

October 31, 2022

Mr. Larry Forester, Chairman  
Lexington-Fayette Urban County Planning Commission  
200 East Main Street  
Lexington, KY 40507

Dear Chairman Forester,

We represent iVCP Athens South LLC, the owner of 5354 and 5380 Athens-Boonesboro Road, Lexington, Kentucky, which has filed an application for a zone change, a conditional use permit and preliminary development plan for 34 gross acres (26.88 net acres) of property located at the corner of Athens-Boonesboro Road and I-75 to allow for the construction of a soccer training facility and stadium for use by the Lexington Sporting Club.

The subject site is located in the Rural Service Area in the Blue Sky Rural Activity Center and is currently zoned Interchange Service Business (B-5P). The site has been zoned B-5P since the comprehensive rezoning of the city and county in 1969, and prior to that it was zoned a very similar zone. The site and surrounding acres of B-5P zoned land have remained undeveloped and underutilized all these years. In the time since the property was originally zoned, the Lexington-Fayette County area has grown and changed greatly, including the addition of Man O-War Boulevard and Hamburg Pavilion, and significant growth at other I-75 interchange points.

### **Proposed Use**

To the excitement of the community, the Lexington Sporting Club has brought professional soccer to Lexington with a new men's professional soccer team and plans to add a professional women's soccer team in the near future. In addition, their umbrella extends to local pre-professional soccer teams. The Lexington Sporting Club also runs one of the largest youth soccer clubs in the Commonwealth of Kentucky with nearly 1400 members.

We are proposing to locate on the property a state-of-the-art training facility to support Lexington Sporting Club's professional teams and its youth programs. The training facility will include weight training and physical conditioning areas, locker rooms, medical treatment rooms, meeting and film viewing rooms, centralized office space for coaches and staff, and retail merchandise for the professional teams and soccer fans.

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Additionally, we are proposing the site be the location of a stadium to host games for the Lexington Sporting Club's men and women professionals soccer teams, and to be used as a site for semi-professional, college, high-school, and youth league soccer tournaments and championship games. It will be constructed as a multi-purpose venue capable of hosting concerts, corporate and community events, and multiple other sports, including lacrosse and field hockey. Initial construction would be for an up to 6,500 seat venue. We expect the stadium will be in use approximately 35-45 days a year, with professional soccer team games and other events. The men's professional soccer season runs from April to October and the women's professional season runs from August to May.

Construction of the training facility and the stadium will require an expected investment of \$25 to \$40 million and is expected to generate approximately 275 new construction jobs in the community. The facilities will serve as the employment location for the 30 full time staff, executives, and coaches of the Lexington Sporting Club, which have an average annual salary range of \$70,000 - \$80,000, as well as for 80-100 part-time coaches, trainers and staff. The completed project is expected to employ additional staff for security, maintenance, food and beverage concessions, parking and events.

In addition to the jobs created by this project, it will also generate and pay occupational taxes, sales taxes, property taxes and income taxes. The economic impact to the community of the addition of these facilities goes beyond the site specific jobs created and revenue produced. The facilities allow Lexington to host regional and national events that will draw significant out-of-town visitors to the community, who will bring and spend money at local hotels, restaurants and shops.

The site is an excellent location for both the training facility and the stadium. With its proximity to I-75, it allows for easy access from other areas of the city and from multiple surrounding communities. Its location next to the new soccer fields, that are currently under construction, is convenient for coaches and players in training. Being nestled directly next to Athens-Boonesboro Road and I-75, any impact of sound or light is muted and minimized. It will occupy underutilized land which is already zoned for commercial use, and not use agricultural or economic development land.

**Zone Change and Conditional Use Permit is Justified and Appropriate**

We are seeking to have the zone of the site changed to Highway Service Business (B-3), because B-3 allows as a principal uses, those involved in the training facility, and is one of the few zones available that permits, as a conditional use, sports stadiums.

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A change in zone for the site to B-3, and conditional use permit for a stadium, is justified and appropriate, and in alignment with the Rural Land Management Plan, which states that “The Policy emphasis for Rural Activity Centers is to maximize their potential for jobs while maintain their boundaries and minimizing impacts to the rural area.” The site is already zoned for commercial use and lies firmly with the boundaries of the Blue Sky Rural Activity Center. It is located directly adjacent to I-75 and it’s on ramp and surrounded by other commercially zone property, minimizing its ability to impact rural land. The existing zone, B-5P, provides for a set of very limited uses, which restrict the amount and type of jobs that may be located within the zone to mostly low wage service jobs in fast food, restaurant, hotel and gas station type businesses. The B-3 zone greatly expands the potential business and commercial ventures that may be located on the site, and the types and variety of jobs that may be generated to include, not only those already included in the B-5P zone, but also retail, office, medical office, banks and other uses, including the training facility and stadium, that can generate a wide variety of good paying jobs.

Further the proposed zone change is in agreement with the 2018 Comprehensive Plan and furthers the Goals and Objectives of (i) supporting infill opportunities (Theme A, Goal #2), (ii) of creating jobs & prosperity through supporting showcase local assets that furthers creation of a variety of jobs, of encouraging development that promotes and enhances tourism and of providing entertainment and other quality of life opportunities that attract young, and culturally diverse professionals and a work force of all ages and talents (Theme C, Goals #1 and #2), and (iii) of seeking an urban rural balance (Theme E). Also, the addition of a training facility and soccer stadium is consistent with the Theme C, Livability Policy #3 of the Comprehensive Plan, which seeks to enhance Lexington’s ability to host regional athletic tournaments.

The proposed zone change will not cause any decrease in the land available to service the interstate traveling public, as those type of B-5P uses are included as permitted uses in the B-3 zone. Moreover, the change of the site to a B-3 zone, in addition to increasing variety and quality of jobs permitted in the area, will allow for the development of the area to proceed in a much more deliberate, thoughtful and productive manner with a variety of compatible uses, and help avoid the haphazard development that has occurred along the B-5P property on the east side of I-75 due to the limitations of the B-5P zone. The zone change will allow underutilized existing commercial property within the Rural Activity Center to be re-purposed and used in productive and job creating manner. As set out above, the training facility and stadium will create a significant number of jobs and revenue.

The Athens-Boonesboro exit is the first Lexington exit interstate travelers on I-75 from the south encounter. A view as they exit to Lexington of a new stadium and training facility will provide and attractive entrance to our community and create a positive first impression for visitors.

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There are few parcels of land large enough in Fayette County to accommodate a stadium in a location that provides sufficient acreage and access. The proposed stadium is a unique opportunity to create a venue that will be an asset to our community. Not only will it support world class pro-sports teams, but it will also be available to host other local and regional tournaments for soccer and other sports, and provide a venue for concerts and other entertainment, all of which increase tourism and revenue to the Lexington community. Moreover, a professional soccer sports franchise and first-rate entertainment venues contribute to a vibrant city with a high quality of life, and enhance the ability of the community recruit and retain businesses, employers and talent.

The applicant thanks you for your consideration of this zone change and condition use permit request.

Very truly yours,

STITES AND HARBISON, PLLC



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*Attorneys for iVCP Athens South LLC*