

# LEWIS & CLARK

## EXPLORATORY CENTER

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November 8, 2005

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**VIA FACSIMILE - 972-4012**

Rebecca Ragsdale, Senior Planner

County of Albemarle

Department of Community Development-Planning

401 McIntire Road, Room 213

Charlottesville, Virginia 22902-4596

Re: Special Use Permit

Dear Rebecca:

This letter should respond to your question as to why the Lewis & Clark Exploratory Center of Virginia, Inc. (the "Center") would qualify as a "historic center" as defined in the Albemarle County Zoning Ordinance, as well as answer other questions related to the Tower on the site plan.

The site of the Center qualifies as a "historic center" because, as detailed below, the site is located both at and adjacent to the most significant historic resources in Central Virginia.

The mission of the nonprofit educational Center is to create a hands-on interpretive facility geared to children of all ages to "explore" the Lewis & Clark Expedition, the Expedition's eastern origins, including the early Albemarle County explorers, and the relationship between the Europeans and the Native Americans both in the east and in the west. That mission includes both understanding and teaching the skills in science, art and industry that enabled the Expedition to succeed.

From the origin of the English Colony at Jamestown in 1607, exploration was often by water as the Europeans sought a water passage to the Pacific Ocean.

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Albemarle County and Central Virginia contributed many leaders to the western exploration and the Center intends to reconnect with those explorers who inspired Thomas Jefferson to initiate the Lewis & Clark Expedition. These included Thomas Walker, of Castle Hill who has been called the father of Kentucky, who "discovered" the Cumberland Gap and built the first log cabin built by a European in what is now Kentucky; George Rogers Clark who explored Kentucky, is considered the conqueror of the old northwest territory, and who in 1783 was asked by Jefferson, then governor of Virginia, to lead the expedition to the Pacific.

The George Rogers Clark birthplace is connected to our site by a permanent easement which permits access and construction of two trails across the easement. This site is one of the handful of sites in the east with a critical relationship to Lewis & Clark Expedition. Other sites include Shadwell and Monticello; Locust Hill, the birthplace of Lewis; Cloverfield, a residence of young Lewis; William Clark's birthplace in Spotsylvania County; Clark's home in Fincastle, Washington, Pittsburgh and Philadelphia.

The Rivanna, Mr. Jefferson's River, was "main street" for Jefferson, Lewis and the Clark family.

Moreover, well in advance of the European exploration and equally important was the Monacan Nation's habitation along the Rivanna River. According to Jeffrey Hantman, archeologist and Native American Anthropologist at the University of Virginia, the Rivanna River was at the center of the Monasukapanough Village and settlements along both sides of the Rivanna.<sup>1</sup>

The river, according to Hantman and other authorities, was not a boundary of the Indian village but a "main street" which was crossed and recrossed in any given day as members of the Nation went about their daily lives in hunting, gathering and agricultural activities. There are numerous sites along the Rivanna from Albemarle to Fluvanna County that show this

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<sup>1</sup> Jeff Hantman, speaking at the annual meeting of the Lewis & Clark Exploratory Center of Virginia, June 26, 2005.

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early pattern of usage by the Monocan Nation. It remains today virtually the same as it was in late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Likewise, with the Lewis & Clark Center, Native Americans issues and relationships will be central to the Center. The Center will explore the views that the explorers had of the native tribes and the relationship and commonalities between the eastern and western tribes.

The historical nature of the river is important in another way. Eighty percent of the Corps 8,000 mile trip was on water and more than 25 boats were used. A major theme of the Center has been and will be boats, boat building and boatmanship. In the late 18<sup>th</sup>, early 19<sup>th</sup> century both European American and Native Americans could build a boat in an instant. While our boats take longer than an instant to build engaging young people in the boat building adventure and education is a central part of our mission. As you know, the Center has already successfully completed building a replica of the keel boat used by the Corps of Discovery. This initial boat-building project brought together children, adults and teenaged volunteers who worked and learned together for this common goal.

The definition of a "historic center" under the zoning ordinance is set forth in Section 18.3.1. We meet the ordinance's criteria in multiple ways.

The Center will build facilities "designed and used for education activities" which are related to both "natural and cultural" history. Our site is located both at and adjacent to historic resources as follows:

1. The site is both connected to and adjacent to the birthplace of George Rogers Clark and two of his siblings, a site with historical, archeological, and cultural remains.
2. The site is on and includes the Rivanna River, a site with archeological and cultural remains which is both connected to and adjacent to Monticello and Shadwell.

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3. The site is at and adjacent to the Southwest Mountains Historical District, a district which contains a number of architectural and cultural remains including Thomas Jefferson's birthplace near Shadwell and home at Monticello; Thomas Walker's home at Castle Hill; and the Lewis home at Cloverfields.

4. The site is at and includes the location of the Monacan Village of Monasukupanough, a site with historic, archeological and cultural remains.

5. The site is on the Route Through Hallowed Ground, a district consisting of historic sites from Monticello in Virginia to the Gettysburg Battlefield in Pennsylvania, all of which contain historical, archeological and cultural remains.

As to the relevance of the tower in the plan, this feature has been included in our plan in consultation with our program chairman Roger Stein, professor emeritus of American art and culture at the University of Virginia and an expert in the design of living museums. The tower is both important for and appropriate to our plan in a number of ways.

Professor Stein suggested that a tower builds on the spatial, conceptual, and educational goals of the Center. Spatially, the tower will afford us views in a variety of directions, lifting the viewer above the ground through which she or he has been moving, where attention has been directed at the forest floor, the flora and fauna, and the human uses of the land.

When visitors climb above this to the top of the tower, they will experience the distant views: Monticello to the north and the Blue Ridge Mountains to the west. Spatially these two points locate the experience of the Lewis & Clark Expedition in relation to its eastern Jeffersonian origins, and point us westward towards those nearby mountains which are surrogates for the distant Rocky Mountains over and through which the discovery party must pass to reach their Pacific goal.

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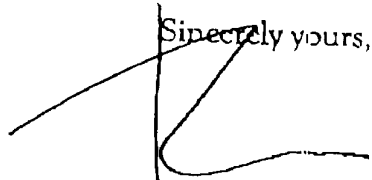
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Tower signage and interpretive programs will underline the relation between the known and unknown experience of mountains, then and now. The experience of the tower will thus reinforce vividly viewers' sense that the Expedition is an exploration into and about American space and coming to terms with its meanings.

As Professor Stein explains, one task of the Lewis & Clark Expedition - with all its "sublime" moments (Rockies vistas, Shoshone Falls) - was to bring the vast spaces under control, to measure and map them, to give human consciousness control of the panoramic space of this new American territory—naturally, culturally, economically, as the paths through the forest emphasize. Thus the tower experience will enact on a small scale for viewers the larger aims of the expedition, and assist in the primary educational goals for learners of all ages about the relations of our present experience to its historical past.

We will be glad to answer any other questions either before or at the meeting.

Sincerely yours,



Francis McQ. Lawrence

FML/sp

Cc: Amelia McCulley, Director (via facsimile 972-4126)