

Film studio tech upgrade means expanding Vineland building



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VINELAND — Big screen. Big building.

Vineland has rethought a proposed overhaul it wants to do next year on the former Landis Marketplace building. The decision is that constructing a two-story addition, not just a broad overhaul, is needed to yield a state-of-the-art digital film studio.

WNN Studios already is producing movies in the property and plans other digital projects such as commercials. The company is moving to install a “volume film production” or “volumetric” LED screen to accommodate different jobs and reduce costs. That technology is behind a proposed building overhaul.

Sandy Forosisky, the city Economic Development director, says the volumetric station needs to be 26 feet high and 60 feet in diameter. That could not fit in the marketplace without major internal changes, she said.

“We would have had to put a big hole in the floor and use up all that space,” Forosisky said this week. “It didn’t make sense. It just made sense to put an addition on.”

In late September, the City Council had approved making a request for a \$250,000 state Film and Digital Media Infrastructure Grant.

Vineland now is seeking \$900,000, with the council approving an amended request at its Oct. 26 meeting. The planned work on the 631 East Landis Ave. property in total is estimated to have an \$1.6 million price tag.

Forosisky said the idea for an addition is endorsed by representatives of the state film program and by WNN Studios. The production company is an affiliate of Weekly World News, an online publication.

The studio recently wrapped its first film; “Zombie Wedding” is now being shopped to distributors.

Forosisky said the addition, because of the significant increase in work space, opens the city to a special “partner” designation with the state. The addition would be built at the rear of the building, she said.

“It’s going to be off the loading dock,” she said. “We’re going to change the back entrance. Instead of it facing Elmer (Street), It’s going to face west.”

Greg D’Alessandro, chief executive officer of Weekly World News, previously said the LED screen technology is not in widespread use if used at all in South Jersey.

“But it’s a very popular film-making tool that people are using,” D’Alessandro said. “And great for commercials, music videos, TV, infomercials.”

Joe Smith is a N.E. Philly native transplanted to South Jersey 36 years ago, keeping an eye now on government in South Jersey. He is a former editor and current senior staff writer for The Daily Journal in Vineland, Courier-Post in Cherry Hill, and the Burlington County Times.

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