City of Culver City, California

Planning Commission Agenda Item Report

Meeting Date: November 18, 2015	Item Number:
AGENDA ITEM: Comprehensive Plan Amendment (No.6) for the proposed construction of three new office buildings and a new multi-level parking structure; and a Historic Preservation Program Certificate of Appropriateness for the relocation of four historically designated bungalow buildings for The Culver Studios, located at 9336 Washington Boulevard, in the Studio Zone.	
Contact Person/Dept.: Susan Yun, Senior Planner	Phone Number: (310) 253-5755
Public Hearing: [X] Action Item: []	Attachments: [X]
Public Notification: Mailed to all the property owners and occupants within a 500 foot radius extended to the end of the block; Emailed to the City's Master Notification List and Posted on the City's website on October 27, 2015; Published in the Culver City News on October 29, and November 5, 2015; Signs Posted on the subject property on October 27, 2015.	
Planning Approval: Thomas Gorham, Planning Manager	Department Approval: Sol Blumenfeld, Community Development Director

RECOMMENDATION

That the Planning Commission:

1. Adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND), P2015-0069-MND, based on the Initial Study finding that the project, with mitigation measures incorporated, will not have a significant adverse impact on the environment (Attachment No. 6); and

2. Recommend Approval to the City Council of Comprehensive Plan Major Modification, P2015-0069-CP/MAM, and Historic Preservation Program Certificate of Appropriateness, P2015-0069-HPCA, subject to the Conditions of Approval as stated in Resolution No. 2015-P008 (Attachment No. 1).

PROCEDURES

1. Chair calls on staff for a staff report and Commission poses questions to staff as desired.
2. Chair opens the public hearing, providing the applicant the first opportunity to speak, followed by the general public.
3. Chair seeks a motion to close the public hearing after all testimony has been presented.
4. Commission discusses the matter and arrives at its decision.

BACKGROUND

Request

The Culver Studios (Studios) is requesting approval of a Comprehensive Plan Amendment (No. 6) and a Historic Preservation Program Certificate of Appropriateness to update and modernize their facilities and operations. The proposed development project consists of the following:

- Three new production office buildings ranging in heights of 52.5' to 56' and resulting in a net increase of 180,093 sq. ft. of office facilities (297,965 sq.ft. of office total).
- The demolition of 41,096 sq.ft. of support and stage facilities (188,581 sq.ft. of stage and support facilities to remain).
- A new 56' high multi-level (6 levels above grade and 2 levels below grade) parking structure located off of Van Buren Place containing 1,408 parking stalls (total spaces onsite is 1,875 spaces).
- The relocation of four historically designated bungalows.

The Comprehensive Plan Amendment No. 6 document (Attachment No. 3) submitted as part of the project application includes all the relevant land use and development standards for the Project including setbacks, height, parking, and permitted uses; as well as the site plan, floor plans, building elevations and renderings, a shade/shadow analysis, historic preservation, building materials and colors, landscaping, public open space, infrastructure, and sustainability provisions.

Existing Conditions

The project site is located within the Studio Zone. The General Plan land use designation is Studio. The project site is generally bounded by Van Buren Place to the west, the vacated portion of Washington Boulevard to the north, Ince Boulevard to the east and Lucerne Avenue to the south. Surrounding areas include predominantly a mix of two-family and multi-family uses with downtown Culver City to north and commercial uses to the northeast.

The project site, comprising approximately 14 acres, is presently occupied by studio related office, support and stage uses. The Culver Studios is developed with approximately 117,872 square feet of office uses, 74,197 square feet of support uses, and 155,480 square feet of stage uses, for a combined building area total of 347,549 sq. ft.

The site presently provides 756 vehicle parking spaces. On-site parking is provided in several areas, including a three-level subterranean parking

structure behind the mansion building ("Building C"), a two and one-half level above ground parking structure adjacent to Van Buren Place, and surface parking areas located throughout the site. The Culver Studios also provides 100 bicycle parking spaces.

Project Description

The Project, Amendment No. 6 to the Culver Studios Comprehensive Plan involves the demolition of eight existing structures totaling approximately 66,703 square feet of floor area and the construction of three new buildings (Building O, Building Y and Building R), totaling approximately 205,700 square feet of floor area resulting in a net new floor area of 138,997 square feet. Of the floor area removed, 39 percent is comprised of office uses and 61 percent is identified as studio support and stage uses. Office use comprises predominantly the floor area added (205,700 sq. ft.). In addition, a new multi-level, 56' high parking structure is proposed near Van Buren Place. The project development program summarized as follows:

- Building O: Construction of a 90,000 sq. ft. five-story (55.5 foot tall) office building where there are currently two office buildings, Building L and O and the Commissary building, located off and along Ince Boulevard. A 21,400 sq. ft. basement level, located entirely below grade, is used for infrastructure utility rooms only and will have limited access. The basement level is not included in overall area totals.
- Building Y: Construction of an 84,700 sq. ft. five-story (56 foot tall) office building at the southern end of the property where currently there are three support buildings; Stage 10, Building Y and Building Z. A 27,300 sq. ft. basement level, located entirely below grade, is used for infrastructure utility rooms only and will have limited access. The basement level is not included in overall area totals.
- Building R: Construction of a 31,000 sq. ft. four-story (52.5 foot tall) office building where currently there is a surface parking lot. Building R is proposed adjacent to Stages 2, 3 & 4 located near the rear lawn of the studio administration building (Building C).
- Building J: Façade enhancement to interior and portions of the side elevation only. No new square footage proposed.
- Van Buren Parking Structure: Construction of a 56 foot high, multi-level parking structure (1,408 spaces) replacing an existing 2.5 story parking structure; Four historic bungalows will be relocated from their current location adjacent to Van Buren Place and 34 space surface parking spaces will be absorbed in the proposed Van Buren parking structure.
- Relocation of Historic Bungalows: A Historic Preservation Program Certificate of Appropriateness is requested to relocate the historic bungalows currently located next to the parking structure near Van Buren

Place. The project will involve the relocation of four existing historic bungalows (Buildings S, T U & V), from the westerly portion of the property to a new location behind the mansion building, respecting the historic spacing and alignment of the existing bungalows.

- Gate 3 Realignment: Gate 3 will be realigned with the goal to make the entry at this location more efficient for studio vehicles and emergency vehicles, while reducing potential impacts to Ince Boulevard from queuing activities at the gate. The realignment will include the removal of Building X, which houses the fire pump, and will also include the relocation of the guard shack at Gate 3.
- Gate 4 Realignment: Gate 4, located at the southern end of the property near Building Y will be realigned closer to Carson Street and striped with two 14 foot wide lanes to provide more efficient ingress and egress and improved maneuverability for emergency vehicles accessing the Culver Studios.

ANALYSIS

For areas within the special purpose zoning districts such as a Studio District, all development standards are established by a Comprehensive Plan.

General Land Use Provisions

Pursuant to Chapter 17.250.010.A of the Zoning Code, the Studio zone allows for motion picture and television studio facilities and related media support facilities. The Culver Studios includes uses such as office, stage and support space. Office uses generally involve spaces to accommodate producers, writers, and production teams; stage uses include all types of active entertainment production; and support uses range from utilities to props/grips/wardrobe to set construction to storage. As identified in the Comprehensive Plan Amendment No. 6 document, the project will be in conformance with the Studio zoning district and General Plan Land Use designation for the property.

Architectural Design

The architectural design of proposed new buildings is contemporary. The architect's selection of building materials, design, shape and color reflect the primary goal of The Culver Studios to embrace a rapidly evolving new media landscape that incorporates contemporary workspace for creative industries while respecting historic aspects of the Studio environment.

Building O: Building O is a 4-story office building with a basement for utility infrastructure. Building O will replace existing Building O, Building L and the Commissary building. The base of Building O is relatively solid on the interior side consistent with the massing and of the historic buildings on the studio lot. The modern upper floors employ more industrial like materials including glass and metal with a variety of openings and screens. The Ince Boulevard side of Building O is composed of a series of steel framed windows with a transom level of clear glass above a higher set of translucent glass panes to give the façade variety and scale. An architectural projection composed of varying slopes and heights that will also serve as a mechanical screen define the rooflines of the new Building O. The sloped and gabled architectural projection/mechanical screen is intended to complement existing sound stages. Super graphics, consistent with the large format graphics traditionally used on the sound stages, are incorporated into the building design as building identification. Other features such as giant, signature “elephant doors” and large-scale garage door openings are part of the industrial language of sound stages reimaged for contemporary use.

Building Y and Building R: Both buildings are 4-story office buildings with Building Y also having a basement for utility infrastructure. Both buildings have similar design strategies to Building O, but at different scales and for different functions. Both have solid double height bases, referencing the solidity and mass of the historic buildings on site. Both buildings have dynamic, sculptural upper floors which are contemporary interpretations of industrial buildings. They also include an architectural projection composed of varying slopes and heights that will also serve as a mechanical screen to define the rooflines similar to Building O.

Existing Building J: Located adjacent to Gate 2 along Ince Boulevard, Building J will undergo a façade renovation on the Studio elevation side and a portion of the north elevation so that the building is better integrated with the design of the adjacent new Building O and other new and existing buildings on the lot.

Van Buren Parking Structure: The parking structure is functionally different from the other buildings and requires a design response sensitive to its day to day operations and its location along a residential street.

The new parking structure is made up of pre-cast concrete panels along the east (interior) with minimal openings for stairwells. This elevation is required by building and fire codes to have minimal openings due to its proximity to the existing sound stage buildings. The north and south sides of the parking structure will be completely enclosed with pre-cast concreate panels and will have no openings. The west elevation of the parking structure facing Van Buren Place will be constructed with pre-cast concrete panels with openings above the 3-4 foot level on each floor. In order to provide visual relief for this

elevation, which measures 415 feet long, an architectural screen made up of vertical aluminum louver like panels will be attached to the façade of the structure. This aluminum panels will be rendered in muted colors, compatible to the coloration of the drought tolerant landscape that will be installed at the base of the parking structure along Van Buren Place.

Building Height and Setbacks

Pursuant to the Zoning Code, no structure within the Studio zoning district may exceed a maximum height of 56 feet. Further, any parapet wall shall not exceed 5 feet above the top of the roof, and any mechanical equipment/screening shall not exceed 13'-6" above the roof line. Architectural projections are allowed, up to a maximum of 13'-6" above the height of a building and are limited to 15% of the total roof area. All three new office buildings and new parking structure meet the heights limits established by the Zoning Code. Building setback provisions are established with the adoption of a Comprehensive Plan.

Building O: New Building O will have a height of 55.5 feet to the top of the roof and 69 feet to the top of the proposed architectural projection/mechanical screen. Building O will replace existing Building O, Building L and the Commissary building. The existing Building O is approximately 39 feet in height. The existing commissary building has a height of 17 feet and Building L has a height of 26 feet.

Building O will be setback 1.5 feet from the property line at the ground level facing Ince Boulevard to allow for the installation of ornamental landscape planting at the base of this building. The existing buildings that will be removed currently have a minimum of 1.5 feet building setback that include plantings at the base of the buildings. The proposed landscaped area will enhance the pedestrian level experience at this location and minimize large blank facades that are intrinsic to some of the older studio buildings.

Building Y: The new Building Y will have a height of 56 feet to the top of the roof and 69 feet to the top of the proposed architectural projection/mechanical screen. A 30 foot section of the back side or southern side of Building Y, is stepped down to 32 feet high. The existing Building Y is 29 feet high. The building height at this side of the new building is lowered to minimize visual impacts to the abutting residential property primarily to the south. The residential properties to the west will benefit partially from the lowered building height. The west elevation of Building Y is 117'-9" in total length. When viewed by the residential properties to the west, the building height is 69 feet to the top of the architectural projection/mechanical screen for a length of approximately 87'-9" of northern section of Building Y and 32 feet high for a length of 30 feet of the southern section Building Y. Those properties directly adjacent to the lowered portion of Building Y will be less impacted.

Building Y is proposed to be located in the same footprint of the existing Building Y with zero building setbacks to the abutting residential property lines. Similar to Building O, Building Y is setback 1.5 feet on the east elevation to allow for the installation of ornamental landscape planting at the base of this building along Ince Boulevard. The building design also includes a decorative landscaped green screen affixed to the southerly building face and a portion of the westerly building face. This landscape feature will require installation of green screen, irrigation and planters at an upper level deck and will require additional plan submittals to ensure that it can be maintained as a permanent building feature to soften the building facades.

Building R: Building R is a wedged shaped building proposed where currently there is a surface parking lot. Building R is proposed to be built alongside Stages 2, 3 & 4 located near the rear lawn of the studio administration building. Building R is four stories and will have a height of 52.5 feet.

Van Buren Parking Structure: The proposed parking structure is 56 feet in height to the roofline and 59.5 feet to the top of parapet wall. The existing Van Buren parking structure ranges in heights of 21 to 26 feet. The proposed parking structure building length is 415 feet long. The proposed parking structure will have a building setback of 15 feet from the west property line, allowing for a landscape buffer along its entire length as described above. In addition, the north and south edges will have an 18 foot building setback and will retain existing trees and add new trees where they do not currently exist.

A linear parklike landscape area is provided as a visual buffer between the west façade of the structure and Van Buren Place. The landscape area includes a 4 foot high earth berm up against the parking structure, visually screening the lower level of the structure and enhancing the walking experience on the sidewalk. The berm area is planted with California native and drought tolerant Mediterranean plants and evergreen and deciduous trees. Where possible, the landscape is used as bio swales for storm water run-off. The existing street trees which are mature Cedars and Pines are retained and will add to the visual buffer for the residents.

On both the southern and northern elevations of the proposed parking structure, additional visual mitigations include installation of a row of columnar evergreen trees and the planting of climbing vines at the base of the structure provide visual mitigations for the neighboring residential properties.

Shade and Shadow

The proposed project will modify the height of existing structures on the site and will introduce new or increased shade/shadow effects on adjacent

residential shade-sensitive uses. In order to determine the extent of the shading from the proposed project, shading diagrams were prepared (included in the Comprehensive Plan for the Project) to indicate the shading patterns that would occur during the times specified in the *City of L.A. CEQA Thresholds Guide*. Culver City does not have specific shade/shadow thresholds and defers to the City of LA CEQA Thresholds Guide. Pursuant to the criteria, significant shading impacts occur if a shade-sensitive use is shaded for more than three consecutive hours between the hours of 9:00 A.M. and 3:00 P.M. from mid-November through mid-March, or for more than four consecutive hours between the hours of 9:00 A.M. and 5:00 P.M. from mid-March through mid-November.

As shown in the shade and shadow analysis of the Comprehensive Plan, shadows lengths, based on the project's building heights, are identified for specific times of the day and vary according to the season of the year. Analysis indicates that the amount of time that shade is cast on surrounding sensitive receptors by the project shadows will not exceed the thresholds noted above. Shading diagrams in the Comprehensive Plan indicate maximum shadow for the Winter and Summer solstices.

Parking

Numerical Parking Requirements

As part of the project development, the new multi-level parking structure (2 levels below grade and 6 levels above grade) located adjacent to Van Buren Place will provide 1,408 new parking spaces. Further, 12 new parking spaces are proposed in a surface parking area near Building Y, resulting in a total of 1,420 new parking spaces added to the site.

A total of 301 existing surface and structured spaces will be removed as part of the proposed construction. The removal of 301 spaces from the existing 756 spaces currently provided and the addition of 1,420 new parking spaces proposed, will result in a total of 1,875 parking spaces provided on-site. At the completion of proposed project, 1,875 parking spaces will be provided for all on-site uses resulting in a surplus of 334 parking spaces. The additional parking supply on site will help mitigate spill over parking in the adjacent residential neighborhoods.

Parking Summary	Totals
Existing Parking Provided	756
Existing Parking to be Removed	-301
Gross New Parking Spaces	+1,420
Total Parking Provided	**1,875**

Required Parking	**1,541**
Parking Surplus	**334**

The Culver Studios will provide ample number of bicycle stalls that are dispersed throughout the site at convenient locations. The total number of bicycle parking will not change from what is currently provided which is 100 stalls. Some of the old racks will be removed and any new bicycle racks will adhere to the design requirements of the Culver City Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan design guide.

Removal of Trucks off of Ince Boulevard: The proposed Van Buren parking structure will incorporate high clearance parking bays on both the ground level and 1st basement level which are designed and structured to allow production vehicles to use the parking structure as a "base camp" in lieu of current operations (along the west side of Ince Boulevard between Gates 2 and 4). These levels will allow sufficient clear heights and structural capacity to shift those aspects of Studio operations within the property boundaries.

Parking Attendants: The new structure will include tandem parking that will be managed by the Culver Studios; parking attendants will be stationed on each tandem parking level & managed in coordination with Studio security personnel.

Lighting: Lighting from the proposed parking structure is designed to be sensitive to adjacent neighbors. Potential light spillover and glare from the new parking structure lighting (interior/ceiling and roof top pole lights) and lighting in the landscaped area in front of the new Van Buren Parking structure will be prevented by requiring lighting fixtures to be recessed and/or shielded and directed downward to prevent the light from shining directly onto surrounding property. The light poles at the top level of the parking structure are restricted in height to no more than 18' including any base they sit on. They are located at the center of the parking structure, away from the edges of the parking structure so as to minimize glare onto neighboring properties. Compliance with the City standards and special lighting guidelines as set forth in the Comprehensive Plan for lighting will ensure that lighting and glare impacts are less than significant.

Operations: According to the applicant, the parking operation of the proposed Van Buren Garage, will maintain the same operating hours and general uses as the existing Studio parking structure and parking lots. The Culver Studios provides access to their tenants to meet their operational needs; such access is not restricted by time of day, or day of the week, consistent with the demands of production companies. The Culver Studios operates 24/7 and is staffed at all times with security and operations personnel.

The proposed Van Buren Garage will be used for production vehicles, tenant employees, and studio visitor parking. Some Studio tenants from time to time can include live audience productions and live event uses among the types of productions leasing facilities on the lot.

As noted above, the proposed Van Buren parking structure is designed with high bay parking on the ground and first subterranean level to serve as a staging area for production vehicle. This will help mitigate impacts by bringing parking and production vehicles inside the Studio boundaries instead of having to use Ince Boulevard for staging of projection vehicles.

Noise: The new Van Buren parking structure is required by both conditions of project approval and environmental noise mitigation measures to minimize potential impacts from the parking structure operation.

A noise study was prepared by the applicant which analyzed existing noise and projected noise generated from the area where the new Van Buren parking structure is located. Additional noise measurements were taken at the northwest corner of top level of the existing Van Buren parking structure and at the southern property line between the existing surface parking lot and the neighboring residences. All data obtained at the conclusion of the measurements were within the acceptable noise thresholds of the City's Noise Element and noise regulations of the City's Municipal Code.

Operational noise from the parking garage will not significantly impact the adjacent residential properties provided that a concrete wall shielding the full first level from adjoining residential uses is installed along the parking structure's west elevations, facing Van Buren Place. This is consistent with the structure's north and south elevations which is proposed to be enclosed with pre-cast concrete panels with no openings from the ground level to top of the garage. The pre-cast concrete panels at the north and south sides of the structure is required to weigh at least 4lbs per square foot and form a continuous façade with no gaps between the panels to maximize the benefits of an enclosed elevation. Further, all parking structure exhaust or ventilation systems is required to be designed with quiet fans and duct silencers so as to reduce noise emissions to neighboring residential properties.

As the new parking structure will be open to the general public who purchase tickets for live performances or show tapings, the applicant is also required to post signs at all parking levels that remind people to respect neighboring residential uses and to prohibit honking of horns and loud music from cars or

vehicles. Studio parking staff shall enforce this requirement and potential violations especially during live audience shows or special events.

Studio Access and Gates

The Culver Studios will maintain four access gates to the property. Presently the majority of the Studio's employee and visitor vehicular traffic enters the site at Gate 2, just south of the intersection of Washington Boulevard and Ince Boulevard. Gate 2 also provides entry access for production vehicles. Further south on Ince Boulevard, Gate 3 will continue to be used as an access for employee vehicles using the new parking structure adjacent to Van Buren Place and production vehicles. Gate 3 will be the primary exit point for all production vehicles on-site. Gate 4 (at the southern end of the site), is restricted primarily for Fire Department access only. Gate 1, located at the front of the site with access off of the vacated portion of Washington Boulevard, will continue to serve as a secondary access for the studios. There will be one driveway off of Van Buren Place, adjacent to the new multi-level parking structure, to be used only for emergency access to the site only.

Traffic and Circulation

The traffic analysis (Attachment No. 4) prepared for the project evaluated 2015 existing traffic conditions and 2018 forecast future traffic conditions (future traffic conditions with and without the proposed project). The traffic analysis studied twenty four (24) intersections, including Studio Gates 2 and 3 (the project's main entrance and exit gates) during both the AM and PM peak hours; 18 intersections are in Culver City and 6 intersections are in Los Angeles. The traffic study estimated that the project's net new trip generation will be 1,564 daily vehicle trips; 169 trips in the morning peak and 159 trips in the evening peak. Using the adopted threshold criteria for both the City of Culver City and the City of Los Angeles for determining the project's significant traffic impacts at a specific location, the traffic study reported that there will be traffic impacts at two of the study intersections.

- Ince Boulevard & Washington Boulevard during the PM peak hour; (Culver City intersection);
- Robertson Boulevard/Exposition Boulevard & Venice Boulevard during both the AM and PM peak hour (City of Los Angeles intersection).

In order to reduce vehicular capacity impacts (or level of service - LOS impacts) on these intersections, traffic mitigations described below are required. These mitigations will improve and enhance the vehicular capacity of the intersections noted above resulting in more efficient traffic flow thus reducing LOS impacts:

- *Ince Boulevard and Washington Boulevard*: The applicant will be required to modify the existing raised island and restripe the eastbound approach from the abandoned Washington Boulevard towards Ince Boulevard from one shared through/right-turn lane to one through lane and one shared through/right-turn lane. Eastbound left-turn movements will be prohibited.
- *Robertson Boulevard/Exposition Boulevard and Venice Boulevard:* The applicant will be required to provide cost reimbursements to the City of Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) to upgrade signal controllers in up to six (6) intersections within the vicinity of the project and that are identified by LADOT. Additionally the applicant will be required to install Close Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras at the two intersections of Cadillac Avenue and Robertson Boulevard and Fairfax Avenue and Pico Boulevard. CCTV cameras are used by City Traffic Engineers to monitor intersections from remote locations and adjust signaling as appropriate. LADOT agreed with this mitigation which will enhance its ability to monitor traffic flows and adjust signal timing as appropriate.

Further, the traffic study analyzed potential queuing impacts at the intersection of Ince Boulevard and Washington Boulevard and at southbound Ince Boulevard and Gate 3. The focus was to determine if there is adequate vehicle storage in the westbound to southbound left turn lane at Ince Boulevard and Washington Boulevard and to determine the need for a southbound right turn lane at Gate 3 along southbound Ince Boulevard. The analysis showed that additional queuing room is needed at the intersections noted above to accommodate additional vehicles resulting from the project. The following mitigations will improve vehicular flow by increasing vehicle storage capacities within specific lanes described below:

- *Westbound to Southbound Left Turn Lane at Ince Boulevard and Washington Boulevard*: The applicant will extend the westbound left-turn lane from 118 feet to 150 feet and modify the raised median island to accommodate the extended left-turn lane; modify striping to restrict left-turns out of the Ince Parking Structure driveway into the roadway; and remove the median island along Washington Boulevard at this location, replacing it with a two-way left turn lane further east of the extended left-turn lane.
- *Southbound Ince Boulevard Project Traffic Entering Gate 3:* The applicant will widen Ince Boulevard by 2 feet; narrow the sidewalk from 10 feet to 8 feet; and restripe the roadway to accommodate a 100 foot southbound left-turn pocket into Gate 3, a southbound through lane, and a northbound through lane. The 100 foot right-turn pocket will sufficiently meet the queuing demand for Gate 3.
- *Gate 3 Entrance and Exit:* The applicant will modify Gate 3 to be a right turn in only and left turn out only driveway.

Historic Preservation Program Certificate of Appropriateness

PCR Services Corporation completed a Historical Resources Assessment and Environmental Impact Analysis Report ("Report") for The Culver Studios (Attachment No. 5). The purpose of the Report was to identify and evaluate historical resources that may be affected by the implementation of The Culver Studios Comprehensive Plan Amendment 6. PCR's Report includes descriptions, integrity analysis and significance evaluations for individual buildings that in many instances reflect additional research and data not referenced in prior reports. PCR's Report underwent a peer-review process and the final Report incorporates comments provided during peer review. Potential impacts to historical resources and mitigation measures as included in the CEQA Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration are, for the most part, based on the PCR Report's findings.

The Culver Studios Comprehensive Plan Amendment 6 includes the demolition of eight buildings found ineligible as historical resources. These are: the Commissary, the Van Buren parking structure, Buildings L, O, X, Y, Z and Stage 10. However, there are historical resources that would be directly impacted by the project.

Bungalows: A six-level above grade parking structure will replace the existing 3-level parking structure adjoining Van Buren Place. The four existing bungalows, Buildings S, T, U and V, currently located on the proposed parking structure site will be relocated behind the Mansion (Building C). The bungalows will be removed from their historic setting in proximity to Stage 11/12/14 and within the residential corridor on Van Buren Place. The configuration and layout of Buildings S, T, U and V under the project would retain the historic grouping of the four bungalows within the studio lot, including the existing architectural hierarchy and elements of the bungalows' original setting. The orientation, however, and site plan will be slightly altered due to the confined setting of the proposed new site. The bungalows were originally laid out following the development of the site with the older structures to the front (northeast) and the newer structures to the rear (southwest). The project would have an adverse impact to these four historical resources and appropriate mitigation measures are required to reduce potential impacts to less than significant. In order to address the potential impacts to historic resources, the applicant must apply for and receive approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for the relocation of Buildings S, T, U and V which are designated Significant Cultural Resources under Culver City's Historic Preservation Program. Approval of the Certificate of Appropriateness is conditioned upon all exterior alterations complying with the US Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings. With the implementation of a Relocation

and Rehabilitation Plan (as outlined in the Historical Resources Assessment prepared for the project and also included in the CEQA Initial Study), the exterior features and appurtenances of the four structures would be preserved and the relocated bungalows would be integrated into the new site in a compatible manner adjacent to Building I and the Mansion.

Historic Stage 2/3/4 and Building R:

Stage 2/3/4: The new Building R will have a triangular foot print and will abut the north front of Stage 2/3/4 which appears eligible for listing on the National Register and is therefore considered a historical resource as defined by CEQA.

Stage 2/3/4 is a three-story structure with a rectangular footprint that is oriented fronting north towards the Mansion (Building C). The structure is clad with stucco and topped with a low pitched roof with a cupola or monitor roof that runs the length of the building. The primary character defining features of the building are located on the east elevation which will remain visible. The north elevation is a secondary elevation and has a characteristic shape and profile but otherwise is a blank wall with “The Culver Studios” painted wall sign. The painted wall sign does not appear in historic photographs and is a recent alteration, not a historic sign. The north front of Stage 2/3/4 would project above the new Building R, exposing the distinctive character defining parapet. Stage 2/3/4 would remain otherwise intact, and would still be visually prominent when viewed from the center of the studio lot. As the primary (east elevation) of Stage 2/3/4 is oriented toward the center of the studio lot, the construction of Building R would not obscure primary views of the east front of Stage 2/3/4. After project completion, Stage 2/3/4 would remain intact and the primary views of the east façade of the building would be retained.

Stage 2/3/4 would remain eligible as a historical resource under National and State criteria A/1 and would remain eligible for local designation for its association with early motion picture production on the lot. However, the project would reduce the integrity of the north front of Stage 2/3/4; therefore, the project is required to obtain a qualified architectural historian to provide input to the final building design to ensure minimal historic impact occurs at this elevation.

Mansion (Building C): Under the project, the Mansion (Building C) would not be physically demolished, relocated or altered, including the primary view looking south into the studio from the public right of way directly at the front of the Mansion. While the Manson’s immediate surroundings would be changed on the south side, a secondary elevation, the surroundings would not be materially impaired and Building C would continue to convey its historical significance. Approval of the project includes a condition that any proposed plans for changes to the Mansion’s front lawn landscaping identify the

character-defining features of that area and that proposed plans be reviewed by a qualified preservation professional for submittal to the City according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes.

Construction Schedule and Management

Based on information provided by the applicant, construction of the proposed project would most likely be performed in two phases. Building Y and the Parking Structure would be constructed first. Buildings located at the site of Building O are currently occupied. Upon completion of Building Y, occupants of these buildings would be relocated to Building Y and construction of Building O and R would commence. Construction of the first phase (Building Y and Parking Structure) would require approximately 14 months which includes 2 months of demolition, 3 months of excavation and foundation, and 9 months of building construction, architectural coatings and asphalt paving. Construction of the second phase (Building O and R) would require approximately 13 months.

Phasing of the construction will help to minimize construction impacts. Further, the project is required to submit for review and approval by the building and traffic engineering officials, a comprehensive construction management plan prior to the issuance of any permits. In addition to standard noise reducing conditions required during construction that will lessen project generated noise, the project requires the following noise mitigation measures:

- The applicant shall utilize quiet air compressors and similar equipment, where available; and
- The applicant shall provide minimum 12-foot tall noise barriers such as noise blankets with a noise reduction coefficient (NRC) of 0.85 and a minimum of sound transmission coefficient (STC) of 20 to block the line-of-site between the construction equipment and residential areas during construction. Noise blankets shall be placed around all construction fencing or in various sections of the construction site wherein there is line-of-site between construction equipment and residential areas.

Neighborhood Compatibility

The Culver Studios is seeking to achieve a balance between its historical 20th century industrial use and emerging operations as a 21st century media center that result from the way entertainment is now produced and experienced. These changes have implications for the evolution of the Studio to a modern facility and for adjacent residential neighborhoods. To address these dual concerns, the Studios have proposed to provide an ample parking supply fully satisfying its parking needs which will help mitigate spill over

parking in adjacent residential neighborhoods. The proposed Van Buren parking structure is intended to provide necessary parking for the future growth and development of Culver Studios as it moves ahead with plans to become a modern media center with a variety of media /creative office tenants which have significant parking demand. The design of the proposed parking structure and its location are partly a function of the historic aspects of the property that limits how and where development may occur. The design elements planned for the proposed parking structure include setbacks, screening and landscaping are intended to address those challenges, however there may be additional measures which can be explored to further mitigate impacts and create the best fit of the proposed parking structure with the surrounding area.

The prior Studio operations created noise impacts from live audience queuing and from truck deliveries. With the recent purchase of the Culver Studios, new management has demonstrated its interest in becoming a better neighbor with proactive measures to improve operations relative to live shows queuing on site, deliveries and on-site and off-site maintenance.

Further, the applicant has worked closely with staff to improve the project design. The new 56 foot high parking structure will replace the existing Van Buren parking structure which ranges in heights of 21 to 26 feet. The new parking facilities are more enclosed than the original design to help baffle noise generated from within the new parking structure particularly to properties to the west, north and south of the Studio.

The new parking structure will be 415 feet long. In order to address the potential visual impacts of the new structure to the adjoining residential neighborhood, design elements planned for the parking structure include a 15 foot bermed landscaped setback and architectural screening on the structure façade along the Van Buren Place frontage; an 18 foot setback planted with tall columnar trees on the northern and southern sides of the structure where they abut residential properties with clinging vine planted on the building parking structure walls.

Building Y is located on the same building footprint as existing Building Y with zero setbacks along both the west and south property lines where the building abuts residential properties. Proposed Building Y will increase in height from the existing 29 feet to a height of 69 feet to the top of the proposed architectural projection/mechanical screen. In order to address impacts to the abutting residential uses to the south a 30 foot section of the back side or southern side of Building Y, is stepped down to 32 feet high. The building height at this side of the new building is lowered to minimize visual impacts to the abutting residential property primarily to the south. The residential properties to the west will benefit partially from the lowered building height. The west elevation of Building Y is 117’-9” in total length. When viewed by the residential properties

to the west, the building height is 69 feet to the top of the architectural projection/mechanical screen for a length of approximately 87'-9" of northern section of Building Y and 32 feet high for a length of 30 feet of the southern section Building Y. To address this potential impact, the Studios has proposed the use of landscaped green screens particularly along the southerly and westerly building edge facing residential properties at Building Y. Landscaping such as clinging vines will cascade down from irrigated planters at the upper level roof area and will require additional plan submittals to ensure that it can be maintained as a permanent building feature to soften the building facades. The Comprehensive Plan allows for design flexibility to accommodate special uses and development programs. Absent the flexibility in development standards provided for through the Comprehensive Plan, the Zoning Code would require commercial setbacks adjacent to residential zones of 10 feet for the first 15 feet of building height. For portions of the structure above 15 feet in building height, a 60 degree clear zone angle must be maintained, measured from 15 feet above the existing grade and from 10 feet from the side or rear property line. Given the historic use of the property there is need to accommodate it with design flexibility and staff believes that there may be further opportunities to explore to ensure the best fit of the proposed Van Buren parking structure and Building Y. Such additional measures could include additional step backs, setbacks or landscaping from those currently proposed. As a Condition of Approval, staff recommends that the Comprehensive Plan allow for further project refinements subject to administrative review and approval prior to issuance of building permits.

Design for Development

In 1986, the former Culver City Redevelopment Agency adopted a Design for Development (DFD) plan for the Site. This DFD was last amended in 2006 as part of Comprehensive Plan Amendment No. 5. A DFD is a unique tool which allowed Redevelopment Agencies to overlay additional design and use criteria to one or more properties. The additional design criteria could be more restrictive than the underlying zoning code restrictions.

Effective February 1, 2012, the California state government acted to close all Redevelopment Agencies; however, the sections of the State Health and Safety Code pertaining to Redevelopment Plans and their related land use regulatory powers, remain. The responsibility of enforcing Culver City Redevelopment Agency land use controls, including DFDs, was assigned to the City on December 10, 2012, per Resolution Nos. 2012-R098 and 2012-R001.

When the City Council considers Comprehensive Plan No. 6, it will concurrently include a recommendation to amend the DFD. Amending the DFD will extend

the life of this flexible land use tool and consolidate previous amendments consistent with Comprehensive Plan No. 6.

Community Meetings and Outreach

The Culver Studios held two community meetings as part of its outreach to neighbors and community members. Community Meeting No. 1 was held on June 25, 2015 on-site at The Culver Studios. There were three presentations held at 5pm, 6pm and 7pm followed by a short walking tour of the lot. The first community meeting was well attended with a total of approximately 150 people in attendance. The meeting included a presentation by the ownership of The Culver Studios and their architect where it was stated that the goal of the project was to have the Culver Studios remain relevant and competitive in the entertainment industry for many years to come by providing state of the art facilities that will appeal to entertainment producers. The modernization project is central to the Studio's long-term vision to be a center for film, television and digital arts. People in attendance expressed both concerns as well as positive feedback on the proposed project and existing operations:

Summary of Community Issues:

- Construction impacts, including noise, truck traffic, duration of construction, hours of construction.
- Provision of adequate mitigations to be in place during construction to reduce impacts.
- Existing and proposed traffic congestion on nearby streets were also expressed as issues. Difficulty in exiting from one's own driveway.
- Neighbors also identified that in the past employees of The Culver Studios would park in the residential neighborhood; however that had become less of a problem over time.
- Height and mass questions; lighting impacts; closeness of new buildings to residences.
- Concern over height of parking structure affecting sight distance safety as one is existing out from their driveway.
- Noise and traffic concerns over Studio production trucks parked on Ince Blvd.
- Relocation of Historic Bungalows.

Positive Feedback

- Studio trucks are following current restrictions – never sees Studio related trucks on Lucerne.
- Proposed screening on new parking Garage is better than what the neighborhood sees today.
- The architect has done a good job greening Van Buren with the "park".
- Likes the landscaping and vines on the side of the new parking garage.

- Proposal looks the like the architecture Culver City deserves.
- Modernization will be great for the neighborhood.
- Studio has been responsive to neighborhood calls/complaints
- Neighbors grateful for invitation to the Studios.

Community Meeting No. 2 was held on October 1, 2015 at the Culver City Senior Center. Seven community residents attended. The purpose of the meeting, like the first community meeting was to inform the Studio's neighbors about the proposed project. The presentation focused on the Studio's history, current operations, and needs for the future. Comments were focused on trucks parking along Ince Boulevard and their use of backup horns when start moving around in the early morning. Other topics raised included:

- Use of gate 4 and keeping it restricted
- The possibility of noise coming from the new garage
- The height of the new garage
- Hours and duration of construction
- Traffic
- Audience members lining up in the neighborhood outside the studio
- Shade-shadow impacts, and
- The Studios management's responsiveness to community complaints.

As part of the City's notification for the Planning Commission hearing and up to the time of writing of the staff report, staff received one phone call and four emails from individuals expressing concern and/or wanting to know more about the proposed project. Written correspondences are contained in Attachment No. 7.

CONCLUSION:

The Applicant has worked to ensure that the proposed project will be compatible with surrounding residential uses while preserving and protecting the historic elements of the property and providing the Studios with economic viability to move forward as a modern media center. Based on the analysis contained herein staff believes the findings for a Comprehensive Plan Amendment and Historic Preservation Program Certificate of Appropriateness can be made as outlined in proposed Resolution No. 2015-P008 (Attachment No.1) and recommends project approval.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION:

The proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendment is in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Potential impacts to various environmental factors such as aesthetics, biology, cultural resources, geology

and soils, noise, and traffic, as reviewed in the Initial Study will be mitigated. Pursuant to the CEQA guidelines, the project has been determined to have less than significant impacts on the environment with mitigations and a Mitigated Negative Declaration is prepared (Attachment No.6).

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS:

The following alternative actions may be considered by the Planning Commission:

1. Approve the application with the recommended conditions of approval if the application is deemed to meet the required findings.

2. Approve the application with additional or different conditions of approval, if deemed necessary to meet the required findings and mitigate any new project impacts identified at the meeting.

3. Disapprove the application if it does not meet the required findings.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Draft Resolution No. 2015-P008; Exhibit A, Conditions of Approval.
2. Project Location Map
3. Comprehensive Plan Amendment No. 6, dated November, 2015
4. Culver Studios Comprehensive Plan Amendment No. 6 Traffic Analysis Validation and Update, Prepared by Fehr & Peers, dated September, 2015.
5. Historical Resources Assessment and Environmental Impacts Analysis Report prepared by PCR Services Corporation, dated September 2015.
6. Mitigated Negative Declaration, Initial Study Checklist for CPA No. 6, dated October 27, 2015.
7. Comments received from the Public