



# City of Culver City

## Staff Report

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**File #:** 20-194, **Version:** 1

**Item #:** PH-1.

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**PC - Administrative Site Plan Review & Administrative Use Permit, P2019-0104-ASPR/P2019-0104-AUP to Allow a 9,338 s.f. Addition to a Creative Office Building Spanning Two Adjoining Commercial Lots Currently Developed with a 7,500 s.f. Building that will Result in a Total of 16,839 s.f. Three-Story Building with Mezzanine to Include On-Site Improvements Such as a Parking Lot Restriping, New Parking Stackers, and New Hardscape/Landscape, at 3516 Schaefer Street.**

**Meeting Date:** August 28, 2019

**Contact Person/Dept:** Lisa Edwards, Contract Planner;  
Michael Allen, Current Planning Manager

**Phone Number:** (310) 253-5728

**Fiscal Impact:** Yes  No

**General Fund:** Yes  No

**Public Hearing:**  **Action Item:**  **Attachments:**

**Public Notification:** (Mailed) Property owners and occupants within a 500-foot radius of the site (8/7/19); Published Culver City News (8/16/19); (Email) Master Notification List (8/23/19); (Posted) City website (8/23/19), Posted on Site (8/21/19).

**Department Approval:** Sol Blumenfeld, Community Development Director (08/20/19)

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission:

1. Adopt a Class 32 Categorical Exemption for this project pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act Section 15332 In-Fill Development Project.
2. Approve Administrative Site Plan Review & Administrative Use Permit, P2019-0104-ASPR/P2019-0104-AUP, subject to the Conditions of Approval as stated in Resolution No. 2019-P008 (Attachment No. 1).

### **PROCEDURES**

1. Chair calls on staff for a brief staff report and Planning 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

On May 8, 2019, an application was submitted for an Administrative Site Plan Review for an adaptive reuse of an existing industrial building to a creative office building involving a 9,338 square-foot addition spanning two adjoining commercial lots currently developed with a 7,500 square-foot building. The addition includes a 16,839 square-foot, three-story building with mezzanine level and connected at the second floor of the existing building located adjacent to the project site at 3520 Schaefer Street. Other on-site improvements include parking lot restriping, new parking stackers, and new hardscape/landscape, at 3516 Schaefer Street in the General Industrial (IG) Zone.

This Administrative Site Plan Review request is subject to Section 17.540.015.C.2 & 3, which requires referral of an Administrative Site Plan Review application to the Planning Commission that otherwise could be approved administratively. Since the size of the total structure exceeds 15,000 square feet and the proposal of alternative parking methods such as stacked and tandem parking require Administrative Use Permits, the project is being considered by the Planning Commission.

### Existing Conditions

The subject site is located on the east side of Schaefer Street, south of National Boulevard and north of Higuera Street, as outlined in the Vicinity Map (Attachment No. 3). The Land Use Element of the City's General Plan designates this site and immediate surrounding areas as Industrial, which is consistent with the site's zoning designation of Industrial General (IG).

The aggregate project site is comprised of three parcels (Tract No. 4161, Lots 320-321) and partial use of a remnant "spur parcel" (Tract No. 03153, Lot 9) located along the rear property line of Lots 321 & 322. The subject property is rectangular in shape, generally flat in topography, and is a total of 18,000 square feet. Properties surrounding the site to the north, and west, consist of industrial-zoned rectangular parcels, similar in size, with those along Schaefer Street and National Boulevard. To the south are Low Density Two Family Residentially zoned properties. To the east along the rear property line, the site abuts a spur remnant parcel that runs south beginning from National Boulevard and terminates at Lot 333. The property is accessed exclusively by Schaefer Street and currently has two (2) existing driveways, one driveway is for access to 3516 Schaefer and the other was previously the driveway access for 3520 Schaefer.

The subject site is currently developed with both industrial and office uses and during the 1950s was considered commercial/industrial use. An approximately 6,000 square-foot creative office building recently remodeled is located at 3520 Schaefer Street and will remain in place and only be modified to accommodate the integration of the proposed addition. The existing warehouse/manufacturing buildings totaling approximately 7,500 square feet are located at 3516 & 3512 Schaefer Street and are proposed to be partially demolished as part of the creative office expansion.

### Project Description

As outlined in the Preliminary Development Plans (Attachment No.5), the applicant proposes to consolidate the existing buildings to develop a total of approximately 26,000 square-foot creative office space (inclusive of

the 16,839 s.f. addition). This will include proposing a second and third story addition to the structures currently located at 3516 Schaefer Street (Schaefer II) and joining this building with the existing structure at 3520 Schaefer Street (Schaefer I). Features such as a third-story mezzanine level and outdoor decks are also being proposed.

The proposed overall height of the building will be at 43 feet, the maximum allowed in the General Industrial (IG) zone. Auxiliary rooftop structures such as screen walls and elevator shafts are permitted to exceed the height allowance by no more than 13'-6" and 19'-6" respectively. As proposed, the rooftop equipment will not be more than 7'-3" in height.

Alternative parking is being provided in the form of mechanical parking stacker and tandem parking that will be operated under a parking management company. Most of the parking will be provided within stacked parking structure (16 spaces out of 27 required spaces) and the remaining will be surface parking; standard parking (3 spaces), van accessible parking (2 spaces), electric vehicle parking (2 spaces), and tandem parking (4 spaces).

All improvements are consistent with the provisions of the Culver City Municipal Code (CCMC).

### **ANALYSIS/DISCUSSION:**

Section 17.230.010.B states "The IG Zoning District is applied to areas appropriate for a wider variety of industrial uses than the IL District, including outdoor activities, but no heavy industry." Office uses within the IG zone are permitted and consistent with the intent of the IG zone in that commercial and/or office businesses do not involve heavy industrial activities. Additionally, the proposed project is a creative office which means that allowance for more diverse uses of space and will attract more variety of businesses.

The IG Zone requires minimum setbacks of five (5) feet for street facing properties while side and rear yards have no minimum setback. As shown in the Project Summary (Attachment No. 4), the proposed development conforms to all regulations of the IG Zone.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE SITE PLAN REVIEW**

#### **Architectural Design**

The existing industrial and commercial buildings within the surrounding area are one-story and are often constructed of a single material such as brick or concrete. Although the proposed building will be three stories, it will be designed in a manner that is compatible with the industrial, commercial, and residential uses within the vicinity. The building is a modern architecture style that predominantly uses glazing to mask its massing and has accent features such as metal window grids, metal panel walls, exposed steel beams, concrete sheer walls, and concrete-colored brick veneer to incorporate industrial-like materials. At the same time, the roof lines are pitched similarly to those of the residences within the neighborhood and the use of wood accents and select landscaping gives the building a softened exterior.

Rooftop equipment is treated with screen walls that repeat the horizontal patterns of the wood accents. Mechanical equipment is placed on a concrete pad and enclosed with metal screening in a design that integrates well with the building's character. The elevator shaft at the rooftop is constructed of board-formed concrete which introduces another style of concrete material while complimenting other elements of the building.

Overall, the proposed project design is compatible with residential structures in the neighborhood and the building height and massing is consistent with the zoning standards of the IG Zone, and intent of the Administrative Site Plan Review (ASPR) required findings.

### Landscaping

The CCMC outlines that “In the case of an existing use, if the amount of required landscaping cannot be accommodated because of existing buildings or other physical constraints of a site, the applicant shall provide landscaping toward meeting the landscape requirements that the Director determines can be reasonably accommodated.” Since the project intends to preserve most of the existing ground floor layout, the proposed landscaping has been maximized to the extent possible within the parking areas and along the street frontage. Within the five-foot (5’) required front yard setback area, five (5) 36”-box size Acacia trees accompanied by a variety of 5-gallon plantings and low-lying vegetation. An existing zero-lot-line condition at the southern property boundary which limits opportunities for landscaping. At the northern boundary line, the building is proposed at zero lot line because the IG zone does not require a minimum side yard setback and often eliminates the need for landscape.

New landscaping is also provided within the parking lot area and will function as screening of the surface parking from the street and also create a buffer between parking and pedestrian areas. The landscaped area adjacent to the sidewalk nearest the driveway provides the most screening of the parking lot as seen from the public right-of-way with two (2) proposed 36”-box size trees and clustered placement of minimum 5-gallon plants. In the bike rack area that is flanked by planters, several 5-gallon plantings of the same species are proposed. Between the surface parking stalls and the entrance for Schaefer II, a planter buffer has been placed. Lastly, along the building wall at the tandem parking, 5-gallon plant species will be located within a curbed planter as visual transition from the building wall to the parking area. The parkway area will span across the buildings frontage and contain an existing Tipu tree accompanied by 5-gallon non-flowering plantings and similar ground cover as used within the front setback area.

Preliminary landscape information is included in the preliminary development plans made part of this report (Attachment No. 4).

### Neighborhood Compatibility

The project site is located along the 3500 block of Schaefer Street, which is a local residential street developed with a variety of one-story and two-story single and multiple family residences and commercial/industrial uses. The proposal for a creative office building is a transitional type use for this neighborhood in that the office use is a less intensive use than would otherwise be typical of an industrial-zoned property, but more intensive than a residential use. As it relates to use, the project development will reduce the impact on the surrounding uses, compared to the previous commercial/industrial use. The building mass distribution is such that the taller portions of the proposed building are set furthest from the residential boundary lines thereby diminishing privacy issues. At the building’s tallest height of 43 feet, it will stand three (3) stories high which matches the height of some the matures trees in the parkway along Schaefer Street and therefore will be partially screened from the residents.

Noise, light, and air quality will be less impacted by the development given that the project is an office use as opposed to an industrial or commercial use. Offices generally do not generate noise, light, or emissions above what is expected for an industrial or commercial use and therefore will be compatible with the adjacent residential neighborhood. In addition, the hours of operation for an office use are most often during daytime

hours as compared to a retail commercial use that can have activity until early evening or industrial uses that have activity until later evening hours. Therefore, the proposed use will be compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.

### Traffic, Parking, and Circulation

Per the Engineering Division of the Public Works Department, the traffic scope of the proposed development has been deemed adequate to serve the site. The project proposes to remove all existing driveways along Schaefer Street and to consolidate into a single 25-foot wide driveway for vehicular ingress and egress. In addition, the applicant is subject to replace the existing sidewalk with a new five foot (5')-wide sidewalk to extend the length of the total street frontage that shall include new curb and gutter. Existing items within the public right-of-way include a decorative streetlight to be relocated and a parkway tree to remain. The density of the overall development will not create any significant traffic impacts and is below the threshold requiring a traffic study or off-site improvements related to traffic.

In accordance with the Zoning Code requirements, the parking provided was calculated based on the provisions of Section 17.320.020.D.2 (Non-Residential Change of Use, Expansion of Structure) which states "When the floor area of an existing structure is increased, additional parking spaces shall be provided on-site, as required by this Chapter for the additional floor area." The total floor area for the proposed addition is 9,338 square feet, which yields 27 required parking spaces. As such, the required parking has been met as there are 27 parking spaces provided on site; 16 within a parking stacker, 9 surface parking stalls, and 2 van accessible stalls.

Vehicle circulation on site, although sufficient in back-up distance and turn-around area, will be coordinated by a parking management company to ensure the safe entry and exiting of vehicles during operation hours.

## ADMINISTRATIVE USE PERMIT

### Parking Stackers

Section 17.320.025 (Alternative Parking Provisions) allows for the installation and operation of mechanical parking stackers to meet required parking and is subject to a Site Plan Review when proposed as part of development of 5,000 square feet or more of gross floor area. The applicant is requesting to satisfy 16 parking space requirements with the use of Park Plus double mechanical Car Stackers. The proposed parking stackers will service the buildings addressed as 3516 Schaefer St. (Schaefer II) and 3520 Schaefer St. (Schaefer I). Upon entering the main driveway from Schaefer Street, the tenants/employees will be greeted by an attendant and instructed to park at the tenant/employee drop off area. During peak morning and evening hours an average of 15 cars are anticipated to be in the parked or retrieved where three (3) attendants will assist.

### Tandem Parking

Section 17.320.035 (Parking Design and Layout Guidelines) offers an alternative parking option to meet required parking and is subject to an AUP. The applicant is requesting to satisfy four (4) parking space requirements and will have parking management. Each stall is proposed to be the minimum stall size of 9' x 18' and will be arranged with a maximum of two (2) cars in depth.

### Sustainability and Mobility

To address sustainability and accommodate alternative transportation, the project will be required to provide a minimum of 20% EV Capable parking spaces, 10% EV Ready parking spaces, and 10% Full EV Charging parking spaces, and minimum two (2) short-term and two (2) long-term bicycle parking space, a condition of the project if approved. The short-term bicycle parking will have a dedicated area within the Schaefer II courtyard area and long-term bicycle parking will be located inside the building on the ground floor of Schaefer II.

Due to the scale of the project solar photovoltaic improvements may not be required, but the project will implement at minimum 80% of the measures listed within the Culver City Green Building Program as set forth in CCMC Section 15.02.1100, et. seq.

#### Comments Received During Public Comment Period

As of the writing of this report, staff has not received any public comments, in writing or any other form, on the proposed project.

#### **CONCLUSION/SUMMARY:**

The applicant has presented the City with a development that is appealing in design and function. Attempts to incorporate the building into the existing environment have been successfully achieved through the application of materials, massing, and overall design. The scale of the building meshes with both the commercial and industrial uses to the north and with the residential uses to the south because the staggered building setbacks and arrangement of building are pedestrian-friendly. Much consideration has been given to the orientation of the building and in the selected accents and details for each elevation.

Based on the proposed preliminary development plans and recommended conditions of approval, staff considers the project to be compatible with the surrounding neighborhood, providing a layout, architectural design, and landscape consistent with applicable development standards and guidelines, with adequate public facilities, and consistent with the Culver City General Plan and the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance. Additionally, the Administrative Use Permit meets all requirements of the CCMC. Staff believes the findings for Administrative Site Plan Review & Administrative Use Permit, P2019-0104-ASPR, can be made as outlined in Resolution No. 2019-P008 (Attachment No. 1).

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION:**

Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, initial review of the project by staff established that there are no potentially significant adverse impacts on the environment and the proposed project has been determined to be a Class 32 Categorical Exemption as an "In-Fill Development Project" (Section 15332) project.

Specifically, as outlined herein, the project meets the criteria for a Class 32 Categorical Exemption: (a) The project is consistent with the applicable general plan designation and all applicable general plan policies as well as with applicable zoning designation and regulations; (b) The proposed development occurs within city limits on a project site of no more than five acres substantially surrounded by urban uses; (c) The project site has no value as habitat for endangered, rare or threatened species; (d) Approval of the project would not result in any significant effects relating to traffic, noise, air quality, or water quality; (e) The site can be adequately served by all required utilities and public services. Therefore, the project is categorically exempt pursuant to

the above noted CEQA section.

**ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS:**

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

1. Approve the proposed project with the recommended conditions of approval if the applications are deemed to meet the required findings.
2. Approve the proposed project with additional and/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 proposed project if the applications do not meet the required findings.

**MOTION:**

That the Planning Commission:

1. Adopt a Class 32 Categorical Exemption for this project pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act Section 15332 In-Fill Development Project.
2. Approve Administrative Site Plan Review & Administrative Use Permit, P2019-0104-ASPR/P2019-0104 -AUP, subject to the Conditions of Approval as stated in Resolution No. 2019-P008 (Attachment No. 1).

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Draft Resolution No. 2019-P008 and Exhibit A: Conditions of Approval
2. Parking Management Plan
3. Vicinity Map
4. Project Summary
5. Development Plans