



City of Culver City

Mike Balkman Council
Chambers
9770 Culver Blvd.
Culver City, CA 90232

Staff Report

File #: 24-986, **Version:** 1

Item #: PH-1.

PC - PUBLIC HEARING: Consideration of a Site Plan Review and Administrative Modification to allow the addition of 27,008 square feet to an existing industrial building to create a 48,906 square foot office building with 4 feet 3 ½ inches of additional building height above Code standard at 5880 Adams Boulevard (Project).

Meeting Date: May 8, 2024

Contact Person/Dept: William Kavadas, Assistant Planner
Emily Stadnicki, Current Planning Manager

Phone Number: 310-253-5706 /310-253-5727

Fiscal Impact: Yes ☐ No ☒

General Fund: Yes ☐ No ☒

Public Hearing: ☒ **Action Item:** ☐ **Attachments:** ☒

Public Notification: (E-Mail) Meetings and Agendas - Planning Commission (05/02/24); (Posted) City Website (04/17/24); (Mailed) Property owners and occupants within a 500 ft radius (04/16/24); (Posted) on-site signs facing Adams and La Cienega Boulevards (04/17/24).

Department Approval: Mark E. Muenzer, Planning and Development Director (05/01/24)

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Planning Commission adopt a resolution approving Site Plan Review and Administrative Modification, P2024-0038-SPR/AM, subject to conditions of approval, to allow the addition of 27,008 square feet to an existing industrial building to create a 48,906 square foot office building with 4 feet 3 ½ inches of additional building height in the Industrial General (IG) Zone and adopting a Categorical Exemption, pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines.

PROCEDURES

1. Chair calls on staff for a staff report and the Planning Commission poses questions to staff.
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. Planning Commission discusses the matter and arrives at its decision.

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION

Request

Site Plan Review for an addition and modification to an existing industrial building to create a new three-story creative office building and Administrative Modification for a 10% height increase at 5880 Adams Boulevard ("Project Site" or "Site"). The Project Summary (Attachment No. 2) and Preliminary Development Plans (Attachment No. 4) provide a synopsis of the project details and proposed plans.

Existing Conditions/Project Site

The Project Site is a 1.3-acre parcel that is generally flat and irregularly shaped. It is a through lot with frontages on Adams Boulevard to the north and La Cienega Boulevard and Perry Drive to the south. The Project Site is currently developed with a 21,898 square foot vacant industrial building and surface parking. There are two driveways that provide access to the Project Site, one on Adams Boulevard and the second on La Cienega Boulevard.

Surrounding Area/Zoning/General Plan

The Project Site is located at the eastern edge of the City in the East Washington Neighborhood. The immediate surroundings are generally industrial in character with a mix of commercial uses along Washington Boulevard. A wholesale use borders the site to the north across Adams Boulevard, with office uses to the east along Adams Boulevard and Perry Drive, office and automotive repair uses to the south across Perry Drive and La Cienega Boulevard, and automotive rental uses to the west.

The Project Site is zoned Industrial General (IG) and has an Industrial Park Land Use designation. The proposed office use is allowed in the Zone with an approved Site Plan Review to permit the construction of the new building area.

Project Description

The Project involves modifications to the existing one-story 21,898 square foot industrial building and the addition of two new floors to create a 48,906 square foot creative office building. The project also includes an Administrative Modification for a 10% height increase above the required 43-foot height limit to account for Building Code requirements within a flood plain and the reuse of the existing industrial building as part of the new structure.

Other improvements include restriping of the existing parking lot, updated driveway entrances at both Adams Boulevard and La Cienega Boulevard, and new landscaping throughout the Project Site. With exception to the requested height modification that will be discussed later in this staff report, the structure complies with all other IG development standards. Project details and plan layout are provided in the Project Summary (Attachment No. 2) and the Preliminary Development Plans (Attachment No. 4).

ANALYSIS/DISCUSSION

Architectural Design and Landscaping

The project is designed in a modern architectural style with nods to the industrial past of the site. The existing structure will be generally maintained so the first floor of the proposed building will maintain the brick façade that is common for other buildings originally developed in the neighborhood. The upper floors of the structure complement the design of the first floor by providing polished concrete facades of similar coloring. Steel framed windows are provided to reduce expanses of blank façade on the structure and steel balconies and external staircases further accent the façade of the structure. A sloped steel roof caps the proposed structure. The design of the Project interior provides three levels of open floor space to accommodate different layouts for a future tenant or multiple tenants. Upper floors include outdoor patios and other building step-backs and, with the sloped roof, provide variation in the building façade and reduce perceived bulk and mass.

The applicant provides landscaping in the parking lot, with trees in excess of Code requirements, and a mix of groundcover across all parts of the property that are not otherwise used for hardscape. Landscaping will also help to screen the proposed transformer and trash enclosures on the south and north ends of the site, respectively. Landscape materials are drought tolerant.

The applicant has requested an Administrative Modification request for a 10% increase in building height (4 feet 3 ½ inches) above the 43-foot height limit for the IG zone, resulting in a total building height of 47 feet 3 ½ inches. The existing building lies in a flood plain that requires construction to be further offset from grade than similar structures in the IG zone. The existing floor level ranges between 2 feet 4 inches and 4 feet 7 inches above grade. Further, the applicant's reuse of the existing first floor for the new structure creates a situation where the resulting two additional stories would not provide the necessary ceiling height in a comparable three-story new-build development. Staff believes the location within the flood plain and reuse of the existing building constitute a hardship. The resulting increase in height will not affect any surrounding sensitive uses as the neighborhood is primarily industrial and commercial and the setbacks on upper floors and sloped roof will help to reduce perception of bulk and mass of the taller structure.

Vehicle Parking, EV Parking, and Access

Pedestrian and vehicular access is provided from both Adams and La Cienega Boulevards. Adequate sidewalks and paved public streets provide pedestrian access to public transit services at La Cienega and Washington (Culver City Bus No 1) and at Adams/Fairfax (Metro No 37, 38, 105, 217 and Culver City Bus No 4). The project is also within walking distance of the Metro E Line La Cienega/Jefferson Station.

The City does not have a minimum parking requirement. The applicant has however proposed 67 parking spaces including 47 standard sized stalls, 15 compact stalls, and 5 accessible stalls. The applicant meets Code standard for EV parking by providing 7 EV charging spaces, 7 EV ready spaces, and 14 EV capable spaces. The existing driveway on La Cienega would be upgraded, but remain in the same location. The Adams Boulevard driveway would be relocated further east from its current location and upgraded to meet current standards. The surface parking lot would not include any tandem spaces and future tenants would self-park their vehicles.

The applicant has also provided bike parking spaces in excess of the Code Requirement. City Code requires 1 short term space per 10,000 square feet of office area and 1 long term space per 5,000 square feet of long term area. The applicant has provided 11 short term bike parking spaces, 5 adjacent to the main entrance and 6 adjacent to the Adams Boulevard driveway, and 10 long term bike parking spaces within a bike room at the main entrance of the building. Further, the applicant has provided one men's and one women's shower facility, compliant with code.

Traffic and Mobility

KOA consultants conducted a Transportation Study which determined that the Project lies within a Transit Priority Area and is therefore exempt from Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) analysis. The Public Works Department, Mobility and Traffic Engineering Division, has concurred with this analysis and has concluded that the project would not cause significant transportation impacts under CEQA.

The Transportation Study also determined:

- The Project is estimated to generate 76 net new automobile trips in the morning peak hour (67 inbound trips, 9 outbound trips) and 72 net new afternoon peak hour trips (12 inbound trips, 60 outbound trips).
- The Project will not have a significant impact on vehicle capacity (Level of Service) at any studied intersections compared to existing or projected future conditions.
- The Project provides adequate internal circulation to accommodate vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle traffic without impeding through traffic movements on City streets.
- The design of the Project driveway does not introduce safety hazards for pedestrians, bicyclists, or motorists.
- The Project will incorporate a Transportation Demand Management program, detailed further below.

A preliminary Construction Management Plan (CMP) for the Project has been prepared and submitted for review and approval. The draft CMP defines the scope and scheduling of construction activities as well as the Project's construction site management responsibilities to ensure that disturbance of nearby land uses or interruption of pedestrian, vehicle, bicycle, and public transit are minimized to the extent feasible. The draft CMP also shows the construction site layout, proposed haul route, and pedestrian protection plan. City staff will review and finalize the Plan prior to permit issuance.

The Project will implement a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Plan. The TDM Plan will consist of the following measures:

- A Transportation Coordinator to develop, administer, and implement the TDM plan.
- A Transportation Information Packet for new employees.
- Two parking spaces for vanpools and carpools located close to employee entrance.
- Six additional short term bike parking spaces.
- Mobility bulletin board, display case, or kiosk displaying transportation information.

Development Fees

The Project is subject to development fees that are collected during the building permit plan check phase. The New Development Impact Fee and Mobility Fee are used to address traffic and mobility impacts in the vicinity of the Project Site. The Affordable Housing Commercial Development Impact fee funds affordable housing efforts in the City and the Art in Public Places Fee either contributes money for cultural and art programs or provides an art piece at the Project Site for the public to view. Below is a summary estimate of these fees for this Project:

- New Development Impact fee based on \$1 per commercial square footage above the first 5,000 square feet: \$43,906

- Mobility Fee based on net new commercial office space: \$357,856
- Affordable Housing Commercial Development Impact based \$5 per Gross Leasable Floor area: \$244,530.
- Art in Public Places fee is currently under review. Final Building Permit valuation is needed, and the Applicant may wish to install art instead of paying the fee-based permit valuation.

As noted, these are estimates and fees may change after final Building Permit plans are submitted that include final permit valuation figures, gross area, and gross leasable area.

Trash Removal and Loading

The applicant has submitted their Waste Management Plan to the Environmental Programs and Operation (EPO) Division which was approved in January 2024. The proposed trash enclosure is at the north side of the building. The trash enclosure is at-grade and will be accessed with trucks entering from Adams Boulevard and exiting on La Cienega Boulevard.

Neighborhood Compatibility

The Project will enhance the surrounding neighborhood by revitalizing a vacant industrial building on a very visible site, while maintaining the existing design characteristics of the neighborhood. Improvements in landscaping along the sidewalk will also improve pedestrian experience in a neighborhood that is within proximity to a transit line. The economic potential of the neighborhood will expand as new development is brought to the northern end of the East Washington Corridor.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

Community Meetings and Public Outreach

Pursuant to the City's Community Outreach Guidelines, the applicant held two community meetings as part of its outreach to neighbors and community members. Consistent with Culver City Municipal Code (CCMC) Chapter 17.630, a notice of community meeting was mailed to all property owners and occupants within 500-feet extended to City Block from the Project Site boundaries. The community meetings were held in-person on February 1 and virtually on August 17, 2023. At the meetings, the Applicant gave a brief overview of the proposed office building and provided opportunity for discussion with meeting attendees.

1st Community Meeting Minutes; February 1, 2023 at 5880 Adams Boulevard:

One member of the public attended the meeting where applicant representatives provided a presentation informing the public of the proposed project. The member of the public stated his support for the initial design and wanted to know if parking would be made available to the public, to which the applicant representatives informed the member of the public that parking would be for use of the future tenant.

2nd Community Meeting Minutes; held virtually on August 17, 2023:

Three members of the public attended the meeting, and the applicant began with an overview of the Project including revisions that occurred after the 1st community meeting and provided information on key design elements.

Key issues and questions raised at the meeting included:

- Number and Type of Future Tenants
- Number of Parking Spaces
- General Questions about the Entitlement Process

Comments Received During Public Comment Period

A public notice was mailed to all property owners and occupants within a 500-foot radius of the Project Site extended to City Block on April 17, 2024, advising the public of a hearing at the regularly scheduled Planning Commission meeting of May 8, 2024. Prior to the May 8th Hearing, staff received one email from the public in opposition to the height exemption. Public Comment is included as Attachment 6 to the staff report.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION

Pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, initial review of the Project established there are no potentially significant adverse impacts upon the environment, and the Project has been determined to be Categorically Exempt pursuant to CEQA Section 15332, Class 32 - In-Fill Developments, because the proposed Project is consistent with the Industrial Park Land Use designation and the IG Zoning standards. The Project Site is on a 1.3-acre site surrounded by urban uses that is substantially urban in character, developed with buildings and surface parking, and has no value as habitat for endangered, rare, or threatened species. The Project will not result in any significant effects relating to traffic, noise, air quality, or water quality because it is within the anticipated development threshold for this area. Project specific studies did not identify significant impacts and required utilities and public services are provided as determined by the City.

SUMMARY

Based on the proposed preliminary development plans and recommended conditions of approval, the Project is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood, adequately served by public facilities and, consistent with the General Plan, Zoning Code, and all CCMC requirements. The findings for Site Plan Review and Administrative Modification P2024-0038-SPR/AM are made as outlined in proposed Planning Commission Resolution No. 2024-P002 (Attachment No. 1).

FISCAL ANALYSIS

There is no fiscal impact from this project to the City.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Proposed Planning Commission Resolution No. 2024-P002 with Exhibit A, Conditions of Approval and Exhibit B, Code Requirements
2. Project Summary
3. Vicinity Map
4. Preliminary Development Plans dated April 2024

5. CEQA Class 32 Exemption Report dated March 20, 2024
(Associated Technical studies A-H are available upon request)
6. Public Comment Received

MOTION

That the Planning Commission:

Adopt a resolution adopting a Categorical Exemption and approving Site Plan Review and Administrative Modification P2024-0038-SPR/AM, subject to conditions of approval.