



City of Culver City

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Staff Report

File #: 21-1026, **Version:** 1

Item #: PH-1.

PC - Consideration of a Modification to Previously Approved Site Plan Review, P2021-0077-SPR/M, to Allow Change of Use from Retail/Restaurant to Office at an existing Eight-Story Office-Retail Mixed-Use Building at 10000 Washington Boulevard in the Commercial General (CG) Zone.

Meeting Date: June 9, 2021

Contact Person/Dept: Deborah Hong, Planning Technician
Michael Allen, Current Planning Manager

Phone Number: (310) 253-5714

Fiscal Impact: Yes ☐ No ☒ **General Fund:** Yes ☐ No ☒

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

Public Notification: (Email) Meetings and Agendas - Planning Commission (05/19/2021), Master Notification List (05/19/2021); (Posted) City Website (05/19/2021); (Mailed) Property Owners and Occupants within a 500-foot radius and extended (05/19/2021).

Department Approval: Sol Blumenfeld, Community Development Director (05/20/2021)

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the Planning Commission adopt a Categorical Exemption - Class 1, Existing Facilities CEQA finding, and approve the proposed Site Plan Review Modification.

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 March 25, 2021, an application was submitted for a Site Plan Review Modification to allow an office use in a tenant area previously approved as retail or restaurant use in accordance with Planning Commission Resolution No. 2016-P007, approving Site Plan Review P2016-0033-SPR. The applicant proposes to combine Suite 101, a 5,331 sq. ft. ground floor tenant space at the southwesterly corner of the existing building, with street frontages along Culver Boulevard and Madison Avenue, with Suite 102, a 2,759 sq. ft. ground level tenant space with no street frontages. The combined total of 8,090 sq. ft. is proposed as an office use. The proposal includes a façade remodel to add glazing along the street frontages and new ancillary outdoor seating to the existing 2,500 sq. ft. landscaped area.

Existing Conditions

The Project Site is developed with an eight-story office and retail building, bound by Duquesne Avenue, Washington Boulevard, Culver Boulevard, and Madison Avenue.

On June 22, 2016, the Planning Commission approved Site Plan Review P2016-0033-SPR (Attachment No. 2) which allowed the interior and exterior renovation of an existing eight-story office building, including the change of use to ground level spaces from office to retail, restaurant, and fitness; addition of storefronts on Culver Boulevard; new office spaces; material and color changes to the exterior façade; new landscaping; and new outdoor seating areas.

On July 3, 2017, a subsequent minor modification request was administratively approved (Attachment No. 3), to expand outdoor seating areas along Culver Boulevard, improve building façade and overall design, reduce retail and restaurant use, and expand fitness use. The modifications resulted in a total of 19,610 sq. ft. of retail and/or restaurant use and 30,049 sq. ft. of fitness use on ground level and an overall parking surplus of 343 spaces.

On December 19, 2019, the Planning Commission approved Site Plan Review Modification, P2019-0106-SPR/M, to allow change of use of a ground level tenant space along Culver Boulevard to medical office. This modification resulted in a total of 15,977 sq. ft. of and/or restaurant use and no changes to the fitness use on ground level or parking requirement.

ANALYSIS/DISCUSSION:

Land Use

The proposed office use is consistent with the Commercial General (CG) Zoning and General Corridor General Plan land use regulations. It is a principally permitted use in the CG zone per Table 2-5 (Allowed Uses and permit Requirements Table for Commercial Zoning Districts) of CCMC Section 17.220.015 Commercial District Land Uses and Permit Requirements.

The existing site is developed with retail, restaurant, fitness, and medical office uses on ground floor and office use from 2nd to 8th floors. The project site abuts the Commercial Downtown and Studio zones. Residential Medium Density, Residential Two-Family and Residential Single-Family zones are also in close proximity, as well as City Hall.

The subject tenant spaces were previously approved as a retail or restaurant use, with the intention of supporting local business activities by extending the retail and restaurant land use pattern of the adjacent Commercial Downtown Zone and serving the needs of local residents. However, due to the

changing retail environment that has resulted from on-line retailing, there is less demand for retail space now. This problem is not unique to Culver City. Further it has been difficult to secure a restaurant tenant in this space due, in part, to the issues related to the pandemic. The space itself would require an extensive and costly ventilation system for restaurant use which the owner does not believe is justified given the lack of restaurant interest in the space which is on the cusp of downtown. The space has remained vacant since the completion of construction in 2018.

Consistent with the intent of recent changes to permitted ground floor uses within the Commercial Downtown Zone and Mixed-use projects, the proposed office use will continue to meet the intent of the original Project approval. A tech office tenant currently occupying the building is proposing to expand into the space. The office use will complement surrounding downtown restaurant and retail activity in the vicinity. The proposal will also create a stronger connection with the street by replacing a large portion of exterior walls along street frontages with glazing and by providing ancillary outdoor seating for the proposed office tenant, thereby activating the tenant space at pedestrian level. The proposed office use will take up approximately 88 linear feet of street frontage along Culver Boulevard and 74 linear feet along Madison Avenue. A total of 7,887 sq. ft. will remain as retail and/or restaurant use.

Parking

The proposed office use will not result in additional required parking as the parking ratio for office use is the same as that for retail use per Table 3-3 Parking Requirement by Land Use of CCMC Section 17.320.020 Number of Parking Spaces Required. New outdoor seating area will be ancillary to the existing tenant space and will not result in additional parking demand.

Traffic and Circulation

The proposed office use will generate vehicular traffic during morning and evening peak hours as is typical of an office. As the design of the tenant space encourages foot traffic throughout the day during office hours. It will not result in significantly greater traffic than or alter circulation patterns from that which was expected of a retail use.

Noise

The change of use from retail to office will result in a similar amount of activities and will not result in increased noise. New outdoor seating will be ancillary to the proposed office tenant and used for daily office activities. Such activities will not result in significant noise.

Public Comments

Staff received no public comments regarding this item.

CONCLUSION:

The proposed change of use is compatible with other uses on site and consistent with the Zoning and General Plan Land Use designations and permitted uses, as well as uses of the surrounding neighborhood and will enable immediate occupancy of the ground level space, generate more foot traffic to surrounding retail and restaurants in the vicinity, and create a stronger connection between the project site and the street. The proposed façade remodel will create a more open and inviting appearance along Culver Blvd. and Madison Street frontages. The ancillary outdoor seating area will also help invigorate the project site at street level.

Staff deems that no new conditions of approval are required to implement the proposed change as the proposed improvements and operation are consistent the intent of the original approval.

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. The proposed Site Plan Review Modification, P2021-0077-SPR/M is Categorically Exempt per Section 15301, Class 1 - Existing Facilities as the Project only involves change of use, minor interior improvements consisting of demolition of partition walls, façade remodeling consistent with the existing overall design, and new outdoor furniture in an existing outdoor area. The Project does not result in expansion of area.

MOTION:

That the Planning Commission:

Adopt a Categorical Exemption pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act, and Approve a Site Plan Review Modification, subject to the original Conditions of Approval as adopted by Resolution No. 2016-P007 and Resolution No. 2019-P014.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Draft Planning Commission Resolution No. 2021-P005
2. Planning Commission Resolution No. 2016-P007
3. Planning Commission Resolution No. 2019-P014
4. Vicinity Map
5. Proposed Floor Plan dated April 27, 2021