



# City of Culver City

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## Staff Report

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**File #:** 22-674, **Version:** 1

**Item #:** PH-1.

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**PC - PUBLIC HEARING: Consideration of a Site Plan Review to allow construction of a 51,178 square foot office building and a 70,739 square foot parking structure at 9925 Jefferson Boulevard.**

**Meeting Date:** February 9, 2022

**Contact Person/Dept:** Jose Mendivil, Associate Planner

**Phone Number:** 310-253-5757

**Fiscal Impact:** Yes ☐ No ☒

**General Fund:** Yes ☐ No ☒

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

**City Council Action Required:** Yes ☐ No ☒ **Date:** N/A

**Public Notification:** (E-Mail) Meetings and Agendas - Planning Commission (02/04/22); (Posted) City Website (01/19/22); (Mailed) Property owners and occupants within a 500-foot radius (01/19/22); (Sign Posted) at Project Site (01/10/22).

**Department Approval:** Sol Blumenfeld, Community Development Director (02/01/22)

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### RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Planning Commission adopt a resolution adopting a Categorical Exemption, and approving Site Plan Review P2021-0218-SPR, subject to conditions of approval and applicable code requirements to allow construction of a 51,178 square feet creative office building and a 70,739 square foot parking structure.

### PROCEDURES

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

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Request**

The Project application involves demolition of existing structures and construction of a new office building and a parking structure by HQ Development, LLC ("Applicant"). Vehicle access to the Project Site is provided by an existing 22-foot-wide by 320-foot-deep driveway which is shared with the adjacent property to the west at 9937 Jefferson Boulevard. There is a reciprocal access easement between the two properties. Mutual access will continue to operate pursuant to the existing agreement.

### **Existing Conditions**

The Project Site is 2.01 acres, rectangular in shape, and located along the north side of Jefferson Boulevard, .2 miles west of Duquesne Avenue, and .70 miles east of Overland Avenue ("Project Site"). An existing 30-foot wide sewer easement traverses in the east-west direction in the central portion of the Project Site.

The 2.01-acre property also includes a 45-degree sloped Ballona Creek flood control easement area measuring 85-foot deep by 145-foot wide totaling .31 acres. The flood control easement area is located just beyond the existing paved and built area at back portion of the property. The developable area of the Project Site is approximately 1.7 acres excluding the .31-acre flood control easement area. The Project Site is accessed from Jefferson Boulevard.

The Project Site is developed with commercial buildings and asphalt and concrete paving consisting of the following:

- 2 story 34,834 square foot commercial building fronting Jefferson Boulevard.
- 2 story 7,091 square foot warehouse building toward the back of Project Site.
- 28,235 square foot surface parking area containing 80 parking spaces.
- 5 parking spaces at the front of the commercial building, along Jefferson Boulevard.

### **Surrounding Area/General Plan/Zoning**

The Project Site is located within an urbanized area and is characterized by a mix of commercial, office, and light industrial uses, ranging in height from 1 to 2-stories. The Project Site is zoned Industrial General (IG) and has a General Plan Light Industrial Land Use designation. Surrounding zoning and land uses are:

*Table 1: Surrounding Zoning and Land Use*

<b>Location</b>	<b>Zoning</b>	<b>Land Use</b>
<b>North</b>	OS Zone (with Ballona Creek) and R2 Zone beyond	Residential Two-Family beyond Ballona Creek with one & two-story single & two-family residential uses
<b>South</b>	IG Zone across Jefferson Blvd	One & multi-story non-residential buildings used for office, storage, and light industrial
<b>East</b>	IG Zone	Three-story Research & Development Office Building
<b>West</b>	IG Zone	Two-story commercial office & light industrial building

The Ballona Creek easement area is separately Zoned as Open Space (OS) and designated Ballona Creek in the General Plan from the rest of the Project Site due to its long term and primary function and use as a flood control system. The proposed project does not include development in this easement area.

### Project Description

The Project proposes two structures including an office building towards Jefferson Boulevard and a parking structure towards Ballona Creek. The sewer easement is located between the proposed two structures. The Project involves demolition of approximately 26,405 square feet of the existing 41,925 square feet of commercial space. This includes the entire 7,091 square foot warehouse building and 19,314 square feet of the front building, retaining approximately 15,520 square feet of floor area. A 35,658 square foot addition will be constructed in the front building over the area to be demolished for a total of 51,178 square feet of creative office space. A 70,739 square foot parking structure with 177 automobile parking spaces and 22 bicycle parking spaces is proposed towards the back of the Project Site north of the sewer easement with a large landscaped open space at the rear of the property for visual screening along the Ballona Creek edge

The proposed creative office space building is 3 stories and 43 feet high (excluding permitted rooftop structures). The parking structure contains 4 levels with a height of 36 feet (excluding permitted rooftop structures). Light poles will be mounted on the parking structure top level toward the office building and solar panels, roof top trellis, and seating will be installed on the roof of the office building. Both structures will include roof top elevator and stair enclosures. The building at the front will maintain the minimum 5 front setback required in the IG Zone. Setbacks are not required on the sides and the office building will have a zero setback on the east side and an 11 to 16 foot wide setback on the west side. The parking structure will have a 1.5-foot east side yard setback, a 5-foot west side yard setback, and a 16-foot setback from the Ballona Creek portion of the Project Site. The 5 parking spaces at the front, off Jefferson Boulevard, will be removed, one front facing drive approach on the east side will be filled with landscaping, curb, gutter, sidewalk, and a relocated Culver City Transit bus stop, and the west drive approach will be narrowed to meet current code standards. There are no proposed changes to the Project Site's existing General Plan designation or zoning.

See the Project Summary (Attachment No. 3) and the Preliminary Development Plans (Attachment No. 4) for a synopsis of the Project details and plan lay out.

## **ANALYSIS/DISCUSSION:**

### Architectural Design

The proposed office building includes a variety of architectural materials, building planes, and façade transparencies. The parking structure is designed with a variety of architectural materials and a grid façade to minimize views of cars. Building materials such as concrete, steel, glazing, and metal panels provide consistency with recent developments near the Project Site. Use of different textures, colors, setbacks, materials, and distinctive architectural treatments are designed to create visual interest, avoid repetitive facades, and break up the building's mass. The office building and parking structure are modern in architectural style and the office building has extensive fenestration and windows, including open spaces decks at different levels.

### Neighborhood Compatibility and Ballona Creek Building Frontage

The Project's modern design is compatible with nearby commercial developments such as Nantworks located across the street from the Project Site. Preservation of the bow truss portions of the existing buildings and their integration into the new structure will complement the surrounding buildings and two-story brick and bow

truss buildings that were originally designed for light industrial uses. The proposed creative office uses including the building and parking structure design are consistent with the immediate surrounding uses and structures.

### Parking Structure Screening

Pursuant to Zoning Code Section 17.320.035.M.4, parking structures facing residential areas are subject to the following design guidelines:

*Parking structure facades facing residential parcels shall:*

- a. Be enclosed to prevent light spill, noise, or pollutants from impacting dwellings; and*
- b. Incorporate architectural design elements, including surface treatments, offset planes, structural articulation, and landscaping to provide visual interest and compatibility with adjacent dwellings.*

The parking structure facing Ballona Creek includes features to reduce potential impacts to neighborhoods located across Ballona Creek. The parking structure elevation facing Ballona Creek has angled, vertical metal louvers to screen and shift lighting from the parking structure away from residential areas. Roof top parking lot lighting closest to Ballona Creek will be inlaid at the bottom of the parapet wall with light poles shifted towards the Project's office building at the front of the Site. The parking structure is set back from the Creek easement boundary 16 feet to provide a space for robust tree and ground cover vegetation. The landscaping is proposed to help screen the parking structure, minimize vehicle noise emanating from the structure, and dissipate light and glare. Further, it will enhance the flora on the Ballona Creek drop off. The 16 foot set back area will provide space to allow specific types of landscape screening. The LACFCD does not allow for varied types of vegetation within its easement.

Specific strategies and conditions meant to decrease parking structure impacts include the following:

- Tree planting of 7 *Tristania Conferta* (Brisbane Box) trees, planted at 15 feet on center to screen the building along Ballona Creek.
- The tree size at planting at approximately 18 to 22 feet in height and tree size at maturity at approximately 30 to 35 feet in height with a 15 to 30 foot wide canopy.
- The parking structure at a maximum height of 36 feet so tree planting at maturity will substantially screen the height of the parking structure.
- All *Tristania* trees shall be low-branching and selected and tagged by the Project landscape architect for delivery to the Site; tagging will be done for 18 to 22 foot high trees pending availability and landscape architect will provide photographic evidence of tagged trees to the Current Planning Division prior to delivery.
- Solar panels will not be installed on the parking structure roof to eliminate the need for roof top screening (solar panels will be installed on the roof of the office building fronting Jefferson Boulevard).
- Understory planting below trees to be a variety of tall shrubs, 6 to 10 feet high at maturity and shall include *Heteromeles arbutifolia* (Toyon perennial shrubs).
- Trees and shrubs shall not be deciduous.
- *Ficus Pumilia* (Creeping Fig) vines to be planted on the west facing stair and elevator tower and the east facing blank wall at the Creek parking structure frontage to screen these features.
- Small evergreen trees (*Arbutus marina* / Marina Strawberry Trees) to be planted along northeast rear corner of the parking structure and shifted toward Ballona Creek.
- Roof top parking structure lighting closest to Ballona Creek to be set into the parapet walls to avoid light poles at the north end of the parking structure closest to residential uses.

A Project Condition requires a Parking Operations Plan and review of parking operations if screening is insufficient following analysis of complaints after the Project's first year of operation. Attachment No. 5

includes elevation renderings illustrating measures noted above.

### Traffic

A traffic report prepared by Fehr & Peers (Attachment No. 6), determined there would be no traffic related impacts. Trip generation estimates for the Project were determined using trip generation rates from the ITE Trip Generation Manual, 10<sup>th</sup> Edition for general office and for warehouse to estimate existing trips and those trips are shown in Table 2. Credit was taken for the existing office and warehouse spaces, which the Project replaces. According to Table 2 below, the Project is estimated to generate approximately 161 daily net external trips, including 15 trips in the AM peak hour and 17 trips in the PM peak hour.

*Table 2: Trip Generation Estimate*

Land Use	Size	Daily	AM Peak Hour			PM Peak Hour		
Project								
Office	51,178 sf	554	65	10	75	10	50	60
Existing Use								
Office	34,834 sf	(381)	(51)	(8)	(59)	(7)	(35)	(42)
Warehouse	7,091 sf	(12)	(1)	(0)	(1)	(0)	(1)	(1)
Net New Trips		161	13	2	15	3	14	17

The Culver City Transportation Criteria and Guidelines establishes criteria to determine when transportation studies are required. The guidelines state a transportation study is required if a project adds 250 or more new daily trips and because the Project will generate less than 250 net trips, a transportation (or Vehicle Miles Travel - VMT) analysis is not required. The Guidelines also allow existing trips to be credited and significant traffic impacts are not expected.

### Automobile / Pedestrian Access and Bicycle Parking

As noted above, vehicle access is provided by the existing west driveway. The parking structure is designed to accommodate vehicles through a combination of standard, compact, and Americans With Disabilities (ADA) compliant parking spaces and will include spaces for low emission vehicles (i.e., hybrid, alternative fuel, and electrical automobiles).

The Project requires 146 parking spaces. However, there will be a total of 177 parking spaces with varying levels of infrastructure to accommodate Electric Vehicle (EV) charging spaces. Total parking spaces will include:

- 102 standard spaces.
- 2 compact spaces.
- 10 ADA spaces.
- 3 EV ADA spaces.
- 15 EV parking spaces with chargers installed.
- 15 EV ready spaces.
- 30 EV capable (future) spaces.

The area between the parking structure and the office building provides ample space for two-way traffic entering and exiting the structure as well as turnaround space for Fire Department emergency vehicles.

The Project is designed with multiple pedestrian access points. Pedestrian access is provided from:

- The public sidewalk fronting Jefferson Boulevard.
- A 6-foot-wide walkway parallel to the driveway.
- An interior, ground level courtyard between the parking structure and the office building.

There will be a total of 22 bicycle spaces, 7 spaces above the required.

### Landscaping

There will be approximately 15,837 square feet of open space area. Open space and related amenities include:

- A Jefferson Boulevard landscaped area within the 5 foot front setback area.
- A ground level garden at the west side of the office building between the new square footage and the remaining bow truss portion of the original building.
- A ground level deck and open courtyard at the east side between the office building and the parking structure.
- The tree and ground cover area to screen the back of the parking structure.
- A second level terrace courtyard on the east side of the office building between the new structure and the remaining bow truss building.
- A roof top deck above the new structure.

The landscaped and hardscaped areas will provide seating and outside break areas for office tenants. All existing ornamental trees will be removed and at least 32 new trees on the ground level and 3 trees on the upper terrace (including seven street trees on the southern street frontage) will be planted. In addition to the street trees, the public right-of-way will be improved with new sidewalk, curb, gutter, and a relocated bus stop with shelter and seating. Further, the crosswalk on the east side of the Project leading to 9930 Jefferson Boulevard across the street, will be restriped.

### Lighting and Security

Exterior lights will be wall or ground mounted and shielded away from adjacent land uses. Building security lighting will be:

- Used at all entry/exits.
- Will be on from dusk to dawn.
- Will be designed to prevent light trespass onto adjacent properties.

Parking structure lighting (as noted above) will:

- Be shielded with louvers angled towards the Creek.
- Include inlaid parapet lighting at the top level.
- Include roof top light poles shifted towards the office building.

The Project will have a 24 hour/seven-day video surveillance security program to ensure safety for Project users and all entryways and public areas will be lighted.

### Sustainability Features and Trip Reduction Measures (TDM)

The Project is subject to applicable Culver City Green Building code requirements. Green building design features are incorporated to further conservation, energy efficiency, and carbon emission reduction (including compliance with the California Energy Code/Title 24 requirements). Project elements will include the following features:

### *Conservation and Energy Efficiency*

- Recycling/salvaging of non-hazardous demolition debris & on-site recycling collection.
- Energy efficient elevators & lighting.
- Low-flow faucets & toilets / Stormwater filtration & capture systems.
- Permeable exterior paving surfaces to reduce stormwater runoff.
- Incorporation of low water & drought tolerant plants.
- Installation of electric vehicle charging stations.
- Installation of photovoltaic systems equivalent to at least 1% of the Project's electricity demand & at least 1-kilowatt (kW) of solar photovoltaics/10,000 SF of new development.
- Photovoltaic systems will be installed entirely on the office portion of the project. No solar panels shall be mounted on the garage roof deck.
- Energy efficient mechanical systems, efficient glazing / window frames, & high reflective roof material.

### *Carbon Emission Reduction*

- Bicycle rooms in Parking levels 1 & 2 & shower facilities.

### *Mobility Features*

- Access to multi-modal transit with connecting bike & bus routes (there is direct access to a Class III bus route).
- Bike friendly design with bicycle parking for guests & employees.
- An area for micro mobility parking.
- Designated parking for low-emission/zero-emission vehicles.
- Incorporation of the City's approved Streetscape plan with the intent of creating an attractive and inviting walkable environment.

In addition, the Project is subject to the Standard Conditions of Approval Transportation Demand and TDM requirement that lists a menu of trip reduction measures, some of which intersect with the above mobility features. Standard Project required TDM measures include, but are not limited to:

- End of trip facilities including Employee Bicycle Lockers / Showers.
- Public Transportation & Shared-ride Uber/Lift Information Kiosks.
- Public Works approved curbside loading areas for shared-ride vehicles.
- Subsidized Shared-Ride/Uber/Lift Service.
- Promotion of "walk to work" programs.
- Two bicycle sharing spaces with accompanying bicycles.
- TAP Card subsidies.

### Waste Removal, Emergency Vehicles, and Loading

A trash enclosure will be located at the entrance to the parking structure. A 22 foot wide driveway can accommodate City sanitation vehicles required to service the Project's refuse, recyclables, and organic waste. An approximate 80 foot by 50 foot area between the parking structure and the office building, west of the ground floor courtyard, provides sufficient space for sanitation vehicles to maneuver into and out of the Project Site. This area provides the same maneuvering area for Fire emergency vehicles as determined by the City's Fire Department. A small loading space equivalent to a standard parking space is behind the office building on the west side and across from the parking structure entrance. Delivery vehicles will make use of the same maneuvering area to enter and exit the Site. The 22 foot wide driveway and 80 foot by 50 foot maneuvering area provides sufficient space and back up capacity for efficient and safe waste removal, emergency vehicle, and loading operations. Additionally, the driveway and area between the parking structure and office building

as well as the Jefferson Boulevard frontage are large enough to accommodate ride share, curbside loading and other mobility measures as required in the Project conditions.

### Noise

The Project is not expected to generate significant noise levels as an office development. Potential noise impacts during construction will be addressed with construction related Project Conditions of Approval.

### **PUBLIC OUTREACH**

As part of the Project review process, two community meetings were held via video conference on March 16<sup>th</sup> and August 31<sup>st</sup> of 2021, consistent with the Culver City “Safer-at-Home” Public Orders and Community Meeting Guidelines. The Applicant invited interested persons to learn about the Project, provide comments and feedback, and share any concerns regarding the proposed Project (refer to Community Meeting Summary, Attachment No. 7).

At the first community meeting, 13 people including several residential neighbors, attended. The Applicant invited people to provide comments after an Applicant Project presentation. Comments from the public included:

- Whether or not the bow truss building will be repurposed.
- Whether or not the Project will include properties to the south of the Project Site.
- Pedestrian access to the building.
- Traffic along Jefferson Boulevard.
- Change of occupancy increasing number of employees at the Site.
- Increase of employees leading to increased traffic.
- Development at 10100 Jefferson Blvd increasing traffic substantially.
- Project timeline.
- Whether or not the Project will be for creative office / flexible business hours.
- Landscaping including native species.

The Applicant responded by explaining that the increased traffic trips caused by the new office use is below the threshold for requiring a traffic study and described the Project’s TDM measures that are intended to reduce trips. They also clarified that as a creative office use, some employees will not work within traditional business hours, which can further spread trips throughout the day.

At the second community meeting, 2 people attended. The Applicant invited people to provide comments after an Applicant Project presentation. Comments from the public included:

- Access to landscaped areas once the Project becomes operational.
- Location of solar panel installation.
- Convenience store or sandwich shop in the building.
- Build out timeline.

The Applicant responded by verifying all landscaping will be accessible for maintenance purposes, solar panels will not be installed on the parking structure's top level, and construction will take approximately 20 months.. They also stated that a convenience store or sandwich shop are not proposed.

### **Comments Received During Public Comment Period**

A public notice was mailed to all property owners and occupants within a 500 foot radius extended to end of City block on January 18, 2022. As of the writing of this report, staff has not received any written public



comments.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION:**

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines, initial review of the Project by staff 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 Light Industrial General Plan Land Use designation, the DFD for the Jefferson Blvd Industrial Area, and the IG Zoning standards.

The Project Site is on a 2.01 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 proposed 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 can be provided as determined by City departments during the internal Project review (Attachment No. 8).

### **CONCLUSION/SUMMARY**

The Project design and landscaping to reduce massing, along with proposed private and public amenities improves and maximizes the development of the Project Site while respecting surrounding commercial and nearby residential uses. Based on the proposed preliminary development plans and recommended conditions of approval, staff considers the Project compatible with the surrounding neighborhood, adequately served by public facilities and, consistent with the General Plan, Zoning Code, and all CCMC requirements. Staff believes that findings for Site Plan Review P2021-0218-SPR can be made as outlined in Resolution No. 2022-P002 (Attachment No. 1).

### **MOTION**

That the Planning Commission:

Adopt a Resolution Adopting a Categorical Exemption, and Approving Site Plan Review P2021-0218-SPR, subject to Conditions of Approval.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

1. Draft Planning Commission Resolution No. 2022- P002 and Exhibits A and B.
2. Vicinity Map.
3. Project Summary.
4. Preliminary Development Plans dated January 14, 2022.
5. Ballona Creek facing Elevation and Landscaping Renderings.
6. May 2021 Fehr & Peers Traffic Report.
7. Community Meeting Summary Notes.
8. CEQA Class 32 Exemption Analysis.