

June 18, 2020

CHAIR AND PLANNING COMMISSIONERS

City of Long Beach  
California

RECOMMENDATION:

Accept Categorical Exemption CE 20-058 and approve Conditional Use Permit CUP 20-008 to allow the establishment and operation of a rocket manufacturing facility with outdoor operations located at 3500 E. Burnett Street in the Long Beach Business Center (PD-7) Zoning District. (District 5)

APPLICANT: Ruby Willmann for Relativity Space  
3500 E. Burnett Street  
Long Beach, CA 90809  
(Application No. 2003-25)

**DISCUSSION**

Background

The site is located along the east side of Redondo Avenue, at the southeast intersection of Burnett Street in the Long Beach Business Center Planned Development District (PD-7). PD-7 is bounded on the south by a California Army National Guard facility, on the west by Redondo Avenue, on the north by Willow Street, and on the east by a single-family residential neighborhood (Exhibit A - Location Map). It comprises 51.5 acres and is characterized by business offices, research and development, and moderately-sized industrial and warehousing operations with limited environment impacts in terms of noise, chemical waste and health or safety hazards.

The project site is located within Subarea 4 of PD-7. Subarea 4 was formed in 2018 as part of a development project to repurpose the former United States Postal Service (USPS) Long Beach Processing & Distribution Center, which was initially zoned Institutional. The overall scope of that project consisted of the creation of a new light-industrial center as follows: a Zone Change and Zoning Code Amendment to include the USPS site as a part of PD-7; a Tentative Parcel Map and Site Plan Review to subdivide the remaining 19-acre site (3.07 acres stayed under USPS ownership) into three separate parcels, with a new building to go on each new parcel. Exhibit B - Pacific Edge Site Plan, provides an overall layout of this project, known as Pacific Edge. The three new buildings total 424,050 square feet: Building 1 – 205,530 square feet; Building 2 – 113,800 square feet; Building 3 – 104,720 square feet.



### Project Proposal

The applicant, Relativity Space, is in the process of occupying Building 2 with the intent to establish a rocket manufacturing facility with outdoor operations (Exhibit C - Plans). Indoor activities include manufacturing of rocket tanks (mainly via 3-D printing), cleaning, machining and assembly of smaller rocket components, assembly and testing of electronic components (such as circuit board assemblies), and research and development pertaining to the company's 3-D printing methods.

The proposed outdoor activities would include testing operations for the rocket tanks that are produced indoors, as a necessary practice to ensure that the tanks are without defect. The testing operations (which include structural testing and pressure testing) will be administered by placing rocket tanks on exterior test stands with the use of a 37' crane (Exhibit D - Equipment Rendering). Structural testing would be done with the use of equipment built into the test stands that push and pull the tanks to monitor any splitting or cracking they may occur. Pressure testing would be done by filling the tanks with pressurized water or liquid nitrogen and checking for leaks over a period of approximately nine hours.

### Conditional Use Permit Requirements

In accordance with the regulations of the PD-7 Ordinance, uses permitted within the planned district shall be consistent with the uses permitted in the Light Industrial district, as specified in Section 21.33.080 of the Long Beach Municipal Code (LBMC). Per Section 21.33.080 of the LBMC, the manufacture of transportation equipment such as rockets, and aircraft require a Conditional Use Permit when they incorporate outdoor operations.

In order to approve a CUP request for outdoor operations, positive findings must be made by the Planning Commission and compliance with any applicable special development standards of the zoning ordinance must be met (Exhibit E - Findings). Findings include the requirement that the use not be detrimental to the surrounding community and that it carries out the intent of the General Plan, while special development standards are outlined in Chapter 21.52 of the LBMC.

### Analysis

The building is oriented along the southeast corner of Redondo Avenue and Burnett Street. The location of the proposed outdoor activity is within the area designated for loading docks, which is largely tucked away from public right-of-way view. The configuration of the applicant's building and adjacent buildings on site provides a natural on-site/off-site barrier that adequately buffers the aesthetic impacts of any outdoor equipment to be used. Furthermore, Conditions of Approval will be incorporated to require any additional visual screening measures, to the satisfaction of the Director of Development Services (Exhibit F – Conditions of Approval). The special development standards of Chapter 21.52 are also in place to ensure that industrial uses are not detrimental to the surrounding community. The standards include complying with the noise ordinance, hours of operation, and proper storage/disposal of hazardous waste materials, and will be discussed further.



Special Development Standards

Although the LBMC does not have any specific requirements relative to aircraft manufacturing with outdoor operations, the aforementioned special development standards (compliance with noise ordinance, hours of operation, and proper storage and disposal of hazardous wastes). Staff does not anticipate any nuisance activity related to these standards. Any noise that is generated from outdoor operations is expected to be minimal at best. Outdoor operations begin with the placement of rocket tanks on the test stand, after which is a testing set-up/preparation phase. During this phase, a team of four employees commence with minor activities like using hand-tools to connect pieces of equipment such as sensors. During the testing phase, the rocket tanks are first filled with liquid (either water or liquid nitrogen) over a period of three hours. The liquid is then stored and tested for another three hours. Finally, the tanks are drained of the liquid which would take an additional three hours. These activities are not expected to generate any noise significant enough to have an adverse impact on the surrounding community.

Per Chapter 8.80 of the LBMC, the project site is located within District 1 of the Noise District Map. The maximum noise levels allowed in District 1 are as follows: 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. – 50 decibels; 10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. – 45 decibels. Table 1 below shows the duration of time in which noise levels can exceed the maximum thresholds of 50 decibels and 45 decibels.

Table 1: Noise Regulations

<b>Daytime DB Level</b>	<b>Nighttime DB Level</b>	<b>Duration of Time to Exceed DB Level</b>
50 decibels	45 decibels	30 minutes in any 1-hour period
55 decibels	50 decibels	15 minutes in any 1-hour period
60 decibels	55 decibels	5 minutes in any 1-hour period
65 decibels	60 decibels	1 minutes in any 1-hour period
70 decibels	55 decibels	Not Permitted for any duration of time

The applicant is proposing to commence outdoor operations three days a week, from 5:00 a.m. to 12:00 a.m. (Exhibit G - Hours of Outdoor Operations). The applicant has also provided a preliminary analysis from an acoustical engineer pertaining to noise levels generated from the loudest equipment to be used outdoors (Exhibit H - Acoustical Analysis). The analysis indicates that the sound from testing activities would exceed the levels allowed by the LBMC. However, with the implementation of sound-mitigating measures, noise would be attenuated to an acceptable level. These measures include the construction of a screening wall with acoustical absorption on its inner face and the use of mufflers. A Condition of Approval has been incorporated to require a noise barrier be built meeting the specifications given in the analysis. The analysis concludes that the recommended noise attenuation measures will be sufficient enough to ensure compliance with Chapter 8.80 of the LBMC. It should be noted that the limited outdoor activity proposed before 7:00

a.m. and past 10:00 p.m. is very minimal with no expectation of noises exceeding the maximum limit.

In relation to the storage and disposal of hazardous materials, outdoor operations will not produce any. All hazardous materials that will be produced as a result of indoor manufacturing activity will be properly contained and disposed of using a licensed hazardous waste vendor and shipped to an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) certified Treatment, Storage, and Disposal Facility (TSDF). The Conditions of Approval that are included will require compliance with any applicable special development standards, to the satisfaction of the Director of Development Services. These conditions will allow staff to conduct periodic re-inspections to ensure proper maintenance and operation of the site.

Regarding General Plan conformance, the site has a General Plan PlaceType Designation of Regional-Serving Facility – RSF. The RSF PlaceType has been applied to sites and areas in the City that serve a unique role, or population reaching beyond local concerns. The preferred land uses in these areas include uses that serve a regional need for medical and social services, education, goods movement, people movement, energy production and distribution, public utilities, and uses of a similar nature. Aerospace/aircraft manufacturing and the accessory activity of testing rocket tanks within an auto-oriented location serves a unique role that reaches beyond the local level. Such a use has the potential to sustain a large number of high-quality jobs that doesn't necessarily cater only to the surrounding community. The Land Use Element recognizes the PD-7 District as one of the many areas within the RSF PlaceType (and surrounding the Long Beach Airport) that has its own approved master plan offering a variety of allowable industrial uses that serve the regional community.

### Conclusion

The City of Long Beach has recently seen a significant resurgence in the aerospace and aircraft manufacturing industries. Dating back to the war years, Long Beach was a hub for several aircraft manufacturing facilities particularly in the areas surrounding the Long Beach Airport. The proposed CUP request is for outdoor operations that will serve in conjunction to the principal indoor rocket manufacturing facility. The outdoor operations are crucial to the overall functionality of this facility, which is anticipated to have a positive economic impact on the city and drive the establishment of a desirable use. Staff recommends that the Planning Commission approve the CUP for outdoor operations, subject to Conditions of Approval.

### **PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE**

A total of 319 Public Hearing Notices were distributed on June 1, 2020 in accordance with the requirements of Chapter 21.21 of the Long Beach Municipal Code. At the time of writing this report, no correspondence has been received.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

In accordance with the Guidelines for Implementation of the California Environment Quality Act, this project is exempt per Section 15301 – Existing Facilities, as the project consists of the

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establishment and operation of a rocket manufacturing facility with accessory outdoor storage at an existing building (CE 20-058).

Respectfully submitted,



CUENTIN JACKSON  
PROJECT PLANNER



ALEXIS OROPEZA  
CURRENT PLANNING OFFICER



CHRISTOPHER KOONTZ, AICP  
PLANNING BUREAU MANAGER



LINDA F. TATUM, FAICP  
DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

LFT:CK:AO:CJ

Attachments:    Exhibit A – Location Map  
                         Exhibit B – Pacific Edge Site Plan  
                         Exhibit C – Plans  
                         Exhibit D – Equipment Rendering  
                         Exhibit E – Findings  
                         Exhibit F – Conditions of Approval  
                         Exhibit G – Hours of Outdoor Operations  
                         Exhibit H – Acoustical Analysis