

September 16, 2021

CHAIR AND PLANNING COMMISSIONERS

City of Long Beach

California

RECOMMENDATION:

To receive and file the Downtown Plan Environmental Impact Report (DPEIR) (SCH#2009071006) and the Downtown Plan Program EIR Land Use Equivalency Program and 7th Street and Locust Avenue Project EIR Addendum EIRA 06-20 pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15162. (Districts 1 and 2)

APPLICANT: City of Long Beach, Development Services Department
411 West Ocean Boulevard, 3rd Floor
Long Beach, CA 90802
(Application No. 2004-11)

DISCUSSION

In January of 2012, the City Council amended the Downtown Plan (PD-30) Zoning District to: 1) expand the Downtown Plan area from 467 acres to 719 acres; 2) establish a comprehensive set of design standards for different building types; and, 3) modify the height limits, focusing intensity on the core area of Downtown (Attachment A – Downtown Map).

At that same time a Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) was certified by the City Council for the zone code amendment to PD-30. The City Council certified the Downtown Plan PEIR (SCH #2002009071066) and adopted findings of fact, a statement of overriding considerations, and a mitigation monitoring and reporting program for PD-30 (Attachment B – Downtown Plan Program Environmental Impact Report and Attachment C – Downtown Plan MMRP). The certified PEIR allowed a buildout of up to 1) approximately 5,000 new residential units; 2) 1.5 million square feet (sf) of new office, civic center, cultural, and similar uses; 3) 384,000 sf of new retail; 4) 96,000 sf of restaurants; and, 5) 800 new hotel rooms within Downtown. This build-out of the development potential within PD-30 was assumed to occur over a 25-year time-period, ending in 2035.



Since 2012, build-out of the development potential analyzed under the PEIR has occurred in response to economic conditions and market demand and has not occurred equally across all land uses. To date, approximately 5,252 dwelling units have been completed, under construction or are approved. In addition, 203,710 sf of retail/commercial space and 490,000 sf of office space, and 223 hotel rooms have been completed, are under construction, or approved. Since PD-30's adoption, the greatest development has occurred in residential land uses, and the planned residential capacity of approximately 5,000 residential units analyzed under the original PEIR has been built out. As a result, an addendum assessing the impact of the conversion of land uses from planned non-residential uses to residential uses and establishing a Land Use Equivalency Program (Equivalency Program) has been prepared, in order to permit future residential projects to meet the market demand for housing, and includes the assessment of a specific development project at 7th and Locust (Attachment D – Downtown Plan PEIR Addendum, EIRA 06-20).

7th STREET AND LOCUST AVENUE

The Equivalency Program will be open to all downtown development but the addendum also covers a specific project that is pending contingent on the allowance for additional downtown units. The 7th and Locust project consists of 0.52-acre site, with a 7-story mixed use building containing 108 total dwelling units, including 88 one-bedroom units, 17 two-bedroom units, and 3 three-bedroom units. The proposed project would provide 1,188 sf of retail uses, a 1,000sf lobby, 400-sf leasing office, a 687-sf amenity lounge, a 736-sf fitness room, on the ground floor, and a courtyard, pool and pool deck, and community room on the 3rd floor. In addition, the project would provide 139 parking spaces within 4 levels (2 subterranean and 2 above-ground levels) and 32 bicycle parking spaces on the ground floor level. The specific Site Plan Review application would be considered by the Planning Commission under a separate agenized public hearing item.

LAND USE EQUIVALENCY PROGRAM

The Equivalency Program has been prepared to allow development flexibility so that the planned land uses can respond to market conditions over the remainder of the build-out duration of PD-30 (Attachment E - Land Use Equivalency Program). Land uses under the Equivalency Program would be allowed to be reallocated among the permitted land uses so long as the limitations of the Equivalency Program are satisfied and do not exceed the analyzed upper levels of environmental impacts that are identified in the Certified PEIR or exceed average maximum Floor Area Ratios (FARs) contemplated by the plan, including FAR incentives. Under the proposed Equivalency Program, increases in residential land uses can be permitted when corresponding decreases in the amount of other permitted non-residential land uses are made. As assessed in the addendum, this would enable future residential development projects to rely upon the original Downtown Plan and this Addendum to construct a maximum of 3,260 additional residential units, in exchange for a reduction of commercial or office floor area and/or hotel units. These assumptions are consistent with local, regional and nationwide trends toward decreased expansion of office and retail space and increased acute demand for multifamily residential development.

To facilitate this exchange of development potential, a Downtown Plan Equivalency Calculator was developed to allow staff to track approved projects in the PD-30 area and to reduce available commercial, office, and/or hotel space to accommodate increased demand for residential housing units. The Downtown Plan Equivalency Calculator utilizes a conservative exchange rate to allow for the reallocation of commercial, office, and/or hotel space as residential units such that applicable regulations are satisfied, and no additional significant environmental impacts or substantially greater impacts would occur than previously identified in the Certified PEIR (Attachment F – Downtown Plan Equivalency Calculator). The Downtown Plan Equivalency Calculator provides for the initial reallocation of non-residential land use to account for an additional 3,260 housing units to be developed within downtown. The 3,260 additionally approved residential units can be accommodated by reducing office uses by 417,060 sf, commercial uses by 135,320 sf, and hotel uses by 177 rooms. Considering the development pending approval and/or already approved, as of this point in time and when accounting for the proposed project at 7th Street and Locust Avenue (636 Locust), this leaves a balance of 3,008 dwelling units, 592,950 sf of office space, 140,970 sf of commercial space, and 400 hotel rooms.

The equivalency program would allow for additional residential development capacity within the downtown area. Those new developments would continue to be reviewed on an individual basis in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). A compliance checklist would continue to be required and site-specific technical studies such as traffic, shade and shadow, historic assessments, etc., as necessary, would continue to be required to ensure that no individual project exceeds the thresholds analyzed as part of the Program Environmental Impact Report (EIR) or Addendum without further environmental review.

This program has been reviewed for compliance with the CEQA. An Environmental Impact Report (EIR) Addendum (EIRA 06-20) was prepared to analyze the proposed project to determine whether the project would result in any new significant environmental impacts or a substantial increase in the severity of impacts identified in the Certified PEIR. The Equivalency Program analysis prepared as a part of this Addendum determined that the project will not result in any new significant impacts that exceed those analyzed in the Downtown Plan PEIR with mitigation measures included. Pursuant to 15164, an addendum does not require a period of public circulation or public hearing. The Downtown is expected to continue to play a vital role in the supply of new housing within the city and to help the city meet its affordable housing obligation. Downtown is one of the two sub-market areas subject to inclusionary housing requirements, for projects submitted on or after March 6, 2021. In consideration of the large number of development's considered by the Planning Commission within the Downtown area staff believes the proposed "Equivalency Program" is necessary to continue to facilitate the demand for housing while doing so in a public forum in order to disclose the change. Staff requests that the Planning Commission receive and file the Downtown Plan Program EIR Land Use Equivalency Program and 7th and Locust Project EIR Addendum EIRA 06-20.

PUBLIC NOTICE

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The action being recommended is concurrence and receive and file and does not require a public hearing.

Respectfully Submitted,



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PROJECT PLANNER



ALEXIS OROPEZA
CURRENT PLANNING OFFICER



PATRICIA DIEFENDERFER, AICP
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OSCAR W. ORCI
DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

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Attachments:

- Attachment A – Downtown Plan Area Map
- Attachment B – Downtown Plan Program EIR
- Attachment C – Downtown Plan MMRP
- Attachment D – Downtown Plan PEIR Addendum, EIRA 06-20
- Attachment E – Land Use Equivalency Memo
- Attachment F – Downtown Plan Equivalency Calculator