

November 3, 2022

CHAIR AND PLANNING COMMISSIONERS  
City of Long Beach  
California

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Recommend that the City Council accept Categorical Exemption CE21-156; and

Recommend that the City Council approve a General Plan Amendment (GPA21-004), to change the PlaceType designation from Open Space (OS) to Neo-Industrial (NI). (District 5)

APPLICANT: Sean Hitchcock  
2H Property 3060, LLC  
2653 Walnut Avenue  
Signal Hill, CA 90755  
(Application No. 2008-06)

**DISCUSSION**

The project site is located at 2600 California Avenue on the northeast corner of California Avenue and Willow Street (Attachment A – Location Map). The 0.72-acre (31,375-square foot) project site is currently developed with a surface parking lot, a small open space with walking path, and associated landscaping, and can be accessed via two one-way driveways on California Avenue. The project site is currently within the Institutional (I) Zoning District and within the Land Use Element Open Space (OS) PlaceType. The existing parking lot, and associated landscaping was approved through a Conditional Use Permit (CUP17-007) on June 15, 2017 for off-site parking at for a commercial building across the street at 999 East Willow Street in the City of Signal Hill.

The project site is surrounded by a mixture of open space, office, and retail uses. The project site is bounded to the east by a cemetery, to the north by an urban farm, to the west by California Avenue and office uses in the City of Signal Hill, and to the south by East Willow Street and retail uses. Regional access to the project site is provided by Interstates 405 (I-405) and 710 (I-710), which are located approximately 0.6 miles north and 1.5 miles west of the project site, respectively. Local access to the project site is provided by California Avenue and East Willow Street.

**GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT**



The project site has a current General Plan Land Use Element PlaceType designation of OS. The existing OS PlaceType supports recreational space such as public parks and does not allow for commercial or industrial uses, such as offices. Although the existing I Zoning District allows for medical offices, the land use PlaceType does not. The applicant is proposing to add a new 3,000 square foot medical office building to site, within the existing landscape area (Attachment B – Plans).

A General Plan Amendment to the Neo-Industrial (NI) PlaceType is required to allow for this development to occur on private property. The NI PlaceType is intended for light industrial, clean manufacturing, offices and commercial uses accessory to creative business. The NI PlaceType is used in many circumstances including as a buffer between existing industrial and residential neighborhoods. On this site the PlaceType would serve as a transition to Willow Springs Park to the north and the Sunnyside Cemetery to the east. Properties across California Avenue (to the west) and Willow Street (to the south) are located within the City of Signal Hill and currently developed with industrial and commercial uses. While the adoption of the Land Use Element is fairly recent, the proposed General Plan Amendment is still appropriate because it corrects a City error in designating this privately owned and commercially operating parcel (Attachment C – General Plan Amendment Map).

In accordance with the General Plan, the I Zoning District is generally consistent with the NI PlaceType (Table LU-6: PlaceTypes and Zoning Districts Consistency Matrix, Page 170 of the Land Use element). The site on which the General Plan Amendment is proposed is private property. Overall, the proposed PlaceType would be harmonious with the existing land uses surrounding the site (Attachment D – Findings).

## **SITE PLAN REVIEW**

The proposed project requires Site Plan Review approval to construct an approximately 3,000-square-foot single-story medical office building. For non-residential projects of less than 50,000 square feet of new Gross Floor Area, Planning Commission review is not required, and the Staff Site Plan Review Committee reviewed and approved this proposal on October 28, 2020. Since the General Plan Amendment, discussed above, must be approved by the Planning Commission and City Council, this discussion of the Site Plan Review entitlement is presented for the record of proceedings.

The proposed building is 22'-8" in height, on the northern half of the project site. The project site is a long and narrow rectangular shaped lot. The proposed building would be bordered to the north and south by surface parking. Physical development would be restricted to the northern portion of the project site, including 12 parking spaces for the proposed medical office. A trash enclosure, eight feet in height, would be included on the northeastern corner of the project site. The existing southern portion of the project, which includes an existing parking lot for the property at 999 East Willow Street, will remain. The design of the proposed building meets the design requirements of the I Zoning District.

The proposed project would have a Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 0.936, which would be consistent with the project site's proposed General Plan PlaceType designation (Neo-

Industrial) FAR (minimum of 0.5 and maximum of 1.0). The Urban Design Element specifies additional design standards for the NI PlaceType, which includes the following strategy: Policy UD 25-5: Encourage NI PlaceTypes to have improve walkability with on-site, sidewalk and streetscape landscaping, signage and other enhancements. The proposed building provides new landscaping along the frontage and parking, signage and activates the current frontage along California Avenue.

Existing trees on site were planted in 2020; none are significant in terms of species, history, visual appeal, or habitat. Conditions of approval will require trees to be removed along the eastern site boundary are to be relocated and replanted on-site. However, all species are protected from nest disturbance by the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) and the California Fish and Game Code. Therefore, a condition of approval will require all tree removal to occur in compliance with the MBTA and be accompanied by a nesting bird survey prior to tree removal. These requirements will provide a net increase in the number of trees on the development site over existing conditions. These requirements will be enforced through conditions of approval (Attachment E – Conditions of Approval).

### **PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE**

A total of 543 public hearing notices were distributed on October 19, 2022, in accordance with the requirements of Chapter 21.21 of the Zoning Regulations. No public comments in response to these notices were received at the time the report was prepared.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Section 15303, Class 3(c), this project is eligible for a CEQA Categorical Exemption for “New Construction or Conversion of Small Structure” because the Site Plan Review and General Plan Amendment is for a commercial office building in an urbanized area and would be less than 10,000 square feet. A Class 3 Categorical Exemption (CE) requires that the proposed project does not involve the use of significant amounts of hazardous substances. The proposed medical building may use small amounts of hazardous substances associated with the common medical uses but would not require a significant amount of hazardous substances. The proposed project would be consistent with the project site’s current zoning designation as permitted uses in the I Zoning District include medical buildings and complexes. The project would not have any significant impacts related to traffic, noise, air quality, and water quality as discussed in the following sections. Therefore, the proposed project would be consistent with subsection (c) of Section 15303 and qualifies for a Class 3 CE (Attachment F – Categorical Exemption).

The proposed project would not result in any specific or general exceptions to the use of a CE as detailed under State CEQA Guidelines Section 15332. The proposed project is an office building, in an urbanized area, not exceeding 10,000 square feet in floor area on a site zoned for such use. Additionally, the proposed project would not involve the use of significant amounts of hazardous substances where all necessary public services and facilities are available, and the surrounding area is not an environmentally sensitive area. The proposed project would not cause any impacts to traffic, noise, air quality, or water

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quality. The project site does not have value as habitat for endangered, rare, or threatened species. The proposed project would not result in damage to a scenic resource within a highway officially designated as a State Scenic Highway. The project site is not on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code. Furthermore, no unusual circumstances or potential cumulative impacts would occur that may reasonably create an environmental impact. Therefore, the proposed project is exempt from the provisions of CEQA as specified by the State CEQA Guidelines identified above.

Respectfully submitted,



MARCOS LOPEZ  
PROJECT PLANNER



SCOTT KINSEY, AICP  
PROJECT PLANNER



ALEXIS OROPEZA  
CURRENT PLANNING OFFICER



CHRISTOPHER KOONTZ, AICP  
ACTING DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT  
SERVICES

CK:AO:sk:ml

Attachments:      Attachment A – Location Map  
Attachment B – Plans  
Attachment C – General Plan Amendment Map  
Attachment D – Findings  
Attachment E – Conditions of Approval  
Attachment F – Categorical Exemption