

June 17, 2021

**CHAIR AND PLANNING COMMISSIONERS**

City of Long Beach

California

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Adopt a Resolution Certifying Environmental Impact Report (EIR-04-19) (State Clearinghouse No. 2019110206), make findings of fact, adopting a statement of overriding considerations, and approving a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP); and

Approve Site Plan Review SPR20-035 for the demolition of the existing, 5,548-square foot city-owned Fire Station No. 9, located at 3917 Long Beach Boulevard in the Community Automobile-Oriented (CCA) Zoning District. (District 8)

**APPLICANT:** City of Long Beach Department of Public Works  
c/o Eric Lopez  
411 W Ocean Blvd, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Long Beach, CA 90802  
(Application No. 1911-03)

**DISCUSSION**

The site is located at 3917 Long Beach Boulevard and is identified as Assessor Parcel Number (APN) 7139-013-900 (Attachment A - Vicinity Map). The site is owned by the City of Long Beach and encompasses approximately 5,800 square feet, or 0.13-acre. The project site is improved with the vacant City of Long Beach Fire Station No. 9 building, which services Fire Service Area 9. The site is bound by Long Beach Boulevard on the east and North Virginia Road to the west and is regionally accessible from Interstate-710 (I-710) and I-405.

Surrounding land uses consist of commercial buildings to the north, east (across Long Beach Boulevard), and south and single- and multi-family residences to the north, east (across Long Beach Boulevard), south, and west (across North Virginia Road). The Oakwood Academy private school is located approximately 450 feet southeast of the site, across Long Beach Boulevard.



The site is in the Community Automobile-Oriented (CCA) Zoning District and has a Neighborhood Serving Center or Corridor – Low (NSC-L) General Plan PlaceType Designation. Uses permitted in the CCA Zoning District include retail and service uses for an entire community, including convenience and comparison shopping for goods and associated services.

The project site was developed in 1938 with the fire station, a 5,548-square-foot, rectangular building of one-and-a-half stories in height with a three-story hose tower (Attachment B - Site Photos). The two fire truck bays are located at the rear of the structure with direct access to Virginia Road. The building operated as Fire Station No. 9 from 1938 until summer 2019 when it was vacated due to the presence of toxic mold in the building. Due to the presence of mold, the building was determined to be uninhabitable by the Long Beach Fire Department.

Fire Station No. 9 was designed by W. Horace Austin (1881–1942) in the Tudor Revival style as a Works Progress Administration (WPA) project for the City of Long Beach. Character-defining features of the building include its single-family residential scale, massing and asymmetry, half-timbering and other wood details, cement plaster exterior finishes, hose tower, wood window frames and windows, and oversized garage doors. However, many of the original building materials and character-defining features, such as the roof and all but one window, have been replaced or removed in the years since construction of the fire station.

The proposed project includes the demolition of the 5,548-square foot City-owned Fire Station No. 9 at 3917 Long Beach Boulevard. While deemed ineligible for listing on either the National or California historic registers due to a lack of integrity, Fire Station No. 9 is considered a historic resource, pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), as a result of the findings of a historic resource evaluation which determined the building to have potential historical significance due to its conformance with local historic criteria (Criterion A). An Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was prepared to analyze impacts of the project under CEQA. As required by CEQA, four alternatives, including a “No Project” alternative were studied; among the alternatives, the EIR examined two options that included demolition of the fire station building. The analysis included in the EIR also examined the reuse of the building as one of the project alternatives.

As previously noted, the project being proposed by the City involves removal of the existing fire station and either of the following options for reuse of the site in the near term, with Option B being the more likely near-term use:

- Option A would remove the existing structurally impaired and deteriorated building due to the hazardous conditions created by the mold and building moisture and install a temporary modular structure to accommodate the station crew.

- Option B would also remove the existing structurally impaired and deteriorated building. However, under Option B, the site would remain undeveloped until a future use for the site is determined.

The project subject to this site plan review approval is for the demolition of the structure (Option B). Upon demolition, the site would be secured with City-approved fencing and the placement of mulch to ensure adequate on-site drainage (Attachment C - Site Plan).

While the demolition of the building would not preclude the adaptive reuse of the building. The analysis included in the EIR demonstrates that the reuse of the building would result in the same significant and unavoidable impact because the remediation would result in the removal of the character-defining features resulting in the same historic resource impacts as demolishing the building. Therefore, for disclosure purposes under CEQA, the selected alternative is the demolition of Fire Station No. 9.

#### Interim Fire Station

An Administrative Use Permit (AUP) was approved by the Zoning Administrator on July 13, 2020, for an interim location for Fire Station No. 9 until a new station can be built. The AUP approval includes the reuse of an existing structure at the former Boeing Fitness Center at 2019 East Wardlow Road. This interim location permits fire personnel to occupy an independent facility rather than co-locating at existing Fire Station Nos. 13 and 16. The 2019 East Wardlow location fulfills the immediate need for a temporary fire station while interim and long-term plans and the approval process, including determinations about the future use of the current Fire Station No. 9 project site, are completed. The City has entered into a limited short-term lease for the interim site.

Since circulation of the Notice of Preparation (NOP) in November 2019 and in order to continue to serve the Fire Service Area's fire and safety needs, the City Manager, or designee, has been authorized to execute any and all documents necessary, including a Standard Offer, Agreement and Escrow Instructions for Purchase of Real Estate (Agreement) for the purchase of certain real property located at 4101-4107 Long Beach Boulevard (Assessor Parcel Numbers 7139-015-010 and -017). This site has been identified as a potential location for the permanent Fire Station No. 9. The potential development of the site as the new Fire Station No. 9 would require a separate project-level environmental analysis.

Staff is able to make positive findings for the Site Plan Review for the proposed demolition of Fire Station No. 9 (Attachment D - Findings). Conditions of Approval are recommended to ensure that the objectives for this project will be met and that the City's interests are protected by maintaining flexibility as it pertains to the future reuse of the subject site (Attachment E - Conditions of Approval).

## **PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE**

A total of 743 notices of public hearing were distributed on June 1, 2021, in accordance with the requirements of Chapter 21.21 of the Zoning Regulations. No comments have been received as of the preparation of this report.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

An Environmental Impact Report (EIR-04-19) (State Clearinghouse No. 2019110206) has been prepared and made available for public review and comment, in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the CEQA Guidelines.

A Notice of Preparation (NOP) of an EIR for review and comment by the public, and responsible and reviewing agencies, was circulated by the City for a 30-day review period from November 12, 2019 to December 12, 2019. During the NOP comment period, the City received six comment letters from agencies and organizations. A Draft EIR was prepared for the Project pursuant to the CEQA Guidelines (Attachment F – Draft EIR [EIR-04-19] [State Clearinghouse No. 2019110206]). The EIR prepared for the project was a Focused EIR, by focusing the EIR effects determined to be potentially significant, identifying the effects determined not to be significant, and explaining the reasons for determining that certain effects would not be significant.

A Notice of Availability (NOA) of a Draft EIR and copies of the Draft EIR were circulated for review and comment to those public agencies that have jurisdiction by law with respect to the Project, or which exercise authority over resources that may be affected by the Project, and to other interested parties and agencies as required by law. Consistent with the requirements of CEQA Guidelines Sections 15087 and 15105, the Draft EIR was also submitted to the State Clearinghouse, Office of Planning and Research, along with a Notice of Completion (NOC). Additionally, the NOA was published in the Long Beach Press-Telegram on July 10, 2020. Comments from such agencies, interested parties, and the general public were sought on the Draft EIR from July 10, 2020 through August 31, 2020, for a total review period of 52 days. The City received four comment letters on the Draft EIR from public agencies, organizations, and interested parties (California Department of Transportation [Caltrans], HouStories, Long Beach Heritage, and Juan E. Ovalle).

Following closure of the public comment period, all comments received on the Draft EIR during the comment period, the City's written responses to the significant environmental points raised in those comments, and additional information or clarification regarding the Draft EIR were compiled into a Final EIR pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Sections 15089 and 15132 (Attachment G - Final EIR [EIR-04-19] [State Clearinghouse No. 2019110206]). On March 26, 2021, the Final EIR was published and circulated to public agencies and interested parties that commented on the Draft EIR. The Final EIR was made available on the City's website. The Final EIR were also submitted to the State Clearinghouse, Office of Planning and Research on March 26, 2021.

A Statement of Overriding Considerations is required under the CEQA whenever an EIR identifies an unavoidable significant adverse project impact. The Final EIR identifies one significant and unavoidable impact for the project related to the loss of a historic-age resource. The project's impact related to demolition of a historic resource cannot be mitigated to a less than significant level with incorporation of all feasible mitigation measures. The City finds this significant and unavoidable impact to be acceptable due to overriding considerations (Attachment H - CEQA Findings of Fact). All other Project-specific and cumulative impacts would be less than significant or mitigated to a less than significant level. A Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) and Statement of Overriding Considerations have been prepared. The project would include mitigation measures to address Cultural, Paleontological and Tribal Resources and Hazards and Hazardous Materials. Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21081 and CEQA Guidelines Section 15091(a)(3), the City finds that specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations make infeasible additional mitigation measures or alternatives beyond those identified in the EIR. The City approves the project based on the following project benefits, including but not limited to, the removal of a vacant structure that could attract nuisance/criminal behavior to the area, provision of a safe and healthy workplace for the Fire Station No. 9 crewmembers, and restoration of operation of Fire Station No. 9 within the Fire Service Area No. 9 service area. The preparation and public availability of the EIR has been carried out in compliance with the provisions of CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines.

Staff therefore recommends the Planning Commission approve the Site Plan Review for the demolition of City-owned Fire Station No. 9.

CHAIR AND PLANNING COMMISSIONERS

June 17, 2021

Page 6 of 6

Respectfully submitted,



MARYANNE CRONIN  
PROJECT PLANNER



ALEXIS OROPEZA  
CURRENT PLANNING OFFICER



PATRICIA DIEFENDERFER, AICP  
PLANNING BUREAU MANAGER



CHRISTOPHER KOONTZ, AICP  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT  
SERVICES



OSCAR W. ORCI  
DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

OO:CK:PAD:AO:mc

Attachments: Attachment A - Vicinity Map  
Attachment B - Site Photos  
Attachment C - Site Plan  
Attachment D - Findings  
Attachment E - Conditions of Approval  
Attachment F - Draft EIR (EIR-04-19) (State Clearinghouse No. 2019110206)  
Attachment G - Final EIR (EIR-04-19) (State Clearinghouse No. 2019110206)  
Attachment H - CEQA Findings of Fact