



Legislation Text

File #: 23-0033, **Version:** 1

Recommendation to receive supporting documentation into the record, conclude the public hearing, and find that the Project is exempt from further environmental review and affirm the Planning Commission's determination (Categorical exemption CE 21-156); and, find that the project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Sections 15303 (Class 3 - New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures); and

Adopt resolution approving a General Plan Amendment (GPA21-004) to change the Land Use Element PlaceType designation of 2600 California Avenue from Open Space (OS) to Neo-Industrial (NI). (District 5)

On November 3, 2022, the Planning Commission held a duly noticed public hearing on this project, and recommended (4-0, with three commissioners absent) that the City Council take the above-listed actions to approve the project (Attachment A).

The applicant proposes to construct a new 3,000-square-foot medical office building on the site, within the existing landscape area. Although the Institutional (I) Zoning District designation for the subject site allows for medical offices, the project site has a current General Plan Land Use Element PlaceType designation of Open Space (OS), which appears to have been designated as such erroneously. The existing OS PlaceType supports recreational uses such as public parks and does not allow for commercial or industrial uses, such as offices. Thus, a General Plan Amendment to change the PlaceType designation is required to allow for any development to occur on the subject private property.

Project Site

The project site is located at 2600 California Avenue on the northeast corner of California Avenue and Willow Street (Attachment B). 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 I Zoning District and within the Land Use Element Open Space 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 landscaped open space area on the north side of the lot site was provided by the applicant in lieu of leaving the area undeveloped and was not required as a condition of approval.

The project site is surrounded by a mixture of open space, office, and retail uses. The project

site is bounded by Sunnyside Cemetery to the east, and Willow Springs Park to the north. 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. Regional access to the project site is provided by the San Diego Freeway (I-405) and the Long Beach Freeway (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.

Project Proposal

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; therefore the Staff Site Plan Review Committee reviewed and conditionally approved this proposal on October 28, 2020. Since the General Plan Amendment, discussed above, must be approved for the development to move forward, 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 (Attachment C). 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 and the Urban Design Element (UDE) of the General Plan.

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 improved walkability with on-site, sidewalk and streetscape landscaping, signage and other enhancements. The proposed building provides new landscaping along the frontage and activates the current frontage along California Avenue. The Staff Site Plan Review Committee made positive findings for approval of this Site Plan Review (Attachment D).

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 that are removed along the eastern site boundary to be relocated and replanted on-site, if feasible, and replaced in kind otherwise. However, potentially nesting bird 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).

A General Plan Amendment to the Neo-Industrial (NI) PlaceType is required to allow for the proposed land use 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 and the Sunnyside Cemetery as well as properties across California Avenue and Willow Street, 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 as Open Space (Attachment F). The Open Space designation is clearly erroneous based on the Land Use District (LUD) of the property under the 1989 General Plan which was LUD No. 9G - General Industry which was intended for light and medium industrial uses compatible with sensitive uses. As such, the proposed project would have been consistent with the 1989 LUD.

Requested Entitlements and Recommended Actions

This project requires approval of a General Plan Amendment to change the PlaceType for the property from OS to NI (Attachment F). The proposed project would allow the property owner to develop a new 3,000 square-foot commercial medical building and correct a City error in designating this privately owned and commercially operated parcel. The Planning Commission recommended on November 3, 2022 that the City Council approve this General Plan Amendment. The General Plan Amendment must be adopted by a Resolution, which requires City Council action.

Public Hearing Notice

A notice of public hearing was mailed on January 3, 2023, in accordance with the requirements of Chapter 21.21 of the Long Beach Municipal Code. A notice of public hearing also was published in the Long Beach Press-Telegram on January 3, 2023, also in accordance with the requirements of Chapter 21.21. Four written comments were received via e-mail prior to the Planning Commission hearing, and one verbal public comment was received during the Planning Commission hearing on October 6, 2022. As of the time this report was written, no additional comments have been received since the Planning Commission hearing (Attachment G).

Environmental Review

In accordance with 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, or 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 H).

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 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.

This matter was reviewed by Deputy City Attorney Erin Weesner-McKinley on December 20, 2022 and by Revenue Management Officer Geraldine Alejo on December 16, 2022.

The Development Services Department is required to transmit the Planning Commission’s recommendation to the City Council within 60 days of positive action by the Planning Commission, per Section 21.25.103 of the Zoning Regulations. The Planning Commission made a positive recommendation on this project’s requested actions on November 3, 2022.

This recommendation has no staffing impact beyond the normal budgeted scope of duties and is consistent with City Council priorities. There is no fiscal or local job impact associated with this recommendation.

Approve recommendation.

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CHRISTOPHER KOONTZ
DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

APPROVED:

THOMAS B. MODICA
CITY MANAGER