



Staff Report

File #: 20-0034

**PLANNING AND HOUSING COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT**

DATE: 1/21/2020

TO: Honorable Chair and Commissioners

FROM: Community Development Department

APPLICATION REQUEST:

PPM2019-0005: Application to review the site plan, architecture, and signage associated with the construction of a 48,413 square foot four-story hotel containing 122 rooms proposed on 5.02 acres located on the south side of Tom Barnes Street, east of Interstate 15 in the Commercial Center designation of the El Cerrito Specific Plan (Applicant: Aaron Packard, Gold Coast Properties CA1, LLC, 16155 SW 11th Avenue, Unit B2, Miami, FL 33177).

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

That the Planning and Housing Commission adopt Resolution No. 2548 **GRANTING PPM2019-0005** based on the findings contained in the staff report and conditions of approval.

PROJECT SITE SUMMARY

Area of Property: 5.02 acres

Existing Zoning: Commercial Center designation, El Cerrito Specific Plan (SP91-02)

Existing General Plan: General Commercial

Existing Land Use: Vacant Commercial

Proposed Land Use: Hotel

Surrounding Zoning/Land Uses:

N: Light Industrial (El Cerrito Specific Plan) / Vacant Industrial

E: Commercial Center (El Cerrito Specific Plan) / Vacant Commercial

S: Interstate 15 Freeway and Commercial Center (El Cerrito Specific Plan) / Vacant Industrial

W: Interstate 15 Freeway

BACKGROUND

The purpose of PPM2019-0005 is to review the site plan, architecture, landscaping and signage associated with a 48,413 square foot four-story hotel containing 122 rooms located on a vacant 5.02-acre pad within The Crossings in the Commercial Center (CC) designation of the El Cerrito Specific Plan (SP91-02). The hotel was originally contemplated in The Crossings commercial center Environmental Impact Report (EIR) certified by the City Council on April 17, 2002. The Crossings is

a comprehensively planned commercial center on 113.5 acres located adjacent to Interstate 15, north of Cajalco Road and west of Temescal Canyon Road.

A 79,545 square foot four-story hotel with 121 rooms was previously entitled on the project site in 2008. The tenant for the hotel was Hilton Garden Inn and the project featured a similar layout as the current proposal in terms of the building, parking lot, and access locations. The hotel, however, was not constructed and the entitlement expired in 2010.

The current application, PPM2019-0005, is for a WoodSprings Suites, which is an extended stay hotel. The application was reviewed by staff at the Project and Environmental Review Committee meeting on July 11, 2019. The applicant was issued an application incomplete letter due to missing application items. The applicant over time submitted the required application materials to staff with the application finally considered complete on December 30, 2019 and was cleared for public hearing before the Planning and Housing Commission.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Site Plan

As shown in Exhibit A, the building is centrally located on the project site with parking spaces located along the perimeters of the pad and around the building. The building's front entrance is located on the east side facing Tuscany Street. Trash enclosures are provided in the parking lot behind the building to the west. The building's location complies with all applicable building setbacks prescribed by the El Cerrito Specific Plan for developments proposed within the CC designation, including a special 50-foot setback to the freeway right-of-way. The project meets this requirement by providing a distance of 140 feet from the freeway right-of-way.

Architecture

The architecture proposed for the hotel reflects its signature look for the WoodSpring Suites chain. The hotel does implement materials and colors that are consistent with the existing commercial buildings within the Crossings center. The specific plan does not prescribe a specific architectural theme for buildings in the CC designation. As shown by the applicant's colored elevation plans in Exhibit D, the building's exterior finish consists primarily of horizontal siding with stone veneer which is applied along the bottom portion of the building. The roof design is a cross gable style concrete barrel shaped tiles in a charcoal color. The black and white elevation plans, however, indicate asphalt shingles as the roofing material. The Community Development Department is requiring the roofing material to be concrete tiles which is a better quality, aesthetically attractive and consistent with materials used on other commercial buildings in the vicinity and in general the city. Therefore, a condition of approval reflecting this requirement is included in the project's conditions of approval in Exhibit B to ensure that there is no confusion over the required roofing material during the plancheck process. The building's entrance features a covered structure consisting of wood beams and stone veneer columns. The building has an overall height of approximately 49 feet, which is below the 55-foot building height limit established for commercial buildings within the CC designation. The elevation plans and color/material palette are attached as Exhibit D.

Floor Plan

Exhibit C depicts the hotel's floor plans. The main entrance is located on the east side of the building. Secondary access points are located on the west side of the building as well as at the north and south wings of the building. As shown on the first floor plan, the hotel includes a lobby with a registration area at the entrance. Beyond the lobby area is a staff laundry room, miscellaneous employee rooms, a fitness room, guest laundry room and guestrooms. Additional guestrooms are located on the second, third, and fourth floors. As WoodSpring Suites is an extended stay hotel, each guestroom will include a sink and a two-burner cooktop.

Landscaping

Per the applicant's conceptual landscape plan in Exhibit E, trees are being provided along the perimeters of the site's parking lot and at the north and south ends of the building. The plant palette for the parking lot and around the building also includes a variety of shrubs and ornamental grasses. All plant materials are required to be drought tolerant. Three-foot high shrubs will be installed along the project frontage as a headlight buffer for vehicles parked perpendicular to Tuscany Street. As the plan is only conceptual at this time, all plant materials are not graphically shown on the plan, particularly along the perimeters of the site which only depicts trees. To ensure that these areas will receive additional landscaping such as shrubs, groundcover, and other ornamental landscape materials, a condition of approval is added to the conditions of approval to reflect this requirement.

A water quality management basin (WQMP) is proposed along the project frontage between the parking lot and Tuscany Street. The purpose of the basin is to capture and treat surface water from the project site before allowing the water to enter into the city's drainage system. The basin will contain landscape materials that are appropriate for water quality management basins.

The site has an existing slope along the west perimeter adjacent to I-15 that is approximately 35 feet in height which was originally landscaped at the time the Crossings center was developed. The applicant is installing additional landscaping along the base of the slope consisting of palm trees and shrubs to enhance the site and slope. The rest of the slope area will remain in its existing landscaped condition. The slope is a part of the common area maintenance within the entire Crossings center.

The applicant is required to submit landscape plans to the city for plancheck which will be reviewed by the applicable city departments in greater detail during this process for compliance with the city's landscape requirements under Chapter 17.70 of the CMC and the El Cerrito Specific Plan.

Signage

The project's signage is attached as Exhibit F. Wall signage is proposed on the north, south, and east sides of the building. Each sign is approximately 95 square feet in size. Per the El Cerrito Specific Plan, wall signs in the CC designation is allowed at a ratio of 1.25 square foot of sign area per one linear foot of building elevation. Based on the linear measurement of the hotel's east elevation which is 243 feet, a maximum of 303 square feet of signage is allowed on the east elevation. Therefore, the proposed 95 square foot sign on this elevation complies with the specific plan's sign standard. The north side of the building has a linear measurement of approximately 48 feet as well as the south side. Thus, the north and south sides of the building are limited to no more

than 60 square feet of signage per elevation. The project is conditioned to reduce the 95 square foot signs proposed on these two elevations to no more than 60 square feet per elevation. This requirement is reflected on the project's conditions of approval in Exhibit B.

Two directional signs are proposed at the two parking lot entrances of the project site to guide guests into the site from Tuscany Street. Each directional sign is 5 feet high and has a sign face area of 8 square feet. The specific plan permits directional signs up to 5 feet in height with a maximum sign face area of 25 square feet. Therefore, the proposed directional signs comply with the sign standards. The sign standards, however, indicate that directional signs shall be consistent in terms of design and material as the other directional signs within the commercial center. Staff has determined that even though the hotel is technically located within the Crossing commercial center and takes access from an internal roadway within the commercial center, the hotel site is located within its own separate pad and is not part of the retail shops. The hotel is also isolated towards the northeast corner of the commercial center. Therefore, a different design for the directional signs would be acceptable in this case.

The hotel will be sharing pylon signage with The Crossings. The pylon sign program for the center was recently revised to accommodate the widening changes that occurred on the Cajalco Road and Interstate 15 interchange near the center. Freeway signage is still available for the center along Interstate 15.

ACCESS, CIRCULATION AND PARKING

The Crossings primary access is from Grand Oaks via Cajalco Road. An internal private road, Tuscany Street, provides additional circulation within the center and is the point of access for the project site in addition to Tom Barnes Street. Tom Barnes Street is located north of The Crossings and will provide secondary access to the hotel site. Internal circulation is facilitated by 25 to 30 foot wide drive aisle. Vehicular circulation throughout the site is adequate and sufficient sight distance is provided at all internal sections and corners. Also, the Public Works Department is requiring paved vehicular access to three existing sewer manholes that are located near the bottom of the slope at the west perimeter of the site.

The hotel is required to provide parking based on a ratio of one parking space per room plus two spaces for the manager's office for a total of 124 spaces. The hotel site provides 144 parking spaces which are all contained on the project site.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

Per Section 15162 of the State Guidelines for Implementing the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), no subsequent environmental evaluation is required when an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) has been certified for a project and no substantial changes have been made to the project. On April 17, 2002, the city certified the Crossings EIR which analyzed the 113.5-acre Crossings commercial center. The analysis included the project site and a 120-room hotel. The current proposal is a 122-room hotel, which is not considered a substantial change from what was originally analyzed in the EIR. Therefore, the current proposal is not expected to result in new significant environmental effects from what was previously analyzed in the EIR. Therefore, a Notice of Exemption was prepared for the project which is attached as Exhibit H.

FISCAL IMPACT

The applicant paid \$5,436.00 in application processing fees.

PUBLIC NOTICE AND COMMENTS

A 10-day public notice was mailed to all property owners within a 500-foot radius of the project site, as well as advertised in the Sentinel Weekly News and posted at the project site. As of the preparation of this report, the Community Development Department has not received any responses from the public.

STAFF ANALYSIS

The project is consistent with the CC designation of the El Cerrito Specific Plan because it provides an attractive hotel building that is intended to meet the needs of residents and travelers on Interstate 15. The proposed project is an essential component to the Crossings commercial center because the various commercial enterprises capitalize on patrons of the hotel through shopping, recreation, and commerce.

The project adheres to the development standards of the CC designation pertaining to building setbacks, building height, landscaping, and parking. The architecture proposed complements the commercial buildings within the Crossing commercial center. The project fulfills several General Plan policies related to providing a range of uses and goods to support the needs of Corona's residents, generating jobs, and maintaining revenue-generating land uses to help the city maintain a competitive edge and a strong sales tax base. Therefore, based on the following findings and the conditions of approval in Exhibit B, PPM2019-0005 is recommended for approval.

FINDINGS OF APPROVAL FOR PPM2019-0005

1. A preliminary exemption assessment has been conducted by the City of Corona and it has shown that this project does not require further environmental assessment because the project was previously evaluated under the Crossings Environmental Impact Report (EIR) which was certified April 17, 2002. The previous EIR included the project site and a 120-room hotel in its analysis. The current proposal is a 122-room hotel and is not considered a substantial change from what was originally analyzed. Therefore, the current proposal is not expected to result in new significant environmental effects from what was previously analyzed in the EIR.
2. All the conditions necessary to granting a Precise Plan as set forth in Section 17.91 of the Corona Municipal Code do exist in reference to PPM2019-0005 for the following reasons:
 - a. *The proposal is consistent with the General Commercial land use designation of the General Plan because this land use is intended for commercial uses.*
 - b. *The proposal complies with the Commercial Center designation of the El Cerrito Specific Plan because hotels are a permitted use.*
 - c. *The proposal has been reviewed in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and all applicable requirements and procedures of the act have been followed. As justified in Finding # 1, the project is exempted from further review under CEQA as the project site was previously analyzed under The Crossings Environmental Impact Report which was certified by the City of Corona on April 17, 2002. The proposed project is not expected to result in any significant impacts to the*

- environment.
- d. *The site is of a sufficient size and configuration to accommodate the design and scale of proposed development, including buildings and elevations, landscaping, parking and other physical features of the proposal, as demonstrated in Exhibit A of this report.*
 - e. *The design, scale and layout of the proposed development will not unreasonably interfere with the use and enjoyment of neighboring existing or future developments, will not create traffic or pedestrian hazards, and will not otherwise have a negative impact on the aesthetics, health, safety or welfare of neighboring uses because the proposal complies with the City's development standards for properties located within the Commercial Center designation of the El Cerrito Specific Plan.*
 - f. *The architectural design of the proposed development is compatible with the character of the surrounding commercial buildings, will enhance the visual character of the neighborhood by improving vacant undeveloped property, and will provide for harmonious, orderly and attractive development of the site which is demonstrated by this application.*
 - g. *The design of the proposed development will provide a desirable environment for its occupants and visiting public as well as its neighbors through good aesthetic use of materials, texture, and color that is aesthetically appealing and will retain a reasonably adequate level of maintenance as demonstrated by the applicant's plans for this application.*

3. The proposal is consistent with the General Plan for the following reasons:

- a. *The proposed hotel project is consistent with the project site's General Plan designation of General Commercial which is intended for various commercial, retail and service related uses.*
- b. *The project meets the intent of General Plan Policy 1.1.1 which is to accommodate uses that support the diverse needs of Corona's residents including opportunities for living, commercial, employment, recreation, education, culture, entertainment, civic engagement, and social and spiritual activity that are in balance with natural open spaces because the hotel is being located within an existing regional commercial center that already provides various retail establishments, eating places and entertainment .*
- c. *The project meets the intent of General Plan Policy 1.1.2 which is to emphasize the development of uses that sustain Corona as a cohesive, distinct, and self-sustaining community and minimize the need for Corona's residents to travel to surrounding communities for retail goods, services, and employment because the hotel will accommodate the visiting public.*
- d. *The project meets the intent of General Plan Policy 1.2.9 which is to promote the development of new jobs by generating uses along the freeway corridors to maximize visibility because the hotel will increase the city's service population by providing more job opportunity.*
- e. *The project meets the intent of General Plan Policy 1.11.1 which is to encourage a comprehensive range of retail, services, and other commercial uses in the City that provide goods and services to meet the diverse needs of Corona's residents and businesses as the hotel expands upon services needed in the city.*
- f. *The project meets the intent of General Plan Policy 5.4.1 which is to encourage the expansion of visitor-serving opportunities by encouraging an appropriate mix of revenue-generating land uses to maintain a competitive edge and a strong sales tax*

base because the hotel will accommodate the visiting public.

4. The proposal is consistent with granting criteria for precise plans under Section 14.6.4 of the El Cerrito Specific Plan for the following reasons:

a. The proposed project conforms to the General Plan, the El Cerrito Specific Plan, and all provisions of the Corona Municipal Code for the following reasons.

- i. The project site is designated General Commercial on the General Plan land use map which accommodates various commercial uses.*
- ii. The proposed project is a four-story hotel which is a permitted use in the Commercial Center designation of the El Cerrito Specific Plan. The project is designed to comply with the building setbacks, building height, landscaping, and parking requirements of the El Cerrito Specific Plan and Corona Municipal Code as demonstrated by this application.*

b. The project will not unnecessarily remove trees, will preserve natural landforms and ridgelines, does not include excessive or unsightly grading of hillsides and otherwise will not adversely affect the natural beauty of the City for the following reason:

- i. The project site is currently a vacant pad located within an existing developed commercial site. Development of the project will not unnecessarily remove trees from the site as the pad is primarily a dirt pad that was previously graded at the time The Crossings center was developed and used as a staging area for equipment. The development will not impact the landscaping within the existing westerly slope that borders Interstate 15 which was installed at the time of the development of the Crossing center.*

c. The project will not adversely affect the views, sunlight, or privacy of any nearby residences because the project is not located nearby or adjacent to any existing land uses, provides adequate buffering between residential and non-residential uses, and otherwise is in the best interest of the public health, safety, and general welfare for the following reason:

- i. The project site is zoned commercial and surrounded by non-residential land uses located in the same zone and vacant property to the north that is zoned light industrial.*

d. The structure, site plan, and landscaping are in scale and harmony with existing and future development adjacent to the site, and in the vicinity and with the landforms and vegetation in the vicinity of the site.

- i. The proposed hotel has a building height of approximately 49 which is compatible with the structures within the commercial center. The tallest in-line tenant building within the commercial center is 45 feet with the tallest architectural feature at approximately 65 feet. Furthermore, the hotel is appropriately situated at the northwesterly corner of the commercial center by Interstate 15. The hotel's location, the landscaping and overall site design*

complement and enhance the commercial center.

- e. The structure, site plan, and landscaping create an internal sense of order, provide a visually pleasing setting for occupants, visitors and the general community, are appropriate to the function of the site, and provide safe and convenient access to the property for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles.*
 - i. As demonstrated by this application and the applicant's plans, development of the project site includes the construction of a private sidewalk along Tuscany Street along the project's frontage to allow for safe pedestrian access between the existing commercial center and hotel site. In addition, two points of vehicular access will be provided to the site for ingress and egress. The project site will have landscaping throughout, and the architecture of the hotel complements the retail buildings in terms of materials, colors, and building height. The overall design and layout of the project will provide a visually pleasing setting for occupants, visitors and the general community.*
 - f. To the maximum extent feasible, the project includes the maintenance, rehabilitation and improvement of existing sites, structures and landscaping, and will correct any violations of the zoning ordinance, building code, or other provisions of the Municipal Code that exist on the site.*
 - i. The project site is an undeveloped pad with no zoning or building code violations.*
 - g. The design and location of the signs are consistent with the character and scale of the buildings to which they are attached or which are located on the same site, and the signs are visually harmonious with surrounding development and there are no illegal signs on the site.*
 - i. The proposed hotel will be developed in its own pad separate from other commercial buildings within the Crossing center. The signage proposed of the project are visually harmonious with the design of the hotel in terms of color and location, and there are no illegal signs currently erected on the project site.*
5. The proposed development is compatible with and enhances the design of existing buildings and other physical features of the site as demonstrated by this application.

PREPARED BY: SANDRA YANG, SENIOR PLANNER

SUBMITTED BY: JOANNE COLETTA, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

EXHIBITS

1. Resolution No. 2548
2. Locational and Zoning Map.
3. Exhibit A - Site Plan and Conceptual Grading Plan.
4. Exhibit B - Conditions of Approval.
5. Exhibit C - Floor Plans.
6. Exhibit D - Elevations Plans.
7. Exhibit E - Conceptual Landscape Plan.
8. Exhibit F - Signage.
9. Exhibit G - Applicant's letter dated June 12, 2019 regarding the project.
10. Exhibit H - Environmental Documentation.

Case Planner: Sandra Yang (951) 736-2262