



Legislation Text

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**PLANNING AND HOUSING COMMISSION  
STAFF REPORT**

DATE: 05/08/2023

TO: Honorable Chair and Commissioners

FROM: Planning and Development Department

**APPLICATION REQUEST:**

**CUP2021-0004 (CONTINUED):** A Conditional Use Permit application to allow a drive-through and walk-up window coffee shop (Starbucks) within an existing commercial center located at the southeast corner of Green River Road and Dominguez Ranch Road in the Neighborhood Commercial District of the Sierra Del Oro Specific Plan. (Applicant: Jessica Steiner of Bickel Group Architecture)

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

**That the Planning and Housing Commission** find the project exempted from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15303(c), and adopt Resolution No. 2605 GRANTING CUP2021-0004, based on the findings contained in the staff report and conditions of approval.

**PROJECT SITE SUMMARY**

**Area of Property:** 0.39 acres

**Existing Zoning:** NCD (Neighborhood Commercial District) of the Sierra Del Oro Specific Plan (SP85-02)

**Existing General Plan:** GC (General Commercial)

**Existing Land Use:** Undeveloped

**Proposed Land Use:** Drive-through and walk-up coffee shop

**Surrounding Zoning / Land Uses:**

**N:** Green River Road and Railroad Right-of-Way / BNSF Railway and beyond

**E:** NCD of SP85-02 / Commercial center

**S:** NCD of SP85-02 / Commercial center

**W:** NCD of SP85-02 / Restaurant with drive-through

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Project Site History**

The project site is a 0.39-acre (16,910 square feet) commercial parcel that is located within the Green River Promenade commercial center. The commercial center is located at the southeast corner of Green River Road and Dominguez Ranch Road and was originally constructed in the early 1990s under Precise Plan 91-08. The proposed project is located on a vacant pad at the northeast corner of the center's retail area (Exhibit 2). Based on the center's 1991 precise plan, the pad was originally intended to accommodate a 4,000-square-foot restaurant building. The intended building pad was rough graded but has not yet been developed.

### **Prior Public Hearings**

The project was initially reviewed by the Planning and Housing Commission at its meeting on February 21, 2023. The Commission raised concerns regarding the drive-through design, which originally featured a single drive-through lane with a total stacking capacity for 14 vehicles (Exhibit 5). The Commission also raised concerns regarding the number of parking spaces removed for the project, the drive-through design creating on-site congestion within the parking lot drive aisles, and whether alternative drive-through site designs were considered to address queueing concerns. As such, the Commission continued the public hearing to March 20, 2023, and subsequently to April 10, 2023, to allow more time for the applicant and staff to evaluate the concerns.

At the April 10, 2023 public hearing, staff presented to the Commission four "alternative site designs" provided by the applicant. Each alternative design was discussed, and the challenges and shortcomings were highlighted in comparison to the original proposal. The Commission again expressed concerns regarding the original proposal's queueing at the single drive-through lane and the potential impact to the on-site circulation. The Commission inquired about preserving the first drive-aisle located immediately to the south of the Starbucks pad, and suggested that the applicant consider a layout similar to the Starbucks design in the City of Grand Terrace, which has dual drive-through lanes with a total stacking capacity for 17 vehicles. At the applicant's request, the Commission continued the project to the public hearing on April 24, 2023, and subsequently to May 8, 2023, to give the applicant time to address the concerns.

### **Revised Site Plan**

In response to the Commission's concerns, the applicant revised the site plan to include dual drive-through lanes that have a total stacking capacity for 18 vehicles (Exhibit 6). The new dual lane design emulates the layout of the Starbucks site design in the City of Grand Terrace. The new design provides stacking space for 4 additional vehicles in the drive-through lane when compared to the original site design.

In order to accommodate the dual drive-through lanes, changes had to be made to the project site. First, the bioretention basin that was originally proposed on the east side of the building to manage and treat onsite drainage was removed in order to accommodate the dual lanes. The applicant is

now proposing to use pervious pavement in various locations within the project site to manage and treat onsite drainage. These areas, which are highlighted in the color "green" in Exhibit 8, include the drive-through lanes and portions of the parking lots located to the northwest and south of the Starbucks building. Second, two (2) parking spaces from the original site plan had to be removed in order to accommodate the dual entrance, which reduces the number of surplus parking spaces from 7 to 5. Because of the surplus, the site still complies with the City's parking requirements, as shown in the updated Parking Table in Exhibit 9. Parking is discussed in detail under the "Parking" section of this report.

The City does not use shared parking analysis to determine parking requirements for projects that are less than 20 acres in size, and therefore the required parking is determined solely on whether the minimum number of spaces for each tenant are provided. However, parking counts conducted to identify existing utilization of a center can help the Commission understand whether a particular use would impact an existing shopping center, as a survey of existing conditions can help illustrate the needs of existing businesses. Therefore, for the Commission's consideration, attached to this report are parking counts conducted by AimTD in October 2021, which was commissioned by the applicant's traffic engineer, Linscott Law and Greenspan (LLG). LLG also conducted additional counts in April 2023, which were done to reassess/update the peak hour demand identified in the 2021 survey (Exhibit 21).

Per the applicant, the preservation of the existing parking lot drive-aisle located immediately south of the Starbucks pad was evaluated. However, keeping the additional drive-aisle would reduce the area available for the drive-through lane, making it infeasible to provide the longer stacking/queue depth requested by the Commission. Also, keeping the additional drive-aisle could create conflicting movements with the main site access drive aisle, as well as with vehicles wanting to access the drive-through lane. Furthermore, the property owner has expressed concern with keeping the first drive-aisle, regardless of the proposed Starbucks project, because drivers frequently utilize it to avoid the speed bumps located on the main drive-aisle, which were installed to reduce vehicle speed and discourage cut through traffic by drivers wishing to avoid traffic on Green River Road.

Staff believes that the updated dual lane site design addresses most of the Commission's concerns and accommodates the operational needs of Starbucks. The dual lane design increases the drive-through stacking by 4 vehicles (18 total), and compared to the original design. The design would have the ability to accommodate all vehicles based on projected during peak hours. And should there be a demand greater than that forecasted, the site is capable of supporting vehicles beyond the drive-through entry without impacting public streets. And finally, the updated design has a minimal reduction in parking, such that it maintains conformance with the City's parking requirements.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

CUP2021-0004 is an application to construct a 966-square-foot drive-through and walk-up coffee shop for Starbucks, within an existing commercial center located at the southeast corner of Green River Road and Dominguez Ranch Road. The project site is zoned NCD (Neighborhood Commercial District) by the Sierra Del Oro Specific Plan. The NCD zone requires conditional use permit (CUP) approval for drive-through restaurants.

## **Overall Site Plan**

The project site is located on the northern portion of the commercial center, adjacent to Green River Road. The southernmost portion of the commercial center contains the center's main building with in-line tenants. To the east of the project site is an office park consisting of 11 office buildings, and to the west is a drive-through restaurant, and a gasoline service station with a convenience store.

The existing Green River Promenade development is comprised of three components, including a retail shopping center, office park, and an adult daycare (east of the office park). All of these uses share three driveways along Green River Road, and one driveway on Dominguez Ranch Road. The proposed project will be accessible from any of the shared driveways.

The shopping center has a common parking lot area that is centrally located to serve the center's in-line tenants and restaurant pads.

Note that the Overall Site Plan in Exhibit 3 depicts the original site design featuring a single drive-through lane. The Conditions of Approval in Exhibit 4 require the applicant to update the site plan to reflect the latest revised site design with the dual drive-through lanes for plan check submittal.

## **Site Plan**

The proposed Starbucks building is set back approximately 36 feet from the center's property line at Green River Road, which exceeds the Specific Plan's 10-foot setback requirement. The pad is elevated approximately 12 feet higher than Green River's roadway, and the existing sloped setback is fully landscaped.

The coffee shop will provide drive-through and walk-up services. There is no interior or outdoor seating proposed. The drive-through lane entrance is located on the south side of the building. The lane circulates along the east and north sides of the building and exits into the center's parking lot. The order board and pick-up window are located on the east and north sides of the building, respectively. The drive-through lane has a total vehicle stacking capacity for 18 vehicles from the drive-through window. The lane accommodates 11 vehicles after the menu board with the dual lane design, which meets the Code's minimum stacking requirement for drive-through establishments.

The walk-up window is located on the south side of the building, opposite of the drive-through window. Customers can walk up to a coffee shop window to order or pick-up drinks, pastries, and prepackaged food items.

The applicant is proposing to construct a new trash enclosure in the parking lot, to the west of the coffee shop building. The trash enclosure will be constructed of cement block and plastered to match the color and finish of the Starbucks building. The enclosure will also be topped with a solid metal roof, and the opening above the block wall will be secured with a flat wire mesh (Exhibit 18).

The Green River Promenade currently has 476 striped parking spaces. Starbucks' new dual lane

design will remove 40 parking spaces and replace 21, resulting in a net loss of 19 parking spaces (a total of 457 spaces will be provided). Two of the 21 replacement parking spaces are located behind the building at 4300 Green River. The project as currently proposed will comply with the parking requirements required by the Corona Municipal Code, which includes a minimum of 452 parking spaces. Parking is discussed in detail under the "Parking" section of this report.

## **Floor Plan and Operations**

Per the applicant's floor plan, the building will house an employee restroom, workroom area, and backbar. The workroom area consists of freezers, an employee rest area, a manager's desk, refrigerators, and shelving racks. The backbar is the kitchen area, which includes the coffee machines, cash registers, and all other necessities required to serve coffee customers. The floor plan is a standard Starbucks configuration for their small quick-serve restaurants, and is attached as Exhibit 14 for reference.

## **Architecture**

The applicant is proposing a building design that maintains Starbucks' familiar "look" and functional elements, and is compatible with the shopping center's existing architecture, which consists of beige stucco walls, flat rooflines and tower elements covered with "S-shaped" roof tiles.

The proposed Starbucks building has beige colored stucco walls on all four sides, and is accented with brownish colored stone veneer on the north and west elevations. The roofline is comprised of parapet walls with varying heights, which add visual interest to the upper portion of the building. The parapet walls also screen rooftop mechanical equipment. Metal awnings are provided over the drive-through and walk-up windows, which are intended to accentuate the windows and shield customers from inclement weather. Light fixtures are mounted on the north and south elevations to provide illumination at the drive-through and walk-up windows. The elevation plans and material board are attached as Exhibits 15 and 16. Photographs of the commercial center and office park are attached as Exhibit 17.

Project signage is conceptually shown on the exterior of the building and consists of green colored directional signs and simple Starbucks logo signs. Signage will be required to comply with the signage requirements per the Sierra Del Oro Specific Plan and will be reviewed in detail by the Planning staff at the time of permit issuance.

## **Landscaping**

The project site will be landscaped as shown in Exhibit 19. A mixture of shrubs and trees are proposed within the project site. Deciduous and evergreen trees will be placed along the drive-through lane, which will create interest and soften the view of the proposed building. The plan also includes three-foot high shrubs along the outer edge of the drive-through lane, which will minimize headlights of vehicles in the drive-through from shining into Green River Road. All new landscape plant materials proposed for the project site are required to be California-friendly. There are existing mature palm trees and various flowering shrubs located adjacent to the site's north and east

perimeters, which will remain in place.

Although the landscape plan still depicts the original site design, the Conditions of Approval (Exhibit 4) require the applicant to update the landscape plan to reflect the updated site design with the dual drive-through lanes at time of plan check submittal.

### **Parking**

The coffee shop's parking requirement is based on the parking ratios that were in effect at the time the commercial center was entitled (1991) and as allowed by the Corona Municipal Code. The established 1991 parking ratios for the center are as follows:

- General Retail and Office: 1 space per 375 square feet of floor area.
- Restaurants and Eating Establishments: 1 space per 125 square feet of floor area.

Because Starbucks is not technically a restaurant with dine-in services, and only provides to-go services, staff applied the retail parking ratio of 1:375, which requires three parking spaces for the project. Using the retail parking ratio for this Starbucks model is consistent with other food services that provide "grab and go" items, like a donut shop. Staff prepared an updated parking analysis for the center based on existing uses and the proposed project. The center requires 452 parking spaces, and 457 parking spaces will be provided after the construction of Starbucks. The updated parking table is provided as Exhibit 9.

### **Traffic Impact Analysis**

A Traffic Impact Assessment (TIA) was prepared by Linscott Law & Greenspan (LL&G) Engineers (November 11, 2021) for the project and reviewed by the Public Works Department's Traffic Division. The TIA outlines the potential traffic impacts the proposed project is anticipated to contribute to the surrounding transportation system. The assessment provides analysis related to the traffic generation forecast, site access, and queuing for the proposed coffee shop.

#### *Traffic Generation Forecast:*

The proposed coffee shop is anticipated to generate 213 daily trips, with approximately 81 trips in the AM peak hour and 20 trips in the PM peak hour. Per the project traffic engineer, LL&G, the project's anticipated daily trip generation during the AM and PM peak hours is not anticipated to significantly impact the surrounding transportation system.

#### *Site Access Analysis:*

The TIA analyzed the three (3) existing entrances on Green River Road and Dominguez Ranch Road during AM and PM peak hours.

- Driveway 1 at Green River Road
- Driveway 2 at Green River Road
- Driveway 3 at Dominguez Ranch Road

All three (3) driveways are expected to operate at “buildout” at a Level of Service (LOS) of C or better during the AM and PM peak hours. An evaluation at buildout is based on an assumption of traffic volumes when the center is fully constructed, leased and operational. As it relates to LOS, the City’s General Plan considers a LOS D and better as acceptable. For reference, LOS is measured on a scale of A to F, with A being the best (unrestricted low) and F as the worst (traffic jam).

*Queuing Analysis:*

The queuing at three existing Starbucks were analyzed to help determine the project’s anticipated queueing capacity. Two of the locations are in Corona (4718 Green River Road and 480 N. Main Street), and one is in the City of Orange (1630 E. Chapman Avenue). In terms of queuing, the City of Orange location is most similar to the proposed project, in that it provides only drive-through and walk-up services. The Orange location is located at an intersection of two arterial roadways, not far from SR-55 and SR-22 freeways.

The queuing surveys were conducted on a Thursday, which represents a typical weekday, and on a Saturday, which represents a typical weekend day. The analysis indicated the following:

Weekday (Thursday: 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., and 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.)

- On average, a queue of 7 vehicles in the drive-through lane can be expected during the morning, midday, and evening peak periods;
- 85 percent of the drive-through customers will wait in a line no longer than 12 vehicles; and
- 95 percent of the drive-through customers will wait in a line no longer than 14 vehicles.

Weekend (Saturday: 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. & 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.)

- On average, a queue of 9 vehicles in the drive-through lane can be expected during the morning, midday, and evening peak periods;
- 85 percent of the drive-through customers will wait in a line no longer than 14 vehicles; and
- 95 percent of the drive-through customers will wait in a line no longer than 17 vehicles.

According to the queuing analysis, it is anticipated that 95 percent of the project’s drive-through customers will wait in line of 17 vehicles or less. The TIA notes that “the 85<sup>th</sup>” percentile queue is generally the industry standard utilized when designing the length of a drive-through lane. As the revised site plan accommodates an 18-vehicle stacking capacity at the drive-through, this latest design provides enough stacking capacity to meet the expected demand of the drive-through customers.

In the event that vehicles overflow into the parking lot during peak times, LL&G recommends that Starbucks employees place cones at the south end of the parking lot’s drive aisle, and direct vehicles to access the drive-through lane from the north. This would mitigate any potential impacts at the site’s main drive aisle, which accommodates the commercial center’s through-traffic. The recommended on-site traffic management plan is shown in Exhibit 20. The City Traffic Engineer has reviewed and approved the on-site traffic management plan.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS**

Per Section 15303(c) of the State Guidelines for the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and Section 3.27 of the City's Local CEQA Guidelines, a Notice of Exemption has been prepared for the project because the project qualifies as a Class 3 categorical exemption (New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures), as the project consists of a new 966-square-foot coffee shop with drive-through and walk-up services only (no indoor or outdoor seating), within an existing commercial center. The Notice of Exemption is attached as Exhibit 22.

## **FISCAL IMPACT**

The applicant has paid the applicable application processing fees for the conditional use permit.

## **PUBLIC NOTICE AND COMMENTS**

Prior to the February 6, 2023, Planning and Housing Commission meeting, a 10-day public notice was mailed to all property owners within a 500-foot radius of the project site, advertised in the Sentinel Weekly News, and posted at the project site. Re-noticing of the project was not required because the Commission has continued the proposals to specific dates.

The Planning and Development Department previously received one phone call in support of the project from the business One Stop Liquor, and one email correspondence in support of the project from the business West Corona Dentistry (Exhibit 11). Both businesses are tenants within the shopping center.

As of the preparation of this updated staff report, the Planning and Development Department has received a signed petition (Exhibit 12) in support of the proposal from members of the public and tenants within the center supporting; and an email opposing the project from a person asking to remain anonymous (Exhibit 13).

## **STAFF ANALYSIS**

The project site has been vacant since the commercial center was constructed in the early 1990s. Development of the proposed project would complete the center as originally intended under the 1991 precise plan. The design of the project complies with the development standards in the Sierra Del Oro Specific Plan for commercial developments and meets the development standards established for drive-through establishments under Section 17.33.110 in the Corona Municipal Code.

The design of the building utilizes colors and materials that are compatible with the adjacent commercial buildings and nearby office park. The landscape proposed for the project will further enhance the site and surrounding area. The project site has adequate vehicular access from the shared driveways located within the commercial center, and the traffic generated by the drive-through service is expected to be minimal. The site is an infill property with infrastructure already in place to adequately serve the project.

The drive-through activities associated with the project are not anticipated to create any noise or glare issues for the nearest residential uses, as they are situated on a hillside to the south of the commercial center, and the existing building serves as a buffer for the project. There will also be three-foot high shrubs placed between the drive-through lane and Green River Road to mitigate

headlight glare from the drive-through lane.

CUP2021-0004 is consistent with General Plan Policies LU-1.1 and LU-1.2 because it supports the diverse needs of Corona's residents by accommodating a use that will help sustain Corona as a cohesive, distinct, and self-sustaining community, and minimize the need for Corona's residents to travel to surrounding communities for services and employment.

The Planning & Development Department recommends approval of CUP2021-0004, based on the findings listed below and staff's recommended conditions of approval (Exhibit 4).

## **FINDINGS OF APPROVAL FOR CUP2021-0004**

1. The City of Corona has determined that this project is exempted from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant Section 15303(c) of the State Guidelines for Implementing CEQA and Section 3.27 of the City's Local CEQA Guidelines, because the project qualifies as a Class 3 categorical exemption (New Construction and Small Conversions). The proposed project consists of a new 966-square-foot coffee shop with drive-through and walk-up services only (no indoor or outdoor seating), within an existing commercial center.
2. All the conditions necessary for granting a Conditional Use Permit as set forth in Section 17.92.110 of the Corona Municipal Code do exist in reference to CUP2021-0004 for the following reasons:
  - a. *The proposed use will not be detrimental to the public health, safety, convenience, and general welfare and is in harmony with the goals and policies of the City's General Plan, as the proposal supports the diverse needs of Corona's residents. The proposed project meets or exceeds the development standards of the Corona Municipal Code and the Sierra Del Oro Specific Plan for the Neighborhood Commercial District in terms of setbacks, building height limitation, parking, landscaping, and overall site design. The project also meets the city's established development standards in the Corona Municipal Code for drive-through establishments. Furthermore, the project has adequate vehicular access from Green River Road and Dominguez Ranch Road from established driveways into the commercial center.*
  - b. *The proposed use would not be detrimental to other existing and permitted uses in the general area because the project site is located within an existing and fully improved commercial center and is capable of accommodating the proposed coffee shop with walk-up and drive-through services. The project also has adequate vehicular access from the adjacent streets which are fully improved and capable of handling the traffic associated with the use.*
  - c. *The project is subject to the Conditions of Approval attached as Exhibit 4, which are necessary and desirable for the purpose of protecting public health, safety, convenience, and general welfare of the public, in accordance with the intent and purpose of the City's zoning regulations.*

3. The proposal is consistent with the General Plan for the following reasons:
  - a. *CUP2021-0004 is consistent with the project site's General Plan land use designation of General Commercial.*
  - b. *The proposed project is consistent with General Plan Policies LU-1.1 and LU-1.2 because it supports the diverse needs of Corona's residents by accommodating a use that will help sustain Corona as a cohesive, distinct, and self-sustaining community, and minimize the need for Corona's residents to travel to surrounding communities for services and employment.*
4. The proposal is consistent with Neighborhood Commercial District designation of the Sierra Del Oro Specific Plan (SP85-02) for the following reasons:
  - a. *The proposed use complies with the Neighborhood Commercial District designation of the Sierra Del Oro Specific Plan as coffee shops with drive-through services are permitted by a conditional use permit.*
  - b. *The proposed use complies with the development standards of the Sierra Del Oro Specific Plan, with respect to setbacks, minimum parking requirements and access, as demonstrated by the project plans attached to CUP2021-0004.*

**PREPARED BY:** RAFAEL TORRES, ASSISTANT PLANNER

**REVIEWED BY:** SANDRA YANG, SENIOR PLANNER

**REVIEWED BY:** JAY EASTMAN, PLANNING MANAGER

**SUBMITTED BY:** JOANNE COLETTA, PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

#### EXHIBITS

1. Resolution No. 2605
2. Aerial and Locational Map
3. Overall Site Plan of Commercial Center
4. Conditions of Approval
5. Original Site Plan - February 21, 2023 P&H Meeting
6. Revised Site Plan (Dual Drive-through Lanes) - May 8, 2023 P&H Meeting
7. Letter from Bickel Group Architecture addressing Commission's concerns, dated April 20, 2023
8. Pervious Pavement Plan
9. Updated Parking Analysis Table
10. Letter from Capital Investment Network (property center manager)
11. Email Correspondence Supporting the project
12. Petition Supporting the project

- 13. Email Correspondence Opposing the project
- 14. Floor Plan
- 15. Colored Elevations
- 16. Material Board
- 17. Site Photos
- 18. Trash Enclosure
- 19. Conceptual Landscape Plan
- 20. Traffic Management Plan, from Linscott Law and Greenspan
- 21. Parking Surveys
- 22. Environmental Documentation

Case Planner: Rafael Torres (951) 736-2262