



Legislation Text

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PLANNING AND HOUSING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

DATE: 8/26/2019

TO: Honorable Chair and Commissioners

FROM: Community Development Department

APPLICATION REQUEST:

SPA2019-0001: Application to amend the Downtown Corona Revitalization Specific Plan (SP98-01) to change the designation of seven properties totaling approximately 1.03 acres from Single Family (SF) and Commercial Services (CS) to Downtown (D) and establish the Downtown District on approximately 0.56 acres of public rights-of-way to facilitate the development of a medical office park on 3.48 acres located on the south side of West Sixth Street between Sheridan Street and Belle Avenue. (Applicant: Richard Boureston, Boureston Development, 650 Town Center Drive, Suite 890, Costa Mesa, CA 92626)

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

That the Planning and Housing Commission recommend adoption of the Mitigated Negative Declaration and the Mitigation Monitoring Plan and **APPROVAL of SPA2019-0001** to the City Council, based on the findings contained in the staff report and conditions of approval.

PROJECT SITE SUMMARY

Area of property: 1.96 acres combined

Existing General Plan: LDR (Low Density Residential, 3-6 du/ac)
OP (Office Professional)

Proposed General Plan: OP (Office Professional) and MUD (Mixed Use Downtown)

Specific Plan: Downtown Corona Revitalization Specific Plan (SP98-01)

Existing Zoning: SF (Single Family District)
CS (Community Services District)

Proposed Zoning: D (Downtown District)

Existing Land Use: Vacant land

Proposed Land Use: Medical office buildings

Surrounding Land Uses / Zoning:

S: Parking lot / CS District of SP98-01

N: Vacant land and parking lot / D District of SP98-01

E: Corona Public Library / D District of SP98-01

W: Single-family residences / TC (Transitional Commercial District) of SP98-01

BACKGROUND

The project site is comprised of two blocks containing 13 parcels located on the south side of West 6th Street between Sheridan Street and Belle Avenue. The two blocks are physically separated by 7th Street which will be vacated adjacent to the project site so that the land area can be included as part of the project's on-site improvements. Two alleys which are located between the parcels will also be vacated adjacent to the project site and included within the project boundary. In total, the project site is 3.48 acres which will be developed with two medical office buildings totaling 58,900 square feet. The development also includes on-site parking to serve the buildings and on-street parking located on Belle Avenue adjacent to the project site.

The project site consists of 12 vacant parcels and one developed parcel containing a parking lot for the Corona Public Library which is located east of the project site. The parking lot and the adjacent vacant property (315 W. 7th Street) located directly west of the parking lot are currently under the ownership of the City of Corona. The remaining 11 vacant parcels are under the ownership of the Corona Housing Authority.

On November 7, 2018, the city entered into a Development and Disposition Agreement with the applicant, Boureston Companies, to allow the applicant to acquire the 11 properties owned by the Corona Housing Authority. The applicant is also acquiring the two city-owned properties. All 13 properties are currently under escrow and, per the terms of the Agreement, the sale of the properties will be finalized once the applicant has obtained project approval.

The Agreement establishes certain milestones for the construction of the project which will be phased. Phase 1 will be the construction of Building A which is located closest to Sixth Street and Phase 2 will be the construction of Building B which is located on the southern portion of the project site closest to the Corona Regional Medical Center. The Agreement requires the applicant to complete construction of the building associated with Phase 1 and all necessary related off-site public improvements within 36 months after the close of escrow. The building associated with Phase 2 is required to be completed within 36 months of the first certificate of occupancy issued for the building in Phase 1. However, the Agreement does not prevent the applicant from constructing both buildings at the same time under Phase 1. Building A is intended to be occupied by City of Hope, a cancer treatment center. Building B will be a medical office building occupied by multiple tenants specializing in specific medical practices.

To make up for the loss of the 49 parking spaces within the library's off-site parking lot, the city will be entering into a shared parking agreement with the applicant to allow library patrons to utilize the new on-street parking spaces proposed on Belle Avenue which will have 54 parking spaces. Library patrons will be able to utilize the parking spaces during the evenings and weekends when the library is heavily trafficked. This agreement was discussed at the Infrastructure Committee meeting on July 31, 2017. The Committee was receptive to the proposed on-street parking as it would provide parking that is much needed, and the spaces are also at a safe walking distance to the library. The Committee also discussed the appearance of the buildings from Sixth Street with then-Council Member Jason Scott directing that if the rear elevations of the buildings face Sixth Street they should receive as much architectural detail along the backs as the fronts.

The project requires a precise plan (PP2019-0003) to review the site plan and architecture of the

project and a parcel map (PM 37565) to merge the 13 lots into two parcels. In addition, the 13 parcels have varied General Plan land use designations under the Downtown Corona Revitalization Specific Plan. As such, the project requires a General Plan Amendment (GPA2019-0001) which would bring each parcel into one General Plan designation. Parcel 1, as proposed by PM 37565, will maintain its existing General Plan designation of Mixed Use Downtown and Parcel 2, as proposed by PM 37565, is proposed to have a General Plan designation of Office Professional. The area for Parcel 2 contains two General Plan designations of Low Density Residential and Office Professional. Therefore, to facilitate the creation of the new parcel being created by this parcel map, the parcel needs to have one General Plan designation.

The project was initially reviewed by staff through the city's Development Plan Review (DPR) process in November 2018. The applicant officially submitted the GPA, SPA, parcel map, and precise plan applications to the city on March 15, 2019. The applicant was issued an application incomplete letter due to missing or incomplete application items. The applicant over time submitted the required application materials to staff with the applications finally considered complete on July 23, 2019, and cleared for public hearing before the Planning and Housing Commission on August 26, 2019.

PROPOSED SPECIFIC PLAN AMENDMENT

The proposed Specific Plan Amendment will enable the development of two medical office buildings on the project site. As indicated, the 13 parcels are within the Downtown Corona Revitalization Specific Plan and have varied zonings. As shown in Exhibit D, the six properties located on the north block (north side of 7th Street) are zoned Downtown (D). The four properties located on the south block on the south side of 7th Street between Sheridan Street and the alley are zoned Single Family (SF). The three properties located on the south block between the alley and Belle Avenue are zoned Community Services (CS). The project is a medical office use which is permitted under the Downtown and CS designations; however, the use is not permitted under the SF designation. Therefore, the applicant is seeking to change the zoning of the four SF-designated properties located on the south block to Downtown in order to permit the use on this portion of the site and to allow all the parcels to be developed comprehensively by the applicant. In addition, the three CS-designated properties that are located on the same block are also being changed to the Downtown zone so that the development standards applied to the entire project are the same. For the segment of 7th Street and the two alleys that will be vacated, the Downtown zone will also be established over these areas in order for them to be consistent with the land use designation established on the adjoining parcels. Exhibit A illustrates the proposed General Plan designations that will be established across the project site.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

Per Section 15070 of the State Guidelines for implementing the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and Section 6.02 of the City's Local Guidelines, a Mitigated Negative Declaration was prepared for the project because the Initial Study identified that the project's potentially significant effects to the environment are capable of being mitigated to less than significant. Therefore, based on the project mitigation measures identified in the Mitigated Negative Declaration, there is no substantial evidence, in light of the whole record before the City, that the project may have a significant or potentially significant effect on the environment. The Mitigation Negative Declaration is recommended for adoption (Exhibit I).

FISCAL IMPACT

The applicant paid \$4,399.00 in application processing fees for the specific plan amendment.

PUBLIC NOTICE AND COMMENTS

A 20-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, staff has received calls from two property owners of two residential properties located on Sheridan Street south of Eighth Street. The property owners requested clarification on the location and use of the project with one property owner expressing support for having the City of Hope in the Corona.

Staff also received a letter of protest from Mr. John Vazirian who owns the automobile dealership and three residential properties located to the west of the project site. The letter is attached in Exhibit J. Mr. Vazirian's concern is related directly to the design of the project and is not related to the specific plan amendment but is being included with this staff report for informational purposes. Mr. Vazirian indicates that Building A would visually obstruct his business and future commercial development on his properties from Sixth Street. His letter includes three site plans depicting alternative layouts of Building A that would reduce visual impacts to his properties. Staff has spoken to Mr. Vazirian and informed him that his properties including the residential properties are zoned Transitional Commercial which requires only an 8-foot front yard setback. Therefore, any future commercial development proposed on his properties could be built as close as 8 feet from the Sixth Street right-of-way line. This setback is closer to Sixth Street than the setback that is being proposed for Building A which is designed to have a 10-foot setback from Sixth Street with the majority of the building being set back 20 feet from Sixth Street. Also, the medical office buildings could be built up to a height of 60 feet which is allowed in the Downtown District but the applicant has chosen to design them as two-story buildings with a height of approximately 40 feet. It is also worth mentioning that this segment of 6th Street is intended for commercial development and the city's development standards do not require the preservation or protection of views along the street from certain distances. The development standards are adopted by the city to provide equal application of the standards to all property owners that develop their property in accordance with the zoning of the property.

STAFF ANALYSIS

Extending the Downtown designation from the northern portion of the project site to the southern portion of the project site is logical and creates zoning consistency for the project site while facilitating the development of a medical office park on vacant and underutilized land. The proposed zoning is consistent with the General Plan designation of Office/Professional that is being proposed for the southern portion of the project site by the project's General Plan Amendment application GPA2019-0001. Also, the proposed zoning is compatible with the surrounding land uses which consists of commercial, medical office, hospital, residential, and quasi-public type uses. Finally, the specific plan amendment is consistent with several General Plan and Downtown Corona Revitalization Specific Plan policies established for the Downtown. Therefore, based on the following findings and conditions of approval attached as Exhibit B, SPA2019-0001 is recommended for approval.

FINDINGS OF APPROVAL FOR SPA2019-0001

1. An initial study (environmental assessment) has been conducted by the City of Corona so as to evaluate the potential for adverse environmental impacts. The initial study identifies potentially significant effects on the environment, but:

- a. *The project applicant has agreed to revise the project to avoid these significant effects or to mitigate the effects to a point where it is clear that no significant effects would occur, as reflected in the Conditions of Approval attached as Exhibit B.*
 - b. *There is no substantial evidence before the City that the revised project may have a significant effect.*
2. The plan systematically implements and is consistent with the General Plan for the following reasons:
 - a. *The amendment is consistent with Land Use Policies 1.1.1 and 1.1.2 in that it supports the diverse needs of Corona's residents by accommodating uses that 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.*
 - b. *The amendment is consistent with Growth and Development Policy 1.4.3 as it would allow for the development of vacant lands within the City on the periphery of existing development that complements the scale and pattern of existing uses, protects development and population from natural hazards, and where it is logical and feasible to extend infrastructure improvements.*
 - c. *The amendment is consistent with Downtown Corona Policy 1.17.6 in that the project is designed with a centralized parking lot that can be shared by multiple tenants within the two medical office buildings.*
 - d. *The amendment is consistent with Downtown Corona Policy 1.17.7 in that it would allow for the development of a medical office park that is attractive in architectural design and landscaping and creates an image conducive to economic revitalization in accordance with the Downtown Corona Revitalization Specific Plan.*
 - e. *The amendment is consistent with Downtown Corona Policy 1.17.9 because it promotes the consolidation of individual lots for the development of cohesive and well-designed commercial and mixed-use projects that maintain the area's character of low-rise and pedestrian-oriented buildings with distinctive storefronts.*
3. The Plan provides for the development of a comprehensively planned project that is superior to development otherwise allowed under the conventional zoning classifications for the following reasons:
 - a. *SPA2019-0001 will result in a project that continues to be comprehensively planned in accordance with the provisions of the Downtown Corona Revitalization Specific Plan and Corona Municipal Code.*
4. The Plan provides for the construction, improvement, or extension of transportation facilities, public utilities and public services required by the long-term needs of the project and/or other area residents, and complements the orderly development of the City beyond the project's boundaries for the following reason
 - a. *The amendment will facilitate development that includes the appropriate infrastructure that will be required at the time of development of the overall project site.*

5. The Plan provides for the appropriate orientation and relationship between land use within and adjacent to the project for the following reason:
 - a. *The proposed medical office land use on the project site is compatible with the surrounding commercial, medical, quasi-public, and residential land uses.*
6. The proposed amendment is consistent with the goals, policies and planning concepts of the Downtown Revitalization Specific Plan for the following reasons:
 - a. *The amendment is consistent with Specific Plan Policy I.B.2 because it encourages new development that is transit and pedestrian-oriented and that contributes to an integrated mix of land uses. The development is located in proximity to bus stops, is within walking distance from residential neighborhoods, and is in walking distance to other supporting uses including a library, medical clinics, hospital, religious facilities, offices, and retail services.*
 - b. *The amendment is consistent with Specific Plan Policy I.B.9 because it helps to establish an area in the southwest quadrant of the Circle that facilitate medical/professional offices and senior housing.*
 - c. *The amendment is consistent with Specific Plan Policy 2.B.6 because it facilitates a development that will establish special parking strategies and incentives for the Specific Plan area that will provide for adequate parking while still retaining the small town, human scale character of the Downtown. As demonstrated by the accompanying precise plan, PP2019-0003, the project provides adequate on-site and on-street parking on Belle Avenue to serve visitors of the proposed medical office park. The project will also share the parking on Belle Avenue with the Corona Public Library which will enable library patrons to park within walking distance to the library and help retain a small town downtown feel to the area.*
 - d. *The amendment is consistent with Specific Plan Policy 3.B.6 because it facilitates a development that preserves the City's heritage while accommodating new development. As demonstrated by the accompanying precise plan, PP2019-0003, the proposed medical office buildings have incorporated an architectural design that preserves historic elements and design elements of the Commercial Block style which is one of architectural themes prescribed by the Specific Plan for new development.*
 - e. *The amendment is consistent with Specific Plan Policy 3.B.9 because it facilitates a development that incorporates drought tolerant trees and landscaping throughout the parking lot and perimeters of the project site.*

REVIEWED BY: SANDRA YANG, SENIOR PLANNER

SUBMITTED BY: JOANNE COLETTA, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

EXHIBIT

1. Locational and Zoning Map
2. Exhibit A - Proposed Specific Plan Amendment.
3. Exhibit B - Conditions of Approval.
4. Exhibit C - Aerial Map.

5. Exhibit D - Existing Specific Plan Designation.
6. Exhibit E - Existing General Plan Designation.
7. Exhibit F - Site Plan.
8. Exhibit G - Applicant's letter dated March 5, 2019, explaining Specific Plan and General Plan amendments.
9. Exhibit H - Legal description of the specific plan amendment site.
10. Exhibit I - Environmental Documentation.
11. Exhibit J - Public Correspondence.

Case Planner: Sandra Yang (951) 736-2262