



ALFRED C. COOPER, JR. AND J. ALAN COOPER • INVESTMENT

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**Sycamore Hills Distribution Center  
Parking Variance for Parcel 1/Building A**

**Variance Requested:** The City's Municipal Code addresses general warehouse use but does not have a parking standard specific to warehouse/logistics centers, therefore a parking variance is needed to permit Parcel 1/Building A to provide 388 parking stalls where 430 are required per code.

**Required Findings:**

Item 1. YES. The parking requirements in the zoning code does not specifically address parking normally associated with warehouse/logistics facilities. As a building increases in size, parking per square foot of building space decreases. Car parking for a 400,000 SF warehouse/distribution building is estimated to be less than 300 stalls. The surrounding jurisdictions' car parking standards for such facilities are approximately one-half of the City of Riverside standard. As an aside, but important to note, the City code does not require on-site truck trailer parking. On-site trailer parking is an important element for the efficient functioning of the modern distribution facility. The subject property provides 110 trailer parking stalls.

Item 2. YES. The property is adjacent to the Sycamore Canyon Wilderness Park (SCWP) to the north. If the building was in another area, not adjacent to SCWP, all of the area north of the building could have been used for parking required to meet code. The open space buffer is a better use in this location than parking.

Item 3. NO. The open space designed north of the building, adjacent to SCWP, is a more compatible use for this area than parking, and creates a benefit for the public and surrounding area. This area could have been designed for 42 more parking stalls, but that would have been a less desirable use and in all likelihood the additional parking stalls would not be used.

Item 4. NO. There is no impact to the General Plan. All parking will be provided on site. In the unlikely event that parking is necessary in excess of the 388 stalls provided, the partial use of the "alternative parking plan" can be implemented for the additional 42 stalls per code.

## **WALL VARIANCE**

To allow installation of combination retaining/freestanding walls wherein the retaining portion exceeds 4' in vertical height, and the overall height exceeds 10 feet, as specified in RMC 19.550.030.B.2. The required findings below are submitted in accordance with RMC 19.720.040.

## **REQUIRED FINDINGS**

*Will the strict application of the provisions of the Zoning Code result in practical difficulties or unnecessary hardships inconsistent with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Code?*

- 1) Yes. The 48-acre site is significantly restricted due to topography and jurisdictional encumbrances as described herein and under Finding No. 2, below. Dock doors with a truck court are proposed along the easterly side of Building A (Parcel 1), which abuts a privately owned, undeveloped parcel with the same land use designation. The truck court is designed to drain northerly with a uniform gradient of 0.50% and a maximum cross slope of 2%. To provide required screening and security, an 8-8.5' high screen wall is proposed around the truck court. The elevation changes along the common property line vary as much as 16 feet. As a result, approximately 700 linear feet of combination freestanding/retaining wall is required along the easterly property line. The southerly portion of the truck court is generally below the adjacent finished grade, while the northerly portion of the truck court sits above the adjacent property. As illustrated in Area 3 of the Grading Exception & Wall Variance Exhibit, more than half of the combination wall exceeds the allowable 4' of retaining. The maximum height of the retaining portion at any point, does not exceed 7.6'. Strict adherence to the height limitation would necessitate raising the southerly end of the truck court 3.6' and lowering the northerly portion as much as 2.4'. These drastic grade changes would adversely affect truck maneuvering and render most, if not all, truck docks unusable. Furthermore, maintaining dramatic grade changes along this common property line will only complicate future development of the property to the east. Alternatively, the screen wall would need to be relocated approximately 8' westerly of the property line to allow for slope grading. The wall shift would not eliminate the need for retaining walls. But, it would reduce the walls to the required 4' maximum height. This configuration would result in a narrow, sloped sliver of land outside of the screened truck court that would be unusable, difficult to maintain and prone to become an attractive nuisance. Additionally, the undulating edge condition will still remain along the property line, creating similar challenges upon development of the adjacent property. The strict application of the Zoning Code would not further the purposes stated in RMC 19.020.010, particularly regarding encouraging the most appropriate use of land as well as conserving and stabilizing the value of property, for both the subject property and the abutting property.

*Are there special circumstances or conditions applicable to the property involved or to the intended use or development of the property that do not apply generally to other property in the vicinity and under the identical zoning classification?*

- 2) Yes. The subject property is approximately 48 acres of undisturbed land with undulating topography resulting in approximately 45 feet of elevation change within the site. The Sycamore Canyon Wilderness Park is immediately to the north along an irregularly shaped property line. A privately-owned, undeveloped parcel lies to the east. The property is bounded, in part, by Barton Street to the west and Alessandro Boulevard to the south. Public street frontage is limited due to a separately owned, 13.6-acre development at the northeasterly corner of Barton and Alessandro.

No grading or other land disturbing activities are allowed within the wilderness park. Therefore, significant portions of the northerly boundary must be encumbered by matchup grading. Additionally, the subject property is bisected by restricted covenants to the benefit of US Army Corps of Engineers, which also restrict land disturbing activities. The restrictive covenants completely isolate Parcel 1 and render it an irregularly shaped, deep, narrow parcel. The resultant parcel configuration coupled with restrictions on placement of dock doors (to minimize visibility from public streets and the wilderness park) severely limit building location and circulation/parking layout.

*Will the granting of such variance be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to the property or improvements in the zone or neighborhood in which the property is located?*

- 3) No. The variance applies to an isolated wall segment within the property's side yard area. The wall is visible only from the undeveloped, private property to the east. The proposed wall design will establish a uniform edge condition along the common property line and will not hinder future development of the property to the east.

*Will the granting of the variance be contrary to the objectives of any part of the General Plan?*

- 4) No. The granting of the variance will allow development of the property to include a logical and fully functional truck dock area with adequate parking, maneuvering and circulation. In accordance with Section 3.10 of the Sycamore Canyon Specific Plan, the truck court will be screened from public view by an 8-8.5' high screen wall. The Specific Plan allows a maximum 12' high wall.

## **GRADING EXCEPTION**

To allow installation of retaining walls, in an area not open to public view, to exceed 6' in vertical height, in accordance with provisions specified in RMC 17.028.010.C.1. The required findings pursuant to RMC 17.32.020, are provided below.

## **REQUIRED FINDINGS**

*Will the strict application of the provisions of this Title result in practical difficulties or unnecessary hardships inconsistent with the general purpose and intent of this Title?*

- 1) Yes. The subject properties are significantly restricted due to topography and encumbrances as described herein and under Finding No. 2, below. Due to these constraints and conditions, perimeter grading required to transition from developed pad to the significantly varied elevation changes are very challenging. While the vast majority of the grading complies with the Code, minor portions of the proposed retaining walls will exceed the allowable 6' in height. These areas are illustrated on the Grading Exception & Wall Variance Exhibit and identified as Areas 1 & 2.

Area 1- This area consists of approximately 94 linear feet of retaining wall that varies in height from 6.5-11.5'. The primary purpose of this wall is to serve as a headwall and wing walls for a 48" diameter storm drain outlet that conveys offsite flow from the Metropolitan Water District Mills Filtration Plant, through the subject property and discharges directly into the deed restricted area. The storm drain outlet is located per the direction of US Army Corp of Engineers. The storm drain outlet cannot be relocated horizontally or vertically and sufficient cover over the pipe is necessary to protect it from traffic loading. The proposed pipe connects at Barton Street and runs within the drive aisle along the northerly side of Building 2. Strict application of the Code would require narrowing the drive aisle and eliminating 1-2 parking spaces at the northeasterly corner of the building to provide approximately 8-10' of separation between the screen wall and the U-shaped retaining wall to accommodate a 2:1 slope. Approval of the grading exception to allow retaining walls varying from 6.5-11.5' in height in this area would be consistent with the general purpose and intent of Title 17 of the Riverside Municipal Code to minimize the adverse effects of grading on natural landforms, particularly in regard to water runoff.

Area 2- This area is located near the southeasterly corner of Building 2. The sole purpose of the walls in this area is to accommodate two water quality basins. Such water quality measures for new development is a requirement of the Federal Clean Water Act, State Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act and the Santa Ana Region National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit. Due to insufficient infiltration rates of the underlying soils, the basins, including the size and location, are required pursuant to design criteria specified in the Water Quality Management Plan (WQMP) guidance documents. Strict application of the Code would result in insufficient basin capacity, causing the project fail in meeting the requirements of the MS4 Permit and WQMP.

Therefore, approval of the grading exception for Area 2 is consistent with Title 17 regulations to preserve hydrologic features of public value as set forth in RMC 17.04.010(A).

*Are there exceptional circumstances or conditions applicable to the property or to the intended use or development of the property that do not generally apply to other property in the same zone or neighborhood?*

- 2) Yes. The subject property is approximately 48 acres of undisturbed land with undulating topography resulting in approximately 45 feet of elevation change within the site. The Sycamore Canyon Wilderness Park is immediately to the north along an irregularly shaped property line. A privately-owned, undeveloped parcel lies to the east. The property is bounded, in part, by Barton Street to the west and Alessandro Boulevard to the south. Public street frontage is limited due to a separately owned, 13.6-acre development at the northeasterly corner of Barton and Alessandro.

No grading or other land disturbing activities are allowed within the wilderness park. Additionally, a unique condition of the subject property is that it is bisected by two irregularly shaped areas encumbered by restricted covenants to the benefit of US Army Corps of Engineers. These covenants restrict land disturbing activities on approximately 12.4 acres of land. As a result of the boundary and internal grading restrictions, significant portions of the remaining site must be encumbered for match-up grading. An additional 1.2 acres will be dedicated to the City and developed with a public parking lot to serve the Sycamore Canyon Wilderness Park. Lastly, the historic drainage patterns within the vicinity must be accommodated through/around the site to ensure surface flows are neither obstructed nor redirected.

*Will the granting of a waiver be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to the property or improvements in the zone or neighborhood in which the property is located?*

- 3) No. The granting of the grading exception will accommodate the storm drain outlet structure to discharge offsite flows into the restricted area in accordance with US Army Corps of Engineer's direction. Accepting and conveying these historic flows generated from the Mills Filtration Plant, located northwesterly of the project site, are to the benefit of Metropolitan Water District. The ability to convey these flows will be beneficial to surrounding properties. Additionally, no other properties are adjacent or in close proximity to these walls.

The grading exception will also accommodate construction of two water quality basins to collect and treat surface flows in Parcel 2, as required under the Santa Ana Region Water Quality Management Plan. A privately-owned parcel is located immediately south of the basins and is developed with a self-storage facility. A 10-12' high masonry wall surrounds the facility and is separated from the basins a minimum of 75' and elevated approximately 15-20' above the basin walls. Accordingly, the proposed walls are consistent with those of surrounding uses and will not be injurious to surrounding properties or the neighborhood.

Hernandez, Veronica

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From: Zerda, Daniel <DZerda@Rivco.org>  
Sent: Tuesday, June 8, 2021 10:12 AM  
To: Hernandez, Veronica  
Subject: [External] CITY OF RIVERSIDE - NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY OF DRAFT EIR - SYCAMORE HILLS DISTRIBUTION CENTER (ALUC Comments)

Hi Veronica,

Thank you for sending the transmittal for the above referenced case. The project is located in Zone C1 of the March Airport Influence Area. It is my understanding that the project does not propose any legislative actions, and since the City's General Plan has been found consistent with the March Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan, City Staff may perform the Airport Compatibility review. Please let me know if you have any questions.

-Best Regards,

Daniel Zerda  
Student Intern  
Transportation and Land Management Agency  
County of Riverside  
(951)955-0982

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**County of Riverside California**



Veronica Hernandez  
City of Riverside  
vhernandez@riversideca.gov

**Subject: SYCAMORE HILLS DISTRIBUTION CENTER**

**DCF: 1027-21NC**

The Transmission Department of SoCalGas does not operate any facilities within your proposed improvement. However, the Distribution Department of SoCalGas may maintain and operate facilities within your project scope.

To assure no conflict with the Distribution's pipeline system, please e-mail them at:

[SCGSERegionRedlandsUtilityRequest@semprautilities.com](mailto:SCGSERegionRedlandsUtilityRequest@semprautilities.com)

Best Regards,

SoCalGas Transmission Technical Services  
[SoCalGasTransmissionUtilityRequest@semprautilities.com](mailto:SoCalGasTransmissionUtilityRequest@semprautilities.com)

Hernandez, Veronica

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From: Jamie Nord <Jamie.Nord@sanmanuel-nsn.gov>  
Sent: Tuesday, June 8, 2021 4:51 PM  
To: Hernandez, Veronica  
Cc: Ryan Nordness  
Subject: [External] RE: Response to Draft EIR, Sycamore Hills Distribution Center, Riverside, Riverside County, California

Dear Veronica Hernandez,

Thank you for contacting the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians (SMBMI) regarding the above-referenced project. SMBMI appreciates the opportunity to review the project documentation, which was received by the Cultural Resources Management Department on June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021. The proposed project is located outside of Serrano ancestral territory and, as such, SMBMI will not be requesting to receive consulting party status with the lead agency or to participate in the scoping, development, or review of documents created pursuant to legal and regulatory mandates.

Kind regards,

**Jamie Nord**

CULTURAL RESOURCES TECHNICIAN

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Hernandez, Veronica

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From: Mauricio Alvarez <malvarez@riversidetransit.com>  
Sent: Wednesday, July 14, 2021 10:32 AM  
To: Hernandez, Veronica  
Subject: RE: [External] RE: CITY OF RIVERSIDE - NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY OF DRAFT EIR - SYCAMORE HILLS DISTRIBUTION CENTER

Good Morning Veronica,

When I last received the plans for this project last year, the recommendation was, if possible, to provide an ADA compliant bus stop on Alessandro, west of Vista Grande Dr. I don't know if the recommendation was moved forward at the time. Looking at the plans again, the recommendation would still be the same now. In addition, there should be an ADA pathway from the main entrance/street on Alessandro to the warehouse facility to ensure pedestrians have a safe area to walk.

Thank you for considering this comment.

**Mauricio Alvarez, MBA**

Planning Analyst  
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Space, Cover Your Face.



THE METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT  
OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

**July 15, 2021**

**Via Electronic Mail**

Veronica Hernandez, Senior Planner  
City of Riverside  
Community and Economic Development Department  
Planning Division  
3900 Main Street, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Riverside, California 92522

Dear Ms. Hernandez:

Notice of Availability of a Draft  
Environmental Impact Report for the Sycamore Hills Distribution Center Project

The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (Metropolitan) reviewed the Notice of Availability of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the Sycamore Hills Distribution Center (Project). The proposed Project would construct two warehouse buildings, a trailhead parking lot, associated improvements including parking, fire lanes, fencing and walls, landscaping, and water quality treatment areas, and would extend Barton Street to access the Project in the city of Riverside. This letter contains Metropolitan's comments to the proposed Project and DEIR as an affected responsible public agency.

Metropolitan previously provided correspondence on the Project in August 2020 (copy attached) in response to the Notice of Preparation for the DEIR stating that the Project had the potential to impact Metropolitan's Box Springs Feeder and Perris Valley Pipeline waterlines, Henry Mills Water Treatment Plant, and associated fee-owned property. The attached exhibit provides an updated depiction of these facilities and fee property in relation to the Project. Due to the Project's proximity to these facilities and property we provided a copy of Metropolitan's "Guidelines for Improvements and Construction Projects Proposed in the Area of Metropolitan's Facilities and Rights-of-Way."

While we appreciate that our previous comments were noted and addressed in the DEIR, upon review of the document and the more detailed project depictions provided therein, including Figure 3.0-9, we determined that the Project would require the use of Metropolitan fee owned property on Barton Street. Specifically, Metropolitan owns the portion of the street extending westerly of its centerline. Metropolitan acquired the property, assigned MWD Parcel 1610-1-1, by grant deed recorded as Document No. 87059 on August 29, 1966, and re-recorded as Document No. 99077, on October 6, 1966 (see grant deed attached). As described in the DEIR, the Project would utilize Barton Street during construction and operation and would pave and extend the roadway north of its current terminus to provide access to Parcels 2 and C.



Veronica Hernandez  
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July 15, 2021

The use of Metropolitan's fee-owned property to extend Barton Street will require the submittal of a land use application (see attached) for the granting of a public road easement or the issuance of an entry permit. Metropolitan will consider the FEIR to evaluate the applicant's request for a public road easement or entry permit. However, Metropolitan's engineering and operations staff will analyze the project and construction documents as well as engineering reports to determine if the potential impacts from the proposed use cannot be adequately mitigated to negate disruptions or interference with current and future operational requirements. Therefore, the potential impacts associated with the use of Metropolitan's fee owned property on Barton Street should be analyzed and described in the FEIR. This discretionary action and the granting of permanent real property rights will be carried out by Metropolitan's Board of Directors.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide input to your planning process, and we look forward to receiving future environmental documentation and design plans regarding this proposed Project. If you have any questions, please contact Alex Marks at (213) 217-7629.

Very truly yours,

Diane Doesserich  
Diane Doesserich  
Team Manager, Environmental Planning Section

DD:asm  
SharePoint\CityofRiverside\_SycamoreHills\_External Review

Enclosures:

- (1) Map of Metropolitan fee property and facilities in relation to the Project
- (2) Metropolitan Grant Deed DOC 99077
- (3) Metropolitan Land Use Application
- (4) Metropolitan comment letter on the NOP for the Project, dated August 17, 2020