



*City of Arts & Innovation*

# City Council Memorandum

**TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL      DATE: DECEMBER 1, 2015**

**FROM: COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT      WARD: 1**  
**DEPARTMENT**

**SUBJECT: PLANNING CASE P15-0326 BY THE CITY OF RIVERSIDE – SPECIFIC PLAN**  
**AMENDMENT TO DOWNTOWN SPECIFIC PLAN (DSP) PROSPECT PLACE**  
**OFFICE DISTRICT SECTION 9.5.2 – PROPOSAL BY CITY OF RIVERSIDE**

## **ISSUE:**

The issue for City Council consideration is an amendment to Section 9.5.2 of the Downtown Specific Plan (DSP) to allow a maximum building height of 80-feet for the portion of the Prospect Place Office District bounded by Fourteenth Street, Olivewood Avenue, Prospect Avenue and State Highway 91.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

That the City Council:

1. Determine the proposed project is exempt from California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant CEQA Guidelines §15061(b)(3), as the proposed development standard is a height limit that currently exists in the Prospect Place Office District, and is only being expanded to be consistent over the entire District, and that no specific physical development is included in this request; therefore the General Rule of CEQA applies since it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the amendment would have the potential to significantly effect the environment;
2. Approve Planning Case P15-0326 based on and subject to the Planning Commission findings and recommended conditions found in the attached staff report; and
3. Adopt the attached Resolution.

## **STAFF/PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Staff recommended approval to the Planning Commission, subject to recommended conditions of approval. On October 8, 2015, the City Planning Commission recommended approval of Planning Case P15-0326 by a vote of 8 ayes, 0 noes and 0 abstentions, subject to the staff's recommendation. Additionally, at the October 8, 2015 Planning Commission meeting staff clarified that the City of Riverside is the applicant of the Specific Plan Amendment, and that the staff report incorrectly stated that the applicant as Pacific Medical Buildings (PMB).

## **BACKGROUND:**

### ***Background***

The Downtown Specific Plan (DSP) was established in 2002 to facilitate and encourage development and improvements that help realize the community's vision for Downtown. Of the nine land use districts established by the DSP, the Prospect Place Office District is generally bounded by State Highway 91, 14th Street, Magnolia Avenue, and Riverside Community College. This area is intended to provide for a variety of high quality office uses, and be an entry point to the Downtown from areas to the south and east.

Development standards are established in the Prospect Place Office District to accommodate compatibility with existing historic structures, provide for adaptive reuses and the development of low-density office uses. The maximum height for structures in the Prospect Place Office District is 35 feet, except that development within the entire block bounded by 14th Street, Olivewood Avenue, Prospect Avenue and Orange Grove Avenue has a maximum building height of 80 feet. This block is an area primarily developed with the Press Enterprise facility, and five story office building currently occupied by Riverside County. The Prospect Place Office District is depicted on exhibit 6.

On the easterly side of Olivewood Avenue, existing office buildings serving the Riverside Unified School District, and the Federal Drug Enforcement Agency. There are also two existing historic Victorian homes situated along Prospect Avenue (the McIntyre and Sweatt residences).

### ***Proposal***

The City of Riverside, as the applicant, has submitted a Specific Plan Amendment to amend Section 9.5.2 of the Downtown Specific Plan (DSP) to allow a maximum building height of 80 feet for the portion of the Prospect Place Office District bounded by Fourteenth Street, Olivewood Avenue, Prospect Avenue, and State Highway 91. If approved, a maximum 80-foot high building would be permitted for all parcels in the area indicated in the map of Exhibit 3 of the Planning Commission staff report (Attachment 2 of this report). No development is proposed as part of this amendment request; although a proposal for a medical office building on Successor Agency owned property with the amendment area is anticipated in the near future.

### ***Recommendation***

The Prospect Place Office District, in which the proposed amendment applies, is bounded by 14th Street, Orange Grove Avenue, Prospect Avenue, and State Highway 91. This area is the southeast boundary of the Downtown Specific Plan, and is immediately adjacent to the 91 freeway on/off ramps. As such, it serves as a gateway area for drivers approaching the downtown from the south, on Olivewood Avenue, including residents to the south of Riverside City College; and for drivers approaching the downtown from the east on 14th Street, or regionally on the 91 freeway using the 14th street off-ramps. Prospect Place Office District is also adjacent to the Downtown Specific Plan's Justice Center District, to the north.

As a district adjacent to the 91 freeway, and as a buffering area between the Justice Center District and the lower intensity area surrounding the College, a proposed maximum building

height should establish an appropriate intensity and character for Prospect Place Office District to establish both a local and regional destination.

The balance in raising building height in areas considered transition zones between residential and urban development is compatibility between higher density building masses and lower density, smaller structures, some of which could contain sensitive receptors and/or historic resources. To address these challenges, staff notes several tools that currently exist in the DSP and Zoning Code could be utilized for future development in the Prospect Place Office District. The DSP contains site planning guidelines and development standards for the Prospect Place Office District, which aim at preserving the “residential character” by siting driveways onto Olivewood Avenue, and requiring a greater building setback when adjacent to the Victorian style McIntyre and Sweatt residences, at the corner of Prospect Place and Olivewood Avenue. Additionally, the X-Building Setback Overlay and S-Height of Building Overlay Zones are available to provide project specific compatibility with the existing built environment.

As a matter of information and clarity, the DSP contains several references to the “Olivewood Corridor” as being within the Twogood Neighborhood Conservation Area. Design guidelines in Section 9.6 of the DSP provide recommended site planning and building features to ensure consistency with the one of Riverside's first residential neighborhoods, originally established in the 1880s. The Twogood Neighborhood Conservation Area covers much of what is today the Prospect Place Office District of the DSP. However, upon the establishment of the DSP in 2002, many of the homes that were originally located in the Twogood Neighborhood Conservation Area were removed to accommodate the Press Enterprise expansion on the westerly side of Olivewood Avenue. Subsequently, from 2006-2008, many historic residences on the easterly side of Olivewood Avenue were relocated, and the Neighborhood Conservation Area was “de-designated” as many of the qualifying features no longer exist. Nonetheless, the proposed Specific Plan Amendment to allow an increase in the maximum building height to 80 feet will not be incompatible with the remaining historic resources.

Please refer to the October 8, 2015, City Planning Commission staff report, recommended conditions and draft minutes for additional information.

### **FISCAL IMPACT:**

There is no fiscal impact to the General Fund, other than staff time to complete the Specific Plan Amendment.

Prepared by: Rafael Guzman, Community & Economic Development Director  
Certified as to  
availability of funds: Brent A. Mason, Finance Director/Treasurer  
Approved by: Al Zelinka, FAICP Assistant City Manager  
Approved as to form: Gary G. Geuss, City Attorney

### **Attachments:**

1. City Planning Commission Recommended Conditions
2. City Planning Commission Report - October 8, 2015
3. City Planning Commission Draft Minutes - October 8, 2015
4. Resolution