



City of Arts & Innovation

City Council Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL DATE: JULY 20, 2021

FROM: COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WARD: 5
DEPARTMENT

SUBJECT: AN APPEAL, ON BEHALF OF RIVERSIDE EXPRESS, LLC, OF A DENIAL OF PLANNING CASE P20-0476 CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT AND P20-0477 DESIGN REVIEW – BY THE CITY PLANNING COMMISSION FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF AN AUTOMATED VEHICLE WASH FACILITY– LOCATED AT 3729 AND 3745 VAN BUREN BOULEVARD, SITUATED ON THE EAST SIDE OF VAN BUREN BOULEVARD BETWEEN MAGNOLIA AVENUE AND ANDREW STREET

ISSUE:

An appeal, on behalf of Riverside Express, LLC, of the denial of Planning Case P20-0476 Conditional Use Permit and P20-0477 Design Review by the City Planning Commission to permit the construction of an automated vehicle wash facility on a 1.15-acre parcel, located at 3729 and 3745 Van Buren Boulevard, situated on the east side of Van Buren Boulevard between Magnolia Avenue and Andrew Street.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the City Council:

1. Determine that the proposed project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15332 (In-Fill Development Projects) of the CEQA Guidelines, as the project will not have a significant effect on the environment; and
2. Uphold the appeal and approve Planning Cases P20-0476 Conditional Use Permit and P20-0477 Design Review, based on the findings outlined in the staff report and subject to the recommended conditions of approval.

PLANNING COMMISSION DETERMINATION:

On May 13, 2021, the Planning Commission denied Planning Cases P20-0476 Conditional Use Permit and P20-0477 Design Review by a vote of 6 ayes, 1 noes, and 0 abstentions. A 2/3 majority vote of the Commissioners present is required to approve a Conditional Use Permit, which would have required the affirmative vote of at least five Planning Commission members.

BACKGROUND:

Existing Conditions

The project site consists of two contiguous parcels, totaling 1.15 acres:

- The northern parcel consists of 0.76-acres and is currently vacant. In 1954, it was developed with a commercial building. In 1992, the Planning Commission denied a Conditional Use Permit and Variances (C-17-912) for an automated vehicle wash facility and vehicle service station due to concerns related to traffic, noise, air quality, and impacts to the adjacent residential uses.
- The southern parcel consists of 0.41-acres and is developed with a single-family residence and a detached garage, constructed circa 1910. The residence is not eligible for historical designation because of the inappropriate alterations to it that have occurred over the years. Records indicate the residence has been occupied by a lighting company since 2008.

Access to each parcel is provided from Van Buren Boulevard. Surrounding land uses include commercial uses to the north (interior side), single-family residences to the south (interior side) and east (rear), and vacant commercially zoned property to the west (across Van Buren Boulevard).

Project Description

The applicant is requesting approval of a Conditional Use Permit and Design Review to permit the construction of a 9,708 square foot automated vehicle wash facility and related site improvements on the project site. To facilitate this project, the existing single-family residence is proposed to be demolished.

The vehicle wash facility is proposed on the north side of the site oriented toward Van Buren Boulevard. The proposed project has been designed to complement the neighborhood and minimize potential impacts on surrounding land uses. The proposed project includes a one-story building with a single vehicle wash tunnel, an office, restrooms, and utility/storage rooms. A canopy at the point-of-sale is located on the southern side and will accommodate twenty-seven (27) vehicles. Thirty (30) covered vacuum positions, and two employee parking spaces are provided south of the vehicle wash tunnel. Three (3) queueing lanes have been proposed to accommodate customers. The proposed building elevations consist of a modern interpretation of Spanish style architecture for compatibility with the existing design pattern of the Arlington District.

The facility is proposed to operate seven days a week from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. A total of twelve (12) employees are anticipated for the operation of the proposed vehicle wash facility, with no more than four (4) employees at any given time.

For additional background information, please refer to the May 13, 2021, City Planning Commission Report, conditions of approval, and minutes (Attachments 1 and 2).

DISCUSSION:

Planning Commission Decision and Findings for Denial

On May 13, 2021, the Planning Commission considered the Conditional Use Permit and Design Review and expressed concerns with the proposed use. The Commission agreed that the Magnolia Avenue and Van Buren Boulevard intersection is an activity node and that because of its location, a pedestrian scale project that complements the historic character of the area should be developed.

The Planning Commission indicated that the proposed car wash does not meet the Arlington District objectives of the Magnolia Avenue Specific Plan (MASP) and that the 1910 residential structure should not be demolished. They also indicated that there are other car wash facilities in the immediate area to serve the community and there is no need for an additional car wash facility.

Following discussion, the Planning Commission denied the project based on the findings that the project does not meet Objectives LU-35, LU-36, and LU-37 and Policy LU-37.4 of the General Plan 2025 and consequently the Objectives and Policies of the MASP.

Staff Recommended Consistency Determination

Staff determined the project to be consistent with the vision for the Arlington District of the MASP for the following reasons:

- The proposed use is permitted subject to the granting of a Conditional Use Permit;
- The project site is not one of the properties at the Magnolia Avenue/Van Buren Boulevard intersection envisioned in the MASP to be developed with pedestrian-oriented retail and services uses;
- Future street improvements expected to enhance pedestrian crossing and connections at the intersection will not be hindered by this project;
- The existing residence, built in 1910, is not eligible for historic designation, and the proposed demolition will have no impacts to cultural resources in the District;
- The project has been designed to incorporate a tower element at each end of the vehicle wash tunnel to completely screen it from public view, and to complement the character-defining elements of the Arlington District of the MASP; and
- Landscaping throughout the project site, particularly along the Van Buren Boulevard frontage, will enhance the appearance of the public realm.

Staff prepared responses addressing the consistency of the project with the General Plan Objectives LU-35, LU-36, LU-37, and LU-37.4 pertaining to the goals and vision of the Arlington Neighborhood, which are also provided in the Arlington District of the MASP.

- Objective LU-35: Maintain Arlington's sense of community through careful and coordinated planning that builds upon the neighborhood's key assets and reinforces its historic development patterns.

Response: The Arlington District of the MASP is characterized by one and two-story, pre-1950's retail buildings surrounded by a single-family residential neighborhood. Design Guidelines for the Arlington District show the project site is located within the Arlington Village and South Van Buren Portal, which are intended to strengthen and reinforce Arlington's sense of identity and serve as a focal point for social interaction. The Design Guidelines build on the vision and includes provisions for building placement, building

spacing, parking location, building design, height, roofline/cornice area, storefront, back of buildings, awnings and canopies, and signs.

The proposed project was designed to be consistent with the applicable Arlington Design Guidelines as the building design consists of a contemporary interpretation of the Spanish architecture style of the 1920's and incorporates design features such as recessed arched facades, decorative cornices, and stacked brown stone accents compatible with the existing buildings in the surrounding area. The building height is 30 feet – 2 1/2 inches and was designed with a flat roof and a parapet that adequately screens the rooftop mechanical equipment. The tower elements proposed at each end of the wash tunnel include a decorative double cornice for aesthetic emphasis. The proposed project is unique since it is not a commercial/office building that is traditionally designed with a storefront. Nonetheless, the project was thoughtfully designed to incorporate a storefront area along Van Buren Boulevard frontage for consistency with the Arlington District Design Guidelines.

- Objective LU-36: Restore, strengthen and maintain the unique community character and identity of the Arlington Neighborhood.

Response: The proposed project is unique in that it is not a commercial/office building that is traditionally designed with a storefront. However, the project was thoughtfully designed to incorporate a storefront area along Van Buren Boulevard consisting of three inset spandrel windows framed with black metal trim. It consists of one story, with a maximum building height of 30 feet. The flat roof and parapet wall adequately screen the roof-mounted mechanical equipment. A decorative cornice is proposed to enhance the building.

Overall, the proposed project was designed to be consistent with the Arlington District Guidelines of the MASP.

- Objective LU-37: Spur the economic revitalization of the Arlington Neighborhood.

Response: The northern parcel of the project site is currently vacant. The proposed project will provide the Arlington Neighborhood with a new automated vehicle wash facility, which will help revitalize the neighborhood.

- Policy LU-37.4: Support and encourage the redevelopment of the Magnolia Avenue corridor with mixed-use development as shown on LU-10, Land Use Policy Map.

Response: While the project site does not front onto Magnolia Avenue, the proposed project and existing surrounding residential and commercial/office use result in a mix of uses consistent with the underlying General Plan 2025 land use designation of MU-V – Mixed Use-Village.

Appeal

On May 21, 2021, the applicant filed a timely appeal of the Planning Commission's denial of the proposed project (Attachment 3). The applicant's appeal is based on the project being compatible with the objectives and policies of the General Plan 2025 for the Arlington Neighborhood.

The Applicant's appeal letter bases the compatibility with the following:

- The Project maintains a sense of community in the Arlington neighborhood through careful planning - it will spur economic revitalization;

- It is not required to be mixed-use;
- It is generally consistent with the General Plan as the project is not required to comply with every objective and policy; and
- It complies with the applicable standards and guidelines.

Conclusion

Vehicle wash facilities are permitted in the CR – Commercial Retail Zone, subject to the granting of a Conditional Use Permit, and compliance with Site Location, Operation and Development Standards for Vehicle Wash Facilities, as defined in Title 19 – Zoning of the Riverside Municipal Code. The applicable development standards of the Zoning Code and the MASP were evaluated, and staff determined the project and design to be consistent with the standards. The proposed building has been designed to be consistent with unique character-defining elements in the Arlington District of the MASP.

The proposed project will not be detrimental to the health, safety, or general welfare of the public or surrounding area and will provide economic revitalization to the neighborhood.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no impact with this recommendation since all project costs are borne by the applicant.

Prepared by: David Welch, Community & Economic Development Director
Certified as to
availability of funds: Edward Enriquez, Chief Financial Officer/City Treasurer
Approved by: Rafael Guzman, Assistant City Manager
Approved as to form: Kristi J. Smith, Interim City Attorney

Attachments:

1. City Planning Commission Report – May 13, 2021
2. City Planning Commission Minutes – May 13, 2021
3. Applicant Appeal Request – May 21, 2021
4. Presentation