



LOS ANGELES CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

200 North Spring Street, Room 272, Los Angeles, California, 90012-4801, (213) 978-1300

www.planning.lacity.org

LETTER OF DETERMINATION

MAILING DATE: **FEB 25 2020**

Case No. CPC-2017-712-GPA-VZC-HD-VCU-SPR

CEQA: ENV-2017-713-MND

Plan Area: Westlake

Council District: 1 – Cedillo

Project Site: 2005 West James M. Wood Boulevard

Applicant: Tauan Chen Infinitely Group
Representative: Eric Lieberman, QES Incorporated

At its meeting of **January 23, 2020**, the Los Angeles City Planning Commission took the actions below in conjunction with the approval of the following project:

Demolition of an existing commercial retail building and related surface parking for the construction, use, and maintenance of a new six story hotel above two levels of subterranean parking. The Project would contain 100 guest rooms with kitchens, and approximately 10,948 square feet of office, restaurant, meeting room and support space, on a 22,500 square-foot property. The Project includes approximately 100 automobile parking spaces, as well as six long-term and six short-term bicycle parking spaces. The Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of the proposed building would be 2.99:1 and the maximum height would be approximately 82 feet. Only the modified General Plan Amendment will be considered at this time.

The scope of the January 23, 2020 hearing before the CPC was limited to the CPC's consideration and recommendation back to City Council regarding the proposed modification to the General Plan Amendment area (to remove the requested Add Area), pursuant to Los Angeles Charter Secs. 555(c) and (d), as well as consideration of the Mitigated Negative Declaration, recirculated on September 12, 2019, and Errata, dated December 2019.

1. **Found**, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15074(b), after consideration of the whole of the administrative record, including the Mitigated Negative Declaration, No. ENV-2017-713-MND ("Mitigated Negative Declaration" or MND), and Errata dated December 2019, and all comments received, with the imposition of mitigation measures, there is no substantial evidence that the project will have a significant effect on the environment; **Found** the Mitigated Negative Declaration and Errata, dated December 2019, reflects the independent judgment and analysis of the City; **Found** the mitigation measures have been made enforceable conditions on the project; and **Adopt** the Mitigated Negative Declaration and Errata dated December 2019 and the Mitigation Monitoring Program(MMP) prepared for the Mitigated Negative Declaration and Errata, dated December 2019;
2. **Approved** and **Recommended** that the City Council adopt, pursuant to Charter Section 555 and LAMC Section 11.5.6 F, a modified General Plan Amendment to the Westlake Community Plan from the Highway Oriented Commercial Land Use Designation to the Community Commercial Land Use Designation to include only the subject property; and
3. **Adopted** the attached Amended Findings.

The vote proceeded as follows:

Moved: Millman
Second: Choe
Ayes: Khorsand, Leung, Mack, Mitchell, Padilla-Campos, Perlman
Absent: Ambroz

Vote: 8 – 0



Cecilia Lamas, Commission Executive Assistant
Los Angeles City Planning Commission

Fiscal Impact Statement: There is no General Fund impact as administrative costs are recovered through fees.

Effective Date/Appeals: The decision of the Los Angeles City Planning Commission is final and effective upon the mailing of this determination letter and not further appealable.

Notice: An appeal of the CEQA clearance for the Project pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21151(c) is only available if the Determination of the non-elected decision-making body (e.g., ZA, AA, APC, CPC) **is not further appealable** and the decision is final.

If you seek judicial review of any decision of the City pursuant to California Code of Civil Procedure Section 1094.5, the petition for writ of mandate pursuant to that section must be filed no later than the 90th day following the date on which the City's decision became final pursuant to California Code of Civil Procedure Section 1094.6. There may be other time limits which also affect your ability to seek judicial review.

Attachments: Amended Findings, Map, Resolution

c: Jane Choi, Senior City Planner
Kevin Golden, City Planner

REVISED GENERAL PLAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL FINDINGS

Legislative Findings / General Plan / Charter Findings

1. GENERAL PLAN LAND USE DESIGNATION

The Project Site is located within the Westlake Community Plan, which was adopted on September 16, 1997. The existing Community Plan designates the property as Highway Oriented Commercial with corresponding zones of C2, C1, CR, RAS3, RAS4, and P. The Project Site's current zones are C2-1 and R4-1. The proposed General Plan Amendment will change the Project Site land use designation to Community Commercial with corresponding zones of C4, C2, C1, CR, RAS3, RAS4, P, and PB. Height District 2 in the C Zone allows unlimited height with a maximum FAR of 6.0: 1. In addition, the proposed Zone Change will unify the entire Project Site under the C2 Zone while maintaining the height and FAR restrictions of Height District No. 2. With approval of the proposed General Plan Amendment from Highway Oriented Commercial to Community Commercial, the Project will be consistent with the land use designation. The mix of commercial uses adjacent to multiple family residential uses give the area a vibrant walkable identity.

The Project Site is in an existing commercial area, an area that is able to support such developments which are in close proximity to rail and bus transit stations. It is made up of retail shops offices clinics and cafés that are mostly walkable neighborhood/community uses. The GPA will unify land use and zoning with adjacent and future planned land use patterns in the area. Moreover, it would allow for redevelopment of the Project Site, reflecting the typical scale envisioned by the General Plan Framework. The Project will be in substantial conformance with the purposes, intent and provisions of the General Plan.

2. GENERAL PLAN TEXT

- a. **Westlake Community Plan:** The proposed Project is consistent with several goals, objectives, and policies of the Westlake Community Plan. The plan text includes the following relevant land use goals, objectives and policies:

Commercial, Objective 1: *To conserve and strengthen viable commercial development in the community and to provide additional opportunities for new commercial development and services.*

The Project will take advantage of an underutilized site containing a partially-vacant shopping center and will revitalize it with a new viable hotel use.

Commercial, Objective 2: *To provide a range of commercial facilities at various locations to accommodate the shopping needs of residents and to provide increased employment opportunities within the community.*

The Project will provide short- and long-term jobs, including construction, maintenance, and administrative support staff.

Commercial, Objective 3: *To improve the compatibility between commercial and residential uses.*

The hotel use is compatible with the existing commercial and multiple-family residential development in the area. The existing commercial development will

provide easy access to amenities and services for hotel guests, while the proposed restaurant will be a new amenity for the hotel guests. The pedestrian friendly architectural design will enhance the streetscape of James M. Wood Boulevard and Westlake Avenue.

Commercial, Policy 1: *That commercial facilities be located on existing traffic arteries and commercial corridors.*

The hotel, a "hybrid" between residential and commercial land uses, is located along James M. Wood Boulevard, which is a commercial corridor improved with a church just east of the Project Site and a clothing store to the west and a restaurant and hotel to the south.

Commercial, Policy 7: *That new commercial development be oriented so as to facilitate pedestrian access by locating parking to the rear of structures.*

With the exception of a few spaces for loading/un-loading and compliance with ADA, the majority of the hotel's parking is located in two basement levels.

Commercial, Policy 8: *That adequate parking be provided for all types of retail and office commercial development, and that all parking areas adjacent to residential lands be appropriately buffered by a wall and/or landscaped setback.*

The Project's parking is provided as required by the LAMC. The majority of the hotel's parking is buffered from residential uses and pedestrians as it is located in two basement levels.

- b. **Framework Land Use Chapter:** The Framework Element's Land Use chapter seeks to support the viability of the City's residential neighborhoods and commercial districts while encouraging sustainable growth in commercial districts.

The General Plan Framework seeks to "reinforce existing and encourage new community centers, which accommodate a broad range of uses that serve the needs of adjacent residents, promote neighborhood and community activity, are compatible with adjacent neighborhoods, and are developed to be desirable places in which to live, work and visit, both in daytime and nighttime." The corresponding zones for the Community Commercial (referred to as Community Centers in the Framework) land use designation are CR, C4, and [Q]C2. The General Plan Framework defines Community Centers as "intended to be identifiable focal points and activity centers for surrounding groups of residential neighborhoods ... and contain a diversity of uses such as small offices, **overnight accommodations**, cultural and entertainment facilities, schools and libraries in addition to neighborhood-oriented uses."

The General Plan Framework identifies two types of Commercial Centers: 1) A multiuse, nonresidential center that encourages the development of professional offices, **hotels**, cultural and entertainment facilities, in addition to the neighborhood-oriented uses; and, 2) A mixed-use center that encourages the development of housing in concert with the multi-use commercial uses.

The Project supports and is generally consistent with the General Plan Framework Land Use Chapter, and it will contribute an amenity to the residents, employees, and visitors of Los Angeles in general, and the Westlake community in particular.

Specifically, the Project will comply with the goals, objectives and policies for the Community Center land use designation, set forth in the General Plan Framework Land Use Chapter:

Goal 3: Pedestrian-oriented, high activity, multi- and mixed-use centers that support and provide identity for Los Angeles' communities.

Objective 3.9: Reinforce existing and encourage new community centers, which accommodate a broad range of uses that serve the needs of adjacent residents, promote neighborhood and community activity, are compatible with adjacent neighborhoods, and are developed to be desirable places in which to live, work and visit, both in daytime and nighttime.

Policy 3.9.1: Accommodate the development of community-serving commercial uses and services and residential dwelling units in areas designated as "Community Center" in accordance with Tables 3-1 and 3-5.

The Community Center land use designation is a focal point for surrounding residential neighborhoods and contains a diversity of uses, Community Centers generally range from floor area ratios of 1.5:1 to 3.0:1, characterized by two- to six-story buildings, e.g., some will be two-story Centers, some four- or six-story Centers depending on the character of the surrounding area.

Policy 3.9.6: Require that commercial and mixed-use buildings located adjacent to residential zones be designed and limited in height and scale to provide a transition with these uses, where appropriate.

Policy 3.9.7: Provide for the development of public streetscape improvements, where appropriate.

The Project is consistent with the Community Centers land use designation's first typology: A multiuse, non-residential center that encourages the development of professional offices, **hotels**, cultural and entertainment facilities, in addition to the neighborhood-oriented uses. The Project is located in an area of Westlake consisting of properties with the Highway Oriented Commercial land use designation and are zoned C2-1, among a mix of Medium Residential and High Medium Residential and R3- and R4-zoned properties. The Project Site's proposed Community Commercial land use designation supports the area's diversity of uses, consistent with the Framework's characterization of Community Commercial as a focal point of activity for surrounding groups. The Project will invigorate the immediate area by replacing an obsolete shopping center and associated surface parking lot with a hotel. Approval of the Project will therefore contribute to the existing diversity of jobs and services in an urban area that is well-served by public infrastructure and transit.

- c. **Health and Wellness Element:** "Plan for a Healthy Los Angeles", the Health and Wellness Element of the General Plan, provides high-level policy vision to elevate health as a priority for the City's future growth and development. The Plan focuses on public health from the perspective of the built environment and City services. The proposed Project is consistent with the Plan 's policies, as follows:

Policy 2.2: Healthy building design and construction: *Promote a healthy built environment by encouraging the design and rehabilitation of buildings and sites for healthy living and working conditions, including promoting enhanced pedestrian-oriented circulation, lighting, attractive and open stairs, healthy building materials and universal accessibility using existing tools, practices, and programs.*

Policy 3.8: Active spaces: *Support public, private, and nonprofit partners in the ongoing development new and innovative active spaces and strategies to increase the number of Angelenos who engage in physical activity across ages and level of abilities.*

Active spaces in the proposed Project include a fitness center and swimming pool. The proposed Project will comply with the state and local Green Building Codes. The project site's location, near several public transit lines, and restaurant uses at the ground level encourage pedestrian circulation in an area currently with limited pedestrian activity.

- d. **Mobility Element:** Mobility Plan 2035, the Mobility Element of the General Plan, will not be negatively affected by the proposed GPA and Zone Change. The Project is consistent with the five goals of the plan to provide:
- i. Safety First
 - ii. World Class Infrastructure
 - iii. Access for All Angelenos
 - iv. Collaboration, Communication and Informed Choices
 - v. Clean Environments & Healthy Communities

Pursuant to Mobility Plan 2035, the designations for the Project's adjacent streets are: James M. Wood Boulevard, adjoining the project site to the south, is designated an Avenue III and has a 72-foot right-of-way; Westlake Avenue, adjoining the project site to the east, is designated a Standard Local Street with a 60-foot right-of-way. The proposed project will not impact Mobility Plan 2035 as Westlake Avenue is presently 60 feet wide while the portion of James M. Wood Blvd. that is adjoining the project site has varying widths of 78 to 80 feet. The Bureau of Engineering is requiring off-site improvements as part of the project's approval, including any necessary removal and reconstruction of the existing improvements.

The Applicant is not requesting discretionary actions to allow relief from off-street automobile stalls and bicycle parking spaces. The project site is well-served by public transportation, including the following regional and local bus lines:

- Metro Local Line 200 runs north-south along Alvarado Street;
- Metro Local Line 66 runs east-west along 8th Street and Olympic Boulevard.
- LADOT Pico Union / Echo Park line runs in all directions but generally north-south toward Echo to the north and the Pico Union neighborhood to the south, including along Alvarado Street, Union Avenue, Westlake Avenue, Lucas Avenue and Washington Boulevard.

3. CHARTER COMPLIANCE - CITY CHARTER SECTIONS 555, 556 AND 558 (GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT)

The proposed GPA is consistent with Charter Sections 555, 556 and 558. It is consistent with numerous goals, policies and objectives of the Citywide General Plan Framework and the Westlake Community Plan to provide density in commercial centers, transit use, reduced vehicle dependency, and improved air quality. The proposed GPA will change the land use designation from Highway Oriented Commercial to Community Commercial on the land use map, promoting job and housing growth in a multi-use, non-residential center that encourages the development of professional offices, **hotels**, cultural and entertainment facilities, in addition to the neighborhood-oriented uses.

The Project Site is in an existing commercial/multiple family residential area, an area that is able to support such developments which are in close proximity to rail and bus transit stations. The area contains a mix of commercial uses, in a node of urban activity. The project site is located within one-half mile from the MacArthur Park Metro Red Line and Purple Line Rail Station, which is at the corner of 6th Street and Alvarado Boulevard adjacent to the popular MacArthur Park. The MacArthur Park Metro Red Line station provides access to Hollywood and the San Fernando Valley, with connecting service to the Metro Orange Line (serving the west Valley and Chatsworth). The Metro Red Line and Purple Line serve Downtown, including Los Angeles Union Station, with connecting service to the Metro Gold Line (serving Azusa and East Los Angeles), Amtrak passenger rail, Metrolink commuter rail, and bus service for regional and local lines. The Metro Purple Line also serves Koreatown. The Metro Blue Line originates at the 7th Street/Metro Center station and provides access from downtown Los Angeles to downtown Long Beach, as well as connecting service to the Metro Green Line (serving Norwalk, Redondo Beach, and LAX via shuttle). Additionally, the Wilshire/Alvarado Bus Station provides access to the several Metro Bus lines that are available.

The General Plan Amendment from Highway Oriented Commercial to Community Commercial makes sense because the City is moving away from a car culture to a more pedestrian friendly culture. The Community Commercial Land Use Designation is a useful tool for facilitating walkable neighborhoods now that the City and region has embraced a more robust public transportation system, including mixed-use and high density development near rail stations and bus lines. As such, the Project, will contribute to the emerging social and physical identity of the Westlake Community Plan Area.

As conditioned, the Project will be designed in harmony with the existing neighborhood and minimize impacts on neighboring properties. The Project's recommended bulk and height will be compatible with adjacent land uses. The Project will replace an underutilized shopping center and associated surface parking lot with a hotel, which is compatible with other developments and improvements in the immediate vicinity. The GPA will unify land use and zoning with adjacent and future planned land use patterns in the area. Moreover, it would allow for redevelopment of the Project Site, reflecting the typical scale envisioned by the Framework, which envisions this area as part of a Regional Center per the Metro Long Range Land Use Diagram. It would also provide a hotel in the Westlake area to accommodate a growing shortage of hotel rooms and employment opportunities in the surrounding neighborhood.

4. **WESTLAKE RECOVERY REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT PLAN**

The Project Site is located within the boundaries of the Westlake Recovery Redevelopment Project Plan("Redevelopment Plan") area where, "if and when the Westlake Community Plan is amended so as to change the land uses permitted within the Project Area, the land uses specified for the Project Area in the Community Plan as so amended, shall supersede

the land use designations on the attached Redevelopment Plan Map, and all of the other land use provisions of this Redevelopment Plan, to the extent that such Redevelopment Plan land use designations and provisions are inconsistent with the Community Plan as so amended.” Therefore, a separate discretionary action regarding the Redevelopment Plan is not required.

Environmental Findings

1. **Environmental Finding.** A Mitigated Negative Declaration (ENV-2017-713-MND), circulated in December 2017 and September 2019, and Errata dated December 2019 were prepared for the proposed project. On the basis of the whole of the record before the lead agency including any comments received, the lead agency finds that, with imposition of the mitigation measures described in the MND and Errata dated December 2019, there is no substantial evidence that the proposed project will have a significant effect on the environment. The attached Mitigated Negative Declaration and Errata dated December 2019, reflects the lead agency’s independent judgment and analysis. The records upon which this decision is based are with the Department of City Planning on the 13th floor of 221 N. Figueroa Street.
2. **Flood Insurance.** The National Flood Insurance Program rate maps, which are a part of the Flood Hazard Management Specific Plan adopted by the City Council by Ordinance No. 172,081, have been reviewed and it has been determined that this project is located in Zone C, areas of minimal flooding.

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the subject project is located within the area covered by the Westlake Community Plan adopted by the City Council on September 16, 1997;

WHEREAS, the City Planning Commission, at its meeting on January 23, 2020, recommended approval of a General Plan Amendment to the Westlake Community Plan from the Regional Center Commercial Land Use designation to the Community Commercial Land Use designation for the subject property;

WHEREAS, pursuant to the provisions of the Los Angeles City Charter, the Mayor and City Planning Commission have transmitted their recommendations;

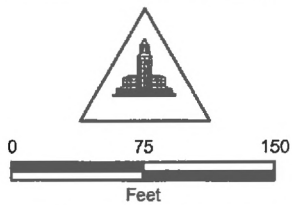
WHEREAS, the requested General Plan Amendment is consistent with the intent and purpose of the adopted Westlake Community Plan to designate land use in an orderly and unified manner; and

WHEREAS, the subject proposal has been assessed through a Mitigated Negative Declaration No. ENV-2017-713-MND, recirculated Sept. 12, 2019 and Errata Dated December, 2019 in accordance with the City's Guidelines for implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA);

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Westlake Community Plan be amended as shown on the attached General Plan Amendment map.



 **COMMUNITY
COMMERCIAL**



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