

Communication from Public

Name: Eric Lieberman
Date Submitted: 10/31/2019 04:36 PM
Council File No: 18-1242
Comments for Public Posting: Please include the attached comments for the record.



I N C O R P O R A T E D

October 25, 2019

Planning and Land Use Management Committee
Los Angeles City Council
200 N. Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Subject: Council File No. 18-1242
Comments to October 14, 2019 Local 11 letter

On September 13, 2018, The City Planning Commission found, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15074(b), that with the mitigation measures imposed the project will not have a significant effect on the environment. The City Planning Commission approved the MND and recommended the adoption of a General Plan Amendment, including "add areas", changing the land use designation from Highway Oriented Commercial to Community Commercial and approved; recommended a Vesting Zone Change from R4-1 and C2-1 to (T)(Q)C2-2D to allow a Building Floor Area Ratio of 2.99 to 1; approved a Conditional Use to allow a hotel within 500 feet of residentially zoned property, approved a Site Plan Review; adopted the recommended conditions from City Planning Staff and adopted the Findings necessary to support the approvals.

The Appellant's comments regarding Housing, Land Use and Air Quality are addressed in the letter dated January 17, 2019 from Meridian Consultants and previously submitted to the record

The Appellant states that the project as proposed cannot comply with the required findings regarding necessity, public interest or the general welfare, but fails to state how the project is not in compliance.

The City Planning Commission's action is supported by clear Legislative, General Plan and Charter Findings noted in the Letter of Determination Dated November 20, 2018.

The Proposed Land Use Designation is Appropriate

The site and "Add Area" are located within the Westlake Community Plan and are in an area that supports bus and rail transit and includes retail, office, clinics and cafés that serve the neighborhood and is convenient to pedestrian activity. The General Plan Amendment changing the Land Use Designation to Community Commercial is appropriate and necessary in order to accommodate the changing and evolving transit infrastructure.

The General Plan Amendment does not change residential capacity, it simply reclassifies the permitted potential zones allowed in the new Land Use Designation. Each individual property owner within the add areas would be required to apply for

changes of zone, which would be JJJ compliant for residential dwelling unit densities, if the current densities are not desirable.

The Proposed Land Use Designation supports the Goals, Policies and Objectives of the City Wide General Plan Framework

The Subject site and "Add Area" are located within walkable transit oriented commercial corridors providing neighborhood serving uses. The General Plan encourages uses such as the proposed hotel and will support transit use, reduce vehicle dependency and improve air quality. Changing the land use designation to Community Commercial supports the objective of encouraging local job growth and development of cultural and entertainment facilities, hotels and professional offices.

Public Necessity, Convenience and General Welfare demand Approval of the Zone Change

Rezoning the site as proposed will increase construction and permanent job opportunities for the local population. The proposed hotel use will provide needed short stay accommodations for tourism and business traveler in a community where there is a shortage of such services. Convenience is served by locating a hotel near transit thereby reducing reliance on cars. Increased pedestrian activity further stimulates the local economy and boosts business to local business. The general welfare of the community is served by meeting local job needs, creating amenities around transit and bringing private investment to the community.

Bulk and Scale of the Development are Compatible with Existing Zoning and Future Development

The proposed Height District will provide the Building Floor Area needed to ensure the construction of the hotel project is consistent with the public necessity, general welfare and good zoning practice. To keep the development at an appropriate scale, the FAR is limited to 3:1 thereby ensuring the bulk and scale is compatible with existing and future development in the surrounding area.

The Proposed Project will Enhance the Built Environment and serve an Important Function

The proposed project will replace an underutilized site being improved with an older commercial shopping center with a newly constructed 100-room hotel designed in compliance with the Citywide Design Guidelines. The hotel use is in high demand and will serve the shortage of moderately priced hotels in and around the area of the Convention Center.

The Surrounding Neighborhood, Public Health, Welfare and Safety are Protected

The current request for Height District Change will permit a 3:1 Building Floor Area Ratio consistent with the surrounding R3 and R5 zoned lots. The 9-foot setback along the northern boundary together with the "U" Shaped configuration of the building design reduces the massing and creates a buffer between the hotel and the existing apartment uses. The proposed 5-story apartment building adjacent to the proposed hotel site will be

The Project Conforms with the Purpose and Intent of the General Plan and Community Plan

The proposed zone is consistent with the zones permitted in the Community Commercial land use designation. The demolition of the existing shopping center and construction of the hotel use will support the tourism industry and create local construction and permanent jobs. The hotel use is defined as a hybrid residential use and therefore creates a transitional use between commercial and residential. Code required parking is substantially located in basement garages ensuring that the ground floor is primarily used for pedestrian oriented activity.

The redevelopment of underutilized land is encouraged by the Westlake Recovery and Redevelopment Project Plan. By locating new development near public transit, it will help to revitalize the neighborhood, accommodate tourism and enhance business development.

The Arrangement of the Proposed building will be Compatible with Existing and Future Development

The project is located along a commercial corridor with the bulk of the building oriented to the street sides. The north side (rear) of the building is shaped like a "U" thereby reducing the building mass and opening the building elevation to make it more compatible with the multi-family uses to the north.

The height of the proposed building is compatible with the surrounding urban neighborhood by providing a transition from the two to four story multi family to adjacent 5 story surrounding the site to the six story hotel along the commercial corridor. All required yard setbacks are met or exceeded with emphasis on the 9 foot ground floor setback on the northerly property line.

For the reasons outlined about, it is easily concluded that the proposed project and the requested General Plan Amendment, Zone and Height District Change, Site Plan Review, CUP and CEQA Compliance are consistent and compatible the intent and objectives of the General Plan.

The appellant asserts that the proposed hotel will have a negative impact on surrounding residential development. It is important to point out that TOC development in the R4 zoning around the project site has already begun with the adjacent property to the north. The adjacent property is proposed for demolition of 17 existing units and construction of a 79 unit 7 story (5 story apartment building over a two story parking podium) apartment complex. This is an indication of future development and speaks to the fact that the proposed hotel is compatible with adjacent and future uses in the area.

We respectfully request that the Planning and Land Use Management Committee deny the appeal and sustain the recommendation and decision of the City Planning Commission.

Thank you for your time and consideration.



Eric Lieberman
QES, Inc.

Date: October 31, 2019
To: Kevin Golden, Department of City Planning, City of Los Angeles
Cc: Eric Liberman, QES
From: Ned Baldwin, Senior Project Manager
Subject: Response to Comments on ENV-2017-713-MND

This memo provides responses to comments contained in the October 14, 2018 letter submitted by UniteHere! Local 11 on the recirculated MND regarding the proposed hotel at 2005 James M Wood Boulevard.

1. GPA Consistency with Measure JJJ

The UniteHere! Local 11 letter states that the proposed GPA would reduce the capacity for the creation of affordable housing. However, the proposed GPA would broaden the range of zoning that would be consistent with the Community Plan to include C4 and Height District 2. If a parcel were subsequently rezoned to Height District 2, it would allow a higher density of housing than is currently permitted. If this were the case, the TOC program incentive would be even greater than under current zoning. As such, the capacity for the creation of affordable housing would increase.

2. Hotel Consistency with Measure JJJ

The UniteHere! Local 11 letter states that the proposed hotel would conflict with the provisions of Measure JJJ. Hiring and wage aspects of JJJ are not CEQA issues and thus were not addressed in the MND.

3. Foreseeable Development from GPA

The UniteHere! Local 11 letter states that the MND does not adequately address the potential for development resulting from the GPA. The letter refers to a change in FAR from 1.5:1 to 6:1. The FAR permitted on a site is determined by the zoning. The GPA would not change existing zoning though it would make Height District 2 consistent with the Community Plan and therefore a property within the GPA could apply for rezoning from Height District 1 to 2, which allows for the increase in FAR. As such, the GPA in itself does not change the FAR; subsequent discretionary approval is necessary.

Nonetheless, the letter argues that analysis of potential effects -- specifically with respect to such topics as air quality, GHG, growth inducement, and traffic -- ought to have been included in the MND. If applications for rezoning were implemented, the theoretical effect would be an increase in density of mixed-use development in a transit-oriented location. This would be consistent with the City, SCAG and SCAQMD policies and projections for future development by targeting growth in a desired location and reducing Vehicle-Miles-Traveled thereby reducing regional air quality impacts and GHG emissions. As such, any theoretical increase in density associated with the GPA would not be anticipated to have significant adverse effects. Nonetheless, future rezoning actions and development applications would be subject to additional environmental review on a case by case basis.

4. Hotel Development Impacts

The UniteHere! Local 11 letter states that the MND does not adequately address hotel impacts associated with alcohol sales or natural gas leaks. On-site alcohol service or sales is not a CEQA issue. The letter references a gas leak and fire that occurred in January 2019, associated with an underground utility vault in front of 711 Westlake Avenue. The alleged relationship of this event to the Project is not expressed in the UniteHere! Letter. A leak in a utility line is not a reasonably foreseeable result of the Project.

The UniteHere! Local 11 letter expressed concern regarding noise impacts. The MND includes mitigation to address potential noise impacts, for which the letter commends the City.