



DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE

AGENDA ITEM

AGENDA DATE: DECEMBER 18, 2013
TO: Chair Fox and Members of the Design Review Committee
THRU: Leslie Aranda Roseberry, Planning Manager
FROM: Anne E. Fox, Contract Staff Planner
SUBJECT: DRC NO. 4700-13 – STORAGE WEST

SUMMARY

The applicant proposes to demolish an existing two-story office/storage building at an existing self-storage establishment and construct a new three-story self-storage building in its place including related site improvements.

RECOMMENDATION TO PLANNING COMMISSION

Staff is requesting that the DRC recommend approval of the proposed project to the Planning Commission.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Applicant: Shab Vakili – KSP Studio
Owner: John Hathaway – LAACO, Ltd.
Property Location: 681 South Tustin Street
General Plan Designation: General Commercial Max. 1.0 FAR (GC)
Zoning Classification: C2 (General Business)
Existing Development: 21,600 SF two-story office/storage building with 85,056 SF within 17 single-story storage buildings
Property Size: 4.67 Acres (203,600 SF)
Associated Applications: CUP No. 2912-13, VAR No. 2230-13 & MJSP No. 0745-13

PUBLIC NOTICE

No Public Notice was required for this project.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Categorical Exemption: The proposed project is categorically exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) per State CEQA Guidelines 15332 (In-Fill Development Projects) because it consists of a project that can be characterized as in-fill development meeting all the stated conditions.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant is proposing site improvements to the westerly one-third portion of an existing commercially developed parcel, currently established as a self-storage establishment operated by Storage West. The improvements to be considered by the DRC are shown on the submitted plans provided as Attachments 2, 3 & 4 and generally include:

- Sheets A1 & A2 – demolition of the existing 21,600 SF two-story, office/storage building and immediately surrounding asphalt and planter areas of parking lot, protecting three on-site trees and two off-site trees that are immediately adjacent to the subject parcel in an area owned by Cal Trans. The existing pole sign will also be retained and is proposed to be re-faced with the updated Storage West corporate branding and the supporting structure painted to match the colors of the new building; therefore it is not subject to DRC review and is shown for reference only.
- Sheets A2, A4 & A5 – Construct new 46,528 SF three-story building providing approximately 1,400 SF of retail/office space for the self-storage business, with the remaining square footage divided into individual, climate-controlled, rental storage units ranging from 50 to 200 SF in size.
- Sheets A2 and C.01 – Construct new asphalt and stripe new parking lot areas providing a total of nine spaces and two loading zones, drive aisles and curbing for new planter areas; new fencing, and entry monuments (low walls), and gates for controlled vehicle entry around the building and to the existing single-story storage buildings on the eastern portion of the parcel; and a new trash enclosure.
- Sheet A6 – Finish exterior and architecture of new three-story building is contemporary and proposes to use primarily an exterior plaster painted in complimenting shades of earth tones, with accent metal panels. A combination of concrete block (precision and split face) and ledger stone veneer is proposed at the base of the building. Anodized aluminum store-front windows and doors are proposed with building entrances highlighted by an overhead metal canopy at the first floor level. The west elevation features a columned and raised roof entry element, capped by a metal cornice painted in a red tone. This same red tone accent color is used on the individual storage unit roll-up doors visible through the store-front windows. Sign locations for wall signs are shown for reference only. All proposed wall signs comply with OMC requirements and are not subject to DRC review. All mechanical equipment is screened to comply with the OMC.
- Sheet L-1 – Retains two on-site pine trees located along the First Street frontage, and adds 24 “Queen Palms” with 12-foot BTH and 10 “Smoke Trees” at 36-inch box size in the perimeter planter areas of the east on-third of the parcel. A variety of 5-gallon low-water use shrubs, and 1-gallon grasses and groundcovers are also proposed within these perimeter planter areas.

EXISTING SITE

The subject site is located within a triangular shaped area of land with frontage along Tustin Street, flanked on either side by freeway interchange connecting ramps between the SR22 and SR55 Freeways. The site abuts but does not have direct access to Tustin Street taking access from an adjacent Cal Trans access road that runs along the length of the subject property's southern boundary from First Street on the west through to the Cal Trans Yard on the east. The existing site has been developed with a 21,600 SF two-story office/storage building with associated parking, landscaping and signage on the front (west) one-third of its parcel, with 85,056 SF contained within 17 single-story storage buildings on the back (east) two-thirds of the parcel.

EXISTING AREA CONTEXT

Surrounding property to the north and south are commercial developments separated from the subject site by the SR22 Freeway. The parcel immediately east of the site is owned and operated by Cal Trans as a yard facility. An office development is located to the west across Tustin Street. The applicant has submitted photographs of the immediately surrounding properties, which is provided as Attachment 5 for the DRC reference.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Orange Municipal Code (OMC) Section 17.10.070 establishes the general criteria the DRC should use when reviewing the project. This section states the following:

The project shall have an internally consistent, integrated design theme, which is reflected in the following elements:

1. **Architectural Features.**
 - a. The architectural features shall reflect a similar design style or period.
 - b. Creative building elements and identifying features should be used to create a high quality project with visual interest and an architectural style.
2. **Landscape.**
 - a. The type, size and location of landscape materials shall support the project's overall design concept.
 - b. Landscaping shall not obstruct visibility of required addressing, nor shall it obstruct the vision of motorists or pedestrians in proximity to the site.
 - c. Landscape areas shall be provided in and around parking lots to break up the appearance of large expanses of hardscape.
3. **Signage.** All signage shall be compatible with the building(s) design, scale, colors, materials and lighting.

4. **Secondary Functional and Accessory Features.** Trash receptacles, storage and loading areas, transformers and mechanical equipment shall be screened in a manner, which is architecturally compatible with the principal building(s).

ANALYSIS/STATEMENT OF THE ISSUES

Issue 1: Number of Trees

The OMC requirement for landscaping specifies the minimum number of trees that must be provided. Taking into account only the area of the proposed expansion and applying the stated formula (903 ft site perimeter + 600 ft building perimeter + 53 ft of parking row / 36), a total of 43 trees would be required to be incorporated into the landscaping, 11 of which must be 24-inch box in size or greater. The submitted plans only show a total of 34 trees being added to the site that meet or exceed this minimum requirement, retaining two existing pine trees, for a total of 36 trees. This represents more than a ten-percent deficiency in the number of trees, which requires approval of a Variance by the Planning Commission. The DRC is asked to provide a recommendation regarding this deviation. Ten of proposed new trees will be of larger specimen size, 36-inch box and those will be located along the parcel's frontage. Much of the visibility to the subject site is obstructed due to the adjacent freeway ramps and the Cal Trans yard surrounding the property. This is an unusual topographical consideration, and the applicant is proposing to compensate for the limitation by providing larger trees and concentrating them in the planter areas most visible from Tustin Street. Staff believes that the Variance in this instance can be supported and that the DRC could recommend the Planning Commission approve the request finding that there is a unique situation and that the applicant has provided an appropriate design solution.

Issue 2: Integrated Design Theme

The project proposes improvements to only the westerly one-third portion of the parcel, without proposing any modifications to the single-story storage buildings located on the remaining east portion. Staff does not believe this to be a significant concern as the overall appearance of the subject site today gives the impression of multiple businesses and parcels. However, one of the overarching criteria for consideration of Design Review approval is an internally consistent and integrated design theme. Further, other self-storage businesses that have demolished a portion of their buildings to construct a new climate-controlled facility have updated the colors and/or finish materials of the buildings that are proposed to remain. As such, Staff would recommend that the DRC include a condition of approval that requires at a minimum, that the remaining single-story buildings on the easterly portion of the parcel be painted to match the color scheme used on the new building.

ADVISORY BOARD RECOMMENDATION

The Staff Review Committee (SRC) considered the submitted plans on October 23, 2013, and recommended approval of the proposal subject to conditions.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION AND REQUIRED FINDINGS

The courts define a “Finding” as a conclusion which describes the method of analysis decision makers utilize to make the final decision. A decision making body “makes a Finding,” or draws a conclusion, through identifying evidence in the record (i.e., testimony, reports, environmental documents, etc.) and should not contain unsupported statements. The statements which support the Findings bridge the gap between the raw data and the ultimate decision, thereby showing the rational decision making process that took place. The “Findings” are, in essence, the ultimate conclusions which must be reached in order to approve (or recommend approval of) a project. The same holds true if denying a project; the decision making body must detail why it cannot make the Findings.

The Findings are applied as appropriate to each project. Based on the following Findings and statements in support of such Findings, staff recommends the DRC approve the project with recommended conditions.

1. *In the Old Towne Historic District, the proposed work conforms to the prescriptive standards and design criteria referenced and/or recommended by the DRC or other reviewing body for the project (OMC 17.10.070.F.1).*

This project site is not within the Old Towne Historic District; therefore, this finding does not apply.

2. *In any National Register Historic District, the proposed work complies with the Secretary of the Interior’s standards and guidelines (OMC 17.10.07.F.2).*

This project site is not within the National Register Historic District; therefore, this finding does not apply.

3. *The project design upholds community aesthetics through the use of an internally consistent, integrated design theme and is consistent with all adopted specific plans, applicable design standards, and their required findings (OMC 17.10.07.F.3).*

The project is not located within any specific plan area or area with specific design standards. The new building and its associated site improvements are complimentary to the use of the site; and although the total number of trees proposed is less than required, the specimen size and placement is appropriate for the site; and, with the condition included on the project approval to match the colors of the new building on the remaining single-story structures, the overall project design will be consistent.

4. *For infill residential development, as specified in the City of Orange Infill Residential Design Guidelines, the new structure(s) or addition are compatible with the scale, massing, orientation, and articulation of the surrounding development and will preserve or enhance existing neighborhood character (OMC 17.10.07.F.4).*

This project is not an infill residential development; therefore, this finding does not apply.

CONDITIONS

The approval of this project is subject to the following conditions:

1. All construction shall conform in substance and be maintained in general conformance with plans and exhibits labeled as Attachments 2, 3 & 4 in the staff report (label dated December 18, 2013), including modifications required by the conditions of approval, and as recommended for approval by the Design Review Committee. Further, exterior building color and materials shall substantially conform to the plans and color and materials board approved by the Design Review Committee on December 18, 2013. Any change to the exterior of the building from the approved plans shall be subject to subsequent review and approval by the Design Review Committee.
2. The applicant agrees to indemnify, hold harmless, and defend the City, its officers, agents and employees from any and all liability or claims that may be brought against the City arising out of its approval of this permit, save and except that caused by the City's active negligence.
3. The applicant, business owner, managers, successors, and all future assigns shall comply with all Federal, State and local laws, including all City regulations. Violation of any of those laws in connection with the use will be cause for revocation of this permit.
4. Except as otherwise provided herein, this project is approved as a precise plan. After any application has been approved, if changes are proposed regarding the location or alteration of any use or structure, a changed plan may be submitted to the Community Development Director for approval. If the Community Development Director determines that the proposed change complies with the provisions and the spirit and intent of the approval action, and that the action would have been the same for the changed plan as for the approved plot plan, the Community Development Director may approve the changed plan without requiring a new public hearing.
5. Prior to the issuance of building permits, the applicant shall pay all applicable development fees including but not limited to: City sewer connection, Orange County Sanitation District Connection Fee, Transportation System Improvement Program, Fire Facility, Police Facility, Park Acquisition, Sanitation District, and School District, as required.
6. Construction permits shall be obtained for all construction work, as required by the City of Orange, Community Development Department's Building Division and Public Works Grading Division. Failure to obtain the required building permits will be cause for revocation of this permit.
7. All structures shall comply with the requirements of Municipal Code – Chapter 15.52 (Building Security Standards), which relates to hardware, doors, windows, lighting, etc. (Ord. 7-79). Approved structural drawings shall include sections of the security code that apply. Specifications, details, or security notes may be used to convey the compliance.
8. The final approved conditions of approval shall be reprinted on the first or second page of the construction documents when submitting to the Building Department for the plan check process.

9. If not utilized, project approval expires twenty-four months from the approval date. Extensions of time may be granted in accordance with OMC Section 17.08.060. The Planning entitlements expire unless Building Permits are pulled within 2 years of the original approval.
10. The existing single-story structures on the easterly portion of the subject site shall be painted using the color scheme, primary building color, trim and doors, as proposed for the new building.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Vicinity Map
2. Submitted Full-Size Plans (label dated December 18, 2013)
3. Submitted Color Elevations and Renderings (label dated December 18, 2013)
4. Submitted Color Landscape Plan (label dated December 18, 2013)
5. Photos of Surrounding Development

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