



## POLICY PLANNING DIVISION

City Hall • 200 N. Spring Street, Room 667 • Los Angeles, CA 90012



April 1, 2015

Council District: 14  
Plan Area: Central City

TO: Edmond Yew, Manager  
Land Development Group  
Bureau of Engineering

FROM: Craig Weber, Principal City Planner

SUBJECT: VACATION OF PUBLIC ALLEY – VAC-E1401184

PROJECT LOCATION: Harlem Place (portion) from 4<sup>th</sup> Street to approximately 360 feet Southwesterly Thereof

After receipt of the attached Exhibit A and further information about the proposed project, the Department of City Planning has prepared the revised recommendations below.

### **CHARTER SECTIONS 556 AND 558**

With the imposition of conditions as described in this report, the proposed project would be in substantial conformance with the purposes, intent, and provisions of the City's General Plan and the Central City Community Plan, an element of the General Plan.

The environmental (CEQA) status of the proposed project, as determined by the Lead Agency, is:

Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND)

### **BACKGROUND**

The proposed vacation request is for an improved portion of Harlem Place, which is a named alley. The respective alley runs parallel to Spring Street and Main Street, between 4<sup>th</sup> Street and 5<sup>th</sup> Street. Harlem Place is approximately 20 feet in width and is approximately 600 feet in length. The subject alley is located behind parcels that front onto Spring Street and Main Street that are zoned [Q]C4-4D.

On April 24, 2009, the City Council adopted a resolution approving a General Plan Amendment to the Central City Community Plan to: (a) re-designate selected streets from Major and Secondary Highways to Modified Major and Modified Secondary Highways; (b) revise Chapter V of the Central City Community Plan text to incorporate the Downtown Design Guide, Urban Design Standards and Guidelines; and (c) amend the Transportation Element to revise the Urban Design Chapter and amend the Street

Designations for the area generally bounded by the 101 Freeway on the north, the 110 Freeway on the west, the 10 Freeway on the south, and San Pedro and Alameda Streets on the east.

## FINDINGS

The City Planning Department finds that vacating the respective alley would adversely affect transportation patterns unless the Resolution to Vacate is conditioned on the applicant being required to maintain public access to the alley through provision of a public easement. If public access is maintained, the vacation would not have such effects. The subject alley is paved, free of debris and functions as a throughway for pedestrians, bicyclists and vehicles. The alley creates an alternative means for loading and unloading for adjacent commercial and residential uses, thereby relieving the north-south corridors of Spring Street and Main Street, as well as the east-west corridors of 4<sup>th</sup> Street and 5<sup>th</sup> Street of further congestion resulting from loading activities. Existing and future commercial, residential, recreational and/or open space development would greatly benefit from the retaining and preserving the respective alley connection with access to west-east streets. Any approval of the vacation request should include a condition to maintain public access, at minimum between the hours of 6AM and 12AM.

### A. General Plan Findings:

#### 1. Central City Community Plan

The subject alley to be vacated is located within the Central City Community Plan. The Central City Community Plan was adopted by the Los Angeles City Council on January 8, 2003 and is intended to promote an arrangement of land uses, circulation and services which will encourage and contribute to the economic, social and physical health, safety and convenience of the community. With the inclusion of an easement to maintain public access through the alley, the proposed alley vacation is consistent with the following Central City Community Plan Policy:

#### *Chapter IV. Transportation and Circulation*

*Policy: Provide for the efficient circulation into and within Downtown.*

Without maintenance of public access, the alley vacation request would remove a key part of the community's circulation grid, placing further stress on the existing circulation system as it attempts to compensate for the loss of the alley. The Community Plan is intended to address future growth; any future development along this section of Harlem Place fronting Spring Street and Main Street would benefit from direct vehicle access from this alley. Because the parcels on Harlem Place are commercially zoned as [Q]C4-4D with a land use designation of Regional Center Commercial, this alley has the

potential to serve vehicles entering and exiting the surrounding commercial businesses and residential uses, as well as easing circulation for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Retaining public access to Harlem Place would benefit existing commercial and residential uses by providing a vehicular and pedestrian connection to east-west corridors, while preserving a loading zone for vehicles. Additionally, future commercial, residential, recreational and/or open space growth would benefit by maintaining access and circulation on Harlem Place, thereby decreasing the congestion on the adjacent streets and permitting direct access to the rear of the buildings fronting Spring Street and Main Street, as well providing direct pedestrian and vehicular access to the rear of the adjacent Spring Street Park.

## 2. Downtown Design Guide

The subject alley to be vacated is located within the boundaries of the Downtown Design Guide, Urban Design Standards and Guidelines (Design Guide) in the Historic Downtown Neighborhood District. The Downtown Design Guide was adopted by the City Council on April 24, 2009 as a General Plan Amendment to the Central City Community Plan to revise Chapter V of the Central City Community Plan text to incorporate the Downtown Design Guide, Urban Design Standards and Guidelines. The Downtown Design Guide contains Standards and Guidelines for creating a more livable Downtown with provisions for sustainable design, sidewalks and setbacks, ground floor treatment, parking and access, massing and street wall, on-site open space, architectural detail, streetscape improvements, and signage prepared at a finer grain specifically for the Downtown Neighborhood Districts.

The proposed action is consistent with the Downtown Design Guide in that it will maintain, enhance and utilize an existing alley as an activated space that is open and accessible to the public. During daytime hours, the Alley will serve as a pedestrian paseo with permeable paving, moveable planters, and overhead string lighting. During nighttime hours, the Alley will be accessible to vehicles for loading and unloading activities for the adjacent properties.

The Downtown Design Guide strives to promote a continuous street wall and reduce conflicts with vehicles and pedestrians, thus the preservation of publicly accessible alleys is essential in creating a pedestrian friendly environment. During daytime hours, the Alley will provide for north-south pedestrian circulation between 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Streets, with an east-west connection to the adjacent Spring Street Park and to Spring Street in approximately the middle of the block. Preserving public access and circulation for pedestrians, while enhancing the quality of the Alley, will support the creation of a more livable and walkable Downtown.

The Downtown Design Guide supports maintenance of alleys for the purpose of vehicle ingress and egress in order to avoid the need for additional curb cuts on adjacent streets. The subject Alley will remain accessible to vehicles during nighttime hours, and new curb cuts on adjacent streets will be limited due to the presence of several historic structures on the block. An existing curb cut on Main Street provides access to a public parking structure, and vehicle access through to the Alley behind. This vehicular access will remain and provide an additional point of vehicle circulation to the Alley during nighttime hours.

In summary, the Department of City Planning finds that with the inclusion of the following conditions of approval, the alley vacation is consistent with the intent, goals and provisions of the General Plan:

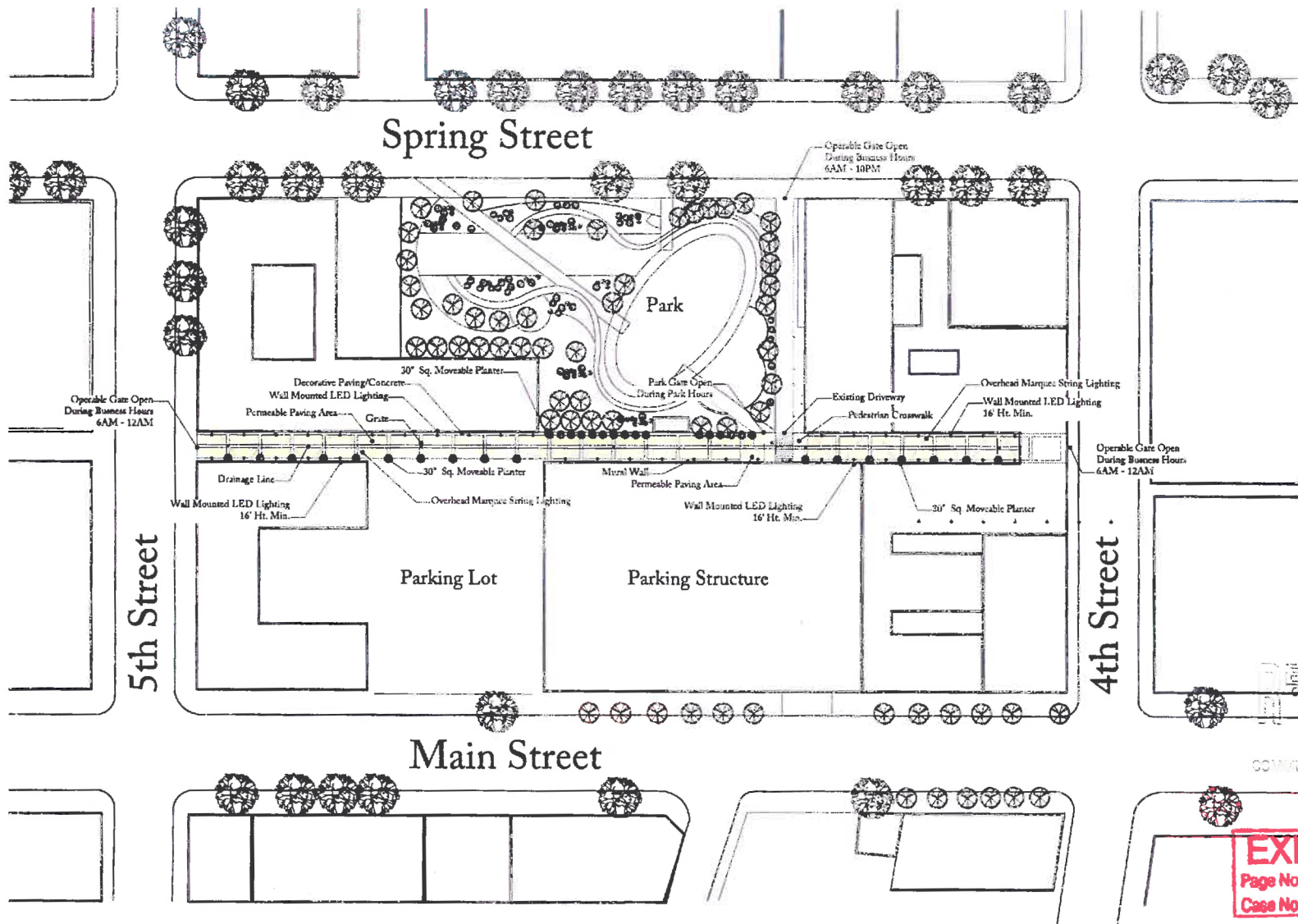
Conditions:

1. The applicant shall provide the City with a public access easement over the alley, indicating that it shall remain open and accessible to the public during the hours of 6AM to 12AM.
2. Improvements shall be constructed in accordance with the plans as shown on Exhibit A, stamped and signed by the Department of City Planning (see attached).
3. Gates, if installed, must remain fully open during the above hours, and shall be designed to complement the historic character of the surrounding buildings.

The alley provides an important service to the community and public access should be retained. The proposed improvements will enhance the quality of the alley and serve to promote improved pedestrian circulation, while maintaining vehicular access during nighttime hours. As development and revitalization continue in this area, Harlem Place Alley will provide valuable and essential services for the populace.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Under the authority granted by Section 559 of the City Charter and the City Planning Commission action of July 27, 2000 delegating authority to the Director of Planning to act on behalf of the Commission on certain matters, I find that the project, with inclusion of the above conditions, is **consistent** with the General Plan and recommend it be approved by the City Council.



CITY OF CHICAGO  
COMMUNITY PLANNING BUREAU

**EXHIBIT "A"**  
Page No. 1 of 1  
Case No. VAC-EH01184