

FINDINGS

(As Amended by the Central Los Angeles Area Planning Commission at its meeting November 8, 2022)

General Plan/Charter Findings

1. **General Plan Land Use Designation.** The project site is located within the Central City North Community Plan, which was last updated by the City Council on December 15, 2000. The subject property is an irregularly-shaped site comprised of four parcels with approximately 29,798 square feet of net lot area. The Community Plan designates the site for Regional Commercial Land Uses, with corresponding zones CR, C1.5, C2, C4, RAS3, RAS4, R3, R4, and R5. The site is presently zoned (T)(Q)C2-2-RIO and is thus consistent with the land use designation.

The requested Zone Change modifies the Qualified (Q) Condition increasing in the maximum allowable floor area at the site from 102,679 square feet to 124,233 square feet. This increase is consistent with what is otherwise allowed under the C2 zone and with the land use designation. The request is in substantial conformance with the purpose, intent, and provisions of the General Plan as it is reflected within the Central City North Community Plan.

2. **General Plan Text.** The development of the project represents the opportunity to achieve the overarching goals of the Central City North Community Plan, which include improving the function, design, and economic vitality of the commercial corridors and uses a development opportunity site for needed job producing uses that will improve the economic and physical condition of the Central City North area. The proposed development furthers the following Community Plan goals, objectives and policies:

Goal 2: A strong and competitive commercial sector which best serves the needs of the community through maximum efficiency and accessibility while preserving the historic commercial and cultural character of the district.

Objective 2-1: To conserve and strengthen viable commercial development in the community and to provide additional opportunities for new commercial development and services.

Policy 2-1.2: Protect commercially planned/zoned areas from encroachment by residential only development.

Policy 2-1.4: Require that projects be designed and developed to achieve a high level of quality, distinctive character, and compatibility with existing uses and development.

Objective 2-2: To attract uses which strengthen the economic base and expand market opportunities for existing and new businesses.

Policy 2-2.2: New development needs to add to and enhance the existing pedestrian street activity.

Objective 2-4: To enhance the appearance of commercial districts.

Policy 2-4.1: Require that any proposed development be designed to enhance and be compatible with adjacent development.

Policy 2-4.2: Preserve community character, scale, and architectural diversity.

Policy 2-4.4: Landscaped corridors should be created and enhanced through the planting of street trees.

The project maintains and improves the existing building while maximizing the efficient use of the site by bringing a mix of commercial spaces open to the public. By repurposing the existing building and abandoned rail spur with additional space, the project will bring commercial activity to an area that has seen a large influx of residential developments. While the prior approved project included a private club, this modified project would not include private clubs. The uses in the building would include a restaurant, restaurant and lounge, coffee bar, event space, artist studios, photo studio, screening room and offices. The project is designed to maximize the ground floor of the building with the aforementioned commercial uses and improved streetscape adding to and enhancing the pedestrian experience of the neighborhood. The entrance to the automated parking lot is accessed through an interior driveway creating an openness of the frontage along Vignes Street and allowing for street trees to be planted along the sidewalk. Though the project seeks a zone change to allow an increase in maximum floor area from 102,679 square feet to 124,233 square feet, the uses proposed are consistent with the policies to reinforce commercial development, grow the economic base, and improve aesthetics.

The project has been designed with high quality architectural elements and will maintain and improve the façade of the existing structure with modern designs to create a distinctive commercial building that will enhance the architectural diversity of this burgeoning commercial area. The project is compatible with the adjacent building to the west, a five-story mixed-use residential and commercial development and will enhance that development by creating a building of similar size with commercial amenities to go along with the new residences.

- 3. Framework Element.** The Framework Element for the General Plan (Framework Element) was adopted by the City of Los Angeles in December 1996 and re-adopted in August 2001. The Framework Element provides guidance regarding policy issues for the entire City of Los Angeles, including the project site. The Framework Element also sets forth a Citywide comprehensive long-range growth strategy and defines Citywide policies regarding such issues as land use, housing, urban form, neighborhood design, open space, economic development, transportation, infrastructure, and public services. The Framework Element includes the following goals, objectives, and policies relevant to the instant request:

Goal 3A: A physically balanced distribution of land uses that contributes towards and facilitates the City's long-term fiscal and economic viability, revitalization of economically depressed areas, conservation of existing residential neighborhoods, equitable distribution of public resources, conservation of natural resources, provision of adequate infrastructure and public services, reduction of traffic congestion and improvement of air quality, enhancement of recreation and open space opportunities, assurance of environmental justice and a healthful living environment, and achievement of the vision for a more livable city.

Objective 3.4: Encourage new multi-family residential, retail commercial, and office development in the City's neighborhood districts, community, regional, and downtown centers as well as along primary transit corridors/boulevards, while at the same time conserving existing neighborhoods and related districts.

Policy 3.4.1: Conserve existing stable residential neighborhoods and lower-intensity commercial districts and encourage the majority of new commercial and mixed-use (integrated commercial and residential) development to be located (a) in a network of neighborhood districts, community, regional, and downtown centers, (b) in proximity to rail and bus transit stations and corridors, and (c) along the City's major boulevards, referred to as districts, centers, and mixed-use boulevards, in accordance with the Framework Long-Range Land Use Diagram.

The project site is located 0.3 miles from the existing Little Tokyo/Arts District station of the Metro Gold Line and 0.6 miles from Union Station, in an area served by public transit options. Therefore, the project is located in an area suitable for commercial development at a higher scale. Further, the project is designed to place an emphasis on the quality of the public realm including the experience of pedestrians by improving the ground floor experience of the site and providing areas open to the public. The project will also promote a pedestrian-friendly environment with active commercial uses of a restaurant and coffee bar. The commercial spaces and open space available to the public are designed to ensure that ground floor commercial uses will benefit from additional connectivity between the project and the neighboring areas and that neighborhood-serving commercial uses will bring convenience to project residents and the community. The character of the area includes mixed-use projects, commercial and retail uses and converted industrial spaces. Therefore, the project's intensity and height will be compatible with the existing development and will not create negative impacts to the adjacent commercial or residential areas. The Project includes bicycle parking (both long and short term), consistent with the LAMC and California Green Building Code. As such, the project enables a more self-sufficient, pedestrian-oriented lifestyle that will reduce unnecessary vehicle trips in the vicinity and thereby enhance the general welfare. Therefore, the project encourages growth and increased land use intensity in a rapidly growing neighborhood and is near transit nodes, to create a pedestrian-oriented environment while promoting an enhanced urban experience and provide for places of employment.

Goal 7B: A City with land appropriately and sufficiently designed to sustain a robust commercial and industrial base.

Objective 7.2: Establish a balance of land uses that provides for commercial and industrial development which meets the needs of local residents, sustains economic growth, and assures maximum feasible environmental quality.

Goal 7D: A City able to attract and maintain new land uses and businesses.

Objective 7.6: Maintain a viable retail base in the city to address changing resident and business shopping needs.

The project proposes the construction of approximately 3,938 square feet of restaurant and coffee bar use, 10,534 square feet of restaurant and lounge use. Further, the project proposes event space, artist studios, photo studios, screening room, and office use. This balance of uses is designed to meet the needs of local residents, attract visitors, and sustain the economic growth of the area. Specifically, the project advances the above objectives by concentrating commercial uses in an existing transit and commercial corridor in an area that has recently added a large supply of residential units that would be served by increased job opportunities, and amenities. The variety of commercial, office, and artist uses of the project will create job opportunities for local residents.

4. **The Sewerage Facilities Element** of the General Plan will not be affected by the recommended action. While the sewer system might be able to accommodate the total flows for the proposed project, further detailed gauging and evaluation may be needed as part of the permit process to identify a specific sewer connection point. If the public sewer has insufficient capacity then the developer will be required to build sewer lines to a point in the sewer system with sufficient capacity. A final approval for sewer capacity and connection permit will be made at that time. Ultimately, this sewage flow will be conveyed to the Hyperion Treatment Plant, which has sufficient capacity for the project.

Zone Change and “T”/“Q” Classification Findings

5. **Pursuant to Section 12.32 of the Municipal Code, the zone change and classifications are necessary because:**

Pursuant to Section 12.32-C of the Municipal Code, and based on these findings, the recommended action is deemed consistent with public necessity, convenience, general welfare and good zoning practice.

The requested zone change to modify the Qualified Classification (“Q Classification”) (as well as modifications to related Conditions of Approval for consistency purposes) will allow an increase in floor area from 102,679 square feet to 124,233 square feet for the use and addition to an existing warehouse building into a eight-story commercial development with an FAR of 4.2 to 1.

- a. **Public Necessity:** Approval of the Zone Change to modify the present Qualified Classification (“Q Classification”) will allow an increase in floor area from 102,679 square feet to 124,233 square feet for the use and addition to an existing warehouse building into a eight-story commercial development with an FAR of 4.2 to 1. The new commercial development will enhance the built environment and provide new employment opportunities for the community while generating sales tax revenue for the City. Furthermore, the proposed development is located at a site that is currently improved with a two (2) story warehouse. The proposed commercial uses and offices uses will complement and be compatible with the site’s surrounding commercial uses. Thus, the proposed project will contribute to the public necessity of providing new compatible and viable commercial uses that will generate jobs for the region and tax revenue for the City.
- b. **Convenience:** The project site is located in an urbanized area of the Central City North community plan area that has a wide variety of commercial, industrial, residential, and public uses and extensive infrastructure. Approval of the Zone Change in conjunction with the proposed project, will allow for the redevelopment of a non-operating warehouse and restricted commercially zoned property that has frontage along two commercial thoroughfares: 2nd Street and Vignes Street. In addition, the project site is within proximity

to the Metro B Line and Metro Local bus lines, enabling future employees and customers to access the new businesses via public transit, thereby reducing vehicle miles traveled in the region. The project will add new viable commercial, office, and artist uses that are compatible with existing commercial and residential uses, and beneficial to the community.

- c. General Welfare: Approval of the Zone Change will allow for the redevelopment of a non-operation warehouse with a modern commercial development that will revitalize a long-established commercial corridor and provide new commercial, office, and artist uses for the neighborhood and community as a whole. The project also provides a valuable service of expanding employment opportunities in the Central City North communities, while generating new tax revenue for the City.
- d. Good Zoning Practice: The proposed Zone Change to (T)(Q)C2-2-RIO is consistent with the underlying Regional Commercial land use designation by the Central City North Community Plan. The proposed Zone Change would effectively modify the Qualified Classification (“Q Classification”) at the site as the part of the subject property’s existing (T)(Q)C2-2-RIO zoning that impose site-specific limitations, that will allow for the redevelopment of a non-operating warehouse site with a new eight-story commercial and office building including public improvements to the sidewalks and streets fronting the property. The proposed development is consistent and compatible with the uses, scale, and character of surrounding properties. The project’s design and proposed uses will enhance the built environment, increase commercial activity, and support job growth within the region.
- e. “T” and “Q” Classification Findings: Per Section 12.32-G, 1 and 2 of the Municipal Code, the current action, as recommended, has been made contingent upon compliance with new “T” and “Q” conditions of approval. Such limitations are necessary to ensure the identified dedications, improvements, and actions are undertaken to meet the public’s needs, convenience, and general welfare served by the required actions. The conditions that limit the scale, design and scope of future development on the site are also necessary to protect the best interests of and to assure a development more compatible with surrounding properties and the overall pattern of the commercial and residential development in the community, to secure an appropriate development in harmony with the General Plan as discussed in Findings Section 1, and to prevent or alleviate the potential adverse environmental effect of adding commercial floor area to the established neighborhood.

Environmental Findings

6. **Environmental Finding.** An Addendum to the Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) for the Proposed Project at 2nd and Vignes has been prepared to evaluate the potential environmental effects of modifications to previously approved project (Case No. CPC-2016-1080-GPA-ZC-HD-MCUP-ZV-SPR) at the same site which was adopted in February 2017. The Approved Project evaluated in the Adopted MND consists of a renovation to the existing two-story commercial building with one subterranean level with the addition of five new levels above the existing building to create a seven-story, 131-foot high, 124,233-square-foot commercial development. The Project Applicant is now proposing a modified project that would maintain the Approved Project’s building height but would relocate the parking from the fourth level of the building to the ground level and existing basement level to create additional office space on the fourth level (which is proposed to become two levels, the fourth level and fifth level). The modifications would result in six new levels above the existing building to create an eight-story commercial development. In addition to the relocation of the parking in the building, the modified project would add approximately 21,554 square feet of additional floor area to result

in a total floor area of 124,233 square feet. These modifications were assessed in the Addendum to the Mitigated Negative Declaration (Case. No. ENV-2016-1081-MND-REC1), which is attached as an Exhibit to this report. The analysis and technical studies conclude that no major revisions are required to the original Mitigated Declaration and no subsequent EIR or negative declaration is required for approval of the project.

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15164, there is no required comment period or circulation period for an Addendum to an MND. However, Planning did receive a comment on the environmental analysis for this project from the Southwest Regional Council of Carpenters ("Southwest Carpenters" or "SWRCC"), dated October 17, 2021. Planning has reviewed the 444-page comment letter, which is attached to this report, and has concluded that the commenter has not provided substantial evidence that the project may have significant impacts, requiring an Environmental Impact Report (EIR). Additionally, the applicant does not provide sufficient evidence of piecemealing. The proposed project was evaluated in full and numerous technical studies were prepared all concluding that the project, with mitigation, would have no significant effect on the environment. The MND, Addendum, and Technical Studies are attached as Exhibits to this report.

7. **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 Outside Flood Zone, areas of minimal flooding