

City of Hesperia

STAFF REPORT



DATE: January 22, 2019

TO: Mayor and Council Members

FROM: Nils Bentsen, City Manager

BY: Mike Blay, Assistant City Manager
Chris Borchert, Acting Principal Planner
Ryan Leonard, Senior Planner

SUBJECT: Specific Plan Amendment SPLA18-00003; Applicant: City of Hesperia; Area affected: City-wide

RECOMMENDED ACTION

The Planning Commission recommends that the City Council introduce and place on first reading Ordinance No. 2019-02 approving Specific Plan Amendment SPLA18-00003 applying to the Pedestrian Commercial zone in the Main Street and Freeway Corridor Specific Plan.

BACKGROUND

The Main Street and Freeway Corridor Specific Plan (MSFCSP) was adopted by the City Council on September 16, 2008. The MSFCSP encompasses approximately 10,636 acres and includes all properties that are parallel to the freeway corridor as well as commercial, industrial, and residential properties that are adjacent to Main Street. The MSFCSP includes 15 different zoning designations including 2 industrial zones, 5 residential zones, 6 commercial zones, a Mixed Use zone and a Public/Institutional overlay.

The proposed Specific Plan Amendment would apply only to the Pedestrian Commercial zone in the MSFCSP (Attachment 1). The intent of the Pedestrian Commercial zone is to promote a pedestrian environment by providing setbacks and uses conducive to walkability. This zone is characterized as one that creates a vital, active pedestrian-oriented area that encourages a concentration of uses and mix of activities that generate activity during daytime, evening and weekend hours.

On December 13, 2018 the Planning Commission forwarded this item to the City Council with a recommendation for approval by a 5-0 vote. There were no residents who spoke either in favor or opposition to the project.

ISSUES/ANALYSIS

Staff recently met with representatives from Circle K regarding a proposal to demolish an existing used car dealership and construct a new gas station and automated car wash at the southwest corner of Main Street and Seventh Avenue. Based upon the current zoning standards staff is unable to accommodate their request as gas stations are listed as prohibited uses within the Pedestrian Commercial zone. However, staff believes that the request has merit and would greatly improve the overall site. The site was originally developed as a gas station, however the

gas station closed in the mid 2000's and changed to a used car dealership. Nonetheless many of the original features of the gas station remain including the fuel canopy, pump islands, and rollup service doors.

This proposal is a staff initiated Specific Plan Amendment to allow vehicle fuel stations and vehicle wash facilities as conditionally permitted uses within the Pedestrian Commercial zone of the MSFCSP. Additionally, the discussion with Circle K has brought into question the entire purpose of the Pedestrian Commercial zone district. Staff believes that the intent of the Pedestrian Commercial zone is inconsistent with the development potential of the area as there are very few vacant parcels. Some of the development regulations required in this zone such as 0 foot setbacks and limited square footage are common in an old downtown area with a combination of street parking and parking at the rear of the buildings, however, they are probably not realistic along Main Street.

If the proposed Specific Plan Amendment is approved the development potential for additional gas stations in this zone would be limited. Staff is recommending that new gas stations be located on a corner lot that is at an intersection between two arterial streets. This is also consistent with the City's Municipal Code requirement which limits off-sale alcohol licenses to businesses that are located at an intersection of two arterial streets. In addition, staff recommends that vehicle wash facilities only be allowed as an ancillary use.

With regard to future development, there is only one vacant lot that is located at the corner of two arterial streets. Staff believes that vehicle fueling stations and ancillary vehicle wash facilities would be compatible with the existing development and existing uses within the Pedestrian Commercial zone.

At the December 13th Planning Commission meeting a separate discussion item was also presented to the Commission regarding the existing development standards in the Pedestrian Commercial zone. Staff explained that there are some issues with the current zoning standards that staff feels can be improved. For example, most of the area along Main Street is already developed with uses that do not conform to the standards in the Pedestrian Commercial zone. As a result, there is very little development opportunity along Main Street for encouraging pedestrian uses. In addition, some of the development regulations pertaining to setbacks are inconsistent with the zoning standards in place for other commercial designations. As a result, staff is in the early stages of preparing a substantial amendment to the Pedestrian Commercial zone that will include alterations to the permitted uses, conditionally permitted uses, prohibited uses, and development standards. Staff requested feedback from the Commission on potential changes that could be implemented. The Commission unanimously expressed their support for a wider variety of allowable uses and less restrictive development standards.

Environmental: Approval of the Specific Plan Amendment is exempt from the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act per Section 15061(b)(3), where it can be seen with certainty that there is no significant effect on the environment. The proposed Specific Plan Amendment is also exempt from the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act by Section 16.12.415(B)(10) of the City's CEQA Guidelines, as the Specific Plan Amendment does not propose to increase the density or intensity allowed in the General Plan.

Conclusion: Staff supports the Specific Plan Amendment because it will allow consideration of vehicle fuel stations and ancillary vehicle wash facilities on a limited number of parcels within the Pedestrian Commercial zone. Staff believes that vehicle fueling stations and ancillary vehicle wash facilities are compatible with the existing development and uses in the zoning district

FISCAL IMPACT

None.

ALTERNATIVE(S)

1. Provide alternative direction to staff.

ATTACHMENT(S)

1. Aerial Photo of the Pedestrian Commercial Zone
2. Ordinance 2019-02
3. Exhibit "A"