

City of Hesperia STAFF REPORT



DATE: March 14, 2019

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Chris Borchert, Acting Principal Planner

BY: Ryan Leonard, Senior Planner

SUBJECT: Specific Plan Amendment SPLA19-00002; Applicant: City of Hesperia; Area affected: City-wide

RECOMMENDED ACTION

It is recommended that the Planning Commission adopt Resolution No. PC-2019-06 recommending that the City Council introduce and place on first reading an ordinance approving SPLA19-00002.

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 purpose of the MSFCSP is to facilitate and encourage development and improvements along the Main Street and freeway corridors that help realize the community's vision for the area which is to provide new shopping, service and entertainment venues and to bring quality development to Main Street.

The proposed Specific Plan Amendment would change approximately 109 acres within the MSFCSP from Pedestrian Commercial to Neighborhood Commercial (Attachment 1). The Pedestrian Commercial zone is described in the Specific Plan as 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. Development and design standards for this zone are designed to create a continuous street front experience, with areas of open space, plazas and courtyards, to maximize the quality of the pedestrian environment.

At the December 20, 2018 Planning Commission meeting staff held a workshop to discuss potential changes to the Pedestrian Commercial zoning standards. The Commission did not take an action but unanimously expressed their support for a wider variety of allowable uses and less restrictive development standards.

ISSUES/ANALYSIS

Over the years it has been problematic for staff to implement the vision and associated policies and codes in the Pedestrian Commercial zone. 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. For instance, the development regulations in this zone require 0 foot setbacks along the street and limit the amount of parking that can be provided in front of the building. These types of standards 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.

There are currently 169 parcels within the Pedestrian Commercial zone that total approximately 109 acres. However, a majority of these parcels are already developed; approximately 111 are developed and 58 are vacant. In addition, of the 169 parcels, approximately 71 parcels are located along Main Street and 9 parcels are vacant.

Land Use: The proposed Specific Plan Amendment includes all parcels that are presently zoned Pedestrian Commercial and proposes to change the zoning designation to Neighborhood Commercial. The Neighborhood Commercial zone is the most prevalent of the commercial zones along Main Street (Attachment 2). The Neighborhood Commercial zone is described in the Specific Plan as immediate day-to-day convenience shopping and services for the residents of nearby neighborhoods. This zone promotes a concentration of businesses that provide convenience goods and services frequented by local residents. Site development regulations are intended to make such uses compatible to and harmonious with the character of surrounding residential areas by promoting human scale elements and providing a sensitive transition between these uses and neighboring residences.

If the Specific Plan Amendment is adopted it would allow for a wider variety of commercial uses and development opportunity. With regard to permitted uses, the Neighborhood Commercial zone allows for shopping centers up to 5 acres in size, grocery stores, health and fitness clubs, medical and dental offices, veterinary offices, automotive parts and accessories stores, and retail sales under 60,000 square feet as permitted uses. In the Pedestrian Commercial zone these uses are either not allowed, or require a conditional use permit. In addition, retail sales are limited to 10,000 square feet in the Pedestrian Commercial zone (Attachment 3-current Pedestrian Commercial and Neighborhood Commercial zoning standards).

In addition, the Neighborhood Commercial zone allows shopping centers larger than 5 acres, vehicle fuel stations, vehicle rental, minor vehicle repair, vehicle wash facilities, day care centers, and equipment sales and rentals as conditionally permitted uses. In the Pedestrian Commercial zone these uses are not allowed.

There is only one use that is allowed in the Pedestrian Commercial zone that is not allowed in the Neighborhood Commercial zone; a farmer's market. At this time staff is not proposing to modify the Neighborhood Commercial zone to allow for a farmer's market.

With regard to development standards, the Neighborhood Commercial zone requires a front yard setback of 25 feet and a street side yard setback of 15 feet. The Pedestrian Commercial zone requires a 0-foot setback in the front and street side setback. As previously mentioned the 0-foot setback requirement is problematic for staff to implement and many developers have expressed difficulty in meeting this requirement. The rear yard setback and interior side yard setback are the same between the two zoning designations and would not change.

Parking Standards: Staff is also proposing to remove the development standard in the MSFCSP that prohibits parking in the street side setback (generally within the first 25 feet of the front yard and 15 feet of a street side yard). This development standard currently applies to all commercial

and industrial zones in the MSFCSP. However, over the years staff has had difficulty applying this standard equitably. In some instances staff was not able to enforce the development standard because the site was either too small, or lacked the amount of space to accommodate a relocated parking area. In addition, the parking restriction is only required for commercial and industrial properties within the MSFCSP; it is not required for properties that are located outside the MSFCSP (i.e. Bear Valley Road, Hesperia Road). Finally, City Municipal Code Section 16.20.610 (D) requires an 8-foot wide landscape planter to be located adjacent to the front and street side property lines for all commercial and industrial properties. The proposed Specific Plan Amendment would not modify any existing landscape requirements. It would allow for parking spaces to be located within the street side setback but behind the required landscape planter.

Floor Area Ratio: The Floor Area Ratio is the relationship of buildable floor area (total amount of square feet) to a given site area (amount of land). If the parking standards are revised to allow parking in the street side setbacks, it would allow developers to utilize more of the site for development. Therefore, staff is recommending that the FAR be increased to 0.35 in the Neighborhood Commercial (NC) zone. Furthermore, staff would like to take a closer look at the maximum floor area requirements for all of the zones in the MSFCSP and may come back at a later time with recommended changes.

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 proposal will provide an underlying zoning designation that will serve the community with commercial uses that are already allowed in the Neighborhood Commercial zone. Furthermore, as future development is proposed on parcels that are larger than 5 acres, they will be reviewed independently for CEQA compliance.

Conclusion: Staff supports the Specific Plan Amendment because it will allow for a wider variety of commercial uses and development opportunity. Approval of the Specific Plan Amendment would not create any non-conforming land uses as all of the allowed uses in the Pedestrian Commercial zone are also allowed in the Neighborhood Commercial zone, with the exception of a farmers market. Approval of the Specific Plan Amendment will also resolve inconsistencies with development standards currently found in the Pedestrian Commercial zone. In addition, the Specific Plan Amendment will remove parking restrictions within the street side setback for commercial and industrial properties that are within the MSFCSP as these requirements have been difficult and problematic for staff to implement.

FISCAL IMPACT

None.

ALTERNATIVE(S)

1. Provide alternative direction to staff.

ATTACHMENT(S)

1. Aerial Photo of the Pedestrian Commercial Zone
2. MSFCSP Land Use Map
3. Current Pedestrian Commercial and Neighborhood Commercial zoning standards.
4. Resolution No. PC-2019-06, with Exhibit "A"