



AGENDA REPORT

Department: Community Development
Prepared by: David Welch, Associate Planner
Meeting Date: Tuesday, October 18, 2022
Approved by: Brad Raulston, City Manager

SUBJECT:

Public Hearing to request a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) modification for the expansion of a self-storage facility location at 1300 Wilson Avenue (U-Haul).

RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt a Resolution entitled, "Resolution of the City Council of the City of National City, California, Approving a Conditional Use Permit Modification for the Expansion of a Self-Storage Facility with Accessory Truck Rental and a Zone Variance to Allow Trucks to Back in from a Public Street. Located at 1300 Wilson Avenue (U-Haul) Case File No. 2021-10 CUP, Z - APN Nos: 559-061-14 and 559-061-18

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE PRIOR ACTION:

The Planning Commission recommended approval of the Conditional Use Permit by unanimous vote of those present. Commissioner Sanchez was absent.

EXPLANATION:

Executive Summary

The applicant proposes to construct a single-story 30,925 square-foot warehouse building to store U-Box containers for their self-storage customers. A modification of the existing Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for the self-storage facility is requested to add this new building and the accessory warehouse use. A zone variance is also requested to permit a loading area that will require trucks to back in off the street. The design is intended to limit the number of trucks entering the site as well as reduce conflict with customer traffic. Additional parking will be provided off-site at a parking lot under common ownership across Civic Center Drive.

Site Characteristics

The project site is a 3.29-acre property located on the west side of Wilson Avenue south of Civic Center Drive. The property is developed with a 170,002 square-foot self-storage building with three floors. The property is unique in that the lot is long and skinny. Although it is over 970 feet long, it is only 183 feet deep. Rental trucks on site are limited to 50 by the existing CUP approved in 2013, Case File No. 2013-20 CUP. A Specific Plan Amendment, along with the CUP, permitted the existing use and an adaptive re-use of the property. Parking and rental truck storage exist on the northern and southern portions of the property along with two smaller structures that would be demolished to make room for the proposed warehouse. The approved CUP established a

parking requirement of 11 spaces. There is currently sufficient space for overflow parking on the southern portion of the property, which is proposed to be redeveloped. U-Haul has also acquired

a 0.52 acre property across Civic Center Drive that is currently being developed with additional parking for this site. Existing pedestrian signals and crosswalks at the intersection with Wilson Avenue would provide safe access to the new parking area for customers and employees.

The area has a mix of uses with single-family residential properties alongside warehouses, light manufacturing, and auto repair businesses, which is typical of the Westside. The site is also adjacent to rights-of-way for the San Diego Trolley and Interstate 5. To the north, there is an entrance ramp to northbound Interstate 5 and the proposed parking area for U-Haul. To the south, there is an existing building materials business. To the east, there is a mix of businesses and residences. The west side of the site is adjacent to the San Diego Trolley right-of-way.

Proposed Use

The applicant proposes to expand the existing self-storage facility permitted with 2013-20 CUP by adding a 30,925 square-foot warehouse building. The warehouse would house U-Haul's "U-Box" product, which is a type of container used for self-storage and moving. U-Haul would require advanced notice from customers to access a U-Box from the new building. Since this product is also used for moving, U-Haul is proposing a loading dock that is capable of accommodating 10-12 semi-trucks per day. The trucks would allow U-Haul to transport the U-Boxes to larger facilities before they are shipped to their ultimate destination. Site constraints would make it infeasible to use smaller vehicles for transport since it is not well-suited for a large number of trucks. A Zone Variance is requested to allow the semi-trucks to back in off of Wilson Avenue into the site, which is not permitted in Chapter 18.41 – Site Planning Standards of the Land Use Code. An increase in required parking will be met with an off-site parking facility. No increase in the number of rental trucks is proposed. No changes are proposed to the hours of operation, which are 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday and Saturdays, 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Fridays, and 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Sundays.

Analysis

General Plan

A self-storage facility is a conditionally-allowed use within the CL zone of the WSP, which is consistent with the General Plan. However, the proposed loading area would accommodate truck traffic accessing the property. The Circulation Element of the General Plan has one policy related to truck traffic:

Policy C-6.2: Enforce the use of designated truck routes for both local and regional goods transport.

The subject property is located at the southwest corner of Civic Center Drive and Wilson Avenue. Civic Center Drive is designated as an alternate truck route with direct freeway access and links to a primary truck route at Harbor Drive and an alternative route on National City Boulevard. U-

Haul is currently utilizing semi-trucks at the subject site, which are not easily accommodated in the existing parking areas. With immediate access to Civic Center Drive and Interstate 5, the property is well-located to utilize existing truck

routes. The proposed loading docks are intended to alleviate difficulties loading trucks on the site. Staff has included conditions of approval to require trucks to turn left out of the site towards Civic Center Drive to avoid the use of neighborhood streets as well as limit the number of trucks serving the facility daily to prevent an increase in traffic.

Specific Plan

The WSP was amended in 2013 to allow self-storage facilities as a conditionally-allowed use in the CL zone, which was when the existing U-Haul facility was proposed. The new warehouse building would be an accessory use to this facility. The development helps address one of the goals of the CL zone, which is for the zone to serve as a buffer between the freeway and the adjacent neighborhood. The WSP has modified development standards that the portion of the site being developed would need to adhere to, such as a requirement for an eight-foot high wall along the freeway. Conditions of approval are included to address compliance with the development standards of the WSP.

Land Use Code

The project site, as described above, is a long and skinny property that is bifurcated by a large existing building that was redeveloped into the existing self-storage facility. Since the site was developed before many of the development standards in the LUC were adopted by the City, the site and existing building are considered legal, non-conforming for certain development standards such as internal circulation. However, the proposed warehouse building and any related site improvements would be required to conform with the current code since it is new development.

During staff review of the original design for the proposed development a comment was provided to the applicant stating that a section of Chapter 18.41 – Site Planning Standards of the LUC was not met by the design, which would have required trucks to back in off the public street to utilize the proposed loading area. The applicant was able to provide revised drawings in conformance with this section of the Code. However, the resulting three-point turning movement that allowed semi-trucks to turn around within the site posed a potential conflict with U-Haul customers accessing the storage facility on the south side of the main building and raised safety concerns with the applicant. Based on the shape of the lot, the location and shape of the existing building, and the location customer entrance, the applicant is requesting a zone variance to allow a loading area that requires trucks to back in from a public street. The applicant also proposes to use semi-trucks for the new warehouse to limit the number of vehicles accessing the site. The ability to back in would also reduce the amount of maneuvering operations of the trucks, which reduce emissions and noise impacts, as well as being safer for customers on site.

Parking

The existing self-storage facility was approved with 11 required parking spaces, nine for the retail component of the business and two additional spaces for the self-storage use. At the time, it was taken into consideration that the site had additional space for overflow customer parking should

it be needed. The facility was also permitted to have up to 50 rental trucks on the site. The proposed warehouse building will take away the overflow space on the site and, therefore, create a need for more parking in conformance with the LUC. The new 30,925 square-foot building will be used as a warehouse, which has a parking ratio of one space per 1,000 square feet of floor area, and result in an increase of 31 spaces for a total parking requirement of 42 spaces. U-Haul is developing a new parking area on the north side of Civic Center Drive with 40 new spaces. Along with ten existing spaces on the south side of the main building and twelve more spaces directly adjacent to the retail section of the building, the new spaces will be sufficient to serve customers and employees for the overall use of the site. Additional spaces remain on the north side of the main building, which can be used for the storage of the rental trucks. A condition of approval is included to require an off-site parking agreement for the new parking area in conformance with Chapter 18.45.030 – Off-site facilities of the code.

Traffic/Circulation

U-Haul generally serves the community within 3-½ miles of the outlet. The existing CUP has conditions of approval that limit the maximum number of rental trucks to 50, require only non-diesel rental vehicles, and require that all vehicles be stored on site (not on adjacent city streets). These conditions will remain in effect unless modified by resolution.

According to U-Haul, storage and rental centers generate less and lighter vehicle traffic than a comparably-sized industrial or commercial use. For example, a typical center of 80,000 square feet would generate approximately 31 average daily trips (ADT) on a weekday and 53 on a weekend day. The opinion of staff for the original CUP was that the self-storage facility would result in a lower than expected ADT and not have a significant impact on traffic in the area. The new warehouse building, per information provided by SANDAG, would generate approximately 5 ADT per 1,000 square feet. Information provided by U-Haul suggests an average trip generation rate of 0.36 ADT per 1,000 square feet on weekdays and 0.72 on weekend days. This would result in the new building generating 155 ADT on weekdays using SANDAG's numbers and 11.1 ADT using U-Haul's numbers (22.3 ADT on weekends). Based on the low expected increase in ADT and access to the freeway, staff is still of the opinion that the facility would not have a significant impact on traffic in the area.

Mailing

All property owners and occupants within a distance of 300 feet are required to be notified of a public hearing for a CUP application. Notice of this public hearing was sent to 108 occupants and owners. One public comment was received in response to the hearing.

Department Comments

Comments were provided by the Engineering and Fire Departments related to standard requirements for new developments. The Planning Division also provided a cursory review of the proposed plans with comments related to the Land Use Code and Westside Specific Plan. All comments have been incorporated as conditions of approval for the CUP.

Findings for Approval

The Municipal Code contains six required findings for CUPs as follows:

1. The proposed use is allowable within the applicable zoning district pursuant to a Conditional Use Permit and complies with all other applicable provisions of the Land Use Code.

Self-storage facilities are identified as a conditionally-allowed use in the Limited Commercial (CL) zone, and the conditions of approval will require compliance with all applicable development standards in the Land Use Code.

2. The proposed use is consistent with the General Plan and any applicable specific plan.

The Westside Specific Plan conditionally allows self-storage uses in the CL zone; the Westside Specific Plan is consistent with the General Plan. The proposed warehouse building will be required to meet applicable development standards in the Westside Specific Plan.

3. The design, location, size, and operating characteristics of the proposed activity would be compatible with the existing and future land uses in the vicinity.

The property will be partially redeveloped with a new warehouse building and an off-site parking facility will provide enough parking spaces based on provisions outlined in the Land Use Code. The proposed development, subject to the conditions of approval, meets all requirements for such uses outlined in the Land Use Code, as discussed above, and the current street network is able to absorb additional vehicular traffic without resulting in an unsatisfactory level of service.

4. The site is physically suitable for the type, density, and intensity of use being proposed, including access, utilities, and the absence of physical constraints.

The property is large enough to accommodate an additional building complying with Land Use Code standards along with existing driveways and sufficient access to utilities.

5. Granting the permit would not constitute a nuisance or be injurious or detrimental to the public interest, health, safety, convenience, or welfare, or materially injurious to persons, property, or improvements in the vicinity and zone in which the property is located.

The proposed project will provide an adequate loading area for trucks to service the new warehouse building and additional parking for customers and employees will be provided with an off-site parking facility. The new warehouse building will serve as a buffer blocking noise and views of Interstate 5 from the neighborhood.

6. The proposed project has been reviewed in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

The proposed project has been reviewed in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and has been determined to be categorically exempt from environmental review

pursuant to Class 32, Section 15332 (In-fill Development Projects) for which a Notice of Exemption will be filed subsequent to approval of this Conditional Use Permit.

In addition, the Municipal Code requires three additional findings for the granting of a Zone Variance:

1. Due to special circumstances applicable to the property, including size, shape, topography, location or surroundings, the strict application of the Land Use Code deprives such property of privileges enjoyed by other property in the vicinity and under identical zoning classification.

With few exceptions, properties in the Limited Commercial zone were developed before Chapter 18.41 – Site Planning Standards, which established requirements for loading facilities with adequate space to allow trucks to enter a site without backing in from a public street, and Chapter 18.45.110 – Loading Requirements, which established minimum standards for the provision of loading space. Furthermore, most properties in the zoning classification are less than 10,000 square feet in area and, thus, unable to comply with either Chapter. The subject property is relatively narrow, with a depth of 183 feet, and bifurcated by a large existing building. The provision of turnaround space for trucks on the site is infeasible as it would lead to safety concerns for customers accessing the existing building.

2. The variance is subject to conditions that will assure that the adjustment thereby authorized shall not constitute a grant of special privileges inconsistent with the limitations upon other properties in the vicinity and zone in which such property is situated.

The project will be subject to conditions of approval that limit the daily number of trucks that will back in from the public street assuring the site will not have an increase over the number of trucks currently utilizing the site.

3. The variance is not granted for a parcel of property which authorizes a use or activity which is not otherwise expressly authorized by the zone regulation governing the parcel of property.

The property is within the CL zone, which conditionally-allows self-storage facilities. The proposed warehouse is an expansion of an existing facility and is allowed as an accessory use.

Findings for Denial

There are two findings for denial of the CUP as follows:

1. The proposed expansion of the use is not deemed essential and desirable to the public convenience and welfare, because there are five other self-storage facilities serving the city and the existing development fully utilizes the existing site.
2. Granting the permit would constitute a nuisance or be injurious or detrimental to the public interest, health, safety, convenience, or welfare, or materially injurious to persons, property, or improvements in the vicinity and zone in which the property is located,

because it would allow for trucks to back in off the public street and permit the use of trucks with diesel engines further contributing to air quality issues.

There is one finding for denial of the Zone Variance as follows:

1. The proposal to construct a warehouse building as an accessory to an existing self-storage facility will increase the movement of goods at the site and thereby grants a special privilege inconsistent with the limitations of other properties in the zone classification.

Conditions of Approval

At the City Council meeting on September 6, 2022, the Council passed a motion to hold a public hearing with the request that staff include a condition of approval addressing the staging and operations of semi-trucks entering the property. This has been added in the draft resolution. Other conditions of approval are included that address City Department comments. Conditions cover code requirements (Fire & Building), grading and improvement requirements (Engineering), and the proposed loading docks (Planning). Staff has also included a condition that maintains the existing conditions of approval from previous CUP unless otherwise modified by resolution.

Summary

The proposed expansion of the self-storage facility with a new accessory warehouse building is consistent with the Land Use Code and Westside Specific Plan with the approval of a CUP and Zone Variance request. Conditions of Approval will ensure that the business operates in harmony with existing uses in the area. The expansion of the use is minimal since the number of trucks serving the new warehouse will be limited by the conditions of approval and they will be required to turn left out of the site to utilize existing truck routes. Adequate parking for the expansion will be provided at an off-site parking area. Staff is recommending approval of this CUP and Zone Variance request.

Options

1. Approve 2021-10 CUP, Z subject to the conditions listed within, based on the attached findings, or findings to be determined by the City Council; or
2. Deny 2021-10 CUP, Z based on the attached findings or findings to be determined by the City Council; or,
3. Continue the item to a specific date in order to obtain additional information.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT:

Not applicable

RELATED CITY COUNCIL 2020-2025 STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL:

Not Applicable

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

This is a project under CEQA subject to a Categorical Exemption. In-fill Development Projects CCR 15332. This project qualifies for a Notice of Exemption. CCR 15374.

PUBLIC NOTIFICATION:

Agenda Report posted within 72 hours of meeting date and time in accordance with Brown Act.

ORDINANCE:

Not Applicable

EXHIBITS:

Exhibit A – Map - Overhead

Exhibit B – 2021-10 CUP, Z Staff Report

Exhibit C – PC Resolution 2022-20

Exhibit D – Exhibit A to the PC Report – Plans

Exhibit E – PowerPoint Slides from PC Meeting

Exhibit F – Resolution