



REPORT to the LA MESA PLANNING COMMISSION

DATE: April 17, 2024

SUBJECT: PROJECT 2022-0898

DESCRIPTION: CONSIDERATION OF A SITE DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR A PARKING MODIFICATION THAT WOULD ALLOW FOR A REDUCTION OF REQUIRED PARKING FOR A 3,694 SQUARE FOOT THIRD STORY ADDITION AND RENOVATION TO AN EXISTING TWO-STORY COMMERCIAL BUILDING LOCATED AT 8923 LA MESA BOULEVARD (APNS 490-472-31-00 AND 490-472-11-00) IN THE C-D-MU (GENERAL COMMERCIAL/URBAN DESIGN OVERLAY/MIXED USE OVERLAY) ZONE WITH ASSOCIATED PARKING LOCATED ON A PARCEL TO THE NORTH AT 5264 WOOD STREET (APN 490-472-07-00) IN THE R3-P-MU (MULTIPLE UNIT RESIDENTIAL/SCENIC PRESERVATION OVERLAY/MIXED USE OVERLAY) ZONE

ISSUING DEPARTMENT: Community Development

SUMMARY:

Issue(s):

1. Should the Planning Commission approve a Site Development Plan to allow a parking modification that would reduce the required parking of 36 spaces for the construction and remodel of a commercial building?

Recommendation:

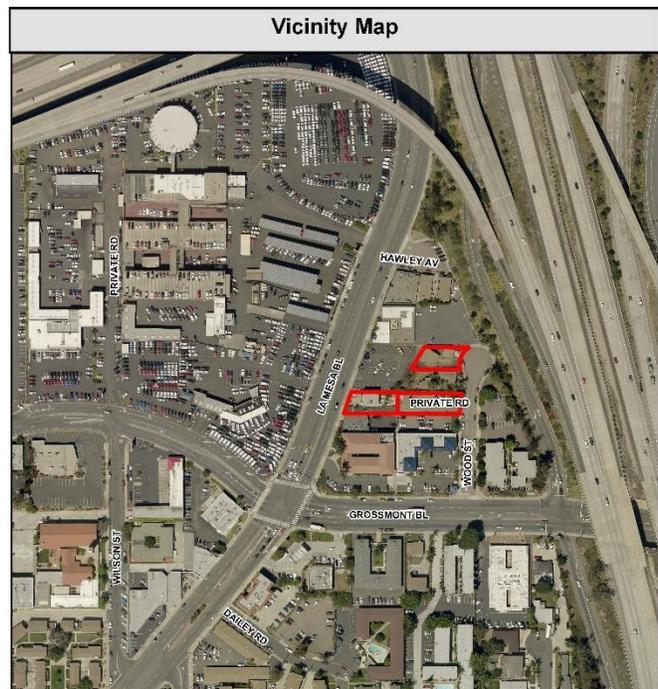
Adopt a resolution (**Attachment A**) to approve Project 2022-0898, subject to conditions of approval.

Environmental Review:

This project has been determined to be Categorically Exempt from environmental review pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15303.

BACKGROUND:

The 0.44-acre project site includes a total of three legal lots, one of which has frontage on the east side of La Mesa Boulevard, and two of which have frontage on the west side of Wood Street, as can be seen on the vicinity map. The property located at 8923 La Mesa Boulevard is currently developed with an existing two-story commercial building with a parking lot on the adjacent parcel to the west. Driveway entrances exist off of La Mesa Boulevard and Wood Street. A 15-foot easement for vehicular and incidental purposes is located on the south side of the property and serves as common driveway access to the properties addressed 8923 La Mesa Boulevard and 8917 La Mesa Boulevard. Existing photos of the project site are provided in **Attachment B**.



The project proposes to construct a 3,694 square foot addition to create a three-story commercial building with proposed renovations to both the existing first and second floors and improvements to the existing parking lot. In addition, in order to provide additional parking for the development, the project proposes to demolish an existing single-family residence located at 5264 Wood Street to build a parking lot. . The project proposes to utilize the provision for collective parking, which would allow for off-street parking facilities to be provided collectively, and not less than the sum of the requirements for the various individual uses computed separately as the proposed uses will operate at varying times with varying peaks in service. On-street parking is also available on both streets.

The surrounding area is developed with a variety of commercial and residential uses,

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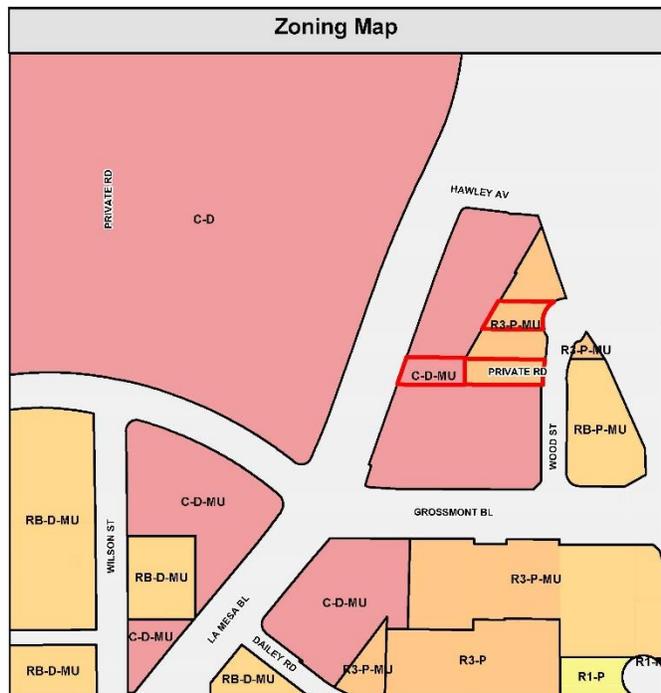
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including shops, offices, and services along La Mesa Boulevard. Offices, single-family and multifamily residences are located along Wood Street. Surrounding development includes the Sedano Lincoln dealership to the west, a licensed cannabis dispensary to the north, commercial and office complexes to the east, and single-family residential to the north.

Parking in this area does not appear to be constrained and MTS bus route 852 runs along University Avenue to La Mesa Boulevard, with the closest stop is approximately 250 feet from the project site located on the corner of La Mesa Boulevard and Grossmont Boulevard. The MTS Orange Line at the Grossmont Station is also located approximately 0.7 miles away from the project site. The frontages of La Mesa Boulevard and Wood Street include sidewalk, curb and gutter.

Zoning and Entitlements

The project (three parcels) is located in both the C-D-MU (General Commercial/Urban Design Overlay/Mixed Use Overlay) zone and the R3-P-MU (Multiple Unit Residential/ Scenic Preservation Overlay/ Mixed Use Overlay) zone, as shown on the Zoning Map. The base zone, General Commercial (C), allows for commercial development, including retail, office, and service uses. The site's Planned Land Use Designation of Mixed Use Urban corresponds to the Mixed Use Overlay (MU) zone, which also allows for commercial uses, with an emphasis on neighborhood serving uses that generate pedestrian activity. Additionally, the Scenic Preservation Overlay (P) zone, allows for projects that retain natural topography, vegetation, and scenic features of the site insofar as feasible and incorporated into each proposed development with minimal grading.



Per Chapter 24.18 (A7), of the La Mesa Municipal Code (LMMC), Urban Design Review is required for all new development and major renovation of existing development that includes remodeling of, or additions to, existing structures that exceeds two thousand five hundred square feet within the MU zone. The Design Review Board (DRB) reviewed for consistency with the City's Urban Design Program and the Design Guidelines for

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Properties in the MU Zone and recommended approval of the project on March 25, 2024. The DRB Certification of Action is provided as **Attachment C**. DRB decisions are ratified by the City Council.

Additionally, LMMC 24.18 (A7) requires Site Development Plan review for all new development and major renovation over 2,500 square feet for analysis as to whether development requirements are complied with, design objectives are achieved, and whether any detriment to the public health, safety or welfare would result from the project. For this project, Site Development Plan review is subject to Planning Commission approval for the requested collective parking modification. The Planning Commission shall review and approve site development plans with parking modifications for collective parking when it is demonstrated that all uses can be sufficiently served because of varying hours of operation and for varying peak parking demand times.

DISCUSSION:

The project consists of a 3,694 square foot third story addition and major renovation to an existing two-story commercial building, and the demolition of an existing single-family residence to provide an additional parking lot for the commercial building. The project utilizes the existing siting of the building, drive aisles, and parking lot for 8923 La Mesa Boulevard. The existing lots are relatively flat, and therefore, no grading is proposed for the project. Other proposed site features include decorative fencing for privacy screening, downward facing site lighting and a trash enclosure in the parking area. The proposed covered trash enclosure has metal gates and stucco finish to match the building. Project plans are provided as **Attachment D**, and simulation views are provided as **Attachment E** to illustrate how the development would appear from the street.

Since the project includes an addition of greater than 2,500 square feet and a request for collective parking subject to LMMC Chapter 24.04.020 (G1) to meet the required parking, a Site Development Plan application was submitted. Site Development Plans are required to ensure that development requirements are complied with, design objectives are met, and no detriment to the public health, safety or welfare will result. Staff analysis shows that the proposed project meets the required findings as described below:

Compliance with Development Requirements

The development meets all underlying development standards, including setbacks, building height, and parking lot dimensional standards for the C and R3 zones. The project also must meet the specific purposes of the MU zone, the P zone, and the finding for collective parking.

Mixed Use Overlay zone

The specific purposes of the MU zone are to provide a mechanism to:

1. Revitalize older commercial corridors;
2. Increase opportunities for infill housing while transforming and aesthetically improving transportation corridors into tree-lined civic boulevards with mixed use projects;
3. Encourage new housing and innovative retail that is less automobile dependent; and
4. Help to create pedestrian oriented neighborhoods where local residents have services, shops, jobs and access to transit with walking distance of their homes.

The proposed project meets the purposes of the MU zone as discussed below:

Revitalization of Commercial Corridors

The project includes an addition to an existing two-story dental office, a redesign of an existing parking lot, and the demolition of an existing single-family residence for a new parking lot. The proposed commercial building will consist of a dental office on the first floor, a hair salon on the second floor, and a restaurant with rooftop dining on the third floor. The MU Zone allows for commercial uses that are neighborhood serving and that generate pedestrian activity, such as generate pedestrian activity, such as cafes, restaurants, bookstores, floral shops, retail shopping, personal and convenience service stores, and offices. The proposed uses appear to meet the intent of the MU zone by providing pedestrian generating uses that would revitalize the neighborhood. The building addition is also an example of infill development that provides improvements that modernize and enhance an existing site. Although the neighborhood mainly consists of older buildings built in the 1960s and 1970s, the proposed modernization of the building is compatible with the architectural design of the newly renovated Sedano Lincoln dealership located to the west at 8930 La Mesa Boulevard. The addition of more modern architectural design in the area helps contribute to the variety of uses and design in the City and revitalizes this commercial corridor.

Aesthetically Improving Transportation Corridors into Tree-Lined Civic Boulevards

To activate the streetscape in the MU zone, a twelve-foot wide pedestrian realm is required in front of all mixed-use projects along Circulation Element designated streets. The pedestrian realm requirement would apply to the street frontage on La Mesa Boulevard, but not the street frontages on Wood Street. The project's pedestrian realm on La Mesa Boulevard is proposed to implement sidewalk improvements including the addition of two Gold Medallion street trees in pedestrian-friendly tree grates. There are no visual disruptions along the frontage of the project such as open parking lots, parking

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structures, and blank walls which provides for continuity of the pedestrian movement experience. A common driveway easement exists on the property, creating a shared internal circulation system. The curb cuts for the common driveway are off of La Mesa Boulevard and Wood Street. By providing vehicular access to more than one site through one, shared driveway, this reduces the number of driveway cut-outs along both streets which enhances connectivity and promotes pedestrian activity. In addition, the existing parking lot is located at the rear of the building, and is proposed to remain in this location. By keeping the existing parking lot towards the rear of the building, this reduces the visibility of the parking area from arterial streets and further contributes to a walkable and pedestrian oriented environment along La Mesa Boulevard.

Innovative Retail that is Less Automobile Dependent

The proposed commercial building will consist of a dental office, hair salon, and a restaurant with rooftop dining on the third floor. This appears to be the first proposal for rooftop dining within the City of La Mesa which meets the intent for innovative retail development.

Although commercial uses typically result in vehicle trips, the uses will operate during varying hours and days to decrease the demand of parking on the site at one time as evaluated later in this report. In addition, the property is located nearby to public transit, including the MTS bus route 852 stop located 250 feet from the project site located on the corner of La Mesa Boulevard and Grossmont Boulevard, and the MTS Orange Line at the Grossmont Station is located approximately 0.7 miles away from the project site to the north. Due to the property's location to public transit, and new housing development in the area, this will encourage patrons and nearby members of the community to use other modes of transportation to visit the commercial development.

Pedestrian Oriented Neighborhoods

To create pedestrian activity area along the street edge, new non-residential and mixed-use buildings shall be built directly adjacent to the twelve-foot wide pedestrian realm at or near the same elevation of the sidewalk, with entrances to the commercial uses located directly from the sidewalk. However, setbacks up to an additional ten feet from the interior edge of the pedestrian realm edge may be permitted for non-residential and mixed-use buildings to allow for pedestrian entrances, outdoor dining areas, pedestrian arcades, or for building articulation. Currently, the existing building is sited at an angle to the sidewalk and street with a building setback of up to eight feet from the pedestrian realm. In order to maintain business operations for the existing tenant, the applicant proposes to maintain the existing first floor of the building. The angling of the building provides for planting area, walkways to the building, and for building articulation. Therefore, the structural orientation of the existing building meets the intent of the MU zone to provide access and pedestrian interest. Further, the MU development standards

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require that for visual interest at the pedestrian level, at least fifty percent of the total ground floor building frontage of any new or reconstructed building facing the public realm shall have with clear un-tinted glass windows and/or doors. In order to meet the MU design guidelines, the project provides floor to ceiling glass door and windows to approximately half of the existing building's first floor frontage on the west elevation, not including the proposed staircase enclosure that is located along the building frontage.

The addition of the building's first floor entrance on along the street, glass windows and doors on the west elevation, and the metal awning above the entry door create a sense of entry for the building, and elevate the pedestrian experience along the street frontage while maintaining the existing siting of the building. Additionally, the open breezeways and rooftop dining area provide for additional pedestrian interest to the building. By improving the pedestrian realm, and situating the entrance of the commercial building along La Mesa Boulevard, the project appears to meet the vision of the Mixed-Use Overlay zone to activate the street and provide pedestrian orientation to the currently auto-oriented character of this portion of La Mesa Boulevard.

The intent of the MU Design Guidelines is to create walkable and lively places where people want to live, work, and stroll by improving the pedestrian experience. The project appears to improve the pedestrian experience through the addition of street trees and wider sidewalk on La Mesa Boulevard, and by providing visual interest at the ground floor of the building. With the improvements of the pedestrian realm and the existing siting of the property with the building oriented towards La Mesa Boulevard and the parking located toward the rear, a safe and pedestrian oriented environment is created along La Mesa Boulevard.

Scenic Preservation Overlay zone

Two of the three lots are located in the Scenic Preservation Overlay zone. Within the Scenic Preservation Overlay zone, natural topography, vegetation, and scenic features of sites are to be retained insofar as feasible and incorporated into each proposed development with minimal grading. The Scenic Preservation Overlay Zone also stipulates that a landscape plan be provided with new development, and requires that all specimen size trees (24-inch box or larger) must be replaced with healthy trees of specimen size. There are eight existing trees on the property addressed 8923 La Mesa Boulevard and three existing trees on the property addressed 5264 Wood Street. All existing trees are specimen size trees, and are proposed to be removed and replaced. A total of nine Gold Medallion and Western Redbud trees are proposed on the property addressed 8923 La Mesa Boulevard and a total of five Gold Medallion and Western Redbud trees are proposed on the property addressed 5264 Wood Street as part of the Landscape Plan. These trees are proposed together with accent plants and shrubs, including French Lavender, Sweetbay Laurel, Cape Honeysuckle, Furcraea, and Birds of Paradise for ornamental landscaping areas in the parking lot and planting areas around the building.

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Plants have been selected for drought tolerance, and are consistent across the two properties. The planting areas are also meant to act as screening to address privacy between the adjacent single-family residential house addressed 5252 Wood Street.

Collective Parking

The project proposes to utilize the ordinance provision for collective parking. LMMC Chapter 24.04.020 (G1) allows for collective parking, permitting off-street parking facilities to be provided collectively, and the code reads: "not less than the sum of the requirements for the various individual uses computed separately." The Planning Commission may grant this modification when it is demonstrated that all uses can be sufficiently served because of varying hours of operation and for varying peak parking demand times.

The parking requirement for the proposed project includes the following:

1. Medical Office: 1 per each 200 s.f. gross leasable area (GLA) (1,675 s.f./200 spaces per s.f. = 8.4 spaces)
2. Salon: 1 per each 250 s.f. GLA (2,105 s.f./250 spaces per s.f. = 8.4 spaces)
3. Restaurant: 1 per each 250 s.f. + 1 for each 3 persons seating capacity in the dining room (1,589/250 spaces per s.f. +36 seating capacity/3 = 18.4 spaces)

Therefore, the project as proposed requires a total of 36 parking spaces, with the restaurant requiring the most amount of parking for the site.

As proposed, 15 parking spaces are provided on the property address 8923 La Mesa Boulevard, and seven parking spaces are provided on the neighboring property addressed 5264 Wood Street. Although 5264 Wood Street is not immediately adjacent or abutting to the proposed site, parking is allowed if there is a traversable pedestrian route not more than three hundred feet in length over and along public streets or walkways or permanently established and improved easements between the proposed parking site and the buildings or uses it is to serve. To create a traversable pedestrian route that is not more than 300 feet, the applicant is required to provide sidewalk, curb, and gutter along the street frontage of the lot located in between the subject properties, 5252 Wood Street.

As shows above the proposed uses, if computed separately, would require a total of 36 parking spaces, with proposed parking of 22 spaces. The development utilizes an existing site, which constrains its opportunities to provide parking and provide new development that meets the intent of the Mixed Use Overlay zone. Each business is proposed to operate at varying times to lessen the parking demand on the site at one time. The dental office is only open during normal business hours Monday through Friday, the hair salon would be open during normal business hours Tuesday through Saturday and closed on

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Mondays and Sunday afternoons, and the restaurant would only be open during the evenings Monday through Saturday, and open for lunch and dinner Sundays.

The applicant provided a traffic and parking assessment letter to demonstrate that because of varying hours of operation and varying peak parking demand times, the project could be support with 22 parking spaces (**Attachment F**). The parking study included analysis on the parking requirements when each business was open, and also for two hours before and after the businesses open and close to account for preparation and clean up. The analysis demonstrates that at 12 p.m. on Sundays, the parking demand is at its highest at 22 parking spaces. At all other times, the highest demand is 19 parking spaces at one time. Therefore, because of varying hours of operation and varying peak parking demand times, the project only requires 22 parking spaces. A condition of approval is included in the draft resolution, requiring that a declaration of covenants and restrictions shall be recorded for that portion of each building site covered by such parking and driveways to guarantee the continued use of such collective parking for the benefit of all occupants of the individual building sites and to establish the responsibility for maintenance of such parking area.

Design Objectives

The proposed project is subject to the Urban Design Program and was reviewed by the Design Review Board on March 25, 2024 to ensure that the design objectives established by the City Council are achieved. The DRB Certification of Action is provided as **Attachment C**. The design of the parking lot, including drive aisles, parking spaces, and landscaping, conforms to City's adopted Parking Standards. Roof-mounted mechanical equipment will be located behind parapet walls to comply with screening requirements.

Public Health, Safety, and Welfare

The project would not result in any detriment to the public health, safety, or welfare. A dental office has operated on the site for many years, and utility services are available to serve the new uses. To continue to provide sufficient, safe, and minimal interference with on and offsite walkways and crossing, existing curb openings on the property addressed 8923 La Mesa Boulevard remain unchanged and only minor modifications are proposed to internal site circulation. Demolition of the existing building is subject to state and federal air quality regulations. Local noise ordinances limit construction hours to minimize neighborhood disturbance. Construction permits will be required to ensure compliance with Building and Fire codes, including accessibility. Project conditions of approval related to stormwater quality, fire service, and permitting are provided in the draft Resolution (**Attachment A**).

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

The project is exempt from environmental review under California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15303, which exempts new construction or conversion of

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small structures, including commercial structures, accessory structures, and water, electrical, gas, and other utility extensions, including street improvements. Commercial buildings in urbanized areas not exceeding 10,000 square feet qualify for the exemption, provided that the project is in an area where all public services and facilities are available, the area in which the project is located is not environmentally sensitive, and the use does not involve the use of significant amounts of hazardous substances.

The project is located in an urbanized area and limited to permitting a 5,369 square foot floor area building on a site zoned for such land use. The project is located where all public services and facilities are available, the surrounding uses are not environmentally sensitive, and the use does not involve the use of significant amounts of hazardous substances. The project meets all of the conditions necessary to qualify for the exemptions and none of the exceptions listed in Section 15300.2 apply.

CONCLUSION:

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission adopt a resolution (**Attachment A**) to approve Project 2022-0898, subject to conditions of approval.

Respectfully submitted by:



Laura Traffenstedt
Associate Planner

Reviewed by:

Lynnette Santos

Lynnette Santos
Director of Community Development
Attachments:

- A. Draft Planning Commission Resolution
- B. Site photographs
- C. DRB Certification of Action
- D. Development plans
- E. Renderings
- F. Traffic and Parking Assessment Letter