



STAFF REPORT

April 19, 2023
File Number 0830-07

SUBJECT

WEST COAST ARBORISTS PROJECT – MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT, PRECISE DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT FOR CONTRACTOR SERVICES OFFICE AND OUTDOOR EQUIPMENT STORAGE - PL22-0512

DEPARTMENT

Development Services Department, Planning Division

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Request the City Council conduct a public hearing on the development proposal and take action on the recommendations of City staff and the Planning Commission, which recommends that the City Council:

- 1) Introduce Ordinance No. 2023-08 for Master Plan Amendment and Precise Development Plan, and for the adoption of a Notice of Exemption pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines
- 2) Adopt Resolution No. 2023-44 approving a Conditional Use Permit

Staff Recommendation: Approval (Development Services Department: Andrew Firestine, Director of Development Services)

Presenter: Jay Paul, Senior Planner

PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

The Planning Commission considered the Project at its March 28, 2023 hearing, and the staff report has been included as Attachment "1". The Planning Commission discussion primarily focused on the requirement to install landscaping along the Highway 78/I-15 transition frontage. No one from the public except for the project applicant spoke at the hearing. After deliberation, the Planning Commission voted 5-0 (Commissioners Barba and Doan absent) to recommend that the City Council approve the Project as conditioned. The Commission also unanimously recommended to eliminate the requirement for the applicant to provide landscape screening along the freeway frontage and the west property boundary.

FISCAL ANALYSIS

The proposed Project is a private development that will require the payment of fees in effect at the time permits are requested, as well as the development of required infrastructure (e.g., street improvements, etc.) to support the project. The City of Escondido ("City") has not yet analyzed the fiscal impact of commercial development on municipal services, but studies conducted by other cities have generally



CITY *of* ESCONDIDO

STAFF REPORT

found that sales taxes generated by commercial development cover the cost to provide municipal services required to serve those developments.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

West Coast Arborists (“Applicant”) submitted an application to utilize the Project site to establish a satellite office and training facility to serve as their North County operation. West Coast Arborists was established in 1972 and provides professional tree maintenance and management services to municipalities and public agencies throughout California and Arizona. The company has ten locations throughout both states. The proposed site and existing building would be modified to support office uses, a training facility and warehouse, and to serve as a staging area for company trucks, trailers and chippers. The existing building would be modified with a new contemporary design to support the office operations, and a new 1,325 square foot training building and 1,045 square foot warehouse. Full-width street improvements across the Montiel Road frontage would be installed, to include curb, gutter, sidewalk and landscaping. Three accessory structures would be demolished. The Montiel Road Planning land-use matrix does not list contractor office/services and fleet storage as a permitted use. Therefore, a modification to the list of permitted and conditional permitted uses is necessary. Contractor Services/Office and fleet and outdoor equipment storage is proposed to be a conditionally allowed use in order to establish appropriate design, screening and operational conditions to address any potential visual and compatibility impacts with adjacent uses. The CUP process also allows for a noticed public hearing to allow for public input. A complete project description can be found in the March 28, 2023 Planning Commission staff report (Attachment “1”).

LOCATION

The 1.3-acre project site is located on the south side of Montiel Road, north of State Route 78, west of Interstate 15, address at 1359 Montiel Road (APN 228-290-54-00).

PREVIOUS ACTION

The property is located within the 15-acre Montiel Road Planning Area that was originally designated Planned Commercial (PC) in the mid-1980s that allowed commercial and office uses. The Planned Development has been amended over the years to revise the list of permitted and conditionally permitted uses to include various limited industrial, self-storage facility, motorcycle sales and service, and a religious facility. Three of the parcels have been developed with industrial/commercial/office type uses that include North Coast Church, Escondido Cycle Center and Cube Smart Self-Storage.

ANALYSIS

1. General Plan Conformance:

The City’s General Plan land-use designation for the project site is Planned Commercial (PC, Montiel Road #11). The Guiding Principles for this planning area include limited light industrial and commercial uses. Development is implemented through the Montiel Road Planning Area



CITY *of* ESCONDIDO

STAFF REPORT

Development Plan. The Montiel Road Planning Area development plan allows for a variety of commercial, light industrial, warehouse, service, schools, trades, repair and warehouse type uses. The proposed use of the site for construction type services with fleet storage would be similar to the variety of uses currently permitted/conditionally permitted. Therefore, the proposed Project, with the requested land-use amendment, would be consistent with the General Plan Guiding Principles for the planning area and the Montiel Road Planning Area planned development.

2. Architectural Design:

The Project consists of the modification of the existing 1,288 square foot single-story structure to support office uses along with the construction of a 1,325 square foot addition to provide employee training space and a 1,045 square foot warehouse. The architecture would be updated to provide a more contemporary style similar to other commercial/industrial buildings along Montiel Road. The building would focus the main office entry towards Montiel Road with an enhanced entry/trellis type feature. A similar type feature would be added to the warehouse roll-up doors, which are recessed into the site to provide the main visual focus on the office portion of the building. The building includes a stepped-back architectural design with the taller portion of the building (up to 21 feet in height) located behind the office structure, and includes varied rooflines. The wall planes incorporate vertical score lines and varied colors to help break up the mass and scale of the walls.

3. Landscape Design:

The Montiel Road frontage would be landscaped to accent the building architecture and help soften views along the roadway and from residential properties north of the project site. The existing building also will screen views to the lower section of the site for any storage behind the building. In order to provide appropriate screening of the fleet parking and equipment area located within the eastern portion of the site, a six-foot high decorative open style metal fence would be installed along the street frontage and include a layered planting of taller screening shrubs and trees. The fencing also will provide a security barrier and the two access driveways fronting Montiel Road would be gated. The gates would be recessed into the property approximately 40 feet to reduce the visual impact of security type fencing along the roadway.

The eastern section and rear of the property are located at a significantly lower elevation than the adjacent Interstate 15 northwest bound transition lanes on the east and Highway 78 on the south. The existing landscaped berms/topography along the highway (located within Caltrans right-of-way) screen most views into the site and the areas that would be used primarily for truck and equipment parking. The project, as currently designed, would install a row of trees and shrubs on site along the highway frontages to provide additional screening in conformance with the Montiel Road design requirements. An existing six-foot high chain link fence also is located along the freeway frontage and includes a tan mesh screening material. The Planning Commission felt that while landscaping is important along visible street frontages and Highway 78, the requirement to provide landscaping along the freeway frontage in this instance was not warranted due to the existing lower elevation of



CITY *of* ESCONDIDO

STAFF REPORT

the site relative to the highway travel lanes and existing freeway landscaping. The Commission also felt the landscape requirement would be an unnecessary burden on the developer and that additional landscaping would be ineffective. Therefore, the Commission recommended the landscape requirement along the freeway frontage and west property boundary be eliminated. This landscape modification would only apply to this remaining parcel in the Montiel Road Master Plan. The proposed modifications to the Montiel Road Planned Development are detailed in Attachment 3 to this report.

4. Conditional Use Permit

The Montiel Road Planning land-use matrix does not list contractor office/services and fleet storage as a permitted use. In order to establish appropriate conditions for the development and operation of a contractor type operation that includes fleet and outdoor equipment storage, the discretionary Conditional Use Permit process is recommended. The CUP process also allows for public input on any development requests. The Conditions of Approval for the project include requirements for screening of the outdoor storage areas, design of the fencing and gates, and limits outdoor storage to the fleet vehicles, support equipment and potted or boxed plant materials for future planting. Any construction materials (such as fertilizer, pots, soils, etc.) must be stored within a completely enclosed building. Due to the proximity of residential development and views from the freeway, no outdoor storage or processing of green waste materials is allowed to include mulching, shredding or chipping of green waste. The Commission recommended that all lift-type equipment be stored in a down position. The Conditions of Approval have been revised accordingly.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The Project qualifies for an exemption under CEQA Guidelines section 15301 (Existing Facilities), section 15303 (New Construction of Small Structures), section 15305 (Minor Alteration in Land-Use Limitations), and section 15332 (Infill Development), which is included as Attachment 2 to this report.

CONCLUSION

The Project is consistent with the General Plan and Montiel Road Planned Development, as proposed to be amended, as well as with the development standards approved under the Planned Development and Project details of request. The project as proposed will not have a significant effect on the environment, as designed and conditioned. The location, size and design of the proposed Project will not be incompatible with, or will adversely affect, or will be materially detrimental to adjacent land uses. The site is suitable for the type and intensity of use or development which is proposed. Both the Planning Commission and staff recommend the City Council the proposed Project.

RESOLUTIONS

- A. Resolution No. 2023-44
- B. Resolution No. 2023-44 Exhibit "A"



CITY *of* ESCONDIDO

STAFF REPORT

- C. Resolution No. 2023-44 Exhibit "B"
- D. Resolution No. 2023-44 Exhibit "C"
- E. Resolution No. 2023-44 Exhibit "D"

ORDINANCES

- A. Ordinance No. 2023-08
- B. Ordinance No. 2023-08 Exhibit "A"
- C. Ordinance No. 2023-08 Exhibit "B"
- D. Ordinance No. 2023-08 Exhibit "C"
- E. Ordinance No. 2023-08 Exhibit "D"

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Attachment 1 – March 28, 2023, Planning Commission staff report
- B. Attachment 2 – CEQA Notice of Exemption
- C. Attachment 3 – Modification to the Montiel Road Planned Development documents