

Agenda Report

TO: CITY COUNCIL **DATE:** DECEMBER 13, 2004
FROM: CITY MANAGER
SUBJECT: PASADENA CONFERENCE CENTER EXPANSION PROJECT EIR

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council:

1. Certify the adequacy of the Pasadena Conference Center Expansion Project Environmental Impact Report (EIR);
2. Approve the De Minimis Impact Finding on the State Fish and Wildlife Habitat; and
3. Direct the City Clerk to file a Notice of Determination with the Los Angeles County Recorder.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The primary goal of the Pasadena Center Operating Company (PCOC) is to create a state-of-the-art conference center to attract national conventions. Given the proximity of the site to entertainment dining, and lodging, the PCOC would like to maximize revenue and economic opportunities for the City of Pasadena by increasing tourism, meetings and conventions.

The project will include approximately 211,320 square feet of new floor area. A new 201,320 square foot Exhibition Hall/Ballroom building will be constructed at the west end of the project site (replacing the existing Exhibition Hall), the existing Conference Center at the east side of the site will be remodeled and a 10,000 square foot addition for administrative office space is proposed. A new parking structure is also proposed to be located behind the Conference Center building, along Euclid Avenue. In addition, the existing Pasadena Ice Center will be converted back to a ballroom and the forecourt in front of the Civic Auditorium will be restored back to the original 1932 design.

An Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the proposed expansion Project has been prepared, and a draft has been circulated. Staff is recommending certification of the Final EIR. The EIR finds that all potential impacts from the Project can be mitigated to a less than significant level. Mitigation measures are proposed for Land Use, Transportation and Circulation, Aesthetics, Air Quality and Noise.

The architectural firm chosen to develop the Project is Fentress Bradburn of Denver Colorado. Fentress Bradburn has been working extensively with the PCOC, City staff

and the community throughout development of the Project. The Design Commission established a design sub-committee to work with the applicant and the Project architects. The committee will provide a recommendation to the Design Commission on the final design of the Project which will provide comments to the City Council at the time as the City Council reviews the design for the project.

BACKGROUND:

A Final Environmental Impact Report has been prepared. In January 2003, an Initial Study was prepared that concluded significant impacts would not occur, and mitigation measures would not be required for the following topics: Biological Resources, Energy and Mineral Resources, Geology, Hazards, Hydrology, Population and Housing, Public Services, Recreation and Utilities and Service Systems. The Initial Study did identify several areas in which the Project may have a significant impact. These areas are Land Use, Aesthetics, Historic Resources, Transportation and Circulation, Air Quality and Noise.

In September 2003 a Draft EIR was prepared and circulated for comment. However, during this period the PCOC changed architects and revised the development proposal. The City, based on a review of the revised design, concluded that the changes warranted the preparation and circulation of a revised EIR. The Revised Draft EIR was circulated for public comment from August 17- November 10, 2004. The Planning Commission held a public hearing to receive comment on the DEIR on November 10, 2004.

During the public comment period the Revised DEIR was presented to the Design Commission, Transportation Advisory Commission and the Planning Commission. The Design Commission adopted a motion to forward the Planning Commission and the City Council comments that the EIR should address the replacement of trees, a correction in the Aesthetics Section #6-Cumulative Impacts regarding the slope of the site, the scale of the parking structure elevation and indicated that it would be beneficial to begin preliminary design review at the earliest possible time. The other commissions provided individual comments that were either noted as issues that do not pertain to the potential environmental impacts of the project, were responded to by referencing information in the EIR that addresses the comment or described how the city's review process would mitigate any potential impacts. No new mitigation measures resulted from commission/public comments. One letter was also received from the California Department of Transportation (CalTrans). A detailed description of all comments can be found in the "Response to Comments" section of the EIR, which is included as Section VII.

A summary of the EIR in the areas of Land Use, Aesthetics, Historic Resources, Transportation and Circulation, Air Quality and Noise can be found in Attachment B.

APPROVALS NEEDED

Based on the project as proposed, staff has concluded that the following *primary* approvals will be needed:

- Conditional Use Permit: Major Project and Expansion of Commercial Recreation Use;

- Variance: Setbacks along Green Street and Marengo Avenue for the proposed Exhibition/Ballroom building to permit a greater setback to accommodate street trees;
- Public Tree Removal (none of the trees to be removed meet native, specimen tree standards and no street trees will be removed; and
- Advisory Design Review

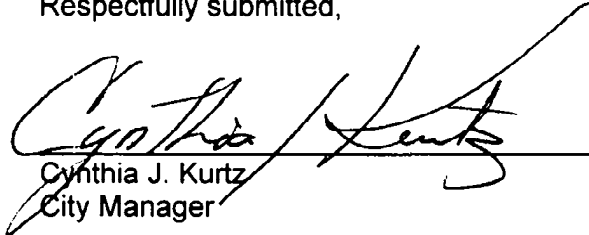
CONCLUSION

The EIR does not identify any impacts that cannot not be mitigated, and there is no need for a statement of overriding considerations. There are four areas, which, after a detailed analysis, have been identified as requiring mitigation; Land Use, Historic Resources, Air Quality and Noise. With implementation of the mitigation measures as proposed in the EIR there will be no significant environmental impacts as a result of the Project.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The project will generate plan check and permit fees estimated to be approximately \$2,000,000. The City also anticipates additional revenue from visitors who will stay in Pasadena and frequent local establishments while attending events at the Conference Center.

Respectfully submitted,



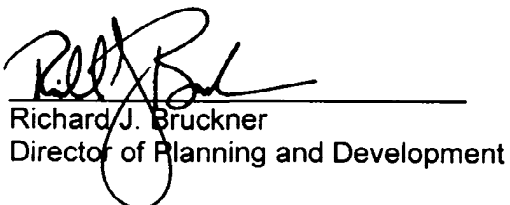
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Approved by:



Richard J. Bruckner
Director of Planning and Development

Attachment A: Project Description
Attachment B: EIR Summary
Attachment C: Pasadena Conference Center Expansion Project Final Environmental Impact Report.

ATTACHMENT A

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project site is approximately nine (9) acres, on the northern half of the block bounded by Green Street to the north, Euclid Avenue to the east, Cordova Street to the south and Marengo Avenue to the west. The existing Pasadena Conference Center Complex is comprised of the Exhibition Hall and Ludwigshafen Plaza at the west side of site, the Pasadena Civic Auditorium and ice rink at the center of the site, and the Conference Center building and Mishima Plaza at the east side of the site.

Exhibition Hall

The project proposes to demolish the existing 47,000 square-foot Exhibition Hall and Ludwigshafen Plaza and replace it with a new 201,320 square foot Exhibition Hall/Ballroom structure. The new structure will include two exhibit halls, meeting rooms, lobby and pre-function areas, and back of house space (circulation, storage etc.). Under the revised plan, a 25,600 square foot ballroom will be located on the north side of Exhibit Hall A. The Exhibition Hall/Ballroom building will be in approximately the same location as the existing exhibit hall, extending further south into the present area of Ludwigshafen Plaza.

Conference Center

The existing 49,344 square foot Conference Center building located at the east side of the site will remain. A 10,000 square foot addition will provide administrative office space along Green Street. The entrance will also be relocated to the northwest corner of the building to provide improved access and synergy with the Civic Auditorium Forecourt and the new Exhibition Hall. A new façade for the building will match the architectural style and materials of the new Exhibition Hall structure.

Parking Structure

A new parking structure is proposed along Euclid Avenue that would be located approximately 70 feet south of the Conference Center at the current location of Mishima Plaza. The structure will contain up to seven parking levels- two below grade, one at grade, and four above grade (a five level structure is also being considered with two levels below grade, one at grade and two above grade). The seven level structure would be 48 feet tall, with an additional 7 feet in height for the elevator shaft. The five level structure would be 28-30 feet above grade with the 7-foot elevator shaft. 897 spaces will be provided in the seven level structure and 653 spaces will be provided in the five level structure.

Ice Skating Rink

The project also includes the conversion of the Pasadena Ice Skating Center back to its' original use as a ballroom. The entire 21,000 square foot structure will be converted to a ballroom. Access into the space will remain at the west elevation and there are no exterior changes proposed.

Civic Auditorium

The project proposes to restore the steps in front of the Civic Auditorium to the original 1932 design. There are no proposed changes to the Civic Auditorium.

Plazas and Public Trees

The new Exhibition Hall/Ballroom building and the expanded Conference Center/Parking Structure would replace the existing Sister City Plazas (Ludwigshafen and Mishima). In addition to the Civic Auditorium forecourt, a comprehensive system of plazas is designed to extend throughout the project site. The Sister City Plazas will remain on-site and will be integrated into the new plaza network. All plaza space will be located at grade to further engage pedestrians and draw visitors onto the site.

Approximately 69 of the 152 existing trees will be removed. The trees are public trees and each will require the review and approval of a tree removal application by the City Manager with notification to the City Council, Design Commission and area neighborhood associations.

ATTACHMENT B

EIR SUMMARY

Land Use

Pasadena General Plan

- The project will aid in preserving Pasadena's historic character and environment and will aid in diversifying the economic base;
- The project will enable the Conference Center to become more competitive on a regional level, and will provide much needed modern amenities;
- The local economy will be strengthened by drawing out-of-town visitors to the City.

Central District Specific Plan

- The EIR finds the Project will not have a significant impact with respect to the plan, and is consistent with the general provisions and intent of the plan;
- The Project will further the goals of the plan by enhancing a Civic Institution, creating a more active pedestrian streetscape, and strengthening the Civic Center's role as a symbolic center for the City;
- The Project will comply with the height limit and floor area ratio limit (F.A.R.);
- Building setbacks for the Exhibition Hall/Ballroom Building will not meet the five-foot setback requirement proposed along Green Street and Marengo Avenue. The EIR finds the Variances could be warranted as the Project protects street trees and achieves the objectives and design principles of the plan.

Pasadena Municipal Code

- The Project use is considered "Commercial Recreation" and requires a Conditional Use Permit for any new use or expansion of an existing use. A Major Project Conditional Use Permit is also required for the project (required for commercial projects over 25,000 square feet);
- Parking requirements for the Commercial Recreation use are determined per the CUP required for the Project and will be determined after evaluating the Parking Study;
- The EIR states that the findings to support the Conditional Use Permits can be made based on the fact that the Project will meet the goals and objectives of the General Plan and applicable Specific Plan, and will not be detrimental to the public health, safety and welfare;
- Three mitigation measures related to Land Use are proposed to ensure that the Project complies with the Federal Migratory Bird Act, that access and use of the Civic Auditorium be maintained throughout the duration of the project, and that the City Design Guidelines and Policies are adhered to as the final design of the project is developed.

Aesthetics

- The EIR finds the new buildings would be compatible with the historic character of the Civic Auditorium and its' setting in terms of size, scale, massing, texture and color;
- The Project would respect the design and monumentality of the Civic Auditorium by developing buildings that are lower in height and overall scale compared with the Auditorium;

- With respect to views, the EIR finds the Project would respect the important role of the Civic Auditorium and maintain visual access to the Civic Auditorium from Garfield Avenue and Euclid Avenue;
- Shade and Shadow studies find the project would not result in substantial shading effects on sun-sensitive uses (e.g., the Sheraton tennis courts and swimming pool);
- The EIR finds the Project is generally consistent with applicable City plans, policies, and regulations as well as the Citywide Design Principles;
- The final Project will be subject to advisory review by the Design Commission and the EIR finds there will be no significant aesthetic impacts as a result of the project.

Historic Resources

- The Civic Auditorium will be affected by the Project through the reconfiguration of the front step arrangement back to the 1932 original design. Recommended mitigation measures require the work be conducted in a manner consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's standards for Rehabilitation and the Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings; therefore there will be no significant impacts to the structure as a result of the forecourt reconfiguration;
- The EIR finds View Corridors are historic in nature based primarily on the fact that they have existed since the Civic Auditorium was constructed. However the Project will continue to provide views of the Civic Auditorium from primary elevations;
- The EIR finds there will be no impacts on Historic Resources as a result of the Project. Mitigation measures are proposed that ensure any impacts to the Civic Auditorium are reduced to a less than significant level.

Transportation and Circulation

- A traffic study and parking study for the project was prepared by LLG and was approved on July 18, 2003 by the Department of Transportation. These studies are attached as Appendix B of the EIR; these studies found there will be no Project impacts related to Traffic or Parking that require mitigation;
- The Project is not forecasted to generate an increase in average daily traffic volume as a result of future operations;
- While the number of events per year may increase, the maximum daily attendance and size of events is not anticipated to increase;
- The Project will generate traffic from construction workers, materials delivery, debris removal etc. However based on the required route approvals by the Transportation Department, and a mitigation measure to coordinate construction work with other Civic Center improvements, the EIR finds there will be no impacts related to construction traffic;
- The Parking Study finds that peak parking demand will occur on the few occasions where a sold-out Civic Auditorium event occurs simultaneously with either a Conference Center event or full occupancy of the Sheraton Hotel. The peak parking demand is anticipated to occur in the evening and totals 1,270 spaces (a shortfall of 298 spaces with a five-level structure and 54 spaces with a seven-level structure).
- The parking study identified approximately 2,100 parking spaces that are available in several parking structures in the immediate area to mitigate any parking shortfalls;

- Based on the infrequent occurrence of the peak parking demand and the adequate amount of off-site parking available the EIR finds no parking impacts will occur.
- Loading for the Project will occur in the same approximate location as loading presently exists, with dock areas located off of Marengo Avenue and Euclid Avenue. No impacts related to loading operations were identified.

Air Quality

- The EIR finds that during the operational phase, the Project would not result in any significant impacts to air quality. The EIR did identify that there may be short-term air quality impacts related to construction;
- To limit the potential for any impacts during construction five (5) mitigation measures are proposed as Best Management Practices to be implemented to the extent possible;
- The EIR finds the Project will be in compliance with all SCAQMD rules and will not result in any significant impacts to local or regional air quality.

Noise

- The EIR finds that given the Project site's location near sensitive uses during construction there could be significant impacts related to noise. As a result, seven (7) mitigation measures are proposed that will reduce the potential noise impacts to a level of non-significance, therefore the Project will not result in any significant impacts related to noise.