



REPORT TO PLANNING COMMISSION

To: Honorable Chair and Members of the Planning Commission

From: Damaris Abraham, Community Development Director

Prepared by: Carlos Serna, Associate Planner

Date: September 17, 2024

Subject: Planning Application No. 2019-80 (Ortega Oaks Plaza) – Proposal to Construct an Approximately 3,300-Square-Foot Convenience Store with a New Gasoline Dispensing Facility and a 1,400-Square-Foot Drive-Through Restaurant on a 3.57-acre Portion of the Existing Ortega Oaks Plaza Located at 15890 Grand Avenue

Applicant: David Culter, Ortega Plaza, LLC

Recommendation

1. Find that the proposed project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15332 (In-fill Project);
2. Adopt A RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF LAKE ELSINORE, CALIFORNIA, APPROVING CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT NO. 2024-06 TO ESTABLISH AND OPERATE A 3,427-SQUARE-FOOT GASOLINE DISPENSING FACILITY WITH TEN (10) FUELING STATIONS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL (C-1) DISTRICT LOCATED AT 15890 GRAND AVENUE (APN: 381-320-025);
3. Adopt A RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF LAKE ELSINORE, CALIFORNIA, APPROVING CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT NO. 2022-05 TO ESTABLISH AND OPERATE A 1,400-SQUARE-FOOT DRIVE-THROUGH RESTAURANT IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL (C-1) DISTRICT LOCATED AT 15890 GRAND AVENUE (APN: 381-320-025); and
4. Adopt A RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF LAKE ELSINORE, CALIFORNIA, APPROVING COMMERCIAL DESIGN REVIEW NO. 2022-05 TO CONSTRUCT A ONE-STORY 3,375-SQUARE-FOOT CONVENIENCE STORE, A 3,427 SQUARE-FOOT GASOLINE DISPENSING FACILITY, AND A 1,400-SQUARE-FOOT DRIVE-THROUGH RESTAURANT LOCATED AT 15890 GRAND AVENUE (APN: 381-320-025).

Project Location

The proposed project site is located within an existing 7.07-acre property that is zoned within the Neighborhood Commercial (C-1) zoning district and is located on the southeastern corner of the Grand Avenue and Ortega Highway intersection. The project site includes Assessor Parcel Number (APN) 381-320-025.

The property currently contains a commercial retail plaza that was originally entitled in the mid-to-late 1950s and is now known as the Ortega Oaks Plaza. The site is fully developed with an approximately 6,400-square-foot (sq. ft.) two-story office building, an 8,600 sq. ft. one-story grocery store, and a 1,200 sq. ft. quick-service restaurant building along with existing parking spaces and landscaping.

Environmental Setting

	EXISTING LAND USE	GENERAL PLAN	ZONING
Project Site	Commercial	General Commercial (GC)	Neighborhood Commercial (C-1)
North	Vacant Naval Base	Commercial Mixed Use (CMU)	Commercial Mixed Use (CMU)
South	Commercial Retail/ Vacant	General Commercial (GC) & Riverside County Low-Medium Residential (LMR)	Neighborhood Commercial (C-1)
East	Commercial	Commercial Mixed Use (CMU)	Commercial Mixed Use (CMU)
West	Vacant	Commercial Mixed Use (CMU)	Commercial Mixed Use (CMU)

Table 1: Environmental Setting

Project Description

Planning Application No. 2019-80 is a request for a Commercial Design Review (CDR No. 2022-05) and two (2) Conditional Use Permits (CUP No. 2024-06 and 2022-05) to develop a new convenience store with gasoline dispensing facility and drive-through restaurant building. The project proposes the following construction and improvements:

- Demolish the existing approximately 1,200 sq. ft. one-story restaurant building;
- Construct a new one-story 3,375 sq. ft. convenience store;
- Construct a new 3,427 sq. ft. gasoline dispensing facility with ten (10) fueling stations;
- Construct a new 1,400 sq. ft. drive-through restaurant; and
- Re-configure the existing surfacing parking lot including new striping and new landscaping.

The new construction project site will be developed on the northwestern 3.57-acre portion of the existing Ortega Oaks Plaza. The existing office building and grocery store will remain since they are not part of the new construction, and no changes are proposed to them including additional square footage. The site will be accessed by one right-in right-out driveway on Grand Avenue,

one right-in right-out driveway on Ortega Highway, and one full-movement driveway on Ortega Highway (along the southwest corner of the property).

The proposed improvements are intended to provide a mix of new commercial uses and site improvements to revitalize the existing retail center and beautify one of the City's gateways through enhanced circulation and landscaping.

Analysis

The following analysis below provides a discussion of the proposed project's consistency with the commercial development standards and requirements pursuant to the Lake Elsinore Municipal Code (LEMC) as well as the General Plan. In addition, the Design Review Committee, including Staff from Planning, Building and Safety, Fire, and Engineering Departments and the Elsinore Valley Municipal Water District, has reviewed the project and have included recommended conditions of approval to ensure compliance with adopted plans, policies, and regulations.

General Plan Consistency

The subject site has a General Plan Land Use designation of General Commercial (GC) and is located in the Lake Edge District. The GC Land Use designation provides for retail, services, restaurants, professional and administrative offices, hotels and motels, mixed-use projects, public and quasi-public uses, and similar and compatible uses with a maximum 0.40 floor area ratio (FAR). The project is proposing a one-story 3,375 sq. ft. convenience store, a 3,427 sq. ft. gasoline dispensing facility, and a 1,400 sq. ft. drive-through restaurant for a maximum FAR of 0.07. Even though the proposed project increases the intensity with additional uses and square footage, the addition is well under the maximum FAR allowed. Further, the proposed changes in use will continue to be consistent with the intent of the GC Land Use designation. Therefore, the project is consistent with the General Plan.

Municipal Code Consistency

The current zoning designation of the subject site is Neighborhood Commercial (C-1). According to LEMC Section 17.124.020, general merchandise stores such as convenience stores are permitted uses in the C-1 zone. Furthermore, according to LEMC Section 17.124.030, drive-through restaurants and gasoline dispensing facilities are conditionally permitted uses (subject to approval of conditional use permits) in the C-1 zone.

Staff has reviewed the submitted development plans for compliance with the C-1 development standards and has determined that the proposed development conforms to said development standards as shown in Table 2 below.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD	REQUIRED	PROPOSED
Floor Area Ratio (FAR)	0.40 maximum	0.07
Front Setback	Average of 20 ft. but not less than 15 ft.	52 ft. – 6 in.
Right Side, Interior Setback	15 ft.	124 ft.

Fueling Station Canopy Setback	20 ft.	57 ft. – 8 in.
Building Height	35 ft.	29 ft. – 6 in.
Landscape Improvements:		
Drive-through planter separation (from driveways, parking and property lines)	5 ft. minimum	13ft. – 5 in. to 20 ft.
Parking area from ROW	15 ft. minimum	15 ft.

Table 2: Development Standards

Architectural Elevations

The architectural design of the proposed building complies with the Nonresidential Development Standards (Chapter 17.112) of the LEMC. The proposed commercial building elevations would bring a modernized and contemporary architectural style to the plaza. The structure also employs recessed and pop-out walls to add additional architectural articulation and stone veneer will be employed throughout the structure to avoid long expanses of untreated open walls. The updated exterior consists of stucco in earth toned color palettes with gray trim accents. The exterior architecture, including colors and materials, have been designed to be harmonious and compatible with the existing structures and surrounding development. Furthermore, the proposed landscaping improvements complement the proposed building design, provide shade, and breakup expanses of pavement.

The project also meets the minimum parking requirements set forth in Section 17.148.030 of the LEMC as shown in Table 3.

LAND USE	REQUIRED	PROPOSED
Drive-Through Lane Storage	8 vehicles / 20 ft. per vehicle (160 ft.)	10 vehicles / 20 ft. per vehicle (200 ft.)
Drive-Through Restaurant	One (1) space per 45 sq. ft. of customer area One (1) space per 200 sq. ft. of non-customer area	Customer Area: 420 sq. ft. = 10 Non-Customer Area: 980 sq. ft. = 5
Convenience Store, Existing Office, and Existing Grocery	One (1) space per 250 sq. ft. of gross floor area	Convenience Store: 3,375 sq. ft. = 14 Existing Office: 6,478 sq. ft = 26 Existing Retail: 8,634 sq. ft. = 34
TOTAL REQUIRED	89	
TOTAL PROVIDED	124	

Table 3: Parking Requirements

Environmental Determination

The proposed project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (Cal. Pub. Res. Code §§21000 et seq.: "CEQA") and the CEQA Guidelines (14 C.C.R. §§ 15000 et seq.) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15332 (In-Fill Development) because the project (a) is consistent

with the applicable general plan designation and all applicable general plan policies as well as with applicable zoning designation and regulations, (b) the site of the proposed development is within city limits on a project site of less than five acres substantially surrounded by urban uses, (c) the project site has no value as habitat for endangered, rare or threatened species, (d) the project will not result in any significant effects relating to traffic, noise, air quality, or water quality, and (e) the site can be adequately served by all required utilities and public services. A categorical exemption checklist documenting project eligibility for the Class 32 exemption is attached to this report (Attachment 5).

MSHCP Consistency

The proposed project is consistent with the Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP). The project site is completely disturbed and is developed with an existing commercial center. The subject property is not located in an MSHCP criteria cell and is not subject to the City's LEAP and the Western Riverside County Regional Conservation Authority's (RCA) JPR process. The project complies with all other applicable requirements of the MSHCP.

Public Notice

Notice of the hearing for this application has been published in the Press-Enterprise newspaper and mailed to property owners within 300 feet of the subject property. As of the writing of this report, no written comments concerning this application have been received by staff.

Attachments

Attachment 1 – CUP-2022-05 Resolution
Attachment 2 – CUP-2024-06 Resolution
Attachment 3 – CDR Resolution
Attachment 4 – Conditions of Approval
Attachment 5 – Class 32 Exemption Checklist
Attachment 6 – GIS Exhibits
Attachment 7 – Design Review Package
Attachment 8 – Public Notice Package