

ZONING CODE AMENDMENT FINDINGS

3701 Pacific Place

Case No. 2407-21 (ZCA24-002)

June 5, 2025

Pursuant to Government Code Sections 65853 and 65855, the Planning Commission shall render a decision on any proposed Zoning Code Amendment and transmit the reasons for the recommendation, and the relationship of the proposed amendment to the applicable general and specific plans, to the City Council. These findings and analysis are presented for consideration, adoption and incorporation into the record of proceedings.

1. THE PROPOSED CHANGE IS CONSISTENT WITH THE GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND PROVISIONS OF THE GENERAL PLAN; AND

A Zoning Code Amendment (ZCA) is being requested to allow the Commercial Storage (CS) zoning district to utilize height overlays pursuant to Chapter 21.39 of the Zoning Regulations, which it does not currently allow. This proposed ZCA would allow for properties in the CS zone to request a height district overlay, and use of the overlay is proposed for the subject project in the context of the Applicant request that the subject Property at 3701 Pacific Place be rezoned to Commercial Storage (CS), along with the proposed height overlay, to accommodate the proposed Project.

The ZCA would not conflict with the City's General Plan or any other applicable land use plans and policies. The ZCA involves adding the CS zoning district to Section 21.39.030 (Applicable districts.) of the Zoning Regulations. This change to the zoning regulations continues to require consistency with General Plan provisions, including compliance with the Land Use Element (LUE) height limits, allowed uses within PlaceTypes, and design compatibility. That is, even with allowance of a height overlay, all properties zoned CS would still be subject to existing height limits in the LUE. The Community Commercial (CC) PlaceType is the most predominant and appropriate PlaceType for CS zoning, and properties designated with the CC PlaceType have General Plan height limits that range from 2 to 5 stories. The Neighborhood Serving Corridors- Moderate (NSC-M) PlaceType is also a consistent designation for CS according to the LUE, and in some places allows height up to 7-stories. Allowing for greater height for properties zoned CS reflects evolving land use trends to respond to greater demand for self-storage and the need for greater height for projects to work in today's context. Self storage facilities developed or improved today are typically 3 or more stories in height due to significant fixed costs associated with acquisition and development of property for self storage uses. The proposed project requests use of the height overlay, and any future property zoned CS that seeks to use the height overlay would be required to go through a discretionary review process and ensure consistency with the General Plan, including consistency with the General Plan height limit.

The proposed project should be reviewed in relation to the General Plan as a whole and the growth trends of the City. The City continues to accommodate housing construction across the city and has issued permits for more than 7,000 units since the 2019 year of the LUE adoption. Many of these units were smaller, in-fill apartment units or small Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). Some portion of these units, as well as the population as a whole, requires storage including off-site self-storage. The ability for the City to accommodate urban living and smaller units around the city requires that the City also consider facilitating a limited number of appropriate properties, including the subject property, for high-quality storage uses. In that manner, the proposed zoning code amendment is consistent with and helps to implement several goals and policies of the General Plan related to facilitating a greater density and range of housing, including LU Policy 12-1 "Allow a variety of housing types in new residential developments with the goal of establishing new opportunities for persons of varied income ranges, ages, lifestyles and family needs" as well as several goals and policies in the Land Use and Housing Elements related to increasing density, allowing smaller units including piloting the use of micro-units, and preserving historic homes and neighborhoods, many of which are developed with minimal amounts of storage compared to the typical needs of residents today.

One of the citywide goals identified in the Land Use Element is to accommodate strategic growth and change (Goal No. 3 of the Land Use Element). Under this goal, the City aims to encourage this growth within strategic locations while preserving existing neighborhoods. The Land Use Element identifies the subject site as a target for one of the eight major areas of change. In order for major change to be facilitated, sufficient height allowances are needed. Additionally, allowing for the height overlay to be used when appropriate in the CS zone helps further LU Policy 10-2: Complete neighborhoods by allowing low-intensity commercial uses to locate along neighborhood edges, in transition areas and at key intersections.

LU Policy 7-4 sets out to encourage degraded and abandoned buildings and properties to transition to more productive uses through adaptive reuse or new development. The project site has been abandoned for several years (since 2007), contributing to the presence of a blighted vacant property that has been used for illegal activity. The use of this site in a limited capacity is due largely to its contamination from previous activities such as oil well drilling and oil brine water treatment facility operations. Given the significant upfront costs associated with improving this site and other sites like it subject to the CS zone, a zoning code amendment that would allow for additional height to be granted through a site specific entitlement process is appropriate to allow for feasible redevelopment of under-utilized sites.

The Urban Design Element of the General Plan also sets forth several goals aimed at improving blighted properties in Long Beach. Strategy No. 15 within the Urban Design Element coincides with the proposed Project as it is meant to “consider vacant parcels as infill opportunities.” Specifically, Policy UD 15-2 aims to “promote infill Projects that support the designated PlaceType and be appropriate in their use, scale, compactness of development, and design character with adjacent sites and nearby existing development.” The subject project would be facilitated through use of this zoning code amendment and proposes appropriately scaled infill for this large, isolated site buffered by two major freeways, metro tracks and the L.A. River. These same scale and compatibility factors can be considered as part of the discretionary review that would be required for any future site to make use of additional height that could be achieved through use of a height overlay in the CS Zone, should the zoning code amendment be adopted.

2. THE AMENDMENT WILL NOT ADVERSELY AFFECT THE CHARACTER, LIVABILITY OR APPROPRIATE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CITY, AND IS IN CONFORMITY WITH PUBLIC NECESSITY, CONVENIENCE, GENERAL WELFARE, AND IN GOOD PLANNING PRACTICE;

A Zoning Code Amendment (ZCA) is required to allow the CS zoning district to utilize height overlays, which it does not currently allow. This proposed ZCA would allow for properties in the CS zone to request a height district, and use of the overlay is proposed in conjunction with a zone change to the CS Zoning District, in order to facilitate the subject project.

The purpose of Chapter 21.39 (High-Rise Overlay District) of the Zoning Regulations is to establish special building height limits to allow taller, high-rise buildings to locate outside the downtown area. Processing a ZCA to allow the use of the height overlay in the CS zone is appropriate. The existing height limit of the CS zone is 28 feet. While previous trends within the self-storage industry were typified by two-story facilities, the evolution of the industry in recent years has seen the emergence of facilities with three and four stories. In order for the CS zone to be useful in today’s context (in relation to self-storage facilities), providing the ability to increase height above the base 28 feet in specific circumstances is appropriate. Use of a height overlay on a specific property is a discretionary action required via a Zone Change to allow the height overlay code to be exercised. Therefore it allows for analysis of site specific factors and conditions to ensure the additional height is appropriate at any given site.

In regard to the proposed use of the zoning code amendment as part of the proposed project entitlements, staff finds use of the height overlay to be appropriate. The additional height allows for a feasible project to be developed, despite significant environmental and site access constraints. Additionally, in terms of compatibility, although the Property is in close proximity with a school, a park and a single-family residential community to the east, it is buffered by the Metro A-line light rail tracks and Del Mar Avenue. Other land uses in the project vicinity are buffered from the site by the Interstate-405 (I-405) freeway and the Los Angeles River (L.A. River). As such, allowing additional height on the Property would not adversely affect the character, livability or appropriate development of the surrounding area. The height increase to an allowable 50 feet is a minor change to the existing allowable height at the Property, which is 40 feet per the current General Plan's Height Map (Map LU-8).

In addition, due to the site's relatively isolated location and access, the proposed Project is compatible with the Property and therefore rezoning and construction of the Project will not negatively affect the character of the existing residential neighborhood, nor would it adversely affect its livability. The Project will result in substantial improvements to the development site including a comprehensive remediation, installation of native landscaping, and the paving of additional roadways, and would not result in negative effects upon the surrounding area.

The Project is also harmonious with its location near the L.A. River. The Property is located adjacent to a vacant Los Angeles County Flood Control District (LACFCD) property, which itself is located adjacent to the L.A. River and existing public trails along the river, used by bicyclists, pedestrians, and equestrians. There is not currently any public access to the L.A. River from the Property or near the Property's location. For several years, the City and LACFCD have been discussing potential development of the LACFCD property for public open space and recreational uses consistent with the RiverLink Plan's vision to improve the LACFCD property as a riparian woodland. A similar vision is also articulated in the LLARRP. Among 155 Opportunity Areas along the L.A. River identified in the LLARRP, the LLARRP identifies 58 acres in the Project vicinity as potential Opportunity Area 68 (includes, among other properties, the LACFCD parcel, the Property, and the private property abutting the Property to the east), which envisions potentially open space, wetland, or recharge basin uses.

No public agency has identified, secured, or issued funding to acquire, remediate, and develop the Property for open space uses, nor has any public agency made such an offer to do so. Nevertheless, the Project will facilitate and be consistent with the opportunities contemplated in the RiverLink and LLARRP by dedicating an easement for future development of a publicly accessible trail and trailhead that connects Pacific Place to the LACFCD property via a path around the southern and western edge of the Property. Therefore, if the LACFCD property is developed for public open space in the future, the easement will be available to be developed as safe, efficient public

access to the LACFCD property and bike path/L.A. River adjacent where none currently exists at this location.

In addition, if the LACFCD property is developed as public open space, the Project's development and use would be consistent with adjacent open space uses. The vacant properties in the vicinity (the Property, LACFCD property, and private property to the east of the Property) have long been an attractive nuisance due to their isolated location. The Property has been secured and is now monitored by the current owner, however, these issues have resulted in community complaints in the past. The Project would reduce the amount of space in which nuisance activities can occur, add new security lighting and measures, and bring commercial activity to the area. Development of the Project makes those activities less likely for neighboring sites like the LACFCD property because the area will no longer be isolated and vacant. Accordingly, the area would become safer for open space or park uses.

Further, the Project will include a comprehensive soil remediation of the Property, implement major upgrades including landscaping, construct a new building with high-quality architecture and new paving, install water and energy efficient systems, install a comprehensive stormwater control system including detention basins and modular wetland biofiltration, and construct off-site roadway improvements. These improvements will enhance adjacent properties and reduce the Property's potential impacts on those sites in terms of aesthetics, environmental contamination, access, and stormwater runoff and quality.

Further, any future proposed height overlays on other properties in the CS zone would be required to undergo a separate analysis of compatibility with the character, livability or appropriate development of the surrounding area.