



Legislation Text

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Report regarding consideration of an application for a Use Permit, Design Review, Sign Permit, and Transportation Demand Management Plan for a new clinic and medical services building at 225 Spruce Avenue, and determination that the project is categorically exempt from CEQA. (*Justin Shiu, Consultant Planner and Sailesh Mehra, Planning Manager*)

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission make findings and approve the entitlements request for the project including a Use Permit, Design Review, Sign Permit, and Transportation Demand Management Plan, subject to the attached draft Conditions of Approval, and determine that the Project is categorically exempt under the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), Class 32, Section 15332, In-Fill Development Projects.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The applicant, North East Medical Services (NEMS), is seeking entitlements to construct a clinic and medical services building at 225 Spruce Avenue. The project (P18-0008) proposes a 10,716 square foot, four-story building on a 7,000 square foot parcel (FAR of 0.42).

The project is seeking approval for a Use Permit (UP18-0002) for the proposed clinic use and for parking reduction request PE18-0001; Design Review (DR18-0004) for construction of a nonresidential building; Sign Permit (SIGNS18-0002) to meet signage requirements; and Transportation Demand Management Plan (TDM19-0001) for trip generation associated with the proposed project.

BACKGROUND

NEMS is a private, non-profit community health center that services medically underserved populations at eight other locations in San Francisco, San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties (Attachment 3). The building would provide medical clinic spaces on two floors and dental care facilities on one floor, as well as provide wellness education spaces and support spaces to support operations.

The project site is 7,000 square foot parcel that contains a two-story building previously occupied by the Bay Sleep Clinic. The proposed project would demolish the existing two-story building and construct a new four-story building, as well as update the project area.

ZONING CONSISTENCY ANALYSIS

The site is zoned Grand Avenue Core (GAC) and located within the Downtown Station Area Specific Plan (DSASP) boundaries. The proposed project is consistent with the development standards established for the zoning district.

Table 1. Development Standard Compliance

	Proposed Project	Development Standard
Minimum Lot Size	7,000 sf (existing)	5,000 sf

Floor Area	10,716 sf	10,500 sf - 15,000 sf
Minimum Floor Area Ratio (FAR)	1.53	1.50
Maximum Floor Area Ratio (FAR)	1.53	3.00
Height	45 feet	45 feet
Setbacks		
Grand Avenue	0	0
Maple Avenue (Pedestrian Priority Area)	0	N/A
Interior Side	0	0
Rear	0	0
Maximum Lot Coverage	60%	100%

Proposed Uses

The proposed use of the site is a clinic that provides medical and dental services. Clinic uses at the ground floor level are permitted with the approval of a Conditional Use Permit for areas west of Maple Avenue in the GAC zoning district. (SSFMC Table 20.280.003) Findings in support of the project’s approval can be made since the use is compatible with surrounding uses, is located on a site that was previously occupied by a clinic, and would not create significant impacts to the surroundings (Attachment 1).

Design

The design presents an improvement over the present conditions and is compatible with the design guidelines for the Downtown Station Area Specific Plan as well as current development standards. The proposed building is designed with attention to the characteristics of the site as a corner property. A corner entry opens out at an approximately 45 degree angle to the northeast with colors and architectural treatment that emphasize the entry at the corner. Building transparency is maintained along the street level for the sides of the building adjacent to Grand Avenue and Spruce Avenue; windows along Grand Avenue provide transparency that helps show active use of the building. The application of wood siding elements provides a visual connection with traditional construction materials used in the Downtown area.

The proposed building design is an increase in height and floor area over the size of the existing building, however the increase is required to accommodate minimum floor area ratio (FAR) requirements for the GAC zoning district. A minimum FAR of 1.5 is required, which translates to a minimum building size of 10,500 square feet for the 7,000 square foot lot. The project has been redesigned since its initial conception to meet the minimum FAR requirement and the final proposal is an approximately 10,716 square foot building (Attachment 2).

The project will preserve the presence of a medical building at the location and establishes a building that is consistent with the current building size requirements.

Signs

Two wall signs are proposed for the building. The sign above the corner entry is approximately 18 square feet, with aluminum lettering painted red. The sign proposed at the southeastern portion of the building featuring the NEMS logo is a painted metal sign approximately 24.75 square feet in area. The dimensions comply with the standard design requirements for wall signs under Chapter 20.360 Signs of the South San Francisco Municipal Code.

Parking Requirements and Transportation Demand Management

The project proposes to reduce the number of required parking spaces on site by 27 parking spaces and is projected to be able to meet parking demand based on the service characteristics of the use and available parking resources. Planning Commission may consider parking reduction requests under a use permit request. The existing site has nine parking spaces. Under the standard parking ratios established in Section 20.330.007 Downtown Parking, the project would need to provide 36 parking spaces based on building floor area. Through the parking reduction request, the project proposes to maintain the existing nine parking spaces on site, comprised of seven standard spaces, one carpool/vanpool space, and one accessible parking space. On-site parking spaces would be reserved for patient parking. Employees who drive would be required to purchase passes from a nearby garage parking, such as the Miller Parking Garage at 329 Miller Avenue.

The project is expected to have lower parking demand due to the nature of NEMS medical service. In the first year of operation, the project is estimated to have 30 patients and 12 employees per day. In the fifth year, the project would reach the capacity of 75 patients and 24 employees per day. A study of mode choice at other NEMS facilities showed that approximately 13 percent of patients and 17 percent of employees arrive by automobile. These rates translate to a projected 10 patients and 4 employees per day for the proposed project in the fifth year of operation. As NEMS provides community-based health centers for underserved communities, operations tend to serve a smaller geographic area and employees and patients tend to have greater dependencies on modes other than driving compared to typical medical clinics (Attachment 4).

Although on-site parking is intended to meet patient parking demand, analysis of on-street parking showed the availability of spaces in the surrounding areas. During the estimated peak hours of 1:00pm to 3:00pm, 78 out of 218 spaces, or 36 percent of spaces, within one block of the project site were observed to be available. A study of the area within a quarter mile of the site found that approximately 236 spaces out of 925 spaces were available (Attachment 4). Patient parking is expected to be managed on site, however, the surrounding area has capacity to accommodate parking should there be any excess parking demand during the peak periods.

Transportation demand management strategies are applied to the project to target an alternative mode share of at least 28 percent. The project is estimated to create 222 daily trips based on trip generation rates of standard clinic uses. As the number of trips projected for the proposed uses exceed 100 average daily trips, a transportation demand management plan (TDM Plan) is required, pursuant to Chapter 20.400 Transportation Demand Management. The TDM Plan contains strategies to reduce vehicle trips generated by the use (Attachment 4). The project is projected to generate 27 trips at the AM peak and 20 trips at the PM peak. The TDM Plan trip reduction strategies would reduce transportation impacts created by the proposed use so that they would not be significant.

Strategies to reduce parking demand and trip generation include the use operator's administration and promotion of alternative transportation options (carshare, vanpool, etc.); provision of bicycle facilities (four short-term bicycle parking spaces in the parking lot and one long-term bicycle parking space on the ground level); unbundling parking to preserve parking for patients; assigning a TDM coordinator to implement the alternative mode share goal of 28 percent; and providing financial incentives for employees to use alternatives to automobiles. Compliance with the parking and transportation demand management plan has been added as a condition of approval (Attachment 1).

GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY ANALYSIS

The City's General Plan designates the parcel as Grand Avenue Core (GAC), which serves as the historic retail center of the City. New mixed-use development on underutilized properties is encouraged. However, the proposed use takes the place of a previous clinic use at the same location and allows for medical service to be

reestablished at the location to offer a variety of services available in the downtown area. The building height would not detract from the historic character of existing buildings in the GAC district. The project is consistent with building height limits envisioned along Grand Avenue and is located at an intersection where taller buildings can help define the corner. Further, the project site has a degree of separation from other properties in the GAC district along Grand Avenue in that it is located on a corner, near the edge of the GAC district, separate from a full block under the GAC designation, and is one of a few properties designated GAC west of Spruce Avenue. The proposed use is therefore consistent with the General Plan in that it replaces a previous clinic use with a new clinic and medical services use at the same location and the project does not detract from its setting.

DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

The project was reviewed by the Design Review Board (DRB) on March 20, 2018 and August 21, 2018. DRB had a positive reception to the design shown at the August 21, 2018 meeting. The board recommended approval with comments (See Attachment 5). The board commented on further consideration about parking, parking impact on side streets, and exploration of using parking structures. The applicant conducted a parking study and transportation demand management plan following the meeting to analyze existing parking conditions in the surroundings and propose strategies to management parking demand (Attachment 4). A final landscape plan would be required as part of the conditions of approval, which would address comments about plantings and bioretention. When the project is submitted for building permit review, building code compliance and adherence to conditions of approval would be confirmed.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The proposed project has been determined to be categorically exempt under the provisions of CEQA, Class 32, Section 15332, In-Fill Development Project. The project is consistent with the general plan, specific plan and zoning code; is on a site surrounded by urban uses and not more than five acres; does not have value as a habitat; does not result in any significant effects; and can be adequately served by all required utilities and public services. The site is an existing developed property within the downtown area and surrounded by commercial and institutional buildings.

CONCLUSION

The proposed project would replace the previous clinic use and reestablish the availability of a clinic and medical services at the intersection of Grand Avenue and Spruce Ave. The proposed project meets the guidelines and requirements of the General Plan's Grand Avenue Core (GAC) land use and subsequent zoning regulations.

Therefore, staff recommends that the Planning Commission make findings and approve the entitlements request for Project P18-0008 including Use Permit (UP18-0002), Design Review (DR18-0004), Sign Permit (SIGNS18-0002), and Transportation Demand Management Plan (TDM19-0001), subject to the attached draft Conditions of Approval, and determine that the Project is categorically exempt under the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), Class 32, Section 15332 In-Fill Development Project.

Attachments

1. Draft Findings for Approval and Conditions of Approval
2. Plan Set, March 26, 2019
3. Project Description, January 31, 2019
4. Parking and Transportation Demand Management Study, January 31, 2019
5. DRB Minutes, August 21, 2018