



Legislation Text

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Report regarding a four-month review of an approved Use Permit to allow extended business hours, indoor live entertainment, and private events at Hometown Bowl located at 237 El Camino Real in the El Camino Real Mixed Use (ECRMX) Zoning District. (*Stephanie Skangos, Associate Planner*)

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission receive this staff report, provide input, and schedule an eight-month review of the approved Conditional Use Permit (UP19-0020) to allow extended business hours, indoor live entertainment, and private events at Hometown Bowl.

BACKGROUND

On June 18, 2020, a Conditional Use Permit was approved by the Planning Commission for Hometown Bowl, located at 237 El Camino Real, allowing extended business hours, indoor live entertainment, and private events at the bowling center. Hometown Bowl, formerly known as Brentwood Bowl, which was originally approved by the City Council in 1951, consists of 16 bowling lanes, amusement arcade with 10 amusement devices (arcade and video games), six pool tables, a bar, and a restaurant/café. The approved business hours are Monday through Thursday, 3pm to 12am; Friday, 3pm to 2am; Saturday, 10am to 2am; and Sunday, 10am to 12am. Live entertainment and special events are subject to the approval of an event permit from the Police Department at least 30 days in advance of each event.

Approval of Hometown Bowl's Use Permit included several Conditions of Approval (see Attachment 1) to ensure proper management of the bowling center operations and help mitigate any negative impacts to the surrounding residential neighborhood, including the requirement for four-, eight-, and twelve-month reviews and the ability to modify and/or revoke the Use Permit if full compliance is not met.

This review constitutes the required four-month review of Hometown Bowl's operations and compliance with the Conditions of Approval. Although the Use Permit was approved in June 2020, Hometown Bowl was not able to commence full operations until a year later on June 15, 2021, due to State and local restrictions on businesses as a result of the COVID pandemic. October 15, 2021 represents the four month marker for full operations.

DISCUSSION

Compliance with Conditions of Approval

Staff has reviewed each of the approved Conditions of Approval for compliance. The applicant was also tasked with providing compliance information to staff for each Condition of Approval (see Attachment 2).

Below are the approved Conditions of Approval that have been problematic and/or have not been complied with followed by staff discussion.

Planning Division Condition No. 7

The business owner/operator shall implement and maintain noise attenuation measures, including curtains in front of doorways, double-paned windows, and/or insulation techniques, to minimize and limit noise emissions from the establishment. The business shall comply with SSFMC Section 8.32, Noise Regulations, during normal business hours and private events. Such measures shall be reviewed and approved by the Chief Planner prior to operation under the Use Permit provisions.

Staff Response: The applicant was unable to install noise attenuation curtains in front of doorways due to restrictions from the Fire Department. All other noise attenuation measures have been implemented to help minimize noise emissions from the bowling center.

Planning Division Condition No. 8

The business owner/operator shall ensure that parking by patrons of the establishment be located along El Camino Real and within the adjacent public parking lot, and discourage parking within the surrounding residential neighborhood by posting parking information on their website, posting signage near the entrances, including parking information in private event promotional flyers and announcements, and implementing ridesharing promotional offers with various ride sharing platforms.

Staff Response: There have been complaints received that parking for the establishment is occurring within the adjacent neighborhood. The applicant is continuing to encourage parking along El Camino Real and within the adjacent public parking lot by posting signage online and near the entrance, including parking information in the business's promotional emails, and making nightly announcements.

Planning Division Condition No. 9

The business owner/operator shall be responsible for maintaining the premises and surrounding area within 500 feet of the establishment, including the adjacent neighborhood, parking lots and alleyway, in a clean and orderly manner during and after regular business hours and any private events. The adjacent neighborhood shall be checked the morning after regular business operations and private events. In providing such maintenance, the business owner/operator shall send notification to property owners and tenants within 500 feet of the establishment advising that staff maintenance and cleanup of the adjacent neighborhood will be performed in the mornings after regular business operations and private events. The notice shall contain contact information for the establishment, as well as information about any upcoming events, and shall be sent every 60 days. The first set of such notice shall be sent within 30 days of the date of the Use Permit approval.

Staff Response: There have been complaints of excessive garbage and debris within the adjacent neighborhood, some of which is directly associated with the establishment. The applicant is continuing to work with their team to maintain and clean the surrounding area, including the adjacent neighborhood, alleyway and public parking lot, during business hours and nightly at closing.

Planning Division Condition No. 10

The business owner/operator shall establish and maintain a dedicated complaint line for the establishment. A complaint log shall be maintained, and any complaints received shall be logged and include the following

information: date, time and description of complaint; name and contact information for complainant; and date, time and description of response, along with staff information. The complaint log shall be kept up-to-date and be made readily available to the Planning Division upon request.

Staff Response: The applicant will establish a Complaint Line email address dedicated for comments, suggestions and/or complaints, as well as maintain a dedicated comment box within the establishment located at the front desk.

Planning Division Condition No. 13

The business owner/operator shall repaint the exterior façade along El Camino Real and explore options to incorporate the previous bowling mural. Paint samples for the exterior shall be submitted to the Planning Division within 30 days from the date of approval of the Use Permit.

Staff Response: The applicant is still working with the City to repaint the exterior façade of the establishment along El Camino Real. In discussions, staff has suggested that instead of a complete repaint of the exterior, some pattern or stripes in a contrasting color to the black be added.

Planning Division Condition No. 14

The existing wooden roof sign at the northwestern corner of the existing building shall be removed. Any required permits for the removal of the sign shall be applied for within 30 days from the date of approval of the Use Permit.

Staff Response: The applicant is working with the Building Division to secure any required building permits necessary for the removal of the existing wooden roof sign.

Planning Division Condition No. 18

The business owner/operator shall obtain sound readings from four separate areas adjacent to the establishment, including near the main entrance, within the alleyway, and across the street, to demonstrate compliance with SSFMC Chapter 8.32, Noise Regulations. The sound readings shall be submitted to the Planning Division prior to hosting live entertainment or within 30 days from the date of the Use Permit approval, whichever occurs first, and should reflect accurate noise levels during amplified live music events. If the sound readings are above the permissible sound levels outlined in SSFMC Chapter 8.32, Noise Regulations, the business owner/operator shall install noise attenuation measures, as discussed in Condition No. 7 above. Sound readings shall be obtained from the same locations after implementation of noise attenuation measures and submitted to the Planning Division.

Staff Response: The applicant is still working on obtaining the required sound readings.

Police Department Condition No. 8

The alleyway, outside the doors listed above in #7, shall have a minimum of a six-foot tall gate on each the El Camino Real and the Northwood Drive sides. The gates shall have exit panic hardware on the interior side. The exterior of the gates shall be keyed and a corresponding key shall be secured in a KnoxBox at each gate location that is mounted in compliance with the Fire Department.

Staff Response: The applicant is working with the Building Division to secure any required building permits necessary for the required gate/fencing.

Police Department Condition No. 15

"No Loitering" signs shall be posted conspicuously throughout the parking area in locations designated by the Police Department.

Staff Response: The applicant will add the required signage around the establishment and parking areas.

Safety and Security Concerns

Since approval of Hometown Bowl's Use Permit, during restricted operations under State and local COVID restrictions, and since full reopening in June 2021, the South San Francisco Police Department (SSFPD) has responded to Hometown Bowl 104 times, with 84 of those being self-initiated contacts by officers. From those contacts, several themes have emerged including:

1. Large crowds loitering and/or spilling into the nearby areas;
2. Littering in the area; and
3. Intoxicated customers.

The SSFPD has seen an increase in calls for service at Hometown Bowl, many of which have been related to large crowds of customers loitering outside the business and spilling into the neighboring residential area and/or nearby businesses. Many of the crowds have been described by officers as rowdy and failing to listen to commands to disperse from security guards or police. Officers checking on the business and surrounding areas, including the adjacent residential neighborhood, gas station, and public parking lot, have consistently located discarded alcoholic beverage containers. Officers have also seen numerous customers walking in the streets after leaving the establishment at closing time, even when cars are traveling on the roadway.

There have been numerous reports of customers leaving intoxicated, with several having to be transported to the hospital by the South San Francisco Fire Department. One officer contacted an employee regarding intoxicated customers and was told that employees have a difficult time controlling what customers drink because they sometimes sneak their alcoholic beverages into the business.

Loud noise, either emanating from the business or by customers loitering in the area, has been reported by citizens or witnessed by officers on several occasions.

There have been very few reports of assaults at Hometown Bowl; however, there was an incident that involved a customer being transported to the hospital after receiving a fractured orbital bone after attempting to intervene in a fight. The fight began when security escorted a customer out of the business and six friends returned to the business to confront the security guard.

Safety and security at Hometown Bowl will continue to be a concern for SSFPD. Compliance with the approved Conditions of Approval can help mitigate some of these issues.

ZONING CONSISTENCY ANALYSIS

The project site is located in the El Camino Real Mixed Use (ECRMX) Zoning District.

Per South San Francisco Municipal Code (SSFMC) Section 20.090.002 (Land Use Regulations-Commercial,

Office, and Mixed-Use Districts), Commercial Entertainment and Recreation uses are allowed subject to approval of a Conditional Use Permit. Additionally, pursuant to SSFMC Section 20.490.002 (Use Permit Applicability), Use Permit approval is required for any use with hours of operation between midnight and 6 a.m., except for properties within the Mixed Industrial Zone District that do not directly abut another zone district, and for any commercial use with live entertainment. The required use permits have been secured by Hometown Bowl.

GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY ANALYSIS

The General Plan Land Use Designation for the project site is El Camino Real Mixed Use. This designation is intended to accommodate high-intensity active uses and mixed-use development in the South El Camino Real area. Commercial recreation is an encouraged use within this land use designation.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

At the time of Use Permit approval in June 2020, the project was determined to be categorically exempt under the provisions of CEQA, Class 1, Section 15301, Existing Facilities. This exemption covers the operation, repair, maintenance, permitting, leasing, licensing, or minor alteration of existing public or private structures, facilities, mechanical equipment, or topographical features, involving negligible or no expansion of existing or former use. This four-month review of the approved Use Permit for Hometown Bowl is not subject to the provisions of CEQA, as the review does not include any changes to the project.

CONCLUSION

On June 18, 2020, a Conditional Use Permit was approved by the Planning Commission for Hometown Bowl, allowing extended business hours, indoor live entertainment, and private events at the bowling center. Approval of Hometown Bowl's Use Permit included several Conditions of Approval to ensure proper management of the bowling center operations and help mitigate any negative impacts to the surrounding residential neighborhood.

Staff has reviewed Hometown Bowl's operations and compliance with the Conditions of Approval and finds that the continuation of an existing unit under new ownership has resulted in far higher customer volumes and related incidents requiring public safety response. Based on the Police Department report, these incidents are likely to continue without significant investment in on-site security and customer management during peak weekend evenings. Staff recommends that the Planning Commission receive this information, provide input, and schedule an eight-month review of the approved Conditional Use Permit as a public hearing with the ability to impose new conditions to better mitigate impacts and/or discuss revocation of the Conditional Use Permit granting extending hours, indoor live entertainment, and special events.

Attachments

1. Planning Commission Approved Conditions of Approval as of June 18, 2020
2. Applicant Write-up of Compliance with Conditions of Approval, dated August 1, 2021