
DATE: December 7, 2023

**STUDY SESSION
STAFF REPORT**

AGENDA ITEM NO 9.1

TO: FOSTER CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

PREPARED BY: KEVIN MCGILL, ASSISTANT PLANNER

CASE NO.: UP2023-0094

PROJECT LOCATION: Parking Lot Behind 384 Foster City Blvd

APN: 094-521-140

REQUESTED ACTION/PURPOSE

The purpose of this Study Session is to initiate a discussion and obtain direction from the Planning Commission for the vacant parking lot behind 384 Foster City Blvd property to allow 1) overflow employee parking for nearby business(es) and/or 2) overnight bus/shuttle parking for shuttle services for business(es) within or outside of City's boundary.

GENERAL INFORMATION

GENERAL PLAN DESIGNATION: Research/Office Park

ZONING DISTRICT: C-M/PD (Commercial Mix/Planned Development)

ZONING HISTORY: On July 15, 1976, the Planning Commission approved a Use Permit (UP-11-76) to allow for the construction of an office/warehouse building.

On January 4, 2001, the Planning Commission approved UP-00-020 & Resolution P-76-00 to construct a 327-stall off-site parking lot behind the existing 384 Foster City Blvd building.

SURROUNDING LAND USE: North: 380 & 384 Foster City Blvd – (Commercial Mix/Planned Development)
South: 353 Vintage Park Dr – (Commercial Mix/Planned Development)
East: 353 Vintage Park Dr – (Commercial Mix/Planned Development)
West: 390 Foster City Blvd (Commercial Automobile Repair & Service District)

LOT SIZE:

2.63 Acres (San Mateo County Assessor's Record)

KEY PLANNING OR USE CONSIDERATIONS

Whether the proposal to expand the use beyond the original Use Permit is acceptable.

STUDY SESSION NOTICING/PUBLIC OUTREACH

The public was advised of this Study Session in the following ways:

- Published in the Foster City Islander on November 22, 2023
- Posted on the Foster City website at www.fostercity.org on November 16, 2023
- Electronic marquee at Leo Ryan Park on November 22, 2023, through December 7, 2023
- Emailed out to the Planning Listserv on November 16, 2023
- A Public Notice was mailed to residents within 300 feet radius on November 22, 2023
- Posted on-site and at all of the City's official posting locations on November 22, 2023

BACKGROUND

LOCATION

The project site is located behind the building at 384 Foster City Blvd. The parking lot currently has 301 parking stalls (7 of which are ADA stalls) that is surrounded by an existing 6' tall chain-link fence with vinyl slats. Access to the parking lot is provided by three (3) driveways with one (1) signalized driveway on Vintage Park Drive and two (2) unsignalized driveways on Foster City Boulevard. The entire site is encumbered by a PG&E easement, preventing the construction of any structures on the site (Attachment 6). Thus, the site is only suitable for parking and storage purposes.

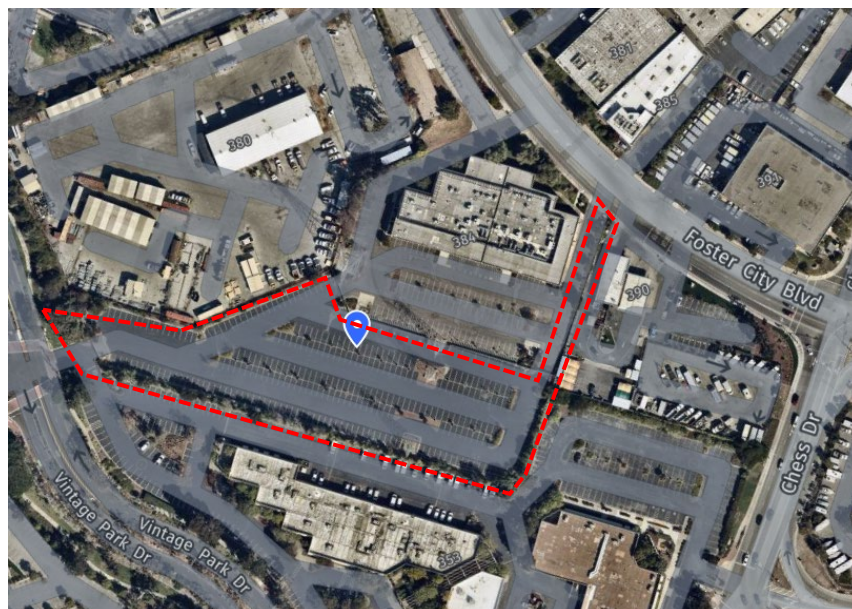


Figure 1: Location map; Source: Google Maps

PROJECT HISTORY

On November 2, 2000, the Planning Commission approved an Environmental Assessment (EA-00-001) and a Use Permit (UP-00-020) request to construct a 327 off-site parking lot on a vacant lot behind the existing building at 384 Foster City Blvd. This was intended to satisfy the off-street parking requirements for a nearby development at 381 Foster City Boulevard (Applied Biosystems) at that time. This arrangement was made possible due to amendments to Chapter 17.62 to allow for off-street parking facilities to be located more than 300 hundred feet from the principal entrance of a building if the off-street parking facility was served by a shuttle bus system pursuant to a written agreement.

The Use Permit request for the off-site parking lot was approved via Resolution P-76-00. Both resolution and staff report are available for additional background as Attachment 3.

Previous uses for the surface parking prior to vacancy was a 304-auto vehicle parking lot for Applied Bio Systems in 2000 which continued for approximately 10 years. Gilead Systems then leased the lot in its entirety initially for parking and subsequently for storage of construction materials and contractor offices and employee training. Since December 2020, Gilead Systems no longer needed the overflow parking due to their campus development plan and newly developed lab structures. Therefore, the existing parking surface lot is now vacant. During this time, the applicant has been working with PG&E on easement related issues as the entire site is covered by the easement.

PROJECT PROPOSAL

On June 30, 2023, staff received a Use Permit Modification application (UP2023-0094) to amend the use of the parking lot to allow for greater flexibility in leasing to tenants beyond what was previously approved for Applied Biosystems. The operator no longer requires this separate parking, and the applicant also desires to broaden the use to attract future operators.

The proposal includes allowing a variety of vehicle parking and services such as off-site employee overflow parking or overnight bus/shuttle parking. These services would cater to morning and evening commutes for large corporations. While the site will continue to remain as a surface parking lot, the proposal seeks to expand to operators that are outside of the city.

ANALYSIS

GENERAL PLAN AND ZONING CONSISTENCY

General Plan Land Use Category

The Land Use Map of the General Plan designates the use of the subject site as Research/Office Park. As stated by the General Plan, Research/Office Park is a designation for office, research and development (R&D), and manufacturing establishments where operations are quiet. As previously mentioned, the project site was originally included with the 384 Foster City Blvd office building and was only developed into a separate surface parking lot to facilitate employee parking for a future R&D

development in 2001. As such, the project site and existing use itself is consistent with the General Plan Land Use Land Use Category. The proposed use of retaining this the surface parking lot and expanding it to accommodate other businesses, whether within the City's boundary or outside, would not result in any major changes to the site that would be incompatible with the area. Furthermore, the future operation may be in support of other commercial offices, R&D, and/or manufacturing establishments. For those reasons, the proposed expansion of use at this site would continue to be consistent with the intent of the General Plan Land Use Category.

Zoning

The parcel is zoned as a Commercial Mix/Planned Development Combining District (C-M/PD). The previous entitlement approved per P-76-00 allowed for the parking lot to be used for employee overflow parking with a shuttle to and from the Applied Biosystems campus in Foster City that was at the time under construction.

The proposed uses would be similar to the previously approved P-76-00 with the exception of service to potential business(es) outside of Foster City that may generate additional traffic in and out of City limits.

LAND USE ENTITLEMENTS - USE PERMIT MODIFICATION (UP2023-0094)

The applicant is proposing to amend the use of the parking lot to allow for greater flexibility in leasing to tenants beyond what was previously approved by the Planning Commission via Resolution P-76-00.

Currently, there are three (3) PG&E power lines that run directly above the parking lot and as a result, the entire site is covered by the easement. The potential for commercial operations is limited as the construction of any building or permanent structure would not be permitted due to PG&E easement. Due to the unique layout of the parcel and surrounding conditions the business operations are limited to parking lot services only with no permanent structures.

Traffic/Transportation Impact Study by Kimley-Horn (Attachment 1)

In order to understand the impacts of expanding the use to other local businesses and/or allowing an operator from outside the city, staff requested the applicant to provide a report detailing transportation/traffic impacts of the proposal(s). The report prepared by Kimley-Horn can be viewed as Attachment 1 and outlines the following two (2) scenarios:

- Alternative #1: Local Trip Generator
- Alternative #2: Regional Fleet Management (bus storage for shuttle service)

To study the effect of the two (2) scenarios, a traffic operational analysis was completed including an evaluation of level of service (LOS) at five (5) intersections. These intersections are:

1. Lakeside Drive / Vintage Park Drive / West Project Driveway
2. Chess Drive / WB SR-92 Ramps
3. Chess Drive / Foster City Boulevard
4. Metro Center Boulevard / EB SR-92 Ramps
5. Metro Center Boulevard / Foster City Boulevard



Fig 2: Project study intersections; Source: Kimley-Horn study

- For Project Alternative #1, Local Trip Generator, the intersection LOS analysis was only based on the Zoox project. For this analysis, it was assumed that vehicle trips would shift from the Zoox Headquarters, located at 1149 Chess Drive, to the surface parking lot near 384 Foster City Boulevard.

Table 1 – Alternative #1: Local Trip Generator: Zoox Parking

#	Intersection	LOS Criteria ¹	Control	Existing				Shuttle					
				AM Peak		PM Peak		AM Peak			PM Peak		
				LOS	Delay (sec)	LOS	Delay (sec)	LOS	Delay (sec)	Delay Var (sec)	LOS	Delay (sec)	Delay Var (sec)
1	Vintage Park Drive/Lakeside Drive/Parking Lot Access	D	Signal	A	8.5	B	12.0	A	9.8	1.3	B	12.1	0.1
2	Chess Drive/WB SR-92 Ramps	D	Signal	C	29.2	C	28.1	C	29.2	0.0	C	28.0	-0.1
3	Chess Drive/Foster City Boulevard	D	Signal	D	43.3	D	45.1	D	43.2	-0.1	D	44.7	-0.4
4	Metro Center Boulevard/EB SR-92 Ramps	D	Signal	D	37.9	D	40.6	D	38.5	0.6	D	40.5	-0.1
5	Metro Center Boulevard/Foster City Boulevard	D	Signal	D	42.1	D	39.1	D	42.2	0.1	D	39.2	0.1

Note: Intersections that are operating below acceptable levels are shown in **BOLD**. Project caused deficiencies are shaded.

¹ LOS criteria is from the City's General Plan, Land Use and Circulation Element Policy LUC-F-1.

The study concluded that all five (5) intersections continue to operate acceptably since no new trips are being added to the local area.

- For Project Alternative #2, Regional Trip Generator, the intersection LOS analysis was only based on an example fleet service scenario. It was assumed that shuttle buses would park overnight and when not in use in the project surface parking lot. Then during the commute periods, the shuttle buses would pick-up and drop-off employees at the workplace campuses. In addition, this would also include parking for shuttle bus drivers to park in the project surface parking lot while they are using the shuttle buses. This would not be an employee pick-up/drop-off site.

The project surface parking lot is assumed to have 42 bus parking spaces and 42 passenger car parking spaces. It was assumed that half of the buses (21) would depart the project surface parking lot during the AM peak hour and 21 inbound passenger car

trips were assumed in the AM peak hour to account for the bus drivers arriving on-site prior to departing in the shuttle buses. For the trip distribution of buses, it was assumed that the workplace campuses and their employees would all be coming from NB US-101 or SB US-101 to the west.

The study concluded that all intersections continue to operate acceptably, and therefore, it can be concluded that Project Alternative #2 would not result in any operational deficiencies nor add significant impacts for the peak morning and evening commute times as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2 – Overnight Bus/Shuttle Parking

#	Intersection	LOS Criteria	Control	Existing					Shuttle					
				AM Peak		PM Peak			AM Peak			PM Peak		
				LOS	Delay (sec)	LOS	Delay (sec)	V/C ¹	LOS	Delay (sec)	Delay Var (sec)	LOS	Delay (sec)	Delay Var (sec)
1	Vintage Park Drive/Lakeside Drive/Parking Lot Access	D	Signal	A	8.5	B	12.0	0.0	A	9.8	1.3	B	12.1	0.1
2	Chess Drive/WB SR-92 Ramps	D	Signal	C	29.2	C	28.1	0.0	C	29.2	0.0	C	28.0	-0.1
3	Chess Drive/Foster City Boulevard	D	Signal	D	43.3	D	45.1	0.0	D	43.2	-0.1	D	44.7	-0.4
4	Metro Center Boulevard/EB SR-92 Ramps	D	Signal	D	37.9	D	40.6	0.365	D	38.5	0.6	D	40.5	-0.1
5	Metro Center Boulevard/Foster City Boulevard	D	Signal	D	42.1	D	39.1	0.0	D	42.2	0.1	D	39.2	0.1

Note: Intersections that are operating below acceptable levels are shown in **BOLD**. Project caused deficiencies are shaded.

While the study estimated for half of the buses to be operating at one time as a realistic scenario, staff would require future verifications that the future tenants, cumulatively, would continue to be operating at equivalent level of impact as compared to this study. Therefore, should this scenario be approvable, staff intends to add a condition of approval that would require applicant to submit future operation plans and provide a traffic study prepared by a qualified transportation engineer to re-verify that the operation would be consistent with the acceptable LOS and consistent with the impact disclosed in this report prior to initiation of full operation.

Peer Review by Traffic Patterns

Staff required a third-party peer review that was completed by Jaime Rodriguez with Traffic Patterns. This peer review concluded that the transportation analysis and findings were sufficient and logical based on industry standards and only provided minor comments to ingress and egress such as stripping and signages. The peer reviewer also recommended adding STOP signs, limit line, and STOP legend on pavement at driveway approach(es) that will be used for egress onto Foster City Boulevard from the parking lot (Attachment 4).

The project was also reviewed by the Interdepartmental Evaluation Committee (IDEC) and no additional concerns resulted from the November 1st IDEC meeting (Attachment 5). Public Works Departments concurred with the findings and recommendations of the peer reviewer.

The report was revised to include the peer review recommendations for improvements, that included:

- To allow vehicles adequate access to the parking lot during periods when the southbound queues extend to the driveways, it is recommended that a “Keep Clear” striping and pavement legend be placed along Foster City Boulevard adjacent to both unsignalized parking lot driveways.
- Stop signs be placed at both unsignalized driveway approaches along Foster City Boulevard in addition to stripping a “Stop”



Fig 2: Recommended Improvements; Source: Kimley-Horn study

Despite active efforts by the applicant for over two (2) years and multiple attempts by staff to connect with local businesses in Foster City, no tenant has been secured for the vacant parking lot. Given the challenges of finding a local employer/business, the ownership group proposes modifying the previously approved use permit. The use permit modification aims to support their business operations and provide flexibility in filling the site.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Some discussion questions are:

1. Should the permitted use be revised to allow employee overflow parking for both local and out of the City's businesses?
2. Are there any other analysis that would be required to supplement the analysis?

NEXT STEPS

If the Planning Commission provides direction the proposed use change would be approvable staff will schedule a future public hearing to request approval to allow employee overflow parking and/or overnight parking for a bus/shuttle service.

ATTACHMENTS:

- Attachment 1 – Parking Lot Traffic Study
- Attachment 2 – Neighbor Notification Forms
- Attachment 3 – UP-00-020 Planning Commission Staff Report and Resolution P-00-076
- Attachment 4 – Peer Review Comments
- Attachment 5 – Public Works Review of Peer Review
- Attachment 6 – Site Plan with PG&E Easements