
DATE: November 2, 2023

STAFF REPORT

AGENDA ITEM NO. 6.2

TO: FOSTER CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

PREPARED BY: HELEN GANNON, ASSOCIATE PLANNER

CASE NO.: UP2023-0014

PROJECT LOCATION: 550 SHELL BLVD. – NEIGHBORHOOD TOWN CENTER (TC)

REQUESTED ACTION/PURPOSE

Use Permit request to approve the exterior reimaging of the existing hotel, demolition, and reconstruction of the existing porte cochere, removal of eight trees, and new landscaping located at 550 Shell Blvd. (UP2023-0014) and find the project exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under Section 15301.

GENERAL INFORMATION

GENERAL PLAN DESIGNATION: Town Center Commercial

ZONING DISTRICT: C-2/PD – General Business District /Planned Development Combining District

HISTORY:

On March 20, 1986, the Planning Commission approved Use Permit (UP-14-85) through Resolution No. P-40-86 for the construction of a 147-room hotel with supporting coffee shop, lounge, meeting rooms and covered pool.

On November 5, 1987, the Planning Commission approved a Use Permit request to allow the on-site sale and consumption of alcoholic beverages (UP-87-030).

On October 16, 1997, the Planning Commission approved a Use Permit Modification request to change the exterior building color of the hotel building and related structures (UP-85-014A).

On July 16, 2001, the Community Development Director approved a Use Permit Modification request to make landscaping modifications (UP-85-014B).

On June 11, 2002, the Community Development Director approved a Use Permit Modification request to make landscaping modifications (UP-85-014C).

On May 7, 2004, the Community Development Director approved a Use Permit Modification request to make landscaping modifications (UP-85-014D).

SURROUNDING LAND USE

North: Retail commercial center/Metro Center Boulevard/Costco Wholesale warehouse store

South: Parkside Towers offices

East: KinderCare – Child day care facility

West: Cityhomes East multifamily (townhomes) complex

LOT SIZE:

177,812 SF/4.08 acres (094-524-050)

PUBLIC HEARING PUBLIC NOTICING

The public was advised of this Regular Meeting in the following ways:

- Ad in the Foster City Islander – October 11, 2023
- Foster City Website: www.fostercity.org – October 11, 2023
- Foster City TV Channel 27 – October 19, 2023 through November 2, 2023
- Electronic Marquee Sign in Leo Ryan Park – October 19, 2023 through November 2, 2023
- Email Notification to listserves – October 11, 2023
- Mailing to property owners who own property within a 300-foot radius – October 19, 2023
- Public Posting Places – October 11, 2023

NEIGHBOR NOTIFICATIONS

Consistent with the Use Permit (UP) process and procedures, the applicant is required to provide neighborhood notification to the adjacent properties of the proposed project site. The intent of the Neighbor Notification Form is to inform potential interested parties of the proposed site developments and encourage neighbors to submit any questions or concerns. Neighbor Notification Forms were provided to two (2) adjacent properties (by mail) of 550 Shell Boulevard including 1000 Metro Center Blvd. (Units A, B, D, E) and 1010 Metro Center Blvd. Staff did not receive any Neighbor Notification Forms expressing any questions or concerns with the proposed project.

In addition to the neighbor notification forms provided by the applicant to the adjacent property owners, a Public Hearing notice was sent to the adjacent property owners within 300 feet informing them of the November 2, 2023, Planning Commission Meeting.

KEY PLANNING OR DESIGN ISSUES

Whether the proposed modifications, including change in colors and materials of the existing hotel building, a new porte cochere in the existing location, and new landscaping are compatible with the existing structure and surrounding neighborhood.

BACKGROUND

PROJECT LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

The subject site is located within the Town Center Neighborhood that covers approximately 100 acres of land (known as Metro Center) in Foster City. The site is bounded by Shell Boulevard to the south, an existing surface parking lot to the north, and existing commercial/office buildings to the east and west. The building footprint and surface parking on site will remain the same.

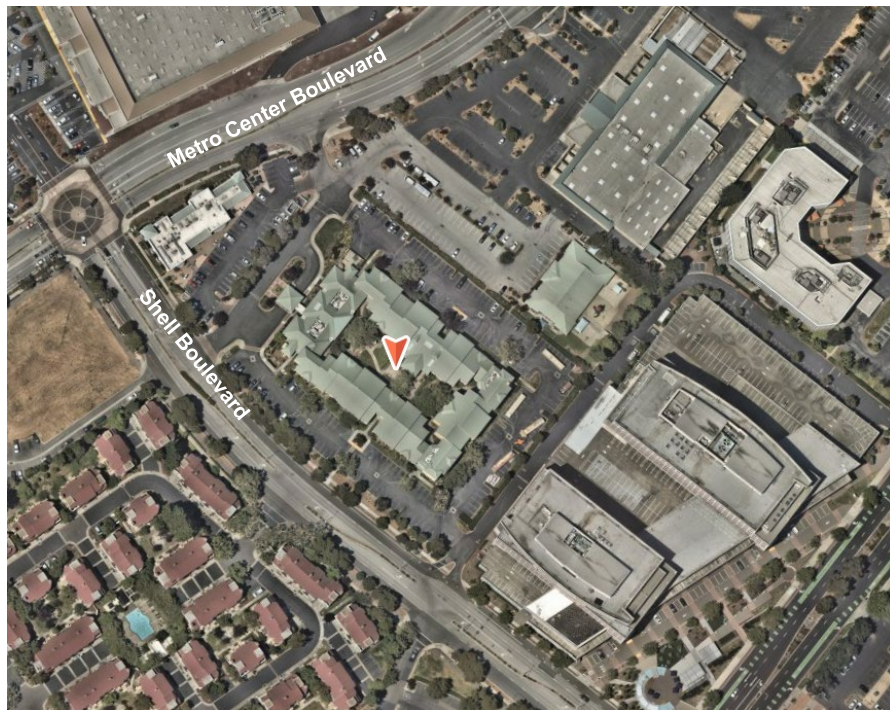


Fig 1: Location Map; Source: NearMap 2023

PROJECT OVERVIEW

On March 28, 2023, a Use Permit application was submitted by Seth S. Terry Architects to modify the colors and materials of the existing hotel building, construct a new porte cochere in the existing location, remove eight trees, and add new landscaping. The number of rooms and parking spaces on site will remain the same.

ANALYSIS

GENERAL PLAN AND ZONING CONSISTENCY

General Plan Land Use

The Land Use Map of the General Plan designates the use of the subject site as “Town Center Commercial.” The City’s General Plan includes Town Center land use category as follows:

“The designation is reserved for the area located northwest of East Hillsdale Boulevard, bounded by Foster City Boulevard to the north and State Route 92 to the west. The area includes a 100-acre development known as Metro Center, in addition to Parkside Towers and other office developments. Metro Center is intended to serve as Foster City’s downtown core.”

On December 5, 2022, the City Council approved Resolution 2022-138 adopting a text amendment to the General Plan, Land Use and Circulation Element, "Town Center Commercial" Land use category, which reads as follows.

"The Town Center area is intended to serve as Foster City's downtown core and allows for a mix of uses, including residential, commercial office, retail, service and compatible research and development (R&D)."

Staff comments: According to the General Plan, the subject site is designated for Town Center Commercial use, which is consistent with the existing use of the subject site. The application includes the reimagining of the existing hotel, new porte cochere, removal of eight trees, and new landscaping. Therefore, the proposal will not be changing the existing use on site and is consistent with the General Plan Land Use and Circulation Element.

Zoning/General Development Plan

The subject site is zoned C-2/PD where permitted uses include hotels and motels (including restaurant and meeting rooms).

On March 20, 1986, the Planning Commission adopted Resolution No. P-40-86 approving the construction of a 147-room courtyard style hotel with supporting coffee shop, lounge, meeting rooms, and a covered pool (UP-14-85). Since then, the original Use Permit went through numerous amendments for various tree removal and landscaping modifications.

Staff comments: The proposed project is consistent with the Zoning because the proposal is to upgrade the exterior of the existing hotel, install a new porte cochere, remove eight trees, and propose new landscaping on the subject site. The proposal does not change the existing use of the site and the use continues to be consistent with the permitted zoning. There will be no changes to the existing footprint, setbacks, height, or lot coverage on site.

Pursuant to section 17.06.070 Use permit – Grant or denial of the Foster City Municipal Code:
Upon receipt of the application for a use permit the planning commission shall determine whether or not the establishment, maintenance or cooperation of the use applied for will, under the circumstances of the particular case, be detrimental to the health, safety, morals, comfort and general welfare of the persons residing or working in the neighborhood of such proposed use, or whether it will be injurious or determinantal to property and improvements in the neighborhood or the general welfare of the city.

USE PERMIT MODIFICATION

USE PERMIT APPLICATION (UP2023-0014)

The applicant is proposing to modify the colors and materials of the existing hotel building, construct a new porte cochere in the existing location, remove eight trees, and propose new landscaping. The existing roof and parking on site will remain.

The existing gable roof porte cochere and entry canopy will be removed and replaced with a new dark bronze aluminum flat roof porte cochere and canopy over the entryway of the hotel. The posts will match the dark bronze of the porte cochere ceiling panels and will have gray toned stone bases. Additionally, the three existing bay windows at the storefront will be replaced with

new flat white aluminum framed windows to match the existing building windows. At the roofline, a new parapet and new wood-like metal panels will be installed to modernize the main entrance.



Fig. 1: New Porte Cochere; Source: Project Plans (Attachment 2)

The two existing stair towers near the front of the building will receive the same parapet and wood-like metal panels, with the side entries (located near the middle of the building) receiving new paint and the low shed roofs to be replaced with new metal standing seam roof in a charcoal gray color. The existing rear entries (located on each end of the hotel wings) will also receive new paint and a new metal standing seam roof to match the sides. The entire building will receive new paints and finishes, ranging in color and flat to acrylic flat finishes.



Fig. 2: North Elevation; Source: Project Plans (Attachment 2)

The exterior modifications will not modify the existing lot area, building footprint, overall height, setbacks, or open green area required pursuant to Chapter 17.26 of the Foster City Municipal Code.

Landscaping

The proposed project includes the removal of eight trees, as demonstrated in the Davey Resource Group Arborist Report, dated August 2023 (Attachment 3). It should be noted that trees #8-9 will be retained and not removed. The eight trees to be removed will be replaced with medium to large 15 new 24" box trees throughout the site. The new landscaping plan mainly consists of new evergreen shrubs, grasses, and perennials located at the front of the hotel and around the perimeter of the existing hotel. The plant palette was selected to provide a more modern design oriented in a rectilinear fashion focusing on impactful masses of planting. All species are native and native adaptive planting, providing year-round color, texture and interest.

As stated in the Project Narrative (Attachment 4), proposed landscape water usage will be reduced, or remain equivalent to the existing water use. The proposal reduces the amount of lawn on site and removes higher water use planting in favor of low water use plantings. All proposed plant species qualify as low or very low water use per the Water Use Classification of Landscape Species (WUCOLS) database.

Staff comments: The proposed project will overall enhance the architectural style and aesthetics of the existing hotel. The exterior reimagining updates will include a new port cochere, new paint, the removal of eight trees, and new landscaping. As stated in the attached Arborist report, the eight trees being removed range from fair to poor health. As such, the modifications will not be detrimental to the health, safety, morals, comfort and general welfare of the persons residing or working in the neighborhood, as the proposed project will not change the use or overall footprint.

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) includes project types that have been determined to not have significant impacts on the environment, which makes them exempt from further studies under CEQA. This proposed project is for the remodeling and landscaping modifications to an existing hotel. The existing use and overall footprint will not be changing. Therefore, the project is exempt from CEQA under Section 15301.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Consistent with the findings stated in the Resolution (Attachment 1), the proposal is consistent with Title 17 (Zoning), Chapter 17.06 (Administration, Construction and Enforcement) of the Foster City Municipal Code, the General Plan's goals and policies, and all applicable Planning Commission Policies. For these reasons, staff recommends the project be approved as proposed, subject to the Conditions of Approval in Exhibit A of Attachment 1.

NEXT STEPS

The Planning Commission's action on the proposal is final unless appealed to the City Council. There is an appeal period of ten (10) calendar days following any action of the Planning Commission.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Resolution
Attachment 2 – Project Plans
Attachment 3 – Arborist Report
Attachment 4 – Project Narrative

INDIVIDUALS, ORGANIZATIONS AND DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

Foster City General Plan
Foster City Municipal Code
Foster City Environmental Review Guidelines
Project Plans
Project Narrative