

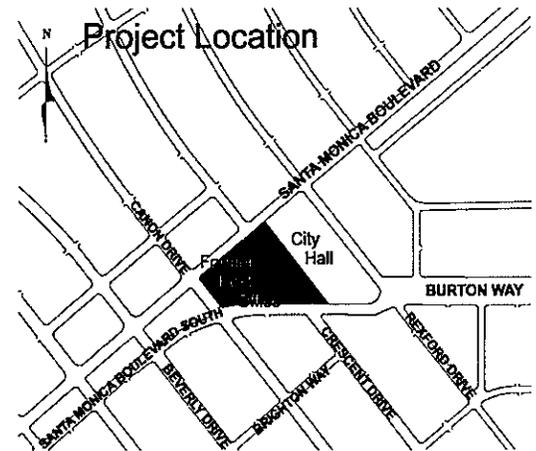


STAFF REPORT
CITY OF BEVERLY HILLS

**For the Planning Commission
Meeting of September 25, 2008**

TO: The Planning Commission
FROM: Michele McGrath, Senior Planner
THROUGH: Jonathan Lait, AICP
City Planner

SUBJECT: A Request for a Resolution Recommending Approval of a Performing Arts Center (Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts) Including the Rehabilitation and Reuse of the Former Main Post Office and Construction of a New Theater at 470 North Canon Drive and Construction of a Public Parking Garage at 455 North Crescent Drive; Finding the Project in Conformance with the City's General Plan; and Consideration of a Draft Environmental Impact Report.



RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended the Planning Commission approve the resolution with any changes or conditions the Commission may wish to add. It is noted that Resolution Recommendation # 12 may need clarification with regard to the time period of the proposed restriction on use of the 500-seat theater.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A project has been proposed on the site of the City's former main Post Office on Santa Monica Boulevard North between North Crescent Drive and North Canon Drive. The project site includes Crescent Drive and the lawn in front of City Hall. The site is owned by the City of Beverly Hills. The project includes a performing arts center complex proposed by the Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts ("Center") that includes rehabilitation and reuse of the historic Beverly Hills Post Office and construction of a new, 500-seat theater, a pedestrian walkway and sculpture gardens (470 North Canon Drive).

Staff Report
470 North Canon Drive and 455 North Crescent Drive
For the Planning Commission Meeting of September 25, 2008

The project also includes a subterranean public parking garage at 455 North Canon Drive for the use of the public which includes patrons of the performing arts center. The garage is proposed to be located under Crescent Drive adjacent to the old Post Office site and would extend under the front lawn of City Hall adjacent to Crescent Drive. The garage was originally proposed as either a two-level or three-level garage with entry and exiting from a driveway on Santa Monica Boulevard South (Little Santa Monica Boulevard) and a valet driveway in the motor court at the north end of the Post Office site.

As a result of public hearings before the Planning Commission, the proposed garage was revised and three options were presented to the Planning Commission for discussion at its September 11, 2008 meeting. At that meeting, the Planning Commission unanimously agreed to recommend Garage Option 21d to the City Council. This garage option includes two self-park driveways: a driveway on the east side of North Crescent Drive that would extend onto the front lawn area of City Hall and a driveway on the north side of Santa Monica Boulevard South on the site of the Center. Both driveways could allow ingress and egress.

At the September 11, 2008 meeting, the Planning Commission directed staff to prepare a resolution approving the project, considering the draft Environmental Impact Report and finding the project in conformance with the City's adopted General Plan. Recommendation #12 in the resolution places restrictions on the use of the 500-seat Goldsmith Theater. Staff is requesting clarification as to the daytime hours the restrictions should be in place and clarification as to whether daytime patrons of the theater may arrive by personal vehicle if such vehicle is not parked in the public parking garage adjacent to the theater.

NEXT STEPS

An adopted resolution would be forwarded to the City Council for review at a public meeting, most likely in October, 2008.



MICHELE MCGRATH

Attachments:

Resolution

RESOLUTION NO.

RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF BEVERLY HILLS RECOMMENDING APPROVAL OF A PERFORMING ARTS CENTER (WALLIS ANNENBERG CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS) INCLUDING THE REHABILITATION AND REUSE OF THE FORMER MAIN POST OFFICE AND CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW THEATER AT 470 NORTH CANON DRIVE AND CONSTRUCTION OF A PUBLIC PARKING GARAGE AT 455 NORTH CRESCENT DRIVE; FINDING THE PROJECT IN CONFORMANCE WITH THE CITY'S GENERAL PLAN; AND CONSIDERATION OF A DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

The Planning Commission of the City of Beverly Hills hereby finds, resolves and determines as follows:

Section 1. A project has been proposed on the site of the City's former main post office on Santa Monica Boulevard North between North Crescent Drive and North Canon Drive. The project site also includes Crescent Drive and the lawn in front of City Hall. The site is owned by the City of Beverly Hills. The project has two main components:

- A performing arts center complex proposed by the Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts ("Center") that includes rehabilitation and reuse of the historic Beverly Hills Post Office into classrooms, Center offices, a donor's lounge and a flexible performance/rehearsal/lecture space as well as construction of a new, 500-seat theater and a pedestrian walkway to the site with sculpture gardens available to the public (470 North Canon Drive); and,
- A two or three--level subterranean public parking garage proposed by the City ("City") that would provide additional public parking for the City's Business Triangle area as well as the Civic Center area including the proposed performing arts center (455 North Crescent Drive).

Section 2. The project site is 3.9-acres and consists of the following: a 2.55-acre trapezoid-shaped parcel developed with the former Beverly Hills Post Office; a section of Crescent Drive adjacent to the Post Office parcel; and, the lawn of and landscaped area of Beverly Hills City Hall adjacent to Crescent Drive. The 2.55-acre Post Office site, proposed for the performing arts center, is bordered by Santa Monica Boulevard North to the north, Santa Monica Boulevard South to the south, Canon Drive to the west and Crescent Drive to the east. The Post Office site is currently developed with the historic Post Office, the Post Office's wall-enclosed service/truck delivery yard, and surface parking lots (found along the northern and southern edges of the property). The City's public parking garage is proposed to be located under the eastern edge of the Post Office parcel, under Crescent Drive between Santa Monica Boulevard North and Santa Monica Boulevard South adjacent to the Post Office parcel, including the public rights of way (parkway, sidewalk), and under a section of the front lawn of City Hall.

The subject site is adjacent to the City's Civic Center area incorporating City Hall, the police department, fire station, library and Beverly Hills Municipal Court building. A diversity of uses is found in the immediate vicinity of the subject site. Commercial uses adjoin the site to the south (across Santa Monica Boulevard South) and west (across Canon Drive). These include the Union 76 gas station, commercial and medical offices to the south and corporate offices at the southeast corner of Santa Monica Boulevard South and Crescent Drive (Platinum Equity office site). Further southeast are multi-family and single-family residential areas. A combination of high-end retail stores, salons and offices housed in one, two and multi-story buildings are located to the west and southwest across Canon Drive (the Business Triangle). Santa Monica Boulevard North, a major, heavily trafficked east-west thoroughfare, separates the subject site from Beverly Gardens Park, a linear park that borders the north side of the street. Bordering Beverly Gardens to the north is a single-family residential neighborhood whose homes are located approximately 200 feet or more from the proposed project.

Section 3. Pursuant to Government Code Section 65402, the Planning Commission, as the City's planning agency, shall report as to the conformity of the

Project with the adopted general plan. Government Code Section 65402 requires that no public building or structure shall be constructed or authorized until the planning agency has reported on the conformity of the construction or authorization of the public building with the applicable general plan.

The project site is shown in the Land Use Element of the City's current General Plan as "Public Buildings." The site is proposed to be developed with a performing arts center that will provide ongoing cultural activities for the public and a public parking structure that will provide much-needed additional public parking for the community as well as the performing arts center. As such, the project is consistent with the City's General Plan because it provides a structure and parking garage for public use.

Section 4. The Project has been environmentally reviewed pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the State CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Sections 15000, *et seq.*, hereafter the "Guidelines"), and the City's environmental guidelines. The Draft Environmental Impact Report ("DEIR") was released for public comment on June 13, 2008 and the public comment period closed on Tuesday, July 29, 2008.

Section 5. On May 28, 2008, June 26, 2008, August 7, 2008 and September 11, 2008, the Planning Commission held a duly noticed public hearing to consider the Project. Evidence, both written and oral, was presented at said hearing, and the hearing was closed on September 11, 2008. At its meeting of September 11, 2008, the Planning Commission was presented with three garage options including Options 21d, 22c, and 21c. Option 21d would provide ingress and egress from a Crescent Drive North driveway with ingress and egress from Santa Monica Boulevard South with a new and improved turn radius into this entrance. Option 22c would provide ingress and egress from a Crescent Drive South driveway with egress only from Santa Monica Boulevard South. Option 21c would provide ingress and egress from a Crescent Drive North driveway with additional ingress from Rexford Drive and egress only from Santa Monica Boulevard South.

Section 6. The Planning Commission has considered the DEIR for the project which includes an analysis of the Wallis Annenberg Center for Performing Arts and the public parking garage. Based on the three parking garage options presented to the Planning Commission at its September 11, 2008 public hearing, the Planning Commission recommends to the City Council the adoption of parking garage Option 21d.

The Planning Commission noted that, due to site constraints, there is no design for the proposed public parking garage that does not have disadvantages; however, Option 21d appears to be the best parking garage option presented because it would have better internal circulation than other options presented, it was the only option presented that would have two driveways providing both ingress and egress for self parking vehicles, and the driveway at Santa Monica South had been improved to address the Planning Commission's safety concerns.

Section 7. Recommendations: The Planning Commission makes the following recommendations on the Project:

1. The City Council shall approve the project and enter into a lease with the Center with appropriate provisions to address the conditions as set out below.
2. The performing arts center portion of the Project shall be built pursuant to the plans dated May 5, 2008 and reviewed at the Planning Commission's May 28, 2008 public hearing.
3. The public parking garage portion of the Project, North Crescent Drive Parking Structure Option 21d, shall be built pursuant to plans dated August 28, 2008 and reviewed at the Planning Commission's September 11, 2008 meeting. This garage option includes two self-park driveways: a driveway on the east side of North Crescent Drive that would extend onto the front lawn area of City Hall and a driveway on the north side of Santa Monica Boulevard South on the site of the Center. Both driveways could allow ingress and egress. The garage shall be built to accommodate as many parking spaces as possible without negatively impacting the internal circulation of the garage. This includes building the maximum number of garage floors possible and building garage floors to a height that would accommodate mechanical lifts, with the understanding that the City Council will make the final determination as to the number of garage floors, height of the garage floors and maximum number of parking spaces.

4. The City shall retain control of the valet ramp located in the motor court at the north end of the Project site. While the Planning Commission acknowledges that the ramp is intended to be used for valet patrons of the Center, the Planning Commission also notes that future conditions at the site are unknown and encourages consideration of future use of the ramp for City valet operations, by monthly parkers, or any other such use as the City Council may contemplate, pursuant to the lease between the City and the Center.

5. The Project shall be conditioned to use photovoltaics or at least to be photovoltaic-ready so photovoltaics may be installed in the future.

6. An alternative to the typical caution bar for vehicle height shall be contemplated for the public garage driveway at North Crescent Drive due to concerns about visual impacts in front of City Hall.

7. Appropriate signage shall be provided at all vehicle access points to the site, identifying the access point as well as acceptable vehicle weights and heights.

8. Pedestrian entrances to the proposed public garage shall reinforce the connection between the City's Business Triangle and the garage by being located as close to the Business Triangle as possible and being easily accessible and well marked. Consider a pedestrian access at the northwest corner of Santa Monica Boulevard South and North Crescent Drive if it is physically possible.

9. The pedestrian island between the Santa Monica Boulevard South driveway to the public garage and the Center's loading area just west of that driveway is essential to pedestrian access along Santa Monica Boulevard South adjacent to the Project site and shall be designed with pedestrian access and safety in mind.

10. There shall be deployment of technology in the garage to help garage patrons navigate the garage and to identify the location of available parking spaces.

11. Should circulation problems develop at the site after the performing arts center is open and operating, staff shall study changes to the traffic signals in the vicinity of the site and particularly consider installing a "no right turn on red" signal at the northwest corner of Santa Monica Boulevard South and Crescent Drive to facilitate traffic moving west on Canon Drive and vehicles entering the public garage driveway at Santa Monica Boulevard South.

12. The public parking garage is intended to supplement parking in the City's Business Triangle. The peak parking period in this area is 11:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. Monday

through Saturday. To achieve the public parking goal, the 500-seat Goldsmith Theater at the Center may be used during weekdays only if patrons arrive other than by personal vehicles, i.e. arrive by bus, taxi or foot. The Goldsmith Theater may be used on Saturdays only in a manner that does not utilize on-site public parking spaces between 11:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.

Section 8. The Secretary of the Planning Commission shall certify to the passage, approval, and adoption of this resolution, and shall cause this resolution and certification to be entered in the Book of Resolutions of the Planning Commission of the City.

Adopted:

Noah Furie
Chair of the Planning Commission
of the City of Beverly Hills,
California

Attest:

Secretary

Approved as to form:

David M. Snow
Assistant City Attorney

Approved as to content:

Jonathan Lait, AICP
City Planner