



**PROJECT LOCATION**  
160 Lorton Avenue (Parking Lot N)

# City of Burlingame

*Design Review and Lot Merger for a New Five-Level Parking Garage*

**Item No. 9b  
Design Review Study**

**Address:** 160 Lorton Avenue (Parking Lot N)

**Meeting Date:** February 26, 2018

**Request:** Application for Design Review and Lot Merger for construction of a new five-level parking garage.

**Applicant:** Chris Grant, The Pacific Companies

**APN:** 029-231-060 and 029-231-240

**Property Owner:** City of Burlingame

**Lot Area:** 33,750 SF

**Architect:** Pacific West Architecture

**General Plan:** R-4 Incentive District

**Zoning:** R-4 Incentive District Subarea

**Adjacent Development:** Multifamily Residential and Commercial Uses

**Current Use:** Public Parking Lot (Lot N) with 109 stalls

**Proposed Use:** Five-level parking garage providing 388 stalls.

**Allowable Use:** Multifamily, duplex, single family residential uses and public buildings.

**Background:** In 2010 the Burlingame City Council adopted the *Burlingame Downtown Specific Plan*. The culmination of a multi-year community planning process, the Plan provides a framework for sustaining the existing success of the downtown and accommodating new opportunities.

One aspect of the Downtown Specific Plan is a focus on better use of parking facilities downtown, particularly the twenty City-owned surface parking lots. The plan encourages parking lots to be converted to different uses over time, such as housing, open space, and additional parking. Choices about uses are guided by what will most benefit the downtown area.

Consistent with the *Downtown Specific Plan*, the City Council has expressed an interest in expanding the housing options available in Burlingame, including the provision of more affordable housing options, a category of housing that is minimally represented amongst the existing housing stock within the community.

Likewise, as parking is important to Downtown businesses and residents alike, the City Council has been evaluating options for improving parking in the downtown area. This includes accommodating demand by using the land more efficiently with decked or structured parking.

The proposed development of Parking Lots F and N is intended to respond to the following objectives with:

- new housing units to support the community, including housing for seniors and for people working in the community;
- additional, conveniently-located parking for use by downtown businesses and residents alike;
- additional open space to be enjoyed by both current and new residents.

For more general information about the proposed project and affordable housing, please refer to the attached "Village at Burlingame Frequently Asked Questions" prepared by staff and the developer.

Although the purpose of the design review study meeting is only to review and discuss the proposed design of the project, staff thought it would be helpful to include this background information so that the Planning Commission has a full understanding of the context of the proposed project.

**Project Summary:** In December 2014 the City of Burlingame distributed a Request for Proposals (RFP) seeking qualified developers interested in partnering with the City to develop City-owned Parking Lots F & N with affordable housing. One requirement of the RFP was that the development should not only replace the existing spaces on the two parking lots, but also to the extent possible expand the amount of public parking for the benefit of the downtown business district. The City Council's Downtown Specific Plan Implementation Subcommittee reviewed the proposals and provided recommendations for the City Council to consider. After several public hearings, the City Council selected The Pacific Companies as its preferred developer at its regular meeting of July 6, 2015. Since that time, the developer has been doing preliminary work on the project including financing, site conditions reconnaissance, and design development.

The project site consists of merging a portion of Lot 7 and Lots 8, 9, 14 and 15 of Block 10 (see attached parcel map), which combined will extend from Lorton Avenue to Highland Avenue (see attached aerial). These lots are currently owned by the City of Burlingame and contain Parking Lot N, a public parking lot with 109 stalls. The project site has 100 feet of frontage on Lorton Avenue and 125 feet of frontage on Highland Avenue and is zoned R-4 and located within the R-4 Incentive District Subarea.

The site is bordered by two-story commercial buildings to the north along Howard Avenue, a two-story multifamily residential building and private parking lot to the south, two-story multifamily residential buildings and Parking Lot F to the west across the street on Lorton Avenue, and a gasoline station and automotive repair buildings to the east along Highland Avenue.

The proposed project consists of demolishing the existing public parking lot (Parking Lot N) and constructing a new five-level above-grade parking garage. The proposed parking garage would provide a total 388 parking stalls, including 97 parking stalls that would be displaced by the proposed affordable housing development on Lot F, 109 parking stalls currently located on Lot N and 182 new parking stalls. The garage will contain four levels of covered parking with the fifth level being open to the sky. The proposed parking garage has been designed to allow vehicles to enter and exit on both Lorton Avenue and Highland Avenue by way of one driveway entrance on each street.

Code Section 25.29.020 (a) of the R-4 District Regulations allows all uses permitted in the R-1, R-2 and R-3 Districts. In the R-1 District, public buildings are permitted under Code Section 25.26.020 (b)). A public parking garage is considered to be a public building.

The proposed parking garage measures 55'-0" in height, where 55'-0" is allowed by right in the R-4 Incentive District Subarea. As noted above, the fifth level is open to the sky and therefore the building will appear as a four-story building.

The following applications are requested for this project:

- Design Review for construction of a new five-level above ground parking garage (C.S. 25.29.045 and Chapter 5 of the Downtown Specific Plan); and
- Lot Merger to combine a portion of Lot 7 and Lots 8, 9, 14 and 15 of Block 10, Town of Burlingame Map No. 1 Subdivision into one lot.

**Design Review:** The purpose of this design review study meeting is to provide initial comments on design elements as they relate to the proposed parking garage.

The proposed project is subject to Chapter 5 of the Downtown Specific Plan (Design & Character). Section 5.2.6 (page 5-16) provides design guidelines specifically for developments on public parking lots. Section 5.4 (pages 5-22 through 5-27) provides more general design guidelines that apply to all areas of the downtown,

including residential and mixed use areas. These applicable sections of the Design and Character chapters of the Downtown Specific Plan have been attached for reference.

The materials proposed for the exterior of the parking garage include natural concrete finish walls, and angled metal shields along the Lorton Avenue, Highland Avenue and south facades of the building. Green screen panels are also proposed on the street-facing and north facades of the building that will allow vines to climb up onto the green screens. Openings along the exterior of the parking garage will be secured by cable rails. Please refer to the building elevations on sheets A3.1 through A-3.3 and perspective renderings on sheet A-3.4 for additional information.

The following design review criteria for development projects in commercial, industrial and mixed use districts shall be reviewed by the Planning Commission for the following considerations (Code Section 25.57.030 (g) (1-6):

1. Support of the pattern of diverse architectural styles that characterize the city's commercial, industrial and mixed use areas;
2. Respect and promotion of pedestrian activity by placement of buildings to maximize commercial use of the street frontage, off-street public spaces, and by locating parking so that it does not dominate street frontages;
3. On visually prominent and gateway sites, whether the design fits the site and is compatible with the surrounding development;
4. Compatibility of the architecture with the mass, bulk, scale, and existing materials of existing development and compatibility with transitions where changes in land use occur nearby;
5. Architectural design consistency by using a single architectural style on the site that is consistent among primary elements of the structure, restores or retains existing or significant original architectural features, and is compatible in mass and bulk with other structures in the immediate area; and
6. Provision of site features such as fencing, landscaping, and pedestrian circulation that enriches the existing opportunities of the commercial neighborhood.

**Lot Merger:** In the R-4 District, the minimum requirement is a 5,000 SF lot with 60 feet of street frontage for lots measuring greater than 10,000 SF in area. The proposed combined lot would have 100 feet of street frontage along Lorton Avenue and 125 feet of street frontage along Highland Avenue, and would measure 33,750 SF in area. Therefore, the proposed lot merger is in compliance with lot size and street frontage requirements.

**Landscaping:** The project site is currently covered primarily by a paved public parking lot, with several small areas of landscaping at the entrance to the parking lot along Lorton Avenue. There are no existing trees on the project site.

There are several existing trees that are located adjacent to the proposed project, including a large Redwood tree and an unknown tree species at the rear of 1115 Howard Avenue. The City Arborist notes that an arborist report will be required to establish tree protection measures during construction, but pointed out that the smaller tree at the rear of 1115 Howard Avenue, located very close to the property line would most likely need to be removed. He also noted that he would like to see standard conditions of approval included in the entitlements, such as require hand-digging for the garage foundation, having a qualified arborist on-site during the construction of the foundation, and notifying the City Arborist if roots over a certain size are encountered.

Landscaping is proposed along the south side of the site, which also includes a 10 to 14 foot wide pedestrian walkway connecting Lorton and Highland Avenues (see Landscape Plan on sheet L1). A total of eight 36-inch box Columnar European Hornbeam trees are proposed to be planted in the area portion of the lot nearer to Highland Avenue. In addition to the trees, the pedestrian walkway will consist of decorative paving, a raised planter, groundcover and pervious paving. These elements also are provided to comply with stormwater requirements.

There are three existing street trees along Lorton Avenue and two existing street trees along Highland Avenue in front of the project site. All existing street trees would be removed and replaced with three new 36-inch box street trees along Lorton Avenue and four new 36-inch box street trees along Highland Avenue. The applicant will be working with the Parks Division to select the appropriate street tree species prior to the building permit submittal. The applicant would obtain the required tree removal permits from the Parks and Recreation Director pursuant to the Burlingame Municipal Code Chapter 11.04, Street Trees.

**160 Lorton Avenue (Parking Lot N)**

**Lot Area:** 33,750 SF

**Plans date stamped:** January 18, 2018

|                         | <b>PROPOSED</b>   | <b>ALLOWED/REQUIRED</b>                                      |
|-------------------------|---|--|
| <b>Use:</b>             | Five-level parking garage with 388 stalls<br><br>(includes 97 parking stalls displaced by the proposed affordable housing development on Lot F, 109 parking stalls currently located on Lot N and 182 new parking stalls) | public buildings   |
| <b>Setbacks</b>         |   |  |
| <b>Lorton Ave:</b>      | 0'-0" to metal fins <sup>1</sup>  | 10'-0"   |
| <b>Highland Ave:</b>    | 0'-0" to metal fins <sup>1</sup>  | 10'-0"   |
| <b>North Side:</b>      | 1'-0" <sup>1</sup>  | 10'-0"   |
| <b>South Side:</b>      | 10'-0"/14'-0"   | 10'-0"   |
| <b>Building Height:</b> |   |  |
|                         | 55'-0"  | 55'-0" (rooftop enclosures allowed to extend additional 10') |
| <b>Lot Coverage:</b>    |   |  |
|                         | 85.1% <sup>1</sup><br>(28,750 SF)   | 50%<br>(16,875 SF)   |
| <b>Landscaping:</b>     |   |  |
|                         | 3% of front setback <sup>2</sup><br>(45 SF)   | 40% of front setback<br>(600 SF)                             |

<sup>1</sup> Request to allow 85.1% lot coverage based on Code Section 25.29.050(f).

<sup>2</sup> Request to allow 3% front setback landscaping based on Code Section 25.29.050(f).

The proposed parking structure deviates from the setback, lot coverage, and front setback landscaping requirements of the R-4 district, as outlined in Section 25.29 (R-4 District Regulations). However, the R-4 district regulations include a provision (Section 25.29.050(f)) that allows the Planning Commission and the City Council, in the considerations and acceptance of any tentative or final map submitted pursuant to the provisions of the Subdivision Map Act, to approve or accept any such tentative or final map wherein one or more lots or parcels of land do not conform to all of the provisions of Chapter 25.34, when the planning commission and the city council find that by reason of exceptional or extraordinary circumstances the approval or acceptance of such maps will not adversely affect the comprehensive zoning plan of the city.

The Vesting Tentative Map for the project would propose that the building be built to the lot lines on the Lorton and Highland Avenue frontages and along the northern property line, that the lot coverage be 85.1% (50% maximum allowed) and the percentage of front setback landscaping be 3% (40% minimum required). The Planning Commission and City Council would need to determine that the proposal would be not adversely affect the comprehensive zoning plan of the city, and incorporate the appropriate findings into their actions on the Vesting Tentative Parcel Map and the project.

**Staff Comments:** See attached comments from the Building, Parks, Engineering, Fire and Stormwater Divisions. The applicant is currently working with several City divisions on addressing their plan review comments.

**General Plan/Specific Plan:** The *Burlingame General Plan* designates the project site as High Density Residential. In 2010 the City Council adopted the *Burlingame Downtown Specific Plan* (with amendments in 2014, 2015, 2016, and 2017), which serves as an element of the General Plan. The subject property is located within the boundaries of the planning area for the Downtown Specific Plan; the site is in the R-4 Incentive District. The Plan describes the R-4 Incentive District as follows:

*The R-4 Incentive District consists of lands in the southern portion of Downtown, on either side of Bayswater Avenue between Highland Avenue and Park Road. The land uses for this area are predominantly higher density multifamily residential. The development standards for this district provide incentives to encourage high density residential uses. In addition to residential uses, small corner retail stores serving local residents would be allowed.*

**Environmental Review:** Section 15332 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines is intended to promote in-fill development within urbanized areas. This class consists of in-fill projects which are consistent with local general plan and zoning requirements. This class is not intended to be applied to projects which would result in significant impacts on endangered, rare, or threatened species, traffic, noise, air quality, water quality, utilities, and public services. Application of this exemption, as all categorical exemptions, is limited by the exceptions described in Section 15300.2 of the CEQA Guidelines. Section 15332 states:

- (a) The project is consistent with the applicable general plan designation and all applicable general plan policies as well as with applicable zoning designation and regulations.
- (b) The proposed development occurs within city limits on a project site of no more than five acres substantially surrounded by urban uses.
- (c) The project site has no value as habitat for endangered, rare or threatened species.
- (d) Approval of the project would not result in any significant effects relating to traffic, noise, air quality, or water quality.
- (e) The site can be adequately served by all required utilities and public services.

The City has entered into a contract with ICF to prepare and document the analysis, findings, and determination that the proposed project will have been reviewed and in compliance with the CEQA, pursuant to Section 15332 of the *2016 CEQA Statute and Guidelines*. The scope of work includes analysis of potential transportation/traffic, noise, and air quality impacts. If it is determined, through the analysis process, that additional CEQA review is required (such as an Initial Study), the scope of work will be revised accordingly.

**Design Review Criteria:** A design review application in commercial, industrial and mixed use districts shall be reviewed by the Planning Commission for the following considerations (Code Section 25.57.030 g, 1-6):

- (1) Support of the pattern of diverse architectural styles that characterize the city's commercial, industrial and mixed use areas;
- (2) Respect and promotion of pedestrian activity by placement of buildings to maximize commercial use of the street frontage, off-street public spaces, and by locating parking so that it does not dominate street frontages;
- (3) On visually prominent and gateway sites, whether the design fits the site and is compatible with the surrounding development;
- (4) Compatibility of the architecture with the mass, bulk, scale, and existing materials of existing development and compatibility with transitions where changes in land use occur nearby;
- (5) Architectural design consistency by using a single architectural style on the site that is consistent among primary elements of the structure, restores or retains existing or significant original architectural features, and is compatible in mass and bulk with other structures in the immediate area; and
- (6) Provision of site features such as fencing, landscaping, and pedestrian circulation that enriches the existing opportunities of the commercial neighborhood.

**Planning Commission Action:**

1. **Design Review Study:** The Planning Commission should comment on the design of the project as required by Chapter 25.57 of the Zoning Ordinance, Design Review, and to the following design criteria for commercial projects:
  - a. Support of the pattern of diverse architectural styles that characterize the city's commercial, industrial and mixed use areas; and
  - b. Respect and promotion of pedestrian activity by placement of buildings to maximize commercial use of the street frontage, off-street public spaces, and by locating parking so that it does not dominate street frontages; and
  - c. On visually prominent and gateway sites, whether the design fits the site and is compatible with the surrounding development; and
  - d. Compatibility of the architecture with the mass, bulk, scale, and existing materials of existing development and compatibility with transitions where changes in land use occur nearby; and
  - e. Architectural design consistency by using a single architectural style on the site that is consistent among primary elements of the structure, restores or retains existing or significant original architectural features, and is compatible in mass and bulk with other structures in the immediate area; and
  - f. Provision of site features such as fencing, landscaping, and pedestrian circulation that enriches the existing opportunities of the commercial neighborhood.

Kevin Gardiner, Planning Manager  
Ruben Hurin, Senior Planner

c. Chris Grant, The Pacific Companies

Attachments:

Application to the Planning Commission  
Frequently Asked Questions – Village at Burlingame  
Downtown Specific Plan Applicable Design Guidelines (reference only)  
Staff Comments  
Notice of Public Hearing – Mailed February 16, 2018  
Aerial Photo