



STAFF REPORT

AGENDA NO: Study Session

MEETING DATE: January 21, 2020

To: Honorable Mayor and City Council

Date: January 21, 2020

From: Kevin Gardiner, Community Development Director – (650) 558-7253

Subject: 220 Park Road (Former Post Office) – Application Update

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the City Council receive an update from the applicant proposing an adaptive re-use development project involving the former United States Post Office at 220 Park Road.

BACKGROUND

The United States Postal Service (USPS) sold the former Burlingame Main Post Office, located at 220 Park Road, in 2014. The property is now privately held.

The City of Burlingame entered into an Exclusive Negotiating Agreement (ENA) with property owner Burlingame Park Square LLC in 2015 for a development proposal that would encompass both the Post Office property and the adjacent City-owned Parking Lot E. The ENA expired in September 2019, and the previous development proposal has become inactive. Since then, the property owner of the former Post Office has engaged developer Sares Regis on a new development proposal for adaptive reuse of the Post Office site. In this study session, representatives from Sares Regis will present an update to the City Council on potential uses and development concepts for the former Post Office property.

DISCUSSION

The following items are relevant to the current discussion of potential adaptive re-use of the former Post Office:

Zoning and General Plan Designations: 220 Park Road is located within the Howard Mixed Use (HMU) zoning district of the Downtown Specific Plan. The HMU zone allows a range of uses including retail, restaurants and services on the ground floor, and housing, offices and hotels on upper floors.

Historic Preservation Covenant: The Historic Resources Inventory prepared for the Downtown Specific Plan identified the building as being potentially eligible for listing on a state or national register under Criteria A (events) and C (design/construction). In anticipation of the disposition of the post office, the USPS commissioned a historic resource evaluation to identify potentially

historic or character-defining elements of the property. Those elements include the lobby (both interior and exterior), the primary building facade facing Park Road, and the exterior artwork including the bronze relief over the entrance doors. As a condition of the sale, USPS placed a preservation covenant on the property to ensure preservation of those character defining elements of the property. Any adaptive re-use of the building must retain and incorporate these elements.

Town Square/Community Open Space: Concurrent with the proposal for the Post Office property, the City will pursuing the design and development of a town square/community open space on the adjacent city-owned Parking Lot E. A "signature open space" was a key element of the Downtown Specific Plan, envisioned to be in the heart of Downtown in the vicinity of the former Post Office. The previous development proposal had combined the City's parking lot and the Post Office property into a single development site to be developed jointly; the direction going forward will be to coordinate the two efforts so they are complementary, but they will not necessarily be combined together into a single development project.

On January 6, 2020 the City Council approved a professional services agreement with the urban design firm Urban Field Studio to work with the community to develop conceptual design options for a public plaza on Parking Lot E. This work will include public participation and the development of design concepts for the public plaza, which is intended to become a community amenity. The study will consider the relationship of the public plaza to the adjacent buildings facing (and backing onto) Lot E, as well as coordination with the proposed development of the Post Office site.

Downtown Specific Plan Development Capacity: The Downtown Specific Plan was adopted in 2010. The environmental review (Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration) evaluated a build-out involving up to 1,232 new residential units, up to 248,702 square feet of new office space, and up to 183,843 square feet of new retail space. The General Plan Update, adopted in January 2019, incorporated these same figures into the Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

To date, 443 new residential units (371 net, accounting for existing units being replaced) and 107,789 square feet of new office space (all new space; no existing office space has been replaced) have been built or approved since the adoption of the Downtown Specific Plan. Retail space has decreased slightly (by a net 4,470 square feet) as some existing commercial retail buildings were replaced with new mixed use buildings that included a smaller amount of retail space than had existed previously.

Community Input. Any adaptive re-use of the Post Office is subject to Planning Commission review, including public hearings. Review will also include study of potential environmental impacts, as required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The design of the town square will include a separate series of community meetings intended to determine the design and programming of the open space.

The Planning Division maintains an informational page on the former Post Office property at www.burlingame.org/220park. The page includes Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ), and will include project updates as they become available.

FISCAL IMPACT

None.