



# PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

**APPLICATION:** GPA2019-0001/PCR2019-0007/ZA2019-0002/PCR2019-0008/TPM 82736/CUP2019-0008/IS/MND/PCR2019-0006

**AGENDA ITEM:** PH-1

**PREPARED BY:** Austin Arnold  
Assistant Planner

**MEETING DATE:** October 9, 2019

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**SUBJECT:** General Plan Amendment GPA2019-0001; Planning Commission Resolution 2019-0007; Zoning Ordinance Map Amendment ZA2019-0002; Planning Commission Resolution 2019-0008; Tentative Parcel Map No. 82736; Conditional Use Permit CUP2019-0008; Mitigated Negative Declaration; Planning Commission Resolution 2019-0006/Ordinance2019-09

115–127 East Lime Avenue (Assessor's Parcel Numbers [APNs] 8516-012-800, 8516-012-801, and 8516-012-802)

**REQUEST:** Adaptive re-use of an existing 4-story telecommunications building on a 31,799 square foot site. A self-storage facility and manager's office will occupy approximately 86,729 square feet of building space and at ground floor level (facing Lime Avenue) commercial storefronts will occupy approximately 5,520 square feet. There are 19 on-site parking spaces accessible from a 16-foot wide alley located on the north side of the site.

The request requires approval of the following: a Tentative Parcel Map consolidating three parcels into one parcel, an amendment to the General Plan and Zoning Map designations changing P/QP (Public/Quasi Public) to PD-5b (Planned Development-Area 5b), a General Plan amendment to include PD-5b guidelines to facilitate the adaptive re-use of the site, and a Conditional Use Permit to allow the proposed self-storage facility, manager's office and commercial storefronts to occupy the existing building at the subject location.

**APPLICANT:** Monrovia Lime LLC  
19300 South Hamilton Avenue, Suite 200  
Gardena, CA 90248

**ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION:** Mitigated Negative Declaration

**BACKGROUND:** In 1954, a Mid-Century Modern telecommunications building was constructed at 115-127 East Lime Avenue. Over the years, the building became a very recognizable feature in the downtown due to its large size, height and style. However, changes in technology have pushed the building toward obsolescence, and it is now vacant. The current zoning designation (Public/Quasi-Public) is intended for governmental and quasi-

governmental uses, such as utility companies. The current zoning severely limits the type of land uses available to the site, and therefore has limited the opportunity for new uses to occupy the building.

In order to provide an economically viable future for the building, the applicant is requesting a change in the land use designation. Based on the constraints, surrounding uses, and proposed use of the property, an expansion of Planned Development – Area 5 (PD-5) would be an appropriate land use designation. The PD-5 zone encompasses many of the properties on the side streets in Old Town. The development standards and regulations for this area promote uses that encourage pedestrian activity and support and increase the ongoing viability of Old Town Monrovia. Staff believes the proposed development standards will allow the adaptive re-use of this building in a manner that would improve the pedestrian experience and minimize potential impacts to the surrounding neighborhood.

As this application requires the approval of the City Council, the Planning Commission is serving as the advisory body, and the actions of the Commission are in the form of recommendations. The requested entitlements are as follows:

1. **General Plan Amendment** to change the land use designation on the property, and adopt new development standards and design guidelines. (PCR2019-0007). Amendments to the General Plan are adopted by resolution.
2. **Zoning Ordinance Map Amendment and Zone Change** to amend the Official Zoning Map to change the zone designation from P/QP (Public/Quasi-Public) to PD-5b (Planned Development – Area 5b). (PCR2019-0008/Ordinance No. 2019-09). Zone Changes are adopted by Ordinance.
3. **Tentative Parcel Map** to consolidate three parcels into one 31,799 square foot parcel. (TPM 82736).
4. **Conditional Use Permit** to allow adaptive reuse of the site for the proposed self-storage facility. (CUP2019-0008)

Prior to making its recommendation on the entitlements above, the Commission must first consider and provide its recommendation on a **Mitigated Negative Declaration and Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program** for the proposed project pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). (PCR2019-0006)

**SUBJECT PROPERTY:** The subject site at 115-127 East Lime Avenue is improved with a 92,500 square foot telecommunications building constructed in 1954. The site consists of three parcels: 8516-01-2800, 8516-01-2801, and 8516-01-2802. The 31,799 square foot site abuts a 16' wide alleyway to the north, approximately 200' of frontage on East Lime Avenue to the south and has a lot depth of 160'. Additionally, the project site abuts a number of commercial units to the west and public parking lot to the east.

### ***Existing Site Characteristics***

The property is currently improved with a vacant telecommunications building (Frontier), approximately 92,500 square feet along East Lime Avenue. The property currently contains a small surface parking lot located just north of the building, which is surrounded with a non-conforming chain-link fence. The building is accessed primarily from Lime Avenue. Lastly, the

overall site is in need of significant property maintenance improvements due to the building's vacancy.

The subject property is designated Public/Quasi-Public (P/QP) in the General Plan and zoning designations. The site is surrounded by the following land uses:

**East:**

General Plan: Public/Quasi-Public  
Zoning: P/QP (Public/Quasi-Public)  
Land Use: Parking lot

**West:**

General Plan: Historic Downtown Commercial  
Zoning: HCD (Historic Downtown Commercial)  
Land Use: Commercial Uses

**North:** (across the alley)

General Plan: Public/Quasi-Public and Residential High Density (54 Du/Ac)  
Zoning: P/QP (Public/Quasi-Public) and RH (Residential High Density)  
Land Use: Public Parking lot and private school – Boys Republic School for Boys and office use.

**South:** (across the street on East Lemon Avenue)

General Plan: Planned Development – Area 5 and Public/Quasi-Public  
Zoning: PD-5 (Planned Development – Area 5) and P/QP (Public/Quasi-Public)  
Land Use: Movie Theater and Monrovia Police Station

**DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS:** Although in the heart of Old Town, the subject building was constructed for a specific purpose and over time has lost its economic viability. This is primarily due to the existing zoning (Public/Quasi-Public) which severely limits the types of permitted uses, therefore making it almost impossible to reoccupy the site with a viable use. With that said, the building is conforming, and office uses are permitted; therefore, if a new office use were to occupy the building, it could potentially cause severe parking and traffic congestion impacts due to the building's extremely high occupancy capacity and very little onsite parking. Conversely, with the reality of the office market, staff realized that under the limitations of the current zoning, the building could remain vacant for years to come.

When the applicant first approached the City with the idea to convert the building into a self-storage facility, staff felt that there was a great deal of merit to the concept. It is a low impact use, with an extremely low parking demand. However, it was critical that the plan have a greater public benefit. The resulted in additional commercial storefronts along Lime Avenue, which will help to activate that portion of the block.

In order to best accommodate the proposed use, staff determined that the expansion of the existing PD-5 Area would be an optimal option to entitle the proposed use. As an older city, Monrovia has a number of areas and neighborhoods that pose challenges in applying traditional zoning. Over the years, the City has successfully used Planned Development Areas to address unique situations by allowing flexibility that normal zoning cannot. Specifically, PD-5 and its previous expansion, PD-5a, to accommodate the Colorado

Commons project on Colorado Boulevard is a good example of the use of the PD zone. Additionally, the recent creation of PD-66 provided flexibility in accommodating the adaptive reuse of buildings that represent the importance of Route 66 in Monrovia.

As proposed, the expansion of PD-5 will allow the proposed project to move forward. This is consistent with the goals of the existing PD area, as well as the goals of the General Plan. The proposed self-storage use will decrease the potential demand for parking and traffic. Moreover, it would generate both additional new jobs and foot traffic by providing commercial spaces on the ground floor. This will improve the commercial retail connection between the side streets of Myrtle Avenue and the downtown corridor. The following sections of the staff report describe the project as well as the required entitlements.

### ***Site Plan/Floor Plans***

There will be very few changes to the existing site layout. The proposed plan will utilize the existing 92,249 square foot, four story building. The existing basement will also be utilized. Because the lot size is only 31,799 square feet, the existing building has a floor area ratio (FAR) of 2.90 to 1. An existing parking lot is located north of the building on-site and will be updated improved to accommodate 19 parking spaces.

The proposed Planned Development Guidelines classify the use of the building into two commercial categories: Major and Minor. The Minor Commercial Area will consist of 5,520 square feet of the ground floor area directly adjacent to Lime Avenue. This will allow for up to four (4) storefronts.

This will provide new commercial opportunities for Old Town and will significantly improve the pedestrian experience along this portion of Lime Avenue.

The remainder of the 19,863 square foot first floor (management office and storage units) as well as floors 2-4 and the basement will be dedicated to the self-storage use. This all constitutes the Major Commercial Area. A total of 668 storage units will be provided. Each floor will have different configurations of storage units.

The second floor will consists of 21,146 square feet and contains 167 storage units. The third floor consists of 21,146 square feet and contains 167 storage units. The fourth floor consists of 9,088 square feet and contains 81 storage units. The basement consists of 21,006 square feet and contains 163 storage units.

### ***Building Elevations***

While the design of this building has long elicited a wide range of opinions, it is however representative of a prior time and place and is a good example of a Mid-century modern institutional building, specifically connected with a “telephone company”. The massing as well as the materials are consistent with the aesthetic. Building materials include brick, scored concrete and aluminum louvers. The proposed changes to the building maintain the design and character defining features as well as enhance areas to improve both physical and visual connection to the street.

The proposal has minor additions which enclose the exterior staircases on the north elevation as well as add a new elevator to allow customers easier access to the storage units for their bulkier items. The proposed new materials will match the white scored concrete and stucco portions already present on the building.

There are some new windows proposed on the north and south elevations; they are energy efficient metal windows with clear glass to match those existing on the building. Specifically, the proposed new windows on the south elevation (facing Lime Avenue) of the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, are proposed to be flush with the existing building line, whereas currently the windows are setback. This will provide a defining look to the building. Additionally, staff has identified a large “blank canvas” on the north side of the building facing the alley that could be a prime area for either a public art piece or a decorative element for the existing building. While not subject to the Art in Public Places requirement, a condition of approval (#3 on Data Sheet 1) has been added to allow that portion of the building to be used for a potential public art piece or a decorative element in the future, should the opportunity arise.

### ***Parking***

The project proposes to restore and restripe the dilapidated parking lot on the subject site to maximize the number of stalls available; 19 spaces will be provided, two of which will be ADA compliant. Given the limited parking on site, the proposal of a self-storage facility will cause less impact on parking than that of office or retail uses. If the building were proposed as an office or retail use, then the parking requirement of 1 space per 250 square feet for the building could result in requiring up to 369 parking spaces.

While the Monrovia Municipal Code does not have a parking regulation for self-storage facilities, the applicant prepared a study comparison performed by Fehr & Peers (Appendix D) with similar storage facilities, which includes a comparison between the office and self-storage use. The results of the study confirmed that the proposed uses would generate 80% fewer trips than if the building were occupied solely with an office use and that the proposed 19 parking spaces would be more than adequate. Additionally, the subject site is within the historic Old Town, and the proposed commercial uses will be covered by the existing parking overlay. Moreover, there are a number of existing public parking lots located to the north and east as well as additional street parking spaces directly in front of the subject site. In addition, the project will provide ten bicycle parking spaces.

Driveway Access: To accommodate commercial deliveries and trash pick-up for the commercial businesses on Lime Avenue, a 30’ drive aisle accessed through the alley is located on the north side of building. The project also proposes a trash enclosure near the north property line facing the alley and adjacent drive aisle. The project has been carefully designed to allow self-storage customers and trash pick-up along the rear of the property and the frontage along Lime Avenue for the commercial corridor. Thus, keep the uses somewhat separated and will be less of an impact to the surrounding neighborhood.

In order to bring life back into this building, many entitlements are required to provide this unique opportunity and economic viability to the existing building. The intent of the proposed Planned Development – Area 5b land use and zoning designation is to provide standards and regulations to provide an opportunity for creative adaptive reuse of the existing commercial building at 115-127 East Lime Avenue for a self-storage facility. Moreover, the proposed project will expand the commercial corridor connection between Ivy Avenue and Myrtle Avenue.

### ***General Plan Amendment/ Zone Amendment***

In order to facilitate the proposal and provide a viable future for the building, the applicant is requesting a General Plan Amendment and Zone Amendment to change the existing land use and zoning designations. The portion of the request includes:

- Amending the Land Use Map of the Land Use Element (LUE) of the General Plan to create a new subarea “5b” of Planned Development – Area 5 (PD-5) and change the land use designation of the subject property from Public/Quasi-Public to Planned Development – Area 5b.
- A text amendment of the LUE to incorporate PD-5b development guidelines as described below.
- Amend the Official Zoning Map by changing the zoning designation on the project site from P/QP (Public/ Quasi-Public) to PD-5b (Planned Development – Area 5b). This will ensure the Zoning Ordinance is consistent with the General Plan. (PCR2019-0007/Ordinance No. 2019-09)

These entitlements will provide the framework to allow viable economic use for the building and standards for those uses to follow in order ensure future uses are compatible with Old Town.

### ***Planned Development – Area 5b Development Standards***

Originally, PD-5 was adopted to address the unique concerns for Old Town properties that do not front Myrtle Avenue. PD-5 generally encompasses the side streets running through Old Town bounded by Primrose Avenue on the west and Ivy Avenue on the east. Planned Development-Area 5 was designed to support a variety of uses, but the uses should be related to and compatible with Myrtle Avenue and be of a type and quality that is in keeping with Old Town Monrovia. The proposed PD-5b land use designation is an expansion to the existing Planned Development – Area 5 and is designed to coincide with its intent to encourage a pedestrian-oriented commercial corridor link between the subject site and Myrtle Avenue. As proposed, the PD-5b development guidelines also require special review criteria to ensure minimal parking and traffic impacts given the limited available parking on-site.

The proposed PD-5b development standards divide the building into two sections:

- Minor Commercial Area – This area is limited to 25% of the ground floor that fronts Lime Avenue. Permitted uses focus on those that support the downtown commercial businesses and encourage pedestrian activity, such as retail, restaurant, service commercial, and office uses. This requirement is similar to the rest of the Planned Development – Area 5 and will help make the connection as a commercial corridor to help bring pedestrians from Ivy Avenue to Myrtle Avenue.
- Major Commercial Area. – This covers all other areas of the building. The guidelines specify that any proposed use will require a Conditional Use Permit. This will allow the Planning Commission to review proposed uses for compatibility with Old Town, as well as parking and traffic generation impacts related to the proposed use.

It should be noted that the standards for PD-5b do not allow for expansion of the building floor area because additional building area could impose impacts on the adjacent properties, especially related to parking and traffic. However, the standards do allow for minor modification or reconfiguration to the interior layout to be determined by the Development Review Committee as long as the change does not materially change any approved project.

Additionally, the Guidelines state that on-site parking shall not be reduced. Further, any proposed signage will require a Master Sign Program to be reviewed and approved by the Development Review Committee. As such, signage will be limited to face Lime Avenue frontages and shall follow the same sign regulations as the Historic Commercial Downtown zone.

***Tentative Parcel Map 82736/ Conditional Use Permit CUP2019-0008***

A Tentative Parcel Map (TPM 82736) is required to merge the three existing parcels because the building currently is built across all three parcels which is prohibited by the City's Building Code. The requested entitlements allow the City to address conflicts with current regulations—to bring the property “up to code”, The Tentative Parcel Map consolidates three existing parcels into one 31,799 square foot parcel and will facilitate the proposed adaptive reuse project.

***Conditional Use Permit***

The proposed PD-5b standards allow a self-storage facility through the approval of a Conditional Use Permit in order to provide adaptive reuse of the building. Therefore, the applicant is requesting a Conditional Use Permit CUP2019-0008, to convert the existing building into a self-storage facility with ground floor commercial storefronts. The TPM and CUP allow the City to require conditions of approval that address both the impacts during the construction of the site as well as the building's continued maintenance and operation. Data Sheet No. 1 contains the Planning and Fire Department conditions; Data Sheet No. 2 contains the Public Works conditions. Data Sheet No. 3 has the required findings to approve and recommend approval of the TPM and CUP.

***Mitigated Negative Declaration***

Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), an Initial Study was completed which analyzed the potential impacts that the proposed project could have on the environment. The resulting environmental document is a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND). The Initial Study identified several potential environmental impacts that would be “less than significant with mitigation incorporation.” Therefore, a MND was prepared for the project.

In summary, the proposed MND identifies mitigation measures in the form of a Mitigation and Monitoring Reporting Program (MMRP) to reduce and/or avoid impacts which could occur primarily during the construction phase to the following environmental factor areas: Air Quality, Noise, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, and Utilities and Service Systems. Additionally, a trash generation study is required to determine the initial pick-up frequency to ensure that the provided dumpster does not overflow. The full MMRP is attached as “Exhibit X” for reference.

CEQA requires a minimum review period of 20 days for an MND, which began on September 19, 2019. The documents were posted on the City's website on September 19, 2019. Additionally, a Notice of Intent (NOI) to adopt a MND was filed with the County Clerk on September 17, 2019; a public notice was published in the Monrovia Weekly on September 19, 2019, and notices were mailed to all property owners within 300 feet of the subject property on September 19, 2019. The comment period ends at the conclusion of the public hearing on this item at the Planning Commission meeting on October 9, 2019. (PCR2019-0006)

### ***Development Review Committee Review***

At the DRC meeting held on September 25, 2019, the Committee was given a presentation on the proposed project. Courtesy notices were mailed to property owners to solicit additional feedback; however, there was no public in attendance at the meeting. The Committee discussed various aspects of the project and overall, was pleased with the project. The Fire Chief articulated the need for early detection and ventilation systems to be installed, especially in the basement, in case of a fire when there are only a handful of emergency exits available. Compliance with the code will be reviewed during the plan check process. The DRC recommended approval to the Planning Commission.

### ***Conclusion***

The proposed General Plan and Zoning Amendments will provide standards to allow for viable uses at the site that will support the Historic Downtown and allow for economic viability of the existing building. The Conditional Use Permit will allow the building be converted to a self-storage facility with 668 storage units and four ground floor commercial storefronts that will help provide a commercial corridor connection between South Ivy Avenue and South Myrtle Avenue. The conditional use permit will provide conditions of approval to minimize the uses' impact on the surrounding neighborhood. Additionally, the project will provide mitigation measures through the MND and MMRP as additional conditions of approval to minimize any potential impacts to the surrounding neighborhood.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The Development Review Committee and Staff recommend approval of the application as presented in the Staff Report. If the Planning Commission concurs with Staff's recommendation then, following the public hearing, the appropriate actions would be to adopt Planning Commission Resolution Nos. PCR2019-0006, PCR2019-0007, PCR2019-0008 and recommend approval of Tentative Parcel Map No. 82736 and Conditional Use Permit CUP2019-0008:

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

1. The Planning Commission has independently considered and reviewed the information in the MND and Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program, and all comments received regarding the MND and Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program , and based upon the whole record of the proceedings before it, finds that the MND and Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program were prepared in compliance with CEQA and the City's local CEQA Guidelines, and that the findings contained therein represent the independent judgment and analysis of the Planning Commission; therefore, the Planning Commission recommends that the City Council adopt the Mitigated Negative Declaration and Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program as the environmental documents for the project (Tentative Parcel Map No. 82736, Conditional Use Permit CUP2019-0008, General Plan Amendment GPA2019-0001 and Zoning Ordinance and Map Amendment ZA2019-0002) as set forth in Planning Commission Resolution Nos. 2019-0006, 2019-0007, and 2019-0008 .
2. The Planning Commission finds that the custodian of records for all other materials that constitute the record of proceedings upon which this decision is based is the Planning Division Manager. Those documents are available for public review in the Planning Division located at 415 South Ivy Avenue, Monrovia, California, 91016.

3. The Planning Commission in the exercise of its independent judgment hereby makes the findings listed on attached Data Sheet No. 3 for TPM 82736 and CUP2019-0008, which are incorporated herein by this reference.
4. The Planning Commission hereby recommends approval to the City Council of Tentative Parcel Map No. 82736, Conditional Use Permit CUP2019-0008, General Plan Amendment GPA2019-0001 and Zoning Ordinance and Map Amendment ZA2019-0002, subject to the attached Planning and Conditions on Data Sheet No. 1, Public Works Conditions on Data Sheet No. 2, and recommendations in the Staff Report, all of which are incorporated herein by this reference.

**MOTIONS:**

- A. Close the public hearing and adopt Planning Commission Resolution No. PCR2018-0006 recommending approval to the City Council of the Mitigated Negative Declaration and Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program.
- B. Adopt Planning Commission Resolution No. PCR2019-0007 recommending approval to the City Council of General Plan Map and Text Amendment.
- C. Adopt Planning Commission Resolution No. PCR2019-0008 recommending approval to the City Council of Zoning Ordinance Map Amendment Ordinance No. 2019-09.
- D. Recommend to the City Council the approval of TPM 82736 and CUP2019-0008 as presented in the Staff Report.