



Staff Report

File #: 23-0342

**PLANNING AND HOUSING COMMISSION  
STAFF REPORT**

DATE: 4/24/2023

TO: Honorable Chair and Commissioners

FROM: Planning & Community Development Department

**APPLICATION REQUEST:**

**V2022-0002:** Variance application requesting a variance from Section 9.4.5 of the Mountain Gate Specific Plan to reduce the minimum front yard setback requirement from 20 feet to 15 feet along Chase Drive, in conjunction with a new 52,423-square-foot health club facility proposed at 2895 S. Main Street, within the Quasi-Public (QP) designation of the Mountain Gate Specific Plan. (Applicant: Joseph Balbas, Balbas Construction, Inc., 3189 Airway Avenue, Unit D, Costa Mesa, CA 92626).

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

**That the Planning and Housing Commission** adopt the Mitigated Negative Declaration and Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan, and adopt Resolution No. 2609 GRANTING V2022-0002, based on the findings contained in the staff report and conditions of approval.

**PROJECT SITE SUMMARY**

**Area of Property:** 4.09 acres

**Existing Zoning:** QP (Quasi-Public) within the Mountain Gate Specific Plan (SP89-01)

**Existing General Plan:** OP (Office Professional)

**Existing Land Use:** Vacant

**Proposed Land Use:** Health Club Facility

**Surrounding Zoning / Land Use:**

**N:** QP (Quasi-Public) / Medical Buildings

**E:** W (Water/Utility) / Water Basin

**S:** SFD (Single Family Detached) / Single Family Homes

**W:** R-1-7.2 & R-1-9.6 (Single Family Residential)

**BACKGROUND**

The Applicant proposes to develop a 52,423-square-foot, two-story health club facility on a 4.09-acre site located at 2895 S. Main Street in the city of Corona. The site is located within the Quasi-Public (QP) designation of the Mountain Gate Specific Plan (SP89-01), and Office Professional (OP) designation of the South Corona Community Facilities Plan (SCCFP). The property is designated

Office Professional (OP) in Corona's General Plan land use element. Surrounding land uses include medical office use to the north, a flood control channel and water detention basin to the east, single family residential to the south across Chase Drive and single family residential to the west, across Main Street.

The property was previously occupied by a single-family residence with orchards. The home was recently demolished, and the orchard has been removed.

The Variance is associated with a Precise Plan application (PP2022-0004). The Precise Plan application reviews the site plan, architecture, landscaping and walls/fencing associated with the proposed development of the 52,423-square-foot health club facility. Details associated with PP2022-0004 are provided under a separate staff report, which is being processed concurrently with this Variance request.

The project was initially reviewed by the Development Plan Review (DPR) Committee on April 7, 2022. The Applicant formally submitted the precise plan application to the City on September 21, 2022, and submitted the Variance application on October 25, 2022. The Precise Plan application was reviewed by the Project and Environmental Review Committee (PRC) on October 13, 2022 and the Variance application was reviewed by the PRC on November 17, 2022. Missing and revised items were subsequently submitted, and the applications were deemed complete on March 8, 2023 and scheduled for the Planning and Housing Commission meeting of April 24, 2023.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The applicant's request is to vary from the front yard setback requirement of Section 9.4.5 of the Mountain Gate Specific Plan (Specific Plan). The variance is proposed to accommodate the on-site parking requirement for the proposed development.

The property is a corner lot with two street frontages (Exhibit 3). The western perimeter abuts Main Street, and the southern perimeter abuts Chase Drive. Although Main Street has more traffic volume, Chase Drive is considered the frontage because it is the narrowest portion of the property abutting a public right-of-way. This determination is based on Corona Municipal Code (CMC) Section 17.04.267, which states:

"Lot frontage" means that portion of a lot which abuts a public right-of-way or approved private right-of-way; provided, however, if certain portions of a lot abut two or more public rights-of-way or approved private rights-of-way, the frontage of the lot shall be the narrowest portion of the lot which abuts the rights-of-way.

The Code further defines the rear lot line as being the opposite of the front lot line, and defines side lot lines as all lot lines that are not the front or the rear.

Per Section 9.4.5 of the Specific Plan, the setbacks are required for structures. The setbacks are a) front yard, 20 feet minimum; no parking shall be permitted with a required front yard, b) side yard, 10 feet minimum, and c) rear yard, 20 feet minimum.

Based on the "flag" configuration of the project site, the frontage along Chase Drive is the front yard,

the frontage along Main Street and the interior side yards adjacent to the flood control channel and the earthen basin is the side yard, and the interior north property line is the rear yard.

Due to the lot's configuration, the applicant submitted a variance request to reduce the front yard setback along Chase Drive from 20 feet to 15 feet and reduce the rear yard setback along the northern property line from 20 feet to 5 feet. After further analysis by staff, which occurred after the project was publicly advertised, the variance for the rear yard is not required. The Specific Plan only restricts the structure from being located within the setback and not the parking. Additionally, the city's landscape design guidelines for commercial properties require parking areas adjacent to interior property lines to have a minimum landscaped width of five feet at the property line. The project provides the required five-foot wide planter from the north property line. The structure is also set back 103 feet from the north property line.

Variance 2022-0002 is for the front yard setback along Chase Drive. The variance proposes to reduce the front yard setback from 20 feet to 15 feet to accommodate on-site parking spaces required for the proposed health club. The asymmetrical configuration of the property created on-site constraints in meeting the minimum front yard setback required by the Specific Plan. The "Analysis" section of this report justifies staff's support for the variance.

Additional project details are provided under a separate staff report (PP2022-0004), which is being processed concurrently with V2022-0002.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS**

Per Section 15070 (b) of the State Guidelines for Implementing the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and Section 6.02 of the City's Local Guidelines, a Mitigated Negative Declaration was prepared for the project since the Initial Study identified that the project's potentially significant effects to the environment are capable of being mitigated to less than significant. Therefore, based on the project mitigation measures identified in the Mitigated Negative Declaration, there is no substantial evidence, in light of the whole record before the City, that the project may have a significant or potentially significant effect on the environment. The Mitigated Negative Declaration is recommended for adoption (Exhibit 5).

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

The applicant has paid the applicable application processing fees for the project.

### **PUBLIC NOTICE AND COMMENTS**

A 20-day public notice was mailed to all property owners within a 500-foot radius of the project site, as well as advertised in the Sentinel Weekly News and posted at the project site. As of the preparation of this report, the Planning and Development Department received two letters regarding the project in response to the public notice. One letter is from the Jay and Sue McNeilly, who reside at 2841 Plumwood Lane. The McNeilly's do not support the project. In general, the McNeillys oppose commercial use on the project site and prefer the site to be developed for single family homes consistent with the residential uses in the area. A second letter was received from Nicole Leyva, a Corona resident living at 1855 Stanwich Place. Ms. Leyva supports the project. In general Ms. Leyva would like to see more attractions, restaurants and locally owned businesses, and supports an active lifestyle and healthy living. The letters are attached as Exhibit 7.

## **STAFF ANALYSIS**

The variance is consistent with the findings required by Section 17.96.020 of the Corona Municipal Code (CMC). Section 17.96.020 requires that special circumstances applicable to the subject property must exist in order for the Planning and Housing Commission to grant a variance application. Special circumstances applicable to the subject property must relate to the size, shape, topography and location or surroundings of the subject property.

The special circumstances applicable to this project are due to the asymmetrical shaped lot, which resembles a flag design, causing the property to have a narrower frontage on Chase Drive. This configuration also causes the northeastern portion of the site to be narrow, which limits development in this area to parking, thereby requiring structures to be constructed on the western portion of the parcel. Because Chase Drive is considered the front of the property, the 20-foot front yard setback, which restricts parking from being located within the setback, makes the on-site development more restrictive. However, the project does provide a greater setback from the property line along Main Street, which was increased from 10 feet to 20 feet, with 15 feet being landscaped from the back of the sidewalk.

Furthermore, the public right-of-way improvements along Chase Drive include a 24-foot wide parkway, which when combined with the proposed 15-foot on-site landscaped setback results in a depth of 39 feet from the back of the street curb. Furthermore, the project site is at a lower elevation than the street by five feet in this location. Therefore, the reduced on-site setback along Chase Drive will not impact the aesthetics of the project from the street. Also, the structure is setback 84 feet from the property line along Chase Drive.

Therefore, the Planning and Development Department recommends approval of V2022-0002, subject to the findings below and the recommended conditions of approval in Exhibit 4.

## **FINDINGS FOR APPROVAL OF V2022-0002**

1. An initial study (environmental assessment) has been conducted by the City of Corona so as to evaluate the potential for adverse environmental impacts. The initial study identifies potentially significant effects on the environment, but:
  - a. *The project applicant has agreed to revise the project to avoid these significant effects or to mitigate the effects to a point where it is clear that no significant effects would occur, as reflected in the Conditions of Approval attached as Exhibit 4.*
2. The strict application of the terms of the zoning regulations from which the Variance is being sought deprives the subject property of privileges enjoyed by other properties in the vicinity and under identical zone classification because of the following special circumstances applicable to the property related to size, shape, topography, location or surroundings:
  - a. *The strict application of the setback requirements under Section 9.4.5 of the Mountain Gate Specific Plan deprives the property owner of privileges enjoyed by other*

*commercial properties in the area due to special circumstances that exist on the property. The development is constrained by the lot's unusual "flag" shape which is narrow at the site's northeastern corner. This narrow area restricts development within this portion of the site, requiring the necessary components of the development including the entrances, building, trash enclosures, main parking lot and required 28-foot wide fire lanes to occur on the site's western portion. The reduced setbacks along the site's front yard allows the project to accommodate parking spaces that are closer and more accessible to the building.*

3. The approval of V2022-0002 does not constitute the granting of special privilege inconsistent with the limitations upon other properties in the vicinity and zone in which subject property is located for the following reasons:
  - a. *Aside from the variance for the front yard setback on Chase Drive, all other aspects of the development comply with the development standards in the Mountain Gate Specific Plan. The project also provides a greater setback along the property line adjacent to Main Street, which was increased from 10 feet to 20 feet.*
  - b. *The public right-of-way improvements along Chase Drive adjacent to the project site include a 24-foot wide parkway plus the 15-foot-wide on-site landscaped setback, which results in a combined 39-foot depth from the back of the curb. The project site is also five feet lower than the elevation of the street in this location. As such, the variance in the setback is nominal and would not visually impact the aesthetics from Chase Drive.*
  
4. The Variance will not adversely affect property and the use thereof in the vicinity of subject property or the public health, safety and general welfare for the following reason:
  - a. *The proposed variance of 5 feet from the front yard setback requirement along Chase Drive will not adversely affect surrounding property in the vicinity, as the project site is being developed in an orderly manner and provides additional landscaping in other areas throughout the project site. The existing residential uses across Chase Drive to the south will not be impacted because the houses back Chase Drive and are separated from the street by a six-foot high block wall, and the parkway width when combined with the on-site landscaped setback results in a depth of 39 feet from the back of the street curb. Therefore, the variance does not adversely affect surrounding property nor the public's health, safety and general welfare.*

**PREPARED BY:** ROCIO LOPEZ, CONSULTING PLANNER

**REVIEWED BY:** SANDRA YANG, SENIOR PLANNER

**REVIEWED BY:** JAY EASTMAN, PLANNING MANAGER

**SUBMITTED BY:** JOANNE COLETTA, PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

**EXHIBITS**

1. Resolution No. 2609
2. Locational and Zoning Map
3. Site Plan
4. Conditions of Approval
5. Environmental Documentation
6. Applicant's Letter dated 12-10-22
7. Public Correspondence

Case Planner: Rocio Lopez (951) 736-2263