



STAFF REPORT
To The
LONGVIEW PLANNING COMMISSION

PRESENTED BY: Steve Langdon, Planning Manager
REVIEW DATE: September 6, 2017
APPLICATION NO.: PC 2017-6
APPLICANT: City of Longview/River Cities Transit
PROPERTY OWNER: City of Longview
REQUEST: Special Property Use Permit in accordance with LMC §19.44.020 Table 19.44.020-1 to allow “Bus terminals and stations, transportation and transit facilities.”
LOCATION: 1135 12th Avenue (Assessor’s parcel numbers 01577 & 015770001)
ASSOCIATED
CASES: None
ZONING DISTRICT: Downtown Commerce District
TYPE OF ACTION: Quasi-judicial (City Council to hold public hearing)

BACKGROUND AND PROPOSAL

The applicants want to upgrade to the transit center located at 1135 12th Avenue. The existing site, 42,360 square feet in size, is fully developed as a transit center. The transit center includes a 1,250 square foot building that houses a lobby, ticket sales, restrooms and a staff break-room. The existing site has 31 parking stalls. The rest of the site is dedicated to bus circulation with eight bus berths and four passenger shelters.

Under the proposed upgrade, the existing 1,250 square foot building will be demolished and replaced with an approximately 4,300 square foot building. The new building will house the same functions as the existing building with the addition of new administrative offices and a training room facility. Administrative staff, currently housed off-site, will be located to the new transit center.

Under the proposal, 20 parking stalls will be eliminated leaving 11 existing or repaved stalls. The site currently has four driveway access points; two are dedicated to bus entry and exiting and

will remain as-is. The other two driveways are for parking lot entering and exiting. One of driveways will be relocated and the other will be eliminated. Parking lot exiting will then occur at the bus exit. The upgrade project reconfigures the bus berths for a total of six. Each berth will have a passenger shelter. In addition, one of the existing bus lanes will be converted to a newly paved plaza area to provide for more functional pedestrian circulation. The proposed project intends to re-use the existing utility connections for sewer and water.

The site is not on any historic register.

Neighboring land uses:

South – Florida Street, automobile repair business, commercial building with several spaces for lease currently housing medical/health offices.

East – 12th Avenue, physical fitness business, roofing business, wholesale plumbing business, commercial building with several spaces for lease

North – Auto detailing and sales business, Hemlock Street

West – restaurant, various retail, service and repair businesses facing Commerce Avenue

The Comprehensive Plan classifies the subject property as Central Business District. The parcel is within the Downtown Commerce (zoning) District.

The subject site currently has a 31-space parking lot located north of the building. Twenty of those will be eliminated. There are publicly-owned parking lots located immediately to the south and a half-block to the north. The application is attached as Exhibit A.

SEPA DETERMINATION

An Environmental Checklist for the proposed SPU/building project was reviewed pursuant to the State Environmental Policy Act and a determination of non-significance was issued on August 30, 2017. [E 2017-11 SEPA checklist]

The comment period for the SEPA checklist ends on September 13, 2017. SEPA documents are attached as Exhibit D.

APPLICABLE CODE SECTIONS

19.44.010 Purpose.

The paragraphs in the purpose section of Chapter 19.44 Commercial Zoning Districts relating to the Downtown Commerce District are given below:

This chapter accommodates a range of commercial land uses in the community in five commercial districts and one mixed use district. All of these districts are intended to provide for land use compatibility while providing a high-quality environment for customers, businesses and employees.

The downtown commerce (D-C) district is a part of the overall central business district identified in the comprehensive plan. The D-C district has the same purpose as the CBD zoning district *[see below]* but is designed to reflect its unique historical heritage. Pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access is emphasized to

ensure that this area is walkable. Active storefronts are vital to maintaining a walkable ambiance for the downtown area.

The central business (CBD) district is the commercial area which is, shall be maintained, promoted as, and redeveloped as a major retail, service, financial, professional, and cultural center if not also the regional retail trade center for the Longview-Kelso urban area and vicinity. This area shall be developed and redeveloped with a dense, highly intensive land use pattern focusing on high-quality, urban style of development and architecture.

Staff comment: Upgrading the transit center in the Downtown Commerce District is consistent with the description of the Central Business District and Downtown Commerce District as being an area where “Pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access is emphasized to ensure that this area is walkable.” (Underlined text is my emphasis.)

19.44.030 Downtown commerce district – Special property use.

In the downtown commerce district special property use permits are granted by the city council. Per LMC 2.03.060, the city council shall conduct an open-record public hearing prior to their decision. Per LMC 2.27.070, the planning commission shall make recommendations to the city council for the granting or denial of such permits.

Staff Comment: Per the above section, only the City Council holds a public hearing on the application. Thus, the Planning Commission cannot take testimony on the application.

2.27.070 Recommendations on special property use permits in the D-C district.

The planning commission shall make recommendations to the city council for the granting or denial of such permits. The planning commission shall be guided by the provisions of LMC 19.12.050(3) in making its recommendations. In making its recommendations to the city council, the planning commission shall make findings of fact in support of such recommendations. Per the appearance of fairness doctrine, planning commission members shall not receive any testimony or recommendations except from city staff.

Staff comment: The provisions given in Subsection 19.12.050(3) are given in the staff analysis section below.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Comprehensive Plan Goals, Objectives and Policies for the Downtown area attached as Exhibit C. A policy from the Comprehensive Plan Transportation Element is given below:

Policy TR-A.2.7 Continue to work closely with the Cowlitz Transit Authority Board to improve the Community Urban Area Bus (CUBS) area transit services.

[Note: CUBS was renamed to River Cities Transit.]

Staff comment: Other than the policy above, staff found no specific guidance from the goals, objective and policies regarding this application. In general, there does not appear to be significant inconsistencies with the Comprehensive Plan.

LONGVIEW'S DOWNTOWN PLAN

The proposed land use map on page 22 of the November 2001 Downtown Plan shows the subject property with a proposed land use category of "Professional and Personal Services, F.I.R.E. And Parking."

While a transit station is not within the land use categories given above (except it will have some parking), it is ancillary to those uses and to other uses discussed in the Downtown Plan (retail, entertainment, government and medical). Having the transit center downtown furthers other goals in the Downtown Plan including accessibility to the Downtown area.

LONGVIEW DOWNTOWN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Longview Downtown Advisory Committee (DAC) will be discussing the application at their September 11, 2017 meeting. Thus, their recommendation will not be known by the Planning Commission when they make their recommendation.

STAFF ANALYSIS

The criteria for evaluating a special use permit are given below followed by staff comments.

- (a) That the use for which such permit is sought will not be injurious to the neighborhood or otherwise detrimental to the public health, safety, morals and general welfare.

Staff has no indication that the proposed upgrades to the transit center will cause anything that is significantly detrimental to public health, safety, morals and general welfare.

- (b) In making such determination the board shall be guided by the following considerations and standards:

- (i) That the use will not be detrimental to the character and use of adjoining buildings and those in the vicinity.

Staff has no indication that the proposed transit center upgrades will be significantly detrimental to the character and use of adjoining buildings and in the vicinity.

- (ii) That the use will not create a hazard in the immediate area either for pedestrian or vehicular traffic.

The City Traffic Engineer reviewed the applicant's site plan and found no known significant hazards.

- (iii) That adequate ingress and egress will be available for fire and other vehicular emergency equipment.

Fire and other vehicular emergency equipment can easily access the building from 12th Avenue. There is nothing in the proposal that affects ingress and egress for emergency equipment.

- (iv) That adequate off-street parking will be provided to prevent congestion of public streets.

The proposal is located in the City's Downtown Commerce District. Per LMC 19.78.105, "There is no minimum number of off-street parking spaces required for the Downtown Commerce District."

Even though off-street parking is not required, the transit center will have 11 parking spaces. In addition the transit center is adjacent to a city-owned parking lot and within a half-block of another city-owned parking lot.

STAFF DISCUSSION

The proposal will allow transit administrative staff to relocate to the transit center. The additional persons housed onsite will help with monitoring the activities taking place at center. In addition, the employees will be taking advantages of the downtown restaurants and service and retail opportunities.

STAFF FINDINGS

1. Because the proposal is a major expansion of a transit center, a special use permit is needed.
2. The use for which such permit is sought will not be detrimental to the public health, safety, morals and general welfare.
3. The proposal is consistent with the purpose section of the commercial zoning chapter (LMC 19.44.010) and there is no conflict with the general provision provided in LMC Section 19.44.090.
4. The proposal meets the criteria given is LMC Subsection 19.12.050(3).

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission recommend to the City Council that they grant a special property use permit to upgrade the transit center located at 1135 12th Avenue.

EXHIBITS

- A. Special Property Use Permit Petition with applicant's narrative including applicant's site plan
- B. General Provisions (LMC 19.44.090)
- C. Comprehensive Plan Goals, Objectives and Policies for Downtown
- D. SEPA documents