

Board of Adjustment

Staff Report

CASE NUMBER: BA15-049
STAFF PLANNER: Gordon Sheffield, AICP CNUa; Zoning Administrator
LOCATION/ADDRESS: 254 West Broadway Road
COUNCIL DISTRICT: 4
OWNER/APPLICANT: American Property Group

REQUEST: *Requesting a Substantial Conformance Improvement Permit (SCIP) to facilitate redevelopment of a commercial building in the DB-2 zoning district. (PLN2015-00410)*

SUMMARY OF APPLICANT'S REQUEST

This request involves the redevelopment of the former Mesa Sunkist Growers fruit packing plant into a manufacturing facility and corporate headquarters for Autoline. This company is moving from its current home in Gilbert, and focuses principally on the manufacture of high performance auto parts, but also provides manufacturing services in the medical, aerospace and technology fields

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval of case BA15-049, *conditioned upon:*

- 1) *Compliance with the narrative and site plan submitted, except as may be modified by the conditions listed below;*
- 2) *Review and approval of an Administrative Design Review application for the materials and colors used in the remodeling of the building.*
- 3) *Review and approval of a Special Use Permit for a Comprehensive Sign Plan to allow the historic Sunkist Growers attached sign to remain.*
- 4) *Review, approval of a building permit application, and compliance with all requirements and conditions related to the issuance of that building permit.*

Of note, the staff recommendation includes review of a comprehensive sign plan for the historic sign. The Board should make note of this if a motion to approve this case with these recommendations is made. A second request would then be advertised for hearing next month to address the required SUP

SITE CONTEXT

CASE SITE: Vacated fruit packing plant, zoned DB-2
NORTH: Southern Pacific Railroad tracks, not zoned (right-of-way), and various industrial activities, zoned DB-2
EAST: Vacated site, former automobile sales lot, zoned DB-2
SOUTH: (Across Broadway Rd) Various general commercial, contractor and auto repair activities, zoned DB-2
WEST: (Across Country Club Dr) Paz de Cristo Charity Dining Facility

STAFF SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS:

As the east Valley, and Mesa in particular have grown in population, the primary land uses in the area have changed to support this growth, including a major change from an agricultural community to urban and suburban development. Part of this change in land use affected the citrus industry, and reduced the need for a

fruit packing plant in this area. The Sunkist facility has been vacant for several years, awaiting a new use. Autoline has proposed to redevelop the site as a manufacturing facility and corporate office, uses already authorized in the DB-2, Downtown Business 2 zoning district without additional review or requirements.

The general idea is to upgrade the historic building structure, including: replacement of the failing roof; removing unnecessary and screening; and replacing and revising perimeter landscaping, especially along Broadway Rd. The interior of the building will be gutted, and security, HVAC and other building components will be updated. Much of the described demolition has or is concurrently taking place on the property at this time.

In addition, the applicant wishes to incorporate into the building remodeling continued use of the historic Sunkist Growers sign painted on the south elevation of the building, facing Broadway Rd. SCIP applications are not authorized to specifically address deviations to sign ordinance requirements. However, a second request to specifically address this issue can be considered as a separate question as a Comprehensive Sign Plan at next month's Board meeting, while allowing the Board to act on the SCIP application.

Buildings and related development on this site date back to the 1930s and earlier. Some of the screening walls and street side landscaping relate to redevelopment efforts in the 1990s. For the most part, the development on the site compliance with dimensional requirements for setbacks, height, and perimeter landscaping. The building proposed to remain encroach 5.5-ft into the street side setback. A foundation base will be installed along the east elevation, varying from 10-ft deep to about 24-ft at the north end of the building.

Improvements related to the security enhancements include the placement of visitors parking spaces at the west driveway, increasing the height of the perimeter wall from 6-ft to 8-ft, and increasing abilities to use 'passive surveillance' adjacent to Broadway Rd by removing unnecessary screen walls that may be used as hiding places.

The applicant's narrative provides a description of applicable ordinance standards, and further describes how the proposed plan addresses each requirements. Staff is in agreement with the applicant's analysis of the applicability of these standards for this use, save for the historic sign mentioned previously.

ORDINANCE REQUIREMENTS:

Zoning Ordinance

Chapter 73, Substantial Conformance Improvement Permits (SCIPs)

Section 11-73-1 Purpose and Applicability

The purpose of this chapter is to establish a review process by which improvement standards required by this [Ordinance](#) can be incrementally installed on non-conforming sites when such sites are enlarged; buildings are replaced, extended or have additions constructed; or other site modification developed. The intent is to recognize existing site constraints, and work proportionately with the degree of improvement being sought by the applicant to also improve the property based upon the development standards adopted by the Ordinance, and therefore bring non-conforming developments into substantial compliance with this Ordinance through approval of a [Substantial Conformance Improvement Permit](#) (SCIP).

Section 11-73-2 Allowed Modifications

The only development requirements that may be modified in a [SCIP](#) are building setbacks, landscaping design, on-site parking, building height, right of way dedication, and other site development provisions, contained in this [Ordinance](#).

Section 11-73-3 Required Findings

A [SCIP](#) shall not be granted unless the [Zoning Administrator](#), acting as a [Hearing Officer](#), or [Board of Adjustment](#) shall find upon sufficient evidence that:

- A. The entire development site will be brought into substantial conformance. Substantial conformance shall mean physical improvements to the existing development site which constitute the greatest degree of compliance with this [Ordinance](#) that can be attained without causing or creating any of the following conditions:*
 - 1. The demolition or reconstruction of existing buildings or other significant structures (except signs); or*
 - 2. The cessation of the existing conforming use, or the preclusion of any other lawful, permitted use.*
 - 3. The creation of new non-conforming conditions.*
- B. The improvements authorized by the [SCIP](#) will result in a development that is compatible with, and not detrimental to, adjacent properties or neighborhoods.*

FINDINGS:

- 1.1 The existing building and development date back to at least the 1930s, and possibly earlier, based on historic aerial photography from Maricopa County. It was used as a cooperative fruit packing plant for citrus growers in this region. The facility has been vacant for the last several years.
- 1.2 The applicant is redeveloping the site with the idea of keeping the historic packing plan building intact, and upgrading the building structurally and technologically. Dead landscaping is being replaced, screening is being updated to focus on only the screening that is needed or required, and access and parking needs are being modernized.
- 1.3 The principal deviations from required development standards relate to the location of the existing building relative to the street, and reduced setbacks for landscaped area adjacent to Broadway Rd. Additional deviations relate to the depth of the foundations base requirements. As proposed, the degree of compliance proposed is proportional to the degree of change taking place on the site.
- 1.4 Although the building is not specifically listed on the Mesa Register of Historic Places, it does have significant historic value related to the economic development of Mesa as a farming community, and facilities used to ship principal crops to market. The applicant's intents of redeveloping the site in line with conserving the building shell and maintaining the historic sign are in line with goals expressed by the Mesa Historic Plan.
- 1.5 SCIP applications are limited to addressing questions related to the site development, and are not permitted to address issues related to signs. A separate request is needed to permit the historic sign to remain. The staff recommendation addresses this issue in condition 3, which requires the review and approval of a comprehensive plan to allow the historic sign to remain.