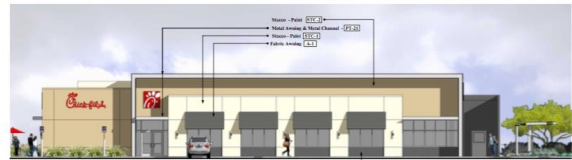


Planning, Land Use and Mobility Committee

**Case Report: DIR-2016-3785 - SPP
Chick-fil-A
20101 Ventura Boulevard,
Woodland Hills, CA 91364**



SOUTH ELEVATION



EAST ELEVATION



NORTH ELEVATION



WEST ELEVATION

PLUM Hearings: *March 2, 2017 (First Presentation)*
May 18, 2017 (Second Presentation)

WHWCNC Review: *June 14, 2017*

Case No: DIR-2016-3785 - SPP

Site Location: 20101 Ventura Boulevard.
Woodland Hills, CA 91364

Special Note: The Applicant's current request pertains **only to the demolition, grading, clean-up and site-prep aspects of this project**. As such, this Case Report examines only those issues. At a later date, when the Applicant is ready for the complete project to be considered, an ADDITIONAL Case Report will be written regarding the construction and design of the actual restaurant, as well as the unique traffic, safety and parking access issues associated with this location.

Project: The Applicant seeks a Project Permit Compliance per LAMC Section 11.5.7 to allow for the demolition of multiple gas station related buildings and grading (500 cubic yards of cut and 250 cubic yards of fill) on an [E] 39,890 sf former gas station site. Project is located within the Ventura/Cahuenga Boulevard Corridor Specific Plan. The proposed project on this 42,980 sf property will ultimately include the construction of a 4,698 sf restaurant with associated drive-through facilities. The restaurant will have 130 indoor seats, and 16 outdoor seats. There will be 47 parking spaces, including 2 handicap spaces, and there will be 4 bicycle parking spaces. The cue for the drive-thru has room for 16 cars at a time. The restaurant will employ approximately 50-60 people, with approximately 15 employees working at any one time during the day.

Request: 1) PROJECT PERMIT COMPLIANCE (SPP) PER LAMC SECTION 11.5.7 – Request is to allow for the demolition of multiple gas station related buildings and grading (500 cubic yards of cut and 250 cubic yards of fill) on an [E] 39,890 sf former gas station site. Project is located within the Ventura/Cahuenga Boulevard Corridor Specific Plan.

2) Environmental Assessment Form (EAF)

Applicant: Jennifer Daw, Chick-fil-A
15635 Alton Pkwy, Suite 350
Irvine, CA 92618
(404) 305-4834

Company/Firm: Chick-fil-A

Representative: Jonathan Lonner, Burns & Bouchard, Inc.
9619 National Blvd., Los Angeles, CA, 90034
310-802-4261 – office
310-802-4262 – direct
310-420-9165 - mobile
jlonner@burnsbouchard.com

Submitted By: Gilbert Yablon, WHWCNC PLUM Committee Member

Project Description (from the Applicant's Submission):

*The proposed project includes the site prep (i.e. grubbing, grading, etc.) and demolition of an existing gas station as well as **[though not included in the current request, which only pertains to demolition, grading and export]** the construction of a 4,698 sf restaurant with associated drive-through facilities. [Earthwork quantities consist of approximately 500 cubic yards of cut and 250 cubic yards of fill. 250 yards will be exported from the site.]*

*The proposed restaurant and drive-through **[which is not included in the current request]** is generally located on an irregularly shaped site at the intersection of Ventura Boulevard and Winnetka Avenue (both designated as Avenue II in the Mobility Plan 2035). The site is located within the Ventura/Cahuenga Boulevard Corridor Specific Plan and the Woodland Hills Streetscape District.*

The location at the intersection of Ventura Boulevard and Winnetka Avenue is a central hub to a number of residents, businesses, restaurants, and sundry shops. Being a major transit connection between the 101 Freeway and the Woodland Hills Community, these streets are very auto-centric.

The existing building on the site was the previous home to a gas station. The gas station has not been in operation in quite some time. In the years since, the site has been vacant and generally well maintained, however signs of minor unkempt landscaping is visible.

[Though not part of the current request] *The entitlement of this location as a restaurant with drive-thru options affords the site the ability to serve the population willing to walk, bike, and drive for a sit-down meal either indoors or outside on the patio while providing the operator an ability to serve the automobile traffic that utilizes Ventura Boulevard and Winnetka Avenue to commute to work an alternative to traditional fast food fare.*

[Though not part of the current request] *The store will contribute positively to the local economy, providing job opportunities within the community, purchasing goods and services required to operate the store, and maintaining the property in keeping with the local neighborhood. Collectively these contributions improve the aesthetic appeal and livability of the area. The location of the store will serve to increase the attraction, for both residents and businesses, to this area*

and will help to fuel the on-going commercial revitalization of the Ventura Blvd./Cahuenga Blvd Specific Plan corridor.

Requested Action:

- 1) Project Permit Compliance (SPP) per LAMC Section 11.5.7 – Request is to allow for the demolition of multiple gas station related buildings and grading (500 cubic yards of cut and 250 cubic yards of fill) on an {E} 39,890 sf former gas station site. Project is located within the Ventura/Cahuenga Boulevard Corridor Specific Plan.

- 2) Environmental Assessment Form (EAF)

APPLICANT’S SPECIFIC PLAN FINDINGS (from Applicant’s submission):

The project substantially complies with the applicable regulations, findings, standards and provisions of the Ventura/Cahuenga Boulevard Corridor Specific Plan (Ordinance No. 174,052)

The proposed project complies with all applicable development requirements of the Ventura/Cahuenga Boulevard Corridor Specific Plan, as follows:

- A. **Uses:** *The proposed project includes the site prep (i.e. grubbing, grading, etc.) and demolition of an existing gas station. [Earthwork quantities consist of approximately 500 cubic yards of cut and 250 cubic yards of fill. 250 cubic yards will be exported from the site.]*

The project is located in the Woodland Hills Streetscape District of the Specific Plan. However, as no construction is being applied for under this entitlement application the Streetscape District is not applicable.

- B. **FAR:** *No construction is being applied for under this entitlement application. As such this component of the Specific Plan is not applicable.*

- C. **Yards and Setbacks:** *No construction is being applied for under this entitlement application. As such this component of the Specific Plan is not applicable.*

Front: *n/a*

Side: n/a

Rear: n/a

D. **Lot Coverage:** No construction is being applied for under this entitlement application. As such this component of the Specific Plan is not applicable.

E. **Landscape - Parking Lots:** No construction is being applied for under this entitlement application. As such this component of the Specific Plan is not applicable.

F. **Landscape - Yards, Setbacks, and Building Frontages:** No construction is being applied for under this entitlement application. As such this component of the Specific Plan is not applicable.

G. **Height Limit:** No construction is being applied for under this entitlement application. As such this component of the Specific Plan is not applicable.

H. **Parking:** No construction is being applied for under this entitlement application. As such this component of the Specific Plan is not applicable.

I. **Signage:** No construction is being applied for under this entitlement application. As such this component of the Specific Plan is not applicable.

PARKING:

[Though not part of the current request] The proposed facility will have 47 parking spaces, including 2 handicap spaces. The drive-thru cue will hold 16 cars at a time. There will also be 4 bicycle parking spaces.

SPECIAL NOTE:

As noted on the cover page, the Applicant's current request pertains only to the demolition, grading, clean-up and site-prep aspects of this project. As such, this Case Report examines only those issues. At a later date, when the Applicant is ready for the complete project to be considered, an ADDITIONAL Case Report will be written regarding the construction and design of the actual restaurant, as well as the unique traffic, safety and parking access issues associated with this location. However, the Applicant provided a lot of important information regarding the full scope of the project during their first presentation to PLUM on March 2, 2017, and a lot of relevant feedback was provided to the Applicant from the PLUM committee. As such, the bulk of what was discussed at that

presentation is provided below for the record, though it may not all be relevant for the recommendation found in this specific report.

However, It should also be noted, that based on the Applicant's presentation and PLUM's interaction with the Applicant at the presentation as will be described below, the Applicant gathered input from the Committee and has been working on plan revisions to address PLUM's concerns. Since then they have requested approval to move ahead with the demolition only, and will be bringing further design proposals to be heard by PLUM when they are ready.

Points to Consider from the Applicant's First Presentation:

When the Applicant presented this project to PLUM on March 2, 2017, the Committee responded with both enthusiasm and concern. All of the Committee members were intrigued with the idea that a popular, highly regarded and well-maintained restaurant was being proposed for the currently run-down northwest corner of Ventura Boulevard and Winnetka Avenue. But concern came from an overwhelming awareness that this particular corner presents significant traffic, safety and accesses issues, especially for what is known to be a very popular, highly visited, fast food restaurant. PLUM had further concern that the Drive-Thru would further exacerbate the traffic and safety issues, as this heavily traveled corner location (with bordering traffic from Ventura Boulevard, Winnetka Avenue, and 4 traffic ramps from the Ventura Freeway) would not be able to accommodate street cueing if the restaurant's on-site Drive-Thru cue filled up. The additional automobile traffic, congestion and poorly placed legacy curb-cuts, combined with pedestrian traffic from Taft High School directly across the street, was described by one Committee member as "hundreds of lawsuits waiting to happen. And it wont be just against Chick-fil-A, it will be against the City, and it will be a huge problem."

The discussion focused largely on those traffic and safety issues, and several alternative traffic flow configurations were suggested by PLUM members for the Applicant to consider. The applicant was very receptive to the ideas that were offered, but pointed out that some of the more promising alternatives might violate certain requirements of the Specific Plan. This started a further discussion among PLUM members about whether safety concerns might be justification for the City granting a Specific Plan exception. One PLUM member pointed out that due to the context of the site there could be justification to get some variance in the Plan, because the justification would be safety. That statement opened up some possibilities, and the consensus among the PLUM members and the Applicant was that exploring other configurations was worth a try, and if the Applicant came up with a configuration that mediated the traffic and safety concerns PLUM

would support getting that safer configuration approved, even if a Specific Plan exception were required.

Additional Points to Consider from the Applicant's First Presentation:

The Applicant pointed out that this site has a large lot (almost an acre) and the circulation on it lets them change the drive-thru cue to be longer during busy hours – when they get to 15 cars, two employees go out into the parking lot to take orders and assist with traffic flow in the lot – they can re-arrange the drive-thru circulation to accommodate 26 cars. As mentioned earlier, some PLUM members were concerned about additional congestion in the lot when the drive-thru cue is re-arranged. Others thought that even a 26 car cue might not be enough to accommodate a popular restaurant like Chick-fil-A. And given that letting the cue overflow into the street is not an option for this location (due to extreme traffic flow issues at this intersection), PLUM voiced major concern about this.

The Committee voiced concern over the conflict between people in the drive-thru cue and people trying to get in and out of parking spaces when the drive-thru cars are in the way. Chick-fil-A said that the parking lot assistants would alleviate that problem, by helping direct traffic to get people in and out of their parking spots.

To help with safety, Applicant plans to limit ingress and egress to right turns only. However, PLUM pointed out that people tend to ignore those signs, and make the left turns anyway – creating the hazard in spite of the signs.

When asked if the current curb-cuts could be moved to facilitate better ingress, egress and safety, the Applicant informed PLUM that they couldn't move the driveways because there is a Metro Rapid bus stop right between their two curb cuts on Ventura Blvd. PLUM voiced concern about this, and considered the topic open for further exploration with DOT, Metro, and the Council Office.

One PLUM member pointed out that ingress and egress for a drive-thru is always a problem urbanistically.

Another PLUM member pointed out that there is a huge pedestrian component that is likely to be a safety hazard. Since the largest School in Woodland Hills (Taft High School) is right across the street, High School students will be walking to and from school, or waiting for the bus right there.

Another PLUM member pointed out that people coming from the west can't get to the restaurant in the morning (or any time for that matter),

because there are too many cars, and by the current traffic flow design, they can't turn left into the restaurant anyway.

Because of all the safety and traffic hazards that could be intensified by the traffic flow at the restaurant, if it is done wrong it could create a crisis – and then it may not be able to be fixed. Better to get the formula right before building.

It's a great location, but the problem is ingress and egress, as well as the pedestrian problem.

One PLUM member was concerned about the entrance that is close to the freeway.

When asked about employee parking, the Applicant talked about encouraging employees to take the bus and / or park off site. They pay for bus passes and off-site parking to help make that happen.

Some problems with re-arranging the restaurant on the lot are:

- 1 – ending up with the drive thru window on the passenger side
- 2 – forcing pedestrian customers to walk across the drive thru lane to get into the restaurant.
- 3 – not complying with the Ventura/Cahuenga Specific Plan

Current design is compliant with Ventura/Cahuenga Specific Plan.

Current design is complaint with density, height, parking spaces, landscape set back, trees per auto stall, etc.

Applicant offered to explore alternate configurations that would minimize traffic and safety issues, but pointed out that some of those configurations might not comply with the Ventura/Cahuenga Specific Plan.

PLUM offered to assist with possible Specific Plan variances, arguing that safety might be justification for the variance.

Additional Materials:

- 1) After an initial evaluation of the proposed site, and the fact-finding meeting with the Applicant on January 21, 2017, I had questions about traffic and safety issues that might arise. I contacted the Chair of the WHWCNC Safety Committee, and asked for input. He did a study of the location, and provided me with a document describing his Traffic Safety observations for the proposed site. That document is attached to end of this Case Report.

- 2) A satellite photograph of the site, scaled to match the Traffic Safety Observations document is attached to the end of this Case report, for visual reference.
- 3) Site Plan for the Project dated 3/3/2016, provided by the Applicant. This plan is likely to be revised going forward.
- 4) When I met with the applicant, I had prepared a list of questions I thought might be relevant to the case. Jonathan Lonner reviewed the questions, and provided them back to me with answers as an FAQ document. That document is attached to the end of this Case Report.

Additional Issues to Consider:

Again, It should be noted, that based on the Applicant's presentation and PLUM's interaction with the Applicant at the presentation as described the "Points to Consider" sections above, the Applicant gathered input from the Committee and has been working on plan revisions to address PLUM's concerns. Since then they have requested approval to move ahead with the demolition only, and will be bringing further design proposals to be heard by PLUM when they are ready.

**PLUM Committee Analysis
and Applicant Agreements:**

PLUM Motion:

As pertaining to Case DIR-2016-3785 – SPP, having held two public hearings for the application filed by Chick-fil-A for 1) A PROJECT PERMIT COMPLIANCE (SPP) PER LAMC SECTION 11.5.7 – to allow for the demolition of multiple gas station related buildings and grading (500 cubic yards of cut and 250 cubic yards of fill. *250 yards will be exported from the site.*) on an [E] 39,890 sf former gas station site, and 2) an Environmental Assessment Form (EAF) at 20101 Ventura Blvd., the Planning, Land Use and Mobility Committee hereby finds that:

WHEREAS, the application requests approval for demolition of the existing structures on the site, as well as grading of the site (including 500 cubic yards of cut, 250 cubic yards of fill, and 250 cubic yards of export); and,

WHEREAS, the applicant is requesting approval for demolition and grading only; and,

WHEREAS, the applicant would like to initiate the process and is requesting approval to move ahead with the demolition and grading; and,

WHEREAS, they have met all the criteria required for beginning demolition and grading;

THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED that the Planning, Land Use and Mobility Committee, for the findings and conditions stated herein, finds that the submitted demolition application from Chick-fil-A for the proposed project at 20101 Ventura Boulevard, should receive the support of the Board of the Woodland Hills-Warner Center Neighborhood Council for the requested actions.

Motion: Gilbert Yablon
Second: Ray Cole

Vote:	<u>Aye</u>	<u>Nay</u>	<u>Abstain</u>
	9	0	0