

Date: April 4, 2019
Project: Fonseca Building
Location: 1645 & 1647 South Tejon Street
To: Attn: Ryan Tefertiller
City of Colorado Springs
Land Use Review Division
Planning & Community Development

1645 & 1647 South Tejon Street – Project Statement

Project Description:

The applicant is seeking to renovate the existing building at 1645 South Tejon. The footprint of the building will remain as is, however the two addresses/buildings are located on the same parcel.

1645 South Tejon was originally a grocery store and warehouse. Its most recent use was The Blue Star Restaurant. The Blue Star was open for approximately 20 years in this location and was highly popular in the neighborhood and City. The Blue Star had a parking variance for this property allowing the use of 27 off-street parking stalls where 65 were required, however the parking variance was tied to the restaurant, not the property.

The current application is to convert the existing 8,783 s.f. restaurant at 1645 South Tejon into a “commercial center” with three different uses. The current tenant mix is assumed to be retail, a medical marijuana dispensary, and a bar/restaurant/music venue (refer to attached site plan for presumed areas). This tenant mix is not officially determined yet, but the mix of three different tenants in compliance with the definition of “commercial center” is officially determined.

As part of this submittal we are requesting a non-use variance to reduce the amount of parking required by the Zoning Code. The site consists of two buildings built to the sidewalk and a small land area in the back dedicated to drive aisle and parking. We are requesting a revocable permit to count the 11 existing on street parking stalls that are immediately adjacent to the 130'-6" of street frontage as it is not possible to add any more parking to the site. The site has 26 on-site stalls which brings the total to 37 parking stalls. The parking requirement for the mix of uses is 44. We are requesting to reduce this requirement by 15% bringing the required number of stalls down to the 37 that are provided. Unfortunately the site is fully built out and there is no room for any additional parking without demolition of existing, historic building area. The building Owner has explored many uses for the building and has now chosen to lower the “parking intense” uses that he had originally envisioned for the property (also less parking intensive than the previous City approved use). The Owner and applicant believe that this is a good compromise for functionality of the building, the Owner, the tenants, and the desires of the neighbors. See below for the responses to the City’s Nonuse variance criteria.

Non-Use Variance Review Criteria:

1. The property has extraordinary or exceptional physical conditions that do not generally exist in nearby properties in the same zoning district; and the extraordinary or exceptional physical condition of the property will not allow a reasonable use of the property in its current zone in the absence of relief; and the granting of the variance will not have an adverse impact upon surrounding properties.

The buildings in question have a long history in the neighborhood. They were built as a local neighborhood grocery store and associated warehouse. Over the years the uses of the buildings have changed, but they have always been locally oriented drawing neighbors for groceries, craft cocktails, and/or local food options. The buildings were built at a time when our City was oriented more toward local traffic and pedestrians rather than catering to the automobile. Zoning laws changed over the decades and brought this building out of compliance with local zoning codes. The build out of the site with existing buildings, a small parking lot, and being locked in by Tejon Street and the creek create a situation where it is impossible to add more parking. The number of existing parking stalls severely limit the use of the buildings to a level that doesn’t work for the building owner and would not be a benefit to the local neighborhood (ie. warehousing/industrial uses).

2. The proposed location of the vehicle will not create a pedestrian or vehicular safety problem; and the granting of the variance will not have an adverse impact upon the surrounding properties or neighborhood.

The parking for which a variance is being requested is already existing at the site. Therefore, the vehicular and pedestrian ways are what the neighborhood is used to and creates no additional impact on the surrounding properties. The parking will be re-striped, painted with one-way traffic arrows, and supplied with signage indicating the direction of traffic to add to the safety of the parking area. The current proposal also reduces the parking load of the previous building tenant which lowers the impact on surrounding properties. An existing fence on the east side of the property screens the entire length of the parking lot while vegetation screens the north.

3. The site has exceptional physical conditions, no reasonable uses within conformance of applicable zoning regulations, and no adverse impact on the neighborhood.

The Owner of the building has considered many types of uses for this building that is limited in existing space due to adjacent streets and a creek. The current proposal is a direct result of neighborhood input and benefits them by reducing the required parking from the former use. We believe this proposal brings the request into alignment with the intent of the Zoning Code and allows a reasonable use for an unreasonable parking situation.

Respectfully,
Echo Architecture, LLC
by

