



City of Sunnyvale

Agenda Item-No Attachments (PDF)

File #: 14-0382, Version: 1

REPORT TO THE ZONING ADMINISTRATOR

File #: 2013-7995

Location: 700 First Ave. (APN: 110-44-001)

Applicant / Owner: Bloom Energy (applicant) / Yahoo! (owner)

Proposed Project:

MOFFETT PARK SPECIAL DEVELOPMENT PERMIT to allow fuel cell boxes between the face of building and street, with partial screening from view

Reason for Permit: A Minor Moffett Park Special Development Permit is required for consideration of the location and configuration of improvements.

Project Planner: Timothy Maier, (408) 730-7257, tmaier@sunnyvale.ca.gov

Issues: Location, aesthetics

Recommendation: Approve with conditions

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

	Existing	Proposed
General Plan:	Moffett Park Specific Plan	Same
Zoning District:	Moffett Park Industrial	Same
Lot Size:	395,089 sq. ft.	Same
Total Building Size:	212,661 sq. ft.	Same
Parking (Total Yahoo! Campus):	1,565	Same
Landscaping (Total Yahoo Campus):	27%	Same
Setback:	35 ft.	Same

Previous Planning Projects related to Subject Application: The existing building was originally constructed in 2001 as part of a six-building campus for a single tenant. Since then, permits have been issued for rooftop mechanical equipment, tree removal, landscaping, and minor architectural changes.

Yes

Deviations from Standard Zoning Requirements The applicant requests a deviation from Sunnyvale Municipal Code (SMC) Section 19.48.100, which prohibits mechanical equipment from being installed between the face of a building and the street. The applicant also requests a deviation from SMC Section 19.38.020, which requires that mechanical equipment which exceeds sixteen inches in any dimension be screened. All setback requirements are met.	Yes
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Use Description: The applicant proposes to install five, partially screened ground-mounted fuel cell (Bloom) boxes between the face of building and street in the front yard of Building E of the Yahoo! campus (Attachment 4). The primary use of the fuel cells is to provide a portion of the site's electrical power requirements. No modifications are proposed to the existing building.

The fuel cell boxes contain a limited quantity of hazardous materials (Attachment 4). Staff have previously consulted with the Department of Public Safety regarding the siting and operation of fuel cells; the Department of Public Safety has expressed no concerns. The site is surrounded on all sides by properties zoned for industrial use.

Location: The proposed location of the fuel cell boxes lies adjacent to Building E of the Yahoo! campus, approximately 40 feet from the adjacent curb along First Avenue, and approximately 230 feet away from the property line at Mathilda Avenue (see attachments 3 and 6). The project site is located in the northeast "elbow" of Building E, within an area surrounded by a trash enclosure, generator, electrical transformer, and other mechanical and electrical equipment (Attachment 3).

City of Sunnyvale Municipal Code precludes the siting of mechanical equipment between the face of a building and the adjacent street. However, for operational and economic reasons, fuel cells require close proximity to buildings and existing infrastructure. The applicant has provided an analysis of potential project locations and justifications for selection of the proposed site (Attachment 4).

Site Layout: Each fuel cell is approximately 8 feet, 6 inches wide and 6 feet, 9 inches tall (Attachment 3). As a result of the configuration proposed, the lengths of the units vary from approximately 16 feet to approximately 25 feet, 6 inches (Attachment 3). As proposed, three banks of fuel cells will be configured in a cluster, and a single bank will be isolated and located approximately 15 feet to the north. In the cluster, three banks of fuel cells will be placed side-by-side, with a total depth of approximately 40 feet facing First Avenue; the isolated cell bank will be placed approximately 16 feet to the west, with a depth of 8 feet, 6 inches facing the adjacent street. The arrangement of units will be staggered so as to remain principally located within the existing landscaped area between the face of building and street, and to mostly avoid conflicts with surrounding easements (Attachment 3).

The site plan indicates the installation of two supporting concrete pads, one beneath each cluster of fuel cells, providing structural support for the proposed new equipment. The precast concrete underlying the two groupings of cells will have a total size of approximately 2,238 square feet. Ancillary equipment used for operation of the units is proposed to be located several feet south, on an auxiliary concrete pad (Attachment 3). Including concrete, each cell system will be no greater

than seven feet in height above grade.

Exterior Changes: No exterior modifications to the existing buildings are proposed.

Landscaping/Impervious Area: To accommodate the ground-mounted fuel cell units, approximately 2,238 square feet of landscaping will be removed and replaced with impervious material. In addition, a portion of the concrete pad required to support the cells will encroach approximately 6 feet into the 25-foot private landscape easement adjacent to First Avenue (Attachment 3). Vegetative screening will be added, helping to offset some of the loss of landscaping. Despite the net loss of vegetation, the Yahoo! campus overall exceeds the minimum landscaped area required by Code.

Aesthetics: First Avenue lies approximately 40 feet beyond the project site, and existing pedestrian walkways run along the front of the building, with ground-level concrete support pads as close as 19 feet behind the back of sidewalk.

The fuel cells boxes are composed of a high-quality metal exterior with a smooth finish. As seen in Attachment 6, several “living walls” and shrubs will provide partial screening of the units from First Avenue. Proposed landscaping will shield ground-level concrete from view, while the fuel cell units themselves will remain partially visible to both pedestrians and motorists traveling on First Avenue. Given the presence of landscaping and distance from street frontages, in a project site dominated by utility equipment within the context of Moffett Park, staff finds aesthetic impacts to surroundings to be minimal.

Parking: The Yahoo! campus has a total of 1,565 parking stalls. The proposed project will not impact parking or circulation patterns of the site, as no modifications to the parking lot area or surrounding street are proposed.

Public Contact: Eight notices were sent to surrounding property owners, including the subject and adjacent sites, in addition to standard noticing practices which include advertisement in the Sunnyvale Sun Newspaper and on-site posting. No letters or calls were received from the public by staff.

Environmental Determination: A Categorical Exemption Class 5 (minor changes in use) relieves this project from CEQA provisions.

FINDINGS

Moffett Park Specific Plan Goals and Policies-Guiding Principles and Objectives:

The City of Sunnyvale Moffett Park Specific Plan (MPSP) establishes goals and policies for development in the Moffett Park Specific Plan area. Section 19.29.100 of the City of Sunnyvale Municipal Code states that the Director of Community Development or Planning Commission may approve any Minor Moffett Park Special Development Permit upon such conditions, in addition to those expressly provided in other applicable provisions of this code, as it finds desirable in the public

interest, upon finding that the permit will both:

(A) Attain the objectives and purposes of the MPSP:

The project attains the primary purpose of the MPSP objectives based on the following policies of the City of Sunnyvale Moffett Park Specific Plan:

Guiding Principles

- *Guiding Principle 2.0:* Encourage and support emerging industries.
- *Guiding Principle 4.0:* Provide opportunity for strategic retention and attraction of business and private investment.
- *Guiding Principle 6.0:* Streamline the land use permit and environmental review approval process.
- *Guiding Principle 10.0:* Incorporate sustainable design and green building concepts into private and public projects.

Implementation and Administration Objectives

Specific Plan Objective IMP-4: Allow for flexibility with the Specific Plan so that it is responsive to changes in the marketplace.

Bloomenergy is a Sunnyvale-based company which designs and manufactures fuel cells (Bloom boxes) locally, contributing to growth in the emerging clean energy industry. Innovative technology, fuel cells produce alternative sources of power which support sustainable growth and allow for flexible provision of power desired by local technology-based industries.

(B) Ensure that the site improvements, general appearance of proposed structures, and the uses to be made of the property to which the application refers, will not impair the orderly development of, or the existing uses being made of, adjacent properties:

The project has attained primary design objectives of the Specific Plan, as the proposed addition of fuel cells is confined to the Yahoo! campus and does not impact surrounding land use or circulation. The proposed project site features existing mechanical and electrical equipment, and the siting of fuel cells will maintain compatibility with the current land use in that portion of the Yahoo! campus. New vegetation will partially screen the fuel cells from view, helping to counteract the adverse effects of added impervious surface, while conforming to, and complementing, the design of existing landscaping.

Moffett Park Specific Plan Goals and Policies-Community Design:

The project achieves the following specific policies related to Community Design as delineated in Chapter 6 of the MPSP:

Site Planning

1. Service areas for trash bins, utility cabinets, transformers, etc. should be planned and designed as an integral part of the site.

As proposed, the fuel cells will be located in an area surrounded by existing mechanical and electrical equipment and will conform to the land use in the immediate vicinity of the proposed project site.

Landscaping

1. Landscaping serves a variety of purposes and shall be designed to serve multiple needs.

Sustainable Design and Green Building Techniques

1. Impervious surfaces, including parking areas, shall be kept to the minimum amount necessary to adequately serve the use.
2. Impervious surface design shall incorporate methods to reduce impacts such as heat island effect and stormwater runoff. Use of light colored materials, vegetation, permeable pavement, tree shading, phasing of parking, are examples of methods to address the negative impacts of impervious surfaces.

Although the project would increase the amount of impermeable area due to the installation of fuel cell boxes and supporting concrete pads, the proposed new impervious surface is minimal compared to existing landscaping, and falls below the threshold requiring preparation of a Stormwater Management Plan. Added vegetation will aid in balancing the negative consequences of urban runoff, and new landscaping provide shading to reduce the heat island effect of additional impermeable surfaces, improving overall site conditions. Proposed vegetation will partially screen new equipment and conform to existing landscaping, resulting in an appearance consistent with intended site design.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Approve the Minor Moffett Park Special Development Permit with recommended Conditions in Attachment 2.
2. Approve the Minor Moffett Park Special Development Permit with modifications.
3. Deny the Minor Moffett Park Special Development Permit.

RECOMMENDATION

Alternative 1. Approve the Minor Moffett Park Special Development Permit with recommended Conditions in Attachment 2.

Prepared by: Timothy Maier, Project Planner
Approved by: Gerri Caruso, Principal Planner

ATTACHMENTS

1. Vicinity and Noticing Maps
2. Standard Requirements and Recommended Conditions of Approval
3. Site and Architectural Plans
4. Letter from the Applicant
5. Site Photographs
6. Existing Project Site and Rendering of Proposed Site