



City of Sunnyvale

Agenda Item-No Attachments (PDF)

File #: 18-1091, **Version:** 1

REPORT TO THE ZONING ADMINISTRATOR

File #: 2018-7810

Location: 1260 N Mathilda Avenue (APN: 110-25-051)

Applicant / Owner: Bloomenergy (applicant) / JSR Micro Inc (owner)

Proposed Project:

VARIANCE to allow installation of mechanical equipment (Bloomenergy servers and other ancillary equipment) between the face of the building and the street.

Reason for Permit: A Variance is required for mechanical equipment proposed to be located between the face of the building and the street, per Sunnyvale Municipal Code Section 19.48.100 (Mechanical equipment - Setback requirements).

Project Planner: Kelly Cha, (408) 730-7408, kcha@sunnyvale.ca.gov

Recommendation: Approve the Variance with Conditions of Approval.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed project requests a Variance to allow for the installation of mechanical equipment between the face of the building and the street. The mechanical equipment, which includes eight Bloomenergy servers and other ancillary equipment, will be screened with an 8-foot (97 inches) tall fence with vertical green slats on each of the south and west sides of the equipment area. The applicant proposes to add vines to the fences to mitigate the visual impact from the street and mimic the trees and landscaping within the site. Findings for the Variance can be found in Attachment 3.

The Bloomenergy servers and ancillary equipment would provide clean energy for the site as an alternative to power from the existing energy grid. The servers would generate clean, reliable power onsite with minimal environmental impact, according to the applicant (Attachment 6).

The proposed enclosure for the Bloomenergy equipment will cover approximately 6,475 square feet, and will remove approximately 4,410 square feet of landscaped area from the project site. It would result in a total of approximately 118,883 square feet of landscaped area, which is more than the minimum landscaped area required for the project site. The proposed enclosure does not impact the amount of parking spaces on the project site. Attachment 2 includes a project data table that provides detailed information of the project site conditions. Attachment 5 includes architectural plans for the site and the outdoor equipment area for Bloomenergy server equipment.

Previous Planning Projects related to Subject Application: • MPP 2017-7124: Installation of a new 600-ton cooling tower adjacent to an existing building, which includes a 10-foot tall fence with slats to match existing screening on two sides of the tower. This increased the total equipment area on the site to 6,600 square feet or 1.14% of the net lot area. • MPP 2015-7607: Installation of a new 600-ton cooling tower adjacent to an existing building, which includes a 10-foot tall fence with slats to match existing screening on two sides of the tower. • MPP 2011-7626: Installation of ground-mounted mechanical equipment fully screened and resulting in less than 5% incidental and accessory storage. • MPP 2008-0897: Installation of a 260-square foot accessory utility building.	Yes
Neighborhood Preservation Complaint:	No
Deviations from Standard Zoning Requirements: • The applicant is requesting a deviation from the City of Sunnyvale Municipal Code Section 19.48.100, which prohibits mechanical equipment from being located between the face of the building and the street.	Yes

Background

The project site is located within the Moffett Park Specific Plan Area, at the southeast corner of N Mathilda Avenue and W Java Drive. The site is surrounded by industrial uses, including the Yahoo! Campus and Lockheed Martin buildings. The buildings are generally located in the center of the site facing N Mathilda Avenue. Other existing buildings, surface parking lots are located facing W Java Drive as well as N Mathilda Avenue. The property is buffered from both streets with landscaped areas.

The proposed enclosure for the Bloomenergy servers and ancillary equipment meets setback requirements for the project site, but it is located in between the face of the existing warehouse building and the street (W Java Drive). Sunnyvale Municipal Code Section 19.48.100 prohibits any mechanical equipment being located between the face of building and the street. Therefore, the proposed location for the Bloomenergy servers and ancillary equipment requires a Variance.

Site Layout and Outdoor Equipment Area

The project site is a corner lot with two street frontages. The existing buildings are generally facing N Mathilda Avenue at the northwest corner of the lot. The site has north and south positioned surface parking lots fronting both N Mathilda Avenue and W Java Drive. Landscaping along each street frontage buffers the site from vehicular traffic. The existing solid waste collection area is located at the southeast corner of the site.

A previous permit for outdoor equipment (MPP 2017-7124) indicates that the total equipment area for the project site is 6,600 square feet (1.14% of the net lot area). The proposed outdoor equipment area for this project would add approximately 6,475 square feet to the total outdoor equipment area for the site, and would increase the total percentage to 2.25%. Sunnyvale Municipal Code allows up

to 5% of outdoor equipment area in the industrial zoning districts without a Use Permit approval.

Aesthetics

As stated previously, the Bloomenergy servers and ancillary equipment will be screened with approximately 8-foot tall fences with vertical green slats. The applicant proposes to add vines and shrubs to mitigate visual impacts of the fence materials and mimic the existing landscaping around the building façade.

The screening fences are only proposed on the south and west sides of the outdoor equipment area. The mechanical equipment would be exposed on the east side without screening. The east side of the outdoor equipment area is screened from the street (N Mathilda Avenue) due to the existing building; however, the proposed mechanical equipment would be exposed from users and visitors of the project site, as there are walkways and a surface parking lot nearby. Therefore, staff has added a Condition of Approval AT-1 to construct fencing with slats around all three sides of the outdoor equipment to completely screen the mechanical equipment from view. The Condition also requires vines and shrubs to the fences to mimic the existing trees and landscaping around on the site.

With the added condition of approval to require further screening, staff considers the aesthetic impacts to the surrounding uses to be minimal. Furthermore, the site is surrounded by industrial uses with similar equipment enclosures. The site has existing landscaped areas that buffer the view along W Java Drive. The proposed fencing with additional landscaping should minimize visual impact. Renderings illustrating how the proposed screening would appear from W Java Drive can be found in Attachment 7.

Public Contact: 20 notices were sent to surrounding property owners and residents adjacent to the subject site in addition to standard noticing practices, including 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 3 (new construction or conversion of small structure) relieves this project from CEQA provisions.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Approve the Variance with recommended Conditions of Approval in Attachment 4.
2. Approve the Variance with modifications.
3. Deny the Variance.

RECOMMENDATION

Alternative 1. Approve the Variance with recommended Conditions of Approval in Attachment 4.

Prepared by: Kelly Cha, Associate Planner

Approved by: Ryan Kuchenig, Senior Planner

ATTACHMENTS

1. Vicinity and Noticing Map
2. Project Data Table
3. Recommended Findings
4. Recommended Conditions of Approval
5. Site and Architectural Plans
6. Letter from the Applicant
7. Rendering of the Outdoor Equipment Area