

Washington-Centinela Market Hall Frequently Asked Questions

Parking and Traffic:

1. Q: How will you prevent the Market Hall customers and employees from parking in my neighborhood?

A: The Agency is proposing methods to prohibit parking and traffic intrusion into the abutting residential neighborhoods. These include traffic diversions at the end of the commercial lot depth and traffic diverters in the garage which only allow turning movement toward the commercial area and prevent turning into the residential area. Further, the City is willing to work with the neighborhood to establish a parking district and traffic calming methods that eliminate commercial parking in the residential area and slow vehicles.
2. Q: Why build extra parking?

A: The parking structure will provide 40 extra parking spaces that can be used by Market Hall customers or nearby businesses that do not have sufficient parking of their own. The availability of extra parking will further discourage customers from parking in the adjacent neighborhood.
3. Q: Why does a “pedestrian oriented” project require extra parking?

A: A pedestrian friendly development includes uses that support pedestrian activity and opportunities for alternative travel to the facility including biking or riding the bus. It also requires ample auto parking so that those who cannot conveniently walk, bike or bus to the project, can park and not create spill over neighborhood parking problems.
4. Q: Why can't we build the parking garage on the northeast corner instead?

A: The northeast corner is too small and its odd shape does not provide an efficient parking design.
5. Q: I fear gang activity, vandalism, and graffiti at the parking garage. How will you prevent this from occurring?

A: Much like the parking structures downtown, the proposed parking structure will be operated with staff to patrol and maintain it. In addition, it will be secured when not in use in order to prevent unwanted behavior. Security lighting, a roll-up gate and locking pedestrian doors will also be installed.
6. Q: What hours will the parking structure be open?

A: Though the operation of the parking structure is still being analyzed, the current thinking is to have it operate the same hours as the Market Hall and close by midnight.
7. Q: How will you prevent traffic from encroaching into the neighborhood?

A: As previously noted, the design will include traffic control measures that only allow turning movement away from the residential area.
8. Q: Why not only one entrance into the parking structure off Centinela? If you need two entrances, why not use Washington Boulevard instead of Colonial Ave.?

A: Parking structures of this size could operate with one entrance/exit; however, in order to minimize the number of vehicles using Colonial Avenue, a second access was added on Centinela Avenue. Access was not provided from Washington Boulevard because it would disrupt the pedestrian orientation and traffic flow along that street and reduce the already small market hall development.

9. Q: What is to prevent the garage from being used for overnight parking?
A: As in downtown Culver City, the parking structure will adopt a no overnight parking policy. The parking operator staff will patrol the structure on a regular basis and issue citations and order towing when necessary to minimize nuisance.
10. Q: Can a roof be added to the top floor of the garage in order to minimize noise?
A: While adding a roof limits some noise transmission it also adds considerable cost to the project, which has not been budgeted. Vehicle noise will also largely be mitigated by construction of a solid wall abutting to the residential uses. To prevent loitering, the landscaped setback area separating the residential use from the market hall on Colonial Avenue will be enclosed by a fence that includes a gate that locks.
11. Q: Will left-hand turn signals be installed at Washington Boulevard and Centinela Avenue?
A: Traffic improvements (including left-hand turn signals) will be studied by the City's traffic engineer and if warranted, they will be installed as part of the project.

Design/Use:

12. Q: Why a Market Hall and not a museum, a Trader Joe's, Bristol Farms or Whole Foods store instead?
A: The demographics and size of the site do not support a Bristol Farms or Whole Foods store. Trader Joe's looked at the site previously, but found it too small to meet their needs and subsequently located in Marina Del Rey. New construction projects demand higher rents than most Museums can afford.
13. Q: What if we don't build a Market Hall, what else could be built?
A: The Commercial General Zoning allows up to a 56' high mixed-use project with residential above commercial uses or an all-commercial use such as offices, retail, services and restaurants. A drive-thru Walgreens was interested in the NW corner at one time. A multi-tenant retail use (mini mall) would also be a feasible.
14. Q: We have too many expensive restaurants in the area I cannot afford to eat at. Will the Market Hall be more of the same?
A: When an area undergoes revitalization, restaurants are the first uses to move in because rents are low. Rents are typically low due to the poor condition of the area, the poor condition of buildings in the area and the lack of commercial activity. Experienced restaurateurs are able to see an area's potential and are willing to invest when others are not. Experienced restaurateurs develop restaurants that are attractive and desirable, which enables them to charge more for their product.

The Market Hall will provide a variety of choices for food service and product options with a range of prices. Many Market Halls have cafes with reasonably priced meals from \$6 to \$15. Kiosks serving individual gourmet food items are even less expensive. The intent is create a place where neighbors can walk to, purchase food items, a newspaper or magazine, coffee or a sandwich, and relax and socialize in one of the outdoor dining areas located on the first floor or upper floor deck facing Washington Boulevard.

15. Q: Why not attract retailers instead of a Market Hall?
A: Though some food service will be a part of the Market Hall, it is primarily comprised of retail and food related product sales. Retailers are risk averse and restaurants are risk takers when an area is undergoing revitalization so retailers typically move into a neighborhood after it has established itself. The Market Hall with some small food related cafes and related retail partly addresses this concern.

16. Q: Why does the project need to be this size – why can't it be smaller?
A: The proposed project is low-rise at 1 to 2 stories. The second floor makes the project more financially feasible to construct and is proposed to also include an open air common seating area where customers can relax or dine after making their purchases in the Market Hall.
17. Q: Why not build a 1-story structure or a smaller project?
A: The development is intended to provide a prominent, architecturally significant project on the two corners of Washington Blvd. and Centinela Avenue and help spur additional reinvestment in the area. A smaller, less attractive development will have less impact. Also the proposed project is small at approximately half the size of your neighborhood Ralph's or Von's Supermarket.
18. Q: What if a Market Hall is unsuccessful?
A: The Market Hall design includes demising walls that are easily altered for smaller or larger tenants and/or for other more traditional retail and service uses if changes are required. However, given the revitalization interest in the area that the Agency has been able to achieve, the Market Hall should be a success. Also given the code related parking requirements, major variations from the proposal will be impractical.
19. Q: How do we ensure that the Market Hall tenants are high quality?
A: The City's agreement with the developer will require the City to approve any Market Hall tenants for the first five years. This is the same process used for all Agency projects.
20. Q: Can we get a bookstore instead of the Market Hall?
A: Border's just filed for bankruptcy. Bookstores are currently contracting, not expanding due in part to competition from on-line retailers and the increased use of electronic devices to read books in lieu of hard copies.
21. Q: Can the City subsidize rent to attract a tenant, such as a bookstore?
A: The Agency is prohibited from subsidizing rent for tenants in a newly constructed building, which is why the City's agreement with the developer will include approval rights for the first five years. During the five year period staff will work with the developer to identify tenants that are desirable and financially feasible. Following the five year period the Agency can assist with certain tenant improvements to attract desirable tenants, but not rent.
22. Q: Can the current plan be modified?
A: The JRDV conceptual designs are preliminary, but they reflect the desire to provide a an attractive low rise, pedestrian serving retail project that capitalizes on the redevelopment that is currently underway in the area.
23. Q: Why does the City have to do anything at the site – why can't you just sell it?
A: The City is involved in order to control the site's development. Without City involvement, it would likely be sold to the highest qualified bidder. Commercial businesses currently acquiring property of this size for development include Walgreens (with a drive-through), Fresh & Easy and 7-Eleven. Additional permitted uses include mixed-use residential, office, automotive parts/repair and other uses allowed by the zoning.

The Redevelopment Agency expended significant staff time and resources to acquire the property and prepare it for redevelopment for a project that will revitalize the area.

The abutting residents wanted an attractive, low rise, pedestrian serving project which the proposed Market Hall provides.

24. Q: This was a waste of tax payer money – why did you purchase it in the first place?

A: Agencies are in the business of revitalizing neighborhoods. To implement the Visioning Workshop Plan and the Redevelopment Plan and promote revitalization of the area, the Agency acquired the blighted property (an abandoned gas station, run down shops and liquor store). When the surrounding commercial area is entirely revitalized the Agency's significant efforts will be realized. The commercial area has been neglected for many decades and this effort by the Agency reflects the intent and desire to turn the area around.

Q: Why build a market hall near the Von's?

A: The Market Hall will provide a unique retail development that is distinct from an ordinary supermarket. The Market Hall will offer special food, related retail sales, small retail shops specializing in food services and products and small cafes and kiosks. The small scale and pedestrian orientation will make it a unique place to shop, grab a quick, inexpensive meal or leisurely go for Sunday breakfast. It will serve the needs of nearby residents who can walk, bike or drive to it and will fit within the community with more than adequate parking and an attractive open-air design.