



**CITY OF SANTA MARIA**  
**PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT**

AUGUST 16, 2023

**BETTERAVIA PLAZA CHEVRON PLANNED DEVELOPMENT PERMIT AND  
CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT AT THE NORTHEAST CORNER OF BETTERAVIA  
ROAD AND WALKER AVENUE.**

**Property Location: Northeast Corner of Betteravia Road and Walker Avenue**

Review of a Planned Development Permit (PD2021-0010) and Conditional Use Permit (U2023-0015) for Morris Kautz Jr. to construct a 10-pump fueling station, electric vehicle charging facility, and carwash with a 6,100-square-foot convenience store with second-floor office/storage area, and a 2,500-square-foot drive-through restaurant on a 2.9-acre site in a PD/C-2 (Planned Development/General Commercial) district.

Environmental: The Project was adequately covered in a previously adopted Environmental Impact Report (SCH# 2015011029) and only minor technical changes were required; therefore, an Addendum has been prepared pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act State Guidelines Section 15164.

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

That the Planning Commission take the following actions:

1. By resolution, approve an Addendum to the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) prepared for the Betteravia Plaza Chevron project;
2. By motion, approve Planned Development Permit PD2021-0010; and
3. By motion, approve Conditional Use Permit U2023-0015

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**BACKGROUND**

The project site is located on West Betteravia Road, at the northeast corner of Betteravia Road and newly constructed Walker Avenue (Attachment A – Vicinity Map). The project site is zoned PD/C-2 (Planned Development/General Commercial) and is undeveloped. Surrounding land uses include the remainder of the Betteravia Plaza Master Plan area to the north and west, including the recently approved Las Brisas Apartments (formerly Betteravia Place) to the north, and vacant commercial land to the west and northwest. Various industrial uses are to the east across the Santa Maria Valley Railroad tracks and to the south across Betteravia Road.

### History of Betteravia Plaza Site

On February 2, 2016, the City Council adopted a Development Agreement and Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) to allow for future commercial, office, high-density residential, and open space uses. A Planned Development Permit with a conceptual layout for future development on the site was subsequently approved by the Planning Commission on February 3, 2016. Two years later in 2018, the Planning Commission also approved a Tentative Tract Map (Betteravia Plaza Tract 6008) to subdivide the site into 22 lots. On February 7, 2023, the City Council adopted an Addendum to the FEIR, General Plan Amendment and Zone Change, and approved two Planned Development Permits to allow for the construction of 443 residential apartment units (Las Brisas Apartments) on lots 1 through 4 of the Betteravia Plaza Tract 6008, which are located along the northern boundary of the tract, parallel to Carmen Lane. Building permits for the apartments have been submitted and are currently under review. The entire Betteravia Plaza project area has been mass graded, and the public roads and accompanying infrastructure are currently under construction.

### Planning Commission Study Session

The project was presented to the Planning Commission at the July 20, 2023, study session public meeting. Commissioners discussed vehicular circulation in and around the project site, fueling hose length, carwash, vacuum noise, and building finish material. Commissioners requested additional information from staff regarding the noise study completed for the project as well as the queuing analysis for the drive through. This information has been provided in the discussion section below.

## **DISCUSSION**

The applicant, Morris Kautz Jr. is requesting a Planned Development Permit to construct a 10-pump fueling station with accompanying carwash, convenience store with second floor office and storage, a drive-through restaurant, and nine-space electric charging facility. The request is being processed through a Conditional Use Permit for the gas station, carwash and drive-through restaurant, and a Planned Development Permit for the site and building design.

### Architecture

The proposed commercial building is oriented facing west, toward the fueling canopy. The patio seating for the drive-through restaurant is located to the north of the building and is shielded from traffic on Betteravia Road. The building's architecture utilizes a combination of materials to create a compatible buffer between the Spanish style apartments to the north and the older industrial buildings to the south. The primary finish material is stucco, with tile and wood-pattern panels, which wrap around the entire building. The lower elevations then transition to metal tower elements and a brown standing seam roof. Large windows bring light into the interior of the building and provide interest to the building's exterior. At 32'-4" tall, the building complies with the height maximum of 40-feet for the underlying C-2 district.

## Vehicular Circulation and Access

The site is accessed from two driveways on Walker Avenue. The entry to the carwash and drive-through restaurant are from the southern driveway, though vehicles can maneuver through the interior of the site to reach the entries to both as well. The drive-through restaurant is equipped with a ten-car queuing length, which has been reviewed and accepted by Public Works Engineering and Planning Division staff. The applicant has stated that the intended tenant to the drive-through would be the typical fast-food chain seen at other Chevron gas stations. Given the coffee provided within the convenience store, the owner/operator of the gas station would be disinclined to lease to a competing user on the same site, so morning peak-hour queuing issues common among coffee shop drive throughs are unlikely to occur. The applicant has stated the likely tenant for the restaurant will be a national burger chain. At the July 2023 Study Session, the Planning Commission was concerned that the drive through lane did not provide adequate queuing space. Staff reviewed a recent queuing study completed by Associated Transportation Engineers (ATE) for a recent similar project in the City, Park Edge Mixed Use, the average maximum queuing length for a national hamburger chain is between 8.5 and 10 vehicles. With queuing for ten vehicles, the project provides sufficient queuing based on this data. In addition, condition of approval no. 6 is incorporated to require the drive-through operator to monitor their drive-through queue and to take operational measures to address any spillover into the drive aisles.

## Parking

The project is required to provide 63 parking spaces and 75 parking spaces are provided. Additionally, 12 bicycle parking spaces are provided. A breakdown of the parking requirements is as follows:

### *Drive Through Restaurant*

The Santa Maria Municipal Code (SMMC) requires restaurant projects that include a drive-through window to provide a minimum of ten spaces plus an additional parking space for every 105-square-feet over 1,000-square-feet of gross floor area. However, the project may also apply a parking credit at the rate of half a space for every 24-linear-feet of drive-through lane, not to exceed a credit of three spaces. The required parking for the quick serve restaurant without the drive through lane credit is 24 spaces. With the credit for the more than 190-linear foot drive-through lane, the required number of spaces is 21 spaces.

### *Convenience Store*

The SMMC requires convenience stores which sell alcoholic beverages and prepared food intended to be consumed on site or in the vicinity of the store, shall provide one space for each 210-square-feet of gross floor area. For the purpose of this section, prepared food means hot dogs, hamburgers, slices of pizza, deli sandwiches, tacos, burritos, and similar convenience foods. It should be noted that alcoholic beverages are not proposed nor permitted with this Planned Development permit, (see Condition of Approval no. 23). Approval of a separate Conditional Use Permit and/or a possible finding

of Public Convenience or Necessity would be required. The 6,100-square foot convenience store requires 29 parking spaces, and the second floor 1,777-square-foot office/storage requires seven spaces for a subtotal of 36 parking spaces.

### *Carwash*

Carwashes do not have an explicit parking ratio, however the closest use identified in the Santa Maria Municipal Code describes automobile service stations and auto repair shops required to provide three spaces for each lubrication stall, service rack or pit, and service bay. As there are two carwash tunnels, six parking spaces are required.

### Noise

The carwash is required to be constructed to include sufficient noise attenuation and shielding of the carwash dryer to protect sensitive receptors (residents of the apartments to the north) from operational noise impacts. The provisions of the Noise Element of the Santa Maria General Plan include maximum ambient noise levels that all uses must abide by. The ambient base noise levels are as follows 55/45 dBA for residential daytime/nighttime hours respectively, and 65/60 dBA for commercial daytime/nighttime hours. Although not stated in the City's noise ordinance, the City's General Plan defines daytime as 7:00a.m. to 10:00p.m. and nighttime as 10:00 p.m. to 7:00a.m. A Noise Assessment was prepared by AMBIENT Air Quality & Noise Consulting (Appendix D of the EIR Addendum, Attachment D). The report provided an analysis of noise impacts associated with the proposed car wash project and provided a summary of existing conditions in the project area and applicable noise standards. Recommendations to minimize operational noise levels and to better ensure compliance with City noise standards were provided, including limiting operational hours to daytime only, enclose the carwash with masonry block or similar, install manufacturer-recommended shroud and/or mounding the blower motors behind the exterior façade of the car wash, noise barrier along the northern property line, etc. (AMBIENT, 2023).

The project proposes a centralized motor vacuum system, in which the loud motors are entirely enclosed within a solid masonry building. These centralized vacuums are designed to be quieter than the car wash vacuums with individual motors that are outside, adjacent to the vacuum stations, rather than in a centralized, enclosed location away from the residential boundary. Additionally, the Planned Development Permit includes conditions of approval requiring the developer and carwash operator to install and maintain noise reduction measures such as an eight-foot-tall solid masonry boundary wall to separate the commercial use from the residential uses to the north, limits to the operational hours of the carwash (8:00 am to 9:00 pm), required construction materials to be used for the carwash itself to contain the noise, installing a shroud around the dryer blowers and mounting the blower motors behind the exterior façade of the carwash. These measures would bring ambient exterior noise levels down to acceptable levels according to City standards (55dBA for residential during daytime hours).

The residential development to the north is required to be constructed to include sufficient noise attenuation to maintain interior noise levels to City standards for residential use as well. Typically, this includes double-paned windows on all windows exposed to traffic or railroad noise, glazing area limitations, solid-core doors, and walls insulated in conformance with California Title 24 requirements. This will further reduce any noise related impacts to the adjacent residential uses as a result of the proposed project.

### Landscape

Over twenty-two percent of the site is landscaped area, exceeding the required 15 percent minimum for commercial districts in the SMMC. A large portion of this landscaping is provided by the lush perimeter landscaping. The project will plant eight street trees and 30 on-site trees. The average landscaped setback area is at least 15-feet in width and is to be planted with low to medium water using flowering plants and bunch grasses.

The project also includes connections from the Betteravia Project area off Walker Avenue to the City-owned multi-purpose trail. Pedestrian amenities including benches and shade trees are to be provided on site for neighborhood users to enjoy. An outdoor dining patio is also proposed for the restaurant. Conditions of approval ensure maintenance and upkeep of any patio umbrellas, and also require adequate wind screening for the comfort of diners against the prevailing wind.

### Health Risk Assessment and Air Quality

Service stations are subject to Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District (SBCAPCD) requirements, rules, and regulations including the requirement to obtain an Authority to Construct (ATC) permit from the SBAPCD prior to building permit issuance. The City provided the project application materials for early consultation with SBCAPCD as a courtesy review to ensure that the proposed fueling/service station conceptual plans are designed according to SBCAPCD standards. During the review of the application, a Hazard Risk Assessment (HRA) was prepared to demonstrate that the operation of project-related equipment does not cause a significant risk to the surrounding community and nearby sensitive receptors (i.e., residences, schools, elder care homes, etc.). SBCAPCD Air Quality Specialists provided comments and corrections to the technical information provided for the HRA and the Air Quality assessment that was also prepared. Based on this analysis, the residential and worker receptors in close proximity to the project would not be exposed to Toxic Air Contaminants (TACs) at levels above significance thresholds established by SBCAPCD. Conditions of approval recommended by the SBCAPCD in a letter dated March 10, 2023, to reduce Greenhouse Gases have been incorporated into the permit.

### Environmental

An Addendum to the Final Environmental Impact Report (EIR) prepared for the Betteravia Plaza project was completed in accordance with Section 15164 of the CEQA Guidelines. Specifically, there are no substantial changes which have occurred in respect to the circumstances under which the modified Betteravia Plaza project will be undertaken.

There is no new information regarding potential significant effects that have come to light in the review of the proposed Betteravia Plaza project, including in the topics of Energy, Wildfire, and the use of Vehicle Miles Traveled, which were not analyzed in the 2015 EIR. The modified Betteravia Plaza project does not involve any new significant environmental effects not otherwise addressed in the previously adopted EIR and mitigation monitoring program for the original Betteravia Plaza project. Therefore, no further environmental review is required.

Attachments

- A – Vicinity Map
- B – Permit
- C – Plan Set
- D – EIR Addendum with Appendices
- E – SBCAPCD Comment Letter Dated March 10, 2023