



REPORT TO PLANNING COMMISSION

To: Honorable Chairman and Members of the Planning Commission

From: Damaris Abraham, Planning Manager

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Date: June 21, 2022

Subject: Planning Application No. 2021-26 (Ortega BESS) Requesting Design Review Approval to Construct a 20-Megawatt Battery Energy Storage System

Applicant: Ortega Grid, LLC

Recommendation

Adopt A RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF LAKE ELSINORE, CALIFORNIA, APPROVING PLANNING APPLICATION NO. 2021-26 (COMMERCIAL DESIGN REVIEW NO. 2021-12) FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A 20-MEGAWATT BATTERY ENERGY STORAGE SYSTEM LOCATED AT APN: 377-200-045.

Project Location

The project site is located southeast of the intersection of Camino Del Norte and O Hana Circle (APN: 377-200-045).

Environmental Setting

	EXISTING LAND USE	GENERAL PLAN	ZONING
Project Site	Vacant	General Commercial	C2 - General Commercial
North	Commercial	Business Professional	CM - Commercial Manufacturing
South	Vacant	General Commercial	C2 - General Commercial
East	Vacant	Specific Plan	Open Space (Spyglass Ranch SP)
West	Interstate 15	Public Institutional	Caltrans Right-of-Way

Table 1: Environmental Setting

Project Location and Description

Planning Application No. 2021-26 (Commercial Design Review No. 2021-12) proposes to construct a 20-megawatt battery energy storage system (BESS) on a 1.79-acre site in the C-2 General Commercial zoning district. The primary function of the proposed BESS is to store and deliver electricity to the grid under agreement with Southern California Edison (SCE). The proposed BESS includes twelve battery enclosures that are each 40 feet long, 8 feet wide, and 10 feet tall. The battery enclosures will be aligned along a central, "Y"-shaped paved access road. The proposed development also includes the construction of auxiliary equipment including

switchgears, transformers, and other power station components. The proposed BESS would connect to existing SCE transmission lines situated along the eastern boundary of the site.

The proposed BESS would be screened by an 8-foot-tall split-face CMU wall along the street frontage and 8-foot-tall metal security fencing along interior lot lines. Landscaping consisting of trees, shrubs, and groundcovers would be installed along the facility perimeter in order to provide effective screening from the public right-of-way. Access to the proposed development will be provided from Camino del Norte by a vehicle overcrossing to be constructed above an existing earthen channel in the northwest portion of the site.

The project is also required to construct off-site improvements such as street widening of Camino Del Norte along the project frontage which will require the extension of an existing culvert passing underneath Camino Del Norte and Interstate 15.

Analysis

General Plan Consistency

The proposed development site has a General Plan designation of General Commercial (GC) and is located within the Business District planning area. The GC designation provides for retail, services, restaurants, professional and administrative offices, hotels and motels, mixed-use projects, public and quasi-public uses, and similar and compatible uses with a maximum 0.40 Floor Area Ratio (FAR). The project is a development proposal to construct a public utility installation and associated improvements. No habitable floor area is proposed. Therefore, the project is consistent with applicable general plan policies.

Municipal Code Consistency

The subject parcel is zoned General Commercial (C-2). In accordance with Section 17.124.020.B of the C-2 zone of the Lake Elsinore Municipal Code (LEMC), all permitted uses of the C-2 district, including Public Utility Distribution and Transmission Facilities (Public Utilities Installations) pursuant to LEMC Section 17.116.020.O, are permitted in the C-2 zone. The proposed use is considered a Public Utility Installation and is permitted in the C-2 zone. Therefore, the project is consistent with the applicable zoning designation and regulations.

Planning Division Staff has evaluated the proposed development plans and found that it meets the C-2 development standards as follows:

Development Standard	Required	Proposed
Front Setback (min)	20'-0"	20'-0"
Interior Side Setback (min)	0'-0"	0'-0" min. to 20'-0" max.
Building Height (max)	45'-0"	10'-0" (battery container) 12'-0" (switchgear)
Landscape improvement:		
Adjacent to Street	20'	20'
Landscape Coverage	15%	10.2% ¹

Table 2: Development Standards

¹ A reduction in coverage may be sought and approved during the design review process in recognition of quality design pursuant to LEMC Section 17.124.080.C.

Parking Analysis

In accordance with LEMC Section 17.148.030, the project is not required to provide parking because no habitable floor area is being proposed. Furthermore, the proposed BESS station would be operated remotely, and the proposed development will not be occupied on a permanent or continuous basis. Periodic maintenance of the facility is only expected to consist of a four-person crew visiting once every two to three months on average.

Code Compliance

The Design Review Committee including staff from the Planning, Building and Safety, Fire, and Engineering departments have reviewed the proposed project, and have conditioned the project to mitigate any potential concerns and ensure compliance with applicable City policies and regulations.

Environmental Determination

The project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (Cal. Pub. Res. Code §§21000 et seq.: "CEQA") and the CEQA Guidelines (14 C.C.R. §§ 15000 et seq.) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15332 In-Fill Development Projects. As documented in the attached Class 32 Categorical Exemption Checklist (Exhibit F), the project is consistent with the applicable General Plan designation and policies as well as zoning designations and regulations. The project is located within the City's boundaries on a site less than five acres surrounded by urban uses, the development site has no value as habitat for endangered, rare, or threatened species. Project approval will not result in any significant effects relating to traffic, noise, air quality, or water quality, and the proposed development is adequately served by all required utilities and public services.

Exhibits

- A – CDR Resolution
- B – Conditions of Approval
- C – Vicinity Map
- D – Aerial Map
- E – Design Review Package
- F – CEQA Class 32 Exemption Checklist