



CITY OF SAINT PAUL
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DATE: April 17, 2019
TO: Planning Commission
FROM: Comprehensive and Neighborhood Planning Committee
RE: Review and Recommendation Regarding Proposed Commercial Development District at 194 Cesar Chavez Street

Background

Commercial development districts are designated areas across the city that allow the City to issue new liquor licenses above ward-specific limits outside of Downtown. The City Council can, after a public hearing, designate new commercial development districts by ordinance. Individual establishments within a commercial development district must still go through a standard licensing process to obtain a liquor license.

§17.07.1 of the City Charter defines commercial development districts and gives the City Council power to establish new districts. §17.07.2 includes restrictions on liquor licenses for commercial development districts. §409.20 of the Legislative Code describes the process for creating new or amending existing districts, including the Planning Commission role in that process. §409.20 is reproduced below (emphasis added):

- (a) Commercial development districts, as defined in section 17.07.1 of the City Charter, may be created or expanded by the filing in the office of the city clerk of a written petition therefor setting forth the boundaries of the expanded district, and containing the written consent of the owners of two-thirds of the several descriptions of real estate situated within the new or area of the expanded district, together with the written consent of the owners of two-thirds of the several descriptions of real estate situated within one hundred (100) feet of the new or expanded district, and after the affirmative vote in favor thereof by at least five (5) members of the city council.
- (b) The city council may waive the requirements for consent signatures if the city council shall determine that a hardship exists therefor, and in such case the council may, on its own, initiate the process of creating or expanding a commercial development district. In such case, the affirmative vote of at least five (5) members of the city council shall be required to create or expand any such district.
- (c) **In all such cases, the planning commission shall be consulted for advice concerning the proposals for consistency with the city's comprehensive plan and zoning ordinances, and the planning commission shall report in writing to the city council its findings and recommendations.**

- (d) Upon receipt of the report of the planning commission, the council's committee designated to hear license matters shall fix a date for public hearing to consider the petition or proposal to create or expand a commercial development district and afford an opportunity to all affected persons to be heard. The city clerk shall cause notice of the hearing to be published once in the official newspaper of the city, and mailed notice thereof shall be given by the department of safety and inspections to all owners of land within the new or area of the expanded district. Published notice and mailed notice shall be made at least twenty (20) days in advance of the public hearing.

In February 2019, a petition was submitted to the Department of Safety and Inspections to create a Commercial Development District for 194 Cesar Chavez Street to allow La Costa Sports Mexican Bar & Grill to expand alcohol sales past midnight to 2:00 a.m. This Commercial Development District is proposed to include all of 194 Cesar Chavez Street, and no other properties. (See attached maps.) The Planning Commission is being consulted for advice concerning the proposal's consistency with the City's comprehensive plan and zoning ordinances, per §409.20 of the Legislative Code.

La Costa opened for business in the spring of 2017. Currently the bar and grill serves alcohol and food until midnight. By applying for a Commercial Development District, the restaurant hopes to accentuate its character as a Mexican sports bar and late-night destination among the District del Sol commercial corridor.

Findings

The Comprehensive and Neighborhood Planning Committee has reviewed the proposed commercial development district and made the following findings:

1. La Costa Mexican Sports Bar & Grill includes one approximately 2,200 square foot building at 194 Cesar Chavez Street.
2. The proposed Commercial Development District is confined to the site of La Costa Mexican Sports Bar and Grill.
3. The proposed Commercial Development District is consistent with the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan. The property lies within a designated Mixed-Use Corridor, described in the Comprehensive Plan as including "commercial areas with goods and services for people who live and work among them." The District del Sol Plan Addendum to the Comprehensive Plan calls for the City to "support and retain the current business mix" (Strategy CV1) and to "continue to capitalize on neighborhood characteristics... to create a strong identity and brand for the District" (Strategy CV4). The District del Sol Plan also calls for the City to "concentrate businesses that provide goods and services to residents at the three commercial nodes", one of which is the intersection of George Street and Cesar Chavez Street. Establishing this Commercial Development District to allow La Costa to extend their alcohol sales will expand the variety of goods available to area residents and workers at an identified commercial node, as well as reinforce District del Sol's Latinx neighborhood brand and identity.
4. The proposed Commercial Development District is consistent with existing zoning. The property is zoned T2 traditional neighborhood, which permits bars and restaurants up to five thousand (5,000) and fifteen thousand (15,000) sq. ft. in area respectively, requiring conditional use permits for larger establishments.

Recommendation

Based on findings 1 through 4, the Comprehensive and Neighborhood Planning Committee recommends that the Planning Commission report to the City Council that the proposed Commercial Development District for 194 Cesar Chavez Street for La Costa Mexican Sports Bar & Grill is consistent with the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code, and recommends that the Planning Commission support the creation of the La Costa Mexican Sports Bar & Grill Commercial Development District.