



**CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE
City Commission Agenda Memo
REGULAR MEETING**

#25-0714

TO: Honorable Mayor & Members of the
Fort Lauderdale City Commission

FROM: Rickelle Williams, City Manager

DATE: June 30, 2025

TITLE: Motion for Discussion – City Commission Request for Review – Site Plan
Level II Amendment in Downtown Regional Activity Center – Case No.
UDP-A24036 – 221 SW 1 Avenue – (**Commission District 4**)

Recommendation

Staff recommends the City Commission consider a motion to set a hearing to review the proposed Site Plan Level II Amendment in Downtown Regional Activity Center (RAC) for the “Society” project, formerly “X Las Olas”, Case No. PL-R16049, amending the garage parking podium screening under Case No. UDP-A24036, and determine whether to set a de-novo hearing to review the application.

Background

The City Clerk received a statement of intent filed from the office of City Commission District Four (4), Commissioner Ben Sorensen, pursuant to the City of Fort Lauderdale Unified Land Development Regulations (ULDR), Section 47-26A.2, City Commission Request for Review (CRR) to review the site plan amendment for the “Society” garage parking podium screening. The statement of intent is attached as Exhibit 1.

The site has an underlying land use designation of Downtown RAC and is zoned Regional Activity Center – City Center (RAC-CC) District. The site plan is subject to the Downtown Master Plan (DMP) following the Downtown Core Character Area design standards. A location map is attached as Exhibit 2.

The original site plan was approved on April 19, 2017, then subsequently amended on February 3, 2020, under Case No. R16049D3. The amendment application removed the metal louver garage screening system and replaced it with a flexible mesh fabric containing artistic imagery.

At the time of the original amendment, staff indicated that the proposed flexible mesh fabric was not considered high-quality material and there was a concern regarding the durability of the screening. After discussions and a commitment from the applicant that the mesh would last a decade, but would be replaced every five (5) to seven (7) years, the administrative amendment was approved with the following stipulation:

“The applicant indicated that this screening material is specified to last a decade and intends to replace these specific art pieces with new pieces by other local artists every 5-7 years.”

The applicant installed the flexible mesh garage screening in March 2020, and within approximately one (1) year, in February 2021, most of the mesh screening was removed due to poor weathering and environmental impacts, thereby exposing the garage and violating the February 3, 2020, administrative approval. Within two (2) years of installation, all the mesh screening was removed.

In 2023, the applicant installed a new mesh screening containing a large super graphic advertising the words “Flow – Humankind” to which the City issued a code violation, under Case No. CE24040555. The case was first heard by the Special Magistrate at a hearing on June 11, 2024. Since that time, the applicant was granted several extensions to the time provided to correct the violation. At the most recent Special Magistrate hearing on June 10, 2025, the Special Magistrate denied any further extensions, requiring the applicant to come into compliance, and until such time the property owner is currently incurring daily fines.

The subject application, Case No. UDP-A24036, was submitted on July 26, 2024, to update the garage screening and was reviewed by the Administrative Review Committee on October 22, 2024. The administrative review application and the applicant’s narratives are attached as Exhibit 3. The administrative review comments are attached as Exhibit 4.

The applicant responded to the Administrative Review Committee comments but did not address them, and the code violation remained in place. Subsequently, the applicant returned to the Special Magistrate on April 8, 2025, and was granted an extension of sixty-three (63) days to June 10, 2025, to revise the application. However, no revision was made and on May 23, 2025, the applicant submitted a separate application for a Site Plan Level II RAC Sign.

STAFF ANALYSIS:

The proposed mesh fabric garage screening does not meet the DMP, Principle of Building Design, B9 - Parking Garages, which states:

“The upper floors of a parking garage should not be visible along primary streets, waterways, and parks (See Q5). Active spaces on these upper floors along primary streets, waterways, and parks are encouraged as a preferred design.”

“Parking garage design should be well-integrated with the overall building design. In order to create vibrant streetscapes, structured parking is encouraged to be shielded from streets with a ‘liner’ of active uses (residential/ commercial/ office).”

“Where shielding by active uses cannot be achieved, beyond the first floor, exposed parking garages should be limited to secondary streets, starting as far

back from the primary street intersection as possible. Where exposed to street, parking garages should be disguised through a variety of architectural screening solutions (such as windows, landscape elements, architectural panel systems integrated with overall building design...).”

In addition, the proposed mesh fabric garage screening does not meet the DMP, Quality of Architecture, Principle Q5, which states:

“Where structured parking must be exposed to the street, exceptionally creative solutions should be explored.”

“The City should implement special architectural review techniques to include: dramatic and/or elegant building form with a compelling street presence, consistent and integrated architectural details, high quality, durable exterior materials, richer material palette...”

The proposed amendment does not meet the intent of these principles. Screening material of higher quality and lasting architectural elements should be provided, consistent with the DMP intent. In addition, the proposed screening is not durable and lacks integration with the architecture of the building and overall project design.

Furthermore, at the time of its original approval, the installation of the mesh fabric was considered experimental as a potential creative solution for garage screening. The mesh screening has failed to withstand the test of time and has weathered poorly, indicating that fabric mesh screening is not an adequate material for screening parking podiums and does not meet the test of exceptionally creative screening solutions. The elevation of the garage podium is attached as Exhibit 5. A side-by-side elevation graphic depicting the originally approved site plan as compared to the amended and proposed garage mesh screening is attached as Exhibit 6.

Based on this analysis, staff made the determination that application, Case No. UDP-A24036, has failed to meet the requirements of Section 47-13.20, Downtown RAC Review and Special Regulations, and therefore, the application was denied by staff.

City Commission Request for Review

Pursuant to ULDR, Section 47-24.2.A.6, denial of a site plan amendment development permit subject to City Commission Request for Review (CRR) shall not be final until thirty (30) days after preliminary approval and then only if no motion is adopted by the City Commission seeking to review the application pursuant to the process provided in Section 47-26.A.2 of the ULDR. The City Commission may adopt a motion to set a hearing to review the application if it is found that the new project is in an area which due to characteristics of the project and the surrounding area requires additional review in order to ensure that development standards and criteria have been met and to ensure that the area surrounding the development is protected from the impacts of the development. The process for CRR may be initiated by a statement of intent filed by any member of the City Commission with the City Clerk with a copy to the department. The motion shall be considered within thirty (30) days of the decision by the lower body with certain exceptions

provided in Section 47-26.A.2 of the ULDR.

The motion approving a CRR shall set a date for consideration of the application no later than sixty (60) days from the date the motion is adopted. Notice of the hearing shall be provided by posting a sign at least ten (10) days before the hearing in accordance with ULDR, Section 47-27, Notice Procedures. Review by the City Commission shall be by de-novo hearing supplemented by the record and the same standards and criteria applicable to the development permit shall be applied. At the conclusion of the hearing the City Commission shall take action approving, approving with conditions, or denying the application.

Should the City Commission wish to proceed with the CRR request, a hearing must be set within the required sixty (60) day period to consider the application.

Pursuant to State Statute 166.033(1), this application is subject to 180-day timeframe for approval or denial of the development permit, which was to October 17, 2025, thereby providing sufficient time to conduct a de-novo hearing. The hearing may be held at the regularly scheduled City Commission meeting on August 19, 2025.

Resource Impact

There is no fiscal impact associated with this section.

Strategic Connections

This item supports the *Press Play Fort Lauderdale 2029* Strategic Plan, specifically advancing:

- The Business Growth and Support Focus Area, Goal 6: Build a diverse and attractive economy.

This item advances the *Fast Forward Fort Lauderdale 2035* Vision Plan: We Are Prosperous

Attachments

Exhibit 1 – Statement of Intent

Exhibit 2 – Location Map

Exhibit 3 – Application and Applicant's Narratives

Exhibit 4 – Administrative Review Comments

Exhibit 5 – Elevation of Garage Podium

Exhibit 6 – Side-by-Side Elevation Graphic

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