



CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE
City Commission Agenda Memo
REGULAR MEETING

#25-0733

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

FROM: Rickelle Williams, City Manager

DATE: August 19, 2025

TITLE: Quasi-Judicial – Resolution – Amendment to a Site Plan Level II
Development Permit in the Downtown Regional Activity Center – Case No.
UDP-A24036 – 221 SW 1 Avenue – **(Commission District 4)**

Recommendation

Staff recommends the City Commission approve a resolution denying the proposed Site Plan Level II Amendment in Downtown Regional Activity Center (RAC) for the “*Society*” project, formerly known as “*X Las Olas*”, Case No. PL-R16049, amending the garage parking podium screening under Case No. UDP-A24036.

Background

The applicant is requesting approval of an amendment to the approved site plan to change the garage screening from a metal louver garage screening system to a two-dimensional flexible mesh featuring an artistic graphic for the “*Society*” project located at 221 SW 1st Avenue. The applicant’s application narrative frames the request as follows: “...to replace the previously approved garage screening in accordance with the Previous Approval.”

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 1. The request was administratively denied on June 19, 2025, and is before the City Commission as a result of a City Commission Request for Review approved by the City Commission by motion (4-0 vote) on June 30, 2025, setting a de novo hearing on the development permit for August 19, 2025.

The original Site Plan Level II application, Case No. R16049, for the development of a mixed-use building with 1,214 residential units and 58,000 square feet of commercial space was approved by the City Commission on April 19, 2017. Subsequently, the site plan was administratively amended (Case No. R16049D3), changing the required garage screening from a metal louver garage screening system to a flexible mesh fabric containing artistic imagery. The administrative amendment was approved with the following condition:

“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 flexible mesh garage screening was approved in February 2020, installation commenced in the early part of 2021, and the screening was removed by October 2022. The mesh screening failed to meet the conditions for the approved administrative amendment and in accordance with ULDR Section 47-24.1, the approved amendment was subject to revocation for failure to meet the conditions of approval.

In 2023, the applicant installed a new mesh screening containing a large super graphic advertising the words “*Flow – Humankind*” in violation of the City’s sign code. The City issued a code violation, Case No. CE24040555.

The subject application, Case No. UDP-A24036, was submitted on July 26, 2024, 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 2. The administrative review comments with responses are attached as Exhibit 3. One of the comments in the report stated that any indication of signage or advertisement should be removed from the garage screening. Rather than removing the indication of signage from the pending application, the applicant submitted a separate application for a Site Plan Level II RAC Sign on May 23, 2025. This application was subsequently deemed incomplete and withdrawn.

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.

Additional consideration was given by staff to the failure of the mesh screen approved in the initial amendment. That mesh screening failed to withstand the test of time and has weathered poorly, indicating that fabric mesh screening is an inadequate material for screening parking podiums and does not meet the test of exceptionally creative screening solutions, as stated in DMP, Principle Q5. The proposed elevation of the garage podium is attached as Exhibit 4. A side-by-side elevation graphic depicting the original 2017 approved site plan as compared to the 2020 amended elevation and the proposed 2025 garage mesh screening is attached as Exhibit 5.

Based on this analysis, staff has 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

In accordance with Section 47-26A.2.B of the ULDR, the City Commission shall determine if the proposed garage screening meets the standards and criteria applicable for an Amendment to a Site Plan Level II review in the Downtown Regional Activity Center, based upon the de novo hearing and supplemented by the record and shall take action approving, approving with conditions, or denying the application.

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 – Location Map

Exhibit 2 – Administrative Review Application and Applicant's Narratives

Exhibit 3 – Administrative Review Comments with Responses

Exhibit 4 – Elevation of Garage Podium

Exhibit 5 – Side-by-Side Elevation Graphic

Exhibit 6 – Resolution Approving

Exhibit 7 – Resolution Denying

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