

Agenda Report



Watsonville
CALIFORNIA

MEETING DATE: Tuesday, July 2, 2024

TO: PLANNING COMMISSION

FROM: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR MERRIAM
ASSOCIATE PLANNER IVAN CARMONA

SUBJECT: SPECIAL USE PERMIT WITH DESIGN REVIEW AND ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW (PP2023-6388) TO ESTABLISH A DUPLEX USE BY CONSTRUCTING A 406-SQUARE-FOOT SECOND UNIT ON AN EXISTING SINGLE-FAMILY DWELLING LOCATED AT 225 ELM STREET (APN: 017-201-23)

STATEMENT OF ISSUES:

The project involves the establishment of duplex use by constructing an attached, one-story, one-bedroom, 406-square-foot second unit for a property located within the RM-3 (Multiple Residential – High Density) Zoning District. The project entitlements consist of a Special Use Permit with Design Review and Environmental Review.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Staff recommends the Planning Commission adopt a resolution:

- 1) Approving Special Use Permit with Design Review and Environmental Review #PP2023-6388 to establish a duplex use by allowing construction of an attached, one-story, one-bedroom, 406-square-foot second unit and demolition of two existing detached garages and construction of a new detached, 322-square-foot, one-car garage and a new detached, 446-square-foot, two-car garage located at 225 Elm Street (APN: 017-201-23) based on the attached findings and conditions of approval; and
- 2) Finding the project is exempt from review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) as a Class 1 Categorical Exemption, pursuant to Section 15301 of the State CEQA Guidelines.

BASIC PROJECT DATA

Application: PP2023-6388
Location: 225 Elm Street
Parcel Size: 0.1560± acres (6,795± SF)
General Plan: Residential High Density

Zoning: RM-3 (Multiple Residential-High Density)

Surrounding: Residential High Density in the RM-3 Zoning District to the south and east, and Public/Quasi Public in the N Zoning District to the north and west.

Existing Use: Single Family Residential

Surrounding: A mix of single and multi-family residential to the north and south, an elementary school to the east, and a high school to the north.

Proposed: Multiple Family Residential

Flood Zone: AH

CEQA Review: The project is eligible for a Class 1 Categorical Exemption, in accordance with the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines.

Applicant: Soufyane Zatlá with Inspired ADUs, 1940 Union Street, Suite 22, Oakland, CA 94607

Property Owner: Juan Ortega, 225 Elm Street, Watsonville, CA 95076

BACKGROUND

According to the Santa Cruz County Assessor's Office, in 1930, the subject parcel was developed with a 1,232-square-foot single family dwelling with two detached garages totaling 748 square feet.

Proposal

On November 14, 2023, Soufyane Zatlá with Inspired ADUs, on behalf of property owner, Juan Ortega, submitted an application for a Special Use Permit with Design Review and Environmental Review (PP2023-6388) requesting construction of an attached, one-story, one-bedroom, 406-square-foot second unit; a detached, 322-square-foot, one-car garage; and a detached, 446-square-foot, two-car garage located at 225 Elm Street (APN: 017-201-23).

PROCESS

Special Use Permit

Pursuant to [WMC Section 14-16.403\(b\)](#), establishment of a duplex within the RM-3 Zoning District is subject to a Special Use Permit approved by the Planning Commission if the lot area allows more than two units.

The Planning Commission is authorized to approve Special Use Permits in accordance with the procedures set forth in WMC Sections [14-12.509](#) through [14-12.512](#) if it can make the findings required by [14-12.513](#).

The purpose of the Special Use Permit is to ensure the proper integration of uses which, because of their special nature, may be suitable only in certain locations or zoning districts

or only provided that such uses are arranged or designed in a particular manner.¹ This special review shall be for the purpose of determining that the proposed use is, and will continue to be, compatible with surrounding, existing, or planned uses; and for the further purpose of establishing such special conditions as may be necessary to ensure the harmonious integration and compatibility of uses in the neighborhood and with the surrounding area.²

Design Review

Pursuant to [WMC Section 14-12.400](#), construction of residential multi-family projects is subject to a Design Review Permit. No Building Permit shall be issued for a development subject to Design Review until a Design Review Permit has been approved. The Zoning Administrator is the final decision-maker for Design Review permits, but because the proposed project requires a Special Use Permit in addition to Design Review, it has been forwarded to the Planning Commission for review and approval per [WMC §14-12.402\(b\)](#).

Environmental Review

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires local and state governments to consider the potential environmental effects of a project before making a decision on it. CEQA's purpose is to disclose any potential impacts of a project and suggest methods to minimize identified impacts so that decision-makers will have full information upon which to base their decision. Certain classes of projects, however, have been identified that do not have a significant effect on the environment, and are considered categorically exempt from the requirement for the preparation of environmental documents. [State CEQA Guidelines § 15300](#).

STANDARD OF REVIEW & APPEAL PROCESS

The decision whether to approve this Special Use Permit with Design Review and Environmental Review is adjudicative and requires environmental review. For more information on standard of review and process, see the [Standard of Review and Process Overview](#) on the City website.

DISCUSSION

Existing Site

The subject site is located within the RM-3 Zoning District with a General Plan Land Use designation of Residential High Density (RHD). According to the County of Santa Cruz Assessors Office, the existing 1,232-square-foot single-family residence was developed in 1930 on a 6,795-square-foot parcel. The single-family residence is situated at the front of the property, fronting Elm Street. The rear of the property contains the backyard with two detached garages totaling 748 square feet. Access at the front of the site is achieved via a 15-foot-wide driveway approach off Elm Street and at the rear of the site via an existing 20-foot-wide alleyway.

¹ [WMC § 14-12.500](#)

² [WMC § 14-12.501](#)

The surrounding uses consist of single and multi-family residential, Linscott Elementary, and Watsonville High School. Figure 1 provides an aerial of the subject site and surrounding uses.



FIGURE 1. Subject site and surrounding uses.

Source: Google Aerial 2024

Proposed Project

The project includes the construction of a one-story 406-square-foot second unit attached to the primary dwelling. This unit will feature one bedroom, one bathroom, a kitchen, and a living room (Attachment 1). The proposed project also includes demolition of the two existing detached garages and construction of a new detached, 322-square-foot, one-car garage and a new detached, 446-square-foot, two-car garage.

Special Use Permit

When considering applications for a Special Use Permit, the Planning Commission shall evaluate the impact of the project on and its compatibility with surrounding properties and neighborhoods to ensure the appropriateness of the project at a particular location. This includes being able to make the finding that the proposed project is consistent with policies of the General Plan.

Design Review Permit

When considering applications for a Design Review Permit, the Zoning Administrator shall evaluate the design of the residential project to ensure the project is consistent with the City of Watsonville's Multi-Family Residential Development Standards. Due to the fact that this residential development requires a Special Use Permit in addition to Design Review, it has been forwarded to the Planning Commission for review and approval.

General Plan

The parcel is designated Residential High Density on the 2005 General Plan Land Use Diagram. The purpose of the Residential High-Density designation is to provide living environments through multi-story apartment and condominium type housing at densities equal to 14, up to and including 36.99 dwelling units per net acre (du/acre). This allows for greater residential density; to stabilize and protect residential characteristics of the district; and to promote a suitable environment for the lives of the families and single persons living in the district.

The project proposes construction of a one-story 406-square-foot addition to the primary dwelling to create a new second unit with one bedroom, one bathroom, kitchen, and living room.

The proposed project is also consistent with the following General Plan goals, policies, and implementation measures:

- **Goal 4.7 Land Use Suitability.** Ensure the orderly development of land for the needs of the existing and projected population within the City limit and Sphere of Influence is based on the land's overall suitability, including; the accessibility of existing and proposed public facilities, services, utilities; physical and financial constraints; and/or growth inducing impacts.
- **Policy 4.G Land Use Suitability.** The City shall encourage the development of urban uses on those lands best suited for urban uses and discourage it on lands unsuited for urban uses.
- **Implementation Measure 4.A.2 Land Use Compatibility.** The City shall monitor housing production to ensure compatibility with surrounding land uses.

The subject site, located in the RM-3 Zoning District, features a one-story, 1,232-square-foot, three-bedroom single-family residence on a 6,795-square-foot parcel. Approval of the second unit would create a duplex use. Therefore, the city is encouraging residential development on lands best suited for residential development.

Zoning

The purpose of the RM-3 Zoning District is to provide for the development of areas for greater residential density; to stabilize and protect residential characteristics of the district; and to promote a suitable environment for the lives of families and single persons living in the district. [WMC Section 14-16.400](#).

The proposed duplex is conditionally permitted use within the RM-3 Zoning District, requiring approval of a Special Use Permit by the Planning Commission.

Conformity with Multi-Family Residential Design Guidelines (Rentals)

The project is also consistent with all development regulations relating to the Multi-Family Residential Design Guidelines and the RM-3 Zoning District regulations.

Density. Table 1 below identifies the RM-3 Density requirements and how the project meets the density standards for the RM-3 Zoning District.

Table 1.
Density

Lot Size (square feet)	Existing (E) and Proposed (P)	Minimum Net Land Area
6,795	(E) 3-bedroom unit	2,875
	(P) 1-bedroom unit	2,125
	Total	5,000
	6,795 – 5,000 = 1,795 net land remaining	Complies

Setbacks. Table 2 identifies the multi-family residential setback standards and how the project is consistent with those standards.

Table 2.
Multi-Family Residential Setback standards

	FT	Project	Conformance
Front	15	15	Yes
Side(s)	5	5	Yes
Rear from alley	5	5	Yes

Building Height. Table 3 identifies the RM-3 building height standards.

Table 3.
Building Height

	FT	Project	Conformance
RM-3 District Max Height	28	15	Yes

Design. The existing primary single-family dwelling has a wood timber construction with artisan cement board for siding. The proposed second unit would provide the same finish materials, matching the existing single-family dwelling.

Pedestrian Circulation. The Multi-Family Residential Design Standards require a pedestrian circulation system accessed from the public right-of-way and internally throughout the

residential development. As shown on the site plan (Attachment 1, sheet A1.1), the project is providing the pedestrian circulation system accessed from the public right-of-way and throughout the residential development meeting the Multi-Family Residential Design Standards.

Landscaping. Table 4 identifies the multi-family residential design standards for landscaping.

Table 4.
Multi-Family Residential Landscaping Standards

	SF /percentage	Project/SF /percentage	Conformance
Landscaping 20 percent of lot size	20 percent = 1,359 SF	33 percent = 2,268 SF	Yes

Private Open Space. Table 5 identifies the multi-family residential design standards for private open space.

Table 5.
Multi-Family Residential Private Open Space Standards

	SF Standard	Project SF	Conformance
Unit 1	200 SF	220 SF	Yes
Unit 2	200 SF	132 SF	Yes
Common Open Space	104 SF	116 SF	Yes

Parking. Table 6 identifies the parking standards for the multi-family residential design standards.

Table 6.
Multi-Family Residential Parking Standards

	Parking Standard	Project	Conformance
Unit 1	2 spaces/1 covered	2 spaces/2 covered	Yes
Unit 2	2 spaces/1 covered	2 space/1 covered	Yes
Total	4 spaces/2 covered	4 spaces/3 covered	Yes

Yard Storage. Table 7 identifies the yard storage standards for the multi-family residential design guidelines.

Table 7.
Multi-Family Residential Yard Storage Standards

	Cubic Feet	Cubic Feet/Project	Conformance
Unit 1	200 CF	726 CF	Yes
Unit 2	200 CF	726 CF	Yes

Trash Bin Area. The Multi-Family Residential Design Guidelines requires a trash bin area for the proposed residential development. As shown in the site plan (Attachment 1, sheet A1.1) the project is providing a trash bin area meeting the Multi-Family Residential Design Standards. The project will provide 2 bins per unit (recycle and trash) with a shared yard and food waste bin for a total of 10 bins.

Drainage. In 2014, the City adopted Ordinance No. 1299-14 (CM), amending WMC Section 6-3.535 to require that Resolution No. 4-14 (CM) be implemented for all applicable new development and redevelopment construction projects. Resolution No. 4-14 (CM) provides post-construction stormwater management requirements (PCRs) for applicable projects. The primary objective of the PCRs is to ensure the reduction of pollutant discharges to the maximum extent possible and prevent stormwater runoff from causing or contributing to a violation of water quality standards. The PCRs categorize projects into four primary tiers based primarily on the net increase in impervious surfaces that would result from a project (i.e., the amount of new and replaced impervious surfaces). Each PCR tier is linked to increasingly stringent performance requirements for stormwater management and treatment. Each PCR tier is subject to the performance requirements of that tier, plus the performance requirements of the lower tiers, as applicable.

The proposed project would create 736± square feet of new impervious surface area. The project does not exceed the minimum requirement of 2,500 square feet of new impervious surface. Therefore, the project is conditioned to meet the City of Watsonville's Erosion Control Measures for best management practices.

Flood Plain Development. The subject property is located within FEMA Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA) AH. The SFHA is defined as the area that will be inundated by the flood event having a 1-percent chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year. The 1-percent annual chance flood is also referred to as the base flood or 100-year flood. As shown in the plans (Attachment 1, sheet 1), the topographic map identifies the base flood elevation at 33 Feet above sea level. Pursuant to [WMC Section 9-2.500\(c\)](#), all new residential construction shall have the lowest floor of the entire structure, including basement, one foot above the base flood elevation. Therefore, the project is conditioned to submit a Flood Elevation Certificate prior to submittal of a building permit application, during construction, and at building permit final. The building permit plans shall also be stamped by a certified registered civil engineer or surveyor before submittal of a building permit application.

Environmental Review

Categorical Exemption

A Categorical Exemption has been prepared for the construction of an attached 406-square-foot second unit. The subject site is 6,795± square feet in size located in an urbanized area where it can be adequately served by all required utilities and public services. This project is eligible for a Class 1 Categorical Exemption, pursuant to Section 15301 of the State CEQA Guidelines because the project involves an addition that will not result in an increase of more than 10,000 square feet. The project is consistent with the applicable general plan

designation and all application polices, as well as with applicable zoning designation and regulations. The proposed development is also located within city limits on a project site no more than five acres in size and substantially surrounded by urban uses and all public services and facilities are available to allow for maximum development permissible in the General Plan. The project site is not located in an area that is environmentally sensitive. Approval of the project would not result in any significant effects relating to traffic, noise, air quality, or water quality.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Plan Set (Dated March 28, 2024)
2. Site and vicinity map