



PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA REPORT

MEETING DATE: Tuesday, April 1, 2025
TO: PLANNING COMMISSION
WRITTEN BY: ASSOCIATE PLANNER IVAN CARMONA
RECOMMENDED BY: INTERIM COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR MEEK

SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF A SPECIAL USE PERMIT, DESIGN REVIEW PERMIT, AND ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW (#PP2025-8417) TO ALLOW CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW 9,884± SQUARE-FOOT AUTOMOTIVE RESTORATION SHOP ON A 0.29± ACRE PROPERTY LOCATED AT 140 GROVE STREET (APNs 017-252-25 & -26)

STATEMENT OF ISSUES:

The project involves construction of a new 9,884-square-foot automotive restoration shop for Body by Hank located within the IG (General Industrial) Zoning District. The project entitlements consist of a Special Use Permit, Design Review Permit, and Environmental Review.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Staff recommends the Planning Commission adopt a resolution approving the Special Use Permit, Design Review Permit, and Environmental Review (#PP2025-8417) and find the project categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines §§ 15303 and 15332, to allow construction of a new 9,884± square-foot automotive restoration shop on a 0.29± acre site located at 140 Grove Street (APNs 017-252-25 & -26) subject to the recommended findings and conditions of approval.

BASIC PROJECT DATA

Application: PP2025-8417
Location: 140 Groves Street
Parcel Size: 0.29± acres (12,880± square feet)
General Plan: Industrial
Zoning: General Industrial (IG)
Surrounding: Residential High Density in the RM-3 Zoning District to the north and Industrial in the IG Zoning District to the east, west and south.
Existing Use: Vacant Lot
Proposed: New 9,884-square-foot automotive restoration shop
Flood Zone: AH, Panel 06087C0394E
Applicant: Ron Gordon, 812 Delaware Street, Watsonville, CA 95076
Property Owner: Hank Wempe, 812 Delaware Street, Watsonville, CA 95076

BACKGROUND

On December 1, 2020, the City of Watsonville Planning Commission approved Special Use Permit with Design Review, Lot Consolidation, and Environmental Review (Application No. 7) to allow construction of a new 9,884-square-foot automotive restoration shop for Body by Hank located at 140 Grove Street (APNs 017-252-25 & -26).

All approvals of Special Use Permits are conditioned to submit a building permit within two years. The applicant did not submit a building permit within two years of approval. Therefore, the Special Use Permit with Design Review, Lot Consolidation, and Environmental Review (Application No. 7) to allow construction of a new 9,884-square-foot automotive restoration shop for Body by Hank expired on December 1, 2022.

Although the Special Use Permit entitlement expired on December 1, 2022, the property owner was able to move forward with recording the lot consolidation with the County Recorder's Office on March 3, 2025. Due to the recent recordation, a new APN has not yet been assigned by the County to the consolidated parcel. Therefore, the staff report refers to the two pre-existing APN numbers for the subject site.

Proposal

On March 5, 2025, Ron Gordon, applicant, on behalf of Hank Wempe, property owner, submitted an application for a Special Use Permit, Design Review Permit, and Environmental Review (PP2025-8417) application proposing construction of a 9,884-square-foot automotive restoration shop for Body by Hank located at 140 Grove Street (APNs 017-252-25 & -26).

PROCESS

Special Use Permit

Pursuant to [WMC Section 14-16.603\(b\)](#), establishment of a automotive restoration body shop within the IG Zoning District is subject to a Special Use Permit approved by the Planning Commission.

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 ([WMC § 14-12.500](#)). 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 ([WMC § 14-12.501](#)).

Design Review

Pursuant to [WMC Section 14-12.400](#), construction of new commercial development 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 generally 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, Design Review Permit, and Environmental Review is adjudicative. For more information on standard of review and process, see the [Standard of Review and Process Overview](#) on the City website.

DISCUSSION

Existing Site

Two parcels comprise the 0.29± acre site with APN: 017-252-25 located at 140 Grove Street and APN: 017-252-26 located at 142 Grove Street. APN 017-252-25 is 6,490± square feet in size and APN 017-252-26 is 6,185± square feet, with a total square footage of 12,675 square feet. The subject site contains an existing 1,176± square-foot industrial building. According to the County Assessor's office, the industrial building was constructed in 1960. As shown in Figure 1, the existing building crosses a property boundary line, which is why a lot consolidation was required as part of the previous approval. Surrounding uses consist of an adjacent auto restoration shop, industrial uses, and non-conforming residential development. Overall, the existing industrial building is in disrepair and the site has an accumulation of vehicles and other debris.

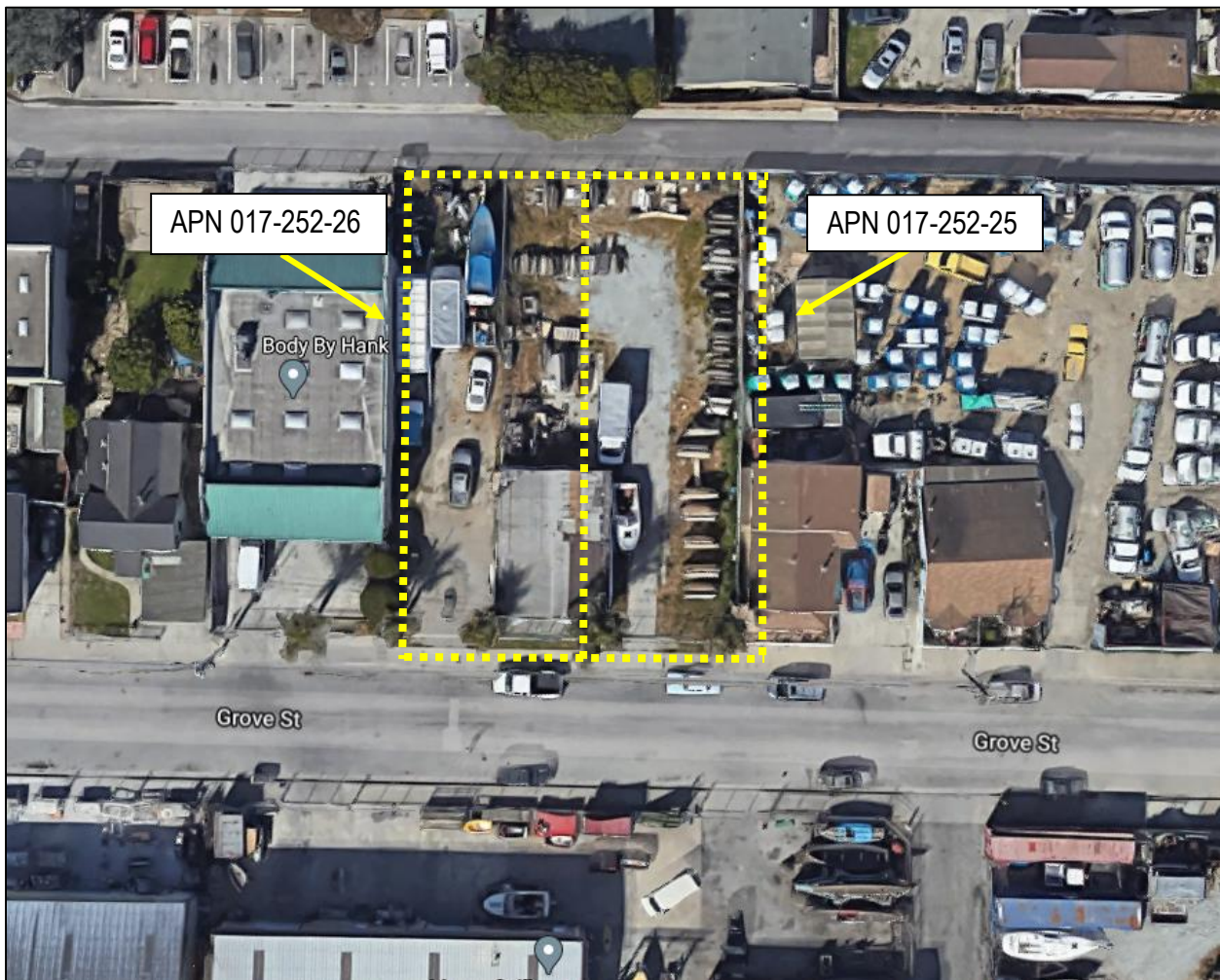


FIGURE 1 Aerial view of the project site and surrounding area

Source: Google Aerial View, 2024

Proposed Project

The proposed project is the same as the one approved in 2020. It seeks to demolish the existing 1,176± square-foot industrial building to construct a new 9,884± square-foot automotive restoration shop consisting of the following:

- First floor (7,354± square feet)
 - Vehicle Restoration Area
 - Paint Booth
 - Office
 - Three restrooms (two for public use and one for employee use)
 - Porte Cochere
- Second Floor (2,530± square feet)
 - Mezzanine storage area

The new automotive restoration shops will provide auto collision repairs while the existing abutting automotive restoration shop located at 144 Grove Street would focus on classic auto body restoration. The new automotive restoration shop anticipates four full-time employees. Proposed business operations would be Monday – Friday 8 am – 6 pm and Saturdays 8 am – 5 pm.

General Plan

The project site is designated Industrial on the General Plan Land Use Diagram. General categories of allowed uses for Industrial designated land include:

- Wholesale sales, storage, heavy commercial, transportation services,
- Warehousing
- Construction, fabrication, and trade shop,
- General manufacturing
- Food processing, and
- Related services, business and uses

General Plan Consistency

The proposed project is consistent with the following 2005 General Plan goals and policies concerning industrial land use and land use suitability.

- **Goal 4.4 Industrial Land Use** – Achieve economic diversification, living wage employment, the preservation of the agricultural economic base of the Pajaro Valley, and maintain a balance among jobs, housing, and other urban land uses.

Staff Analysis: The project is proposing construction of a 9,884-square-foot automotive restoration shop on land designated Industrial on the General Plan Land Use Map and has a zoning designation of General Industrial (IG). Establishment of an automotive restoration shop (GLU 63) within the IG zoning district is subject to a Special Use Permit with Design Review approved by the Planning Commission. This Special Use Permit with Design Review has been conditioned to adhere to the IG zoning district development standards and all requirements of the Watsonville Municipal Code.

- **Policy 4.D.1 Modernization** – The City shall encourage existing industrial plants to maintain high standards for public safety and environmental quality consistent with economic feasibility. These standards include emission reduction, noise, reduction, built-in fire protection, water conservation, and the safe use, storage, and disposal of hazardous materials.

Staff Analysis: The project proposing construction of a 9,884-square-foot automotive restoration shop will be modernizing an existing industrial parcel. The project will demolish the existing industrial building to accommodate the new development. The new development will include landscaping and will also provide new sidewalk curbs and gutters, thereby modernizing the industrial parcel. The project is also conditioned to apply

for and receive issuance of building permits for the proposed development.

- **Goal 4.7 Land Use Suitability** – Ensure that the orderly development of land for the needs of 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, and utilities, physical and financial constraints; and/or growth inducing impacts.

Staff Analysis: The project is considered an infill project as the property is currently developed with a 1,176-square-foot industrial building. The property is served by public roads, utilities, sewers, curbs, and gutters along the frontage of the property as well as the surrounding development. The project would modernize the industrial property by demolishing the existing industrial building and constructing a new 9,884 square-foot automotive restoration shop. The new automotive restoration shop will incorporate design features to reduce noise , an air filtration system for paint booth, and will include built-in fire protection, thus meeting modernization requirements of the Watsonville 2005 General Plan.

Conformity with District Regulations

The proposed project use is consistent with the IG Zoning District regulations. The analysis below shows how the project meets the IG Zoning District standards.

IG District Standards	Standard	Proposed	Consistent
Minimum Lot Size	5,000 sf	12,880 sf	Yes
Setbacks			
Front Yard	0 ft	31'-8"	Yes
Side Yard	0 ft	0	Yes
Rear Yard	0 ft	23'-9"	Yes
Lot Coverage	100 %	57 %	Yes
Building Height	35 ft	29.5 ft	Yes
Parking	Automotive repairs and garages require 5 spaces plus one space for each 800 sf of floor area in excess of 3,000 sf (WMC Section 14-17.1001(d))	9 parking spaces ¹	Yes
Landscaping	0 percent	644 SF or 5 percent	Yes

Design Review

The following is a discussion of the building design and potential lighting and visual impacts.

- **Building Design.** As shown on the plan set (Attachment 3, sheets A-5 through A-8) the proposed 9,884-square-foot automotive restoration shop design is a concrete building. The building’s materials are constructed of CMU block walls with smooth finishes. Design features include a 5-foot parapet wall that will screen all roof mounted equipment as well as a Porte Cochere providing visual interest for the building façade. The parapet wall and Porte

¹ Determining Floor Area [WMC § 14-17.108\(b\)](#): Industrial and commercial floor space may be calculated at 85 percent of the gross floor area for the purposes of determining floor area. The project proposes a new 9,884 SF automotive restoration body shop. The second-floor use is a mezzanine for storage and does not require parking spaces. The first-floor size of 7,354 SF can be calculated at 85 percent of the gross floor space for purposes of determining the number of parking spaces. Calculation: 7,354 x 0.85 = 6,251.75 – 3,000 = 3,251.75 ÷ 800 = 4.06 rounded down to 4 parking spaces

Cochere proposed roofs will be metal with forest green finishes. Metal awnings are proposed over the roll up doors and doorways for a total of four awnings on the building's front façade. The building design is consistent with the surrounding industrial development.

- **Lighting and Visual Impact.** The project did not provide a lighting photometric plan. Therefore, the project is conditioned to submit a lighting photometric plan with the building permit application submittal. The photometric plan will show the location of proposing lighting and the amount of light, measured in foot-candles (fc), on the ground surface. Proposed lighting may take the form of pole or wall-mounted fixtures. All lighting shall be installed at intervals and heights to ensure adequate lighting of the parking lot and building entries. The photometric plan shall demonstrate that all proposed lighting will not create a significant source of spillover light onto adjacent properties or glare nuisances to motorists on public street.

Drainage

The project proposes 12,261 square feet of new impervious surface and is classified as a Tier II project under the City's Post Construction Stormwater Performance Requirements. Tier II performance requirements must demonstrate that stormwater runoff be treated to reduce pollutant loads and concentrations using physical, biological, and chemical removal. Runoff from all new impervious surfaces shall be directed to bioretention facilities where water quality treatment shall be facilitated.

Overflow from the bioretention area fronting Grove Street will drain through overflow structure then through a curb drain to the gutter along Grove Street. Overflow from the bioretention area fronting the alley will sheet flow across the alley to the concrete vee gutter on the opposite side of the alley. The drainage then will flow down the vee gutter to a catch basin at the back of the walkway at Riverside Drive where it exits through a curb drain into the curb and gutter along Riverside Drive.

The stormwater control plan was reviewed by Public Works staff and found to meet the City of Watsonville Post Construction Storm Water Requirements. As a project condition of approval, prior to submitting for a building permit, a percolation test shall be required. The percolation test shall field verify the percolation rate to be used for the project.

Flood Plain Management and Development

The property is located in the special flood hazard area and is subject to a 1% or greater chance of flooding in any given year. The project is subject to [Chapter 9-2 Flood Plain Management of the WMC](#). Projects that are fully enclosed below the base floodplain elevation shall be designed to automatically equalize hydrostatic flood forces on exterior walls by allowing for the entry and exit of floodwater. Designs for meeting this requirement shall follow the guidelines in FEMA Technical Bulletins TB 1-93 and TB 7-93, and must meet or exceed the following minimum criteria:

- Have a minimum of two openings having a total net area of not less than one square inch for every square-foot of enclosed area subject to flooding. The bottom of all openings shall be no higher than one foot above grade. Openings may be equipped with screens, louvers, valves or other coverings or devices provided that they permit automatic entry and exit of floodwater; or
- Be certified by a registered professional engineer or architect.

As a project condition of approval, a flood elevation certificate is required from the Santa Cruz County Environmental Health Services department prior to the issuance of a building permit. Also, a spill prevention control plan (SPCC plan) is required by issuance from the Santa Cruz County Environmental Health Services documenting the impact of this facility to water quality treatment in the event of a flood.

Monterey Bay Air Resources District Permit

The project is proposing construction of a paint booth within the automotive restoration shop and requires a Coating Operations General Permit from the Monterey Bay Air Resources District (MBARD). MBARD requires permits for

facilities having coating operations where volatile organic compounds are used. As a project condition of approval, the plans shall be revised to include an air filtration and ventilation system to capture all volatile compounds from the paint booth. All exhaust and ducting equipment shall be directed away from all adjacent residential development. Prior to issuance of a building permit, the applicant is required to submit to the Community Development Department evidence of the MBARD permit for the proposed paint booth. The project is also conditioned to submit evidence of a spill prevention hazardous waste permit from the County of Santa Cruz Department of Environmental Health, prior to issuance of a building permit.

Environmental Review

A Class 3 (New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures) and Class 32 Categorical Exemption (In-Fill Development Projects) has been determined to be applicable to the project, which would demolish an existing 1,176-square-foot industrial building and construct a new 9,884-square-foot automotive restoration shop on a 0.29± acre industrial lot, located within the City limits. The subject site is considered an infill site and is located in an area substantially surrounded by urbanized uses where all necessary public services and facilities are available, and the surrounding area is not environmentally sensitive (CEQA Guidelines §§ 15303 and 15332). The project is consistent with the General Plan and Zoning requirements for the City of Watsonville, has no value as habitat for endangered, rare or threatened species and approval of the project will not result in any significant effects relating to traffic, noise, air quality, or water quality.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Plan Set (Dated 2/25/2020)
2. Site and Vicinity Map