

Findings of Fact/Factors to be Considered

PL23-0075

Environmental Determination(s)

1. Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (Public Resources Code section 21000 et. seq.) ("CEQA"), and its implementing regulations (14 C.C.R. § 15000 et seq.) ("CEQA Guidelines"), the City of Escondido ("City") is the Lead Agency for the project ("Project"), as the public agency with the principal responsibility for approving the Project.
2. The Project qualifies for an exemption from further environmental review pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15301 (Existing Facilities) and 15303 (New Construction or Conversion of Small Structure) because such categorical exemption applies to proposed developments that consist of minor alterations to private structures involving negligible or no expansion beyond the existing or former use. This applies to development such as interior or exterior alterations, and additions to existing structures of not more than 10,000 square feet. The project also qualifies because it involves the conversion of existing unused space to multi-family residential totaling no more than six dwelling units in urbanized areas. The project site is substantially surrounded by urban uses, where the site has no habitat value for special status species, can be adequately served by all required utilities and public services, and the project would not result in any significant effects relating to traffic, noise, air quality, or water quality. The Project also does not trigger any exceptions to the categorical exemption as listed in CEQA Guidelines section 15300.2.
3. The City Council has independently considered the full administrative record before it, which includes but is not limited to the January 24, 2024, City Council Staff Report; testimony by staff and the public; and other materials and evidence submitted or provided to it. The administrative record demonstrates that each of the above requirements have been satisfied. No substantial evidence has been submitted that would support a finding that any of the above-described exemption requirements has not been satisfied. The Project will not have a significant effect on the environment, and all of the requirements of CEQA have been met.

Master and Precise Development Plan

1. The location, design, and residential density of the proposed Project is consistent with the goals and policies of the Escondido General Plan because mixed-use residential development is permitted and encouraged in the Downtown Specific Plan Area (SPA 9) and the Historic District (HD). The proposed infill residential project would be in conformance with General Plan Housing Element's Goals and Policies to plan for quality managed and sustainable growth; provide a range of housing opportunities for all income groups and populations with special needs, and; encourage a compact, efficient urban form the promotes transit, supports nearby commercial establishments and takes advantage of infrastructure improvements installed to accommodate their intended intensities. The site is physically suitable for the proposed density of development because the property is within a downtown urban core area

and the project will assist in the ongoing revitalization of the Downtown Area and retail core by establishing a permanent residential base in the downtown area. The subject site is located within the Historic District of the Downtown Specific Plan, which allows multi-family mixed-use development up to 75 du/ac. Based on the property size of 0.16 acres, the Historic Downtown District would allow up to 12 units and a three-story structure up to 45 feet in height. The request to remodel the second story of the existing two-story, 27-foot-high building is consistent with the land use density and development requirements envisioned for this area. The project density of 25 du/ac is consistent with the allowable density for the project site.

The proposed Planned Development, consisting of a Master and Precise Development Plan, includes a request for a parking reduction from eight spaces to six spaces, along with reduction in setbacks for the six parking spaces. The Downtown Specific Plan allows for modifications to development standards through the Planned Development process. The proposed modifications to the development standards would be appropriate for this project, as discussed in the Planning Commission staff report dated December 12, 2023, and City Council staff report dated January 24, 2024.

2. The proposed location of the development allows the planned development to be well integrated with its surroundings by providing a mixed-use residential housing project in close proximity to transit, and near retail and other commercially developed properties. Adequate parking, circulation, utilities and access would be provided for the development (as detailed in the staff report). The project would not be out of character for the area because the Historic Downtown District of the Downtown Specific Plan envisions an upscale urban area with a mix of high-density residential and commercial development. Further, the proximity to the Escondido Transit Center makes the density appropriate. The proposed exterior improvements to the buildings are appropriate for the proposed location due to the street-oriented appeal and urban design characteristics, along with the quality of the architectural design and use of a variety of building materials and colors. The proposed exterior improvements also would be consistent and appropriate for the historic design of the structure.
3. All vehicular traffic generated by the proposed development would be accommodated safely and without causing undue congestion upon adjoining streets, as determined by the Engineering Division.
4. The overall design of the proposed residential mixed-use development would produce an attractive, efficient and stable environment for living because adequate residential amenities, parking, and landscaping would be provided. Further, the design of the development is consistent with a high quality, urban infill project that will provide housing opportunities within walking distance of downtown commercial and retail services consistent with the City's vision for the downtown area. The project includes sufficient on-site open space amenities appropriate for this mixed-use urban development, including a parking roof-deck common open area with outdoor seating areas.
5. The proposed development would be well integrated into its surroundings, because the new structures would incorporate compatible and integrated architecture, materials and colors, and

the project would not be visually obstructive or disharmonious with surrounding areas, or harm major views from adjacent properties. No grading is proposed for the project other than minimal ground preparation for the modified parking area.

6. The uses proposed have a beneficial effect not obtainable under existing zoning regulations. Utilizing the Planned Development process allows flexibility from the Downtown Specific Plan requirements in order to achieve a higher-density residential project in the urban core and adaptive reuse of the existing underutilized building. The project would provide residential opportunities integrated into a comprehensive and self-contained development, which creates an environment of sustained desirability and stability through the controls offered and regulated through the Planned Development process.
7. The project would provide an environment of sustained desirability and stability because City services and adequate access would be provided; adequate parking would be provided; the proposed architecture would be integrated into its surroundings; and the project could serve as a catalyst for further revitalization efforts in the area.
8. The improvements are not likely to cause substantial environmental concerns because the property was previously developed with commercial uses. The site does not contain any sensitive or protected habitat or other environmental concerns as determined during the environmental review. The design of the project and the type of improvements are not likely to cause serious public health problems because the project will not degrade the levels of service on the adjoining streets or drainage system as the project incorporates appropriate infrastructure improvements. Adequate city sewer and water is available to the site.
9. The general provisions, conditions, and exceptions applicable to the underlying Downtown Specific Plan shall be applied to the planned development, unless a different regulation or standard is prescribed by an adopted planned development. Development standards related to parking, setbacks, building height and open space as described in the December 12, 2023 staff report and January 24, 2024 staff report shall be governed by the site-specific Master Development Plan standards, which shall be adopted as part of the Project. All other provisions of the Escondido Zoning Code and Downtown Specific Plan shall prevail during the implementation and operation of the Project.

No Net Loss

No Net Loss Law (Government Code section 65863) applies when a site is included in the jurisdiction's Housing Element's inventory of sites and is either rezoned to a lower residential density or is approved at a lower residential density or affordability level than shown in the Housing Element. The City does not need to determine if this Project or a decision related to this Project would be subject to No Net Loss Law and its remedies. The Project site is not identified in the vacant/underutilized sites land inventory of the City's Sixth Cycle (current) Housing Element (i.e., Appendix B of Chapter IV of the General Plan).