

**MEETING MINUTES OF THE CITY OF
COSTA MESA PLANNING COMMISSION**

September 11, 2023

CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG

Fire Station Five led the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Present: Chair Adam Ereth, Vice Chair Russell Toler, Commissioner Angely Andrade, Commissioner Karen Klepack, Commissioner Jonny Rojas, Commissioner Jimmy Vivar

Absent: Commissioner Jon Zich

Officials Present: Development Services Director Jennifer Le, Assistant Director of Development Services Scott Drapkin, Assistant City Attorney Tarquin Preziosi, Assistant Planner Gabriel Villalobos, Contract Planner Michelle Halligan, City Engineer Seung Yang and Recording Secretary Anna Partida

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRESENTATIONS:

None.

PUBLIC COMMENTS – MATTERS NOT LISTED ON THE AGENDA:

None.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS:

Commissioner Vivar reflected on the significance of September 11, honoring the sacrifices of military personnel, emergency responders, and public safety officials, including Costa Mesa's fire and police departments, for their dedication to the nation's safety. He also highlighted his participation in a meeting hosted by the Costa Mesa Alliance for Better Streets and Move LA, where local leaders and the California Secretary of Transportation discussed advancing transportation inclusivity and promoting alternatives to vehicle dependency.

Commissioner Rojas reflected on the significance of September 11, recalling his own experiences and the impact of that day, while noting how it has become a historical event for younger generations. He emphasized the importance of remembering the event and its lasting effects. Additionally, he commended the ongoing work in Placentia, particularly the pavement and restriping efforts, acknowledging the temporary challenges but praising the impressive progress and anticipated outcome.

Commissioner Andrade reflected on the significance of September 11, sharing her experience of living in New York City during the tragedy. She highlighted the unity it fostered, as people came together to support one another despite political differences. She expressed gratitude for the City's recognition of the day and appreciation for community events, such as movies and symphonies in the park, which foster connection. She also commended the Fairview Master Plan Update session for encouraging community input and urged residents to engage with city updates and events through social media to stay informed and provide feedback for the City's ongoing improvement.

CONSENT CALENDAR:

No member of the public nor Planning Commissioner requested to pull a Consent Calendar item.

- 1. SEPTEMBER 12, 2022 UNOFFICIAL MEETING MINUTES**
- 2. OCTOBER 10, 2022 UNOFFICIAL MEETING MINUTES**

MOVED/SECOND: Vivar/Rojas

MOTION: Approve recommended action for Consent Calendar Items

The motion carried by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Ereth, Toler, Andrade, Rojas, Vivar

Nays: None

Absent: Zich

Abstained: None

Motion carried:6-0-1

ACTION: The Planning Commission approved all Consent Calendar items.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

- 1. PLANNING APPLICATION 22-30 AND TENTATIVE TRACT MAP 19244 (T-23-01) FOR A MASTER PLAN FOR AN EIGHT-UNIT LIVE/WORK DEVELOPMENT AT 1711-1719 POMONA AVENUE**

Project Description: Planning Application 22-30 is a request for a Master Plan and Tentative Tract Map (NO.19244) for a proposed eight unit live/work residential development. The project proposes to demolish the existing industrial development, and to construct eight new live/work units with attached garages and open parking spaces. Each unit will be three floors (plus a roof deck) and will be

42 feet in height. In addition, the project proposes a variety of site improvements including new hardscape and landscaping.

Environmental Determination: The project is categorically exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) per CEQA Guidelines Section 15332 (Class 32), In-Fill Development.

One ex-parte communication reported.

Chair Ereth spoke with the applicant before the start of the Planning Commission meeting.

Christopher Yeager, Associate Planner, presented the staff report.

The discussion covered environmental, regulatory, and planning aspects of a proposed development. One commissioner asked about the site's past use as an auto repair facility and whether environmental testing was needed; staff confirmed that a Phase One Environmental Assessment found no remediation necessary. Another commissioner asked whether live-work units could have separate tenants for residential and commercial spaces; staff clarified the units must be occupied by individuals using both spaces. Questions were also raised about the Mesa West Bluffs overlay, including its intent to revitalize industrial areas, restrictions on mixed-use rentals, workspace requirements, wall placement, driveway materials, and future parking needs, which staff addressed in detail. Concerns about parking availability were discussed, with staff explaining that while street parking doesn't count toward requirements, off-site options may be considered. The area's walkability was highlighted, and staff explained that the integration of housing and business use was part of a city-approved plan to encourage mixed-use development. Affordability was also brought up, with staff noting it isn't currently required but could be addressed through a future inclusionary ordinance.

The Chair opened the Public Hearing.

Ryan Lederman, applicant's representative, stated he had read and agreed to the conditions of approval.

During the discussion between the commissioners and the applicant, questions centered around drainage, parking, design compliance, and sustainability. One commissioner, drawing from an engineering background, inquired about the site's bioretention system and runoff capacity, and was assured it met standards for a 100-year storm with improved infiltration. The applicant confirmed the system's overflow mechanisms and compliance with city and water board requirements. Questions were also raised about adherence to objective versus subjective design standards, the project's alignment with residential design guidelines, and the rationale behind the number of parking spaces, with the applicant acknowledging that fewer spaces would have been preferable both financially and from a

walkability perspective. Design features intended to support authentic live-work use—such as large storefront windows—were discussed, along with limitations posed by site geometry. Concerns were raised about the placement of trees and the orientation of units, especially those facing a less visible north wall, to which the applicant explained access, fire safety, and neighbor compatibility were key factors. The applicant also highlighted efforts to enhance green space, provide EV charging, and support sustainable transportation by including electric bikes or scooters for residents. Though not certified LEED, the project incorporates many eco-friendly elements aligned with modern California building standards.

The Chair opened public comments.

Graham Reed expressed support for the project but raised concerns about parking, noting that only five of the 24 spaces are common and could be inadequate for businesses with multiple employees. He disagreed with claims that street parking is readily available, citing long-term issues due to nearby multi-tenant housing. He also questioned renderings that show the site at street level, pointing out that the actual grade is lower. Lastly, he suggested that labeling the units as live-work may be a way to increase residential density.

Scott Highley voiced strong support for the live-work project, sharing that it would be an ideal fit for his cosmetic company, which serves international clients in the film industry. He highlighted the location's convenience, proximity to his home, walkability, and appeal to customers who prefer visiting Costa Mesa over other parts of L.A., making it a perfect spot for a showroom and business operations.

The Chair closed public comments.

The Commission asked the applicant about grading concerns, specifically whether the site would require significant grading or ramps due to elevation differences. The applicant explained that while there is some slope, it will meet city engineering standards and ADA requirements using natural grade pathways, not steep ramps with railings. A few stairs will be included at front entrances, but internal access will remain ADA-compliant.

Discussion between Commissioners and staff focused on parking flexibility, live-work unit enforcement, and potential design improvements. Commissioners debated the challenges of high parking requirements, noting that while reducing parking now would require a variance, future flexibility could be explored through permits and shared-use strategies. There were concerns about ensuring the workspaces remain bona fide businesses and not convert into extra living areas. Staff explained that CC&Rs and conditions of approval require marketing and use of the ground floor as commercial space, with some ideas floated—like maintaining clear windows, prohibiting frosted glass, or annual inspections—to reinforce this intent. Commissioners also discussed tree placement for better walkability, ADA-compliant grading, and the marketability and affordability of the units. Some

supported adding conditions like a 42-inch max wall height and staff exploring tree relocation into the parkway. Ultimately, the project was seen as a positive step within existing code constraints, though several commissioners expressed broader concerns about outdated parking and density standards shaping development in ways that don't align with current city goals for walkability, affordability, and vibrant mixed-use neighborhoods.

The Chair closed the Public Hearing.

Vice Chair Toler made a motion. Seconded by Chair Ereth.

Commissioners expressed overall support for the project, acknowledging its alignment with current zoning and city regulations, while also voicing concerns about broader issues like affordability and density. One commissioner emphasized that while the project is well-designed and the applicant followed the rules, it reflects outdated city standards—particularly regarding low density and high parking requirements—which limit the potential for more affordable and walkable development. Others highlighted the project's contribution to homeownership and local business opportunities, even if the likely price point may be out of reach for first-time buyers. There was appreciation for the applicant's collaboration and design efforts, especially the inclusion of ground-floor commercial space and landscaping. While recognizing limitations due to market conditions and policy, commissioners agreed that the project represents a positive step forward for the community.

MOVED/SECOND: Toler/Ereth

MOTION: Approve staff's recommendation.

The motion carried by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Ereth, Toler, Andrade, Rojas, Klepack, Vivar

Nays: None

Absent: Zich

Recused: None

Motion carried: 6-0-1

ACTION: The Planning Commission adopted a resolution to:

1. Find that the project is categorically exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) per CEQA Guidelines Section 15332 (Class 32) In-Fill Development; and
2. Approve Planning Application 22-30 and Tentative Tract Map 19244 (T-23-01), subject to conditions of approval.

RESOLUTION PC-2023-24 - A RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF COSTA MESA, CALIFORNIA APPROVING PLANNING APPLICATION 22-30 AND TENTATIVE TRACT MAP 19244 (T-23-

01) FOR A MASTER PLAN FOR AN EIGHT UNIT LIVE/WORK DEVELOPMENT AT 1711-1719 POMONA AVENUE

The Chair explained the appeal process.

OLD BUSINESS:

None.

NEW BUSINESS:

None.

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

1. Public Works Report – Mr. Yang announced that the Parks and Community Services Commission will receive a presentation on the TeWinkle Park Lakes upgrades this Thursday at 6:00 PM in the City Council Chambers. The public is invited to attend either in person or via Zoom, with more information available on the city’s website.
2. Development Services Report – Scott Drapkin reported that the City Council recently directed the Planning Commission to revisit the cannabis ordinance, with a study session expected around the start of the new year. The initial review will be informational, presenting City Council direction and staff analysis without requiring immediate action. A follow-up hearing will allow for formal input. Commissioners asked for a map showing current cannabis application statuses and clarification on how existing applications are handled during the ordinance review process. Staff confirmed that all complete applications will continue under current rules until changes are adopted. Commissioners also requested data on cannabis revenue potential and comparisons with other cities’ policies. Staff noted that while financial impacts are outside the Planning Commission’s scope, comparisons, population-to-store ratios, and implementation outcomes from other jurisdictions will be included to help guide the review.

CITY ATTORNEY’S OFFICE REPORT

1. City Attorney – None.

ADJOURNMENT AT 8:50 PM

Submitted by:

SCOTT DRAPKIN, SECRETARY
COSTA MESA PLANNING COMMISSION