



# PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA REPORT

MEETING DATE: JUNE 23, 2025

ITEM NUMBER: PH-1

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**SUBJECT: DESIGN REVIEW (PDES-24-0013) AND TENTATIVE PARCEL MAP 2024-156 FOR A RESIDENTIAL SMALL LOT SUBDIVISION TO CREATE TWO PARCELS EACH CONTAINING A NEW TWO-STORY DETACHED SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENCE AND AN ATTACHED TWO-CAR GARAGE AT 2280 ELDEN AVENUE**

**FROM: ECONOMIC AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES  
DEPARTMENT/PLANNING DIVISION**

**PRESENTATION BY: JEFFREY RIMANDO, ASSISTANT PLANNER**

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## **RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends the Planning Commission adopt a Resolution to:

1. Find that the staff presentation is exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15315 (Class 15) Minor Divisions of Land, and Section 15303 (Class 3) New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures; and
2. Approve Parcel Map No. 2024-156 and Design Review PDES-24-0013 based on findings of fact and subject to conditions of approval.

## **APPLICANT OR AUTHORIZED AGENT:**

The applicant and authorized agent is David Dilettoso representing the property owner, Peter C. Swift Trust.

**PLANNING APPLICATION SUMMARY**

|           |   |                     |              |
|-----------|---|---------------------|--------------|
| Location: | 2280 Elden Avenue   | Application Number: | PDES-24-0013 |
| Request:  | Parcel Map and Design Review for a residential small lot subdivision project consisting of two, two-story, detached single family dwelling units with attached two-car garages. |                     |              |

**SUBJECT PROPERTY:**

**SURROUNDING PROPERTY:**

|                       |  |                           |       |
|-----------------------|--|---------------------------|-------|
| Zone:                 | R2-MD (Multi-Family Residential, Medium Density)   | North (across Elden Ave): | R2-MD |
| General Plan:         | Medium Density Residential   | South:                    | R2-MD |
| Lot Dimensions:       | 46' x 140'   | East:                     | R2-MD |
| Lot Area:             | 6,470 SF   | West (across Albert Pl):  | R2-MD |
| Existing Development: | Two existing detached single-story single-family dwellings on one lot with attached one-car garages. |                           |       |

**DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS COMPARISON**

| Development Standard                                 | Small Lot Standards  | Proposed/Provided  |
|--|--|--|
| <b>Lot Size</b>                                      |  |  |
| Lot Width/Depth                                      | No Standard  | Parcel 1: 56 FT 8 IN / 46 FT 6 IN<br>Parcel 2: 68 FT 5 IN / 46 FT 6 IN |
| Lot Area   | No Standard  | Parcel 1: 3,286 SF<br>Parcel 2: 3,184 SF                               |
| <b>Density/Intensity</b>                             |  |  |
| DUs Per Acre (Residential)                           | 1 DU / 3,630 SF of Lot Area<br>2 units maximum allowed*  | Total of two units   |
| <b>Building Height</b>                               |  |  |
|  | 2 Stories / 27 FT  | 2 stories / 26 FT 8 IN   |
| <b>Open Space</b>                                    |  |  |
| Overall Open Space                                   | 35% of development area  | 3,186 SF (49%)   |
| Private Open Space                                   | 200 SF / Min. 10 FT  | Unit 1 (Parcel 2): 795 SF<br>Unit 2 (Parcel 1): 703 SF                 |
| <b>Residential Guidelines</b>                        |  |  |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor to 1 <sup>st</sup> Floor Ratio | Maximum 100%   | Unit 1 (Parcel 2): 107%**<br>Unit 2 (Parcel 1): 101%**                 |
| <b>Development Lot Building Setbacks</b>             |  |  |
| Front  | 20 FT  | 20 FT  |
| Side (left/street)                                   | 10 FT  | 10 FT  |
| Side (right/southeast)                               | 5 FT   | 5 FT   |
| Rear   | 15 FT  | 15 FT  |
| Distance Between Main Buildings                      | 6 FT   | 6 FT   |
| <b>Parking</b>                                       |  |  |
| Garage   | 2-car garage per unit  | 2-car garage/unit (4 spaces)   |
| Open   | 2 spaces per unit  | 2 spaces/unit (4 spaces)   |
| Total Parking  | 8 spaces   | 8 spaces   |
| CEQA Review  | Exempt per CEQA Guidelines Section 15315 (Minor Division of Land) and Section 15303 (New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures) |  |
| Final Action   | Planning Commission  |  |

\* Legal lots existing as of March 16, 1992, that are less than 7,260 square feet in area but not less than 6,000 square feet in area, are allowed a density of 1 unit per 3,000 square feet of lot area.  
\*\* A residential project that does not meet the residential design guidelines criteria will require design review approval

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The applicant is requesting Planning Commission approval of a small two-lot residential subdivision project for the development of two new parcels, each with a two-story, detached single-family residence and an attached two-car garage. The proposed subdivision would allow for individual ownership of the units. Staff supports the request because the proposed small lot subdivision project is consistent with applicable goals, objectives, and policies of the General Plan, complies with applicable provisions of the Zoning Ordinance and respective findings, and would be compatible with surrounding residentially zoned development.

## **BACKGROUND**

The project site is located on the eastern corner of the intersection of Elden Avenue and Albert Place, in eastside Costa Mesa. The project site is a corner lot located on a level, rectangularly shaped 6,470 square foot parcel.

The property has a General Plan Land Use designation of Medium Density Residential (MDR) and is zoned Multi-Family Residential District, Medium Density (R2-MD). The project site is surrounded by residential development that consists of duplexes and single-family residences. Properties abutting the project site to the northeast and southeast and properties across the intersection are also designated under the R2-MD zone.

Exhibit 1 Project Location



Current development on the property consists of two detached single-family residences constructed in 1954. Each residence has a driveway with access from Elden Avenue that leads to a single-car garage.

**Exhibit 2 Existing Street View of 2280 Elden Avenue**

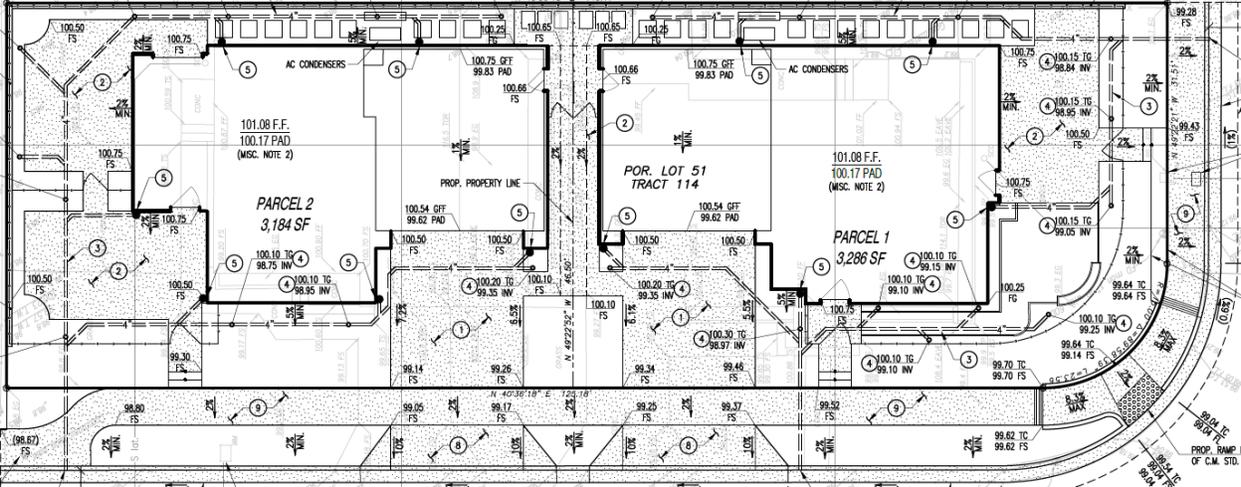


**REQUEST**

The applicant is requesting approval for a Small Lot Subdivision for the development of two single family residences and attached garages. Small Lot Subdivisions are allowed in the R2-MD zoning district pursuant to Costa Mesa Municipal Code (CMMC) Section 13-30 with the approval of a Tentative Parcel Map and Design Review applications.

The proposed development, as shown in exhibit 3 below, will subdivide the 6,470-square-foot parcel into two parcels. Parcel 1 is proposed to be 3,286 square feet and parcel 2 is proposed to be 3,184 square feet. Each parcel proposes a two-story single family residence with an attached two-car garage oriented towards Elden Avenue.

**Exhibit 3 Proposed Parcel Map**



**ANALYSIS**

## **Residential Small Lot Subdivision / Tentative Parcel Map**

The CMMC requires that the maximum density of a small lot subdivision be consistent with the underlying zoning district (R2-MD, Multiple-Family Residential District, Medium Density) and required development standards are specified pursuant to CMMC Section 13-42.3(b)(1-6). Legal lots existing as of March 16, 1992, that are less than 7,260 square feet in area but not less than 6,000 square feet in area, are allowed a density of 1 unit per 3,000 square feet of lot area. The project proposes two parcels each with a minimum lot area greater than 3,000 square feet and therefore complies with the density requirements. A comparison of the required development standards and the proposed project is provided above in the "Development Standards Comparison" table. As indicated in this table, the project is designed in compliance with the City's standards.

The existing 6,470 square-foot corner property is rectangularly shaped and is 140 feet deep and 46.5 feet wide. The Tentative Parcel Map application proposes the creation of two lots consisting of Parcel 1 (3,286 square feet) and Parcel 2 (3,184 square feet). Parcel 1 is proposed relatively rectangular shaped on the corner of the intersection with 56 feet 8 inches of street frontage on Elden Avenue, and Parcel 2 is proposed to be located side adjacent to Parcel 1 as an interior lot with an approximate 68 feet 5 inches of street frontage on Elden Avenue. The City's Residential Small Lot Subdivision standards do not require a minimum lot size.

Pursuant to the Costa Mesa Municipal Code Section 13-29 (g)(13), to approve the Parcel Map the Planning Commission must find:

- *That the map is consistent with the general plan, applicable specific plan(s), and the Zoning Code;*
- *The proposed use intended for the subdivision is compatible with the general plan;*
- *That the property is physically suitable to accommodate the subdivision;*
- *That the design of the subdivision provides, to the extent feasible, for future passive or natural heating and cooling opportunities;*
- *That the division and development will not unreasonably interfere with the free and complete exercise of the public entity and/or public utility rights-of-way and/or easements; and*
- *That the discharge of sewage from this land division into the public sewer system will not violate the requirements of the State Regional Water Quality Control Board.*

As indicated and detailed in the below "Findings" section of this report, the project complies with above findings to approve the Tentative Parcel Map. In addition, pursuant

to the Subdivision Map Act, Government Code Section 66474, a parcel map must be denied if one or more findings are made:

1. *“That the proposed map is not consistent with applicable general and specific plans as specified in Section 65451;*
2. *That the design or improvement of the proposed subdivision is not consistent with applicable general and specific plans;*
3. *That the site is not physically suitable for the type of development;*
4. *That the site is not physically suitable for the proposed density of development;*
5. *That the design of the subdivision or the proposed improvements are likely to cause substantial environmental damage or substantially and avoidably injure fish or wildlife or their habitat;*
6. *That the design of the subdivision or type of improvements is likely to cause serious public health problems; and*
7. *That the design of the subdivision or the type of improvements will conflict with easements, acquired by the public at large, for access through or use of, property within the proposed subdivision. In this connection, the governing body may approve a map if it finds that alternate easements, for access or for use, will be provided, and that these will be substantially equivalent to ones previously acquired by the public. This subsection shall apply only to easements of record or to easements established by judgment of a court of competent jurisdiction and no authority is hereby granted to a legislative body to determine that the public at large has acquired easements for access through or use of property within the proposed subdivision.”*

Pursuant to the proposed subdivision design, none of the above findings for denial can be made or associated with the proposed project.

### ***Design Review***

The proposed development includes two new two-story single-family residences that are proposed be approximately 2,050 square feet (Unit 1) and 2,164 square feet (Unit 2), with attached two car garages, and three bedrooms. The maximum height of the residences is proposed to be 26 feet 8 inches.

Pursuant to CMMC Section 13-42.2, a new residential small lot development project shall be processed according to the City’s Design Review procedures. The City’s Design Review application process ensures that the proposed development complies with the

Costa Mesa Zoning Code and meets the intent of the *Residential Design Guidelines*. Table 1 below provides a summary of the residential development proposed on each Parcel.

| Table 1 Unit Characteristics |                            |        |  |   |                |                        |                               |          |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|--------|--|---|----------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|----------|
|                              | 1 <sup>st</sup> Floor Area | Garage | 2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor Area (including balcony) | 2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor / 1 <sup>st</sup> Floor Ratio | Bed-room Count | Bath-rooms (Full/Half) | Parking Spaces (Garage /Open) | Lot Area |
| Unit 1 (Parcel 2)            | 790 SF                     | 486 SF | 1,367 SF                                       | 1.07  | 3              | 2 Full / 1 Half        | 2/2                           | 3,184 SF |
| Unit 2 (Parcel 1)            | 835 SF                     | 474 SF | 1,329 SF                                       | 1.01  | 3              | 2 Full/ 1 Half         | 2/2                           | 3,286 SF |

### **Residential Design Guidelines**

The proposed development, as shown in exhibit 4 below, meets the intent of the City's *Residential Design Guidelines* as follows:

- Second-Story Design and Building Mass:** The City's Residential Design Guidelines recommend second-story floor areas (including balconies) should not exceed 100 percent of the first-story floor area (including attached garage areas). The second-story floor area of Unit 1 has been designed to exceed 91 square feet of the first-story floor area and Unit 2 has been designed to exceed 20 square feet of the first-story floor area. Although each residence has a second-story floor area that will exceed 100 percent of the first story floor area, each proposed residence has been designed with articulation and off-sets on the various elevations to avoid boxy appearances. The elevations for the proposed development include multiple building planes and varied roof forms to soften the surplus mass of the second story. The elevations also include varied facades and articulations with stone veneer and vertical and horizontal wood siding.
- Second-Story Setbacks:** According to the *Residential Design Guidelines*, "the second-story interior side building elevation should be set back an average of 10 feet but shall be no closer than five feet from the side property line". However, the *Guidelines* specify that only a five-foot second-story setback is required for units less than 2,700 square feet of living area. Both units are proposed at less than 2,700 square feet with five-foot secondary setback and therefore, are in compliance with the second-story setback requirements.

- **Elevation Treatments:** All units feature a variety of projections and include articulation on each wall, varying roof types and materials. Building materials include stone veneer and vertical and horizontal wood siding and asphalt composite roofing.
- **Window Placement:** Consideration for design and privacy has been provided in locating the windows on the property. The applicant provided a “line of sight study” which demonstrates that the second-story windows facing northeast and southeast are located without direct views into the neighboring properties. The first-story windows are located behind the proposed six-foot block wall. The block wall is proposed to be constructed on the property line between the neighboring properties, which would further eliminate privacy impacts for the existing neighboring properties.
- **Consistency in Architectural Design:** The proposed design includes contemporary farmhouse features with materials and finishes that remain durable and require minimal maintenance. In addition, each façade features a variety of overhangs, materials, and roof forms, which provides visual interest and façade articulation (see the below Exhibit 4).

Exhibit 4 Colored Elevations



The immediately surrounding neighborhood features a diverse collection of architectural styles including other residences with modern and eclectic influences, and residences with craftsman features, eclectic styles and traditional styles (see the below Exhibit 5). The varying use of materials ranging from stucco and brick veneer to wood siding and the use of articulation and off-sets for two-story residences are common throughout the neighborhood which would be compatible with the proposed design.

**Exhibit 5 Neighboring Property Street View Examples**



**Open Space**

The CMMC requires that each unit be provided a minimum of 200 square feet of open space with no dimension being smaller than 10 feet. The units are proposed to be constructed to comply with the CMMC required private open space. Unit 1 provides 795 square feet of private open space with a minimum of 15 feet in depth and Unit 2 provides 703 square feet of private open space with a minimum of 15 feet in depth. Pursuant to the CMMC, each unit will also provide adequate space outside for three trash containers without encroaching into the garage space and without being visible from the public right of way.

**Parking and Circulation**

Pursuant to the City’s Small Lot Subdivision Standards and as provided by the project, units proposed with three bedrooms require two garage and two open parking spaces for each parcel (see the below Table 2).

| Table 2 Parking Requirements |   |          |
|------------------------------|---|----------|
|                              | Requirement                                       | Proposed |
| Garage Parking Spaces        | 4 spaces (2 per unit)                             | 4 spaces |
| Open Parking                 | 4 spaces (2 per unit for 3 or more bedroom units) | 4 spaces |

Pursuant to the Residential Small Lot Subdivision standards, driveway width is required to be 10-foot. The project complies with a 16-foot-wide driveway on each parcel. Each driveway provides access to the respective unit’s two-car garage and two open-parking spaces located on each driveway. Both the City’s Fire Department and Public Works Department have reviewed the project access design for conformance with minimum safety and access criteria. As required by the CMMC and as conditioned, all parking and driveways shall consist of decorative concrete, pavers, or other material subject to review by the Development Services Director.

## **Fences and Walls**

Pursuant to CMMC Section 13-75, the project requires the installation of a six-foot tall masonry wall around the perimeter of the proposed development lot. The final design of the walls will be reviewed as part of the building permit submittal. Any future modifications to the site walls and fencing are subject to review and approval of the Planning Division and may require building permits to be issued prior to installation. The heights and locations of walls and fences shall comply with the CMMC requirements as well as applicable visibility standards for traffic safety.

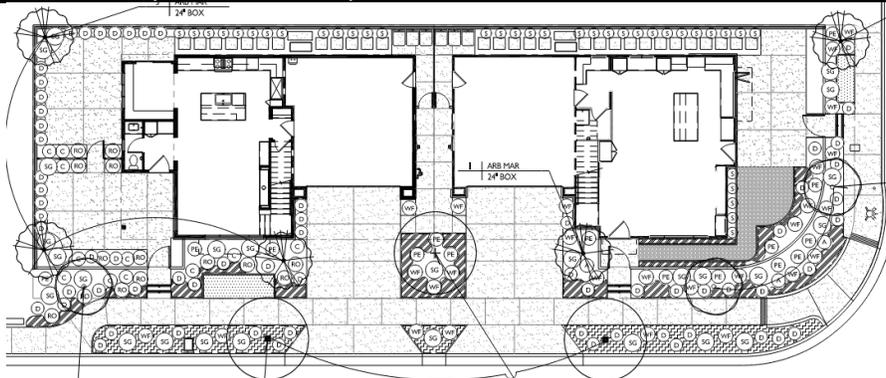
## **Landscaping and Lighting**

Per CMMC Section 13-106, all required landscape areas shall consist of drought tolerant plant material and shall meet the minimum number of plant types based on the total landscape square footage. The project proposes a total of 1,785 square feet of landscaping with a mixture of usable and decorative landscaping. The number of plants and trees required and proposed is provided in Table 3 below.

| <b>Table 3 Landscaping Requirements</b> |   |                 |
|---|---|-----------------|
|   | <b>Requirement</b>  | <b>Proposed</b> |
| <b>Tree Count</b>                       | 9 (one, 15-gallon tree or larger per 200 square feet of landscape area) | 9               |
| <b>Shrub Count</b>                      | 71 (one shrub for every 25 square feet of landscape area)               | 128             |
| <b>Groundcover coverage</b>             | 70% with the remaining area to incorporate uncontaminated compost/mulch | 70%             |

Two street trees will also be proposed to further improve the site. As part of the building permit plan check review, landscape plans will be prepared and certified by a California licensed landscape architect confirming compliance with the CMMC and water efficiency landscape guidelines (see Exhibit 6 which shows the proposed landscape plans for Parcels 1 and Parcel 2).

**Exhibit 6 Conceptual Landscape Plans**



Lighting is required to be provided in all parking areas, vehicular access areas, and on major walkways. The project is conditioned to have the applicant submit lighting plans at the time of building permit submittal.

### **Utilities**

The CMMC requires that new construction provide undergrounding of all utilities on site, including existing utility poles. As required, all new and existing utilities will be installed underground. Conditions of approval require that any new backflow preventers or related equipment be installed outside of the front landscape setback and be screened from view from any location on- or off-site. As required by the CMMC, all utility meters shall be screened from view from the public right of way and neighboring properties. Conditions of approval will require that prior to building permit approval, the applicant shall submit for approval of a comprehensive utilities plan to ensure that the water and sewer mains are adequate, and utility upgrades will be required if the existing infrastructure is not adequate. The plan will be reviewed by both the City's Building Division and Public Works Department at time of building permit submittal.

### **GENERAL PLAN CONFORMANCE**

The following analysis further evaluates the proposed project's consistency with specific policies and objectives of the 2015-2035 General Plan.

1. **Policy LU-1.3:** "Strongly encourage the development of residential uses and owner-occupied housing (single-family detached residences, condominiums, townhouses) where feasible to improve the balance between rental and ownership housing opportunities."

**Consistency:** The proposed project is in conformance with General Plan Policy LU-1.3 in that the proposed scope of work consists of demolishing two rental single-family dwellings and detached garages located on a multi-family zoned parcel (R2-MD) and to construct two, two-story detached ownership single-family dwelling units with attached garages on separate parcels, which will maximize the ownership opportunities of a residential property.

2. **Objective LU-2A:** "Promote land use patterns and development that contribute to community and neighborhood identity."

**Consistency:** The project site is surrounded by multi-family zoned parcels featuring various types of single and multi-family development. The proposed project complies with General Plan Objective LU-2A in that the proposed multi-unit development is consistent with the types of development within the surrounding neighborhood and contributes to

architectural design that complies with the residential design standards in the neighborhood.

3. **Policy HOU-3.4:** "Consider the potential impact of new housing opportunities and their impacts on existing residential neighborhoods when reviewing development applications affecting residential properties."

**Consistency:** The project would not negatively affect surrounding residential properties as privacy impacts have been considered in the development of the project and the proposed development will generally improve neighborhood and streetscape aesthetics. The project would be located in an established residential neighborhood and would increase the total opportunities for individual housing ownership in the City.

## **FINDINGS**

Pursuant to Title 13, Section 13-29(g)(13) and (14), "Findings for Tentative Parcel Maps and Design Review," in order to approve the project, the Planning Commission must find that the evidence presented in the administrative record substantially meets the following applicable required findings:

### ***Tentative Parcel Map Findings - Costa Mesa Municipal Code Section 13-29(g)(13)***

*The creation of the subdivision and related improvements is consistent with the General Plan, any applicable specific plan, and the Zoning Code.*

The Medium Density Residential General Plan land use designation maximum allowable density of 12 units per acre can be exceeded for legal, nonconforming Medium Density Residential lots between 6,000 and 7,260 square feet in size that existed as of March 16, 1992. The subject parcel is 6,470 square feet and has existed prior to 1992. The parcel map would allow for a new residential project that would be consistent with the General Plan land use designation of Medium Density Residential and the R2-MD zone that allows for one unit per 3,000 square feet of lot area for legal lots existing as of March 16, 1992, that are less than 7,260 square feet in area but not less than 6,000 square feet in area. The project design also complies with the applicable development standards for a residential small lot subdivision. The proposed parcel map is consistent with General Plan Land Use Objectives LU-1A and LU-2A, in that the subdivision allows for a project that would promote homeownership opportunities and improve the balance between rental and ownership housing in the City, and the parcel map would allow for redevelopment of an existing parcel which would improve and maintain quality of the neighborhood by improved architecture, aesthetics, and landscaping.

The proposed use of the subdivision is compatible with the General Plan.

The subject property has a General Plan land use designation of Medium Density Residential, which allows multi-family residential uses at a maximum of 12 dwelling units per acre. However, the maximum allowable density of 12 units per acre can be exceeded for legal, nonconforming Medium Density Residential lots between 6,000 and 7,260 square feet in size that existed as of March 16, 1992 (as allowed per the General Plan land use designation of Medium Density Residential and CMMC Section 13-32). The subject parcel is 6,470 square feet and has existed prior to 1992. The Parcel Map proposes a residential use that although would exceed the maximum density allowed per the General Plan, the proposed use would still maintain compatibility with the General Plan due to existing parcel size. In addition, the subdivision allows for a project that would promote homeownership opportunities and improve the balance between rental and ownership housing in the City, and the parcel map would allow for redevelopment of an existing parcel which would improve and maintain quality of the neighborhood by improved architecture, aesthetics, and landscaping, pursuant to General Plan Land Use Objectives LU-1A and LU-2A.

The subject property is physically suitable to accommodate the subdivision in terms of type, design and density of development, and will not result in substantial environmental damage nor public health problems, based on compliance with the Zoning Code and General Plan, and consideration of appropriate environmental information.

The property is relatively flat regarding topography, located within an established residential neighborhood, currently improved with residential development and suitable to accommodate two residential units. The size of the lot is also suitable since the proposed development meets all applicable development standards including, setbacks, parking, and open space. The parcel map proposes to subdivide a parcel into two lots that does not exceed the minimum R2-MD maximum density of one dwelling unit for 3,000 square-feet of lot area. Adequate infrastructure exists to serve the proposed project and the project will not result in the loss of any habitat, result in a negative impact on the environment as a whole or require extensive infrastructure improvements to provide service to the site.

The design of the subdivision provides, to the extent feasible, for future passive or natural heating and cooling opportunities in the subdivision, as required by State Government Code section 66473.1.

The project provides 49 percent open space for the overall development and each unit will have at least 200 square feet of private open space area. The open space will accommodate landscaping that can be provided throughout the site with adequate setbacks for airflow, and trees for site shading. The project is proposed

to include operable windows and will be fully insulated as required by the building code.

The division and development will not unreasonably interfere with the free and complete exercise of a public entity and/or public utility rights-of-way and/or easements within the tract.

The project has been reviewed by the Public Works Department and there are no conflicts with the City's or other utility agencies' rights-of-way or easements.

The discharge of sewage from this land division into the public sewer system will not violate the requirements of the State Regional Water Quality Control Board pursuant to Division 7 (commencing with State Water Code section 13000).

The lot currently has connections to the public sewer system for the existing residential units. The parcel map would allow for a residential project that would not include physical changes to the lot that would result in discharge into the public sewer system in violation of State requirements. Furthermore, the applicant will be required to comply with the regulations set forth by the Costa Mesa Sanitation District and Mesa Water District. Compliance with the Costa Mesa Sanitation District and Mesa Water District involves the implementation of a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) for construction-related activities, which will specify the "best management practices" (BMPs) that the project will be required to implement during construction activities to ensure that all potential pollutants of concern (including sediment) are prevented, minimized, and/or otherwise appropriately treated prior to being discharged from the subject property.

### **Design Review Findings - Costa Mesa Municipal Code Section 13-29(g)(14)**

The project complies with the City of Costa Mesa Zoning Code and meets the purpose and intent of the residential design guidelines, which are intended to promote design excellence in new residential construction, with consideration being given to compatibility with the established residential community. The design review includes site planning, preservation of overall open space, landscaping, appearance, mass and scale of structures, location of windows, varied roof forms and roof plane breaks, and any other applicable design features.

The project proposes a maximum density of one dwelling unit per 3,000 square feet of lot area, which is consistent with the maximum allowable density for the R2-MD Zone and the Medium Density Residential land use designation. The project complies with all other applicable Zoning Code standards including setbacks, parking, and open space. The project design incorporates elevations with varied roof forms and projections including eaves and overhangs to provide visual interest

as viewed from the street. The exterior materials include an asphalt composite roofing and a combination of vertical and horizontal wood siding with stone veneer accents. The architecture of the homes includes varying roof forms, wall planes, and exterior materials which allow it to avoid a boxy two-story design. Landscaping throughout the project meets code requirements and the project would introduce nine new trees on-site. The project will not result in privacy impacts to the surrounding residences based on the proposed window fenestration patterns and the proposed setbacks from the neighboring properties.

*The visual prominence associated with the construction of a two-story house or addition in a predominantly single-story neighborhood has been reduced through appropriate transitions between the first and second floors and the provision of second floor offsets to avoid unrelieved two-story walls.*

The neighborhood includes a mixture of one and two-story residential properties consisting of apartments, duplexes, condos, and single-family residences. The abutting property to the northeast consists of a two-story residence and the abutting property to the southeast consists of two detached single-family residences. The second story design proposes a second-floor area to exceed the floor area of the first floor which does not comply with the design guidelines. To compensate the slightly larger second-to-first floor area ratio, the second story provides articulation on both roof forms and wall planes that helps soften the façade along the street and avoids a boxy appearance.

*As applicable to affordable multi-family housing developments, the project complies with the maximum density standards allowed pursuant to the general plan and provides affordable housing to low or very low-income households, as defined by the California Department of Housing and Community Development. The project includes long-term affordability covenants in compliance with State law.*

The application does not include an affordable multi-housing development component and therefore, the requirement to include an affordability covenant is not applicable to the project.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION**

The project is categorically exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15315 (Class 15), Minor Land Divisions for the parcel map application, and Section 15303 (Class 3), New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures for the design review application.

Under Class 15, the division of property in urbanized areas is exempt from the provisions of CEQA if the subdivision: is zoned for residential use, is being subdivided into four or fewer parcels, conforms with the General Plan and Zoning Code, is

accessible and serviceable by utilities, was not involved in a division of a larger parcel within the previous two years, and has an average slope less than 20 percent. The proposed project meets the aforementioned conditions as described under CEQA Section 15315 in that:

- The project is located within the City of Costa Mesa and is consistent with the R2-MD Zoning Designation and the Medium Density Residential General Plan Designation because it proposes lot areas and development in compliance with zoning requirements, and proposes a density allowed by the General Plan Land Use Density;
- The project site is serviceable by all utilities and is accessible to the public right of way;
- The parcel has not been involved in a previous subdivision in the previous two years; and
- The parcel has been previously graded, is relatively flat and has an average slope less than 20 percent.

Additionally, under Section 15303 (Class 3), a project is exempt from the provisions of CEQA if it includes the construction or conversion of less than three new single-family residences in an urbanized area. The proposed project meets this requirement in that it includes the replacement of two existing single-family residences with two new single-family residences in an urban area. Lastly, none of the exceptions that bar the application of a categorical exemption pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 applies. Specifically, the project would not result in a cumulative environmental impact; would not have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances; would not result in damage to scenic resources; is not located on a hazardous site or location; and would not impact any historic resources.

## **ALTERNATIVES**

As an alternative to the recommended action, the Planning Commission may:

Approve the project with modifications. The Planning Commission may suggest specific changes that are necessary to alleviate concerns. If any of the additional requested changes are substantial, the item should be continued to a future meeting to allow a redesign or additional analysis. In the event of significant modifications to the proposal, staff will return with a revised Resolution incorporating new findings and/or conditions.

Deny the project. If the Planning Commission believes that there are insufficient facts to support the findings for approval, the Planning Commission must deny the application, provide facts in support of denial, and direct staff to incorporate the findings into a Resolution for denial. If the project is denied, the applicant could not submit substantially the same type of application for six months. However, because this

project is subject to the Housing Accountability Act (Government Code Section 65589.5), if the Planning Commission denies the housing project, and the development is determined to be consistent with applicable, objective general plan, zoning, and subdivision standards and criteria, including design review standards, the Planning Commission must make the following written findings:

- The housing development project would have a specific, adverse impact upon the public health or safety unless the project is disapproved or approved upon the condition that the project be developed at a lower density; and
- There is no feasible method to satisfactorily mitigate or avoid the adverse impact, other than the disapproval of the housing development project or the approval of the project upon the condition that it be developed at a lower density. (Feasible means capable of being accomplished in a successful manner within a reasonable period of time, taking into account economic, environmental, social, and technological factors.)

### **LEGAL REVIEW**

The draft Resolution and this report has been approved as to form by the City Attorney's Office.

### **PUBLIC NOTICE**

Pursuant to CMMC Section 13-29(d) three types of public notification have been completed no less than 10 days prior to the date of the public hearing:

1. **Mailed notice.** A public notice was mailed to all property owners and occupants within a 500-foot radius of the project site June 12, 2025. The required notice radius is measured from the external boundaries of the property.
2. **On-site posting.** A public notice was posted on each street frontage of the project site on June 12, 2025.
3. **Newspaper publication.** A public notice was published once in the Daily Pilot newspaper on June 6, 2025.

As of the completion date of this report, no written public comments have been received. Any public comments received prior to the June 23, 2025, Planning Commission meeting will be provided separately.

## **CONCLUSION**

Staff supports the applicant's request to develop a Residential Small Lot Subdivision because the proposed development is consistent with the City's R2-MD zoning designation and the General Plan. The project would provide homeownership opportunities to improve the balance between rental and ownership housing in the City. In addition, the proposed development is in compliance with the City's Subdivision and Development Review standards and complies with the City's Residential Design Guidelines. Lastly, the State's Housing Accountability Act (Government Code Section 65589.5) applies to this project and generally requires that cities approve housing projects that are consistent with the General Plan and zoning, unless the City can make specific State mandated findings for denial (further discussed in the "Alternatives" section of this report).