



PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA REPORT

MEETING DATE: DECEMBER 8, 2025 ITEM NUMBER: PH-2

SUBJECT: DESIGN REVIEW (PDES-25-0002) AND TENTATIVE PARCEL MAP 2025-141 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 2396 ORANGE AVENUE

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

PRESENTATION BY: JEFFREY RIMANDO, ASSISTANT PLANNER

**FOR FURTHER JEFFREY RIMANDO
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RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the Planning Commission adopt a Resolution to:

1. Find that the project 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. In addition, this project is statutorily exempt from the requirements of CEQA pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21080.66 (Housing Development Projects); and
2. Approve Parcel Map No. 2025-141 and Design Review PDES-25-0002 based on findings of fact and subject to conditions of approval.

APPLICANT OR AUTHORIZED AGENT:

The applicant and authorized agent is Rod Jeheber representing the property owner, Hal and Nancy Moorefield Family Trust.

PLANNING APPLICATION SUMMARY

Location:	2396 Orange Avenue	Application Number:	PDES-25-0002
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 (Multiple-Family Residential, Medium Density)	North (across Orange Ave):	R2-MD
General Plan:	Medium Density Residential	South:	R2-MD
Lot Dimensions:	Irregularly Shaped	East (across Santa Isabel Ave):	R1 (Single-Family Residential)
Lot Area:	7,580 SF	West:	R2-MD
Existing Development:	One two-story, single-family dwelling with an attached two-car garage.		

DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS COMPARISON

Development Standard	Small Lot Standards	Proposed/Provided
Lot Size		
Lot Width/Depth	No Standard	Parcel 1: 56 FT 8 IN / 46 FT 6 IN Parcel 2: 68 FT 5 IN / 46 FT 6 IN
Lot Area	No Standard	Gross: 7,580 SF Net: 6,952 SF ¹ Parcel 1 (Gross): 4,060 SF Parcel 2 (Gross): 3,520 SF Parcel 1 (Net): 3,752 SF ¹ Parcel 2 (Net): 3,200 SF ¹
Density/Intensity		
DUs Per Acre (Residential)	1 DU / 3,630 SF of Lot Area 2 units maximum allowed	Total of two units
Building Height		
	2 Stories / 27 FT	2 stories / 26 FT 8 IN (29 FT to top of chimney) ²
Open Space		
Overall Open Space	35% of development area	3,407 SF (49%)
Private Open Space	200 SF / Min. 10 FT	Parcel 1: 381 SF Parcel 2: 602 SF
Residential Guidelines		
2 nd Floor to 1 st Floor Ratio	Maximum 100%	Unit 1 (Parcel 2): 87% Unit 2 (Parcel 1): 92%
Development Lot Building Setbacks		
Front	20 FT	20 FT 1 IN
Side (right/street)	10 FT	10 FT 1 IN (9 FT 1 IN to fireplace) ³
Side (left/interior)	5 FT	5 FT 1 IN
Rear	15 FT	15 FT 1 IN
Distance Between Main Buildings	6 FT	13 FT 2 IN
Parking		

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) and Public Resources Code section 21080.66 (Housing Development Projects)		
Final Action	Planning Commission		
¹ Square footage of parcel after the dedication of a 5-foot sidewalk easement. ² Chimneys may extend two feet above the maximum building height. ³ Fireplaces may encroach two feet into the required setback area.			

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The applicant is requesting approval of a two-unit small 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 southern corner of the intersection of Orange Avenue and Santa Isabel Avenue, in Eastside Costa Mesa. The project site is a corner lot located on a level, generally rectangular 7,580-square-foot parcel.

The property has a General Plan Land Use designation of Medium Density Residential (MDR) and is zoned Multiple-Family Residential District, Medium Density (R2-MD). The project site is surrounded by residential development that consists of multiple- and single-family residences. Properties abutting the project to the southwest, southeast, and across Orange Avenue to the northwest are also zoned R2-MD. Properties across Santa Isabel Avenue are zoned Single-Family Residential District (R1).

Exhibit 1 Project Location



Current development on the property consists of one single-family residence with a two-car garage, which based on historic aerial photographs, was constructed in the late 1940s. There is no permit on file with the City for the construction of the residence due to the construction occurring prior to City incorporation. The residence has a driveway with access from Orange Avenue that leads to a two-car garage. This structure is proposed to be demolished to allow for the proposed project.

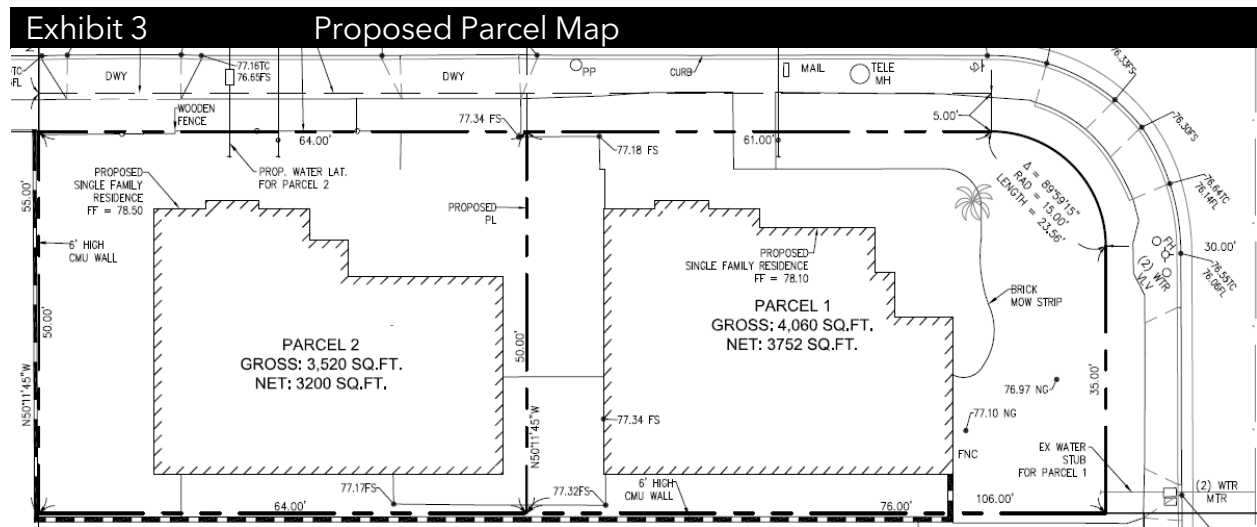
Exhibit 2 Existing Street View of 2396 Orange Avenue



REQUEST

The applicant is requesting approval for a Small Lot Subdivision including a tentative parcel map and design review to facilitate the development of two, two-story single family residences each with an attached two-car garage.

The proposed parcel map, as shown in Exhibit 3 below, will subdivide the 7,580 square-foot parcel into two parcels. Parcel 1 is proposed to be 4,060 square feet and Parcel 2 is proposed to be 3,520 square feet. The tentative parcel map also provides a five-foot wide sidewalk easement at the northwest side of the property along Orange Avenue that would span across both parcels. The easement results in a total development lot size of 6,952 square feet resulting in Parcel 1 to be 3,752 net square feet and Parcel 2 to be 3,200 net square feet after the dedication.



The proposed development includes two new two-story single-family residences that are approximately 2,291 square feet (Unit A) and 2,186 square feet (Unit B), with attached two car garages, and three bedrooms. The maximum height of each residence is proposed to be 26 feet 8 inches, with a 29 foot chimney. Table 1 below provides a summary of the residential development proposed on each Parcel.

	1 st Floor Area (SF)	Garage	2 nd Floor Area (SF)	2 nd Floor/ 1 st Floor Ratio	Bed-room Count	Bath-rooms (Full/Half)	Parking Spaces (Garage /Open)	Gross Lot Area (SF)
Unit A (Parcel 1)	1,033	417	1,258	0.87	3	3 Full / 1 Half	2/2	4,060
Unit B (Parcel 2)	907	489	1,279	0.92	3	3 Full/ 1 Half	2/2	3,520

ANALYSIS

Residential Small Lot Subdivision / Tentative Parcel Map

The Costa Mesa Municipal Code (CMMC) requires that the maximum density of a small lot subdivision be consistent with the underlying zoning district (R2-MD) and development standards are required pursuant to CMMC Section 13-42.3(b)(1-6). The R2-MD zone allows a density of 12 units per acre (one unit per 3,630 square feet of lot area). Although the five-foot sidewalk easement would reduce the square footage of the subject property from 7,580 square feet down to 6,952 square feet, the maximum density of a small lot subdivision is based on the gross acreage of the lot – the total area of a lot of land before public streets, easements, or other areas to be dedicated or reserved for public use are deducted from such lot. The project proposes two units on the existing lot with a gross acreage of 7,580 square feet (11.5 units per acre) and therefore complies with the density requirements. While the 3,630 square feet lot average is noted for the density purposes, the City's Residential Small Lot Subdivision standards do not require a minimum lot size, allowing for some flexibility in the lot subdivision, to accommodate lot features such as land dedications, easements, driveways, etc.

The Tentative Parcel Map application proposes to create two lots consisting of Parcel 1 (4,060 square feet) and Parcel 2 (3,520 square feet). Parcel 1 is proposed at the corner of the intersection with the dwelling oriented towards Santa Isabel Avenue, and Parcel 2 is proposed as an interior lot with an approximate 64 feet of street frontage on Orange Avenue. As noted above, the project includes a sidewalk easement along the Orange Avenue frontage.

A comparison of the required development standards and the proposed project is provided above in the "Development Standards Comparison" table and as proposed, the project is designed in compliance with the City's standards.

Design Review

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 (CMMC Section 13-29). The City's Design Review application process ensures that the proposed development meets the intent of the Residential Design Guidelines.

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 requires that second-story floor areas should not exceed 100 percent

of the first-story floor area (including attached garage areas). The second-story floor area of Unit A has been designed with an area 87% and Unit B has been designed with a floor area that is 92% of the first story 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 stucco.

- **Second-Story Setbacks:** According to the *Residential Design Guidelines*, 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 a 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 stucco and standing seam metal roofing.
- **Window Placement:** The location of the windows included consideration for design and privacy of neighboring properties. The abutting property to the southwest (2390 Orange Avenue) consists of a single-story single-family dwelling in the front portion of the lot that is set back five feet from the shared property line of Parcel 2. The minimum distance between the existing dwelling and the proposed Unit B would be approximately 20 feet. The abutting property to the southeast (207 Santa Isabel Avenue) consists of a single-story single-family dwelling with a detached garage. The dwelling is set back 12 feet from the shared property line and is buffered by an existing driveway. The second-story windows of the proposed dwellings would be located without direct views into the neighboring properties. The first-story windows are located behind a proposed six-foot block wall which 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 modern features with exterior materials and finishes including stucco, stone veneer and a standing seam metal roofing that are 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 residences with modern and eclectic influences, residences with craftsman features, and other traditional styles (see the below Exhibit 5 and 6). 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



Exhibit 6 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 A provides 381 square feet of private open space with a minimum of 10 feet in depth and Unit B provides 602 square feet of private open space with a minimum of 15 feet in depth. The proposed dwellings also include adequate space for three trash containers without being visible from the public right of way.

Parking and Circulation

The project complies with the City's Small Lot Subdivision Parking standard for units proposed with three bedrooms as indicated in Table 2 below.

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, the minimum driveway width is required to be 10-foot. The project complies with a minimum 17-foot-wide driveway on each parcel. Each driveway provides access to the respective unit's two-car garage and the two open-parking spaces are proposed on each driveway. 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 prior to issuance of building permits.

Fences and Walls

Pursuant to CMMC Section 13-75, the project is required to install 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.

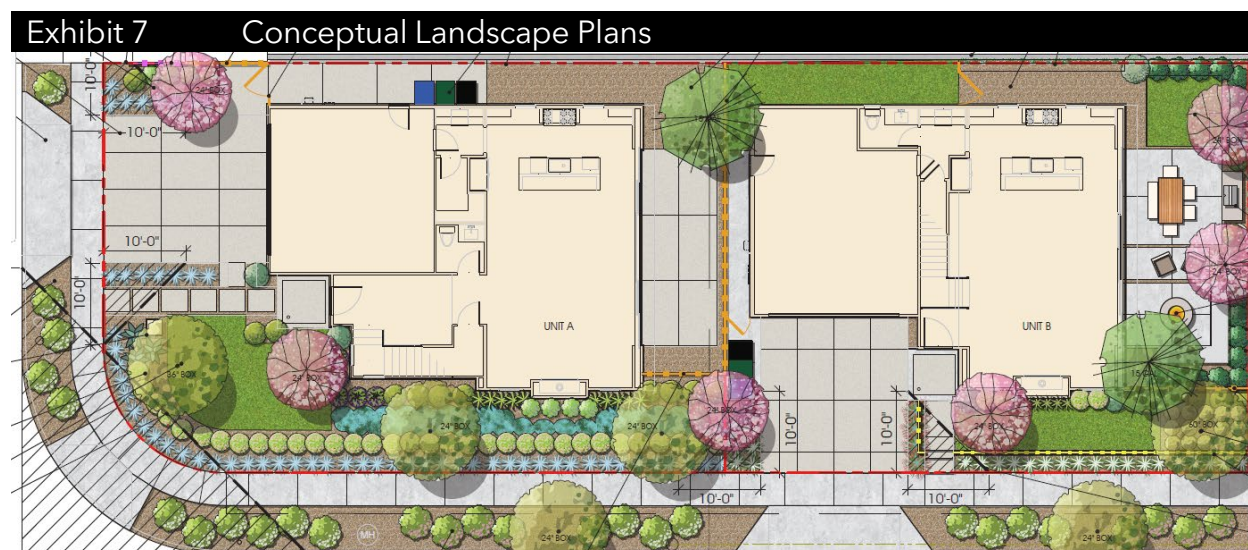
Landscaping

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. As shown in Exhibit 7 below, the project proposes a total of

2,341 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.

Table 3 Landscaping Requirements		
	Requirement	Proposed
Tree Count	12 (one, 15-gallon tree or larger per 200 square feet of landscape area)	12
Shrub Count	93 (one shrub for every 25 square feet of landscape area)	241
Groundcover coverage	70% with the remaining area to incorporate uncontaminated compost/mulch	70%

In addition to the on-site trees, two street trees are proposed to further improve the streetscape. A California licensed landscape architect will prepare landscape plans conforming with the CMMC and water efficiency landscape guidelines prior to issuance of building permits.



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

Consistency: The project site is within an established residential neighborhood featuring various single-family dwellings and multi-family developments. The proposed project complies with General Plan Objective LU-2A in that the proposed 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 in an established residential neighborhood and would increase the ownership opportunities 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)

- a) *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 establishes a maximum allowable density of 12 units per acre. The subject parcel is 7,580 square feet in area. Although a five-foot sidewalk easement would reduce the square footage of the subject property from 7,580 square feet down to 6,952 square feet, the maximum density of a small lot subdivision is based on the gross acreage of the lot. 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 3,630 square feet of lot area. The project design 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.

- b) *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 multiple-family residential uses at a maximum of 12 dwelling units per acre. The existing parcel is 7,580 square feet in area. The Parcel Map proposes a residential use that would not exceed the maximum density allowed per the General Plan. 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.

- c) 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 flat and has been previously graded and is located within an established residential neighborhood. The property is currently improved with residential uses and is 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 3,630 square-feet of lot area. While the 3,630 square-foot lot area is noted for the purposes of calculating density, the City's Residential Small Lot Subdivision standards do not require a minimum lot size. 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.

- d) 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.

- e) 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.

- f) 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.

As indicated above, 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:

That the proposed map is not consistent with applicable general and specific plans as specified in Section 65451;

The proposed subdivision map is consistent with the goals, objectives, policies, and land use designations of the applicable General Plan and any relevant Specific Plans adopted for the area. The project complies with all applicable land use, circulation, and development standards and furthers the intent of the City's planning documents. Therefore, this finding cannot be made.

That the design or improvement of the proposed subdivision is not consistent with applicable general and specific plans;

The design and proposed improvements of the subdivision, including lot configuration, access, and infrastructure, conform with applicable General and Specific Plan policies and standards. Improvements are consistent with the planned infrastructure network and development pattern anticipated in the area. Therefore, this finding cannot be made.

That the site is not physically suitable for the type of development;

The site is physically suitable for the type of development proposed. The topography, existing conditions, and lack of physical constraints such as flood zones or geologic hazards allow for safe and feasible development. Necessary utilities and infrastructure can be provided to support the proposed use. Therefore, this finding cannot be made.

That the site is not physically suitable for the proposed density of development;

The proposed density of development is consistent with zoning regulations and the land use designation for the site. The site can adequately accommodate the proposed number of lots or units without resulting in overcrowding or unsafe conditions. Adequate access, open space, and public services are available to support the proposed density. Therefore, this finding cannot be made.

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;

The design of the subdivision and associated improvements will not cause substantial environmental damage or significantly and avoidably impact fish or wildlife habitat in that there are no environmentally sensitive areas within or around the site. Therefore, this finding cannot be made.

That the design of the subdivision or type of improvements is likely to cause serious public health problems; and

The design of the subdivision and proposed improvements will not result in any serious public health problems. The project will comply with all applicable building codes, health regulations, and safety standards. Required public services, including fire protection, water, and wastewater infrastructure, are available and sufficient to serve the development. Therefore, this finding cannot be made.

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."

The subdivision does not conflict with any public easements for access or use. All existing public easements of record have been identified and appropriately preserved, or alternate easements of substantially equivalent utility will be provided where necessary. The proposed map ensures continued public access and utility connectivity as required. Therefore, this finding cannot be made.

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

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

- a) 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 3,630 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 stone veneer, white stucco and standing seam metal roofing. 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 12 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.

- b) 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 single- and multiple-family residences. The abutting property to the southeast consists of a one-story residence and the abutting property to the southwest consists of two detached single-family residences. The second story design proposes a second-floor area that will not exceed the floor area of the first floor which complies with the design guidelines.

- c) 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 nor is required to provide 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.

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:

1. 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.
2. 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 have 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 November 25, 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 November 26, 2025.
3. **Newspaper publication.** A public notice was published once in the Daily Pilot newspaper on November 28, 2025.

As of the completion date of this report, no written public comments have been received. Any public comments received prior to the December 8, 2025, Planning Commission meeting will be provided separately.

CONCLUSION

Staff supports the applicant's request to develop the proposed Residential Small Lot Subdivision because it 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 complies 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).