



PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA REPORT

MEETING DATE: JANUARY 26, 2025 ITEM NUMBER: PH-1

SUBJECT: CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT PCUP-25-0014 TO CONVERT TWO EXISTING TWO-STORY OFFICE BUILDINGS INTO A CHURCH ("GRACE FELLOWSHIP CHURCH") FACILITY AT 3146 AND 3152 RED HILL AVENUE

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

PRESENTATION BY: JEFFREY RIMANDO, ASSISTANT PLANNER

**FOR FURTHER
INFORMATION
CONTACT: JEFFREY RIMANDO
714-754-5012
Jeffrey.Rimando@costamesaca.gov**

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 15301 (Class 1) Existing Facilities; and
2. Approve Conditional Use Permit PCUP-25-0014 based on findings of fact and subject to conditions of approval.

APPLICANT OR AUTHORIZED AGENT:

The applicant and authorized agent is Anthony Massaro representing the property owner, Glenn Bianchi.

PLANNING APPLICATION SUMMARY

Location:	3146 & 3152 Red Hill Avenue	Application Number:	PCUP-25-0014
Request:	To convert two existing two-story office buildings into a church facility and to construct a 195-square-foot addition to each building to facilitate new elevators and equipment and storage rooms.		

SUBJECT PROPERTY:

Zone:	CL (Commercial Limited)	North (across Red Hill Ave):	MP (Industrial Park)
General Plan:	Industrial Park	South:	CL (Commercial Limited)
Lot Dimensions:	<u>3146 Red Hill Ave: 215 FT (W) x 263 FT (D)</u> <u>3152 Red Hill Ave: 215 FT (W) x 265 FT (D)</u>	East:	CL (Commercial Limited)
Lot Area:	<u>3146 Red Hill Ave: 56,584 SF</u> <u>3152 Red Hill Ave: 56,975 SF</u> Total = 113,559 SF	West:	CL (Commercial Limited)
Existing Development:	One single tenant commercial building (3146 Red Hill Avenue) and one multi-tenant commercial building (3152 Red Hill Avenue) with surface parking.		

SURROUNDING PROPERTY:

DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS COMPARISON

Development Standard	Required	Existing/Proposed
Building Height	2 Stories / 30 FT	2 Story / 28 FT (no change)
Setbacks:		
Front	20 FT	74 FT 4 IN (no change)
Side (left/right)	15 FT / 0 FT	70 FT 7 IN left (no change) 70 FT 7 IN right (no change)
Rear	0 FT	74 FT 6 IN (no change)
Floor Area Ratio	0.40	0.388/0.391
Parking	174	177 (no change)
CEQA Review	Exempt per CEQA Guidelines Section 15301 (Existing Facilities)	
Final Action	Planning Commission	

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Grace Fellowship Church is requesting Planning Commission approval to convert two existing two-story office buildings into a church facility. Staff supports the request in that the proposed use will operate in a way that would be compatible with nearby uses, and provides a community service. Additionally, the use is consistent with applicable goals, objectives, and policies of the General Plan, complies with applicable provisions of the Zoning Ordinance and respective findings. Staff recommends that the Planning Commission find that the project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and approve the application based on findings of fact and subject to conditions of approval.

SETTING

The subject properties are located at 3146 and 3152 Red Hill Avenue, each developed with a one detached 22,015-square-foot, two-story office building. The subject properties are located on the east side of Red Hill Avenue, mid-block between Paularino Avenue and Baker Street (see Figure 1). The proposed church facility would occupy both office buildings.



The site is designated Industrial Park by the City's Land Use Element of the General Plan and is zoned CL (Commercial Limited). The Industrial Park designation is intended for large districts that contain a variety of industrial and compatible offices and support commercial uses. The CL zone is intended for industrial areas where commercial uses must be considered according to their compatibility with existing or permitted industrial uses.

The subject property is adjacent to CL-zoned properties to the east, south and west and MP (Industrial Park) zoned properties across Red Hill Avenue. To the southeast is an existing business park known as the "John Wayne Executive Guild". To the northeast and southwest are existing two-story office buildings. The development across Red Hill Avenue consists of multiple multi-tenant industrial buildings.

BACKGROUND

On February 1981, Conditional Use Permit ZE-81-23 was approved by the Planning Commission to allow compact parking in conjunction with construction of two 22,500 square foot office buildings. Each building was constructed on a separate parcel (3146 & 3152 Red Hill Avenue) as a mirror image of the other. Each structure is 28 feet high. Both parcels are under one ownership with reciprocal access and parking.

REQUEST

The applicant is requesting a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) pursuant to Costa Mesa Municipal Code (CMMC) Section 13-30 to occupy and convert each existing building into a single church facility.

STANDARD OF REVIEW

To approve a CUP application under CMMC Section 13-29(g)(2)(a-c), the Planning Commission must find that the proposed use must meet specific criteria. The project must be compatible with surrounding developments and should not be detrimental to nearby properties. Additionally, granting the CUP must not harm public health, safety, or welfare, nor permit a use, density, or intensity that is inconsistent with the general plan or applicable specific plans. Each application is project-specific and evaluated on its unique merits to ensure it aligns with the City's development standards and the zoning code.

As necessary, proposed conditional uses may have conditions of approval applied to the development or their operations to ensure that the required findings can be met. An assessment of the project's relationship to the findings and General Plan is provided later in this report.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Use and Operations

The applicant proposes a church facility with different uses throughout the two buildings. The main sanctuary area is proposed to be located at 3146 Red Hill Ave and educational classrooms are proposed at 3146 Red Hill Avenue. Parking will remain in its existing condition. See further information below.

Figure 2 Site Plan - 3146 & 3152 Red Hill Ave

This site plan illustrates the layout for two buildings, 3146 and 3152 Red Hill Ave, situated between 2150 PL and 2155 PL. The plan shows the building footprints, setbacks, and various construction details. Key features include:

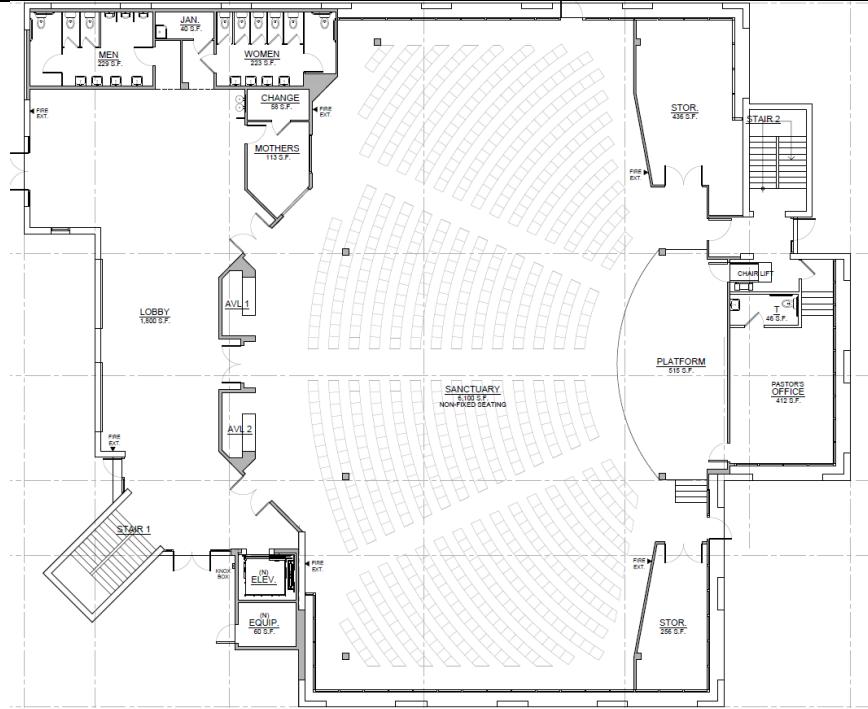
- Buildings:** 3152 RED HILL AVE (left) and 3146 RED HILL AVE (right).
- Setbacks:** The plan shows front, side, and rear setbacks for the buildings.
- Landscaping:** Three landscape areas are indicated between the buildings.
- Construction Details:**
 - AREA OF NEW FOOTPRINT (ELEVATOR AND MACHINE ROOM) is shown for both buildings.
 - AREA OF NEW FOOTPRINT (ELEVATOR AND MACHINE ROOM) is also indicated for 3146.
 - RECONSTRUCT SIDEWALK THIS AREA TO COMPLY WITH TITLE 24 ACCESSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS (5% SLOPE / 2% GROSS SLOPE MAX) is required for the sidewalk area.
 - RECONSTRUCT CURB RAMP AS REQUIRED TO CSC STANDARDS FOR ACCESSIBILITY is required for the curb ramp areas.
 - PATH OF TRAVEL AT EXISTING SIDEWALK is indicated for the sidewalk area.
- Dimensions:** Various dimensions are provided for setbacks, building widths, and distances between structures.

The applicant proposes to remodel the first floor of 3146 Red Hill Ave to provide the church sanctuary (Figure 3). The sanctuary would consist of a 6,100-square-foot assembly area with non-fixed seating. A 195 square-foot expansion to accommodate a new elevator and equipment room on the first floor and a storage room on the second floor. The first floor would also contain two bathrooms, two storage rooms, an office, a mother's room, and a changing room.

According to the applicant's project letter (Attachment 2), the church services would primarily be provided within the main sanctuary on Saturdays from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. and Sundays from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Figure 3

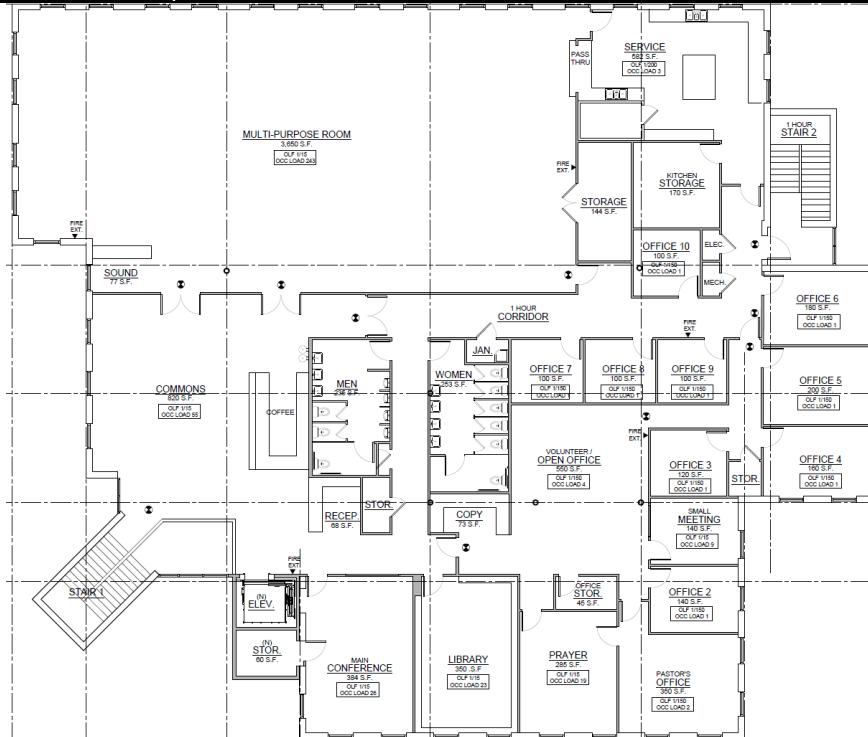
Proposed First Floor Plan - 3146 Red Hill Ave



The second floor (Figure 4) would contain a common area with a coffee bar, administrative offices, multi-purpose rooms, library, bathrooms, kitchen and storage rooms.

Figure 4

Proposed Second Floor Plan - 3146 Red Hill Ave



As shown on the proposed first and second floor plans (Figures 5 and 6) for the building on 3152 Red Hill Avenue, the building would consist of classrooms, bible study rooms, bathrooms and assembly areas. In the rear southwest corner of the first floor the applicant proposes to create a 1,314-square-foot covered outdoor play area by removing the four existing storefront glass window areas. During the church services on Sundays, the building classrooms and play area would be utilized for children to be supervised during the church services.

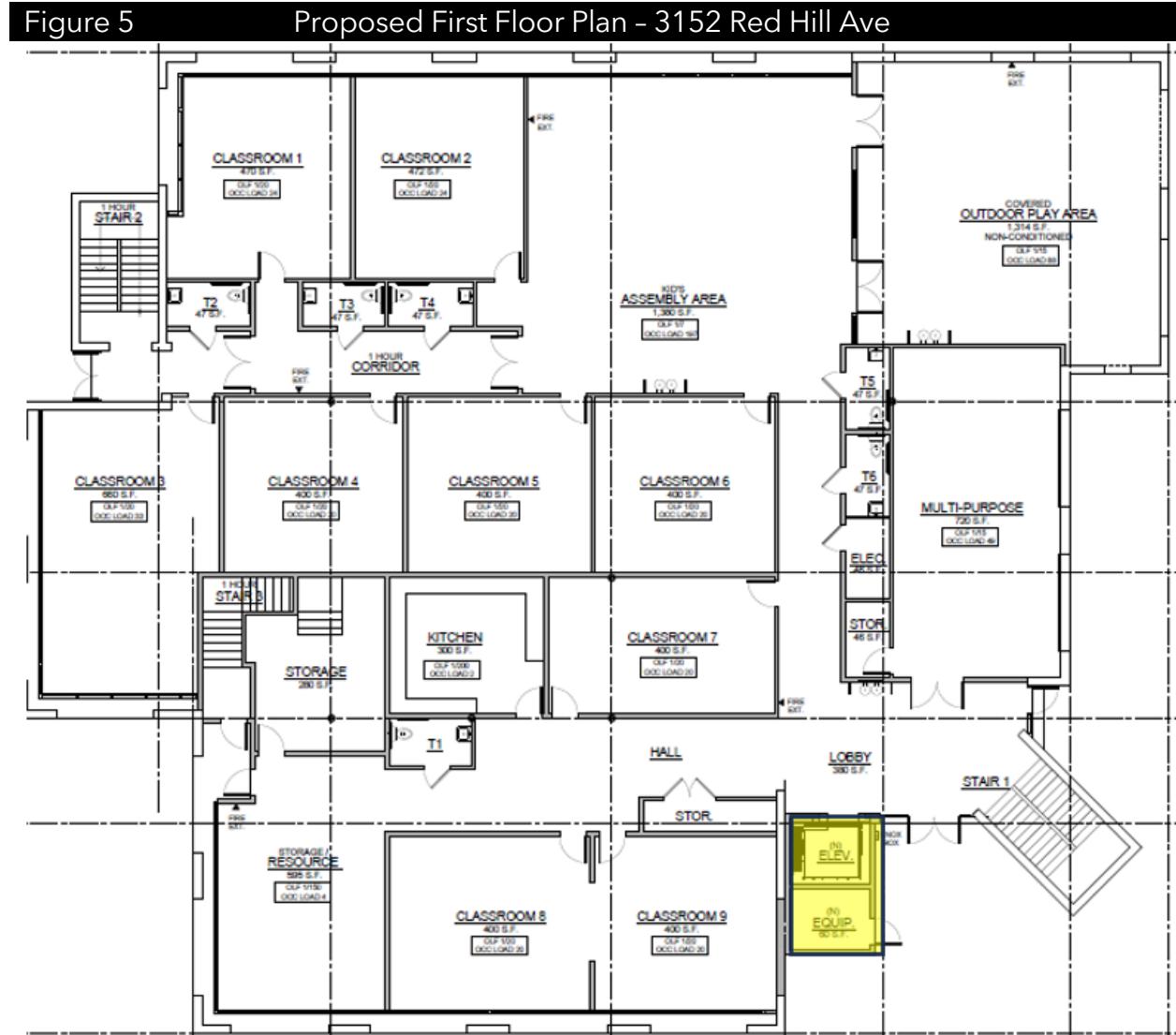
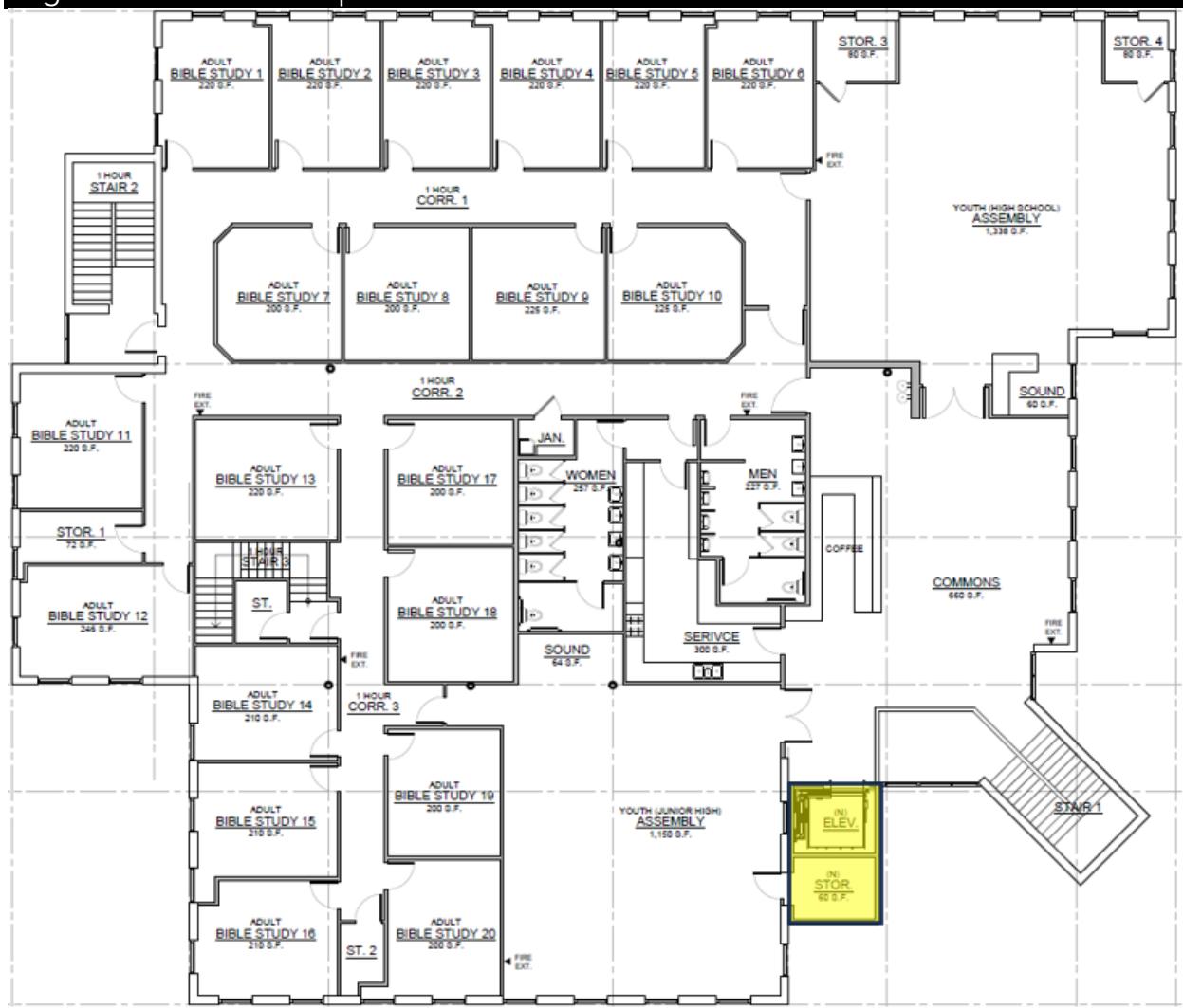


Figure 6

Proposed Second Floor Plan - 3152 Red Hill Ave



Similar to 3146 Red Hill Avenue, a 195-square-foot expansion (in yellow) would be proposed to accommodate an elevator and an equipment room on the first floor and a storage room on the second floor as highlighted in yellow.

Both buildings would be utilized throughout the weekdays ranging between the hours of 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. for office hours and group gatherings for bible studies. The main sanctuary within 3146 Red Hill Avenue would be the primary gathering space for religious studies with the 3152 Red Hill Avenue building utilized in conjunction for children to be supervised during religious study sessions. At this time, the day care services are not proposed. A detailed schedule of services provided throughout the week is provided in the applicant's project letter (Attachment 2).

Parking

The City's parking ratio for a church use is one (1) space for every 35 square feet of seating area if there are no fixed seats. The church does not propose fixed seating; therefore, the church would consist of 6,100 square feet of assembly area which results in a parking requirement of 174 spaces for the entire development. The project site (3146 & 3152 Red Hill Avenue) contains a total of 177 parking spaces leaving a surplus of three spaces for the site.

ANALYSIS

The project includes a request for a church use with ancillary services such as bible studies and offices. Pursuant to Costa Mesa Municipal Code (CMMC) Section 13-51.52, accessory facilities related to churches that are in the same or separate building are permitted including religious classrooms, assembly rooms, restrooms, kitchens and libraries. Although the main sanctuary for the church would be located on the first floor of the building located on 3146 Red Hill Avenue, the church would be occupying the second floor of the building as well as the two-story building on 3152 Red Hill Avenue for classrooms, assembly rooms and offices. The additional space would allow the church to provide additional services such as religious studies for a variety of groups from children to adult men and women.

The proposed church is surrounded by commercial and industrial uses and is not within 200 feet from a residential zoned property. The activities of the church would be conducted primarily indoors and would have a covered outdoor play area located at the rear (southwest) corner of the first floor of 3152 Red Hill Avenue. The play area would be set back a minimum 150 feet from the closest neighboring business and would not have an adverse impact to the neighboring business park to the south and the existing office buildings to the east and west. Furthermore, parking would not be impacted and there will be surplus of three spaces onsite.

Additionally, a trip generation letter was provided by the applicant (Attachment 7) and reviewed by the Transportation Division staff with the determination that the conversion of the existing office buildings into a church would generate 142 fewer trips per day during the weekday peak hours than the existing office building. Therefore, the proposed project would not significantly impact the operations of the nearby intersections to the site.

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. **Goal LU-1:** "A balanced community with a mix of land uses to meet resident and business needs."

Consistency: The proposed project involves the conversion of two existing office buildings to accommodate a church facility. The proposed church would provide a local service and a valuable support system to meet residential needs of the community.

FINDINGS

Pursuant to Title 13, Section 13-29(g), Findings, of the CMMC, to approve the project, the Planning Commission must find that the evidence presented in the administrative record substantially meets the following applicable required Conditional Use Permit findings:

- a) The proposed development or use is substantially compatible with developments in the same general area and would not be materially detrimental to other properties within the area.

Consistent. The project includes the conversion of two existing buildings previously occupied by office uses to a church facility. Minor building additions totaling 195 square feet are proposed to accommodate an elevator, equipment room, and storage room. The proposed use would operate primarily indoors and is compatible with surrounding commercial and institutional uses. The project would not result in substantial noise, traffic, or other operational impacts that would be materially detrimental to nearby properties.

- b) Granting the conditional use permit will not be materially detrimental to the health, safety and general welfare of the public or otherwise injurious to property or improvements within the immediate neighborhood.

Consistent. Granting approval of the church would not be detrimental to the health, safety and general welfare of the public or otherwise injurious to property or improvements within the immediate neighborhood. All business activities would be conducted primarily within the building, with the exception of the covered outdoor play area, which would be set back a minimum 150 feet from the closest neighboring business. The use would not generate noise, excessive traffic or other detrimental effects on the surroundings.

- c) Granting the conditional use permit will not allow a use, density or intensity which is not in accordance with the General Plan designation and any applicable specific plan for the property.

Consistent. The General Plan designation is “Industrial Park,” which is intended to permit a wide range of industrial and institutional uses that serve both the local and regional needs. The proposed church is located in an area that includes a variety of industrial and commercial uses, including administrative offices and medical offices. Furthermore, the proposed project is consistent with General Plan Land Use Goal LU-1 as indicated previously.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION

The project is categorically exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15301 (e)(2) (Class 1 – Existing Facilities), as the project involves a negligible 195-square-foot addition to each of the two existing buildings to accommodate an elevator and an equipment/storage room, with no expansion of use beyond existing developed areas. Lastly, none of the exceptions to the use of categorical exemptions set forth in CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 apply. Specifically, the project would not result in cumulative impacts, does not involve unusual circumstances, would not impact scenic resources, is not located on a hazardous site, and would not affect 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.

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 January 14, 2026. 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 January 15, 2026.
3. **Newspaper publication.** A public notice was published once in the Daily Pilot newspaper on January 16, 2026.

As of the completion date of this report, no written public comments have been received. Any public comments received prior to the January 26, 2026, Planning Commission meeting will be provided separately.

CONCLUSION

Approval of the project would allow for the use of a church within two existing two-story office buildings. The proposed use is in conformance with the General Plan, Zoning Code, Planning Application Review Criteria, and the required CUP findings can be made. The proposed use, as conditioned, would be compatible with the surrounding industrial and commercial businesses and would not be materially detrimental to other properties within the area. Therefore, staff recommends approval of the proposed project, subject to the conditions of approval contained in the attached resolution.