



CITY OF SIERRA MADRE

PLANNING COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

Thursday, May 21, 2026, 5:30 PM

City Council Chambers, 232 W. Sierra Madre Blvd.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

Pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act, persons with a disability who require a disability related modification or accommodation in order to participate in a meeting, including auxiliary aids or services, may request such modification or accommodation from the City Clerk at (626) 574-5455. Notification 48 hours prior to the meeting will enable the City to make reasonable arrangements to assure accessibility to the meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT & ACCESS

The Brown Act provides the public with an opportunity to make public comments at any public meeting. As an alternative, public comment may be submitted by e-mail to publiccomment@sierramadrecal.gov by 3:00PM on the day of the meeting. Emails will be acknowledged at the Planning Commission meeting, filed into public record, and scanned onto the City website for public review.

A copy of the posted agenda and a live video stream of the meeting can be found on the City's website at sierramadrecal.gov, on Foothills Media website at foothillsmidia.org/sierramadre, and broadcast on Government Access Channel 3 (Spectrum).

If you require special assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact the City Clerk's Office at (626) 355-7135 at least 48 hours prior to the meeting.

CODE OF CONDUCT

The purpose of a Planning Commission meeting is to conduct City business. Members of the public that behave in a manner that interrupts or obstructs the Planning Commission's ability to conduct City business may be asked to leave the meeting. Any and all demonstrations which disrupt, interrupt, or obstruct the Planning Commission's ability to conduct City business are prohibited. No signs, posters, or other large objects shall be brought into the Council Chambers or other meeting place if doing so would disrupt, disturb, or otherwise impede the orderly course of the meeting.

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. ROLL CALL OF PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERS

Thomas Denison, Chair
Patrick Simcock, Vice Chair
Kevin Brennan, Commissioner
Christine Moran, Commissioner
Yong Yoo, Commissioner

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

4. REPORT FROM CITY COUNCIL LIASON

5. PUBLIC COMMENT FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

Any person wishing to speak before the Planning Commission is asked to complete a Speaker Card and provide it to staff prior to the start of the meeting. Speakers are generally limited to three (3) minutes per person and time may not be delegated; any changes to the allotted time will be announced prior to the Public Comment period. Under the Brown Act, the Planning Commission is prohibited from discussing or taking action on any item not listed on the posted agenda.

Addressing the Planning Commission from the audience is not permitted; all comments addressing the Commission must be made from the podium. Only public comment made from the podium will be recognized by the Planning Commission and entered into public record.

6. PUBLIC HEARING

Any person wishing to speak before the Planning Commission on a public hearing item is asked to complete a Speaker Card noting the agenda item number and provide it to staff prior to the start of the public hearing. Separate and apart from the applicant (who may speak longer in the discretion of the Commission) speakers are generally limited to three (3) minutes per person; any changes to the allotted time will be announced prior to the Public Comment period. Under the Brown Act, the Planning Commission is prohibited from discussing or acting on any item not listed on the posted agenda. The applicant may additionally submit rebuttal comments, at the discretion of the Commission.

Following the closure of the public hearing and prior to the final decision, Commissioners shall disclose any ex parte communication that has taken place pertaining to the public hearing item. Planning Commissioners shall also disclose all visits to a site that is the subject of a quasi-adjudicatory proceeding before the Planning Commission. The disclosure will include whether the site visit was organized by staff, upon the invitation of the applicant, or on the Commissioners' own accord. The Commissioner must disclose all information learned from the site visit that is not included in the agenda packet and that informs his or her decision-making.

- A. Municipal Code Text Amendment (MCTA 26-02) – Adoption by Reference of the City of Sierra Madre Objective Design Standards by Adding Chapter 17.50 (Objective Design Standards) to and Amending Various Sections of Title 17 (Zoning) of the Sierra Madre Municipal Code Related to Multifamily Development Standards
(Continued from May 7, 2026)
CEQA: 14 CCR 15061(b)(3) - Common Sense Exemption
Recommended Action: Approve

- B. Variance (VAR 26-01): A Request to Allow the Construction of an Outdoor Patio Dining Area with a Reduced Setback on an Existing Commercial Property Located at 14 E. Sierra Madre Blvd.
CEQA: 14 CCR 15061(b)(2)- Categorical Exemption
Recommended Action: Approve

7. CONSENT CALENDAR

All matters listed under the Consent Calendar are considered to be routine and can be acted on by one roll call vote. There will be no separate discussion of these items unless a member of the Planning Commission requests that a specific item be removed from the Consent Calendar for separate discussion and action.

- A. Regular Meeting Minutes of May 7, 2026
CEQA: Not a Project
Recommended Action: Approve

8. REPORTS FROM PLANNING COMMISSION

9. REPORTS FROM CITY STAFF

10. ADJOURNMENT

The Planning Commission will adjourn to its next regular meeting on N/A.

INFORMATION TO THE PUBLIC

The Planning Commission will consider the last item at 10:30 p.m. and they will adjourn the meeting by 11:00 p.m. The Planning Commission will continue all unfinished business to an adjourned meeting on the following Thursday at 5:30 p.m. or to a different time and date certain.

Copies of the Agenda are available for your convenience at the rear of the Council Chambers. State legislation (Govt. Code Section 54954.2) limits the Planning Commission's ability to take action on specific requests. Govt. Code Section 54954.2 limits the placement of items on the Agenda for action 72 hours prior to meetings, except for specific findings.

No action or discussion may be undertaken by the Planning Commission on any item if not posted on the agenda, except that Commissioners or staff may briefly respond to statements made or questions posed by the public, a Commissioner or staff may ask a question for clarification, make a brief announcement, or make a brief report on his or her own activities. A Commissioner or the Planning Commission itself may provide a reference to staff to report back to the Planning Commission at a subsequent meeting concerning any matter or may direct staff to place a matter of business on a future agenda.

REQUIRED FINDINGS

Conditional Use Permit and Variance considerations are "quasi-judicial" decisions made by the Planning Commission. As such, these decisions may be challenged in court. Accordingly, courts require an adequate "record" to exercise judicial review. This means that the documentation supporting the approval or denial of a project must include an explanation of how the Planning Commission processed the raw information and evidence considered in reaching its decision. The California Supreme Court has laid down distinct, definitive principles of law detailing the need for findings when a public agency approves or denies a project while acting in a "quasi-judicial" roll. This decision is based upon the case, *Topanga Assoc. for a Scenic Community v. County of Los Angeles* ("Topanga"). The "Topanga" court outlined the following 5 purposes for making findings:

- Provide a framework for making principled decisions, enhancing the integrity of the administrative process;

- Facilitate orderly analysis and reduce the likelihood the agency will randomly leap from evidence to conclusions;
- Serve a public relations function by helping to persuade the parties that the administrative decision making is careful, reasoned, and equitable;
- Enable the parties to determine whether and on what basis they should seek judicial review and remedies; and
- Apprise the reviewing court of the basis for the agency's decision.

For more information on the necessary "Findings" that the Planning Commission must make, please contact the Planning and Community Preservation Department at (626) 355-7138.

(Source: Curtin's California Land Use & Planning Law, Daniel)

Date Posted: May 14, 2026



CITY OF SIERRA MADRE

STAFF REPORT

PLANNING & COMMUNITY PRESERVATION

DATE: May 21, 2026

TO: Honorable Chair and the Planning Commission

FROM: Clare Lin, Director of Planning & Community Preservation
By: Joshua Wolf, Senior Planner

SUBJECT: **Municipal Code Text Amendment (MCTA 26-02) – Adoption by Reference of the City of Sierra Madre Objective Design Standards by Adding Chapter 17.50 (Objective Design Standards) to and Amending Various Sections of Title 17 (Zoning) of the Sierra Madre Municipal Code Related to Multifamily Development Standards**

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Planning Commission continue the public hearing to consider Municipal Code Text Amendment No. 26-02, receive and consider all public testimony, and adopt Planning Commission Resolution No. 26-06, included as [Attachment A](#), recommending that the City Council approve Municipal Code Text Amendment No. 26-02, consisting of an ordinance adding Chapter 17.50 (Objective Design Standards) and amending various sections of Title 17 (Zoning) of the Sierra Madre Municipal Code.

SUMMARY

The City of Sierra Madre is considering adoption of Objective Design Standards (ODS) prepared in coordination with the San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments (SGVCOG), The Arroyo Group, and Onyx Architects as part of a regional effort to develop State-compliant design standards tailored to local conditions. The proposed ODS would be adopted as a standalone document and incorporated into Title 17 (Zoning) of the Sierra Madre Municipal Code through the addition of Chapter 17.50 and related existing code amendments. The standards provide clear, measurable design requirements for qualifying multifamily and mixed-use projects in a manner consistent with recent State housing laws, while maintaining neighborhood compatibility, pedestrian-oriented site design, and overall design quality in Sierra Madre.

BACKGROUND

On May 7, 2026, the Planning Commission held its first public hearing on this subject and reviewed proposed municipal code text amendments including the addition of Chapter 17.50 (Objective Design Standards) and Section 17.50.040 (Exceptions and exemptions). For additional background context on this subject, please refer to the Planning Commission Staff Report dated May 7, 2026, on this subject. Funding from the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) Regional Early Action Program (REAP) 2.0 Subregional Partnership (SRP) requires that the City adopt an ordinance that implements Objective Design Standards before July 1, 2026. In consideration of the necessity for timely review, the Planning Commission deliberated its intent to advance a recommendation to adopt an ordinance implementing the Sierra Madre Objective Design Standards with amendments to the municipal code text amendments as initially prepared by City staff concurrently in review of pending amendments to the Sierra Madre Objective Design Standards which may be amended by a resolution of the Planning Commission pursuant to Section 17.50.050(B) of the Sierra Madre Municipal Code, as proposed.

Due to a scheduling conflict, a representative from the Arroyo Group is unable to attend the May 21, 2026, Planning Commission meeting and thus unable to respond to any questions regarding the content of the Objective Design Standards. It is therefore recommended that the Planning Commission review the municipal code text amendments as further edited based on direction provided to staff on May 7, 2026, and approve Planning Commission Resolution No. 26-06 recommending the City Council adopt an ordinance to implement the municipal code text amendment. The City Council is forecasted to conduct its first reading of the Ordinance on June 9, 2026, and its second reading on June 23, 2026, approval upon which adopts the ordinance. The Planning Commission will have further opportunity to review the Sierra Madre Objective Design Standards on June 4, 2026, and prepare a resolution for specific amendments to the Sierra Madre Objective Design Standards prior to the City Council's second reading of the ordinance.

DISCUSSION & ANALYSIS

As discussed and directed by the Planning Commission in its review of municipal code text amendments adding Chapter 17.50 (Objective Design Standards), City staff have revised the chapter as summarized below:

- Section 17.50.020
 - The subject applicability of the Sierra Madre Objective Design Standards has been changed from "construction projects" to "development projects."
- Section 17.50.030
 - The phrase, "as may be amended periodically in accordance with Section 17.50.050" was added to qualify the incorporation of the Sierra Madre Objective Design Standards by reference.
 - Redundant language was struck.
- Section 17.50.040
 - As suggested by the City Attorney, "exemptions" and all provisions for Alternative Design Standards Agreement were struck.
 - "Minor exceptions" has been changed simply to "exceptions."
 - Provisions relating to Density Bonus incentives, concessions, and waiver has been simplified and limits an applicant from requesting an exception pursuant to Section 17.50.040 if requesting any incentives, concessions, or waiver through Density Bonus regulations.
 - The second finding for approval of an exception under the authority of the Director has been modified. Instead of finding that the exception enables development at the maximum permissible density, granting the exception must now be based on the value of of the development's design.
- Section 17.50.050
 - Subsection B has been broadened to capture any amendment not authorized by subsection A.

The revised municipal code text amendments are included as [Exhibit 1](#) of [Attachment A](#) in this report.

GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY

MCTA 26-02 is consistent with the following Goals and Policies of Sierra Madre General Plan's Housing Element in that it promotes a diverse range of housing types, reduced governmental constraints, and flexible mixed-use and innovative housing models while preserving community character and the low-scale downtown environment. The amendment implements this direction by aligning local development standards with State housing law through the use of Objective Design Standards.

- Goal 2.0: Facilitate the provision of a range of housing types to meet community needs.
 - Policy 2.1: Encourage diversity in the type, size, price and tenure of residential development in Sierra Madre, while maintaining quality of life goals.
 - Policy 2.4: Provide opportunities for the integration of housing in commercial districts, while maintaining the downtown's low scale character and ground level retail spaces.
- Goal 3.0: Reduce governmental constraints on the maintenance, improvement and development of housing while maintaining community character.
 - Policy 3.3: Provide flexibility in development standards to accommodate new models and approaches to providing housing, such as co-housing, shared housing, and live/work housing.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

This municipal code text amendment is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15061(b)(3), the "common sense" exemption. The proposed amendment does not, in itself, authorize or approve the construction of any specific building or structure, but instead establishes design regulations that will apply to future development. Because the amendment is limited to setting design standards and will not result in a reasonably foreseeable physical change to the environment, it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the project may have a significant effect on the environment, and it is therefore not subject to CEQA review.

Approved by:



Clare Lin
Planning and Community Preservation Director

Attachments

[Attachment A - Planning Commission Resolution 26-06](#)

[Exhibit 1 - MCTA 26-02](#)

PLANNING COMMISSION RESOLUTION 26-06

A RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF SIERRA MADRE RECOMMENDING THE CITY COUNCIL ADOPT AN ORDINANCE, ADDING CHAPTER 17.50 (OBJECTIVE DESIGN STANDARDS) TO TITLE 17 (ZONING) OF THE SIERRA MADRE MUNICIPAL CODE, AND AMENDING VARIOUS SECTIONS OF TITLE 17 (ZONING) OF THE SIERRA MADRE MUNICIPAL CODE TO REFERENCE AND INCORPORATE THE SIERRA MADRE OBJECTIVE DESIGN STANDARDS WHERE APPLICABLE TO MULTIFAMILY DEVELOPMENTS.

RECITALS

WHEREAS, the State of California adopted several housings laws, including Senate Bill (SB) 167, SB 423, SB 4, SB 330, and Assembly Bill 2011, which strongly incentivize cities and counties to streamline the review process for multifamily housing, including mixed-use residential developments, and require local agencies to limit their review of qualifying housing projects to objective standards;

WHEREAS, pursuant to SB 423, Objective Design Standards "involve no personal or subjective judgment by a public official and are uniformly verifiable by reference to an external and uniform benchmark or criterion available and knowable by both the applicant or developer and the public official before submittal";

WHEREAS, the City participated as one of four partner cities in the development of a Regional Objective Standards document led by the San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments (SGVCOG);

WHEREAS, the SGVCOG effort was funded through Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) Regional Early Action Program (REAP) 2.0 Subregional Partnership (SRP), which is designed to accelerate housing production, support jurisdictions in meeting their sixth cycle Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) obligations, and advance state and regional priorities related to housing, transportation, equity, and climate;

WHEREAS, the purpose of adopting Objective Design Standards is to comply with recent State legislation and to implement streamlined and ministerial review processes for qualifying projects by establishing reasonable, uniform, and comprehensive standards and procedures for multi-family residential and mixed-use development projects;

WHEREAS, the Objective Design Standards will apply to all new qualifying residential and mixed-use development projects, specifically where State law limits the City's enforcement of design standards to objective standards only, or where the Sierra Madre Municipal Code requires a ministerial approval process; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission held a duly noticed public hearing on May

7 and May 21, 2026, to consider a Municipal Code Text Amendment (MCTA 26-02) and a recommendation for the City Council to adopt an ordinance.

THEREFORE, THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF SIERRA MADRE, CALIFORNIA, DOES RESOLVE AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. Recitals. The Recitals above are true and correct and incorporated herein by this reference.

SECTION 2. Municipal Code Text Amendment. The Planning Commission recommends that the City Council adopt an ordinance adding Chapter 17.50 (Objective Design Standards) and amending Chapter 17.24 (R-2 Two-Family Residential Zone), Chapter 17.28 (R-3-13 Medium/High Density Residential Zone), Chapter 17.29 (R-3-20 and R-3-30 High Density Residential Zones), Chapter 17.32 (R-E Residential Entrepreneur Overlay Zone), Chapter 17.36 (Commercial Zone), Chapter 17.39 (RHO Religious Housing Overlay Zone), Chapter 17.40 (Manufacturing Zone), and Chapter 17.59 (Ministerial Design Review Permits) of Title 17 (Zoning) of the Sierra Madre Municipal Code consistent with Municipal Code Text Amendment 26-02 included herein as Exhibit 1.

SECTION 3. Adoption of the City of Sierra Madre Objective Design Standards. The Planning Commission recommends that the City Council adopt by reference the City of Sierra Madre Objective Design Standards included herein as Exhibit 2.

SECTION 4. Consistency with the General Plan. Municipal Code Text Amendment 26-02 is consistent with the following Goals and Policies of Sierra Madre General Plan's Housing Element:

Goal 2.0: Facilitate the provision of a range of housing types to meet community needs.

Policy 2.1: Encourage diversity in the type, size, price and tenure of residential development in Sierra Madre, while maintaining quality of life goals.

Policy 2.4: Provide opportunities for the integration of housing in commercial districts, while maintaining the downtown's low scale character and ground level retail spaces.

Goal 3.0: Reduce governmental constraints on the maintenance, improvement and development of housing while maintaining community character.

Policy 3.3: Provide flexibility in development standards to accommodate new models and approaches to providing housing, such as co-housing, shared housing, and live/work housing.

The Housing Element promotes a diverse range of housing types, reduced governmental constraints, and flexible mixed-use and innovative housing models while preserving community character and the low-scale downtown environment. The amendment implements this direction by aligning local development standards with State housing law through the use of Objective Design Standards.

SECTION 5. California Environmental Quality Act. Municipal Code Text Amendment 26-02 is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3), the "common sense" exemption. The proposed amendment does not authorize or approve the construction of any specific building or structure but instead establishes design regulations that will apply to future development. Because the amendment is limited to setting design standards and will not result in a reasonably foreseeable physical change to the environment, it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the project may have a significant effect on the environment, and it is therefore not subject to CEQA review.

SECTION 6. Severability. If any sections, subsections, subdivisions, paragraph, sentence, clause or phrase of this Resolution or any part hereof or exhibit hereto is for any reason held to be invalid, such invalidity shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions of this Resolution or any part thereof or exhibit thereto. The City Council hereby declares that it would have passed each section, subsection, subdivision, paragraph, sentence, clause or phrase hereof, irrespective of the fact that anyone or more sections, subsections, subdivisions, paragraph, sentences, clauses or phrases be declared invalid.

SECTION 7. Certification. The Director of Planning and Community Preservation shall attest to the passage and adoption of this Resolution by the Planning Commission and shall cause the same to be listed in the records of the City.

SECTION 8. Effective Date. This Resolution shall take effect immediately upon adoption.

PASSED, APPROVED AND ADOPTED this 21st day of May 2026, by the following vote:

AYES:
NOES:
ABSTAIN:
ABSENT:

Thomas Denison, Chairperson
Sierra Madre Planning Commission

ATTEST:

Clare Lin, Director
Planning & Community Preservation
Department

Approved as to form:

Aleks Giragosian, City Attorney

Chapter 17.50 OBJECTIVE DESIGN STANDARDS

17.50.010 Purpose and intent.

The purpose of this Chapter is to provide the public, building and design professionals, and decision-makers with objective design criteria for new multifamily residential and mixed-use (residential and commercial) developments in the City.

17.50.020 Applicability.

The City of Sierra Madre Objective Design Standards apply to all new development~~construction~~ projects, regardless of zoning, that meet the following criteria:

- A. Multifamily Residential Projects: A project consisting of multifamily residential uses with two or more dwelling units, including detached and attached condominiums and accessory dwelling units created with existing or proposed multifamily development.
- B. Mixed-Use Projects: A project featuring a combination of residential and commercial uses where at least two-thirds of the square footage of the development is designated for residential uses.

17.50.030 Incorporation of the City of Sierra Madre Objective Design Standards.

The City of Sierra Madre Objective Design Standards, ~~as may be periodically amended in accordance with Section 17.50.050,~~ are incorporated by reference into this ~~Chapter~~code. ~~The City of Sierra Madre Objective Design Standards shall be treated as if contained within the City's Zoning Ordinance.~~ A copy of the City of Sierra Madre Objective Design Standards is on file with the planning and community preservation department for use and examination by the public. To the extent that a development is other than multifamily residential or mixed-use ~~(residential and commercial),~~ the requirements of the underlying zone(s) shall prevail. Where there may be conflict, the City of Sierra Madre Objective Design Standards shall override.

17.50.040 Exceptions ~~and exemptions.~~

All projects described in Section 17.50.020 are required to comply with the City of Sierra Madre Objective Design Standards. However, an applicant may request up to three (3) ~~minor~~ exceptions/~~exemptions~~ if they are unable to meet certain City of Sierra Madre Objective Design Standards ~~or may request to enter into an Alternative Standards Agreement to apply substitute standards in lieu of the City of Sierra Madre Objective Design Standards.~~

- A. This provision allows for limited discretionary review and flexibility for projects that may have a physical site constraint or propose an alternative architectural solution to a specific standard(s).
- B. Requests shall be made by the applicant in writing to the director as part of the entitlement application ~~(conditional use permit, design review permit, or other application).~~
- C. The director has decision-making authority over ~~exception/exemption and Alternative Standards Agreement~~ requests. The decision of the director may be appealed to the Planning Commission in accordance with procedures established in Chapter 17.60.
- D. ~~Exception/exemption or Alternative Design Standards Agreement~~ request. The written justification for each ~~exception/exemption or Alternative Standards Agreement~~ request must identify the design standard(s) requested to be waived and how the request meets the applicable findings listed below.
 - 1. ~~Exception/exemption~~ findings. The director shall consider the request and information provided and make findings to approve or deny the request. An exception ~~/exemption~~(s) shall be granted only if both of the following findings are made:
 - a. The project meets the intent of the design standard(s) under consideration to be waived, or a similar design standards is implemented in substitution.

Exhibit 1

~~b. The project achieves the maximum number of residential dwelling units allowable, in accordance with the underlying zone, with the inclusion of the proposed exception/exemption(s) There is a specific physical site constraint that precludes compliance with a specific design standard or strict compliance with a specific design standard conflicts with the architectural quality of the proposed development and is mitigated by the application of an architectural solution that achieves a high quality design.~~

~~2. Alternative Design Standards Agreement findings. The director shall consider the request for an Alternative Design Standards Agreement upon finding that:~~

~~a. The strict compliance with the City of Sierra Madre Objective Design Standards is not necessary to achieve the purpose and intent of this section;~~

~~b. The project achieves the maximum number of residential dwelling units allowable, in accordance with the underlying zone, with the application of the Alternative Standards Agreement;~~

~~c. The Alternative Design Standards Agreement is in a form approved by the director and city attorney, in each of their sole discretion; and~~

~~d. The project possesses compensating design and development features that offset impacts associated with the modification, waiver, or substitution of the City of Sierra Madre Objective Design Standards.~~

~~3. Density Bonus. An applicant that submits a request for incentives, concessions, or waiver under density bonus law, may not submit an application for an exception Density Bonus Law allows for increased density and reductions in required development standards (i.e., concessions/incentives and waivers) for residential projects that meet certain affordability requirements. The exception/exemption and Alternative Design Standards Agreement processes set forth in this section are in conjunction with the concessions/incentives and waiver process permitted under Density Bonus Law (Government Code Section 65915) and/or other applicable state laws. If an applicant requests a concession/incentive and/or waiver under Density Bonus Law for any standard within the City of Sierra Madre Objective Design Standards, it would also be counted as a one for one basis, one (1) allowed waivers for the purposes of exceptions/exemptions under this Section.~~

17.50.050 Amendments to the City of Sierra Madre Objective Design Standards.

A. Minor amendments to the City of Sierra Madre Objective Design Standards shall not result in a significant change to any design standard. Minor amendments shall be reviewed by the director and any approved minor amendments to the City of Sierra Madre Objective Design Standards shall be issued in writing. Minor amendments include adjustment of a numeral requirement or addition of language to clarify existing standards for any of the following purposes:

1. To comply with changes in state law; or

2. To ensure consistency with policies, goals, and objectives of the City as declared by the City Council.

B. Major amendments include modifications that result in the addition or removal of standards within the City of Sierra Madre Objective Design Standards not authorized under Section 17.50.050(A). Any amendment that results in a significant change to a design standard shall also be considered a major amendment. Major amendments shall be reviewed by the planning commission at the recommendation of the director and any approved major amendment to the City of Sierra Madre Objective Design Standards shall be issued via resolution at a noticed public hearing.

Exhibit 1

Chapter 17.24 R-2 TWO-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL ZONE

17.24.030 Standards of development—Generally.

All premises in the R-2 zone shall comply with the standards of development set forth in the following sections. [For multifamily residential development, the standards of this Chapter 17.24 shall be considered in combination with the City of Sierra Madre Objective Design Standards \(Chapter 17.50\). Where there may be conflict, the City of Sierra Madre Objective Design Standards shall override. To the extent that a development is other than multifamily residential, the requirements of this Chapter 17.24 shall prevail.](#)

Chapter 17.28 R-3-13 MEDIUM/HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL ZONE

17.28.080 Standards of development.

[For multifamily residential development, the standards of this Chapter 17.28 shall be considered in combination with the City of Sierra Madre Objective Design Standards \(Chapter 17.50\). Where there may be conflict, the City of Sierra Madre Objective Design Standards shall override. To the extent that a development is other than multifamily residential, the requirements of this Chapter 17.28 shall prevail.](#)

A. Floor Area Ratio:

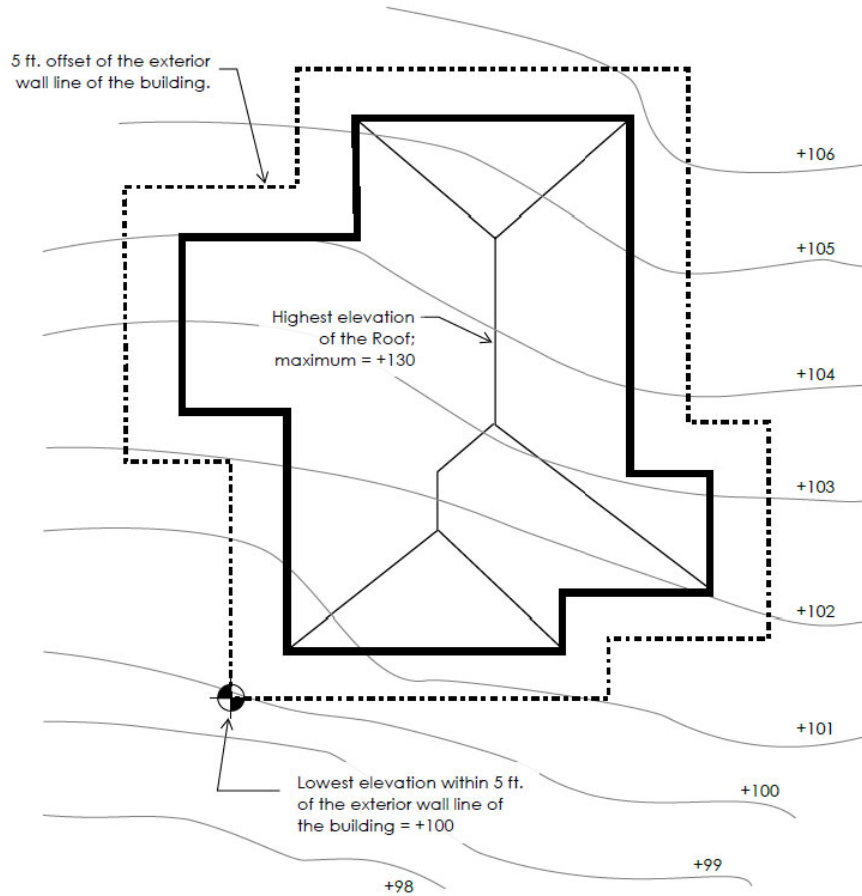
1. On lots with a gross lot area of less than ten thousand square feet or street frontage of less than fifty feet, the floor area of all above-ground buildings and structures (including garages and other non-habitable areas, but excluding basements and other fully subterranean areas) shall be limited to fifty-five percent of the gross lot area.
2. On lots with a gross lot area of ten thousand square feet or greater and with a street frontage of fifty feet or greater, the floor area of all above-ground building and structures (including garages and other non-habitable areas, but excluding basements and other fully subterranean areas) shall be five thousand five hundred square feet plus seventy percent of gross lot area in excess of ten thousand square feet.
3. Notwithstanding paragraphs 1 and 2 above, on lots with (i) one dwelling unit, the floor area of all above-ground buildings and structures (including garages and other non-habitable areas, but excluding basements and other fully subterranean areas) shall be limited to thirty-five percent of the gross lot area, (ii) one dwelling unit and one second unit, the floor area of all above-ground buildings and structures (including garages and other non-habitable areas, but excluding basements and other fully subterranean areas) shall be limited to forty percent of the gross lot area, and (iii) two dwelling units, the floor area of all above-ground buildings and structures (including garages and other non-habitable areas, but excluding basements and other fully subterranean areas) shall be limited to forty-five percent of the gross lot area.

B. Maximum Building Coverage.

1. Building coverage shall not exceed an aggregate of forty-five percent of the lot area. Covered area shall be considered to be the total amount of land covered by residential structures, garages, driveways, and other impermeable surfaces.
2. Decks, permeable patios, porous paving areas, vegetated roof areas, recreational areas, pedestrian walkways and terraces shall not be considered covered areas for the purpose of this standard. An additional fifteen percent in covered area may be added to the aggregate, increasing it to sixty percent with the use of porous surfaces and/or vegetated roof areas.

C. Maximum Building Height. No building shall exceed either thirty feet in height or two stories above grade (see illustration below).

Exhibit 1



D. Yard and Building Setbacks:

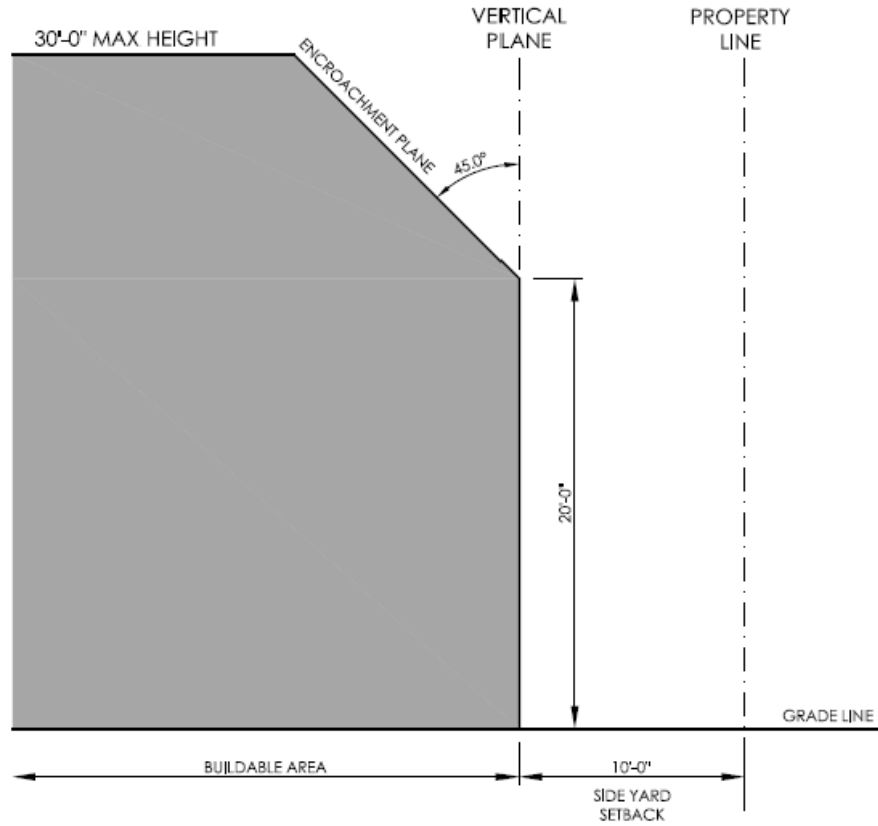
Lot Line	Bounded By	Building Type	Required Setback (feet)
Front		First floor Second floor	15 feet 25 feet
Rear			10 feet
Side or Rear	R-1 zoned lots	Structures over one-story in height	10 feet for height below 20 feet, plus use of "angle-plane" in accordance with subsection F.7 below
Side	An alley or lots zoned other than R-1	Main or accessory	10% of lot width 5 minimum 15 maximum
Side	Public street	Main or accessory	10% of lot width 10 minimum 15 maximum
Side	An alley	Garages opening to alley	25 from opposite side of alley

E. Encroachments into setback areas:

Exhibit 1

1. Garages and other one-story accessory structures may be constructed within three feet of a side or rear property line where the difference between adjoining grades does not exceed one foot and is not adjoining an R-1 zoned property.
 2. Walls and fences in accordance with Section 17.48.130.
 3. Balconies and Exterior Stairways. No more than one-half of the balconies and exterior stairways shall be permitted to project more than fifty percent of the minimum setback requirement into any required setback areas. The minimum setback from any property line abutting R-1 zoned property shall be ten feet.
 4. Swimming pools, hot tubs, spas and similar recreational facilities may be located no closer than five feet from the rear or side property lines, or twenty-five feet from the front property line.
 5. Other projections as allowed in accordance with Section 17.48.120.
- F. Site Design Requirements.
1. Siting: Building siting should:
 - a. Maximize privacy through placement of windows, balconies, landscaping, and design of outdoor spaces;
 - b. Be related to nearby buildings as well as adjacent parcels;
 - c. Be oriented to face the street, avoiding views from the street of parking garages and alleys;
 - d. Minimize negative impact on views from adjacent properties;
 - e. Be oriented to encourage use of outdoor areas and to be compatible with adjoining building orientation; and
 - f. Cluster buildings and modulate architectural elements to provide pleasing and useful ground level and above ground spaces.
 2. Utilities: All utilities shall be placed underground.
 3. Landscaping: Landscaping should be designed to minimize impact of development on surrounding properties. Tree preservation and landscaping with specimen trees are encouraged.
 4. Contextual design: Building forms and details should be in keeping with adjacent neighborhood character, where appropriate. Where possible, existing single-family houses should be preserved.
 5. Building materials: Materials, colors and textures generally should be compatible with those of adjacent and other nearby buildings and the overall character of the neighborhood.
 6. Paving: Use of decorative and permeable materials is encouraged.
 7. Angle-plane: For yards abutting an R-1 zoned lot, an encroachment limit shall be established which is determined at a point twenty feet above the existing ground level at the setback line as required by subsection D above, and using a forty-five-degree angle inwards toward the property to create additional setback (see illustration below).

Exhibit 1



8. Articulation: Articulation of exterior walls is encouraged. In no event shall a linear wall of a second story extend longer than thirty-five feet without an offset of a minimum of five feet for a minimum linear distance of ten feet (see illustration below).

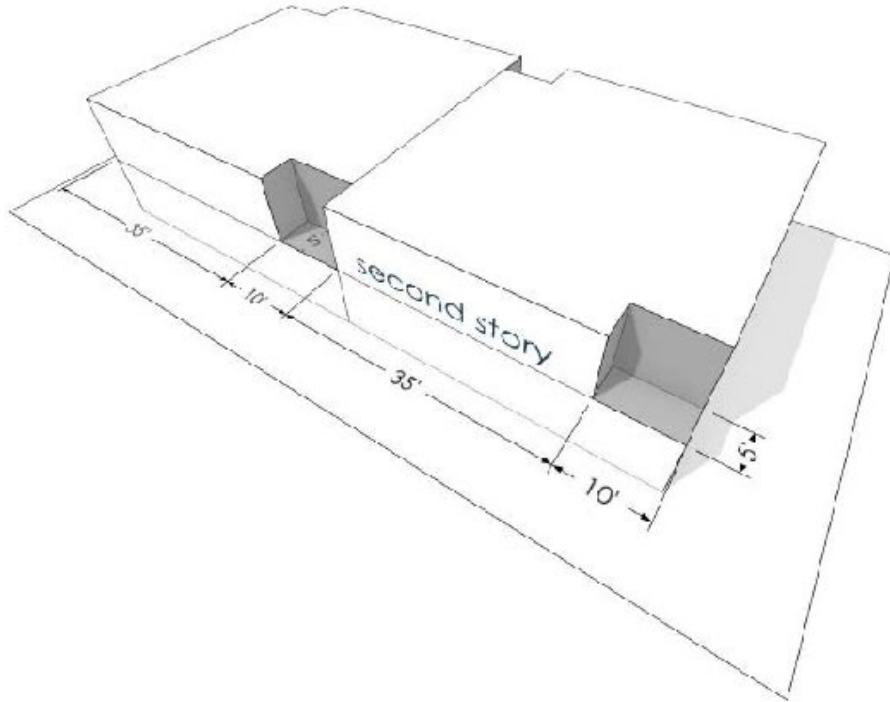


Exhibit 1

9. Screening: Parking areas, refuse storage, mechanical equipment and the like shall be screened by some combination of walls, plantings or earthworks.
10. Design guidelines: From time to time, the planning commission may promulgate and maintain site design and massing guidelines for use by applicants and the city to guide appropriate development in the R-3-13 zone.

Chapter 17.29 R-3-20 AND R-3-30 HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL ZONES

17.29.030 Development regulations.

For multifamily residential development, the standards of this Chapter 17.29 shall be considered in combination with the City of Sierra Madre Objective Design Standards (Chapter 17.50). Where there may be conflict, the City of Sierra Madre Objective Design Standards shall override. To the extent that a development is other than multifamily residential, the requirements of this Chapter 17.29 shall prevail. When not in conflict with the City of Sierra Madre Objective Design Standards, ~~The~~ the regulations and limitations pertaining to the R-3-13 zone shall control and be effective in the R-3-20 and R-3-30 zones (Chapter 17.28 of this title) for multi-family dwellings, with the following exceptions:

- A. Minimum Lot Size. The minimum lot size for new development shall be eleven thousand square feet.
- B. Allowable Density. The allowable dwelling unit density of development shall be as follows:
 - a. R-3-20: Minimum twenty dwelling units/acre, up to twenty-four dwelling units/acre.
 - b. R-3-30: Minimum thirty dwelling units/acre, up to thirty-four dwelling units/acre.
- C. Multi-family projects are not subject to the requirements of Section 17.28.070.
- D. Yard and Building Setbacks. In the R-3-30 zone only, the minimum front yard setback for the first and second floors shall be fifteen feet.
- E. Height. A third story building element shall be permitted, provided that this element is located more than forty feet away from any public street and has no horizontal dimension longer than forty-five feet. Additionally, the total floor area of these elements shall equal no greater than twenty percent of the gross lot area. For any project containing a third story, the height limit shall be measured in compliance with the calculation method described in Section 17.20.040 for the R-1 zone, except that the maximum height shall be thirty feet instead of twenty-five feet.
- F. Articulation. The standards described in Section 17.28.080.F.8 shall apply to all stories above the first story.
- G. Floor Area Ratio. The floor area ratio of developments containing more than eleven dwelling units shall be limited to one hundred percent of the gross lot area, except that pursuant to Government Code 65913.11, the floor area of developments containing eight to ten units shall be limited to one hundred twenty-five percent of the gross lot area.
- H. Maximum building coverage requirements shall not apply.
- I. Open space. Two hundred fifty square feet per dwelling unit of on-site open space shall be provided on the ground level for use by residents. Open spaces may be common or private. In order to be counted toward the open space requirement, the minimum width and length of each space shall be ten feet. Driveways and other vehicular access areas shall not count toward the open space requirement.

Chapter 17.32 R-E RESIDENTIAL ENTREPRENEUR OVERLAY ZONE

17.32.020 Standards of development.

For multifamily residential or mixed-use (residential and commercial) development, the standards of the underlying zone shall be considered in combination with the City of Sierra Madre Objective Design Standards (Chapter 17.50). Where there may be conflict, the City of Sierra Madre Objective Design Standards shall override. To the extent that a development is other than multifamily residential or mixed-use (residential and commercial), the requirements of the underlying zone shall prevail.

Chapter 17.36 C COMMERCIAL ZONE

17.36.050 Standards of development—Generally.

The development standards set forth in the following sections of this chapter shall apply to all construction within the C zone. For multifamily residential or mixed-use (residential and commercial) development, the standards of this Chapter 17.36 shall be considered in combination with the City of Sierra Madre Objective Design Standards (Chapter 17.50). Where there may be conflict, the City of Sierra Madre Objective Design Standards shall override. To the extent that a development is other than multifamily residential or mixed-use (residential and commercial), the requirements of this Chapter 17.36 shall prevail.

Chapter 17.39 RHO RELIGIOUS HOUSING OVERLAY ZONE

17.39.060 Development standards.

For multifamily residential development, the standards of this Chapter 17.39 shall be considered in combination with the City of Sierra Madre Objective Design Standards (Chapter 17.50). Where there may be conflict, the City of Sierra Madre Objective Design Standards shall override. To the extent that a development is other than multifamily residential, the requirements of this Chapter 17.39 shall prevail.

- A. Off-street Parking.
 - a. Reutilization of Church Parking. Reductions in parking for church and school uses below the minimum otherwise required by this Municipal Code is permitted to construct development that conforms to the standards of this chapter. The reduction in parking allowed shall be limited to the footprint of the residential structures and accessory structures, open space or landscaping serving the residential development.
 - b. Residential Parking Standards. Development under the RHO zone is eligible for the alternative or special parking standards described in Section 17.34.070.
 - c. Off-Site Parking. Parking for any on-site use may be located on the same lot as the use the parking will serve. When a parking lot is located on a site other than that on which the facility being served is located, an agreement approved by the city attorney reserving the site for parking purposes shall be recorded in the office of the Los Angeles County recorder. Such off-site parking shall be located no more than six hundred feet walking distance from the nearest point of the building that the parking is required to serve.
- B. Height.
 - a. Height Limit. No building shall exceed either thirty-five feet in height or three stories above grade, as calculated in the manner illustrated in Section 17.28.080.C.

Exhibit 1

- b. Height Adjacent to Public Streets. No building shall exceed either thirty feet in height or two stories above grade within forty feet from any public street other than Michillinda Avenue.
- c. Height Adjacent to R-1 Zone. For yards abutting an R-1 zoned lot, an encroachment limit shall be established which is determined at the point where the wall height is twenty feet, and using a forty-five-degree angle inwards toward the property to create additional setback. (See illustration in Section 17.28.080.F.7).
- C. Front Setback. The minimum front setback shall be fifteen feet for all floors of the building, except along Michillinda Avenue and Baldwin Avenue, where the minimum front setback shall be five feet.
- D. Open Space. One hundred seventy-five square feet per dwelling unit of on-site open space shall be provided for use by residents. Such open space may be located on the ground floor or above, and may be met with a combination of common open space and private open space. In order to be counted toward the open space requirement, the minimum width and length of each space shall be ten feet for common spaces and five feet for private spaces. Driveways and other vehicular access areas shall not count toward the open space requirement.
- E. Podium Parking Requirements. Any parking constructed at or above grade shall not be oriented along the frontage of any street. Parking constructed partially above grade shall be permitted along the frontage of a street only along Michillinda Avenue.
- F. All other development standards shall conform to the requirements of Section 17.28.080, with the exception of lot coverage and floor area ratio standards, which shall not apply.

Chapter 17.40 M MANUFACTURING ZONE

17.40.020 Property development standards.

Notwithstanding anything to the contrary in this chapter, projects incorporating uses permitted in the C zone, including residential uses, shall be developed in locations, to development standards, and with required reviews and approvals only as set forth in Chapter 17.36. [For multifamily residential or mixed-use \(residential and commercial\) development, the standards of this Chapter 17.40 shall be considered in combination with the City of Sierra Madre Objective Design Standards \(Chapter 17.50\). Where there may be conflict, the City of Sierra Madre Objective Design Standards shall override. To the extent that a development is other than multifamily residential or mixed-use \(residential and commercial\), the](#) ~~The~~ regulations set forth in the following sections shall apply ~~to all other uses and development~~ in the M zone.

Chapter 17.58 SMALL HOME LOT DEVELOPMENTS

17.58.050 Development standards.

[For multifamily residential development, the standards of this Chapter 17.58 shall be considered in combination with the City of Sierra Madre Objective Design Standards \(Chapter 17.50\). Where there may be conflict, the City of Sierra Madre Objective Design Standards shall override. To the extent that a development is other than multifamily residential, the requirements of this Chapter 17.58 shall prevail.](#)

- A. Design and Development Standards. This section incorporates the design and development standards in this code unique to each zone, except as modified by this section.
- B. Angle Plane. The angle plane standards in this chapter shall be governed by the angle plane standards in the underlying zone.
- C. Building and Design Standards.

Exhibit 1

1. All the dwelling units shall have consistent exterior wall materials, identified color tones, window types, door and window trims, roofing materials and roof pitch.
 2. Roof decks are prohibited.
 3. All dwelling units ministerially approved under this chapter will install a new or separate utility connection.
 4. All electrical and utility services to a new dwelling unit shall be undergrounded.
 5. If an adjoining property installed a solar energy system, the applicant shall submit a shadow study prepared by an engineer licensed by the Board of Professional Engineers, Land Surveyors, and Geologists or by an architect licensed by the California Architects Board. The shadow of any proposed development shall not cover more than ten percent of the area of any solar energy system on any adjoining property.
- D. Density Standards. The development must result in at least as many units as the maximum allowable residential density allowed under the zoning ordinance.
- E. Fire Safety Standards.
1. All new dwelling units are required to comply with Chapter 15.24 of this code.
 2. Where two dwelling units are configured as sharing a common wall, a one-hour fire wall between the units is required.
 3. All new dwelling units are required to comply with Chapter 15.24 (Fire Code) and have fire sprinklers.
 4. All new dwelling units are required to use fire-resistant building materials.
 5. All new dwelling units are required to comply with Chapter 8.36 (Hazardous Brush Clearance) and maintain defensible space around these units.
 6. New or modified detached dwelling units shall be separated from any other dwelling unit or building by ten feet to prevent the spread of fire.
- F. Floor Area Standards.
1. The average total floor area shall not exceed one thousand seven hundred fifty square feet.
 2. The total floor area standards in this chapter shall be governed by the floor area standards in the underlying zone.
- G. Height Standards. The maximum height standards in this chapter shall be governed by the height standards in the underlying zone.
- H. Lot Coverage Standards. The lot coverage standards in this chapter shall be governed by the lot coverage standards in the underlying zone.
- I. Lot Size Standards. The maximum lot size may not exceed five acres.
- J. Open Space Standards. Two hundred fifty feet per dwelling unit of on-site open space shall be provided on the ground level for use by residents. Open space may be common or private. To be counted toward the open space requirement, the minimum width and length of each space shall be ten feet. Driveways and other vehicular access areas shall not count toward the open space requirement.
- K. Parking Standards. The parking standards in this chapter shall be governed by the parking standards in the underlying zone, except that the required parking need not be enclosed or covered.
- L. Setback Standards.
1. The front, side, and rear setbacks from the lot line will be determined by the zoning district in which the dwelling unit is located.

Exhibit 1

2. No setback is required between units, except as required by Title 15 of this code.
3. All portions of the dwelling unit, including eaves, awnings, sills, cornices, chimneys, overhangs and other projections, may encroach into front, side or rear yards or setbacks in a manner consistent with the building design but in no case greater than one foot in depth.

Chapter 17.59 MINISTERIAL DESIGN REVIEW PERMITS

17.59.050 Development standards.

For multifamily residential development, the standards of this Chapter 17.59 shall be considered in combination with the City of Sierra Madre Objective Design Standards (Chapter 17.50). Where there may be conflict, the City of Sierra Madre Objective Design Standards shall override. To the extent that a development is other than multifamily residential, the requirements of this Chapter 17.59 shall prevail.

- A. Design and Development Standards. This section incorporates the design and development standards in this code unique to each zone, except as modified by this section.
- B. Angle Plane. The angle plane standards in this chapter shall be governed by the angle plane standards in the underlying zone.
- C. Building and Design Standards.
 1. For a detached unit, the exterior materials and design shall match the design of any existing primary dwelling unit on the property through the use of the same exterior wall materials, identified color tones, window types, door and window trims, roofing materials and roof pitch.
 2. For an attached unit, the exterior materials, windows and other architectural features shall match the existing structure by employing the same building form, color tones, window design, door and window trims, roofing materials and roof pitch.
 3. Roof decks are prohibited.
 4. All dwelling units ministerially approved under this chapter will install a new or separate utility connection.
 5. All electrical and utility services to a new dwelling unit shall be undergrounded.
 6. If an adjoining property installed a solar energy system, the applicant shall submit a shadow study prepared by an engineer licensed by the board of professional engineers, land surveyors, and geologists or by an architect licensed by the California Architects Board. The shadow of any proposed development shall not cover more than ten percent of the area of any solar energy system on any adjoining property.
- D. Density Standards. No development may include more than two residential housing units under this chapter and no more than four residential housing units under this code.
- E. Fire Safety Standards.
 1. All new dwelling units are required to comply with Chapter 15.24 of this code.
 2. Where two dwelling units are configured as sharing a common wall, a one-hour fire wall between the units is required.
 3. All new dwelling units are required to comply with Chapter 15.24 (Fire Code) and have fire sprinklers.
 4. All new dwelling units are required to use fire-resistant building materials.
 5. All new dwelling units are required to comply with Chapter 8.36 (Hazardous Brush Clearance) and maintain defensible space around these units.

Exhibit 1

6. New or modified detached dwelling units shall be separated from any other dwelling unit or building by ten feet to prevent the spread of fire.
- F. Floor Area Standards. The total floor area standards in this chapter shall be governed by total floor area standards in the underlying zone.
 - G. Height Standards. The maximum height standards in this chapter shall be governed by the height standards in the underlying zone. If there is an existing primary dwelling on the parcel, then the maximum height of the existing residence cannot be increased through use of this chapter.
 - H. Lot Coverage Standards. The lot coverage standards in this chapter shall be governed by the lot coverage standards in the underlying zone.
 - I. Lot Size Standards.
 1. The minimum lot size standards in this chapter shall be governed by the lot size standards in the underlying zone.
 - J. Open Space Standards. Two hundred fifty feet per dwelling unit of on-site open space shall be provided on the ground level for use by residents. Open space may be common or private. To be counted toward the open space requirement, the minimum width and length of each space shall be ten feet. Driveways and other vehicular access areas shall not count toward the open space requirement.
 - K. Parking Standards.
 1. One off-street, covered parking space is required for each new dwelling unit.
 2. The parking space shall be a dimension of at least ten feet wide, eight feet tall, and twenty feet deep.
 3. If a new dwelling unit is located within one-half mile walking distance of either a high-quality transit corridor, as defined in Public Resources Code Section 21155(b), or a major transit stop, as defined in Public Resources Code Section 21064.3, or if there is a car share vehicle located within one block of the parcel, then off-street parking required pursuant to this section shall not apply.
 - L. Setback Standards.
 1. The front setbacks from the lot line will be determined by the zoning district in which the dwelling unit is located;
 2. The minimum side and rear setbacks from the lot line will be four feet.
 3. No additional setback is required for a new dwelling unit constructed in the same location as an existing structure on the parcel.
 4. All portions of the dwelling unit, including eaves, awnings, sills, cornices, chimneys, overhangs and other projections, may encroach into front, side or rear yards or setbacks in a manner consistent with the building design but in no case greater than one foot in depth.



CITY OF SIERRA MADRE

STAFF REPORT

PLANNING & COMMUNITY PRESERVATION

DATE: May 21, 2026

TO: Honorable Chair and the Planning Commission

FROM: Clare Lin, Director of Planning & Community Preservation
By: Katelyn Huang, Assistant Planner

SUBJECT: **Variance (VAR 26-01): A Request to Allow the Construction of an Outdoor Patio Dining Area with a Reduced Setback on an Existing Commercial Property Located at 14 E. Sierra Madre Blvd.**

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Planning Commission hold public hearing, consider all pertinent testimony, and adopt Resolution 26-07, provided in this report as Attachment 1, granting approval of a Variance (VAR 26-01) for a proposed outdoor dining patio area located at 14 E. Sierra Madre Blvd.

SUMMARY

The applicant, Kevin Taylor, is requesting that the Planning Commission consider a Variance from front yard setback requirements defined under SMMC Section 17.36.070(A) to allow the construction of an outdoor patio dining area.

Pursuant to SMMC Section 17.60.010, when practical difficulties, unnecessary hardships or results inconsistent with the general intent and purpose of this chapter occur by reason of the strict and literal interpretation of any of its provisions, a zone variance may be granted in the manner hereinafter set forth in this chapter. Every application for a zone variance shall be set for a public hearing before the commission by the director (SMMC Section 17.60.080). The application requests the zone variance of SMMC 17.26.04(A) for front yard setbacks in the Commercial Zone.

BACKGROUND

A.	Date of Application	April 13, 2026
B.	Applicant	Kevin Taylor, Taylor's Ol' Fashioned Market
C.	Property Owner	Montecito Development Group, LLC
D.	Location	14 E. Sierra Madre Blvd.

E.	Zoning/General Plan	Commercial (C)
F.	Environmental Status	Qualified exemption from CEQA per Section 15301 (Existing Facilities)
G.	Public Notice	This project was advertised in accordance with the SMMC 17.60.100 and Government Code Section 65091

Taylor's Ol' Fashioned Market is a one-story, 12,787-square-foot commercial building with approximately 43 on-site parking spaces located in the commercial core zone of downtown Sierra Madre with a General Plan Land Use and Zoning designation of C (Commercial); adjacent parcels have General Plan Land Use designation of C (Commercial) and RH (Residential High Density), and Zoning Designation of C (Commercial), R-3 (Residential Medium/High Density) with REO (Residential Entrepreneur Overlay). Taylor's Ol' Fashioned Market is an existing grocery store that has been in business since 1966 serving Sierra Madre at the same location for over 50 years.

DISCUSSION & ANALYSIS

The applicant requests approval to construct an outdoor dining patio on the northeast side of Taylor's Ol' Fashioned Market as an accessory improvement to the existing commercial use. The project includes extending the existing elevated concrete patio deck, installing a covered patio awning aligned with the existing building wall at the north property line with an approximate length of 17 feet 8 inches, constructing a six-foot-tall wooden fence located two feet from the north property line, and adding a wooden trellis providing shade with an approximate width of 38 feet and height of 11 feet. Ficus trees would be planted within a planter along the north property line adjacent to the sidewalk and the eastern portion of the existing parking lot. As proposed, the outdoor patio dining area would measure approximately 42 feet 7 inches along the north property line and 38 feet to the east, providing a side-yard setback of approximately 33 feet to the east property line. The project is intended to provide additional outdoor seating, improve patron amenities, and accommodate an ADA-compliant lift and stair access at the northeast entrance, thereby supporting the continued operation and long-term viability of the business.

As proposed, the project would require approval of a Variance from the development standard for a front yard setback in the Commercial Zone pursuant to SMMC Section 17.36.070. Although this provision requires a front yard with a minimum depth of five feet extending across the full width of the lot, strict application of this standard is not feasible in this case because the existing commercial structure is already constructed to the north property line and the proposed outdoor dining patio is designed to align with this established building wall. The fencing and trellis elements would be located two feet from the north property line, with Ficus trees planted along the property line to create a landscaped buffer.

The site's existing configuration, with the building constructed at the north property line, creates a unique physical constraint on the property, such that any effort to provide a functional outdoor dining area and ADA access along the north and east sides of the building requires improvements at or near the property line. The proposed patio extension, awning, and fence respond directly to these physical limitations and the need to integrate new improvements with the existing building envelope, rather than to intensify the use or expand the building footprint beyond the established development pattern. The project would not introduce new driveways or vehicular access, and all construction would be required to comply with applicable building, fire, and accessibility codes. The design is also intended to preserve on-site parking while improving accessible access for patrons, including a proposed van-accessible parking space near the ADA lift entrance that would minimize the path of travel and provide convenient access to the elevated patio area.

The proposed six-foot wooden fence, located two feet from the north property line, would define the patio area, provide a measure of privacy and security for patrons, and create a transition between the commercial activity area and the adjoining property. The two-foot setback also allows space for separation and maintenance. In addition, the proposed Ficus trees along the north sidewalk are intended to soften the hardscape, enhance the pedestrian environment, and improve the appearance of the property as viewed from the public right-of-way.

Overall, staff's analysis indicates that the requested variance arises directly from the physical constraints of an existing building constructed to the property line and is tailored to allow a level of outdoor amenity and accessibility that is typical for similar commercial properties. The scale and design of the proposed improvements, together with the fencing and landscaping, are intended to maintain compatibility with neighboring properties and the surrounding streetscape. Based on these considerations, staff finds that the variance, if approved with appropriate conditions, would allow the proposed improvements without creating significant detrimental impacts or undermining the intent of the applicable zoning standards.

FINDINGS

Pursuant to SMMC Chapter 17.60, when practical difficulties, unnecessary hardships or results inconsistent with the general intent and purpose of the zoning code occur by reason of the strict and literal interpretation of any of its provisions, a zone variance may be granted.

Burden of proof for permit for certain noted projects pursuant to Code Sections 17.60.010 and 17.60.020; and California Government Code Section 65906:

1. The conditions of the variance will assure that the adjustment thereby authorized will not constitute a grant of special privileges inconsistent with the limitations upon other properties in the vicinity and zone in which such property is situated; in that the outdoor patio area is an accessory improvement that supports the existing commercial use and does not introduce a new or more intensive use. Similar outdoor seating areas and patio structures have been permitted on other commercial properties in the vicinity under comparable circumstances, so approval of this variance would not confer a special privilege unavailable to other properties in the same zone.
2. The variance will not authorize a use or activity which is not otherwise expressly authorized by the zone regulation governing the parcel of property; in that the property is currently zoned Commercial and will continue to be used as a neighborhood-serving market, which is an allowed use in this zone. The subject property is developed with an existing commercial building constructed at the north property line, and the proposed outdoor dining patio and related improvements function as accessory to this existing commercial use rather than establishing a new or prohibited use.
3. The applicant has shown that there are special circumstances applicable to the property involved, such as size, shape, topography, location or surroundings, which do not generally apply to other adjacent properties included in the same zone as the subject property; in that the existing market building is constructed directly on the north property line, leaving very limited area between the structure and the property boundary to accommodate contemporary outdoor dining and ADA-compliant access within standard setback requirements. Because of this configuration, strict application of current setback and yard standards would effectively prevent the property from providing an outdoor dining patio and accessible entrance, including a newly proposed van-accessible parking space and associated path of travel.
4. The special circumstance make the granting of the zone variance necessary in order to facilitate a reasonable use of the property involved; in that the requested adjustments are necessary to accommodate reasonable improvements for outdoor dining and an ADA-compliant entry. Without the requested relief to allow the extended patio and associated fencing at or near the property line, the property would be effectively precluded from providing outdoor seating and accessible patron access that are typically associated with food and beverage operations in the commercial zone, and could not be achieved without significantly affecting existing on-site parking.

5. The variance will be consistent with the objectives of the general plan and the zoning ordinance; in that the proposed project supports an existing neighborhood-serving market and is consistent with the Commercial zoning designation. The project is also consistent with the following General Plan Land Use Objectives and Policies:

- Objective L33: Maintaining a commercial area designed to enhance pedestrian activity, preserve historic patterns of development and foster community values.
 - Policy L33.7: Encourage the development of outdoor spaces for dining, and public gathering spaces.
- Objective L34: Promoting greater linkage between off-street parking areas and commercial uses.
 - Policy L34.2: Require that new construction adjacent to a parking area be designed to have access from the parking area as well as the street.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

The proposed project qualifies for a Class 1 Categorical Exemption (Existing Facilities) under Article 19 of the California Code of Regulations (Cal. Code Regs. Tit. 14 § 15301) as it involves (e) as it involves an addition of no more than 2,500 square feet to an existing structure.

Approved by:



Clare Lin
Planning and Community Preservation Director

Attachments

[Attachment 1: Planning Commission Resolution No. 26-07](#)

[Attachment 2: Project Site Plan and Elevation](#)

**PLANNING COMMISSION
RESOLUTION 26-07**

A RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF SIERRA MADRE APPROVING VARIANCE 26-01 TO ALLOW THE CONSTRUCTION OF AN OUTDOOR PATIO DINING AREA WITH A REDUCED SETBACK AT AN EXISTING COMMERCIAL PROPERTY LOCATED AT 14 EAST SIERRA MADRE BOULEVARD

THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF SIERRA MADRE DOES HEREBY RESOLVE:

WHEREAS, an application for a Parcel Map was filed by:

**Kevin Taylor,
Taylor's Ol' Fashioned Market
14 E. Sierra Madre Blvd.
Sierra Madre, CA 91024**

WHEREAS, the request for a VARIANCE can be described as a request to vary from the Commercial Zone Development Standards for a front yard setback. Pursuant to SMMC Section 17.60.010, when practical difficulties, unnecessary hardships or results inconsistent with the general intent and purpose of this chapter occur by reason of the strict and literal interpretation of any of its provisions, a zone variance may be granted in the manner hereinafter set forth in this chapter. Every application for a zone variance shall be set for a public hearing before the commission by the director (SMMC Sec 17.60.080). The application requests the zone variance of SMMC 17.36.070(A) (Yards and Building Setbacks).

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission has received the report and recommendations of staff;

WHEREAS, following a public notice, a public hearing was held before the Planning Commission on May 21, 2026, with all testimony being received being made part of the public record;

WHEREAS, the proposed project qualifies for a Categorical Exemption (Class 1), pursuant to Section 15301(e) for Existing Facilities of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) as it involves an addition of no more than 2,500 square feet to an existing structure;

NOW THEREFORE, in consideration of the evidence received at the hearing, and for the reasons discussed by the Commissioners at said hearing, the Planning Commission now finds as follows:

SECTION 1. Recitals. The recitals above are true and correct and incorporated

into this Resolution by reference as findings of fact.

SECTION 2. CEQA Compliance. Division 13 of the California Public Resources Code (PRC) establishes the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Cal. Pub. Res. Code Section 21080, subd. (b)(9) and Cal. Pub. Res. Code Section 21084, subd. (a) provide that CEQA does not apply to classes of projects designated pursuant to the CEQA Guidelines, which include a list of classes of projects that have been determined not to have a significant effect on the environment and as such are exempt from CEQA. California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3, establishes the CEQA Guidelines. Article 19 therein commences by providing classes of projects that qualify for categorical exemption from CEQA (Cal. Code Regs. tit. 14 § 15300). The Planning Commission hereby finds:

SECTION 2.1 Existing Facilities. The proposed project qualifies for a Class 1 Categorical Exemption (Existing Facilities) under Article 19 of the California Code of Regulations (Cal. Code Regs. Tit. 14 § 15301) as it involves (e) as it involves an addition of no more than 2,500 square feet to an existing structure;

SECTION 3. Variance. Pursuant to section 17.60.020 (Burden of proof) of the Sierra Madre Municipal Code and Section 65906 of the California Government Code, the Planning Commission hereby finds the existence of the following facts:

1. *The conditions of the variance will assure that the adjustment thereby will not constitute a grant of special privileges inconsistent with the limitations upon other properties in the vicinity and zone in which such property is situated;* in that the outdoor patio area is an accessory improvement that supports the existing commercial use and does not introduce a new or more intensive use. Similar outdoor seating areas and patio structures have been permitted on other commercial properties in the vicinity under comparable circumstances, so approval of this variance would not confer a special privilege unavailable to other properties in the same zone.
2. *The variance will not authorize a use or activity which is not otherwise expressly authorized by the zone regulation governing the parcel of property;* in that the property is currently zoned Commercial and will continue to be used as a neighborhood-serving market, which is an allowed use in this zone. The subject property is developed with an existing commercial building constructed at the north property line, and the proposed outdoor dining patio and related improvements function as accessory to this existing commercial use rather than establishing a new or prohibited use.
3. *The applicant has shown that there are special circumstances applicable to the property involved, such as size, shape, topography, location or surroundings, which do not generally apply to other adjacent properties included in the same zone as the subject property;* in that the existing market building is constructed directly on the north property line, leaving very limited area between the structure

and the property boundary to accommodate contemporary outdoor dining and ADA-compliant access within standard setback requirements. Because of this configuration, strict application of current setback and yard standards would effectively prevent the property from providing an outdoor dining patio and accessible entrance, including a newly proposed van-accessible parking space and associated path of travel.

4. *The special circumstances make the granting of the zone variance necessary in order to facilitate a reasonable use of the property involved;* in that the requested adjustments are necessary to accommodate reasonable improvements for outdoor dining and an ADA-compliant entry. Without the requested relief to allow the extended patio and associated fencing at or near the property line, the property would be effectively precluded from providing outdoor seating and accessible patron access that are typically associated with food and beverage operations in the commercial zone, and could not be achieved without significantly affecting existing on-site parking.
5. *The variance will be consistent with the objectives of the general plan and zoning ordinance;* in that the proposed project supports an existing neighborhood-serving market and is consistent with the Commercial zoning designation. The project is also consistent with the following General Plan Land Use Objectives and Policies:

Objective L33: Maintaining a commercial area designed to enhance pedestrian activity, preserve historic patterns of development and foster community values.

Policy L33.7: Encourage the development of outdoor spaces for dining, and public gathering spaces.

Objective L34: Promoting greater linkage between off-street parking areas and commercial uses.

Policy L34.2: Require that new construction adjacent to a parking area be designed to have access from the parking area as well as the street.

PURSUANT TO THE ABOVE FINDINGS, IT IS RESOLVED that the Planning Commission APPROVES Variance 26-01, subject to the conditions of approval in Exhibit A, attached herein.

The approval is final, unless appealed to the City Council in writing within ten (10) business days following the adoption of this Resolution, or no later than June 5, 2026, at the hour of 5:30 p.m., pursuant to the provisions of Section 17.60.120 of the Sierra Madre Municipal Code.

The time in which to seek judicial review of this decision shall be governed by Code of Civil Procedure Section 1094.6. The Planning Commission Secretary shall certify to the adoption of this resolution, transmit copies of the same to the applicant and his counsel,

if any, together with a proof of mailing in the form required by law and shall enter a certified copy of this resolution in the book of resolution of the City.

APPROVED, the 21th day of May, 2026, by the following vote:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSTAIN:

ABSENT:

Thomas Denison, Chair
Sierra Madre Planning Commission

ATTEST:

Clare Lin, Director
Planning and Community Preservation Department

EXHIBIT A

CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL VARIANCE 26-01

The applicant, property owner, or successor(s) in interest shall meet the following conditions:

1.0 General Conditions:

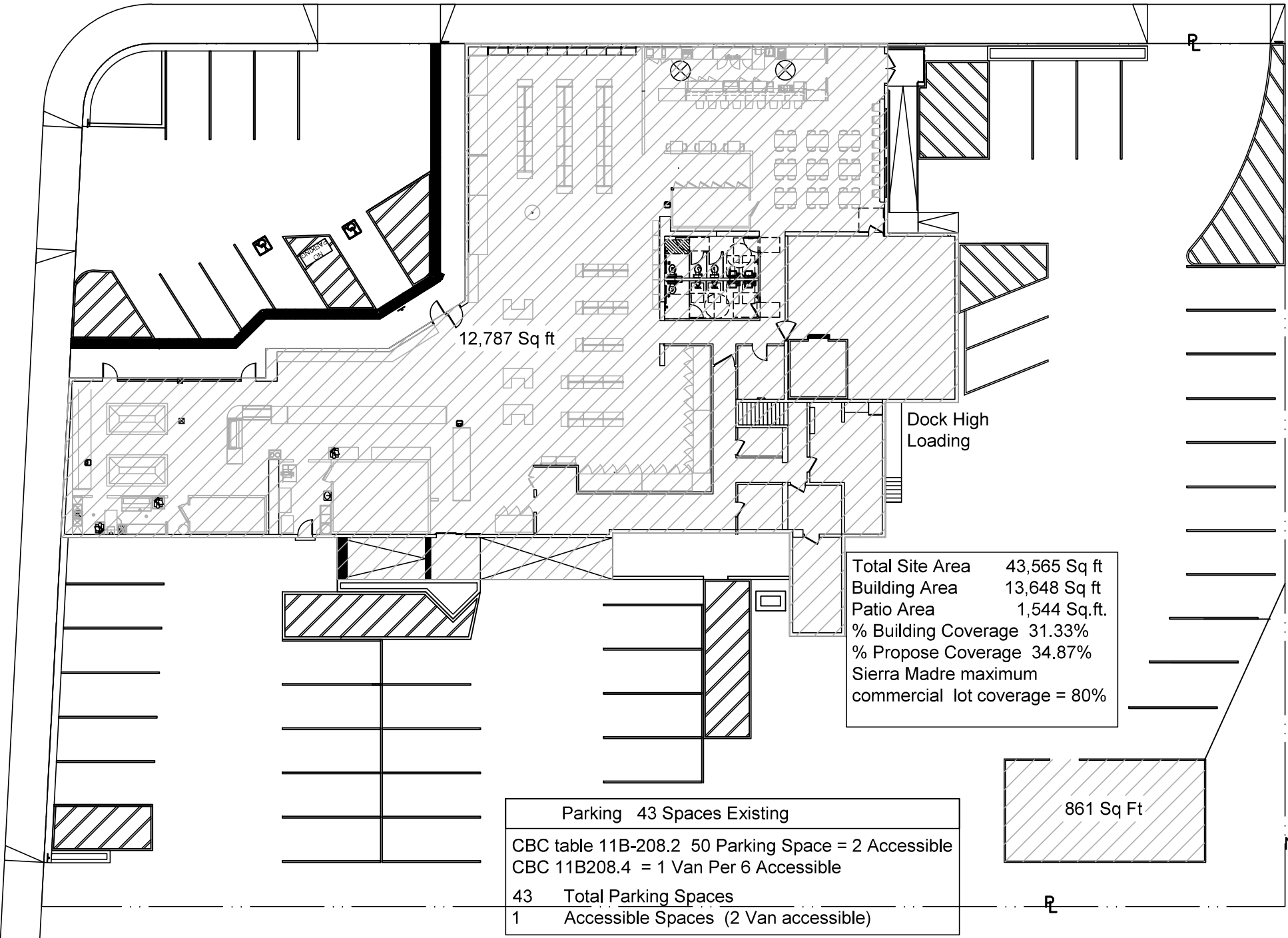
- 1.1 Comply with all applicable provisions of the Sierra Madre Municipal Code, including but not limited to those Chapters pertaining to Zoning, Building and Construction, Vehicles and Traffic, and Health and Safety, and including all such provisions which may be contained in Uniform Codes which have been incorporated by reference within the Sierra Madre Municipal Code.
- 1.2 Comply with all applicable provisions of Federal, State, and Los Angeles County law and regulations, including but not limited to the California Environmental Quality Act.
- 1.3 Execute and deliver to the City's Department of Planning and Community Preservation an Affidavit of Acceptance of Conditions on a form to be provided by such Department; this approval shall not be effective for any purpose until the Applicant complies with this condition.
- 1.4 To the full extent permitted by law, the applicant and property owner shall defend, indemnify, and hold harmless the City, its employees, agents, and officials, from and against any liability, claims, suits, actions, arbitration proceedings, regulatory proceedings, losses, expenses or costs of any kind, whether actual, alleged or threatened, including, but not limited to, actual attorneys' fees, litigation expenses and court costs of any kind without restriction or limitation, incurred in relation to, as a consequence of, arising out of or in any way attributable to, actually, allegedly or impliedly, in whole or in part, the issuance of this approval, or the activities conducted pursuant to this approval. Applicant and property owner shall pay such obligations as they are incurred by City, its employees, agents, and officials, and in the event of any claim or lawsuit, shall submit a deposit in such amount as the City reasonably determines necessary to protect the City from exposure to fees, costs or liability with respect to such claim or lawsuit.
- 1.5 Maintain a signed copy of this record (Planning Commission Resolution 26-07 with this Exhibit A), a letter from the Planning and Community Preservation Department of the notice of approval of the Variance (VAR 26-01), and a copy of the executed Affidavit of Acceptance of Conditions required by Conditions of Approval no. 1.3 that together grant the following entitlement(s):

2.0 Planning Conditions:

- 2.1 Construct the project in substantial conformance with all applications and supporting materials presented to the Planning Commission and as modified by condition of approval on May 21, 2026. Inaccuracies and misrepresentations will be grounds for immediate revocation of the Variance.
- 2.2 Submit construction plans, for 1st Plan Check within one (1) year of the date of this approval; failure to do so will constitute an abandonment of the entitlement, and shall render this approval null and void. This Resolution signed by both the Planning Commission Chair and Director of Planning and Community Preservation and conditions of approval as well as a letter of approval from the Planning and Community Preservation Department shall be included in the submitted construction plans on an individual sheet.
- 2.2 All circulation within parking area must be adequately marked and posted at all times with signs and painted arrows together indicating direction to exit pursuant to SMMC Section 17.60.080(J).
- 2.3. Appropriate entrance, exit and directional signs shall be posted and maintained pursuant to SMMC Section 17.60.080(M).
- 2.4. All lighting shall be directed away from adjoining property otherwise comply with the with the city's "Dark Sky" program and the relevant provisions of the general plan.

(end of conditions)

VARIANCE 26-01: 14 E. SIERRA MADRE BLVD



12,787 Sq ft

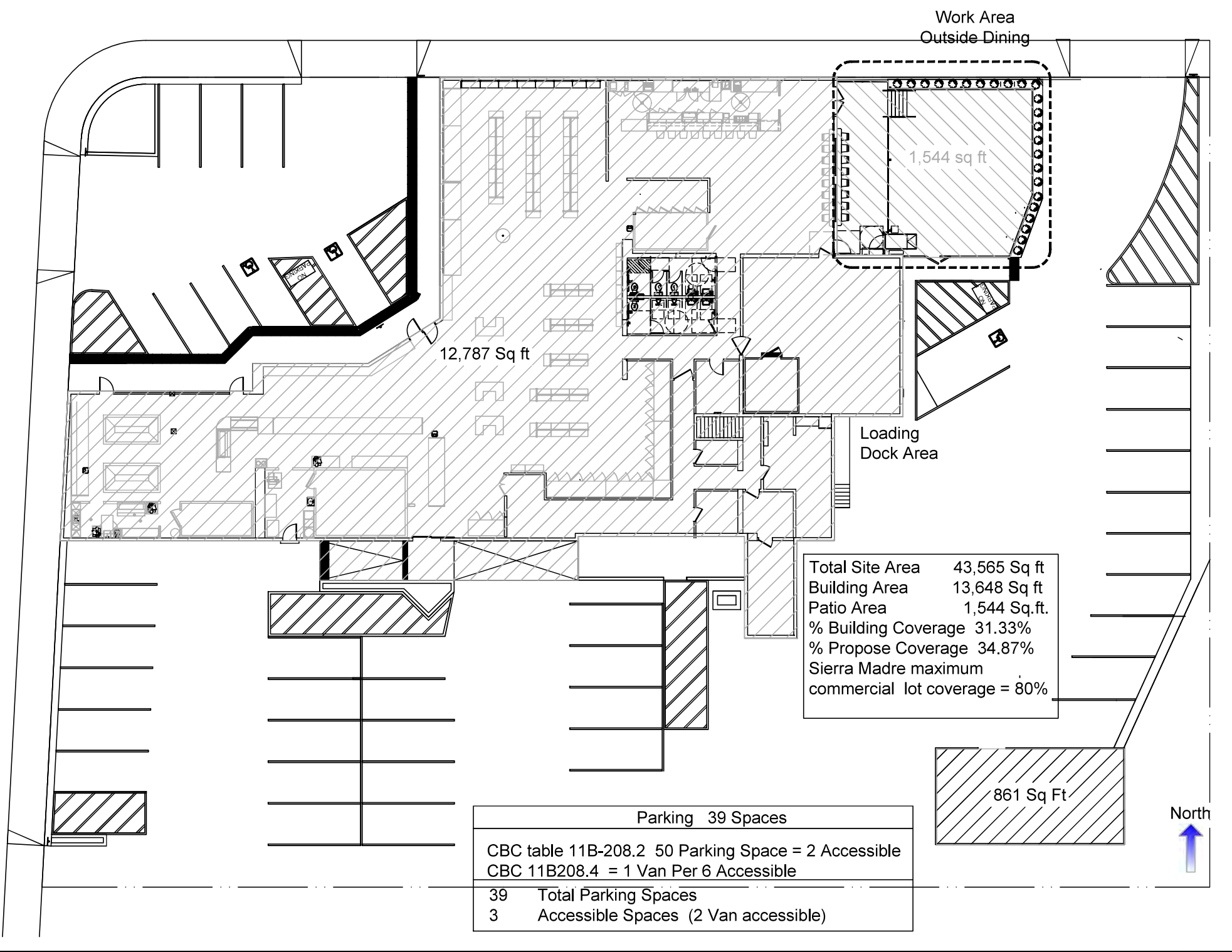
Dock High Loading

Total Site Area	43,565 Sq ft
Building Area	13,648 Sq ft
Patio Area	1,544 Sq.ft.
% Building Coverage	31.33%
% Propose Coverage	34.87%
Sierra Madre maximum commercial lot coverage = 80%	

861 Sq Ft

Parking	43 Spaces Existing
CBC table 11B-208.2 50 Parking Space = 2 Accessible	
CBC 11B208.4 = 1 Van Per 6 Accessible	
43	Total Parking Spaces
1	Accessible Spaces (2 Van accessible)





Work Area
Outside Dining

1,544 sq ft

12,787 Sq ft

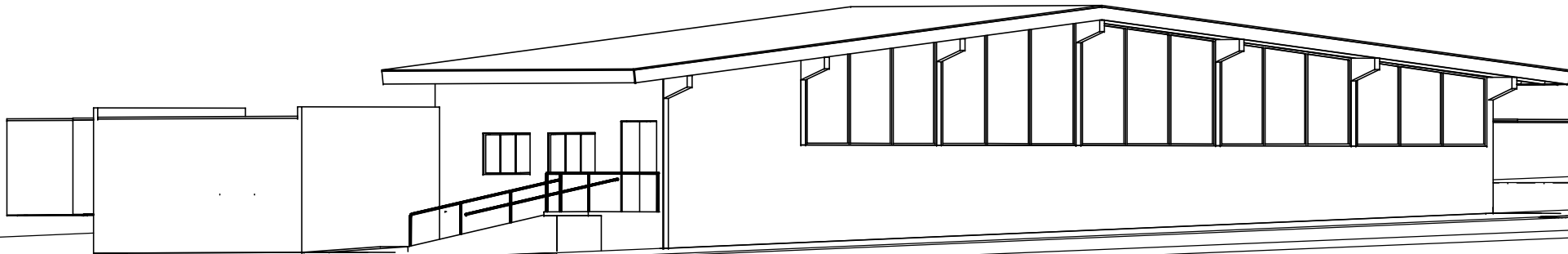
Loading
Dock Area

Total Site Area 43,565 Sq ft
 Building Area 13,648 Sq ft
 Patio Area 1,544 Sq.ft.
 % Building Coverage 31.33%
 % Propose Coverage 34.87%
 Sierra Madre maximum
 commercial lot coverage = 80%

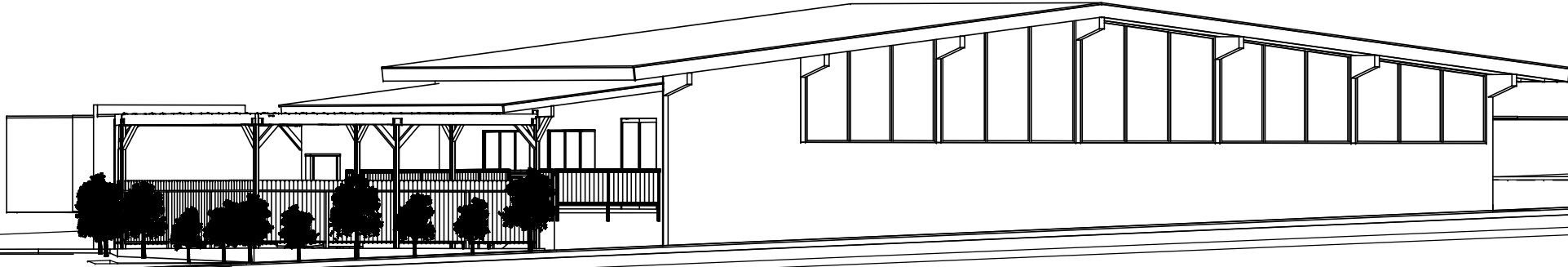
861 Sq Ft

Parking 39 Spaces	
CBC table 11B-208.2 50 Parking Space = 2 Accessible	
CBC 11B208.4 = 1 Van Per 6 Accessible	
39	Total Parking Spaces
3	Accessible Spaces (2 Van accessible)





EXISTING ELEVATION





Thursday, May 7, 2026, 5:30 P.M.

City Council Chambers, 232 W. Sierra Madre Blvd.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

Pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act, persons with a disability who require a disability related modification or accommodation in order to participate in a meeting, including auxiliary aids or services, may request such modification or accommodation from the City Clerk at (626) 574-5455. Notification 48 hours prior to the meeting will enable the City to make reasonable arrangements to assure accessibility to the meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT & ACCESS

The Brown Act provides the public with an opportunity to make public comments at any public meeting. As an alternative, public comment may be submitted by e-mail to publiccomment@sierramadrecal.gov by 3:00PM on the day of the meeting. Emails will be acknowledged at the City Council meeting, filed into public record, and scanned onto the City website for public review.

A copy of the posted agenda and a live video stream of the meeting can be found on the City's website at sierramadrecal.gov, on Foothills Media website at foothillsmedia.org/sierramadre, and broadcast on Government Access Channel 3 (Spectrum).

If you require special assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact the City Clerk's Office at (626) 355-7135 at least 48 hours prior to the meeting.

CODE OF CONDUCT

The purpose of a City Council meeting is to conduct City business. Members of the public that behave in a manner that interrupts or obstructs the City Council's ability to conduct City business may be asked to leave the meeting. Any and all demonstrations which disrupt, interrupt, or obstruct the City Council's ability to conduct City business are prohibited. No signs, posters, or other large objects shall be brought into the Council Chambers or other meeting place if doing so would disrupt, disturb, or otherwise impede the orderly course of the meeting.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Denison called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. Director Lin called the roll.

2. ROLL CALL OF PLANNING COMMISSIONERS

Thomas Denison, Chair
Kevin Brennan, Commissioner
Yong Yoo, Commissioner

Absent: Patrick Simcock, Vice Chair
Christine Moran, Commissioner

Also Present: Clare Lin, Director of Planning and Community Preservation
Aleks Giragosian, City Attorney
Joshua Wolf, Senior Planner
Katelyn Huang, Assistant Planner

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chair Denison asked for a motion to approve the agenda as presented.

Commissioner Brennan made a motion to approve the agenda as presented.

Commissioner Yoo seconded the motion.

Ayes: Chair Denison, Commissioner Brennan, and Commissioner Yoo

Noes:

Absent: Vice-Chair Simcock, Commissioner Moran

Abstain:

The motion to approve the agenda as presented was approved by a unanimous voice vote by all commissioners present.

4. REPORTS FROM CITY COUNCIL LIAISON

Council Member Parkhurst reported that the City Council has three upcoming meetings: a regular meeting on May 26, and budget deep-dive sessions on May 27 and May 28, all beginning at 5:30 PM. He noted that the May 27 session would focus on fire, police, and public works, and invited interested residents to attend for a preview of the Fiscal Year 2027 budget.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

Any person wishing to speak before the Planning Commission is asked to complete a Speaker Card and provide it to staff prior to the start of the meeting. Speakers are generally limited to three (3) minutes per person and time may not be delegated; any changes to the allotted time will be announced prior to the Public Comment period. Under the Brown Act, the Planning Commission is prohibited from discussing or taking action on any item not listed on the posted agenda.

Addressing the Planning Commission from the audience is not permitted; all comments addressing the Commission must be made from the podium. Only public comment made from the podium will be recognized by the Planning Commission and entered into public record.

Chair Denison opened the podium for public comment on items not on the agenda.

Seeing no one come forward, Chair Denison closed public comment.

6. PUBLIC HEARING

Any person wishing to speak before the Planning Commission on a public hearing item is asked to complete a Speaker Card noting the agenda item number and provide it to staff prior to the start of the public hearing. Separate and apart from the applicant (who may speak longer in the discretion of the Commission) speakers are generally limited to three (3) minutes per person; any changes to the allotted time will be announced prior to the Public Comment period. Under the Brown Act, the Planning Commission is prohibited from discussing or acting on any item not listed on the posted agenda. The applicant may additionally submit rebuttal comments, at the discretion of the Commission.

Following the closure of the public hearing and prior to the final decision, Commissioners shall disclose any ex parte communication that has taken place pertaining to the public hearing item. Planning Commissioners shall also disclose all visits to a site that is the subject of a quasi-adjudicatory proceeding before the Planning Commission. The disclosure will include whether the site visit was organized by staff, upon the invitation of the applicant, or on the Commissioners' own accord. The Commissioner must disclose all information learned from the site visit that is not included in the agenda packet and that informs his or her decision-making.

- a) Municipal Code Text Amendment (MCTA 26-02) – Adoption by Reference of the City of Sierra Madre Objective Design Standards by Adding Chapter 17.50 (Objective Design Standards) to and Amending Various Sections of Title 17 (Zoning) of the Sierra Madre Municipal Code Related to Multifamily Development Standards

Staff Presentation

Planning Director Lin credited the collaborative effort behind the Objective Design Standards (ODS), noting support from the San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments (SGV COG), The Arroyo Group, and Onyx Architecture. Participation by the City began in November 2024, with funding via SCAG's REAP 2 subregional grant.

Assistant Planner Huang explained the ODS document offers a clear, objective framework for reviewing multifamily and mixed-use developments, aligned with the City's General Plan Housing Element. The amendment is CEQA-exempt under Section 15061(b)(3) as it creates design standards without foreseeable environmental changes.

Philip Burns

The Arroyo Group

Philip Burns provided an overview of the consultant's work, explaining that recent state housing laws have reduced local discretion in design review and require objective standards for housing projects. He described how the document is organized with intent statements, clear numbered standards, and visual examples to guide interpretation. He also noted that it applies across different zoning contexts and outlines different levels of design review, including streamlined ministerial processes where applicable.

Procedural Discussion

Chair Denison initiated discussion on the procedural pathway for adoption, noting that the ODS document is Sierra Madre-specific.

City Attorney Giragosian and Senior Planner Wolf confirmed that the Commission could forward the municipal code text amendment (MCTA 26-02) to the City Council while continuing to refine the ODS document itself, as the adopted ordinance would authorize the Planning Commission to amend the standards by resolution going forward.

City Attorney Giragosian recommended adding "as may be amended from time to time" language to Section 17.50.030 to clarify this ongoing authority.

Director Lin noted a critical deadline: to satisfy the REAP 2 grant requirements, the City Council must adopt a resolution by June 30, 2026.

Senior Planner Wolf confirmed that with a first reading at the May 26 City Council meeting and a second reading on June 9, the timeline is achievable.

Commissioner Brennan confirmed that Section 17.50.50(B) is broad enough to accommodate the proposed process structure.

Commissioner Yoo expressed comfort with forwarding the ordinance to Council given the grant deadline, while still reserving time to complete the ODS document review.

Substantive Review of the ODS Document

The Commission conducted a detailed section-by-section review of the draft ODS document, raising numerous questions and proposing specific revisions. The following summarizes the key discussion points by section:

Introduction/General Structure:

Chair Denison noted that the nine-page introduction, while informative, may impede usability, particularly given that references to state law timelines and process charts could become outdated quickly.

Commissioner Brennan agreed, suggesting that the standards development process section and Appendix E be relocated to the appendices.

Section 1 – Site Planning and Access:

Chair Denison questioned certain intent statement language (e.g., "access points should be legible," "activate streets and open spaces") as subjective.

Mr. Burns explained that intent statements are intentionally subjective. They offer context for interpreting objective standards and assist staff and commission in making decisions on variations, though they are not enforceable on their own.

City Attorney Giragosian confirmed the city would not be enforcing intent language directly.

On Section 1.3, Chair Denison raised a concern about the undefined terms "length" and "width" in relation to primary vs. secondary streets.

Mr. Burns explained that the primary street commonly refers to the addressed street, and for corner lots, this designation is guided by streets identified in the General Plan circulation element.

The Commission suggested adding a clarifying definition linking "length" to the primary street frontage.

On Section 1.5, Chair Denison asked whether a minimum size was required for a paseo to qualify as an opening.

Mr. Burns confirmed it is defined in Appendix B6 as a minimum of 15 feet wide.

On Section 1.6, the Commission requested that the phrase "as shown below" be replaced with a specific reference to diagram 1.6.

Chair Denison also raised a concern about the requirement for a tree or screen between facing building windows within 30 feet, noting that many older-style apartment buildings in the city have this configuration.

Mr. Burns confirmed this was the standard's intent, and that offsetting windows would also satisfy it.

On Section 1.7, Chair Denison asked whether the privacy requirement for facing building facades applied only to directly opposed windows.

Mr. Burns acknowledged the ambiguity and agreed that both Sections 1.6 and 1.7 should be clarified to explicitly state that offsetting windows constitutes a compliant strategy.

On Section 1.12, Chair Denison sought clarification on the surface parking shielding requirement, noting it would apply only to new construction and expansions, not cosmetic renovations.

On Section 1.14(b), the Commission discussed the restriction on vehicular access points for 700 feet of primary street frontage, which Senior Planner Wolf described as an unlikely but theoretically possible scenario within the commercial block scale zone.

Section 2 – Building Form and Massing:

On Section 2.2(a), Chair Denison raised the challenge of objectively defining color differentiation, citing the near-identical appearance of similar paint colors such as "Swiss coffee" and "whisper white."

Mr. Burns acknowledged that precise color specification was extensively debated during drafting, and that the final approach uses named color families (e.g., taupe) rather than specific color codes, as a practical compromise.

On Section 2.2(c), the Commission questioned how differentiation in fenestration is objectively measured.

Mr. Burns noted that transparency standards for specific frontage types would, in practice, drive significant fenestration variation — for example, a minimum of approximately 65–75% transparency for commercial storefronts versus a maximum of 60% for residential floors above.

On Section 2.4, Chair Denison and Mr. Burns discussed top-level step-back requirements, with Mr. Burns acknowledging this standard was primarily intended for taller mixed-use buildings unlikely to be built in Sierra Madre.

The Commission agreed to strike Section 2.4.

Section 2.7 clarifies that transparency refers to the share of a façade made up of windows, while visible light transmittance/reflectivity relates to the glass properties, ensuring it remains clear rather than mirrored.

Commission noted that 65% transparency for mixed-use ground-floor commercial frontages is consistent with regional practice and supports the city's longstanding goal of activating commercial street frontages.

On Section 2.8, the Commission engaged in an extended discussion of wall plane variation requirements. Regarding subsection (e), which requires wall plane variations to correspond to the building's programmatic floor plan, Commissioner Brennan raised objectivity concerns.

Commissioner Yoo agreed that the provision needed to be formulaic.

Senior Planner Wolf proposed an inverse approach — prohibiting variations on certain facades (e.g., alleys) rather than requiring correspondence with programmatic elements.

The Commission agreed to revisit Section 2.8 and flag it for further refinement, noting the importance of ensuring all subsections are measurable.

On Section 2.9, Chair Denison noted the 25-foot blank wall limit is stricter than the code's 35-foot standard, and staff clarified that Section 2.9 applies only to completely blank walls, while the code applies more broadly to all wall segments.

The Commission found these standards to be compatible and not contradictory.

On Section 2.13, the Commission discussed the provision allowing the director to approve exceptions to wall plane standards for modular construction.

Mr. Burns explained that while factory-built modular units are difficult to modify, alternative approaches like staggering unit placement could introduce variation.

Senior Planner Wolf confirmed that "modular home" is defined in Chapter 17.08 and has the same meaning as "manufactured home" under the California Health and Safety Code.

On Section 2.14, Commissioner Brennan sought clarification on the language governing second-story offsets in house scale zones.

Mr. Burns proposed revised language stating that linear walls of the second story "shall not extend longer than 35 feet without offsetting the wall for a minimum depth of 5 feet for a minimum horizontal distance of 10 feet."

Senior Planner Wolf confirmed this is consistent with existing articulation standards under Section 17.28.

On Section 2.15, City Attorney Giragosian raised a concern about the phrase "where permitted" in relation to third-story building elements, noting ambiguity between what is "permitted" under local zoning versus what may be allowed under state law.

The Commission discussed whether removing "where permitted" would be more inclusive and accurate, and agreed to flag this for further staff review.

On Section 2.16(c), Chair Denison expressed confusion about the requirement that balcony floors and railings be "offset a minimum of 4 feet from the adjoining wall plane."

Commissioner Yoo interpreted this as intending to require a total of 4 feet of differentiation from the primary facade plane, either projecting out or recessing in.

Chair Denison noted that the word "adjoining" was the source of confusion, suggesting it implied the wall next to the balcony rather than the wall the balcony is on.

Mr. Burns agreed to add a diagram to clarify, referencing the existing diagram at Section 3.6 as a useful model.

On Section 2.18, Chair Denison questioned the rationale for mandating flat roofs in block scale zones.

Mr. Burns indicated it was intended to match the prevailing commercial character but acknowledged there is no functional necessity.

The Commission agreed to strike Section 2.18.

Section 3 – Materials, Finishes, and Color:

On Section 3.1, Chair Denison pointed out that the section begins with an exception — allowing the director to approve single-material buildings if they have superior finish and detail. Additionally, the accompanying photograph includes a tile detail that might be viewed as a second material.

Mr. Burns clarified that the image showed a high-quality single-material (stucco) building where the tile is merely an architectural accent, not a main material.

The Commission agreed to move the exception to the end of Section 3, as a proposed Section 3.7, ensuring the section does not start with an exception.

City Attorney Giragosian recommended integrating subjective criteria into the exception/exemption analysis process, ensuring that discretionary judgment is only applied when a developer requests deviations from the objective standards.

On Section 3.8(b), Commissioner Yoo raised a question about the definition of "unfinished concrete masonry unit," clarifying that enhanced CMU products (e.g., split-face or sandblasted block) would likely not be covered by the prohibition.

The Commission noted that "unfinished" in this context refers to plain gray block without texture or finish, and agreed clarification may be warranted.

On Section 3.8(d), Chair Denison questioned the prohibition on composite and synthetic materials that mimic natural ones, noting that the city recently amended its code post-fire to allow cementitious board as a wood substitute.

Commissioner Yoo and Chair Denison agreed that excluding fiber-cement board would be counterproductive given recent fire safety code updates.

The Commission agreed to revisit Section 3.8(d) to either narrow the prohibition to vinyl specifically, or strike it, and to examine whether the prohibition could be limited to materials that are not fire-resistant alternatives.

On Section 3.8(e), Chair Denison clarified that the prohibition on coated or painted natural materials (e.g., painted brick, painted river rock) was intended to preserve the authentic appearance of natural materials, not to exclude them.

The Commission found this reading reasonable.

On Section 3.10, the Commission discussed the two-primary-color, two-secondary-color limitation, noting that the use of natural masonry, stone, or precast materials in their natural state counts as one of the permitted colors.

Chair Denison observed that this could quickly limit a project's palette if multiple material types are used simultaneously.

On Section 3.11, Chair Denison noted that the restriction on matching trim, windows, and doors to adjacent buildings should have the word "storefronts" removed, and that "key architectural" appeared to be missing the word "features."

Exceptions, Exemptions, and Process

City Attorney Giragosian raised the question of the distinction between "minor" and major exceptions/exemptions, ultimately recommending that the word "minor" be struck from the exception language, as it is undefined and potentially unenforceable.

The Commission agreed. Regarding the three-exception limit, the Commission discussed how density bonus waivers would interact with this threshold, with staff confirming that waivers under density bonus law would count toward one of the three allowed exceptions.

The Commission also discussed whether the "alternative design standards agreement" procedure — which allows a developer to propose a wholly different set of design standards in lieu of the city's — was necessary or practical.

City Attorney Giragosian raised concerns that such an agreement may constitute an entitlement subject to the Housing Accountability Act and would therefore need to be governed by objective findings, complicating its administration.

Chair Denison questioned whether the process would require legal fees for each agreement and whether it would set a precedent.

Mr. Burns acknowledged the limitation but cautioned against defaulting entirely to the variance process, as variance findings require demonstrating that a property's unique physical conditions make strict compliance impossible — a high bar unlikely to be met for design standard deviations.

The Commission left this procedural question for further staff review and resolution at the continued hearing.

Community Input

Senior Planner Wolf confirmed no speaker cards were received for this item. No members of the public came forward to speak.

Deliberation

The Commission determined that insufficient time remained to complete the review and directed staff to prepare revised language incorporating the Commission's feedback for consideration at the continued hearing. Chair Denison noted that Commissioner Brennan would be absent from the next meeting.

Commissioner Yoo made a motion to continue the public hearing on MCTA 26-02 on May 21, 2026.

Chair Denison seconded the motion.

Ayes: Chair Denison, Commissioner Brennan and Commissioner Yoo

Noes:

Absent: Vice-Chair Simcock, Commissioner Moran

Abstain:

The motion to continue the public hearing on MCTA 26-02 on May 21, 2026 was passed by majority vote of all commissioners present.

7. CONSENT CALENDAR

All matters listed under the Consent Calendar are considered to be routine and can be acted on by one roll call vote. There will be no separate discussion of these items unless a member of the Planning Commission requests that a specific item be removed from the Consent Calendar for separate discussion and action.

a) Regular Meeting Minutes of April 16, 2026

CEQA: Not a Project

Recommended Action: Approve

Chair Denison asked the Commission for a motion to approve the April 16, 2026, Meeting Minutes.

Commissioner Brennan made a motion to approve the April 16, 2026, Meeting Minutes.

Commissioner Yoo seconded the motion.

Ayes: Chair Denison, Commissioner Brennan and Commissioner Yoo

Noes:

Absent: Vice-Chair Simcock, Commissioner Moran

Abstain:

The motion to approve the April 16, 2026, Planning Commission Meeting Minutes was passed by a majority voice vote by all commissioners present.

8. REPORTS FROM PLANNING COMMISSION

Chair Denison reported that he had the honor of representing the Planning Commission at the City's annual awards dinner the prior evening. He noted that several city staff members received awards and described the event as a positive occasion for the community.

9. REPORTS FROM CITY STAFF

Director Lin reported that the next Planning Commission meeting is scheduled for May 21, 2026, and will include a variance application hearing for 14 East Sierra Madre Boulevard (Taylor's Market), as well as the continued hearing on the Objective Design Standards.

10. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:14 pm to the next meeting on May 21, 2026.

Secretary to the Planning Commission
Clare Lin, Director of Planning and Community Preservation