

PLANNING COMMISSION RESOLUTION NO. PC 2024-13
Design Review DR-2024-0004

A RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF HAWTHORNE, CALIFORNIA, ADOPTING A NOTICE OF EXEMPTION IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA) AND APPROVING DESIGN REVIEW DR-2024-0002 FOR A RENOVATION AND EXPANSION OF AN EXISTING CHURCH AND SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE R-3 (HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL) ZONE LOCATED AT 4951 WEST 119TH STREET, SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS AND MAKING FINDINGS IN SUPPORT THEREOF

WHEREAS, Ugo Mbelu, (Applicant) requested approval of a Design Review for the renovation and expansion of an existing church and school at 4951 W. 119th St. (Property), which is zoned R-3 (High Density Residential); and

WHEREAS, in accordance with Hawthorne Municipal Code (HMC) Chapter 17.99, which states approval by the Planning Commission, appointed as the Design Review Board (DRB), is required to ensure projects meet the requirements of the chapter; and

WHEREAS, in accordance with Hawthorne Municipal Code (HMC) Chapter 17.99 – Design Review, the City of Hawthorne established a design review procedure for all applicable projects not exempted per Section 17.99.030 – Exceptions. The proposed improvements encompass more than 1,000 sq. ft. of building and site surfaces. Therefore, the subject project is not exempt from the design review process and must obtain approval by the DRB; and

WHEREAS, the application is for approval to develop the property with renovated auditorium aisles, changes to the existing floor plan, addition of an elevator, new roof deck, and new roof dome (Project). The existing site is approximately 28,260 sq. ft. and is developed with two structures consisting of an assembly hall and classrooms. The buildings that are part of the proposed project measure approximately 10,260 sq. ft. and is currently occupied by Holy Resurrection Church and School; and

WHEREAS, the Land Use Element of the General Plan designates the Property as High Density Residential (R-3), which is intended for neighborhoods with multifamily residential developments; and

WHEREAS, the City of Hawthorne wishes to protect and preserve the quality of life throughout the City and to ensure uses are managed through effective land use planning and design; and

WHEREAS, the applicant presented evidence that the proposed use complies with all applicable local, state, and federal laws; and

WHEREAS, on June 5, 2024, a duly noticed public hearing on the Project was held before the Planning Commission where all interested parties were given an opportunity to be heard; and

WHEREAS, evidence was heard and presented from all persons in favor of the application, from all persons opposed to the application and from members of the City staff; and that the Planning Commission having heard and received all of said evidence, testimony, and statements and being fully informed of the application, approved Resolution No. 2024-13; and

THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF HAWTHORNE DOES HEREBY FIND, DETERMINE AND RESOLVE AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. All of the facts set forth in the Recitals are true and correct, and are incorporated herein by reference.

SECTION 2. All necessary public meetings and opportunities for public testimony and comment have been conducted in compliance with State law and the HMC.

SECTION 3. Based upon independent review and consideration of the information contained in the Staff Report and the Notice of Exemption for the Project, Staff has determined that the proposed project is exempt from the requirements of preparing an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) or Negative Declaration because the project meets the criteria for a Class 1 categorical Exemption pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15301, (Existing Facilities) of CEQA. This provision exempts projects that involve negligible or no expansion of existing uses in an area that is environmentally sound and where all public services and facilities are available to allow for maximum permissible in the General Plan. Upon the Planning Commission's action, serving as the Design Review Board, Staff will file the Notice of Exemption with the Los Angeles County Clerk's office in compliance with CEQA.

SECTION 4. Based upon substantial evidence presented to the Planning Commission during the June 5, 2024, public meeting, including public testimony and written and oral staff reports, the Planning Commission finds as follows:

Pursuant to HMC Chapter 17.99 – Prior to granting an approval of an application for design review, the Planning Commission, serving as the Design Review Board, must make four specific findings, as follows:

1. The location, size, design and characteristics of the proposed project will be compatible with and will not be detrimental to the public health, safety, or welfare of persons residing in or working in or adjacent to the proposed project;

The property is located on the north side of West 119th Street and east of Felton Avenue. The site is surrounded by residential properties to the north, east, and south. To the west, across Felton Avenue, is another place of worship, New Life Community Church. According to the HMC Section 17.14, places of worship are permitted in residential zones. Therefore, the location of the church is compatible with the Zoning Code.

The HMC does not impose a maximum lot coverage on churches or other religious assembly uses in residential zones. (HMC 17.20.170 B.) Therefore, the proposed building size of 10,260 sq. ft. and lot coverage of 35 percent is not an issue. The design includes updates to the architectural facade which include a new roof dome, tower, and exterior millwork. Other changes include the reconfiguration of doors and windows. The overall church design is traditional and commonly seen at other churches in the City.

Another characteristic of the design is the landscaping which will beautify and enhance the remodeled building. Overall the proposed changes are typical of places of worship and do not stand out in the neighborhood.

2. The proposed design is suitable for its purpose, is harmonious with and relates properly to, the surrounding neighborhood, contiguous parcels, and the site itself.

The proposed design will update the property by introducing a new building style and fresh landscaping. The proposed classrooms, common spaces, and assembly hall are typical and appropriate for the intended use. Further, the immediate neighborhood is home to two other large churches, confirming the current and future design of the site is harmonious with the neighborhood.

3. The overall design will be of quality that will preserve the integrity of, and upgrade, the existing neighborhood.

The remodeled facade and new landscaping will improve the aesthetics of the site. The proposed trees along the street frontage will provide greenery and bright colors to the current exterior which is not landscaped. These improvements are an upgrade from the current conditions.

Additionally, the remodel will present an opportunity to add new materials to the facade which include decorative millwork around the doors and windows. The rooftop deck will be enclosed with glass, adding a sleek visual element. The height and scale of the project is customary of places of worship and is similar to other churches within a one block radius. The modifications do not overwhelm the parcel and therefore, the preservation and integrity of the neighborhood, specifically of those residential properties directly adjacent to the subject site, is achieved.

4. The design of the proposed project is in accordance with the general plan and all applicable provisions of the zoning ordinance.

The proposed project is consistent with the General Plan and General Plan designation, High Density Residential (R-3), of the site for the following reasons:

- The Land Use Element of the General Plan designates the property as High Density Residential, which accommodates neighborhoods with triplexes, fourplexes and multifamily units. Per HMC 17.14.020, places of worship are also permitted in the residential zones. Therefore the use is compliant with the General Plan and HMC.
- Goal 2 of the Land Use Element of the General Plan encourages efforts to ensure existing and future development will remain compatible with surrounding desirable uses. Policy 2.8 specifies that the City shall preserve the character of the City's residential neighborhoods. The existing building and its education and assembly uses are harmonious with the surrounding neighborhood. The church has conducted its operations in an orderly manner without disturbing the surrounding neighborhood. Further, the on-site parking reduces the demand for street parking on the adjacent streets. Therefore, the proposed new update and expansion of the building will meet the goal of this policy in that the renovation and expansion will maintain its compatibility with the surrounding uses.

SECTION 5. Based on the findings contained in the recitals of this resolution, the Planning Commission hereby grants approval of Design Review Application No. DR-2024-0004 subject to the conditions set forth in Exhibit “A” attached hereto.

SECTION 6. The Notice of Exemption (NOE) stating that the project was approved shall be filed with the County Clerk of Los Angeles County unless a timely appeal of this Resolution is filed. The filing of the Notice of Exemption with the County Clerk begins the 35-day statute of limitations period provided by Public Resources Code Section 21168, which is applicable to any legal challenges to the City’s decision that this Project will not affect the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act. Public Resources Code Section 21168 governs the manner in which any such action must be brought and determined.

SECTION 7. The documents and other materials that constitute the record of the proceedings upon which the Planning Commission’s recommendations are based, which include, but are not limited to, the staff reports for the Project and all of the materials that support the staff reports for the Project, are located in the office of the Planning Director of the City of Hawthorne, at 4455 West 126th Street, Hawthorne, California 90250. The custodian of these documents is the Planning Director of the City of Hawthorne.

SECTION 8. This Resolution shall become effective ten days after its adoption, unless within that period of time it is appealed to the City Council. In the event of an appeal, this Resolution shall not become effective unless reinstated by the City Council after hearing on the appeal. The City Council Resolution determining the appeal shall be controlling, and unless the matter is remanded to the Planning Commission, the Resolution of the City Council shall be final.

SECTION 9. This The Planning Commission Secretary shall certify to the adoption of this Resolution and shall forward a copy to the City Council, City Clerk, City Manager, and City Attorney and mail a copy to the applicant.

PASSED, APPROVED and ADOPTED this 5th day of June 2024.

ATTEST:

RYAN RICHARD, CHAIRPERSON

GREGG MCCLAIN, SECRETARY

EXHIBIT A
CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL
DESIGN REVIEW DR-2024-0004

Failure of the applicant to comply with conditions as set forth shall be cause for the Planning Commission to institute a Public Hearing for revocation purposes.

1. The applicant shall comply with all applicable requirements and provisions set forth by the Uniform Building Code, Uniform Fire Code, Hawthorne Municipal Code (HMC), and any additional requirements by the Fire Department, Director of Building and Safety, or Director of Planning, as related to this application.
2. The property shall be developed in substantial conformity with the plans approved by the Planning Commission on February 21, 2024, as conditioned by the requirements contained in the resolution of approval for Conditional Use Permit application CU-2023-00009 and Design Review DR-2023-0006. Any more intensive use of the property, or deviation from said plans, shall first be reviewed as a modification of this permit.
3. The applicant and subsequent property owners/tenants must conform to all Business License regulations and maintain a current city license at all times.
4. All signs, banners, or other outside advertising materials or structures on the property must be approved by the City and shall comply with Chapter 17.35 of the HMC.
5. Signs shall be posted on the site per CA Penal Code Sections 552 through 555.5 and 11532 to prohibit loitering on the property.
6. The number of persons shall not exceed the maximum occupancy load as determined by the Fire Department. Signs indicating the occupant load shall be posted in a conspicuous place on the approved sign near the main exit from the building.
7. Graffiti shall be removed within 24 hours of its discovery.
8. Signage and pavement arrows to direct internal traffic circulation shall be included on plans, subject to City approval.
9. Property owners must keep parking lot clean at all times.
10. All direct lighting produced by the development must be contained onsite. The Owner/Applicant shall ensure any exterior night lighting and illuminated signage installed on the project site is of low intensity, low glare design, minimum height, and shall be hooded to direct light downward onto the subject lot and prevent spill-over onto the adjacent residential lots.
11. All County Fire Department requirements must be met before any building permits will be released.
12. Off-street parking shall be provided at all times in accordance with the originally approved site plan and, Per Municipal Code Chapter 8.16, shall be maintained in a clean and attractive manner (striping maintained, pot-holes and cracks repaired and trash, litter, or other materials shall be removed regularly).

13. Per Municipal Code Chapter 8.14, all landscaped areas shall be maintained in accordance with the originally approved landscaped plan and in a healthy and well-kept condition and kept weed free.
14. The approved conditions of approval shall be included on building plans upon submission.
15. The Applicant shall commence construction of the structure or establish the use that is authorized by this approval within three (3) years of the effective date of this approval. Failure to commence construction of the structure or establish the use within that three-year time period shall render this approval null and void and any attempt to commence construction or establish the use thereafter shall first require approval of a new application. Applications for a time extension to the commencement date as specified herein must be filed a minimum of thirty (30) days prior to the expiration date. The Planning Director may renew the approval for a single one-year period if a request is received at least 30 calendar days before approval lapses. Requests for a time extension must be accompanied by a formal application, all required exhibits and plans, and the required application fees. Any additional requests for extension shall require Planning Commission approval.
16. The Applicant/property owner must submit payment for all outstanding fees payable to the City prior to issuance of any permit, including building, grading, or demolition.
17. The Applicant shall pay the applicable public facility impact fees to the Building and Safety Department in the amount that is in effect at the time such fees are to be collected.
18. No outside display of goods, wares, or merchandise shall be permitted, unless approved by the Planning Director.
19. Per the Department of Public Works – Abide by requirements as requested in memo dated March 14, 2023 and attached as “Exhibit B”
20. The applicant shall ensure all exterior noise generated by the project will comply with Section 9.34.030 Exterior Noise Standards of the Hawthorne Municipal Code. This section provides for an allowable noise level of 70 dBA between 7:00 am and 10:00 pm and 65 dBA between 10:00 pm and 7:00 am.