

**STAFF REPORT – PLANNING
CITY OF TEMECULA
PLANNING COMMISSION**

TO: Planning Commission Chairperson and members of the Planning Commission

FROM: Matt Peters, Acting Community Development Director

DATE OF MEETING: June 19, 2024

PREPARED BY: Scott Cooper, Case Planner

PROJECT SUMMARY: Planning Application No. PA22-0929, a Development Plan for an approximately 60,258 square foot, four-story, 50 room hotel; PA22-0930, a Minor Exception for a two foot increase in the height of the building for an architectural tower element; and PA22-0931, a Variance to allow for parking within the creek side parking facility setback and encroachment of the building over the build-to line along Old Town Front Street due to the narrow width of the project site. The project is located on the west side of Old Town Front Street approximately 400' south of Santiago Road (APN: 922-100-048)

RECOMMENDATION: Adopt Resolutions approving the project subject to Conditions of Approval

CEQA: Categorically Exempt
Section 15332, Class 32, In-Fill Development Projects

PROJECT DATA SUMMARY

Name of Applicant: Sam Mohan

General Plan Designation: Specific Plan Implementation (SPI)

Zoning Designation: Old Town Specific Plan (SP-5)

**Existing Conditions/
Land Use:**

Site: Vacant / Specific Plan Implementation (SPI)

North: Commercial Business / Specific Plan Implementation (SPI)

South: Vacant / Service Commercial (SC)

East: Old Town Front Street, Commercial Buildings / Service Commercial (SC)

West: Murrieta Creek / Open Space (OS)

	<u>Existing/Proposed</u>	<u>Min/Max Allowable or Required</u>
Lot Area:	0.98 Acres	0.08 Acres Minimum
Parking Provided/Required:	50 Parking Spaces	50 Parking Spaces (required)

BACKGROUND SUMMARY

On August 19, 2022, Sam Mohan submitted Planning Application Nos. PA22-0929, PA22-0930, and PA22-0931, a Development Plan for an approximately 60,258 square foot, four-story, 50 room hotel; a Minor Exception for a two foot increase in the height of the building for an architectural tower element; and a Variance to allow for parking within the creekside parking facility setback and encroachment of the building over the build-to line along Old Town Front Street due to the narrow width of the project site. The project is located on the west side of Old Town Front Street approximately 400' south of Santiago Road.

Staff has worked with the applicant to ensure that all concerns have been addressed, and the applicant concurs with the recommended Conditions of Approval.

ANALYSIS

Site Plan

The proposed project entails an approximately 60,258 square foot, four (4) story, 57-foot, hotel. A floor-by-floor breakdown of the programming of the hotel is as follows:

- 1st Floor (street level): four (4) retail/commercial spaces along Old Town Front Street, two (2) retail/commercial spaces along Murrieta Creek with outdoor patio areas, lobby, gift shop, and back of the house uses.
- 2nd Floor: guest rooms, reception and seating areas, wine tasting, gym, guest lounge, and offices
- 3rd Floor: guest rooms
- 4th Floor: guest rooms, pool area, kitchen, and bar/dining

The vehicle access to the proposed project is from Old Town Front Street utilizing both a parking garage and uncovered parking. The project proposes 50 parking spaces which meets the minimum parking requirements for hotels within the Old Town Specific Plan as parking is not required for the retail/commercial spaces of the project. Per the Old Town Specific Plan parking shall not be visible from the street or Murrieta Creek. This is accomplished by adding commercial spaces to the rear of the project along the creek and architectural planting screen for the approximately 64'-0" where a retail or hotel use is not proposed. It should also be noted that within the southern end of the project site which is uncovered by the building and contains parking is an existing storm drain that cannot be built upon. This is delineated on both the site plan and conceptual grading exhibit.

Pedestrian access to the hotel is both from Old Town Front Street through the main entrance or the retail/commercial spaces and from Murrieta Creek utilizing the entrance to the lobby or the retail/commercial spaces. All rooms of the proposed hotel have functioning and useable balconies.

Architecture

The primary architectural style of the proposed project is Andalusian with elements of Spanish Renaissance and Mission Revival to reflect the historical character of the Old Town Specific Plan. Style elements included within the design of the project include smooth stucco finishes, u-shaped clay tile roof, asymmetrical façades, gallery frontage, arched windows with painted trim, dark exposed EIFS beams, curves and arches as decorative wall elements, quoin design details, and stained glass. Staff has worked with the applicant since submittal of a pre-application on the architectural design in order to adhere to the Old Town Specific Plan.

Minor Exception

The height of the building's central tower element along Old Town Front Street is 57'-0", which exceeds the allowable building height of 55'-0" per the Old Town Specific Plan. The applicant has applied for a Minor Exception to the allowable building height, which allows for a 15% increase in building height. The additional two feet in building height will allow for a roofline architectural element, which will enhance the architecture of the building and the overall project.

Variance

The Old Town Specific Plan has parking placement standards for lots with Murrieta Creek frontage that call for a 20'-0" setback both from the build-to line along Old Town Front Street and Murrieta Creek. Given the other requirements of the Specific Plan, including the screening of parking and activation of streetscapes, strict adherence to the creek parking placement development standard would not provide enough space for the required parking due to the narrow width of the project site. Additionally, the ground floor street facing retail along Old Town Front Street will encroach beyond the build-to line up to 10'-0" feet in order to provide street facing shopfront & retail uses which adheres to the Specific Plan. Also, in this area of the Old Town Specific Plan, outside the southern arch of the heart of Old Town Temecula, twenty-foot sidewalks are not necessary as any future development to the south of this parcel will not require twenty-foot sidewalks. A reduced sidewalk width of 10'-0" is more appropriate as it will be consistent with future development to the south (outside of the Old Town Specific Plan boundary) and also provides adequate space for pedestrian movement and street trees.

Landscaping

The project provides the required street trees along with additional shrubs, accent plantings, and trees along Murrieta Creek. All plant materials proposed are consistent with the requirements of the Old Town Specific Plan.

LEGAL NOTICING REQUIREMENTS

The notice of the public hearing was published in the *Press Enterprise* on June 6, 2024, and mailed to the property owners within a 600-foot radius.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION

In accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act, the proposed project has been deemed to be categorically exempt from further environmental review (Section 15332, In-Fill Development Projects);

(a) The project is consistent with the applicable general plan designation and all applicable general plan policies as well as with applicable zoning designation and regulations.

The project is consistent with the applicable General Plan designation because hotels are an allowable use within the Downtown Core zoning designation of the Old Town Specific Plan. The project also meets all applicable General Plan policies and Zoning regulations including General Plan Land Use Policy 7.1 which encourages revitalization of Old Town through implementation of the Old Town Specific Plan.

(b) The proposed development occurs within city limits on a project site of no more than five acres substantially surrounded by urban uses.

The project is located within City limits and is located on a site that is 0.98 acres in size. The proposed project is substantially surrounded by commercial development, vacant land zoned for commercial development, a major roadway, and Murrieta Creek.

(c) The project site has no value as habitat for endangered, rare or threatened species.

The proposed project is located on a project site that is located within an MSHCP criteria cell. As part of the entitlement on this site the project went through the HANS/JPR process with the Regional Conservation Authority in which JPR 23-09-26-01 determined that the project is consistent with other plan requirements and no conservation of land was required. The JPR also determined that the project site did not contain any riparian/riverine/vernal pools on the site. The project site lacks suitable riparian habitat to support riparian birds.

(d) Approval of the project would not result in any significant effects relating to traffic, noise, air quality, or water quality.

The proposed project was required to prepare a Project-Specific Water Quality Management Plan (WQMP) that was reviewed and conceptually accepted for entitlement by City Staff as the WQMP meets the requirements of the City of Temecula. A traffic analysis was not required as part of this project as the proposed use is allowed within the Downtown Core zoning district of the Old Town Specific Plan, and there is nothing unique about this project that would trigger the need for a traffic analysis. Therefore, the project is not anticipated to result in any significant effects relating to traffic, noise, air quality, or water quality as the project is an allowed use per the City of Temecula General Plan and the zoning district.

(e) The site can be adequately served by all required utilities and public services.

The project site is surrounded by development and is able to be serviced by all required utilities and public services.

FINDINGS

Development Plan (Code Section 17.05.010.F)

The proposed use is in conformance with the General Plan for Temecula and with all applicable requirements of State law and other Ordinances of the City.

Hotels are an allowable use within the Downtown Core zoning district of the Old Town Specific Plan. Therefore, the use is consistent with the General Plan for Temecula and the Old Town Specific Plan as well as the requirements for State law and other Ordinances of the City.

The overall development of the land is designed for the protection of the public health, safety, and general welfare.

The overall design of the project, including the site, building, parking, circulation and other associated site improvements, is consistent with, and intended to protect the health and safety of those working and living in and around the site. The project has been reviewed for, and as conditioned, has been found to be consistent with all applicable policies, guidelines, standards and regulations intended to ensure that the development will be constructed and function in a manner consistent with the public health, safety, and welfare.

Minor Exception (Code Section 17.03.060.D)

That there are practical difficulties or unnecessary hardships created by strict application of the code due to the physical characteristics of the property.

The proposal is for a 3.7% increase in the allowable height within the Downtown Core zoning district of the Uptown Temecula Specific Plan from 55'-0" to 57'-0". Due to the narrow width of the project site and the existing storm drain on the southern end of the parcel that cannot be constructed upon the building is forced vertical within a constrained area. The allowance of the two-foot increase in height will allow for a roofline architectural element which will enhance the architecture of the building and will allow the project to meet the development standards of the Specific Plan with respect to architecture.

The Minor Exception does not grant special privileges which are not otherwise available to surrounding properties and will not be detrimental to the public welfare or to the property of other persons located in the vicinity.

Permitting this Minor Exception will not grant special privileges to the applicant that are not otherwise available to surrounding properties because of the unique configuration of the property. The result of permitting this Minor Exception will not be detrimental to the public welfare or to the property of other persons as the increase in height allows the project to meet the intent of the Specific Plan's architectural standards with a roofline architectural element which will exceed the 55'-0" height limit. The project has been reviewed and, as conditioned, has been found to be consistent with all applicable policies, guidelines, standards and regulations intended to ensure that the development will be constructed and function in a manner consistent with the protection of the public health, safety, and welfare.

The Minor Exception places suitable conditions on the property to protect surrounding properties and does not permit uses which are not otherwise allowed in the zone.

The project has been conditioned by the Planning, Fire, Building, Police, and Public Works Departments to protect the surrounding properties. The hotel land use proposed is permitted per the Downtown Core zoning district of the Old Town Specific Plan.

Variance (Code Section 17.04.040.F)

That there are practical difficulties or unnecessary hardships created by strict application of the code due to physical circumstances and characteristics of the property that are not shared by other properties in the zone.

Due to the narrow depth of the project site, and the requirement for on-site parking, there are very limited options to locate the parking on site and comply with the Old Town Front Street and Murrieta Creek frontage surface parking setbacks. The ground floor street facing retail along Old Town Front Street will encroach beyond the build-to line up to 10 feet in order to provide street facing shopfront & retail of the minimum dimension required/recommended by the Old Town Specific Plan development standards (20' depth required, 50' recommended). Parking is being provided within the setback (required setback is 20' behind the build-to line) adjacent to Murrieta Creek. The creekside parking setback will not be entirely met; there are practical difficulties and/or unnecessary hardships created by strict application of the code due to physical circumstances and characteristics that are unique to this property due to its narrow width and location between Old Town Front Street and Murrieta Creek. Strict adherence to all applicable setbacks required under the Old Town Specific Plan would result in an undevelopable site; not just for this project but for any project requiring parking.

The circumstances and characteristics for the variance were not created by the applicant.

Strict adherence to the Old Town Specific Plan build-to line standards and parking setbacks adjacent to Murrieta Creek were not created by the applicant. The applicant is not proposing any changes to the project that would result in a reduction of the size of the parcel. As a result, the applicant is developing the parcel as it is currently configured. The site plan has been developed to meet the majority of these requirements and meets the intent of the Old Town Specific Plan by not allowing parking to be a dominant visual feature on the site or from Murrieta Creek.

The variance does not grant special privileges which are not otherwise available to surrounding properties and will not be detrimental to the public welfare or to the property of other persons located in the vicinity.

This is the southernmost parcel of the Old Town Specific Plan on Old Town Front Street. The variance will not grant special privileges which are not otherwise available to surrounding properties and will not be detrimental to the public welfare or to the property of other persons located in the vicinity.

The variance places suitable conditions on the property to protect surrounding properties.

The variance for this project will not affect surrounding properties as the proposed use of a hotel is a permitted use per the Old Town Specific Plan and the project is contained fully on the project site. No additional conditions are required as part of the project.

The variance does not permit uses which are not otherwise allowed in the zone.

A hotel is a permitted use of the Downtown Core Zoning District of the Old Town Specific Plan therefore the variance is not permitting a use otherwise not allowed in the zoning district.

- ATTACHMENTS**
1. Aerial Map
 2. PC Resolution – Development Plan
 3. Exhibit A - Draft Conditions of Approval - Development Plan
 4. Exhibit B - Plan Reductions - Development Plan
 5. PC Resolution – Minor Exception
 6. PC Resolution - Variance
 7. Notice of Exemption
 8. Notice of Public Hearing