



Town of Mammoth Lakes

Planning & Economic Development Commission Staff Report

Meeting Date: April 10, 2024

AGENDA TITLE: Consideration of Design Review (DR) 23-006 for the Town of Mammoth Lakes Civic Center project located at 1344 Tavern Road in the Public and Quasi-Public Zone. The project was determined to be exempt from further environmental review under CEQA pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21083.3 and State CEQA Guidelines §15183.

Applicant/ Property Owner: Town of Mammoth Lakes

REQUESTING DEPARTMENT:

Community & Economic Development

Nolan Bobroff, Community and Economic Development Director

Michael Peterka, Associate Planner

OBJECTIVE:

1. Hear Staff and Applicant presentations
2. Planning & Economic Development Commission (PEDC) discussion
3. PEDC action to:
 - a. Adopt the attached Planning and Economic Development Commission Resolution (the Resolution), making the required CEQA and Municipal Code findings, and approving Design Review 23-006 with conditions as recommended by staff;
 - b. Adopt the Resolution with modifications; or
 - c. Deny the Resolution

SUMMARY:

Proposal:	The proposed Civic Center project consists of a 2-story, 19,337 square foot municipal office building for the Town of Mammoth Lakes.
Project Name:	Town of Mammoth Lakes Civic Center
Location:	1344 Tavern Road (APN: 035-010-070-000)
Size of Property:	2.1 acres
Zoning:	Public and Quasi-Public (P-QP)
General Plan:	Institutional Public (IP)
Environmental Review:	Exempt from further environmental review pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21083.3 and State CEQA Guidelines §15183

KEY ISSUES:

1. Does the proposed project meet the Design Review criteria and required findings pursuant to MC Chapter 17.88?
2. Is the proposed project consistent with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)?

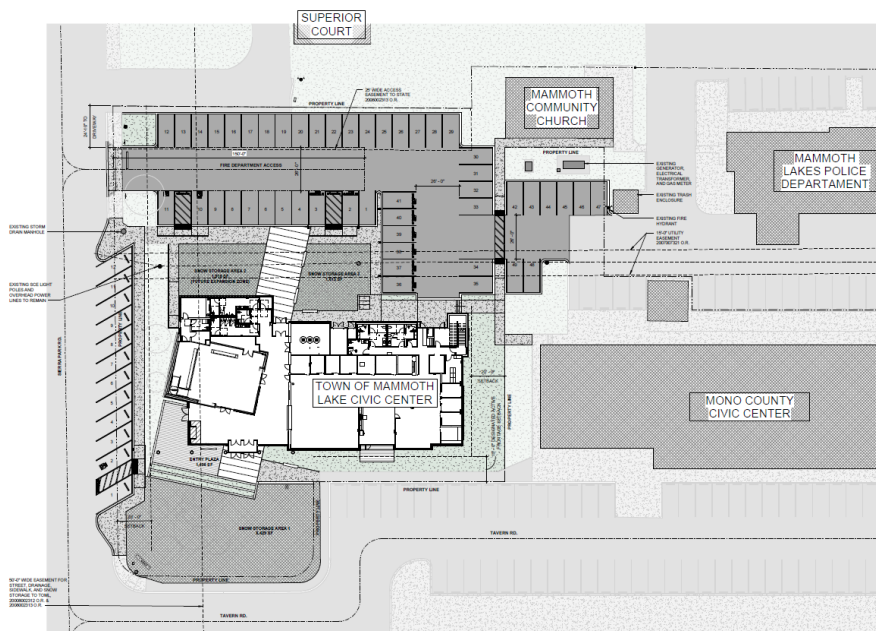
I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The project site is located at 1344 Tavern Road in the Public and Quasi-Public (P-QP) zoning district. The project site is 2.1 acres in size and is a part of the larger 11-acre Civic Center plaza property. The 11-acre Civic Center plaza property has been divided up into separate ownership parcels amongst the State of California, Mono County, Town of Mammoth Lakes, and the Southern Mono Healthcare District and was envisioned to be developed with a variety of public uses including the California Superior Court building (*completed in 2011*), the Mammoth Lakes Police Station (*completed in 2016*), the Mammoth Community Church (*existing*), the Mono County Administrative offices (*completed in 2019*), the expansion of the Mammoth Hospital (*future development*), and the proposed Town Civic Center. The proposed Town Civic Center building will be located on the western portion of the lot that is currently undeveloped.

The 19,337 square foot Town Civic Center is conceptually segmented into three elements: public, semi-private, and business operations. The public elements include a main lobby, public restrooms, and conference rooms. The semi-private elements include Town Council chambers, storage, meeting rooms, and private restrooms. The business operation element includes a two-story administrative office for various Town departments. This includes open and closed offices, meeting rooms, storage, workrooms, break room, interior bike storage, and restrooms.¹

Access to the site will be taken from Sierra Park Road with public parking utilizing existing spaces along Tavern Road on the south side of the building and the existing parking along Sierra Park Road, which is proposed to be reconfigured as a part of this project. Staff parking will be located on the north side of the building. The staff parking lot on the north side of the building will provide 49 parking spaces, including 3 ADA compliant spaces and 6 electric vehicle charging spaces. The combined parking areas will provide a minimum of 77 parking spaces. The placement of the building is intended to promote the retention of existing trees on the site. Additionally, 3,787 square feet of landscaped area is planned for the site. A total of 9,500 square feet of snow storage is provided in three locations on the property. The proposed site plan can be seen in **Figure 1**.

FIGURE 1: PROPOSED SITE PLAN



¹ The site and building were designed to accommodate a future expansion of the building for an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) on the north side of the building adjacent to Sierra Park Road; however, that element of the building will not be constructed at this time due to a lack of funding. The design for the EOC would be subject to further design review approval should funding become available.

Existing Site and Surrounding Land Uses

The project site is shown in Figure 2. The 2.1-acre parcel is located in the Public and Quasi-Public (P-QP) zone and is within the larger 11-acre Civic Center plaza site. The site is also home to the Mammoth Lakes Police Station, the Mammoth Community Church, the CA Superior Court building, the Mono County administrative offices, and the future expansion of the Mammoth Hospital. The proposed Civic Center project will be located on the western portion of the property along Sierra Park Road. The surrounding uses include Public and Quasi-Public uses and Commercial uses.

FIGURE 2: PROJECT SITE



TABLE 1: SURROUNDING LAND USES AND ZONING.

Location	Zoning*	Land Use	Notes / Special Considerations
North	P-QP	Mono County Superior Court	None
South	P-QP	Mammoth Hospital	None
East	P-QP	Mono County Civic Center; Mammoth Lakes Police Station	None
West	D	Multi-Tenant Commercial Building; Starbucks	None

*P-QP = Public and Quasi-Public Zone; D = Downtown Commercial Zone

General Plan

The General Plan land use designation for the site is Institutional Public (IP). This designation allows for institutional uses such as schools, hospitals, governmental offices and facilities, museums, and related uses.

Zoning Code

The proposed project is consistent with the applicable requirements of the Public and Quasi-Public (P-QP) zoning district. The only relevant development standards specified in the zoning code include setbacks of 20 feet on all sides.

II. ANALYSIS OF KEY ISSUES

KEY ISSUED #1: Does the proposed project meet the Design Review criteria and required findings pursuant to MC Chapter 17.88?

Design Review is required per MC §17.88.020. The purpose of Design Review is to implement the General Plan policies related to community design and character, to promote excellence in site planning and design to complement the natural environment and enhance the image of the town as a mountain resort community, and to ensure that the architectural design of structures and their materials and colors are appropriate to the function of the project and visually harmonious with surrounding development.

Below is staff's analysis of the project's consistency with the Design Review criteria. Staff finds that the proposed site layout and building design has met the overall intent of the Design Review criteria.

Design Review Criteria:

To obtain design review approval, projects must satisfy these criteria to the extent they apply:

- A. The site design and building design elements including the architectural style, size, design quality, use of building materials, and similar elements, combine together in an attractive and visually cohesive manner that is compatible with and complements the desired architectural and/or aesthetic character of the area and a mountain resort community, encourages increased pedestrian activity, and promotes compatibility among neighboring land uses.**

The Town Civic Center Building was designed with an elongated east-west orientation, which maximizes southern solar exposure. It also provides natural light from the south and north and allows for natural light to exist throughout the interior workspaces.

The entry plaza is located on the south side of the site and uses building elements to capture the public eye in the southeast corner where the entrance lobby will be located. The roof slants upward to exaggerate the building entry and provide wayfinding. The exterior building materials complement the adjacent Mammoth Lakes Police Department building to maintain a cohesive appearance. The proposed building and site will be compatible with the architectural character of the area.

The exterior of the building utilizes Corten steel, fiber cement panels, and natural stone as finish materials. Corten steel is a weathering steel that will develop a natural rust over time and is used on other adjacent buildings, including the police and courthouse buildings. The fiber cement panels provided added texture to the exterior of the building. They also complement the Corten steel. Natural stone provides unique beauty, while also being durable and requiring minimal maintenance.

FIGURE 3: PROPOSED SOUTHWEST VIEW



- B. The design of streetscapes, including street trees, lighting, and pedestrian furniture, is consistent with the character of commercial districts and nearby residential neighborhoods.**

The proposed streetscape includes a 2,795 square foot public entry plaza that includes seat walls and space for gathering. The design also includes safe and convenient pedestrian connections throughout the site.

- C. Parking areas are located, designed and developed to foster and implement the planned mobility system for the area; buffer surrounding land uses; minimize visibility; prevent conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians and cyclists; minimize stormwater run-off and the heat-island effect; and achieve a safe, efficient, and harmonious development.**

Access to the site will be taken from Sierra Park Road with public parking utilizing existing spaces along Tavern Road on the south side of the building and the street parking along Sierra Park Road, which will be reconfigured to better utilize the space and provide additional parking than what is currently provided. Staff parking will be located on the north side of the building. The proposed staff parking lot on the north side of the building will provide 49 parking spaces, including 3 ADA compliant spaces and 6 electric vehicle charging spaces. The combined parking areas will provide a minimum of 77 parking spaces. The parking areas are designed to eliminate conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians through safe and convenient connections. The building is sited to take advantage of natural sun patterns and avoids shadows on parking and pedestrian features. The project consists of 13,000 square feet of snow storage.

- D. Down-directed and shielded lighting and lighting fixtures are designed to complement buildings, be of appropriate scale, provide adequate light over walkways and parking areas to create a sense of pedestrian safety, minimize light pollution and trespass, and avoid creating glare.**

Conformance with Municipal Code lighting standards is included as a condition of approval for this project. Exterior light pollution and trespass will be minimized through the use of exterior downward-directed and shielded lighting.

- E. Landscaping is designed to conserve water resources, promotes a natural aesthetic, and be compatible with and enhance the architectural character and features of the buildings on site, and help relate the building to the surrounding landscape.**

The proposed project preserves 11 trees with a diameter at breast height (DBH) of 12 inches or greater. The project also consists of 3,787 square feet of landscaped areas.

In addition to the above criteria, the Municipal Code requires that a Design Review Application demonstrate consistency with the applicable standards and requirements of the Municipal Code, the General Plan and any applicable specific plan or master plan, the Town of Mammoth Lakes Design Guidelines, and any other requirements associated with previous or existing planning or zoning approvals for the site. The applicable General Plan and Zoning Code development standards are outlined in **Table 2**.

Table 2: Zoning Consistency

General Information			
General Plan: Institutional Public (IP)		Specific Plan: N/A	
Zoning: Public and Quasi-Public (P-QP)		Overlay Zone/District/Master Plan: N/A	
Existing Land Use: Vacant		Permit(s) Required for Use: DR	
Development Standards			
Standard	Required	Proposed	Complies?
Setbacks			
Front yard (feet)	20 feet	20 feet	Yes
North side yard (feet)	20 feet	~110 feet	Yes
South side yard (feet)	20 feet	> 60 feet	Yes ²
Rear yard (feet)	20 feet	20 feet	Yes
Lot Coverage	The MC does not establish a lot coverage limitation for the P-QP zone.		N/A
Building Height	The MC does not establish a maximum building height for the P-QP zone; however, the project adhered to the 35-foot height limit found elsewhere in Town.		N/A
Snow Storage	~12,000 sf	9,561 sf	No, a snow management plan will be required.
Parking Spaces	77 spaces	77 spaces	Yes

² The southern setback is measured from the south side of Tavern Road, and not the actual property line of the Parcel, due to the Tavern Road area being a part of the original site. Prior to the development of the Mono County Civic Center, the subject parcel, the County parcel, and the Tavern Road extension area were one contiguous parcel. The parking and road area were split into a standalone parcel so that it could be considered public right-of-way (ROW) thereby allowing the Town to be reimbursed for snow removal costs from the State.

General Plan Consistency:

The project is consistent with the following General Plan Vision Statements as described in **Table 3**:

Table 3: General Plan Vision Statement Conformance

General Plan Vision Statement	Explanation of Project Conformance
<i>“being a great place to live and work”</i>	The project will support local construction jobs and provide an improved space for the public to engage and interact with Town staff.
<i>“sense of a “village in the trees””</i>	The project limits tree removal to the maximum extent feasible and the building height is limited to 35-feet in order to not exceed the tree canopy height in the area.

The project is consistent with the following General Plan goals, policies, and actions as described in **Table 4**:

Table 4: General Plan Conformance with Goals, Policies, and Actions

Goal, Policy, or Action	Explanation of Project Conformance with Goal, Policy, or Action
C.2.L: Create visually interesting and aesthetically pleasing built environment by requiring all development to incorporate the highest quality of architecture and thoughtful site design and planning.	The project incorporates design features and architectural detail that provides a high-quality appearance and incorporates thoughtful site planning and design while providing adequate space for staff and the public.
C.2.V: Building height, massing and scale shall complement neighboring land uses and preserve views to the surrounding mountains.	Building height and massing are similar to the heights and massing of the adjacent Mono County Administrative Offices to the east and the California Superior Court building to the north.
C.2.T: Use natural, high quality building materials to reflect Mammoth Lakes’ character and mountain setting.	The project incorporates high quality building materials that achieve a design that is compatible with the surrounding buildings and mountain setting.

Consistency with Town of Mammoth Lakes Design Guidelines

Pursuant to Section 17.88.030 of the Municipal Code, Design Guidelines adopted by the Town Council provide recommendations to be used in the design review process. They are intended to promote high-quality and thoughtful site and building design; visually interesting, appropriate, well-crafted and maintained buildings and landscaping; the use of durable high-quality, and natural materials that reflect Mammoth Lakes' character and mountain setting; and attention to the design and execution of building details and amenities in both public and private projects. The Design Review process is intended to implement the recommendations of the Town Design Guidelines, and the design review criteria are intended to encompass the primary design objectives included therein. In this case, staff finds that the Design Review criteria analysis above sufficiently addresses the Town Design Guidelines that are applicable to this project.

Advisory Design Panel Review

The Advisory Design Panel (ADP) reviewed the project at the ADP meetings on February 1, 2024 and February 26, 2024. At the February 1 meeting, ADP reviewed the project design, including the site plan, building designs, and

proposed materials and provided comments related to the materials and roof pitch. Revised plans were presented to ADP at the February 26 meeting and the ADP was supportive of moving the project forward to the full Commission for consideration of the Design Review permit.

KEY ISSUE #2: Is the proposed project consistent with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)?

The project was determined to be exempt from further environmental review under CEQA pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21083.3 and State CEQA Guidelines §15183.

CEQA Guidelines §15183 provides a specific CEQA review process for qualifying projects that are consistent with a community plan or zoning. Under these regulations (reflected in CA Public Resources Code [PRC] §21803.3 and CEQA Guidelines §15183), projects that are consistent with the development density of existing zoning, community plan, or general plan policies for which an EIR was certified shall be exempt from additional CEQA analysis except as may be necessary to determine whether there are project-specific significant effects that are peculiar to the project or site that would otherwise require additional CEQA review.

Final EIRs (FEIRs) have been certified by the Town for both the General Plan and the Zoning Code. The Civic Center project is consistent with the uses and development densities shown in the adopted General Plan and zoning documents. As noted above, a project that is consistent with an adopted General Plan and/or Zoning Code is exempt from CEQA if it meets a set of specified requirements. Those requirements include: (a) a project must be consistent with the density established by existing zoning, community plan, or general plan policies for which an EIR was certified; and (b) the analysis of project effects must be limited to impacts that are peculiar to the project or parcel, were not previously analyzed, are potentially significant, and/or would have effects substantially more severe than previously analyzed. The proposed project was reviewed for conformance with the criteria in CEQA Guidelines §15183 in the report titled “CEQA Guidelines §15183 Environmental Analysis for County and Town Civic Plaza Community Facility”, dated April 16, 2018 (2018 CEQA Report) (Attachment D), that was prepared by Mono County acting as the Lead Agency. The 2018 CEQA Report analyzed an approximately 53,500 sq ft structure that would serve as the administrative offices for both Mono County and the Town, with the County portion having a size of approximately 33,100 sq ft and the Town portion having a size of approximately 20,400 sq ft. A joint structure was analyzed in the report since that was what originally envisioned when the Town and County began collaborating on constructing a new civic center on the site in 2017.³ The proposed Town offices together with the built Mono County offices are largely the same size and in the same location as the joint structure analyzed in the report, and therefore, it was determined that the existing 2018 CEQA Report adequately analyzed the proposed Town Civic Center project.

The 2018 CEQA Report found that the proposed project met the specified requirements in CEQA Guidelines §15183 to qualify for the exemption. Those requirements include that: (a) the project is consistent with the density established by existing zoning, community plan, or general plan policies for which an EIR was certified; and (b) that the analysis of project effects, if any, are limited to impacts that are peculiar to the project or parcel, were not previously analyzed, are potentially significant, and/or would have effects substantially more severe than previously analyzed. A thorough analysis of the potential environmental effects is provided in Section VIII, Environmental Analysis, of the 2018 CEQA Report.

Since the project meets the criteria to qualify for the exemption provided for in CEQA Guidelines §15183 and since the proposed infill project would not have any significant effects on the environment that either have not already been analyzed in a prior EIR or that are more significant than previously analyzed, or that uniformly applicable development policies would not substantially mitigate, the project is exempt from further environmental review.

³ The vision for the Civic Center Project initially began in 2007 with the acquisition of the 11-acre Civic Center Plaza site and was a collaborative effort between Mono County and the Town with the goal of constructing future community facilities for the Town of Mammoth Lakes and Mono County.

Agency/Public Comments

Staff routed the application to the following local agencies for review: Mammoth Lakes Fire Protection District (MLFPD), Mammoth Community Water District (MCWD), and Mammoth Disposal. Comments received from MCWD were provided to the applicant for informational purposes.

III. STAFF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATION

Staff finds that the project meets the applicable requirements and recommends that the Planning and Economic Development Commission adopt the attached Planning and Economic Development Commission Resolution, making the required CEQA and Municipal Code findings, and approving Design Review 23-006 with conditions as recommended by staff or with modifications.

Attachments

Attachment A: Planning and Economic Development Commission Resolution

Attachment B: Project Plans

Attachment C: Materials Board

Attachment D: CEQA Guidelines §15183 Environmental Analysis for County and Town Civic Plaza Community Facility, dated April 16, 2018