



Town of Mammoth Lakes

Planning & Economic Development Commission Staff Report

Meeting Date: February 11, 2026

AGENDA TITLE: Consideration of Variance 25-002 for an 80% reduction of the required 20-foot front yard setback (*reduced from 20 feet to approx. 4 feet at the northwest corner of the new detached garage*) and for an 80% reduction of the required 10-foot northern side yard setback (*reduced from 10 feet to approx. 2 feet*) to allow the proposed construction of a new detached garage on a steep, down-sloping lot located at 436 Mammoth Knolls Drive.

Applicant: Mike Britton, Britton Architecture

Property Owners: Damon Conover, Danica McCoy

REQUESTING DEPARTMENT:

Community & Economic Development Department

Tess Houseman, Assistant Planner

Nolan Bobroff, Community and Economic Development Director

OBJECTIVE:

- 1) Hear Applicant and Staff presentations
- 2) Hold Public Hearing
- 3) Planning & Economic Development Commission (PEDC) discussion
- 4) PEDC action to either:
 - a) Adopt the attached Planning and Economic Development Commission Resolution, making the required Municipal Code and CEQA findings, and approve Variance 25-002 with the conditions of approval recommended by staff;
 - b) Adopt the Resolution with modifications; or
 - c) Deny the Resolution

SUMMARY:

Proposal: Request for an 80% reduction of the required 20-foot front yard setback (*reduced from 20 feet to approx. 4 feet at the northwest corner of the new detached garage*) and for an 80% reduction of the required 10-foot northern side yard setback (*reduced from 10 feet to approx. 2 feet*) to allow the proposed construction of a new detached garage on a steep, down-sloping lot located at 436 Mammoth Knolls Drive.

Location: 436 Mammoth Knolls Drive (APN: [039-050-030-000](#))

Zoning: Residential Single-Family (RSF)

General Plan: Low-Density Residential 2 (LDR-2)

Environmental Review: Categorically Exempt (CEQA Guidelines Section 15303 – New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures)

KEY ISSUES:

- 1) Can the findings be made for approval of Variance 25-002 pursuant to Municipal Code Section 17.72.040?
- 2) Is Variance 25-002 consistent with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)?

I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The property is located at 436 Mammoth Knolls Drive within the Town's Mammoth Knolls neighborhood and the Residential Single-Family zoning district. The existing topography of the property is steep and down-sloping with an average slope of 35-36% within the required setback lines (the standard buildable area). The property has been developed with an existing single-family residence, which was originally constructed in 1971 and is approximately 1,926 square feet in size. Parking for the existing single-family residence is partially located within the public right-of-way at the end of the cul-de-sac, and no garage or conforming 10'x20' exterior parking spaces currently exist on the property.

The property is considered to be substandard with regard to lot width (37-foot lot width adjacent to the public right-of-way), which is based on the minimum lot width requirement of 75 feet and the minimum lot width requirement for access of 50 feet for lots located within the Residential Single-Family zoning district pursuant to Municipal Code Section 17.20.030.

The Variance was submitted in October of 2025 and initially requested a 95% reduction of the required 20-foot front yard setback (*reduced from 20 feet to approximately 1 foot at the northwest corner of the new detached garage*) and for a 90% reduction of the required 10-foot northern side yard setback (*reduced from 10 feet to approximately 1 foot*). Based on Staff comments and feedback, the site plan was revised to request an 80% reduction of the required 20-foot front yard setback (*reduced from 20 feet to approximately 4 feet at the northwest corner of the new detached garage*) and for an 80% reduction of the required 10-foot northern side yard setback (*reduced from 10 feet to approximately 2 feet*).

The notice for this public hearing was published in The Sheet newspaper on January 31st and on February 7th and was mailed to all property owners located within a 300-foot radius of the property on January 28th.

Proposal:

As described above, Variance 25-002 requests an 80% reduction of the standard 20-foot front yard setback requirement (*reduced from 20 feet to approximately 4 feet at the northwest corner of the new detached garage*) and requests an 80% reduction of the standard 10-foot northern side yard setback requirement (*reduced from 10 feet to approximately 2 feet*) to allow for the proposed construction of a new three-car detached garage on a steep, down-sloping lot located at 436 Mammoth Knolls Drive.

The proposed three-car detached garage addition is approximately 696 square feet and consists of three (3) interior 9'x18' parking spaces. The proposed width of the garage is approximately 29 feet and depth/length of the garage is approximately 24 feet. The proposed three-car detached garage addition features an angled, modern roof with an overall building height of approximately 29 feet above finished grade at the highest ridgeline.

A narrative has been provided with the submittal that describes the need for the Variance and emphasizes that the proposed location of the new detached garage has been requested for the following reasons:

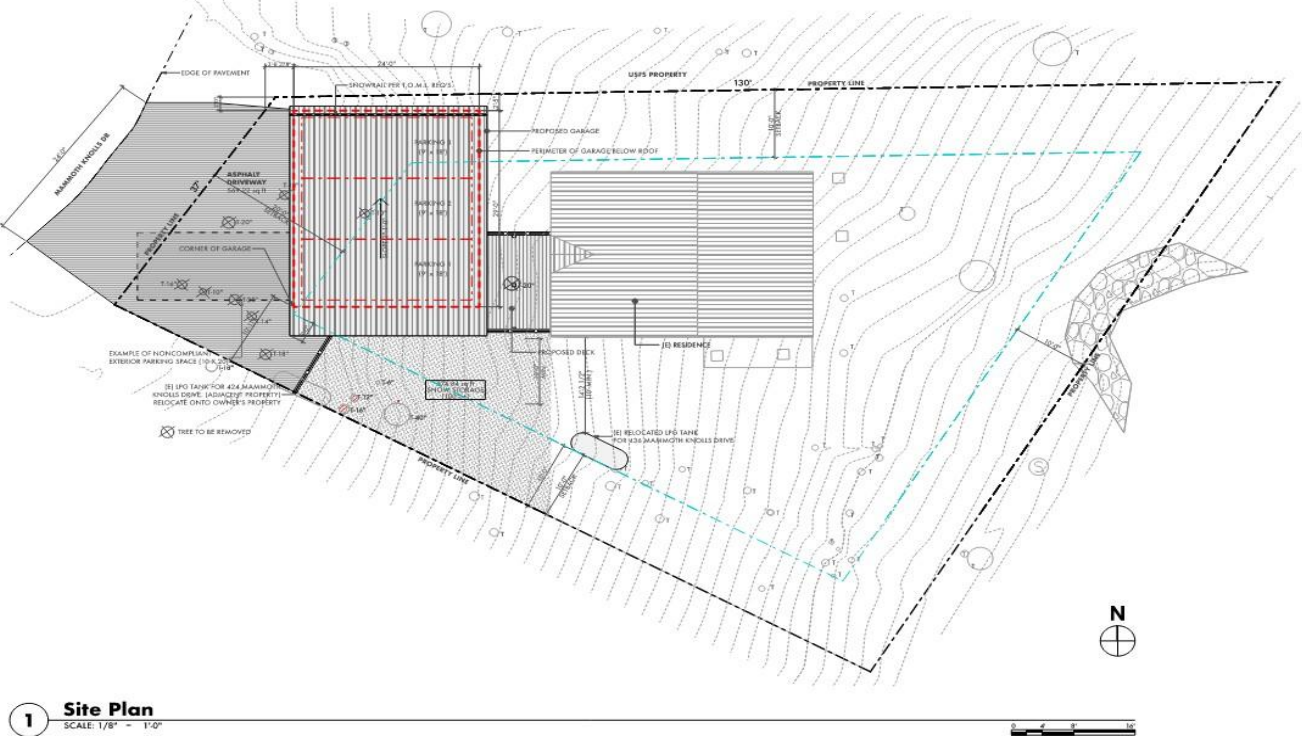
- 1) Locating the garage any closer to the existing single-family residence will result in a surcharge load from the garage foundation onto the existing single-family residence foundation. The existing single-family residence foundation is highly unlikely to be designed for such a load and could be structurally compromised if the garage was located any closer to the existing single-family residence.
- 2) United States Forest Service land abuts the northern property line, and future development is unlikely, whereas an existing single-family residence abuts the southern property line. The proposed location of the new detached garage near the northern property line rather than near the southern property line poses less of a physical and visual impact and hinderance for the neighboring single-family residence.
- 3) The garage is positioned on the flattest section of available, developable land to provide a level, 569-square-foot driveway.

In addition, there is a proposed covered entryway south of the proposed three-car detached garage addition, which is compliant with the applicable Municipal Code standards and does not require a variance.

Figure 1 – Location



Figure 2 – Site Plan



The property, 436 Mammoth Knolls Drive, is located within the Residential Single-Family (RSF) zoning district and has been developed with an existing single-family residence. The following **Table 1 – Land Use and Zoning Analysis** provides the current land use and zoning for the surrounding north, south, west, and east properties. The neighboring east, west, and south properties are zoned as Residential Single-Family with the neighboring east and south properties having been developed with single-family residences. The neighboring north property is undeveloped United States Forest Service (USFS) land and future development is unlikely.

Table 1 – Land Use and Zoning Analysis

Location	Zoning	Land Use	Special Considerations
North	--	USFS Land	Open Space
South	RSF	Single-Family Residence	None
West	RSF	Vacant Lot	None
East	RSF	Single-Family Residence	None

*RSF = Residential Single-Family

Zoning Consistency

The property, 436 Mammoth Knolls Drive, is located within the Residential Single-Family (RSF) zoning district.

Pursuant to Municipal Code Section 17.20.010(2)(b):

“The RSF zone is intended as an area for single-family residential development. Transient occupancy or rental, hotels and motels, bed and breakfast inns, and group living quarters uses are not permitted in the RSF zone. Only those uses are permitted that are complementary to, and can exist in harmony with, a residential neighborhood.”

The proposed three-car detached garage is an accessory use to the existing single-family residence, which is a permitted land use within the RSF zoning district.

With the exception of the requested setback reductions, Variance 25-002 complies with all applicable development standards, which are described within the following **Table 2 – Zoning Consistency**.

Table 2 – Zoning Consistency

General Information			
Zoning: Residential Single-Family (RSF)			
General Plan: Low-Density Residential 2 (LDR-2)			
Overlay Zone/District: N/A			
Specific Plan: N/A			
Existing Land Use: 0.18-acre, down-sloping lot developed with an existing single-family residence			
Required Permit(s): Variance for an 80% reduction of the 20-foot front yard setback requirement (<i>reduced from 20 feet to approximately 4 feet at the northwest corner of the garage</i>) and for an 80% reduction of the 10-foot north side yard setback requirement (<i>reduced from 10 feet to approximately 2 feet</i>).			
Development Standards			
Development Standards	Minimum/Maximum Requirement	Proposed	Compliant?
Front Yard Setback	20-foot minimum	3 feet 8 inches	No; variance requested
Rear Yard Setback	10-foot minimum	70+ feet	Yes
Side Yard Setback (North)	10-foot minimum	2 feet	No; variance requested
Side Yard Setback (South)	10-foot minimum	10 feet 11 inches	Yes

Building Height	35-foot maximum	29 feet (east elevation)	Yes
Lot Coverage	40% maximum	28.4%	Yes
Parking Spaces	2 interior, 1 exterior	3 interior, 0 exterior	Yes; alternate configuration subject to PEDC approval
Snow Storage	Minimum of 75% of driveway area (427 square feet required)	Approx. 575 square feet	Yes

Parking

The applicable development standard requires three (3) parking spaces on-site (*two (2) interior 9’x18’ spaces and one (1) exterior 10’x20’ space*) pursuant to Municipal Code Section 17.44.030(b).

Pursuant to Municipal Code Section 17.44.100(a)(1), *“At least 50% of the required parking spaces shall be enclosed and at least one (1) parking space shall be unenclosed, unless otherwise approved by the review authority.”*

The proposed configuration features three (3) interior spaces and no exterior spaces. The rationale for providing three (3) interior spaces and no exterior spaces is provided under Key Issue #1, Subsection #6, below.

Snow Storage

The applicable development standards require a minimum of 75% of the total driveway area for snow storage (*75% x 569-square-foot driveway area = 427-square-foot snow storage area required*) and require the minimum dimensions of the proposed snow storage area(s) to be 10 feet in any direction pursuant to Municipal Code Section 17.36.110. The substandard lot width and configuration of the proposed detached garage and driveway do not allow for snow storage to be located within the 20-foot front yard setback area abutting the driveway, so instead, approx. 575 square feet south of the proposed garage and east of the proposed driveway has been proposed for snow storage.

General Plan Consistency

The applicable General Plan land use designation is Low-Density Residential 2 (LDR-2).

“This designation allows single-family detached residential development of up to four (4) dwelling units per gross acre. This density range is typical of residential subdivisions in Mammoth Slopes, Mammoth Knolls, the Trails, and the Majestic Pines District. This designation protects the low-density character of existing neighborhoods. Development standards are intended to provide for privacy through building separation, usable yards, and limited shading by structures of adjoining parcels.” (Page L-4, General Plan)

The proposed three-car detached garage is an accessory use to the existing single-family residence, which is consistent with the permitted land uses within the LDR-2 land use designation.

General Plan Vision Statement Conformance

The project aligns with the following General Plan vision statements described within **Table 3**.

Table 3: General Plan Vision Statement Conformance

General Plan Vision Statement	Explanation of Project Conformance
<i>“Adequate and appropriate housing that residents and workers can afford.”</i>	Approval of the variance enables the property owner to develop a new detached garage with covered entryway, which does not currently exist on-site. The project improves the existing parking space configuration and compliance with the applicable parking space requirements and provides safer

	access to and from the existing single-family residence, which is currently occupied as a primary residence.
<i>“Protecting the surrounding natural environment and supporting our small-town atmosphere by limiting the urbanized area.”</i>	The property is within the Town’s Urban Growth Boundary, and the density is consistent with the LDR-2 land use designation.

General Plan Conformance with Goals, Policies, and Actions

The project aligns with the following General Plan goals, policies, and actions described within **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
<p>Comfortable Building Height, Mass, and Scale</p> <p>Policy C.2.V.: building height, massing, and scale shall complement neighboring land uses and preserve views to surrounding mountains</p>	<p>The proposed building height, mass, and scale are similar to existing building height, mass, and scale of surrounding single-family residences located within the neighborhood. The highest ridgeline of the new detached garage (east elevation) is approx. 29 feet above finished grade, which is consistent with development standards.</p>
<p>Housing</p> <p>Goal H.3.: maintain high-quality livable housing units and neighborhoods in Mammoth Lakes</p>	<p>The project improves the existing parking space configuration and compliance with the applicable parking space requirements and provides safer access to and from the existing single-family residence, which is currently occupied as a primary residence.</p>

II. ANALYSIS OF KEY ISSUES

KEY ISSUE #1: Can the findings be made for approval of Variance #25-002 pursuant to Municipal Code Section 17.72.040?

Variances are intended to allow deviations from development standards of the Town's Zoning Code only when, because of special circumstances applicable to the property, including size, shape, topography, location, or surroundings, the strict application of the Town's Zoning Code deprives such property of privileges enjoyed by other property located within the vicinity and under the identical zoning district. The following represents staff's analysis of the required Zoning Code findings pursuant to Municipal Code Section 17.72.040.

Variance Findings:

- 1) There are special circumstances applicable to the property, including size, shape, topography, location, or surroundings, so the strict application of the Zoning Code deprives the property of privileges enjoyed by other property in the vicinity and under the identical zoning district;**

There are special circumstances applicable to the property, including the steep and down-sloping topography of the lot, which features an average slope of approximately 35-36% within the required setback lines (the standard buildable area). The existing topography of the lot significantly reduces the area suitable for development located within the standard buildable area. The flattest portion of the lot is partly located within the standard 20-foot front yard setback area and the standard 10-foot northern side yard setback area, and because this area is the most accessible from the public right-of-way, it is the most feasible location for vehicular access and placement of the garage.

In addition, the property is considered to be substandard with regard to lot width (37-foot lot width adjacent to the public right-of-way), which is well below the minimum lot width requirement of 75 feet and the minimum lot width requirement for access of 50 feet for lots located within the Residential Single-Family zoning district pursuant to Municipal Code Section 17.20.030.

The above-described special circumstances create a hardship for the property owner with regard to development and adherence to the standard 20-foot front yard setback requirement and the standard 10-foot northern side yard setback requirement. The strict application of the Zoning Code development standards therefore deprives the property of privileges enjoyed by other property located within the vicinity and under the identical zoning district.

- 2) Approval of the variance does not constitute a grant of special privileges inconsistent with the limitations upon other properties in the vicinity and in the same zone;**

Approval of Variance 25-002 does not constitute a grant of special privileges, because the Variance will allow for the proposed construction of a new detached garage, which is consistent with land use privileges enjoyed by other properties located within the subdivision and is a permitted land use within the Residential Single-Family zoning district.

- 3) Granting the variance would not authorize a use or activity which is not otherwise expressly authorized by the zone governing the property for which the application is made;**

Variance 25-002 requests an 80% reduction of the 20-foot front yard setback requirement (*reduced from 20 feet to approximately 4 feet at the northwest corner of the new detached garage*) and requests an 80% reduction of the 10-foot northern side yard setback requirement (*reduced from 10 feet to approximately 2 feet*) to allow for the proposed construction of a new detached garage. This request is expressly authorized by the zone governing the property and is consistent with neighboring properties, where the majority of neighboring properties are less challenging topographically and feature larger lot widths adjacent to the public right-of-way.

- 4) Granting the variance would not be detrimental to the public health, safety, or welfare, or injurious to the property or improvements located within the vicinity and zoning district in which the property is located;**

Approval of Variance 25-002 would not be detrimental to the public health, safety, or welfare, or injurious to the property or improvements located within the vicinity and zoning district in which the property is located, because a new detached garage is consistent with what would be permitted on similar single-family residential lots. The project improves compliance with parking space requirements and provides safer access to and from the existing single-family residence.

5) The variance is consistent with the General Plan and any applicable Specific Plan;

Variance 25-002 is consistent with the General Plan, as the applicable land use designation for the property is Low-Density Residential 2 (LDR-2), which protects the low-density character of existing neighborhoods. Development standards are intended to provide for privacy through separation of buildings, usable yards, and limited shading by structures of adjoining parcels. The proposed construction of a new three-car detached garage maintains the existing single-family residential use of the property as well as the low-density residential character of the neighborhood through careful site planning that maximizes the separation from the adjacent residential structures. There is no specific plan applicable to the property.

6) The variance is the minimum departure from the requirements of this Zoning Code necessary to grant relief to the applicant, consistent with Subsections A and B, above; and

Variance 25-002 is the minimum departure from the requirements of the Zoning Code necessary to grant relief to the applicant, since the existing 1,926-square-foot single-family residence requires three (3) parking spaces (*two (2) interior 9'x18' spaces and one (1) exterior 10'x20' space*) in order to be compliant with the minimum parking space requirement. Variance 25-002 enables the property owner to construct a new three-car detached garage with covered entryway on-site, which improves compliance with the applicable parking space requirements and provides for safer access to and from the existing 1,926-square-foot single-family residence.

A third parking space is proposed to be located within the garage, because the proposed location of the garage does not maintain adequate dimensions for an exterior parking space to be located within the driveway and entirely outside of the public right-of-way. The alternative parking space configuration may be approved by the review authority if deemed appropriate, and in this scenario, the project Architect has stated that the proposed location of the garage is important, because locating the garage any closer to the existing single-family residence would result in a surcharge load from the garage foundation onto the existing single-family residence foundation, which was not likely designed for such a load and therefore, could be structurally compromised.

7) The approval is in compliance with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act.

Approval of Variance 25-002 is in compliance with the requirements of CEQA, in that the scope of the project is categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15303, New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures, of Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations, since the project consists of the proposed construction of a 696-square-foot detached garage addition for an existing 1,926-square-foot single-family residence that involves a negligible expansion of the existing use. The proposed detached garage will not result in an increase of more than 10,000 square feet, is located within an area where all public services and facilities are available to allow the maximum development permissible in the General Plan, and is located within an area that is not environmentally sensitive.

KEY ISSUE #2: Is Variance #25-002 consistent with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)?

Variance #25-002 has been determined to be categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15303, New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures, of Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations, which applies to construction and location of limited numbers of new, small facilities or structures, such as the proposed construction of one (1) accessory (appurtenant) structure (e.g., carport, garage, patio, swimming pool). The State of California has determined that these types of projects are within a class of projects that will not have any significant environmental impacts. The project qualifies for the above-described categorical exemption, because the project consists of the proposed construction of a new 696-square-foot

detached garage for an existing 1,926-square-foot single-family residence. In addition, none of the exceptions set forth in CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 are applicable.

Therefore, since the project meets the criteria for use of the categorical exemption described in CEQA Guidelines Section 15303, New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures, of Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations, and the application of that categorical exemption is not barred by one of the exceptions set forth in CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2, the project is exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(2).

III. STAFF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATION

Agency and Public Comments

Staff routed the application to the following local agencies for review: Mammoth Community Water District (MCWD) and Mammoth Lakes Fire Protection District (MLFPD). No comments were received that result in additional conditions of approval for the project.

The Town's Building Division and Engineering Division have reviewed the application and are supportive of Variance 25-002.

The notice for this public hearing was published in The Sheet newspaper on January 31st and on February 7th and was mailed to all property owners located within a 300-foot radius of the property on January 28th. Staff received no public comments prior to publication of the PEDC Staff Report.

Staff finds that the project meets the requirements and recommends that the Planning and Economic Development Commission adopt the attached Planning and Economic Development Commission Resolution, making the required Municipal Code and CEQA findings, and approve Variance 25-002 with the conditions of approval recommended by staff or with modifications.

Attachments

Attachment A: Planning and Economic Development Commission Resolution

Attachment B: Project Narrative, dated received by the Town on 12/03/2025

Attachment C: Project Plans, dated received by the Town on 01/22/2026