



**Honorable Chair and Members of the Hermosa Beach Planning Commission**

**A CONVEX SLOPE DETERMINATION (CSD 25-01) AND PRECISE DEVELOPMENT PLAN (PDP 25-04) FOR A STRUCTURAL REHABILITATION, REMODEL, AND ADDITION TO A FOUR-UNIT APARTMENT BUILDING LOCATED AT**

**3232 HERMOSA AVENUE IN THE MULTIPLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL (R-3) ZONE**

**CEQA:** Determine the project is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act.

(Associate Planner Jake Whitney)

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**Recommended Action:**

Staff recommends the Planning Commission:

1. Determine that the project is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) per Section 15302 of the State CEQA Guidelines; and
2. Adopt a Resolution (**Attachment 1**) approving Convex Slope Determination (CSD 25-01) and Precise Development Plan 25-05 subject to conditions of approval.

**Executive Summary:**

The following report details the request for a Convex Slope Determination (CSD) and Precise Development Plan (PDP) by William J Ready of 3232 Hermosa LLC to allow for a structural rehabilitation, remodel, and minor addition to an existing 3,319-square-foot legal non-conforming four-unit apartment building located at 3232 Hermosa Avenue. The Planning Commission is being asked to review the application materials, consider the request, and adopt a resolution (**Attachment 1**) approving PDP 25-05 subject to conditions of approval.

**Background:**

The project site consists of a corner lot at the intersection of Hermosa Avenue and 33<sup>rd</sup> Street. Vehicular access to the site is provided via Palm Drive. The existing legal non-conforming four-unit apartment building was built in 1923 and there are no prior entitlements approved for the property. The property is zoned as Multiple-Family Residential (R-3) and the City's General Plan (PLAN Hermosa) designates the property as High-Density Residential with an allowable density range of 25.1-33.0 dwelling units per acre. (**Attachment 2**) The site is currently developed at a greater density of 51.25 dwelling units per acre. Under current standards no more than two dwelling units would be permitted to be constructed at the site due to the lot size. For this reason, the applicant

has chosen to pursue a structural rehabilitation and an addition to the property rather than a full redevelopment as four units which would not be permitted under the current zoning regulations. The site is also located within the Coastal Zone. If approved the applicant would also need to obtain a Coastal Development Permit or waiver from the California Coastal Commission. At the October 13, 2025, meeting of the Planning Commission, the applicant requested a continuation of the hearing. The project was continued to the Planning Commission's regular meeting of November 18, 2025.

### Protected Units

The Housing Crisis Act's (HCA) replacement housing requirement, as amended by Senate Bill 8, applies to a housing development that demolishes existing residential units. It prohibits reducing the number of dwelling units on a site and also prohibits approving projects that demolish "protected" units without replacement. California Government Code 66300 states that "protected units" are required to be replaced. Pursuant to California Government Code section 66300.5(h)(4), protected units include residential dwelling units that are or were rented by lower or very low-income households within the past five years. Per this requirement, unless the applicant demonstrates to the City's satisfaction that the prior occupants of any units proposed to be demolished within a five-year period were not rented by low or very low-income households, the City is required to presume that lower income households occupied the units in the same proportion of lower income renter households within the jurisdiction as determined by the most recently available data for the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development's Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy database. According to said database, during the most recently available 2017-2021 American Community Survey approximately 25.62 percent of renter households in Hermosa Beach made less than 80 percent of the HUD Area Median Family Income which the state of California defines as lower income households.

While the proposed project does not call for a full demolition of the existing units, the proposed plans (**Attachment 3**) show that each of the units would be demolished by over 50 percent and thus render all of the units uninhabitable if the project were to be approved. In light of the fact that the units would be demolished under this proposal to the point of being uninhabitable, and the applicant has not verified via forms provided by the City that the units were not rented by lower income households over the prior five year period, City staff is recommending a condition of approval in the draft resolution (**Attachment 1**) that would deed restrict two of the four units to lower income households for a minimum period of 55 years in accordance with California Government Code Section 66300. Pursuant to state statute, all replacement unit calculations resulting in fractions must be rounded up to the nearest whole number; thus, resulting in an affordability replacement calculation of two units.

### Site Information Table:

The following table describes the existing site characteristics.

Site Information	
General Plan	High Density (HD)
Zoning	Multiple-Family Residential (R-3)
Lot Size	3,400 square feet
Existing Building Square Footage	3,319 square feet
Proposed Building Square Footage	2,803 square feet
Surrounding Zoning	North: Multiple-Family Residential (R-3)
	East: Multiple-Family Residential (R-3)
	South: Multiple-Family Residential (R-3)
	West: Single-Family Residential (R-1)
Surrounding Uses	North: Residential
	East: Residential
	South: Residential
	West: Residential

**Project Description**

The applicant, William J Ready of 3232 Hermosa LLC is requesting a Convex Slope Determination (CSD) and Precise Development Plan (PDP) from the City to allow for a structural rehabilitation, remodel, and minor addition to an existing 3,319-square-foot legal non-conforming four-unit apartment building located at 3232 Hermosa Avenue. With this CSD and PDP, the applicant proposes to extend the life of the building, enhance the aesthetic appeal of the structure, and maintain the existing height by allowing the use of alternate points for the basis of height measurement. To achieve these goals, the project would require a significant demolition of the existing units which would be rendered uninhabitable during the course of construction. Due to the proposed demolition exceeding 50% of the existing square footage and due to the fact that the applicant has not verified the income levels of the prior occupants over the past 5 years, City staff is recommending that two units be deed restricted to remain affordable to lower income households for a period of no less than 55 years in order to comply with Senate Bill 8 as explained in the Background section above.

Additionally, the project proposes to convert 119 square feet of non-conditioned space to conditioned space, and enclose 69 square feet of exterior space resulting in a 188 square-foot addition. An existing partition in the two car garage would be removed to make the garage space functionally suitable for vehicle storage whereas it currently is not. Meanwhile, the four-unit sizes would be reconfigured as well resulting from the demolition of walls non-conforming to setbacks and those currently encroaching into the public right-

of-way. Unit 1 would go from 694 square feet to 659 square feet. Unit 2 would go from 722 square feet to 592 square feet. Unit 3 would go from 902 square feet to 763 square feet. Lastly, Unit 4 would go from 1,001 square feet to 789 square feet. Proposed landscaping for the site would consist of 14 Silver Sheen Kohuhu plants as well as 21 Coastal Rosemary plants fronting Hermosa Avenue. **(Attachment 3)**.

Development Standards

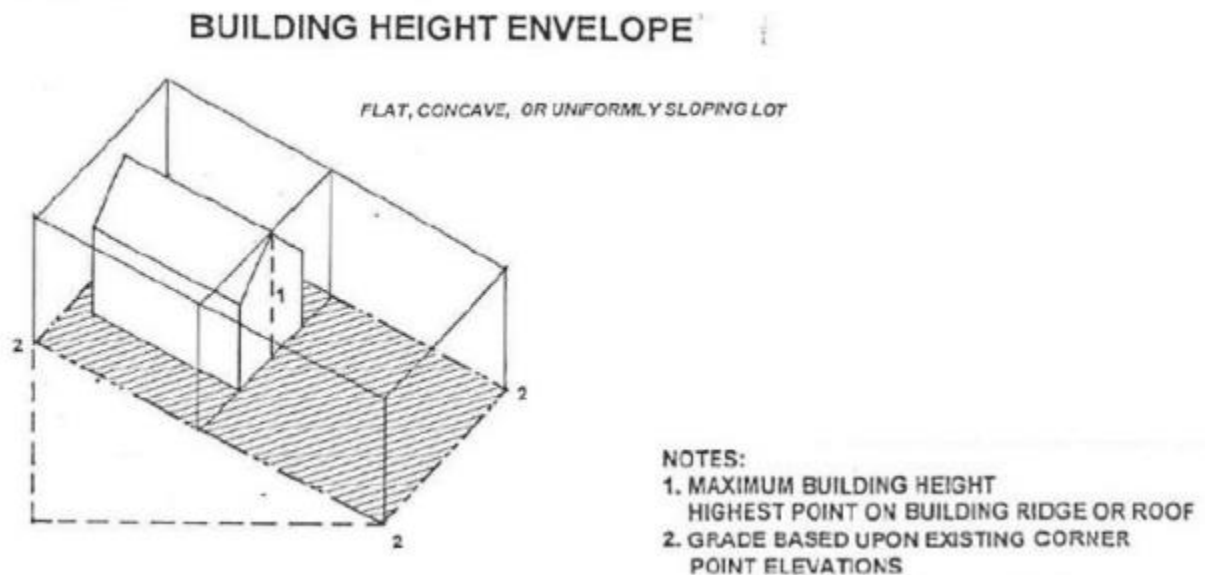
Criteria	Required	Provided
<b>LOT STANDARDS</b>		
Minimum Lot Area per unit	1,320 sf per dwelling unit	850 sf per dwelling unit (existing legal non-conforming)
Lot Coverage Maximum	65%	55%
<b>HEIGHT:</b>	30ft max	32.7 ft max (without convex slope determination)
		29.38 ft max (with convex determination)
<b>YARDS:</b>		
Front	10 ft	11.94 ft
Side	4 ft	4 ft
Rear	3ft (ground level)	3ft (ground level)
	1ft (2 <sup>nd</sup> floor)	1ft (2 <sup>nd</sup> floor)
<b>PARKING AND DRIVEWAYS:</b>		
Total Parking Spaces Minimum	10 spaces	2 spaces (legal non-conforming)
Garage Spaces Minimum	8 spaces	2 spaces
Guest Space Minimum	2 spaces	0 spaces
<b>OPEN SPACE:</b>		
Private Open Space:	1,200 sf (300 sf per unit)	506 sf (126.5 sf av per unit)

**Discussion:**

Convex Slope

Due to the City's varied topography, the Hermosa Beach Municipal Code (HBMC) Section 17.04.040 definition of grade authorizes consideration of the convex slope method of calculating building height when supported through technical evidence. Convex slope determinations are not a variance or an exception to the height limits established within the underlying zones. If a lot contains natural terrain where the grade level arches upward along the property line, then measuring height from the alternate points may be deemed appropriate.

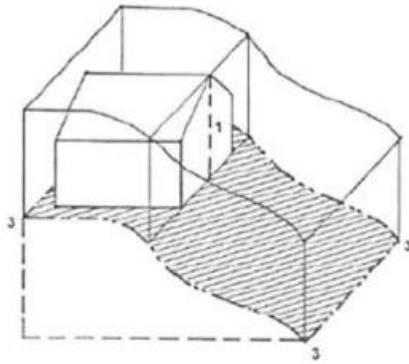
HBMC Sections 17.04.040 and 17.46.015 provide the definitions of building height and "grade" and establish the "by-right/straight line interpolation" method of calculating building height. The typical grade used for height measurements is based on surveyed elevation points at the property corners. See Figure 1 below.



**Figure 1:** Building Height Envelope

The HBMC allows the consideration of alternate spot elevation points along the property lines for lots with "convex" contours (where the grade level arches upward along the property line). In these situations, the grade of a lot may be based on a detailed topographical survey along the property lines with spot elevations called out at a minimum of two-foot intervals in addition to property corner points. A finding that a convex slope exists allows use of alternate spot elevation points for calculating building height, if the evidence supports that grades at the top of the convex slope represent natural or unaltered grades, as determined by the Planning Commission. See figure 2 below.

UNEVEN/CONVEX OR VARIABLY SLOPING LOT



- NOTES:
1. MAXIMUM BUILDING HEIGHT  
HIGHEST POINT ON BUILDING RIDGE OR ROOF
  2. GRADE BASED UPON EXISTING CORNER  
POINT ELEVATIONS
  3. GRADE BASED ON MULTIPLE SPOT ELEVATIONS

**Figure 2:** Uneven/Convex of Variably Sloping Lot

HBMC §17.04.040 states that supporting evidence shall be presented to substantiate whether the convex slope represents natural or unaltered grades. The applicant believes a natural convex slope condition exists as indicated along the northern and southern property lines profiles and provided a survey and topographic profile of the lot prepared by Denn Engineers which shows points of convexity on both the north and south lot lines. The point of convexity on the northerly lot line reaches an elevation of 41.57'. The point of convexity on the southerly lot line reaches an elevation of 40.31'. A geotechnical engineering investigation (soils report) prepared by NorCal Engineering, dated April 8, 2025 (**Attachment 4**), provides data from four bore sites on the subject property. The soils report details the types of soil present at various boring locations measured between 3 and 20.5 feet in depth, as shown on pages 29-32 of the report. The soils report reveals that fill soils between 0.5 and 1.5 feet were encountered at the four bore sites, and that below the fill/disturbed topsoil, undisturbed native soil was present. Bore Sites 1 and 4 closest to the highest points of convexity have been used to determine how much fill soils to exclude along the northern and southern property lines. Details of the subsurface conditions are provided in the soils report.

Soil Sample	Amount of Fill Present	Location of Soil Samples
B-1	1.5 feet	South Central portion of property
B-2	1.5 feet	Western portion of property
B-3	1.5 feet	South Central portion of property
B-4	0.5 feet	Northeastern portion of property

All of the boring sites have the same soil classification for both fill and natural soils. Both consist of silty sand; with fill soils also containing occasional gravel and concrete. However, the boring sites varied when looking at the density and moisture content of the fill and natural soils. Soils closer to the surface of the lot tend to be more loosely packed and dry while soils further from the surface tend to be more densely packed and damp.

Based on the evidence submitted, it appears the convex slope is a natural occurrence, and a convex condition exists on the subject property. However, the evidence of some fill soils suggests the most accurate way to estimate the natural grades is to exclude the depth of the fill soils. Staff recommends that alternate points along the northern and southern property lines, excluding fill soil, be used for purposes of measuring building height.

### **Precise Development Plan (PDP) Review Criteria and Findings**

In accordance with Hermosa Beach Municipal Code (HBMC) Section 17.58.010 and 17.58.020, in order to promote excellence in design, layout, and physical features of development to achieve reasonable quality and compatibility with its surroundings, all remodels or additions exceeding 1,500 square feet require a Precise Development Plan issued by the Planning Commission. In considering an application for a Precise Development Plan, City staff reviews the project using the review considerations for Precise Development Plans identified in HBMC 17.58.030. The review considerations are used to help inform the three required findings which must be made pursuant to Hermosa Beach Municipal Code Section 17.58.40 in order to approve a PDP.

### **Review Considerations for a PDP**

1. Building proportions, massing, and architectural details.
2. Site design, orientation, location, and architectural design of buildings relative to existing structures on or adjacent to the property, topography, and other physical features of the natural and built environment;
3. Size, location, design, development, and arrangement of site access for modes of transportation, including on-site vehicle and bicycle parking.
4. Height, materials, and design of fences, walls, and screen plantings;
5. Location and type of landscaping including selection and size of plant materials, and design of hardscape; and
6. Size, location, design, color, lighting, and materials of all signs.

### **Findings:**

The Review Considerations are used to help inform the three required PDP findings which must be made pursuant to HBMC 17.58.040 to approve, or conditionally approve, a precise development plan application. The inability to make one or more of the following findings is grounds for denial of an application.

**A. The design, layout, and other physical features of the project comply with all other applicable provisions of this Title and all other titles of the Hermosa Beach Municipal Code;**

The proposed project would rehabilitate an existing structure and the project site. The existing structure and use are legally nonconforming with regard to use, density, setbacks, parking, and open space. The project proposes alterations to the walls and a retrofit of an existing two car garage to become more functional and make the property more code compliant. Retrofitting the garage to make it usable for vehicle storage is further consistent with PDP review consideration number 3 listed above pertaining to transportation-oriented site design. Additionally, no non-conformities would be made worse via this project and is thus compliant with HBMC 17.52 pertaining to non-conforming buildings.

**B. The design, layout, and other physical features of the project are consistent with the General Plan, and any applicable specific plan or design guidelines; and**

The subject property has a General Plan land use designation of High Density. This designation includes single-family residences, duplexes, and triplexes. The subject property is legal nonconforming in regard to use and density, and the project proposes to continue its existing density and use, without any expansion in these areas. Additionally, the project has been evaluated for its consistency with relevant goals and policies of the General Plan. As discussed below, the architectural elements of this project contribute to an eclectic and diverse neighborhood which further supports PDP review consideration number 1 pertaining to building massing and architecture.

<b>General Plan Consistency</b>	
<b>Land Use Element</b>	<b>Findings</b>
<p><b>Goal 2:</b> Provide for diverse needs of residents of all ages and abilities</p> <p><b>Policy 2.5</b> Neighborhood preservation- Preserve and enhance the quality of residential neighborhoods by avoiding or abating the intrusion of disruptive non-conforming buildings or uses</p>	<p>The proposal is consistent with policy 2.5 as the project enhances the quality of a residential neighborhood by eliminating walls currently non-conforming to setback requirements as well as brings open space and on-site parking closer to compliance with current standards.</p>
<p><b>Goal 5:</b> Quality and authenticity in architecture and site design in all construction and renovation of buildings</p>	<p>The proposal put forth is consistent with policy 5.6 as it enhances neighborhood character by boosting the aesthetic appeal of the structure</p>

<b>Policy 5.6</b> Eclectic and diverse architecture- Seek to maintain and enhance neighborhood character through eclectic and diverse architectural styles.	through creative use of architectural elements which would contribute to an eclectic and diverse neighborhood.
<b>Housing Element</b>	<b>Findings</b>
<b>Issue Area 1-</b> Conservation of Existing Affordable Housing	The proposed project would maintain and improve the existing housing stock within a local neighborhood. Furthermore, proposed condition of approval #4 in the draft resolution would require 2 units to be deed restricted to lower income households for a period of no less than 55 years, further preserving affordability.
<b>Policy 1.1-</b> The City will continue to encourage the maintenance and improvement of the existing housing stock within the local neighborhoods.	

**C. The design, layout, and other physical features of the project comply with any design or development standards applicable to the zone, unless waived or modified pursuant to the provisions of this Title.**

The proposed exterior modifications include replacing windows, eliminating non-conforming setbacks, modifying the exterior aesthetic, and reconfiguring walls to make the property more code compliant. Additionally, the proposed landscaping consisting of 14 Silver Sheen Kohuhu plants as well as 21 Coastal Rosemary plants fronting Hermosa Avenue helps meet the City goal of effective site design consistent with PDP review consideration number 5 as listed above. Further, no non-conformities would be made worse via this project and is thus compliant with HBMC 17.52 pertaining to non-conforming buildings.

**PDP Specific Conditions of Approval**

Should the Planning Commission make the aforementioned findings to approve the PDP, then it should consider the conditions of approval in the Resolution and any other conditions it deems necessary to ensure the development archives the following outcomes identified in HBMC Section 17.58.050. Among others, staff recommends conditions of approval requiring two affordable units, all exterior lighting to be directed downwards and light shields, and no new walls or foundation footing to be constructed on or over the public right-of-way.

**Environmental Determination:**

Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the proposed project qualifies for a Class 2 categorical exemption, Replacement or Reconstruction, as defined

in section 15302 of the State CEQA Guidelines, as the project consists of a structural rehabilitation, remodel, and minor addition of 188 square feet. Moreover, none of the exceptions to the categorical exemption(s) apply to the project, as defined in section 15300.2 of the State CEQA Guidelines. The project would not result in a significant cumulative impact of successive projects of the same type in the same place over time; the project would not have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances; the project would not damage a scenic highway or scenic resources within a state scenic highway; the project is not located on a hazardous waste site; and the project would not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource. The property was further not found to be listed on the City's inventory of Potentially Historic Resources pursuant to Figure 7.2 of Appendix C of the PLAN Hermosa Program Environmental Impact Report.

**Public Notification:**

For the October 13, 2025, Planning Commission hearing, a total of 223 public hearing notices were mailed to the applicant, occupants and property owners of properties within a 300-foot radius on October 1, 2025. A legal ad was published on October 2, 2025, in the Easy Reader, a newspaper of general circulation. Additionally, the applicant received a notice poster to post on-site and provided proof of posting a minimum of ten days in advance of the public hearing, in accordance with HBMC 17.68.050. Public notification materials are included as **Attachment 6**. As of the writing of the report, staff have received no public comments. Additional public hearing notices were not required for the November 18, 2025, Planning Commission hearing, as the project was continued by the Planning Commission to a date certain.

**Next Steps**

In accordance with HBMC §17.58.060, the Planning Commission's decision may be appealed to the City Council. The appeal period is 10 days, beginning on October 14, 2025, and ending at the close of business on October 23, 2025. Any project that is appealed would be duly noticed in accordance with the HBMC.

**Attachments:**

1. Draft Resolution 25-XX
2. Zoning Map
3. Project Plans
4. Geotechnical Report
5. Senate Bill 8
6. Public Notification Package

**Respectfully Submitted by:** Jake Whitney, Associate Planner

**Concur:** Alexis Oropeza, Planning Manager

**Legal Review:** Sarah Locklin, Interim City Attorney

**Approved:** Alison Becker, Community Development Director