



HAWTHORNE PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

DATE: July 2, 2025
SUBJECT: DR-2023-0020
FROM: Gregg McClain, Director of Planning
BY: Maria Majcherek, Senior Planner

PROJECT INFORMATION

SUMMARY: Design Review Application for a new hotel
LOCATION: 4436 W. Imperial Hwy (APNs 4044-013-008, 009, 010, 011, 012, 013, and 014), City of Hawthorne, Los Angeles County
APPLICANT: Tom Bergerson (Authorized Agent), AO Architects
OWNER: Zeina Awad, ZS Development

DESIGN REVIEW

Introduction

Design Review Application DR-2023-0020 is a request to approve the proposed exterior facade and site design for a new five-story hotel. In accordance with HMC Chapter 17.99, the design review process is intended to reasonably insure and encourage an orderly, attractive, and harmonious appearance of structures, property, and associated facilities, such as signs, landscaping, parking areas and reasonably insure new development does not have an adverse aesthetic, health, safety, or architecturally related negative impact on existing adjoining properties, or the City in general. The Planning Commission was appointed as the design review authority and is tasked to ensure projects meet or exceed the requirements of Chapter 17.99.

Project Description

As shown on the floor plans and elevations (Attachment 1), the applicant is proposing a new five-story hotel consisting of 78 guestrooms, 80 parking spaces, and approximately 12,070 sq. ft. of hotel amenities. The first level consists of the lobby, staff work area/offices, restrooms, service areas (including electrical and machine rooms), and five parking spaces with the remainder of the parking spaces located on the second level. The guestrooms are distributed between levels three through five. The hotel amenities

are found on the third level and consist of an outdoor pool, lounge/dining room, and fitness room. A staff lounge, pantry, and laundry area are all located on the third level of the hotel as well.

Hotel guests and employees will have access to the hotel from the northeastern corner via a right-turn only driveway on Imperial Hwy. The hotel will provide valet parking service with a dedicated drop-off area with a valet office.

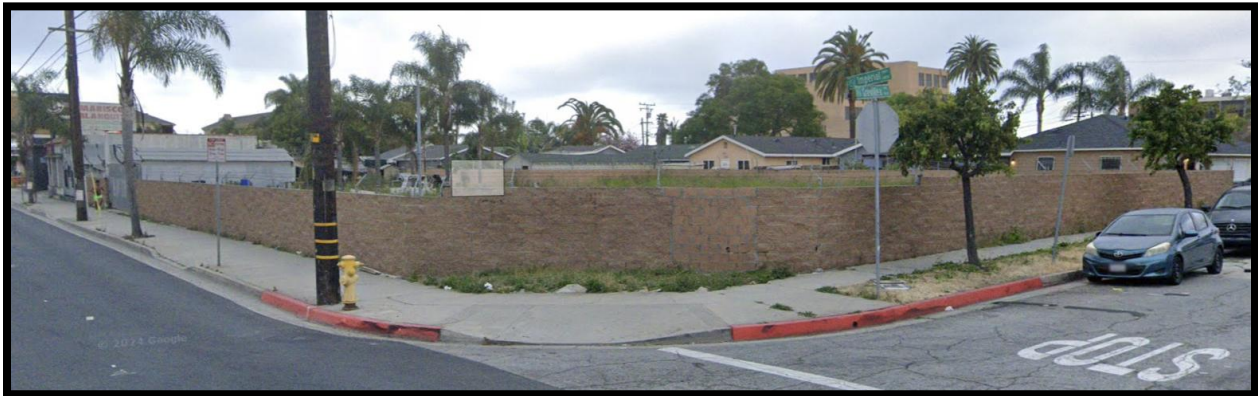
Guestrooms and Parking

Floor	Guestrooms	Parking
1	0	5
2	0	75
3	18	0
4	30	0
5	30	0
TOTAL	78	80

Existing Conditions

As seen in the aerial photo and street views below, the project site is comprised of seven parcels, beginning in the southeast corner of Grevillea Ave. and Imperial Hwy. The site is approximately 0.51 acres. The western portion of the site is vacant and the eastern portion contains two vacant structures.





General Plan Consistency

The project site is located within the Downtown Hawthorne Specific Plan (DHSP) and specifically, the project site is implemented by the DHSP's *Hospitality Commercial (CH)* use. The vision of the DHSP is to make Hawthorne Boulevard the City's economic, civic, and cultural downtown hub by encouraging a mix of retail, office, hotel, dining, entertainment, housing and employment.

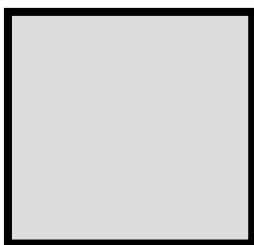
The project is consistent with several goals and policies found within the General Plan Elements, as listed below, and discussed thoroughly within the CEQA Class 32 Categorical Exemption Report prepared June 2025 (Attachment 5):

- Land Use Element
 - o Goal 1, Policy 1.4
 - o Goal 2, Policy 2.1
 - o Goal 3, Policy 3.2 and 3.5
- Circulation Element
 - o Goal 1.0, Policy 1.9
- Conservation Element
 - o Goal 2.0, Policy 2.3
- Economic Development Element
 - o Goal 1, Policy 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3
- Noise Element
 - o Goal 3.0, Policy 3.3

The applicant is proposing a contemporary facade for the building. The architectural style of the hotel is in concert with current hotel designs, which provide the contemporary look with the use of color and materials.



HMC Section 17.99.110—Design Guidelines, specifies architectural styles and materials proposed shall be consistent throughout the project site. The applicant is proposing to utilize a variety of materials (plaster, aluminum, concrete, bronze aluminum, metal) and a variety of colors to create the look as seen in the submitted renderings.



Cold Wind



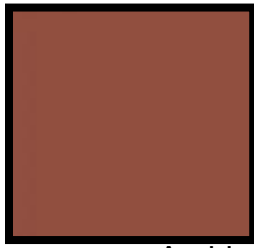
Aqua Bloom



Hamilton Blue



Charcoal Smudge



Arabian Red

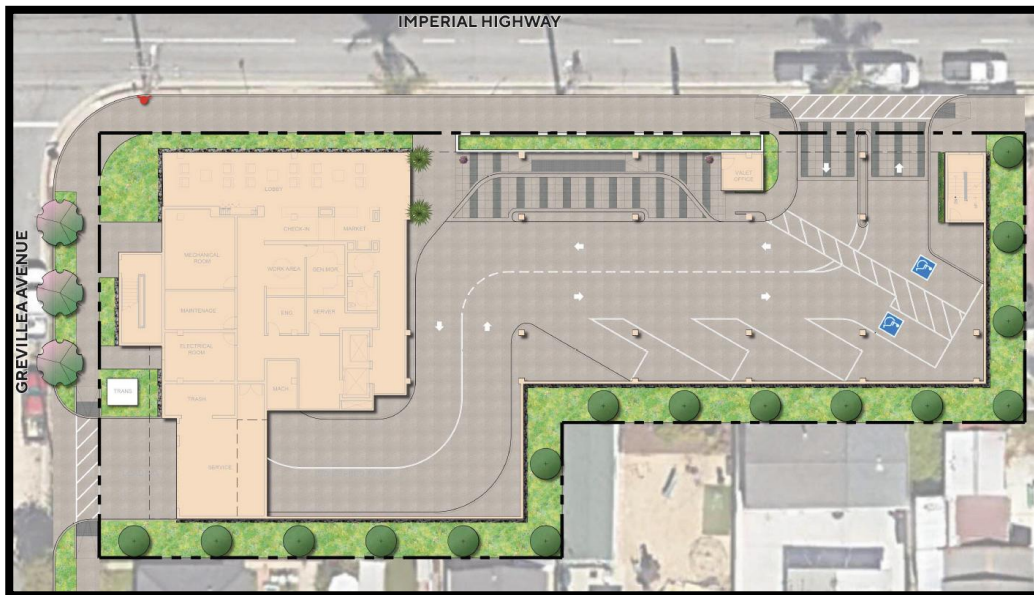


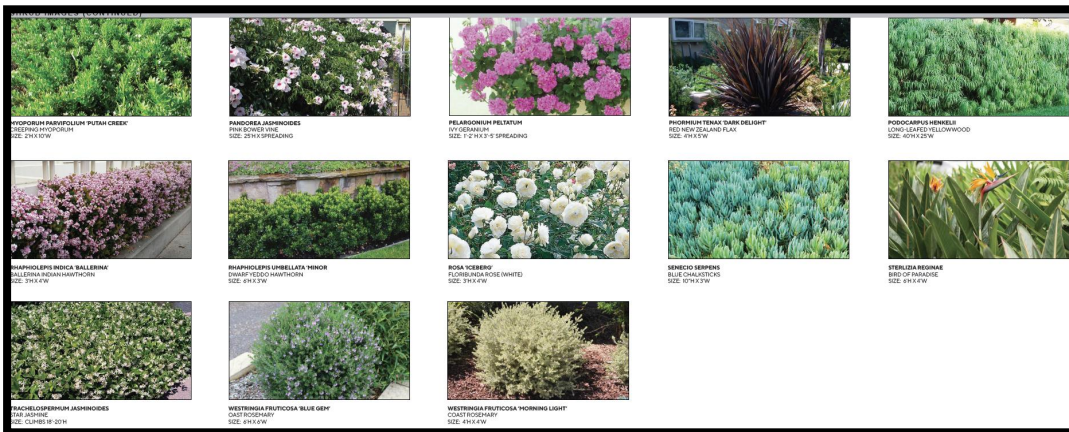
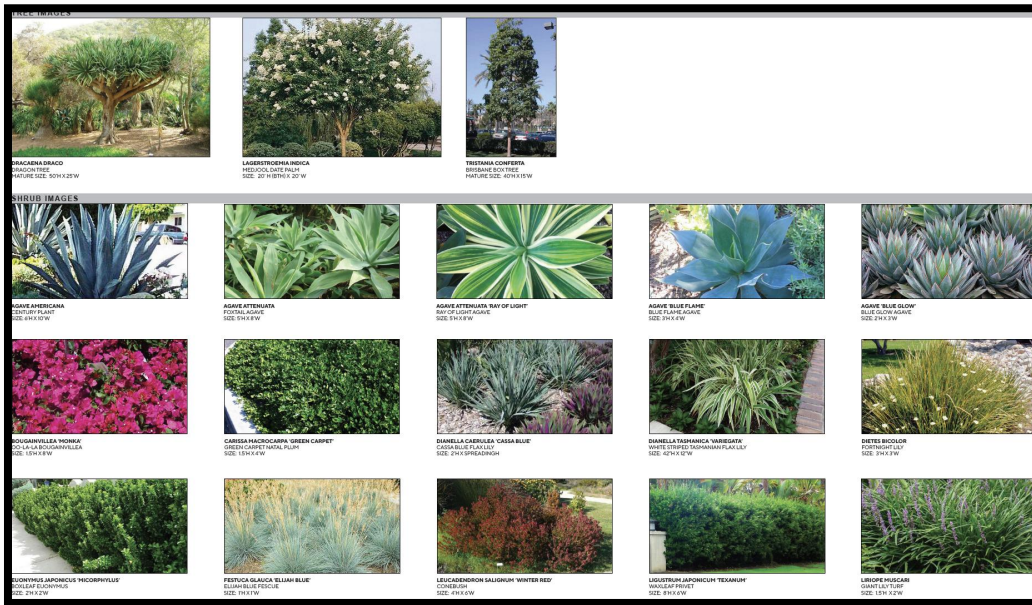
Dark Engine

The color combinations serve as the required base, accent, and trim colors and meet the requirements of the design review regulations and Section 17.30.010 for commercial buildings.

Landscaping

The applicant provided landscape plans for the entire project. This landscaping covers approximately 4,793 square feet. The proposed plants offer variety and scale and complement the project's overall design and aesthetic. The layout of the landscaping is seen below:



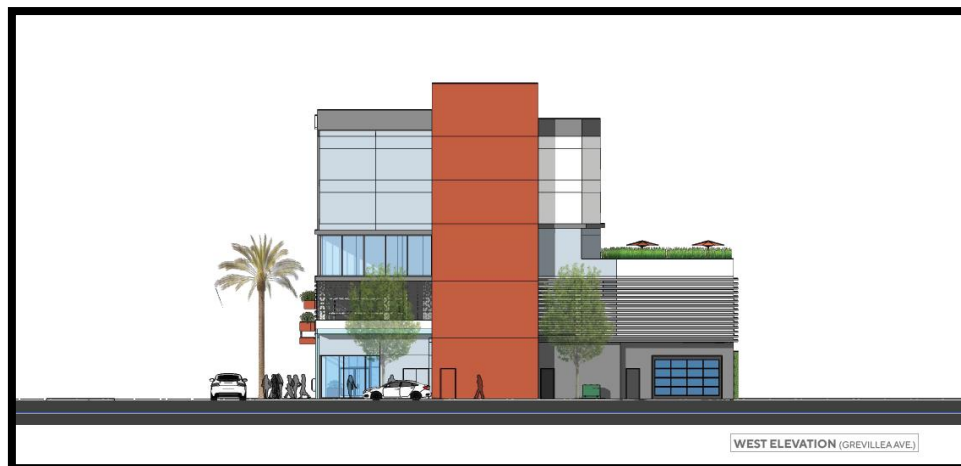


Signs

The renderings are sparse in terms of signs on the property and indicate only one wall sign (rendering not the actual sign wording) will be placed on the north elevation. Per HMC Section 17.35.110, the hotel is permitted to place signs on the property. Any proposed signs will be evaluated by Staff to ensure they are in harmony with the style of the building and do not exceed the allocated permitted square footage for the property.

Additional Information

The site plans and renderings indicate vehicular access to on-site parking is provided from the northeastern corner of the project site, via a right-turn-only driveway on Imperial Hwy. The project includes a loading zone for hotel operations/service vehicles on the south western corner of the site, via Grevillea Ave.



The main hotel amenities, pool, and fitness center, are located on the 3rd floor terrace, overlooking residential homes to the south; therefore, Staff recommends a condition of approval to limit its use to between 7:00am and 10:00pm as well as restrictions related to private functions and management supervision. This application is only for the approval of a Design Review and as such, the scope of the project does not include

authorization to serve alcohol. If desired, that will require a separate discretionary approval. In addition, a special events application is required for events



Required Design Review Findings

HMC Chapter 17.99 specifies the Planning Commission must make the following findings prior to granting an approval of a design review application:

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 proposed project is compatible with the surrounding area because the orientation of the parking and guest access does not provide access from the residential neighborhood located to the south of the site. Additionally, the hotel terrace containing the pool and fitness center will be limited in hours of operation to diminish noise associated with its use during evening hours. The ten-foot setbacks and 28-foot height will diminish negative impacts to the residential uses located to the south. The CR-MU zone is an ideal use for hotels. Hotels are economically viable and a sustainable use for the City. The proposed facade includes updated architectural elements found in contemporary style commercial buildings and will significantly update a location that has been plagued by blight.

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 replace a blighted property by introducing a new hotel with a contemporary building style. The overall design will be of quality that will preserve the integrity of, and upgrade, the existing area.

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

As detailed earlier in this report, Staff reviewed the Hawthorne Municipal Code and the General Plan and, as a result, Staff determined that the project is consistent with the Land Use Element of the General Plan and is in accordance with all applicable provisions of Title 17.

Public Hearing Notice

Public Notice (Attachment 2) was given in accordance with Chapter 17.06 of the HMC. The Planning Department published a public hearing notice in the local paper on June 19, 2025, and mailed notification to property owners within a 300-foot radius of the site.

Environmental Analysis

De Novo Planning Group analyzed and prepared a CEQA Class 32 Categorical Exemption Report, dated June 2025, with associated studies found in appendices A through D of the Report (Report and all associated appendices may be found in Attachment 5) and Staff reviewed the proposed development project in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) guidelines. 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 32 Categorical Exemption pursuant to Section 15332, (In-Fill Development Projects) of State CEQA Guidelines. 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 proposed development occurs within city limits on a project site of no more than five acres that is completely surrounded by urban uses. The project site has no value as habitat for endangered, rare, or threatened species, approval will not result in any significant effects relating to traffic, noise, air quality, or water quality, and the site is adequately serviced by all required utilities and public services.

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

The proposed project meets all the requirements found in CEQA State Guidelines Section 15332 for in-fill development. The site's size and location are appropriate, the project is consistent with the General Plan, there would be no impact to sensitive habitats, all utility services can be provided, and technical studies validated that there would be no significant effects relating to traffic, noise, air quality, or water quality. As such, adoption of a Notice of Exemption under Class 32 for In-Fill Development is appropriate. Upon Planning Commission action, staff will file the Notice of Exemption (Attachment 3) with the Los Angeles County Clerk's office in compliance with CEQA.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on staff's analysis of the issues and the recommended conditions of approval, the proposed hotel: 1) complies with the requirements of the HMC; 2) is compatible with adjacent land uses; and 3) will not result in any negative impacts to the surrounding neighborhoods. Accordingly, the Planning Department recommends that the Planning Commission adopt attached PC Resolution 2025-08 (Attachment 4) approving the CEQA determination and Design Review DR-2023-0020, subject to the conditions included in the resolutions.

ATTACHMENTS

- 1) Site Plans
- 2) Public Hearing Notice
- 3) Notice of Exemption
- 4) PC resolution 2025-07 for design review with conditions of approval
- 5) CEQA Class 32 Categorical Exemption Report dated June 2025

Attachment 1
Site Plans

Attachment 2
Public Hearing Notice

Attachment 3 Notice of Exemption

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION DESIGN REVIEW APPLICATION No. DR-2023-0020

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

TO: County Clerk/Registrar-Recorder County of Los Angeles Environmental Filings 12400 East Imperial Highway, Room 2001 Norwalk, CA 90650	FROM: Planning Department City of Hawthorne 4455 West 126th St. Hawthorne, CA 90250
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Project Title and Location (including county): Grevillea-Imperial Hotel Project (Design Review Application No. DR-2023-0020). APNs 4044-013-008, 009, 010, 011, 012, 013, and 014, City of Hawthorne, Los Angeles County.

Project Description: The Project proposes to remove all on-site improvements and construct a 43,051 square-foot, five-level hotel with 78 guest rooms, 80 parking spaces, and approximately 12,070 square feet of hotel amenities.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: City of Hawthorne

Name of Person/Agency Carrying Out Project:

Applicant: Tom Bergerson (Authorized Agent), AO Architects
Property Owner: Zeina Awad, ZS Development

Exempt Status: (Check one)

- Ministerial (Sec. 21080(b)(1); 15268);
- Declared Emergency (Sec. 21080(b)(3); 15269(a));
- Emergency Project (Sec. 21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c));
- Emergency Project (Sec. 21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c));
- Categorical Exemption: Section: 15332 Class: 32
- Statutory Exemption: Section: ___ Class: ___

Reasons why project is exempt:

The Grevillea-Imperial Hotel Project (Design Review Application DR-2023-0020) is consistent with the General Plan and zoning with approval of the discretionary permit. The site is less than five acres, is located within the city limits in an urbanized area surrounded by commercial and residential uses, and is adequately served by utilities and public services. The Project is located within a highly developed area of the City and does not provide habitat suitable for endangered, rare, or threatened species. The Project will not result in any significant impacts relating to traffic, noise, air quality, or water quality. It will not require significant expansion of utilities and public services beyond existing conditions.

The cumulative impact of this project, and the approval of other projects like it in the vicinity, is not expected to have any significant environmental impact. There are no unusual circumstances applicable to the Project site. The Project is not located along any state designated scenic highway nor within any designated hazardous waste site. There are no historical resources which would be impacted. The Project is not subject to any of the exceptions for exemption under Section 15300.2 of CEQA.

Upon the Planning Commission's action, Staff will file the Notice of Exemption with the Los Angeles County Clerk's office in compliance with CEQA.

Lead Agency Contact Person and Phone Number: Maria G. Majcherek, Senior Planner, 310-349-2970

Prepared and filed by the Hawthorne Planning Department by:

Signature

Printed Name and Title

Date

Attachment 4
PC Resolution 2025-07

Attachment 5
CEQA Class 32 Categorical Exemption Report