Agenda Report

November 10, 2026

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council

FROM: Planning & Community Development Department

SUBJECT: **APPEAL OF THE BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS' QUASI-JUDICIAL DECISION TO APPROVE SINGLE-FAMILY COMPATIBILITY PERMIT #7377 TO ALLOW A NEW 4,955 SQUARE-FOOT, TWO-STORY SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENCE AT 3140 EAST CALIFORNIA BOULEVARD**

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council:

1. Find that the action proposed herein is categorically exempt from environmental review pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15303 (Class 3, Small Structures); and that there are no features that distinguish this project from others in the exempt class and, therefore, there are no unusual circumstances, and no other exceptions to the exemption apply; and
2. Adopt the findings in Attachment A to uphold the Board of Zoning Appeals' decision and approve Single-Family Compatibility Permit #7377, with the conditions in Attachment B.

BACKGROUND:

Site Characteristics

The subject property is a 20,499 square-foot, rectangular-shaped, flat parcel that is improved with a 2,116 square-foot, two-story residence and a 378 square-foot, attached two-car garage. The property is located on the south side of California Boulevard, between Carroll Way and Brightside Lane. Vehicular access to the site is provided from a driveway along East California Boulevard. The property is zoned RS-2 (Single-Family Residential, 0-2 Dwelling Units Per Acre).

Adjacent Uses

- North, south, east and west – Single-Family Residential

Adjacent Zoning

- North, south, east and west – RS-2

Previous Zoning Cases

- Exception #23598 – To build a residence on a portion of lot in Zone E. Approved April 9, 1929.

Project Description

The application, Single-Family Compatibility Permit (SCP) #7377, is a request to demolish the existing single-family residence and attached garage to facilitate the construction of a new 4,955 square-foot, two-story residence with a 467 square-foot attached garage that exceeds Neighborhood Compatibility. The proposed residence would be constructed within the same general footprint as the existing structure. Based on the neighborhood compatibility calculation, the allowable floor area of the residence is 3,630 square feet (35% above the median house size of all properties within 500-foot radius). A residence may exceed Neighborhood Compatibility subject to approval of a SCP and making the required findings, up to the maximum allowed gross floor area (GFA or FAR) of the site (5,799 square feet). Additional information and background on the SCP process is available in the Analysis section on page 3.

Hearing Officer Public Hearing

A SCP for a new two-story residence is required to provide a Notice of Application to all property owners within 500 feet of the subject property upon determination of a complete application and installation of story poles. The Notice of Application provides a minimum 14-day notification period. If no request for a hearing is received during the Notification period, the Zoning Administrator may render a decision on the application, which is appealable to the Board of Zoning Appeals. If a request for a hearing is received, a staff report would be submitted for consideration by the Hearing Officer at a publicly noticed hearing.

The applicant installed story poles that depict the outline and location of the proposed residence in March 2026. The Notice of Application was sent out to all property owners within 500 feet providing information on the application, the story poles, and that the notification period for this project was from April 1, 2026 through April 15, 2026. During the Notice of Application period, a request for hearing was received; therefore, the Hearing Officer was the initial decision-making authority for this project.

On June 3, 2026, the Hearing Officer considered the SCP. Staff recommended that the Hearing Officer approve the SCP, subject to conditions of approval in the staff report (Attachment C). During the public hearing, four people spoke in opposition and one in support on the item. At the conclusion of the public hearing, and after public testimony, the Hearing Officer made the required findings in the affirmative and approved the SCP

(Attachment D). The Hearing Officer adopted the recommended conditions of approval, with the following added conditions to address adjacent neighbors' privacy concerns:

- Condition 13, requiring additional landscape screening along the eastern side property line.
- Condition 14, requiring treated privacy glass to be installed at all second story windows on the east and west side elevations.
- Condition 15, requiring screening on the rear balcony to reduce visibility into the neighboring properties to the east and west.

On June 15, 2026, a request was filed by Tom Altmayer and Beatrice Haddad to appeal the Hearing Officer's decision to the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) (Attachment E). While conditions were added related to privacy, the appellants believed the decision did not address concerns regarding the overall size, height and massing of the proposed house, which they argued was not compatible with the surrounding houses. To supplement the decision, the Hearing Officer provided an addendum explaining his reasons for approving the application and responding to the appeal (Attachment F).

BZA Public Hearing

On August 27, 2026, the BZA considered the appeal of the SCP. Prior to the public hearing, staff received three written public comments from the appellants. During the public hearing, two people spoke in opposition and one in support. Staff recommended that the BZA uphold the Hearing Officer's decision and approve the SCP, subject to conditions of approval (Attachment G). At the conclusion of the public hearing, and after public testimony, a motion was made to uphold the Hearing Officer's decision and approve SCP # 7377 by a vote of 5-0 (Attachment H). The BZA adopted the recommended conditions of approval, with the following revised condition to address adjacent neighbors' privacy concerns:

- Condition 13, requiring additional landscape screening along the eastern and western side property lines.

On September 8, 2026, a request was filed by Beatrice Haddad on behalf of "Save East Pasadena" (Appellant) to appeal the Board of Zoning Appeals' decision to the City Council (Attachment I). The hearing before the City Council is a de novo hearing where the Council can approve the project as recommended, approve the project with changes to the conditions of approval, or deny the project. This is a quasi-judicial action.

ANALYSIS:

In 2014, in response to community concern regarding the size of new single-family residences, the City Council directed staff to develop a strategy to address "mansionization" of single-family residential neighborhoods citywide. The work program was divided into three phases of Zoning Code Amendments, each phase addressed specific concerns based on location:

Phase 1 – Lower Hastings Ranch, completed 2016
Amendments included revising how floor area is calculated, additional setbacks for second stories, standards for second floor balconies and decks, addition of objective design standards to reflect Ranch-style architecture, and a new discretionary permit (Neighborhood Development Permit or NDP) reviewed by the Hearing Officer for any new house, second story addition, and any addition visible from the street.

Phase 2 – Hillside Overlay zones, completed 2017
Amendments included revising the threshold for requiring a Hillside Development Permit to include major renovations, any addition above the first floor and any addition over 500 square feet, limitations on basements and accessory structures, early notification for projects that install story poles, and codifying the Neighborhood Compatibility Standards and introducing findings of approval to exceed neighborhood compatibility.

Phase 3 – Non-hillside and non-historic single-family residential zones, completed 2020
Amendments included height limits for first- and second-story top plate heights, prohibiting new second story windows to be directly across from existing two-story windows on adjacent sites, requiring architectural compatibility for garages, prohibiting the use of unfinished concrete and foam as exterior finishes, and establishing a new neighborhood compatibility calculation for new residences and all additions, except for additions that are less than 500 square feet in size and not visible from the street.

The subject site is part of the non-hillside and non-historic districts. When calculating neighborhood compatibility, the allowable floor area of a residence shall not exceed 35% above the median residence size of all properties within a 500-foot radius of the subject property. The radius serves as the project's "neighborhood" for purposes of neighborhood compatibility. Los Angeles County Assessor information is used to determine the sizes of the existing residences within the radius and to calculate the Neighborhood Compatibility maximum. Note that the data obtained from the Los Angeles County Assessor only includes the square footages for the residence; the data does not include basements, attics, attached garages, accessory dwelling units, or any detached structures.

For projects proposing to exceed neighborhood compatibility, a new discretionary permit (Single-Family Compatibility Permit or SCP) was established. The SCP requires projects involving new two-stories, or additions above the first floor, to install story-poles and to provide a Notice of Application to the neighborhood. If no request for a hearing is received during the Notice of Application period, the Zoning Administrator may render a decision on the application. If a request for a hearing is received, the SCP is reviewed by the Hearing Officer at a noticed public hearing. To approve an SCP, the following two findings related to design compatibility must be made in the affirmative:

1. The design, location, and size of proposed structures and/or additions or alterations to existing structures will be compatible with existing and anticipated future development along both sides of the blockface in terms of aesthetics, height, materials, massing, and scale; and

2. The proposed project includes contextual front yard setbacks and residence entryways consistent in scale with entries on both sides of the blockface.

SCP #7377: To allow a new two-story residence to exceed Neighborhood Compatibility

The proposed project complies with all applicable development standards of the RS-2 zoning district, apart from neighborhood compatibility. A detailed analysis of the project's compliance with all applicable development standards is contained within the BZA staff report (Attachment G), a summary of the project's compliance is provided in Table 1.

Table 1: RS-2 Development Standards

Development Standards	Requirement	Proposed	Compliance
Minimum Lot Size	20,000 sf	20,499 sf	Complies
Minimum Setbacks			
Front	46'-4'	48'-8"	Complies
Side (East)	10'	23'-2"	Complies
Side (West)	10'	11'	Complies
Rear	25'	87'-1"	Complies
Maximum Site Coverage	7,174 sf (35% of the lot size)	6,267 sf	Complies
Maximum Gross Floor Area	5,799 sf (20% of lot size + 1,700 sf)	5,422 sf	Complies
Maximum Height	32'	29'	Complies
First Story Top Plate Height	10'	10'	Complies
Second Story Top Plate Height	20'	20'	Complies
Encroachment Plane	30-degree angle	30-degree angle	Complies
Neighborhood Compatibility	3,630 sf	4,955 sf	*Requested*
Parking	2 covered spaces	2-car garage	Complies

A radius of 500 feet from the project site encompasses 60 properties within the City limits, all of which are developed with single-family residences. The 500-foot-radius includes one-and two-story residences of sizes ranging from 1,681 square feet to 7,829 square feet, with the median residence size of 2,689 square feet and 35% above the median at 3,630 square feet. The lot sizes in the neighborhood range from 10,873 square feet to 49,658 square feet. Refer to Attachment J for the 500-foot radius map and neighborhood compatibility calculation.

As proposed, the 4,955 square-foot residence would exceed 35% above the median by 1,325 square feet. While the residence will be larger than most in the radius, it will not be the largest in the generally flat neighborhood. Four other properties along California

Boulevard are larger than the proposed residence, including two properties across the street, which are 7,313 square feet and 7,829 square feet.

While not required by the Zoning Code, staff reviewed the lot area, lot widths, and front yard setbacks for properties along California Boulevard within 500 feet of the subject property. Larger properties with greater setbacks are often better able to accommodate increased housing sizes, as there is more land for setbacks, building separation, and landscape features. With regards to lot area, the subject property (20,499 square feet) is the 15th largest out of 21 properties. However, with regards to lot width, the subject property (117 feet wide) is the second largest. The front yard setbacks range from 35 to 57 feet on the south side of the street and from 65 to 100 feet on the north side of the street. The front yard setback for the subject property (on the south side of the street) will increase from 44'-4" to 48'-8", which will exceed the average setback of 46'-4". Overall, while the subject property is not significantly large, it is wider than the majority of lots in the area and the project will have a greater front yard setback compared to the existing residence and average setback in the area on the south side of California Boulevard.

In addition, an SCP requires compliance with the maximum GFA for all structures on the site, which is proportional to a property's lot size. For the subject 20,499 square-foot property, the maximum GFA allowed for all structures on the site is 20% of the lot size plus 1,700 square feet, or 5,799 square feet. As proposed, the project results in a GFA of 5,422 square feet, which includes the 4,955 square-foot residence and the 467 square-foot attached garage. Thus, the project complies with the maximum GFA requirement. As noted in Table 1, the project will comply with all other development standards including setbacks, lot coverage, and height.

The applicable review authority may approve an SCP application only after making two required design compatibility findings, which are based on how the design of the proposed residence relates to the design of the residences on the blockface on both sides of the street. The residence is required to provide design compatibility in terms of massing (i.e., modulation, articulation, and roof form) and scale (i.e., height and bulk) and a contextual front yard setback:

1. *The design, location, and size of proposed structures and/or additions or alterations to existing structures would be compatible with existing and anticipated future development along both sides of the blockface in terms of aesthetics, height, materials, massing, and scale.*

   The subject property is situated on the south side of California Boulevard within a blockface extending between Carroll Way and Brightside Lane. Both sides of the blockface consist of one- and two-story single-family residences that were built during different development periods and in various architectural styles, including Spanish Revival, Minimal Traditional, and Ranch style. The proposed design of the new residence features characteristics of the Spanish Revival style including an articulated form, a hipped roof form clad in clay tiles, exterior walls clad in stucco, rectangular and arched windows and openings, and second-story balconies. The

proposed finishes and materials are compatible with the proposed architectural style of the residence, and of the residences on both sides of the blockface designed in the same Spanish Revival architectural style. The Zoning and General Plan designations anticipate single-family development; therefore, the proposed single-family residence would be compatible. Further, much of the proposed footprint of the residence would sit within the footprint of the original residence, reducing visible impacts to the neighborhood.

The proposed residence would maintain compatibility in massing and scale with both sides of the blockface and would not create an incompatible building form. Although the proposed project will result in an increase in building height, it will be compatible with the surrounding single-family residential context since it is located within a neighborhood that consists of both one- and two-story single-family residences and complies with building height.

2. *The proposed project includes contextual front yard setbacks and residence entryways consistent in scale with entries on both sides of the blockface.*

The proposed residence and the new entryway would be in generally the same location as the existing structure. The existing residence provides a 48'-8" front yard setback, and the proposed project would also be located 48' 8" from the front property line, which is set further back than the required 46' 4" front setback. The proposed Spanish Revival architecture would be represented in various elements, such as the arched double door entryway framed by two concrete columns. Staff finds that the project is consistent with the residential character on both sides of the blockface and would not pose an impact to the contextual front yard setbacks and entryways.

APPEAL POINTS AND RESPONSES TO APPEAL:

As previously noted, a request was filed to appeal the BZA's decision. The request was filed by Beatrice Haddad on behalf of "Save East Pasadena" (Appellant) (Attachment I). The appeal points and Staff responses to the Appellant's appeal points are provided in the section below.

1. *The appeal is based on the City's failure to adequately support the mandatory finding required for approval of SCP #7377 that the proposed project is compatible with the surrounding blockface in size, height, massing and scale. The City's own Neighborhood Compatibility Analysis shows that the proposed 4,955-square-foot residence exceeds the 3,630-square-foot compatibility figure by 1,325 square feet and would be larger than 54 of the 60 residences within the City's 500-foot study area.*

Staff's Response: The neighborhood compatibility calculation considers properties within a 500-foot-radius of the subject property, not only the adjacent sites. The 500-foot-radius includes one-and two-story residences of sizes ranging from 1,681 square feet to 7,829 square feet. The lot sizes in the neighborhood vary from 10,873 square feet to 49,658 square feet. As proposed, the 4,955 square-foot residence

would not be the largest residence in the neighborhood. Two properties on the north side of California Boulevard, across the street from the subject property, are 7,313 square feet and 7,829 square feet. These sites have a lot size of 32,709 square feet and 33,237 square feet, respectively. Further, the proposed residence would be proportional to its lot size with a compliant GFA and much of the proposed footprint of the residence will be located within the footprint of the original two-story residence, reducing visible impacts to the neighborhood. As it relates to the height, the proposed two-story residence would be compliant with the maximum first and second story top plate heights and overall height allowed within the zoning district.

2. *The appeal also raises whether the Board independently considered the contrary photographs, neighborhood data and other evidence submitted by the appellants before affirming the approval.*

Staff's Response: Prior to the August 27, 2026 meeting, the Board of Zoning Appeals members received the staff report, the application for the appeal of the Hearing Officer's decision, and public comments received during the Notice of Application period, Hearing Officer public notice period, and Board of Zoning Appeals public notice period. These documents included photographs, neighborhood data and other evidence submitted by the appellants. Additionally, the Board of Zoning Appeals received the appellant's verbal presentation and photographs, as well as public comments during the public hearing on August 27, 2026. The Board considered all submitted comments and evidence prior to rendering a decision.

COUNCIL POLICY CONSIDERATION:

General Plan Consistency

The subject property is designated as Low Density Residential in the General Plan Land Use Element. The existing site would continue as a single-family residential use; therefore, the character of the neighborhood, consisting of single-family residences would be maintained and enhanced.

The proposal would maintain consistency with General Plan Land Use Policies 21.5 (Housing Character and Design) and 22.1 (Appropriate Scale and Massing). Policy 21.5 encourages that when replacement housing is proposed, it should reflect the neighborhood's unique character and qualities, including lot sizes; building form, scale, massing, and relationship to street frontages; architectural design and landscaped setbacks. The proposed residence has been designed to contribute and enhance the architectural character of the residential neighborhood. The placement of the residence is generally in the same location as the existing structure and minimizes potential impact to the adjoining properties by providing sufficient setbacks from the front and side property lines. Moreover, the contextual materials of the finished design are consistent with the materials found throughout the surrounding residential area.

Policy 22.1 requires building scale and massing that is compatible with existing development in single-family neighborhoods. As proposed, the residence would comply with the maximum site coverage, floor area, encroachment plane, and setback requirements. The proposed residence would be located at least 48 feet from the front property line, therefore minimizing any potential massing as viewed from the public right-of-way. The proposed design would center the massing on the lot and be an appropriate scale and massing with the neighborhood. Therefore, the proposed project is consistent with this Policy of the General Plan.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

This project has been determined to be exempt from environmental review pursuant to the guidelines of the California Environmental Quality Act (Public Resources Code §21080(b)(9); Administrative Code, Title 14, Chapter 3, §15303, Class 3, New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures), and that there are no features that distinguish this project from others in the exempt class and, therefore, there are no unusual circumstances, and no other exceptions to the exemption apply. Section 15303 exempts the construction and location of limited numbers of new, small facilities or structures. This includes but is not limited to one single-family residence, or a second residence unit in a residential zone. In urbanized areas, up to three single-family residences may be constructed or converted under this exemption. The project includes the construction of one new single-family residence in a residential zone. Therefore, the project is exempt from environmental review.

CONCLUSION:

Staff concludes that the findings necessary for approving SCP #7377 to allow a new two-story residence to exceed Neighborhood Compatibility can be made (Attachment A) and the proposed project complies with all other applicable development standards of the Zoning Code. The design, massing and scale of the proposed residence would be compatible with the residential development within the surrounding neighborhood and would not be detrimental to the general welfare of the City. While the residence will be larger than most in the 500-foot neighborhood radius, the lot size is also larger. This allows for a larger residence that still meets or exceeds all setbacks and complies with all development standards, including lot coverage and gross floor area. Further, there are two other residences in close proximity that are larger than the proposed residence. Therefore, staff recommends that the City Council uphold the BZA's decision and approve SCP #7377 with the findings in Attachment A and recommended conditions of approval in Attachment B.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no direct fiscal impact as a result of this action.

Respectfully submitted,

Israel Del Toro
Acting Director of Planning & Community Development Department

Prepared by:

Alison Maldonado-Walker
Planner

Concurred by:

Luis Rocha
Planning Manager

Approved by:

MATTHEW E. HAWKESWORTH
Interim City Manager

Attachments: (11)

Attachment A: Single-Family Compatibility Permit Specific Findings
Attachment B: Single-Family Compatibility Conditions of Approval
Attachment C: Hearing Officer Staff Report (dated June 3, 2026, without attachments)
Attachment D: Hearing Officer Decision Letter (dated June 10, 2026)
Attachment E: Hearing Officer Appeal Application (dated June 15, 2026)
Attachment F: Hearing Officer Addendum (dated July 13, 2026)
Attachment G: BZA Staff Report (dated August 27, 2026, without attachments)
Attachment H: BZA Decision Letter (dated August 31, 2026)
Attachment I: BZA Appeal Application (dated September 8, 2026)
Attachment J: 500 Foot Neighborhood Compatibility Map and Calculation
Attachment K: Project Plans