



**City of Half Moon Bay  
PLANNING COMMISSION HEARING  
STAFF REPORT  
December 8, 2015**

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**RECOMMENDATION**

- 1) Find that the Planning Commission has reviewed and considered the Final Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration for the project adopted by the Lead Agency, the Coastside Fire Protection District; and
- 2) Approve PDP-15-046, a Coastal Development Permit and Architectural Review for construction of a prefabricated fire training tower of approximately 50 feet in height and 4,497 square feet in floor area with an unenclosed platform of 550 square feet, on a 86,463 square-foot lot developed with an existing fire station and fire training yard in the P-S, Public Service Zoning District, based upon the Findings and Evidence contained in Exhibit A of the Draft Resolution, and subject to the Conditions of Approval contained in Exhibit B.

**PROJECT SUMMARY**

<b>Owner/Applicant:</b>	Coastside Fire Protection District
<b>Project Planner:</b>	Carol Hamilton, Senior Planner, (650) 712-5836
<b>Requested Permits:</b>	Coastal Development Permit and Architectural Review
<b>Site Location:</b>	1191 Main Street, APN 064-370-050
<b>LCP/Zoning:</b>	Public Facilities and Institutions; P-S, Public Service Zoning District
<b>Environmental Determination:</b>	Mitigated Negative Declaration
<b>Water:</b>	The site has one installed 1.5-inch water connection. The project will obtain water for training activities from existing fire hydrants.
<b>Sewer:</b>	The property is located within the Sewer Authority Mid-Coast (SAM) Sewer District and has four benefit sewer units. The project includes no new sewer discharge.
<b>Right of Appeal:</b>	Any aggrieved person may appeal the decision of the Planning Commission to the City Council within ten (10) working days of the date of the decision. This project is not located within the Coastal Appeal Zone. Therefore, City action on the permit is final.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Project Description**

The project proposes the construction of a new four-story, 4,497-square-foot prefabricated fire training facility on the almost 2-acre Fire Station 40 site located at 1191 Main Street in the P-S, Public Service Zoning District and the Public Facilities and Institutions General Plan designation. The training facility is proposed to be located north of Fire Station 40, in the area of the site currently under construction as a fire training yard. As depicted in the project plans, the building consists of four enclosed floors, topped by an open training platform extending to a height of 50.5 feet.<sup>1</sup> The area of each floor and the open platform is as follows:

- First floor 1,604 sq. ft.
- Second floor 1,296 sq. ft.
- Third floor 1,047 sq. ft.
- Fourth floor 550 sq. ft.
- Total Floor Area 4,497 sq. ft.
- Open platform 550 sq. ft.

The building is configured to provide a variety of training opportunities for firefighters under realistic and emergent circumstances. It includes doors, windows, stairwells, balconies, roof areas, and interior spaces that simulate building conditions fire fighters encounter in actual emergency situations. In addition, the facility provides fire hose connections, burn rooms/areas, a theatrical smoke distribution system, rappelling anchors, moveable interior wall partitions, operable shutters that facilitate a variety of training activities under realistic emergency conditions, and a fan to dissipate smoke from burn rooms.

Proposed materials include metal siding in a clapboard design, as well as metal trim, stairs, balcony rails, doors and windows. The proposed exterior building color is a cream beige intended to blend with the existing fire station building. No exterior lighting is proposed on the building. Small signs are included on doors and walls for field location purposes.

Training operations on the site are expected to occur daily between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. and on Thursday evenings between 7:00 and 9:00 p.m. Training operations would involve three Coastside Fire Protection District (CFPD) engine companies and up to four San Mateo County (CalFire) engine companies that provide operational support and mutual aid to CFPD. Each engine company would be staffed by three firefighters: a maximum of three engine companies (nine firefighters) would train on the site at any one time. Training activities include live fire attack, hose advancement, ventilation, search and rescue, laddering, high angle rope rescue operations, rappelling, roof penetrations and confined space exercises. The CFPD has clarified that the use of live fire would be limited to 15 times per year. The proposed training activities

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<sup>1</sup> The applicant has agreed to Condition A.2.a of the Draft Conditions, which requires the height of the facility to be lowered to 50 feet.



do not include the use of fire suppression foam or hazardous materials, and no hazardous materials are proposed to be stored on the training lot. Proposed operational limitations have been included in Condition No. A.4 of the Draft Conditions of Approval.

The training site will also be used as a helipad in emergencies. The CFPD has indicated that the site is currently used for helicopter landings during emergencies and that no change in frequency of helicopter landings is anticipated.

#### Existing Site

The southerly portion of the site is currently developed with Fire Station 40 and associated parking facilities. The station includes living quarters for fire personnel, fire truck garages, and administrative offices. Approved site improvements are currently under construction on the northerly portion of the site, in the area proposed for the new training facility. These include pavement, gated vehicular access from Main Street, tubular steel perimeter fencing, light standards, a bioswale, and 15 additional perimeter trees (approved under Coastal Development Permit PDP-066-14). A 10,000-gallon, below-grade draughting pit, approved under Coastal Development Permit Exemption PDP-15-010, is intended to retain water pumped to and from tanker trucks during routine training. Water used for training operations inside the training facility would also be conveyed to the draughting pit via an internal drain.



Figure 1. Site Location





**Figure 2. View of Fire Training Yard from Main Street**

### **Permit History**

The original Coastal Development Permit application for Fire Station 40 was submitted in 1996 (CDP-02-96), and the facility was constructed in 1998. That application included a training facility as a second phase, but complete plans were not provided for the second phase improvements. The CFPD filed a second Coastal Development Permit in 2002 for a volunteer/museum building and fire training facility totaling 6,782 square feet in floor area (PDP-90-02). The single-story volunteer/museum building was proposed to be located close to Main Street and the four-story, 45-foot training facility was located behind it. The training facility was proposed to be constructed of concrete block. The Architectural Review Committee denied the proposal on a split vote (one yes and one no) and the Planning Commission determined that a new Initial Study was needed. The Initial Study was never completed and the application was deemed withdrawn in 2008.

### **Surroundings Properties**

The project site is located at the northeast corner of the intersection of Main Street and Higgins Canyon Road, with Highway 1. The site is bordered on the north by the Coastal Repertory Theater, which is zoned P-S, Public Service; on the east by agricultural land located outside the City limits; on the south by agricultural land zoned OS-R, Open Space Reserve; and on the west by vacant land zoned PUD for

which a Coastal Development Permit application (PDP 072-13) is on file to allow construction of an auto dealership and associated commercial uses.

Buildings of varying architectural styles inform the existing visual character of the vicinity of the project site. Fire Station 40, located on the same parcel as the proposed training facility, is a single-story building with a sloped standing-seam metal roof with large eaves and five fire engine bays. The Coastal Repertory Theater is an industrial building with a domed roof, and residential development located further north consists of two-story buildings with pitched roofs. Single-story buildings and surface parking are located along Main Street to the northeast.

### **Story Poles**

Story poles are not required for this project in that the proposed training facility does not require an exception or variance, is not located in a substantially undeveloped area, and is not located in a Visual Resource Area as defined in Zoning Code Chapter 18.37.

### **ANALYSIS**

Key issues for this project are conformance with the General Plan/Local Coastal Program (LCP) and Zoning Code, compatibility with surrounding development, and the Mitigated Negative Declaration.

#### **Conformance with the General Plan/Local Coastal Program**

The project is located within the Public Facilities and Institutions General Plan designation. This designation is intended to provide for educational, governmental, and institutional uses not normally accommodated in offices located in the general commercial area, such as schools, public works and utility yards, and maintenance buildings and hospitals. The proposed fire training facility is consistent with this designation.

The project is also consistent with the Local Coastal Program. It will not interfere with coastal access and is located on a developed fire station site that is not located in a designated Visual Resource Area or Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Area. The Coastside Fire Protection District has filed a Coastal Development Permit application for the project in conformance with LCP Policy 10-1 "City LCP Permitting Requirements", and the project is consistent with the Zoning Code and LCP, in conformance with LCP Policy 10-2 "City LCP Conformance." See the discussion of Zoning Code conformance below.

#### **Conformance Zoning Code**

The proposed training facility, a key element of Fire Station 40's on-going training program, is an allowed use within the P-S, Public Service Zoning District. As indicated in Table 1 below, the training facility is also consistent with all of the development regulations of the P-S District, except height. The building height of 50 feet shown on the project plans is measured from the top of a 6-inch cement pad, rather than from existing grade as specified in the Zoning Code. The Fire District has agreed to Condition A.2.a of the Draft Conditions of Approval, which requires the height of the facility to be lowered by six inches.



The Zoning Code does not include a specific parking standard for a fire station. Staff believes the parking standard for a “public utility, substation, and related facilities”, which is one space per employee plus one space per company vehicle, provides a reasonable parking ratio for the fire station use. The Fire District has indicated that Station 40 has a maximum of 13 employees and 7 vehicles, including engines and ambulances. Based on one parking space per employee and one per District vehicle, the station would need 20 parking spaces. The existing parking lot includes 19 parking spaces, and the garage provides 5 large parking bays, resulting in a total of 24 parking spaces. Any trainees not assigned to Station 40 will arrive at the site in Fire District vehicles, which will be parked on the training lot during the training activities. Based on this analysis, staff concludes that the site has adequate parking for the existing fire station and the proposed training facility.

**Table 1. Project Conformance with P-S Zoning District Requirements**

Development Standards	Zoning Requirements	Proposed
Minimum Site Area	6,000 sq. ft.	86,463 sq. ft. (existing)
Minimum Front Setback	20 ft.	138.0 ft.
Minimum Interior Side Setback	none	48.6 ft.
Minimum Rear Setback	none	38.9 ft.
Maximum Height	50 ft.	50.5 ft.
Parking	20 spaces	24 spaces (existing)

#### **Visual Resource Protection Standards**

The project site is not located within any of the Visual Resource Areas identified in Zoning Code Section 17.37.020 and is not subject to the visual resource protection standards applicable to those areas. The project site is not within a designated Scenic Corridor in that it is not located on a Scenic Coastal Access Route, is not in an area of Broad Ocean Views, and is not in an area of Highway 1 that is designated a scenic highway.<sup>2</sup> Finally, the site is not located within a Planned Development Area, on a designated Upland Slope, or within the Old Downtown.

#### **Compatibility with the Surrounding Area**

Compatibility for this project involves both visual compatibility with the surrounding area and operational compatibility with adjacent uses. These issues are discussed below.

#### **Architectural and Visual Compatibility**

The project site is located at what is generally considered to be the southerly gateway to Downtown Half Moon Bay. Although the subject site is not located within the area of the Downtown Specific Plan, the Plan identifies Higgins Canyon Road and Main Street as a gateway

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<sup>2</sup> Highway 1 is not designated a Scenic Highway within the Half Moon Bay City Limits.

intersection. The Specific Plan includes policies promoting gateway signage and beautification, and calling for removal of features that detract from the visual appeal of the gateway, such as inoperable vehicles and sign clutter. The gateway policies do not provide guidance for surrounding development.

The existing site is developed with a large fire station building that serves as the end cap for a string of commercial and residential buildings that extend along the east side of Main Street from the center of the City to Higgins Canyon Road. The project includes placement of a 4-story, 4,497 square-foot training facility at the north end of the project site, between the existing Coastal Repertory Theater and Fire Station 40. The proposed building has a footprint and massing that is considerably smaller, but somewhat taller than that of the adjacent buildings. The building's lot coverage, at approximately 1,875 square feet, is less than 6% of the total area of the training lot. The building's upper stories step back from a ground floor of 1,604 square feet to a relatively slender top floor and open platform of 550 square feet each. As conditioned, the overall height is 50 feet, roughly 20 feet taller than the adjacent buildings.<sup>3</sup> The visual effect of this additional height is moderated by the building's small size, its greater massing at the ground level, the open nature of the platform at the top of the building, and by the building location, which is set back 138 feet from Main Street, 135 feet from the theater, and 130 feet from the fire station. Visual simulations of the proposed training facility are included in the Initial Study (Attachment 3).

The height and design of the proposed training facility is utilitarian and intrinsic to its use. The Fire District has indicated that the facility is intended to simulate building types and occupancies existing in the District's service area - with operable doors, windows, stairwells, balconies, roof areas, fire hose connections, burn rooms, rappelling anchors, moveable interior wall partitions, and operable shutters. As result, the building is somewhat utilitarian and industrial in appearance. This look is not an abrupt contrast with that of the existing fire station with its standing seam metal roof and large fire engine bays, or with the industrial style of the adjacent theater building. The training facility's small size and location at the back of the site minimize the visual effect from Main Street.

The proposed building and additional perimeter trees (previously approved but not yet planted<sup>4</sup>) will partially obstruct current views of the hillsides available from Main Street across the vacant portion of the site; however, the relatively small building will leave portions of the site open to views, and the development is consistent with the existing pattern along Main Street where buildings are interspersed with open parking areas and street trees block views at regular intervals. The proposed facility will have an incremental effect on views from Higgins Canyon Road, across the open agricultural fields east of the project site. This effect is expected to be fairly minor in light of the existing pattern of development along Main Street. The

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<sup>3</sup> The exact height of the adjacent buildings is not available, but staff estimates the fire station at approximately 30 feet in height and the theater at slightly less than 30 feet.

<sup>4</sup> This includes nine additional trees along the Main Street frontage and six additional trees along the northerly property line.



proposed facility will be visible from Highway 1, but is not expected to be visually intrusive or significantly obstruct views of the hillsides due to the building's relatively small size, its distance from the Highway, and the screening provided by existing and approved trees on both sides of Main Street.



Figure 3. View of Fire Station 40 Site from Higgins Canyon Road

Overall, staff believes that the proposed fire training facility can be found to be visually consistent with the pattern of development in the surrounding area. As conditioned, the project is consistent with the height limit of the Zoning Code. It is not located within a designated Visual Resource Area. The relatively small size of the building and its placement on the site mitigate the visual effect of the facility's height in relation to adjacent buildings. The building design is reasonably compatible with the existing fire station and theater buildings, and the project will not significantly affect views from Main Street, Higgins Canyon Road, or Highway 1.

#### Operational Compatibility

The primary issues for operational compatibility with surrounding uses include air quality, noise, and lighting. The CFPD has indicated that fire training activities similar to what will occur at the fire training facility are already occurring in and around the existing fire station, and that neither the number of training sessions nor the number of trainees per session will increase as result of the proposed fire training facility. The only change will be that training activities will



moved further north on the site and some activities currently occurring outdoors will take place within the training facility.

Live fire training (up to 15 days per year), which is currently occurring in open areas of the site, would be moved to the burn rooms/areas of the fire training facility. A live burn would involve setting a clean wood pallet (void of oil, tar, grease or plastic) in a fire containment box on fire for a period of several minutes. A fan would be used to exhaust smoke from the burn rooms. The purpose of the exercise is to demonstrate and train firefighters in the techniques of fire attack, suppression, and search and rescue in conditions simulating an actual fire. Because the fire training facility would move the live burns approximately 200 feet closer to sensitive receptors (i.e., residents of the housing development located north of the theater), the associated air emissions were included in the health risk assessment prepared for the project. This assessment indicated that the health risk associated with live burn emissions is far below Bay Area Air Quality Management District project-level standards.

The Initial Study indicates that the before-project and after-project noise levels on the site would be comparable. The noise associated with training exercises would primarily occur during normal business hours and may be lower than existing conditions since the exercises currently occur entirely outside, and with implementation of the project, some activities would be moved into the proposed training facility. Noise generating activities on the site would include the running of fire engine motors, chainsaws, hydraulic rescue equipment, and smoke blowers; similar to what currently occurs on the site. No sirens, bells, or amplified sound would be used in future training drills.

No new exterior lighting is proposed for the training facility; new lighting would be limited to internal stairwells. Site lighting for the training lot will be provided by three new light standards previously approved under Coastal Development Permit PDP-066-14. These match light standards existing on the site.

Based on the above analysis, staff concludes that the training activities associated with the proposed training facility would not result in any additional land use compatibility concerns.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION**

The Coastside Fire Protection District, as the lead agency for environmental review of the project, has prepared an Initial Study (IS), Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) and Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) for the project. The District circulated the Draft IS/MND for public review for 20 days, responded to comments received during the public review period, and adopted the Final IS/MND and MMRP on December 2, 2015.

The Final IS/MND identifies mitigation to reduce potentially significant construction impacts in

the areas of noise and air quality to a non-significant level, as follows:<sup>5</sup>

- 1) Noise. Mitigation Measure Noise 1 identifies best management practices for reduction of construction noise. Mitigation Measure Noise 2 specifies that the construction manager coordinate with the Coastside Repertory Theater regarding show times and specifies that no construction shall occur during a show. Staff has incorporated this mitigation into the Draft Conditions of Approval in Attachment 1 (see Conditions C.1 and C.2).
- 2) Air Quality. Mitigation Measure Air Quality 1 identifies Bay Area Air Quality District best management practices to minimize construction emissions. Staff has incorporated this mitigation into the Draft Conditions of Approval in Attachment 1 (see Condition C.4).

Based on the Initial Study, inclusion of this mitigation in the project reduces all of the potentially significant environmental impacts to a less-than-significant level.

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the above analysis, staff concludes that the proposed fire training facility is consistent with the General Plan, Local Coastal Program and Zoning Code and that the project is compatible with surrounding uses and conforms to the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act. Staff recommends approval of the project based on the recommended findings and conditions of approval (Exhibits A and B).

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### **ATTACHMENTS**

**Without Attachments 1 and 2**

1. Draft Resolution with Findings and Evidence, Exhibit A and Conditions of Approval, Exhibit B.
2. Project Plans
3. Final Mitigated Negative Declaration and Initial Study
4. Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (Attachments 3 and 4 are available at: [http://www.half-moon-bay.ca.us/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=69&Itemid=81](http://www.half-moon-bay.ca.us/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=69&Itemid=81))

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<sup>5</sup> The Initial Study also identifies a potentially significant public service impact associated with construction of the fire training facility in regard to noise and air quality. The mitigation for this potential public service impact is the same as identified above for noise and air quality.