



PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA REPORT

DATE: October 10, 2025

AGENDA OF: October 16, 2025

ITEM NO: CP24-0172
Council District: 2

1305 East Cliff Drive

RECOMMENDATION: That the Planning Commission acknowledge the environmental determination and approve the Coastal Permit, Design Permit, and Special Use Permit based on the Findings listed below and the attached Conditions of Approval.

APN: 010-282-01

Property Owner: City of Santa Cruz
Project Applicant: Santa Cruz Museum of Natural History, Felicia Van Stolk

Application Type: Coastal Permit, Design Permit, and Special Use Permit for a renovation and expansion of the Santa Cruz Museum of Natural History building which is listed on the City's Historic Building Survey (Vol. 1, Page 143) on a property located in the PK/PF/CZ-O/SP-O (Parks/Public Facilities/Coastal Zone Overlay/Shoreline Protection Overlay) zone districts.

Zoning: PK/PF/CZ-O/SP-O (Parks/Public Facilities/Coastal Zone Overlay/Shoreline Protection Overlay)

Project Consistency: With permit approvals, the project is consistent with the Zoning Ordinance.

General Plan:
Project Consistency: Parks (PR) & Community Facilities (CF)
Consistent with the PR/CF General Plan designation.

Land Use - existing: City Park/Museum
- proposed: City Park/Museum
- surrounding: Single-family residences/Coastal Bluff

Lot Area: 1.3 acres

Environmental Review: Categorical Exemption (Section 15301, Class 1, Existing Facilities and Section 15331, Class 31, Historical Resource Rehabilitation)

Planning Staff: Ryan Bane, Senior Planner

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION/BACKGROUND

The 1915 Carnegie Library building is a one story, wood framed structure located in the southwest corner of Tyrrell Park, fronting on East Cliff Drive in the Seabright neighborhood of Santa Cruz.



Figure 1: Project Area

Originally constructed as a branch library, the building has been occupied by the Santa Cruz Museum of Natural History since 1954, connecting people with nature and science to inspire stewardship of the natural world. The Museum serves as an exhibit hall, classroom, retail space, event venue, office, workshop, and collections storage. The Museum Improvement Project includes site enhancements to preserve the City’s historic building, protect the Museum’s unique

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collections, and increase safety; also, to improve accessibility and energy efficiency to better serve the community. The Museum building was added onto twice during the 1960s and is owned by the City of Santa Cruz with a long-term lease to the Museum.

The existing Museum building is 5,034 square feet on two levels, with a portion of the building below grade. The main museum upper level includes 3,093 square feet of gallery exhibit space,

reception area, restrooms, a gift shop and a 60 square foot lobby. The lower level includes 1,292 square feet of office space, meeting/library area, staff kitchen, a restroom, and 589 square feet of collections storage.

Project Description. The new project will maintain and restore the front historic Carnegie Library portion of the building. Additions would be made to the portions of the building that were constructed to the rear of the museum in the 1960s. The project would result in a 10,762 square foot building, on three levels, with a footprint of 6,472 square feet. The new portions of the museum would add a 1,085 square foot classroom/community room with a terrace on the west side of the building at the street level, in addition to a lobby, restrooms, storage, small kitchen, attic storage, and elevator tying in the other two levels.



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The main gallery exhibit space would be increased to 4,156 square feet total on the upper level by adding on to the north and west. There would be improvements to the reception area, gift shop, and storage on the gallery's main level. The lower administrative level directly below the new exhibit space would be 3,117 square feet with an expanded and modernized collections area, additional office space, break room, restrooms, storage and a patio. A garden learning center with sample native habitat plantings will be replanted where needed around the Museum. Access improvements would be made to the pathways and the iconic whale sculpture will remain, with better access to it as well.

Background. The proposed additions to the museum building required approval of a Historic Alteration Permit at a public hearing before the Historic Preservation Commission because they would result in an exterior material change of a historic property (Santa Cruz Municipal Code section 24.08.910) listed in Volume I, page 143 of the City Historic Building Survey. In addition to the proposed rehabilitation and expansion of the museum, the proposal includes a request for a Historic Variation to parking. The Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) considered the Historic Alteration Permit and Historic Variation to parking at a public hearing on September 17, 2025 where it was approved unanimously.

PERMITS/REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

The project requires the following permits:

- **Coastal Permit** for development within the CZ-O (Coastal Zone Overlay) and SP-O (Shoreline Protection Overlay) districts.
- **Special Use Permit** for a public facility use in the PK/PF (Parks District/Public Facilities District) zone districts.
- **Design Permit** for construction of a public facility in the PK/PF (Parks/Public Facilities) zone districts.
- **Historic Alteration Permit** to allow for alterations to the museum building listed on the City's Historic Building Survey. (Approved by the Historic Preservation Commission on September 17, 2025)
- **Historic Variation** to vary from the parking standards. (Approved by the Historic Preservation Commission on September 17, 2025)

Zoning Ordinance Section 24.04.150 states that when a project requires more than one permit and the approval of those permits normally rests with more than one decision making body, the body with the highest authority shall take action on all permits concurrently. As such, these permits will be heard at a public hearing by the Planning Commission.

RESOURCES AND CONSTRAINTS

- **Archaeology:** The property is partially located within a highly sensitive archaeological area. An archaeological report was prepared by *Past Lifeways Archaeological Studies* in November of 2024. The study concluded that there was no evidence of significant

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archaeological artifacts or ecofacts observed in the Study Area, resulting in Negative Findings.

- **Sensitive Habitat/Monarch Butterflies/Creek Management Area:** Portions of the site are located with sensitive habitat areas. A Biotic Assessment was prepared by *Ecosystems West Consulting Group* in December of 2024. The study concluded that no sensitive habitat or special-status plants are expected to be impacted by activities related to the Santa Cruz Museum of Natural History Improvement project. The project area does not provide high quality habitat for roosting monarchs and is not expected to support overwintering populations. Impacts from construction extending slightly into the designated Pilkington Creek Management Area will not negatively affect the creek or its riparian corridor.
- **Historic:** The site is listed on the City’s Historic Building Survey (Volume 1, Page 143). A Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation Compliance Assessment was prepared by *Stephen Farneth FAIA* on December 14, 2024. The Historic Preservation Commission approved the Historic Alteration and Historic Variation to parking at a public hearing on September 17, 2025.
- **Heritage Trees:** There are no heritage trees proposed for removal.

ANALYSIS

General Plan Consistency. Tyrrell Park and the museum site have two General Plan land use designations of CF (Community Facility) and PR (Parks). The CF designation is intended for “existing and potential community facilities, including schools, government offices, community buildings such as the Civic Auditorium, sewer and water facilities, and the City landfill. Also applies to land used by State highways.” The PR designation is intended for “neighborhood, community, and regional parks that are owned by the City, County, or State, and which are used by residents and visitors for passive or active recreation. Also allows limited development of structures to support these recreational uses.” The proposed project is consistent with the General Plan land use designations as the expansion and improvements to the existing museum and park enhance an established community facility for visitors and passive recreation. The project conforms to the goals of the *General Plan 2030* in that it will protect a historically and architecturally significant building listed in the City’s Historic Building Survey, native and natural plant and animal communities and habitats, and sensitive archaeological resources. It also will support the continued operations of an important community facility that serves the local population.

Seabright Area Plan. The subject area is located within an area encompassed by the Seabright Area Plan which was adopted in 1981. The area plan addresses four specific categories: direct tourist impacts; traffic and circulation; neighborhood preservation; and long-term policies and programs to address major land use and public facilities and service issues. Implementation of the policies are intended to preserve the small-scale residential character of the area, diminish the impacts of tourism in the neighborhood, and to guide future physical development within the Seabright area. While the area plan provides guidelines for architectural compatibility for single-family homes, there is little discussion of Tyrrell Park or any guiding policies regarding the park. The plans states that Tyrrell Park serves three purposes:

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1. It is a neighborhood park;
2. It is the location of the City Museum; and
3. Its eastern edge is a riparian corridor.

There are no modifications or improvements suggested in the plan relative to the museum use, with recommendations including installation of children’s play equipment near the corner of Forbes Street and Pilkington Avenue and maintaining the riparian corridor along the eastern edge of the site. The proposed improvements to the museum and the amphitheater all appear consistent with the goals and policies of the Seabright Area Plan.

Zoning Ordinance Consistency The subject property is located in the PK (Parks) and PF (Public Facilities) zone districts. Pursuant to Zoning Code Section 24.10.1740, the purpose of the PK zone district is “to designate sites for public parks, and to ensure that there is a compatible relationship between such parks and the surrounding area.” In the PK zone district, public park and recreational facilities as well as government and public facilities are subject to approval of a Special Use Permit and Design Permit. Building heights are limited to 35-feet in residential areas, and setbacks are to reflect those required by adjacent districts.

Pursuant to Zoning Code Section 24.10.1760, the purpose of the PF zone district is “to designate public buildings and facilities and to ensure that there is a compatible relationship between such uses and the surrounding area.” In the PK zone district, “art galleries and museums on public property” are subject to approval of a Special Use Permit and Design Permit. Building heights are limited to 35-feet in residential areas, and setbacks are to reflect those required by adjacent districts.

The museum and public park use have occupied this site for over 100 years and the proposed improvements to the museum structure and use, as well as the garden learning center, will continue as an important public facility, park, and museum which are uses that meet the purposes of both the PK and PF zone districts. The addition to the museum building falls well under the 35-foot height restriction, with the highest portions of the structure measuring approximately 30-foot in height. The R-1 (Single-Family Residential) zone district surrounds the site, with front setbacks of 20-feet and exterior side setbacks of 8-feet. The existing historic museum will maintain an approximately 31-foot setback from the East Cliff Drive frontage, and the new addition maintains an approximately 15-foot setback along the Pilkington Avenue exterior side, meeting the established development standards for the two zone districts.

Coastal Permit. The proposed project requires a Coastal Permit because it is located within the Coastal Zone Overlay (CZ-O) district and Shoreline Protection Overlay (SP-O) district. The proposed project is consistent with the policies of the Local Coastal Program, including but not limited to the following policies:

- **1.7** Develop plans to repair, maintain and maximize public access and enjoyment of recreational areas along the coastline consistent with sound resource conservation principle, safety, and rights of private property owners. (See policies under EQ 4.1, CD 3.4.2, L 3.5.)

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- **2.1** Protect and encourage restoration and rehabilitation of historic and architecturally-significant buildings and landmarks (See policies under CD 3.5.)
- **3.3** Require development adjacent to natural areas and agricultural/grazing lands to be compatible with adjacent lands in terms of land use, visual transition and siting. (See Policies under CD 1.4 and CD 2.2)
- **3.5** New or renovated development shall add to, not detract from City-identified landmarks, historic areas and buildings, and established architectural character worthy of preservation. (See Maps CD-4 and CD-5, policies under goal CR 4, L 4.3, S 2.3.1, S 2.4, and the Santa Cruz Historic Building Survey.)
- **3.6** Maintain existing park lands and ensure that adequate park land is provided in conjunction with development. (See policies under goal PR 1)
- **3.7.2** Support the designation of Santa Cruz as an informational center for the Monterey Bay Sanctuary.
- **4.2.4** Preserve riparian and wetland vegetation by minimizing removal and allowing only for uses dependent on the resources, passive recreational use, and maintenance of existing uses according to adopted management plans with compensating mitigation.
- **4.5.3** Protect monarch butterfly overwintering sites and ensure adequate buffering of these sites from development
- **5.3.5** Ensure that visitor-serving facilities are arranged and developed in a compact, integrated manner to reduce automobile circulation and emphasize pedestrian movement. (See policy ED 5.3)

As proposed, the project is consistent with applicable policies of the Local Coastal Program, which seek to minimize the impact of development on coastal resources and provide visitor-serving uses in the beach area.

Design Permit. Tyrrell Park slopes down eastward from Pilkington Avenue toward Pilkington Creek which generally runs along the eastern side of the park. The museum is generally located on the southwest corner of the park with the main entrance facing East Cliff Drive. Trails and pathway provide access to the park which is mostly made up of open lawn area, a small amphitheater, and riparian area along the creek.

Section 24.08.21 of the City of Santa Cruz Municipal Code regulates development adjacent to city watercourses, consistent with provisions of the adopted City-Wide Creeks and Wetlands Management Plan, including requirements for issuance of a Watercourse Development Permit. No impacts from the building addition or other project improvements are planned for the 40-foot Development Setback or Riparian Corridor, with building expansion to the east and renovation of the existing amphitheater slightly encroaching into the designated Management Area for Pilkington Creek. Disturbance in this area will primarily impact developed pedestrian pathways and ornamental demonstration gardens with no project related impacts extending beyond the existing split-rail fence and adjacent pathway immediately upslope and west of the Pilkington Creek riparian corridor. Zoning Code Section 24.08.2140 lists exemptions to Watercourse Development Permits in the Coastal Zone, and the project specifically meets Section 24.08.2140(1)(b) which exempts “Development projects within a Category “B” watercourse located outside of the designated riparian corridor and development setback area (in the remaining

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management area).” This section also requires that the project meet the criteria listed in Zoning Code Section 24.08.230.1 regarding Coastal Permit exemptions. While portions of the project fall within an environmentally sensitive habitat area, the project does not involve a seawall revetment; dredging; nor repairs or maintenance that include the placement or removal of rip-rap, rocks, or other beach materials that involve the presence of mechanized equipment or construction materials. Therefore, a Watercourse Development Permit is not required.

The larger portions of the museum addition will extend westward toward Pilkington Avenue and northward into the park area. A large terrace off the proposed community room will overlook the park along the north elevation of the addition. The primary siting and façade of the original historic building overlooking Monterey Bay will remain largely unchanged and will be rehabilitated consistent with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation. The addition will have minimal impact to the historic materials and character-defining features of the historic resource and would not result in any substantial adverse change to the historic building. In addition, the project’s overall design would protect and preserve the historic and architectural qualities and physical characteristics which make the building a listed resource of the City of Santa Cruz Historic Building Survey.



The proposed new additions to the east and north facades of the 1968 portion of the building are designed to simply extend the form, materials, and detailing of the modest structure. The overall form of the western addition is a rectangular footprint with a gable roof running north and south, separated from the existing building by a flat-roofed link. Materials of the additions are stucco walls with wood trim, metal windows and metal door systems. As previously mentioned, the Historic Preservation Commission has reviewed the building design and approved the Historic Alteration Permit, finding that the project’s overall design would protect and preserve the historic and architectural qualities and physical characteristics which make the building a listed resource of the City of Santa Cruz Historic Building Survey.

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Parking. Historically the Carnegie Library and subsequent museum use have been part of Tyrrell Park and have relied on street parking. Pursuant to the Zoning Code, expansion of the museum would trigger a requirement to provide parking on site. However, the project qualified for a Historic Variation to parking which was approved by the Historic Preservation Commission on September 17, 2025. Section 24.12.445 of the City Zoning Ordinance allows for development on historic sites to vary from the required site development standards and uses where variations “promote the preservation, maintenance, and rehabilitation of an historic structure or site”. This section also states that Historic Variations in the Coastal Zone may trigger a Coastal Permit and must be in conformance with the Coastal Permit findings. Therefore, the Historic Variation to parking has been included in the Coastal Permit findings for clarification,

Incorporating a parking lot as part of the project would eliminate the majority of the park open space, significantly impacting the usable open space of the park and likely eliminating the outdoor amphitheater. Additionally, paving a large swath of the park would negatively impact the look and feel of Tyrrell Park as well as the historic museum building. While the expansion of the museum will enhance the overall experience for visitors, it is not anticipated that it will significantly increase the number of visitors to the museum to justify the addition of parking.

Public Improvements. The project will include the following public improvements:

- Incorporation of an accessible parking space along Pilkington Avenue;
- Two new ADA ramps, one at the corner of Pilkington Avenue and East Cliff Drive, and the other at the corner of Pilkington Avenue and Forbes Street;
- Two new designated bike rack locations along Pilkington Avenue;
- ADA concrete path that provides access to the museum as well as the newly designed amphitheater; and
- New park amphitheater with seating.

Special Use Permit. Both the PF and PK zone districts require a Special Use Permit for “government and public facilities” and “art galleries and museums on public property”. The subject building was established as a public library in 1915 and has been occupied by the Santa Cruz Museum of Natural History since 1954, long establishing the building as a public facility. Researching the City archives, a use permit (UP-66-25) to construct a 1,200 square foot addition to the museum was approved in 1966. Section 24.08.025 of the Zoning Ordinance states that applications for modification to a Use Permit for a property or portion thereof upon which a Use Permit has been previously issued, shall be treated as an application for a new Use Permit. The Use Permit supersedes or revokes only those Use Permits authorizing use of the same space authorized by the existing permit, but does not affect other uses or Use Permits on the same site. Therefore, the requested Use Permit Modification is subject to review at a public hearing as a new Use Permit, but will not affect the approved Use Permits at the property. Therefore, with the expansion of the museum and the improvements to the park, a Special Use Permit is included as part of the approval of the application.

Health in All Policies (HiAP). HiAP is a collaborative approach to improving the health of all people by incorporating health considerations into decision-making across sectors and policy

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areas. HiAP is based on 3 pillars: equity, public health, and sustainability. The goal of HiAP is to ensure that all decision-makers are informed about the health, equity, and sustainability impacts of various policy options during the policy development process. The project is aligned with the goals of Health in All Policies in that it promotes the long-term viability and usability of an existing historic structure as well as improves, enhances, and protects the museum's unique collections, increases safety, and improves accessibility and efficiency to better serve the community.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) provides several “categorical exemptions” which are applicable to categories of projects and activities that the Natural Resource Agency has determined generally do not pose a risk of significant impacts on the environment. The project qualifies for two Categorical Exemptions (Section 15301, Class 1, Existing Facilities and Section 15331, Class 31, Historical Resource Rehabilitation) because the project involves improvements to a historic structure which are consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation of Historic Structures.

None of the exceptions to the exemptions under Section 15300.2 apply to the project in that the project is not part of a larger project that could result in a cumulative impact, there are no unusual circumstances associated with the project or subject parcel, the project will not result in damage to resources associated with an officially designated scenic highway, the project site is not included on any lists compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code related to Hazardous Waste Sites, and the project will not result in substantial adverse changes in the significance of a historical resource site.

SUMMARY

The project meets all the required site area standards and the findings for approval of the Coastal Permit, Design Permit, and Special Use Permit as detailed in this report and various attachments. The project implements goals and policies of the General Plan and Coastal Plan to support expansion of an important local museum in a historically listed structure. Staff recommends approval based on the Findings below and the attached Conditions of Approval.

FINDINGS

Coastal Permit, Section 24.08.250

1. Maintain views between the sea and the first public roadway parallel to the sea.

The project will not affect coastal views because the property is located on the north side of East Cliff Drive which is the first public roadway parallel to the sea.

2. Protect vegetation, natural habitats and natural resources consistent with the Local Coastal Land Use Plan.

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Portions of the site are located with sensitive habitat areas. A Biotic Assessment was prepared by *Ecosystems West Consulting Group* in December of 2024. The study concluded that no sensitive habitat or special-status plants are expected to be impacted by activities related to the Santa Cruz Museum of Natural History Improvement project. The project area does not provide high quality habitat for roosting monarchs and is not expected to support overwintering populations. Impacts from construction extending slightly into the designated Pilkington Creek Management Area will not negatively affect the creek or its riparian corridor. There are no heritage trees proposed for removal.

The property is partially located within a highly sensitive archaeological area. An archaeological report was prepared by *Past Lifeways Archaeological Studies* in November of 2024. The study concluded that there was no evidence of significant archaeological artifacts or ecofacts observed in the Study Area, resulting in Negative Findings.

3. Be consistent with any applicable design plans and/or area plans incorporated into the Local Coastal Land Use Plan.

The subject area is located within an area encompassed by the Seabright Area Plan which was adopted in 1981. The area plan addresses four specific categories: direct tourist impacts; traffic and circulation; neighborhood preservation; and long-term policies and programs to address major land use and public facilities and service issues. Implementation of the policies are intended to preserve the small-scale residential character of the area, diminish the impacts of tourism in the neighborhood, and to guide future physical development within the Seabright area. While the area plan provides guidelines for architectural compatibility for single-family homes, there is little discussion of Tyrrell Park or any guiding policies regarding the park. The plans states that Tyrrell Park serves three purposes:

1. It is a neighborhood park;
2. It is the location of the City Museum; and
3. Its eastern edge is a riparian corridor.

There are no modifications or improvements suggested in the plan relative to the museum use, with recommendations including installation of children's play equipment near the corner of Forbes Street and Pilkington Avenue and maintaining the riparian corridor along the eastern edge of the site. The proposed improvements to the museum and the amphitheater all appear consistent with the goals and policies of the Seabright Area Plan, including implementation of the Historic Variation to parking to maintain the usable open space of the park and use of the outdoor amphitheater. Paving a large swath of the park would negatively impact the look and feel of Tyrrell Park as well as the historic museum building. While the expansion of the museum will enhance the overall experience for visitors, it is not anticipated that it will significantly increase the number of visitors to the museum to justify the addition of parking.

4. Maintain public access to the coast along any coastline as set forth in the Local Coastal Land Use Plan.

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The proposed project maintains, and in some cases improves public access, by way of the existing pathways through the park. In addition, public access improvements include:

- Incorporation of an accessible parking space along Pilkington Avenue;
- Two new ADA ramps, one at the corner of Pilkington Avenue and East Cliff Drive, and the other at the corner of Pilkington Avenue and Forbes Street;
- Two new designated bike rack locations along Pilkington Avenue;
- ADA concrete path that provides access to the museum as well as the newly designed amphitheater; and
- New park amphitheater with seating.

All of these improvements maintain public access to the coast as set forth in the Local Coastal Land Use Plan.

5. Be consistent with the Local Coastal Land Use Plan goal of providing visitor-serving needs as appropriate.

The proposed project requires a Coastal Permit because it is located within the Coastal Zone Overlay (CZ-O) district and Shoreline Protection Overlay (SP-O) district. The proposed project is consistent with the policies of the Local Coastal Program, including but not limited to the following policies:

- **1.7** Develop plans to repair, maintain and maximize public access and enjoyment of recreational areas along the coastline consistent with sound resource conservation principle, safety, and rights of private property owners. (See policies under EQ 4.1, CD 3.4.2, L 3.5.)
- **2.1** Protect and encourage restoration and rehabilitation of historic and architecturally-significant buildings and landmarks (See policies under CD 3.5.)
- **3.3** Require development adjacent to natural areas and agricultural/grazing lands to be compatible with adjacent lands in terms of land use, visual transition and siting. (See Policies under CD 1.4 and CD 2.2)
- **3.5** New or renovated development shall add to, not detract from City-identified landmarks, historic areas and buildings, and established architectural character worthy of preservation. (See Maps CD-4 and CD-5, policies under goal CR 4, L 4.3, S 2.3.1, S 2.4, and the Santa Cruz Historic Building Survey.)
- **3.6** Maintain existing park lands and ensure that adequate park land is provided in conjunction with development. (See policies under goal PR 1)
- **3.7.2** Support the designation of Santa Cruz as an informational center for the Monterey Bay Sanctuary.
- **4.2.4** Preserve riparian and wetland vegetation by minimizing removal and allowing only for uses dependent on the resources, passive recreational use, and maintenance of existing uses according to adopted management plans with compensating mitigation.
- **4.5.3** Protect monarch butterfly overwintering sites and ensure adequate buffering of these sites from development

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- **5.3.5** Ensure that visitor-serving facilities are arranged and developed in a compact, integrated manner to reduce automobile circulation and emphasize pedestrian movement. (See policy ED 5.3)

As proposed, the project is consistent with applicable policies of the Local Coastal Program, which seek to minimize the impact of development on coastal resources and provide visitor-serving uses in the beach area.

6. Be consistent with the Local Coastal Land Use Plan goal of encouraging coastal development uses as appropriate.

The Local Coastal Program encourages protection, restoration and rehabilitation of historic and architecturally-significant buildings and landmarks in the coastal zone. The museum project accomplishes this in addition to continuing to provide an important visitor-serving use in the Coastal Zone. As proposed, the project is consistent with applicable policies of the Local Coastal Program, which seek to minimize the impact of development on coastal resources and provide visitor-serving uses in the beach area.

Design Permit Findings, Section 24.08.430

7. The site plan and building design are consistent with design and development policies of the General Plan, any element of the General Plan, and any area plan, specific plan, or other city policy for physical development. If located in the Coastal Zone, the site plan and building design are also consistent with policies of the Local Coastal Program.

Tyrrell Park and the museum site have two General Plan land use designations of CF (Community Facility) and PR (Parks). The CF designation is intended for “existing and potential community facilities, including schools, government offices, community buildings such as the Civic Auditorium, sewer and water facilities, and the City landfill. Also applies to land used by State highways.” The PR designation is intended for “neighborhood, community, and regional parks that are owned by the City, County, or State, and which are used by residents and visitors for passive or active recreation. Also allows limited development of structures to support these recreational uses.” The proposed project is consistent with the General Plan land use designations as the expansion and improvements to the existing museum and park enhance an established community facility for visitors and passive recreation. The project conforms to the goals of the *General Plan 2030* in that it will protect a historically and architecturally significant building listed in the City’s Historic Building Survey, native and natural plant and animal communities and habitats, and sensitive archaeological resources. It also will support the continued operations of an important community facility that serves the local population.

The subject area is located within an area encompassed by the Seabright Area Plan which was adopted in 1981. The area plan addresses four specific categories: direct tourist impacts; traffic and circulation; neighborhood preservation; and long-term policies and programs to address major land use and public facilities and service issues. Implementation of the policies are intended to preserve the small-scale residential character of the area, diminish the impacts of

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tourism in the neighborhood, and to guide future physical development within the Seabright area. While the area plan provides guidelines for architectural compatibility for single-family homes, there is little discussion of Tyrrell Park or any guiding policies regarding the park. The plans states that Tyrrell Park serves three purposes:

4. It is a neighborhood park;
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There are no modifications or improvements suggested in the plan relative to the museum use, with recommendations including installation of children's play equipment near the corner of Forbes Street and Pilkington Avenue and maintaining the riparian corridor along the eastern edge of the site. The proposed improvements to the museum and the amphitheater all appear consistent with the goals and policies of the Seabright Area Plan.

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- **3.7.2** Support the designation of Santa Cruz as an informational center for the Monterey Bay Sanctuary.
- **4.2.4** Preserve riparian and wetland vegetation by minimizing removal and allowing only for uses dependent on the resources, passive recreational use, and maintenance of existing uses according to adopted management plans with compensating mitigation.
- **4.5.3** Protect monarch butterfly overwintering sites and ensure adequate buffering of these sites from development

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- **5.3.5** Ensure that visitor-serving facilities are arranged and developed in a compact, integrated manner to reduce automobile circulation and emphasize pedestrian movement. (See policy ED 5.3)

As proposed, the project is consistent with applicable policies of the Local Coastal Program, which seek to minimize the impact of development on coastal resources and provide visitor-serving uses in the beach area.

- 8. For nonresidential projects, the project's location, size, height, operations, and other significant features and characteristics are compatible with and do not adversely affect or further degrade adjacent properties, the surrounding neighborhood, or the public health, safety, and welfare. For residential projects, the project complies with the objective standards and requirements of the zoning district in which it is located, as well as any objective standards of any area plan or other regulatory document that applies to the area in which the project is located.**

This is a nonresidential project that involves rehabilitation and expansion of a museum that has occupied the site since 1954. The operations of the museum will remain unchanged, will remain compatible with the surrounding neighborhood and will not adversely affect the public health, safety or welfare.

- 9. For nonresidential projects, the project provides for an arrangement of uses, buildings, structures, open spaces, and other improvements that are compatible with the scale and character of the adjacent properties and surrounding neighborhood.**

This is a nonresidential project that involves rehabilitation and expansion of a museum that has occupied the site since 1954. The proposed rehabilitation and expansion of the museum building will remain compatible with the scale and character of the neighborhood, meeting the setback and height requirement of the underlying zone district.

- 10. The exterior design and appearance of buildings and structures and the design of the site plan shall be compatible with design and appearance of other existing buildings and structures in neighborhoods which have established architectural character worthy of preservation.**

The museum building is listed on the City's Historic Building Survey (Volume 1, Page 143). A Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation Compliance Assessment was prepared by *Stephen Farneth FAIA* on December 14, 2024. The Historic Preservation Commission reviewed the design and appearance of the proposed rehabilitation and expansion of the museum, finding that it meets the historic standards and approved the Historic Alteration at a public hearing on September 17, 2025.

- 11. Design of the site plan respects design principles in terms of maintaining a balance of scale, form and proportion, using design components which are harmonious, and materials and colors which blend with elements of the site plan and surrounding areas.**

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Location of structures takes into account maintenance of public views; rooftop mechanical equipment is incorporated into roof design or screened from public rights-of-way to the extent possible. Utility installations such as trash enclosures, storage units, traffic-control devices, transformer vaults and electrical meters are accessible and screened.

The new project will maintain and restore the front historic Carnegie Library portion of the building. Additions will be made to the portions of the building that were constructed to the rear of the museum in the 1960s. The project would result in a 10,762 square foot building, on three levels, with a footprint of 6,472 square feet. The new portions of the museum would add a 1,085 square foot classroom/community room with a terrace on the west side of the building at the street level, in addition to a lobby, restrooms, storage, small kitchen, attic storage, and elevator tying in the other two levels. The addition has been designed to be compatible with the existing historic structure as well as blend in with the design elements of the original museum building. The proposed new additions to the east and north facades of the 1968 portion of the building are designed to simply extend the form, materials, and detailing of the modest structure. The overall form of the western addition is a rectangular footprint with a gable roof running north and south, separated from the existing building by a flat-roofed link. The gable roof is higher over the community room space, with a slightly lower ridge over the entrance lobby. The pitch of the new gable roofs match the roof pitch of the existing building, and the upper gable ridge matches the gable ridge of the existing building. The end walls of the gable roof over the community room are parapeted Dutch gables similar in character to those of the original 1915 wings. Materials of the additions are stucco walls with wood trim, metal windows and door systems. A belt course at the height of the window sills wraps around the addition. A standard condition of approval has been included requiring any new mechanical equipment to be screened and utilities to be undergrounded.

- 12. Where a site plan abuts, or is in close proximity to, uses other than that proposed, the plan shall take into account its effect on other land uses. Where a nonresidential use abuts or is in close proximity to a residential use, the effect of the site plan should maintain the residential quality of adjacent or nearby areas.**

This is a nonresidential project that is located in a public park across the street from residential single-family homes. While the expansion of the museum will enhance the overall experience for visitors, it is not anticipated that it will significantly increase the number of visitors to the museum. Thus, the rehabilitation and expansion of the existing museum building will not have any adverse effects on residential uses within the surrounding area.

- 13. To the extent feasible, the orientation and location of buildings, structures, open spaces and other features of the site plan maintain natural resources including significant trees and shrubs, minimize impacts to solar access of adjacent properties, and minimize alteration of natural land forms; building profiles, location, and orientation must relate to natural land forms.**

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Portions of the site are located with sensitive habitat areas. A Biotic Assessment was prepared by *Ecosystems West Consulting Group* in December of 2024. The study concluded that no sensitive habitat or special-status plants are expected to be impacted by activities related to the Santa Cruz Museum of Natural History Improvement project. The project area does not provide high quality habitat for roosting monarchs and is not expected to support overwintering populations. Impacts from construction extending slightly into the designated Pilkington Creek Management Area will not negatively affect the creek or its riparian corridor, with limited grading required for the addition. There are no heritage trees proposed for removal. The museum project is located in a public park across the street from residential single-family homes and will not have any adverse impacts on solar access.

- 14. The site plan ensures that the scale, bulk, and setbacks of new development preserve important public views along the ocean and of designated scenic coastal areas. Where appropriate and feasible, the project shall restore and enhance visual quality of visually degraded areas.**

The project will not affect coastal views as the property is located on the north side of East Cliff Drive, and will restore the historic building as well as enhance portions of the public park.

- 15. The site plan shall reasonably protect against external and internal noise, vibration and other factors which may tend to make the environment less desirable. The site plan should respect the need for privacy of adjacent residents.**

Prior to construction of the addition and rehabilitation a building permit will need to be obtained. The structures will be required to comply with all applicable regulations of the California Building Code pertaining to noise, vibration, and other factors that affect indoor and exterior environmental quality. The subject buildings are not adjacent to any residential uses; therefore, the project will not affect privacy for residents.

- 16. Buildings and structures shall be designed and oriented to make use of natural elements such as solar radiation, wind, and landscaping for heating, cooling, ventilation, and lighting.**

The new addition and rehabilitation of the historic museum will have operable windows and doors that can be opened for passive wind cooling and ventilation. The windows may also provide passive solar heating during the cold season.

Special Use Permit, Section 24.08.050

- 17. The proposed structure or use conforms to the requirements and the intent of this title, and of the General Plan, relevant area plans, and the Coastal Land Use Plan, where appropriate;**

Tyrrell Park and the museum site have two General Plan land use designations of CF (Community Facility) and PR (Parks). The CF designation is intended for “existing and potential community facilities, including schools, government offices, community buildings

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such as the Civic Auditorium, sewer and water facilities, and the City landfill. Also applies to land used by State highways.” The PR designation is intended for “neighborhood, community, and regional parks that are owned by the City, County, or State, and which are used by residents and visitors for passive or active recreation. Also allows limited development of structures to support these recreational uses.” The proposed project is consistent with the General Plan land use designations as the expansion and improvements to the existing museum and park enhance an established community facility for visitors and passive recreation. The project conforms to the goals of the *General Plan 2030* in that it will protect a historically and architecturally significant building listed in the City’s Historic Building Survey, native and natural plant and animal communities and habitats, and sensitive archaeological resources. It also will support the continued operations of an important community facility that serves the local population.

The subject area is located within an area encompassed by the Seabright Area Plan which was adopted in 1981. The area plan addresses four specific categories: direct tourist impacts; traffic and circulation; neighborhood preservation; and long-term policies and programs to address major land use and public facilities and service issues. Implementation of the policies are intended to preserve the small-scale residential character of the area, diminish the impacts of tourism in the neighborhood, and to guide future physical development within the Seabright area. While the area plan provides guidelines for architectural compatibility for single-family homes, there is little discussion of Tyrrell Park or any guiding policies regarding the park. The plans states that Tyrrell Park serves three purposes:

1. It is a neighborhood park;
2. It is the location of the City Museum; and
3. Its eastern edge is a riparian corridor.

There are no modifications or improvements suggested in the plan relative to the museum use, with recommendations including installation of children’s play equipment near the corner of Forbes Street and Pilkington Avenue and maintaining the riparian corridor along the eastern edge of the site. The proposed improvements to the museum and the amphitheater all appear consistent with the goals and policies of the Seabright Area Plan.

The proposed project requires a Coastal Permit because it is located within the Coastal Zone Overlay (CZ-O) district and Shoreline Protection Overlay (SP-O) district. The proposed project is consistent with the policies of the Local Coastal Program, including but not limited to the following policies:

- **1.7** Develop plans to repair, maintain and maximize public access and enjoyment of recreational areas along the coastline consistent with sound resource conservation principle, safety, and rights of private property owners. (See policies under EQ 4.1, CD 3.4.2, L 3.5.)
- **2.1** Protect and encourage restoration and rehabilitation of historic and architecturally-significant buildings and landmarks (See policies under CD 3.5.)

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- **3.3** Require development adjacent to natural areas and agricultural/grazing lands to be compatible with adjacent lands in terms of land use, visual transition and siting. (See Policies under CD 1.4 and CD 2.2)
- **3.5** New or renovated development shall add to, not detract from City-identified landmarks, historic areas and buildings, and established architectural character worthy of preservation. (See Maps CD-4 and CD-5, policies under goal CR 4, L 4.3, S 2.3.1, S 2.4, and the Santa Cruz Historic Building Survey.)
- **3.6** Maintain existing park lands and ensure that adequate park land is provided in conjunction with development. (See policies under goal PR 1)
- **3.7.2** Support the designation of Santa Cruz as an informational center for the Monterey Bay Sanctuary.
- **4.2.4** Preserve riparian and wetland vegetation by minimizing removal and allowing only for uses dependent on the resources, passive recreational use, and maintenance of existing uses according to adopted management plans with compensating mitigation.
- **4.5.3** Protect monarch butterfly overwintering sites and ensure adequate buffering of these sites from development
- **5.3.5** Ensure that visitor-serving facilities are arranged and developed in a compact, integrated manner to reduce automobile circulation and emphasize pedestrian movement. (See policy ED 5.3)

As proposed, the project is consistent with applicable policies of the Local Coastal Program, which seek to minimize the impact of development on coastal resources and provide visitor-serving uses in the beach area.

18. That any additional conditions stipulated as necessary in the public interest have been imposed;

Standard conditions of approval have been included to ensure the interests of the public.

19. That such use or structure will not constitute a nuisance or be detrimental to the public welfare of the community; and

The museum use has operated at the site since 1954 and the rehabilitation and expansion of the structure will not constitute a nuisance or be detrimental to the public welfare of the community.

20. That all thrift store uses shall include a management plan that identifies collection facilities for donated items, operating hours for donation facilities which discourage unsupervised dropoffs, adequate storage areas for sorting the materials, and provides a plan to properly dispose of unusable items in a timely, secure, and orderly fashion and maintains premises in a clean and attractive condition.

The project does not contain a thrift store; therefore, this finding does not apply.

Shoreline Protection Overlay District, Section 24.10.2430

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21. Protect trees and vegetation and sensitive wildlife habitat;

Portions of the site are located with sensitive habitat areas. A Biotic Assessment was prepared by *Ecosystems West Consulting Group* in December of 2024. The study concluded that no sensitive habitat or special-status plants are expected to be impacted by activities related to the Santa Cruz Museum of Natural History Improvement project. The project area does not provide high quality habitat for roosting monarchs and is not expected to support overwintering populations. Pathways, fencing and landscaping currently exist in the management area and work will be limited to repair and maintenance. Therefore impacts from construction extending slightly into the designated Pilkington Creek Management Area will not negatively affect the creek or its riparian corridor. There are no heritage trees proposed for removal.

22. Be consistent with the following criteria for bluff or cliff development:

a. The development is sited and designed to assure stability and structural integrity of its expected economic life span and minimize alterations to natural land forms.

b. The development will not create or contribute significantly to problems of erosion or geologic instability on the site or on surrounding geologically hazardous areas.

c. The development minimizes alteration of cliffs, bluff tops, faces or bases, and will not interfere with sand movement.

d. The development which proposes use of retaining walls shall be allowed only to stabilize slopes. Sea walls at the toe of sea cliffs to check marine erosion shall be allowed only where there is no less environmentally damaging alternative.

e. The development within one hundred feet of any cliff or bluff line shall follow the recommendations of an approved geologic report by a registered geologist. The area where such a report is required may be increased where the issue of slope stability requires a greater distance from any cliff or bluff line.

Not applicable. The project is located inland from the first public roadway parallel to the sea and is not located on a coastal bluff or cliff.

23. Provide maximum erosion protection, using accepted engineering practices and other methods and specifications set forth in this title;

The project site does not contain steep slopes. Erosion control measures will be required as part of the grading permit. Plans submitted for building permits will be required to demonstrate compliance with the revised Chapter 6B of the City's Best Management Practices Manual – Storm Water BMPs for Private and Public Development Projects. Required documentation will include a Storm Water Control Plan following the guidance in Chapter 6B demonstrating compliance with the water quality treatment and runoff retention requirements, and an Operation and Maintenance Plan for stormwater control measures

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incorporated in to the project design. Site plans shall contain notes and details on stormwater control measures incorporated in the project design.

24. Maintain public view corridors between the sea and the first public roadway parallel to the sea and maintain natural views of the coastline;

The project will not affect coastal views because the property is located on the north side of East Cliff Drive which is the first public roadway parallel to the sea.

25. Protect paleontological resources as prescribed in the Land Use Plan;

The site is located within a mapped highly sensitive paleontological area. A condition of approval requires work to be stopped in the unlikely event that resources are discovered during construction.

26. Protect and enhance free public access to or along the beach, and sign such access when necessary;

The proposed project maintains, and in some cases improves public access, by way of the existing pathways through the park. In addition, public access improvements include:

- Incorporation of an accessible parking space along Pilkington Avenue;
- Two new ADA ramps, one at the corner of Pilkington Avenue and East Cliff Drive, and the other at the corner of Pilkington Avenue and Forbes Street;
- Two new designated bike rack locations along Pilkington Avenue;
- ADA concrete path that provides access to the museum as well as the newly designed amphitheater; and
- New park amphitheater with seating.

All of these improvements maintain public access to the coast as set forth in the Local Coastal Land Use Plan.

27. Include mitigation measures prescribed in any applicable environmental document;

Not applicable.

28. Be compatible with the established physical scale of the area;

This is a nonresidential project that involves rehabilitation and expansion of a museum that has occupied the site since 1954. The proposed rehabilitation and expansion of the museum building will remain compatible with the scale and character of the neighborhood, meeting the setback and height requirement of the underlying zone district.

29. Be consistent with the design review guidelines of this title and the policies of any applicable area plan;

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30. Be consistent with the policies of the Local Coastal Program, the General Plan, and the California Coastal Act.

Tyrrell Park and the museum site have two General Plan land use designations of CF (Community Facility) and PR (Parks). The CF designation is intended for "existing and potential community facilities, including schools, government offices, community buildings such as the Civic Auditorium, sewer and water facilities, and the City landfill. Also applies to land used by State highways." The PR designation is intended for "neighborhood, community, and regional parks that are owned by the City, County, or State, and which are used by residents and visitors for passive or active recreation. Also allows limited development of structures to support these recreational uses." The proposed project is consistent with the General Plan land use designations as the expansion and improvements to the existing museum and park enhance an established community facility for visitors and passive recreation. The project conforms to the goals of the *General Plan 2030* in that it will protect a historically and architecturally significant building listed in the City's Historic Building Survey, native and natural plant and animal communities and habitats, and sensitive archaeological resources. It also will support the continued operations of an important community facility that serves the local population.

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- **1.7** Develop plans to repair, maintain and maximize public access and enjoyment of recreational areas along the coastline consistent with sound resource conservation principle, safety, and rights of private property owners. (See policies under EQ 4.1, CD 3.4.2, L 3.5.)
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As proposed, the project is consistent with applicable policies of the Local Coastal Program, which seek to minimize the impact of development on coastal resources and provide visitor-serving uses in the beach area.

Submitted by:

Approved by:

Ryan Bane
Senior Planner

Samantha Haschert
Principal Planner

ATTACHMENTS:

- Conditions of Approval
- Project Plan Set
- Biotic Assessment
- Public Notice Radius Map