PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA REPORT

MEETING DATE: OCTOBER 26, 2026 ITEM NUMBER: PH-2

SUBJECT: CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT (PCUP-26-0002) TO ALLOW FOR A MUSEUM WITH AN OUTDOOR COURTYARD AT 1901 NEWPORT BOULEVARD, SUITE 100

FROM: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
PLANNING DIVISION

APPLICATION DATE: APRIL 15, 2026

PRESENTATION BY: CHRIS YEAGER, SENIOR PLANNER

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: CHRIS YEAGER
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RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Planning Commission:

1. Find that the project is categorically exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) per CEQA Guidelines section 15301 (Existing Facilities); and

2. Approve Conditional Use Permit (CUP) 26-0002 based on findings of fact and subject to conditions of approval.

APPLICANT OR AUTHORIZED AGENT

The applicant and authorized agent is Marwa Saeed, representing the property owner 1901 Newport LLC.

PLANNING APPLICATION SUMMARY

Location:	1901 Newport Boulevard, Suite 100	Application Number:	PCUP-26-0002
Request:	Conditional Use Permit (CUP) request to allow for a new 7,162 square foot museum with a 1,348 square-foot outdoor courtyard/patio area to be used for museum programming.		

SUBJECT PROPERTY:		**SURROUNDING PROPERTY:**	
Zone:	PDC (Planned Development Commercial)	**North:**	PDC developed with a multi-family residential use
General Plan:	Commercial Center	**South (across W 19th Street):**	PDC developed with the Triangle
Lot Dimensions:	Irregular approximately 430 Ft X 470 FT	**East (across Newport Blvd):**	C2 (General Business District) developed with various commercial businesses
Lot Area:	Approximately 3.1 acres	**West:**	PDC and C2, developed with a church and multi-family residential uses
Existing Development:	Multiple tenant commercial center with surface parking lot and parking structure.		

DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS COMPARISON

Development Standard	Required	Existing/Proposed
Parking	401	454 [1]
CEQA Review	Exempt per CEQA Guidelines section 15301 (Existing Facilities)	
Final Action	Planning Commission	

[1] Subject property is subject to Assembly Bill (AB) 2097, since it is located within one-half mile of major transit stops. Pursuant to AB 2097, the City is barred from imposing a minimum parking requirement on the project.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The applicant, Marwa Saeed, on behalf of 1901 Newport LLC, requests approval of Conditional Use Permit PCUP-26-0002 to establish the Kahlil Gibran Museum and Library within Suite 100 and the adjoining courtyard to be used for outdoor museum programming at 1901 Newport Boulevard. The proposed museum is a nonprofit cultural and educational institution that would feature permanent and rotating exhibitions, educational programs, guided tours, lectures, film screenings, storytelling events, and cultural gatherings.

The subject property is zoned Planned Development Commercial (PDC) and has a General Plan designation of Commercial Center. Museums are not specifically identified in the City's Land Use Matrix and it was determined that the proposed use is not substantially similar to a listed use and therefore requires approval of a Conditional Use Permit. Staff has determined that the proposed museum is consistent with the General Plan and that, with the recommended conditions of approval, the use would be compatible with surrounding development and would not be materially detrimental to nearby properties. Staff recommends that the Planning Commission find the project exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15301, Existing Facilities, and approve Conditional Use Permit PCUP-26-0002.

SETTING

The subject site is located at the northwest corner of Newport Boulevard and West 19th Street, at the southerly terminus of the SR-55 Freeway. The property is zoned "Planned Development Commercial" (PDC) and has a General Plan designation of "Commercial Center." The project site is developed with a three-story commercial building, a single-story office building, and a five-story parking structure. The total building floor area, excluding the parking structure, is 133,556 square feet. The proposed suite and courtyard is 8,510 square feet. The northerly portion of the site abuts a three-story residential development located at 401 and 421 Bernard Street ("Pacifica Apartments"). Parking for the residential apartments is provided within the aforementioned adjacent parking structure; however, the residential parking is physically separated from the commercial parking.

On April 9, 1984, the Planning Commission granted a Conditional Use Permit (CUP, ZE-84-73) to allow the establishment of a banquet facility at the subject property in Suite 100. On June 5, 2008, the Zoning Administrator granted a Minor Conditional Use Permit (MCUP) ZA-08-16 to allow the banquet facility to expand and replace the previously existing nightclub located in Suite 101 which was incorporated into Suite 100. In 2017, the Zoning Administrator approved MCUP ZA-16-32 to allow public restaurant services to be added to the existing private banquet facility. In 2017, the banquet facility ceased operations.

On November 5, 2009, the Zoning Administrator granted an MCUP to apply a reduced parking requirement for a group-counseling center. The counseling center is located in Suite 149, a tenant space of approximately 3,800 square feet.

On December 8, 2014, CUP PA-14-25 was approved to allow the establishment of Saddleback Church at the subject property. On March 27, 2017, CUP PA-16-64 was approved to allow the continued operation of the church. On February 20, 2020, CUP PA-19-25 was approved to allow the permanent operation of the church use. The use was established with an A3 occupancy, which allows for places where people gather, like churches or event centers.

On October 10, 2022, CUP PA-22-09 was approved to allow for the establishment of an adult day care facility within suites 156, 176, 179, 180, and 190.

REQUEST

The applicant requests approval of a CUP, pursuant to CMMC section 13-30(d), to establish a Museum and to allow for an adjoining courtyard to be used for outdoor museum programming.

Use Classification

Museums are not specifically listed in Land Use Matrix Table 13-30. Pursuant to CMMC section 13-30(d), an unlisted use must be reviewed by the Development Services Director to determine whether it is substantially similar to a listed use. On October 1, 2026, Ordinance 2026-07 went into effect which introduced the Event Center to the land use matrix, and lists event centers as a permitted use in the PDC zone, subject to the approval of a CUP.

In this instance, the Community Development Director has determined that the proposed primary museum use is not substantially similar to any use listed in Table 13-30. On October 1, 2026, Ordinance No. 2026-07 became effective, introducing Event Centers as a new land use classification and establishing associated operational standards. While the museum would operate primarily as a cultural and educational facility, its proposed special events may exhibit operational characteristics similar to those of an Event Center. Therefore, a CUP is required to establish the museum use, including its associated special event activities. Given the proposed frequency and size of these events, the analysis also considers the newly adopted Event Center operational standards to ensure compatibility with surrounding uses.

Pursuant to CMMC Table 13-58. All nonresidential uses shall be conducted under roof except as allowed by a minor conditional use permit or as permitted elsewhere in this Zoning Code. The patio area immediately adjacent to the Museum is proposed to be used for museum programming and is therefore included in the request.

STANDARD OF REVIEW

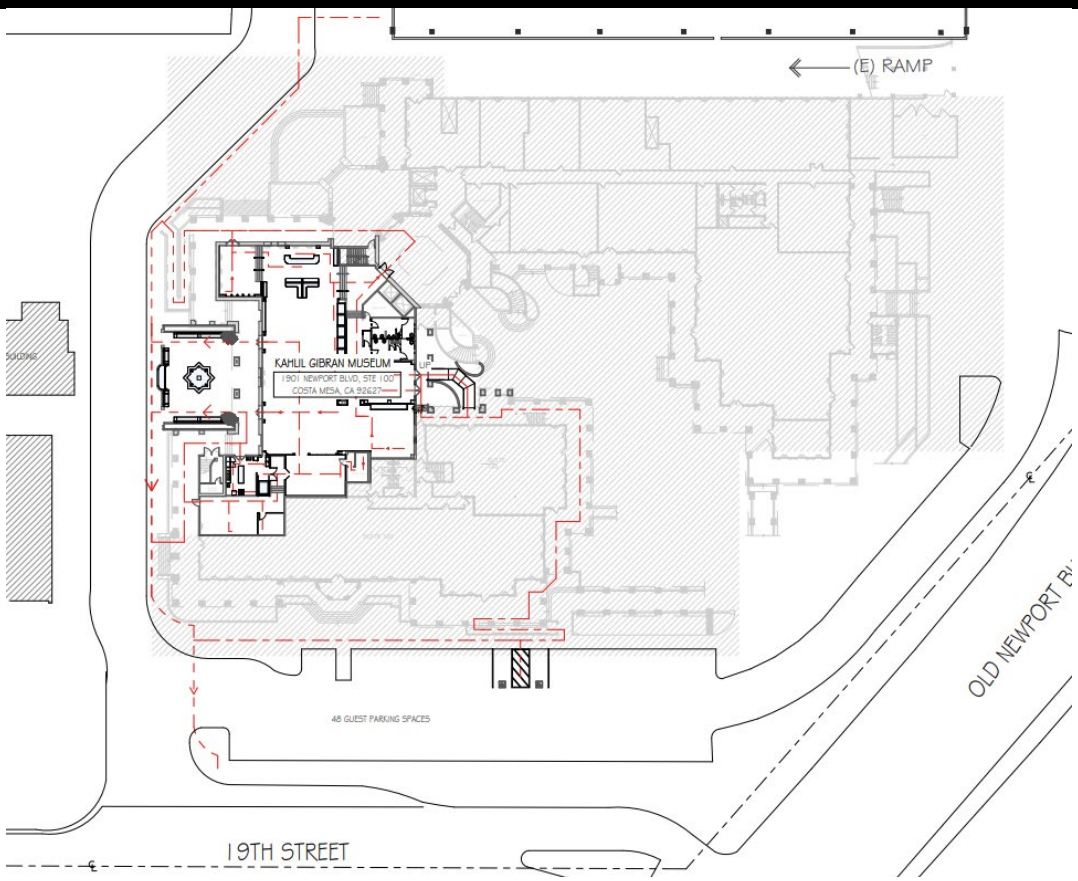
To approve a CUP pursuant to CMMC section 13-29(g)(2)(a-c), the Planning Commission must make the required findings regarding compatibility, public health and safety, and General Plan consistency. The project must be compatible with surrounding developments and should not be detrimental to nearby properties. Additionally, granting the permit must not harm public health, safety, or welfare, nor permit a use, density, or intensity that is inconsistent with the general plan or applicable specific plans. Each application is project-specific and evaluated on its unique merits to ensure it aligns with the City's development standards and the zoning code.

As necessary, conditions may be imposed on the development and operation of a conditional use to ensure compatibility with the surrounding area.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

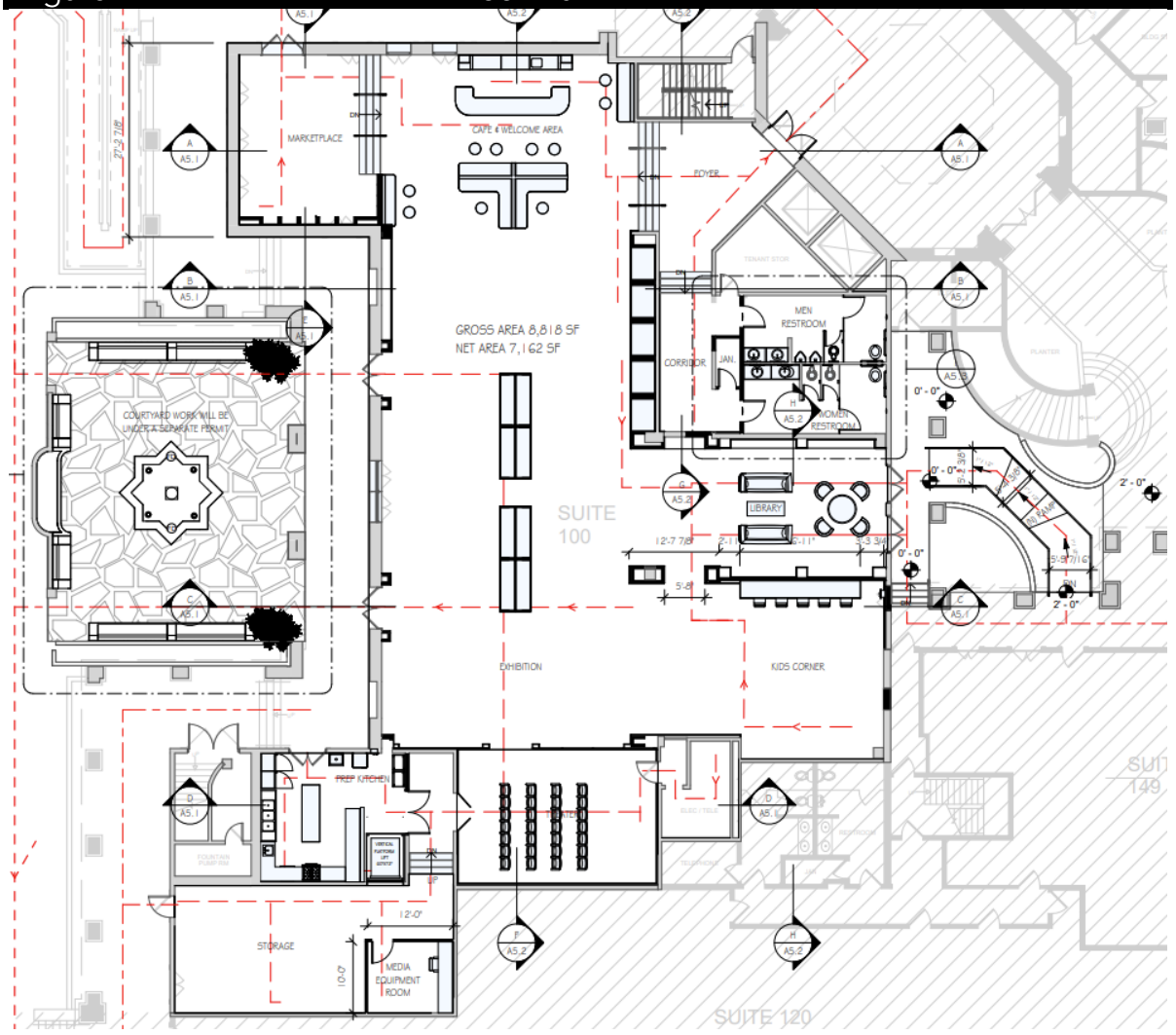
The applicant proposes to establish the Kahlil Gibran Museum and Library within suite 100 and the adjoining courtyard (see figure 1 below). The project is proposed as a nonprofit cultural and educational institution intended to celebrate Arab heritage, literature, art, and historical contributions to society. The organization is a public charity recognized under IRS 501(c)(3) status and is affiliated with the same organization responsible for the Kahlil Gibran National Monument in Washington, DC.

Figure 1 Site Plan



The museum is proposed to feature permanent and rotating exhibitions, educational programming, guided tours, lectures, film screenings, storytelling events, and cultural gatherings. As shown below in the floor plan (Figure 2), the museum is proposed to include a café and welcome area, small retail space, exhibit area, library, kids corner, theater, a storage area, prep kitchen, and the courtyard.

Figure 2 Floor Plan



ANALYSIS

The PDC zone is intended for retail shops, offices and service establishments, including but not limited to, hotels, restaurants, theaters, museums, financial institutions, and health clubs. These uses are intended to serve adjacent residential areas, as well as the entire community and region. The use's A3 occupancy remains unchanged from the previous Church use and is not anticipated to be more intense than the previous use. The proposed museum would introduce a new cultural use to the City and provide residents and visitors with access to educational and cultural resources.

The museum is expected to accommodate cultural gatherings and gala-style events for up to approximately 200 guests. Daily staffing will typically consist of two employees for general operations and tours and additional temporary staff and catering personnel may be retained for larger events as needed. During normal operations, the museum is anticipated to be open weekdays between 10:00 AM and 3:00 PM and occasionally on weekends from 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM. Special events are anticipated to occur twice monthly on weekdays from 5:00 PM to 10:00 PM. To provide operational flexibility, Condition No. 6 would allow the museum to operate between 10:00 AM and 10:00 PM, while limiting special events, including cultural gatherings and gala-style events, to a maximum of two occurrences per month on weekdays between 5:00 PM and 10:00 PM, with a maximum of 200 attendees per event.

The courtyard is proposed to host smaller gatherings of up to 100 attendees, including receptions and community events. Courtyard events are generally anticipated to occur between 10:00 AM and 2:00 PM. Outdoor amplified sound is proposed for microphone-assisted presentations and background music, as appropriate.

Noise

The majority of the museum programming will occur within the building. However, as noted above, occasional events are proposed on the courtyard. The hours of operation for the courtyard use is proposed during daytime hours from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM. The proposed courtyard programming would be limited to daytime hours and therefore would not introduce nighttime outdoor programming at the site. The courtyard is located approximately 80 feet from the nearest residential use (Figure 3).

Figure 3 Residential Proximity



CMMC section 13-280 establishes exterior noise standards. Pursuant to the CMMC, it is unlawful for any person at any location within the City to create any noise, or to allow the creation of any noise on property when the noise level, when measured on any other residential property compared to ambient conditions exceed certain thresholds. To ensure that the proposed use does not become a nuisance to the surrounding residents, Condition No. 7 is proposed to require that any amplified noise on the courtyard be kept to a minimum sound level to be heard within the courtyard and that the use comply with the requirements of the Noise Ordinance. Condition No. 8 is also proposed to limit amplified sound to presentations and background music only and prohibits any musical entertainment including DJs or bands.

Traffic

The Trip Generation Memorandum (Attachment 5) was prepared by K2 Traffic Engineering and reviewed by the City's Transportation division. The memorandum determined that the project would not result in significant transportation impacts because of the limited hours of operation and events proposed outside of peak trip hours. The use would generate 9 net trips compared to the existing uses.

Parking

The project is subject to Assembly Bill (AB) 2097, as it is located within one-half mile of a major transit stop. Pursuant to AB 2097, the City cannot impose a minimum parking requirement on the proposed project. The site currently provides 454 parking spaces within a surface parking lot and parking structure. Based on previous approvals and the parking standards established in the Costa Mesa Municipal Code (CMMC), the site would otherwise be required to provide 401 parking spaces. With 454 existing spaces, the site provides 53 spaces more than would otherwise be required. Therefore, the proposed museum use is not anticipated to adversely impact the site's existing parking supply.

Site Operations

The museum is anticipated to host up to two special events per month, which would result in an increase in the number of people at the site. To ensure that these events do not adversely impact surrounding properties, Condition of Approval No. 12 requires the operator to submit an operations plan consistent with the City's newly adopted operational standards for Event Centers (CMMC Section 13-200.217). The operations plan must address event types, frequency, hours of operation, and maximum occupancy; on-site management and contact information; parking, circulation, and rideshare management; noise control; security and crowd management; alcohol service and applicable licensing requirements; loading and deliveries; and trash collection, site maintenance, and post-event cleanup.

Pursuant to CMMC Section 13-200.217(d)(9), the Community Development Director may require modifications to the approved operations plan to address documented

operational impacts, ensure compliance with conditions of approval, or maintain compatibility with surrounding properties.

GENERAL PLAN CONFORMANCE

The Costa Mesa General Plan establishes the long-range planning and policy direction that guides change and preserves the qualities that define the community. The 2015-2035 General Plan sets forth the vision for Costa Mesa through 2035. This vision focuses on protecting and enhancing Costa Mesa's diverse residential neighborhoods, accommodating an array of businesses that serve both local needs and attract regional international spending, and providing cultural, educational, social, and recreational amenities that contribute to the quality of life in the community. Over the long term, General Plan implementation will ensure that development decisions and improvements to public and private infrastructure are consistent with the goals, objectives, and policies contained in this Plan.

The proposed Museum use is in conformance with the General Plan land use designation for the property. The following analysis evaluates the proposed project's consistency with specific policies and objectives of the 2015-2035 General Plan.

1. ***Policy LU-10.7:*** *Maintain and enhance the City's status and image as a centrally located destination and cultural center in Orange County.*

   Consistency: The Museum will contribute to Costa Mesa's status as a cultural center in Orange County by offering cultural programming to visitors and residents.

2. ***Policy LU-6.7:*** *Encourage new and retain existing businesses that provide local shopping and services.*

   Consistency: The proposed museum would facilitate the establishment of a new museum which provides additional cultural resources to residents and visitors.

3. ***Policy N-2.4:*** *Require that all proposed projects are compatible with adopted noise/land use compatibility criteria.*

   Consistency: The proposed project will comply with applicable Zoning Code and General Plan noise standards. As conditioned, outdoor courtyard use shall be conducted during daytime hours and will not exceed the allowable noise levels as prescribed in the Zoning Code.

FINDINGS

Pursuant to CMMC, section 13-29(g), to approve the project, the Planning Commission must find that the evidence presented in the administrative record substantially meets the following applicable required CUP findings:

a. **Finding:** The proposed development or use is substantially compatible with developments in the same general area and would not be materially detrimental to other properties within the area.

   Facts in Support of Finding. The proposed use is substantially compatible with developments in the same general area and would not be materially detrimental to other properties within the area in that the proposed use consists of a museum use which primarily operates during daytime hours. The museum programming will occur indoor with the exception the courtyard which is only open during the day and which is conditioned to comply with the City's noise ordinance. The use is not anticipated to generate traffic that cannot be accommodated by the existing circulation system and site design.

b. **Finding:** Granting the conditional use permit will not be materially detrimental to the health, safety and general welfare of the public or otherwise injurious to property or improvements within the immediate neighborhood.

   Facts in Support of Finding. The granting of the CUP will not be materially detrimental to the health, safety, and general welfare of the public or otherwise injurious to property or improvements within the immediate neighborhood in that the proposed museum is consistent with other commercial activities, offices, and churches that are currently on the site. The project would not be materially detrimental to public health and safety, all construction will be required to comply with applicable building and fire codes.

c. **Finding:** Granting the conditional use permit will not allow a use, density or intensity which is not in accordance with the General Plan designation and any applicable specific plan for the property.

   Facts in Support of Finding. Granting the CUP will not allow a use, density, or intensity that is inconsistent with the General Plan designation or any applicable specific plan for the property. The site has a General Plan land use designation of Commercial Center. The museum would provide additional cultural programming available to residents and visitors of the City. Although the proposed use is not specifically identified in the CMMC Land Use Matrix, the Commercial Center designation accommodates a variety of uses including retail stores, professional offices, restaurants, hotels, and theaters. The proposed use would support this designation by establishing a local and regional serving cultural establishment further contributing to the City's cultural and artistic identity.

Review Criteria

Pursuant to CMMC section 13-29(e), all planning applications shall be reviewed for consistency with the following review criteria. Below is a summary of the project's conformity with each criterion:

(1) Compatible and harmonious relationship between the proposed building and site development, and use(s), and the building and site developments, and uses that exist or have been approved for the general neighborhood.

The proposed museum would be compatible and harmonious with the surrounding neighborhood because it would introduce a cultural use at the terminus of the 55 freeway. The museum has been reviewed for its relationship with surrounding commercial and residential uses and should not negatively impact the surrounding neighborhood.

(2) Safety and compatibility of the design of buildings, parking area, landscaping, luminaries and other site features which may include functional aspects of the site development such as automobile and pedestrian circulation.

Safety and compatibility are maintained through the proposed project because the circulation, site design, landscaping, and other site features are proposed to remain without change.

(3) Compliance with any performance standards as prescribed in the Zoning Code.

As discussed in the Analysis section of this report, the proposed use would comply with applicable performance standards of the Zoning Code, including applicable noise and operational requirements.

(4) Consistency with the General Plan and any applicable specific plan.

Although the proposed museum is not specifically listed in the Land Use Matrix, the PDC zone is intended to accommodate a range of commercial, cultural, and community-serving uses, and the proposed use is consistent with the Commercial Center General Plan designation. The General Plan land use designation of the property is Commercial Center, which is intended for large areas with a concentration of diverse or intense commercial uses serving local and regional needs. Furthermore, the proposed project is consistent with General Plan Land Use Policies LU-10.7, LU-6.7, and N-2.4 in that the project would add a new cultural use for residents and visitors while not impacting surrounding residential uses.

(5) The planning application is for a project-specific case and is not to be construed to be setting a precedent for future development.

The application has been evaluated based on the specific characteristics of the proposed use, site configuration, surrounding development, and conditions of approval. Approval of this application is project-specific and is not intended to establish a precedent for future development.

(6) When more than one planning application is proposed for a single development, the cumulative effect of all the planning applications shall be considered.

The proposed project includes an application for a museum use and the use of the courtyard, of which the cumulative effect has been considered through this report.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION

The project is exempt from the provisions of the CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15301 (Class 1), Existing Facilities. The Class 1 exemption applies to projects that involve negligible or no expansion of the existing or former use including the use which has a net increase of 9 daily trips. The proposed project would occupy an existing tenant space and would not involve construction or expansion of the existing buildings. The proposed courtyard programming would occur within an existing developed area and would not result in physical expansion of the existing facility. Therefore, the project would involve negligible or no expansion of the existing facility Additionally, none of the exceptions that would preclude the use of a categorical exemption pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15300.2 apply to this project. The project would not result in a significant cumulative impact or have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances. Although the proposed museum is adjacent to a residential neighborhood, there are no unusual circumstances associated with the project that would result in a significant environmental effect. Therefore, the project qualifies for a Class 1 categorical exemption pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15301.

ALTERNATIVES

As an alternative to the recommended action, the Planning Commission may:

Approve the project with modifications. The Planning Commission may suggest specific changes that are necessary to alleviate concerns. If any of the additional requested changes are substantial, the item should be continued to a future meeting to allow a redesign or additional analysis. In the event of significant modifications to the proposal, staff will return with a revised Resolution incorporating new findings and/or conditions.

Deny the project. If the Planning Commission believes that there are insufficient facts to support the findings for approval, the Planning Commission must deny the application, provide facts in support of denial, and direct staff to incorporate the findings into a Resolution for denial. If the project is denied, the applicant could not submit substantially the same type of application for six months.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Pursuant to CMMC section 13-29(d) three types of public notification have been completed no less than 10 days prior to the date of the public hearing:

1. **Mailed notice.** A public notice was mailed to all property owners and occupants within a 500-foot radius of the project site October 16, 2026. The required notice radius is measured from the external boundaries of the property.

2. **On-site posting.** A public notice was posted on each street frontage of the project site on October 15, 2026.

3. **Newspaper publication.** A public notice was published once in the Daily Pilot newspaper on October 15, 2026.

As of the completion date of this report no public comments have been provided. Any public comments received prior to the October 26, 2026, Planning Commission meeting will be provided separately.

CONCLUSION

Approval of the project would allow for the establishment of a new museum, including associated special events and the use of the outdoor courtyard for museum programming. The proposed museum use, including its special event activities, is consistent with the General Plan, Zoning Code, and Planning Application Review Criteria, and the required findings for approval of the CUP can be made. As conditioned, the proposed use would comply with applicable operational standards and would be compatible with surrounding residential and commercial uses without being materially detrimental to other properties in the area. Therefore, staff recommends approval of the proposed project, subject to the conditions of approval contained in the attached resolution.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Draft Planning Commission Resolution
2. Applicant Letter
3. Vicinity Map
4. Zoning Map
5. Trip Generation Memorandum
6. Project Plans