



## REPORT TO CITY COUNCIL

**To:** Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

**From:** Jason Simpson, City Manager

**Prepared by:** Damaris Abraham, Assistant Community Development Director

**Date:** March 26, 2024

**Subject:** Appeal of the Planning Commission's Action to Deny Planning Application No. 2022-02 (Ambassador Discipleship Center) to remodel an existing 14,565 sq. ft. four-story building with a 2,087 sq. ft. addition (16,652 sq. ft. total) and a 3,906 sq. ft. storage building and to establish and operate a congregate living and educational facility located at 164 and 184 South Main Street

**Applicant:** Brett Masters, Dream Center Lake Elsinore

**Appellant:** Brett Masters, Dream Center Lake Elsinore

### **Recommendation**

1. Deny the Appeal and Uphold the Planning Commission's Action to Deny Conditional Use Permit No. 2022-21 and Commercial Design Review No. 2022-14; or
2. Approve the Appeal and Reverse the Planning Commission's Action and Approve Conditional Use Permit No. 2022-21 and Commercial Design Review No. 2022-14.

### **Project Description and Location**

The Ambassador Discipleship Center Project consists of applications for Commercial Design Review No. 2022-14 and Conditional Use Permit No. 2022-21, which collectively are being processed under Planning Application No. 2022-02.

**Commercial Design Review No. 2022-14** proposes to remodel the existing 14,565 sq. ft. four-story Ambassador Hotel building with a 2,087 sq. ft. addition (16,652 sq. ft. total) as a new congregate living and educational facility to include new sleeping dorm rooms, offices, conference/training rooms, a 1,358 sq. ft. dining room and kitchen area/retail commercial restaurant. The project also includes the demolition of the service station and the repair and reconstruction of a 3,906 sq. ft. storage/parking building on the 184 South Main Street parcel and site improvements such as parking lot paving for 29 parking spaces, a new 3,765 sq. ft. basketball

court, water quality detention basin, new sidewalks, lighting, trash enclosure, and landscaping on the approximately 0.85-acre site.

**Conditional Use Permit No. 2022-21** proposes to establish and operate a congregate living and educational facility within the Ambassador Residence Building for 52 participants plus staff for a total of 64 occupants. The program will serve as a transitional housing option, in a congregate dormitory setting, for participants enrolled in or moving on from other programs not located on the property. The program is administered in group, individual, and educational sessions. Participants may include men, women and families each in designated areas of the building. Information regarding the program has been provided by the applicant.

The project site consists of two (2) parcels totaling 0.85 acres in size and is located at the southeast corner of Main Street and Prospect Street, more specifically 164 and 184 South Main Street within the Downtown Elsinore Specific Plan. The first parcel is 0.38 acres of mostly flat terrain that contains the existing vacant Ambassador Hotel, swimming pool, outdoor areas, and a gravel parking lot. The second parcel is 0.47 acres and contains an abandoned service station building and a fire damaged mechanics service garage structure. The project site encompasses Assessor Parcel Numbers (APNs) 373-153-039 and 373-153-041.

### **Background**

The Planning Commission originally heard the project on January 16, 2024. The applicant provided a presentation (Attachment 3) at that meeting and the Planning Commission accepted public oral testimony from fifteen (15) speakers. Three (3) people spoke in opposition, ten (10) people spoke in support of the project, and two (2) speakers were neutral. Issues raised at the meeting include the location of the proposed project on Main Street and the impacts it will have on the other businesses in the Downtown Core Area. The Planning Commission raised concerns about the project's location, compatibility with other uses in the Downtown Area, and consistency with the vision of a vibrant and walkable downtown. The Planning Commission also raised concerns about the retail component of the project, hours of operation, and accessibility to the public. The Planning Commission continued consideration of the item to February 6, 2024 in order to allow the applicant additional time to address the issues raised.

At the February 6, 2024 Planning Commission meeting, the Planning Commission accepted public oral testimony from thirty-seven (37) speakers. Fifteen (15) people spoke in opposition and twenty-two (22) people spoke in support of the project. Seven (7) written comments (six (6) in opposition and one (1) in support) were received and are included as Attachment 4 to this Staff Report. The applicant provided an updated presentation (Attachment 5) at the February 6 public hearing to address the issues raised in the prior public hearing. This presentation provided new information regarding the project and proposed uses, including modification of the project's retail component to include a proposed 50's style diner, retail/gift shop, and shared spaces, including conference rooms, rooftop venue, backyard recreational uses, parking, and pool/hot tub to complement the other uses in the downtown area. The Planning Commission expressed concern that although the applicant has provided additional information regarding the proposed project, the location for the proposed project creates incompatibility with other uses in the Downtown Core

area. The Planning Commission voted 4-1 to deny Commercial Design Review No. 2022-21 and Conditional Use Permit No. 2022-14.

On February 20, 2024, the applicant, Brett Masters, Dream Center Lake Elsinore, filed a timely appeal of the Planning Commission's decision to deny Commercial Design Review No. 2022-21 and Conditional Use Permit No. 2022-14.

### **Discussion**

In accordance with Section 17.410.100.G of the Lake Elsinore Municipal Code (LEMC), upon hearing the appeal, the City Council shall consider the record and such additional evidence as may be offered, and may affirm, reverse, or modify, in whole or in part, the order, requirements, decision, determination, interpretation, or ruling being appealed, or may make or substitute such other or additional decision or determination as it may find warranted under the provisions of this code, the General Plan, or other City requirements or standards. The hearing body is subject to all of the criteria and requirements for making findings imposed upon the original approving authority, including the requirements to complete environmental review.

### **Fiscal Impact**

The time and costs related to processing this application have been covered by fees paid for by the applicant. No General Fund budgets have been allocated or used in the processing of this application.

### **Attachments**

Attachment 1 – Planning Commission February 6, 2024 Staff Report  
Attachment 2 – February 6, 2024 PC Minutes  
Attachment 3 – Applicant January 16, 2024 Presentation  
Attachment 4 – Public Comments  
Attachment 5 – Applicant February 6, 2024 Presentation  
Attachment 6 – Appeal Form dated February 20, 2024  
Attachment 7 – Public Notice Materials