



Staff Report

File #: REPORT 20-0626, Version: 1

Honorable Chair and Members of the Hermosa Beach Planning Commission

Regular Meeting of October 20, 2020

TEXT 20-02 - Consideration of a Text Amendment to amend HBMC Chapter 17.44 Off-street parking to allow the use of mechanical vehicle lifts as a method to provide required parking, adopt proposed definition of “mechanical vehicle lift,” and determination that the project is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Recommended Action:

1. Adopt the attached resolution recommending the City Council adopt a text amendment to HBMC Chapter 17.44 Off-street parking to allow the use of mechanical vehicle lifts as a method to provide required parking, adopt proposed definition of “mechanical vehicle lift,” and determination that the project is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Background:

On February 21, 2017, the Planning Commission approved a parking plan at 260 31st Street, allowing a proposed parking arrangement, which uses alternative methods, including a mechanical parking lift and compact sized guest stalls. Although the vehicle lift was initially approved in error by the City and approved post-construction by the Planning Commission, the Planning Commission did not want to establish a precedent. The Commission, however, agreed to monitor the 260 31st Street residence and use it as a case study for a potential future zoning code amendment.

On February 13, 2020, the Planning Commission received a letter from a resident requesting the Commission initiate a text amendment to allow vehicle lifts as a mechanism for satisfying parking requirements. In response, the Planning Commission requested staff place the item on a future agenda so they can discuss its advantages and disadvantages.

On May 19, 2020, staff presented different types of vehicle lifts, the relevant Hermosa Beach zoning code sections, and how other cities are addressing vehicle lifts in their city. Staff proposed specific questions to the Planning Commission for feedback on what the City should and should not regulate. After discussing the application of vehicle lifts in Hermosa Beach, the Planning Commission agreed that vehicle lifts should be allowed in all zones (residential, commercial, manufacturing, etc.). However, the Planning Commission requested that staff provide further research into which zones or specific lots vehicle lifts should be allowed to satisfy parking requirements in and with what level of ministerial or discretionary review. The Planning Commission also asked staff to clarify vehicle lifts allowed in setbacks and whether or not a third vehicle could block the vehicle lift.

The Planning Commission agreed to initiate a text amendment and approved P.C. Resolution 20-12 initiating a text amendment to Title 17, entitled “Zoning” of the Hermosa Beach Municipal Code allowing the use of mechanical vehicle lifts; and determined that the action was exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

On August 18, 2020 Staff presented additional research for Commission feedback. At this meeting the Planning Commission directed staff to draft a text amendment and present the item at the next meeting. This report summarizes the proposed text amendment for the Planning Commission to consider and recommend to the City Council.

Analysis:

The following analysis summarizes the proposed text amendments:

Add New Definition to HBMC Section 17.44.010. The Zoning Code does not currently include definition for “Mechanical vehicle lift.” The proposed definition is consistent with the additional proposed text amendments.

“Mechanical vehicle lift” means a mechanical system that lifts or descends one vehicle to make space available to park a second vehicle in a vertical tandem fashion.

Modify HBMC Section 17.44.210. The Zoning Code does not include mechanical vehicle lifts as a factor to be considered in a Parking Plan.

Add New HBMC Sub-Section 17.44.240 (Mechanical vehicle lift). The Zoning Code does not set standards for mechanical vehicle lifts. The proposed text amendment is provided below:

17.44.240 Mechanical vehicle lifts

A. Building Permit Required

1. A building permit is required for the installation of a mechanical vehicle lift system.
2. Mechanical vehicle lifts may be permitted to meet off-street parking spaces requirements in HBMC Section 17.44.020 (Off-street parking-Residential uses) on residential lots equal to or smaller than 2,100 square feet.
3. On residential lots greater than 2,100 square feet, mechanical vehicle lifts are permitted where the parking space(s) provided by the mechanical vehicle lift(s) is/are in excess of the minimum number of required parking spaces and are subject to requirements of this Section.

B. Parking Plan Required. On residential lots greater than 2,100 square feet and in all other zones, mechanical vehicle lifts are allowed to meet the off-street parking space requirements established in HBMC Sections 17.44.020 and 17.44.030 with approval of a Parking Plan, in compliance with HBMC Section 17.44.210 (Parking Plan).

C. Screening. Mechanical vehicle lifts shall be located only within a fully enclosed garage.

D. **Vertical Clearance.** A vehicle lift may only be used to store two (2) vehicles vertically where a minimum vertical height clearance from the garage floor to the garage ceiling plate or, in the case of a lift installed below the garage floor, from the below grade floor to the garage ceiling, is a minimum of twelve (12) feet clear of obstructions.

E. **Safety**

1. All equipment shall be listed and rated by a testing agency recognized by California (i.e. UL).
2. A mechanical vehicle lift shall be permitted only if it is operated with an automatic shutoff safety device and is installed in accordance with manufacturer specifications.
3. A mechanical vehicle lift shall be equipped with a key locking mechanism.
4. Mechanical vehicle lifts shall provide a manual override to access or remove vehicles from the vehicle lift in the event of a power outage.

F. **Miscellaneous**

1. Mechanical vehicle lifts shall not be utilized to meet required guest parking. Guest parking shall remain open and accessible at all times.
2. In buildings that are nonconforming to parking, where fewer parking spaces are provided than required by HBMC Sections 17.44.020 and 17.44.030, the number of at-grade parking spaces shall not be reduced.
3. Standards in HBMC Chapter 17.44 which are not specifically stated in and do not contradict this Section still apply.

Environmental Determination:

Modifications to the Zoning Code are considered a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA); however, the activity of recommending the text amendment to City Council is exempt pursuant to CEQA Guideline Section 15061(b)(3), which states that CEQA applies only to projects which have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. The proposed text amendment serves to establish general standards for mechanical vehicle lifts. Individual projects that are subject to the zoning code would still require individual review for conformance with CEQA. Therefore, the proposed amendment is exempt from CEQA.

General Plan Consistency:

This report and associated recommendation have been evaluated for their consistency with the City's General Plan. Relevant Policies are listed below:

PLAN Hermosa encourages "a parking system that meets the parking needs and demand of residents, visitors, and employees in an efficient and cost-effective manner" (Mobility, Goal 4). While vehicle lifts are not specifically mentioned in this Goal, that plan does say that innovative parking supply solutions will be used to meet the parking demand in the City.

The Pacific Coast Highway Corridor's is the only section of the Plan that specifically mentions vehicle lifts as means for easing parking demand in the City. Policy 6.8 (Balance pedestrian and vehicular circulation) requires new development along corridors to "encourage the use of systems to increase parking lot efficiency, such as mechanical lift systems or occupancy sensors." Parking guidelines in residential portions do not have such requirements. However, the General Plan encourages off-street residential parking to be oriented toward to the alley to reduce curb cuts and disruptions to the pedestrian realm. Limited curb cuts are an effective way to ensure on-street parking is available. The use of mechanical vehicle lifts may result in more innovate building and site designs where the vertical stacking of vehicles may lend to more

narrow driveway approaches and less hardscape on-site. This would result in more permeable surface area and sites providing more open space.

Summary:

Due to the unique lot configurations and conditions that exist in Hermosa Beach, such as small lot sizes, half lot conditions, lots with significant slopes, vehicle access from narrow alleyways and other site constraints, finding unique solutions to providing parking on-site would be beneficial. Staff recommends the Planning Commission adopt the attached resolution recommending the City Council adopt a text amendment to HBMC Chapter 17.44 Off-street parking to allow the use of mechanical vehicle lifts as a method to provide required parking, adopt proposed definition of "mechanical vehicle lift," and determination that the project is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Attachments:

1. May 19, 2020 Planning Commission Agenda
2. August 18, 2020 Planning Commission Agenda
3. Draft Resolution
4. Proposed Text Amendment

Respectfully Submitted by: Melanie Emas, Assistant Planner

Concur: Nicole Ellis, Associate Planner

Reviewed for Legal Consistency: Pat Donegan, City Attorney's Office

Approved By: Ken Robertson, Community Development Director