



# Agenda Item

## Design Review Committee

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**Item #:** 3.1.

10/15/2025

**File #:** 25-0497

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**TO:** Chair and Members of the Design Review Committee

**THRU:** Hayden Beckman, Planning Manager

**FROM:** Arlen Beck, Associate Planner

### 1. SUBJECT

A request to demolish the existing structures and construct a new single-family residence and detached garage at 405 E. Toluca Avenue. (Design Review No. 5156).

### 2. SUMMARY

The applicant proposes to demolish the existing 480 square foot single family residence, 162 square foot porch, and 192 square foot detached garage and construct a new 992 square foot single-family residence, a new 495 square foot Junior Accessory Dwelling Unit (JADU), a new 43 square foot front porch, and a new 795 square foot detached two-car garage on a property designated as a non-contributor, in the Old Towne Historic District located at 405 E. Toluca Avenue.

### 3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

Approval of Design Review No. 5156.

### 4. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Applicant/Owner: Rafi Baghdasarian

Property Location: 405 E. Toluca Avenue

General Plan Designation: Low-Medium Density Residential (LMDR)

Zoning Classification: Duplex Residential District (R2-6)

Existing Development: Single Family Dwelling & detached garage

Associated Application: None

Previous DRC Project Review: None

### 5. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project includes the demolition of the existing structures on the lot, which include a 480 square foot single family residence, a 162 square foot porch, and a 192 square foot detached garage. A new 992 sq ft single family residence, 495 square foot Junior Accessory Dwelling Unit, 43 square foot front porch, and a 795 sq ft detached two-car garage are proposed for construction on the existing lot located within the Old Towne Orange Historic District.

The major components of this project include:

- Demolition of an existing 480 square foot single family residence of Mediterranean Revival architecture which was constructed in 1935, 162 square foot porch, and 192 square foot detached garage which is designated as a non-contributor in the Old Towne Historic District.
- A new 992 sq ft three-bedroom, two-bathroom single family residence with a 4:12 pitch gable roof finished with composition shingles. The proposed house is to be finished with new smooth stucco in the Benjamin-Moore color of "Barely There".
- A new one-bedroom, one-bathroom, 495 square foot Junior Accessory Dwelling Unit (JADU).
- A 795 sq ft detached two-car garage and storage space with a 4:12 pitch gable roof is proposed to match the smooth stucco finish and color of the proposed single-family dwelling and will have a new wood clad garage door which is to be finished in the Benjamin-Moore color of "Burnt Ember".
- 352 sq ft of open space.
- 43 sq ft covered front porch with a concrete floor.
- New wood clad windows and doors throughout.
- New landscaping throughout the project site

## 6. EXISTING SITE

The site is comprised of a narrow, rectangular-shaped lot measuring approximately 6,720 sq. ft. (40 ft. x 168 ft.). It is improved with a 480 square-foot single-family residence near the center of the parcel with a deep front yard setback, and a 192 square-foot detach one-car garage. The existing one-story single-family residence was constructed in 1935, and has a rectangular floor plan with a flat roof. The exterior walls are finished in a combination of vertical wood siding and asbestos shingles. The main entrance to the existing single-family residence is located on the south elevation within a projecting full-width porch with a shed roof. Fenestration consists of aluminum sash and vinyl casement sash within wood-framed windows openings, and partially glazed wood doors with metal screens.

Located northwest of the residence is a detached one-car garage with flat roof, reverse board and batten exterior walls, and sliding wood door garage door. At the rear of the parcel is a small detached shed building with a shed roof, composite exterior wall panels that mimic vertical wood siding, a wood-paneled door, and aluminum sliding sash windows.

Landscaping consists of a grassy lawn with mature trees and shrubs. A concrete block wall is along the east property line within the front yard, and the rear yard is enclosed by a wood perimeter fence. Hardscaping is limited to the concrete driveway that extends northward from E. Toluca Avenue along

the west parcel boundary.

## 7. EXISTING AREA CONTEXT

The project site is surrounded by a mix of single-family homes and duplexes. The block includes both contributing and non-contributing properties. The predominant architectural style of the block is Craftsman bungalow, but there are also Minimal Traditional and Ranch style homes.

The applicant prepared an FAR analysis of the block that includes all properties. The FAR of the block including both contributing and non-contributing properties averages to .24. The project proposes a FAR of .33.

## 8. ANALYSIS OF THE PROJECT

The proposed infill construction is designed to be compatible with the adjacent historic buildings and with the guidelines for Infill Construction in the Historic Preservation Design Standards, in that the location of the new primary and secondary structures would follow the historic pattern of front and side yard setbacks in the neighborhood which will better align with the setting, or streetscape of the historic district, and the proposed garage structure is at the rear of the property behind the primary residence to match the pattern of development in the district. The new building would be similar in mass and scale to surrounding buildings and have a comparable height and roof form. The main entrance and facade will be parallel to and facing the street, with the front door oriented to the west, and the pattern of windows and doors on elevations visible from the street generally follow similar patterns to surrounding historic buildings. Exterior materials are compatible with the size, scale, design, texture, reflectivity, durability, and color of historic materials used on comparable historic buildings in the Historic District. The use of appropriate and compatible materials for the new single-family house and detached two-car garage do not create a false sense of history in that all of the structures will be new, and therefore the Historic District continues to retain its integrity of setting that conveys its significance.

### Floor Area Ratio (FAR):

Most historic residential properties in Old Towne range from 0.15 to 0.25 FAR. The project proposes a FAR of .33. In general, an infill project should aim for a FAR that is no higher than the average FAR on the surrounding block. The applicant prepared an analysis of the block that includes all properties, which for both contributing and non-contributing properties averages to 0.24.

The habitable square footage and FAR of the contributing properties on E. Toluca Avenue are listed below:

- 545 S. Grand Avenue (corner of E. Toluca Avenue): 2,886 sq. ft. living area, 0.26 FAR
- 325/327 E. Toluca Avenue: 2,520 sq. ft. living area, 0.26 FAR
- 334 E. Toluca Avenue: 1,246 sq. ft. living area, 0.26 FAR

With 1,487 sq. ft. of livable area, the proposed project would have a total FAR of 0.33, which is comparable to the contributing properties on the block. Although the FAR is slightly higher, the proposed project will be compatible with the physical form of nearby historic buildings as a low scale residence with similar setbacks, massing, and arrangement of primary and secondary buildings on the site.

### Front Door Orientation:

Standard 4 for infill construction of the Historic Preservation Design Standards states, "A new primary

building should have a main entrance and façade parallel to and facing the street.” The main entrance for the proposed new residence would be on the south elevation, oriented south towards E. Toluca Avenue, however, the front entrance door is oriented to the west. The main entrance and façade are still parallel to the street but the front door does not face the street. Other examples of this type of orientation exist in the district and more specifically it is seen on E. Toluca at 320 E. Toluca Avenue, which is designated as a contributor.

## **9. ADVISORY BOARD RECOMMENDATION**

None.

## **10. PUBLIC NOTICE**

Notice was provided to owners and tenants within 300 feet of the project on or before October 2, 2025, and the site was posted with a notice on or before that date.

## **11. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

The proposed project is categorically exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) per State CEQA Guidelines Section 15303 (Class 3 - New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures), because the request consists of the construction of one new 1,487 sq ft residential structure with a 795 sq ft detached two-car garage on an existing 6,720 sq. ft. lot.

## **12. STAFF RECOMMENDATION AND REQUIRED FINDINGS**

Based on the following Findings and statements in support of such Findings, staff recommends the DRC make a final determination on the proposed project with recommended conditions (Orange Municipal Code 17.10.070.G).

1. In the Old Towne Historic District, the proposed work conforms to the prescriptive standards and design criteria referenced and/or recommended by the DRC or other reviewing body for the project (OMC 17.10.070.G.1).

The proposed project is in conformance with the Historic Preservation Design Standards, which are the prescriptive design criteria for projects within the Old Towne Orange Historic District. It is compatible with the mass, scale, and roof form of the surrounding neighborhood, and would not negatively impact the appearance of the Historic District. Materials and color proposed would be complimentary to the homes in the surrounding neighborhood and preserve the character of the street.

2. In any National Register Historic District, the proposed work complies with the Secretary of the Interior's standards and guidelines (OMC 17.10.070.G.2).

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards do not directly regulate new infill construction but provide guidelines for working on historic properties. For new infill construction in California, these standards focus on new work being visually compatible with the historic environment in terms of mass, size, scale, and architectural features, but also clearly differentiated from the historic buildings to protect historic integrity and avoid creating a "false sense of historic development".

The proposed new infill development keeps existing spatial relationships that characterize the property in relation to the district. The proposed comparable FAR, building layout on the lot, and size and position of the garage in relation to the house will be compatible with and preserve the character of the neighborhood.

3. The project design upholds community aesthetics through the use of an internally consistent, integrated design theme and is consistent with all adopted specific plans, applicable design standards, and their required findings (OMC 17.10.07.G.3).

Projects located in the Old Towne Orange Historic District must comply with the Historic Preservation Design Standards for Old Towne. As described above, the proposed project conforms with these design standards. The project upholds community aesthetics through an internally consisted and integrated design theme, supported by complimentary colors and materials.

4. For infill residential development, as specified in the City of Orange Infill Residential Design Guidelines, the new structure(s) or addition are compatible with the scale, massing, orientation, and articulation of the surrounding development and will preserve or enhance existing neighborhood character (OMC 17.10.07.G.4).

The design of the new single-family residence takes cues from the surrounding historic neighborhood and its buildings without creating an exact replica of a historic architectural style and the proposed project is consistent with the mass, scale, floor area ratio, materials, height, roof form, setbacks, architectural details, and pattern of windows and doors of existing buildings on the street. The proposed front and side yard setbacks are consistent with the historic pattern of front and side yard setbacks in the neighborhood, and the proposed project features a main entrance area and façade that will be facing, and parallel to, the street. The proposed infill single family house and detached two-car garage creates a building that responds to its context within its historic neighborhood and does not create a false sense of history.

### 13. CONDITIONS

The approval of this project is subject to the following conditions:

1. This project is approved as a precise plan. All work shall conform in substance and be maintained in general conformance with the plans (date stamped approved September 3, 2025, and in the project case file), including modifications required by the conditions of approval, and as recommended for approval by the Design Review Committee. After the application has been approved, if changes are proposed regarding the location or alteration of any use or structure, a changed plan may be submitted to the Community Development Director for approval. If the Community Development Director determines that the proposed change complies with the provisions and the spirit and intent of the approval action, and that the action would have been the same for the changed plan as for the approved plan, the Community Development Director may approve the changed plan without requiring a new public meeting. If the Community Development Director determines that any proposed change is substantial, he may refer the plans to the Design Review Committee for subsequent review and determination.
2. The applicant agrees, as a condition of City's approval of Design Review No. 5156, to indemnify, defend, and hold harmless, at applicant's expense, the City, its officers, agents, and employees ("City") from and against any claim, action or proceeding brought against the City, including, but not limited to, any claim, action or proceeding commenced within the time period provided in Government Code Section 66499.37 to attack, review, set aside, void or annul the City's approval, to challenge the determination made by the City under the California

Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") or to challenge the reasonableness, legality or validity of any condition attached hereto. City shall promptly notify applicant of any such claim, action or proceeding to which the City receives notice and to cooperate fully with the applicant in the defense thereof. Applicant shall reimburse the City for any and all costs and expenses, including, but not limited to, court costs and attorney's fees that the City may be required to pay, including any expenses ordered by a court or expenses incurred through the Office of the City Attorney in connection with said claim, action or proceeding. City may, in its sole discretion, participate in the defense of any claim, action or proceeding but such participation shall not relieve applicant of the obligations of this condition. In the event the applicant is required to defend City in connection with such claim, action or proceeding, City shall have the right to approve counsel to so defend the City, approve all significant decisions concerning the manner in which the defense is conducted and approve any all settlements, which approval(s) shall not be unreasonably withheld. The obligations set forth herein remain in full force and effect throughout all stages of litigation including any and all appeals of any lower court judgment rendered in the proceeding. Further, applicant agrees to indemnify, defend and hold harmless the City for all costs and expenses incurred in enforcing this provision.

3. The applicant shall comply with all federal, state, and local laws, including all City regulations. Violation of any of those laws in connection with the use may be cause for revocation of this permit.
4. The final approved conditions of approval shall be reprinted on the first or second page of the construction documents when submitting to the Building Division for the plan check process.
5. Construction permits shall be obtained for all future construction work, as required by the City of Orange, Building Division. Failure to obtain the required building permits will be cause for revocation of this permit.
6. If not utilized, project approval expires 24 months from the approval date. Extensions of time may be granted in accordance with OMC Section 17.08.060.

## **14. ATTACHMENTS**

- Attachment 1 Vicinity Map
- Attachment 2 Applicant Justification Letter
- Attachment 3 DPR Form
- Attachment 4 Project Plans
- Attachment 5 Historic Resource Assessment