

Title:	Leach Multi-Family Residential Development
Project:	Design Review DR-25-2 and Administrative Adjustment ADJ-25-2
Location:	1822 I Street
APN:	005-072-005
Applicant:	Donald (DJ) Cleek (Authorized Agent)
Property Owner:	Cory Leach
Purpose/Use:	Construct a new two-story, seven-unit multi-family residential building and associated site improvements
Complete Application:	April 4, 2025
Deadline for Action:	July 8, 2025
General Plan:	HDR – High Density Residential
Zoning:	R3 – Residential High
California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA):	Exempt under CEQA Guidelines §15332, Class 32 In-Fill Development Projects
Staff Contact:	Henry Baker, Assistant Planner
Recommendation:	Hold a public hearing; and Adopt a resolution finding the project exempt from CEQA and conditionally approving the project
Motion:	<i>“I move the Design Review Committee adopt a resolution finding the project exempt from CEQA and conditionally approving the Leach Multi-family Residential Development at 1822 I Street.”</i>

Figure I: Location Map



Figure 2: Area Map (yellow=subject property)



PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Applicant, Donald (D) Cleek (Authorized Agent), is proposing to construct a two-story, seven-unit multi-family building containing four (4) two-bedroom, two-bathroom units, and three (3) one-bedroom, one-bathroom units, with common laundry and ground-floor storage areas with bicycle parking (Figure 3). Associated site improvements include a screened trash enclosure, a gated parking area with permeable pavement accessed from the rear alley, new exterior lighting, and landscaping. Additional public improvements include upgrading the water service, replacing existing sidewalks along I Street fronting the property, and paving the rear alley from the north property line south to Del Norte Street.

Figure 3: Building Concept



The only required discretionary permits for the development are Design Review per Eureka Municipal Code (EMC) §155.412.040 (Design Review) and two Administrative Adjustments per §155.412.030 (Administrative Adjustments). The Administrative Adjustments allow exceptions to the standards for: 1) Building Entries and 2) Vision Clearance Areas (VCAs).

Background

The subject property is an 8,050-square-foot (sf) (0.18 acre) interior lot fronting I Street between Del Norte and 17th Streets, with access via a rear alley connecting the same streets. The property is located within the City of Eureka (City) in the Residential High Zoning District (R3 District) with a High Density Residential (HDR) Land Use Designation, and is surrounded by existing single-family and multi-family residential uses. Multi-family housing is principally permitted in the R3 District.

In 2016, a fire destroyed a single-family home and three accessory structures on the property. Since then, the property has remained vacant and there have been numerous code enforcement cases related to debris, overgrown weeds, and abandoned vehicles (Figure 3). In May 2024, the property was sold to a new owner (Cory Leach) who now proposes to construct the development (hereafter referred to as the Project). The new development includes a 6,783-sf building on an 8,050-sf lot resulting in a site coverage of 42% (maximum allowed is 80%) and a Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 0.84 (maximum allowed FAR is 1.25).

Figure 4: Current Site Conditions



The Applicant participated in a pre-application development review meeting with City Staff in March 2025 (Project No. DEVR-25-4). During the review, it was determined that the Project requires Design Review, as well as two Administrative Adjustments: (1) to allow an exception to the Building Entries standard in EMC §155.312.040, as the entrances of two ground floor units don't face the street; and (2) to allow an exception to the VCA standards in EMC §155.308.040, as fencing and gates taller than 3 ft are proposed within the alley driveway VCAs. Rather than redesign the Project to meet these standards, the Applicant elected to proceed with the current

design and request approval of both Administrative Adjustments in conjunction with Design Review.

Projects requiring multiple discretionary permits must be reviewed and acted upon by the highest review authority, per EMC § 155.412.020.A (Projects Requiring Multiple Permits); therefore, the Design Review Committee must also serve as the review authority for the Administrative Adjustments.

When acting on a Design Review application, EMC §155.412.040(I) (Scope of Design Review) prescribes the Committee must consider only those features directly related to the Design Review Criteria described in EMC §155.412.040(J), and may not require a modification to a project feature that complies with mandatory development standards in the Zoning Code. Design Review is intended to address only aesthetic considerations not otherwise regulated by the Zoning Code.

Below, the required authorizations are analyzed in two separate sections: **1 – Design Review Analysis**, and **2 – Administrative Adjustments Analysis**.

I - DESIGN REVIEW ANALYSIS

To approve a Design Review application, the Committee must make all of the following findings (**bolded**):

- A. The proposed development will not be detrimental to public health, safety, or welfare or materially injurious to the properties or improvements in the vicinity.**

Referrals were sent to agencies and City departments with interest or jurisdiction over the property or the intended use of the property. No comments were received indicating the proposed building would be detrimental to the public health, safety, or welfare.

The Project conforms to development standards for the R3 District (i.e. maximum density, FAR, site coverage, and height, etc.) under EMC §155.204.030. However, it is unclear if future outdoor lighting complies with the standards in EMC §155.308.050 (Outdoor Lighting). Therefore, a condition has been added requiring conformance with this standard, which will also ensure there are no impacts on the nearby wildlife habitat from light pollution.

The Project has been conditioned to alert the Developer of the need to obtain a Building Permit for all construction.

Based on referral response received from the Engineering Department, a condition has been included requiring the Applicant to address comments related to work within rights-of-way, stormwater, erosion control, and water and sewer utilities as described in Attachment 3: Engineering Department Referral Comments.

Additionally, based on the responses received from tribes, a condition has been added requiring the City's standard Inadvertent Discovery Protocol be followed during ground disturbing activities associated with the development, to ensure that any cultural resources that are inadvertently discovered are properly addressed in consultation with the tribes.

Ultimately, the Project will transform a vacant property – previously subject to numerous Code Enforcement cases – into an active multi-family residential development that benefits the broader community by eliminating blight and nuisance conditions, increasing the local housing supply, and providing infrastructure upgrades.

B. The proposed project complies with all applicable Design Review criteria in EMC §155.412.040(J) (Design Review Criteria).

I. Surrounding Context. The overall project and associated buildings enhance the design quality of the area where they are located, and enhance Eureka’s unique character and distinctive sense of place. New buildings may “fit in” with traditional architecture that matches or complements the surrounding context or “stand out” with a contemporary and contrasting style. All buildings must minimize adverse impacts on neighboring properties when possible.

The surrounding neighborhood is comprised of older single-family homes, some of which have been converted into multi-family units that are similar to the new building in terms of form, style and massing. Staff estimates that there are eight or more multi-family units in the surrounding area not including Accessory Dwelling Units added since 1988. The new building continues the existing development pattern of the neighborhood by incorporating design elements from nearby homes while contributing new complementary design features (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Examples of Similar Architecture within the Neighborhood



Examples of the architectural features of surrounding homes are reflected in the new building’s design. For example, the building’s horizontal articulation and prominent upper story windows are similar to 2022 H Street; the building’s entrance is similar to 725 16th Street; the building’s roof form variation is similar to 1904 and 1905 I Street; and the building’s symmetry and massing is similar to 1836 J Street. In this way, the design complements surrounding structures and reinforces the residential character and appearance of the neighborhood. Additionally, the symmetrical upper-floor balconies represent a unique addition to the neighborhood and stand out in a way that enhances the livability and character of the neighborhood. For these reasons, the Project fits well

within the neighborhood and contributes positively to its character and appearance, consistent with Design Review Criteria 1.

2. Pedestrian Environment. Buildings incorporate design features that support an active public realm and an inviting pedestrian environment.

The Project includes improvements and site features which enhance the pedestrian experience within the neighborhood. The Project will replace 70 ft of existing concrete sidewalk along the property's I Street frontage and pave approximately 142 ft of the rear alley, extending from the property's northern lot line south to Del Norte Street. These improvements to the public right-of-way will enhance public safety and accessibility. The building's design supports an inviting pedestrian experience because there are no blank walls (i.e. a square area at least 10-feet by 10-feet) as well as eye-catching balconies, landscaping, and a prominent entry¹ to create a comfortable and engaging streetscape. In these ways, the Project supports and enhances the pedestrian environment, consistent with Design Review Criteria 2.

3. Architectural Style. Buildings demonstrate a coherent and successfully executed architectural style. Building architecture may be traditional or modern. Buildings are not required to conform to any dominant architectural style or local vernacular. Creative architectural and artistic expression is encouraged.

4. Articulation and Visual Interest. Building façades are distinctive, create visual interest, and relate to the human scale through vertical and horizontal articulation, varied building planes, distinctive building elements, and/or noticeable architectural details. Building elements such as roofs, doors, windows, and porches are part of an integrated design and relate to the human scale. Architectural details such as articulation, trim, eaves, window boxes, and brackets contribute to the visual interest of the building.

The new building incorporates four architectural features (Roof Form Variation, Horizontal Articulation, Balconies, and Window Trim) where only two are required. The design's architectural features draw inspiration from structures throughout the neighborhood and demonstrate a thoughtful architectural style through the deliberate use of a variety of materials and design elements. The building also incorporates left-right symmetry in its design through the arrangement of windows, balconies, and massing. This balanced layout enhances the orderliness of the overall design, and balances the variation of materials, textures, to create a unified architectural style.

The building's design is enhanced through variation of roof lines and massing between stories, contributing visual complexity. The different heights on the frontage create a more interesting shape that adds character to the building. More than eight materials and colors are used to enhance the building façade; providing contrast in type, color, size and texture. This variation in materials creates layers of texture and depth, reinforcing the building's unique character. For example, the use of different exterior cladding between the first and second stories accentuates the cantilevered upper story (see Figure 3 above). Taken

¹ While the proposed building entry does not meet the standards in EMC §155.312.040 (Building Entries), this deviation from standards allows for a clearly superior project, as is discussed in section II – Administrative Adjustments Analysis.

together, the variation of form and materials create a visually interesting overall design and architectural style, consistent with Design Review Criteria 3 and 4.

- 5. Materials.** Building façades feature high-quality materials that are appropriate to the architectural style, enhance building articulation, and are compatible with surrounding development.

The development is consistent with the standards in Exterior Materials standards because it avoids prohibited materials such as uninterrupted plywood siding, unfaced particle board, OSB, and vinyl siding; uses vertically-oriented siding on the upper story made of separate boards; and limits stucco to less than 50% of the street-facing building wall. Furthermore, the building design incorporates a varied palette of high-quality materials such as stacked stone, Hardi-brand horizontal plank, vertical panel, and shingle siding, as well as aluminum railings. These materials enhance the overall look of the façade while providing long-term durability. The combination of materials emphasizes the building's roof form variation, horizontal articulation, and cantilevered upper story by creating visual contrast in texture, color, and shape. In addition, the selected materials and colors reflect those found on surrounding properties, contributing to a cohesive, visually interesting streetscape that complements the neighborhood, consistent with Design Review Criteria 5.

- 6. Safety.** The project promotes public safety and minimizes opportunities for crime through design features such as property access controls (e.g., placement of entrances, fences), increased visibility, and features that promote a sense of ownership of outdoor space.

The Project incorporates several design elements that promote safety and deter crime. Street-facing windows and balconies provide opportunities for passive surveillance of both the public right-of-way and the property's immediate surroundings. A prominent front entry, lighting along pedestrian paths, and limited access points enhance visibility and access control. The reactivation of this long-vacant property with seven residential units establishes consistent on-site presence and activity, which fosters a sense of ownership and stewardship. These features, combined with new landscaping and regular maintenance, are expected to discourage illegal dumping, reduce opportunities for concealment, and promote a safer and more attractive neighborhood environment, consistent with Design Criteria 6.

- 7. Landscaping.** Landscaping features low-water-use plants appropriate for the local climate, contains native plants in compliance with §155.328.050(D) (Native Plants), and does not include any invasive species that would be harmful to native plants and habitat, in compliance with §155.328.050(E) (Invasive Plants).

The Applicant has provided a landscape plan which meets most of the requirements of EMC §155.328 (Landscaping). The list of plants contains both native and drought-tolerant species and none are listed as invasive. However, it appears they don't have a landscaping irrigation and/or maintenance plan that complies with the standards in EMC §155.328.030(B)(8) and §155.238.070 (Maintenance and Enforcement), nor information for conformance with water efficiency standards in 155.328.060 (Water Efficiency in Landscaping Ordinance [WELO]). Therefore, conformance with these standards will be confirmed during the Building Permit process and have been include in the conditions of

approval. The Project as conditioned, is consistent with the landscaping standards and Design Review Criteria 7.

II – ADMINISTRATIVE ADJUSTMENTS ANALYSIS

To approve an Administrative Adjustment application to allow exceptions to both the Building Entries and VCA standards, all of the following findings must be made:

- A. The adjustments are consistent with the purpose of the zoning district, the General Plan, and any applicable specific plan or area plan adopted by the City.**

Building Entries

The adjustment is consistent with two general purposes of the residential zoning districts: (1) “ensure that new development protects and enhances the positive qualities of existing neighborhoods and strengthens Eureka’s sense of place”; and (2) “promote new development that supports a pedestrian-friendly environment.” Providing one prominent street-facing entry, rather than three, reflects the pattern of nearby larger homes, which also feature a single main entrance, allowing the new building to better integrate into the neighborhood context. It also supports a pedestrian-friendly environment by enabling greater articulation and detailing along the building façade, resulting in a more engaging and welcoming streetscape.

Additionally, the proposed single entry supports a desirable living arrangement for residents with varied lifestyle needs, consistent with General Plan Policy LU-5.5 (Existing Neighborhoods). For example, individuals who work late hours or from home may prefer not to share a common entry with their neighbors. Therefore, the adjustment to allow one street-facing entry – while two ground floor units do not have street-facing entries – is consistent with the purpose of the zoning district, the General Plan, and no specific plan area plan for the Project area has been adopted by the City Council.

VCAs

The fencing supports the public health, safety and welfare – core objectives of the Zoning Code and General Plan – by providing security for the parking area accessed from the alley. This is consistent with General Plan Policy LU-5.6 (New Residential Neighborhoods), which encourages parking to be accessed from alleys, as proposed by the Applicant. The parking area will be enclosed with a 6-ft-tall wrought iron fence and double automatic gate. As the fencing will be at least 70% open to the passage to light and air, it qualifies as “open fencing” and maintains transparency, which supports traffic safety. Additionally, because the fencing is located in the alley and not along the public sidewalk, it does not impact the pedestrian realm along I Street and therefore does not conflict with the two purposes of the residential zoning districts described above under the Building Entries analysis. For these reasons, the adjustment to allow fencing in the alley driveway VCAs is consistent with the purpose of the zoning district, the General Plan, and no specific plan area plan for the Project area has been adopted by the City Council.

- B. The adjustments will not deprive neighboring property owner on the reasonable economic use and enjoyment of their property.**

Building Entries

Allowing one street-facing entry while two other entries don't face the street will not impact neighboring property owners because only the residents and their guests will use the entries. Therefore, the adjustment to the Building Entries standard will not deprive neighboring property owner on the reasonable economic use and enjoyment of their property.

VCAs

The fencing in the VCA does not physically infringe on the neighboring properties. Because it will be constructed of wrought iron and at least 70% open to the passage of light and air, it allows for visibility to and from the alley, minimizing potential visual obstructions. Additionally, the drive aisle exceeds the minimum width requirement by three feet (at 25-ft-wide), which enhances visibility around the VCAs. To further support safety, a condition of approval requires the Applicant to install a warning sign on the inside of the gate alerting drivers, and the existing 15 mph speed limit in the alley further reduces potential risk. For these reasons, the adjustment to the VCA standard will not deprive neighboring property owner on the reasonable economic use and enjoyment of their property.

- C. The adjustments will not be materially detrimental to the public health, safety, or welfare.**

Building Entries

EMC §155.312.040 requires that ground-floor entries face the street when buildings provide multiple independent entries. However, in this case, requiring three street-facing entries would be inconsistent with the character of the neighborhood, as no other homes in the immediate area feature multiple front-facing entrances. The entry as designed is beneficial to public safety because it allows first-responders to gain entry to units A and B faster (the ground-floor units without entries facing the street) while allowing those residents to escape faster in the event of an emergency. For these reasons, the adjustment to the Building Entries standard will not be materially detrimental to the public health, safety, or welfare.

VCAs

The fencing's encroachment in to the VCA does not pose a threat public health, safety, or welfare because surrounding properties are screened by solid panel fencing or garages, so the new fence will not be visible to neighboring homes or obstruct their views. Because it will be made of wrought iron and mostly transparent, it allows for some visibility. Additionally, a condition of approval has been added to install a "Watch for Pedestrians" sign on the interior of the gate to alert drivers and promote safe merging into the alley. For these reasons, the adjustment to the VCA standard will not be materially detrimental to the public health, safety, or welfare.

The following additional findings are required to allow the adjustments to the Building Entries and VCA standards must also be made:

ADDITIONAL FINDINGS - ENTRANCE DESIGN EXCEPTION

- D. The street-facing building wall incorporates architectural features and design details beyond the minimum requirements in 155.312.050 (Architectural Features); and**

Design Standards require at least two architectural features; the Project incorporates four: Roof Form Variation, Horizontal Articulation, Balconies, and Window Trim. These elements exceed the minimum design requirements and contribute to a visually engaging and contextually appropriate street-facing façade, consistent with this finding.

- E. The exception allows for a clearly superior project to that which can be achieved while complying with the building entry requirement.**

The proposed building entries configuration has been thoughtfully designed to accommodate individuals with accessibility needs. If the building was designed with a single, shared front entry, all tenants would need to pass through multiple doors to access their units. Instead, the proposed design provides three separate dwelling unit entries under a single prominent triple-entrance front and center allowing the residents of units A and B to access their homes directly from the outside, while units C through G access their units from the shared street-facing entry. This design feature provides greater accessibility for individuals with mobility challenges and improved access for first responders in the event of an emergency. For these reasons, the exception allows for a clearly superior Project to that which can be achieved while complying with the building entry requirement.

ADDITIONAL FINDINGS - VISION CLEARANCE AREA EXCEPTION

- F. Compliance with the vision clearance area standard is unnecessary for traffic safety.**

The City Public Works Director and Chief of Police have reviewed the Project and VCA exception request and concur with Staff conclusion that compliance with the VCA standard is not necessary to ensure traffic safety. The fencing will be constructed of wrought iron and will be at least 70% open to light and air, preserving visibility. Additionally, a condition of approval requires installation of a warning sign on the interior of the fence to alert drivers merging into the alley. With these measures in place, the exception does not compromise public safety, consistent with this finding.

CONCLUSION

The Leach Multi-Family Residential Development meets all applicable Design Review criteria and will not negatively impact public health, safety, or nearby properties. The Project qualifies for Administrative Adjustments to the Building Entries and VCA standards because the adjustments are consistent with the purpose of the zoning district and General Plan goals, enhance design quality, and do not compromise safety.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The City of Eureka, as Lead Agency, has determined the Project is categorically exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), pursuant to CEQA Guidelines §15332 (Class 32, In-Fill Development Projects). This exemption applied to in-fill development projects meeting the following conditions:

- (a) The project is consistent with the applicable general plan designation and all applicable general plan policies as well as with applicable zoning designation and regulations.
- (b) The proposed development occurs within city limits on a project site of no more than five acres substantially surrounded by urban uses.
- (c) The project site has no value as habitat for endangered, rare or threatened species.
- (d) Approval of the project would not result in any significant effects relating to traffic, noise, air quality, or water quality.
- (e) The site can be adequately served by all required utilities and public services.

The Project is consistent with the General Plan designation of HDR, which promotes high-density multi-family housing, and complies with relevant policies, as described in the Administrative Adjustment Analysis above. It is also consistent with the R3 zoning designation, which principally permits multi-family residential uses. With the Administrative Adjustments, the Project conforms to all applicable zoning regulations (condition a). The Project is within city limits on a 0.18-acre lot surrounded by urban uses (condition b). The property has no value as habitat for endangered, rare or threatened species as the nearest habitat of value is a gulch greenway parcel approximately 400 feet east of the property, separated by multiple streets and developed lots (condition c). The proposed multi-family development is similar in size, design, and orientation to existing structures in the neighborhood, and it is located near goods and services and transit on Wabash Avenue. Due to the infill nature of the property, its small scale, and its location in the built environment, the Project not result in any significant effects relating to traffic, noise, air quality, or water quality (condition d). Lastly, the property is served by all required utilities and public services (condition e). For all these reasons, the proposed Project qualifies for the Class 32 CEQA exemption.

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

Public notification consisted of notification by mail of property owners within a 300-foot radius of the property on or before May 30, 2025. In addition, the notice was posted on the City's website and bulletin boards. A public hearing notice sign was posted on the property on or before May 30, 2025.

DOCUMENTS ATTACHED

Attachment 1: Design Review Committee Resolution 2025-____

Attachment 2: Applicant Submitted Material

Attachment 3: Engineering Department Referral Comments

Attachment 4: Comments Received