



Community Development Department  
Planning and Building Division  
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## PLANNING COMMISSION USE PERMIT STAFF REPORT

June 15, 2022

### KENSINGTON TEMPORARY FIRE STATION

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#### DETAILS

**Application Number:** PL22-0069

**Applicant:** Kensington Fire Protection District

**Location:** 814 Craft Avenue (Parking lot of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley)

**APN:** 505-302-017

**Zoning:** RS-5 (Single Family Residential)

**General Plan:** Low Density Residential

**Request:** Planning Commission consideration of a Use Permit to allow a temporary fire station for a period no longer than 24 months.

**CEQA:** This project is categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to Section 15303 & 15304 of the CEQA Guidelines, Class 3: New construction or conversion of small structures and Class 4: Minor Alterations to Land, and the general rule in Section 15061(b)(3) of the CEQA Guidelines.

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Kensington Fire Protection District is embarking on a substantial renovation of the District's existing Fire Station (Kensington Public Safety Building/Station 65). The District will need to vacate the building for approximately 18 months during the renovation. During this time, the District needs a temporary fire station in order to house their engines and equipment and to continue to provide fire protection and emergency response to Kensington. Due to the largely built-out nature of Kensington, the District was able to identify only one suitable site for the temporary station. The site is a portion of the parking lot of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley. The site lies within the City of El Cerrito, adjacent to Craft Avenue.

# Background

## Site Location and Layout

The Kensington Fire Protection District is a special district created for the purpose of providing fire protection and emergency response services to the unincorporated community of Kensington, which is adjacent to the City of El Cerrito to the southeast. The District owns and manages a fire station (Kensington Public Safety Building/Station 65) at 217 Arlington Avenue in Kensington, which was built in 1971. The City of El Cerrito has provided Fire Department staffing for the fire station through a contract with the Kensington Fire Protection District since 1995.

The District has determined that the existing Public Safety Building is seismically unsound and in need of major renovation. Through a lengthy public process, the District has developed plan to renovate the existing building. This project will require that the District vacate the existing building for approximately 18 months during the renovation. In order to continue to provide emergency services to the Kensington Community during this time and to house the District's two engines and other equipment, a temporary fire station is needed. Accordingly, the District conducted a search for a suitable site for a temporary fire station. Given the topography and the largely built-out nature of Kensington, only one suitable site was identified. The Kensington Fire Protection District has reached an agreement with the Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley to lease a portion of the church site for use as a temporary fire station.

## Vicinity Map



## Adjacent Designations and Land Uses

North: Single Family Residential (RS-5) Zoning and Low Density Residential General Plan designation. Single family house.

South: Church campus, including preschool in unincorporated Kensington.

West: Single Family Residential (RS-5) Zoning and Low Density Residential General Plan designation. Single family homes.

East: Single Family Residential (RS-5) Zoning and Low Density Residential General Plan designation. Church parking lot.

## Analysis

The Unitarian Universalist Church campus consists of a sanctuary and accessory buildings which are located in Kensington, adjacent to the El Cerrito city limits. In addition to church activities, a preschool (The Good Earth School) also operates on the church campus. Parking areas surround the sanctuary building to the north and west. These parking areas can be accessed from Lawson Road in Kensington or from Craft Avenue in El Cerrito. The site slopes upward from Craft Avenue toward the ridgeline near Kensington Road. The western parking area sits on two parcels which are within the El Cerrito city limits, along Craft Avenue. The proposed site of the temporary fire station is a mostly under-utilized parking area adjacent to Craft Avenue in the City of El Cerrito.

Craft Avenue is a short dead-end street located entirely in the City of El Cerrito. Craft Avenue is accessed from Terrace Drive. The access to the Unitarian Universalist Church is near the end of Craft Avenue on the northeast side of the street. The church access extends northeast and then turns southeast toward the sanctuary and Lawson Road. The first parking area off of Craft Avenue is a dead-end parking bay, meaning it does not circulate to other parts of the parking lot. This parking bay is the proposed site of the temporary fire station.

The proposed temporary fire station would consist of a temporary modular building, containing office space, dormitory rooms and a kitchen; and a temporary garage to house the District's two fire engines. The site would be fenced for security and access would be provided via a large rolling gate across the front of the site. The station will typically be staffed by three (3) people, 24 hours per day. Parking for station staff and visitors will be located in the existing parking lot adjacent to the station to the northwest, outside of the security gate.

Staffing for the station would continue to be provided by the City of El Cerrito. The City of El Cerrito provides unified management of fire services in El Cerrito and Kensington and the temporary station would serve both communities, as emergency response needs dictate. Access to the station would be primarily from Craft Avenue. Craft Avenue would also be the primary emergency response route for the temporary station, but the Lawson Road access would also be used for a small number of calls, depending on the emergency response location. The District has conducted maneuverability tests on the site with their two engines to ensure that the engines can adequately access the proposed garage. The District is proposing to remove two existing speed bumps near the entrance of the church parking lot to ensure adequate maneuverability for the engines.

Station 65 averages two (2) emergency calls daily. Siren use is kept to a minimum. Sirens are only used on emergency calls when necessary to alert other traffic. During extreme fire weather events (red flag days), traffic to/from the temporary station will increase due to regular patrols along the ridgeline. The engine companies also have daily work assignments, including fire prevention inspections, hydrant checks, and company training. These activities are mostly limited to either morning or afternoon. Each engine is equipped with several power tools such as a power unit to the Jaws of Life, a chainsaw, and a gas-powered blower. The tools are operated weekly to ensure reliability. However, no operation of tools or heavy equipment will occur before 9:00 a.m.

Chapter 19.35 of the El Cerrito Municipal Code establishes the procedures for permitting temporary uses. The Zoning Administrator may typically approve Temporary Use Permits. However, pursuant to Section 19.35.020(D), the Zoning Administrator may require an Administrative Use Permit for temporary uses which have the potential or impacts such as noise and traffic impacts. Pursuant to Section 19.34.030(C), the Zoning Administrator may require a Planning Commission hearing for projects that he/she “determines to have special neighborhood or community significance.” Given the unique nature of this application, the Zoning Administrator has decided to require a Planning Commission hearing.

## Public Notice and Comment

The required public notice for the project was published in the East Bay Times and mailed to owners of property within 300 feet of the project site on or before May 25, 2022. Planning staff spoke with two nearby residents of the same household. These residents expressed concerns regarding potential traffic and noise that could be generated by the temporary station.

## Environmental Review

This project is categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to Section 15303 & 15304 of the CEQA Guidelines, Class 3: New construction or conversion of small structures and Class 4: Minor Alterations to Land, and the general rule in Section 15061(b)(3) of the CEQA Guidelines.

## Compliance with the General Plan

The Use Permit to allow a temporary fire station is consistent with the following policies of the El Cerrito General Plan:

**CF1.1: Safety.** Place the highest priority on ensuring the safety of existing community facilities, especially the Public Safety Building, Community Center, and neighborhood clubhouses, including seismic retrofits and necessary upgrades.

*Although not located in the City of El Cerrito, the proposed temporary fire station will allow the Kensington Fire Protection District to renovate and seismically retrofit the District’s existing building, improving the safety of the building.*

**CF1.8 Joint Use:** Seek opportunities for joint use of community facilities and shared maintenance and operation agreements with other service providers, including the West Contra Costa Unified School District and Contra Costa County.

*The proposed project includes the temporary use of an under-utilized portion of the campus of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley.*

**PS2.7: Facility Review.** Review at regular intervals all fire facilities in the community to ensure their adequacy in relation to such factors as fire hydrant capacity, peak load water requirements, fire access roads to wildland areas, and fire protection factors.

*The proposed temporary fire station will allow the renovation and modernization of the existing Station 65, which is staffed by the City of El Cerrito/Kensington Fire Department. The renovation will enhance emergency response.*

**PS2.13 Joint Response Agreements.** Maintain and improve the City's ability to participate in existing joint response agreements that enhance its ability to respond to fire, EMS, or disaster needs.

*The proposed project will allow the continuation of the City of El Cerrito's existing agreement with the Kensington Fire Protection District while the existing station is renovated.*

## Required Findings

In order to approve the Temporary Use Permit to allow a temporary fire station, the Planning Commission must make the following findings, contained in Section 19.35.040 of the El Cerrito Zoning Ordinance:

- A. The proposed use will not unreasonably affect adjacent properties, their owners and occupants, or the surrounding neighborhood, and will not in any other way constitute a nuisance or be detrimental to the public health, safety and welfare.

*The proposed temporary fire station will provide emergency response services to the surrounding community. The duration of the temporary station will be limited to a maximum of 24 months. Operation of the temporary station will be typical of other fire stations. No tools or heavy equipment will be operated before 9:00 a.m. Siren use will be kept to a minimum. The temporary fire station will benefit public health, safety, and welfare.*

- B. The proposed use will not unreasonably interfere with pedestrian or vehicular traffic or circulation in the area surrounding the proposed use, and will not create a demand for additional parking that cannot be safely and efficiently accommodated.

*The proposed project will not restrict pedestrian access to the church property. Adequate parking exists on the church site to accommodate the temporary fire station. During emergency calls, engines may need to temporarily interfere with vehicular traffic. This interference is necessary to provide emergency response and is typical of fire stations.*

## Staff Recommendation

Based on the information contained in this report, staff recommends approval of Planning Application PL22-0069, as conditioned by the draft resolution in Attachment 1.

### Proposed Motion

1. Move adoption of Planning Commission Resolution PC 2022-10 approving a Use Permit to allow temporary fire station in the parking lot of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley on Craft Avenue.

## Appeal Period

Within ten (10) calendar days after the date of the decision, the Planning Commission action may be appealed to the City Council.

## Attachments

1. Draft resolution
2. Project plans

## **Planning Commission Resolution PC 2022-10**

### **APPLICATION NO. PL22-0069**

#### **A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF EL CERRITO PLANNING COMMISSION APPROVING A USE PERMIT FOR A TEMPORARY FIRE STATION LOCATED ON CRAFT AVENUE IN THE PARKING LOT OF THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF BERKELEY**

WHEREAS, the Kensington Fire Protection District has begun a project to renovate the District's existing fire station (Kensington Public Safety Building/Station 65) located at 217 Arlington Avenue in Kensington;

WHEREAS, the District will need to vacate the existing building during the renovation;

WHEREAS, the renovation is expected to take approximately 18 months;

WHEREAS, a temporary fire station is needed during this time to continue to provide fire protection and emergency response and to house the District's engines and equipment;

WHEREAS, the Kensington Fire Protection District has identified the parking lot of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley as a suitable site for a temporary fire station;

WHEREAS, the proposed site is located along Craft Avenue in the City of El Cerrito;

WHEREAS, the Assessor's Parcel Number of the site is 505-302-017;

WHEREAS, the General Plan land use classification of the site is Low Density Residential;

WHEREAS, the zoning district of the site is Single Family Residential (RS-5);

WHEREAS, on May 6, 2022, the applicant submitted a use permit;

WHEREAS, on June 15, 2022, the Planning Commission, after due consideration of all evidence and reports offered for review, does find and determine the following:

1. The proposed temporary fire station will provide emergency response services to the surrounding community. The duration of the temporary station will be limited to a maximum of 24 months. Operation of the temporary station will be typical of other fire stations. No tools or heavy equipment will be operated before 9:00 a.m. Siren use will be kept to a minimum. The temporary fire station will benefit public health, safety, and welfare.
2. The proposed project will not restrict pedestrian access to the church property. Adequate parking exists on the church site to accommodate the temporary fire station. During emergency calls, engines may need to temporarily interfere with vehicular traffic. This interference is necessary to provide emergency response and is typical of fire stations.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that after careful consideration of maps, facts, exhibits, correspondence, and testimony, and other evidence submitted in this matter, and, in consideration of the findings, the El Cerrito Planning Commission hereby approves Application No. PL22-0067, subject to the following conditions:

1. The project will be constructed substantially in conformance with the plans received by the City on June 8, 2022.
2. If the applicant constructs buildings or makes improvements in accordance with these approvals but fails to comply with any of the Conditions of Approval or limitations set forth in these Conditions of Approval and does not cure any such failure within a reasonable time after notice from the City of El Cerrito, then such failure shall be cause for non-issuance of a certificate of occupancy, revocation or modification of these approvals or any other remedies available to the City.
3. This use permit shall be valid for a period of 24 months, unless extended by the Planning Commission.
4. Any construction or other work shall conform to all applicable Zoning Ordinances, building and fire codes.
5. Fire protection and access for fire vehicles shall be provided as specified by the Fire Chief.
6. The site shall be completely cleared of all trash, debris, signs, sign supports, temporary structures, and electrical service within three days following the termination of the temporary use.

#### CERTIFICATION

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I certify that this resolution was adopted by the El Cerrito Planning Commission at a regular meeting held on June 15, 2022, upon motion of Commissioner \_\_\_\_\_, second by Commissioner \_\_\_\_\_:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSTAIN:

ABSENT:

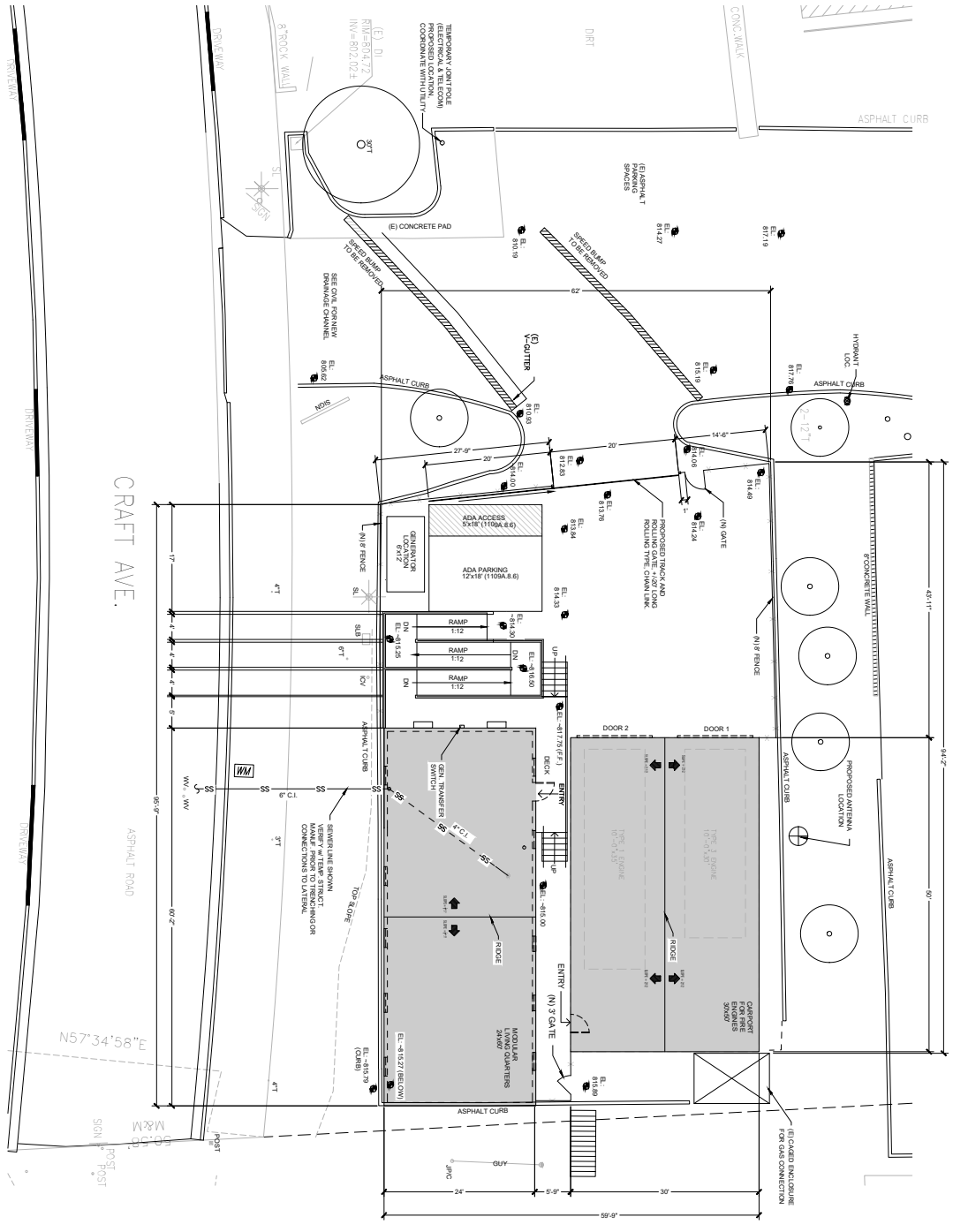
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Sean Moss, AICP  
*Planning Manager*









**1 SITE PLAN**  
1/8" = 1'-0"

**SITE PLAN - ABBREVIATIONS**

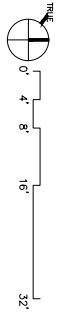
- CD CUBICLE
- CL CORRIDOR
- DI DRAIN TILE
- PLC-60 SCHEDULE 60 PVC

**UTILITY LINES LEGEND**

- FENCE LINE
- WATER LINE
- GAS LINE
- ELECTRIC LINE
- SEWAGE LINE

**GENERAL NOTES:**

OWNER TO VERIFY ALL UTILITIES AND WATER LINE ON SITE WITH INSTALLED AND TO BE MAINTAINED.



**KENSINGTON FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT  
TEMPORARY FIRE STATION**

END OF CRAFT AVENUE  
EL CERRITO, CA 94530

**KAPPE ARCHITECTS**

801 D STREET SAN RAFAEL CA 94901  
TEL: 415.457.7801

DATE: 2017  
DRAWING NO: 02122  
SCALE: AS SHOWN

PROJECT: KENSINGTON FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT TEMPORARY FIRE STATION  
NO. 505-202-0117

APPROVED: [Signature]

Scale: AS SHOWN

Sheet No: **A1.0**

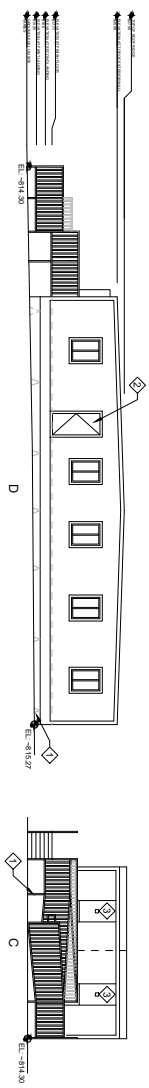
Sheet Title: **SITE PLAN**

**KEY NOTES**

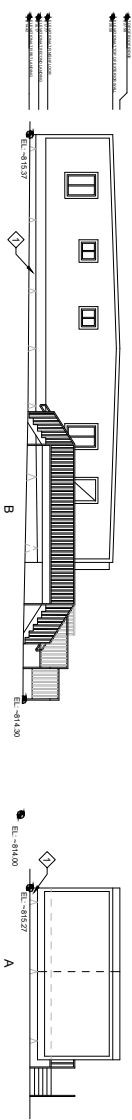
- ◆ SHOWN SUBJECT TO CONFORM WITH THE LATEST EDITIONS OF THE IBC (WHERE SHOWN)
- ◆ ROOMS NOT USED
- ◆ HVAC UNIT
- ◆ SHOWER

**GENERAL NOTES**

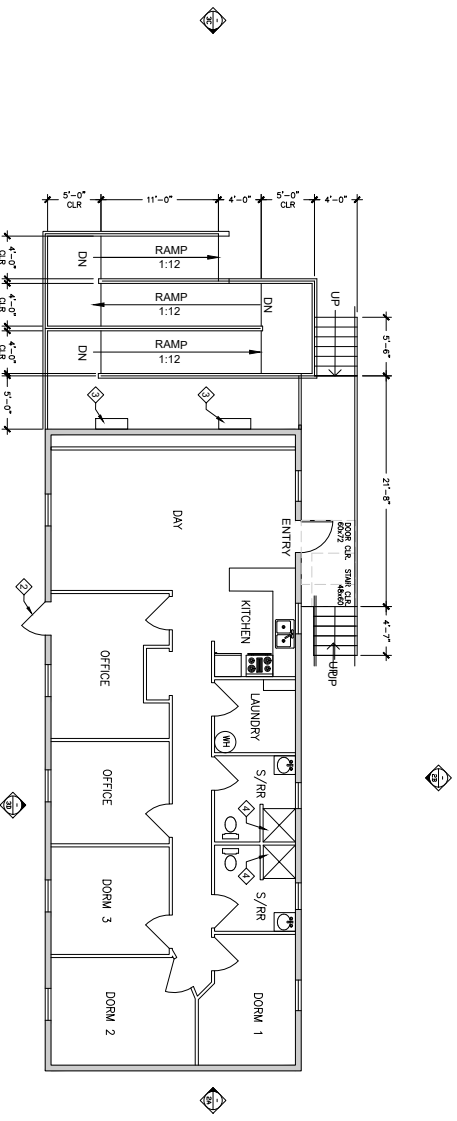
1. ALL ROOMS ARE NOT INCLUDED AS SHOWN.
2. ACTUAL NUMBER OF STAIRS AND ELEVATION MAY VARY DEPENDING ON SITE CONDITIONS. VERIFY ON SITE.



**3 EXTERIOR ELEVATIONS: MODULAR LIVING QUARTERS**  
1/8" = 1'-0"



**2 EXTERIOR ELEVATIONS: MODULAR LIVING QUARTERS**  
1/8" = 1'-0"



**1 FLOOR PLAN: MODULAR LIVING QUARTERS**  
3/16" = 1'-0"

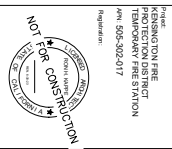


**KENSINGTON FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT  
TEMPORARY FIRE STATION**

END OF CRAFT AVENUE  
EL CERRITO, CA 94530

**KAPPE ARCHITECTS**

801 D STREET SAN RAFAEL CA 94901  
TEL: 415.457.7801



PROJECT NO.	2102
CLIENT	KENSINGTON FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT
DATE	02/22/22
SCALE	AS SHOWN
DESIGNED BY	AK
DRAWN BY	AK
CHECKED BY	AK
DATE	02/22/22

**MODULAR LIVING QUARTERS FLOOR PLANS & ELEV.**

Scale: 1/16" = 1'-0"

**A2.0**

