

Joseph Sanchez

Owner / Managing Member
JR Development, LLC



June 16, 2025

RE: USE-22-0097 / 209 Palm Ave.

Request for Admin Adjustment to Commercial Ceiling Height

City of Imperial Beach

Community Development Department
825 Imperial Beach Blvd.
Imperial Beach, CA 91932
(619) 628-1356

Ryan,

This letter serves as an official request for an Administrative Adjustment to project USE-22-0097 / 209 Palm Ave. Specifically, we are requesting a **10% administrative adjustment** to the minimum required commercial floor-to-ceiling height, as outlined in **Imperial Beach Municipal Code Section 19.27.070(B)**, which states:

“All commercial spaces on the ground floor shall have a minimum fifteen-foot floor-to-ceiling height...”

We respectfully request a **10% Administrative Adjustment** to the minimum commercial ceiling height requirement, reducing the required **15'-0"** to **13'-6"**, as permitted by the Imperial Beach Municipal Code through City Council approval.

Rationale for Request:**1. Compliance with State and Local Height Limitations**

This adjustment is necessary to meet the **25-foot maximum building height** required by **California Government Code §66321(4)(D)** for structures containing **Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)**. While the **C/MU-2 zone** permits buildings up to 30 feet tall, State law preempts local standards when ADUs are included. Since our project includes a commercial ground floor with an ADU above, the overall building height must not exceed 25 feet (at the ADU/Commercial area).

Although **California Building Code Table 504.3** allows buildings of this type (R-3 occupancy, Type V-B construction, fully sprinklered) to reach up to **40 feet in building height**, and **local zoning permits 30 feet**, we are voluntarily limiting the building height to comply with all overlapping regulations. This constraint makes it physically impossible to provide a 15-foot ceiling on the ground floor while maintaining a second floor with livable space and a compliant roof form.

2. Design Proportions and Massing

The project is located within a coastal, pedestrian-oriented community. Maintaining a human-scaled street frontage and minimizing visual bulk are essential design goals. A full 15-foot commercial ceiling would result in a disproportionately tall facade along Palm Avenue and push the building height beyond the 25-foot limit.

By reducing the ceiling height by 10% (to 13'-6"), we are able to:

- Accommodate a functional and leasable commercial space with a ceiling height suitable for typical local small businesses such as local coffee shop or an artist studio;
- Provide an upper-level accessory space with adequate floor-to-ceiling height for its current storage use and planned future conversion into a 2-bedroom ADU, advancing local housing objectives;
- Ensure a better-scaled and cohesive street frontage, reducing abrupt transitions in height and enhancing neighborhood compatibility.

3. Architectural Intent

The project features a **butterfly roof**—a clean, modern design element that reinforces the structured, contemporary aesthetic while improving stormwater direction and reducing visual monotony. Granting the adjustment enables us to maintain this architectural expression and build a contextually appropriate and well-proportioned mixed-use structure.

4. Conformance with City Design Guidelines

If the adjustment is not granted, the design would be forced to adopt a **flat roof** to remain under the 25-foot height limit, which would conflict with the **City of Imperial Beach Design Guidelines**. These guidelines discourage flat, unarticulated rooflines and instead encourage varied and expressive roof forms

that contribute to neighborhood character. The butterfly roof is consistent with this intent and helps establish a positive design precedent.

Overall, this modest reduction does not compromise life safety or accessibility standards and maintains the intent of the commercial space being functional, leasable, and contributing to the economic vitality of the area.

We believe this request meets the intent of the Administrative Adjustment process and we respectfully request that City Council consider and approve the 10% reduction in ceiling height for the commercial space.

Paola Cruz,
Owner Representative