

**CALISTOGA PLANNING COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT**

To: Calistoga Planning Commission
From: Jeff Mitchem, Planning & Building Director
Meeting Date: April 12, 2023
Subject: **2449 Foothill Blvd Gateway Plaza (APN 011-360-003)
Design Review DR 2022-2**

ITEM

Consideration of a Resolution (Attachment 1) approving a Design Review request for a two-building commercial development at the southwest corner of the intersection of Foothill Blvd and Petrified Forest Rd. (PF Rd). Planning Commission is the specified approval body pursuant to the following Calistoga Municipal Code (CMC) provisions:

- [CMC Chapter 17.41](#) Design Review. *Construction of non-residential structures is subject to Planning Commission action.*

BACKGROUND

The 1.6-acre project site consists of one parcel prominently located at Calistoga's southwestern entry point within two overlay areas designated by the General Plan as *Entry Corridor 6: Petrified Forest Rd* and *Petrified Forest Gateway*. The relevance of these designations as pertains to Planning Commission discretionary review is discussed below in Consistency Analysis.



Project site as viewed from Hwy 128 & Petrified Forest Rd

Vicinity development includes the Arco Gas Station (across PF Rd to the east), Riverlea Square Commercial Center (across Hwy 128 to the north), the Highlands Christian Fellowship church (abutting to the south) and a single-family dwelling (abutting to the west.)

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project proposes demolition of all existing structures and construction of the following project components (CMC compliant): two commercial structures (3 retail and 1 bank tenant) consisting of a total of 12,000 SF of building area (17% FAR); 19,600 SF landscape area; 56 surface parking stalls; six bicycle parking space; bio-retention facilities; separated pedestrian circulation features; patio open space (2,100 SF) and a tank house tower element. Please refer to Attachment 2, Project Plans for a full description of the proposed project.

CONSISTENCY ANALYSIS

The project's consistency with the City's plans, policies and codes is evaluated below.

Calistoga General Plan

Community Commercial. The General Plan Land Use Element designates the parcel Community Commercial (CC). The purpose and intent of this designation is to provide a combination of visitor- and local-serving commercial uses for residential neighborhoods at the outskirts of the city. A wide range of commercial uses are permitted outright in CC including those proposed – bank and retail.

Staff Finding: *Consistent.* The proposed retail and service-oriented commercial uses are consistent with the intent of the Community Commercial land use designation.

Dark Sky, Objective OCS-5.4. This objective of the Open Space and Conservation Element states *Minimize obtrusive glare and waster energy from excessive nighttime lighting and preserve views of the nighttime sky.*

Staff Finding: *Consistent as conditioned.* A Preliminary Photometric Plan submitted by the Applicant indicates initial compliance with lighting requirements related to overall site illuminance, and luminaire wattage and lumens specifications. However, a condition of approval requires the submittal of a Final Photometric Plan prior to building permit issuance demonstrating full compliance with OCS-5.4 and the International Dark Sky Association Model Ordinance. The plan must indicate how lighting impacts on neighboring properties and the immediate vicinity are mitigated to less than significant levels by measures such as shielded luminaries, low-voltage landscape lighting, lighting zone limitations, light trespass prevention, minimized mounting heights, etc.

Entry Corridor 6: Petrified Forest Road / Entry Corridor 5: Upvalley Foothill Blvd. The project site is located at the intersection of these two General Plan Entry Corridors. Both corridor designations intend that development reinforce and preserve the forested character of the surroundings by providing tree cover visible from the roadway and have positive visual qualities to mark the entrance to the town.

Existing development directly fronting the intersection are predominantly auto oriented, with little indication that this is an entrance to Calistoga. New development at this important entry point shall be required to better meet the intent of these gateway designations with high-quality design and ample landscaping.

Staff Finding: *Consistent.* The project proposes architectural character referencing positive visual qualities such as a local up-valley barn aesthetic, a tank house gateway element and a landscape plan with ample tree cover and native shrubs.

Petrified Forest Gateway. The General Plan Petrified Forest Gateway is a “country crossroads” located at the intersection of Petrified Forest Road and Foothill Boulevard. This intersection primarily serves commute traffic between Lake, Napa and Sonoma counties. Commercial uses in the area should serve travelers but also include limited services for nearby residents. Although safety and circulation improvements are to be provided by proposed development, the character of new development should have an understated visual appearance and provide a preview of the community’s unique qualities. Summarized below, the proposed project is consistent on balance with the purpose and intent of the gateway designation.

Land Use Considerations:

- The range of uses established for the Community Commercial land use designation is generally appropriate for the area.

- Agriculturally oriented uses such as produce stands, nurseries, winery and vineyard related uses are encouraged.
- Development or redevelopment around the intersection shall not be of a design or style that is typical for a suburban strip center. Formula chain businesses are discouraged.
- Commercial uses should primarily serve the commuter-traveler. Uses that also serve nearby residents but do not compete with downtown businesses may also be allowed.

Staff Finding: *Consistent*. The proposed service-oriented commercial uses serve both visitor and nearby residents.

Development and Design Considerations:

- The scale of new development or redevelopment must not overpower the surrounding neighborhoods and should be understated, using small scale and low-rise building design.
- The approach to town from a rural setting must convey a sense of arrival and signify the characteristics of a unique, small visitor-friendly town.
- Building massing, form and lay-out must convey a diverse village character and reflect Calistoga's individualistic nature.
- Where appropriate, new development or redevelopment should provide some orientation toward Cyrus Creek.
- Landscaping should convey a rural rather than manicured urban setting.
- Uniform setbacks, heights, roof forms and architectural language should be avoided so that the appearance of a large development is that of one which was built over time.
- Outdoor lighting shall be designed to preserve and protect the nighttime environment in accordance with the following International Dark Sky Association model ordinance objectives:
 - Provide the minimum lighting level necessary for night-time safety, utility, security, productivity, enjoyment, and commerce.
 - Minimize adverse offsite impacts such as sky glow, light overspill and obtrusive light.
 - Conserve energy and resources to the greatest extent possible.

Staff Finding: *Consistent* project components: single-level buildings, varied architectural components and form, village scale elements such as courtyard and tank house gateway element.

Connectivity Considerations:

- Intersection improvements are needed to allow for increased/ more efficient traffic flow during peak commuter traffic periods and to improve pedestrian and vehicular safety.
- In addressing intersection design deficiencies, all feasible alternatives including signalization, intersection realignment and installation of a roundabout should be evaluated.
- Commuter traffic congestion must be monitored and managed to ensure that it does not become hindrance to visitor access.

- Development should be coordinated to ensure logical and efficient circulation. Particular attention should be paid to minimizing site access points and creating opportunities for shared parking.
- Opportunities to improve pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular access to sites within close proximity to the intersection should be explored as part of public and private improvement projects.
- Pedestrian and bicycle path connections to the downtown area should be accommodated so that commercial opportunities and services can become more accessible.

Staff Finding: *Consistent.* Project is conditioned to comply with PF Rd / Hwy 128 Intersection Master Plan ensuring compliant connectivity measures.

Calistoga Municipal Code

Chapter 17.22, CC Community Commercial District. The project site is zoned Community Commercial (CC). The intent of the CC District is to implement the Community Commercial land use designation of the General Plan. It provides areas at the edge of the downtown commercial core and at several intersections for activities that are similar to those in the Downtown Commercial District, but because of their size or relatively low pedestrian traffic generation are appropriate for the CC district. These uses predominantly provide for the day-to-day needs of residents, and because of their operational characteristics and space needs (storage, size, parking, etc.) are considered appropriate for the CC district. CMC 17.22.020 A. provides that the proposed uses – retail and banks – are permitted outright.

Staff Findings: *Consistent as conditioned.* CMC 17.22.020 A. describes uses permitted on the subject site without a Use Permit. As proposed, the project specifies “bank” which is among the uses allowed outright. However, because the remaining three tenants are specified as “retail” only, a condition of approval is included to ensure that future tenants are consistent with these provisions.

The site is subject to development standards conveyed in CMC 17.22.060. As provided in the following table, the proposed project *complies* with all applicable standards.

CC Development Standard per Zoning Code		Project	Compliant
Minimum front yard	10 feet	50-80 feet	Yes
Minimum interior side yard	5 feet	10 feet	Yes
Minimum rear yard	10 feet	10 feet	Yes
Maximum lot coverage	60%	17%	Yes
Maximum building height	30 feet / 25 feet abutting Res. 35 feet, permitted projections per CMC 17.38.030	30 feet (building) 35 feet (tank house)	Yes
Maximum Floor Area Ratio	80%	17%	Yes
Minimum Landscaping	40% of open space (9,110 SF)	9,474 SF	Yes

Chapter 17.36 Off-street Parking and Loading. The proposed project generates demand for a total of 48 parking spaces (retail: 32 spaces and bank: 16 spaces). 59 spaces are proposed.

Staff Findings: *Complies.*

Chapter 17.41 Design Review.

Purpose. The proposed project is subject to the City's design review provisions, the purpose of which is conveyed by §17.41.010:

The purposes of design review are to secure the general purposes of this title and the Calistoga General Plan, to promote high quality design and a harmonious relationship of buildings, to preserve the unique character and ambiance of Calistoga, to ensure compatibility of new development with existing development, and to promote the preservation of historic structures.

As conveyed in CMC §17.41.050 Findings, in approving or conditionally approving a design review application, the following findings shall be made that the proposed design:

- A. Is in accord with the General Plan and any applicable planned development.
- B. Is in accord with all applicable provisions of this title.
- C. Is consistent with any adopted design review guidelines to the extent possible. Refer to Attachment 3 Design Review Findings Matrix and Attachment 4 Colors and Materials Board.
- D. Will not impair or interfere with the development, use or enjoyment of other property in the vicinity or the area.

Staff Findings. *Complies.* As conveyed in the attached Resolution, Staff find that the project as proposed is consistent with the specified purpose of design review and complies with all mandatory findings prescribed by Chapter 17.41.

Chapter 17.38.030 Height limits, projections, and exception.

Purpose. The proposed project features architectural elements that exceed the City's height provisions as conveyed by §17.22.060 E.1. of 25'. Both buildings contain rooftop clerestory elements reaching 30' and the water tank house is proposed at 35'. Both of these features are allowed to exceed the 25' height limit if approved by Planning Commission pursuant to CMC §17.38.030 B which states:

Towers, spires, chimneys, machinery, penthouses, scenery lots, cupolas, water tanks, radio aerials, television antennas and similar architectural and utility structures and necessary mechanical appurtenances may be built and used to a height not more than 25 feet above the height limit established for the district in which the structures are located; provided, however, that no such architectural or utility structure in excess of the allowable building height shall be used for sleeping or eating quarters.

Staff Findings. *Complies.* The building component exceeding the 25' height limit is clerestory component of each building which is a rooftop element similar in character to those specified as height exceptions.

Chapter 17.52 Fences, Hedges or Walls.

Purpose. The proposed project is subject to the standards conveyed by §17.52.020 A.

A. Residential, Commercial and Industrial Districts.

- 1. Walls and fences not exceeding eight feet in height shall be permitted in required interior side and rear yards and along interior side and rear yard lot lines, unless otherwise permitted in this title.*
- 2. Walls and fences not exceeding four and one-half feet in height may be permitted in required front and street side yards and along front and street side yard lot lines.*
- 3. In the corner cutoff area, as defined by CMC 17.52.030, the maximum height of walls, fences and landscaping shall be two and one-half feet.*

Staff Findings. *Complies.* The proposal includes a 6' high split-face CMU wall along the interior side and rear yards. A split rail simulated wood fence is proposed within the front yard setback on both the Petrified Forest Rd and Hwy 128 frontages.

Chapter 17. 58 Signs and Advertising Regulations.

Purpose. The proposed project is subject to the City's signage provisions, conveyed by §17.58, the purpose for which is to:

(A) provide standards for the regulation of signs in order to promote and protect the public health, safety and welfare; (B) provide for signage that effectively presents a business name or message for public convenience, while also preserving and enhancing the scenic beauty of Calistoga as an economic asset; and (C) prevent excessive and confusing signs which can result in visual clutter and increase hazards to pedestrians and motorists.

Staff Findings. *Complies as conditioned.* A Preliminary Signage Plan submitted by the Applicant (Attachment 2, Sheet SN-1) indicates initial compliance with signage requirements related to overall sign area, quantity, location, and illumination. However, a condition of approval requires the submittal of a Final Sign Plan prior to building permit issuance for all future tenants demonstrating full compliance with 17.58.050. As proposed the project complies with all standards conveyed by 17.58.050:

- **Total number.** Standard. Each business is allowed 3 signs for a total of 12 signs for the 4-tenant project. Proposed: 12 signs.
- **Sign area.** Standard: 200 square feet. Proposed: 200 square feet.
- **Illumination.** Standard. Interior illuminated signs may be permitted by Planning Commission. Proposed: The Preliminary Signage Plan indicates that all business identification wall signs are halo-lit.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

California Public Resources Code Section 21084 requires the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines to include a list of classes of projects which have been determined not to have a significant effect on the environment and which are, therefore, exempt from the provisions of CEQA. In response to that mandate, the Secretary for Resources has found that

certain classes of projects do not have a significant effect on the environment, and they are declared to be categorically-exempt from the requirement for the preparation of environmental documents. This approach is encouraged by the State, where appropriate, to reduce delay and paperwork.

The Project qualifies for a Class 32 Categorical Exemption for In-Fill Development Projects. The bases for how a project meets the Class 32 category are detailed below.

15332. IN-FILL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Class 32 consists of projects characterized as in-fill development meeting the conditions described in this section.

- (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.

Staff Findings: Complies. The proposed use is consistent with General Plan Land Use policy for Community Commercial and is permitted by-right by the applicable chapter of the zoning code CMC Chapter 17.22.

- (b) The proposed development occurs within city limits on a project site of no more than five acres substantially surrounded by urban uses.

Staff Findings: Complies. The 1.6-acre project site lies entirely within the City of Calistoga city limits and is surrounded on all sides by urban uses – commercial and residential.

- (c) The project site has no value as habitat for endangered, rare or threatened species.

Staff Findings: Complies. The historically disturbed and fully developed site – auto repair / towing yard / single family residence – supports no significant natural habitat, pursuant to Environmental Site Assessment and Geotechnical Study.

- (d) Approval of the project would not result in any significant effects relating to traffic, noise, air quality, or water quality.

Staff Findings: Complies. The potential for the project to conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines § 15064.3, subdivision (b) was evaluated based the project's anticipated Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT).

Trips generated by the proposed project would be mitigated to less than significant levels by project conditions of approval including multi-modal roadway capacity improvements pursuant to the City's master plan for this intersection.

A retail project resulting in an increase to the region's total VMT may reflect a significant impact. Research has shown that local-serving commercial uses, typically those under 50,000 square feet in size, and infill retail developments tend to shift where vehicle trips occur rather than generate wholly new trips (and corresponding vehicle miles traveled). This premise is supported by the California Office of Planning and Research (OPR) in its publication Technical Advisory on Evaluation Transportation Impacts in CEQA, December 2018. Because the proposed project is less than 50,000 square feet and would be expected to shift where people get banking and

retail services rather than increase the demand for banking and retail services in the Calistoga area, it is reasonable to presume that total regional VMT would not increase as a result of the project. The project would be expected to have a less-than-significant transportation impact on vehicle miles traveled due to being local-serving retail uses.

Noise, air quality and water quality impacts would be mitigated to less than significant levels by conditions of approval requiring compliance with applicable CMC provisions.

- (e) The site can be adequately served by all required utilities and public services.

Staff Findings: *Complies. All required utilities serve the existing use and will be conditioned by approval to be upgraded as necessary to accommodate the proposed use. Public services impacts will be offset by requirements for Development Impact Fees.*

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the information and analysis contained in this report, staff recommends that the Planning Commission:

1. Adopt a resolution approving Design Review DR 2022-2 allowing the demolition of existing commercial structures at 2449 Foothill Blvd and replacing them with two commercial structures and related site improvements.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Draft Resolution 2023-XX Design Review / Conditions of Approval
2. Project Plans
3. Design Review Matrix
4. Materials & Color Board