



December 11, 2023
January 31, 2025 – Revision #1

Job No. 22-125

Mr. Brian Bordona, Director
Napa County Planning, Building and Environmental Services Department
1195 Third Street, Suite 210
Napa, California 94559

Re: Request for Exception to the Napa County Road and Street Standards for the
Promise Wines Winery Use Permit Application P22-00384
2000 Sage Canyon Road, St. Helena, California APN 032-520-008

Dear Mr. Bordona:

This request for an exception to the Napa County Road and Street Standards is being filed concurrent with the above referenced Use Permit application for Promise Wines. We are providing this information for your review and final decision by the Planning Commission pursuant to Section 3 of the Napa County Road and Street Standards (2023). Section 3 allows exceptions to the Standards provided that the exception still provides the same overall practical effect as the Standards towards providing defensible space and consideration towards life, safety and public welfare and:

1. The exception will preserve unique features of the natural environment which includes, but is not limited to, natural watercourses, steep slopes, geological features, heritage oak trees, or other trees of at least 6" dbh and found by the decision maker to be of significant importance, but does not include manmade environmental features such as vineyards, rock walls, ornamental or decorative landscaping, fences or the like;
2. The exception is necessary to accommodate physical site limitations such as grade differentials; and/or
3. The exception is necessary to accommodate other limiting factors such as recorded historical sites or legal constraints.

It is our opinion that approving the subject Use Permit along with the proposed driveway improvements and granting this exception will:

1. Reduce the removal of mature oak trees and native vegetation;
2. Minimize the need for grading within the stream setbacks and on steep hillsides exceeding 30% slope;
3. Provide the same overall practical effect as the Standards towards providing defensible space and consideration towards life, safety and public welfare; and
4. Improve emergency vehicle access to the subject property and the area in general compared to what exists today.

The remainder of this letter describes the proposed project, provides background information regarding existing access conditions, outlines the proposed driveway improvements, identifies specific areas where an exception to the Standards is being requested and provides justification for the requested exception.

Project Description

Promise Wines LLC is applying for a Use Permit to construct and operate a new winery at their property located at 2000 Sage Canyon Road in St. Helena, California. The Use Permit application under consideration proposes the operational parameters summarized below:

- **Wine Production:**
 - 5,000 gallons of wine per year (phase 1)
 - 30,000 gallons of wine per year (phase 2)
 - Crushing, fermenting, aging and bottling
- **Employees:**
 - 2 full-time employees
 - 3 part-time employees
- **Marketing Plan:**
 - Daily Tours and Tastings by Appointment
 - 15 visitors per day max
 - 105 people per week max
 - 5,000 people per year max
 - Private Marketing Events – Type 1
 - 25 guests maximum
 - 6 events per year
 - Private Marketing Events – Type 2
 - 100 guests maximum
 - 1 event per year

Existing improvements on the property include a residence, a second dwelling unit, agricultural buildings, vineyards and the related access and utility infrastructure. The project proposes to convert an existing second dwelling unit and an existing barn to be winery structures and also to construct a new cave and covered crush pad and mechanical yard. Please see the Promise Wine LLC Use Permit Conceptual Site Improvement Plans for approximate locations of existing and proposed facilities.

Existing Access Road Conditions

Access to the Promise Wine site is via a private driveway that begins at the south side of Sage Canyon Road (State Route 128), approximately 4.25 miles east of Silverado Trail. The driveway provides access to the subject property and an adjacent property owned by Promise Wine LLC as well as parcels owned by the City of Napa that appear to be undeveloped.

At STA 10+00 (State Right of Way at Sage Canyon Road) the driveway has a paved apron providing a connection to Sage Canyon Road. The driveway then immediately crosses a bridge over Sage Creek and has a width of approximately 19 feet. From the end of the bridge (STA 11+00) to STA 18+00 +/- the driveway is paved with asphalt to an average width of 14 feet. Longitudinal slopes vary and generally average less than 5%. From STA 11+00 to 15+25 the driveway is immediately adjacent to Sage Creek.

At STA 17+75 +/- there is an intersection and the driveway to the Promise Wine site turns to the left to traverse up the hillside (STA 50+00 to End). This segment of driveway serves only the Promise Wine property. This segment of driveway is also paved and widths average 14 feet to 16 feet. Longitudinal slopes in this area range are generally less than 10% at the top and bottom of the hill with the intermediate section inclined at a slope of up to 20% to traverse from the toe of the hill to the building site.

Napa County Road and Street Standards Requirements

The Napa County Road and Street Standards require private access driveways serving wineries to provide two (2) 10-foot-wide travel lanes (20 feet total), 22 feet of total horizontal clearance (including the travel lanes), 13'-6" of vertical clearance, 50 foot minimum inside turning radius and a maximum 16% longitudinal slope (provisions are made to allow slopes up to 18% if paved with asphalt and up to 20% in certain circumstances if there are less sloping areas above and below the 20% section).

Proposed Driveway Improvements and Request for Exception to Napa County Road and Street Standards

Improving the existing private driveway to the full 20 foot drivable width is possible for portions of the driveway and the Applicant is proposing to make such improvements where feasible to fully comply with the Standards. There are however portions of the driveway where there are existing mature oak trees, topographic constraints (steep slopes and large grade differentials) and/or stream setback constraints that preclude the ability to widen to the full standard. In these discrete segments of the driveway we are requesting an exception to the standards to allow a reduced width. The specific areas where an exception to the Standards is being sought are described below:

Location #1: STA 10+00 to STA 15+60

Feature Exception is Requested for: Roadway Width

The existing driveway varies between 13 and 20 feet wide in this area and no widening is proposed.

Basis for Exception: Environmental Constraints

Sage Creek is located to the right side of the road with the top of bank generally being less than five feet from the road edge. Along the left side of the road the topography slopes up steeply with near vertical elevation changes of five to ten plus feet and steeply sloping hillside above. An estimated 10,000 square feet of grading and native vegetation removal, placement of approximately 3,000 sf of new impervious area within the stream setbacks and removal of approximately eighteen to twenty four mature native trees within stream setback would be required to widen the driveway to comply with the Standards. Furthermore, there is an older bridge in this area (STA 10+50 to 11+00) that would also have to be widened to provide the required roadway width. Widening of the existing bridge is likely not feasible and therefore a full replacement would be required. By allowing the requested exception this environmental impact and potential impact to stream corridor can be avoided.

Same Practical Effect Discussion:

The proposed configuration meets the same practical effect criteria as outlined below:

- a) *Access for emergency wildland fire equipment:* The existing driveway and shoulder area will allow for wildland fire equipment to maneuver through this stretch of driveway. The driveway apron at the connection to Sage Canyon Road is generous in size and the bridge that immediately follows is wide enough for an emergency vehicle and passenger vehicle to pass. Furthermore, there is an existing full turnout located at STA 14+50 that can allow vehicles to pull off and allow emergency vehicles to pass.
- b) *Safe civilian evacuation:* Similar to as described above the existing driveway configuration will allow safe civilian evacuation, even with fire trucks navigating the roadway since this short segment of driveway with reduced width has wide areas for passing at either end.
- c) *Signing that avoids delays in emergency equipment response:* Although not required by the Standards, the Applicant will install a sign at the start of the private driveway to inform motorists that the road has a single traffic lane in some areas and motorists must use turnouts to allow emergency vehicles to pass (as is standard practice when a motorist is approached from behind or ahead by an emergency vehicle).
- d) *Available and accessible water to effectively attack wildfire or defend a structure from wildfire:* There is existing water storage for fire protection for the existing buildings as required by the associated development permits. When the structures are modified and new structures are built, as contemplated under this application, the plans for the permits for these projects will include fire protection water storage in the volumes required by the codes in effect at the time of submittal. Complying with the applicable codes will ensure there is adequate water available and accessible for the purpose of attacking a wildfire or protecting a structure from a fire.
- e) *Fuel modification sufficient for civilian and fire fighter safety:* When the structures contemplated under this application are submitted for building permit review the plans will include provisions for fuel modification (vegetation management) as required by the codes in effect

at the time of submittal. Complying with the applicable codes will ensure that fuel modification is completed as needed for civilian and firefighter safety.

Location #2: STA 16+75 to STA 17+50

Feature Exception is Requested for: Roadway Width

The existing driveway is 16 feet wide in this area and no widening is proposed.

Basis for Exception: Environmental Constraints

There are mature oak trees on both sides of the driveway in this area that are worthy of preservation. At a minimum one existing 48 inch diameter oak tree would be removed to facilitate widening in this area. By allowing the requested exception this environmental impact can be avoided.

Same Practical Effect Discussion:

The proposed configuration meets the same practical effect criteria as outlined below:

- a) *Access for emergency wildland fire equipment:* The existing driveway and shoulder area will allow for wildland fire equipment to maneuver through this stretch of driveway. With the proposed improvements the driveway provides the full required width immediately before and after this short stretch that is only 75 feet long and completely intervisible from end to end which will allow for free flowing vehicle movements and passing.
- b) *Safe civilian evacuation:* Similar to as described above the existing driveway configuration will allow safe civilian evacuation, even with fire trucks navigating the roadway since this short segment of driveway with reduced width has wide areas for passing at either end and there is a clear line of sight through this area.
- c) *Signing that avoids delays in emergency equipment response:* Although not required by the Standards, the Applicant will install a sign at the start of the private driveway to inform motorists that the road has a single traffic lane in some areas and motorists must use turnouts to allow emergency vehicles to pass (as is standard practice when a motorist is approached from behind or ahead by an emergency vehicle).
- d) *Available and accessible water to effectively attack wildfire or defend a structure from wildfire:* There is existing water storage for fire protection for the existing buildings as required by the associated development permits. When the structures are modified and new structures are built, as contemplated under this application, the plans for the permits for these projects will include fire protection water storage in the volumes required by the codes in effect at the time of submittal. Complying with the applicable codes will ensure there is adequate water available and accessible for the purpose of attacking a wildfire or protecting a structure from a fire.
- e) *Fuel modification sufficient for civilian and fire fighter safety:* When the structures contemplated under this application are submitted for building permit review the plans will include provisions for fuel modification (vegetation management) as required by the codes in effect at the time of submittal. Complying with the applicable codes will ensure that fuel modification is completed as needed for civilian and firefighter safety.

Location #3: STA 50+55 to STA 54+25

Feature Exception is Requested for: Roadway Width

The existing driveway is 13 feet to 14 feet paved width in this area. Widening is proposed to the maximum extent that is practical. This will result in 20' paved width at STA 53+50 to allow cars to pass. Vegetation management is proposed to improve line of sight.

Basis for Exception: Environmental Constraints

There are mature oak trees and slopes exceeding 30% slope on both sides of the driveway in this area that are worthy of preservation. An estimated 10,000 square feet of grading and removal of 12-18 trees on slopes more than 30% would be required to widen the driveway in this area. Widening is not proposed on the inboard edge of the road over the existing ditch because regrading in that area would likely undermine the stability of the steep slope above. By allowing the requested exception tree removal and grading on steep slopes can be avoided.

Same Practical Effect Discussion:

The proposed configuration meets the same practical effect criteria as outlined below:

- a) *Access for emergency wildland fire equipment:* The existing driveway with proposed improvements will allow for wildland fire equipment to maneuver through this stretch of driveway. With the proposed improvements there will be enough width for a small vehicle and emergency vehicle to pass unimpeded. The driveway provides the full required width immediately before and after this stretch which will allow for free flowing vehicle movements and passing as vehicles approach this segment with reduced width. Furthermore from STA 50+25 to 53+55 the line of site is unobstructed thus providing intervisibility through the reduced width section.
- b) *Safe civilian evacuation:* Similar to as described above the existing driveway configuration will allow safe civilian evacuation, even with fire trucks navigating the roadway since this short segment of driveway with reduced width has wide areas for passing at either end.
- c) *Signing that avoids delays in emergency equipment response:* Although not required by the Standards, the Applicant will install a sign at the start of the private driveway to inform motorists that the road has a single traffic lane in some areas and motorists must use turnouts to allow emergency vehicles to pass (as is standard practice when a motorist is approached from behind or ahead by an emergency vehicle).
- d) *Available and accessible water to effectively attack wildfire or defend a structure from wildfire:* There is existing water storage for fire protection for the existing buildings as required by the associated development permits. When the structures are modified and new structures are built, as contemplated under this application, the plans for the permits for these projects will include fire protection water storage in the volumes required by the codes in effect at the time of submittal. Complying with the applicable codes will ensure there is adequate water available and accessible for the purpose of attacking a wildfire or protecting a structure from a fire.
- e) *Fuel modification sufficient for civilian and fire fighter safety:* When the structures contemplated under this application are submitted for building permit review the plans will include provisions for fuel modification (vegetation management) as required by the codes in effect at the time of submittal. Complying with the applicable codes will ensure that fuel modification is completed as needed for civilian and firefighter safety.

Conclusions & Findings In Support of Exception Request

This request for an exception to the Standards is strictly limited to the existing driveway features described above. All other portions of the existing driveway will be improved to provide full conformance with the Standards and all new driveway segments will be constructed to provide full conformance with the Standards.

It is our opinion that this request to allow the existing access driveway to be approved with significant improvements that will achieve compliance in many areas where feasible and with three isolated segments that do not strictly comply with the Standards meets the criteria established in Section 3 of the Road and Street Standards. More specifically, approval of the proposed exception will:

1. Reduce the removal of mature oak trees and native vegetation;
2. Minimize the need for grading within the stream setbacks and on steep hillsides exceeding 30% slope;
3. Provide the same overall practical effect as the Standards towards providing defensible space and consideration towards life, safety and public welfare; and
4. Improve emergency vehicle access to the subject property and the area in general compared to what exists today.

We look forward to hearing from a representative from your department to discuss this request. Please contact us at (707) 320-4968 if you have any questions.

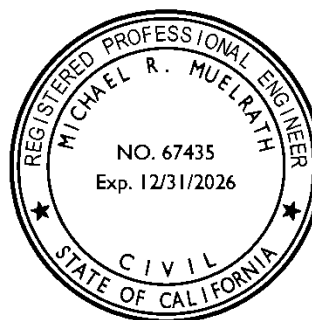
Sincerely,

Applied Civil Engineering Incorporated

By:

Michael R. Muelrath

Michael R. Muelrath, R.C.E. 67435
Principal

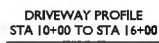


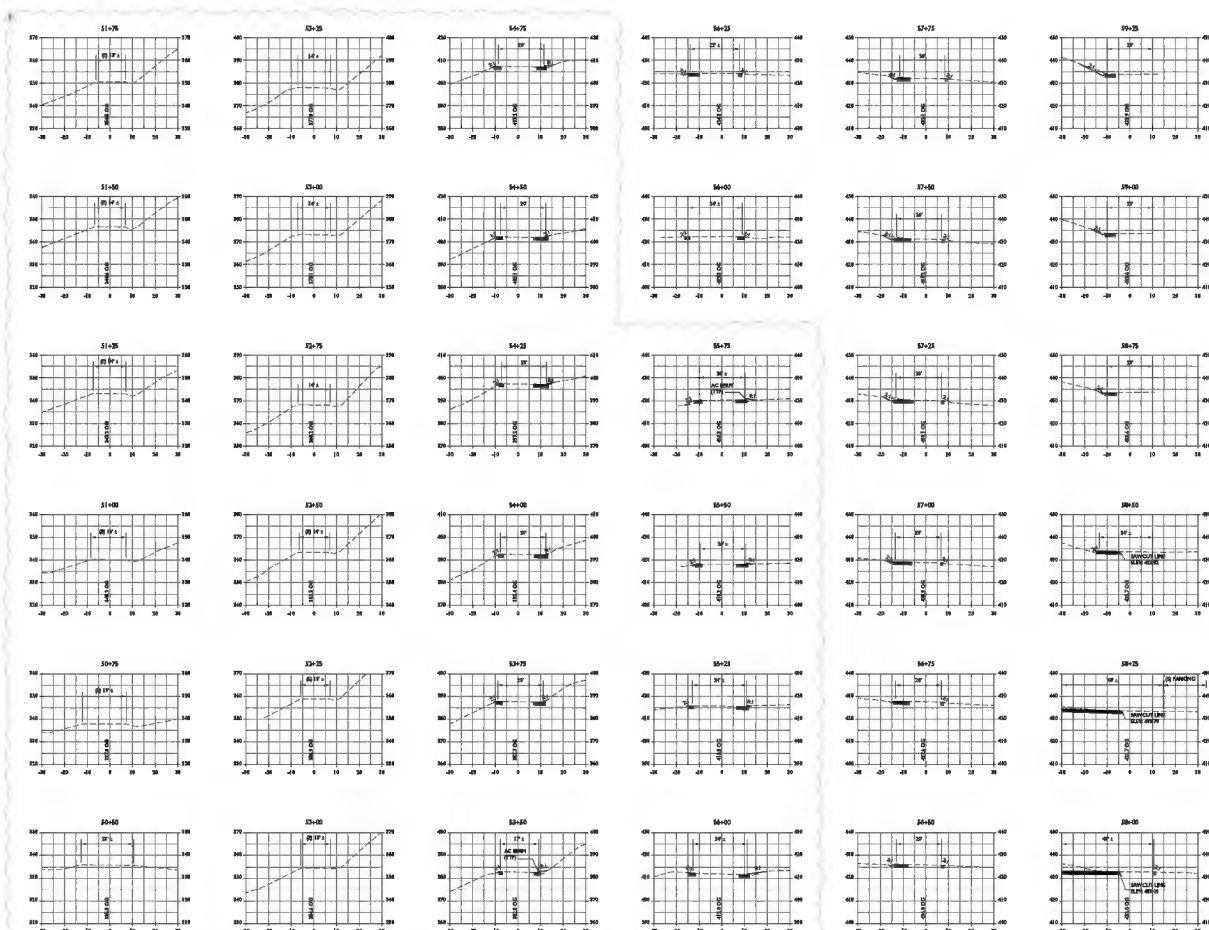
Copy:

Stephen McPherson, Promise Wine LLC (via email)
Josh Stehling, Red Gate Development (via email)

Enclosures:

Promise Wine LLC Winery Use Permit Conceptual Site Improvement Plans





DRIVEWAY CROSS SECTIONS
STA 50+50 TO STA 59+25
SCALE 1"=20'



Power CAD	
Power-CAD LLC	
CHECKED BY:	
PRM	
DATE	
JANUARY 31, 2023	
REVISION	BY:
12/31/23	YES
PERMIT SUBMITTAL	
BY/ISSUED	YES
PLAN CHECK	
COMMENTS	YES
12/31/23	
PLAN CHECK	
COMMENTS	YES
1/31/2023	
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NUMBER:	
23-123	
23CONC-ONLY.DWG	
ORIGINAL SIZE:	
24" X 36"	
SHEET NUMBER:	
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