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CEQA Exemption Memo

Napa Valley Museum Use Permit and Variance
P24-00072-UP & P24-00241-VAR
Planning Commission Hearing – October 2, 2024



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Brian D. Bordona
Director

To: Napa County Planning Commission	From: Andrew Amelung, Planner II
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Date: October 2, 2024	Re: P24-00072 Napa Valley Museum Categorical Exemption Determination 607 St. Helena Highway, St. Helena APN: 027-150-001-000
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Background:

On March 15, 2024, Applicant submitted a request for a use permit to convert an existing structure of approximately 10,775 square feet of combined marketplace use (7,880 square feet) and ancillary use (2,895 square feet) to a reduced marketplace use (1,439 square feet) and increased ancillary use (3,022 square feet), with the introduction of 6,272 new square feet of quasi-public use in the form of a nonprofit museum, for a proposed total of 10,773 square feet.

The marketplace has been operating under a Certificate of the Extent of Legal Nonconformity (CLN 96472) since 1997 and has been opened since 1954. The request of a new use permit and variance will remove the need to uphold the existing CLN, as a conforming use permit with and an approved variance and conditions of approval will replace the entitlement. The variance is requested as an exception to the landscaping and parking development standards required in the CN base zoning district as described in NCC § 18.32.060 & 18.32.070. The operation of the quasi-public museum use will include up to six events with up to 200 people throughout the year.

Existing Conditions and Environment Setting:

The proposed project is located on an approximately 1.41-acre parcel within the CN base zoning district with a Agricultural Resource (AR) General Plan designation at 607 South St. Helena Highway, St. Helena, CA 94559. APN: 027-150-001-000.

Entitlement History:

Existing entitlement records for the parcel include CLN 96472 for the marketplace, Use Permit 107172 for the neighboring restaurant, and a series of building permits for alterations, modifications, and two existing septic system on the property that date back to the 1960s.

CEQA Exemption Criteria and Analysis:

Article 19 of the State Guidelines for Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA Guidelines) establishes a list of classes of projects that are categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA. This project qualifies as an exempt activity under two (2) sections of Article 19:

Class 1: Existing Facilities [California Code of Regulations (CCR) §15301]

Consists of the operation, repair, maintenance, permitting, leasing, licensing, or minor alteration of existing public or private structures, facilities, mechanical equipment, or topographical features, involving negligible or no expansion of existing or former use.

Examples enumerated in CCR §15301 include:

- (a) Interior or exterior alterations involving such things as interior partitions, plumbing, and electrical conveyances.

The scope of the project is almost exclusively limited to interior alterations including partitions, plumbing and electrical conveyances. Exterior alterations include modifications to the approved sign and some minor alterations to the exterior façade. The proposed project does not include any additions to existing structure nor any expansion of existing footprints. There will be no ground disturbance or any disturbance to undeveloped land. The request for the variance is to avoid reconstruction of the parking lot which can result in health and safety issues and adverse environmental impacts. The expected traffic generated, daily visitors, water use, and wastewater generated is expected to be less than the previous use. As such, the proposed project can be adopted as categorically exempt from CEQA under Section 15301 (Class 1).

The proposed project as conditioned not change the existing baseline conditions or trigger exceptions described in CEQA Section 15300.2, and does not present any potential for cumulative impacts, significant effects, impacts on scenic highways, development on hazardous waste sites, or impacts on historical resources.

Conclusion:

The project is categorically exempt from CEQA under Section 15301.