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## Road and Street Standards Exception Requests

Vineyard House Winery, Use Permit P18-00448-UP, Use Permit  
Exception to the Conservation Regulations P21-00341-UP, and  
Exemptions to the Road and Street Standards  
Planning Commission Hearing Date July 16, 2025



October 4, 2024

Job No. 10-130

Steve Lederer, Director  
Napa County Public Works Department  
1195 Third Street, Suite 101  
Napa, California 94559

Re: Request for Exception to the Napa County Road and Street Standards for  
The Vineyard House Winery Use Permit Application - Left Turn Lane Geometry  
1581 Oakville Grade Road, Napa, CA 94558  
Napa County APN 027-360-022  
P18-00448

Dear Mr. Lederer:

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 The Vineyard House Winery. We are providing this information for your review and final decision pursuant to Section 3 of the 2023 Napa County Road and Street Standards. Section 3 allows exceptions to the Standards provided that the exception 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 man made 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 application along with the proposed left turn lane improvements and granting this requested exception to the Standards for specific and limited portions of the left turn lane will:

1. Reduce the removal of heritage oak and other mature native trees and vegetation;
2. Minimize the need for grading on the steep slopes;
3. Allow for completion of road improvements within the limitations of the existing legal and topographic constraints;
4. Provide the same overall practical effect as the Standards towards providing defensible space and consideration towards life, safety and public welfare; and
5. Improve emergency vehicle access to the subject property and the area in general.

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**

The Vineyard House is applying for a Use Permit to construct and operate a new winery at their property located at 1581 Oakville Grade Road in Napa County, California. The subject property, known as Napa County Assessor's Parcel Number 027-360-022, is located along a private driveway approximately 0.4 miles south of the intersection of the private driveway and Oakville Grade Road.

The Use Permit application under consideration proposes the construction and operation of a new winery with the following characteristics:

- Wine Production:
  - 20,000 gallons of wine per year
  - Crushing, fermenting, aging and bottling
- Employees:
  - 4 full time
  - 2 part time
- Marketing Plan:
  - Daily Tours and Tastings by Appointment
    - 12 visitors per day maximum
    - 60 visitor per week average

- Small Group Marketing Events
  - 12 per year
  - 20 guests maximum
  - Food prepared offsite by catering company
- Non-Profit or Industry Events
  - 1 per year
  - 50 guests maximum
  - Food prepared offsite by catering company
  - Portable toilets brought in for guest use
- Harvest Party or Related Event
  - 1 per year
  - 100 guests maximum
  - Food prepared offsite by catering company
  - Portable toilets brought in for guest use

Existing improvements on the property include a single-family residence, a barn / viticulture office, vineyards and the associated access and utility infrastructure typical for this type of residential and agricultural development. The historic main residence will be converted to hospitality use. A new cave and winery facilities will be constructed as part of this proposal. A new left turn lane on Oakville Grade Road at the private driveway intersection is proposed as part of the project. Please see The Vineyard House Winery Use Permit Conceptual Site Improvement Plans for approximate locations of existing and proposed site features.

### **Napa County Road and Street Standards Left Turn Lane Requirements**

The Napa County Road and Street Standards require two twelve foot wide travel lanes, an eleven foot wide turn pocket and four feet of shoulder on each side of the road as part of the standard geometry for a left turn lane on a County Road.

### **Request for Exception to Napa County Road and Street Standards**

While the Applicant proposes to install a left turn lane it is not feasible to construct a left turn that fully complies with the Standards given unique conditions that exist where the project driveway connects to Oakville Grade Road. More specifically, there exist steep slopes on both the north and south sides of Oakville Grade Road just west of the subject private driveway intersection. Any widening in this area requires significant grading and vegetation removal on steep slopes.

During the process of design it was determined that it is not feasible to install a fully compliant left turn lane due to the significant topographic and environmental constraints and limited width of the existing right of way. However, a slightly modified version of the left turn lane was studied and found to be feasible with the incorporation of a retaining wall on the north side of Oakville Cross Road. The requested modification of the left turn lane utilizes eleven-foot wide lanes and a ten-foot wide turn pocket with two-foot wide shoulders to work within the limits of the existing right of way and topographic and environmental constraints.

Creating the additional widening (approximately seven feet) required for a fully compliant left turn lane would require substantial grading on steep slopes, removal of at least 10 mature, native oak and other native tree species all greater than 6 "dbh as well as acquisition of right of way from private property owned by others.

Conclusions & Findings In Support of Exception Request

It is our opinion that this request to modify the required left turn lane geometry as shown on the attached improvement plans meets the criteria established in Section 3 of the Standards to grant the requested exception. More specifically, approval of the proposed exception will:

1. Preserve mature native trees on steeply sloping hillsides;
2. Minimize the need for grading on steep slopes;
3. Abide by the limitations of the existing access easements;
4. Provide the same overall practical effect as the Standards towards providing defensible space and consideration towards life, safety and public welfare.

We trust that this information is sufficient for processing of 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:

Jeremy Nickel, The Vineyard House Winery (via email)  
Jeffrey Redding (via email)  
Paul Kelley, Paul Kelley Architecture (via email)

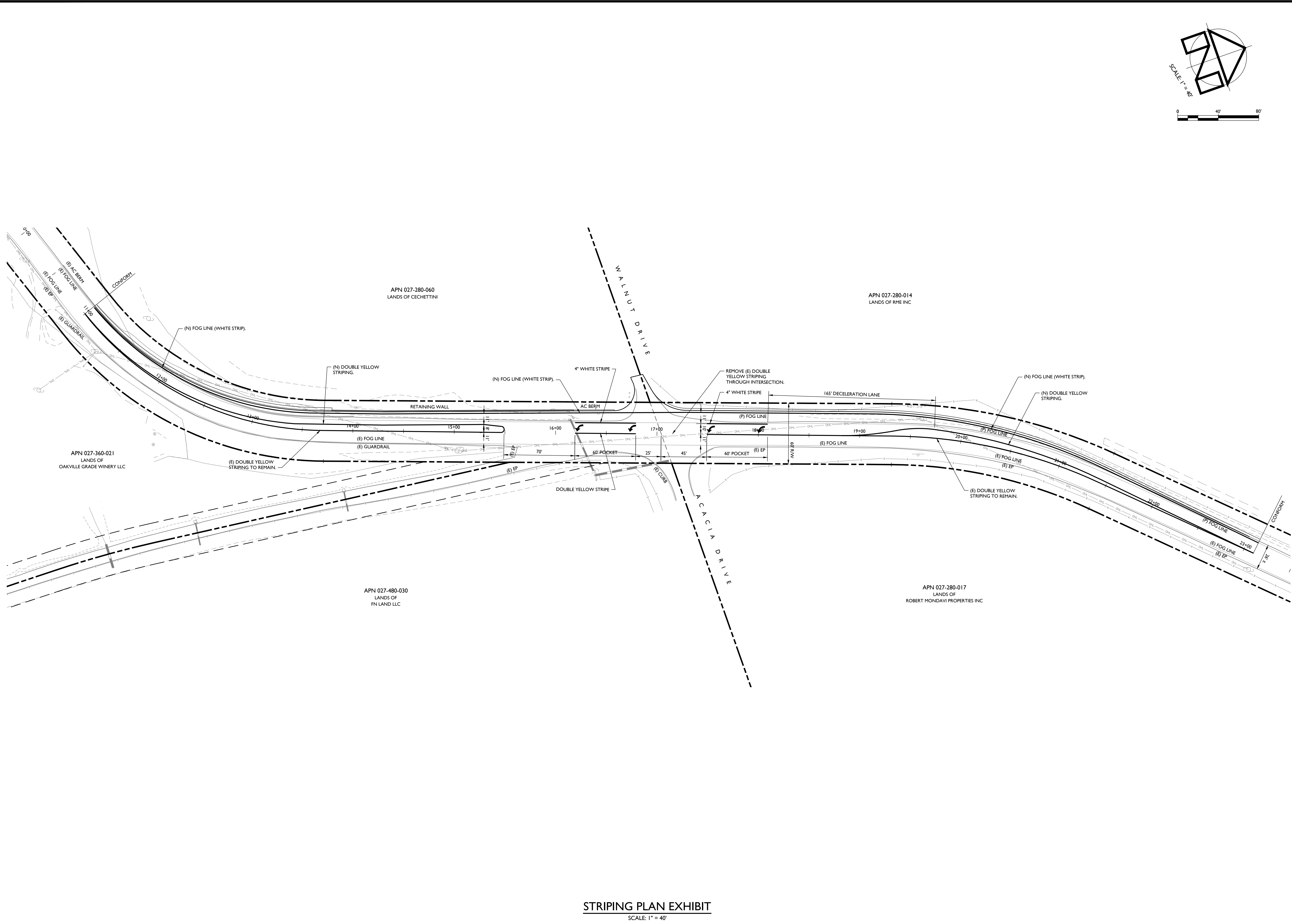
Enclosures:

The Vineyard House Winery Left Turn Lane Exhibit

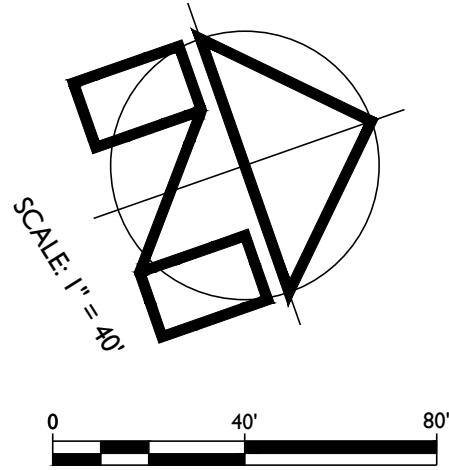






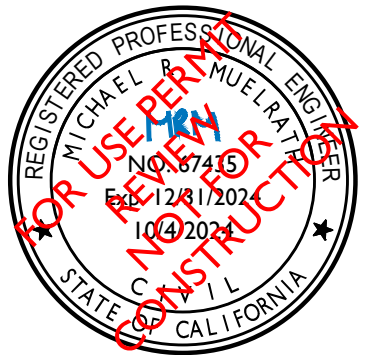


STRIPING PLAN EXHIBIT  
SCALE: 1" = 40'



THE VINEYARD HOUSE WINERY  
STRIPING PLAN EXHIBIT

PREPARED UNDER THE  
DIRECTION OF:



DRAWN BY: SMI  
CHECKED BY: MRM  
DATE: OCTOBER 4, 2024  
REVISIONS: BY:

JOB NUMBER: 10-130  
FILE: 10-130EXH\_LTL-STRIPING.DWG  
ORIGINAL SIZE: 24" X 36"

SHEET NUMBER:  
C2  
OF  
2



December 21, 2018  
August 30, 2019 (Revision #1)  
March 28, 2022 (Revision #2)

Job No. 10-130

Mr. David Morrison, 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 Vineyard House Winery Use Permit Application  
1581 Oakville Grade Road, Napa, CA 94558  
Napa County APN 027-360-022

Dear Mr. Morrison:

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 The Vineyard House Winery. We are providing this information for your review and final decision by the Conservation, Development and Planning Commission pursuant to Section 3 of the Napa County Road and Street Standards. 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 man made 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 application along with the proposed significant driveway improvements and granting this requested exception to the Standards for a portion of the existing driveway will:

1. Reduce the removal of heritage oak and other mature native trees and vegetation;
2. Minimize the need for grading on the steep slopes;
3. Allow for completion of road improvements within the limitations of the existing legal and topographic constraints;
4. Provide the same overall practical effect as the Standards towards providing defensible space and consideration towards life, safety and public welfare; and
5. Improve emergency vehicle access to the subject property and the area in general.

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**

The Vineyard House is applying for a Use Permit to construct and operate a new winery at their property located at 1581 Oakville Grade Road in Napa County, California. The subject property, known as Napa County Assessor's Parcel Number 027-360-022, is located along a private driveway approximately 0.4 miles south of the intersection of the private driveway and Oakville Grade Road.

The Use Permit application under consideration proposes the construction and operation of a new winery with the following characteristics:

- Wine Production:
  - 20,000 gallons of wine per year
  - Crushing, fermenting, aging and bottling
- Employees:
  - 4 full time
  - 2 part time

- Marketing Plan:
  - Daily Tours and Tastings by Appointment
    - 12 visitors per day maximum
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  - Small Group Marketing Events
    - 12 per year
    - 20 guests maximum
    - Food prepared offsite by catering company
  - Non-Profit or Industry Events
    - 1 per year
    - 50 guests maximum
    - Food prepared offsite by catering company
    - Portable toilets brought in for guest use
  - Harvest Party or Related Event
    - 1 per year
    - 100 guests maximum
    - Food prepared offsite by catering company
    - Portable toilets brought in for guest use

Existing improvements on the property include a single family residence, a barn / viticulture office, vineyards and the associated access and utility infrastructure typical for this type of residential and agricultural development. The main residence and barn / viticulture office buildings both become part of the winery facility and a new cave will be constructed as part of this proposal. Please see The Vineyard House Winery Use Permit Conceptual Site Improvement Plans for approximate locations of existing and proposed site features.

### **Existing Access Road Conditions**

Access to The Vineyard House Winery property is via a shared private driveway off of Oakville Grade Road. The shared private driveway extends approximately 0.4 miles from Oakville Grade Road to the proposed winery site. The private driveway is shared by several properties in the general area with both agricultural (vineyards and wineries) and residential uses. The driveway traverses steeply sloping hillsides for the first 0.2 +/- miles and then more gently sloping topography for the remaining 0.2 +/- miles to the project site. Although the driveway crosses steep terrain in some areas the longitudinal slope along the entire driveway up to the project site is gentle averaging well under 16%. The shared driveway is paved with asphalt for the entire length and general averages 14 feet in paved width. Please refer to The Vineyard House Winery Use Permit Conceptual Site Improvement Plans for illustrations of the shared private driveway.

## **Napa County Road and Street Standards Requirements**

The Napa County Road and Street Standards require that private access driveways serving wineries provide two (2) 10-foot-wide travel lanes (20 feet total), 22 feet of horizontal clearance, 15 feet 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 shared private driveway to the full 20 foot width along the entire length would require substantial grading on steep slopes, modification of existing drainage courses and removal of at least 30 or more mature, native oak and other trees. Furthermore, these improvements would require construction of large retaining walls along the length of the driveway or grading outside of the existing easement that the property owner does not have the legal means to achieve.

During our review of site conditions, it was determined that the driveway width can be improved to meet the Standards for approximately one-half of the length of the driveway without undue environmental impacts and within the constraints of the existing easements. Therefore, The Vineyard House Winery is proposing to widen the driveway to the full Standard of 20' wide plus 2' of additional horizontal clearance from STA 23+00 all the way to the building site. This portion of the driveway will fully conform to the Standards after the improvements are constructed as proposed in this application.

In order to minimize environmental impacts, preserve many existing mature trees along the roadway and work within the confines of their existing legal easements across other properties The Vineyard House Winery is requesting an exception to the Napa County Road and Street Standards for the portion of the driveway from STA 10+00 (Oakville Grade Road) to STA 23+00 to allow reduced driveway widths and a non-standard geometrical layout at the intersection with Oakville Grade Road. In these areas the road is already as wide as is feasible without requiring grading on steep slopes and removal of mature native trees. This section of driveway is compliant in terms of slope and the exception is only being requested for width. In order to improve ingress and egress conditions three turnouts are proposed to be constructed along this section of roadway to allow vehicles to pass and to provide the same overall practical effect as the Standards. Based on a site visit with Napa County Engineering and Fire Department staff (Daniel Basore and Chase Beckman) on March 1, 2019 the turnouts at STA 14+50 and 18+50 were further enlarged to provide "double length" turnouts.

In order to provide the same overall practical effect as a Standard connection to Oakville Cross Road a sign will be provided to advise exiting vehicles to perform a right turn only and to prevent left turns out of the driveway onto Oakville Cross Road. Additionally, all guests and employees of The Vineyard House will be informed of the access conditions and will be advised to enter the driveway from the east and exit to the east to avoid the difficult maneuvers to and from the west that result from the non-standard driveway connection to Oakville Cross Road.



### Justification of Exception

As previously described, Section 3.D. of the Napa County Road and Street Standards, states that an exception to the Road and Street Standards may be granted if the exception will preserve unique features of the natural environment (including native trees, watercourses, steep slopes and geologic features) and the proposed project provides the same overall practical effect as the Standards towards providing defensible space, and consideration towards life, safety and public welfare.

Granting of this exception will preserve at least 30 mature native trees. The proposed turnouts have been designed to be inter-visible and therefore will allow vehicles to pass and provide the same overall practical effect as the Standards in providing safe ingress and egress conditions.

In addition to the proposed turnouts, full widening of a significant portion of the driveway and signage to direct traffic to and from the east, several other measures have been incorporated into the project design to provide the “same overall practical effect” as the Standards towards providing defensible space and consideration towards life, safety and public welfare. Below is a summary of the proposed measures:

#### *Defensible Space*

1. Horizontal and vertical vegetation management will be implemented along the entire length of the existing driveway and around the existing and proposed structures on the subject property to create defensible space. This will include vegetation management and modification 10 feet horizontally and 15 feet vertically along all private access roads and 100 feet (or to the nearest property or easement line) around buildings in accordance with Napa County Fire Department requirements.

#### *Life Safety and Public Welfare*

1. Address signage for existing and proposed uses on the subject property will be upgraded as needed to comply with County Fire Department Standards to improve emergency vehicle accessibility.
2. A robust fire protection system is in place and will be upgraded as necessary to comply with all building code requirements. The system includes a storage tank and fire pump that supply hydrants around the facility and sprinklers within the barn building. It is expected that the house will be outfitted with sprinklers when it is converted to a winery use.

Section 3.F. of the Standards specifically identifies that built in fire protection systems can be used to help achieve the same overall practical effect as the Standards towards providing defensible space, consideration of life, safety and public welfare and not compromising civilian access or Fire Department access.

### Conclusions & Findings In Support of Exception Request

It is our opinion that this request to allow the existing access driveway to be approved with the proposed significant improvements and with one segment that does not strictly comply with the Standards meets the criteria established in Section 3 of the Standards. More specifically, approval of the proposed exception will:

1. Preserve mature native trees on steeply sloping hillsides;
2. Minimize the need for grading on steep slopes;
3. Abide by the limitations of the existing access easements;
4. Provide the same overall practical effect as the Standards towards providing defensible space and consideration towards life, safety and public welfare.

We trust that this information is sufficient for processing of this request. Please contact us at (707) 320-4968 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Applied Civil Engineering Incorporated

By:

*Michael R. Muelrath*

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



Copy:

Jeremy Nickel, The Vineyard House Winery (via email)  
Paul Kelley, Paul Kelley Architecture (via email)

Enclosures:

The Vineyard House Winery Use Permit Conceptual Site Improvement Plans