



## Sonoma County Design Review Committee STAFF REPORT

**FILE:** DRH19-0006; Platinum Storage  
**DATE:** July 19, 2023  
**TIME:** At or after 1:30 pm  
**STAFF:** Wil Lyons, Project Planner

### SUMMARY

**Property Owner:** Jefferson Storage Partners  
**Applicant:** Platinum Storage Group  
**Address:** 1382 Highway 116 South  
Sebastopol  
**Supervisory District(s):** District 5  
**APN:** 063-011-017  
**Description:** Request for preliminary Design Review of a new 99,854 sq. ft. self-storage facility to be served by a private well and public sewer on a 3.8 acre, Limited Commercial-zoned portion of a 11.34 acre parcel  
**CEQA Review:** Under Review  
**General Plan Land Use:** Limited Commercial, Rural Residential  
**Specific/Area Plan Land Use:** Not applicable  
**Ordinance Reference(s):** Article 10 – Commercial Zones  
Article 82 – Design Review  
**Zoning:** LC- Limited Commercial, RR B6 2- Rural Residential with 2 Acre per Dwelling Unit Density, LG/116- Local Guidelines for Highway 116, SR- Scenic Corridor for Highway 116.

### RECOMMENDATION

**STAFF RECOMMENDS THE DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE CONSIDER THE PROJECT'S PRELIMINARY DESIGN PLANS; AND PROVIDE FEEDBACK TO STAFF PROCEEDING WITH ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVAL OF THE FINAL SITE PLAN, BUILDING ARCHITECTURE, BUILDING MATERIALS AND COLORS, LIGHTING AND LANDSCAPING.; EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The proposed project is a request for Design Review of a 99,854 square foot self-storage facility on a 3.8 acre, Limited Commercial-zoned portion of a 11.34 acre parcel. The project proposes to demolish several structures including a large commercial building (formerly Discount Alley), several outbuildings, and a barn. A restaurant



(Sequoia Burger), a convenience store (Sequoia Mini Mart), and a home with a detached garage will remain on the site.

The project is subject to environmental review pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). An initial study is underway and a Mitigated Negative Declaration is anticipated.

## **PROJECT SITE AND CONTEXT**

### ***Background***

The 11.34 acre parcel is split-zoned between LC (Limited Commercial, 3.8 acres) and RR (Rural Residential, 7.9 acres), and is within the LG/116 (Local Guidelines for Highway 116) and SR (Scenic Resources: Scenic Corridor) Combining Districts. The parcel’s General Plan land use designations are LC (Limited Commercial) and RR 2 (Rural Residential with 2 acre per dwelling unit density). The site is within the Sebastopol Urban Service Area and the area is a designated Class 2 Major Natural Recharge.

The developed area of the parcel lies almost entirely within the LC zoned northeastern portion which contains a house, a restaurant (Sequoia Burger), a convenience store (Sequoia Mini Mart), the barn (West County Glass Company, to be demolished), a large commercial building (formerly Discount Alley, to be demolished), and several outbuildings. Sequoia Mini Mart, Sequoia Burger, and the home are adjacent to Highway 116 on the eastern portion of the parcel, while the barn and commercial buildings are centrally located in the parcel, behind the restaurant and convenience store. The project is proposed behind Sequoia Mini Mart, Sequoia Burger, and north of the home, which will remain under this proposal. Much of the parcel is zoned Rural Residential (RR) and currently undeveloped. All RR-zoned area will remain undeveloped under the current proposal.

### ***Area Context and Surrounding Land Uses***

<b>Direction</b>	<b>Land Uses</b>
<b>North</b>	<b>Residential</b>
<b>South</b>	<b>Residential; Open Space</b>
<b>East</b>	<b>Residential; Industrial</b>
<b>West</b>	<b>Residential</b>

The site is surrounded primarily by industrial, residential, and agricultural uses. Properties directly adjacent to the north, south, and west of the site are zoned as Rural Residential (RR). To the east, across Highway 116, are areas of light industrial uses which carry M1 Industrial zoning designations, while the parcels to the southeast also carry Rural Residential designations.

### ***Significant Applications Nearby***

Recent applications in the immediate vicinity include a minor subdivision to the north, resulting in two residentially zoned lots.

### ***Access***

Access to the proposed project will be from Highway 116 adjacent to the site. Proposed site improvements will enhance traffic access through various parts of the site, including Sequoia Burger and Sequoia Mini Mart. This is



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accomplished via the inclusion of separated traffic flows between the self-storage uses and patrons of Sequoia Burger and Sequoia Mart. The attached traffic study for the proposed project predicts a decrease in trip generation by nearly half of existing levels due to both the demolition of the former commercial spaces and barn and self-storage being a less traffic-intensive use. Furthermore, a proposed turn lane on Highway 116 will alleviate any congestion that may have arisen accessing the site. Sonoma Public Infrastructure has reviewed the project and traffic study. Comments were limited to the dedication of land for bicycle lane use and compliance with CalTrans. As such they provided conditions of approval for inclusion in the final project approvals. CalTrans expressed concern regarding driveway sight distance and clarity of the plans regarding widening of the road to accommodate the proposed turn lane. Revisions are underway.

**Water/Wastewater/Utilities**

The proposed warehouse will be served by an onsite private well and waste treatment will be provided by a new on-site septic.

**Structures on Property**

Several structures exist on the property. These were evaluated for historic significance by Daniel Shoup, Ward Hill, and Jennifer Hill Archaeological/Historical Consultants in a study dated April of 2022. The following table and descriptions summarize the results of the study in relation to the project proposal.

Structure	Year Built	Size	Eligible for Historic Register?	Proposed for Demolition?
Barn (West County Glass)	1860s	+1210s.f.	N	Y
House	1910	+3000s.f.	N	N
Commercial Building	1960s	+5041s.f.	N	Y
Restaurant (Sequoia Burger)	1960s	+225s.f.	N	N
Convenience Store (Sequoia Mini Mart)	1960s	+2678s.f.	N	N

- **Barn (to be demolished)**

- The barn bears the hallmarks of being developed to support the historic tobacco operations and includes architectural hallmarks of construction of the era, however only one source from the 1980s explicitly refers to it as a tobacco barn.

The barn has been modified significantly in the intervening decades and much of its original shape and function have been lost. It is currently occupied by West County Glass Company and has been modified to accommodate commercial uses. The modifications and loss of historic



features make it ineligible for the California Register of Historic Places. The applicant proposes to incorporate siding elements from the barn into the office structure of the Self-Storage facility.

- **House and Garage**
  - The house is a two-story, single-family home and was built around 1910. The house has been extensively remodeled decades with several modern additions that have significantly altered the historic character of the home. The garage has been extensively rebuilt with modern materials and additions have been made to allow for shop and storage uses. The house will not be demolished under the current proposal. It reflects architectural styles of the time it was built, but the significant alterations have made the structure ineligible for the California Register of Historic Places.
- **Commercial Building (Former Discount Alley, to be demolished)**
  - The wood-frame structure was built in the 1960s and is 173 long and divided into two sections of 20 feet and 37 feet wide. It does not appear to have been significantly altered since its construction, however it does not carry significant associations with local themes or local historic figures, cultural patterns of significance, and is not sufficiently exceptional or distinguished architecturally for commercial uses from that time period. It is not eligible for the California Register of Historic Places.
- **Restaurant (Sequoia Burger)**
  - The structure was constructed in the 1960s and has been significantly remodeled and has received major additions. It does not carry significant associations with local themes or local historic figures, cultural patterns of significance, and is not sufficiently exceptional or distinguished architecturally for commercial uses from that time period. It will not be demolished under the current proposal. While it maintains some architectural style elements of the time it was built, it has been significantly altered and is not eligible for the California Register of Historic Places.
- **Convenience Store (Sequoia Mini Mart)**
  - The structure was constructed in the 1960s, however it has been significantly remodeled and has received major additions. It does not carry significant associations with local themes or local historic figures, cultural patterns of significance, and is not sufficiently exceptional or distinguished architecturally for commercial uses from that time period. It will not be demolished under the current proposal.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The proposed project is a 99,854 square foot self-storage facility on a 3.8 acre, Limited Commercial zoned portion of a 11.34 acre parcel. The project proposes to demolish several existing structures including a large commercial building (formerly Discount Alley), several outbuildings, and a barn estimated to be from the 1860s. A restaurant (Sequoia Burger), a convenience store (Sequoia Mini Mart), and a home with a detached garage will remain on the site.

The project site located at 1382 Highway 116 South is 11.34 acres and is a split-zoned parcel between LC-Limited Commercial (3.83 acres) and RR-Rural Residential (7.51 acres) zoning designations. The developed area of the



parcel lies almost entirely within the LC zoned northeastern portion which contains a house, a restaurant (Sequoia Burger), a convenience store (Sequoia Mini Mart), the barn (West County Glass Company), a large commercial building (formerly Discount Alley), and several outbuildings. Sequoia Mini Mart, Sequoia Burger, and the home are adjacent to Highway 116 on the eastern portion of the parcel, while the barn and commercial buildings are centrally located in the parcel, behind the restaurant and convenience store. Much of the large parcel is currently undeveloped and will remain as such under the current proposal in the predominantly RR zoned portion.

**Site Layout, Architecture, and Exterior Building Materials**

At 41 feet the warehouse complex maintains roughly the same setback distance as the existing Sequoia Mini Mart (42 feet) and Sequoia Burger (6.5 feet) from the property lines. Setbacks from Highway 116 will vary as the road will be widened to accommodate a turn lane and the applicant has proposed to cede land to accommodate future bicycle lane development. The applicants have provided an Irrevocable Offer of Dedication to this end. Development is concentrated in the commercially zoned portion of the parcel, where existing improvements are focused. Apart from septic tank installation, the rest of the residential portion of the site will remain open space under this proposal.

The project consists of a 3-story warehouse building flanked by 1-story warehouse buildings on three sides to decrease visual mass of the larger central structure. The warehouse buildings consist of CMU and metal siding in beige and corrugated metal accents in white, and access doors in blue. The office area for the site resides in a 1-story structure on the east (front) of the parcel. It consists of finishes in faux lumber veneer, metal siding, and storefront glazing. The applicant proposes to incorporate lumber reclaimed from the barn being demolished on-site into this office space to provide accents and keep materials on site.

**Site Lighting and Landscaping**

Exterior lighting will be wall-mounted, full cutoff fixtures along each side of the building. Landscaping improvements are focused along Highway 116 to screen the project where it would be visible from the road. Existing structures, including Sequoia Burger and Sequoia Mini Mart will help to screen the new structures from the road and site improvements including grading and access will better blend the site to its surroundings. Further landscaping, including large redwoods, will shield the south and west sides of the project from nearby residential uses.

**Project History**

The table below summarizes key project milestones and events to date.

Date	Project Event/Milestone
4/15/2019	Application/First Submittal
12/17/2019	Second Submittal/Revised Project Scope
01/15/2020	Preliminary Design Review; Revision comments provided.
5/27/2021	Third Submittal/Revised Project Scope
5/13/2022	Fourth (Current Submittal)

**General Plan**

The following General Plan policies are applicable to the project:



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**LU-17e:** Avoid new "Limited Commercial" and "Limited Industrial" designations outside of the Sebastopol and Graton Urban Service Areas.

The parcel is within Sebastopol's Urban Service Area.

**LU-17f:** Avoid discretionary projects on "Limited Commercial" or "Limited Industrial" lands unless the use:

- (1) Serves the commercial, service, employment or agricultural processing needs of the planning area,
- (2) Is compatible with adjacent residential or agricultural uses,
- (3) Would not adversely affect the level of service on public roadways or interfere with the movement of farm vehicles,
- (4) Provides mitigation for visual impacts within a designated Scenic Corridor through appropriate setbacks, landscaping, and/or screening, and
- (5) Is in keeping with the scale and character of the community.

The project will provide a valuable commercial service to the Sebastopol area. It is compatible with adjacent residential uses as it is separated by over 100 feet of open space from residential uses to the south and west while the residential parcel to the north is heavily screened by landscaping. Improvements to Highway 116, including bicycle and turn lanes, combined with a predicted decrease in trip traffic to the site will not adversely affect levels of service on public roadways. Sonoma Public Infrastructure has reviewed the project and traffic study. Comments were limited to the dedication of land for bicycle lane use and compliance with CalTrans. As such they provided conditions of approval on the project for inclusion in the final project. CalTrans expressed concern regarding driveway sight distance and clarity of the plans regarding widening of the road to accommodate the proposed turn lane. Revisions are underway. The project will be screened by landscaping and existing buildings, new buildings will match the setbacks of existing buildings, and building material choices reflect nearby structures. Lastly, the project is smaller in scale than those industrial uses across Highway 116, and while significant in square footage, the less-intensive use should blend the project into the community while retaining community assets in the long-serving Sequoia Burger and Sequoia Mini Mart.

**LU-17n:** Refer to the City of Sebastopol for review and comment any application for discretionary projects in the vicinity of the Urban Service Boundary.

The City of Sebastopol was sent various referrals on this project and have been invited to this Design Review Committee hearing.

The General Plan Land Use Element does not contain any specific policies applicable to the proposed project. However, the overall purpose and definition for the Limited Commercial land use category is to provide "areas for retail sales and services necessary for the daily self-sufficiency of urban and rural areas in keeping with their character." The applicant has proposed many site improvements that, along with the structure itself, will work to integrate into Sebastopol while providing storage services for the local area.

#### CIRCULATION AND TRANSIT ELEMENT



**CT-7q:** Work with Caltrans in considering passing and turning lanes along Highway 116 to reduce congestion, provided that the improvements are consistent with the designated road classifications.

The most recent Traffic Impact Study was sent to CalTrans for comment on March 19, 2023. CalTrans expressed concern regarding driveway sight distance and clarity of the plans regarding widening of the road to accommodate the proposed turn lane. Revisions are underway.

**Hwy 116 Scenic Corridor Study Guidelines**

**Objective SH3.1:** The County shall seek to identify and assure the preservation of historic structures and landmarks along the Highway 116 scenic corridor.

The property at 1382 Highway 116 South is not a Sonoma County Landmark, is not listed in the County Historic Resource Inventory. The “Building Significance Evaluations,” prepared by Daniel Shoup, Ward Hill, and Jennifer Ho Archaeological/Historical Consultants updated in April of 2022, found that none of the existing structures are eligible for California Register of Historic Places as historic resources. The applicant proposes to reclaim some of the lumber from this barn to reuse in the office space of the project.

**Zoning**

The table below summarizes the development standards that apply to the site as outlined in the Sonoma County Zoning Ordinance, proposed conditions, and whether the project is consistent with standards. Inconsistencies with the Zoning Ordinance are discussed below.

Standard	Ordinance	Proposed Project	Meets Standards
Land Use	Limited Commercial	Warehousing; Permitted by right under Sec. 26-44-010(f)	Yes
Front Setback	Determined through Design Review	42 ft	N/A
Front Setback: Scenic Corridor	30% Lot Depth/165ft	42 ft	No
Side Setback	Determined through Design Review	32 ft min.	N/A
Rear Setback	Determined through Design Review	98 ft	Yes
Height	35 ft	32 ft	Yes
Lot Coverage %	50%	33.34%	Yes
Parking Spaces	28	30	Yes

**ANALYSIS**

**Consistency with General Plan and Zoning**



The proposal is consistent with the General Plan. The Land Use Element states that the overall purpose and definition for the Limited Commercial land use category is to provide “areas for retail sales and services necessary for the daily self-sufficiency of urban and rural areas in keeping with their character.” The applicant has proposed many site improvements that, along with the structure itself, will work to integrate into Sebastopol while providing storage services for the local area and is consistent with this element of the General Plan. In addition, CalTrans has been consulted and plans are being revised until compliant with CalTrans’ comments, consistent with the Circulation and Transit Element.

The RR land use designation provides for low density residential development. Limited Commercial districts promote low-intensity, area-serving commercial uses wherein mini-storage facilities are allowed by Design Review.

Section 26-64-030 for Scenic Corridors requires that buildings be set back 30% of the lot depth to a maximum 200 feet unless:

- (i) They are associated with existing structures,
- (ii) There is no other reasonable location for the structure,
- (iii) The location within the setback is necessary for the use, or
- (iv) Existing vegetation and topography screen the use;

The project is associated with established businesses and structures that will remain on site. Sequoia Mini Mart maintains an equal setback distance as the proposed single-story office structure while Sequoia Burger will remain at 6.5 feet from the property lines. The proposed siting of the project is required due to the small nature of the Limited Commercial (LC) zoned portion of the parcel. As Sequoia Mini Mart, Sequoia Burger, and residence will remain, there is nowhere else in the Limited Commercial zoned portion of the parcel for the proposed use. The project complies with Permit Sonoma Policies which allow mini-storage facilities on Limited Commercial parcels via a Design Review with Hearing. The area behind the project is zoned Rural Residential wherein the proposed use is not allowed. Combined with the proposed widening of the highway and future bicycle lane, the proposed location is the only viable option. To mitigate visual impacts the applicant proposed significant landscape and hardscape improvements to both increase safe access and shield much of the project from view of Highway 116.

### ***Environmental Analysis***

The project is subject to environmental review pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). An initial study is underway, and a Mitigated Negative Declaration is anticipated.

## **NEIGHBORHOOD/PUBLIC COMMENTS**

No public comments have been received to date.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### ***Staff Recommendation***





Staff recommends the Design Review Committee consider the project’s preliminary design plans; provide feedback on the site plan, building architecture, building materials and colors, lighting and landscaping.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

1. Applicant Proposal Statement
2. Site Plan and Architectural Plans
3. Rendering
4. Preliminary Landscaping and Irrigation Plans
5. Grading Drainage and Civil Plans
6. Lighting Plans
7. Existing and Proposed Reference Plan
8. Location Map
9. Building Setback Explanation Letter
10. Existing Structure Floor Plans