



Sonoma County Design Review Committee STAFF REPORT

FILE: DRH22-0014
DATE: June 7, 2023
TIME: At or after 1:35 p.m.
STAFF: Wil Lyons, Project Planner

SUMMARY

Property Owner: Silas Edman
Applicant: Silas Edman
Address: 6524 Front Street, Forestville
Supervisorial District(s): 5
APN: 083-080-027
Description: Request for Design Review for a new 4,260 sq. ft., two-story office, and retail building on a 0.20-acre lot.
CEQA Review: Categorically Exempt under CEQA 15303(c)
General Plan Land Use: LC (Limited Commercial)
Specific/Area Plan Land Use: Not Applicable
Ordinance Reference: Zoning Code Articles 10 (Commercial Zones),
Zoning: LC (Limited Commercial), LG/116 (Local Guidelines – Highway 116 Corridor), SR (Scenic Resources Combining District – Scenic Corridor)

RECOMMENDATION

The Permit Resource and Management Department (Permit Sonoma) recommends that the Design Review Committee adopt a resolution finding the project exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under CEQA Guidelines § 15303(c) (New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures), and approve the design of the proposed 4,260 sq. ft. commercial building on a 0.20 acre parcel to serve the permitted use of office and retail operations located on a parcel along the designated Highway 116/Front Street Scenic Corridor.

If the Committee requests minor changes, staff recommends the Committee staff to administratively approve the project upon receipt of updated plans.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The project proposes the construction of one 4,260 square foot office and retail building, with incidental storage space, to serve Earth Design Group, a landscape architecture and pool construction company 0.20-acre parcel. The parcel is zoned Limited Commercial (LC) and is within the Local Guidelines Highway 116 (LG/116) and Scenic Corridor (SR) combining districts. The parcel is currently undeveloped.

The proposed construction is centered on the property. This area was selected due to a steepgrade that divides the parcel. Building on this grade allows access via Forestville Lane to the proposed lower-level storage space. The office and retail spaces are at ground level along Highway 116/Front Street. Providing access and parking from both rights of way requires that the building be placed in its proposed location. The building is setback 5 feet from its side property lines, though many of the buildings on Highway 116/Front Street in Forestville do not follow a uniform setback. The chosen location combines with proposed landscaping to minimize intrusion on the Scenic Corridor. The building’s design blends with other architecture along Highway 116/Front Street in Forestville with decorative parapets, trim, and window treatments. The proposed Kelly Moore colors of sand tone “Urban Bird,” with roof in “Volcanic Rock” gray, and trim in “Balsamic Reduction” black will further blend the project into the surrounding area.

PROJECT SITE AND CONTEXT

Site Characteristics

The parcel is rectangular, approximately 65 feet wide and 115 feet long. The site is divided roughly in half by a steepgrade that rises 11 ft from 165 feet above sea level at the south of the parcel to 176 feet above sea level at the north. Bordering the parcel on the east are the Forestville Club commercial buildings and a retail and commercial center to the West, both zoned Limited Commercial (LC). The proposed project will be set back from Highway 116/Front Street to provide parking and landscaping. The parcel is bordered by Highway 116/Front Street to the North and Forestville Lane, a named alley, to the South. The proposed structure complies with the Scenic Corridor setback, though to move the parking and landscaping to this setback would require that development of the structure to be offset from the existing grade, making development unfeasible.

Area Context and Surrounding Land Uses

Much of Highway 116/Front Street through Forestville consists of Limited Commercial and Urban Residential land uses ranging from single family dwellings to small scale store fronts, restaurants, and small shopping centers. The applicant has incorporated architectural elements from several of these structures to ensure the proposed project adequately blends with its context. The parcel is surrounded by similar land uses with a bar, restaurant, and vacant commercial building to the east, and a small commercial and retail center to the west. To the north and south are residences.

Direction	Land Uses
North	LC Limited Commercial- Single Family Home and Accessory Structures
South	LC Limited Commercial- Single Family Home and Accessory Structures
East	LC Limited Commercial- Forestville Club Bar and a Vacant Barber Shop
West	LC Limited Commercial- Commercial Center with Retail and Restaurants



Significant Applications Nearby

Not Applicable

Access

The project will be served by Highway 116/Front Street to the north, providing access for customers and access to the upper levels containing the office and retail spaces. Forestville Lane provides access on the south side of the parcel and the storage areas of the proposed building.

Wildfire Risk

The parcel is located within the Local Response Area (LRA) and not located within a fire hazard severity zone or previous burn area. Properties located within the LRA are subject to the Fire Safe Standards located within Chapter 13 of the Sonoma County Code. Permit Sonoma Fire Prevention has provided draft standard Conditions of Approval for the project.

Water/Wastewater/Utilities

The parcel lies in an area within the Forestville Urban Service Area. The applicant has provided a will-serve letter from the Forestville Water District for both water supply and sewer services.

GENERAL AND AREA PLAN ANALYSIS

General Plan

The following General Plan and Area Plan policies are applicable to the project:

“LU-15a- Phase residential and commercial development within the Forestville Urban Service Boundary to allow the community facilities and services adequate time to absorb new growth, and to maintain the community character. For any project of 10 or more housing units, require a precise development plan or master plan that specifies the maximum number of new residential units to be built per year.”

Staff Analysis: No residential units are proposed in this project. This commercial project is an infill project between two existing commercial developments of a similar nature. The applicant has incorporated the design language of surrounding buildings to better incorporate the project into the surrounding area.

“LU-19d- Use the following criteria for approval of discretionary projects in the "Limited Commercial" and "Limited Industrial" category:

- (1) *The use specifically serves the service, employment, or agricultural processing needs of local area residents or the local agricultural community,*

Staff Analysis: The project proposes to add a 4,260 square foot commercial structure for a business that supports Sonoma County resident’s landscape and swimming pool needs.



- (2) *The use is compatible with adjacent residential or agricultural uses,*

Staff Analysis: The proposed project is of a similar design and scale to those structures on Highway 116/Front Street, and its limited scope will maintain compatibility with adjacent residential uses.

- (3) *The use won't adversely affect the level of service on public roadways and will not interfere with the movement of farm vehicles, and*

Staff Analysis: In response to the project referral, CalTrans provided comment requiring the customer to obtain appropriate permitting including a CalTrans encroachment permit and potentially a Transportation Management Plan to reduce construction impacts. This will be included as a condition of approval.

- (4) *If the use is located within a designated scenic corridor, mitigate visual impacts by appropriate setbacks, landscaping, and/or screening.”*

Staff Analysis: Proposed tree planting is designed to partially screen the front façade from public view. Furthermore, the applicants have incorporated design details similar to those on Highway 116/Front Street to maximize the project’s compatibility with its context. The proposed Kelly Moore colors of sand tone “Urban Bird,” with roof in “Volcanic Rock” gray, and trim in “Balsamic Reduction” black will further blend the project into the surrounding area.

Local Guidelines Highway 116 and Sonoma Highway 116 Scenic Highway Corridor Study

Planning and Design Standards:

Objective SH1.5: *Discretionary projects, such as major and minor Subdivisions, use permits and projects subject to design review, located within the Highway 116 scenic corridor shall be evaluated for visual impact to help assure that the scenic qualities of the Highway 116 corridor are maintained. Projects within the scenic corridor, but not visible from Highway 116, shall be exempted from this evaluation.*

Program SH1.5b: *Projects within the SD District within the Highway 116 scenic corridor shall be reviewed for compatibility with retaining the scenic qualities of the scenic corridor and shall consider these factors:*

- 1: Retention of trees on the site,*
- 2: Appropriateness of the required setback from Highway 116;*
- 3: Visibility of the project from Highway 116 for projects away from the Highway;*
- 4: Compatibility of scale and mass with adjacent development;*
- 5: Consistency of landscaping with adjacent development and other factors intended to retain or enhance the scenic qualities of the scenic corridor.*
- 6: Protection from development along, ridgelines and, keeping hillside development from being visible from Highway 116 (exempting projects that are inside the scenic corridor but not visible from Highway 116).*



Staff Analysis

The parcel is undeveloped, and no trees are proposed for removal by the project. The proposed project is located such that it straddles steep grade which divides the site, though the proposed structure meets the required 30% scenic corridor setback. This allows street access to both sides of the property, while having a greater setback than the surrounding parcels. The applicant has proposed landscaping along the front of the building to help screen the project from the Scenic Corridor. The limited amount of space on site, further encumbered by a steep grade which divides the site, mean that most development on the site would be visible from the Scenic Corridor. However, proposed landscaping was designed to screen the project from public views. Furthermore, the applicants have incorporated design details similar to existing structures on Highway 116/Front Street to maximize the project’s compatibility with its context. The proposed Kelly Moore colors of sand tone “Urban Bird,” with roof in “Volcanic Rock” gray, and trim in “Balsamic Reduction” black will further blend the project into the surrounding area.

Zoning

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

Standard	Ordinance	Existing Condition	Proposed Project	Consistency
Land Use	Limited Commercial	Undeveloped	Office and Retail, permitted by-right in LC Zoning Districts	Consistent
Front Setback	None for LC Zones	Undeveloped	39’4”	Consistent
Scenic Corridor Setback	30% Lot Depth, up to 200ft.	40’6”	55’	Consistent
Side Setback	No Minimum	Undeveloped	5’ East and West	Consistent
Rear Setback	No Minimum	Undeveloped	24’	Consistent
Height	35’	Undeveloped	23’	Consistent
Lot Coverage %	50%	0%	29%	Consistent
Parking Spaces	Retail: 1sp/200sf/576sf: 2.8 spaces Office: 1sp/250sf/1,962sf: 7.8 spaces Storage Areas: 1sp/3000sf/1,706sf: .56sp Total Required for project: 11.16 + 2 Bicycle Spaces	0	11	Consistent



Highway 116/Front Street Scenic Corridor

The Scenic Corridor of Highway 116/Front Street requires a setback of 30% of the depth of the parcel to a maximum of 200 feet. At roughly 115 feet deep, this setback would equate to 39 feet, 3 inches. The proposed structure meets this setback, although proposed landscape and parking improvements accessed from the Scenic Corridor do not. As there is a steep grade that divides the property, making the front access and landscape improvements meet this setback would make development of the parcel infeasible. Furthermore, the proposed building will be setback further than its neighbors and screened via the aforementioned landscaping.

Per Sec. 26-64-030 of the Zoning Ordinance, encroachment into the Scenic Corridor setback by new structures is allowed provided:

- *They are subject to design review and,*
- *They are associated with existing structures,*
- *There is no other reasonable location for the structure,*
- *The location within the setback is necessary for the use, or*
- *Compliance with the setback would render the parcel unbuildable;*
- *Satellite dishes which are not visible from the roadway.*

The proposed building location meets the Scenic Corridor setback and improvements within that setback provide access to Highway 116/Front Street and to downtown Forestville. Alternate locations on site would place construction either inside the scenic corridor setback or make it infeasible to work with the site's steep grade.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

Staff finds the project Categorical Exempt under CEQA 15303(c):

“A store, motel, office, restaurant or similar structure not involving the use of significant amounts of hazardous substances, and not exceeding 2500 square feet in floor area. In urbanized areas, the exemption also applies to up to four such commercial buildings not exceeding 10,000 square feet in floor area on sites zoned for such use if not involving the use of significant amounts of hazardous substances where all necessary public services and facilities are available, and the surrounding area is not environmentally sensitive.”

The applicants propose to use the project to house their landscape architecture and pool construction company. This use includes office space, and a small retail area. The proposed structure is 4,260 square feet in size. Furthermore, project site is located within in a census designated urban area and is located within the LC Zoning District, which allows Professional Offices, and General Retail with design review. The project will be served by the Forestville Water District for drinking water and sewer services.

NEIGHBORHOOD/PUBLIC COMMENTS

No public comment has been received to date.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff Recommendation

The Permit Resource and Management Department (Permit Sonoma) recommends that the Design Review Committee adopt a resolution finding the project exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act under CEQA Guidelines § 15303(c) (New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures) and approve the design of the proposed 4,260 sq. ft. commercial building on a 0.20 acre parcel to serve the permitted use of office and retail operations located along the designated Highway 116/Forestville Scenic Corridor.

If the Committee requests minor changes, staff recommends the Committee permit staff to administratively approve the project upon receipt of updated plans.

ATTACHMENTS

- Att. 1 Conditions of Approval
- Att. 2 Site Plan
- Att. 3 Landscape Plan
- Att. 4 Floor Plans
- Att. 5 Sections and Details
- Att. 6 Elevations
- Att. 7 Color Selection
- Att. 8 Proposal Statement
- Att. 9 Aerial Photo
- Att. 10 Rendering

