



## Sonoma County Planning Commission STAFF REPORT

**FILE:** PLP21-0014  
**DATE:** August 25, 2022  
**TIME:** At or after 1:05 pm  
**STAFF:** Cecily Condon, Project Planner

**A Board of Supervisors hearing on the project will be held at a later date and will be noticed at that time.**

### SUMMARY

**Property Owners:** Christian and Karen Bertrand  
**Applicant:** Christian Bertrand  
**Consultant:** Dave Brown, Adobe Associates Inc.  
**Designer:** Kate Estudillo, Tierney/Figueiredo Architects  
**Addresses:** 13670 Arnold Dr. & 5465 O'Donnell Ln., Glen Ellen  
**Supervisory District:** District 1  
**APNs:** 054-290-008 & -009  
**Description:** 1) A Use Permit modification to expand the Glen Ellen Inn by converting the existing restaurant to two new guest rooms, a new check-in and lounge area, and also expanding building D onsite to add a new guest room, for a total of three new guest rooms on two parcels, 0.32 acres and 0.22 acres in size, to be merged by a subsequent Voluntary Merger. 2) A General Plan Amendment and Zone Change to change the land use and zoning from LC (Limited Commercial) to RVSC (Recreation and Visitor Serving Commercial) land use and K (Recreation and Visitor Serving Commercial) zoning on the 0.22-acre parcel.  
**CEQA Review:** Mitigated Negative Declaration  
**General Plan Land Use:** RVSC & LC  
**Specific/Area Plan:** None  
**Ordinance Reference:** 26-10-030, 26-26-030, 26-28-150, 26-82-050(c)  
**Zoning:** K, F2 LG/GE1 RC50/50 SR & LC, LG/GE1 RC50 SR

### RECOMMENDATION

The Permit Resource and Management Department (Permit Sonoma) recommends that the Planning Commission recommend approval of the use permit, the Mitigated Negative Declaration, and the General Plan Amendment and the Rezoning to the Board of Supervisors.



**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The applicant proposes to replace the existing restaurant with two new units and add an additional unit to building D of the existing seven-unit hotel on the half-acre site. The martini bar located in the main building fronting Arnold Drive would be maintained.

Portions of the site are currently zoned Recreational and Visitor Serving Commercial and Limited Commercial. The project includes a rezoning and General Plan Amendment for consistent application of the Recreation and Visitor Serving use Designation to allow the hotel use on the whole site. The timeframe for the required construction is not expected to require more than two years from the date of approval. The majority of the project site is previously disturbed. The undisturbed area adjacent to the creek will not be disturbed by the proposed project. The only construction required is interior modifications to the restaurant area to be replaced by two lodging units, and a building addition to add a new unit to building D in place of a portion of the existing parking lot and landscape area.

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission adopt a resolution recommending that the Board of Supervisors approve the following:

1. General Plan Amendment of the 0.22 acre parcel from Limited Commercial to Recreation and Visitor Serving Commercial
2. Rezone of the 0.22 acre parcel from Limited Commercial to Recreation and Visitor Serving Commercial
3. Use Permit modification to add 3 units to the existing hotel and bar
4. Approval of the Mitigated Negative Declaration

**PROJECT SITE AND CONTEXT**

***Background***

The Glen Ellen Inn site is two parcels containing .55± acres and is located at the corner of Arnold Drive and O’Donnell Lane, at the center of the town of Glen Ellen. The 7-unit inn and the restaurant with the martini bar has been in operation since the early 2000s. The site is mostly level with the exception of a mild east to west downward slope from Arnold Drive towards Calabazas Creek. The new construction would take place on a virtually flat area over a portion of the paved parking lot. The property contains multiple trees and ornamental plants. Existing public water and sewer connections will be maintained.

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

The project site is located within downtown Glen Ellen 0.2± miles west of the Sonoma Valley Regional Park. The site is served by Valley of the Moon Water District and sewer is provided by Sonoma County Water Agency. The Glen Ellen Inn is bordered to the west by Calabazas Creek, to the north by residential, to the south across O’Donnell Lane by a restaurant, and to the east across Arnold Drive by various shops. The site is within an Urban Service Area.

Direction	Land Uses
North	Single-family residential homes



<b>South</b>	O’Donnell Lane, restaurant
<b>East</b>	Arnold Drive, various commercial
<b>West</b>	Cal abazas Creek, single-family residential homes

**Significant Applications Nearby**

There are no significant applications in the near vicinity of the project site. The Sonoma Developmental Center Specific Plan Area is located adjacent to the Sonoma Valley regional park approximately 0.2 miles to the east.

**Access**

The main pedestrian entrance to the project site is via the main building fronting Arnold Drive. Vehicular traffic access is mainly off O’Donnell Lane. Most parking is located off O’Donnell Lane, with the exception of one parking space (ADA) fronting Arnold Drive.

**Wildfire Risk**

The project parcel is located in an urbanized area, and not located in State Responsibility Area. The proposed project would not add population to the site and it is expected to generate less traffic than the current operations on-site. The parking lot has 26 feet of space between each side of the parking areas, providing adequate access for emergency vehicles. The site is 0.3± miles south from the Glen Ellen Fire Station, ensuring rapid response times in the event of an emergency. Fire risk is further reduced by ongoing landscape maintenance and tree trimming to reduce fire fuel. The project is served by an onsite fire hydrant located on O’Donnell meeting Lane Fire Code requirements.

**Water/Wastewater/Utilities**

The project will remain connected to Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District and Valley of the Moon Water District. The site also contains gas, electric, cable, telephone, and internet connections.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The applicant proposes to replace an existing 880 sq. ft. restaurant with two new lodging units of 460 sq. ft. average, and add a third lodging unit to the existing lodge bringing the total hotel units from seven to ten at the approximately half-acre property. The hotel currently includes a martini bar, which is 150± sq. ft. in area, and would remain open to the public. The only two-story building on-site is the “main building” at the corner of Arnold Drive and O’Donnell Lane. The upper floor of the main building is at the level of Arnold Drive and contains the restaurant, bar and lobby area. The lower floor contains office and storage area. The rest of the eastern side of the property is various open space in the form of patio and deck area. There are four other buildings on-site, which account for the current seven units of the hotel, all within the western parcel. There is a variety of trees, shrubs and ornamental plants across the walkways on the property.

Portions of the site are currently zoned Recreational and Visitor Serving Commercial and Limited Commercial. The project includes a rezoning and General Plan Amendment to allow for conversion of the restaurant to lodging on the eastern parcel of the site.



**Proposed Buildings and Uses:** The project consists of two components, the addition of one lodging unit to the existing lodge and conversion of the existing restaurant to two new lodging units, while retaining the existing bar.

**Improvements:** New construction includes a 503 sq. ft. lodging unit addition to Building “D” to be placed over a portion of the existing parking lot. A new 230 sq. ft. hardscape area, fence, accessible concrete path and bike racks will replace a portion of the parking area at the mid-portion of the project site. The existing ADA-compliant parking space located at the front on Arnold Drive will be relocated 25± feet south to make space for an adequate bus stop circulation path. The conversion of the existing restaurant area into two more lodging units will not result in an expansion of the building footprint.

**Employees:** There will be 1 employee for the inn and 1 for the martini bar during operation hours.

**Hours of Operation:** Both the lobby and lounge area will be open daily from 3 to 10:00 p.m.

**Parking:** There will be a total of 15 parking spaces: 3 ADA, 6 standard, and 6 compact.

**Design Style:** The project consists on the addition of three units to the existing inn. The required construction will follow the design of the existing buildings on-site, on both architectural elements and colors. The existing buildings are cottage-style, a mix of Craftsman and Mediterranean architectural styles, which is consistent with the Glen Ellen town design guidelines. The buildings are covered with a warm yellow stucco, details in white and dark reds. Some stone bricks accentuate corners and edges on the buildings, and a couple of stone planters front Arnold Drive. The buildings use vegetation in the form of trees, shrubs, and flowers to complement their style.

**Access:** All access and egress for vehicles will be from O’Donnell Lane at the southern side of the property. The site also has one ADA parking spot adjacent to Arnold Drive, which will be relocated from its current position 25± feet to the south in order to make room for a bus stop circulation. The relocated parking spot will remain adjacent to the property. The main pedestrian entrance to the public is fronting Arnold Drive.

**Construction:** Construction of the proposed project is anticipated to occur over 6–24 months following project approval.

### **PROJECT SITE AND SURROUNDING LANDS:**

The ± 0.55-acre project site is located at the northwest side of the Arnold Drive and O’Donnell Lane intersection, approximately 150 feet south of the intersection of Arnold Drive and Warm Springs Road, and about 0.8 miles south from Highway 12. The site is mostly level with gentle sloping from east to west, and a defined creek bank at Calabazas Creek along the western boundary of the parcel. The property is bordered to the north and west with single-family residences, across O’Donnell Lane to the south by a restaurant, and across Arnold Drive to the east by a wine tasting room and retail shops.

The site contains five buildings in total which will be retained. There are multiple trees, walking pathways and parking spaces across the property. The site is located in a Class 3 groundwater availability area, but will retain Valley of the Moon water and sewer provided by Sonoma County Water Agency.

**Existing Uses:** The property is currently being operated by the applicants as the Glen Ellen Inn, which consists of a restaurant with bar and seven lodging units.



**Topography:** The subject property has minimum slope with a slight drop of 10 ft. from Arnold Drive within the property’s easternmost 30 ft. The Calabazas Creek that runs across the site on the western side has a defined bank with a grade change sloping downward from 240 ft. msl to about 225 ft. msl.

**Drainage:** The site is relatively level with slopes less than 5% as the site is already developed with structures, pavement and drainage inlets across the property.

**Vegetation:** There are multiple trees, bushes and flower plants across the property. A couple of trees will be removed, but none are the protected Valley Oaks.

**Project History**

The table below summarizes key project milestones and events.

Date	Project Event/Milestone
06/17/2021	Application Submittal
06/25/2021	First referral to agencies
06/25/2021	Begin Tribal Consultation per AB-52
07/07/2021	Second referral to agencies
07/28/2021	Sonoma Valley Citizen Advisory Committee - Unanimous Approval
07/25/2021	Tribal Consultation per AB-52 Complete
09/10/2021	Permit Sonoma and TPW site visit
03/15/2022	Begin Tribal Consultation per SB-18
05/09/2022	Tribal Consultation meeting
07/07/2022	Tribal Consultation per SB-18 Complete
07/21/2022	Notice of Planning Commission Hearing was posted on the project site, a 300-foot notice was mailed, and a legal notice was posted in the Press Democrat
08/22/2022	Mitigated Negative Declaration Comment Period Closed
08/25/2022	Planning Commission Hearing

Final review and decision by the Board of Supervisors will occur at a separate hearing yet to be scheduled.

**General Plan and Area Plans**

The existing General Plan Land Use Designations for this site conform to the existing lot lines. The current designations include Recreational and Visitor Serving Commercial on the western portion of the property and Limited Commercial on the eastern portion. The project proposes a General Plan Amendment to change the eastern portion of the site from Limited Commercial to Recreational and Visitor Serving Commercial, to be consistent with the western parcel. The parcels are proposed to be merged at a later date.

**Zoning**

Similar to the application of the Land Use Designation as described above, the zoning designations also conform to the existing parcels boundaries. The western project site parcel is zoned Recreational and Visitor Serving Commercial (K) and the eastern parcel is zoned Limited Commercial (LC). The Riparian Corridor (RC) and



Floodplain (F2) Combining Districts apply in the channel of Calabazas Creek. The project proposes to rezone the eastern parcel from Limited Commercial (LC) to Recreational and Visitor Serving Commercial (K).

Conditionally permitted uses vary depending upon the underlying zoning designation. Where the zoning is Recreational and Visitor Serving Commercial (K), both of the proposed uses for a hotel and bar are conditional uses. Currently the existing hotel units are only located in the western parcel, and the rezone would allow for conversion of the existing restaurant to accommodate two new units on the eastern parcel of the site. Additionally, the martini bar is conditionally permitted under either K or LC 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 Recreational and Visitor Serving Commercial standards.

Standard	Ordinance	Existing Condition	Proposed Project
<b>Conditional Use; K zoning</b>	Lodging: Hotel and Bar	7-unit inn	10-unit inn with bar in K Zone
<b>Conditional Use; LC zoning</b>	-Restaurant with alcohol sales and bar	Restaurant with alcohol sales and bar	
<b>Front Setback</b>	15 ft.	5 to 10± ft.	No change
<b>Side Setback</b>	5 ft.	7± ft.	5 ft., 10 in.
<b>Rear Setback</b>	10 ft.	N/A	N/A
<b>Height</b>	35 ft.	Highest is 24 ft. for main building	The only new building would reach 22 ft.
<b>Lot Coverage %</b>	50%	21%	23%
<b>Parking Spaces</b>	14	21	15

Upon approval of the currently requested entitlements, the applicants intend to apply to merge the two parcels. As a condition of approval, the merger is required to be completed prior to issuing building permits for the new structure addition, which would otherwise encroach into the property setbacks.

**ANALYSIS**

***ISSUE 1: General Plan consistency***

The project is consistent with the policies and objectives of the Land Use Element because it complements the existing conforming uses on-site, providing for the needs of visitors and travelers. The project proposes the expansion of an existing 7-unit inn to 10 units total, which is well below the 200-unit limit in urban service areas. The project requires a General Plan Amendment for the conversion of the restaurant space to two lodging units. The project is consistent with the following goals, policies, objectives and redesignation criteria of the General Plan.

Per the redesignation criteria identified in the Commercial Use Policy of the Land Use Element, amendments to add the Recreation and Visitor Serving Commercial designation must meet all of the following:



- (1) The proposed amendment must be consistent with General Plan Goals, Objectives, and Policies of the Land Use Element pertaining to protection of agricultural lands,

There is no agricultural land within the vicinity of the site that would be affected.

- (2) Potential uses of the site are compatible with adjacent uses and the character of the area,

The inn has been legally operating for over 20 years and the design will remain in conformance with the area character.

- (3) The amendment avoids a detrimental concentration of agricultural support, visitor serving, and recreational uses as defined in Policies AR-5g and AR-6f of the Agricultural Resources Element,

There is no agricultural operation that would be affected.

- (4) In the event that the amendment is proposed on land designated RRD, LIA, LEA, or DA the primary use will generate Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) that is eligible for County appropriation for affordable housing,

The amendment is proposed on land designated Limited Commercial (LC).

- (5) The site shall not be located on land under a Williamson Act or Super-Williamson Act contract,

The site is not under a Williamson Act contract.

- (6) Traffic generated by potential use of the site can be accommodated within the Level of Service objectives and road standards of the Circulation and Transit Element,

The project is expected to produce a lower traffic than the existing operations on site.

- (7) The amendment would not result in the loss of affordable housing or conflict with Goals, Objectives, and Policies of the Housing Element, and

No housing will be lost as result of this project.

- (8) Potential uses of the site would be compatible with nearby agricultural operations and would not occur on land that is either used for agriculture or is Class I, II, III, or IV (USDA) Soils. An amendment could be considered on agricultural land with Class V, VI, VII, or VIII (USDA) Soils.

The project site is classified Urban and Built-Up Land.

Furthermore, expansion of the hotel would generate additional Transient Occupancy Tax (“TOT”), in conformance with Policy HE-4i which encourages to “Strive to increase opportunities for recreational and visitor-serving uses, thus increasing County Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) revenues.”

### ***ISSUE 2: Zoning Consistency***

The project proposes to rezone the eastern parcel of the site to Recreation and Visitor Serving Commercial (K) zoning. The purpose of the K District is to implement provisions of the General Plan Land Use Element which allows lodging with a use permit.



### Development Standards

The proposed project is consistent with the development standards of the Recreation and Visitor Serving Commercial zoning district, as shown in the zoning table provided in the above project description.

The removal of the restaurant and leaving the ‘martini bar’ area open to the public is allowed with a use permit which fits within the “Bar, tavern, nightclub” retail use per Zoning Code Section 26-26-030. The 150 sq. ft. bar would operate daily from 3 to 10:00 p.m. daily, and is not expected to generate any significant impacts on the vicinity due to its small size and consistency with the recent use of the site. Furthermore, no events are part of this application and conditions of approval would allow staff or the Planning Commission to reevaluate the permit should any issues arise.

The project meets the minimum vehicle parking standards, which will be entirely contained on-site, per the architectural plan set.

### Combining Zones

Three combining zones would remain on the site including Floodplain, Riparian Corridor and Local Guidelines. The project complies with the requirements of these combining districts by not encroaching into the riparian buffer along Calabazas Creek, which also includes the designated floodplain. The project includes limited exterior changes and new construction is consistent with Local Guidelines.

### ***ISSUE 3: Environmental Analysis***

Pursuant to Section 15071 of the State CEQA Guidelines, an Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration was prepared for the proposal. Staff determined that the proposed use would not have an adverse impact on the environment with the incorporation of mitigation measures for the following areas:

Air Quality. The project, once established, is not expected to have a significant impact on air quality. The construction of the improvements required to accommodate the project would have a less than significant impact with the incorporation of dust control measures as mitigation.

Geology and Soils. Due to the danger of strong seismic events and liquefaction levels at this site, a standard mitigation measure will ensure strict engineering standards located in the Building Code are followed.

Noise. The proposed project would not result in an increase in existing noise levels upon establishment; however, noise levels may increase during the required construction. Mitigation measures are required to minimize the temporary noise impacts, including hours of construction and applied techniques.

Transportation. The proposed use is expected to generate less traffic than the existing uses on site; however, there could be a potential for hazards during the required construction due to equipment staging or blockage of areas for work. A mitigation measure will require the applicant to ensure safety through the use of best management practices.

Tribal Cultural Resources. The limited scope of ground disturbance and Mitigation measures and conditions of approval are incorporated into the project will avoid any significant impact on tribal cultural resources as result of construction for this project.

### ***Neighborhood/Public Comments***





Thirteen public comments have been received in support of the proposed project. No public comments opposing the project have been received to date.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### ***Staff Recommendation***

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission recommend to the Board of Supervisors adoption of a Mitigated Negative Declaration and approval of the project subject to the findings contained in the Draft Resolution and Conditions of Approval.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

1. Land Use Map
  2. Zoning Map
  3. Vicinity Map
  4. Architectural Plans
  5. Proposal Statement
  6. Mitigated Negative Declaration
  7. Draft Planning Commission Resolution
- Exhibit "A" Conditions of Approval