

MEMORANDUM

TO: Architectural Review Committee

FROM: Brian Pedrotti, Community Development Director

BY: Andrew Perez, Acting Planning Manager

SUBJECT: Review of Architectural Details Associated with Conditional Use Permit 21-005; Construction of a New Commercial Building And Establishment Of An Art Gallery And Wine Tasting Collective Location: 211 E. Branch St; Applicant: Eric and Jill Von Berg; Representative: Jennifer Martin

DATE: February 7, 2022

SUMMARY OF ACTION:

Approval of the final project architectural details will allow the applicant to submit building permit plans for the construction of this commercial building.

IMPACT ON FINANCIAL AND PERSONNEL RESOURCES:

There are no impacts to City financial and personnel resources as a result of the proposed project.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Architectural Review Committee (ARC) approve the project architectural details with the modifications recommended by staff.

BACKGROUND:

On July 19, 2021, the ARC reviewed Conditional Use Permit 21-005 which proposed to construct a 2,720 square foot addition to the existing structure located at 211 E. Branch St. to create an art gallery and a wine tasting collective. The project also included new outdoor patios, a sculpture garden, and accompanying landscaping, which would replace the existing driveway and parking lot. The project proposed to demolish 520 square feet of the existing structure to make room for the new structure. The ARC previously reviewed the project for consistency with the Design Guidelines and Standards for the Historic Overlay District (Design Guidelines) and make a recommendation to the Planning Commission. At that meeting the Committee spoke in favor of the project, but requested changes to the design regarding the architectural transition from the existing structure to the proposed addition. The applicant agreed to revise the design accordingly. With that

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agreed upon changes, the ARC recommended approval of the project to the Planning Commission

The project proceeded to secure an approval by the Planning Commission on September 7, 2021 (Attachment 1). An appeal of the Planning Commission's approval of the project was filed on September 20, 2021. The basis of the appeal was focused on the height, mass, and scale of the addition being incompatible with the existing structure, inconsistency with the Design Guidelines for the Historic Character Overlay District (Design Guidelines), and significant impact to a historic resource under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

A meeting between the appellants and the applicants prior to Council's consideration of the appeal resulted in a revised design to be presented to Council. Revisions to the project included a detached structure to alleviate concerns regarding potential impacts to the historic resource. By changing the building's form and site design, the applicant is seeking to make the new building more compatible with other commercial buildings found in the Village in regards to mass, height, and scale. On November 9, 2021, Council considered and denied the appeal and approved the revised project subject to a new condition that the applicant return to the ARC for review of the architectural details to ensure consistency with the Design Guidelines (Attachment 2). While Council approved the size, scale, massing, and use of the building, the ARC is tasked with evaluating the architectural details associated with the project for compliance with the Design Guidelines to satisfy the imposed condition.

In the time since Council's approval, the project has undergone several revisions. The size, mass, and scale of the new building have not changed, nor has the proposed location of the building on the site. However, changes to the construction materials, colors, and architectural details give the appearance of an entirely new building. Staff worked closely with the applicants and revisions to the project were motivated by the Design Guidelines.

Revised Project

The revised/currently proposed project detaches the new structure and does not propose to demolish any portion of the existing building (Attachment 3). In addition to detaching the new structure and relocating it to the rear of the property, the applicants revised the architectural style of the new building. The style of the detached structure, proposed to house an art gallery, changed significantly since the ARC's initial review of the project. In its original design, the art gallery building featured a pitched roof with prominent gables and clerestory windows at the north and south elevations. Horizontal siding, similar to what is found on the existing structure, and brick were proposed as the primary cladding materials.

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The currently proposed art gallery building has a footprint of approximately 2,400 square feet (48'x50'). A change to a flat roof is proposed to accommodate a rooftop deck. The rooftop would be accessed by either an interior elevator or stairs or an exterior staircase. The building shell is proposed to be 21 feet tall, but the addition of the elevator shaft increases the total height to 26'10", which is still less than the maximum allowed building height of 30 feet. Changes to the site design, cladding materials, colors, and landscaping resulted in the Council imposing a condition that requires the project to return to ARC for approval of the final architectural details. This staff report will present each design aspect of the project for a determination from the ARC about whether the project architectural details are consistent with the applicable Design Guidelines (Attachment 4).

ANALYSIS OF ISSUES:

The Design Guidelines are intended to "help protect the historic buildings and character, architecture, and sites that reflect the heritage of Arroyo Grande" and provide a framework for new construction in the Village. They are not intended to dictate a uniform design, but rather encourage projects to incorporate common design elements to be compatible with the character of the Village. The document provides guidelines and standards for site design, building design, construction materials, building colors, and landscaping for the commercial and residential zones within the Village. In addition to guidelines and standards for the design elements of structures, the Design Guidelines also regulate the materials, colors, and illumination of signage in the historic district. This staff report will analyze each of the previously mentioned aspects of the project in regards to consistency with the guidelines and standards.

Site Design & Landscaping

Locations in the Village Core Downtown (VCD) zoning district emphasize the importance of streetscape improvements that complement the existing paving, lighting, and street furniture found in the district. Due to the location of the proposed structure at the rear of the property, minimal streetscape improvements are required. The portion of the project that is replacing the existing driveway will consist of an outdoor patio for wine tasting, landscaping, and a water feature.

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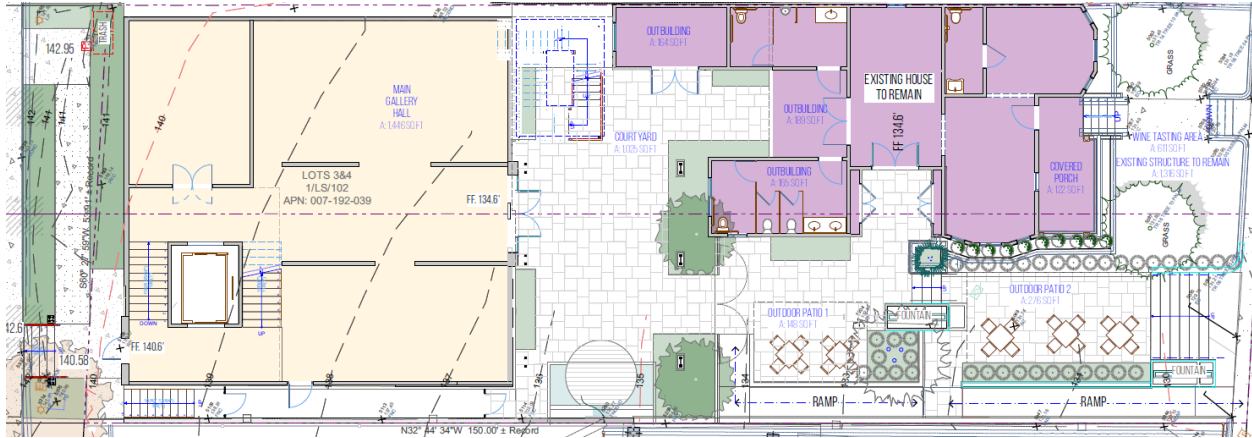


Figure 1: Revised Site Plan

Projects are encouraged to retain as much landscaping as possible, and when infeasible, incorporate street trees and sidewalk planters to liven the streetscape. Robust landscaping is proposed throughout the site. Citrus and olive trees are proposed on both on-grade and on the rooftop deck. Climbing vines are proposed to cover the on-grade trellis and planter boxes around the perimeter of the rooftop deck. Two water fountains and the koi pond included in the original design are proposed to remain. These fountain water features add up to approximately 125 square feet of water surface. Water usage for these elements is approximately 4,300 gallons per year. By comparison, the same size area of turf or densely planted ornamentals with spray irrigation would use approximately 4,900 gallons per year.

Building Design

The Design Guidelines describe buildings in this district as generally being one to two stories and ranging from eighteen to thirty feet in height, with the most common façade design being two stories high. New construction is required to be similar to neighboring buildings with regards to mass, scale, and height. The proposed structure is 47' 6" wide by 50' 3" deep, and the height of the main building shell is 21' 2". The elevator shaft extends another six feet above the main shell, resulting in a height of 27' which is in compliance with the Municipal Code. When the finished grade under a building is not uniform, which is the case here, building height is measure from the average finished grade. For example, the elevation of the finished grade at the southern entrance of the building is 134.6 and the elevation at the northern entrance is 140.58. Therefore, the building height is measured from an elevation of 137.59.

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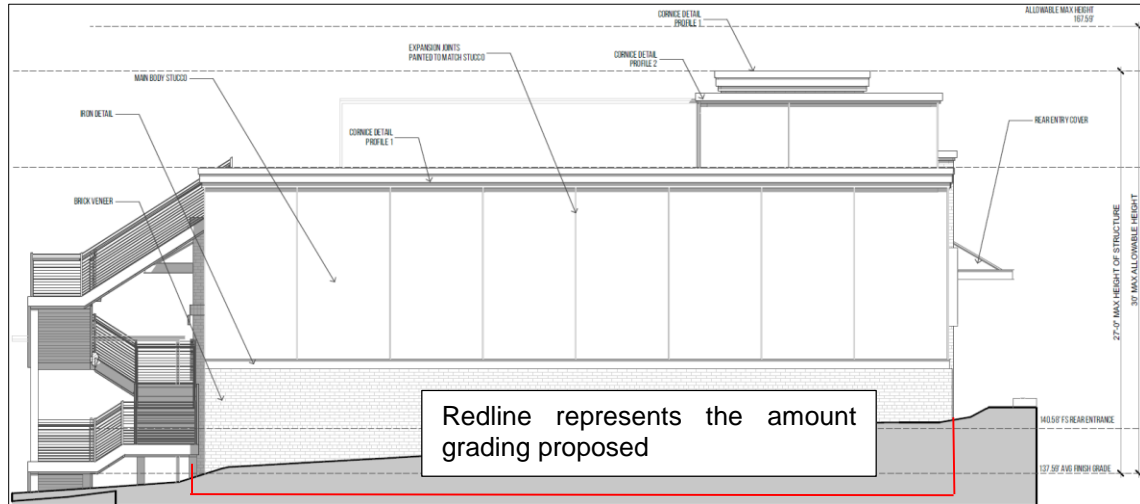


Figure 2: Proposed grading

Grading associated with the project will reduce the elevation of the finished grade by as much as seven feet in some areas below the existing grade. In addition to making the site more functional and buildable, the reduced elevation will obscure the visibility of the proposed structure. Another benefit of the grading is that it will reduce the perceived height of the structure compared to if such substantial grading was not proposed.

Buildings adjacent to the project site include City Council Chambers to the east, Branch Street Deli to the west and Rooster Creek to the south, albeit across Branch St. Council Chambers has a footprint of approximately 3,200 square feet, and the building that is home to Branch Street Deli and Hello Village is approximately 3,800 square feet. The height of Council Chambers at its highest point is approximately 20 feet, while the Deli building is approximately 15 feet tall.



Figure 3: View from Across Branch Street

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The rooftop deck would be accessible internally by both a staircase and an elevator. An exterior staircase located off the southeast corner of the building provides an additional means of rooftop access and is required by Building Code. Arroyo Grande Municipal Code Section 16.48.180 requires that access to the rooftop deck shall be architecturally integrated into the structure, and shall be located in such a way to minimize visual impact to neighboring properties. The location, colors, and material choices proposed for the staircase were chosen to comply with this requirement. Due to its location between the proposed and the existing structure, combined with the elevation of the project site above Branch Street, the staircase is mainly obscured from the public view. Light colored galvanized steel that weathers to a matte finish and small gauge railing were chosen to minimize the visual impacts from adjacent properties.



Figure 4: View from Le Pointe Street parking lot looking west

The rooftop deck is proposed as the primary area to display sculptures. A trellis with retractable shade covering is proposed to provide shade for patrons. Plans and renderings show the trellis extending from the elevator shaft to the southern edge of the patio (see Figure 2 above); no renderings have been provided depicting the trellis with the shade coverings. Staff recommends pulling back the trellis approximately 15 feet from the edge of the building to minimize the visual impact and lessen the perceived height and massing of the structure. A Cor-ten steel planter and a separate railing system behind the planters provides the safety barrier required by the Building Code. Solar panels are anticipated to be installed on the flat roof above the elevator shaft and stairwell.

The design incorporates details to add character to a simple building form. Various cladding materials such as brick, stucco, and the Cor-ten steel planter add color and

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texture to the building. Architectural elements such as awnings, window shadowboxes, and cornices also add to the character of the building. The Design Guidelines encourage replicating the use of materials and ornamentation common to the district to reinforce the existing character of the Village. Examples of ornamentation include cornice detailing and articulation of the roofline, as seen in the image below.



Figure 5: Articulation of roofline

Commercial structures in the Village generally have a minimal number of different window sizes on them. Various sizes of windows are proposed for the new structure. Staff recommends additional ornamentation and variation at the roofline and use of a consistent window size. More specially, staff recommends that the project add some variation like the roof lines of the buildings in Figure 3 and repeating the rectangular windows shown on the West Elevation to the South Elevation of the currently proposed design, to replace the smaller square windows under the front awning. Both changes would add character and carry common design elements from the Village to the project.

Cladding Materials

Within the VCD district, brick and stone masonry are the most common façade and are acceptable for new projects. In regards to stucco, the Design Guidelines state “cement plaster (including stucco) is not as common as wood or brick, however some of the commercial and residential buildings within the Village have plaster exteriors. Cement plaster buildings require detailing that gives them a historic ‘Village’ feel. Buildings with plain plaster walls and no ornamentation are not appropriate for The Village.” Incorporation of brick front elements, parapet features, decorative fixtures, and other ornamentation found elsewhere in the Village further reinforces the character of the district.

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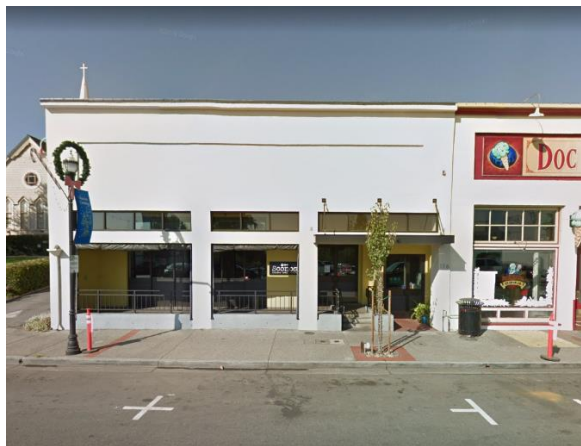


Figure 6 Stucco, brick, and metal railing at 116 W. Branch St.

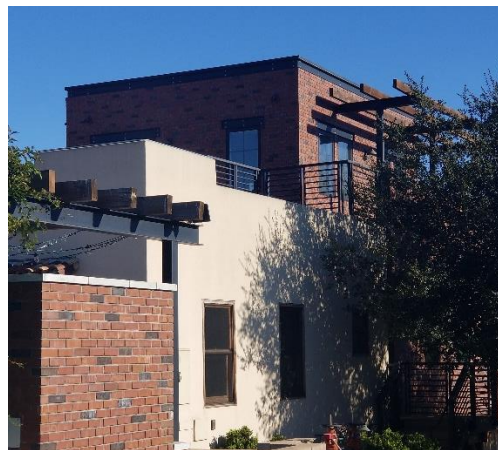


Figure 7: Stucco, metal awning and railing at 139 W. Branch

The proposed structure uses stucco as the primary cladding material and brick veneer as a secondary material. The stucco is proposed to have a hand-troweled, smooth finish and staff is also recommending a uniform or very close to uniform color to provide a more cohesive traditional theme. The building design proposes metal expansion joints, dark iron wainscoting, and cornices to add the ornamentation required to comply with the Design Guidelines. Brick veneer is proposed as a complementary material and serves multiple purposes. It adds color and texture to the west and east elevations to avoid an expanse of stucco. Detailed brickwork on the north and south elevations near the entrance areas creates areas of relief and shadowing. Brick is also used to create a cornice detail on the north, south, and west elevations. Stucco and brick, both on their own and in combination, have been successfully implemented on other structures in the Village. Staff is recommending that the iron wainscot be replaced by brick because brick is noted as a material that accentuates the historic character.

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Figure 8: Brick detailing at south elevation creates a cornice and provides relief above main entrance.

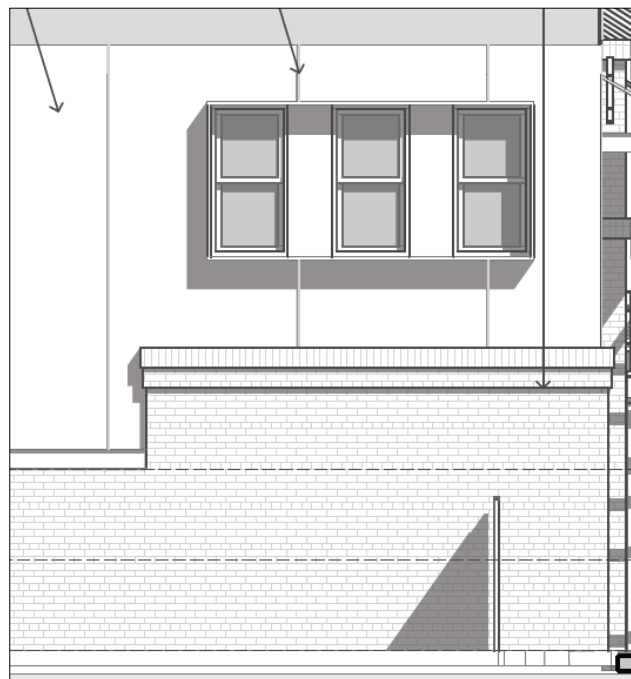


Figure 9: Brick veneer on the west elevation breaks up stucco wall and again creates a cornice.

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Doors & Windows

Traditionally, doors were wood panel and glass. New doors are required to be either wood panel or an approved alternative material that approximates the appearance of original materials. The project proposes a metal storefront door, consisting of a black metal frame and glass panels. Although this type of door is not allowed by the Design Guidelines, it is commonly found throughout the Village.

Windows are required to be wood, or painted steel, and consistent with the historic period. Unfinished aluminum is not allowed, however materials that approximate the appearance of original materials may be substituted subject to the approval of the Architectural Review Committee. The project proposes bronze anodized aluminum windows to complement the exterior color palette. Black iron awnings are proposed on the north, south, and west elevations. Iron shadowboxes are another element that adds ornamentation to the design.

Building Colors

Color palettes are required to complement the majority of neighboring buildings and be consistent with the historic period. Additionally, the number of colors should be kept to a minimum, and accent colors must harmonize with the base color. Two color palettes have been submitted for the Committee's consideration. Attachment 5 is a color board for the "Warm Beige" option. The base color proposed with this palette is a light brown called "Believable Buff". All areas of stucco are proposed to be this color. "Cocoa Whip" a darker brown, is proposed for the wainscoting and cornices, and provides a contrast to the lighter base color. Attachment 6 is the color board for the "Cool Grey" option. As the name implies, cooler tones are proposed for the base and secondary colors. The main stucco color proposed is "Dorian Grey" and the complementary color proposed for the architectural elements is "Dovetail Grey". Each color palette also includes a sample of the complementary fabric shade pattern. Staff is recommending a stucco color that is towards the brown/gray color scheme to subtly complement the existing violet gray color of the historic building at the front of the property.

The brick veneer proposed has mostly brown and lighter brown tones (versus a red brick), similar to the brick found on the portion of the Rooster Creek building immediately to the west of Jaffa Cafe. An accurate portrayal of the color can be seen on the Color and Materials board. City Council Chambers and the Branch Street Deli are immediately adjacent to the project site. The eastern elevation of the deli is a similar brown, as is the entire Council Chambers building. Brick is also found on the front elevation of the deli, across the street at Rooster Creek, and the existing structure on the project site. The dark awnings and iron elements complement the shade structures at Rooster Creek and Gina's Restaurant. Iron ornamentation can be found on the structure at 139 W Branch Street also.

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Figure 10: Iron ornamentation at 139 W. Branch St.



Figure 11: Similar shade structures across from project site on Branch St.

Lighting

The Design Guidelines require light fixtures to be integrated with other design elements of the structures. Simple wall sconces are proposed near entrances and walkways for security and pedestrian safety. Images of the proposed fixtures are included on the Color and Materials boards. Staff is recommending that the exterior lighting fixtures are traditional and match the more historic time period. Soft uplighting is also proposed within landscaped areas and near water features. Staff will confirm the lighting plan complies with Municipal Code requirements, such as the prohibition of light trespass and directing light away from surrounding residential uses, during the plan review process.

Signage

The signage shown on these plans is conceptual only. The ARC will have an opportunity to review the permanent signage when an application for an Administrative Sign Permit is submitted.

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Staff's Recommendation

In conclusion, staff is recommending approval of the project with the six (6) modifications detailed earlier in the staff report and listed below. The implementation of these modifications will result in a new building that is more appropriate for its location in the Village and will bring the project into conformance with the Design Guidelines.

1. Reduce the size of the rooftop trellis. The trellis shall be a minimum of fifteen feet (15') from the southern edge of the building.
2. Add variation and ornamentation to the roofline consistent with the Village character.
3. Replace the iron wainscot detail with brick.
4. Use a consistent window size.
5. Revise the color palette to be more uniform and modify the stucco color to better complement the existing structure
6. Use light fixtures consistent with the historic period of the Village.

ALTERNATIVES:

The following alternatives are provided for the ARC's consideration:

1. Approval of the project with staff's suggested modifications as detailed above;
2. Approve the project as submitted;
3. Provide direction to the applicant and continue the item to a date uncertain

ADVANTAGES:

Review of the project details and approval of the project with staff's recommended modifications by the ARC ensures consistency with the Design Guidelines and compatibility with the character of the Village.

DISADVANTAGES:

None identified.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

The project has been reviewed in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the State CEQA Guidelines and was determined to be exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to Section 15332 for projects consisting of infill development. A Notice of Exemption was recorded on November 10, 2021 after the project was approved by the City Council on appeal. The ARC's determination regarding the project details will not affect that exemption.

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PUBLIC NOTIFICATION AND COMMENTS:

The Agenda was posted at City Hall and on the City's website in accordance with Government Code Section 54954.2. At the time of report publication, five (5) comments have been received. Those comment letters are included as Attachment 7.

Attachments:

1. Minutes from the September 7, 2021 Planning Commission Meeting
2. Minutes from the November 9, 2021 City Council Meeting
3. Project Plans
4. Village Design Guidelines
5. Color and Materials Board – “Warm Beige”
6. Color and Materials Board – “Cool Grey”
7. Public Comment