



2550 Ventura Avenue
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

p: (707) 565-1900
f: (707) 565-1017

Tennis Wick
Director

Scott Orr
Assistant Director

Michelle Arellano
Administration

Nathan Quarles
Engineering and Construction

Genevieve Bertone
Communications

Steve Mosiurchak
Fire Marshal

John Mack
Natural Resources

Brian Keefer
Ombudsperson

Sonoma County Planning Commission

STAFF REPORT

FILE: PLP23-0010

DATE: September 4, 2025

TIME: At or after 1:05pm

STAFF: Mark Shurvinton, 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 Owner:	Kokera North, LLC
Applicant:	Kokera North, LLC
Address:	19651 7 th Street East, Sonoma
Supervisory District(s):	First District
APN:	127-291-037
Description:	1) Zone Change to remove the Z (Accessory Dwelling Unit Exclusion) Combining District; and 2) Certificate of Modification (CMO) to remove Note 15 on Parcel Map "PLP05-0102" recorded in Book 736, Page 33-35, Sonoma County Records; on a 4.02-acre parcel at 19651 7th Street E, Sonoma 95476.
CEQA Review:	CEQA statutory exemption (Pub. Resources Code section 21080.17, ordinances implementing Government Code section 65852.2 re Accessory Dwelling Units); CEQA categorical exemption (CEQA Guidelines Section 15305, Minor Alterations in Land Use Limitations)
General Plan Land Use:	Rural Residential with 3 acres per dwelling unit density (RR 3)
Specific/Area Plan Land Use:	N/A
Ordinance Reference:	Chapter 25 - Subdivisions Sec. 26-08-010 – 040 - Residential Zones Sec. 26-76-005 – Accessory Dwelling Unit Exclusion Combining District Sec. 26-88-060 – Accessory Dwelling Units

Zoning:

AR (Agricultural and Residential) B6 3 (3 acres per dwelling unit density) and Combining District for Z (Accessory Dwelling Unit Exclusion) and VOH (Valley Oak Habitat)

RECOMMENDATION

The Permit Resource and Management Department (Permit Sonoma) recommends that the Planning Commission adopt a resolution recommending that the Board of Supervisors: 1) find the project exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act under Public Resources Code Section 21080.17 and CEQA Guidelines Sections 15282(h) and Section 15305, 2) approve a Zone Change to remove the Z (Accessory Dwelling Unit Exclusion) Combining District from the subject parcel, and 3) approve a Certificate of Modification to remove Note 15 from Parcel Map "PLP05-0102" recorded in Book 736, Page 33-35, Sonoma County Records.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The property owner requests a zone change to remove the Accessory Dwelling Unit Exclusion (Z) Combining District, and a Certificate of Modification to remove Note 15 from Parcel Map "PLP05-0102", to allow for the potential future construction of an accessory dwelling unit (ADU) on the subject parcel. In 2010, the Board of Supervisors approved ZCE08-0006 to add the Z Combining District to the parcel. The ADU prohibitions were placed on the resulting parcels to ensure that future development would not exceed the allowed residential density of the original parcel, however, changes have been made at the state level which establish that ADUs no longer count towards the allowed residential density of a parcel. Therefore, the issue of density is no longer a valid justification to prohibit the construction of an ADU on the subject parcel.

The Sonoma County General Plan supports the removal of constraints to the provision of affordable housing, including the removal of the Z overlay on a parcel-by-parcel basis, where there are not water, flooding, or sewage treatment issues. The applicant has demonstrated that the project site does not meet the criteria for inclusion in the Z Combining District and can support an ADU. Staff finds that granting the requested certificate of modification and rezoning would support the provision of urgently needed affordable housing and would be consistent with the Zoning Ordinance and General Plan.

PROJECT SITE AND CONTEXT***Background***

The subject parcel was created through recordation of Parcel Map PLP05-0102 on December 15, 2009 (Book 736, Page 33-35, Sonoma County Records). To ensure that development on the resulting parcels would not exceed the allowed residential density of the original parcel, the project was conditioned to limit the number of dwelling units to one per parcel. Condition of approval #41 for PLP05-0102 required a note on the map, Note 15 ("15. No second units shall be allowed on these lots."), to preclude the construction of a second dwelling unit on each of the resulting parcels. In addition, condition of approval #38 of PLP05-0102 required a Zone Change to add the Z (Accessory Dwelling Unit Exclusion) Combining District, to further ensure ADUs would not be constructed on the resulting parcels.

In 2022, a request for a Zone Change to remove the Z-Combining District and a Certificate of Modification to modify Note 15 to read “15. No second units shall be allowed on these lots, except for Parcel 1” was submitted for the adjacent parcel (Parcel 1; APN 127-291-036) under File no. PLP22-0009. The request was approved by the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors on June 6, 2023.

Site Characteristics

The subject property is approximately 4.02 acres in size, and is located on the west side of 7th Street East, approximately 100 feet east of the City of Sonoma city limits. The site is developed with a single-family dwelling, residential accessory structures, associated landscaping, and approximately two acres of vineyards.

Area Context and Surrounding Land Uses

The project site is surrounded by residential parcels zoned AR (Agriculture and Residential) and RR (Rural Residential). The site is located approximately 100 feet from medium density residential areas within the City of Sonoma. The Z-Combining District is not applied to any other parcels within 0.5 miles of the subject parcel.

Direction	Land Uses
North	Rural Residential designated land with low density residential development
South	Rural Residential designated land with low density residential development and vineyard
East	Rural Residential designated land with low density residential development
West	Rural Residential designated land with low density residential development

Significant Applications Nearby

In 2023, the Board of Supervisors approved a Zone Change to remove the Z-Combining District and Certificate of Modification to modify Note 15 and expand the building envelope on Parcel Map PLP05-0102 for the adjacent parcel (APN 127-291-036), under File No. PLP22-0009.

Access

The subject parcel is accessed via a private driveway that connects directly to 7th Street East, a County-maintained public road.

Wildfire Risk

The subject parcel is served by the Schell-Vista Fire Prevention District, and is located within the Local Responsibility Area (LRA) outside of a designated Fire Hazard Severity Zone. Any future construction on-site will be subject to applicable Sonoma County Fire Code requirements.

Water/Wastewater/Utilities

The subject parcel is located within a Class 1 Groundwater Availability Area (Major Groundwater Basin), and the parcel is served by an existing well and septic system (SEP16-0170). Additional details and discussion regarding groundwater on the site can be found in the Zoning Consistency section below.

Agricultural Conditions/Land Encumbrances/Contracts

The subject parcel is not subject to any agricultural conditions, land encumbrances, or Land Conservation Contracts.

Other Environmental Conditions

The subject parcel is within the Valley Oak Habitat Combining District. Future development resulting in the removal of valley oak trees shall be subject to the provisions of Valley Oak Habitat Ordinance.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed project includes a request for 1) a Zone Change to remove the Z (Accessory Dwelling Unit Exclusion) Combining District from the subject parcel, and 2) a Certificate of Modification to remove Note 15 from Parcel Map PLP05-0102, recorded under Book 736, Pages 33-35, Sonoma County Records.

Project History

The table below summarizes key project milestones and events.

Table 1 – Project History/Milestones

Date	Project History/Milestone
02/06/2007	PLP05-0102 was approved, including a minor subdivision yielding two lots, APNs 127-291-036 (3.02 acres) and 127-291-037 (4.02 acres)
12/15/2009	Parcel Map PLP05-0102 recorded
04/06/2010	The Board of Supervisors approved ZCE08-0006 to add the Z (ADU Exclusion) Combining District to the subject parcel; Resolution Number 10-0279
06/06/2023	PLP22-0009 - Request for a Zone Change and Certificate of Modification to remove the Z Combining District approved for adjacent parcel, APN 127-291-036.
06/12/2023	PLP23-0010 - Request for a Zone Change and Certificate of Modification to remove the Z Combining District submitted for subject parcel, APN 127-291-037
06/19/2023	Referral to pertinent agencies
07/12/2023	PLP23-0010 deemed complete
07/17/2025	PRAC Hearing
08/14/2025	Legal notice posted for Planning Commission hearing

ANALYSIS

General Plan Consistency

Permitting accessory dwelling units on qualifying properties is consistent with General Plan Housing Element goals and objectives to increase opportunities for the production of affordable housing.

Objective HE-3.1 seeks to “eliminate unneeded regulatory constraints to the production of affordable housing” and Objective HE-3.3 seeks to increase opportunities for the production of affordable housing. ADU surveys conducted by the County in 2006, 2013, and 2019, found that a majority of ADUs are offered at below-market rates that are affordable to moderate income households. The California Department of Housing and Community Development consider ADUs as an innovative, affordable, effective options for adding housing.

Since 2005 the County has been accepting and approving requests to remove the Z overlay on a case by case basis. In 2009, the Board of Supervisors adopted General Plan Policy HE-3c to “review Z Combining District restrictions on agricultural parcels of less than 10 acres county-wide, and consider removing the restrictions where appropriate.” In 2019 the County adopted Ordinance No. 6285, which removed the “Z” Accessory Dwelling Unit Exclusion Combining District from approximately 1,924 specified parcels located in the LIA, LEA, and DA zoning districts countywide that met certain screening criteria. The subject parcel is not in an agricultural zone and was therefore not included within the scope of the county-led effort, however, the County has continued to review and approve requests to remove the Z overlay on a case by case basis.

Staff Analysis:

The County of Sonoma has historically used the Z Combining District to preclude ADUs in areas where it may be unsafe or infeasible to construct an ADU due to water availability, inadequate sewer services, potential for groundwater contamination, potential significant traffic impacts, or significant fire hazard. Permit Sonoma supports applications for rezoning to remove the Z Combining District, where an applicant has demonstrated that the parcel does not meet the criteria for inclusion in the Z Combining District and that all current ADU regulations could be met.

As discussed below with respect to zoning consistency, the applicant has demonstrated how an ADU could be supported on the site. The requested Zone Change and Certificate of Modification is consistent with the General Plan, as they would allow for additional housing opportunities by removing regulatory barriers that unnecessarily constrain the production of affordable housing. By allowing an ADU on the parcel, the property owner may provide additional housing opportunities that may not be otherwise available. ADUs may not be used as short-term rentals (less than 30 days at a time).

The applicant has not applied for an ADU at this time. The approval of these entitlements would not be equivalent to the approval of permits to construct an ADU, however, it would remove barriers to future application for construction related permits through Permit Sonoma.

Zoning Consistency

Agricultural and Residential Zoning District

ADUs are permitted by-right within the Agricultural and Residential (AR) Zoning District. With the proposed Zone Change and Certificate of Modification, an ADU would be a permitted use subject to compliance with Sec. 26-88-060- Accessory Dwelling Units development standards and all other applicable standards. An ADU is evaluated ministerially for compliance with all applicable development standards when a building permit application is submitted and does not require a separate planning permit. ADUs and junior ADUs do not count towards the site’s density limits.

Rezoning to remove the Z combining district will allow the property owner to apply to construct an ADU in a zone where ADUs are otherwise permitted.

Z Combining District

The purpose of Z Combining District is to provide for the exclusion of accessory dwelling units in areas that meet certain criteria found in Article 76 of the Sonoma County Code. Applications to remove the Z Combining District must demonstrate how these criteria do not apply. Each of these criteria is evaluated below:

a) Areas where there is an inadequate supply of water for drinking or firefighting purposes,

The parcel is located within the Sonoma Valley basin, which is designated as high priority groundwater basin by the California Department of Water Resources. The adopted Sonoma Valley Groundwater Sustainability Plan has documented a groundwater depression and declining groundwater levels in the immediate vicinity of the project site, suggesting the local aquifer is in a condition of overdraft. For this reason, Permit Sonoma's staff geologist requested a report demonstrating that the project will result in zero net increase in groundwater extraction. The applicant provided a report demonstrating to the satisfaction of the staff geologist, that removal of existing vineyard would yield no net increase in groundwater use on the subject parcel, and that sufficient water is available to serve a future accessory dwelling unit.

b) Areas where there are inadequate sewer services or danger of groundwater contamination,

The Z Combining District was not applied to the subject parcel for reasons related to inadequate wastewater disposal. The parcel is currently served by a septic system permitted under Septic Permit SEP16-0170, which meets the demand for the single-family dwelling and accessory structures currently on-site. Any increase in septic capacity must be approved by the Permit Sonoma Well and Septic Division.

c) Areas where the addition of second units would contribute to existing traffic hazards or increase the burden on heavily impacted streets, roads, or highways, and

The Z Combining District was not originally applied to the subject parcel for reasons related to traffic hazards. The project site is located in a low-density residential area where the addition of an accessory dwelling unit would not create traffic hazards or increase the burden on the surrounding residential roadways.

d) Areas where, because of topography, access, or vegetation, there is a significant fire hazard.

The Z Combining District was not originally applied to the subject parcel for reasons related to fire hazard. The subject property is located within a Local Responsibility Area, and per the Local Responsibility Area Fire Hazard Severity Zone Maps issued by CALFIRE on February 24, 2025, the parcel is not located within an area with elevated fire hazard.

Valley Oak Habitat Combining District

The parcel is located in the Valley Oak Habitat Combining Zone where impacts to valley oak trees require review and may require mitigation. No development is proposed as a part of this application, and the approval of this project would not directly result in impacts to valley oak trees.

Subdivision Ordinance and Subdivision Map Act Consistency

Subdivision Ordinance

Chapter 25 of the Sonoma County Code allows upon application in writing, minor modifications regarding notes, conditions, etc., on a recorded final or parcel map in accordance with the requirements of the Subdivision Map Act, Section 66472.1, by the advisory agency having jurisdiction over the original subdivision approval, if, after public hearing, the advisory agency makes the findings listed under the Subdivision Map Act heading below.

Subdivision Map Act

Changes to a recorded final or parcel map are allowed per Section 66472.1 or the Subdivision Map Act to make minor modifications to said maps. These changes, if found in compliance with the local zoning ordinance, may be made by recording an amended map or Certificate of Modification. A new final or parcel map would be required if there were changes exceeding minor modifications, such as the proposal of additional lots.

To amend a recorded Subdivision Map, the Planning Commission must make specific findings, as required by Section 66472.1 of the Subdivision Map Act. As included in the attached resolution, these findings are as follows:

1. *That there are changes in circumstances which make certain conditions on the map no longer appropriate or necessary.*

The Sonoma County General Plan 2020 contains policies supporting the removal of unnecessary constraints to the provision of affordable housing, including the removal of prior ADU prohibitions where there are no water, flooding, or sewage treatment issues:

Policy HE-5g: Continue to encourage the retention and further construction of small rental units such as accessory dwelling units, studios, and single-room occupancy (SRO) units.

Removing ADU restrictions on the subject parcel is consistent with the provisions of the Sonoma County General Plan 2020. While the restrictions were placed on the parcels resulting from PLP05-0102 to prevent a second unit from exceeding the allowable residential density of the parcels, changes have been made at the state level which establish that ADUs no longer count towards the allowed residential density of a parcel. As a result of these changes, the issue of density is no longer a valid justification to prohibit the construction of an ADU on the subject parcel. In addition, the subject parcel does not currently meet any of the criteria for inclusion within the Z-Combining District as defined under Sec. 26-75-005 of the Sonoma County Zoning Code. The subject parcel is the only property in the immediate vicinity that is within the Z-Combining District, so approval of a Zone Change to remove the Z-Combining District will not result in spot zoning.

2. *That the proposed modifications do not impose any additional burden on the present fee owner of the property.*

The current property owner of the subject lot has requested the Certificate of Modification because they would like to construct a new ADU. As such, the present property owner is aware of the modification and no additional burden will be imposed.

3. *The modifications do not alter any right, title or interest in the real property reflected on the recorded map.*

The interest in the property of owners of the other Lots as shown on the recorded map is not affected as the property owner has consented to the removal of the note on the map, and the removal of the note on the map is consistent with the previous request made by the property owner.

4. *The map as modified, conforms to all the provisions of the Subdivision Map Act and local implementing ordinances (Section 66472.1 of the Subdivision Map Act and Section 25-13.8 of the Sonoma County Subdivision Ordinance).*

In accordance with the provisions of the Subdivision Map Act, an amended Final Map or Certificate of Modification will be recorded depicting requested modifications as depicted on Parcel 2 of Parcel Map "PLP05-0102", recorded in Book 736, Page 33-35 of Sonoma County Official Records. The amended Final Map or Certificate of Modification will conform to all the provisions of the Subdivision Map Act and local ordinances, as originally approved. Thereby, staff believes that all of the findings required by the California Subdivision Map Act can be made.

Environmental Analysis

Staff finds the project is exempt from CEQA pursuant to:

- a. Public Resources Code Section 21080.17 and CEQA Guidelines § 15282(h), which provide a statutory exemption for adoption of an ordinance by a city or county to implement the provisions of Government Code section 65852.2, regarding permitting of Accessory Dwelling Units. The proposed rezoning would provide for the creation of an Accessory Dwelling Unit in an area zoned to allow residential development; and,
- b. CEQA Guidelines Section 15305, Minor Alterations in Land Use Limitations, because the proposed zone change and certificate of modification would not result in any changes to allowed land uses or residential density on a residential parcel.

NEIGHBORHOOD/PUBLIC COMMENTS

As of August 28, 2025, no public comments have been received for this application.

PRECEDING REVIEW AUTHORITY RECOMMENDATION

The Project Review and Advisory Committee held a public hearing on July 17th, 2025, where they provided a unanimous recommendation for approval (Attachment 5), including the attached Conditions of Approval (Attachment 4).

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission adopt the attached resolution finding the project exempt from CEQA and recommending that the Board of Supervisors approve the requested Zone Change to remove the Z Combining District and Certificate of Modification to remove Note 15 from the Parcel Map approved under PLP05-0102, recorded under Book 736, pp.33-35.

Attachments

1. PLP23-0010 Planning Commission Resolution
2. PLP23-0010 Draft Board of Supervisors Ordinance
3. PLP23-0010 Noticing Affidavit
4. PLP23-0010 Draft Conditions of Approval
5. PLP23-0010 Project Review and Advisory Committee Record of Action
6. PLP23-0010 Site Plan
7. PLP23-0010 Proposal Statement
8. PLP23-0010 Property Owners' Consent
9. PLP23-0010 General Plan Land Use Map
10. PLP23-0010 Existing and Proposed Zoning Map