



COUNTY OF SONOMA

575 ADMINISTRATION
DRIVE, ROOM 102A
SANTA ROSA, CA 95403

SUMMARY REPORT

Agenda Date: 2/4/2025

To: Sonoma County Board of Supervisors

Department or Agency Name(s): Permit Sonoma

Staff Name and Phone Number: Tennis Wick (707) 565-1925, Hannah Spencer (707) 565-1928

Vote Requirement: Majority

Supervisory District(s): Fifth

Title:

1:45 P.M. - File No. PLP16-0054 Forestville Downtown Park General Plan Amendment, Zone Change, and Use Permit; 6990 Front Street and 6720 Highway 116, Forestville

Recommended Action:

Conduct a public hearing and adopt a Resolution to 1) adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration; 2) approve a General Plan Amendment; 3) adopt an Ordinance amending the parcel's zoning; and 4) approve a Use Permit with Conditions of Approval for Forestville Downtown Park at 6990 Front Street and 6720 Highway 116, Forestville; APN: 083-270-001, -002 (Fifth District) (Majority Vote Requirement)

Executive Summary:

Forestville Planning Association, a 501(c)(3) non-profit charitable corporation, owns and operates an unimproved community park in downtown Forestville which also serves as a trailhead to the Sonoma County Regional Parks' West County Bike Trail. Forestville Planning Association requests a General Plan Amendment from "Limited Commercial" to "Public and Quasi Public", a rezone from "Planned Community" to "Public Facilities", and a Use Permit with Design Review to improve the property with new park amenities and host community events. The project will provide urban open space with opportunities for public recreational amenities and oak woodland and wetland preservation areas. Proposed park amenities include a new picnic area, amphitheater and plaza gathering area for up to 20 annual community events with a maximum of 200 attendees, improved pathways and sidewalks, bicycle parking, a public restroom and parking lot for 17 vehicles. Hours of operation will be sunrise to sunset, 7 days per week.

Permit Sonoma determined the project would be evaluated under a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND). In July 2024, staff prepared the MND in accordance with Sections 15120-15132 of the CEQA guidelines. All significant environmental effects were found to be reduced to less than significant with mitigation measures and no alternatives were associated with the proposed project. On September 19, 2024, the Planning Commission held a public hearing and voted 4-0-1-0 to recommend that the Board of Supervisors adopt the MND and approve the general plan amendment, zone change, and use permit request.

Discussion:

Project Site and Context

The 4.26-acre site is relatively flat and surrounded by the urban area of downtown Forestville, commercial and residential properties, and vineyard. Forestville Planning Association (FPA) manages the property as an unimproved community park with a gravel parking area accessed from Highway 116, signage, picnic tables, nature resource preservation, trailhead to the West County Bike Trail, and a gathering area for community events. Future water and sewer services for the park will be provided by the Forestville Water District. Fire and Emergency Services will continue to be provided by the Sonoma County Fire District.

A Conservation Easement and Recreation Covenant held by Sonoma County Agricultural Preserve and Open Space District encumbers the park property, limiting the use of the property to natural resource preservation and public outdoor recreation. The property is also encumbered by a variety of other easements, including the public bike trail and trailhead easement benefiting the County.

Background:

In 2007 and 2010, the Board of Supervisors adopted Mitigated Negative Declarations and conditionally approved subdivision and housing development projects for the site and surrounding properties under File No. PLP06-0076 and PLP07-0062. Although the General Plan Amendment and Zoning Change requests associated with these applications were completed, the conditions of approval for both development proposals expired, and the associated subdivision maps did not record. As a result, the project property is zoned Planned Community.

In 2013, the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District granted Matching Grant Program funds to FPA for acquisition of the property. In exchange, FPA conveyed a Conservation Easement and Recreation Covenant to the District which currently limit the use of the property to natural resource preservation and public outdoor recreation (documents recorded O.R. #2013-110043 and #2013-110044). The Recreation Covenant complements the Conservation Easement by assuring the continued and perpetual public outdoor recreational use of the property consistent with the Conservation Easement.

Over the years, FPA has operated the property as an unimproved community park. FPA contracts with a local maintenance company for weekly trash pick-up and seasonal mowing. Since 2019, the project site has also served as an official trailhead to the Sonoma County Regional Parks' West County Bike Trail.

On September 19, 2024, the Planning Commission held a public hearing and voted 4-0-1-0 to recommend that the Board of Supervisors adopt a mitigated negative declaration and approve FPA's request for a general plan amendment, zone change, and use permit.

Project Description:

FPA requests the following:

- General Plan Amendment from the LC (Limited Commercial) Land Use Designation to the PQP (Public and Quasi Public) Land Use Designation.
- Zone Change from PC (Planned Community) zoning district to the PF (Public Facilities) zoning district.

- Use Permit with Design Review for public park amenities and events:
 - Picnic area for 6 tables, amphitheater with covered stage and sound wall, plaza gathering area for community events.
 - Improved with pathways and sidewalks, 24 bicycle parking spaces, parking lot for 17 vehicles (minimum of two ADA spaces), drainage features, relocated bus stop with a new shelter.
 - Permanent public restrooms and storage structure, drinking fountain, trash cans and trash storage area.
 - Information kiosk and donor plaque displays, oak woodland and wetlands preservation areas.
 - Operating Sunrise to Sunset, 7 days per week.
 - 20 community events per year, ranging in duration from 1 hour to 6 hours with amplified music and speech (see table below for event details).

Proposed event details:

Event Type	Frequency	Estimated Number of Attendees	Amplified Music/Speech
Farmers Market*	Seasonal, 16 weeks (one day per week)	100-150	Yes
Christmas Tree Lighting	1 per year	100	Yes
Fundraisers	4 per year	50-150	Yes
Business Exposition	1 per year	100-150	Yes
School Field Trips	4 per year	20-40	No
Other Events (e.g. community events, flea markets, sponsored events)	4 to 9 per year	50-100	Yes, depending on the event

*The Farmers Market event is an existing Certified Farmers Market that has been held onsite one day per week for 16 weeks since 2011, typically from June through September between 4:00 PM and 7:00 PM.

Project Phasing:

FPA proposes to complete installation of park utilities, bus stop, sidewalk, and frontage improvements within two years of use permit approval. The parking lot, picnic area and connecting pathways, gathering area and amphitheater, restroom / storage building and landscaping improvements are expected to be completed within five years of use permit approval.

General Plan and Zoning Discussion

General Plan Consistency:

The project is consistent with the intent of the Public and Quasi Public (PQP) land use designation of the

General Plan and meets the PQP designation criteria for the following reasons: the site is owned and operated by a 501(c)(3) non-profit charitable corporation; the site has direct access off Highway 116; there are no Area or Specific Plans applicable to the site; the site is located in an Urban Service Area within downtown Forestville and has been managed as an unimproved community gathering space, as well as a trailhead to the West County Bike Trail since 2019.

The project is consistent with various objectives and policies of the General Plan Land Use Element, including Objective LU-15.4 which provides for maintaining the "rural village" character of Forestville through design and development standards that support small scale development with substantial open space and native landscaping. The project also supports goals and objectives of the Public Facilities and Services Element that call for providing community parks and trails as needed in urban areas, encouraging outdoor recreation, and conserving natural and cultural resources (Policy 3.1, Objective PF-2.1, Policy PF-2d).

The General Plan includes a density transfer policy for 51-units (Policy LU-15t). Policy LU-15t was created by a prior housing development approval for the area and now solely applies to the adjacent westerly parcel, APN 083-270-003. The subject park property is encumbered by a 2013 Conservation Easement that prohibits residential and commercial development.

Zoning Consistency:

The project proposes to rezone the property to Public Facilities (PF) zoning- a zoning designation for sites that serve the community or public need. FPA's a request for a General Plan Amendment to the Public and Quasi Public land use designation is consistent with the PF zoning and associated General Plan land use policy. PF zoning allows with use permit approval, public and private facilities for neighborhood or community use including playgrounds, picnicking and open space areas. The park is designed to meet all required development standards of the Public Facilities zoning district.

Three combining zones would remain on the site including Local Area Development Guidelines for Highway 116, Scenic Resources, and Oak Woodland. The project complies with the requirements of these combining districts as there are no impacts to existing historic structures, the new restroom and amphitheater buildings are small buildings with a maximum height of 15 feet, there is no tree removal, and park improvements are designed to connect to an existing public bike path and protect the onsite oak woodlands, grassland, and wetlands. Project conditions of approval ensure future construction complies with policies for tree protection and development in a scenic corridor.

Parking Requirements:

The proposed parking lot for 17 vehicles (including a minimum of two accessible parking spaces) was sized to minimize impacts to onsite resources and to accommodate the park's daily visitors. Typically, 80 parking spaces would be needed to accommodate FPA's largest event of 200-people (using a standard calculation of 2.5 persons/vehicle). The Planning Commission recommended the Board of Supervisors approve the use permit with reduced onsite parking as allowed by County Parking Regulations, Sec. 26-86-010 of the Zoning Code, for the following reasons:

- The project includes improving a relocated bus stop with a new shelter and connecting the bus stop to sidewalks and park pathways.
- The project proposes 24 bicycle parking spaces which exceeds the minimum 16 bicycle parking space requirement based on 80 vehicles.
- Event attendees are expected to utilize the onsite parking lot, the bike path/trailhead and onsite bicycle parking racks, on-street parking in downtown Forestville, public transportation and ridesharing companies, and overflow parking available at nearby businesses that have an agreement with FPA.
- The applicant has existing overflow parking agreements with the adjacent RYME Tasting Room property (6450 1st Street, Forestville) and the Food For Thought property (6550 Railroad Avenue, Forestville). Together, these properties can accommodate overflow parking for approximately 30-40 vehicles.

California Environmental Review Act (CEQA)

The proposed project has been analyzed under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the CEQA Guidelines, California Code of Regulations. Staff has determined that the project is subject to the California Environmental Quality Act. Based on application materials provided by the applicant and technical specialists, an Initial Study was completed. As a result of the Initial Study, it was determined that project impacts could be mitigated to a less than significant level, therefore a Mitigated Negative Declaration was drafted for the project.

Staff published the Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) for public review and comment from July 26, 2024 through August 26, 2024. Agency comments were received from California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District (Ag + Open Space), State Water Resources Control Board, and Sonoma County Water Agency. As a result, staff updated the draft Conditions of Approval to require the applicant obtain authorizations from Caltrans for encroachment permitting and Ag + Open Space for final conservation easement compliance review prior to project construction.

The MND finds that potential environmental impacts related to aesthetics, air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, noise, and tribal cultural resources have been mitigated to less-than-significant levels. Mitigation measures for these potential impacts are detailed in the Mitigated Negative Declaration and have been incorporated into the Conditions of Approval.

Public Comments:

During the Planning Commission's consideration of the project, Permit Sonoma received over 20 public comments in support of the project. Permit Sonoma also received comments raising concerns with potential noise impacts, accessibility, and parking.

In response to the concerns raised, the Planning Commission modified the draft project conditions of approval to require the applicant: limit amplified music to the stage (Condition #32), provide a minimum of two accessible parking spaces onsite (Condition #20), submit an event parking management plan and use

temporary loading signage for special events (Condition #99).

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends the Board of Supervisors conduct a public hearing and adopt a Resolution to 1) adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration; 2) approve a General Plan Amendment; 3) adopt an Ordinance amending the parcel's zoning; and 4) approve a Use Permit with Conditions of Approval for Forestville Downtown Park at 6990 Front Street and 6720 Highway 116, Forestville; APN: 083-270-001, -002.

Strategic Plan:

NA

Racial Equity:

Was this item identified as an opportunity to apply the Racial Equity Toolkit?

No

Prior Board Actions:

- A. On May 15, 2007, the Board of Supervisors adopted a Mitigated Negative Declaration and approved a general plan amendment, zone change, and a major subdivision requested by Ramona Crinella (Board Resolution No. 07-0401, Permit Sonoma File No. PLP06-0076).
- B. On June 8, 2010, the Board of Supervisors adopted a Mitigated Negative Declaration and approved a general plan amendment, major subdivision, and a use permit for a precise development plan requested by Orrin Thiessen (Board Resolution No. 10-0471, Permit Sonoma File No. PLP07-0062).
- C. On October 22, 2013, the Board of Supervisors/Board of Directors of Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District approved a Conservation Easement and Recreation Covenant limiting the use of the property to natural resource preservation and public outdoor recreation (documents recorded O.R. #2013-110043 and #2013-110044).
- D. On December 13, 2016 and August 13, 2019, the Board of Supervisors approved fee waivers for fees associated with the Forestville Planning Association's Forestville Downtown Park use permit.

FISCAL SUMMARY

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

Not Applicable

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

Not Applicable

Attachments:

Attachment 1: PLP16-0054 Board of Supervisors Resolution

Attachment 2: PLP16-0054 Board of Supervisors Resolution Exhibit A - General Plan Amendment

Attachment 3: PLP16-0054 Board of Supervisors Resolution Exhibit B - Board Ordinance

Attachment 4: PLP16-0054 Board of Supervisors Resolution Exhibit C - Use Permit Conditions of Approval

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Attachment 5: PLP16-0054 Planning Commission Resolution No. 24-12

Attachment 6: PLP16-0054 Planning Commission Staff Report and Attachments

Attachment 7: PLP16-0054 Applicant Proposal Statement

Attachment 8: PLP16-0054 Project Plans

Attachment 9: PLP16-0054 Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration and attachments

Attachment 10: PLP16-0054 Public Comments

Attachment 11: PLP16-0054 Staff Presentation

Attachment 12: PLP16-0054 Applicant Presentation

Related Items “On File” with the Clerk of the Board:

NA