



Agenda Item: 6.A
 Date of Meeting: April 29, 2025
 Department: Planning

STAFF REPORT

To: Planning Commission
 From: Ana Budnyk
 Subject: **Variance – 168 East Line Street**
 Prepared On: April 25, 2025
 Attachments: Vicinity Map
 Letter from the Developer
 Developer Proposal
 Draft Resolution PC_APPROVING
 Draft Resolution PC_DENYING

Background/History:

The Planning Department has received an application from **James Miller** requesting three variances related to the development of the **Climbing Training and Fitness Center** proposed at **168 East Line Street** (Assessor's Parcel Number 001-182-10), currently a vacant property.

The property is zoned **General Commercial (C1)** with a **Mixed Use Downtown Overlay (MUO-DT)** designation and is located within the City's Specific Plan area. The surrounding uses and zoning are summarized below:

Property	General Plan	Zoning	Current Use
North (across E. Line Street)	General Commercial	C1, MUO-NT	Electrician business
East	General Commercial	C1, MUO-DT	Residential and office
West	General Commercial	C1, MUO-DT	Residential apartments
South	General Commercial	C1, MUO-DT	Residential apartments

The applicant is requesting the following **three variances** from the **MUO-DT development standards**:

1. **On-Site Parking Location**: Allow parking in front of the building when viewed from East Line Street, rather than behind the building as required.
2. **Parking Space Reduction**: Reduce the number of required parking spaces from ten (10) to eight (8).
3. **Compact Parking Spaces**: Increase the number of compact spaces allowed from two (2) (25% of required parking) to three (3) spaces (37%).

Table 2: MUO-DT Development Standards Comparison for 168 East Line Street

Standard	Required	Proposed
Lot Size	9,600 SF (0.22 acres)	
Maximum Building Area	n/a	6,600 SF
Maximum Building Height	46 feet	Two stories
On-site Parking Location	Behind the building	In front of the building
Parking Spaces	10 (including ADA)	8 (including ADA)
Maximum Compact Parking	25% (2 spaces)	37% (3 spaces)
Customer Bike Parking	4 spaces	8 spaces
Staff Bike Storage	1 per new retail worker	2 spaces
Minimum Landscaped Area	10% (358 SF)	360 SF
Front Setback	0' minimum / 10' maximum	10' + 64' parking + 9' entry

Per **Bishop Municipal Code Section 17.80.060 – Variance – Application**, the Planning Commission has authority to grant variances if the following findings can be made:

1. The variance shall be subject to conditions ensuring that it does not grant a special privilege inconsistent with limitations placed upon other properties in the vicinity and district.
2. Due to special circumstances applicable to the subject property, such as size, shape, topography, location, or surroundings, the strict application of the Code would deprive the subject property of privileges enjoyed by other properties in the same district.

Analysis/Discussion:

The subject property at **168 East Line Street (APN 001-182-10)** is a vacant parcel with **50 feet of street frontage and 191 feet of depth**. While this lot size is typical for downtown parcels, its narrow frontage poses a development challenge under current zoning and parking standards, particularly for uses requiring larger open interior spaces, such as the proposed **Climbing Training and Fitness Center**.

Unlike nearby properties that benefit from wider lot frontages or pre-existing, non-conforming driveways, this site would require 24 feet of its 50-foot frontage just for driveway access to rear parking—substantially impacting the usable width for active building frontage and pedestrian access. Additionally, a comparable property at **169 Short Street** shares a driveway with its neighbor, a configuration unavailable to the applicant.

The **Bishop Specific Plan** encourages pedestrian-oriented, walkable development in the downtown area, calling for:

- concentrating density on parcels that front Main Street and Line Street,
- reduction of potential vehicle miles traveled (VMT) impacts resulting from higher density development
- building features that contribute to a pedestrian-oriented, walkable downtown, which includes: large windows, a continuous street wall with limited setbacks, entrances and signage that can be read from the sidewalk.

The proposed athlete training center proposes a building footprint of 4,410 square feet, which is 45% of the site area, and a 6,600 square foot 2-story structure. While requesting relief from certain parking standards, the project compensates with double the required bicycle parking, two long-term staff bike storage lockers, and safe bike access near the building's entrance—helping to reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and align with Specific Plan goals.

The building also includes large street-facing windows and a 10-foot wide landscaped area along East Line Street featuring dense shrubs and trees designed to create a "**green street wall**", mimicking the continuous façade encouraged by the Specific Plan. The applicant has committed to ongoing maintenance of this landscaping to ensure long-term compliance with the streetscape intent.

GENERAL PLAN & ZONING CONSISTENCY

The property is designated **General Commercial (C1)** with the **Mixed Use Downtown Overlay (MUO-DT)**, within the Bishop Specific Plan area. The proposed project supports the **General Plan's goals** of:

- Encouraging diverse land uses that support long-term economic viability,
- Increasing downtown activity and employment opportunities,
- Promoting recreation-related commercial development,
- Encouraging development of vacant and underutilized land.

Variance Findings:

Based on substantial evidence in the record, the Planning Commission of the City of Bishop makes the following findings regarding approval of a variance waiving the On-Site Parking Location requirement parking in back of the building, Parking Space Reduction, increased Compact Parking Spaces.

1. That any variance granted shall be subject to such conditions as will assure that the adjustment thereby authorized shall not constitute a **grant of special privilege** inconsistent with the limitations upon other properties in the vicinity and district in which the subject property is situated.

Evidence: Any property owner in the City of Bishop has the right to request a variance subject to the same consideration and review by the Bishop Planning Commission for General Plan and zoning code consistency. Due to the requirement for parking to be located behind the building being approved in 2022 other properties in the vicinity have parking located on the

front of the property or exercise other privileges, like narrower preexisting non-compliant driveways, the property immediately adjacent to the subject property on the west 162 East Line Street complies with the parking requirement due to wider 70' street frontage, and the property immediately south 169 Short Street shares a driveway with the adjacent property. The subject site's narrower width and lack of shared driveway make strict compliance uniquely burdensome.

1. That because of special circumstances applicable to subject property, including size, shape, topography, location or surroundings, the strict application of the land use ordinance is found to deprive subject property of privileges enjoyed by other properties in the vicinity and under identical district classification.

Evidence: the subject lot's 50-foot width, while typical downtown, creates unique limitations when coupled with the functional requirements of an athletic facility (open interior spaces, high ceilings). The inability to locate parking to the rear without consuming significant building frontage or reducing usability supports the request for the proposed parking layout with adjusted parking placement, reduced stall count, and additional compact spaces.

Legal Review:

Attorney Russell A. Hildebrand has reviewed and approved the item.

Environmental Review:

The proposed project qualifies as Categorically Exempt under CEQA Guidelines Section 15332 – Infill Development Projects.

Notifications:

A public hearing for this item was noticed in the Inyo Register on April 19, 2025 and mailed to all property owners within 300 feet of the project site at least ten days prior to the Planning Commission hearing, in accordance with City noticing requirements.

Recommended Action:

Staff recommends the Planning Commission:

Hold a public hearing to review the proposed variance.

Approve the variance application based on the site specific circumstances presented above because the variance allows for a project that meets the goals of the General Plan of:

1. Encouraging diverse land uses that support long-term economic viability,
2. Increasing downtown activity and employment opportunities,
3. Promoting recreation-related commercial development,
4. Encouraging development of vacant and underutilized land.

OR

Deny the application because the project does not meet the MUO-DT Development Standards for onsite parking location, number of parking stalls required, and maximum number of allowed

compact spaces.

Approved By: Deston Dishion 4/25/25

Approved By:

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