



PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

ITEM NO. 5.2

DATE: June 16, 2026

TO: Chairperson and Members of the Planning Commission

FROM: Steve Riley, Planning Manager

SUBJECT: Hearing to consider a request for Conditional Use Permit (CUP) 25-005 authorizing the use of 180 South Livermore Avenue as an indoor-outdoor event space featuring a rooftop bar and flexible event areas designed for weddings, corporate events, private gatherings, and community-oriented programming.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Staff recommends the Planning Commission:

1. Adopt a resolution finding the project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under CEQA Guidelines Section 15301, Existing Facilities;
2. Adopt a resolution approving Conditional Use Permit (CUP) 25-005 to allow the operation of an event center (Blanco Modern Venue) at 180 South Livermore Avenue, subject to the attached Conditions of Approval.
3. Direct the Planning Manager to file a Notice of Exemption with the Alameda County Clerk; and
4. Advise the applicant that the Project approval is subject to a 15-day appeal period.

SUMMARY

The applicant, Michael Messinger, is requesting a Conditional Use Permit (CUP), to operate an indoor/outdoor event center named 'Blanco Modern Venue' at 180 S. Livermore Avenue (also addressed as 2324 Second Street). The proposed architecture, footprint, landscaping enhancements, and trash collection plan approved in 2022 is being constructed as previously approved.

The current application focuses strictly on the land use entitlement (Conditional Use Permit) required to execute the event center concept. The Downtown Specific Plan (Specific Plan), Subarea 3, does not list an event center as a permitted use; however, the Specific Plan allows the Planning Commission to authorize additional uses if found to meet the intent of the Specific Plan. Staff finds the event center use to be similar to existing allowed uses, including public halls, community facilities, restaurants, and entertainment uses.

DISCUSSION

BACKGROUND

The property is located at the intersection of South Livermore Avenue and Second Street within Subarea 3 of the Downtown Core in the Downtown Specific Plan. The building includes the historically significant 1928 Southwestern Bell Communications repeater station, along with additions constructed in 1955, 1967, and 1972. After acquiring the property in 2004 as part of downtown revitalization efforts, the City approved its sale to the current owner in 2022. On September 20, 2022, The Planning Commission approved DDR 22-001 and on September 2, 2022, staff approved a Certificate of Appropriateness for conversion of the vacant building into a restaurant. Construction associated with that project is nearly complete.

In August 2025, the owner applied to change the use to an event center, a transition subsequently supported by the City Council's November 2025 amendment to the Purchase and Sale Agreement. City staff have determined that an event center is consistent with the Downtown Specific Plan's intent to support public halls, meeting facilities, and community spaces, subject to CUP approval.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Blanco Modern Venue is designed as a customizable event space that integrates privately reserved events with opportunities for community access. The facility includes a basement level housing a bar and lounge, storage, and restrooms; a main floor with a commercial kitchen, a primary reception hall with a full bar and restrooms; and a rooftop level with outdoor dining and ceremony space, a bar, entertainment areas, and restrooms. The venue will operate seven days a week. The venue can accommodate up to 250 guests, supported by a staff of fewer than 20 employees led by a Venue and Event Manager.

The applicant intends for the venue to become an active contributor to downtown programming by hosting seasonal celebrations, wine dinners, pop up markets, movie nights, and collaborative wine tasting events with local wineries. The space will also support major community events such as the Livermore Downtown Street Fest, Witches Night Out, the Holiday Sights & Sounds Parade, the Livermore Valley Half Marathon, and weekly farmers' markets.

SITE CONTEXT

The site is located at the northwest corner of South Livermore Avenue and Second Street within the Downtown Core Area, Subarea 3. Surrounding uses include restaurants, cafes, commercial services, and the U.S. Post Office. The pedestrian oriented environment supports entertainment-based uses and evening activity.

STAFF ANALYSIS

Land Use Compatibility

The event center use is suitable for its downtown location and consistent with the flexibility allowed under the Downtown Specific Plan. The use supports local economic activity by diversifying hospitality offerings and addressing a regional need for event venues while avoiding oversaturation of restaurant uses. The surrounding area contains a mix of commercial, residential, and civic uses that are compatible with the proposed operation.

Per the Conditions of Approval (Attachment 6) B.1., operating hours are Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, and

Wednesday from 10 a.m. to midnight. On Thursday, Friday, Saturday, the venue will operate from 10 a.m. to 2 a.m. Operating hours may begin earlier on Saturday and Sunday without modifications to this Conditional Use Permit. However, in no case shall an event be allowed to begin before 8 a.m. The applicant may operate until 2 a.m. up to 10 days per calendar year on Sundays through Wednesdays; each late-night operation requires prior written approval from the Planning Division, submitted at least 30 days before the requested date(s).

Traffic Engineering Condition of Approval D.1. restricts the arrivals and departures to avoid peak congestion hours. For up to four events per year, the applicant may obtain a Temporary Use Permit, subject to staff approval, to hold events during peak hours (Condition of Approval B9). Both downtown parking structures are within a six-minute walk to the venue, and a valet service will be provided for the larger events, according to the Business Plan (Attachment 3), and as explained in the Parking, Traffic, and Circulation section of this report.

Architecture & Design Standards Consistency

The applicant proposes no changes to the 2022-approved architecture. The project preserves the defining historic features of the 1928 structure, including smooth stucco finishes, bas-relief ornamentation, and arched opening, while maintaining the distinguishability of modern elements such as the glass-enclosed rooftop deck, projecting windows, raised exterior patio, and accessible elevator tower. The project remains compliant with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for modifications to historic structures.

Parking, Traffic, and Circulation

Based on Specific Plan parking standards, the building requires five parking spaces. Four spaces, including one ADA-compliant space, will be provided on site, the remainder is addressed through in-lieu fees. Substantial free public parking is available within 1,000 feet of the site including in the I Street and L Street garages, both of which are an approximately 0.2-mile, six-seven-minute walk away.

Per Project Specific Condition of Approval B.5, the applicant may provide valet parking with a staging area established on Second Street at the venue's driveway approach and adjacent curb zone. The applicant shall staff the valet parking attendants according to the number of guests, weather, and type of event. At no time shall valet queueing exceed two vehicles, and drive lanes on Second Avenue shall always remain unblocked. Event schedules will be managed to avoid peak traffic periods. Deliveries and waste collection will occur from Second Street, and four new bicycle parking stalls will be installed in the public right-of-way on South Livermore Avenue.

The previously proposed restaurant use would have guests arriving at various times throughout the day and evening, generating vehicle trips throughout the operating time. The newly proposed use as an event center will differ in that guests would be arriving within a narrow time frame and departing within a somewhat narrow time frame. The Downtown Specific plan anticipates this type of activity in the area whether it is the movie theater or the Bankhead theater. The city's Traffic Engineer reviewed the proposed change in use and concluded that all local roadways and intersections will accommodate the use and associated trips. With the Conditions of Approval for the Project, staff supports the proposed event center at this site.

Noise Control and Sound Policy

To mitigate impacts on neighboring commercial uses and nearby residential areas, a strict sound policy is found in Condition of Approval B.3. All rooftop entertainment, music, and amplified sound must

conclude by 11 p.m. No outdoor music is permitted after 11 p.m. under any circumstances. Exterior noise levels shall not exceed 70 dBA between 7 a.m. and 11 p.m., and shall not exceed 65 dBA between 11 p.m. and 7 a.m.

Security and Lighting Plan

Security protocols developed with the Livermore Police Department require professional security staffing proportional to event size and type. A closed-circuit surveillance system will monitor all external and internal access points, with footage maintained consistent with police standards (Condition of Approval F.1-5). Lighting levels will ensure safe circulation while limiting spillover onto adjacent properties (Condition of Approval B.11.)

Landscape

The landscape plan complies with the City's water-efficiency and tree-preservation requirements. Nine declining trees will be removed and replaced with 11 new trees, as approved by DDR 22-001. The existing 30-foot-tall Camphor tree located on the Second Street frontage will be preserved. Irrigation will be controlled through water-efficient automated systems, and decorative vines will be planted along the northern wall through a landscape easement with the adjacent property.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION

The Project is categorically exempt from CEQA in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15301, Existing Facilities, which exempts the permitting of existing private structures involving negligible or no expansion of existing or former use.

RECOMMENDATION

Blanco Modern Venue will activate a prominent downtown location with a flexible event facility that enhances the area's economic vitality and cultural opportunities while preserving the site's historic character. The project's operational safeguards—including comprehensive noise, parking, security, and logistics measures—ensure its compatibility with the surrounding district. Staff recommends the Planning Commission do the following:

1. Find the project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under CEQA Guidelines Section 15301, Existing Facilities;
2. Approve Conditional Use Permit CUP 25-005, subject to the Conditions of Approval;
3. Direct the Planning Manager to file of Notice of Exemption with the Alameda County Clerk; and
4. Advise the applicant that the Project approval is subject to a 15-day appeal period.

ATTACHMENTS

1. [Location Map](#)
2. [Approved Plans](#)
3. [Business Plan](#)
4. [Resolution - CEQA](#)
5. [Resolution - Project](#)
6. [Exhibit A - Conditions of Approval](#)

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