



PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

ITEM NO. 4.1

DATE: May 19, 2026

TO: Chairperson and Members of the Planning Commission

FROM: Steve Riley, Planning Manager

SUBJECT: Project review to develop a 3.2-acre vacant parcel with a Wine Country Inn consisting of 24 single story cottage style buildings with a total of 30 guest bedrooms, a small meeting space, guest kitchen, lobby building, guest pool, and a caretaker's unit. The project includes a total of approximately 19,100 square feet of building area, 39 paved parking spaces, 8 bicycle parking spaces, landscaping with 82 new trees, and related on- and off-site improvements. The new proposal modifies the previously approved project Site Plan Design Review (SPDR) 23-001 for a two story, 29,345 square foot building with a 77-seat restaurant. The new proposal reduces the building area by 10,245 square-feet and does not include a restaurant. No changes are proposed to Conditional Use Permit (CUP) 23-002 for the approved caretaker's residence. The project site is vacant and located at the southwest corner of Arroyo Road and Hansen Road (APN 99-460-8).

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Staff recommend the Planning Commission take two separate actions:

1. Adopt a resolution finding the project is within the scope of the prior certified EIR pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Section 15162 (Subsequent EIRs and Negative Declarations) and statutorily exempt from the provisions of CEQA per guidelines section 15183 (Projects consistent with Community Plan, General Plan, or Zoning).
2. Adopt a resolution approving Site Plan Design Review Modification (SPDRM) 25-030.

DECISION TYPE

Quasi-judicial

SUMMARY

The South Livermore Valley Specific Plan (Specific Plan) establishes a commercial development strategy to implement General Plan goals of supporting South Livermore as a premier wine region destination. Within this framework, Commercial Site 5D2 is designated for a Wine Country Inn. The applicant now seeks a Site Plan Design Review Modification (SPDRM) to replace the previously approved two story 30-room inn and 77-seat restaurant with a lower intensity, single story cottage style

inn that includes 30 guest rooms, a lobby, a guest services building, a pool, and the previously approved caretaker's unit. This modification shifts the project toward a more lodging focused, visitor serving facility without a restaurant. The project site is vacant and located at the southwest corner of Arroyo Road and Hansen Road (APN 99-460-8).

The revised project continues to advance the Specific Plan's goals of enhancing the wine country visitor experience and supporting long term visitation in the South Livermore Valley. The Planning Commission's role is quasi-judicial and their responsibility is to review the modified site plan, building form, and site layout for consistency with the Specific Plan, zoning, and design standards. Staff recommends the Planning Commission find that the modified project complies with all applicable standards and determine the proposed cottage style layout is consistent with and implements the small scale Wine Country Commercial Inn vision for Subarea 5 of the South Livermore Valley Specific Plan.

DISCUSSION

PLANNING COMMISSION ROLE

The Planning Commission's role is to act in their quasi-judicial capacity and review the Site Plan Design Review Modification (SPDRM) application to determine whether it is consistent with applicable development and design standards set forth in the General Plan, Specific Plan, and zoning.

BACKGROUND

On May 22, 2023, the City Council approved Site Plan Design Review (SPDR) 23-001 and Conditional Use Permit (CUP) 23-002 authorizing a 30-room, 29,345-square foot, two-story inn with a 77-seat restaurant, and a conditionally permitted caretaker's unit. The entitlement approvals established the land use permissions and development framework for the proposed inn consistent with the Specific Plan and applicable zoning standards. On April 22, 2025, the applicant requested a one year extension of the approved entitlement. A one year extension was granted per the Livermore Development Code (LDC Sec. 9.12.070) beyond the initial two-year expiration date. The CUP for the caretaker's residence does not expire and is appurtenant to the land. On December 18, 2025, the applicant applied to modify the existing entitlement (SPDR 23-001) reducing the scope of the project to a single-story cottage style inn with no restaurant.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project proposes a Wine Country Inn with 24 single story cottage style buildings containing 30 guest rooms, supported by a 1,315 square foot lobby, a 1,780 square foot guest services building with a meeting space and kitchen, and a small pool house (the "project"). The project's cottage style layout features three different cottage types ranging from approximately 430 to 720 square feet and includes one accessible unit in each cottage type located close to the parking lot in compliance with the American Disability Act (ADA). The project site is vacant and located at the southwest corner of Arroyo Road and Hansen Road (APN 99-460-8), (see Attachment 1 Location Map). The Development Plans are Attachment 2 and include the site plan, building designs, landscape plan and civil plans.

The lobby and guest services buildings would be located in the northern portion of the site, adjacent to the parking lot, facing Hansen Road. The guest services building includes a meeting area that can be divided into two smaller rooms available for registered guests, as allowed by the inn manager. The guest

pool is located in the southern portion of the site and includes two small structures. Table 1 (below) summarizes each of the on-site buildings. The previously approved caretaker's unit remains part of the project.

Table 1

Building Type	Size	Height	Number of Units	Internal Layout
Cottage H450	435 sf.	13'	4	1 bedroom; 1 bathroom; living room; small kitchen
Cottage H550	565 sf.	13'	14	1 bedroom; 1 bathroom; living room; small kitchen
Cottage H720	720 sf.	13'	6	2 bedrooms; 2 bathrooms; living room; small kitchen
Lobby Building	1, 313 sf.	16'	1	reception desk, bathrooms, office, breakroom, and attendant quarters
Guest Services Building	1, 779 sf.	16'	1	laundry room, meeting area, small kitchen, storage room, and bathrooms
Pool Houses	120 sf.	14'	2	bathrooms, storage room, and equipment room.
Caretaker's Residence	1, 635 sf.	17'	1	3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, kitchen, and living room.

PROJECT SITE CONTEXT

The project site is vacant with an approximately 100-foot buffer adjacent to Arroyo Road currently planted as a vineyard. The South Livermore Valley Specific Plan identifies the property as Commercial Site 5D2. The site is surrounded by viticulture uses, with the nearest residential use approximately 230 feet to the west, measured from property line to property line. The project site slopes down approximately 25 feet from the northeast corner to the southwest corner. The site has two public street frontages, Arroyo Road to the east and Hansen Road to the north. A multi-use recreation trail exists along Arroyo Road. Vehicular access to the site is from Hansen Road.

The following table summarizes the General Plan land use designation, zoning classification, and existing land use on the subject site and surrounding land:

	General Plan Designation	Current Zoning Classification	Existing Land Use
North	South Livermore Valley Specific Plan, Subarea 5 – Wine Country Commercial	Planned Development-South Livermore Valley Specific Plan (Planned Unit Development Amendment 01-001)	Agricultural – Vacant Commercial Site 5D1

South	South Livermore Valley Specific Plan, Subarea 5 – Small Winery	Planned Development-South Livermore Valley Specific Plan (Planned Unit Development Amendment 01-001)	Winery – Las Positas Vineyards
East	South Livermore Valley Specific Plan, Subarea 4 – Agriculture and Residential	Planned Development-South Livermore Valley Specific Plan (Planned Unit Development Amendments 02-001 and 07-003)	Agricultural and single-family residential
West	South Livermore Valley Specific Plan, Subarea 5 – Agriculture and Residential	Planned Development-South Livermore Valley Specific Plan (Planned Unit Development Amendment 01-001)	Agricultural and single-family residential
Subject Site	South Livermore Valley Specific Plan, Subarea 5 – Wine Country Commercial	Planned Development-South Livermore Valley Specific Plan (Planned Unit Development Amendment 01-001)	Vacant Commercial Site 5D2

STAFF ANALYSIS

The Analysis below demonstrates how the project is consistent with City policies, development and design standards.

General Plan

The Land Use Element of the General Plan establishes the following goals and objectives:

- Goal LU-13 Promote the South Livermore Valley as a unique and historic wine region.
- Objective LU-13.1 Develop additional wineries with a range of sizes, and other wine country uses that promote the area as a premier wine-producing area

Further, the General Plan land use designation for the project site is the Agriculture/Viticulture sub-designations South Livermore - Vineyard Commercial (SV-VC). This designation envisions limited development of wine country commercial uses that directly support the South Livermore Valley wine region. Specifically, the General Plan designates 16 acres for Vineyard Commercial in Subarea 5 of the Specific Plan area and allows a 30-room inn and large restaurant on the project site. Therefore, the proposed project is consistent with the General Plan policies and the land use designation for the site.

South Livermore Valley Specific Plan

The South Livermore Valley Specific Plan (Specific Plan) systematically implements the Livermore General Plan Goals and Land Use for the South Livermore Valley. The Specific Plan identifies the project site as Site 5D2. The Specific Plan Commercial Goals and Policies describe the project site as having "up to 30 guest rooms and may have a large restaurant" (a restaurant is not included as part of

the project). The project is consistent with the purpose of commercial development by “*supporting the concept of the South Livermore Valley as a wine-country destination*” (SLVSP pages 4-34 and 4-35).

Chapter 12 of the Specific Plan identifies a cottage style site layout for this location, with the intent of creating a small scale, visitor oriented setting that supports wine country visitation while maintaining the agricultural character of the area. The Specific Plan shows that the prototypical site plans for each of the commercial sites that are intended to show one interpretation of appropriate design. The prototypical site plan for Site 5D2 (SLVSP pages 12-12 and 12-13) shows a development pattern with small cottages spread out with open spaces in between. The proposed project closely follows this concept plan through its clustered, single story cottages and integrated open space circulation pattern. As a result, the project is consistent with both the intent and the illustrative example of the Specific Plan's design guidance.

Zoning and Specific Plan Development Standards

The zoning for the site is Planned Development-South Livermore Valley Specific Plan/Planned Unit Development Amendment 01-001 (PUD), which implements the Specific Plan. As explained below, the project complies with the PUD and Specific Plan development standards.

Permitted Use: Consistent with the General Plan and Specific Plan, the PUD permits a Wine Country Inn with no more than 30 guestrooms and a sit-down restaurant with up to 100 seats on the project site.

Setbacks: The PUD Commercial Site Requirements establishes 100-foot building setback from Arroyo Road and 50-foot building setback from Hansen Road. The PUD zone does not require a minimum building setback for the side or rear yard, provided the project is consistent with the Specific Plan. The project includes a 100-foot building setback from Arroyo Road, part of which is planted with vineyards as an agricultural buffer, required by the Specific Plan. The project provides an approximate 89-foot building setback from Hansen Road exceeding the 50-foot minimum requirement. Despite having no required building minimum side and rear setback, the project is between 10 to 18-feet away from the side (west) property line and between 36 to 50-feet away from the rear (south) property line. Further, the project complies with the PUD and Specific Plan standard that limits access to the project site to one entrance on Hansen Road.

Height: The PUD and Specific Plan establish a maximum commercial building height of 35 feet. The project's height ranges between 12 to 18 feet and complies with the maximum height requirements.

Floor Area Ratio: The project has a cumulative floor area ratio of approximately 14% which is compliant with the 25% maximum floor area ratio in the PUD.

Site Layout and Development

The site plan is efficient in terms of layout and circulation, and the orientation of the project's buildings and design elements optimizes the surrounding landscape, terrain, and natural features. The site plan and cottage placement signal arrival to Livermore's Wine Country by taking advantage of the site's location adjacent to Arroyo Road.

Vehicle and Ped/Bike Site Access: The project would be accessed from Hansen Road, via a U-shaped, one-way internal drive aisle that would access the parking lot and lead to the lobby and guest services building. Vehicles will enter at the northwest corner of the project site from Hansen Road through a new

left turn pocket created by on-pavement striping for westbound vehicles on Hansen Road. Eastbound vehicles on Hansen Road will use the same driveway to enter the site. Vehicles will exit at the northeast corner of the site at a right-out only driveway, leading them to Arroyo Road.

This configuration is consistent with the Specific Plan, which requires access to Sites 5D1 and 5D2 only from Hansen Road. Using Hansen Road for access also reduces operational and safety concerns by avoiding conflicts with the regional pedestrian, bicycle, and equestrian trail that parallels Arroyo Road, where higher travel speeds, turning movements across the trail, and limited sight distances created by grade changes could introduce safety hazards. However, the project will provide a direct on site pedestrian and bicycle connection to the Arroyo Road trail.

Parking: The parking lot is located on the north of the site near Hansen Road. The Specific Plan establishes a parking requirement of one space for each sleeping unit, plus one space for each ten such units. The project is required to provide a minimum of 33 parking spaces based on 30 guest rooms plus two additional space for the caretaker's unit for a total of 35 required spaces. The site provides 39 parking spaces in compliance with the Specific Plan parking standards. Further, the project is required to provide a minimum of 4 bicycle spaces. A total of 8 bicycle spaces are provided on-site.

The parking lot design also meets the paving requirement, minimum parking space dimensions, drive aisles width and parking lot tree requirements (SLVSP pages 12-27 and 12-28). Therefore, the project complies with the parking requirements.

Trash Enclosure: The project's trash enclosure is located east of the parking lot near the project exit. The Specific Plan allows the trash enclosure to be located within the 50-foot setback on Hansen Road (SLVSP pages 12-20, 12-22) and screened by trees and landscaping improvements. There will be three trees and landscaping planted around the enclosure to help screen it. The enclosure size is 10' x18' and designed with stucco-finished walls in an earthtone color and a standing seam metal roof. Therefore, the proposed trash enclosure meets location, size and design standards.

Landscape and Architectural Design

Chapter 12.0 of the South Livermore Valley Specific Plan establishes Commercial Design standards and Guidelines, which outline the appropriate site design, landscape features, and building forms and materials consistent with the vision of the Specific Plan image as a premium wine producing region and enhances the experience of visitors to the South Livermore Valley wine country.

Landscape Design. The South Livermore Valley Specific Plan includes a variety of landscaping requirements to reflect an informal wine country setting with agrarian themes, including:

- use of informal plantings with native species to harmonize with the natural setting,
- clustering of trees to screen long building walls or undesirable views, creation of comfortable, appealing outdoor gathering spaces.

To facilitate the project design, the three existing trees along the Hansen Street frontage will be removed, which will be replaced at a ratio of 2:1 or with six new trees near the frontage. An additional eight trees on-site will be removed and replaced for construction of a retaining wall and parking lot. The Livermore Development Code (LDC Sec. 4.05.030) requires 16 trees per gross site area acre, minus

building coverage. The development site is approximately 3.2 acres and the building footprint is approximately 19,100 square feet. Thus, the project would be required to provide 45 trees. In addition, the Livermore Development Code requires that 20 percent of the trees (9 trees) be planted at 24-inch box size. The development project provides 82 trees, 29 of which are 24-inch box. The new trees proposed include the Catalina Ironwood, Western Redbud and Catalina Cherry - the last two of which are listed in the recommended tree palette in the Specific Plan (Page 12-26).

The project meets the landscape requirements of the Specific Plan by providing approximately 53,000 square feet of landscaping with a diverse palette of grasses, shrubs, and 82 new trees, and large shrub species such as manzanita and coffeeberry among the various other species of shrubs, grasses, and groundcovers. Approximately 50 percent of the proposed plant pallet are California native species. Trees and shrubs are strategically clustered to soften building edges and screen longer wall segments, consistent with screening standards. The naturalistic plantings reinforce the site's wine country setting, while the terrace with built in seat walls and a fire pit creates an inviting gathering area for guests. The landscape design also creates transition spaces between the parking area and the cottages or other activity areas. The project also complies with the City's Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance. The project will provide an entrance sign with columns along the entrance. The entry columns will include stone and natural materials that are compatible with the rural aesthetic. Project signage will require approval of a separate permit.

Building Design. The South Livermore Valley Specific Plan includes a variety of architectural and building design requirements intended to reinforce the area's wine country and agrarian character, including:

- maintaining simple, well proportioned building forms inspired by traditional farm compounds
- using human scaled massing and height limits
- providing design elements and treatments to convey a wine country aesthetic
- incorporating natural materials and earth tone colors that integrate with the rural setting

Farm Compound Layout: The project organizes its buildings in a clear hierarchy consistent with the Farm Compound model, creating a clustered "village" of agricultural scale cottages that support the more prominent lobby and guest services buildings. These primary buildings are positioned along Hansen Road and incorporate architectural features and natural materials such as wood accents, stone bases, and articulated window awnings that reflect the Specific Plan's emphasis on simplicity and agrarian character. The remainder of the buildings consist of single-story cottages that are smaller in size and subordinate to the primary structures positioned towards the front of the site consistent with the farm compound and reinforce the Specific Plan's vision of a human scaled environment.

The project's cottages and on-site amenities are reached by an internal pedestrian circulation network as shown on the site plan. The north-south central paseo includes informal meeting areas, seating, shade structures, and 5 to 8 feet wide pedestrian paths consistent with the design standards. Views to the south (and west) are preserved looking through the paseo and from vineyard look-outs and cottage decks among other locations (SLVSP pages 12-12 and 12-13).

Building Materials and Colors: The project incorporates design elements that reinforce human scale and express the South Livermore agrarian identity consistent with the Specific Plan. Rooflines feature simple gabled forms with overhanging eaves, reflecting the traditional agricultural structures described in the

Specific Plan. Building façades include wood shutters, framed entries, and other rural architectural features such as wood doors, window trim, wrap around cottage decks, vertical Board and Batten siding, and appropriately scaled lighting sconces (SLVSP page 12-19). Materials and colors conform to the Specific Plan's emphasis on natural finishes, with a palette of earth tones applied to siding and trim. Colors include light and dark shades of grays, beige, sage green, and maroon. Roof materials consist of composition shingles in darker colors than the wall colors, consistent with Specific Plan requirements and the broader wine country character (SLVSP page 12-19).

Together, these elements strengthen the building design and ensure that the structures align with the agriculturally inspired character required for the Livermore Wine Country. The project supports the simplicity of form, scale, and material expression that the Specific Plan identifies as central to high quality design within the South Livermore Valley. These design elements directly implement Specific Plan Chapter 12 requirements, which produce buildings that are rooted in the wine country and agrarian landscape in compliance with the Specific Plan's development standards.

Sustainability

The City adopted the Reach Code which requires newly constructed buildings to be all electric. In support of the latest Reach Code and Climate Action Plan, the proposed project will incorporate sustainability measures into its construction and operations. In addition to using water-efficient landscaping, the proposed buildings would be all-electric. The project would supplement on-site energy with solar panels. Additionally, the project would use low-flow toilets and shower heads in the cottages, provide electric vehicle charging stations, use biodegradable laundry soap for washing machines, and replace paper towels with hand linens in the restrooms. The project will provide all electric appliances along with EV Capable and EV equipped parking stalls. Additionally, the project is proposing to utilize off-site construction methods for the cottage buildings and reduce on-site construction time and neighborhood disruption. The factory built construction method is a sustainable building process that results in less material waste, more efficient use of resources, and a controlled building environment compared to traditional stick-built construction.

Public Comment and Outreach

Public letters, and emails about the project are included in the agenda packet (see attachment 4).

The City sent a courtesy notice with a description of the project that was mailed to neighbors within 500 feet of the project site. Also, the applicant posted a development notice on the property two month prior to the Planning Commission meeting. Staff has also met with neighbors twice to discuss the project and responded to e-mail questions and information requests.

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

The project is within the scope of the prior analyzed and certified EIR in accordance with California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") Guidelines Section 15162 (Subsequent EIRs and Negative Declarations), and is statutorily exempt from CEQA under CEQA Guidelines Section 15183 (Projects consistent with Community Plan, General Plan, or Zoning), which statutorily exempts projects that are consistent with the development density and land use authorized by an existing, EIR-certified General Plan, Community Plan, or zoning from requiring a full environmental review, unless they present new, significant environmental impacts. Further analysis is provided in the CEQA Resolution (see Attachment

6).

The South Livermore Valley Specific Plan Environmental Impact Report evaluated the traffic associated with a 30-room inn and restaurant on the project site, and a subsequent project level traffic study conducted for the previously approved project confirmed that such a project would be consistent with the EIR. The modified project no longer includes the 77-seat restaurant, which was the primary generator of trips. The project would also be within the volumes analyzed in the EIR and anticipated as part of the Specific Plan. The project remains below the traffic intensity anticipated under the Specific Plan. In 2023, the City adopted an Addendum to the 1997 EIR, finding that no subsequent or supplemental EIR was required because no substantial changes to the project, circumstances, or new information of substantial importance existed (see Attachment 5 - links to the 1997 EIR and 2023 Addendum).

ATTACHMENTS

1. [Location Map](#)
2. [Development Plans](#)
3. [Owner's Narrative](#)
4. [Public Comments](#)
5. [Specific Plan EIR and 2023 Wine Country Inn Addendum](#)
6. [CEQA Resolution](#)
7. [Project Resolution](#)
8. [Exhibit A - Conditions of Approval](#)

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