

RESOLUTION NO. PC - 2017 - 6

**RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF COTATI
APPROVING PRELIMINARY AND FINAL DESIGN REVIEW OF EXTERIOR
MODIFICATIONS TO AN EXISTING BUILDING AND GRANTING A VARIANCE TO
THE PERCENTAGE OF STOREFRONT OPENINGS ALONG THE PRIMARY
FRONTAGE OF AN EXISTING COMMERCIAL BUILDING LOCATED AT 8220 OLD
REDWOOD HIGHWAY**

WHEREAS, the subject property is located at 8220 Old Redwood Highway, identified as Assessor's Parcel Numbers 144-274-008 and 144-274-007; and,

WHEREAS, the subject property is a commercial building located within the Historic Core planning area of the Downtown Specific Plan and is subject to the design standards set forth with the Downtown Specific Plan; and,

WHEREAS, the applicant submitted an application for Design Review for exterior modifications to an existing structure on July 26, 2017; and,

WHEREAS, the Design Review Committee held a meeting on August 17, 2017, and recommended Planning Commission approval of a Variance to the percentage of first floor openings along the primary frontage and approval of Preliminary and Final Design Review of exterior modifications to an existing commercial building; and,

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission held a duly noticed public hearing on September 5, 2017, to consider public testimony and all relevant documents and evidence regarding the request for a Variance to the percentage of first floor openings along the primary frontage and approval of Preliminary and Final Design Review of exterior modifications to an existing commercial building; and,

WHEREAS, the project design demonstrates acceptable site layout, architectural quality, and parking; and,

WHEREAS, it has been determined that the application is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15301, Existing Facilities, of the CEQA Guidelines, as the project consists of minor exterior alterations to an existing structure; and

WHEREAS, the proposed project has been reviewed for consistency and found to be consistent with the intent of the City of Cotati General Plan and Downtown Specific Plan; and,

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission has reviewed all evidence submitted in connection with the application, including public testimony and all other relevant documents and evidence which are part of the record of proceedings; and,

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission further finds that the health, safety, and welfare of the citizens of the City of Cotati will not be jeopardized by the approval of this project.

NOW, THEREFORE, THE CITY OF COTATI PLANNING COMMISSION FINDS AS FOLLOWS:

1. The above recitals are true and correct and constitute a part of the Findings made by the Planning Commission in approving this Resolution.
2. The Planning Commission does hereby find that the proposed project is consistent with the intent of the City of Cotati General Plan and Downtown Specific Plan and hereby approves the project subject to the Conditions of Approval attached as Exhibit "A."
3. That the approval is subject to the following findings of fact:

The project, as conditioned, complies with the Project Review Criteria for Design Review as follows:

- A. Complies with Land Use Code section 17.62.040, Design Review.

As conditioned, this project complies with the Land Use Code and the application has been processed in conformance with the procedures for Design Review set forth in Land Use Code section 17.62.040. The project enhances the community's small town character by upgrading the appearance of an existing commercial building to bring it more into conformance with the design standards set forth in the Downtown Specific Plan, including increasing the percentage of openings along the street-facing frontage, incorporating a bulkhead below the primary frontage windows, and the use of natural materials such wood and stone that complement the historic character of the downtown. The project will not adversely affect community health, safety, aesthetics, or natural resources.

- B. Provides architectural design, building massing and scale appropriate to and compatible with the site surroundings and the community.

No changes to the existing structure's design, massing, and scale are proposed. All changes are primarily cosmetic and include enlarging and adding windows, new wall and soffit cladding, paint and new exterior lighting.

- C. Provides attractive and desirable site layout and design, including building arrangement, exterior appearance and setbacks, drainage, fences and walls, grading, landscaping, lighting, signs, etc.

The proposed project retains the existing building's design and dimensions, but significantly improves the aesthetic appearance by incorporating an attractive wall design that includes additional and larger windows appropriate to a commercial row setting, the use of wood to accent the entry way and soffit, and a stone veneer bulkhead and stone veneer accent wall around the entry door. The proposal results in a modern, yet rustic finished design that will complement and enhance Cotati's

downtown appearance. The exterior lighting is planned to not cast-off onto adjacent properties and is appropriate for a commercial setting by providing lighting along the building's walls and front sidewalk and side alleyway.

- D. Provides efficient, safe, and visually attractive public access, circulation, and parking.

There are no proposed changes to the existing access and circulation of the site. The subject site takes access from Old Redwood Highway, Charles Street and La Plaza. Pedestrian access is provided by broad sidewalks along Old Redwood Highway.

The subject site currently has 20 parking spaces. Six spaces are located on the subject parcel and 14 spaces are located on the adjacent parcel (APN 144-274-007), which is primarily accessed from Charles Street. The proposed patio will require reconfiguration of the subject-parcel parking spaces, which will result in a loss of one space for a proposed total of 19 parking spaces. The proposed use, a realty office, requires 11 parking spaces; therefore, there will be sufficient parking to accommodate the proposed use after the proposed modifications are completed.

- E. Provides appropriate open space and landscaping, including the use of water efficient landscaping and native plant species as appropriate.

The parcel that the subject building is located on is 100 percent covered and does not include landscaping. Street landscaping is provided by the City within the City's right-of-way. No changes are proposed to the adjacent parcel used for parking. The entrance to the parking area from Charles Street is landscaped with large trees that do not require irrigation.

- F. Addresses impacts on City services, traffic flows and patterns, and environmental considerations in a manner that ensures maximum protection, efficiency and enhancement for the immediate area and the city as a whole.

The proposed project includes exterior modifications to an existing commercial building that are largely cosmetic and does not include new development or service needs that could potentially adversely affect City services, traffic flows and patterns, or the environment. The proposed rear patio will not adversely affect traffic flow, emergency or otherwise, that may circulate behind the building and its adjacent neighbors. Access to the rear of the building will remain the same and includes access points from Old Redwood Highway, Charles Street, and La Plaza.

- G. Is consistent with the General Plan.

The proposed project furthers the following goals stated in the Downtown Specific Plan and General Plan:

SPD: SP6: "Ensure a mix of retail uses configured to facilitate pedestrian storefront shopping"

Goal EV 1: “Establish and maintain a healthy local economy that includes a diversity of commercial and industrial enterprises which will provide goods, services, and employment opportunities to Cotati’s residents and which will be consistent with the community’s small-town image.”

Goal EV 2: “Maintain the hub and surrounding area as a thriving downtown that serves as the City’s principal retail and service center.”

Goal LU3: “Provide for a range of commercial, industrial, and mixed uses to provide Cotati’s residents access to jobs and employment and to support the local economy.”

The site carries a Downtown Specific Plan land use designation and is within the HC (Historic Core) Zoning District. As noted above, the proposed project complies with the design goals of the Downtown Specific Plan by increasing the percentage of openings along the street-facing frontage, incorporating a bulkhead below the primary frontage windows, and the use of natural materials such wood and stone that complement the historic character of the downtown. The proposed design encourages pedestrian storefront shopping and the attractiveness of the downtown commercial district is therefore consistent with the City’s goal to maintain the hub area as its principle retail and service center.

The following findings are required to approve a variance:

- H. There are special circumstances applicable to the property, including size, shape, topography, location, or surroundings, so that the strict application of this land use code deprives the property of privileges enjoyed by other property in the vicinity and within the same zoning district.

The Downtown Specific Plan requires openings along the primary frontage of storefronts to comprise 65% of the first floor wall area facing the street. As proposed, the applicants’ design will provide openings along 41% of the primary frontage.

The applicants are not building a new structure or proposing major structural changes or modifications to an existing building that warrant strict application of the standard. The applicants have proposed a window design that nearly doubles the area of street-facing openings (from 24% to 41%) and takes advantage of the buildings existing framing. The windows are proposed to be enlarged by extending the length of the existing openings up and down. The width of the proposed windows remains the same as the existing windows and area where an ATM used to exist. In order for the applicant to meet the 65% openings design standard, nearly 100% of

the remaining wall area above the required bulkhead would need to be comprised of glass openings. This would require substantial structural modifications to the entire structure, which is cost-prohibitive and a significantly different project than the primarily cosmetic project that is proposed.

- I. The approval of the variance or administrative variance includes conditions of approval as necessary to ensure that the adjustment granted does not constitute a grant of special privileges inconsistent with the limitations upon other properties in the vicinity and within the same zoning district.

Approving the variance does not grant any special privilege to the applicant that would be inconsistent with the limitations on other properties, and no conditions of approval were included to prevent a grant of special privilege. If the applicant were proposing major structural changes, a significant addition, or a new or rebuilt structure, then a strict application of the standard would apply.

- J. The variance or administrative variance is consistent with the general plan, and any applicable specific plan.

The intent of the design standard is to promote pedestrian-friendly development that encourages storefront window shopping and design consistency within the commercial blocks. As noted in finding "H" above, the applicants are nearly doubling the amount of openings in the street-facing façade which is consistent with the intent of the specific plan and provides a substantial aesthetic improvement over the existing condition.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Planning Commission of the City of Cotati hereby grants a variance to the required percentage of first-floor openings along the primary frontage and approve Preliminary and Final Design Review of exterior modifications to a commercial building at 8220 Old Redwood Highway, based on the foregoing findings and subject to the applicable Conditions of Approval attached as "Exhibit A."

Approved: _____
Steven Onines, Chair

Attest: _____
Keri L. Pajon, Admin. Secretary