

March 9, 2012



City of Calistoga

Planning and Building Department

1232 Washington Street

Calistoga, CA 94515

Attn: Mr. Erik Lundquist, Associate Planner

Re: Brian Arden Wines Proposed Winery and Tasting Room

331 Silverado Trail, Calistoga, CA

Dear Mr. Lundquist and Members of the Planning Commission:

As a 21 year resident of the unincorporated area of Calistoga, and as a vineyard and winery owner, I am very familiar with the environs of Calistoga and the special appeal of our town. I have been involved in planning issues over the years, including serving as Chair of the Design Review Committee in the 1990's, and feel very protective of Calistoga in regards to the appearance of new development in our area.

When this proposal was reviewed in June of 2011, I wrote a letter to you outlining my deep concerns about the appropriateness of this project. Today, I am writing to you again regarding the updated proposal to be presented later this month. After reviewing the updated proposal, I am deeply saddened to see that so much time has gone by and yet no major changes that would be necessary to comply with the intent of the guidelines established some years ago and more recently by the City of Calistoga have been made. Many of my comments from last June still apply.

Lack of conformance with the Maxfield/Adams Planned Development in the 2003 General Plan. The plan calls for a mix of uses on the affected parcels, but this proposed winery will be directly adjacent to an existing winery and will give the effect of a winery subdivision. This is surely not what the framers of the General Plan had in mind for this parcel. Having two wineries side by side in such close proximity will destroy any sense of agricultural land. By definition, a winery is a permitted use in the Ag Preserve, but it is not agricultural. The commission should also take into consideration the impact this development would have on the neighboring winery, as it would dwarf it in scale and obliterate its views as well as likely make ingress and egress problematic.

Lack of conformance with the Entry Corridor Overlay (EC2). "It is important to preserve and protect the "country town" appearance of Calistoga by ensuring that new development is of a scale subordinate to the agricultural uses of properties located at these entry corridors." And further, in section F, "New buildings should reflect **small-scale, low-rise design characteristics with an understated visual appearance** (emphasis mine)..." The proposed development will appear massive and loom above the Silverado Trail, with a height above ground level of 31 feet to top of roof of the hospitality building. There is nothing small scale or low rise about this project. And rather than being understated, it is large, looming above the grade at the front of the building. The existing Aubert Winery, formerly August Briggs, is a reasonable size and height for an agricultural barn/winery, but it is basically one story with a 7,000 sq ft footprint; it is very visible from the Silverado Trail. **If the proposed Arden Winery**

were to be built as currently proposed, it would be over twice as large as the Aubert Winery and much taller and be much closer to the Trail, increasing its apparent height. If one really wanted to understand the visual impact of this proposal, it would be necessary to put up 'story poles' to demonstrate the height and mass of the buildings. Then everyone could see how close it is to the Trail, and to its neighbors. It would be a revelation to see just how inappropriately large this project is.

Lack of adequate parking. Parking appears inadequate 40 to 60 visitors per day. Furthermore, the proposed single employee for a 10,000 case winery is overly optimistic in my opinion, having operated a winery here for 20 years. A minimum of three employees would be closer to the truth, and winery work cannot be avoided on weekends. There is always work to be done, especially during crush. With all the building square footage allocated for visitors, one could expect a lot of overflow parking that could not be accommodated on site, for the site is just too small for lots of visitors and/or weddings and other events. It is less than two acres net! Winery deliveries are also a constant: barrel deliveries, refrigeration service people, tanks of nitrogen, bottled water deliveries, package deliveries (multiple times a day), kitchen supply deliveries, employees coming and going. There would be vastly more activity on this site than the proposal suggests, and the site is not large enough to adequately handle the combination of car and truck traffic that are part of running a winery alone; when a tasting room is added, the activity would be triple or more.

Winery may dependent on grapes from outside Napa Valley. The website for Brian Arden Wines lists four different wines, only one of which is made from Napa Valley grapes. Having a winery on the Silverado Trail in Calistoga that is predominately making wine from out of valley grapes does not enhance the Calistoga reputation. Rather, it is taking advantage of a location that implies a local wine. I did not find anything in the proposal that committed to making wines just from Napa Valley grapes. Napa Valley grapes are expensive and it is likely that the applicants may not have a business plan that recognizes the true cost of local grapes.

In closing, this proposal would create a 'winery subdivision' on the Silverado Trail in an important entry corridor. It is outsized for its location in building coverage as well as planned activities (weddings, tasting room, etc.); the scale and height of the buildings are not in keeping with Calistoga. The proposed winery is taking advantage of a Calistoga location while not producing Napa Valley wines.

Given the above serious flaws, my husband Bart and I respectfully request that this proposal be denied in anything like its present form. The Commission has the ability to imagine what would be a desirable use for this small parcel in the Rural Residential zone. It is unlikely that a project of this type and size would be one that comes to mind.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Daphne Araujo', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Daphne Araujo, co-owner

Araujo Estate Wines