

CALISTOGA PLANNING COMMISSION

STAFF REPORT

To: Calistoga Planning Commission
From: Zach Tusinger, Planning & Building Director
Meeting Date: January 13, 2021
Subject: **Continued Item - Sign Permit Application for a Mural on the Fair Way Façade of the Dr. Wilkinson's Resort at 1507 Lincoln Avenue**

1 ITEM

2 Continued consideration of a sign permit application from LDMUD, LLC for a large
3 mural on the Fair Way façade of the Dr. Wilkinson's Resort at 1507 Lincoln Avenue.

4 BACKGROUND

5 LDMUD, LLC is in the process of renovating and expanding the existing Dr. Wilkinson's
6 Resort. Twice in the last year and a half, the Planning Commission has granted use
7 permit and design review approvals for the refresh and modest expansion of the resort
8 property. The property owner has submitted to staff a sign permit application package to
9 update the signage for the resort. The historic neon sign will remain. As part of the
10 package, the applicant requests to incorporate a new, large linear mural on the Fair
11 Way façade of the property.

12 While sign permits are generally reviewed at the staff level, there are some types of sign
13 permits that either are required to go to the Planning Commission for review, or which
14 are unique and staff elects to refer to the Planning Commission for the final review and
15 decision. Mural signs, such as the one proposed, are specifically required to go to
16 Planning Commission under CMC Section 17.58.060(B)12.

17 The mural sign as proposed
18 would be painted on the
19 existing façade and would
20 incorporate the parapet. The
21 mural would extend for nearly
22 80 feet. The updated design
23 of the mural incorporates a
24 gray, mid-century motif that
25 features the geometrical
26 design of existing cinder-
27 block architectural features of
28 the property. Other elements
29 include a winding river, palm
30 trees, flowers, and grape vines. The river ultimately transitions into a silhouette that
31 portrays a woman 'making a wish'. This design element would extend around the corner
32 of the façade to a wishing well near the entrance to the spa on Lincoln Avenue. No
33 other improvements are proposed as part of this project.



Fair Way facade, and proposed mural location

34 At its November 18, 2020 meeting, the applicant presented the proposed design. While
35 generally in favor of a mural at this location, the Planning Commissioners provided
36 feedback to the applicant and requested alterations and refinement to the design,
37 including more muted colors, more details regarding the ‘wish’ concept and execution,
38 possible incorporation of grape vines or vineyards, and other changes and
39 modifications. Applicant agreed to work with the artist to refine the designs and resubmit
40 them for additional consideration by the Commission.

41 The item was brought back to the Planning Commission on December 9, 2020 for a
42 second hearing. While the Commissioners believed the design had improved, most of
43 the Commission was still generally concerned that the design was very bold, and very
44 different from anything else already in the community. The majority of Commissioners
45 sought more public input on the proposed design and location. At the Commission’s
46 request, the applicant agreed to
47 hang an illustration of the mural at
48 the corner of Lincoln and Fair Way.
49 Said illustration (printed on an eight-
50 foot-long vinyl banner) was posted
51 on the construction fencing outside
52 the project on December 21, 2020.

53 A member of the community posted
54 on Nextdoor about the mural and
55 advised residents to contact the
56 Planning Department to share their
57 opinions. As of January 5, 2021,
58 staff had received 55 emails from
59 residents expressing their support
60 or opposition to the proposed mural.
61 See Attachment 4.



Vinyl banner hung at Fair Way and Lincoln

62 **DISCUSSION**

63 Zoning Code

64 Review of this application is subject to Chapter 17.58, Signs and Advertising, of the
65 Zoning Code. The purpose of this chapter is to:

66 (A) provide standards for the regulation of signs in order to promote and protect the
67 public health, safety and welfare;

68 (B) provide for signage that effectively presents a business name or message for
69 public convenience, while also preserving and enhancing the scenic beauty of
70 Calistoga as an economic asset; and

71 (C) prevent excessive and confusing signs which can result in visual clutter and
72 increase hazards to pedestrians and motorists. (CMC 17.58.010)

73 As detailed in the Background section, large mural signs are specifically reviewable by
74 the Planning Commission and should be considered in a manner similar to a
75 conventional design review.

76 Section 17.58.070(C) says that “sculptures, statues, mosaics, *murals* and similar
77 decorative depictions that do not contain a name, logo, image or symbol related to a
78 business...*shall complement the architectural character of the building and adjoining*
79 *structures* (emphasis added).” Whether the design of the proposed mural sign conflicts
80 with the designs or character of any of the adjoining properties in the immediate area is
81 a determination that will have to be weighed by the Planning Commission.

82 Calistoga General Plan

83 In order to maintain and enhance Calistoga’s small-town character and the urban
84 design quality of the downtown, development in the DC Zoning District is to be guided
85 by relevant policies of the General Plan’s Community Identity Element and the character
86 areas, gateways and entry corridors of the Land Use Element.

87 The Community Identity Element of the General Plan states that “attention to urban
88 design criteria can help ensure that future development fits within the existing built
89 environment and permit the continued growth of Calistoga in a manner which maintains
90 its existing small-town atmosphere. Landscaping, signage, traffic and noise all play a
91 key role in enhancing the quality of life.”

92 The subject property is located in the Downtown Character Area’s Historic District. The
93 objectives of the Historic District are to:

- 94 • enhance the commercial primacy and dominance of the Historic District
- 95 • ensure that all development shall respect and draw inspiration from the
96 architectural language of the Historic District
- 97 • provide for a visitor experience that shall be enhanced by a sense of discovery
- 98 • encourage the Historic District experience to be seamless without large gaps of
99 inactivity

100 **PUBLIC COMMENT**

101 As stated above, 55 emails had been received from residents as of January 5, 2021.

102 **RECOMMENDATION**

103 Staff recommends that the Planning Commission discuss the revised mural design and
104 public feedback, hold a public hearing, and approve with conditions. A draft resolution
105 with conditions of approval is attached.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Draft Resolution
2. Updated Mural Description
3. Updated Mural Design
4. Written Public Comment