

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Lawer Estates Demonstration Winery, Tasting Room and Restaurant

Lawer Estates/Agent: Roxanna E. Lawer
P.O. Box 1105
Calistoga, CA 94515

Architect: John Taft
Backen & Gillam Architects
1421 Main Street
Saint Helena, CA 94574

Owner: LPS Ventures I, LLC
1795 Garnett Creek Ct
Calistoga, CA 94515

Location: 1374 Lincoln Avenue
Calistoga, CA 94515

APN: APN 011-231-001

Zoning: DC-DD Downtown Commercial – Design District

Site Size: 0.17 acre

Date Prepared: April 9, 2021

Lawer Estates owns vineyards in the Calistoga zip code and operates a wine business in the Napa Valley. This project will occupy one parcel, the former site of Brannan’s restaurant and the Chamber of Commerce.

Current Use: The parcel been used as a restaurant and the offices of the Chamber of Commerce for many years. The restaurant closed in 2018 after the fires.

Proposed Use: Lawer Estates proposes to continue the previous use as a restaurant and the offices of the Chamber of Commerce. Lawer Estates proposes to add a small demonstration winery with a tasting room which will produce only a few hundred cases per year.

This project will be the public face of the Lawer Estates wine business.

Roxanna (commonly known as “Betsy”) Lawer fell in love with Calistoga twenty years ago and has been investing here ever since. She appreciates the beauty of the area, the moonlight over the vineyards at night, the Calistoga light in the morning, bud break in the spring, and the fall colors.

And she appreciates the small-town sense of community, like she grew up with in Alaska - locals supporting each other, and resourceful entrepreneurs. She now has 25 acres of vineyard in the Calistoga zip code, three homes (two more burned in the Tubbs Fire) and an exceptional team of vineyard workers, property managers, dirt movers, electricians, engineers, painters and maintenance people, gardeners, and winemakers, etc. that have been developed over the years.

Betsy has a vision to redevelop this landmark property into a culinary, vineyard and wine educational center. Over the past twenty years, she has had many memorable dinners at Brannan's, with its historic bar, and warm atmosphere. In her vision, when you first step into the room, other than fresh paint and new carpeting, it will feel the same as the old Brannan's. People will be laughing at the bar, and there will be tables full of diners making toasts. Upon closer inspection, you will note that there is no hard liquor being served at the bar, only wine, beer and cider being poured. At the tables, meals are served that have been designed to complement specific wines, with teams of trained educators talking with guests about what wines to pair with which food. Locally sourced salads will be dressed with olive oil and varietal Verjus from Lawer Estate vineyards, and the pairing menus will always end with a serving of chocolate - an addiction both Betsy and her granddaughter share. Plus, chocolate pairs perfectly with the Lawer Estates Calistoga AVA Cabernet Sauvignon grown on a hillside just outside of town.

Lawer Estates will apply for a winegrower permit (Type 02) from the California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control. The Type 02 permit allows for multiple activities, and Lawer Estates intends to implement them all. The permitted activities include the following:

1. Ferment wine on the premises.
2. Operate a restaurant.
3. Operate a tasting room.
4. Operate a retail store.

The Type 02 permit will allow Lawer Estates to advertise the premises as a working demonstration winery, with a tasting room and a restaurant. Visitors will have the opportunity to taste and purchase great wines made from local grapes, learn about winemaking, and enjoy meals from a menu with variety of food and wine pairing options. Lawer Estates will also operate a small retail store that will feature art from local artists, and other products such as books on food and wine, wine serving utensils, and other wine paraphernalia.

The winery/tasting room/restaurant combination will increase the entertainment available to pedestrians, enhancing the image of Calistoga as a great place to visit with lots of opportunities for things to see and do. The location is within walking distance of many hotels and bed-and-breakfasts.

Lawer Estates intends to use local businesses as resources for the winery/tasting room/restaurant both during construction and operation. Local residents and businesses will be used whenever possible, including construction work, tasting room staff, landscape maintenance, caterers, stocking, etc. The tasting room, restaurant, and retail room will also seek to provide employment opportunities for Calistoga residents.

In conclusion, the winery/tasting room/restaurant will be a family-owned business with a focus on Calistoga, our favorite small town.

Operations:

Demonstration winery – A small demonstration winery will showcase barrel fermentation and other winemaking techniques. No grapes will be crushed on-site. Grape juice will be brought in from Lower Estates’ main production facility to ferment and age in oak barrels. Wine production would be limited to 1,200 gallons (20 barrels or 500 cases). Bottling will be done with a small portable bottling line.

Restaurant –The restaurant will provide a variety of menu options including, small bites, cheeses, charcuterie, sweets and a variety of food and wine pairing options. Non-alcoholic food and drink will be offered to guests and those under the age of 21. The primary objective of the restaurant will be to provide a curated artisan food and wine experience with a focus on sustainably farmed, local sourced ingredients.

Tasting room – The tasting room will feature a selection of Lower Estates wines, made from local grapes, and farmed sustainably. Employees will act as educators, and provide information on the local area, its history and significance.

Retail Store – The retail store will feature art from local artists, and other products such as books on food and wine, wine serving utensils, and other wine paraphernalia. The store may also carry locally sourced, artisan goods, such as bread, cheeses, chocolates, and other specialty culinary or wine related items.

Hours: The demonstration winery, restaurant, tasting room, and retail store will be open 7 days a week from 10 am to 10 pm.

Number of Employees: The winery/tasting room/restaurant will employ 6 full time employees, and 10-15 part-time employees, depending on customer traffic.

Construction: No new construction is proposed. Lower Estates will make several modifications to the interior of the building to accommodate the proposed uses and upgrade the existing facilities.

Zoning. The Lincoln Parcels are zoned Downtown Commercial, and the proposed uses are consistent with this zoning. The demonstration winery would qualify as a “cottage industry” under Calistoga Municipal Code Section 17.21.030 A.10.