

DRAFT FINDINGS
MAJOR SITE DEVELOPMENT PERMIT & MINOR USE PERMIT
RENOVATION & REUSE OF AN EXISTING COMMERCIAL STRUCTURE
414 EA PERKINS STREET, UKIAH, CA; APN 002-200-35; FILE NO. 24-000015

The Community Development Department's recommendation for conditional approval of a Minor Use Permit for voluntary modifications to an existing structure per Ukiah City Code Section 9231.14(C)(3) to facilitate its reuse for 'Financial Services', as well as a Major Site Development Permit to utilize the existing drive-through facility in accordance with the Downtown Zoning Code (DZC). Proposed development consists of interior and exterior renovations to the existing building including installation of ATMs, minor façade and footprint modifications, roof replacement, pedestrian improvements and enhanced connectivity to adjacent commercial parcels, revised landscaping, accessibility enhancements, as well as the addition of bicycle parking. This approval also includes exceptions from the Downtown Zoning Code.

SITE DEVELOPMENT PERMIT FINDINGS - DOWNTOWN ZONING CODE

1. The proposed project is consistent with the City of Ukiah General Plan, Ukiah City Code, and this code.

The proposal aligns with the City's 2040 General Plan by revitalizing a longstanding vacant building (LU-11.9) and promoting sustainable development through the renovation of an existing structure (ENV-3.7). This approach also meets the intent of the Downtown Zoning Code (DZC), which encourages a sustainable community through the reuse and improvement of existing buildings (UCC §9220.1(I)). Additionally, by incrementally improving the parking lot and enhancing pedestrian connectivity with neighboring commercial areas, the project supports policies within the City's Mobility Element (MOB-2.3).

- LU-11.9- The City shall encourage restorative maintenance to deteriorated buildings, particularly in Downtown, and restrict the demolition of historically and/or architecturally significant buildings to accommodate new development. The City shall encourage adaptive re-use of historic structures to maintain their historic character while supporting economic development
- ENV 3.7- The City shall encourage appropriate adaptive reuse of historic resources.
- MOB 2.3 - The City shall encourage new development and redevelopment that increases connectivity through direct and safe pedestrian connections to public amenities, neighborhoods, shopping and employment destinations throughout the City

Modernization and reuse of the building minimizes resource consumption compared to new construction, supporting sustainability and the City's emphasis on environmentally conscious redevelopment. Additionally, the Downtown Zoning Code aims to promote revitalization, enhance economic vitality, and encourage sustainable development in the downtown area. Adaptive reuse supports these goals by preserving and updating underutilized buildings, reducing environmental impacts associated with demolition and new construction, and fostering economic growth through reinvestment. By revitalizing a

prominent location along a prominent corridor to Downtown Ukiah, the project enhances the City's appearance and vibrancy. Improvements like the updated façade, landscaping, and pedestrian access contribute to a higher-quality commercial space attractive to residents, businesses, and visitors. Though not explicitly designated as historically significant, the project's restorative approach—focused on upgrades rather than demolition—supports adaptive reuse and preservation of the structure's architectural integrity.

- 2. Design: The design of the proposed project is consistent with the architectural standards of this code and compatible with the character of the neighborhood; will maintain the community's character, provide for harmonious and orderly development, and create a desirable environment for the occupants, neighbors, and visiting public; includes the appropriate use of materials, texture, and color, which will remain aesthetically appealing and appropriately maintained; and the location and orientation of windows, doorways, and outdoor use areas reduce the potential for heat, glare, noise, or other disturbance from on-site or off-site sources. The neighborhood compatibility part of this finding does not apply if it would render the project inconsistent with the architectural requirements of the zoning district in which the project is located.**

The proposed renovation of the 414 East Perkins Street bank structure respects the building's unique architectural style, which includes passive heating features and a Trombe wall. As requested, a minor exception was identified by RCU to forgo the horizontal base banding requirement aligning with the intention to preserve this existing aesthetic while avoiding visual clutter that could detract from the building's character.

While the original design aligned with the Pear Tree Center, the refresh will enhance its visual appeal and functionality, alluding to a healthy and vibrant commercial area.

The updated design maintains the building's distinctive architectural features while introducing creative enhancements such as a new roof, window placement and minor façade changes, ensuring the structure remains engaging and avoids a monotonous or box-like appearance. This approach honors the building's original character while contributing to the vitality of the surrounding commercial district by effectively utilizing an existing structure.

- 3. Siting: The siting of the structure(s) on the parcel is compatible with the siting of other structures in the immediate neighborhood. This finding does not apply if the resulting setbacks are inconsistent with the requirements of the zoning district in which the parcel is located.**

The structure is existing, and compatible with other improvements in the immediate commercial vicinity/neighborhood, a substantial portion of which is outside of the DZC. The proposed improvements are thoughtfully integrated to enhance an existing building by updating its features. Per Table 6, 'Existing Building', Staff determined that the project is consistent with required setbacks.

By maintaining existing ingress and egress points, adding a new connection to the Pear Tree Center, and clearly delineating pedestrian pathways, the proposal improves vehicular and pedestrian circulation. These modifications ensure safer, more convenient access for

additional modalities, including bicycles, without introducing new hazardous conditions.

- 4. Ingress, Egress, Circulation, Parking: The project provides adequate ingress, egress, parking for vehicles and bicycles, and internal circulation for vehicles, bicycles, pedestrians, and delivery vehicles designed to promote safety and convenience and to conform to City standards and will not create potential traffic, pedestrian, or bicycle hazards or a distraction for motorists. Low impact development (LID) design has been incorporated into the project where feasible.**

By adding a vehicular connection to the Pear Tree Center along its eastern periphery, the project supports improved onsite circulation. This additional connection to the existing parking lot area will facilitate more effective dispersal of vehicular traffic that utilize the bank facility or drive-through.

The project design, as proposed, includes a sidewalk along its easterly frontage that enhances pedestrian access to the property and Pear Tree Center where no sidewalk previously existed. Additionally, the project enhances circulation and accessibility by increasing bicycle parking capacity to five spaces and positioning that bicycle parking in a prominent location near the Perkins Street entrance.

As the project includes replacing impervious surfaces (e.g., parking lots, driveways, or roofs), LID measures will be required to manage the increased stormwater runoff, as determined necessary by the City of Ukiah Low Impact Development (LID) Manual utilized by Santa Rosa and Sonoma County (see City of Ukiah Resolution No. 2014-27).

- 5. Landscaping: The landscaping for the project provides opportunities for shading west and south facing windows and outdoor use areas, utilizes native and drought tolerant species, is in keeping with the character and design of the project, and consistent with requirements of this code and City standards.**

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- 6. Resource Protection: The proposed project will not excessively damage or destroy resources or natural features, including cultural and historic resources, trees, shrubs, creeks, and the natural grade of the site.**

The proposed renovation of the 414 East Perkins Street nonconforming structure by Redwood Credit Union (RCU) will not excessively damage or destroy natural features on the site. The project will retain existing trees, while incorporating additional drought-tolerant, native plants to enhance the site. The natural grade of the site will be minimally disturbed, ensuring that the development preserves the site's environmental integrity while improving its functionality and aesthetic appeal.

- 7. Health, Safety, Welfare: The proposed project would not be detrimental to the public health, safety, or welfare; is not materially injurious to the properties or improvements in the immediate vicinity; and will not tend to cause the surrounding area to depreciate materially in appearance or value or otherwise discourage occupancy, investment, or orderly development in the area.**

To be sure, a similar use operated within the structure for more than three decades without compromising the health, safety, or welfare of the public, as conveyed by public agencies that reviewed the project. While the site remains autocentric, the proposed renovation of the legal nonconforming structure by RCU is not expected to have any detrimental impact on the orderly development of the area. In fact, it may contribute to its revitalization as a commercial corridor and encourage additional investment in adjacent parcels, which have remained vacant. Given the nearby land use of a commercial shopping center, the project will complement existing development in a sustainable manner by repurposing an existing structure that was previously utilized for a similar purpose. The proposed renovation will enhance the site's circulation, access, and landscaping, further complementing the surrounding commercial environment and improving the overall functionality and appeal of the Perkins Street corridor without negatively impacting neighboring properties.

EXCEPTION FINDINGS

Section 9231.5 of the DZC, allows specific requirements to be modified with approval of an exception. Table 29, Exception Procedures, establishes two levels of exceptions, major and minor, and the procedures for the review and processing of exceptions. Upon review of Staff the following major and minor exceptions to the DZC development and design standards are required or requested. As noted in DZC Table 29, the below exceptions may be granted with approval by the Planning Commission.

1. Existing Building – Frontage Type (Major Exception Required)

- a. Requirement: Exterior modifications and additions to existing buildings with nonconforming facade orientation shall utilize an allowed frontage type as required by Table 6. Major Exception – Required: Given the current layout, orientation, and architectural character of this existing building, adhering strictly to an allowed frontage type per Table 6 would require substantial structural changes, essentially amounting to a complete rebuild given its unique shape and orientation to the frontage. Such a modification would not only be impractical but would also conflict with the City of Ukiah's goals for sustainability and environmental responsibility, which prioritize the adaptive reuse of existing buildings. The building's current orientation, which does not meet the prescribed frontage types, is a legacy condition. Modifying this facade to meet current DZC standards would compromise the project's sustainability objectives by necessitating major demolition and reconstruction activities, while only minimal upgrades are presently requested to

reoccupy structure. Additionally, the building's unique angled rooflines and architectural features, including its Trombe wall, add character to the commercial area and would be challenging to replicate under a strict frontage requirement

Furthermore, the DZC emphasizes flexibility in reusing existing structures as a means to foster a vibrant and sustainable commercial corridor. As this project aligns closely with the DZC's broader objectives—supporting local businesses, enhancing pedestrian connectivity, and minimizing environmental impacts—a Major Exception for the facade orientation is both reasonable and consistent with the DZC's intent. This exception allows Redwood Credit Union to preserve the architectural integrity of the existing building while updating its functionality and aesthetic.

The requested exception aligns with the DZC's purpose and is therefore appropriate for consideration by the Planning Commission. By allowing this exception, the City can ensure that the structure retains its architectural distinctiveness.

2. Existing Facilities (Parking) – Modifications

- a. Requirement: Modifications to existing parking facilities shall comply with the requirements of Tables 16, 17 and 18. Minor Exception – Requested: In accordance with Table 18 of the DZC, existing open parking facilities that were legal at the time of their creation are recognized as legal nonconforming uses. While Redwood Credit Union does not intend to expand the parking area at 414 East Perkins Street, they do propose minor modifications aimed at improving accessibility, circulation, and connectivity—particularly by creating a new access connection and walkway to the adjacent Pear Tree Center.

These proposed improvements align with the City's objectives for increased modal connectivity. Given the requirements of Tables 16, 17, and 18, however, even relatively minor modifications to existing parking areas that require consistency with current DZC standards for layout, accessibility, and design can be costly and counterproductive to adaptive reuse that would otherwise be permitted if the parking lot remained unchanged.

The applicant's modifications are intended to:

- Enhance ADA accessibility by refining access points and walkways and installing improvements (e.g. tactile warning surfaces, signage and accessible routes); and
- Improve overall circulation to better delineate pedestrian and vehicular areas, which would improve public safety and connectivity; and
- Create a new connection to the Pear Tree Center, promoting ease of access and further distribute vehicular traffic, while creating a new pedestrian path; and
- Reduce the number of parking spaces to accommodate landscaping, trash enclosures, and backup generator.

To accommodate these updates, a Minor Exception is required so that the modifications conveyed above can be made without being subject to the

comprehensive DZC standards outlined in Tables 16, 17, and 18. The proposed circulation pattern allows for queuing to occur on-site, while reducing pressure on the existing on-site encroachment onto Perkins Street. While the facility remains autocentric, Staff considers the requested modification an incremental improvement to a facility that previously served a similar purpose.

The proposed updates will leave most of the existing parking unchanged, while making the site area more functional and accessible, benefiting both the property itself and the adjacent commercial property with only minimal alterations. Given the nonconforming but legally established status nature of the existing parking facility, these improvements provide a balanced approach to the regulatory environment created by the DZC, thereby supporting improvements without extensive redevelopment.

3. Facade – Location of Materials – Minor Exception Requested

- a. Requirement: Combined horizontally with heavier material below the lighter material. Minor Exception – Requested: The architectural design at 414 East Perkins Street is characterized by angular forms and unique, modernist lines that create a visually distinctive, dynamic facade. The Redwood Credit Union’s proposal to forgo the horizontal base banding requirement aligns with the intention to preserve this existing aesthetic while avoiding visual clutter that could detract from the building’s character. The project architect has highlighted that adding horizontal base banding, as required by the DZC, would compete with the structure’s angular design, leading to a visually overwhelming appearance. The base banding requirement typically serves to add stability and grounding to a building’s appearance, especially when transitioning between lighter and heavier materials. In this case, however, the building’s design already achieves a grounded aesthetic through its massing, scale, and material choice, which collectively fulfill the intent of the DZC’s requirement. Therefore, an exception to this requirement would not compromise the appearance or stability of the facade. Additionally, the building’s design features a complexity in form and massing that would be diluted by the addition of horizontal bands. Adding such a design element would impose a competing visual language that conflicts with the existing architectural style. By allowing the proposed exception, the Planning Commission can help preserve the building’s architectural integrity and avoid compromising its unique character.

4. Trash / Recycling Receptacle – Consistent (Staff Determination)

- a. Requirement: Location – All Building Types: Prohibited on frontage(s). Consistent: In this proposal, the location of the trash and generator enclosures—set back from Perkins Street and positioned near the commercial entry and shipping/receiving lane of the adjacent Pear Tree Center—aligns with the DZC requirements for such enclosures regarding frontages, even though they are relatively exposed. While the DZC typically discourages placing trash and generator enclosures on prominent frontages, the selected location in this proposal ensures they are both visually screened and strategically positioned to minimize impacts on pedestrian areas and streetscape visibility, especially along East Perkins Street. The project’s design includes appropriate screening for the trash and generator areas, ensuring that they remain visually unobtrusive. Screening mitigates any potential impact on

the commercial entry of Pear Tree Center, blending the enclosures with surrounding structures and landscaping.

USE PERMIT FINDINGS – MINOR

The subject structure was not involuntarily damaged or destroyed by accident (e.g., fire, explosion, etc.) or natural disaster (e.g., earthquake, etc.), and is therefore subject to UCC Section 9231.14(C), which regulates the voluntary modification of nonconforming structures. Since a nonconforming structure may undergo ordinary repair and maintenance only in a specified manner, UCC 9231.14(C), specifies how the reconstruction or structural alteration may be allowed; provided, that the review authority first determines that the modification is necessary to secure added safety or to reduce the fire hazard and/or to secure aesthetic advantages through the alignment, architecture, or closer conformity to surrounding allowed structures in the immediate neighborhood.

The text below outlines project consistency with the required minor use permit findings, including voluntary repair, as well as required exceptions:

1. The proposed land use is consistent with the provisions of this Title as well as the goals and policies of the City General Plan.

The proposed land use of financial services with a drive-through banking facility is consistent with both the zoning and land use designation of the subject property. Financial Services is considered an allowed use, not subject to discretionary review. The applicant's request to modify a legal nonconforming structure aligns with the intent of the Development Zoning Code (DZC), which encourages the reutilization of existing structures to promote sustainability and preserve the built environment. This structure, having served as a bank for over 30 years, is ideally suited for continued use as a financial services facility, and repurposing it helps maintain the character and functionality of the area while minimizing the environmental impact of new construction.

2. The proposed land use is compatible with surrounding land uses and shall not be detrimental to the public's health, safety and general welfare.

The proposed land use is compatible with surrounding commercial uses, as it involves reactivating a building that was originally constructed as a drive through banking facility and will continue to serve as a financial institution with a drive through component. The structure has been vacant since 2016 and leaving it idle creates quality of life issues for adjacent property owners, as evidenced by the referral response of UPD (Attachment 3). Allowing for the requested improvements, ensures the building serves a productive role in the community, supporting the local economy without imposing additional burdens on municipal resources, such as police or code enforcement.

3. The reconstruction or structural alteration of a nonconforming structure may be allowed with Zoning Administrator approval of a minor use permit; provided, that the review authority first determines that the modification is necessary to secure added safety or to reduce the fire hazard and/or to secure aesthetic advantages through the alignment, architecture, or closer conformity to surrounding allowed structures in the immediate neighborhood, and only in compliance with subsections C1 and C2 of this section.

The proposed improvements to 414 East Perkins Street will enhance the property's compatibility with the surrounding neighborhood, which is characterized by a mix of commercial and retail structures, a portion of which is outside of the DZC. There does not appear to be any conforming DZC structure in proximity to the subject property. By renovating an existing commercial building and adapting it for use by Redwood Credit Union (RCU), the project will better align the site with the scale and function of neighboring commercial undertakings, particularly the Pear Tree Center, which remains an active commercial center with few vacancies.

- 4. Exception Findings:** The request is consistent with the intent of this code and the Ukiah General Plan; The project is compatible with the neighborhood and design intent of this code; the project provides appropriate connections, transitions, and relationships between buildings and the street, adjacent properties and one another; The project provides adequate and appropriate pedestrian facilities and connections;

Many of the requested considerations are separately addressed as required findings for the minor use permit or major site development permit. While the proposed project maintains the drive-through function of the original bank, it aligns with the City's General Plan by enhancing pedestrian circulation and multimodal access. By improving site connectivity with new walkways, bicycle parking, and landscaping, the project fosters a more pedestrian-friendly environment. Importantly, this proposal demonstrates that making productive use of underutilized or vacant spaces is essential. Even if incremental, this revitalization represents a meaningful alternative to leaving the structure dormant, which would hinder the City's long-term goals of sustainable development and commercial vitality along a critical commercial corridor that connects the City's downtown to the U.S. 101.

CEQA FINDINGS

The proposed project at 414 East Perkins Street is subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and qualifies for a categorical exemption under CEQA Guidelines, Article 19, Class 1, Section 15301 (Existing Facilities) (a), which covers minor interior or exterior alterations.

The project involves relatively limited renovations to an existing 4,400-square-foot commercial structure, avoiding any significant changes to the building's footprint or surrounding site. The planned modifications by Redwood Credit Union (RCU) will not damage or disturb any significant natural features on the property.

Additionally, the project is consistent with existing zoning and planning regulations, including the 2040 General Plan, Downtown Zoning Code requirements, and other relevant local policies, aligning with the City's established land-use expectations for the site. Upon review, it has been determined that the project will not impact sensitive environmental resources, such as habitats for endangered species, geologically sensitive areas, or sites of historical or archaeological importance.

PUBLIC NOTICE

- Notice of the Public Hearing was provided in the following manner, in accordance with UCC §9231.3, 9263 and 9264:

- Published in the Ukiah Daily Journal on December 1, 2024; and
- Posted on the Project site on December 1, 2024; and
- Posted at the Civic Center (glass case) on December 1, 2024; and
- Mailed to property owners within 300 feet of the Project parcels on December 1, 2024; and
- Emailed to all agencies having jurisdiction: December 1, 2024.

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