

Proposal to require Temporary Event Permit for all Winery events for greater than 50 people

Background

Currently, winery Use Permits allow a given number of marketing events for groups. This is an accessory use of the property. The County does not have an accurate count of how many of these events actually take place. Yet it is this type of event, especially when larger than 50 people, that has an impact on the immediate surrounding area, can overwhelm traffic and on-site water and sewage facilities and can increase greenhouse gas emissions.

Proposal

In order to more accurately monitor the cumulative impact on infrastructure of winery events, it is proposed that the winery Use Permit include a visitation allowance but not include an allowance for marketing events for greater than 50 people. All winery marketing events of more than 50 people would be required to obtain a Temporary Use Permit. In addition, the application process should require that neighbors within 2500 feet be notified of the event.

This will allow the Planning Department to monitor the number of events being hosted by a facility (and alert staff to “event center” patterns), to monitor the number of events occurring in a given area (and placing a heavier burden on the infrastructure) and allow neighbors to receive a notice of events. It will provide an actual metric (of events taking place as opposed to a permitted allowance) that can be used in the future to determine needed infrastructure improvements or zoning limitations.

Rather than limit wineries to the type of event that can be held (which may limit creative marketing), it is important to focus on the impact of events by accurately monitoring their number and size so that more informed decisions can be made.

Submitted by Christina Benz

Proposal for limiting the extent of setback variances

The WDO created minimum setbacks for wineries as follows: 600 feet for those located contiguous to a state highway, Silverado Trail, or any arterial county road and 300 feet for those contiguous to any other public road or private road used by the public. These setbacks were created to preserve the rural appearance of the Napa Valley.

It is these setback requirements that are currently the most common source of variance requests for new winery use permits. Routine granting of setback variances will have a major impact on the appearance of the valley and should be done only if ALL the required Findings can be met following the Topanga standard. Setback variances should not be used to build wineries on unsuitable parcels.

Proposal:

To preserve the rural character of the Napa Valley and adhere to the spirit of the WDO, it is proposed that when findings can be made, setback variances be limited to a 15% reduction of the required setback.

Submitted by Christina Benz