



A Tradition of Stewardship  
A Commitment to Service

Agenda Date: 8/5/2009  
Agenda Placement: 10B

## Napa County Planning Commission Board Agenda Letter

---

**TO:** Napa County Planning Commission  
**FROM:** John McDowell for Hillary Gitelman - Director  
Conservation, Development & Planning  
**REPORT BY:** John McDowell, Deputy Director - 299-1354  
**SUBJECT:** Request for Board of Supervisors to Consider Creation of Design Review Procedures

---

### **RECOMMENDATION**

#### **REQUEST FOR BOARD OF SUPERVISORS TO CONSIDER CREATION OF DESIGN REVIEW PROCEDURES**

**CEQA Status:** The proposed action is not a project as defined by 14 California Code of Regulations 15378 (State CEQA Guidelines) and therefore CEQA is not applicable.

**Request:** Commissioner Scott requests that the Planning Commission forward a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors to have Staff research and report back on options for creating a Design Review process.

**Staff Recommendation:** Consider Commissioner Scott's proposal and forward a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors if a majority of the Commission supports further review of this topic.

**Staff Contact:** John McDowell, 299-1354, [jmcdowell@co.napa.ca.us](mailto:jmcdowell@co.napa.ca.us)

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

At the July 15, 2009 regular meeting, Commissioner Scott requested agendaizing a Commission discussion and possible action concerning his recommendation that the County look at options for creating a formal design review process. This agenda item provides the Commission with the opportunity to discuss Commissioner Scott's proposal and receive comments from the public. The Commission is not obligated to take any action, but a majority may adopt a motion to request that the Board of Supervisors direct staff to research options for establishing a design review process.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

Is there a Fiscal Impact?            No

### **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION: The proposed action is not a project as defined by 14 California Code of Regulations 15378 (State CEQA Guidelines) and therefore CEQA is not applicable.

### **BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION**

Most general building permits in Napa County are ministerial, and are not subject to design review. However, several project types do receive discretionary review that involve some design evaluation. Most notable are building permits subject to the Viewshed Ordinance, which are mostly processed at a Staff or Zoning Administrator level. Also, the Planning Commission typically reviews and discusses project designs, even asking for changes or imposing conditions (about paint colors for example) when evaluating use permit proposals. In agricultural areas, the Commission is guided by General Plan Policy AG/LU-10, which states: "New wineries and other agricultural processing facilities as well as expansions of existing wineries and facilities in agricultural areas should be designed to convey their permanence and attractiveness." In the Airport Industrial Area, the Commission is guided by goals and policies in the AIA Specific Plan requiring design evaluation.

In the past, Commissioner Scott has suggested that the County develop and implement a process by which the Commission could get the benefit of comments from a panel of design-related professionals (i.e. design review) before making its decisions. As a step in this direction, Commissioner Scott has proposed that the Commission adopt a motion requesting that the Board of Supervisors authorize and direct Department staff to research alternatives for establishment of a design review process.

Presently, the Department work program does not identify this activity, although it allocates a modest amount of staff time (about 0.20 full time equivalents) to Board and Commission-initiated projects and to draft ordinances (about 0.35 full time equivalents). In the current fiscal year, projects in these categories include ordinance updates related to lot line adjustments, vacation rentals, rooster farming, farmers markets, historic preservation, density bonuses, and affordable housing. It is difficult to estimate how much additional time would be necessary to perform the requested evaluation of design review alternatives, and taking on one more project may extend the time required to complete others. Also, if a design review process is ultimately adopted and added to the development review process, it could require additional Department resources.

Staff requests that the Commission consider Commissioner Scott's proposal for reviewing options to establish design review in Napa County. The discussion is not a public hearing, but staff recommends that any members of the public wishing to speak on this item be heard. At the conclusion of the discussion, the Commission may, but is not obligated to, forward a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors.

### **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS**

None

Napa County Planning Commission: Approve

Reviewed By: John McDowell