

Conditional Use Permit Project Description

Introduction:

Del Valle Mexican Restaurant is proposing to construct a drive-thru on 2000 Sebastopol Road, Santa Rosa, CA. This project has been carefully planned and designed to enhance the appearance of the area while also providing a much-needed expansion to the restaurant's business. The proposed drive-thru would operate as an extension of the existing restaurant and the aim is to attract more customers and keep the business afloat.

The proposed drive-thru will consist of an approximately 850 square foot building and a 12-foot drive aisle with a 3' height hedge/fence for screening of the aisle and car headlights from Sebastopol Road. Additionally, the project will introduce 15 new paved parking spaces for the convenience of the customers. Of these, 1 space will be reserved for ADA compliance, which is already present adjacent to the restaurant, making a total of 16 parking spaces. 15 of the new parking spaces will be arranged perpendicular to the dead-end portion of Kenmore Lane, allowing for efficient parking. The primary function of these spaces will be to serve the existing restaurant.

Business Impact:

Del Valle Mexican Restaurant is a family-owned business with a small team, which has faced numerous challenges in recent years. These include the impact of Covid-19, rising inflation, increased employee wages, and heightened competition from a plethora of food trucks in the area. The restaurant's limited indoor seating capacity and seasonal patio, which is only usable during the summer months, have further compounded these challenges. In addition, slow business during the winter season has forced the restaurant to close for three weeks each year these past couple of years. These winter closures not only create instability but also necessitate downsizing the team, followed by rehiring once the restaurant reopens in January. We believe that the proposed project will bring about stability for the business.

To overcome these obstacles, the restaurant seeks to expand its operations and incorporate a drive-thru. This expansion will provide many advantages such as increasing sales and revenue, tapping into a different customer base, and bolstering the restaurant's financial stability in these challenging times. The drive-thru will also help the restaurant stay open during the winter season when outdoor seating is not feasible, and it will create more employment opportunities for the community.

Throughout this process, we have maintained open communication with City of Santa Rosa representatives to ensure we follow all necessary guidelines and regulations. As first-time developers, their guidance and expertise have been invaluable. Since starting this project in January 2022, we have invested over \$100,000—a significant financial effort for us as a small business. Despite these challenges, we are optimistic that the project will be approved as it will bring stability to our business and help us compete in the saturated Sebastopol Road area. We

have diligently incorporated feedback from city personnel, including Robert Sprinkle, Monet Shekali, Sachnoor Bisla, Susie Murray, and Patti Cisco. Additionally, we considered input from the pre-application meeting, which involved representatives from the Building Division, Fire Department, Traffic Division, Transit Division, Engineering Development Services, and Planning Division, as well as feedback from the neighborhood meeting. Our commitment to collaboration with the city underscores our dedication to serving the community and securing our business's long-term sustainability. We are hopeful that our efforts will be recognized and supported.

Site Constraints:

Since the acquisition of the property in 2015, we have been considering various development options for the small gravel lot adjacent to the restaurant. However, site constraints such as parking limitations and the narrowness of the lot have hindered many of these options, making it challenging to accommodate both the existing restaurant and any new development (as stated in Section 20-36.040). This is the primary reason why we believe the property remains an undeveloped, gravel lot as we lead up into 2025.

Despite this, we have explored alternative options, such as placing two food trucks on each corner of the property. Although the city of Santa Rosa found this option feasible at the time, we did not feel that it aligned with our vision for the property, especially given its highly visible location. We wanted to find a better use for the property that would benefit the community and the restaurant.

The proposed drive-thru, which would not include sit-down customers, would be an ideal solution for the gravel lot and provide a viable business on Sebastopol Road, while providing the necessary parking to the existing restaurant.

Benefits of the Proposed Layout:

The proposed layout for the drive-thru is the most suitable option for the site, taking into account the property's geometry and constraints. After reviewing several options, the Deputy Director of Traffic Engineering, Robert Sprinkle, has supported the proposed design as the optimal choice given the preliminary feedback that was provided by the neighbors and city.

The layout maximizes the use of the lot due to the following:

Minimal impact on traffic: The traffic study generated by transportation consultant W-Trans has shown that the proposed drive-thru will have a negligible impact on the traffic flow of Sebastopol Road and Stony Point. According to the study, the drive-thru will continue to operate at level of service D, which is the current level of service in the area with no impact to Sebastopol or Stony Point Road.

The proposed drive-thru layout includes a queue with 230 feet of space for vehicles. Based on the average length of a sedan, which is about 14 feet, the queue can hold approximately 16 cars before vehicles would spill over onto Kenmore Lane. However, if we consider larger vehicles, such as those noted in the W-Trans traffic study, which average about 23 feet in length, the queue would accommodate around 10 cars.

In order to avoid instances of queue overflow, a queue management plan will be put in place to divert potential customers in instances where the queue is at capacity.

Minimal noise impact: The noise generated by the drive-thru will be nominal given its adjacency to Sebastopol Road. As noted in the Yorke Engineering Noise study, the impact will be Less Than Significant (LTS).

Safety/preventative measures: There have been concerns raised about safety for pedestrians. The proposed drive-thru would include several improvements to the property, such as sidewalks on the north side of Kenmore Lane where there currently aren't any. This will provide pedestrians with a clear walkway and will mitigate any concerns. To address concerns about headlight spillage onto residential properties, we are willing to offer a fence on the neighbor's property to screen the headlights if requested by the neighbors on Kenmore Lane. Also all lights on the drive-thru will be shielded to help direct light to the necessary areas.

Perpendicular parking: The traffic study has found that the proposed use of perpendicular parking on the private drive appears to be appropriate given the low volume and speed.

Hour of Operation:

The proposed drive-thru will operate during similar hours as other businesses and drive-thrus in the area. The suggested operating hours are Monday through Sunday, from 7:00 AM to 11:00 PM.

Operation Style:

The proposed drive-thru would operate as an extension of the existing Del Valle Mexican Restaurant.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, Del Valle Mexican Restaurant's proposed drive-thru is designed to enhance the area's appearance while expanding the business's reach. By adding 15 new parking spaces, the drive-thru will accommodate customers while boosting revenue and financial stability while improving a gravel lot on Sebastopol Road. The proposed layout is carefully planned to minimize the impact on traffic and noise and address pedestrian safety concerns. The project

will also address the challenges faced by the restaurant, such as limited seating capacity and slow business during winter months, and provide more employment opportunities for the community. Del Valle Mexican Restaurant remains committed to working collaboratively with the city to ensure that all necessary guidelines and regulations are followed, and we are hopeful that our efforts will be recognized. Overall, the project will help the restaurant remain financially sustainable while continuing to serve the community.