

**RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION
OF THE COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT**

Resolution Number: 25-

Record Number: PLN-2024-18885-MOD01

Assessor's Parcel Number: 500-011-024

Makes the required findings for Resolution by the Planning Commission of the County of Humboldt conditionally approving the Ridgefield Special Events Conditional Use Permit Modification.

WHEREAS, the Ridgefield Events submitted an application and evidence in support of approving the Conditional Use Permit for Special Events Modification; and

WHEREAS, the County Planning Division has reviewed the submitted application and evidence and has referred the application and evidence to involved reviewing agencies for site inspections, comments and recommendations; and

WHEREAS, the County Planning Division, as the lead agency, determined the project to be exempt from further environmental review pursuant to Section 15301 *Existing Facilities* and Section 15304 *Minor Alterations to Land* of the State CEQA Guidelines, there is no substantial evidence that the project will have a significant effect on the environment, and a Notice of Exemption will be prepared and recorded; and

WHEREAS, Attachment 4 in the Planning Division staff report includes evidence in support of making all of the required findings for approving the proposed project (Record Number: PLN-2025-18885-MOD01); and

WHEREAS, the Humboldt County Planning Commission held a duly-noticed public hearing on September 4, 2025, and reviewed, considered, and discussed the application for the Conditional Use Permit Modification, and reviewed and considered all evidence and testimony presented at the hearing.

Now, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Planning Commission makes all the following findings:

- 1. FINDING:** **Project Description:** A Modification to a previously approved Conditional Use Permit (PLN-2024-18885) that authorized a seasonal special event venue (primarily weddings) between mid-April to mid-October, with a maximum of 120 guests per

event and a maximum of 30 events per year. The Modification will allow up to 14 guests directly associated with the event to stay overnight in the existing residence and up to 40 events and 175 attendees. The property will not be used as a short-term rental or for vacation lodging by the general public.

- EVIDENCE:**
- a) Project File: PLN-2025-18885-MOD1 including:
 - Site Plan prepared by Points West Surveying Co. Received January 16, 2024.
 - Revised Operations Plan for Ridgefield Events received June 12, 2025, and Original Operations Plan received January 16, 2024.

2. FINDING: **CEQA:** The requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act have been met. The Humboldt County Planning Commission has considered the project and finds the proposed project is exempt from environmental review pursuant to Section 15301 *Existing Facilities* and Section 15304 *Minor Alterations to Land* of the State CEQA Guidelines.

- EVIDENCE:**
- a) The Class 1 exemption applies to the operation, permitting, repair, maintenance or minor alteration of existing public and private structures or topographical features involving negligible or no expansion of the former use. Alteration of the site, ground disturbance, and new construction will be very limited. Minor improvements to interior and exterior features to comply with ADA and health & safety requirements are anticipated. Existing grassy areas onsite be utilized as parking areas during events and one existing driveway encroachment along the private driveway from the intersection of Fickle Hill Road will be paved to comply with requirements set by the Land Use Division of Public Works.
 - b) The Class 4 exemption applies to minor or temporary use of land having negligible or no permanent effects on the environment. The project proposes use of the property for a total of up to 40 events per year during a 6-month period (middle of April through middle of October). It is reasonable to view the use as “temporary” given the frequency and limited

duration of the activity seeking a permit.

- c) The project can be disqualified from using a Categorical Exemption if any of the exceptions in Section 15300.2 apply. However, none of these exceptions apply to the proposed project.

FINDINGS FOR CONDITIONAL USE PERMITS

- 3. FINDING:** The proposed development is in is in conformance with all applicable policies and standards in the Humboldt County General Plan 2017.

- EVIDENCE:**
- a) The property is planned both Residential Estates specifying a parcel size of 2.5 – 5 acres and Timberland according to the Humboldt County WebGIS. Events would occur in the portion planned Timberland. This designation is utilized to classify land that is primarily suitable for the growing, harvesting and production of timber. Timber-related visitor serving uses are compatible in this designation as long as the use does not change the character of the principal use.
The rental of space for weddings and similar special events is a use that is considered supplemental and temporary. The frequency and range of months targeted for events demonstrate that the use is limited and seasonal and will therefore not conflict with timber operations. Because the property owner signed a conservation easement with the City of Arcata, timber operations would be minimal as the land is adjacent to the Arcata Community Forest and is used for recreational purposes. The restriction imposed through the operations plan and permit conditions place limits on the number, size, and duration of events minimizing potential conflicts with the primary use of the land.
Measures will be taken to protect open areas on the subject parcel. The parking area will be irrigated and mowed on a regular basis during the event period and aerated in November to ensure soils are not compacted. Timberland will not be converted as the existing terrace is being utilized and no new structures are proposed. The only improvement proposed is surfacing at the driveway encroachment(s). Therefore,

Planning staff believes the proposed use is consistent with the plan designation.

- b) The proposed project will have no net effect on housing densities. The parcel was not included in the 2019 County Housing Inventory. The purpose of the proposed project is for a special events venue and will not affect the existing residential use of the property. The project is consistent with the County's Housing Element.
- c) Per review of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Biogeographic Information and Observation System (BIOS) which hosts the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) in February 2024, a total of two (2) unique species were identified as having the possibility of occurrence on Site the western lily (*Lilium occidentale*) and the American peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus anatum*). The proposed project is for the use of a maintained open space (dirt and gravel roads and mowed grass/pasture areas) as an events space for small weddings of up to 250 guests between the months of the middle of April through the middle of October. No ground disturbance is proposed. Review of the Humboldt County WebGIS (WebGIS) tool shows no Streamside Management Area or Wetland Area (SMAWO) on Site as defined by Humboldt County Code (HCC) Section 314-61.
- d) The subject parcel is located within areas of low and high instability and outside of any Alquist-Priolo fault hazard area. There are no mapped historic landslides. The Mad River Fault Zone runs east of the residence and on the eastern portion of the subject parcel. No new construction is authorized by this permit. There are no mapped flood zones on the subject parcel. The subject parcel is located within an area of high fire hazard severity. The parcel is located with the State Responsibility Area (SRA) and also within the Arcata Fire Protection District (Arcata FPD). According to the Operations Plan, there is a fire-truck turnaround space on the subject parcel and there is 30,000-gallons of water storage. The Arcata FPD received a project referral and recommended approval of the project.

- e) The project was referred to the Northwest Information Center, Bear River Band of the Rohnerville Rancheria, Blue Lake Rancheria and the Wiyot Tribe. Comments were received from NWIC and the Blue Lake Rancheria. The Blue Lake Rancheria requested inclusion of the standard inadvertent discovery protocol, which is included as a condition of approval for the proposed project.

4. FINDING: The subject parcel is zoned Timber Production Zone (TPZ). The proposed development is consistent with the purposes of the TPZ.

EVIDENCE: a) A Conditional Use Permit (CUP) is required for special events in accordance with §314-62.1 *Special Events and Attractions*. The CUP would authorize the use of the property as a seasonal venue for special events (primarily weddings) between mid-April to mid-October. A maximum of 175 guests per event and a maximum of 40 events per year are proposed. Events are expected to occur for elopements from Monday through Thursday (typically between 2-20 guests max) and weddings on Friday through Sunday (typically between 30-120 guests). Hours of operations will be 9:30am to 9:30pm, with guests on site generally from 1pm to 9:30pm. It is reasonable to view the use as “temporary” given the frequency and limited duration of the activity seeking a permit.

5. FINDING: The proposed development conforms with all applicable standards and requirements under HCC 312-17.1.3.

EVIDENCE: a) All sets backs of structures within Timber Production Zone (TPZ) are met and exceeded with current proposed site plan (Attachment 1C).

b) Humboldt County Code (HCC) Section 109-1.2.9 *Parking Spaces for Uses Not Specified* *Parking requirements necessitates* the need for adequate parking. An average of two (2) people per vehicle is assumed to determine parking demand. Based on a special event with 175 people, 88 parking spaces would be required. The site plan shows 81 dedicated parking spaces in a grassy area in the southern portion of the parcel (Attachment

1C). Overflow parking east of the event space is more than adequate to accommodate more vehicle parking.

- c) Approval of overnight stays does not constitute as a Short-Term Rental (STR) under Humboldt County Code Short Term Rental Ordinance as the property functions as a commercial entity under the approved Conditional Use permit and not as a residence which would be subject to the Short-Term Rental Ordinance.

6. FINDING: The Project and the conditions under which it may be operated or maintained will not be detrimental to the public health, safety, or welfare or materially injurious to properties or improvements in the vicinity.

- EVIDENCE:**
- a) The project has included the installation of a commercial Onsite Wastewater Treatment System which has been approved by the Humboldt County Department of Environmental Health (EH-SEPTA-24-000097).
 - b) The proposal involves the establishment of a special events venue for weddings and similar events. The project as described, and conditions of approval are designed to ensure that neighboring landowners and occupants are kept apprised of events and that the events are conducted at such a frequency and fashion so as to minimize the disturbance of nearby residents. Conditions of the project also require submittal of a monitoring report to the Department for a period of up to three (3) years. This will allow staff to verify the effectiveness of the conditions of approval and operation standards and restrictions and allow for refinement and adaptive management as needed. It will also provide staff an opportunity to determine whether revocation is appropriate should violations of the permit conditions or operational commitments occur.

7. FINDING: Development permits shall be issued only for a lot that was created in compliance with all applicable state and local subdivision regulations.

- EVIDENCE:**
- a) The parcel is a legal parcel. Planning staff confirmed the parcel

completed a Lot Line Adjustment (LLA) recorded April 7, 2023 (PLN-2022-17758).

8. FINDING: The proposed development does not reduce the residential density for any parcel below that utilized by the Department of Housing and Community Development in determining compliance with housing element law.

EVIDENCE: a) The parcel was not included in the housing inventory of Humboldt County's 2019 Housing Element.

DECISION

NOW, THEREFORE, based on the above findings and evidence, the Humboldt County Planning Commission hereby:

- Adopt the findings set forth in this resolution; and
- Conditionally approves the Conditional Use Permit Modification (record Number: PLN-18885-MOD01) based upon the Findings and Evidence and subject to the conditions of approval attached hereto as Attachment 1A and incorporated herein by reference.

Adopted after review and consideration of all the evidence **September 4, 2025**.

The motion was made by COMMISSIONER _____ and second by COMMISSIONER _____ and the following ROLL CALL vote:

AYES: COMMISSIONERS:

NOES: COMMISSIONERS:

ABSENT: COMMISSIONERS:

ABSTAIN: COMMISSIONERS:

DECISION:

I, John Ford, Secretary to the Planning Commission of the County of Humboldt, do hereby certify the foregoing to be a true and correct record of the action taken on the above-entitled matter by said Commission at a meeting held on the date noted above.

John Ford, Director
Planning and Building Department