



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: 2/19/2026

File #: 26-100

To: Planning Commission

From: Planning and Building Department

Agenda Section: Public Hearing

SUBJECT:

Bracut Industrial Park - Caretaker's Unit and Expanded Signage
Assessor Parcel Number (APN) 501-241-033
Record No.: PLN-2025-19337
Bracut area

A Conditional Use Permit (CUP) and a Coastal Development Permit (CDP) for after-the-fact authorization of an approximately 650 square foot caretaker's unit built between 1988-2000 and to allow commercial signage cumulatively exceeding the base amounts allowed under the Zoning Regulations (313-87.3.3.4.4). Known today as "The Bracut Industrial Park", since 1952 the property has primarily been occupied by a series of lumber products and building supply businesses. Current signage on the property totals approximately 1,455 square feet, approximately 485 square feet greater than historical levels. It is requested that up to 1,500 square feet of total signage be allowed, to accommodate the needs of a more diverse mixture of commercial and industrial tenants now operating from the site following the relocation of The Mill Yard from the property in 2010.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Planning Commission:

1. Adopt the resolution (Resolution 26-__), which does the following:
 - a. Finds the Planning Commission has determined the project to be exempt from environmental review pursuant to 15301 and 15303 of the State CEQA Guidelines; and
 - b. Finds the proposed project complies with the Humboldt Bay Area Plan and Zoning Ordinance; and
 - c. Approves the Coastal Development Permit, Conditional Use Permit as recommended by staff, subject to the conditions of approval (Attachment 1A).

DISCUSSION:

Project Location: The project site is located in the Bracut area, on the west side of U.S. Hwy 101, approximately 1/2 mile south of the intersection of Bayside Cutoff Road and U.S. Hwy 101, on the property known as 4051 U.S. Hwy 101.

Present General Plan Land Use Designation: Industrial/General (MG)

Present Zoning: Industrial General together with the Archaeological Resource Area Combining Zone (MG/A)

Environmental Review: The project has been determined categorically exempt pursuant to sections 15301 and 15303 of the State CEQA Guidelines.

State Appeal: The property is located within the Coastal Zone and the permit is appealable to the Coastal Commission.

Major Concerns:

None

Monitoring Required:

None.

Executive Summary: A Conditional Use Permit (CUP) and a Coastal Development Permit (CDP) for after-the-fact authorization of an approximately 650 square foot caretaker's unit (built between 1988-2000) and to allow commercial signage cumulatively exceeding the base amounts allowed under the Zoning Regulations. No further changes are being requested at this time.

Site Description/History

Approximately 23 acres in size, the property is located in the Bracut area (abbreviation for Brainard's Cut) and was once part of a larger holding created throughout the 1950's by diking and filling a section of the bay using spoils sourced from nearby grading/flattening/removal of Brainard's Point and dredging in Humboldt Bay. Known today as the "Bracut Industrial Park", the site has hosted a series of lumber products and building supply businesses who have served as the primary tenant since at least 1940. The last large anchor tenant was the "The Mill Yard", who operated from the property for nearly 25 years. The property is developed with over 75,000 square feet of commercial and industrial buildings of varying sizes. Water is provided from an existing well and the site is served by an existing on-site wastewater treatment system.

Coastal Zone Jurisdiction

Westerly portions of the site lie within an area where jurisdiction for coastal permitting is retained by the State Coastal Commission. Eastern portions of the site fall under local jurisdiction where

permitting is appealable by/to the Coastal Commission. The existing and proposed signage totals approximately 1,455 square feet and is located both in the county and state jurisdiction for Coastal permitting. The Caretakers' residence is located primarily within the County jurisdiction of the Coastal Zone. A Coastal Development Permit or Permit Waiver from the Coastal Commission will also be needed in addition to County approval.

Prior Permitting

The parcel has a history of prior land use permits and Coastal Development Permits. This includes Conditional Use Permits approved by the Planning Commission in 1976 (CUP-66-76) and 2012 (CUP-12-002) as well as a number of permits and waivers granted by the State Coastal Commission, including an Administrative Coastal Development Permit (1-91-243) approved in 1991 authorizing construction of a new warehouse and retail building just south of the entrance to the site. Completed in 1994, the structure was originally built for use by *The Mill Yard*. Since approximately 2013, the building has been used by Franz Bakery for warehousing, storage, and distribution. A portion of the building also houses their Outlet Store.

Signage Request

The newly adopted Coastal Sign Regulations include base allowances for wall-mounted appurtenant signage on parcels planned and zoned for Commercial or Industrial Uses, permitting two square feet of signage per linear foot of façade, with a maximum of one hundred (100) square feet per façade. The new sign regulations also include provisions for exceeding these limits with a Conditional Use Permit, and the applicant is requesting that the site be authorized to host up to 1,500 square feet of total signage, to be divided amongst tenants based on the size of their respective lease areas. This is further detailed in the signage master plan found in Exhibit B of the Draft Resolution (Attachment 1).

A total of approximately 1,455 square feet of commercial signage is currently on display at the site, divided between 3 tenants (Bayside Garden Supply, Franz Bakery, and Sempervirens Landscaping). This is approximately 485 square feet more signage than existed on the property in 1993 when *The Mill Yard* was the principal tenant. The Department recognizes the 970 square feet of signage found at the site in 1993 as "legal nonconforming" since it exceeds base allowances but traces back to lawful development predating modern signage limits.

During the past two decades the site has gradually shifted towards a more diverse mixture of commercial and industrial uses. Many of the changes in tenancy came following *The Mill Yard's* move to a new Arcata location in 2010. The spike in total signage primarily resulted from new smaller tenants occupying space formerly assigned to the principal tenant (The Mill Yard). This greater number and diversity of tenants caused an increased need for associated signage.

A total of approximately 1,225 feet of highway-facing façade currently exists on the parcel which cumulatively translates to a base allowance of 1,150 square feet of signage divided among 13 different facades. Existing and proposed signage is confined to three (3) structures and four (4)

facades.

In reviewing the current signage request and comparison to historical levels of signage at the site, it is clear that much of the increase in signage are due to the greater diversity of tenants operating from the property. With the exception of the historical monument sign identifying the Industrial Park, all appurtenant signs are flush mounted to buildings and of a size and scale in keeping with the overall bulk and massing of the structures. The relatively large size of the property further serves to lessen the overall effect of the aggregate signage. Approval of the Conditional Use Permit would bring the current and proposed signage into conformance with the Zoning Regulations, transitioning it from a legal nonconforming use to a *conforming* one.

Signage for Coastal Access and Control of Trespass

In addition to the increase in commercial appurtenant signage, the property owner is requesting permission to install directional signage to control traffic associated with access to nearby public land northwest of the Bracut property. This land abuts the northern dogleg section of the Bracut parcel and was formerly a part of the Bracut holdings before being conveyed to the State of California for wetland restoration purposes in 1981. The owner is also seeking permission to place additional signage at several other locations targeted, in an effort to discourage unauthorized parking or trespass within the primary area of the Industrial Park. These non-commercial signage types are detailed on pgs. 5-8 of the Signage Master Plan.

Caretakers Unit

Caretakers units are conditionally permitted in most Commercial and Industrial zones, including the Industrial General (MG) Zoning where the project parcel is located. Review of historical aerial photography reveals that the existing Caretaker's Unit was erected sometime between 1988 and 2000. Approximately 650 square feet in size, the structure is strategically located near the center of the property adjacent to the largest structure and assemblage of tenants on the property.

Water/Wastewater/Solid Waste:

Water to the home is provided by a nearby well and sewer is handled by an existing onsite waste treatment system (OWTS). The OWTS is comprised of one large leachfield located along the eastern boundary of the property and approximately six (6) septic tanks distributed throughout the site. The Division of Environmental Health has reviewed the project and views the OWTS to be of sufficient size for the current scale of development. Engineered design flows calculated in 1988 show sufficient capacity for upwards of 78 employees and five bedrooms which well exceeds current demand at the site. Tenants are each responsible for removal of all of their trash and waste from the property.

Water Resources / Biological Resources: The property is highly developed and the majority of the site is covered with asphalt paving or graveled. No new development outside of the existing paved and graveled area is proposed. Impacts to environmentally sensitive areas are therefore unlikely.

Tribal Consultation: Referrals were sent to the Northwest Information Center, the Wiyot Tribe, Blue Lake Rancheria, and the Bear River Band of the Rohnerville Rancheria. Representatives from the THPO's office for the Bear River and Wiyot Tribes both responded to the referral request. Because portions of the Bracut area have the potential for discovery and disturbance of Tribal Cultural Resources, a Condition of Approval is being included requiring that a Development Plan be prepared for the site noting areas of sensitivity and a Notice of Development Plan be recorded to provide constructive notice and guidance to current and future owners of the property during future development activities.

Coastal Commission Consultation: Coastal Commission staff raised a number of questions in response to the project referral, requesting additional information on the existing/proposed signage, water source, OWTS, and means for disposal of solid waste. Planning staff worked with Environmental Health and the Applicant to collect information to address these questions, which is detailed in a response sent to staff at the North Coast office on October 27, 2025. Correspondence and information provided to Coastal staff is included under Attachment 4 as well as detailed above.

Environmental Review: The project has been determined categorically exempt pursuant to sections 15301 and 15303 of the State CEQA Guidelines. The Class 1 Exemption (15301) covers the operation, repair, permitting, or minor alteration of existing public or private structures involving negligible or no expansion of existing or former use. The signage component of the project is flush mounted to existing structures and has no effect on the footprint or intensity of uses being operated from the site. The Class 3 exemption (15303) covers new construction and location of new small facilities or structures including accessory (appurtenant) structures. The Caretaker's Unit is accessory and appurtenant to the established commercial and industrial uses on the property.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

The project was referred to responsible agencies and all responding agencies have either recommended approval or conditional approval. They are summarized and detailed in Attachment 4. Information provided by planning staff in response to questions from the North Coast office of the Coastal Commission has also been included for reference.

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The Planning Commission could choose to approve the Conditional Use Permit but limit the total signage area and/or the number of signs to a smaller amount than is being requested; and/or
2. The Planning Commission could elect to add or delete conditions of approval; or
3. The Planning Commission could deny approval of the requested permits if unable to make all of the required findings. Planning Division staff is confident that the required findings can be made based on the submitted evidence and subject to the recommended conditions of approval. Consequently, planning staff does not recommend further consideration of these alternatives.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Resolution
 - A. Conditions of Approval
 - B. Signage Master Plan
 - C. Site Plan
2. Location Map
3. Applicant's Evidence in Support of the Required Findings
4. Referral Agency Comments and Recommendations

Applicant/Owner:

Bracut Lumber Company
Rick Hess
38779 Maracaibo Cir. W.
Palm Springs, CA 92264

Agent: GHD Inc.

Kristen Orth-Gordinier
PO Box 1010
Eureka, CA 95502

Please contact Steven Lazar, Senior Planner, at slazar@co.humboldt.ca.us or (707)268-3741 if you have questions about this item.