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Planning Commission Staff Report

Meeting Date: September 15, 2026

Prepared By: Carole Kendrick, Director of Development Services

PROJECT INFORMATION SUMMARY

Case File: Site Plan Review (SPR) 21-04R2 "Gold Country Inn"

Request: Consideration of a request to renew/extend Site Plan Review SPR 21-04 and SPR 21-04-R for exterior modifications to an existing motel (Gold Country Inn) located at 1332 & 1340 Broadway. The project is Categorical Exempt from environmental review pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15301 (Existing Facilities).

Summary Recommendation: Staff recommends approval of the Site Plan Review renewal/extension subject to the previously approved conditions of approval (as modified under SPR 21-04-R), based on consistency with the General Plan and Zoning Ordinance.

<u>Applicant:</u>	Gsons 1332 Broadway, LLC
<u>Property Owner:</u>	4317 Madison, LLC
<u>Address:</u>	1332 & 1340 Broadway
<u>APN:</u>	004-131-044 & -042
<u>Lot Area:</u>	1.41 acres
<u>General Plan Designation:</u>	Medium Density Residential, MDR
<u>Zoning:</u>	Highway Commercial / Airport Overlay (HWC/AO)
<u>Existing Use:</u>	Vacant Motel
<u>Environmental Document:</u>	Categorically Exempt per §15301
<u>Decision Making</u>	Placerville Zoning Ordinance §10-4-9(C)

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant seeks to renew/extend the previously approved Site Plan Review (SPR 21-04, as modified by SPR 21-04-R) authorizing exterior modifications to the existing two-story, approximately 45-room motel known as the Gold Country Inn (formerly the Broadway Motel). The approved work includes a "mountain modern" architectural style featuring corrugated metal and fiber-cement siding, an updated earth-tone color palette, new exterior lighting, renovated landscaping, trash enclosures, a shaded patio area at the rear of the facility, and a propane fire-pit feature near the front lobby entrance.

The 2024 revision (SPR 21-04-R) specifically authorized: (1) retention of the existing structurally sound wood railings in lieu of the previously approved metal railings; and (2) installation of decorative faux windows (Imagination Millwork white PVC frames with black plexiglass panes) in place of the previously approved glass-block in-fill windows on the rear elevations. These changes were made to address repeated break-ins while the property was vacant and under construction, while still providing architectural interest on the rear façades.

No new construction, expansion of floor area, or increase in the intensity of use are proposed under this renewal request. The request is limited to extending the life of the existing entitlements so that the approved exterior improvements, landscaping, and related site work may be completed.

BACKGROUND

The project site has a long history of Planning Commission approvals related to its use as a motel:

- 1982 (SPR 82-10): Approval to relocate a 12-unit motel from 1244 Broadway to the current location at 1332 Broadway (known as the Broadway Motel).
- 1984 (SPR 84-05): Approval of construction and expansion adding units in a second two-story building on the adjoining parcel at 1340 Broadway.
- 1985 (SPR 85-02): Approval of an 8-unit addition to 1340 Broadway together with a landscaping plan.
- 1986 (SPR 86-15): Approval of the demolition of the original 12 units and construction of a 20-unit building, along with a Master Sign Plan.
- 2012: Amendment to the approved Master Sign Plan.

Following years of deferred maintenance and eventual foreclosure, the current owner (GSONS 1332 Broadway, LLC) acquired the property in 2020 with the intent of restoring and reopening the motel as the Gold Country Inn. On June 17, 2021, the owner submitted SPR 21-04 seeking comprehensive exterior modifications to achieve a “mountain modern” architectural style. The application included new siding materials and colors, metal railings, exterior lighting (gooseneck fixtures, wall sconces, and pole lights), a revised landscaping plan, trash enclosures, a rear shaded patio, and a front propane fire-pit feature near the lobby entrance.

SPR 21-04 was approved by the Planning Commission on April 5, 2022. Building permits for interior demolition and remodel of both motel buildings were subsequently issued, but have expired.

In early 2023, Development Services staff became aware of unpermitted exterior construction that was inconsistent with the elevations approved under SPR 21-04 (particularly the rear elevations of both buildings). After coordination with the applicant and review of revised plans submitted under Plan Check Nos. 22587 and 22588, staff determined that the changes

constituted a major change under Zoning Ordinance Section 10-4-9(P). The applicant subsequently submitted SPR 21-04-R on March 1, 2024.

SPR 21-04-R requested two specific major modifications: (1) replacement of the approved glass-block in-fill windows on the rear elevations with siding and decorative faux windows to improve security; and (2) retention of the existing wood railings rather than replacement with metal railings. The Planning Commission approved SPR 21-04-R on April 16, 2024, with modified conditions of approval that clarified the approved plan sheets and added standard Site Plan Review conditions.

The current application (SPR 21-04R2) seeks renewal/extension of these entitlements. Site Plan Review approvals are subject to time limits. This new request starts the time clock again and allows the applicant additional time to complete the approved exterior improvements, landscaping, and related site work consistent with the mountain-modern design previously found compatible with the Upper Broadway corridor and the City's Development Guide.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The approximately 1.2-acre site consists of two parcels developed with two (2) two-story motel buildings, shared parking lot, and landscaping. The site is located on the south side of Broadway, approximately 325 feet east of the intersection of Blairs Road and Broadway and roughly 730 feet west of Schnell School Road, and about 320 feet south of Highway 50. Hangtown Creek runs along the south end of the property between the motel and the Caltrans Maintenance Facility. The project area is within the Airport Overlay Zone.

PROJECT SETTING

Surrounding land uses are a mix of highway-oriented commercial uses (retail, services, and related businesses) to the north, east, and west, with the Caltrans facility and creek corridor to the south. The Upper Broadway corridor is a linear, highway-oriented commercial strip.

The project setting can also be seen in the following materials attached to this staff report:

- General Plan Land Use Map (Attachment C)
- Zoning Map (Attachment D)
- Aerial Photograph (Attachment E)

The land uses, zoning, and Placerville General Plan Land Use Element designations of the project site and surrounding area are shown in the following Table.

	LAND USE	GENERAL PLAN	ZONING
PROJECT SITE	Vacant Motel	Highway Commercial (HWC)	Highway Commercial (HWC)/Airport Overlay (AO)
NORTH	Broadway Plaza	Highway Commercial (HWC)	Highway Commercial (HWC)/Airport Overlay (AO)
SOUTH	CalTrans Maintenance Facility	Highway Commercial (HWC)	Highway Commercial (HWC)/Airport Overlay (AO)
EAST	Tractor Supply	Highway Commercial (HWC)	Highway Commercial (HWC)/Airport Overlay (AO)
WEST	Shoestrings – Quick Service Restaurant	Highway Commercial (HWC)	Highway Commercial (HWC)/Airport Overlay (AO)

PROJECT ANALYSIS

General Plan Consistency:

The project site is designated Highway Commercial (HWC) on the General Plan Land Use Diagram (or is implemented through the corresponding HWC zoning). The Highway Commercial designation and the HWC zone are intended to:

1. Provide for freeway-oriented uses, such as hotels and motels, fast-food restaurants, gas stations, and other uses which are necessary and convenient for the traveling public.
2. Provide for the development of highway commercial facilities concentrated in well-defined and designed areas.
3. Create conditions conducive to a convenient and desirable environment for customers and employees.
4. Protect areas in this designation from encroachment by unrelated and incompatible uses.
5. Differentiate freeway and travel-oriented uses from those of the downtown business district and other light commercial areas.

The continued operation and improvement of the Gold Country Inn as a motel is fully consistent with these purposes. The project also supports General Plan Land Use Element Goal C: “To protect and provide for the expansion of Placerville’s commercial services sector to meet the needs of both Placerville area residents and visitors,” and related policies that encourage highway-oriented lodging serving travelers along Highway 50 and generating transient occupancy tax revenue. The approved mountain-modern exterior upgrades improve the visual quality of the Upper Broadway corridor and contribute positively to the economic health of the community.

Zoning Consistency:

Hotels and motels are permitted uses in the Highway Commercial (HWC) zone. The exterior modifications authorized under SPR 21-04 and SPR 21-04-R (and proposed for renewal under SPR 21-04R2) were previously determined to constitute a major change under Zoning Ordinance Section 10-4-9(P) but were found consistent with the Site Plan Review criteria, the Development Guide (architectural quality, materials compatibility, and contribution to visual interest), and the overall intent of the HWC zone and Airport Overlay.

The faux windows add architectural interest to otherwise blank rear façades while addressing legitimate security concerns experienced during the period the property was vacant and under construction. Retention of the existing wood railings does not detract from the approved mountain-modern aesthetic. On-site parking (approximately 48 standard stalls for 45 guest rooms) continues to meet City parking requirements. No expansion of floor area or intensity of use is proposed.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The City has determined that the project is categorically exempt from environmental review pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15301 (Existing Facilities). The project involves exterior alterations to an existing motel that will not result in an expansion of the use or capacity. The prior approvals (SPR 21-04 and SPR 21-04-R) reached the same conclusion; the present renewal request does not change the physical scope of the previously reviewed work.

PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

Property owners located within a 300-foot radius of the project site were notified of the public hearing on September 4, 2026, with a 10-day hearing notice in addition to a public notice in the Mountain Democrat. At the time of report preparation, the Planning Department has not received any comments.

Any comments received prior to the time of the scheduled Planning Commission meeting will be provided to the Commission at the time of the public hearing.

DECISION MAKING AUTHORITY

The Planning Commission is authorized under Zoning Ordinance Section 10-4-9(C) that states that the planning commission shall review each application for a building permit related to exterior alterations.

FINDINGS (Placerville Municipal Code 10-4-9)

- (a) The proposed project is consistent with this Title;

The project consists of the renewal/extension of previously approved exterior modifications to an existing motel under SPR 21-04 (approved April 5, 2022) and SPR 21-04-R (approved April 16, 2024). Hotels and motels are permitted uses in the Highway Commercial (HWC) zone pursuant to Zoning Ordinance Section 10-5-17. The proposed exterior alterations, including the mountain-modern architectural style, materials, colors, lighting, landscaping, retention of wood railings, and installation of decorative faux windows on the rear elevations, were previously reviewed and found consistent with the purpose, intent, and criteria of Zoning Ordinance Section 10-4-9 (Site Plan Review) and the City's Development Guide. The renewal does not authorize any expansion of floor area, increase in intensity of use, or deviation from the previously approved plans. Therefore, the project remains consistent with Title 10 of the Placerville Municipal Code.

- (b) The proposed use and project are consistent with the goals and policies of the General Plan;

The project site is zoned Highway Commercial / Airport Overlay (HWC/AO) and has long been used as a motel serving the traveling public along the Broadway / Highway 50 corridor. The Highway Commercial land use designation and corresponding HWC zone are intended to provide for freeway-oriented uses such as hotels and motels that are necessary and convenient to the traveling public; to concentrate such facilities in well-defined and designed areas; to create a convenient and desirable environment for customers and employees; to protect the area from incompatible uses; and to differentiate highway-oriented uses from the downtown business district. The continued operation and improvement of the Gold Country Inn as a motel directly advances these purposes.

The project is also consistent with General Plan Land Use Element Goal C: "To protect and provide for the expansion of Placerville's commercial services sector to meet the needs of both Placerville area residents and visitors," and with the implementing policies that encourage highway-oriented lodging facilities that generate transient occupancy tax, provide adequate parking and access, and are designed in a manner sensitive to Placerville's character. The approved mountain-modern exterior upgrades improve the visual quality of Upper Broadway and support the long-term economic vitality of the community. No aspect of the renewal conflicts with any General Plan goal or policy.

- (c) The project will not be detrimental to public health, safety, and general welfare; and

The project involves only the completion of previously approved exterior modifications, lighting, landscaping, and related site improvements to an existing motel. No expansion of use, increase in occupancy, or intensification of operations is proposed. The retention of wood railings and the installation of decorative faux windows on the rear elevations address practical security concerns that arose while the property was vacant and under construction, while maintaining architectural interest and compatibility with the approved design. On-site parking continues to meet City requirements. The improvements will enhance the appearance and condition of the property, reduce blight, and improve the overall character of the Upper Broadway corridor. No evidence has been presented indicating that completion of the approved work would create any adverse impacts to surrounding properties, traffic, public services, or the general welfare of the community.

- (d) The proposed project is in compliance with the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act.

The project qualifies for a Class 1 Categorical Exemption under CEQA Guidelines Section 15301 (Existing Facilities). Section 15301 applies to the operation, repair, maintenance, permitting, leasing, licensing, or minor alteration of existing public or private structures, facilities, mechanical equipment, or topographical features involving negligible or no expansion of existing or former use. The present request is limited to the renewal/extension of previously approved exterior alterations to an existing motel and does not involve any expansion of the use or capacity. The Planning Commission previously determined that both SPR 21-04 and SPR 21-04-R were categorically exempt under Section 15301. The current renewal request does not change the physical scope of work previously reviewed and therefore remains exempt from further environmental review under CEQA.

RECOMMENDED PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION

1. Hold a public hearing and take public testimony; and,

Option 1:

1. Approve Site Plan Review (SPR) 21-07R2 subject to the attached conditions of approval; and

2. Direct staff to prepare a Notice of Exemption (NOE) for the applicant to file with the El Dorado County Clerk Recorder's Office.

Option 2:

1. Continue the item to a future meeting for further discussion or additional information.

Option 3:

1. Deny one or more applications.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. SPR21-04R1 Approved Site Plan
- B. Draft Conditions of Approval
- C. General Plan Land Use Designation Map
- D. Zoning Map
- E. Aerial Photograph

INCORPORATED BY REFERENCE

City of Placerville General Plan

City of Placerville Zoning Ordinance

Contents of City of Placerville Planning Department Project File SPR21-04, SPR21-04R1 & SPR21-04R2