



*“We are a welcoming, active and business-friendly rural foothill community built on California’s rich gold rush history.”*

## Planning Commission Staff Report

**Meeting Date:** November 19, 2024

**Prepared By:** Kristen Hunter, Associate Planner

### PROJECT INFORMATION SUMMARY

**Case File:** Conditional Use Permit (CUP) 24-03 & Site Plan Review (SPR) 24-05 – Establishment of Cornerstone House of Worship  
2020 Smith Flat Road / APN 049-110-031

**Request:** Consideration of a request within the 10,000 Single-Family Residential / Airport Overlay Zone (R1-10 / AO) to: (1) Permit the establishment of a place of worship (Cornerstone Church); (2) Memorialize the exterior elevations of the existing building and modifications; (3) Permit the placement of a sea-land container within the existing parking lot; and (4) Find the project categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Section 15303.

**Summary Recommendation:** Staff recommends approval of this request as amended and conditioned.

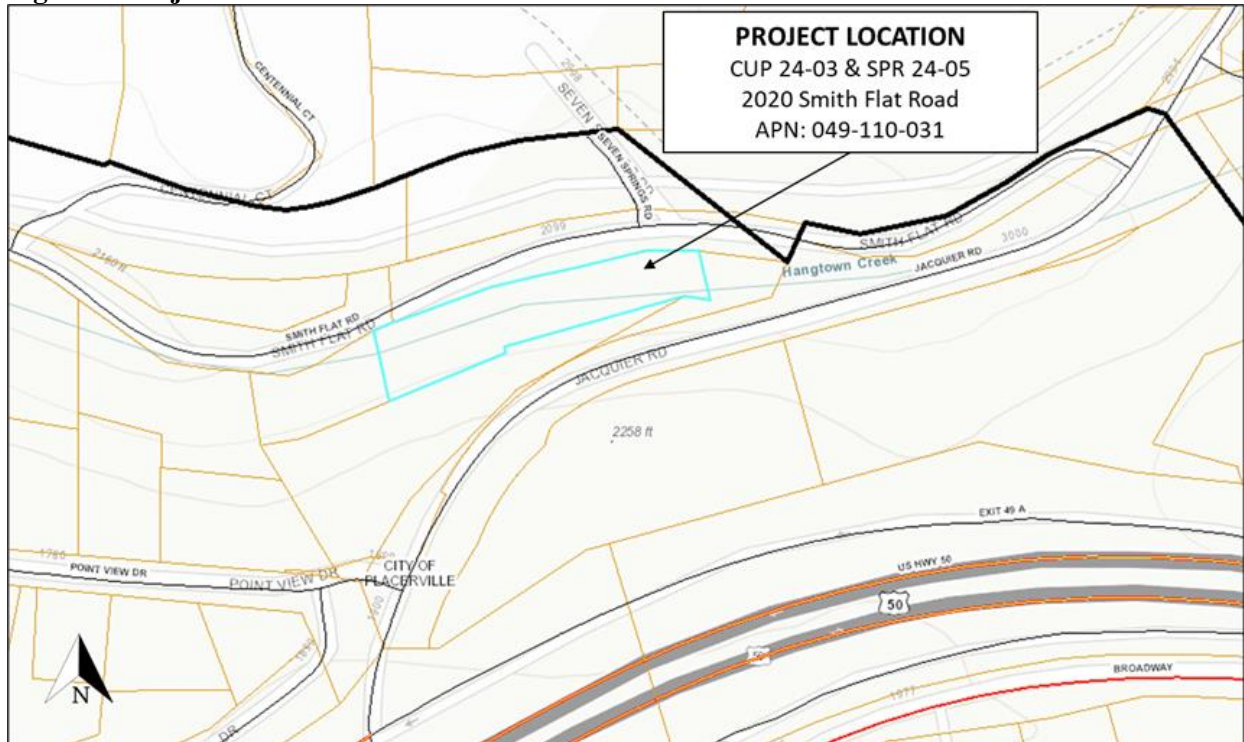
<u>Property Owner/Applicant:</u>	Cornerstone House of Prayer
<u>Representative:</u>	Jim Thorson, Pastor
<u>Address:</u>	2020 Smith Flat Road
<u>APN:</u>	049-110-031
<u>Lot Area:</u>	2.08 acres
<u>General Plan:</u>	Commercial (C)
<u>Zoning:</u>	Commercial (C)
<u>Existing Use:</u>	Former Hangtown Grange

**Decision Making Authority:** The Planning Commission is authorized under Zoning Ordinance Section 10-3-1 (Planning Commission) to approve, approve with conditions, or deny requests for use permits within the City.

## SITE INFORMATION

The project area is a 0.60-acre parcel located on the easternmost section of Smith Flat Road, approximately 530 feet west of the intersection of Smith Flat Road and Jacquier Road (Figure 1). The site is developed, with a 3,814 square foot building previously used as the Hangtown Grange Hall.

**Figure 1. Project Location**



To the north and east of the project site are low density residential uses. The southern boundary of the parcel is bounded by parcels zoned Highway Commercial (HWC) and Jacquier Road.

### Background

The City has minimal records for the subject parcel, including four (4) building permits, with the last issuance in 2002. Based on a review of City records, the site has no previous planning approvals.

As mentioned above, the building was previously used as the Hangtown Grange. The Grange allowed for the renting of the hall for a non-profit meeting space, weddings, dances, banquets, etc.

### Code Enforcement

Development Services Department (DSD) Staff met with Cornerstone House of Prayer in late-2022 / early-2023 regarding the establishment of the place of worship on the subject parcel. Staff informed the representatives of the project that a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) would be required.

A Notice to Correct was sent to the property owners on March 21, 2024, when Staff became aware that the Cornerstone House of Prayer was actively using the property without the benefit of a CUP. Shortly thereafter, DSD filed a Notice of Non-Compliance (NNC) and provided a Stop-Work order for the property for work performed without a building permit and failure to obtain approval of the land use.

The subject application was submitted on July 3, 2024. Following submittal, Staff became aware of further code compliance issues, specifically two (2) recreational vehicles (RVs) parked on the project site being used as dwellings. The applicant was notified of the additional violations, and that compliance was required prior to bringing forward the land use application to the Planning Commission.

Staff discussed the compliance issue, and steps for abatement, with the applicant on September 25, 2024. Following this discussion, Staff set the project for Public Hearing on October 15, 2024. Additionally, the Department issued a Special Temporary Use Permit (TUP 24-12) to allow for a temporary watchman quarters following reports of trespass and attempted break ins.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project includes the following:

1. Establishment of a place of worship within the R1-10/AO zone, within an existing building previously used as the Hangtown Grange Hall, pursuant to the Conditional Use Permit (CUP) regulations;
2. Memorialization of the exterior elevations of the existing building, including modifications completed without a building permit and the proposed wall sign; and
3. Approval of a sea-land container within in existing parking lot, installed without a building permit.

Figures 2 – 5 provide figures of the proposed project. More details can be found within Attachment 3 of the Staff Report.

**Figure 2. Existing Site Plan**

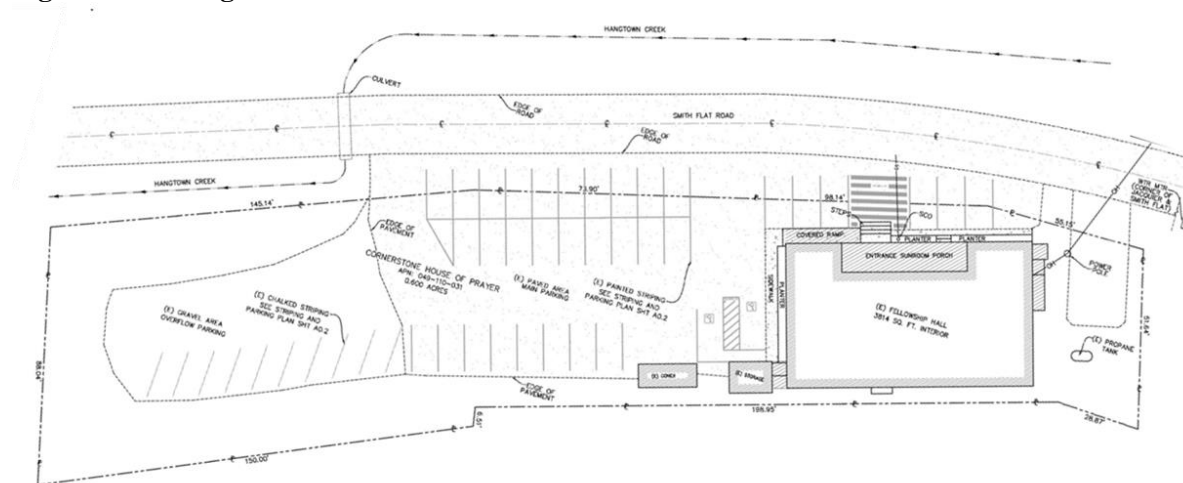


Figure 3. North (Front) Building Elevation

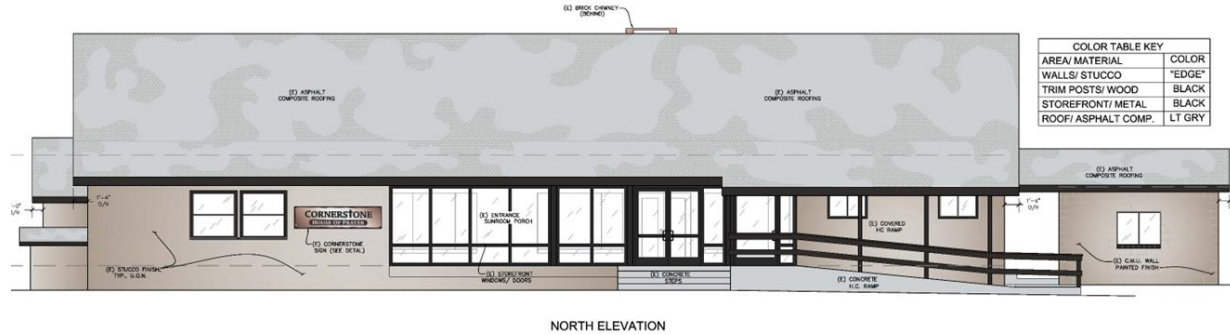


Figure 4. Proposed Sea-Land Container

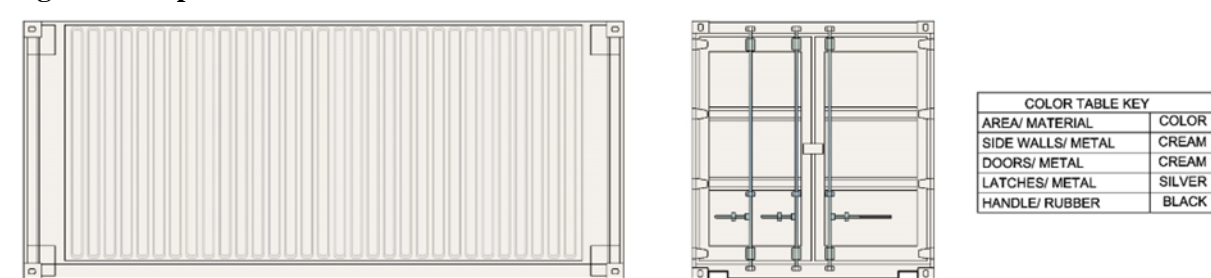
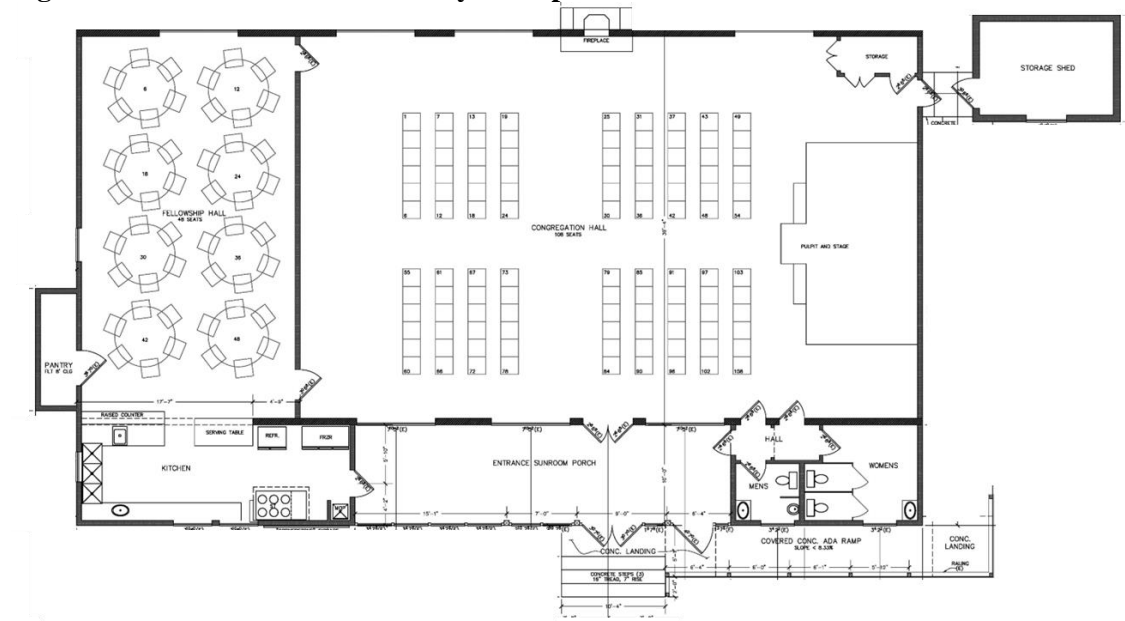


Figure 5. Cornerstone House of Prayer Proposed Floor Plan



As shown in Figure 5 and Sheet A1.0 of Attachment 3, Cornerstone House of Prayer proposes a total of 108 fixed seats within the Congregation Hall and 48 seats within the Fellowship Hall. The building has a pre-existing kitchen. However, Attachment 5 (Project Description) indicates that the kitchen will not be used to prepare food, but for storing and serving prepared food.

## PROJECT ANALYSIS

The following section provides an overview of relevant City of Placerville General Plan Goals, Zoning Ordinance(s), and Development Guide.

### General Plan Consistency:

The land use designation for the subject property is Low Density Residential (LDR). The LDR designation is intended to provide for single-family residential development in areas with urban-level services and facilities for areas limited by topography and terrain while creating conducive conditions for a desirable low-density environment.

The proposed project would result in the use of a currently vacant building and improvement of the pedestrian orientation from Smith Flat Road. As previously mentioned, the subject parcel is developed, with an existing 3,814 square foot building with a proposed use of the parcel (place of worship) similar to that of the previous institutional uses (charitable meeting hall and social purposes) which operated as a legal non-conforming use.

While the parcel is zoned R1-10 / AO, development of the subject parcel consistent to the R-1, 10,000 Single-Family Residential (R1-10) Zone is not necessary to meet the City's designated Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) for moderate- and above-moderate-income levels (50 units and 119 units respectively), especially as the parcel is developed and has historically been used in a manner similar to the proposed use (place of worship).

Continued use of the parcel as a gathering place for the community is not detrimental to the surrounding land use and would result in the enhancement of an existing commercial building. As such, it is the opinion of Staff that the project is consistent with the following Elements and Goals of the General Plan:

- Natural, Cultural, and Scenic Resources Element, Goal I, Policy 1: *“Those positive aspects and attributes of the city which are controllable, and which contribute to the quality of life of the city and its environment, shall be preserved and perpetuated. Placerville’s positive aspects and attributes are its rural country atmosphere, historical heritage, small town atmosphere, compatible neighborhoods and developments, and lack of congestion.”*
- Community Design Element, Goal B, Policy 2: *“The City shall promote the enhancement of commercial buildings and properties.”*

### Zoning Ordinance Consistency:

#### Zoning Ordinance Section 10-3-3: Conditional Use Permits

Pursuant to Zoning Ordinance Section 10-3-3, the Planning Commission may approve conditional uses where such uses are:

1. Deemed essential or desirable to the public convenience or welfare;
2. In harmony with the various elements or objectives of the General Plan; and
3. Found not detrimental to surrounding property.

The proposed use is considered a place of worship, a use permitted in any zone under a CUP<sup>1</sup>.

The subject structure was last used as the Hangtown Grange, considered an institutional use. The proposed use of the property by the Cornerstone House of Prayer would continue use of the property in a similar manner and would not result in an expansion in the utilization of the property.

Additionally, the property currently sits vacant and has been the subject of attempted break-ins. Continued use of the property as proposed would reduce the likelihood of future break-ins and vandalism.

Therefore, it is the opinion of Staff that:

1. The proposed use is desirable to the public and will result in improvements to the quality of life of Placerville residents. Further, the proposed use will not be detrimental to the health, safety, and general welfare of the public or otherwise injurious to the environment or property or improvements within the area;
2. The proposed use is substantially compatible and in harmony with the City of Placerville's Comprehensive General Plan and, as amended and recommended by Staff, with Title 10 (Zoning Ordinance) of the City's Municipal Code; and
3. The proposed use will not be detrimental to surrounding properties and land uses.

Zoning Ordinance Section 10-4-4: Parking and Loading

Pursuant to Zoning Ordinance Section 10-4-4, a place of worship requires one (1) parking stall for each four (4) seats at maximum seating capacity. Sheet A1.0 of the Applicant's Submittal Plans (Attachment 3) shows the floor plan, including fixed seating, of the Cornerstone House of Prayer. The portion of the floor plan identified as the congregation hall shows a total of 108 seats and the smaller portion of the floor plan for the fellowship hall identifies 48 seats. Based on this information, the required on-site parking for the proposed use is 39 parking stalls.

As shown on Sheet A0.1 (Attachment 3), the site has a total of 43 parking spaces. Of the 43 stalls, 16 are located within the City right-of-way boundary and require cars to back up onto Smith Flat Road and 9 stalls are considered overflow parking within a gravel area on the western most side of the parcel.

Subsection 10-4-4(C)2 allows required on-site parking to be located within the required front yards; however, these stalls must be no closer than 3 feet from the street right-of-way. As such, the stalls located within the right-of-way, requiring cars to back out into Smith Flat Road, are inconsistent with the City's Parking and Loading Ordinance and constitute a safety hazard.

In addition, the City's Smith Flat Road Storm Drain and Paving Project (Capital Improvement Project #42213) is anticipated to be constructed in 2025. The project would include drainage improvements along the frontage of the parcel that would affect parking spaces currently within the right-of-way.

---

<sup>1</sup> Zoning Ordinance Section 10-5-10 (R1-10 Zoning) and Section 10-3-4 (Uses Permitted in Any Zone).

Given the planned improvements, the non-compliance with the requirements for on-site parking stall locations (out of the right-of-way), and the partial graveled area for surplus parking on the Site Plan, Staff has included Condition of Approval (COA) #3 regarding the need for revisions to parking plan for the proposed use. The Applicant shall be responsible for providing the Development Services Department a revised site plan showing a revised parking lot for approval.

With the loss of the 16 parking stalls located within the right-of-way, only 27 stalls remain. In order to meet the minimum 39 required parking stalls, 12 additional stalls shall be constructed within the southwest portion of the site. Staff recommends waiving any additional landscaping since the property periphery is heavily treed. The Applicant shall be responsible for working with the Engineering Department regarding improvements to the parking area (paving and drainage) as well as the frontage improvements.

Zoning Ordinance Section 10-4-9: Site Plan Review

Site Plan Review (SPR) Ordinance is meant to encourage orderly and harmonious development while also preserving the historic and scenic character of property within the City. The subject site plan review application is a request to permit the installation of a sea-land container on the subject parcel and record the elevations of the building, including signage, and parking lot as proposed.

Based on the FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Map 06017C0757E, the project site is located outside of Flood Zone AE (Figure 6). As such, placement of the container shall require a building permit and is not required to comply with the requirements of Chapter 9 (Flood Damage Protection) of the City’s Municipal Code.

**Figure 6. Project Location with Respect to Nearby Flood Zones**



Additional discussion of the sea-land container is provided under “Development Guide Consistency.”

### Zoning Ordinance Section 10-4-17: Sign Regulations

The proposed project includes the installation of a wall sign, 8 ft by 2 ft, on the front elevation of the commercial building (Figure 6).

**Figure 7. Proposed Wall Sign**



Pursuant to Zoning Ordinance Section 10-4-17(G)5, wall signs are permitted in nonresidential zones and the area of the wall sign shall not exceed two (2) square feet of sign area for each one (1) lineal foot of business frontage up to fifty (50) feet then an additional sixty-seven hundredths (0.67) of a square foot for remaining frontage over 50 feet.

Approval of the CUP will allow the church to operate as a nonresidential use.

The building has a business frontage<sup>2</sup> of 88.98 lineal feet. As such, the total allowable wall sign area for the parcel is 126.12 square feet. The proposed sign is well within the allowable sign area (16 square feet).

### Zoning Ordinance Section 10-5-23: Airport Overlay

The purpose of the Airport Overlay (AO) is to implement the Placerville Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (ALUCP) in accordance with state law and protect land uses around the airport from potential hazards of airport operations. The project area is within the Airport Influence Area, Review Area 1. The proposed project does not include new development increasing occupant density or building height.

It is the opinion of Staff that the project would not result in any impacts with respect to the following ALUCP policies: Noise Compatibility, Safety Compatibility, Airspace Protection,

<sup>2</sup> The lineal front footage of a building or portion thereof devoted to a specific business or enterprise, and having an entrance/exit open to the general public.

Overflight, or Special/Additional Circumstances. Review by the Airport Land Use Commission (El Dorado County Transportation Commission) is not required.

**Development Guide Consistency**

Chapter IV: Architectural Design Guidelines

3. *Façade Treatments and Exterior Elements*

- e. *Building facades adjacent to the right-of-way must demonstrate a pedestrian orientation, with a well-defined entry, windows, decorative elements, and appropriate ornamentation regardless of zoning classifications.*
- f. *All sides of buildings which are visible from any public right-of-way will incorporate façade treatments, finishes, and features which reflect the quality of the overall design. Large windowless facades detract from the building’s aesthetic value and will be avoided.*
- h. *Roof-mounted mechanical equipment will be screened from view in all cases. Window mounted air conditioning units are generally discouraged and will not be permitted to face any major thoroughfare. Conduits or electrical meters will be screened whenever possible.*

As part of the project, Cornerstone House of Prayer has enclosed the front porch of the building, using floor-to-ceiling windows. This modification provides aesthetic and architectural interest. The newly enclosed sunroom (approximately 374 square feet) triggers a Street Frontage Improvement Agreement (SFIA) pursuant to City Code Section 8-9-6 (Improvements to Existing Buildings).

**Figure 8. Previous Elevation vs As-Built / Proposed Elevation**



The existing building has a roof mounted air conditioning unit above the kitchen, visible from the public right-of-way. To be consistent with the Development Guide guidance for rooftop equipment, Staff has included COA #4 to Attachment 2 of the Staff Report. The applicant shall be responsible for coordinating with the Planning Division regarding the required screening.

The subject project includes the memorialization of the exterior elevations for Cornerstone House of Prayer, including the proposed wall sign, addition of the newly enclosed front patio / sunroom porch (approximately 374 square feet), and color scheme. Additionally, the project includes permitting of a 160 square foot, 8-foot-tall sea-land container within the parking lot.

#### 5. *Color Selections*

- a. *Color schemes should be relatively simple. Use of a single base color for a building is preferred. Use of only one or two accent colors is encouraged, except where precedent has been set for using more than two colors as an in some architectural styles. The complexity of the accent color scheme should be appropriate to the architectural style and period of the building.*
- b. *Color schemes should be developed that coordinate and unify all façade and roofline elements such as signs, ornamentation, vents, chimneys, gutters, downspouts, cornices, awnings, windows, entrances, etc.*
- c. *Using the color scheme to establish a sense of overall composition for the building within its context is strongly encouraged.*

As proposed, the project will restore and improve the exterior of the existing building. The exterior will remain a beige-gray color (“Edge”) and trim elements will be painted black. The color scheme will unify all roofline elements and demonstrate a pedestrian orientation along Smith Flat Road.

The color scheme is simple, with a beige-gray base color for the siding and black trim elements, including windows, roofline, and posts. The color scheme will unify all roofline elements and demonstrate a pedestrian orientation along Smith Flat Road and improve the overall pedestrian orientation from Smith Flat Road.

The proposed sea-land container (as-built) is currently a light cream-beige color. The proposed color is complementary to the color of the existing building; however, to be consistent with screening guidance for storage areas, Staff have included COA #5 for the screening of the sea-land container (additional discussion below).

### V: Specific Site Improvements

#### A. *General Site Design Guidelines*

1. *Parking Facilities*
3. *Sidewalks and Pedestrian Circulation*

As previously discussed, the Applicant shall be responsible for working with City Planning and Engineering to revise the parking lot to accommodate the required parking stalls. Staff will evaluate the submitted parking plan with respect to guidelines for parking facilities and pedestrian circulation.

#### 6. *Screening*

- a. *All storage, loading and utility areas, as well as meters, backflow prevention devices, and other mechanical equipment shall be screened from view from all public rights-of-way. Acceptable screening materials include plant materials as listed in Appendix ‘A’, landscape berms, or walls that complement the site’s*

*architecture at heights, which in no way obstruct the vision of motorists or pedestrians. Chain link fencing or chain link with redwood slats are not acceptable screening materials.*

*Screening shall be provided in such a manner as to allow access as necessary for operation and maintenance. Clearances shall be in accordance with the requirements of the appropriate utilities.*

The proposed sea-land container (as-built) is located west of the existing building, along the rear (southern) boundary of the subject parcel. The location is visible from the public right-of-way along Smith Flat Road. The existing color of the sea-land container is a cream / beige.

Given the location of the sea-land container with respect to the public right-of-way, Staff have included COA #5 requiring a decorative wood fence to screen the container. Staff discussed the potential condition with the applicant prior to the public hearing.

- b. Outdoor refuse collection areas, mechanical equipment and propane tanks shall be screened with live landscape materials in planters of at least eight (8') feet in width along three (3) sides of the unit, except where one side of the utility or equipment area is a building. Provide access in accordance with the requirements of the regulation utility. In commercial areas, mechanical equipment, backflow prevention devices and propane tanks should be accommodated underground wherever possible.*

*Trash enclosure structures shall be integrated with the design of the building through the use of consistent materials and detailing. Whenever possible, adjacent developments should coordinate joint refuse collection facilities, providing access and visual and physical amenities in addition to traditional usage as service or delivery access points.*

Currently the subject property does not include designated outdoor refuse areas or a trash enclosure. The project application was circulated for review by El Dorado Disposal. Staff received comments indicated that a trash enclosure, some form of protection between dumpsters and pedestrian vehicles should be incorporated into the site plan. Additionally, trash enclosures help with preventing illegal dumping. Staff has incorporated COA #6, for the inclusion of a trash enclosure, to address these comments.

In addition, on the portion of the roof facing the public-right-of way (located above the existing kitchen) is an AC unit. To be consistent with the Development Guide guidance on rooftop equipment, Staff has included COA #4 to Attachment 2 of the Staff Report. The applicant shall be responsible for coordinating with the Planning Division regarding the required screening.

### XIII: Signage

#### A. General Guidelines

1. *Signs will be maintained in good condition, including the display surface. Signs should be kept clean, legible, and free of graffiti or other disfigurements.*

2. *All signs should be of professional quality, utilizing materials and finishes and trim elements that complement those used in adjacent architecture and site design.*
4. *Signs for individual tenants should be well designed with a consistent theme and should be logically placed on the building.*

The proposed sign is of professional quality and shall be affixed to the building in a logical manner, facing Smith Flat Road to provide adequate advertising and identification for Cornerstone House of Prayer. Moreover, as previously discussed, the sign complies with the City's General Sign Regulations for wall signs.

**Environmental Review:** The City has reviewed this request and has determined that it is categorically exempt from environmental review pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Section 15301 (Existing Facilities), in that the project includes the placement of on premises signs that shall not result in an expansion of the existing use.

### **RECOMMENDED PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION**

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission take the following action:

- I. Adopt the Staff Report as part of the Public Record.
- II. The project request is exempt from environmental review, in that the project qualifies for a Categorical Exemption under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Section 15303 (New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures), in that the project includes the conversion of existing small structures where only minor modifications are made to the exterior of the structure and the placement of an accessory structure (sea-land container) on-site.
- III. Make the following findings in support of the Conditional Use Permit (CUP) 24-03 request:
  1. The project site, 2020 Smith Flat Road (APN 049-11-031), contains an existing single-story 3,814 square foot commercial building located within the 10,000 Single-Family Residential / Airport Overlay (R1-10/AO) Zone previously used a community hall (Hangtown Grange).
  2. The proposed place of worship is desirable to the public and will result in improvements to the quality of life of Placerville residents. Further, the proposed use will not be detrimental to the health, safety, and general welfare of the public or otherwise injurious to the environment or property or improvements within the area.
  3. The proposed project is substantially compatible and in harmony with the City of Placerville's General Plan and, as amended and recommended by Staff, with Title 10 (Zoning Ordinance) of the City's Municipal Code.
  4. The proposed project will not be detrimental to surrounding properties and land uses.

IV. Make the following findings in support of the Site Plan Review (SPR) 24-05 request:

1. The project request as amended by Staff is consistent with the General Plan Community Design Element, Goal J, as well as Zoning Ordinance Section 10-4-17 (Sign Regulations) and the City of Placerville Development Guide for signs, in that the proposed signs are of professional quality, provide adequate signage for the tenant(s), and are placed on the building in a logical manner.
2. The project request is consistent with the Placerville General Plan Community Design Element Goal B, in that the project shall enhance and continue the use of an existing institutional use building. The project is also consistent with Goal I, Policy 1 of the Natural, Cultural, and Scenic Resources Element as the project shall contribute to the quality of life to Placerville's residents.
3. The project, as conditioned, is consistent with the purpose, intent, and criteria of Zoning Ordinance Section 10-4-4: Parking and Loading, Section 10-4-9: Site Plan Review, and Section 10-4-17: Sign Regulations.
4. The project, as conditioned, is consistent with the City of Placerville Development Guide for Architectural Design and Specific Site Improvements as described in the Staff Report dated November 19, 2024.
5. The project site is heavily treed and would not benefit from additional landscaping in the parking lot.
6. Approval is based on the analysis provided in Staff's November 19, 2024 report to the Planning Commission, and limited to compliance with the project description, Applicant Submittal Package, and Conditions of Approval.

V. Conditionally approve CUP 24-03 and SPR 24-05 based on the project information and findings included in the Staff Report, and subject to the recommended Conditions of Approval included in Attachments 1 and 2 of the Staff Report dated November 19, 2024.

**ATTACHMENTS**

1. [Conditional Use Permit \(CUP\) 24-03 Recommended Conditions of Approval](#)
2. [Site Plan Review \(SPR\) 24-05 Recommended Conditions of Approval](#)
3. [Application Plan Set](#)
4. [CUP Questionnaire Responses](#)
5. [SPR Project Narrative Description](#)