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Planning Commission Staff Report

Meeting Date: April 7, 2026

Prepared By: Carole Kendrick, Director of Development Services

PROJECT INFORMATION SUMMARY

Case File: Site Plan Review (SPR) 83-05R (Taco Bell)

Request: Consideration of request to: (1) remodel of the existing fast-food restaurant and drive-through at 1240 Broadway (APN 004-261-022) in the Hangtown Village Square shopping center to reduce indoor seating from 50 to 25 seats, maintain the existing drive-through lane redesigned for a maximum 9-car onsite stack, reduce onsite parking stalls from 9 to 6, and implement site improvements including new ADA-compliant ramps with guardrails, sidewalks, curbs, bollards, menu board relocation and new speaker/OCB pedestal, clearance bar, repainted directional arrows and 4"-wide parking stall lines, refaced pylon sign, and landscaping to match existing planting in the Highway Commercial/Airport Overlay zone.

Summary Recommendation: Staff recommends that the Planning Commission open the continued public hearing, take testimony, and approved Site Plan Review 83-05-R for the Taco Bell remodel located at 1240 Broadway Avenue (APN: 004-261-022), including the Class 1 Exemption under CEQA Guidelines §15301 (Existing Facilities).

<u>Property Owner:</u>	Thomas Concord CA LLC
<u>Applicant:</u>	VMI Architecture – Philip Moss
<u>Address:</u>	1240 Broadway
<u>APN:</u>	004-261-022
<u>Lot Area:</u>	0.29 acres
<u>General Plan Designation:</u>	Highway Commercial (HWC)
<u>Zoning:</u>	Highway Commercial/Airport Overlay (HWC/AO)
<u>Existing Use:</u>	Quick Service Restaurant with a drive-thru
<u>Environmental Document:</u>	Categorically Exempt per §15031
<u>Decision Making</u>	Placerville Zoning Ordinance §10-4-9(G)

BACKGROUND

The project was originally approved in 1983 (CUP 83-07 / SPR 83-05) and has undergone prior amendments in 2003 and 2004. At the March 3, 2026, Planning Commission meeting, the Commission heard a full presentation and public discussion on the Taco Bell remodel. Staff reviewed the January 12, 2026, Engineering memo concerns regarding signing/stripping notes and queue management.

The applicant and Engineering Department representatives confirmed collaboration on revisions. All parties expressed general support for moving forward, with explicit agreement to work together on enforceable queue procedures, final “keep clear” striping notes, and minor plan clarifications. No opposition was voiced, and the Commission directed staff and the applicant to finalize the revisions for the April 7 meeting.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant, Philip Moss with VMI Architecture representing Thomas Concord CA LLC, submitted an application proposes a remodel of the existing Taco Bell restaurant located at 1240 Broadway within the Hangtown Village Square shopping center. The remodel includes:

- The remodeled building footprint (2,215 SF, no net expansion), drive-through lane with 9-car stacking, ingress-only Broadway access, reduction to 9 parking stalls (reciprocal agreement noted), ADA ramps/paths, bollards, menu board/speaker pedestal, and clearance bar. Key notes confirm existing elements to remain and new elements for compliance. The layout integrates with the shopping center’s shared parking and circulation.
- Interior remodel with 25 new seats which is a reduction from the 50 existing seats, kitchen/prep/service areas optimized for drive-through efficiency, and no expansion of habitable space. Maintaining the existing drive-through lane, designed to accommodate a maximum stack of 9 vehicles within the contained drive-through area.
- Proposed and demo elevations maintain the existing architectural character (metal siding, stone wainscot, parapet cap) with refaced pylon sign and removal of obsolete canopies. Color and material schedule matches the center.

The drive-through lane exceeds Taco Bell's maximum requirement of space for 5 cars between the order point and pick-up window, providing efficient operation. The applicant has submitted a Queue Management Program narrative outlining operational mitigations for queue overflow, including adding equipment, employees, curbside mobile pick-up, and promoting pre-order online usage.

The project is a revision to the approved Site Plan Review (SPR) 83-05, originally granted in 1983 alongside Conditional Use Permit (CUP) 83-07 for the construction of a fast-food restaurant with drive-through. This revision was submitted on July 31, 2024, and has followed the timeline provided below:

SITE DESCRIPTION

The 0.29-acre (12,632 square foot) site is located at 1240 Broadway in the Hangtown Village Square shopping center, adjacent to businesses such as McDonald's, Starbucks, and other retail uses. The site is developed with an existing Taco Bell restaurant and drive-through, with access from Broadway (ingress only) and shared circulation with the shopping center. The site is relatively flat, with existing utilities (sewer manhole, gas meter, water meter, electrical switchgear, trash enclosure, fire hydrant, storm drain inlet) to remain.

PROJECT SETTING

The subject property is zoned Highway Commercial/Airport Overlay (HWC/AO) with a General Plan designation of Highway Commercial (HWC). Surrounding properties have the same zoning and land use designations as the subject property. The site features include the existing quick service restaurant with a drive-thru, parking areas, and landscaping.

The project setting can also be seen in the following materials attached to March 3, 2026, staff report:

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

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	Quick Service Restaurant with drive-thru (Taco Bell)	Highway Commercial (HWC)	Highway Commercial (HWC)
NORTH	Broadway and US 50	N/A	N/A
SOUTH	Retail Shopping Center (Hangtown Village Square)	Highway Commercial (HWC)	Highway Commercial (HWC)
EAST	Commercial (Wells Fargo)	Highway Commercial (HWC)	Highway Commercial (HWC)
WEST	Quick Service Coffee Shop with drive-thru (Starbucks)	Highway Commercial (HWC)	Highway Commercial (HWC)

PROJECT ANALYSIS

General Plan Consistency: The General Plan designates the site as Highway Commercial, emphasizing efficient circulation, minimal traffic impacts, and compatibility with adjacent uses. Policies in the Circulation Element require developments to mitigate traffic congestion, and the Community Design Element promotes harmonious site improvements

Zoning Consistency: The project is located in the HWC/AO (Highway Commercial/Airport Overlay) zone, where fast-food restaurants with drive-throughs are permitted subject to CUP and SPR. The proposal conforms with density, setbacks, and height standards but requires evaluation for traffic, parking, and site design.

Elevations

The proposed elevations maintain the existing building massing and architectural character while refreshing finishes for compatibility with the shopping center. Key changes include:

- Exterior walls and edge trim painted Benjamin Moore “Hanging Village Square Ivy Green” (semi-gloss) with accent walls in “Hanging Village Square Dark Green.”
- Metal canopies, trellis, and railings in Benjamin Moore “Pittsburgh Heavy Cream” or “Black.”
- Stone wainscot and parapet cap power-washed and retained; new stone wainscot matches existing where infill occurs.
- Removal of obsolete canopies, drive-up windows, and select signage elements, with infill using wood framing and matching finishes.
- Flying arch, trellis, and roof elements power-washed, primed, and painted to match.
- All painting follows the exterior finish schedule, ensuring visual harmony and durability.

Landscaping

The preliminary landscape plan retains the majority of existing planting (1,237 square feet) and adds/refurbishes 580 square feet for a total of 1,817 square feet (13.2% of the site). The plant schedule uses low-water-use species (e.g., *Chondropetalum tectorum*, *Dietes vegeta*, *Nandina domestica* ‘Harbour Dwarf’, *Rhaphiolepis umbellata* ‘Minor’, *Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*, *Festuca ovina glauca*) with groundcovers and ornamental grasses selected for visibility, buffers between ramp/drive aisle, and aesthetic blending with the center. Irrigation is retrofitted to meet Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance requirements. Existing trees and shrubs remain where possible.

Signage

Signage is limited to the refaced pylon sign (150 square feet allowable) and new menu board/canopy system. Total proposed sign area is 57.9 square feet (well under the 85 square feet allowance based on 42'-5" frontage). Murals and graphics are incorporated on elevations for brand refresh without additional sign area. The menu includes detailed foundation, canopy, and speaker post details compliant with ADA and traffic requirements. Signage under separate permit; all elements match the center’s master sign plan.

Drive-Through Queuing and Traffic: The proposed drive-through accommodates 9 vehicles, an increase from the original 4-car stack discussed in 1983. However, a traffic study observed up to 12 vehicles during peak periods. The Engineering Department notes:

- Revised plans include 20-foot-wide ingress with "in only" arrows and "do not block intersection" hatching but lack a note for "keep clear" signing/stripping.
- Without committed procedures for queues exceeding 9 vehicles, the project could cause backups onto Broadway, violating the original 1983 condition.

The applicant's Queue Management Program includes:

- Exceeding maximum 5-car space between order and pick-up.
- Increasing stacking to 9 cars.
- Operational mitigations (e.g., second order line, additional staff, curbside pick-up, pre-order promotion).

Parking: The site reduces onsite stalls from 9 to 6, relying on a reciprocal agreement with the shopping center. The parking analysis provided shows:

USE	AREA SF	REQUIRED PARKING	PARKING #	PER 200 SF	PROVIDE
Shopping	31,600	1 per 200 sf	158	158	98
McDonalds	4,200	1 per 50 sf + 1 per 4 seats	96	21	34
Starbuck's	2,000	1 per 50 sf + 1 per 4 seats	48	10	26
Taco Bell	2,215	1 per 50 sf + 1 per 4 seats	57	11	10
Shopping 2	5,200	1 per 200 sf	26	26	74
Shopping 3	4,000	1 per 200 sf	20	20	25
Parking Needed:			405	246	267

Total parking at the center is approximately 267 spaces but would be required based on the uses to provide 405, indicating a potential deficiency. While reciprocal agreements identified in the property agreement (see Attachment C – Attachment K) allow shared parking, the reduction may exacerbate peak-hour issues, especially with reduced seating shifting emphasis to drive-through.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The Taco Bell remodel project qualifies for a Class 1 Categorical Exemption under CEQA Guidelines §15301 (Existing Facilities), as it involves minor alterations to an existing restaurant structure with no net expansion of use (building footprint remains the same at 2,215 sq ft exterior face of stud of habitable space, indoor seating reduced from 50 to 25, and drive-through lane maintained with operational enhancements). This exemption presumes no significant

environmental effect and requires no further CEQA review (e.g., Negative Declaration or EIR) unless an exception under §15300.2 applies.

Post-SB 743 (effective 2020), transportation impacts under CEQA are evaluated primarily using Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) rather than automobile delay, congestion, or Level of Service (LOS); pure traffic backups or drive-through queue overflows causing congestion on Broadway do not constitute a significant impact solely on that basis, as SB 743 explicitly removes LOS/delay as a CEQA metric (CEQA Guidelines §15064.3). The project's redesign (9-car onsite stacking exceeding Taco Bell's 5-car maximum between order and pick-up, plus Queue Management Program measures like added staff/equipment, curbside mobile pick-up, and pre-order promotion) likely maintains or reduces VMT by improving efficiency and shifting reliance from drive-through to other channels, with no substantial increase in total vehicle travel anticipated from this remodel.

The unusual circumstances exception (§15300.2(c)) could theoretically apply if substantial evidence shows a reasonable possibility of significant effects due to site-specific factors (e.g., the site's history of circulation concerns from 1983 approvals or potential secondary safety hazards from queues), but post-SB 743 case law and guidance emphasize that congestion alone is insufficient to trigger this or disqualify the exemption—impacts must tie to VMT, air quality, GHG emissions, or other non-delay effects (e.g., safety risks supported by data like accident rates). Cumulative impacts (§15300.2(b)) or location-based exceptions (§15300.2(a)) are unlikely here, as the site is in a developed commercial area without apparent sensitive resources.

Overall, the project does not trigger full CEQA review beyond the proposed categorical exemption, as circulation/queuing issues are addressed operationally and do not rise to significant environmental effects under current law; any remaining concerns (e.g., peak queues up to 12 vehicles per the traffic study) fall under local permitting authority (e.g., the 1983 condition for potential hearing on alternatives or closure) rather than CEQA mandates. If new evidence emerges (e.g., VMT increase or documented safety hazards), the exemption could be reevaluated, but based on available information, it remains appropriate.

PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

Property owners located within a 300-foot radius of the project site were notified of the public hearing on February 20, 2026, with a 10-day hearing notice in addition to a public notice in the Mountain Democrat (see Attachment C – Attachment G).

The Planning Department received one email from Steve Puthuff requesting a continuation prior to the first meeting (see Attachment C – Attachment J). 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.

The project was continued to the April 7, 2026, meeting at the March 3, 2026, Planning Commission meeting after public testimony and deliberations.

DECISION MAKING AUTHORITY

The Planning Commission is authorized under Zoning Ordinance Section 10-4-9(G) to act upon all applications within the City.

The planning commission may approve, approve with conditions, or disapprove the application for a building permit or other required approval in any matter subject to its scope of authority after considering whether the following criteria are met. These criteria are not intended to supersede any requirements in the city's construction regulations, restricting imagination, innovation, or variety, but rather to assist in focusing on design principles which can result in creative solutions to assist in promoting the purpose of this title.

RECOMMENDED PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION

Hold a public hearing and take public testimony; and,

Option 1:

1. Approve Site Plan Review (SPR) 83-05R subject to the conditions of approval.

Option 2:

1. Deny based on determinations that the project remains inconsistent with the 1993 conditions of approval, General Plan circulation policies, or that the Queue Management Program is still insufficient.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Development Plan
- B. Conditions of Approval
- C. March 3, 2026, Planning Commission Staff report for SPR83-05-R

INCORPORATED BY REFERENCE

City of Placerville General Plan
City of Placerville Zoning Ordinance
Contents of City of Placerville Planning Department Project File SPR83-05, SPR83-05R and CUP83-07