



COUNTY OF LAKE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
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Item #6a
9:05 a.m.
August 28, 2025

STAFF REPORT

TO: County of Lake
Planning Commission

FROM: Mireya G. Turner, Community Development Director
Laura Hall, Senior Planner

DATE: August 28, 2025

SUBJECT: Consideration of Major Use Permit (PL-25-282) for a Commercial Special Event to allow events including serving food and wine; located at 3210 and 3280 Big Valley Road, Kelseyville 95451 (APN 008-037-30 & 008-037-31); Applicant: Mara Mehlman.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Site Plan
2. Draft Conditions of Approval
3. Public Comments
4. Tribal Comments

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Applicant proposes a major use permit for a commercial special event use to allow special events including farm-to-table dining and fine wine events. The site is located in Kelseyville and includes two parcels. Project activities would occur on the parcel with the single-family home and include hosting up to 96 events annually with a maximum of eight events per month. The parking area includes eight spaces, including one space for accessible parking. All reservations would be made in advance through ticketed sales to ensure a walk-in-free environment. Hours of operation would be from 4:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. with guest arrival at 5:00 p.m. and departures by 9:30 p.m. Events would take place indoors in an existing dedicated dining room. Each dinner would be fully staffed by the two owners of the property with no employees. Construction and improvement activities would include a graveled parking area with an eight-car capacity, an underfloor chef's kitchen in the undeveloped area of home, a proposed dining area, and a reconstructed patio. Improvements would include outfitting the chef's kitchen, plating room, indoor dining area, plus incorporation of Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant amenities. Water would be supplied from a groundwater well located on the adjacent APN 008-037-31 which is vacant. Wastewater would go to an onsite septic system on the main parcel APN 008-037-30. The vacant parcel also has two agricultural wells.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

<u>Project Title:</u>	Harmony
<u>Permit Numbers:</u>	Major Use Permit (PL-25-282)
<u>Applicant Name & Address:</u>	Mara Mehlman 3210 and 3280 Big Valley Road Kelseyville, CA 95451
<u>Property Owner:</u>	Same as Applicant
<u>Project Location:</u>	Same as above
<u>Assessor's Parcel Number(s) (APNs):</u>	008-037-30 & 008-037-31
<u>Parcel Size:</u>	±5.27 and 5.32 acres
<u>General Plan Designation:</u>	Agricultural A
<u>Zoning District(s):</u>	"A" Agricultural
<u>Flood Zone:</u>	Not mapped
<u>Hazards:</u>	Not mapped on State or Local Fire Hazard Severity Zone Viewer

Project Overview

The Applicant proposes hosting special events on property in Kelseyville which would include an event to serve farm-to-table food utilizing vegetables and fruits from the property, and fine wine including but not limited to, from local wineries. The project would include hosting up to 96 special events per year with a maximum of eight cars per event, which could generate up to 4 people per car. All reservations would be made in advance through ticketed sales. Hours of operation would be from 4:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., with guest arrival at 5:00 p.m. and departures by 9:30 p.m. Events would take place indoors in a dedicated dining room with background music. Each dinner would be fully staffed by the two owners of the property (no employees). Figure 1 includes a Vicinity Map and Figure 2 includes the Site Map (Attachment 1).

Construction and Improvement Activities

Construction and improvement activities would include a graveled parking area with an 8-car capacity with one accessible (ADA) space, an underfloor chef's kitchen in undeveloped area of home, a proposed dining area, and a reconstructed patio.

Improvements include outfitting the chef's kitchen, plating room, indoor dining area, plus incorporation of ADA compliant amenities, and surfacing the parking area.

Road Access

The site is accessed from Big Valley Road which is a county owned and maintained roadway that is classified as a Rural Minor Collector Road:

“Minor collectors are community travel and collection of traffic from local roads providing access to higher density residential areas, local commercial facilities, neighborhood parks, and schools.”¹

The proposed parking area would be located 30 feet from a recorded waterway that is classified as a Riverine (R4XBCx) on the U.S. Fish and Wildfire Service Wetlands Mapper. This is an intermittent waterway (contains flowing water only part of the year) runs along the entire western property line of the parcel with the house. The parking area would accommodate eight vehicles and would be surfaced with gravel.

Water Source and Septic

There are three groundwater wells on the adjacent property at APN 008-037-31 which is also owned by the Applicant. One of the wells is used for domestic purposes and the other two are agricultural wells. It is estimated that approximately 7.5 gallons of water would be used per meal served² for a total of 18,432 gallons per year.

Accommodation would include an ADA restroom. As shown on the site plans (Attachment 1), the housing is on septic and the tank has a capacity of 1500 gallons with a 500-gallon pump tank. All plumbing has water savers. Therefore, it is estimated that only 1.28 gallons would be used per toilet flush³, and 1.0 gallon per handwashing for a total of 3,502 gallons per year.

Historically, the entire site was planted with pear trees which required substantially more water than what is currently being proposed. In addition, the residence is 5,199 sq. ft. with six bedrooms and five bathrooms, with only the two owners residing there. Even with the proposed events, domestic water use would not exceed what was historically used on the property.

Topography/ Vegetation

The entire site was previously planted with pear trees, so it has been disturbed. Topography of the site is flat with 0 to 10% slopes. Onsite vegetation consists of non-

¹ As defined in the 2008 Lake County General Plan.

² AWWA Research Foundation and American Water Works Association. 2000. *Commercial and Institutional End Uses of Water*. Note: an average was taken.

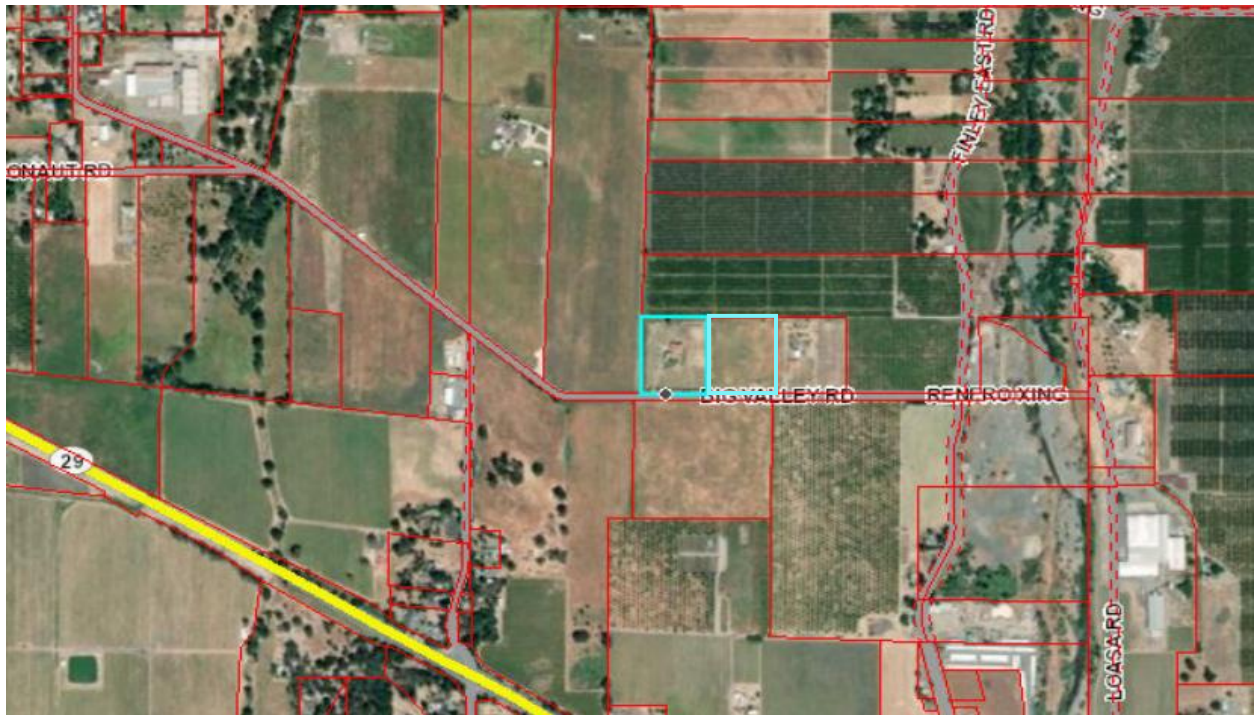
³ Environmental Protection Agency. 2025. Residential Toilets. Available online at: <https://www.epa.gov/watersense/residential-toilets#tab-1>.

native grass and shrubs that border the boundary line, and trees near the residence. As mentioned previously, there is a recorded waterway (Riverine) that runs along the western property line of the parcel with the house. However, the parking area would be setback 30 feet from the waterway.

Surrounding Neighbors

The approximate size of the parcels are 5.27 acres, and 5.32 acres. There is a residence to the east approximately 679 feet from the project site's home. Another residence is located approximately 1,423 feet to the east, and 1,680 feet to the southwest. This is a rural area of Lake County with large parcels and single-family residences with agricultural activities.

Figure 1: Vicinity Map



Source: Lake County GIS Portal, 2025.



PROJECT SETTING

The parcels are located in central western Lake County in the unincorporated community of Kelseyville. Access to the site is from county maintained Big Valley Road. There are single-family homes with agricultural crops surrounding the project site except to the south where there is fallowed land. Historical drainage occurs approximately 420 feet to the southwest of the property. Vegetation includes non-native scrubs, grasses, and trees.

Surrounding Zoning Designations and Uses (Figure 3):

- North: "A" Agricultural: Land historically used for single-family residential and agricultural crops.
- South: "A" Agricultural: Land historically used for agricultural crops.
- East: "A" Agricultural: Land historically used for single-family residential and agricultural crops.
- West: "A" Agricultural: Land historically used for single-family residential and agricultural crops.

Figure 3: Zoning Map of Site and Area



Source: Lake County GIS Portal, 2025.

PROJECT ANALYSIS

General Plan Conformity

The project site's general plan land use designation is A. As proposed, the project supports the following goals and policies of the Lake County 2008 General Plan.

Chapter 3 - Land Use

Goal LU-3: To provide adequate land in a range of residential densities to accommodate the housing needs of all income groups expected to reside in the County and ensure a high quality of development.

- Policy LU-3.4 Residential Agriculture Uses. The County shall limit lands designated for agricultural use to only allow single-family residences and quarters for farm laborers as secondary uses, agricultural tourism related uses, and agricultural support services.

Response: Although agricultural tourism is not defined in the Lake County 2008 General Plan, according to the United States Department of Agriculture, "Agritourism is a form of commercial enterprise that links agricultural production and/or processing with tourism to attract visitors onto a farm, ranch, or other agricultural business for the purposes of entertaining or educating the visitors while generating income for the farm, ranch, or business owner". The proposed Special Event, Commercial, would attract visitors to the property for the purpose of entertaining and serving farm-to-table food and wine some sourced from local wineries.

Goal LU-6: To maintain a healthy and diverse local economy that meets the present and future employment, shopping, recreational, and service needs of Lake County residents.

- Policy LU-6.1 Diverse Economic Base. The County shall actively promote the development of a diversified economic base by continuing to promote agriculture, recreation services, and commerce, and by expanding its efforts to encourage industrial and non- industrial corporate development, and the development of geothermal resources.

Response: The proposed project would add to the diversified economic base in Lake County and promote agriculture. The Applicant would host up to 96 dining events per year with a maximum of eight vehicles per event by reservation-only (no walk-ins). Hours of operation would be from 4:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. with guest arrival at 5:00 p.m. and departure by 9:30 p.m. Dinners would be held indoors in the designated dining room. Events would be staffed by the owners.

Chapter 12 – Agricultural Resources

Goal AR-3: To provide opportunities for agri-tourism that is beneficial to the County and its agricultural industry and is compatible with the long-term viability of agriculture.

- Policy AR-3.1 Visitor-Related Agricultural Uses. The County should establish criteria for and amend the zoning ordinance to allow development of agricultural tourism facilities, as long as the facility is secondary and incidental to the commercial agricultural use on that site and the tourism activity does not negatively

impact agricultural operations on adjacent lands, based upon parcel size, proposed use and the parcel's ability to provide adequate buffer zones.

- Small-Scale Facilities. Facilities may be permissible if they meet the following conditions (in addition to a standard site suitability assessment as part of a normal major use permit):
 - The facility is approved subject to maintaining an agriculturally oriented theme
 - The use is compatible with existing agricultural uses in the area and does not adversely impact neighboring agricultural operations
 - The use does not require the extension of urban services (sewer and/or water service)
 - No motorized off-road vehicles for recreational purposes (no use restrictions when used to support agricultural operations)

Response: The proposed project would maintain an agriculturally oriented theme with a portion of the food coming from the existing garden and fruit trees on the property. Although the project would include hosting up to 96 events annually with a maximum of eight events per month, no live amplified voice or music is being proposed. The nearest neighbor is over 679 feet to the east. The project is not on public sewer or water. There would be no motorized off-road vehicles.

Kelseyville Area Plan Conformity

The project site is in Kelseyville, so it is subject to the objectives and policies for agriculture in the Kelseyville Area Plan.

Agriculture

Objective 3.5: To encourage agricultural activities and development in the Kelseyville Planning Area and limit the intrusion of incompatible development into prime agricultural areas.

- Policy 3.5a: Development shall be directed to areas which will minimize impacts to prime farmland.

Response: The project's parcels are bordered on the north to Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance, and to the east, south, and west by Farmland of Local Importance. However, the Lake County Code, Zoning Article 27, allows for a Special Event, Commercial, with a major use permit on lands designated as Agriculture. There would be eight vehicles at a time visiting the site, and parking would be inside of the property. Historically, pears were grown on properties which used a lot of water compared to the proposed use which will only use less than 21,934 gallons per year. The proposed project is not expected to impact surrounding agricultural lands.

Zoning Ordinance Conformity

The project site's zoning designation is "A" Agriculture. As proposed, the project conforms with the following requirements of the Lake County Code Zoning Ordinance.

Article 5, Agriculture or "A"

Response: The project site has an Agriculture "A" zoning designation. Under Article 5, SEC. 21-5, subsection 5.4 the following use is permitted subject to first obtaining a major use permit.

- *(f) Those uses permitted in the "A" district with a major use permit in Table B, Article 27.*

Article 27, Uses Generally Permitted

(ah) Special Event, Commercial: None

Response: There are no listed requirements in Article 27 for Special Event, Commercial. However, the project would have to comply with the requirements of Article 5 which requires compliance with Article 41. In addition, the project would also need to comply with the development standards in Article 5 which includes compliance with Article 46 for parking as discussed below.

According to Article 68, a special event is defined as:

- *Special event: An establishment or enterprise involving large assemblages of people or automobiles on private land not specifically designed for such events, including but not limited to a carnival or circus, automobile or foot race, rodeo, outdoor concert, play or festival attracting more than five hundred (500) participants or observers, or a tennis tournament.*

Response: Large assemblages of people are not defined in Article 68. Although the project would not attract the number of people that might attend a festival, it could potentially host up to 96 events annually with a maximum of eight events per month in a responsible manner which might be comparable to an outdoor concert or play in Lake County.

Article 41, Performance Standards

Response: The proposed Special Event, Commercial, is a permitted use with a major use permit. The project Applicant would comply with all local, state, and federal requirements for building and the preparation and serving of food and wine. The proposed parking area would be graveled. Air pollution during construction and operations would be minimal coming from the delivery of gravel and automobiles traveling to the site, and cooking food. The project was sent to the Lake County Air Quality Management District for review and no comments were received. There would be no impact on any activity outside of the project area by producing electromagnetic interference. The project would not generate

any electromagnetic interference as no transmission or receiving radio waves are proposed. Graveling the driveway would actually improve conditions and minimize erosion. The project is approximately 1.5 miles from the Kelseyville Fire Protection District. The project was sent to the Fire Department as well as to the Lake County Community Department, Building Division to the Chief Building Official who is also the Fire Marshall for the County for review and no comments were received. There are no known impacts from fire and explosion hazards. No new lighting is proposed with the project. Any landscaping would comply with the landscaping standards listed in Section 41.9. The project would not include liquid, solid and hazardous waste. Operations would include noise from vehicle traffic. Noise levels would be the same as already on the site. The project would adhere to the Lake County Code, Zoning Article 41, SEC. 21-41, subsection 41.11 requirements for noise. Outdoor storage is not being proposed with this project. This project would not produce any known radioactive waves or substances. The delivery of gravel for the parking area would not include heavy equipment that would cause vibrations. In addition, the nearest neighbor is over 679 feet away.

Attachment 2, which includes the conditions of approval for the proposed project, would ensure that all applicable requirements in the Lake County Code, including those in Article 41, would be adhered to by the Applicant.

Article 46, Regulations for Parking

Article 5 SEC. 21-5, subsection 5.16 (b) Other uses: As provided for in Article 46. (Ord. No. 2128, 1/14/1993; Ord. No. 2305, 10/19/1995). Section 46.5 includes the required number of spaces for residential, commercial, industrial, and public service. Although the type of use proposed is not included in the table, because it will include food and wine, number 4. Restaurant, bar, cocktail lounge was applied to the project which requires the following:

- One (1) space for each fifty (50) square feet of floor area used for seating, dancing and assembly

Response: The parking area would accommodate eight vehicles. Based on that the floor area for the proposed use could not exceed 400 sq. ft. In addition, size requirements would include:

- *A required off-street open parking space shall not be less than nine (9) feet in width and not less than twenty (20) feet in length (9' x 20'), exclusive of access drives or aisles, ramps, posts or other uses of space. Such space shall have a vertical clearance of not less than seven (7) feet. This requirement has been added to the conditions of approval for the project.*

Public Comments

A Request for Review (RFR) was initially sent out on May 19, 2025, for this project under PL-25-81 which was for a minor use permit. However, staff determined that the minor use permit was not the appropriate permit for the project. Therefore, another RFR was sent out on July 16, 2025, for PL-25-282 for a major use permit. All comments are included in

Attachment 3. Comments were received from the Redbud Audubon and Pacific Gas and Electric Company (Attachment 3). There were no adverse comments.

Tribal Comments

As stated above, two RFRs were sent out on this project. No new comments were received on the second RFR from the tribes. The Yocha Dehe sent a letter on June 12, 2025, stating that the project is not within their tribe's aboriginal territories and deferred correspondence to the Big Valley Band of Pomo Indians. A letter was also received by the Habematolel Pomo May 30, 2025, stating that the project is not within their tribe's aboriginal territories and deferred correspondence to the Big Valley Band of Pomo Indians (Attachment 4). no other comments were received as of August 5, 2025.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Pursuant to the California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3, Section 15301 Class 1 Existing Facilities, would be applied to the project as the existing structure would be used for the Special Event, Commercial. In addition, the project would not trigger any of the exceptions in Section 15300.2 based on the following: a) There could be no harm to federal, or state listed endangered or threatened animal or plant species as the only activities would be placing gravel on the parking area. Also, there would be no tree removals; b) There are no other major use permits for the same use currently proposed, previously approved, or anticipated in the foreseeable future near the project site. Therefore, no cumulative impacts would occur; c) There are no known unusual circumstances that would have a significant effect on the environment; d) According to the Caltrans List of Officially Designated County Scenic Highways, Lake County has no officially designated state highways; e) The State's Envirostor database was checked and there are no hazardous waste sites on or adjacent to the project site; f) The project site is not on the California Historical Resources list or the County's Office of Historical Preservation list and there are no other known historical resources present. The Lake County Community Development Department has determined that the project would not have a significant effect on the environment and is therefore exempt from the provisions of CEQA.

FINDINGS FOR APPROVAL

The Planning Commission may only approve or conditionally approve a major use permit if all of the following findings are made:

1. That the establishment, maintenance, or operation of the use applied for will not under the circumstances of the particular case, be detrimental to the health, safety, morals, comfort and general welfare of the persons residing or working in the neighborhood of such proposed use or be detrimental to property and improvements in the neighborhood or the general welfare of the County.

Response: The proposed use is allowed under a Special Event, Commercial in Table B of Article 27. The project was sent to the Lake County Department of Environmental Health for the preparation of food, and to the Kelseyville Fire Protection District and Lake County Fire Marshal for Fire Code requirements. The project would not be detrimental to the health, safety, morals, comfort and general welfare of the people residing or working in the neighborhood of such proposed use or be detrimental to the property or the area with the incorporated conditions of approval.

2. That the site for the project is adequate in size, shape, location, and physical characteristics to accommodate the type of use and level of development proposed.

Response: Article 5 of the Lake County Code allows for a Special Event, Commercial in Article 27 with an approved major use permit. With exception of graveling a parking area, construction/ updates would occur inside of the existing single-family residence and comply with building standards and other requirements of the Lake County Environmental Health Department standards. The gravel parking area would comply with Article 46.

3. That the streets, highways and pedestrian facilities are reasonably adequate to safely accommodate the specific proposed use. (Ord. No. 2128, 1/14/1993)

Response: The site is accessed from county maintained Big Valley Road. The project could result in the generation of 64 vehicle trips per month. Big Valley Road is accessed from Argonaut Road which connects to State Highway 29. Both are paved roads that can accommodate the proposed use.

4. That there are adequate public or private services, including but not limited to fire protection, water supply, sewage disposal, and police protection to serve the project. (Ord. No. 1749, 7/7/1988)

Response: The site is served by on-grid power by PG&E and is on a septic system and has a groundwater well. Kelseyville Fire Protection District provides fire protection services and is 1.5 miles away, and Lake County Sheriff's Department provides law enforcement services and is 6.2 miles away. No expanded services are required for the project site.

5. That the project is in conformance with the applicable provisions and policies of this Code, the General Plan and any approved zoning or land use plan.

Response: This project was evaluated for compliance with the General Plan, the Kelseyville Area Plan, and the zoning ordinance. The project meets all required development standards in Article 5. Compliance with the conditions of approval would ensure all conformity with the aforementioned plans and zoning ordinance.

6. That no violation of Chapters 5, 17, 21, 23 or 26 of the Lake County Code currently exists on the property, unless the purpose of the permit is to correct the violation, or the permit relates to a portion of the property which is sufficiently separate and apart

from the portion of the property in violation so as not to be affected by the violation from a public health, safety or general welfare basis. (Ord. No. 2128, 1/14/1993)

Response: A query of the County's permitting database OpenGov on August 11, 2025, showed no documented code violations on the project site.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommend the Planning Commission take the following actions.

Approve Major Use Permit UP PL-25-282, Harmony with the following findings:

1. That the establishment, maintenance, or operation of the use applied for will not under the circumstances, be detrimental to the health, safety, morals, comfort and general welfare of the persons residing or working in the neighborhood of such proposed use or be detrimental to property and improvements in the neighborhood or the general welfare of the County.
2. The site is adequate in size, shape, location, and physical characteristics to accommodate the type of use and level of development proposed.
3. The streets, highways and pedestrian facilities are reasonably adequate to safely accommodate the proposed use.
4. There are adequate services to serve the project.
5. This project is consistent with the Lake County General Plan, Kelseyville Area Plan, and Lake County Zoning Ordinance.
6. No violation of Chapter 5, 17, 21, 23 or 26 of the Lake County Code currently exists on this property, with a condition of approval implemented.

SAMPLE MOTIONS

Environmental Review

- A. I move that the Planning Commission find the Major Use Permit (PL-25-282) located at 3210 Big Valley Road in Kelseyville (APNs 008-037-30 & 008-037-31) is categorically exempt from CEQA under the California Code of Regulations Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3, Article 19, Section 15301, Class 1, Existing Facilities based on the findings in the staff report

Major Use Permit (PL-25-282) Conformity

- B. I move that the Planning Commission find that the Major Use Permit (PL-25-282) for a Special Event, Commercial to serve food and wine at 3210 Big Valley Road in

Kelseyville (APN 008-037-30 & 008-037-31) based on the findings and subject to the conditions in the staff report.

NOTE: The applicant or any interested person is reminded that the Zoning Ordinance provides for a seven (7) calendar day appeal period. If there is disagreement with the Planning Commission's decision, an appeal to the Board of Supervisors may be filed. The appropriate forms and applicable fee must be submitted prior to 5:00 p.m. on or before the seventh calendar day following the Planning Commission's final determination.