



# STAFF REPORT

## PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

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February 13, 2024

**TO:** Honorable Chair and Commissioners

**FROM:** David Loya, Director of Community Development

**PREPARER:** Joe Mateer, Senior Planner

**DATE:** February 06, 2024

**TITLE:** **Consider Action for a Design Review Permit on proposed installation of a scissor gate near the building's front entrance at 887 and 893 H Street; File No. 234-019-DR**

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### **RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends the Planning Commission open the public hearing, receive a staff report and public comments, and consider approving the Design Review by adopting: 1) a California Environmental Quality Act §15301, Class 1, Existing Facilities environmental review exemption, and then 2) the Action with Findings of Approval, Conditions of Approval, and the approved plans.

### **INTRODUCTION:**

The applicant is proposing an exterior alteration to a portion of an existing commercial structure in the Arcata Plaza Historic District. The proposed project includes the installation of a scissor gate near the building's front entrance. Design Review is required for exterior alterations to existing buildings located in the Arcata Plaza Historic District according to Land Use Code sections 9.53.050.B.1.a, and 9.72.040.B.2.a. The Planning Commission's Action (Attachment A) would authorize the proposed scissor gate improvement as shown in Exhibit 3 of Action.

The proposed security gate is requested to limit access to the building's recessed entryway located on the front building façade during non-business hours. The application states: "*Installation of a security gate to protect storefront entry from repeated clean up of bodily fluid, food waste, etc., and trespassing. This gate can be removed at anytime in the future*".

The project is located on the corner of 9<sup>th</sup> and H<sup>th</sup> Streets with the proposed scissor gate fronting H St. The building was developed in 2002 and was described as having neoclassical and modern style features. It is not designated as a Historic Landmark. The building has a wrought iron balcony railing and fence / gate with horizontal rails and vertical pickets. The building's recessed entryway is about twelve feet wide by six feet deep and nine feet tall. The proposed black metal "scissor" style security gate is about eight feet tall that collapses to either side when open and expands when closed. The security gate when closed is flush with the building façade and does not encroach into the sidewalk. Based on referral comments, a recommended condition of approval requires the security gate be open and secured to the inside of the recessed entryway when the building is occupied. This ensures the security gate does not encroach into the sidewalk when it is open. In addition, this allows those inside the building to exit easily.

The importance of the Arcata Plaza to our community is reflected in the General Plan Land Use, Design and Historical Preservation Elements. The proposed security gate could trigger similar actions by businesses and property owners seeking solutions to address trespassing from community members seeking shelter. City Planning staff is concerned the use of security gates and windows will become the norm for the downtown area and beyond. There is a balance as some may find the proposed design functional and compatible while others may find the design detracts and not enhance the property and surrounding neighborhood. There are about 92 recessed entryways or covered areas within the nine block Arcata Plaza Area Historical District. Entryways are identified in the General Plan and Land Use Code as an amenity or project enhancement for projects in the Commercial – Central zoning district. In some cases, the recessed entries allow a commercial door to swing outwards without encroaching into the rights of way or sidewalks. There are no specific design or development standards for security gates, doors, or windows.

Staff recommends the Commission consider acting on the project based on the application material, staff report, and public testimony. The Action includes open ended Findings of Approval statements the Planning Commission should consider prior to adopting the environmental review determination and final action.

**ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:** As further discussed in the Findings of Approval, the project qualifies for a California Environmental Quality Act §15301, Class 1 Existing Facilities, environmental review exemption.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

- A. Planning Commission Action, Findings, Conditions, Plans (PDF)
- B. Plaza Area Historical District with Entrys (PDF)
- C. Photos submitted February 7, 2024 (PDF)