

DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 26, 2019
TO: City/County Design Review Committee
FROM: Nina Bellucci, Project Planner
SUBJECT: **Preliminary Design Review**
File No.: DRH19-0002, The Redwood Apartments
Address: 3422 Santa Rosa Avenue, Santa Rosa
APN: 134-132-070

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This is a 96-unit affordable infill rental housing project on a 4.11-acre parcel zoned R3 (High Density Residential) B6 13 (13 units per acre density), VOH (Valley Oak Habitat Combining District). The project will utilize a Rental Housing Opportunity Program bonus, which allows up to a 100 percent increase over base density, to achieve the proposed density of 24 units per acre. All 96 units will be affordable to households earning between 30% and 60% of the Area Median Income. The proposal is a by-right permitted use on this site, subject to design review.

Development will consist of four three-story apartment buildings, a 2,874 sf community building, a play area, 174 parking spaces (96 covered), and 40 bike spaces. The project will provide 12 one-bedroom units, 60 two-bedroom units, and 24 three-bedroom units. Ten units will be accessible, four units will be accessible to those with sensory impairment issues, and 22 additional units will be adaptable.

A Mitigated Negative Declaration (Attachment 1) was prepared for this project, and environmental issues are discussed below. Comments received by June 19, 2019, are shown in Attachment 2.

GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY**Land Use**

The parcel's General Plan land use designation of Urban Residential allows multi-family and affordable housing projects as permitted uses. The proposed project includes a 100% density bonus for affordable housing, which results in a total of 96 units (24 du/acres). Under Government Code 65915, the State density bonus law, the County and the City must both find this increased density consistent with their general plans.

Housing Element

The proposed project is consistent with Housing Element policies related to affordable and multi-family housing. It is an affordable infill project, on an underutilized (vacant) site within an Urban Service Area.

Such projects are allowed flexibility in development standards pursuant to State density bonus law and Housing Element Policy HE-3j:

Policy HE-3j: Continue to encourage affordable “infill” projects on underutilized sites within Urban Service Areas by allowing flexibility in development standards pursuant to state density bonus law (Government Code 65915).

The project, including the requests for incentives and concessions described below, is consistent with the Sonoma County General Plan Housing Element.

AREA PLAN CONSISTENCY

The project site is located in the area that is regulated by the South Santa Rosa Area Plan; under that plan, the parcel’s land use designation is Urban Residential, allowing densities ranging from five to 25 units per acre, and allows Rental Housing Opportunity projects consistent with the County’s general plan. The project is consistent with the Area Plan.

ZONING CONSISTENCY

The project site is zoned R3 (High Density Residential). The proposed project is a permitted use in that district.

BACKGROUND

The 4.11 acre parcel is zoned R3 (High Density Residential District) B6 13 DU (13 units/acre density), VOH (Valley Oak Habitat Combining District). The project site is located in the area that is regulated by the South Santa Rosa Area Plan; under that plan, the zoning is R2 Multi-Family Residential. The parcel’s General Plan land use designation is Urban Residential (13 units/acre density).

The project site is located within the sphere of influence of the City of Santa Rosa, within the city’s voter-approved Urban Growth Boundary, and within the county’s designated Urban Service Area. The City of Santa Rosa provides water service upon approval of a City Utility Certificate, and sewer service is provided by the South Park County Sanitation District. Utility certificates may be granted for new sewer and/or water connections when the proposed project use is consistent with the City’s General Plan, is approved by the joint City/County Design Review Committee, and meets the City of Santa Rosa’s development standards. The project site is designated Medium Density Residential (8-18 units/acre density) in the City’s General Plan. The City requires development to be at least at the mid-point of the density range; therefore, the project must provide at least 13 units per acre to receive a Utility Certificate. The project appears to be in conformance with the City of Santa Rosa’s General Plan and development standards, and a Utility Certificate for water service will be issued by the City subject to the project design approved by the City/County Design Review Committee.

SITE CHARACTERISTICS AND DESIGN

The project is level, rectangular in shape, and located in southwest Santa Rosa at the corner of Santa Rosa Avenue and East Robles. The site is vacant and was previously developed as a nightclub. Surrounding parcels are developed with single-family housing and commercial uses.



Plant communities at the site are primarily non-native annual grasslands and seasonal wetlands. To construct the project, three Valley Oaks and one English walnut will be removed from the site to allow room for development, and the landscape plan provides for replacement Valley Oaks as required by the County’s Tree Protection Ordinance. (See discussion under Landscaping, below.)

Preliminary site layout can be found in attachments 3 and 4. Two apartment buildings are proposed to be situated along East Robles Avenue. The community building is proposed to be located on Santa Rosa Avenue. A third apartment building is located in the middle of the site, and a fourth to the rear of the property. Apartment buildings will be three stories, and the community building will be one story. Buildings were situated so that they avoid flood-prone areas proposed in new flood maps.

Two driveways are located at the southwest corner of the property on Santa Rosa Avenue, and at the northeast corner on East Robles Avenue. Two new monument signs will be located near the two driveways.

Development Standards

The project is subject to the design and development standards of the County’s Zoning Ordinance and the South Santa Rosa Area Plan. Under Section 26-89-060(B) of the Zoning Ordinance, and Government Code Section 65915, the project is eligible for four concessions or incentives that would allow a variation in development standards, including covered parking requirements, open space requirements, or setbacks.

Below is a summary of the applicable development standards and the project’s compliance with them or if not, whether an incentive is requested. The most restrictive standard applies:

Table 1: Development Standards

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD	R3	SOUTH SANTA ROSA AREA PLAN	PROPOSED	MEETS STANDARDS	INCENTIVE REQUESTED
BUILDING HEIGHT	40' (3 stories)	18' at min setback (20'); 35' at 40'	39' 4 ½" (3 stories)	No	Yes
LOT COVERAGE	60%	n/a	22%	Yes	
SETBACK - SANTA ROSA AVENUE	15'	Minimum for residential: 35'	12'	No	Yes
SETBACK - EAST ROBLES AVENUE	15'	n/a	5'	No	Yes
SETBACK - SIDE	5'	n/a	10' 2"	Yes	
SETBACK - REAR	10'	n/a	10'	Yes	
PARKING	180 spaces	n/a	174 spaces	No	No ¹
ACCESSIBLE PARKING	8 spaces (1 per 25 required)	n/a	10'	Yes	
OPEN SPACE	14,400 sf (150 sf per unit)	n/a	55,663 sf	Yes	

¹ The Design Review Committee may approve a reduction in required parking.



As demonstrated by the table, the project meets or exceeds all applicable County development standards with the exception of the 40-foot building height limit and the required setbacks from Santa Rosa Avenue and East Robles Avenue. Under Government Code Section 65915, at least three incentives or concessions must be allowed this affordable housing project. Staff recommends that three concessions be approved to allow the following:

1. Building height of 39' 4 ½", exceeding the South Santa Rosa Area Plan limit of 18' at the minimum setback (20') or 35' at 40';
2. Setback along Santa Rosa Avenue of 12', exceeding the 35' setback required by the South Santa Rosa Area Plan; and
3. Setback along East Robles Avenue of 5', exceeding the 15' setback required by the County's zoning ordinance.

Site Plan and Previous Direction to Applicant

The project has been before the Committee for Conceptual Design Review in March of 2019. The Committee directed the applicant to request specific incentives where the project did not meet development standards, as shown above. The Committee also encouraged the applicant to relocate the community building from the center of the site to the front of the site facing Santa Rosa Avenue. The Committee also requested improvements to the building facades to better relate to the street.

The site plan (Attachment 3) reflects the Committee's feedback. The community building has been relocated to Santa Rosa Avenue. One of the four three-story apartment buildings are still located at the corner of Santa Rosa Avenue and East Robles, and as discussed in Development Standards, above, the applicant has requested two incentives to allow increased building height for the apartment building at the corner of East Robles and Santa Rosa Avenue, and reduced setbacks for all structures along Santa Rosa Avenue.

One additional change to the site plan was made in June 2019 to adjust the placement of Building B (toward the southeast corner of the site) to accommodate the proposed (see Attachment 4).

Circulation and Parking

Access will be taken from the two project driveways on Santa Rosa Avenue and East Robles Avenue. Interior drive aisles will be two-way and 26 feet wide, providing sufficient emergency vehicle access.

The project proposes 174 parking spaces, of which 96 would be covered. Per Sec. 26-86-010, parking requirements for an affordable housing project provided pursuant to Section 26-89-050 (Density bonus programs) are:

- 1 space for each studio or 1-bedroom unit; 2 spaces for each 2- or more bedroom unit

This would result in 180 spaces with no requirement for covered parking. The applicant requests that the Design Review Committee allow a reduction of six spaces to allow 174 spaces to be provided; staff recommends that the Committee approve this request.



Landscaping

Landscaping will include drought-tolerant, ornamental, native species complementing the architectural design of the structures (see Attachment 5). Landscaping will comply with the County’s Water-Efficient Landscaping Ordinance. See additional discussion of Tree Protection and Removal, below.

Colors and Materials

The building cladding is proposed as painted cement board shingles and board and batten. Buildings will be painted in earth-tones—medium greys, dark red-browns, beige, and greens, and limestone details will appear at columns and patio walls. The roof is proposed to be grey composite shingles.

Fencing

Along Santa Rosa Avenue and East Robles Avenue, the property will be fenced with a four-foot vertical wrought iron fence. The south and east sides of the property will be fenced with a six-foot dog-eared cedar fence.

Landscaping and Irrigation

The landscaping plans (Attachment 5) indicate that the landscaping will comply with the County’s Water Efficiency Landscape Ordinance (WELO). Screening landscaping is not proposed.

Tree Removal and/or Protection

The County’s Tree Protection Ordinance (Sec. 26-88-030(m)) requires protection of trees over 9 inches; where preservation is not feasible, on-site replacement is required. Where on-site replacement isn’t feasible, an in-lieu fee is required. A qualified arborist prepared a Tree Preservation and Mitigation Report, identified four trees on site requiring protection (three valley oaks and one English walnut), and recommended removal for all four trees.

Table 2: Tree Replacement Required by the Tree Protection Ordinance

Tree	Diameter at Breast Height (dbh)	Arboreal Value (AV)	Replacement Trees Required
Tree 1	15	1	two 15-gallon trees
Tree 2	7.5	0	0
Tree 3	30	4	two 15-gallon trees
Tree 4	38	5	two 15-gallon trees

The project site is located within the boundaries of the Valley Oak Habitat (VOH) Combining District, which was established to protect and enhance valley oaks and valley oak woodlands. Section 26-67-040 (Design review approval in the VOH) requires that, “(w)here any development project within the VOH district is subject to design review pursuant to another provision of this chapter, the design review approval shall include measures to protect and enhance valley oaks on the project site...such measures shall include, but not be limited to, a requirement that valley oaks shall comprise a minimum of fifty percent (50%) of the required landscape trees for the development project.”

All valley oaks are 60 inches or less, and are considered small valley oaks under the VOH district; no replacement or in-lieu fee is required for trees of that size.



Exterior Lighting

The exterior lighting plan (Attachment 6) shows all proposed light fixtures to be downward-facing, and the photometric site plan does not show any light spill onto adjacent sites. Recommended conditions of approval require a detailed lighting plan to be submitted for approval prior to issuance of a building permit.

Grading and Storm Water

The project site is mostly level, sloping at approximately less than one percent from both north to south and west to east. Construction will require minimal cut and fill. On-site mitigation will include bio-retention beds with vegetation and structural soil. The project will be required to meet the City of Santa Rosa's Low Impact Development Design Manual. The project will meet those standards by achieving 100 percent volume capture. See Attachment 7, Preliminary Storm Water Mitigation Plan and Attachment 8, civil drawings, for more information.

Conditions of approval will require the applicant to enter into a Maintenance and Indemnification agreement with the County Department of Transportation and Public Works for any LID drainage features located in the public right-of-way.

Signs

Two new monument signs are proposed at the project driveways on Santa Rosa Avenue and East Robles Avenue. The signs do not exceed the maximum height (six feet) or area (32 square feet). A recommended Condition of Approval will return the sign details, including any illumination, for review and approval prior to issuance of a building permit.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW ISSUES

A Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) has been prepared for this project and is attached for the Committee members' review (Attachment 1). The public comment period began on May 26, 2019, and ended on June 25, 2019. As of June 19, comments had been received from the California Department of Fish & Wildlife, and are shown in Attachment 2. Comments have been incorporated into the recommended Conditions of Approval.

The following noteworthy issues were identified in the MND as requiring mitigation:

Biological Resources

The proposed project site is within the potential range of the California tiger salamander (CTS) as shown on the Santa Rosa Plain Conservation Strategy Map prepared by California Department of Fish & Game. A biological assessment was conducted, which determined that 3.82 acres of the 4.11 acre parcel constitutes habitat suitable to support CTS and would be impacted by the conversion of the site to the residential use. As there are no aquatic habitats providing suitable CTS breeding habitat on the site, there would be no impacts to breeding habitat, but construction of the project would result in elimination of upland habitat for the species. The project is not likely to result in the destruction or adverse modification of designated critical CTS habitat.



Mitigation requires the applicant to compensate for the impact to approximately 3.82 acres potential CTS habitat, consistent with requirements of the Santa Rosa Plain Conservation Strategy and the 2007 Programmatic Biological Opinion. The applicant will also be required to mitigate for the impacts to suitable habitat for special status plant species, including Sonoma sunshine, Burke's goldfields, and Sebastopol meadowfoam, with conservation of an additional 0.37 acres, through the purchase of mitigation conservation bank credits, consistent with the requirements of the 2007 Programmatic Biological Opinion.

The project site contains 0.35 acres of seasonal wetlands potentially within the jurisdiction of the Army Corps of Engineers. Under the recommended Conditions of Approval, the applicant will be required to submit a wetland delineation report for the project to the US Corps, and the applicant will be required to obtain necessary permits from the Corps and the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board to fill the 0.35 acres of seasonal wetlands. On-site mitigation is not feasible for the project; the final wetland mitigation requirements will be determined by the regulatory agencies during their permitting process (minimum 1:1 ratio).

Transportation and Circulation

A traffic impact study was prepared by W-Trans on. The study area included intersections of Santa Rosa Avenue/East Robles Avenue, Santa Rosa Avenue/Todd Road, Todd Road/US 101 North Ramps, South Moorland Avenue/US 101 Overcrossing, and Todd Road/US 101 South Ramps; and Santa Rosa Avenue and East Robles Avenue.

The study intersections currently operate acceptably at Levels of Service (LOS) C or better during peak hours and they would be expected continue operating at the same LOS upon the addition of project-related traffic, based on traffic modeling. The study intersections are expected to operate acceptably without the project under future conditions, except for Santa Rosa Avenue/Todd Road, which would deteriorate to LOS E and F during the am and pm peak hours, respectively. However, under future conditions, with the addition of project-related traffic, the study intersections would operate at the same service levels during both peak hours as without the project. The project would add less than five seconds to the Santa Rosa Avenue/Todd Road average delay, so the impact would be less-than-significant under the County's Guidelines for Traffic Impact Studies.

Regarding alternative forms of transportation, pedestrian, bicycle, and transit facilities serving the project site would be adequate. Sidewalks exist along the project frontage with Santa Rosa Avenue, and would be provided by the project within the project site along East Robles Avenue. Santa Rosa Avenue from Roberts Lake Road to the Santa Rosa city limit is a Class II bikeway. Existing bicycle facilities, together with shared use of minor streets provide adequate access for bicyclists. Transit facilities serving the project site are adequate. Existing transit routes are adequate to accommodate project-generated transit trips and stops are within acceptable walking distance of the site. The project would maintain the existing bus stop on Santa Rosa Avenue with a new on-site pull-out bus stop.

Noise

An Environmental Noise Assessment was prepared by Illingworth & Rodkin, Inc. The Environmental Noise Assessment found that project-generated traffic would result in traffic noise increases of less than



1 dB Ldn at sensitive locations. This increase would not exceed the threshold in the County's guidelines and would not be anticipated to be perceptible or measurable.

Parking spaces would be provided for residents of proposed building in the central, southern, and northeastern portions of the project site. Construction of a barrier at the eastern edge of the project site is expected to reduce the impact of noise generated from the parking areas to the nearest residence to the east.

Noise generated by the play area is not anticipated to exceed Sonoma County standards during daytime or nighttime.

Mitigation measures will reduce impacts from the temporary noise generated by construction activities and impacts from noise generated by mechanical equipment (i.e., air conditioning units).

Outdoor use areas located within 181 feet of the centerline of Santa Rosa Avenue will be exposed to an Ldn in excess of the City's outdoor goal of an Ldn of 60 dBA. This would include the common area along Santa Rosa Avenue. However, the private outdoor spaces, including balconies are far enough from the road and located behind the buildings that they would be exposed to an Ldn of less than 60 dBA. No sound walls are proposed for the project.

Some of the proposed dwelling units could be exposed to exterior Ldn values above 60 dBA and, therefore, measures to reduce interior sound levels, such as the use of sound-rated windows and doors, will be needed to insure compliance with State and County regulations. The project conditions of approval require that a detailed acoustical report be prepared during the architectural design phase and submitted prior to issuance of building permit. The report would identify the specific measures that are being incorporated into the design of specific units to meet City and State acoustical requirements.

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a resolution accepting the Planning Director's determination that the MND is appropriate and adequate for this project and approving the project design, granting the requested incentives and reduction in required parking, subject to the recommended conditions of approval.

ATTACHMENTS

Draft Resolution and Conditions of Approval

1. Mitigated Negative Declaration
2. Comments on Mitigated Negative Declaration, received by June 19, 2019
3. Preliminary Site Plan and Architectural Drawings
4. Site Plan showing change to Building B
5. Preliminary Landscape Plan
6. Electrical Drawings and Lighting Plan
7. Preliminary Storm Water Mitigation Plan
8. Civil Drawings
9. Proposal Statement (cover letters dated January 25, 2019 and April 26, 2019)
10. Public comments received by June 19, 2019

