

CITY OF SANTA ROSA  
PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT  
STAFF REPORT FOR WATERWAYS ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
January 27, 2022

**PROJECT TITLE**

Hyatt Regency Sonoma Wine Country Fence  
and Lighting

**APPLICANT**

Hiran Wirekoon

**ADDRESS/LOCATION**

170 Railroad Street

**PROPERTY OWNER**

Thi Vi Sonoma LLC

**ASSESSOR'S PARCEL NUMBER**

010-760-006

**FILE NUMBER**

DR21-067

**APPLICATION DATE**

November 30, 2021

**APPLICATION COMPLETION DATE**

December 28, 2021

**REQUESTED ENTITLEMENTS**

Minor Design Review

**FURTHER ACTIONS REQUIRED**

Design Review approval and Building  
Permit

**PROJECT SITE ZONING**

Station Mixed Use-Downtown Station  
Area (SMU-DSA)

**GENERAL PLAN DESIGNATION**

Station Mixed Use

**PROJECT PLANNER**

Monet Sheikhal

**RECOMMENDATION**

Provide comments

CITY OF SANTA ROSA  
WATERWAYS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

TO: CHAIR RABINOWITSH AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS

FROM: MONET SHEIKHALI, CITY PLANNER  
PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

SUBJECT: HYATT REGENCY SONOMA WINE COUNTY FENCE AND  
LIGHTING

AGENDA ACTION: PROVIDE COMMENTS

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RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended by the Planning and Economic Development Department that the Waterways Advisory Committee provide comments on the proposed fence and lighting for the property located at 170 Railroad Street, as it relates to the Citywide Creek Master Plan, applicable General Plan goals and policies, and Design Guidelines for development near waterways.

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant has submitted a Minor Design Review application to construct a new eight-foot height metal picket fence with associated lighting along the southern boundary of the property in order to control access to Hyatt Regency Sonoma Wine Country hotel. The parcel is located next to the Prince Memorial Greenway which allows for access to walkways and trails along Santa Rosa Creek. The fence location would begin on the southwest corner of the hotel building and runs along the Greenway sidewalk, around the central gathering space in the Greenway, and along the sidewalk on the east side of the hotel and meets with the existing chain link fence at the 101 overpass. The existing damaged chain link fence would be removed from the property because the height of the fence is not sufficient to provide the desired security for the property.

The proposed fence would be a black picket fence with gates in two locations. The pickets would be spaced four inches on center to allow visibility into the property and views from the property into the Greenway and open space, and to the Santa Rosa Creek. The length of the fence would be approximately 800 linear feet and would be placed about seven feet from the Greenway sidewalk. Low-voltage lighting would be

installed in the canopy of trees and on fence posts to provide a better visibility and security.

Additionally, the applicant is proposing landscape improvements, which would be implemented in two phases: the first phase would be the installation of the proposed eight-foot fence with minor lighting improvements, and the second phase would include minor planting improvements. The existing landscape will be preserved wherever appropriate and feasible.

The proposed planting will include drought tolerant, fire resistant, and low-maintenance planting. There will be Lady Banks' Roses planted along the fence which will also grow as groundcovers on the sloped areas and along the fence to soften the metal fence. Evergreen, flowering groundcovers and evergreen ornamental grasses will infill in areas where planting is missing or existing plants, such as Echium, need to be removed and replaced.

Santa Rosa Creek is the major collector stream in the City, central to the hydrologic system. Santa Rosa Creek has received the most attention in prior plans and improvements, including the Santa Rosa Creek Master Plan, Santa Rosa Creek Design Guidelines, and the Prince Memorial Greenway Project, constructed where the creek passes through the heart of downtown. This portion of the creek is channelized and owned by Sonoma County Water Agency. The proposed fence will be located within the 50-foot creek setback.

The review authority for the proposed fence (Minor Design Review) is the Zoning Administrator (ZA). However, the Waterways Advisory Committee (WAC) must review the project prior to the ZA meeting. The WAC should review the project for consistency with the adopted waterway plans, goals and policies, including the Citywide Creek Master Plan, the City's General Plan, Downtown Station Area Plan, and Zoning Code Section 20-30.040 – Creekside development. Once WAC review is provided, these comments will be considered during design review conducted by the ZA.

## ANALYSIS

### 1. General Plan

The project site is within an area designated for Station Mixed Use in the City's General Plan. The Station Mixed Use (SMU) designation is intended to provide for a range of visitor-serving uses, including retail, restaurants, entertainment, cultural amenities, and hotels in proximity to the Downtown SMART station.

The following are goals and policies shown in the General Plan that are applicable to the project:

- OSC-E-4** Require incorporation of native plants into landscape plans for new development, where appropriate and feasible, especially in areas adjacent to open space areas or along waterways.
- OSC-D-9** Ensure that construction adjacent to creek channels is sensitive to the natural environment. Ensure that natural topography and vegetation is preserved along the creek, and that construction activities do not disrupt or pollute the waterway.

**OSC-D-10** Orient development and buildings toward creeks while providing privacy, security, and an open transition between public and private open spaces.

2. Other Applicable Plans – Santa Rosa Citywide Creek Master Plan

The project site is next to Santa Rosa Creek Reach 4 in the Santa Rosa Creel Map 2 of 4. The Citywide Creek Master Plan designates Santa Rosa Creek Reach 4 as culvert, resorted, and modified creek. This reach of Santa Rosa Creek has been altered significantly. From E Street to Santa Rosa Avenue, the creek flows through a pair of box culverts with a fish ladder. The creek has been restored from Santa Rosa Avenue to Railroad Street and is known as the Prince Memorial Greenway. The restored portions of this reach are regularly monitored for colonization by invasive species. Invasive species are removed as soon as possible and replaced with native plantings. Adaptive management is used if when the planted vegetation or other aspects of the project are not performing as expected.

The Greenway is a fully improved urban amenity, with decorative concrete paths, benches, seat walls, art installations, and lighting on both sides of the creek to Railroad Avenue, and continuing on the north bank to Pierson Street. A Neighborhood Park is planned east of Pierson Street. Access to the creek trail will be provided at West 3rd Street and the Railroad Square water tower site.

The following are policies and objectives shown in the Creek Master Plan that are applicable to the project:

- EC-1-1** Where discretionary approval for new development is sought adjacent to the creek, that development shall, to the extent possible, be consistent with and support the Master Plan. Planners and decision-makers will look for consistency between proposed projects and the Master Plan. The overall intent of this policy is to incorporate the creek into the project design.
- EC-2-1** Continue to support efforts towards healthy, clean, and safe creeks.
- PR-3** Encourage access from private property to public creek trails where desired by the property owner and where appropriate.
- PR-3-1** Support landowners' requests to allow gates from private property to creek trails along flood control channels, where approved by Sonoma County Water Agency. Encourage participation in the Creek Stewardship Program.

3. Zoning

The project is zoned SMU-DSA (Station Mixed Use with Downtown Station Area combining district). The SMU zoning district is applied to areas within downtown Santa Rosa to provide for a range of visitor-serving uses, including retail, restaurants, entertainment, cultural amenities, and hotels in proximity to the Downtown SMART station. While commercial uses are emphasized, new multi-

family housing will also be allowed to support the daytime and evening vitality of the Downtown Station Area. New development will be required to respect the historic character of the Railroad Square area, adding to the mix of uses and enhancing the walkable, pedestrian-oriented streets and public spaces that attract locals, SMART train riders, and visitors from the wider region.

The -DSA combining district is intended to enhance and reinforce distinctive characteristics within the Downtown Station Area Specific Plan area and create environments that are comfortable to walk in by establishing development form, intensity, streetscape, and public realm standards.

Section 20-30.040 of the Zoning Code requires a 50-foot setback from waterways for new structures. The setbacks provide reasonable protection to owners of riparian property and the public from the hazards of stream bank failures and flooding, while allowing owners of property near waterways reasonable use of and the opportunity to improve their properties consistent with general safety.

The proposed eight-foot fence would be placed within the 50-foot creek setback. This portion of the Santa Rosa Creek is channelized and per Section 20-30.040 (D)(3) Santa Rosa Zoning Code, *“Where a fully channelized waterway exists, structures may be closer to the top of the bank than a distance of 2.5 times the depth of the bank plus 50 feet, subject to the following standards: the setback encroachment will not obstruct or impair the channel’s hydraulic functions; impede City or Sonoma Water access or maintenance of the channel; impair the stability of the slope, bank, or maintenance of the channel; or impair the stability of the slope, bank, or creekbed fountain, all as determined by and approved by the Planning and Economic Department, the Water Department, and additionally Sonoma Water for projects adjacent to Sonoma Water owned or controlled channelized waterways.”*

#### 4. Downtown Station Area Specific Plan

The project site is located within the boundaries of Downtown station Area Specific Plan (DSASP). The following are goals and policies in the DSASP that are applicable to the project:

MOB-2.5 Design pedestrian and bicycle trails to be highly visible and accessible from creek-adjacent development:

- Allow and encourage property owners to provide direct access to trails that abut their properties through the installation of access gates where fencing currently exists.
- Any fencing along trails should be as low and visually permeable as possible, such as three-foot high split rail fencing.
- Work with property owners and Sonoma County to address safety, security, and maintenance in selecting creek access points and designing fencing

- MOB-2.6 Require new development adjacent to the creeks to employ Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles and adhere to “eyes on the creek” development standards and design guidelines.
- DG-53 Evergreen shrubs and trees should be used as screening devices along property lines, around mechanical equipment, and to obscure grillwork and fencing associated with service areas and parking garages.
- DG-54 Tree species planted in or adjacent to the public right of way should be appropriate for urban environments. Shallow root species with the potential to damage sidewalks and utility infrastructure should be avoided, as should trees that drop fruit.

The proposed fence and associated improvements are consistent with the DSASP goals and policies in that the proposed project will include gate to access the trail for the visitors and provide lighting along the fence to increase safety and security. Evergreen and low-maintenance planting will be added along the creek to screen the fence and the hotel’s backyard amenities and equipment.

## 5. Design Guidelines

The following are goals and guidelines in the City’s Design Guidelines that are applicable to the project:

- I.A Preserve existing creeks and riparian vegetation along creek corridors.
- I.E Encourage development along creek corridors by treating the corridors as open space amenities rather than undesirable elements with back-on treatment.
- I.I To incorporate pedestrian/ bike paths as an ancillary use on existing vehicle service roads along creeks.
- II.A.1 Preserve waterways in the natural state.
- II.A.6 Where the opportunity occurs and when permitted by the Sonoma County Water Agency, flood control channels can be used by pedestrians or cyclists. In such cases, design development to make use of these channel corridors as part of a larger pedestrian network.

The proposed fence is consistent with the City’s Design Guidelines in that it will be open transparent, providing “eyes on the creek.” Additionally, the proposed fence with associated lighting would increase safety for pedestrians and cyclists. Finally, the fence would not make any changes to the existing creek stream nor the removal of plants from the creek.

ISSUES

There are no unresolved issues.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 - Disclosure Form
- Attachment 2 - Location Map
- Attachment 3 - Project Plan
- Attachment 4 - Watershed Area Map
- Attachment 5 - Gate and Fence Examples

CONTACT

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