

CITY OF SANTA ROSA  
PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT  
STAFF REPORT FOR THE JOINT MEETING OF  
THE CULTURAL HERITAGE BOARD AND THE DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

**November 23, 2020**

**PROJECT TITLE**

The Flats at 528 B Street

**ADDRESS/LOCATION**

528 B Street, Santa Rosa

**ASSESSOR'S PARCEL NUMBER**

010-035-022

**APPLICATION DATE**

February 25, 2020

**REQUESTED ENTITLEMENTS**

Landmark Alteration Permit and  
Design Review

**PROJECT SITE ZONING**

Downtown Commercial, within the Historic  
and Station Area combining districts  
(CD-5-H-SA)

**PROJECT PLANNER**

Susie Murray

**APPLICANT**

Tom Karsten

**PROPERTY OWNER**

Morrison Karsten Group

**FILE NUMBER**

PRJ20-005

**APPLICATION COMPLETION DATE**

February 25, 2020

**FURTHER ACTIONS REQUIRED**

Final Design Review if it's not granted at  
this meeting.

**GENERAL PLAN DESIGNATION**

Retail and Business Services

**RECOMMENDATION**

Approval

Joint meeting of the Cultural Heritage and Design Review Boards on November 23, 2020

CITY OF SANTA ROSA  
CULTURAL HERITAGE BOARD AND DESIGN REVIEW BOARD  
JOINT MEETING

TO: CHAIRS AND MEMBERS OF THE BOARDS  
FROM: SUSIE MURRAY, SENIOR PLANNER  
PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
SUBJECT: THE FLATS AT 528 B STREET

AGENDA ACTION: TWO RESOLUTIONS

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RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended by the Planning and Economic Development Department that the Cultural Heritage and Design Review Boards take the followings actions to approve The Flats at 528 B Street:

- Cultural Heritage Board & Design Review Board – By Resolution, grant Preliminary Design Review
- Cultural Heritage Board – By Resolution, approve a Landmark Alteration Permit

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Flats at 528 B Street is a proposal to construct a five-story, mixed-use building comprised of 24 market-rate dwelling units above commercial space located on the ground floor. The project includes applications for a major Design Review because it involves construction of a building greater than 5,000 square feet in a preservation district, and for a Landmark Alteration Permit because the proposed structure is within the St. Rose Preservation District.

## BACKGROUND

The Flats at 528 B Street (Project) property is located on north side of B Street on the eastern edge of the St. Rose Preservation District. The Project proposes demolition of the existing building and construction of a new five-story mixed-use building on an approximately 0.19-acre site.

The proposed building is proposed at 55-feet tall at the top of the cornice with additional screening set back on the roof to screen rooftop equipment. It designates the bottom floor for commercial space with and provides 24-residential units on the second through fifth floors, including both one- and two- bedroom units. Given the shape and size of the parcel, parking is provided offsite in a City-owned garage adjacent to the site, which allows for an open-space area for the exclusive use of building occupants along the northern side of the property. A comprehensive project description, provided by the applicant, is attached to this report.

Image 1: View north down B Street



Source: Project Plans

## Project History

- On January 30, 2019, a Neighborhood Meeting was held; six neighbors attended.
- On October 2, 2019, the project was considered as a concept item at a joint meeting of the Cultural Heritage Board and Design Review Board (Boards).
- On February 25, 2020, the Project applications were submitted to the Planning and Economic Development Department.

- On March 13, 2020, a Notice of Application was mailed to owners and occupants of properties within 600 feet of the project site.
- On July 1, 2020, revised plans, dated June 5, 2020, were submitted in response to staff comments.

#### PRIOR CITY COUNCIL REVIEW

Not applicable.

#### ANALYSIS

##### 1. General Plan and Existing Land Uses

The subject site is designated as Retail and Business Services on the General Plan land use diagram, which is intended for a mix of retail and service enterprises, offices, and restaurants, and allows mixed-use development. The site is currently under-developed with a single-story commercial building.

##### Surrounding Land Uses

North: Retail and Business Services; currently developed with a single-story commercial building.

South: Retail and Business Services; currently developed with a three-story, multifamily residential structure.

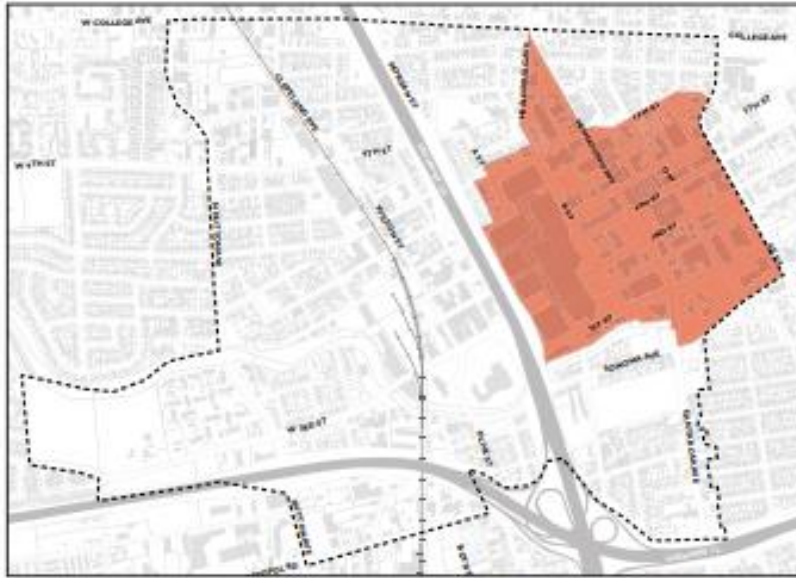
East: Retail and Business Services; currently developed with five-story, City-owned parking garage.

West: Medium Density Residential (8-18 units per acre) and the convergence of B Street, 8<sup>th</sup> Street and Healdsburg Avenue; currently developed with two-story, single-family residential structures.

##### 2. Other Applicable Plans – Downtown Station Area Specific Plan

The subject site is within the Courthouse Square Sub-Area of the Downtown Station Area Specific Plan (Specific Plan) boundary. The Courthouse Square Sub-Area is the commercial core of Santa Rosa. It is envisioned to be developed into a vibrant mixed-use area with new housing added to existing commercial uses, where more housing will promote activity at the street, including nightlife and improved safety. The ground floor is intended for activity-generating uses and the subject site has a five-story height limit with no limitation on residential density.

Image 2: Courthouse Square Sub-Area



Courthouse Square Sub-Area

Source: Downtown Station Area Specific Plan

Applicable Specific Plan goals include:

- SP-LU-1** Ensure land uses that promote use of transit.
- SP-LU-2** Encourage variety in new housing development.
- SP-UL-5** Create identifiable places while seeking to preserve and enhance the character of existing neighborhoods within the Plan Area.
- SP-LU-6** Encourage development projects that will improve the quality of life in the Plan Area and draw new residents into the core of Santa Rosa.

The project site located within walking of the downtown SMART station as well as the 2<sup>nd</sup> Street Transit Mall. The proposed housing helps achieve a diverse mix of housing type by adding one- and two-bedroom apartments in an area where housing units are predominately detached single-family, in some cases modified to multifamily. The project includes commercial space on the ground floor which is a characteristic of this sub-area.

Table B-1 of the Specific Plan provides development standards and guidelines for the site. It allows a height of two-five stories and suggests stepping above three stories. Given the size and shape of the parcel, small and narrow, the building has been designed with vertical stepping rather than horizontal, providing relief along the street frontage. These standards have been codified in Zoning Code Section 20-28.060.

3. Zoning

The site is within the Downtown Commercial (CD) zoning district and is also within the Historic (-H) and Station Area (-SA) combining districts, which is consistent with the General Plan land use designation.

Image 3 below summarizes applicable development standards pursuant to the Zoning Code:

Image 3: Staff's summary of development standards

| Feature           | Requirement                          | Applicable Code Requirements | Comments   |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| Lot Size          | Not applicable                       | Zoning Code Table 2-8        | Project complies                                 |
| Allowable Density | No maximum                           | Zoning Code Table 2-8        | Project complies                                 |
| Front Setback     | None allowed                         | Zoning Code Table 2-8        | Supported by Specific Plan; the project complies |
| Side Setback      | Five feet if adjacent to residential | Zoning Code Table 2-8        | Project complies                                 |
| Rear Setback      | None required                        | Zoning Code Table 2-8        | Project complies                                 |
| Lot Coverage      | Up to 100%                           | Zoning Code Table 2-8        | Project complies                                 |
| Building Height   | Five stories                         | Zoning Code Table 2-19       | Project complies                                 |
| Landscaping       |                                      | Zoning Code Chapter 20-34    | Project complies                                 |
| Parking           |                                      | Zoning Code Chapter 20-36    | 100% Off-site parking; project complies          |

Source: Zoning Code

Additional Zoning Code Sections that are also applicable to the project include:

[Section 20-16.060\(A\)\(7\)](#), which allows a Residential Component of a Mixed-use project by right in the Downtown Station Area Priority Development Area.

[Zoning Code Section 20-23.060](#), which provides development standards for the CD zoning district which, in this case, are aligned with the Specific Plan:

- Where and what uses are appropriate;
- Differentiating ground floor architecture;
- Building height;
- Compatibility with surrounding structures;
- Open space; and

- Application requirements.

Proposed West Elevation



Source: Project Plans, provided by Applicant

[Zoning Code Section 20-28.040](#), which discusses preservation districts, including the date the district was established, district boundaries, period of significance, context statement and character defining elements. Refer to the Historic Preservation Review Standards section of this report for more discussion about the St. Rose Preservation District (District).

This code section allows the review authority to require conditions of approval that pertain to the placement of screens, the location and type of openings, the location and projections of sun decks, porches, balconies, patios, and similar architectural amenities, to enhance or preserve the residential privacy of the proposed structures and of any adjacent existing or anticipated residential structures or uses. If either or both Boards deem it necessary to condition the project with protective elements to enhance or preserve the privacy of residential uses, those conditions may be added during the public hearing.

And finally, this code section limits the allowable height of a new structure to 35-feet or two stories unless the following finding can be made, as shown on the draft Preliminary Design Review resolution:

- A. The review authority finds that the increased height does not detract from the character of the preservation district or any adjacent contributing properties.

[Zoning Code Section 20-28.060](#), which codifies development standards applicable to the Specific Plan area. Pursuant to Zoning Code Section 20-12.020(D), in the event of any conflict between the requirements of this Zoning Code and standards adopted as part of a Specific Plan, the requirements of the Specific Plan shall control.

[Zoning Code Chapter 20-36](#), which discusses parking requirements. The project has been conditioned to enter into a parking agreement with the City prior to building permit issuance. Parking will be provided in the City-owned parking facility at 521 7<sup>th</sup> Street, adjacent to the site, with direct access from the shared property line, and in compliance with the Zoning Code.

[Section 20-42.090](#) provides direction for mixed-use development projects. The Project has met the design considerations including compatibility, location and layout of commercial and residential uses; density; neighboring uses and structures; and performance standards (lighting, noise and hours of operation).

[Section 20-52.030](#) discusses Design Review and requires concept design review for projects within -H combining districts. On October 2, 2019, Planning staff presented concept designs to a joint meeting of the Boards. Before granting Preliminary Design Review, the review authority, in this case both Boards, must first make the following seven findings, as shown on the draft resolution for Preliminary Design Review, attached to this report:

- A. The design and layout of the proposed development is of superior quality, and is consistent with the General Plan, any applicable specific plan, applicable Zoning Code standards and requirements, the City's Design Guidelines, architectural criteria for special areas, and other applicable City requirements (e.g., City policy statements and development plans);
- B. The design is appropriate for the use and location of the proposed development and achieves the goals, review criteria and findings for approval as set forth in the framework of Design Review (Design Guidelines, Introduction, subsection C);
- C. The design and layout of the proposed development will not interfere with the use and enjoyment of neighboring existing or future developments;
- D. The architectural design of the proposed development is compatible with the character of the surrounding neighborhood;



- E. The design of the proposed development will provide a desirable environment for its occupants, visiting public, and its neighbors through the appropriate use of materials, texture, and color, and would remain aesthetically appealing and be appropriately maintained;
- F. The proposed development will not be detrimental to the public health, safety, or welfare or materially injurious to the properties or improvements in the vicinity; and
- G. The proposed project has been reviewed in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

[Section 20-58.060](#), which discusses Landmark Alteration Permits, including a unique process applicable to projects proposing greater than 5,000 square feet of new development that are within the -H combining district. This section also provides the review criteria for decision makers, which are addressed in Table 1 of the attached Parry report, and shown on the draft Landmark Alteration Permit:

- A. The consistency, or lack thereof, of the proposed change with the original architectural style and details of the building;
- B. The compatibility of the proposed change with any adjacent or nearby landmark structures or preservation district structures;
- C. The consistency and/or compatibility of the proposed colors, textures, materials, fenestration, decorative features and details with the time period of the building's construction, and/or adjacent structures;
- D. Whether the proposed change will destroy or adversely affect an important architectural feature or features;
- E. The Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings (1983 Revision); and

4. [Design Guidelines](#)

The design guidelines for the City's Core Area apply to the Project. The overarching goal of the Core Area guidelines is to encourage diverse uses that create a vibrant, safe, pedestrian-friendly Downtown that exhibits superior design. The Core Area design guidelines include a set of goals to ensure that the design of new buildings is compatible with the architectural style and character of adjacent buildings and historic districts in terms of height, scale, materials, and massing.

Design related policies from the Specific Plan have been incorporated into the Core Area section of the Design Guidelines. Listed below are some applicable

goals and guidelines that apply to the Project, and are not otherwise discussed in the General Plan, Specific Plan, Zoning Code or Historic Preservation Review Standards sections of this report.

### **CORE AREA**

- 2.1.1 Encourage dense development in the downtown station area.
- 2.1.5 A New buildings should be designed in such a way that they do not appear to have been built earlier than they were. This does not preclude the use of materials, scale, or massing found in older buildings.
- 2.1.6 B Compatible design need not be created through historic replication, but should reflect a consideration of the materials, scale and massing of the adjacent historic buildings.
- 2.1.8 C Locate building entrance at the street sidewalk and not adjacent to the parking lot.
- 2.2.2 Provide generous street-level windows.
- 2.4.1 Design buildings to be sensitive to the neighborhood with regard to scale, architectural style, use or materials, bulk and historic context. This is especially important in designated historic districts.
- 2.4.2 Design new development in historic preservation districts to be compatible with existing structures.

### **MULTIFAMILY RESIDENTIAL**

- 3.2 I D Encourage multifamily projects which are safe, contribute to safer neighborhoods, and support Police and Fire Department efforts to promote public safety.
- 3.2 II B 4 Integrate multifamily developments with surrounding neighborhoods as opposed to isolating this housing.

### **BUILDING DESIGN**

- 3.2 III A 1 Break up the mass of larger structures with articulation of the form, use of color and the use of multiple materials.
- 3.2 III A 4 Avoid dressing up fronts of building with higher quality materials and switching to less expensive siding material on the sides and back. Design all four sides of buildings.

- 3.2 III C 1 Incorporate features such as balconies, cantilevers, dormers, bay windows, patios, entries, accent materials, etc. to provide articulation and interest.
- 3.3 II D 2 When residential uses are combined with commercial uses, care should be taken to ensure adjacent uses will be compatible.
- 3.3 III A 5 For facades greater than 50 feet in length, incorporate significant wall plane projections or recesses to reduce the massive and uniform look typical of these types of projects.
- 3.3 III A 11 Include features that articulate upper floor wall plane, such as windows, balconies, and awnings.
- 3.3 III A 15 Develop a sense of architectural continuity, but all elevations need not be identical.

### **HISTORIC DISTRICTS**

- 4.7 A Preserve Santa Rosa's historic heritage.

The Project meets the goals and policies of the Design Guidelines by offering 24 residential units, including one- and two-bedroom apartments, above commercial uses on the ground floor. The overall project design would be consistent with the visual character of the surrounding area in scale and architectural style, as defined by the City's Core guidelines.

The design doesn't mimic, but rather compliments the area. This section of B Street is a designated Entryway in the Specific Plan. The new mixed-use building will screen the view of a five-story parking garage from B Street. The architecture is unique to Santa Rosa and incorporates a street-facing entrance; significant glazing on the ground floor; varied exterior materials; and landscaping and landscape features that soften the scale at street level.

The massing of the building is broken up with vertical stepping, the addition of balconies, varied window sizes and placement, and a broad range of materials. No two sides of the new building are the same; each elevation is unique; and the building retains architectural continuity appropriate for all elevations.

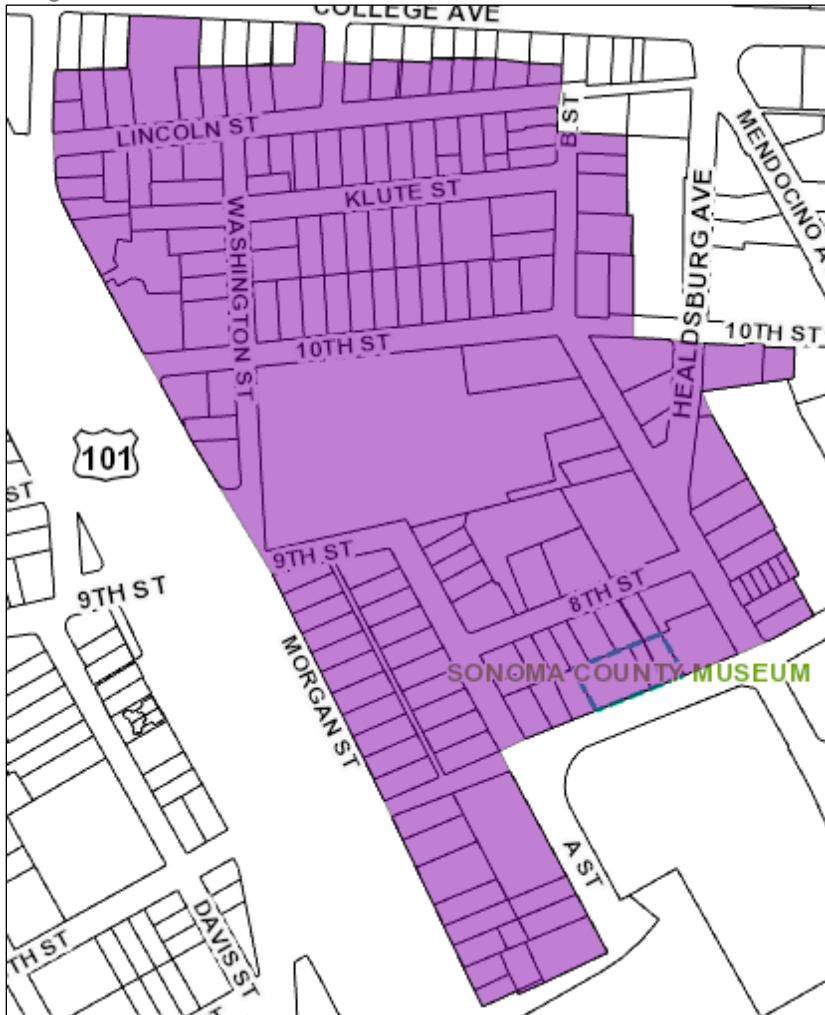
### 5. **Historic Preservation Review Standards**

The St. Rosa Preservation District (District) was established in November 1990 and recognizes a period of significance dating from 1872 through 1948. The District is primarily residential with examples of vernacular versions of Bungalow, Queen Anne, Craftsman, Italianate, Colonial Revival, Mediterranean Revival, Art

Deco, Gothic Revival, and Provincial architectural styles.

Houses in the District are typically small, simple, and single-story, however, there are larger more elaborate houses sprinkled throughout the district (Italianate, Stick, and Queen Anne), many nearby the subject site. Homes are generally wood framed with narrow clapboard or shingle exteriors, but there are also some with stucco exterior. Full or partial width porches with orientation toward the street are typical. Double hung wood sash windows in simple rectangular form and multi-pane windows are also common. Front doors generally include windows.

Image 4: St. Rose Preservation District



Source: City of Santa Rosa Geographic Information System (GIS)

There are two primary tools for reviewing projects proposed in preservation districts:

[The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation](#) - As discussed in the Parry Report, many of these standards are not applicable because this is new

construction. The report concludes that the “new building reflects the basic district context and sufficient character-defining elements to be sensitive to and in keeping with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards.”

[Processing Review Procedures](#) (for owners of historic properties) – Section G provides guidelines for new construction. The guidelines don’t specify architectural style, stating that new construction can be contemporary and should not mimic existing buildings in the district. The document focuses more on scale, mass and size, acknowledging that taller structures are more common to both the Railroad Square and St. Rose Preservation Districts, and highlights the following criteria to be considered for new construction:

- Height of a new building should be compatible with adjacent structures;
- Proportion should match adjacent structures in width and height;
- Rhythm along streetscapes should be maintained with window and door opening on the main façade;
- Setbacks should be consistent with adjacent structures;
- Materials and Texture should be compatible with adjacent buildings on the block;
- Roof shapes should be compatible with adjacent structure; and
- Architectural Details and Decorative Features of existing structures can inform new design.

The subject property is located along the eastern edge of the District. This section of B Street is also designated as an Entryway street type in the Specific Plan, which is a key corridor to the City’s downtown. The goal for this street type is “to mediate between the small scale residential and larger scale development and to create a pleasantly landscaped street” (DSASP, page 5-15).

Image 5, below, shows the current view from the B Street, the “entryway.” The proposed five-story mixed use building would replace the existing structure and screen the view of the five-story parking garage from this vantage point. The existing structure is not a contributor to the District and, as concluded in the evaluation prepared by J Longfellow, does not meet the requirements as a historic resource pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act.

Image 5: Existing view from B Street



Source: Google Maps (image captured in March 2019)

The Project site is also adjacent to three residential buildings that are identified as contributors to the District:

- 535 B Street - A two-story single-family structure located approximately 150 feet to the west, on the opposite side of B Street;
- 534/536 B Street - A single-story commercial building to the north, with a shared property line, which would be separated by private open space along the north side of Project site; and
- 526 B Street - A three-story multifamily structure to the south that would be directly adjacent to the propose structure and separated by landscaping.

Overall, the three District-facing elevations of the new building would be differentiated, yet remain compatible, with the setting of the St. Rose Historic Preservation District. The contemporary design of the proposed mixed-use structure incorporates architectural design features inspired by historic buildings located close by and within the District, including the cornice, window trim details, balcony guardrails, storefront industrial sash, and gate. The new building would maintain the rhythm of the streetscape with windows and an entry adjacent to the sidewalk. A flat roof and varied exterior finish materials that differentiate between ground and upper floors are also compatible with adjacent buildings.

The Processing Review Procedures highlights that the St. Rose Preservation District is one that includes taller buildings. The proposed five-story structure is

compatible in height with most of its neighbors, with one exception, to the north, where there's a single-story residential structure currently used as commercial office space. The Project's site plan is designed with open space separating the two structures that will minimize that impact, at the same time providing a screen from B Street of the five-story parking garage to the east.

6. Neighborhood Comments

Written comments have been received and are provided as an attachment to this report. To summarize, comments expressed:

- support for the project, and
- concerns about building height.

7. Public Improvements/On-Site Improvements

A comprehensive list of required improvements is provided on the Engineering Development Services Exhibit A, prepared by Laura Ponce, dated July 23, 2020 (attachment to the resolution included with this report). To summarize:

- Street trees will be planted along B Street;
- Existing curb cut will be abandoned and replaced with sidewalk, and will include repairs to the existing sidewalk; and
- All new utilities will be installed underground

FISCAL IMPACT

Approval of this project would not have a fiscal impact on the General Fund.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The project has been reviewed in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA):

- Pursuant to CEQA Section 15183, because the project is being developed consistent with the General Plan, for which Council certified an Environmental Impact Report in 2009, the project is eligible for streamlined CEQA processing. No further environmental review is necessary for the Project as analysis has confirmed that there are no new environmental effects, or environmental effects of greater severity, peculiar to the parcel or the project that were not analyzed and addressed in a prior EIR.
- Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15332, because the project site is less than five acres; is consistent with the General Plan, any applicable specific plan and zoning; is not considered suitable habitat for listed species; is located in area where all services are available; and would not result in a

significant impact in air quality, water quality, or traffic, it qualifies for a categorical exemption.

### BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

On October 2, 2019, the Boards reviewed the proposal for the Flats at 528 B Street as a concept item. The applicant has provided a comprehensive response that addresses each Board's comments.

### NOTIFICATION

All noticing was done in compliance with Zoning Code Chapter 20-66, including a mailed Notice of Public Hearing to owners and occupants within 600 feet of the project site, a published Notice of Public Hearing in the Press Democrat, and 12-square foot public hearing sign posted onsite.

### ISSUES

There are no unresolved issues.

### ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1: Disclosure Form
- Attachment 2: Location and Neighborhood Context Map
- Attachment 3: Project Narrative
- Attachment 4: Project Plans
- Attachment 5: Applicant Response to Board Comments, prepared by Morrison Karsten Group and ArchiLOGIX
- Attachment 6: Trash Removal Plan, prepared by Thomas Karsten, dated August 3, 2020
- Attachment 7: Shadow Study, provided by ArchiLOGIX, dated September 29, 2020
- Attachment 8: Historic Resource Evaluation, prepared by Mark Parry, Artisan-Architecture, dated June 2, 2020
- Attachment 9: Historic Property Survey and CEQA Evaluation, prepared by J Longfellow Consulting, dated January 5, 2020
- Attachment 10: Plans presented for Concept Review
- Attachment 11: Public Correspondence

- Resolution 1: Preliminary Design Review
- Resolution 2: Landmark Alteration

### CONTACT

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