

RESOLUTION NO. RES-2025-020

RESOLUTION OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SANTA ROSA APPROVING AN AMENDMENT TO THE CITY OF SANTA ROSA DESIGN GUIDELINES TO REPLACE ALL REFERENCES TO THE DESIGN REVIEW BOARD AND CULTURAL HERITAGE BOARD WITH THE CONSOLIDATED DESIGN REVIEW AND PRESERVATION BOARD

WHEREAS, the City of Santa Rosa desires to streamline the Landmark Alteration (LMA) Permit process, which was last updated in 2004, and consolidate the Cultural Heritage Board and Design Review Board into a single Design Review and Preservation Board, in order to provide an improved and more streamlined process, enhance the City's historic preservation efforts, and better allocate City resources; and

WHEREAS, on May 22, 2018, the City Council adopted Ordinance No. ORD-2018-012, adding Zoning Code Sections 20-16.060 through 20-16.110 related to, among other things, reduced review authority for certain uses and to provide for modifications and streamlining of the Design Review process; and

WHEREAS, since May of 2018, City staff have been monitoring the reduced review authority and streamlined Design Review process to understand its impact on development, and how it might be expanded to other entitlement processes. As part of this consideration, staff received positive feedback on the streamlined process from developers through multiple roundtable meetings in 2022; and

WHEREAS, on January 30, 2024, the City Council held a study session to receive information, ask questions, and provide direction to City staff related to the City's draft Development Related Cost of Service Fee Study. During the presentation, existing subsidies for development related permit fees were identified, including for LMA Permits. However, the direction provided for reductions in the proposed new permit fees did not include reductions for LMA Permits; and

WHEREAS, on March 5, 2024, the City Council adopted Resolution No. RES-2024-033, adopting new development related permit fees. As part of the resolution, Council adopted reductions to certain permit application fees, including appeals, affordable housing, downtown housing development of four units or greater, daycare facilities and grocery stores in designated "food deserts". Reduction in fees for LMA Permits was not included in that list; and

WHEREAS, on July 1, 2024, the new development permit fee schedule went into effect, which included significant increases in LMA Permit fees; and

WHEREAS, on July 17, 2024, during a regular meeting of the Cultural Heritage Board, five members of the Board, including the Chair, announced that they would be resigning due to concerns related to the increased LMA Permit fees and the fact that the Board had not been consulted about the proposed fee increases prior to Council taking action. Since that time, five Board members have provided written resignations to the City Clerk's Office. With only two remaining members, the Cultural Heritage Board is currently lacking a quorum to conduct

business; and

WHEREAS, the City has been reviewing its various boards, commissions and committees to determine if there could be consolidation to address City resources and redundancy amongst decision making bodies; and

WHEREAS, between January 2019 and July 2024, staff found that the Cultural Heritage Board held 36 regular meetings, 7 joint meetings with the Design Review Board, and canceled 99 of their regular meetings, either due to lack of items or a lack of a quorum of the Board. In that same 5.5 year time period, the Cultural Heritage Board took action on a total of 15 Major LMA Permits and provided comments on 16 Concept LMA items; and

WHEREAS, on October 30, 2024, a project website was posted that included background information on the proposed amendments, links to the draft amendments to the Municipal Code, and City staff contact information; and

WHEREAS, in October and November 2024, notices were sent to those who have subscribed to the Cultural Heritage Board and Design Review Board mailing lists, and information was provided through the Press Democrat newspaper and all of the City of Santa Rosa's social media sites, to notify the public about the proposed amendments and to solicit feedback on the draft amendments; and

WHEREAS, on November 7, 2024, the Design Review Board held a Study Session and provided comments on the proposed amendments, which included general support of the proposed streamlining of the LMA Permit process, and made suggestions regarding requirements for qualifications of the proposed Design Review and Preservation Board; and

WHEREAS, on December 12, 2024, the Planning Commission of the City of Santa Rosa held a duly noticed public hearing and recommended to the City Council adoption of Municipal Code Text Amendments to address streamlining and process improvements for the Landmark Alteration Permit process and consolidation of the duties and composition of the Cultural Heritage Board and Design Review Board into a single Design Review and Preservation Board; and

WHEREAS, the City Council held a public hearing on February 4, 2025 regarding the amendments to the Municipal Code related to streamlining and enhancement of the Landmark Alteration Permit process and consolidation of the Design Review Board and Cultural Heritage Board into a single Design Review and Preservation Board, including the Santa Rosa Design Guidelines Amendments, at which time all persons were invited to speak or submit written comments; and

WHEREAS, the Council, after due consideration of all evidence and reports offered for review, does find and determine the following:

1. The proposed amendment to the Santa Rosa Design Guidelines to replace all references to the Design Review Board and Cultural Heritage Board with references

to the consolidated Design Review and Preservation Board, is necessary to implement the amendments to the Municipal Code for the purposes of providing a more streamlined process, enhancing the City’s preservation efforts, and better allocating City resources; and

2. The Santa Rosa Design Guidelines is a living document that requires periodic updates and amending of the guidelines for consistency with amendments to the Municipal Code related to consolidation of the Design Review Board and Cultural Heritage Board into a single Design Review and Preservation Board; and
3. The proposed amendment will not be detrimental to the public health, safety, or welfare or materially injurious to the properties or improvements in the vicinity; and
4. The proposed amendments to the Design Guidelines have been reviewed in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). It has determined that the proposed action is exempt pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15061(b)(3) because it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that these amendments to replace the references to the Design Review Board and Cultural Heritage Board to the consolidated Design Review and Preservation Board would have a significant effect on the environment.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Council of the City of Santa Rosa adopts the Santa Rosa Design Guidelines Amendment in the form set forth in Exhibit “A” to this resolution.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this resolution shall be effective following the adoption of Ordinance No. ORD-2025-003.

IN COUNCIL DULY PASSED this 4th day of February, 2025.

AYES: (6) Mayor Stapp, Council Members Bañuelos, Fleming, MacDonald, Okrepkie, Rogers

NOES: (0)

ABSENT: (1) Vice Mayor Alvarez

ABSTAIN/RECUSE: (0)

ATTEST: _____ APPROVED: _____
City Clerk Mayor

APPROVED AS TO FORM: _____
City Attorney

Exhibit A – Santa Rosa Design Guidelines