

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
FROM: PATRICK STREETER, SENIOR PLANNER
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

SUBJECT: SPINSTER INN REZONING, 413 SOUTH A STREET

AGENDA ACTION: INTRODUCE ORDINANCE

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended by the Community Development Department that the Council introduce an ordinance to reclassify one (1) parcel located at 413 South A Street (APN: 010-221-018) from R-2 (Medium Density Multi-Family Residential) to CG (General Commercial), consistent with the policies in the General Plan and Downtown Station Area Specific Plan.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The proposed Spinster Inn development includes the demolition of an existing multi-family duplex structure and construction of a new 2-story mixed-use building. The applicant proposes to develop a 9 room guest house, ancillary kitchen associated with the Spinster Sisters restaurant next door, and street-level retail. The proposed development is over two existing lots that will be merged as part of this project. One of these lots, Assessor's Parcel Number (APN) 010-221-018 must be rezoned in order for the proposed land use to occur. Staff's determination is that the development accommodated by the proposed rezoning will introduce a new commercial enterprise that complements existing businesses along the South A Street corridor while providing a service to local residents and attracting a regional clientele, therefore implementing Council Goal 1: Create a Strong, Sustainable Economic Base.

BACKGROUND

1. Surrounding Land Uses

North: Commercial/residential mixed use and single-family detached residential

South: State highway right-of-way

East: Retail and business services, single-family detached, and single-family attached residential

West: State highway right-of-way

The area surrounding the project site contains a mix of land uses including restaurants and cafes, retail establishments, small professional offices, studio space, and residential developments. Single-family, multi-family, and mixed-use residential developments are all represented within the neighborhood. Luther Burbank Elementary School, Burbank Playground, and Juilliard Park are located 600 feet north of the project site. The project site is approximately 0.45 miles from the proposed Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit (SMART) Santa Rosa-Railroad Square station.

2. Existing Land Use – Project Site

The subject parcel consists of one 4,200 square foot lot that, together with the lot adjacent to the north, has been developed with a residential duplex building. The existing duplex includes approximately 2,500 square feet of living space, two parking pads, and a carport. The project site is within the boundaries of the Downtown Station Area Specific Plan.

3. Project History

The Downtown Station Area Specific Plan, a long range land use plan focused on creating a transit supportive environment in and around the planned Railroad Square SMART station was adopted by the Santa Rosa City Council (the Council) on October 9, 2007.

On December 11, 2014, the current rezoning application was submitted along with applications for Minor Design Review and a Minor Conditional Use Permit.

A neighborhood meeting was held on January 14, 2015 to introduce the proposed Spinster Inn project to neighbors and gather feedback from the community.

On May 27, 2015, the Trip Generation and Parking Study for the Spinster Inn document, authored by Whitlock & Weinberger Transportation, Inc. (W-Trans), and dated May 27, 2015, was submitted to the Department of Community Development.

On July 23, 2015, the Planning Commission adopted by a 4-2-1 (Commissioners Crocker and Duggan being absent and Vice-Chair Stanley being absent/recused) vote, a resolution recommending that the Council adopt the requested rezoning.

On August 6, 2015, a public hearing was held before the Zoning Administrator, after which the Zoning Administrator approved the requested Conditional Use Permit and Design Review.

4. Project Description

The proposed development is located at 407-413 South A Street and includes a two-story mixed use development. The project proposes to develop 1,800 square feet of retail space on the ground floor as well as nine hotel rooms, with some portion on the ground floor and the remainder to be located on the second floor. An additional 2,300 square feet of cellar, to be used for storage purposes, may also be constructed as part of the project.

The proposed building will be oriented toward South A Street and will incorporate a saw-toothed roof that allows for solar panels to be installed along the south-facing angle while also allowing the north-facing skylights to provide natural light to hotel rooms.

The retail space will act as an annex to the existing Spinster Sisters restaurant located at 401 South A Street and will feature substantial glazing and a roll-up section of the façade to allow increased interaction with the sidewalk. The Spinster Inn hotel rooms are designed for guests looking for both short and extended stays and will include living areas and small kitchens.

PRIOR CITY COUNCIL REVIEW

Not applicable.

ANALYSIS

1. General Plan

The site is identified as a multiple land use area in the Santa Rosa General Plan 2035 and is designated Retail and Business Services, Medium Density Residential, or a combination of both. The following General Plan goals and policies are relevant to the proposed project:

LUL-G: Promote mixed use sites and centers.

LUL-I-1: Provide a range of commercial services that are easily accessible and attractive, that satisfies the needs of people who live and work in Santa Rosa and that also attracts a regional clientele.

T-A-7: Support tourist rail excursions on the Northwestern Pacific Railroad [now identified as SMART] as well as rail service for commuting and other travel purposes.

Staff finds that the proposed project is consistent with applicable goals and policies of the General Plan. The proposed project will develop multiple uses on a single site that will service the surrounding neighborhood while also drawing in regional visitors.

2. Specific Plan

The project site is located within the boundaries of the Downtown Station Area Specific Plan, a long range land use plan focused on creating a transit supportive environment in and around the planned Railroad Square SMART station. The Specific Plan reflects the General Plan designation for the project site, designating it Retail and Business Services, Medium Density Residential, or a combination of both. The following Specific Plan policies are relevant to the proposed project:

SP-LU-4.2: Require new development to include activity generating uses such as retail at the street level along Sixth Street, A Street, and Seventh Street.

SP-LU-5.1: New development shall be designed to reinforce and enhance the distinctive and unique qualities of the Sub-Area it is located within.

SP-LU-6.9: Encourage development of neighborhood-serving retail uses in areas adjacent and accessible to residential neighborhoods. These retail uses should be compatible with the character of the immediately surrounding area and include “mom and pop” pedestrian-oriented stores. Larger scale, auto-oriented enterprises are discouraged.

Staff finds that the proposed project will help to implement the policies laid out in the Specific Plan for the area. The proposed rezoning will allow development that complements existing businesses in the area, provides commercial services to the surrounding neighborhood, and encourages the pedestrian-centric, transit-oriented development envisioned for the Downtown Station Area.

3. Zoning

North: CG (General Commercial)

South: State highway right-of-way

East: R-2 (Medium Density Multi-Family Residential)

West: State highway right-of-way

The existing duplex straddles two zoning districts: General Commercial on the north and Medium Density Multi-Family Residential on the south. The proposed development, which is consistent with the General Plan and Specific Plan

designated land use for the area, is a permitted use in the CG district, but not the R-2 district. In order for the proposed development to take place, the south parcel, 413 South A Street, would need to be rezoned to CG. Further, since current building codes require an interior fire wall with no openings for buildings that cross property lines, a lot merger is necessary for any new development that proposes to integrate floor area across both project parcels; it is in the City's best interest to apply a single zoning district to the newly formed lot. The CG district is the most common commercial zoning district in the City and permits development that is consistent with existing uses found along this portion of South A Street. The CG district is also the less restrictive of the two zoning districts presently on the proposed development site, and can allow the greatest range of uses in satisfying the General Plan designation.

Based on the requirements in Section 20-36.040 of the City Zoning Code, the proposed 9-room inn would require 9 parking spaces, at one per room, and the proposed retail space would require seven parking spaces (one space for 250 square feet of leasable area), for a total of 16 off-street spaces. The proposed off-street parking supply is two spaces, with nine spaces provided along the curb in front of the building.

Because the proposed development is within the boundaries of the Downtown Station Area Specific Plan, the provisions of City Code Section 20-36.050(C)(2) and (3), which allow parking reduction as a condition of approval and recognize that "the location of several types of uses or occupancies in the same building or on the same site may constitute a special circumstance warranting the reduction of parking requirements" are applicable. The requested parking reduction was granted to the proposed development by the Zoning Administrator when the Minor Conditional Use Permit was approved.

4. Comments/Actions by Other Review Boards/Agencies

The applicant submitted applications for minor design review and a minor conditional use permit. These applications were approved by the Zoning Administrator on August 6, 2015.

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) has requested copies of a Traffic Impact Study, if it is deemed necessary, as well as copies of the plan set. The traffic trip generation study found that the proposed project would not surpass Caltrans trip generation thresholds. Copies of the project plan sets, including depiction of the proposed project's relationship to the State highway right-of-way were forwarded to Caltrans.

5. Neighborhood Comments

Staff received one comment via telephone and several speakers were present during the Zoning Administrator hearing; all but one of the public comments were

related to the Conditional Use Permit entitlement. One speaker at the Zoning Administrator public hearing addressed the proposed rezoning, expressing concern over the loss of residential districts. Staff's position, for this particular rezoning application, is that for any development to occur that utilizes both project lots, a rezoning of one of the lots must occur. Placing both lots into a CG district allows the greatest range of uses to implement the General Plan for the area in that CG allows both Commercial and Residential uses to take place.

6. Public Improvements/On-Site Improvements

No public or on-site improvements are required as a part of this rezoning.

7. Issues

No unresolved issues associated with this rezoning have been identified.

FISCAL IMPACT

The proposed zoning map change would expand the development potential for the south portion of South A Street to include commercial uses that could generate tax revenue for the City. The proposed zoning map change would also expand the South A Street commercial corridor, which could allow for development that would be complementary to existing businesses in the area.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The proposed project qualifies for a statutory exemption from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under Section 21155.4 of the California Public Resources Code (the Code). The language that provides this exemption was added to the Code with the passage of Senate Bill 743 in September, 2013.

The Code states that a mixed-use project, taking place in a transit priority area for which a specific plan and environmental impact report (EIR) have been prepared, will require no additional environmental review. The intent of this section of the Code is to facilitate development projects in specific plan areas that are consistent with goals and policies of that specific plan. Since the EIR for the specific plan would already have addressed potential environmental impacts that might arise from development under the plan's guidelines, additional environmental review need only be conducted for projects with new or more significant impacts.

The proposed project, as supported by a traffic trip generation study and Santa Rosa staff review, will not result in impacts that have not already been identified in the Downtown Station Area Specific Plan Program Environmental Impact Report.

The proposed project also qualifies for CEQA streamlining under Sections 15183 (projects consistent with a specific plan) and 15183.3 (infill development projects).

Because these sections only require review of previously unanticipated impacts and project specific effects which are peculiar to the site, the streamlining permits the proposed project to progress with no further environmental review.

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

On July 23, 2015, the Planning Commission adopted by a 4-2-1 (Commissioners Crocker and Duggan being absent and Vice-Chair Stanley being absent/recused) vote, a resolution recommending that the Council adopt the requested rezoning. Members of the Planning Commission were supportive of the project, citing the appeal of creating a new destination spot in this area of Santa Rosa (See minutes, attached). Staff supports the Planning Commission's recommendation.

NOTIFICATION

The project was noticed as a Public Hearing per the requirements of Chapter 20-66 of the City Code. Notification of this public hearing was provided by posting an on-site sign, publishing notice in a newspaper of general circulation, mailed notice to surrounding property owners, electronic notice to parties that had expressed interest in projects taking place in this geographic area of Santa Rosa, and bulletin board postings at City Hall and on the City website.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 – Location Map
- Attachment 2 – General Plan Map
- Attachment 3 – Zoning Map
- Attachment 4 – Development Plan Set
- Attachment 5 – Disclosure Form
- Attachment 6 – Planning Commission Minutes: July 23, 2015
- Attachment 7 – Resolution No. 11715
- Attachment 8 – Trip Generation and Traffic Study: May 27, 2015
- Attachment 9 – Public Correspondence
- Draft Ordinance

CONTACT

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