

CITY OF SANTA ROSA  
PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT  
STAFF REPORT FOR DESIGN REVIEW BOARD  
**JANUARY 6, 2022**

**PROJECT TITLE**

Downtown Station (SMART Site)  
Development

**APPLICANT**

Peter Stanley, ArchiLOGIX

**ADDRESS/LOCATION**

34 W 6<sup>th</sup> Street & 4 2<sup>nd</sup> Street

**PROPERTY OWNER**

Cornerstone Communities

**ASSESSOR'S PARCEL NUMBER**

010-166-003 and 010-171-019

**FILE NUMBER**

LMA21-008

**APPLICATION DATE**

April 21, 2021

**APPLICATION COMPLETION DATE**

September 27, 2021

**REQUESTED ENTITLEMENTS**

Major Design Review

**FURTHER ACTIONS REQUIRED**

None

**PROJECT SITE ZONING**

SMU-H (Station Mixed Use – Historic)

**GENERAL PLAN DESIGNATION**

Station Mixed Use

**PROJECT PLANNER**

Adam Ross

**RECOMMENDATION**

Approval

CITY OF SANTA ROSA  
DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

TO: CHAIR WEIGL AND MEMBERS OF THE DESIGN REVIEW BOARD  
FROM: ADAM ROSS, CITY PLANNER  
SUBJECT: DOWNTOWN STATION DEVELOPMENT (SMART VILLAGE PROJECT)

AGENDA ACTION: RESOLUTION

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RECOMMENDATION

The Planning and Economic Development Department recommends that the Design Review Board (DRB), by resolution, approve Major Design Review for the Downtown Station (SMART Site) Development, a 114-unit, six-story, mixed-use building, with 12 units designated for low-income occupants, within the Railroad Square Preservation District, located at 34 W. 6<sup>th</sup> Street and 2 4<sup>th</sup> Street.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Downtown Station (SMART Site) Development project (Project) proposes to construct a six-story, 114-unit mixed-use housing development, comprised of one-bedroom, two-bedroom, and “family” units with outdoor amenities such as a community pool and open gathering spaces on a 0.86-acre site within both the Downtown Station Area Specific Plan (DSASP) boundary and the Railroad Square Preservation District. The Project will strengthen Downtown Santa Rosa pedestrian connectivity by creating a new multi-use path along the eastern property line connecting W 6<sup>th</sup> Street and the SMART Downtown Station. A 26-foot wide pathway on the southern side of the proposed building connects the western side of the property to the new SMART multi-use path. Seventy-five parking spaces (0.7 spaces per unit) are located along a portion of a new street along the western property line. 10.5% of the residential units (12 units) will be designated affordable to low-income residents.

A fenced-in community pool for residents is proposed behind the proposed six-story building and between the new 26-foot wide pedestrian walkway. Additional amenities include a play area for children, outdoor exercise equipment, outdoor tables, and seating. A large hydroseeded field will be on the southern side of the property continuing onto the adjacent parcel, which will include native grasses and wildflowers.

## DOWNTOWN STATION DEVELOPMENT

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Other landscaping includes large specimen and shade trees, along with medium sized trees and small accent trees. The project will also be subject to the City's Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance.



## BACKGROUND

### 1. Surrounding Land Uses

North: Neighborhood Mixed-Use

South: Station Mixed-Use

East: Neighborhood Mixed-Use

West: Station Mixed-Use

The Project site is bordered by Chop's Teen Club and residential uses to the north; the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Playhouse and the old Cannery site to the west; W. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street and commercial uses to the south; and the SMART rail tracks, Downtown SMART Station, public parking and commercial uses to the east.

### 2. Existing Land Use – Project Site

The site is currently undeveloped, covered with gravel, and was previously used for construction staging for the Downtown SMART Station. This site is vegetated with various shrubs.

3. Project History

On September 16, 2020, the Project was reviewed by both the Cultural Heritage Board and the Design Review Board as a Concept Item. Both Boards provided comments, recommendations, and considerations for the Project.

On April 21, 2021, project applications were received by the Planning and Economic Development Department.

On June 2, 2021, a Neighborhood Meeting was held for the Project to allow residents and interested parties to attend for an introduction of the Project and for attendees to provide feedback for the Proposal.

On May 15, 2021, a Notice of Application was sent to owners and occupants within 600 feet of the Project's property lines.

On September 27, 2021, the application was deemed complete.

On November 17, 2021, the Cultural Heritage Board approved the Major Landmark Alteration Permit for the Project.

PRIOR DRB REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

During the September 16, 2020, joint CHB and DRB meeting, the DRB provided the following comments, recommendations, and considerations:

- Encourage carrying robust materials around the north elevation for preliminary review.
- Explore a roof deck as an amenity if feasible, or additional outdoor space for tenants.
- Show justification of temporary parking and how it gets relocated.
- The height for density is appreciated and it could go higher.
- Include a sun study in the preliminary design review package, including how shadows are cast across the street and to the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Playhouse.
- Explore steel for some of the darker panels, integrating with the wood.
- Reconsider the porcelain tile at the ground floor as it could get cracked.
- Consider a panelized system or stones for the ground floor to tie into Railroad Square.
- Integrate in/out pushing from stucco to dark on all four sides.
- Reconsider ground floor residential for security concerns and consider two-story live/work units, office space, daycare, bodega/small market, small clinic, etc., to provide amenities for the non-commuting development being proposed.
- Consider adding more than 11 units of very-low, low, or moderate income housing for Phase 1.

- Look for overall balance for affordable units.
- Explore material and color options i.e., long brick.
- The all glazed balcony railings allowing view of robust verticality of windows is appreciated.
- Bring uniqueness to entries, avoiding too much repetition.
- Consider bringing industrial features to each stoop for differentiation.
- Submit photos of the neighborhood with renderings embedded to show scale and how the project relates to neighboring properties.

### **ANALYSIS**

#### 1. **General Plan**

The [General Plan](#) addresses issues related to the physical development and the growth of Santa Rosa. The site is designated as Station Mixed Use on the General Plan Land Use Diagram. Areas with this designation are 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. 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 local residents, SMART train riders, and visitors from the wider region. The Station Mixed Use designation has a maximum FAR range of 3.0-6.0.

General Plan policies seek to ensure that new development is designed in character with historic structures. A representation of applicable General Plan goals include:

#### **Land Use**

LUL-A Foster a compact rather than a scattered development pattern in to reduce travel, energy, land, and materials consumption while promoting reductions in greenhouse gas emissions citywide.

#### **Downtown/Downtown Station Area Specific Plan**

LUL-C-1 Promote downtown as the center of the business, residential, social, and civic life of Santa Rosa by directing high intensity office uses, government, residential, and entertainment uses to locate downtown.

LUL-C-7 Permit residential uses in all land use categories within downtown.

LUL-L Ensure land uses that promote use of transit

### **Residential**

LUL-F      Maintain a diversity of neighborhoods and varied housing stock to satisfy a wide range of needs.

### **Urban Design**

UD-B      Preserve and strengthen downtown as a vital and attractive place.

### **Housing**

H-A      Meet the housing needs of all Santa Rosa residents.

H-C      Expand the supply of housing available to lower-income households.

The Project contributes to the overall transportation element of the General Plan and implements multi-modal transportation infrastructure by providing two pedestrian accessways through the site and connecting to the Downtown SMART station via a multi-use path. The Project is also respectful of the neighboring commercial, residential, and historic properties. The Project provides a transition from single-family residential units in the St. Rose Preservation District to the higher density housing and commercial uses within the Railroad Square Preservation District.

The site is allowed a Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 3.0 to 6.0 and the Project implements a FAR of 3.0. The Project includes studio, one-, two-bedroom units, and family units, which provide flex rooms that can be used as bedrooms or other rooms to suit familial needs, while also designating 10.5% or 12 units as affordable to low-income residents increasing the number of affordable units within the City's downtown area. Finally, while the site is designated a contributor to the Railroad Preservation District, the existing condition of the property does not contain resources that qualify for listing on the California Register of Historical Resources, nor does it meet the criteria for designation on the National Register of Historic Places, as stated by Architectural Historian John W. Murphey, in the Historic Resource Analysis, dated September 15, 2021 and revised November 5, 2021, provided as Attachment 7.

## **2. Downtown Station Area Specific Plan**

The [Downtown Station Area Specific Plan](#) (DSASP) discusses recently adopted land uses, development standards and implementation of the goal for a thriving downtown area. As discussed above, the Station Mixed Use (SMU) designation is intended for visitor-serving commercial uses, new multi-family housing will also be allowed to support the daytime and evening vitality of the Downtown Station Area.

The most applicable goals, that were not previously addressed in the General Plan section of this report, coupled with Staff's analysis are shown below:

- LU-1: Downtown Santa Rosa will be an energetic regional commercial and cultural center with a range of housing, employment, retail, entertainment, and restaurant options in a safe, vibrant, walkable environment.
- LU-2.7 Require new development within the Core Mixed Use, Station Mixed Use, Maker Mixed Use, and Neighborhood Mixed Use designations to achieve the mid-point or higher of the maximum FAR in all cases where FAR is established. Exceptions are allowed where parcel configuration, historic preservation or utility constraints make the mid-point impossible to achieve. On properties where no FAR is established the building's height shall be controlled through the applicable zoning.

By providing housing in the Downtown Station Area, the Project will have a positive effect on the downtown by putting residents within walking distance of services, shops, restaurants, and entertainment. Similar to the General Plan, the DSASP encourages a mix of single- and multifamily housing types that will meet the needs of residents in all income levels, abilities, and age groups. In addition to helping meet the housing needs of Santa Rosa residents, the proposed development will provide an alternative type of housing product in its immediate area within walking distance of quality public transportation and many other services, both business and recreational. While the site does not achieve the midpoint FAR of 4.5, an exception can be granted due to the Project site's location within the Railroad Square Preservation District. Additionally, the exception can be also be granted due to the unique parcel configuration, which curves to follow the SMART Rail, while also requiring build-out of the SMART multi-use path. The SMART multi-use path is planned along the eastern property line for future development connecting the portion proposed as part of the Project, which would connect 6<sup>th</sup> Street with 3<sup>rd</sup> Street.

### 3. Zoning Code

The [Zoning Code](#) implements goals and policies of the General Plan by classifying and regulating the use of land and structure development within the City. The Zoning Code has been updated to reflect development standards implemented by the recently adopted DSASP. The Project site is zoned SMU-H (Station Mixed Use-Historic), where multifamily housing is allowed by right. Because the Project site is located within the DSASP and the -H (Historic) combining district, it is subject to both a Landmark Alteration Permit and Design Review. The Cultural Heritage Board approved a Landmark Alteration Permit for this project at its November 17, 2021, meeting.

The Project has been reviewed in compliance with development standards in the SMU zoning district:

**Lot Coverage:** 100% coverage is allowed.

**Building Height:** There is no maximum building height for buildings within the SMU zoning district; however, building heights greater than 35 feet or two-stories in a Preservation District are only permissible when:

- The review authority finds that the increased height does not detract from the character of the preservation district or any adjacent contributing properties; and
- The review authority may 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. ([20-28.040\(E\)\(3\)\(c\)](#)).

The building is proposed at approximately 75 feet to top of habitable space, with an approximately 85-foot total height with architecturally screened roofing.

A District Compatibility Report (Report) was provided for the Project by Kara Brunzell, a qualified Architectural Historian, dated November 5, 2021, which found that, “The proposed project is six stories, which is taller than but compatible with adjacent structures. Although its massing and scale could potentially overwhelm a low-slung single-story historic residence, Railroad Square district contributors were constructed for commercial and industrial uses and are both taller and larger in scale than the buildings found in residential historic districts.” The Study also finds that the Project is distanced far enough from the Sixth Street Playhouse building that it will not detract from the character of the Railroad Square Preservation District and is even further from residences that are contributors to the West End Preservation District. For those reasons, the height of the proposed Project is compatible with both Preservation Districts.

**Setbacks:** The project meets or exceeds all setbacks outlined for the SMU zoning district in [Table 2-8](#) of Zoning Code Section 20-23.040.

**Traffic & Parking:** The application materials included a Focused Traffic Study (Traffic Study), prepared by W-Trans, dated August 10, 2021, that concluded the project, “is expected to result in an additional 295 trips per day including 23 new AM Peak Hour trips and 21 PM Peak Hour trips.” The Study also concluded that the project complies with all emergency access, site distance, circulation, and queuing requirements and would have less than significant impacts to Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) due to the Project’s proximity to the adjacent downtown SMART station and Downtown Santa Rosa.



**Table 1 – Trip Generation Summary**

Land Use	Units	Daily		AM Peak Hour				PM Peak Hour			
		Rate	Trips	Rate	Trips	In	Out	Rate	Trips	In	Out
Multi-Family Housing (Mid-Rise)	114 du	2.59	295	0.20	23	3	20	0.18	21	15	6

Note: du = dwelling unit

Pursuant to Zoning Code [Table 3-4](#) no minimum parking spaces are required for multi-family and affordable residential uses within the DSASP boundary. Therefore, the Project complies with minimum parking requirements by proposing 75 parking spaces (0.7 spaces per unit). However, the Traffic Study dated August 10, 2021, by W-Trans, recommended that the Project include a Parking Demand Management Plan that could include incentives for residents to rely on other modes of transportation such as unbundling parking, a generous supply of bicycle parking, and providing a car share program. A total of 48 bicycle parking spaces are proposed (0.42 per unit), exceeding the requirement for 0.25 spaces per unit.

#### 4. Design Guidelines

Applicable goals and implementation measures listed in the City's Design Guidelines, including those specific to historic districts and the DSASP, are shown below.

#### **Neighborhood Design**

- 1.1. I.A To promote the development of new “neighborhoods” that incorporate a variety of uses as opposed to subdivisions that feature single-family homes exclusively.
- 1.1.I.C To promote neighborhoods that feature a variety of housing types (both single-family and multi-family) as well as a variety of price ranges.

#### **Downtown Station Area**

- 2.4.3 Locate entrances and upper-story windows such that they look out onto and, at night, cast light onto, sidewalks and pedestrian paths.
- 2.4.4 Improve the setback area along the residential street frontages with trees and planting to enhance the landscape quality and the character of the existing residential street.
- 2.4.7 To establish continuity between land uses, all new developments in the Downtown Station Area, regardless of size or use, should reflect a similar urban form that is human-scale and pedestrian-oriented, with strong physical and visual connections to fronting streets.

- 2.4.8 Surrounding buildings establish the context for the design of new buildings. Whether new buildings are detailed in a historical, contemporary or eclectic manner, incorporating similar rhythm and proportions found in adjacent buildings improves the compatibility between new and old.
- 2.4.13 Building façades should be constructed of high quality and durable materials such as stone, brick, tile, wood, glass, and metal. Use of stucco should be minimized and aluminum mesh is discouraged as a balcony material. Ground floor should use high quality material with texture.
- 2.5.1 Design new development in and adjacent to historic preservation districts to be compatible with existing structures. In terms of mass, materials, color, proportion, and spacing of windows and doors. A particular architectural style or design is not specified; however, the scale, mass and size of the building are often more important than the decorative details which are applied.
- 2.5.8 Infill development in the Downtown Station Area should incorporate and reflect character defining elements of the area and follow the design guidelines outlined in the City's Processing Review Procedures for Historic Properties.

### **Multi-family Residential**

- 3.2.I.E To provide developments with logical layouts that people can navigate through without confusion.
- 3.2.II.L.7 All site features including trash enclosures, fencing, light fixtures, mailboxes, laundry and facilities utility screens, should be architecturally compatible with the main structures.
- 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.B.1 Orient the main entrance of each unit, or the building to the street or to a common open area.

### **Landscaping**

- 4.1 II 2 Provide special attention to incorporation of trees in all landscape design.
- 4.1 II 6 Select landscape materials and plants that are appropriate in scale and function to the locations in which they are placed.
- 4.1 II 13 Automatically controlled irrigation systems with multiple programs and repeat start times, are required.

### **Historic Districts**

- 4.7.I.A To preserve Santa Rosa's historic heritage.
- 4.7.I.E To assist property owners and designers in developing plans for historic properties and to encourage the compatibility of new structures in historic districts.
- 4.7.III.G.1 Design new construction so that the architectural character of the neighborhood is maintained. Specific architectural styles are not mandated. Designs for new construction can also be contemporary.
- 4.7.III.G.2 Design new construction to be compatible in height and proportion with adjacent structures.
- 4.7.III.G.3 Use materials and designs similar to that found throughout the neighborhood.

The Project implements several goals and implementation measures from the Design Guidelines as outlined above. Coupled with the incorporation of several architectural features found throughout the Railroad Square Preservation District and the distance between the residences of the West End Preservation District, the new building transitions smoothly between the neighboring single-family and existing commercial uses. The District Compatibility Report, prepared by Kara Brunzell, dated November 5, 2021, found that "The project will not copy specific features of adjacent historic buildings in order to avoid creating a false sense of history or a cartoonish historicism. Imitation materials will be avoided. Ground-floor materials on the west elevation will respond to the adjacent historic brick warehouse; brick cladding, metal handrails, and steel awnings will be utilized. For these reasons, the materials and texture of the proposed project is compatible with the preservation districts."

The Project establishes visual interest with front porches that activate the street frontage along W 6<sup>th</sup> Street. Additionally, the new pedestrian pathway on the southern side of the building provides activity generating features for future residents and pedestrians. The building has street-facing windows that break up the massing and allow more eyes on the street and all balconies are located on the south elevation. The proposed materials wrap all four sides of the structure

and include a variety of architectural features resulting in an architecturally compatible structure to the Railroad Square Preservation District and to the City. The fencing, light fixtures, and accessory structures are compatible with the main building.

#### 4. Neighborhood Comments

Several residents attended the June 2, 2021, Neighborhood Meeting. Comments received included the following:

- Concern over the consistency with the General Plan
- Concern over lack of parking
- Concern over consistency with the surrounding neighborhoods
- Concern for safe crossings around the Project site
- Request to limit construction hours during the day to avoid potential light and noise impacts
- Question about the internal roadway and maintenance responsibilities
- Question if amenities, including pool usage, is available to surrounding neighborhood
- General support for the Project
- Support for parking supply
- Encourage expansion of affordability component
- Public support for the Project was provided during the November 17, 2021, Cultural Heritage Board Public Hearing for Project

Public Correspondence received for the Project as of November 29, 2021, is included as Attachment 12.

#### 5. Public Improvements/On-Site Improvements

Public right-of-way improvements include sidewalk and pedestrian improvements along W 6<sup>th</sup> Street; a new interim private roadway along the western property line with a public access easement for public use that will eventually connect 3<sup>rd</sup> Street with W 6<sup>th</sup> Street; SMART track crossing improvements along 6<sup>th</sup> Street; a new multi-use path along the eastern property line connecting W 6<sup>th</sup> Street and the SMART Downtown Station; a 26-foot wide pathway on the southern side of the proposed building; and 75 parking spaces along the new road. Additional public right-of-way improvements can be found in Engineering Development Services Exhibit "A" dated October 22, 2021.

#### FISCAL IMPACT

Not applicable.

### ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The proposed project has been reviewed in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The project is statutorily exempt from CEQA pursuant to Government Code Section 65457 and implemented in CEQA Guidelines Section 15182(a)(c). Specifically, the project would develop a residential land use that is undertaken to implement, and is consistent with, the Downtown Station Area Specific Plan and the certified Subsequent Program EIR (SCH 2006072104) and no events subsequent to certification have required a Supplemental EIR pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21166. The residential intensity, design, and infrastructure plan of the proposed project is consistent with the adopted Specific Plan's goals and policies.

### NOTIFICATION

All noticing for the public hearing has been done in compliance with Zoning Code Chapter 20-66, including mailed Notice of Public Hearing (Notice) to owners and occupants of properties located within 600 feet of the development site, a Notice published in the Press Democrat and two 32-square foot Public Hearing signs, one posted on each street frontage, at the Project site.

### ISSUES

There are no unresolved issues with the Project.

### ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1: Disclosure Form
- Attachment 2: Location Map
- Attachment 3: Design Narrative dated July 19, 2021
- Attachment 4: Project Plans received October 5, 2021
- Attachment 5: CEQA 15182 Consistency Downtown Station Area Specific Plan Determination
- Attachment 6: District Compatibility Report, prepared by Kara Brunzell, dated October 26, 2021
- Attachment 7: Historic Resource Evaluation, prepared by John W. Murphey, dated September 15, 2021
- Attachment 8: Climate Action Plan Development Worksheet, received September 10, 2021
- Attachment 9: Concept Project Plans from Joint CHC/DRB Meeting from September 16, 2020
- Attachment 10: Public Correspondence as of October 26, 2021
- Attachment 11: Joint CHB/DRB Meeting Minutes from September 16, 2020
  
- Resolution 1: Design Review (with Engineering Development Services Exhibit A, dated October 22, 2021 and SMART Exhibit B, dated June 9, 2021)

CONTACT

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