

CITY OF SANTA ROSA  
PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT  
STAFF REPORT FOR PLANNING COMMISSION  
**AUGUST 11, 2022**

**PROJECT TITLE**

Recess Self-Storage – Phase II

**APPLICANT**

Larry Thom, on behalf of  
American Recess LLC

**ADDRESS/LOCATION**

4465 & 4480 Streamside Drive

**PROPERTY OWNER**

Bonfire Aloha LLC

**ASSESSOR'S PARCEL NUMBER**

032-530-002 & 032-530-003

**FILE NUMBER**

PRJ21-028 (DR21-062, CUP21-094,  
HDP22-006 & ZV22-006)

**APPLICATION DATE**

November 18, 2021

**APPLICATION COMPLETION DATE**

February 8, 2022

**REQUESTED ENTITLEMENTS**

Variance, Minor Conditional Use Permit,  
and Hillside Development Permit

**FURTHER ACTIONS REQUIRED**

Design Review

**PROJECT SITE ZONING**

CG (General Commercial)

**GENERAL PLAN DESIGNATION**

Retail and Business Services

**PROJECT PLANNER**

Susie Murray

**RECOMMENDATION**

Approval

Agenda Item #8.2  
For Design Review Board Meeting of: August 11, 2022

CITY OF SANTA ROSA  
PLANNING COMMISSION

TO: CHAIR WEEKS AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION  
FROM: SUSIE MURRAY, SENIOR PLANNER  
PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
SUBJECT: RECESS STORAGE – DESIGN REVIEW

AGENDA ACTION: FOUR RESOLUTIONS

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RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended by the Planning and Economic Development Department that the Planning Commission, by four resolutions, approve: (1) an Addendum to a previously approved Mitigated Negative Declaration, (2) a Variance, (3) a Hillside Development Permit, and (4) a minor Conditional Use Permit to construct three self-storage structures, one at 4465 Streamside Drive and two at 4480 Streamside Drive; File No. PRJ21-028.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Recess Self-Storage - Phase II (Project) is a proposal to construct an approximately 21,780- square foot, three-story self-storage building at 4465 Streamside Drive, adjacent to the Santa Rosa Creek Trail, and two single-story self-storage structures, totaling approximately 4,665 square feet, at 4480 Streamside Drive, adjacent to existing residential uses.

The Project requires the following actions:

- Addendum to the previously approved Recess Storage Project Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) (Planning Commission);
- A Variance to allow a reduced front and rear setback for two buildings proposed at 4480 Streamside Drive and a reduced setback for the single building proposed at 4465 Streamside Drive (Planning Commission);
- A Hillside Development Permit (HDP) to allow development on a slope greater than ten percent for the building proposed at 4465 Streamside Drive (Planning Commission);
- Minor Conditional Use Permit (MUP) to construct and operate a self-storage facility (Planning Commission); and

- Design Review for three commercial buildings (Design Review Board).

## BACKGROUND

### 1. Project Description

The Project site straddles a new segment of Streamside Drive. The larger three-story building proposed as part of this project is bordered by the Santa Rosa Creek Trail, a new four-story self-storage facility and Streamside Drive. The two smaller single-story buildings are bordered by Hwy 12, single-family residential uses, and Streamside Drive. Both properties have been graded as part of the construction of Improvement Plans for the previously approved Recess Storage project.

Primary access for eastbound traffic will be taken from Hwy 12, and westbound traffic will likely access from Streamside Drive.



### 2. Surrounding Land Uses

North: Retail and Business Services and Medium Density Residential (8-18 units per acre); currently developed with a new four-story self-storage structure owned and operated by the applicant, and multi-family residential uses across Hwy 12.

South: Low Density Residential (2-8 units per acre)/Open Space; The Santa Rosa Creek Trail, Santa Rosa Creek and Flat Rock Park.

East: Retail and Business Services; currently developed with a mix of retail uses.

West: Retail and Business Services, Medium Density Residential and Low Density Residential (2-8 units per acre)/Open Space; currently developed with commercial uses and multi-family residential.

3. Existing Land Use – Project Site

Both properties are currently undeveloped.

Site and Project History

The previously approved Recess Storage project included a four-story self-storage facility; a three-story, eight-unit residential structure; and a two-story six-unit residential structure. That project required a Rezoning for Annexation into the CG Zoning district consistent with the General Plan land use designation of Retail and Business Services; a Tentative Map to subdivide one parcel into three individual commercial lots; a Hillside Development Permit to construct on slopes greater than ten percent; a minor Conditional Use Permit for a mixed-use development including a Personal Storage Facility and Multifamily Residential uses; and Design Review for three structures. Through the following series of events, the original Recess Storage project was approved:

- On August 8, 2019, the Planning Commission approved the original Recess Storage project, resolution numbers 11972-11976, adopting a Mitigated Negative Declaration; recommending to Council to approve a Rezoning into the General Commercial zoning district for annexation; approving a Tentative Map to subdivide one parcel into three commercial lots, a HDP to develop on a slope greater than ten percent, and MUP for a mixed use development including a four-story self-storage facility and two multifamily housing structures.
- On September 24, 2019/October 1, 2019, the Council approved rezoning the properties located at 4200 and 4224 Sonoma Highway into the CG zoning district.
- On January 16, 2020, the DRB granted Final Design Review.
- The property was annexed into the City, the Final Map was recorded, and the site improvements and the four-story self-storage structure was constructed.

The following summarizes the currently proposed Project history:

- On October 7, 2021, the Design Review Board reviewed the proposed project on a concept basis. The Board was generally in favor of the project.
- On November 18, 2021, Planning and Economic Development received

applications for a MUP and Design Review for the proposed self-storage development. Upon further review, staff determined that the project also required both a Variance and HDP. The project application was deemed complete on February 8, 2022, when the additional companion applications were submitted.

- On May 26, 2022, the Waterways Advisory Committee (WAC) reviewed the project because of the site's proximity to Santa Rosa Creek and the creek path. The WAC recommendations are discussed under the Committee Review and Recommendations section of this report.

### PRIOR CITY COUNCIL REVIEW

There has been no Council input since the Rezoning for the previous project was approved.

### ANALYSIS

#### 1. General Plan

The General Plan land use designation for the site is Retail and Business Services which allows retail and service enterprises, offices and restaurants. There are only a few General Plan Goals/Policies applicable to the project, some of which are shown below:

### **TRANSPORTATION**

T-K-1      Link the various citywide pedestrian paths, including street sidewalks, downtown walkways, pedestrian areas in shopping centers and work complexes, park pathways, and other creek side and open space pathways.

### **URBAN DESIGN**

UD-C-6      Require that buildings, sound walls, and other structures highly visible from Highway 101 or Highway 12 and adjoining neighborhoods be designed to enhance and improve scenic character.

UD-A-11      Require structures within new developments to step with the slope of the site. Absorb site topography through use of split-level designs.

The landscaping design includes a variety of trees along the Hwy 12 frontage and the area between the Santa Rosa Creek Trail and the storage facility. The three-story building has been designed to step with the natural slope. The site is

in a developed area where all utilities and emergency services are available.

2. Other Applicable Plans

Not applicable.

3. Zoning

Zoning for surrounding properties:

North: CG (General Commercial), R-3-18 (Multi-family Residential) and PD (Planned Development)

South: PD

East: CG and RR-20 (Rural Residential)

West: PD

The following Zoning Code sections are applicable to the project:

[Table 3-4](#) provides parking requirements. The existing building has six spaces, and the new buildings will provide ten more. The site will operate in compliance with the Parking Ordinance with a total of 16 spaces.

[Chapter 20-32](#) discusses development on hillsides with slopes greater than ten percent and requires structures to step with the slope. While most of the development area is flat, the footprint of the larger building will be constructed over an area with greater than ten percent slope. In anticipation of the previously approved housing structure, this area has already been graded. A new HDP was required because the 7,260-sf footprint of the proposed building extends further into the sloped area than the 5,692-sf footprint of the approved housing structure. The Commission may approve a Hillside Development Permit only after making the following findings:

- Site planning minimizes the visual prominence of hillside development by taking advantage of existing site features for screening, including tree clusters, depressions in topography, setback hillside plateau areas, and other natural features;
- Site development minimizes alteration of topography, drainage patterns, and vegetation on land with slopes of 10 percent or more;
- Site development does not alter slopes of greater than 25 percent, except in compliance with Section 20-32.020.B (Applicability—Limitations on hillside development);

- Project grading respects natural features and visually blends with adjacent properties;
- Building pad location, design, and construction avoids large areas of flat pads, and building forms are instead “stepped” to conform to site topography;
- The proposed project complies with the City’s Design Guidelines;
- The proposed project complies with the requirements of this chapter and all other applicable provisions of this Zoning Code;
- The proposed project is consistent with the General Plan and any applicable specific plan; and
- The establishment, maintenance, or operation of the use will not, under the circumstances of the particular case, be detrimental to the public health, safety, or general welfare.

Staff has demonstrated on the draft resolution for Hillside Development Permit that these findings can be made.

[Chapter 20-23](#), Table 2-7, provides development standards for commercial zoning districts. The project has been found in compliance with rear and side yard setbacks, lot coverage, and building height.

[Section 20-42.180](#) provides additional development standards specific to self-storage facilities allowing personal storage facilities only along regional streets. This section of the Zoning Code states that the use may only be located on a regional street. While Streamside Drive is not a regional street, Highway 12 is, and, while the site for this specific building does not technically have frontage on Highway 12, the facility takes its main access off of Highway 12. Therefore, staff has found that the project complies with this requirement.

Zoning Code Section 20-42.180 also requires a 25-foot front setback from a regional street and a 20-foot front setback from all other streets. The proposed structures are located on separate but contiguous parcels, both of which are adjacent to the already-constructed four-story personal storage facility. All of the proposed structures comply with the required 25-foot setback from Highway 12, an arterial/regional street. However, the proposed building at 4480 Streamside Drive would have a 15-foot setback from the adjacent residential neighborhood, rather than the required 20-foot setback, and an approximately 7 to 10-foot setback from Streamside Drive rather than the required 20-foot setback. Likewise, the proposed building at 4465 Streamside Drive is set back from Streamside Drive approximately eight feet rather than the required 20 feet. Due

to a variety of unique circumstances related to both parcels, a reduced front setback is appropriate and necessary. As such, the Project requires a Variance.

Pursuant to Zoning Code [Section 20-50.060](#), four affirmative votes are required to approve a Variance. Pursuant to Zoning Code [Section 20-52.060](#), the Commission may grant a Variance for development standards, dimension standards, numerical standards and other operational standards only after making the following findings:

- There are special circumstances applicable to the property (e.g., location, shape, size, surroundings, topography, or other conditions), so that the strict application of this Zoning Code denies the property owner privileges enjoyed by other property owners in the vicinity and under identical zoning districts or creates an unnecessary and non-self-created hardship or unreasonable regulation which makes it obviously impractical to require compliance with the applicable development standards.
- A non-self-created hardship peculiar to the subject property does exist by reason of the conditions, and that these conditions are not common to all or most of the properties in the immediate area which are also within the identical zoning district. In this context, personal, family, or financial difficulties, loss of prospective profits, and existing zoning violations, or legal nonconforming uses or structures existing on neighboring properties shall not be deemed hardships justifying a Variance.
- Granting the Variance is necessary for the preservation and enjoyment of a substantial property right possessed by other properties in the vicinity which are within the identical zoning district as the subject property, and that a Variance, if granted, would not constitute a special privilege to the subject property which is not held or enjoyed by neighboring properties within the identical zoning district.
- The Variance would not be of substantial detriment to adjacent properties and would not be in conflict with the purposes and intent of this Zoning Code, the General Plan, any applicable specific plan, or the public interest or welfare.
- The proposed project has been reviewed in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Staff has demonstrated on the draft resolution for Variance that the findings can be made.

Pursuant to Zoning Code [Section 20-23.030](#), the Personal Storage Facility (mini-storage) requires a MUP. Zoning Code [Section 20-52.050](#) provide guidance from processing MUPs which are normally considered by the Zoning Administrator. In an effort to minimize the number of public meetings and



expedite processing of the Project, staff has elevated the review of the MUP to the Commission together with the review of the HDP and Variance. Before approving a MUP, the review authority must first make the following findings:

- The proposed use is allowed within the applicable zoning district and complies with all other applicable provisions of this Zoning Code and the City Code;
- The proposed use is consistent with the General Plan and any applicable specific plan;
- The design, location, size, and operating characteristics of the proposed activity would be compatible with the existing and future land uses in the vicinity;
- The site is physically suitable for the type, density, and intensity of use being proposed, including access, utilities, and the absence of physical constraints;
- Granting the permit would not constitute a nuisance or be injurious or detrimental to the public interest, health, safety, convenience, or welfare, or materially injurious to persons, property, or improvements in the vicinity and zoning district in which the property is located; and
- The proposed project has been reviewed in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Staff has demonstrated on the draft resolution for MUP that the findings can be made.

4. Design Guidelines

Some of the goals and implementation measures set forth in the City's Design Guidelines, that are applicable to this project, are shown below:

**Section 1.3 – Streetscapes**

I.E/F To develop a comprehensive pedestrian/bicycle circulation system.

**Section 4.3 - Infill Development**

- II.1 Integrate new development carefully into existing neighborhoods with respect to scale, level of detailing, use of materials, landscaping, and other characteristics of the neighborhood.
- II.2 Where Santa Rosa's General Plan calls for a change or an intensification in land use, new development should consider the character of the

surrounding neighborhood or district, particularly at the edges adjacent to existing development.

- II.3 At edge conditions of infill, avoid placing structures and elements which adversely affect adjacent residents. For example, avoid placing the following directly adjacent to residences:
- a. trash enclosures, which are both smelly and noisy;
  - b. large structures which block sunlight; and
  - c. living spaces with second and third story windows that permit residents to look directly into neighbors' yards.
- II.4 In addition to what is discussed in #3 above, design infill development at its edges to:
- a. approximate the scale and mass of adjacent existing residences;
  - b. include buildings which are detailed and articulated on at least the side facing adjacent existing residences (and preferably on all four sides). Long blank back or side walls are undesirable; and
  - c. avoid blocking significant views.

Streamside Drive is a looped street on the south side of Hwy 12, with residential uses on the west end, then transitioning to commercial uses at the east end. At 4480 Streamside Drive, the parcel adjacent to existing residential uses, the proposed buildings are thoughtfully designed with only interior access to storage units (no roll-up doors), and a landscape design that includes several trees between the storage structures and existing residences.

The Design Review Board reviewed the project on a concept basis October 7, 2021; the Board was generally in favor of it. The proposed building materials have been selected to continue the theme from the already-constructed storage building and the developer has incorporated changes based on direction from the Board. The current proposal has been conditioned contingent to Design Review Board approval.

## 5. Neighborhood Comments

Staff has received the following comments about pertaining to the current project:

- The implementation of the site improvements and construction of the existing storage facility was noisy and messy. What can be done to correct those conditions for the next round of development?

Staff response: The project has been conditioned to reduce construction hours to be more appropriate adjacent to existing residential uses, to minimize construction-related dust with standard best management practices (as shown in the conditions of approval), to post a sign with contact information for the onsite general contractor and the developer; and to address all construction-related complaints within 24-hours.

- Construction trucks/equipment blocked the view of oncoming eastbound traffic for drivers exiting the driveway from hardware store to the east of the project site.

The current project has been conditioned to prohibit construction-related trucks and equipment, including employee-owned vehicles, to park all construction vehicles off Hwy 12.

- Why is the City approving a reduction in housing for another self-storage facility?

Staff response: The project site is designated for commercial businesses. The City cannot require housing or prohibit commercial uses.

- This is not an appropriate use along the gateway corridor.

Staff response: This property is not in the -G (Gateway) combining district.

- Is the use appropriate adjacent to existing residential uses?

Staff response: Changes in land use designation occur all over the City where residential uses abut commercial or industrial uses. Part of the entitlement process is making sure new uses are compatible with existing neighboring uses. In this case, the buildings proposed at 4480 Streamside Drive are single-story; they do not have exterior access to the storage units so there are no roll-up doors; and there are a significant number of trees being planted between the building and the fence that will provide screening. These design features will result in a seamless transition from residential to commercial uses.

- The proposed buildings are too close to the creek. What if someone stores something that spills?

The building will be self-contained meaning spills inside will stay inside until they are cleaned up.

## 6. Public Improvements/On-Site Improvements

Given that this site was recently approved for a mixed-use project, the street

extension and all utilities are newly installed after a thorough permit review process. As such, no significant improvements, on or off-site, are required. Refer to the Exhibit A, prepared by Engineering Development Services, dated August 3, 2022, attached to the draft resolution for MUP.

### FISCAL IMPACT

Approval of this action will not have a fiscal impact on the General Fund.

### ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The Project has been found in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). On August 8, 2019, the Planning Commission adopted a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) for the project. An addendum, prepared by Arcadis, dated July 2022, concluded that “there have been no significant changes in circumstances that would involve new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects. None of the “new information” conditions listed in CEQA Guidelines Section 15162[a][3] are presented here to trigger the need for a subsequent MND.”

### COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Due to proximity to the Santa Rosa Creek, on May 26, 2022, the WAC reviewed the project materials. The Committee was generally in favor of the new proposal to construct a three-story self-storage building given similar development along that stretch of path. The direction given pertained to the types of trees planted between the building and creek path, requesting a mix of evergreen and deciduous, preferable native, trees. The Committee also liked the faux glazing on the creek-facing elevation.

### NOTIFICATION

- Zoning Code Section 20-50.050(E) requires a Notice of Application for projects that require a public hearing be mailed within 45 days of application submittal. This notice was overlooked. Pursuant to Zoning Code Section 20-66.020(A)(3), A defect (failure) in the notice procedure shall not affect the jurisdiction or authority of a review authority to take action on a matter.
- On October 7, 2021, the applicant opted to present their proposed project to the Design Review Board as a concept item. A Notice of Public Meeting was mailed to property owners and occupants within 600 feet of the project site and three public meeting signs were posted on site.
- Pursuant to Zoning Code Chapter 20-66, all required public noticing was done for the public hearing, including the installation of three public hearing signs at the Project site, a mailed Notice of Public Hearing to property owners and occupants within 600 feet of the Project site, and a Notice of Public Hearing published in the

Press Democrat for the August 11, 2022, Planning Commission meeting.

### ISSUES

Given the recent approval of the mixed-use project and approved site improvements, there were no significant issues raised during staff review of the project materials.

There are no unresolved issues.

### ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1: Disclosure Form
- Attachment 2: Location and Neighborhood Context Map
- Attachment 3: Project Narrative stamped received on November 17, 2021
- Attachment 4: Site Plan, provided by applicant, stamped received on April 29, 2022
- Attachment 5: Slope Analysis, prepared by Eric Wade, BkF Engineers, stamped received on April 29, 2022
- Attachment 6: Project Renderings, provided by applicant, date stamped received on April 29, 2022
- Attachment 7: Elevations, lighting and materials, provided by applicant, date stamped received on April 29, 2022
- Attachment 8: Landscape Plan, prepared by HWA Landscape Architecture, date stamped received on April 29, 2022
- Attachment 9: Planning Commission Resolution No. 11972 (including MND)
- Attachment 10: Addendum to Approved MND, prepared by Arcadis, dated July 2022
- Attachment 11: Recorded Map
- Attachment 12: Public Correspondence

- Resolution 1: Addendum to Recess Storage Mitigated Negative Declaration
- Resolution 2: Variance
- Resolution 3: Minor Conditional Use Permit
- Resolution 4: Hillside Development Permit

### CONTACT

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