

320 College Avenue- Pre Concept Landmark

Project Description:

Applicant proposes to the adaptive reuse of an existing 3 level office building located at 320 College Avenue into rental housing as well as the construction of a new 4 story apartment building. The site is located just east of Hwy 101, lies within the Station Area Plan with a General Plan designation of Retail Business Services and a Zoning of CD-5-H. The reuse and remodeling of the existing office building will create 20 apartment units; the new building will house an additional 20 for total unit count of 40 market rate rental units. The unit mix will consist of Studios (3), 1-Bedroom (22) and 2-Bedroom (15) units.

The existing office structure is currently improved with multiple office suites on floors 2 and 3. Floor one contains the lobby entrance to the office floors, parking garage, pass through to the parking lot at the southerly portion of the site. The subject property has suffered from poor occupancy over the past 5-7 years and has gone through 2 ownership changes. These owners had not had the desire to renovate and enhance the office environment. The proposed project is supported within the CD-5 Zoning District and per Zoning Code Section 20-16.060 A.6, multi-family uses are permitted by right without the need of a Conditional Use Permit. The project will improve the landscaping along College Avenue and Lincoln St and will provide 1 parking stall per unit; 31 stalls will be covered and 11 will be uncovered. The project will also provide a common patio area, bike storage, and private outdoor space for some of the units.

The zoning designation of CD-5 allows for a height limit of 55 feet. The project will be far below this limit. The existing structure is 3 levels and approximately 35' in height. Although the proposed new building will be 4 levels with an approximate height of 45' 6" at it's highest point, the portion closest to Lincoln Street will be 2 levels and approximately 24' in height. This southerly building façade is set back approximately 25' from the curb at Lincoln Street.

Although the property lies in the St. Rose Historic District, this block only contains one contributing historic property. (See contributing/non-contributing map attached.) It's also noteworthy that the project site is only 1 of 2 properties in the district with frontage on both College Avenue and Lincoln Street. This creates a very unique situation of trying to bridge between the Lincoln Street residential frontage, and the highly trafficked College Avenue commercial frontage. This block, and the block directly east, only have 2 parcels in the Historic District t with frontage along College Avenue. The College Avenue frontage consists of an existing office building that appears to have been built before the St. Rose District was created. Our design proposes a modest exterior renovation to modernize the College Avenue façade of the existing building while creating a continuity in overall massing between our original structure and the proposed structure. We have attempted to be thoughtful with the massing of the new structure and its relationship to the Lincoln Street frontage. This was carried out by a setback approach to the building height, so that the 2 story elements are adjacent to the sidewalk. As previously noted, the 2nd story portion is approximately 25' from curb, and the 4-story height is approximately 32' back from curb. The new building also incorporates a recess entry form with vertical stair tower element and vertical glazing reminiscent of Art Deco apartment buildings from the 1930's which would be one of the architectural periods associated with this neighborhood. We feel this scale,

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massing and architectural aesthetic is more in keeping with both the visual connection to the existing office building and the historic neighborhood than conforming to the primarily single-story scale of the adjacent homes. This scale also allows us to meet the design intent and residential density of the General Plan and Station Area Plan. We will replace 3 trees in the sidewalk planters, and also plant an additional 3 trees between the sidewalk and the new building to help further enhance the pedestrian streetscape and visually soften the height of this structure.

The parking standards for this site are governed by the Downtown Station Area Plan. The Station Area Plan (SAP) breaks this area into 7 sub-sections. This project lies in the Historic Residential Sub-Area. According to the SAP, this area will retain existing land use designations. The SAP also outlines parking standards within these 7 areas. Currently, the parking standards ranges from 1 to 1.5 reserved spaces for all 7 sub sections. If this area will be governed by the “existing land use designation” of CD-5, then section 20-36.050 table 3-4: Downtown Station Area Specific Plan would prevail. This requires that 1 reserved and 0.5 visitor spaces be provided. However, other areas within this plan have lower parking standards. The City currently is in the process of amending the Station Area Plan and reducing the parking standards is one of the many adjustments being considered. We have heard that the standard could drop as low as .68 spaces per unit. This project would exceed that parking requirement, and we wish to submit our application for consideration and review prior to the City’s determination of the final amendments to the SAP.

General Plan Goals this project would satisfy:

Section (NSRSA Plan) AH-3.1 “Encourage housing of all types, including students and seniors”.

This proposed project would deliver 25 studio and 1 bedroom units all of which would be served by elevator and meet State accessibility requirements.

General Plan, Section 4-8: H-A, H-C,

The proposed project meets the goal of providing housing needs for all Santa Rosa residents by increasing the supply of apartment units.

Section H-C: Expand the supply of Housing available to Lower Income Households. The proposed project will be a market rate development that will provide housing near and possibly below the median rent for similar style of housing. Half of this project will not be new construction, units will be compact in size with no pool, work out room or similar amenity, the project will not command the amount of rent achievable in other parts of the community.

Adaptive Reuse: This project would meet the definition of Adaptive Reuse in the General Plan. The proposed project would reuse and repurpose the existing building. This approach is significantly better for the local environment than the demolition and dumping of the existing structure into a landfill. Additionally, the reuse allows to keep project costs lower, resulting in rents that are more attainable for renters.

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Summary:

The proposed project will provide 40 units of housing of varying sizes within the downtown core. The project will provide a transition between the non-historic commercial side of College Avenue, to the St. Rose Historic District. Housing continues to be a challenge for the community; the reuse concept allows for a housing project to obtain entitlements in less time, and at a lower cost than comparable bare land projects. The applicant is targeting a first quarter 2020 construction start, with units available by mid 2021. The project will offer in-unit laundry, covered parking and elevator service. Additionally, the project is walking distance to downtown shops, restaurants services and the new Courthouse Square. The project site also has easy access to public transportation, including being located 0.9 miles to Santa Rosa SMART depot as well as near adjoining bike paths. The Applicant believes these housing units will be well received by the market and add to a vibrancy of the downtown core.

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