

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
STAFF REPORT FOR THE DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

PROJECT TITLE

Avenue 320 Apartments

APPLICANT

Nick Abbott, on behalf of
Avenue 320 Apartments

ADDRESS/LOCATION

320 College Avenue
(also fronting Lincoln Street)

PROPERTY OWNER

Avenue 320, LLC

ASSESSOR'S PARCEL NUMBER

010-113-035

FILE NUMBER

PRJ19-028

APPLICATION DATE

June 22, 2019

APPLICATION COMPLETION DATE

April 13, 2021 (After redesign)

REQUESTED ENTITLEMENTS

Design Review

FURTHER ACTIONS REQUIRED

Landmark Alteration

PROJECT SITE ZONING

NMU-DSA-H

GENERAL PLAN DESIGNATION

Neighborhood Mixed Use

PROJECT PLANNER

Susie Murray

RECOMMENDATION

Approval

Agenda Item # 9.1
For Design Review Board Meeting of: September 16, 2021

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

TO: CHAIR WEIGL AND MEMBERS OF THE BOARD
FROM: SUSIE MURRAY, SENIOR PLANNER
PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
SUBJECT: AVENUE 320 APARTMENTS

AGENDA ACTION: RESOLUTION

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended by the Planning and Economic Development Department that the Design Review Board, by resolution, grant Design Review for the Avenue 320 Apartments, a 37-unit, two structure apartment complex, located at 320 College Avenue.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Avenue 320 Apartments (Project) is a proposal to construct a 37-unit apartment complex comprised of two residential buildings and associated amenities. Building A involves the renovation and reuse of the existing structure fronting College Avenue and Building B involves the construction of a new three-story building that steps to two stories where it fronts Lincoln Street.

Because the Project site is located within the St. Rose Preservation District, required entitlements include Design Review and Landmark Alteration Permits. The Design Review Board (DRB) is being asked to consider granting Design Review.

BACKGROUND

On January 21, 2021, the Design Review Board considered the Project. After deliberation, the item was continued for redesign and the applicant was directed to reconsider setbacks, building height, and overall architectural design. The primary reason for the continuance pertained to Building B, the new building fronting Lincoln Street. The DRB briefly discussed Building A, the existing building along College Avenue, commenting that the buildings do not need to match, but should be designed to complement each other.

1. Project Description

The Project site is located within the boundary of the Downtown Station Area Specific Plan (DSASP) and is also within the St. Rose Preservation District (Preservation District). The approximately 0.63-acre parcel fronts both College Avenue and Lincoln Street. The site is accessed by two driveways on College Avenue and one on Lincoln Street. The Project scope includes two residential structures, with 37 market-rate residential units, and associated amenities.

Building A: The existing three-story commercial structure will be adapted from commercial to residential use and will provide 20 living units, with parking on the ground floor.

Building B: This is a new structure proposed along the Lincoln Street frontage. At the direction of the Design Review Board, following its meeting of January 21, 2021, the following changes have been implemented:

- The building's front setback has been increased from 12 feet to 19.75 feet;
- The overall building height was reduced from 46'4" to 37'3", and now steps down from three stories to two as it approaches Lincoln Street;
- The number of residential units has been decreased from 39 to 37; and
- There is no longer parking on the ground floor of Building B, and the number of overall spaces has been reduced from 40 to 36.

The Landscape Plan, prepared by MacNair Landscape Architecture, dated March 22, 2021, shows an existing Live Oak tree that will be retained, and proposes two shade trees along the southwestern boundary. The Project has been conditioned to plant 36"-box Valley Oak trees, which will provide adequate shade for 11 parking spaces and meets the intent of "Orchard-Style" parking. This plan also shows the location of the trash enclosure centrally located on the site and roughly 100 feet away from Lincoln Street where it's not readily visible from offsite.

2. Surrounding Land Uses

North: General Plan Land Use: Retail and Business Services; currently occupied by various commercial uses.

South: General Plan Land Use: Low Density Residential; currently developed with single and multifamily residential uses.

East: General Plan Land Use: Neighborhood Mixed Use and Single Family Residential; currently developed with commercial and single-family residential uses.

West: General Plan Land Use: Neighborhood Mixed Use and Single-family Residential; currently developed with a service station and single-family residential uses.

3. Existing Land Use – Project Site

The site is currently developed with an office building with a surface parking lot. The site is vegetated with ivy and several trees of which two redwoods and an oak tree are note-worthy. The oak tree will be preserved, and the Project has been conditioned requiring appropriate replacement trees be planted onsite to allow for the removal of the redwood trees in compliance with the Tree Ordinance, Chapter 17-24 of the City Code.

4. Project History

On March 20, 2019, the Cultural Heritage Board reviewed the proposed plans as a concept item.

On May 1, 2019, a Neighborhood Meeting was held to introduce the proposal to the neighbors and interested members of the public.

On August 22, 2019, the Planning and Economic Development received the Design Review and Landmark Alteration Permit applications and Project materials.

On August 8, 2020, revised Project materials were submitted in response to issues raised by staff.

On January 21, 2021, the Design Review Board held a public hearing where it deliberated the Project plans and continued the item for re-design.

On April 13, 2021, revised Project plans were submitted.

ANALYSIS

1. General Plan

The [General Plan](#) addresses issues related to the physical development and growth of Santa Rosa and guides the City's planning and zoning functions as well as the funding of public improvement projects, including as parks and streets. The site is designated as Neighborhood Mixed Use on the General Plan Land Use Diagram. Areas with this designation are intended for new multi-family

residential development combined with a broad mix of uses to serve local residents. Housing development is envisioned to include low- and mid-rise apartments and condominiums, as well as duplexes, triplexes, townhomes.

The most applicable General Plan goals with Staff's analysis are included below:

Land Use

- LUL-A Foster a compact rather than a scattered development pattern in order to reduce travel, energy, land, and materials consumption while promoting reductions in greenhouse gas emissions citywide.
- LUL-E Promote livable neighborhoods by requiring compliance with green building programs to ensure that new construction meets high standards of energy efficiency and sustainable material use. Ensure that everyday shopping, park and recreation facilities and schools are within easy walking distance of most residents.
- LUL-F Maintain a diversity of neighborhoods and varied housing stock to satisfy a wide range of needs.
- LUL-L Ensure land uses that promote use of transit.
- LUL-M Ensure new development and streetscape projects provide pedestrian and bicycle circulation improvements.
- LUL-S Develop an attractive, safe, and extensive network for pedestrian and bicyclist movements.

Urban Design

- UD-B Preserve and strengthen downtown as a vital and attractive place.
- UD-G Design residential neighborhoods to be safe, human-scaled, and livable by addressing compact development, multi-modal connectivity and reducing energy use.

Housing

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

This is a complex development site with several land uses converging at this location, including Neighborhood Mixed Use, Low Density Residential, and Retail and Business Services land uses. As revised, the Project is respectful of the neighboring commercial and historic properties. It achieves a smooth transition from single-family residential units within a preservation district to higher density

housing. Likewise, the project transitions comfortably from commercial to residential uses on the north side.

The site is allowed a Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 4.0. The units will be split in two multifamily structures with a total FAR of 1.18, less than the midpoint, which is allowed by the General Plan because the site is within a designated preservation district. Building B, fronting Lincoln Street, has been re-designed to fold into the St. Rose Preservation District by increasing setbacks to 19.75 from back of sidewalk, reducing the building height to 37'3" at its tallest point and stepping down to two stories along the Lincoln Street frontage, and incorporating several architecture features found in the District, while providing an alternative type of housing. Required improvements will update the pedestrian and bicycle paths of travel, and the site is located within walking distance of multiple public transportation facilities, including bus stops and the SMART train.

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 Neighborhood Mixed Use (NMU) designation is intended for a mix of higher density housing together with a broad mix of uses that serve the needs local residents.

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-4: A diverse range of housing opportunities suitable for people of all incomes, abilities, and stages of life.

By providing housing in the Downtown Station Area, the Project will have an energizing 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 multi-family 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 the public transportation and many other services, both business and recreational.

The project has been analyzed pursuant to the Zoning Code and Design Guidelines, which have both been updated to reflect development standards and guidelines from the DSASP.

3. Zoning Code

The [Zoning Code](#) implements the goals and policies of the General Plan by classifying and regulating the use of land and structure development within the City. The project site is zoned NMU (Neighborhood Mixed Use), where multifamily housing is allowed by right. The project has been reviewed in compliance with development standards in the NMU zoning district:

Lot Coverage: 100% coverage is allowed.

Building Height: There is no maximum building height for buildings within the NMU 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\(E\)\(3\)\(c\)](#)).

Building A is approximately 36 feet and Building B is proposed to be 37'3" at its tallest point stepping down to 21'11" as it approaches Lincoln Street.

Setbacks: The project meets or exceeds all setbacks outlined for the NMU zoning district in [Table 2-5](#) of Zoning Code Section 20-22.050.

Traffic & Parking: The application materials included a Focused Traffic Study (Traffic Study), prepared by W-Trans, dated November 5, 2020, that concluded the project "is expected to result in an additional 23 new trips on a daily basis and would decrease the peak hour trips to the site with nine fewer trips during the morning peak hour and five fewer trips during the evening peak hour compared to the existing office building." The Study also concluded that the project complies with all emergency access, site distance, circulation, and queuing requirements.

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
Existing											
General Office Building	19.4 ksf	9.74	-189	1.16	-23	-19	-4	1.15	-22	-4	-18
Proposed											
Multifamily Housing	39 du	5.44	212	0.36	14	4	10	0.44	17	10	7
Net New Trips			23		-9	-15	6		-5	6	-11
Note: ksf = 1,000 square feet; du = dwelling unit											

The site plan includes 36 parking stalls. The Study concluded that there would be a deficiency in parking when compared to ITE standards; however, pursuant to Zoning Code [Table 3-4](#), no parking is required for uses within the DSASP boundary. Due to limited parking, the project has been conditioned to provide unbundled parking where a reduced rent would be available for a unit that does not include a reserved parking space.

Note that the Study has not been updated since the Project modifications were completed because the changes resulted in a reduction of units, thus resulting in a reduced trip generation and parking demand.

4. Design Guidelines

Applicable goals and implementation measures listed in the City's Design Guidelines, including those specific to 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.
- 2.4.16 Upper story step-backs should incorporate features that activate the setback areas, such as balconies, terraces, living roofs, and greenery.
- 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.
- 2.6.1 Parking areas should generally be below grade, in a podium, or "wrapped" with uses to reduce the visual impact. Where not feasible, surface parking should be located behind buildings.

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.
- 3.2.III.C.2 Avoid buildings with a massive appearance. Divide buildings into segments that break down the scale.
- 3.2.III.E.2 Locate garages or carports to minimize their impact from the public street. The main buildings should be the dominant visual statement along the public streetscape.

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.

Off-Street Parking

- 4.2 II A 2 Do not locate parking stalls adjacent to vehicular entrances and exits where vehicles entering and exiting the parking space will be in conflicts with vehicles entering and exiting the parking lot. Provide a minimum of 15 feet behind the sidewalk to the first parking space.
- 4.2 II B 3 Screen parked cars from public street frontage. Screening may be of landscaping, a planted earth berm, planted fencing, or some combination of the above. The screening should be to a height of not less than 4 feet above the adjacent sidewalk (or curb if there is no sidewalk) to obscure the greater portion of each parked vehicle.

The Project implements several goals and policies from the Design Guidelines as outlined above. Building B, the new 17-unit multifamily structure, is two stories along the along Lincoln Street frontage and steps to three stories as it moves away from the street. Coupled with the incorporation of several architectural features found with the District, the new building transitions smoothly to neighboring single-family uses. A Historical Evaluation, prepared by Mark Parry, dated July 20, 2021, found that “The colors, textures, materials, fenestration, and decorative features and details as proposed are consistent with the period, and

are compatible with the historic resource through a strategy of compatible composition with the use of contemporized character defining elements.”

The Project establishes visual interest with focal entrance points to both buildings that activate the street frontage. Both buildings have street-facing window that break up the massing and put more eyes on the street. The proposed materials wrap all four sides of the new structure and include a variety of architectural features resulting in two buildings with architecture unique to the both the site and the City. The trash enclosure is centrally located and is designed with similar materials as Building B with a safety feature allowing it to be utilized by residents only.

The Project provides both covered and surface parking. Where surface parking is visible from Lincoln Street, the landscape provides a buffer to screen the view.

The landscape plan identifies a significant oak tree to be retained, and the Project has been conditioned to mitigate the loss of two redwood trees by planting varietals selected from the City’s heritage tree list. The Project is also conditioned to comply with the City’s Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance (WELO) in effect at the time building permit applications are submitted.

5. Neighborhood Comments

Prior to the January 21, 2021, Design Review Board meeting, staff received several public comments, primarily expressing concerns about Building B, the new building proposed along the Lincoln Street frontage in terms of the compatibility with the St. Rose Preservation District and the building’s massing. At the direction of the DRB, the applicant has made significant design changes, which have been addressed throughout this report.

No new comments have been received as of the date this report was written.

6. Public Improvements/On-Site Improvements

A comprehensive list of on and offsite improvements are included the Engineering Development Services Exhibit A, prepared by Jesus McKeag, dated August 17, 2021, and can be found attached to the draft resolution. To summarize, the project will be required to bring the existing curb, gutter and driveway cuts to current standards; comply with Low Impact Development (LID) requirements in terms of site drainage, and comply with the Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance (WELO).

FISCAL IMPACT

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

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The proposed project has been reviewed in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and is eligible for multiple exemptions, as shown on the draft resolution.

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15182(b)(c), the project is exempt from CEQA in that:

- It proposes residential uses with a FAR greater than 0.75;
- The development site is located within a transit priority area;
- The Project is consistent with the DSASP for which an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was certified; and

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15332, the Project is exempt as infill development in that:

- The Project is consistent with the General Plan land use, DSASP and zoning.
- The development site is surrounded on all sides by other urban uses, is less than five acres in size and located entirely within city limits.
- The Project site does not provide habitat for endangered, rare or threatened species.
- Approval of the project would not result in any significant effects relating to traffic, noise, air quality, or water quality.
- The Project site can be served by all required utilities and public services.
- No exceptions to the exemptions apply and there is no reasonable possibility that the activity will have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances (CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2.)

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

On March 20, 2019, the Cultural Heritage Board reviewed the Project plans as a concept item and provided the following comments:

- Consider adding rounded elements.
- Consider revisiting polychrome material.
- Scale is too large, consider stepping back the 3rd and 4th story elements.
- Consider lowering the building's height within the Historic District.
- Include context of neighborhood in submittal.
- Identify siding materials.
- Identify lighting materials.
- Identify windows and door specifications.
- Decrease scale at street line and take influence from historical style.
- Consider stucco and horizontal siding elements.
- Consider revising the design to reflect elements from the St. Rose Preservation District.
- Consider revising the double height entry.
- Consider redesigning the tower portion.
- Consider revising the sun visors.
- Consider incorporating minimal elements into the design.

Previous comments provided by the Design Review Board on January 21, 2021, are summarized in the Background Section on Page 2 of this Staff Report.

NOTIFICATION

All noticing 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

subject site.

ISSUES

The Project has been conditioned with reduced construction hours because of its proximity to residential uses.

- Standard Condition: Construction activities are allowed Monday through Friday from 7:00 am to 7:00 pm, on Saturday 8:00 am to 6:00 pm, and no construction activities are permitted on Sunday and holidays.
- Proposed Condition: Construction activities are allowed Monday through Friday from 8:00 am to 6:00 pm, on Saturday 9:00 am to 5:00 pm, and no construction activities are permitted on Sunday and holidays.

The applicant has expressed concern with the allowable construction hours. The DRB may accept or revise the condition.

There are no other unresolved issues.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1: Disclosure Form
- Attachment 2: Location/Neighborhood Context Map and Existing Conditions
- Attachment 3: Project Narrative
- Attachment 4: Project Plans
- Attachment 5: Historic Evaluation
- Attachment 6: Shadow Study
- Attachment 7: Traffic Study
- Attachment 8: Traffic Flow Exhibit
- Attachment 9: Floor Area Ratio (FAR) Calculation
- Attachment 10: Light Fixture Exhibit
- Attachment 11: Environmental Noise Assessment
- Attachment 12: Climate Action Plan Appendix E (New Development Checklist)
- Attachment 13: CalEEMod Analysis
- Attachment 14: Public Correspondence received prior to January 21, 2021, Design Review Board meeting

Resolution: Design Review (with conditions)

CONTACT

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