

RESOLUTION NO.

**RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF SANTA ROSA MAKING FINDINGS AND DETERMINATIONS AND APPROVING A HILLSIDE DEVELOPMENT PERMIT FOR CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW 70-ROOM HOTEL BUILDING, RENOVATION OF THE EXISTING STONEHOUSE BUILDING INTO A FIVE-ROOM BOUTIQUE HOTEL, AND ASSOCIATED SITE AND HILLSIDE IMPROVEMENTS LOCATED AT 3331 AND 3555 HIGHWAY 12, FILE NUMBER PRJ25-001 (HDP25-001)**

WHEREAS, an application was submitted requesting the approval of a Conditional Use Permit and Hillside Development Permit for a new 70-room hotel (Stonehouse Hotel) and other related site improvements, to be located at 3331 and 3555 Highway 12, also identified as Sonoma County Assessor's Parcel Number(s) 181-120-034 and 181-120-033; and

WHEREAS, the Santa Rosa Planning Commission has completed review of the Hillside Development Permit application to allow for a new hotel (Stonehouse Hotel) and other related site improvements, to be located at 3331 and 3555 Highway 12, also identified as Sonoma County Assessor's Parcel Numbers 181-120-034 and 181-120-033; and

WHEREAS, a Neighborhood Meeting was held on July 15, 2024, at which project information was presented and members of the public were provided with an opportunity to ask questions and express concerns regarding the proposed project; and

WHEREAS, formal project plans and entitlement applications were submitted to the City on January 8, 2025, and a Notice of Application for the proposed project was mailed to surrounding property owners and tenants on April 4, 2025, in accordance with the noticing requirements of the Zoning Code; and

WHEREAS, the Hillside Development Permit approval to allow the proposed project is based on the project description and official approved exhibit dated received December 15, 2025; and

WHEREAS, on May 28, 2026, the Planning Commission held a duly noticed public hearing on the application at which all those wishing to be heard were allowed to speak or present written comments and other materials; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission has considered the application, the staff reports, oral and written, the General Plan and zoning on the subject property, the testimony, written comments, and other materials presented at the public hearing; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that after consideration of the reports, documents, testimony, and other materials presented, and pursuant to City Code Section 20-32 (Hillside Development Standards), the Planning Commission of the City of Santa Rosa finds and determines:

1. Site planning minimizes the visual prominence of the 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 in that the proposed project will take advantage of the existing tree grove at the southwest corner of the property. An Arborist Inventory Report, prepared by Merge Studio, Inc., dated December 5, 2024, noted that maintaining the tree grove at the south corner of the property will also provide screening for the neighboring residential properties. For the 34 trees recommended for removal, the Arborist Inventory Report identifies required replacement planting and mitigation consistent with City Code Chapter 17-24. The Project proposes to satisfy the 108-tree replacement requirement through a combination of 66 replacement trees planted on-site as new landscaping and an in-lieu fee payment to the City for the remaining 42 replacement trees, which shall be used for tree-related educational projects and/or planting programs of the City. The Project includes vegetative screening along portions of the rear property line. The hotel will be constructed on the central portion of the site and will include a parking garage at the approximate level of the existing level pad. The proposed location is within a previously disturbed and less visually prominent portion of the site. The hotel is stepped from three stories to one story from north to south to limit the amount of grading in the areas with slopes greater than 10 percent. The ground-level parking garage is partially recessed into the hillside rather than sitting fully above the natural grade to limit the height of the hotel. Additionally, the hotel is proposed to be placed towards the rear of the site, and a 5-foot gabion wall along the Highway 12 frontage, combined with proposed street trees and shrubs, reduces the hotel and parking area's visual prominence from the public right-of-way; and
2. Site development minimizes alteration of topography, drainage patterns, and vegetation on land with slopes of 10 percent or more in that the hotel building has been stepped from three stories to one story from north to south to limit grading in areas with slopes greater than 10 percent. The grouping of trees on the uphill portion of the southwest corner of the site will be preserved; their preservation in this area is significant to maintain existing woodland tree clusters and provides screening for the adjacent neighbors. There are also multiple Heritage trees that will be preserved. The Arborist Inventory Report identifies required replacement planting and mitigation for trees recommended for removal, consistent with the City's Tree Ordinance. The Project minimizes alteration of the topography by partially recessing the parking garage into the existing hillside, rather than grading a large single flat platform, and concentrates a large portion of the development on previously disturbed slopes. The project proposes to incorporate bioretention areas to replicate existing drainage patterns and to manage on-site stormwater. The Preliminary Drainage Analysis, prepared by Adobe Associates and dated March 11, 2026, concluded that the Project is not anticipated to result in significant impacts to neighboring properties or natural drainage features. The new hotel building will not be located near the ridgeline; and
3. Site development does not alter slopes of 25 percent or more except in compliance with Section 20-32.020.B (Applicability-Limitation on hillside development). Alterations determined by the review authority to be minor may be approved if any of the following

applies: (A) for road or driveway construction across slopes greater than 25 percent but determined by the visual analysis to be insignificant; (B) over previously constructed slope; or (C) within terrain areas determined by the visual analysis to be visually insignificant and/or hidden. The proposed development blends with the existing topography and adjacent development. The areas exceeding 25 percent slope mostly occur in the center of the site, where a previous warehouse building with extensive retaining walls was constructed over 70 years ago. When the warehouse building was demolished, steep slopes with retaining walls were created. Staff has determined that the proposed development on the portions of the site greater than 25 percent to be minor, and that a significant portion of the hotel is located on a constructed slope. The visual analysis confirms that although some areas with slopes exceeding 25 percent may be visible, the areas proposed for alteration do not contain significant landforms or features and are visually insignificant; and

4. Project grading respects natural features and visually blends with adjacent properties in that the proposed hotel is placed towards the rear of the site and landscaping will be placed along the Highway 12 frontage. The proposed hotel will step from three stories to one story from north to south to limit grading in areas with slopes greater than 10 percent. A significant portion of the hotel will be placed on the existing concrete pad and on a previously constructed slope. The Project also proposes to preserve the existing oak woodland grove at the southeast portion of the site. Additionally, the visual analysis has determined that the new hotel building and parking lot area will be visually insignificant and the structure will not interrupt the view of the skyline from a major public viewpoint; and
5. Building pad location, design, and construction avoids large areas of flat pads and building forms will be stepped to conform to site topography. The new hotel will have a stepped floor design that conforms to the rising natural grade from the Highway 12 frontage northward, with each successive floor level positioned higher up the slope, consistent with the natural rise of the hillside on the site. Retaining walls will be utilized to reduce extensive cut flat pads. The ground-level parking garage is partially recessed into the hillside, rather than sitting fully above the natural grade, reducing the amount of visible surface parking and reducing the building's visible profile from adjacent properties. A significant portion of the hotel building will be placed on an existing concrete pad. Additionally, the hotel is proposed to be placed towards the rear of the site and vegetation is proposed along Highway 12 to soften the view of the hotel and parking area from the public right-of-way; and
6. The proposed project complies with the City's Design Guidelines in that the proposed hotel adheres to the City's Design Guidelines, and specifically Section 4.5 – Hillside Considerations. The project site will have vegetative screening on all sides of the site, resulting in minimal visual impact on adjacent residential properties. The parking garage is tucked below grade into the hillside to eliminate the creation of a large, dominating structure. The new hotel building will not be located near the ridgeline or a visually sensitive area; and

7. The proposed project complies with the requirements of Chapter 20-32 and all other applicable provisions of the Zoning Code in that the proposed hotel is consistent with the permitted uses as described in the PD zoning district. The hotel is setback 20 feet from the rear property line and setback more than 20 feet from all other property lines and is aligned with the natural contours of the site to the maximum extent feasible. The grouping of trees on the uphill portion of the southwest corner of the site will be preserved; their preservation in this area is significant to maintain existing woodland tree clusters and provides screening for the adjacent neighbors. Multiple heritage trees will be preserved, and removal of the remaining trees will be mitigated through 108 replacement trees, consisting of 66 on-site replacement trees and in-lieu payment for 42 replacement trees, consistent with Chapter 17-24. A visual analysis has been provided, and the review authority has determined that proposed construction across slopes greater than 25 percent will be visually insignificant, and the alterations are over previously constructed slopes; and
8. The proposed project is consistent with the General Plan and any applicable specific plan in that the site is designated Retail and Business Services, which allows retail and service enterprises, offices, and restaurants. Hotels are considered service enterprises within the hospitality industry. The use is permitted within the Planned Development (PD 0441) zoning district, which has been found to be consistent with the Retail and Business Services General Plan designation. The existing Stonehouse Hotel is one of Santa Rosa's most recognized visual landmarks on the Highway 12 corridor, and the proposed project preserves the structure in its entirety. The development aligns with the integrity and character of the surrounding residential uses and applies concepts and standards set in the Zoning Code and other guiding City documents by applying appropriate setbacks to new structures, installing downward directed lighting and vegetative screening along property lines to minimize noise, light and glare and other impacts. The Project is not located within an adopted specific plan area; and
9. 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 in that a Traffic Study conducted by Linscott, Law & Greenspan, Engineers (LLG), dated December 4, 2024, concluded that the additional trips associated with the proposed Project will not significantly impact the existing surrounding roadway network. It is not anticipated that vehicles will queue onto Highway 12 because the driveway is restricted to right-turn movements only. The Traffic Study evaluated the potential need for a southbound right-turn deceleration lane and a southbound departure acceleration lane at the site driveway and determined that neither improvement is warranted due to the low volume of forecast peak hour right-turning traffic, confirming that access to the site will be adequate. A gated emergency vehicle access route is proposed to connect to Sunridge Drive. Additionally, the site is adequately served by City services, including water, sewer, Fire, and Police; and
10. The proposed Project has been found exempt from the provisions of the California Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975 because all proposed excavation and

earthmoving activities can be identified as a necessary and integral part of a construction project; and

11. The project has been found in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15332, the Project qualifies for a Class 32 categorical exemption as in-fill development.

- The project is consistent with the applicable general plan designation and all applicable general plan policies as well as with applicable zoning designation and regulations.

The Project is consistent with Santa Rosa General Plan 2050, and the current City of Santa Rosa Zoning Code. The land use designation is Retail and Business Services, which allows offices, restaurants, and retail and service enterprises, including businesses related to hospitality. The zoning is Commercial Planned Development (PD 0441), which allows hotels and similar uses by obtaining a Conditional Use Permit. The commercial PD district is consistent with the property's General Plan land use designation. The PD district restricts uses to those compatible with the surrounding residential neighborhood and the historical character of the existing Stonehouse building.

- The proposed development occurs within city limits on a project site of no more than five acres substantially surrounded by urban uses because the project site is 2 acres in size.
- The project site has no value, as habitat for endangered, rare or threatened species.

The Biological Resources Assessment, prepared by FirstCarbon Solutions and dated October 31, 2025, concluded that special-status plant and wildlife species documented within the vicinity of the study area are unlikely or have no potential to occur on the Project site. No State or federally protected aquatic features are present on the site. Although mixed oak woodland may provide nesting habitat for common protected birds, the Project has been conditioned to require pre-construction nesting bird surveys and avoidance measures if construction occurs during the nesting season. These measures will ensure compliance with applicable federal and State regulations. Compliance with the Arborist Inventory Report and City Code Chapter 17-24 will also ensure consistency with the City's Tree Ordinance.

- Approval of the project would not result in any significant effects relating to traffic, noise, air quality, or water quality.

A Traffic Study conducted by LLG Engineers, dated December 4, 2024, concluded that the additional trips associated with the proposed Project will not significantly impact the existing surrounding roadway network. It is not anticipated that vehicles

will queue onto Highway 12 because the driveway is restricted to right-turn movements only. Pursuant to Chapter 20-36 of the Zoning Code, one vehicle parking space is required for each guest room. The Project proposes 75 rooms in total and 77 vehicle parking spaces.

An Environmental Noise Impact Study, prepared by Yorke Engineering, dated October 2024, concluded that the project would not result in excessive levels of noise or vibration at off-site receptors and no mitigation measures are necessary nor recommended. The project has also been conditioned to remain in compliance with the Noise Ordinance, City Code Chapter 17-16.

An Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Analysis, prepared by Yorke Engineering, LLC, dated October 30, 2024, evaluated criteria pollutant and greenhouse gas emissions associated with proposed construction and hotel operations of the Project in accordance with the thresholds of significance established by the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD). The analysis concluded that Project-related criteria pollutant emissions during both the construction and hotel operational phases would remain below all applicable BAAQMD significance thresholds, resulting in a less than significant impact on regional air quality. The Project's greenhouse gas impacts were also determined to be less than significant, and no additional mitigation measures were identified as necessary.

- The site can be adequately served by all required utilities and public services.

The project is conditioned to incorporate all Low Impact Development (LID) Best Management Practices (BMPs) as part of the Final Storm Water LID Submittal. City staff has reviewed the plans and conditioned the Project appropriately.

The Project also qualifies for streamlining pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15183 in that the Project is consistent with the City's General Plan and, as evidenced by the special studies prepared for the Project, the Project does not contain conditions, nor would it result in any of the following effects:

- Effects that are peculiar to the project or the parcel on which the project would be located.

There are no project specific effects which are peculiar to the Project or its site, and which the General Plan EIR failed to analyze as significant effects. The project site is located in an area developed with commercial and residential uses. The property does not support any peculiar environmental features, and the Project would not result in any peculiar effects. In addition, all Project impacts were adequately analyzed by the General Plan EIR.

- Effects that were not analyzed as significant effects in the General Plan EIR. The Project does not include any new land use that could create an effect that has not been previously analyzed by the General Plan.

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- Effects that are potentially significant off-site impacts and cumulative impacts that were not discussed in the prior EIR prepared for the General Plan.

There are no potentially significant off-site and/or cumulative impacts which the General Plan EIR failed to evaluate. The proposed Project is within the scope of the General Plan EIR and would represent a small part of the growth that was forecasted for build-out of the General Plan. The General Plan EIR considered the incremental impacts of the future development, such as the Project, and no potentially significant off-site or cumulative impacts have been identified which were not previously evaluated.

- Effects that are previously identified significant effects which, as a result of substantial new information which was not known at the time the EIR was certified, are determined to have a more severe adverse impact than discussed in the prior EIR.

The applicant has provided a focused traffic study, prepared by Linscott, Law & Greenspan, Engineers (LLG), dated December 4, 2024. Also, the applicant has provided a Biological Resources Assessment, prepared by FirstCarbon Solutions, dated October 31, 2025. None of the studies revealed any new information or condition that suggests a previously identified significant effect is more severe than determined at the time the General Plan or Specific Plan EIR were certified.

None of the exceptions to the use of categorical exemptions set forth in CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 apply. In particular, based on the technical studies prepared for the Project, there is no substantial evidence that unusual circumstances would result in a significant environmental effect.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this Hillside Development Permit is subject to all applicable provisions of the Zoning Code, including Section 20-54.100 (Permit Revocation or Modification).

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a Hillside Development Permit for the construction of a 70-room hotel building, renovation of the existing Stonehouse building into a five-room boutique hotel, and associated site improvements, to be located at 3331 and 3555 Highway 12, is approved subject to each of the following conditions:

## **DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

### **GENERAL:**

1. Compliance with the latest adopted ordinances, resolutions, policies, and fees adopted by the City Council at the time of building permit review and approval. All fees must be paid prior to issuance of a building permit.

2. Comply with all applicable federal, state, and local codes. Failure to comply may result in issuance of a citation and/or revocation of approval.

**ENGINEERING DIVISION**

3. Comply with all conditions as specified in the Engineering Development Services Exhibit A, dated April 16, 2026, attached hereto and incorporated herein.

**PLANNING DIVISION:**

4. Grading shall be limited to roadways, driveways, garage pads, and understructure areas including accessory structures such as swimming pools.
5. All grading shall be designed to blend into the natural contours of the site. Slope grading and contour grading techniques shall be utilized. All disturbed areas shall be revegetated with native plants to the maximum extent possible.
6. Prior to issuance of building permits, the Project shall obtain Major Design Review approval for the proposed building architecture, site design, landscaping, lighting, and related improvements. Building materials, elevations, site design, and appearance submitted for building permit review shall be consistent with the final Design Review approval.
7. Compliance with City Graffiti Abatement Program Standards for Graffiti Removal (City Code 10-17.080).
8. The Project shall comply with City Code Section 21-08, development requirements relating to public art.

9. **PROJECT DETAILS:**

- All project details shall be in accordance with the restrictions and limitations of the City Zoning and Uniform Building Codes, as well as the City's Design Review Guidelines.
- The design of all fencing, sound walls, carports, trash enclosures, and similar accessory site elements shall be compatible with the architecture of main buildings and shall use similar materials. The design must be approved by the Planning Division prior to issuance of a building permit.
- All roof appurtenances, accessory equipment, and meters must be totally screened from public view by an architecturally design element approved by the Design Review Board or Planning Division.
- All outdoor storage of materials or refuse bins/cans shall be maintained within a completely screened structure or area. The design of the screened structure or area shall be approved by the Planning Division prior to issuance of a building permit.

- Compliance with all recommendations stated within the Biological Resource Assessment conducted by FirstCarbon Solutions, dated October 31, 2025, to ensure potential project-related impacts to protected nesting birds would be reduced to a less than significant level.

10. TREE PRESERVATION:

- Tree Preservation notes and protection during construction notes shall be shown on the improvement plans and building plans. The tree driplines shall also be shown on each drawing with the attendant protection instructions.
- Prior to issuance of a grading or building permit for any clearing, excavation, construction, or other work on the site, a protection zone shall be established to protect natural vegetation and trees from construction activities. The following conditions and restrictions shall apply:
  - i. The zone shall encompass the "protected perimeter" which shall be either the root zone or other limit as established in this approval.
  - ii. The zone shall be delineated with a brightly colored construction fence. Such fences shall remain continuously in place for the duration of all work undertaken on the site.
  - iii. No storage or construction activities (including trenching, grading or filling) shall be permitted within the protected zone.
  - iv. No burning or use of equipment with an open flame shall occur near or within the protected perimeter.
  - v. All brush, earth, and other debris shall be removed in a manner which prevents injury to the protected trees and/or shrubs.
  - vi. No oil, gas, chemicals, or other substances that may be harmful to trees shall be stored or dumped within the protected perimeter or any other location from which substances might enter the perimeter of a protected tree.
- The contractor(s) shall be notified in writing by the developer of the "Protection Zone." Copies of the letter shall be provided to the Planning and Building Divisions prior to issuance of a building or grading permit for any site work.
- The protection zone delineated with the brightly colored construction fence shall be posted with signs which state "Tree/Vegetation Protection Zone -- No Construction or Storage Permitted."
- Irrigation systems and plant varieties which require regular watering shall not be permitted within the dripline of an Oak tree which is to be preserved.

- No concrete or asphalt paving or compaction of soil shall be permitted within the root zones of protected trees.
- Any special work, including mitigation, within the "Protection Zone" must be done under the supervision of a City approved certified arborist.

11. Tree Replacement Program. The Project shall provide 108 replacement trees through a combination of on-site planting and approved in-lieu payment, consistent with the Arborist Inventory Report and City Code Chapter 17-24.

- If construction is initiated during the avian nesting season (February 1- August 31), the project applicant shall retain a qualified Biologist to perform pre-construction surveys for nesting birds. The survey shall be conducted 5 days prior to the initiation of project activities to determine whether active nests are present. If an active nest is located, the qualified Biologist shall determine an appropriately sized avoidance buffer based on the species and anticipated disturbance level. A qualified Biologist will delineate the avoidance buffer using Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) fencing, pin flags, and/or yellow caution tape. No construction/maintenance activities or other foot traffic is allowed to occur within the avoidance buffer(s). The ESA buffer zone shall be maintained around the active nest site(s) until the qualified Biologist determines that the young have fledged and are foraging independently. The qualified Biologist shall monitor the active nest during maintenance and/or construction activities and stop or divert project activities in the vicinity, as needed, to prevent any potential impacts that may result from the construction of the proposed project until the young have fledged.

12. LANDSCAPING:

- All required landscaping and irrigation must be installed prior to occupancy per the approved final plans.
- Construction drawings submitted for issuance of a building permit shall include final landscape and irrigation plans, except where not required.
- All landscaping must be continuously maintained in a healthy and attractive condition, free of weeds and debris, in accordance with the approved plans. Dead and dying plant materials shall be replaced with healthy specimens as necessary.
- Street trees will be required and shall be planted by the developer. Selection will be made from the City's approved Master Street Tree Plant List in coordination with the City Parks Division. Planting shall be done in accordance with the City "Standards and Specifications for Planting Parkway Trees." Copies of the Street Tree List and the Planting Standards are available at the Parks Division office.

13. LIGHTING:

- All exterior lighting shall be shown and specified on the plans submitted for issuance of a building permit in accordance with the Design Review approval.
- Light sources shall be concealed from public view.
- All lighting shall be directed toward the subject property and away from adjacent properties.
- The mounting height of lighting fixtures in parking and storage areas shall not exceed 16 feet in height. Lower mounting heights are encouraged.

14. PARKING:

- The parking lot shall be constructed to City standards. The parking lot shall be striped according to City standards and all handicapped and compact spaces shall be identified and marked accordingly.
- Bicycle parking shall be provided in accordance with Zoning Code requirements. The location and number of spaces shall be shown on the site plan submitted for issuance of a building permit.

15. SIGNING:

- No exterior signs, banners, or similar signage are approved with this permit. A separate Sign Permit and Building Permit, as applicable, shall be required for all proposed signs.
- Building permits for sign installations shall be separate permits from other building permits issued for construction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this approval is granted based on the applicability and validity of the conditions of approval set forth above. If any condition is determined to be invalid, this approval would not have been granted without the imposition of other conditions necessary to achieve the purposes and intent of this approval. The Project shall comply with all conditions of approval and be constructed in accordance with the approved plans.

REGULARLY PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Planning Commission of the City of Santa Rosa on the 28<sup>th</sup> day of May 2026 by the following vote:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSTAIN:

ABSENT:

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_  
KAREN WEEKS, CHAIR

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_  
JESSICA JONES, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

Exhibit A – Engineering Development Services Exhibit “A,” dated April 16, 2026.