

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
STAFF REPORT FOR THE DESIGN REVIEW AND PRESERVATION BOARD
December 18, 2025

PROJECT TITLE

Lago Fresca Apartments

ADDRESS/LOCATION

2445 Summerfield Road and
4744 Hoen Avenue

ASSESSOR'S PARCEL NUMBER

014-361-028 and 014-361-029

APPLICATION DATES

August 18, 2022

REQUESTED ENTITLEMENTS

Major Design Review

PROJECT SITE ZONING

CO (Commercial Office)

PROJECT PLANNER

Monet Sheikhal

APPLICANT

Janver Holly

PROPERTY OWNER

Auxon Lago Fresca, LLC

FILE NUMBERS

PRJ22-019 (CUP22-050, DR22-037 and
DB22-004)

APPLICATION COMPLETION DATES

February 24, 2025

FURTHER ACTIONS REQUIRED

None

GENERAL PLAN DESIGNATION

Office

RECOMMENDATION

Approval

For Design Review and Preservation Board Meeting of: December 18, 2025

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
DESIGN REVIEW AND PRESERVATION BOARD

TO: CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE DESIGN REVIEW AND
PRESERVATION BOARD

FROM: MONET SHEIKHALI, SUPERVISING PLANNER
PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

SUBJECT: LAGO FRESCA APARTMENTS

AGENDA ACTION: RESOLUTION

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended by the Planning and Economic Development Department that the Design Review and Preservation Board, by resolution, approve Design Review for the Lago Fresca project, a 50-unit multifamily residential development located at 2445 Summerfield Road and 4744 Hoen Avenue.

BACKGROUND

1. Project Description

The Lago Fresca project involves a 50-unit multifamily residential development spanning two parcels, totaling 1.31 acres, which will provide both market-rate and affordable housing. Out of the 50 units, four (4) will be designated as very low-income affordable housing. Therefore, the project qualifies for a Density Bonus with concessions and waivers. The project proposes four separate buildings, ranging in height from three to four stories. The project will be located at the corner of Hoen Avenue and Summerfield Road, as shown in Figure 1.

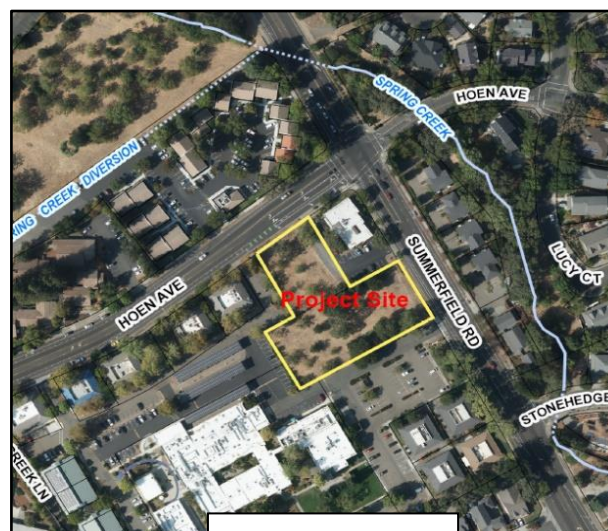


Figure 1

The project includes a request for a Density Bonus, which was approved by the Planning and Economic Development Director. Based on the on-site affordable units that will be provided, the project qualifies for two concessions and five waivers, which are summarized below:

Concessions

1. A concession to relocate all four affordable units into a single building and be exempt from the dispersion requirement.
2. A concession to reduce the number of parking spaces from 72 to 63 spaces.

Waivers

1. A waiver request to increase the maximum allowable height from 35 to 45 feet.
2. A waiver request to decrease the Front Yard Setback at Summerfield Road from the minimum allowed of 15 feet to 7 feet.
3. A waiver request to decrease the Front Yard Setback at Hoen Avenue from the minimum allowed of 15 feet to 10 feet.
4. A waiver request to decrease the standard for required covered parking from 50 spaces to 38 spaces.
5. A waiver request to decrease the width of the covered parking space from 9.5 feet to 9 feet.

2. Surrounding Land Uses

North: Office - The properties across Hoen Avenue are currently developed with commercial office uses, including medical office uses and business/service uses.

South: Public Institutional - The property is developed with the medical office and the former SAY campus, which is currently vacant.

East: Low-Density Residential (2-8 units per acre) - The area along Summerfield Road is developed with single-family residential properties. Office - The lot adjacent to the property is currently used for commercial purposes, including a veterinary clinic and an office.

West: Public Institutional and Office - The properties are currently developed with commercial and medical office uses, and one is the former SAY campus.



Figure 2

3. Existing Land Use – Project Site

The project site is 1.31 acres and is currently undeveloped and vacant. It consists of grass and some scattered trees, and the land is relatively flat. The site is situated within a built-up, developed neighborhood and is adjacent to office and commercial properties, as well as a low-density residential area. Additionally, a bus stop on Summerfield Road is approximately 100 feet from the project site.

A tree survey was provided on February 15, 2021, by MacNair & Associates Arborists to assess the potential impacts on the existing trees. The site contains 47 trees, of which 14 are classified as heritage trees. Unfortunately, one heritage tree was removed without the property owner's permission or the necessary permits. All the trees are located within the building footprints, parking lots, or areas designated for grading and underground utilities. As a result, all the trees will need to be removed.

The proposed project would require compliance with the City's tree ordinance ([Section 17-24.50](#)) to replace the 47 removed trees and/or to pay an in lieu payment of \$100.00 per 15-gallon replacement tree. The ordinance requires that two 15-gallon trees be planted for each 6 inches of trunk diameter, or, instead of fees, be paid if the site is inadequate to accommodate the replacement trees. Further, the ordinance states that trees removed without a permit must be replaced at a 4:6 ratio (for each 6-inch-diameter tree, four 15-gallon trees of the same species). The landscape plans indicate that 47 trees are proposed for planting. The tree sizes vary among 24-inch box trees (equal to three 15-gallon trees), 36-inch box trees (equal to five 15-gallon trees), and 48-inch box trees (equal to eight 15-gallon trees). By complying with tree removal and replacement requirements, the proposed project is consistent with the City of Santa Rosa's tree ordinance.

4. Project History

September 29, 2021	Pre-application Neighborhood Meeting was held
March 3, 2022	Design Review Board Meeting was held for Concept Design Review (note, the meeting was held prior to the consolidation of the Design Review Board and Cultural Heritage Board into the current Design Review and Preservation Board)
August 18, 2022	Project applications submitted
September 16, 2022	Notice of Application was distributed
November 12, 2025	Director approved the Density Bonus Letter
December 1, 2025	Notice of Planning Commission Meeting and Design Review Board and Preservation Board was distributed
December 11, 2025	Planning Commission Meeting was held

During the Concept Design Review meeting on March 3, 2022, the Board members provided the following comments:

Site Planning, Circulation & Access

- The Board raised concerns regarding ingress and egress.
- Some members expressed concern with general site circulation.
- The Board suggested moving the trash enclosure to the west side/back of the site to improve on-site circulation.
- Enhancing site circulation and evaluating access and trash enclosure placement.

Open Space, Courtyard, and Site Amenities

- Concerns were raised regarding the limited private open space.
- Clarifying and demonstrating the usability and shading of open spaces.
- The Board encouraged creative approaches to common open space areas.
- The board asked for a child play area.

Bicycle Parking

- A board member expressed support for adding additional bicycle racks at the ground level.
- Ensuring adequate bicycle parking.

Building Scale & Massing

- The four-story portions of the development are too tall for the neighborhood.
- A suggestion was made to “take away some verticality and add horizontality.”

Architecture & Building Design

- Improving architectural expression, articulation, and roof forms.
- The Board encouraged exploring additional articulation and clearer differentiation between building forms.
- Increasing the residential character of the design and reducing an “industrial” appearance.
- Several board comments suggested the architecture appears “too industrial,” encouraging more creative architectural expression.
- A board member recommended removing gable roofs in favor of flat roofs with parapets to reduce perceived building height and better screen rooftop equipment.
- A request was made to consider extending the eaves.

Materials & Detailing

- A board member requested to review a physical sample of the proposed Moz aluminum screen (“laser cut open screen”).
- A Board Member acknowledged that the project incorporates varied window types and sizes, consistent with the City’s Design Standards.

Staff response: The applicant team has incorporated several of the Design Review Board's comments into the revised project design. In response to concerns regarding circulation and access, the trash enclosure has been relocated to the west side of the site. The project plans have been reviewed by the City's Traffic Engineer and the Fire Department for on-site circulation and ingress/egress and have been conditioned accordingly. A Parking Management Plan has been submitted to regulate on-site parking and includes a system for tenant permits, guest parking regulations, and enforcement measures. The project design has also been updated to enhance private and common open space, including the addition of an outdoor child play area, an outdoor seating area, and private balconies. Architectural improvements have been made to soften the project's overall appearance by including four colors (deep burgundy, charcoal, cream, and golden green), adding exterior vertical siding, varied roof forms, railings, gable roofs with shed dormers, low-slope eave overhangs, and oriel window elements. Bicycle parking has been improved by adding three bike racks at various locations and providing storage spaces for each unit in assigned garages and/or balcony closets. These revisions show the applicant's effort to thoughtfully address the Board's feedback and enhance the project's quality and functionality.

ANALYSIS

1. General Plan

The project site is designated as Office on the General Plan Land Use Diagram. Areas with this land use designation are intended for administrative, financial, business, professional, medical, and public offices. The implementing zoning district is Office, which allows multifamily housing at densities up to 30 units per acre through a Conditional Use Permit (CUP).

The General Plan supports density bonuses where affordable housing is proposed. Because the project will provide four affordable units reserved for very low-income occupants, it is eligible for a 32.5% density increase. These four units will be deed-restricted for very low-income occupants for a period of 55 years.

The General Plan includes various goals and policies related to land use, housing, open space, conservation, and growth management. The proposed project was submitted and deemed complete in 2022, when the General Plan 2035 was in effect. Since that time, the City Council adopted a comprehensive update to the General Plan (General Plan 2050). As such, the project was reviewed for compliance with both documents.

The following General Plan goals and policies, as outlined in the 2035 General Plan at the time of application submission, are most relevant and applicable to the staff's analysis of this project.

LUL-E-6 Allow residential or mixed-use development in the Retail and Business Services or Office designations

- LUL-F** Maintain a diversity of neighborhoods and varied housing stock to satisfy a wide range of needs.
- LUL-F-3** Maintain a balance of various housing types in each neighborhood and ensure that new development does not result in undue concentration of a single housing type in any one neighborhood. Downtown is excepted.
- LUL-M** Ensure new development and streetscape projects provide pedestrian and bicycle circulation improvements.
- LUL-M-2** Require dedication of right-of-way for improvement and/or expansion of pedestrian and bicycle facilities where insufficient right-of-way currently exists.
- GM-A** Prevent urban sprawl by focusing growth within the Urban Growth Boundary.
- H-A** Meet the housing needs of all Santa Rosa residents
- H-A-2** Pursue the goal of meeting Santa Rosa's housing needs through increased densities, when compatible with existing neighborhoods. Development of existing and new higher-density sites must be designed in context with existing, surrounding neighborhoods.
- H-C** Expand the supply of housing available to lower income households.
- H-C-15** Encourage new affordable housing development to provide amenities for residents, such as on-site recreational facilities.
- H-D** Provide housing for households with special needs
- UD-A-5** Require superior site and architectural design of new development projects to improve visual quality in the city.
- T-C-3** Implement traffic calming techniques on streets subject to high speed and/or cut-through traffic to improve neighborhood livability.
- T-G-9** Require curbs and gutters only where they are necessary for drainage and pedestrian safety purposes.

The most relevant General Plan 2050 goals, policies and actions applicable to the project are shown below:

- Goal 2-3** Create dense and varied housing types near transit to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote livability.
- Policy 2-3.1** Ensure that residential developments, including subdivisions and neighborhoods, are designed to foster livability, maintain local and historic character of neighborhoods, and offer diverse housing types to satisfy a wide range of needs and retain local character.
- Action 2-3.1** Update the Zoning Code to permit residential and mixed-use development by right in some nonresidential zoning districts, as mandated by State law.

- Policy 2-3.2** Ensure that residential developments achieve the density potential of the project site and include a variety of housing types with a full range of affordability, in accordance with the General Plan Land Use map (Figure 2-6).
- Policy 2-4.1** Encourage compact, attractive development that creates complete neighborhoods.
- Action 2-4.3** Create environments with safe, connected streets, sidewalks, and bicycle facilities that include shade trees to establish a pleasant streetscape.

The following goals and policies are the most relevant from the Santa Rosa 2023-2031 Housing Element:

- GOAL H-1** Encourage the development of housing to meet the needs of all Santa Rosa residents.
- Policy H-1-1** Ensure there is a sufficient supply of land zoned to accommodate the projected housing needs.
- Policy H-1-3** Facilitate infill housing along commercial corridors, near employment centers, near high-frequency transit areas, and in all zones that allow residential development as a way to revitalize commercial corridors, promote walkability and increased transit ridership, and provide increased housing options.
- GOAL H-3** Increase special needs housing opportunities and supportive services for lower-income households, families with children, seniors, persons with physical and developmental disabilities, farmworkers, female-headed households, and people who are experiencing homelessness.
- Policy 3-1** Give priority in providing housing assistance to those groups with demonstrated special needs, such as lower-income households, seniors, persons with disabilities, persons with mental health conditions or psychiatric disabilities, large families with children, female-headed households, victims of domestic violence, and people who are experiencing homelessness.
- Policy 3-2** Encourage housing developers to produce affordable units by providing development standard incentives for projects that include new affordable units available to special needs groups.
- Program H-27** Housing for Large Households. Encourage the development of units with three or more bedrooms in affordable housing projects. Encourage new affordable housing development to provide amenities for residents, such as on-site recreational facilities, children's programs (day care and/or after-school care), and community meeting spaces.

- GOAL H-6** Develop energy-efficient residential units and rehabilitate existing units to reduce energy consumption.
- Policy H-6.1** Encourage the use of energy conservation features in residential construction, rehabilitation, and remodeling.

The Lago Fresca Project has been reviewed for General Plan consistency and has been found consistent with both General Plan 2035, which was in effect at the time the project application was submitted and deemed complete, and General Plan 2050, which was adopted in June 2025. The project aligns with the goals and policies of both Plans by contributing to the City's housing stock, supporting infill development, and promoting land-use efficiency within an established urban area.

The project will add 50 new residential units, including four deed-restricted affordable units for very low-income households, introducing a new and diverse housing type to the area. By introducing a new and diverse housing type to the neighborhood, the development broadens the City's housing options and enhances opportunities for residents across income levels. This mix of unit types and affordability levels supports citywide housing objectives and contributes to a more inclusive housing supply.

By promoting a diverse and compact infill development rather than a scattered pattern, the project helps prevent an overconcentration of any single housing type in one neighborhood. This approach supports the housing needs of Santa Rosa residents, particularly those with lower incomes, by expanding the overall housing supply in a well-connected and sustainable manner.

On-site amenities have been incorporated to support the daily needs and enhance the quality of life for future residents. The project features on-site amenities for residents, including a community room, a play structure, and an outdoor seating area, to foster social interaction among residents.

Off-site improvements will involve upgrading sidewalks and replacing damaged curbs and gutters. These improvements will enhance pedestrian safety, improve accessibility, and contribute to the overall connectivity of the neighborhood. The project location is served by existing utilities and emergency services, ensuring that adequate public infrastructure is available to support the new development.

Also, the Zoning Code currently allows residential uses within commercial zones through a use permit. The policy to update the Code to permit residential and mixed-use development in certain nonresidential zoning districts has already been implemented.

2. Zoning

The Zoning Code implements the goals and policies of the General Plan by classifying and regulating the use of land and structural development within the City. The project is within the CO (Commercial Office) zoning district. Per the Zoning Code [Section 20-23.030](#), Table 2-6, a multifamily dwelling is allowed with the approval of a Conditional Use Permit in the CO zoning district. Pursuant to Zoning Code Table 2-1, site zoning is

consistent with the General Plan land use designation of Office. The project has received approval for a density bonus pursuant to applicable State and local provisions. In conjunction with the density bonus, the applicant has requested the following development standard waivers in order to facilitate the proposed design:

- Building Height: A waiver to increase the maximum allowable height from 35 feet to 45 feet.
- Front Yard Setback (Summerfield Road): A waiver to reduce the minimum setback from 15 feet to 7 feet.
- Front Yard Setback (Hoen Avenue): A waiver to reduce the minimum setback from 15 feet to 10 feet.
- Covered Parking Requirement: A waiver to reduce the required number of covered parking spaces from 50 spaces to 38 spaces.
- Covered Parking Space Dimensions: A waiver to reduce the required width of covered parking spaces from 9.5 feet to 9 feet.

These waivers were requested to allow the project to achieve the increased density while maintaining functional site circulation, building placement, and project feasibility. As a result of the approved density bonus and associated waivers, the project is not required to meet all applicable development standards for the CO zoning district.

Parking: Zoning Code [Section 20-36.040](#) requires each multi-family dwelling unit to propose 1 covered space plus 0.5 visitor spaces for studio and 1-bedroom units, and provide 1 covered space plus 1.5 visitor spaces for 2 or more bedroom units. Visitor spaces may be in tandem with spaces for the unit, or on-street abutting the site, except on a street identified by the General Plan as a regional street. The project consists of 50 units: 16 one-bedroom, 25 two-bedroom, 4 three-bedroom, and 5 four-bedroom. The number of parking spaces required by the zoning code for this project is 109. However, because the project qualifies for a State Density Bonus, it is entitled to request reductions in development standards. As part of its density bonus application, the applicant has requested a parking concession to reduce the required on-site parking spaces to 63.

Findings for Design Review

Pursuant to Zoning Code Section 20-52.030, the Design Review and Preservation Board must make the findings shown below before granting Design Review. As demonstrated on the attached draft resolution, staff's analysis has determined that these findings can be met:

- 1) The design and layout of the proposed development is of superior quality, and is consistent with the General Plan, any applicable specific plan, applicable Zoning Code standards and requirements, the City's Design Guidelines, architectural criteria for special areas, and other applicable City requirements (e.g., City policy statements and development plans).

- 2) The design is appropriate for the use and location of the proposed development and achieves the goals, review criteria, and findings for approval as set forth in the framework of Design Review (Design Guidelines, Introduction, subsection C).
- 3) The design and layout of the proposed development will not interfere with the use and enjoyment of neighboring existing or future developments.
- 4) The architectural design of the proposed development is compatible with the character of the surrounding neighborhood.
- 5) The design of the proposed development will provide a desirable environment for its occupants, visiting public, and its neighbors through the appropriate use of materials, texture, and color, and would remain aesthetically appealing and appropriately maintained.
- 6) The proposed development will not be detrimental to the public health, safety, or welfare or materially injurious to the properties or improvements in the vicinity.
- 7) The proposed project has been reviewed in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Staff analysis along with the required findings are included in the Resolution attached to this Staff Report.

3. Design Guidelines

The Design Guidelines are the primary design criteria under which discretionary review is conducted. The most relevant applicable Design Guidelines goals and policies include:

Section 1.1 – Neighborhood Design

I.C: To promote neighborhoods that feature a variety of housing types (both single-family and multiple-family) as well as a variety of price ranges.

Section 3.2 – Multiple-Family Residential

II.A.2: Integrate new development carefully into existing neighborhoods.

II.B.6: If a multiple-family project is located across the street from a single-family neighborhood, orient the buildings to the street with individual entries, patio areas and landscaping facing the single-family homes. Parking lot areas, and carports should not be located along these street frontages.

II.F.2: Provide common useable open space for all multiple-family projects with more than 10 units.

II.G.1: Provide each unit with a minimum of 40 square feet of semi-private open space directly adjacent to the unit. It is not intended for the space to have a privacy (6 foot) wall. The intent is to provide a balcony on units above the ground level and a small patio area on the ground level.

II.G.2: These semi-private spaces should feature an open rail, low wall, or hedge or other element that defines the space but permits the resident to have a presence on

the street or open space.

III.A.1: Break up the mass of larger structures with articulation of the form, use of color and the use of multiple materials, including: horizontal wood, cement fiber and composite siding, vertical wood siding, stucco, wood shingles, real and cultured masonry.

III.A.5: Within mixed income developments, provide the same level of detailing and materials on the affordable units as on the market rate units.

III.C.1: Incorporate features such as balconies, cantilevers, dormers, bay windows, patios, entries, accent materials, etc. to provide articulation and interest.

III.C.2: Avoid buildings with a massive appearance. Divide buildings into segments that break down the scale.

III.E.2: Locate garages or carports so as to minimize their impact from the public street. The main buildings should be the dominant visual statement along the public streetscape.

Staff Response: The Lago Fresca project is consistent with several goals of the City of Santa Rosa Design Guidelines. The project adds multi-family housing with four very low-income units to an established neighborhood, supporting diverse housing types. The 50 units are spread across four separate buildings, which lessens the overall building mass and creates a scale that aligns better with the surrounding neighborhood. The parking spaces are positioned away from the streetscape, and landscaping will be added along the street to enhance visual appeal. The project design includes a common, usable, accessible open space designed for residents. Each unit features a balcony with open rails, allowing residents to maintain visibility and a presence in the street or common areas. The project includes gable roofs, shed dormers, oriel window boxes, varied fenestration, articulated façades, and a colorful palette, all of which support the guideline requirement for massing breaks and architectural interest.

4. Summary of Public Comments

Below is a summary of the public comments received since the project was noticed in October 2022.

Parking Shortage:

- Repeated concern that 63 parking spaces for 50 units is inadequate.
- Residents expect most units will have at least two vehicles, creating overflow into surrounding neighborhoods.

Staff Response: The proposed project includes four affordable units for very low-income households, which makes it eligible for a Density Bonus under California Government Code Section 65915. Pursuant to Government Code Section 65915(p)(5), a housing development applicant may request a reduction in required parking ratios as part of a Density Bonus application. In addition to the parking ratios

established by subdivision (p), the statute expressly provides that “an applicant may request parking incentives or concessions beyond those provided in this subdivision pursuant to subdivision (d).” Subdivision (d) allows applicants to propose additional incentives or concessions, including further parking reductions, that a jurisdiction must grant unless specific written findings can be made. Accordingly, the applicant’s request for a parking reduction beyond the standard limits in Government Code Section 65915(p) is consistent with the rights granted under the state Density Bonus Law. As such, the applicant’s request for a greater parking reduction than the baseline ratios is permitted under the State Density Bonus Law.

Traffic & Congestion:

- Hoen and Summerfield are already congested, especially during school hours and emergencies.
- Residents fear added traffic will worsen safety and access.

Staff Response: A Focused Traffic Study was prepared by W-Trans dated December 28, 2023, to evaluate the proposed project, which the City’s Traffic Engineering Division reviewed. The study includes the following analysis:

- 1. Minimal Trip Generation:** The project is expected to generate only 227 daily trips. In comparison, the existing traffic volume on Hoen Avenue is about 15,100 vehicles per day. This means the increase in traffic from the project is minimal and will not significantly affect overall traffic flow or congestion in the area.
- 2. Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT):** The project’s VMT per capita is 12.08, which is below the established threshold of 14.11. This indicates that the project will result in lower vehicle usage per person compared to existing City averages. This also aligns with the City’s and state’s goals of reducing car dependence.
- 3. Site Access:** The project will be accessed via a single driveway on Hoen Avenue, which is located 150 feet from the intersection with Summerfield Road.

The traffic analysis at the Summerfield Road/Hoen Avenue intersection evaluated future conditions with the addition of project traffic and existing signal timing. It found that the eastbound traffic queue may extend up to 188 feet, slightly beyond the 150-foot distance between the intersection and the proposed project driveway. While this could occasionally overlap with the driveway, the impact is expected to be minimal, as drivers entering or exiting the site can safely wait for appropriate gaps in traffic—standard practice for many driveways near intersections. Westbound drivers turning left into the site may face delays if eastbound queues block the travel lane; however, the current law prohibits driving in the bike lane buffer to bypass left-turning vehicles. To address this, the study recommends extending existing dashed striping in the bike lane buffer, making it legally permissible to maneuver around turning vehicles and access nearby parking. This modification ensures compliance with traffic laws while maintaining safe and efficient circulation for all users. Overall, the project is not expected to significantly impact traffic flow or safety at the intersection.

4. Collision History: The Hoen Avenue and Summerfield Road intersection was studied to see if any safety concerns could get worse with more traffic from the new project. The study analyzed crash data from October 2017 to September 2022, utilizing records from the California Highway Patrol. On average, similar intersections in California have about 0.24 crashes per million cars that go through them. This intersection had a lower rate (0.13) with only four crashes reported over a five-year period. This suggests the intersection is generally safe.

5. Pedestrian and Bicycle Infrastructure: The project site is well served by sidewalks, bike lanes, and crosswalks, ensuring safe access for pedestrians and cyclists. The nearest bus stops are within walking distance, providing additional transportation options for residents and further reducing the need for private vehicle use. A new crosswalk with flashing warning lights (called rectangular rapid flashing beacons, or RRFBs) will be added about 300 feet west of Summerfield Road. This will provide a formal crossing location for pedestrians who choose to park on the north side of the street, from the development.

Overall, the project is expected to have minimal impact on traffic in the area. Additionally, the availability of nearby on-street parking and adequate site access further reduces any potential impact to the adjacent neighborhoods, making the project a well-integrated addition to the area.

Building Size & Height:

- Many object to the proposed buildings' height, saying they are out of character with the primarily 1–2 story neighborhood.
- Some requested reducing the number of units or building height.

Staff Response: The maximum building height allowed in the CO zone is 35 feet, but the applicant is proposing a building height of approximately 45 feet for the tallest structure on the site, specifically Building D. This 45-foot height includes the elevator shaft and attic for the building. The remaining buildings on the site are shorter than 35 feet, in compliance with the zoning height requirement. However, to make this project feasible and allow for the necessary density and affordable housing units, the applicant is utilizing the California Density Bonus Law, as outlined in Government Code Section 65915.

Under California's Density Bonus Law (Government Code Section 65915), developers who include affordable housing units in their projects are eligible for various incentives, such as waivers or modifications of development standards, including height limits. In this case, the applicant is providing four affordable housing units out of a total of 50 units in the project, which qualifies them for a waiver of the building height restriction. The waiver will allow the applicant to construct a taller structure, increasing the building height to approximately 45 feet for Building D, while the remaining buildings will be below the 35-foot height limit.

This height waiver is directly tied to the provision of affordable housing units and is in line with the goals of the Density Bonus Program, which aims to encourage the

development of affordable housing across the state. By utilizing this law, the applicant is able to maximize the potential of the site, providing 50 units in total rather than being restricted to fewer units due to the height limitation. This supports state housing objectives, addressing the ongoing demand for affordable housing.

Neighborhood Character:

- Residents feel the scale and density of the project are incompatible with the area.
- Some mentioned potential impacts on home values, noise, and local businesses.

Staff Response: While the project will introduce new residential buildings to a site that is currently vacant, its density and building height are within what is allowed under City zoning and consistent with Santa Rosa's General Plan goals for compact, infill housing. The proposed Project has been carefully reviewed for consistency with the City's General Plan, Zoning Code, and State housing regulations.

The project has been reviewed by City staff and was presented to the Design Review Board (DRB) as a concept project on March 3, 2022, where the Board and members of the public provided detailed feedback on building design, height, landscaping, and neighborhood fit. Following that review, the applicant revised the project to soften building massing, enhance architectural articulation, improve the landscaping buffer along Hoen Avenue and Summerfield Road, and refine building colors and materials to better integrate with the surrounding neighborhood context.

Construction noise will be temporary and limited to daytime hours under City regulations. Once the project is completed, it will not create ongoing noise beyond typical residential activity.

Zoning and Planning Issues:

- The land is zoned commercial/office; multiple residents believe the multifamily use is inconsistent with the general plan.
- Several called for an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and stricter adherence to planning regulations.

Staff Response: As noted in the General Plan and Zoning section of the staff report, the project has been found to be consistent with both General Plan 2035 and 2050 and the Santa Rosa Zoning Code.

The applicant has provided a detailed Infill Exemption Environmental Analysis Memorandum (prepared by FirstCarbon Solutions, dated February 24, 2025), demonstrating that the project qualifies for a CEQA Class 32 (Infill Development) Exemption under Section 15332 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines. After review, City staff agree that the project meets the criteria for this exemption and does not require an EIR.

Under CEQA Section 15332, an infill exemption may be applied to projects located on small sites within city limits that are surrounded by existing urban development, consistent with local zoning, and that would not result in significant environmental impacts. The Lago Fresca Project meets all five required conditions. The project site is within the City of Santa Rosa, measures only 1.31 acres, and is fully surrounded by existing residential, commercial, and medical uses. The project is consistent with the City's General Plan land use designation and zoning through application of the State Density Bonus Law, which allows modest increases in housing density for developments that include affordable housing units.

Environmental studies prepared for the project show there would be no significant impacts related to traffic, noise, air quality, or water quality. The project's traffic study found that the number of new vehicle trips would be low and well within City standards. Air quality and greenhouse gas analyses determined that emissions would remain below Bay Area Air Quality Management District thresholds, and construction activities will comply with standard dust and noise control measures. Drainage plans include on-site bioretention basins that will treat all stormwater before it enters the City's system, ensuring compliance with regional water quality regulations. The biological assessment confirmed that the site has no habitat value for any endangered or threatened species.

The project site is in an urbanized area already served by all public utilities and emergency services. Additionally, the project will be required to pay standard development impact fees to offset its share of public service and infrastructure needs. Finally, the analysis found that none of the exceptions that would disqualify the use of a CEQA exemption apply to this project since the site is not on a hazardous materials list, not within a scenic highway corridor, and does not contain any historic or cultural resources.

Because the project satisfies all CEQA Class 32 criteria and no exceptions apply, the City has determined that the Lago Fresca Residential Project qualifies for a Class 32 Infill Exemption. Therefore, preparation of a full Environmental Impact Report is not required.

Construction Impacts:

- Concerns about construction noise affecting nearby businesses during work hours.

Staff Response: Construction noise is a common and expected temporary impact associated with development projects. However, it is important to note that these impacts are short-term and will only occur during the construction phase of the project. Once construction is completed, the project will not generate unusual or ongoing noise beyond normal residential activity.

To minimize temporary construction noise, the project will be required to follow the City's standard construction noise limits, which restrict work from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, and 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on Saturdays, with no construction allowed on Sundays and holidays. The contractor must also implement

noise-reduction practices, such as maintaining equipment in good condition, using mufflers, and locating stationary equipment as far as possible from neighboring businesses and residences.

With these measures in place, noise from construction will be limited, controlled, and temporary. Once construction is complete, the project will not cause any permanent increase in noise levels in the area. The long-term operation of the residential buildings will be consistent with typical neighborhood noise levels.

Lack of Low-Income Housing:

- A few residents supported the idea of more housing but criticized the low percentage of affordable units in the proposal.
- A small number of residents expressed support for increasing housing, especially in light of the housing shortage, provided the project is thoughtfully designed and scaled appropriately.

Staff Response: As noted, the project proposes to provide four on-site, deed-restricted affordable units at a very low income level. The proposed units comply with the City's Inclusionary Housing Ordinance.

5. Public Improvements

A comprehensive list of on and off-site improvements is included in the Engineering Development Services Exhibit A, dated November 18, 2025, and is attached to the draft resolution. To summarize, the developer must dedicate public easements for utilities, including a 10-ft PUE along Hoen Avenue, and ensure public street improvements such as maintaining existing sidewalks on Hoen Avenue, installing driveways to City standards, replacing broken curbs and gutters, and undergrounding utilities; private driveways must be designed with proper queuing space and comply with fire lane regulations. Storm drainage systems must meet City and Sonoma County Water Agency (SCWA) standards, incorporate Low Impact Development practices, and ensure proper stormwater treatment and maintenance. Also, water and sewer systems must be designed and constructed according to City standards. Also, a crosswalk with enhanced warning devices (rectangular rapid flashing beacons, or RRFBs) will be installed approximately 300 feet west of Summerfield Road in order to facilitate additional crossings that will occur between the signal at Summerfield and the RRFB at Sierra Creek.

FISCAL IMPACT

Approval of the Project will not have an effect on the General Fund.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The proposed Project has been reviewed in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and qualifies for an exemption under CEQA Guidelines Section 15332, Class 32 (Infill) exemption. The applicant has submitted a memorandum for the infill exemption environmental analysis, detailing how the

Project aligns with the criteria listed in CEQA Guidelines Section 15332 (a-e) as follows:

- a. The Project site is located in an area designated by the General Plan as Office, which provides sites for administrative, financial, business, professional, medical, and public offices. The Project is within the CO (Office Commercial) zoning district, consistent with the General Plan land use designation, where Multifamily Housing is allowed through a Conditional Use Permit.
- b. The Project site is located within Santa Rosa City limits, does not exceed five acres, and is surrounded by urban uses.
- c. The Project site is not within regions designated for special habitats or protected species. The biological assessment report prepared by First Carbon Solutions, dated September 6, 2023, and updated June 18, 2024, indicates that the project site has no value as habitat for endangered, rare, or threatened (including candidate, sensitive, or special status) species due to the absence of suitable habitat conditions and use of surrounding areas.
- d. The Project will not result in any significant traffic, noise, air quality, or water quality impact as explained below:
 - **Traffic:** A Focus Traffic Study is provided by W-Trans dated December 28, 2023, which evaluated the proposed project. The study concludes that the proposed project would generate a low number of new trips and would not substantially impact the City's circulation system. The City's Traffic Engineering Division has reviewed the report and did not raise any issues.
 - **Noise:** The Noise Impact Assessment, dated June 12, 2024, analyzed different sources of noise such as construction activities, traffic, operational/stationary sources, and groundborne vibrations. The assessment indicates that the project would not result in significant noise effects on the surrounding environment and will maintain acceptable noise levels for nearby residents.
 - **Air Quality:** An Air Quality, Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHG), and Energy Impacts Analysis Memorandum was prepared for the proposed project on October 17, 2023, and updated on June 14, 2024. The memorandum indicates that the project is consistent with local zoning and does not require a General Plan amendment, as population growth has been considered in the 2017 Clean Air Plan. The project meets the BAAQMD criteria for air quality impacts, with construction emissions controlled through Basic Construction Mitigation Measures to limit dust. Operationally, the project involves 50 apartment units, well below the 451-unit threshold for air quality impacts. As such, the project will not generate significant emissions or air quality impacts. Further, the project is below acceptable thresholds for air quality impacts on sensitive receptors. The proposed project includes all-electric construction, reduced vehicle miles traveled, EV charging infrastructure meeting CALGreen Tier 2 standards,

and adherence to the Santa Rosa CAP (Climate Action Plan). Therefore, the project aligns with a Qualified GHG Reduction Plan and will not have significant effects.

- o **Water Quality:** The proposed project will be developed in accordance with Low Impact Development (LID) requirements and all relevant federal, state, and local regulations regarding stormwater management and runoff. The Engineering Development Services and the Water Department have reviewed the Preliminary Drainage Analysis and the Initial Storm Water Low Impact Development (SWLID) plan. The project has been conditioned to ensure that it does not cause significant impacts on water quality.
- e. The project site is situated in an area where all necessary utilities and public services are accessible. It is located within half a mile of Fire Station 4. Also, the plans have been reviewed and appropriately conditioned by the Fire Department, Water Department, and Engineering Development Services.

The City has further determined that 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.) This determination is based on the current development of the site and surrounding area.

LEVINE ACT

This project is subject to the Levine Act (Gov. Code Section 84308), which prohibits city officials from participating in certain decisions regarding licenses, permits, and other entitlements for use if the official has received a campaign contribution of more than \$500 from a party, participant, or agent of a party or participant in the previous 12 months. The Levine Act is intended to prevent financial influence on decisions that affect specific, identifiable persons or participants. Please see the attached Disclosure Form for information on individuals interested in the proposed land use action and any monetary contributions to city officials. For more information see the FPPC website: www.fppc.ca.gov/learn/pay-to-play-limits-and-prohibitions.html

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

On December 11, 2025, the Planning Commission will be reviewing and taking action on the requested Conditional Use Permit. Because this report was prepared prior to the Commission's action, City staff will provide the Board with a summary and report of the action taken during the December 18, 2025 presentation.

PUBLIC NOTIFICATION

The project was noticed as a public hearing per the requirements of Chapter 20-66 of the City Code. Notification of this public hearing was provided by posting an on-site sign, publishing notice in a newspaper of general circulation, mailed notice to surrounding property owners and occupants, electronic notice to parties that had

expressed interest in projects taking place in this geographic area of Santa Rosa, and bulletin board postings at City Hall and on the City website. Pursuant to Government Code Section 65091, where necessary, the City has incorporated notice procedures to the blind, aged, and disabled communities. These procedures include audio amplifier/assistive listening device support at public meetings, closed captioning, and optical character recognition conversion of electronic notices.

ISSUES

There are no unresolved issues remaining with the project.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Disclosure Form
Attachment 2 – Location Map
Attachment 3 – Project Narrative
Attachment 4 – Architectural Plans
Attachment 5 – Landscape Plan
Attachment 6 – Density Bonus Letter Request
Attachment 7 – Approved Density Bonus Letter
Attachment 8 – CEQA Class 32 Memorandum
Attachment 9 – Traffic Study
Attachment 10 – Parking Management Plan
Attachment 11 – Public Comments
Attachment 12 – Planning Commission Resolution PC-RES-2025-018

Resolution with Exhibit A

CONTACT

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