

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
STAFF REPORT FOR THE DESIGN REVIEW AND PRESERVATION BOARD
November 6, 2025

PROJECT TITLE

Elm Tree Station

ADDRESS/LOCATION

874 N Wright Road

ASSESSOR'S PARCEL NUMBER

035-063-001, -002

APPLICATION DATES

December 17, 2021

REQUESTED ENTITLEMENTS

Design Review

PROJECT SITE ZONING

Planned Development (PD 0435)

PROJECT PLANNER

Conor McKay

APPLICANT

Mangal Dhillon

PROPERTY OWNER

Mangal Dhillon

FILE NUMBERS

DR21-069 (PRJ21-033)

APPLICATION COMPLETION DATES

December 17, 2021

FURTHER ACTIONS REQUIRED

N/A

GENERAL PLAN DESIGNATION

Retail & Business Services

RECOMMENDATION

Approval

Agenda Item # 9.1

For Design Review and Preservation Board Meeting of: October 16, 2025

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
DESIGN REVIEW AND PRESERVATION BOARD

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

FROM: CONOR MCKAY, SENIOR PLANNER
PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

SUBJECT: ELM TREE STATION – DESIGN REVIEW – 874 N WRIGHT RD –
PRJ21-033

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 Elm Tree Station Project, which includes a gas station, two general retail land uses across two buildings, one apartment unit and a small park, for the property located at 874 N. Wright Road.

BACKGROUND

1. Project Description

The proposed project includes the construction of a gas station with six gas pumps and four electric charging stations, and a 3,448-square-foot general retail space with an 806-square-foot, one-bedroom apartment above. The proposed project also includes the construction of an additional 432-square-foot general retail use and park-like amenities, including patio/trellis area, benches and picnic area, and a bike path that would traverse the eastern and southern boundaries of the project site from the Joe Rodota Trail to North Wright Road. Design Review is required for the gas station fueling canopy, two retail buildings, and multifamily dwelling.

2. Surrounding Land Uses

North: Joe Rodota Trail
 South: Fuel Dealer (Industrial)
 East: Vacant
 West: Portable Restroom Services (Industrial)

The project site consists of two parcels. Parcel 1 is 31,143 square-feet and would include the gas station and larger retail space with one residential unit above. Parcel 2 is 11,600 square-feet and would include the small retail space and park-like amenities.

3. Existing Land Use – Project Site

The project site is currently vacant. A decayed Chinese Elm Tree is currently on site and is recommended for removal.

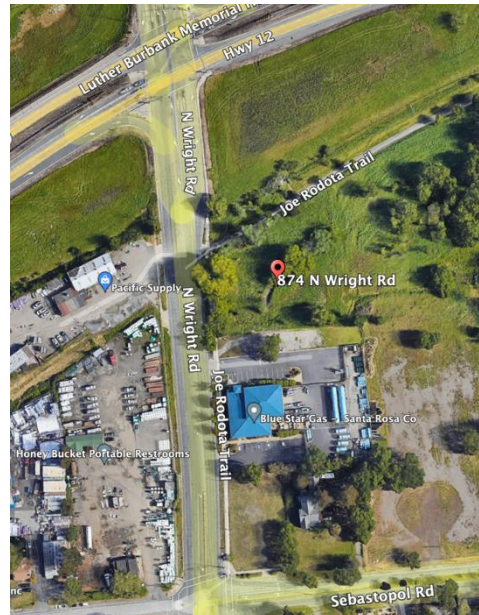


Figure 1: Aerial of Project Site

4. Project History

July 12, 2007	The Planning Commission reviewed a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for the construction of a service station with a car wash, neighborhood market and a drive-through restaurant on the subject site. The proposal also included a Zoning Code Text Amendment that would have amended the Code to allow such uses to be adjacent to each other, with the approval of a Conditional Use Permit. The Planning Commission did not support the Zoning Code Text Amendment and the resulting project. The Planning Commission continued the item to July 26, 2007, to prepare resolutions denying the applications with prejudice.
July 26, 2007	The Commission adopted Resolution Nos. 11142 and 11143, unanimously denying, with prejudice, the CUP and Zoning Code Text Amendment based on the finding that service stations are not appropriate adjacent to residential, specifically because of related noise and air quality. The Commission also found that the use would not be consistent with the General Plan with regard to the major entry route (Highway 12) into the City and the Joe

	Rodota Trail, located at the northern boundary of the site. Pursuant to Zoning Code Section 20-54.080(C), by denying the application with prejudice, no further application for the denied request could be filed for the ensuing 12 months.
August 3, 2007	The applicant submitted an appeal of the Planning Commission's denial.
October 2, 2007	The City Council, on appeal, adopted Resolution No. 26942 denying the appeal and upholding the Planning Commission's denial, with prejudice.
October 12, 2011	A Neighborhood Meeting was held for a proposed new project, which included a Tentative Parcel Map to subdivide the 0.98-acre site into two parcels and a Conditional Use Permit to construct a fueling station, neighborhood market with extended hours (5 a.m. to midnight, seven days a week), a residential apartment above the market, and a small retail building.
October 4, 2012	The applicant submitted the Conditional Use Permit and Tentative Map applications for the proposed project.
August 5, 2013	A Notice of Application was sent to property owners within 400 feet of the subject property.
October 24, 2013	The Planning Commission adopted Resolution Nos. 11653, 11654 and 11655, approving a Tentative Parcel Map and CUP, and adopting a Mitigated Negative Declaration for the project.
December 19, 2013	The Design Review Board adopted Resolution No. 13-887, granting preliminary Design Review approval for the project.
March 20, 2014	The Design Review Board adopted Resolution No. 14-888, granting final Design Review approval for the project.
October 24, 2017	The project's approved entitlements expired.
June 1, 2018	The applicant filed a Parcel Map Waiver and Certificate of Compliance application in response to the determination that the Tentative Parcel Map had expired. A minor subdivision for a property can be allowed through Parcel Map Waiver and Certificate of Compliance pursuant to City Code Section 19-16.030.
December 12, 2019	The Subdivision Committee approved a Parcel Map Waiver and Certificate of Compliance to subdivide an approximately 0.98-acre parcel into two parcels, one at 0.73 acres and one at 0.25 acres. Public comments were received during the public hearing with general opposition to the proposed gas station use.

December 16, 2019	An appeal of the Subdivision Committee's approval was filed by a member of the community representing the Coalition Opposing New Gas Stations.
December 17, 2021	New Conditional Use Permit and Design Review applications were submitted for the subject project.
August 11, 2022	The Planning Commission, on appeal, adopted Resolution No. PC-2022-020 denying the appeal and upholding the Subdivision Committee's approval of the Parcel Map Waiver and Certificate Compliance. During the time between when the appeal was filed and when it was acted on by the Commission, City staff and the applicant had been working to determine the best path forward for the project following a determination that the previous CUP and Design Review approvals had expired.
April 10, 2025	The Planning Commission adopted Resolution No. PC-RES-2025-007 unanimously denying the requested Conditional Use Permit for the operation of the gas station and multifamily land uses.
August 19, 2025	The City Council, on appeal, adopted Resolution Nos. CC-2025-140 and CC-2025-141, adopting an addendum to the Elm Tree Station Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration and accepting the appeal and approving the Conditional Use Permit for a gas station, two general retail land uses, one apartment unit and outdoor amenities.

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. The project site is designated Retail & Business Services. This designation allows a wide variety of retail and service enterprises, offices, and restaurants. The proposed gas station and associated retail development is consistent with this designation, which allows retail and service enterprises. The following goals and policies are pertinent to this application:

Land Use and Livability	
LUL-J: Maintain vibrant, convenient and attractive commercial centers.	Consistent. The proposed project would establish basic services that will be needed in close proximity to surrounding future neighborhoods, as well as the traveling public 24-hours a day. The proposal will provide an
LUL-J-1: Provide a range of commercial services that are easily accessible and attractive, that satisfies the needs of people who live	

and work in Santa Rosa and that also attracts a regional clientele.	attractive commercial development that will satisfy the needs of people who live, work, or visit Santa Rosa due to its visible location adjacent to Highway 12.
Urban Design UD-A-5: Require superior site and architectural design of new development projects, to improve visual quality in the City. UD-C: Enhance and strengthen the visual quality of major entry routes into the City, as well as major corridors that link neighborhoods with downtown.	
	Consistent. The attractive building design and site design will enhance the visual quality of the Highway 12 entry into the City while providing essential services to the traveling public.

2. Zoning

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 within Planned Development (PD) 0435, which allows the service station (gas station) land use with the approval of a Conditional Use Permit. As noted in the Project History section of this staff report, the issue of land use has been determined by the City Council, with the approval of the CUP on August 19, 2025. The analysis below focuses on the required development standards for the project. Note, some development standards are not specifically addressed in the PD 0435 Policy Statement, so staff has analyzed the Project's compliance with the most similar zoning district CG (General Commercial) in those cases.

Development Standards

Setbacks: Required setbacks are not specifically addressed in the PD 0435 Policy Statement, so the setbacks for the most similar standard zoning district, which is the CG (General Commercial), apply to the Project site.

- a) Front: 7.5 feet adjacent to a residential zone or use, or more as required by Design Review; none required elsewhere.

Staff Response: The Project proposes to construct the gas station awning at a distance of 32 feet from the back of sidewalk along N Wright Road (western property line). Therefore, the Project complies with the front setback requirement.

- b) Side: 5 feet adjacent to a residential zone or use, or more as required by

Design Review; none required elsewhere.

Staff Response: The Project proposes to construct a structure to be used as General Retail 5.38 feet from the edge of the property line shared with Joe Rodota Trail (northern property line). Therefore, the Project complies with the front setback requirement.

c) Rear: 10 feet adjacent to a residential zone or use, or more as required by Design Review; none required elsewhere.

Staff Response: The Project proposes to construct a structure on Lot 1 to be used as General Retail 5.89 feet from the rear property line. The Project also proposes to construct a structure on Lot 2, which is adjacent to a residential zoning district, located 21 feet from the rear property line; therefore, the Project complies with the rear setback requirement.

Building Height: The General Commercial (CG) zoning district establishes a maximum building height of 55 feet. The general retail structure on Lot 1 is proposed at 29.5 feet and the general retail structure on Lot 2 is proposed at 17 feet; therefore, the Project complies with the maximum building height requirement.

Lot Coverage: The General Commercial (CG) zoning district establishes a maximum lot coverage of 100%. The Project proposes a lot coverage of 23.6% on Lot 1 and 5.5% on Lot 2; therefore, the Project complies with the lot coverage requirement.

Parking: Pursuant to Zoning Code Section 20-60, one parking space per service bay and one parking space per employee are required for gas stations. Additionally, one parking space per 250 square-feet of retail space is required. Finally, one covered parking space and one-half parking space are required for each multifamily unit. The Project does not propose any service bays and proposes 3,448 SF of general retail space which requires 13.8 parking spaces. The Project includes one multifamily unit which requires one covered parking space and one-half of a parking space. The Project proposes to include shared on-site parking for the smaller, 432-square-foot retail building on the adjacent parcel which requires 1.7 parking spaces, which will require a parking covenant be recorded for each lot pursuant to Zoning Code Chapter 20-36 (Parking and Loading Standards). In total, the Project proposes to provide 18 parking spaces; therefore, the Project complies with parking requirements.

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). Please, see the Environmental Review Section of this staff report.

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 3.3 - Retail Centers & Commercial Districts

I.F: To provide vehicular as well as a direct and safe pedestrian and bicycle access and within retail centers and to neighboring uses.

I.G: To provide site entries that are clear and understandable to customers and employees, minimizing confusion and facilitating easy and unobstructed, pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular access.

I.H: To create pleasing pedestrian environments in and around retail centers that encourage walking to and within the center.

II.B.2: When retail centers are located adjacent to public spaces, such as parks, orient the development to the public space.

II.B.5: Provide continuous internal pedestrian walkways from the public sidewalk or right-of-way to the customer entrances of all buildings on the site. Also provide pedestrian sidewalks between customer entrances within the project and provide direct connections between stores and focal points such as transit stops and street crossings. Locate walkways to promote walking between stores rather than driving.

Staff Response: The project site's adjacency to the Joe Rodota Trail offers a unique opportunity to integrate the multi-use pathway and the site's internal circulation for cyclists and pedestrians. The site is designed with two pathway connections to the Joe Rodota Trail: one on the northeast site boundary that traverses south along the eastern boundary to the southern boundary and connects to the existing sidewalk on N Wright Road, and one on the northern site boundary that provides a direct connection to the larger retail space. Each pathway is designed to minimize conflict with vehicles accessing the gas station by not introducing any new conflict points.

4. Summary of Public Comments

Staff has received many public comments regarding the proposed Project, which were specific to the proposed gas station land use. Because the land use was approved by the City Council, and because the purview of the Design Review and Preservation Board is the project design, those comments have not been included as part of this packet. As of the writing of this staff report, City staff has not received any comments related to the project design. Any comments received will be provided to the Board prior to the meeting.

5. Public Improvements

The following is a summary of specific public improvements:

- A public bicycle path connecting to Joe Rodota Trail through the project site from Wright Road.
- New bike path and trail route signage
- Bike sharrow striping along the frontage of N Wright Road

- Standard conditioning used for utility connections and driveway curb cut improvements

FISCAL IMPACT

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

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The Project applicant prepared an Addendum, (J. Kapolchok and Associates, dated March, 2024) which analyzes the Project relative to the previously adopted Mitigated Negative Declaration to determine if the current Project includes substantial changes, if there has been a substantial change in circumstances, or if new information exists to such a degree that a new or subsequent mitigated Negative Declaration should be required (CEQA Guidelines sections 15164, subdivision (b) and 15162, subdivision (a)).

This Addendum relies on the Mitigated Negative Declaration adopted by the Planning Commission on October 24, 2013, by Resolution No. 11653.

According to CEQA Guidelines Section 15164, if only minor technical changes or additions are necessary or if none of the conditions described in CEQA Section 15162 calling for the preparation of a subsequent EIR or negative declaration have occurred, then an addendum to an adopted EIR or Negative Declaration can be prepared (CEQA Section 15164 (b)).

CEQA Section 15162 sets forth three conditions, any one of which would cause the preparation of a subsequent EIR or subsequent Negative Declaration. They are:

1. Substantial changes in the project would result in new significant effects or an increase in the severity of the previously identified significant effect.
2. Substantial changes in circumstances under which the project is undertaken that would result in new significant effects or an increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects.
3. New information of substantial importance, which was not known or could be known, shows:
 - a. The project will have one or more significant effect(s) not discussed in the previous Negative Declaration.
 - b. Significant effects, previously examined, will be more severe than shown.
 - c. Mitigation measures previously considered not to be feasible are feasible and would reduce one or more significant effects of the

project, but the project proponents decline to adopt the mitigation measures or alternatives.

- d. Mitigation measures or alternatives that are considerably different than those analyzed in the previous EIR (or Negative Declaration) that would substantially reduce one or more significant effects on the environment, but the project proponent declined to adopt the mitigation measure or alternative.

Based on the analysis in the Addendum and the technical reports, the Project would not cause new significant environmental effects or substantial increases in the severity of a significant of a significant environmental effect identified in the Mitigated Negative Declaration prepared and adopted for the Project. There are no substantial changes in circumstances affecting the Project which would cause increased environmental impacts. Although there is new information, which was not known and could not have been known at the time of the adopted MND, analysis of that new information or regulations applied to the Project shows no new or more severe environmental effects. Additionally, adopted mitigation measures included in the MND have not been discovered to now be infeasible.

The Addendum and technical reports found that approval of the Project would not meet any of the requirements in CEQA Guidelines Section 15162 for the preparation of a subsequent Negative Declaration or a supplement to the Negative Declaration.

On August 19, 2025, the City Council adopted the Addendum to the 2013 Elm Tree Station IS/MND.

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 April 10, 2025, the Planning Commission unanimously denied the Conditional Use Permit.

On August 19, on appeal, the City Council adopted the Addendum to the 2013 Elm Tree

Station IS/MND, accepted the appeal and approved the Conditional Use Permit for the Elm Tree Station project.

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 Description
Attachment 4 – Architectural Plans
Attachment 5 – Climate Action Plan Appendix E Checklist
Attachment 6 – Stormwater LID, December 2018
Attachment 7 – Prior Gas Station Zoning Code Regulations
Attachment 8 – PD 0435
Attachment 9 – City Council Resolution No. CC-RES-2025-140 – Addendum and MMRP
Attachment 10 – City Council Resolution No. CC-RES-2025-141 CUP with Exhibit A

Resolution 1 – Design Review

CONTACT

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