

DESIGN REVIEW COMMISSION (DRC) STAFF REPORT

MEETING

DATE: February 21, 2018

STAFF: Hans Grunt, Senior Planner
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SUBJECT: **First and Grant**
P2017-092; DESIGN REVIEW – WORKSHOP
APNs 114-282-04 & -07; 1119 & 1107 Grant Avenue

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REQUESTED ACTION

Conduct a public workshop to review and provide comments on draft plans for site design, building massing, building architecture and landscaping for a three story mixed use commercial and residential building including. 13,317 SF of ground floor commercial space and 32 residential units, on the second and third floors; 47 parking spaces are provided for the residential units. For the commercial space, the applicant is seeking approval of a downtown parking waiver to utilize on-street parking.

PROJECT SITE AND DESIGN DESCRIPTION

Site Description: First and Grant mixed use development is proposed on two parcels, 1119 & 1107 Grant Avenue, APNs 14-282-04 & -07 respectively. The combined parcels, 37,153+/-sf, contain the building formerly occupied by Pini Hardware and an adjacent parking lot to the west; also defined as the area between Grant Ave. and Industrial Way from First St. to the commercial building at currently occupied by Ito's White Tiger. Pini Hardware was the last active use to occupy the project sites, which moved out in 2004. The proposal involves removal of the existing, approximately 19,500sf single story building and adjacent private parking lot. The proposed building would reoccupy the existing building and parking lot areas.

Building Design: The proposed building is 275.33 ft wide by 125.5 feet deep, and 42' tall (three habitable stories), excluding rooftop mechanical and screening. The ground floor is divided into 13,317 SF of ground floor commercial space oriented onto Grant Avenue and a 47 stall podium style parking lot dedicated for the proposed residential units fronting Industrial Way. The residential units, 32 total, include ten one-bedroom/one bath and six two-bedroom/two bath units on the 2nd floor, and nine one-bedroom/one bath and seven two-bedroom/two bath on the third floor.

The design of the ground floor retail spaces is primarily defined by seven, 29'+/- wide by 57'+/- deep glass store fronts, each framed by narrow supporting walls or columns and a shallow header finished in red brick. Atop the storefront headers, is a continuous, projecting, horizontal band

serving to “cap” the ground floor that is finished in a soldier row of matching red brick. The ground floor storefronts are further defined by a continuous metal awning that extends out over the sidewalk. Proportional to the width of the glass store fronts, a vertically integrated glass and fiber cement finished main residential entry lobby leading to the second and third floors is also incorporated into the Grant Avenue façade. At the corner of Grant and First Streets, the ground floor storefront design affords a 35 foot by 33 foot plaza space suitable for outdoor dining etc.

The exteriors of the second and third stories are comprised of a vertical cadence of flush and recessed wall planes finished in fiber cement panels and horizontal siding. The upper floors are further articulated by windows and glass doors that lead to functional, open rail, metal framed balconies. Upper level metal accent awnings are also integrated that serve to define the second and third floors. Lastly the top edge or parapet of the building is dictated by the flush and recessed walls planes and incorporates an intermittent beveled cornice.

Cross Sections: Plan Sheets A5.0 and A5.1 include cross sections that depict 1) the building’s line-of-site or privacy implications to the yard and home at 1106 Maribella Ave., 2) the building’s complete façade as viewed from Grant Ave. in relation to neighboring buildings to the east and west, Westamerica Bank and Ito’s White Tiger respectively, and 3) the building’s east elevation fronting First St. in relation to the home at 1102 Mirabella Ave., opposite Industrial Way, and Mike’s Liquor’s on the opposing side of Grant Ave.

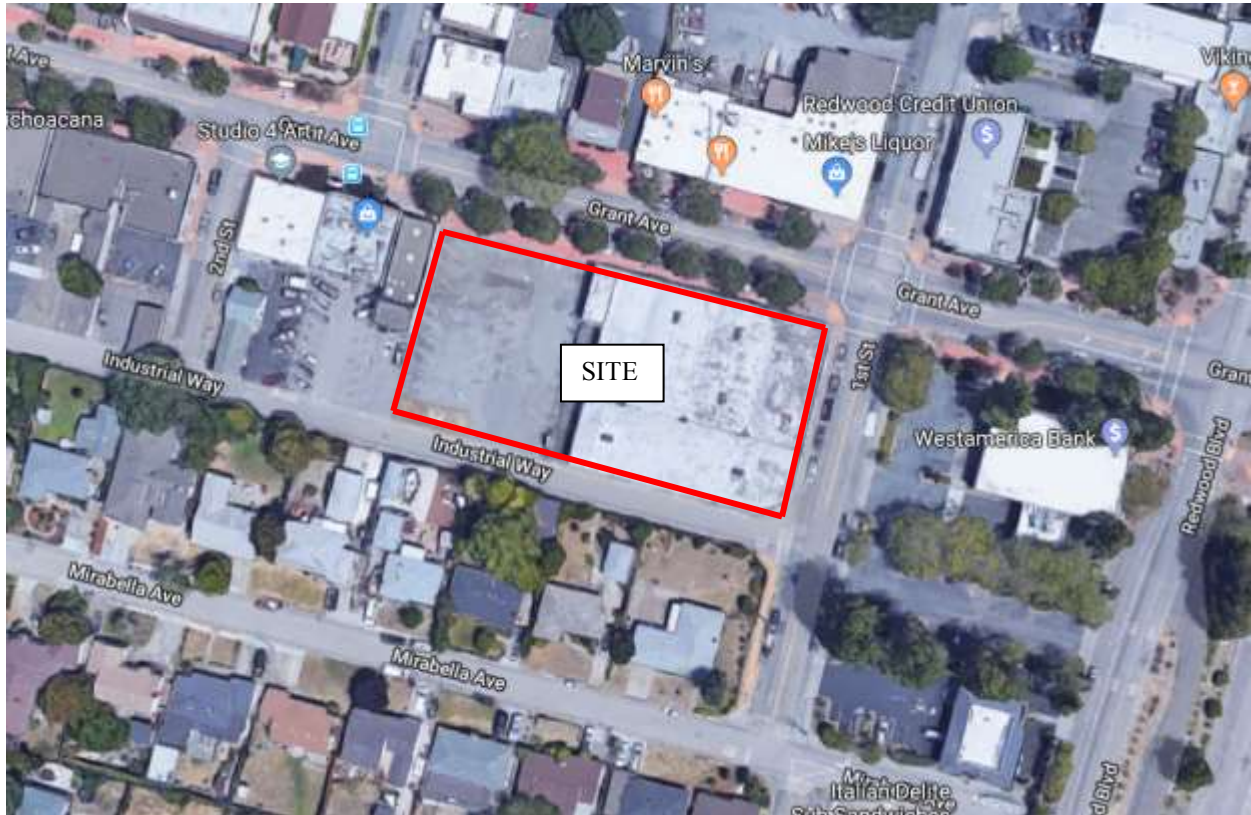
Landscape Design: As the building footprint occupies nearly the entire site area, preliminary landscaping plans, for the ground level, focuses on specific planter areas, including evergreen climbing plant (variety not specified) at the building’s base flanking the central residential lobby on Grant Ave., at opposing corners of the plaza space at the corner of Grant Ave. and First St., and at the base of both stairwells exiting onto Industrial Way. Movable raised planters are proposed for the plaza, and raised planters, also serving as biofilters for rain runoff, are positioned along the exterior walls of the podium parking lot fronting Industrial Way.

Within the second floor floorplan, a central courtyard is proposed that is framed in on the north, east, and west sides by second and third story living units. Along the building’s south elevation, the second story central courtyard is framed by a raised planter, also serving as biofilter for rain runoff that incorporates ground cover shrubs and shade trees. Elevated turf and planter areas movable trees/planters, seating and a group barbecue area are incorporated within the central courtyard. Across the second story of the building’s west elevation is a continuous roof deck that is also framed in part by a raised planter serving as a biofilter for rain runoff that incorporates ground cover shrubs and shade trees. Said deck also incorporates movable planters and seating.

Building Circulation and Parking: The building affords primary ground floor access for pedestrians directly to individual or combined commercial tenant spaces, including plaza space at the corner of First St. and Grant Ave. Secondary or service access is also afforded for each tenant space from the “back of shop” via a common sidewalk within the residential parking lot which is integrated into the rear or southerly half of the building’s ground floor fronting Industrial Way. Pedestrian access to the private second and third floor residential units is provided via a central lobby (stairwell and elevator) accessed both from Grant Ave. and from the common sidewalk within the residential parking lot. Two secondary, residential only, stairwells

are provided from Industrial Way.

A 47 stall parking lot dedicated for the proposed residential units is integrated into the rear half of the ground floor fronting Industrial Way. Two-way access drives are incorporated; one off of First St. and one off of Industrial Way. Parking for the ground floor commercial space is proposed to be served by existing on-street parking spaces fronting commercially designated properties in the Downtown between Redwood Blvd. and Seventh St. For additional information, see Parking under Staff Analysis below.



Project entitlements required include:

Use Permit, - Planning Commission approval of a use permit to ensure operational compatibility between the proposed housing and commercial activities allowed within the Downtown Core Retail District, including the new commercial space in the proposed project, and

Design Review - Approval of the project's site design, landscape, architecture, finish materials and colors. Design Review entails a formal design recommendation from the Design Review Commission to the Planning Commission, which in turn takes final action on the design approval in conjunction with its action for approval of a Use Permit described above.

BACKGROUND

Property Owner: Bromich LLC

Applicant: Daniel Macdonald AIA Architects

Assessor's Parcel No. 141-282-04 & -07

Property Size: 37,153+/-sf

General Plan Designation: Downtown Core (CD)

Current Zoning: Downtown Core Retail and Downtown Overlay (CDR:D)

Existing Use: Vacant

Adjacent Land Use/Zoning/Uses:

North- Service and Retail Businesses/ CDR:D

South- Single Family Residential/Low Density Residential (R1-7.5)

East- Service and Retail Businesses/CDR:D

West- Service and Retail Businesses/CDR:D

STAFF ANALYSIS

The Design Review Commission (DRC) is asked to conduct a workshop to obtain public comment on and provide feedback to staff and the applicant regarding draft plans for site design, circulation, building massing, building architecture and landscaping for the proposed First and Grant project. The public workshop process conducted with the Design Review Commission is a mandatory component of the City's Design Review process for projects of this scale. At a scheduled workshop(s), the DRC does not make any formal decisions to approve or deny the proposed project, but is asked to provide design feedback and/or suggested changes, if any.

Neighborhood Meeting, November 11, 2017

This design workshop follows a neighborhood meeting that was conducted by the applicant's architect, Dan Macdonald, on November 11, 2017. At the neighborhood workshop residents and community members in attendance (approximately 80) expressed both concerns and opportunities related to the proposed project. For the DRC's consideration, the following is a summary of the comments received at the November 11, 2017 neighborhood workshop:

Summary of Public comments taken during the November 11, 2017 Neighborhood Meeting:

Design Related Comments

- Impacts on the privacy of residents in homes along the north side of Mirabella Ave.
- Refuse area needs to be adequately designed/screened and secured against rodents
- Offsite light and glare impacts need to be considered
- Need coordinated loading zone, suggest it be on First St., and possible restriction on size of delivery trucks
- Objection to using Westamerica Bank (ugly) as a design reference
- Consider preparing a shade study
- Can a 3D computer model be generated to further convey design information
- Accommodations for bicycle parking
- Like the functional upper story balconies
- Applicant's architect noted consideration to change Industrial Way to a one-way street (from east to west) to accommodate additional parking

Land Use Comments

- Downtown parking impacts is a major concern
- Parking overflow onto adjacent neighborhood streets, namely Mirabella Ave. is a concern
- Property management should manage parking e.g. limits on vehicles per residential unit
- Increase traffic on Mirabella Ave.
- Need a traffic study based on credible use of commercial space
- Time for the City to plan for and construct a parking garage for Downtown
- Concern with increased commercial vacancy rates

Novato General Plan Consistency

The project site is assigned the Downtown Core (CD) land use designation of the Novato General Plan. The CD land use designation applies to properties within the boundaries of the Downtown Novato Specific Plan area, primarily parcels fronting Grant Avenue between Seventh Street and Railroad Avenue and the first two blocks of Redwood Boulevard to the north and south of Grant Avenue. This land use designation permits commercial service, retail uses, and restaurants, as well as mixed commercial and residential uses where nonresidential uses are located primarily on the ground floor. The CD designation allows a maximum base floor area ratio (FAR) of 1.2 for nonresidential development. An FAR of up to 2.0 may be permitted for mixed residential and commercial projects or where a project displays exemplary architectural design.

As noted earlier, the proposed building is intended to host retail, restaurant, and commercial service uses, all of which are activities allowed on parcels assigned the CD land use designation. The proposed building has a floor area of approximately 61,731-square feet, which represents an FAR of 1.66 based on a parcel area of 37,153+/- square-feet. This FAR is well within the maximum FAR of 2.0 allowed for mixed residential and commercial land use projects under the Downtown Core land use designation. . Note: The podium parking area is not included in the FAR calculation, and residential density (units per acre) is not a development intensity metric applied to the CD designated properties. Based on these observations, the proposed project's anticipated land uses and development intensity are consistent with applicable policies of the Land Use Chapter of the General Plan, including:

LU Policy 1 Implementation of Land Use Map. Implement the Land Use Designations Map by approving development and conservation projects consistent with the land use definitions, densities and intensities indicated in LU Table 2. Ensure consistency between the General Plan, the Zoning Ordinance, and other land use regulations.

In addition to land use and intensity, the 1996 Novato General Plan provides a framework of policies that were adopted to coordinate all major components of Novato's physical development and associated uses. These policies serve as a basis to assess whether public and private development proposals are consistent with the General Plan. In this instance, the Design Review Commission should consider the First and Grant design concepts in light of the design related policies of the Novato General Plan listed below:

HO Policy 3.2 Design that Fits into the Neighborhood Context. It is the City's intent that neighborhood identity and sense of community will be enhanced by designing all new housing to have a transition of scale and compatibility in form to the surrounding area. HO Policy 3.3 Housing Design Principles. The intent in the design of new housing is to provide stable, safe, and attractive neighborhoods through high quality architecture, site planning, and amenities that address the following principles:

- a. Reduce the perception of building bulk. In multi-unit buildings, encourage designs that break up the perceived bulk and minimize the apparent height and size of new buildings, including, for example, the use of upper story stepbacks and landscaping. Application of exterior finish materials, including siding, trim, windows, doors and colors, are important elements of building design and an indicator of overall building quality.
- b. Recognize existing street patterns. Where appropriate, encourage transitions in height and setbacks from adjacent properties to respect adjacent development character and privacy. Design new housing so that, where appropriate, it relates to the existing street pattern.
- c. Enhance the "sense of place" by incorporating focal areas where appropriate. Design new housing around natural and/or designed focal points, emphasized through pedestrian/pathway or other connections.
- d. Minimize the visual impact of parking areas and garages. Discourage home designs in which garages dominate the public façade of the home (e.g. encourage driveways and garages to be located to the side or rear of buildings, or recessed, or along rear alleyways or below the building in some higher density developments).

CI Policy 1 Compatibility of Development with Surroundings. Ensure that new development is sensitive to the surrounding architecture, topography, landscaping, and to the character, scale, and ambiance of the surrounding neighborhood. Recognize that neighborhoods include community facilities needed by Novato residents as well as homes, and integrate facilities into neighborhoods.

CI Policy 7 Landscaping. Encourage attractive native and drought-tolerant, low-maintenance landscaping responsive to fire hazards.

CI Policy 9 Undergrounding Utilities. Continue to require undergrounding of utilities.

CI Policy 12 Parking Standards. Reduce the visibility of parking facilities and the amount of land necessary for them to the maximum extent feasible.

CI Policy 14 Open Areas and Landscaping. Require provision of adequate landscaped, open areas in project design.

CI Policy 15 Pedestrian Paths. Provide for maximum feasible pedestrian circulation.

CI Policy 21 Ground Floor Retail. Encourage the establishment of ground floor retail uses wherever feasible.

CI Policy 25 Architectural and Landscape Design. Require attractive architectural and landscape design for all new developments as well as for expansion to existing uses, consistent with *Downtown Specific Plan* guidelines.

CI Policy 26 Pedestrian Movement. Encourage a pedestrian-friendly Downtown with outdoor seating.

CI Policy 32 Public Art. Promote public art that enhances the cultural life of the community.

EN Policy 39 On-Site Recycling Areas. Require on-site areas for recycling in commercial/retail, office and multi-family residential developments as required by State law.

Downtown Novato Specific Plan

The project site lies within the boundaries of the Downtown Novato Specific Plan ("Specific Plan") area. The Specific Plan was adopted in July 1998 to provide policy direction to revitalize and enhance downtown Novato. Accordingly, the Specific Plan recognizes downtown Novato as the heart of the community and encourages...*"maintaining and enhancing the small town feel, historical character, charm, and human scale that is pedestrian friendly while facilitating*

development as a thriving, multi-faceted hub of economic, social and cultural activities and an active gathering place that reflects quality in its built environment and personal services provided." Given this focus, the Specific Plan includes design guidelines that provide an extensive list of considerations regarding the site design and architecture of new and expanded development in the downtown. The guidelines emphasize quality architecture and development, and place a high value on varied and distinctive building designs, generous landscaping to accent buildings, and high quality materials and construction. The Specific Plan guidelines for new structures are provided as Attachment No. 3.

Downtown Novato Design Guidelines

In 2005 the staff and the DRC prepared the Downtown Novato Design Guidelines ("Downtown Design Guidelines") to further clarify the city’s design objectives and expectations for new development and redevelopment within downtown Novato. As part of the pending General Plan Update, the Downtown Design Guidelines will be carried forward as a key design reference document for project proponents, the public, staff, and city review authorities (e.g., Design Review Commission) when considering the merits of a project’s design. Notable design aspects of the First and Grant proposal that are in keeping with the Downtown Design Guidelines include the concealment of parking in the rear of the structure, incorporation of a pedestrian plaza at First and Grant, and incorporation of smaller individual storefronts that yield a pedestrian scale. The Downtown Novato Design Guidelines are provided as Attachment No. 2.

Novato Zoning Ordinance

The project site is located in the Downtown Core Retail (CDR) Zoning District and the Downtown (D) Overlay Zoning District. The CDR Zoning District prescribes specific development standards that must be met by new development, such as maximum lot coverage and building height. The D Overlay Zoning District indicates that new project's must comply with any applicable policies of the Downtown Novato Specific Plan.

The table below lists the development standards applied in the CDR Zoning District in relation to the proposed project.

CDR ZONING DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS		
	CDR Zoning District	First and Grant proposal
Maximum FAR	2.0	1.66
Maximum Lot Coverage	100%	91%
Maximum Height	45-feet	42-feet (45-feet at highest point)
Minimum Setbacks from Property Line	Front – None Side – None Rear - None	Front @ Grant Ave. Elevation: None Side @ East Elevation: None Side @ West Elevation: None Rear @ Industrial Way: None

Residential Parking	1 space/1 bedroom unit (19) 1.5 space/2 bedroom unit (20) Guest space = 1/each 4 units (8)	47 = (19+20+8) dedicated in podium
Commercial Parking	see discussion below	see discussion below

Commercial Parking

Located in the Downtown Core (CD), the new nonresidential component of the project is eligible for a parking exemption pursuant to Section 19.30.050 of the Novato Zoning Ordinance. The applicant has requested a parking exemption for the proposed 13,317 SF of nonresidential, commercial space. Staff is in the process of contracting with a traffic engineering firm to prepare a parking demand and occupancy study resulting from the project to determine if there is adequate parking available to support the project and existing development.

Art Program

Staff has advised the applicant that this proposal is subject to the City’s Art Program pursuant to Division 19.21. The applicant has not yet put forth conceptual or detailed plans to satisfy the City’s Art Program.

"Art" shall mean, but is not limited to, all paintings, murals, inscriptions, stained glass, fiber work, statues, reliefs, or other sculpture, monuments, fountains, arches, or other structure intended for ornament, commemoration, or display. Carvings, frescoes, mosaics, mobiles, photographs, drawings, collages, prints and work in clay, fiber, wood, metal, glass, plastics and other materials are also included. Landscape items including the artistic placement of natural materials or other functional art objects may be included. Works of art may be portable as well as permanent. The Art Project shall have a value of not less than one-third of one percent of the construction cost of the completed development project.

Art proposed for this development shall be reviewed by the City's Design Review Commission in conjunction with their review and recommendation, to Planning Commission and City Council, of the complete site and architectural plans. The Design Review Commission shall provide a recommendation after considering the arts context, scale, artistic quality, media, permanence, durability, and safety.

Design Review Findings

For this workshop, the Design Review Commission should consider the proposed combined commercial and residential project from the perspective of the following uniform design review findings. These are the finding the Design Review Commission will be asked to make when forwarding its formal recommendation on the First and Grant proposal’s site design, building architecture and landscape plan to the Planning Commission.

Design Review Finding No. 1: The design, layout, size, architectural features and general appearance of the proposed project is consistent with the general plan, and any applicable specific plan and with the development standards, design guidelines and all applicable provisions of this code, including this title and any approved master plan and precise development plan.

Design Review Finding No. 2: The proposed project would maintain and enhance the community's character, provide for harmonious and orderly development, and create a desirable environment for the occupants, neighbors, and visiting public.

Design Review Finding No. 3: The proposed development would not be detrimental to the public health, safety, or welfare; is not materially injurious to the properties or improvements in the vicinity; does not interfere with the use and enjoyment of neighboring existing or future developments and does not create potential traffic, pedestrian or bicycle hazards.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

An environmental assessment is not required to conduct a design review workshop. A recommended environmental determination will be presented to the Planning Commission should the proposed project return to DRC for a formal public hearing and design recommendation to the Planning Commission.

RECOMMENDATION

Conduct a public workshop and provide comments to staff and the applicant on draft plans for site design, circulation, building massing, building architecture and landscaping for the First and Grant development proposal.

FURTHER ACTION

A future public hearing will be scheduled with the Design Review Commission to develop a formal recommendation to the Planning Commission regarding the site design, building massing and architecture, and landscaping proposed for the First and Grant project.

ATTACHMENTS (electronic links, hard copy can be made available upon request)

1. Full set of project design concept plans – available for download on the City’s project webpage at: novato.org/pini
2. [Downtown Novato Design Guidelines](#)
3. [Downtown Specific Plan guidelines](#)