

## DESIGN REVIEW COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

MEETING: April 19, 2017

STAFF: Steve Marshall, Planning Manager  
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SUBJECT: **HAMILTON COTTAGES**  
**CEQA MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION**  
**P2015-071; DESIGN REVIEW**  
**APN 157-860-03 & -04; HAMILTON PARKWAY & B STREET**



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### REQUESTED ACTION

Conduct a public hearing to consider the final landscaping details, including a public art component, for Hamilton Cottages, a 16-unit residential development for senior aged residents.

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Hamilton Cottages is a 16-unit, for-sale single-family residential development intended for primary occupancy by senior residents aged 62-years or older. The project is proposed on a 1.5-acre parcel known as the Senior Housing Triangle (Planning Area 19) of the Hamilton Field Master Plan (a.k.a., New Hamilton Partnership Master Plan).

On October 25, 2016, the City Council approved Hamilton Cottages. The City Council's action included a condition of approval requiring the final architectural and landscaping (including public art component) details to be considered by the Design Review Commission.

On December 21, 2016, the Design Review Commission considered the final architectural, site design and landscaping details for Hamilton Cottages. The Commission approved the final site design and architectural details for the project, including lighting and paint colors, but postponed taking action on the final landscaping details. The minutes of this hearing are attached for Commission reference.

The Commission's motion to approve the final architectural and site design details, included direction to the applicant and staff to return with a more detailed landscape plan, a revised [widened] entry trellis feature, and the required public art component. In response to this direction, the applicant has submitted a construction detail landscape plan set and a package describing the public art component proposed for the project.

#### *Landscape Plan*

The construction detail landscape plan addresses the entirety of the project site, including perimeter landscaping along Hamilton Parkway and Cottage Lane (new street serving the project). Elements of the landscape plan include decorative paving, trellis structures, a central outdoor gathering space (dining tables, barbeque island, fire pit, and various seating amenities), ornamental landscaping, community garden, wood fencing, and a stucco wall along Hamilton Parkway.

Notable revisions made to the landscape plan include:

- All of the entry brows (arbors) have changed width and depth to provide proper clearances for utilities and access to the site and garages;
- An access path was added to the public art component since it is intended to be an interactive art piece; and
- A few trees were removed from the plan due to conflicts with utility lines.

### *Public Art Piece*

The applicant is proposing to satisfy Novato’s Art Program Ordinance by installing an art piece consisting of an interactive sculptural bicycle that can be written on with dry erase markers. The art piece would be constructed of stainless steel with a reflective chrome finish and translucent, colored UV resistant polycarbonate wheels. The art piece would be 6- or 8-feet tall and located at the south-end of the central common area in the project. The art piece would be accessible via two concrete pathways connected to a walkway encircling the perimeter of the central common area.

The construction detail landscape plan and public art component concept may be viewed at: [www.novato.org/hamiltoncottages](http://www.novato.org/hamiltoncottages)

## **BACKGROUND**

Applicant:	Hamilton Cottages, LLC
Property Owners:	Hamilton Cottages, LLC (APN 157-860-03) City of Novato (APN 157-860-04)
Property Size:	1.5+/- acres
General Plan Designation:	Medium Density Multiple Family Residential (R10)
Zoning:	Planned District (PD) – New Hamilton Partnership Master Plan
Existing Use:	Vacant
Proposed Use:	16 Single-Family Dwellings (Senior Occupancy)
Adjacent Zoning:	North – Planned District (PD); Single-Family Dwellings East – Planned District (PD); Single-Family Dwellings South and West – Planned District (PD); City owned property

## **ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

Hamilton Cottages was analyzed in an Initial Study prepared pursuant to the requirements of California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and City of Novato Environmental Review Guidelines. Based on the findings of the Initial Study, the City Council adopted a Mitigated Negative Declaration for the project.

The landscaping elements and public art component being considered by the Design Review Commission fall within the scope of the adopted Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration.

Accordingly, no further environmental review is required for the Design Review Commission to take action on the final landscaping details and public art component for Hamilton Cottages.

## **NEED FOR DESIGN REVIEW**

Design Review is a mandatory process for any project proposed on a Planned District (PD) zoned property. The Design Review Commission's role in the Planned District process includes hosting a preliminary site design workshop, conducting a public hearing to provide a recommendation to the Planning Commission and City Council, and holding a public hearing(s) to take action on the final design details of a project if approved by the City Council.

## **STAFF ANALYSIS**

The Design Review Commission's action regarding the landscaping details of Hamilton Cottages must be based on the findings of approval required for Design Review actions as specified in Novato Municipal Code Section 19.42.030.F. Below is a discussion regarding whether the final landscaping details for Hamilton Cottages meets the required Design Review findings.

***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.***

### *Novato General Plan*

The Novato General Plan includes several policies addressing the design of new residential development projects. Applicable policies are listed below followed by facts detailing whether the project is consistent therewith.

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 setbacks 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).

The Project includes landscape elements consistent with the design principles of Housing Policy 3.3, including:

- A well landscaped common area central to the neighborhood for the enjoyment of residents and visitors, including an outdoor kitchen, fire pit, and seating areas. These amenities, along with a community room and garden, create a sense of place, activity, and focal points in the project.
- The landscape plan proposes a wide variety of low water demand trees, shrubs, vines, and ground covers supporting the “pocket neighborhood” design concept on which the project is based.
- The project features a system of pathways and landscaped corridors providing pedestrian connectivity to each residence, the central common area, community room/garden, the public sidewalk on Hamilton Parkway, and the public parking area serving the project. These pathways would create an inviting outdoor and pedestrian experience for residents and visitors.
- The landscape plan details the planting of trees and shrubs along the perimeter of the private drive serving the project. This landscaping would soften the appearance of parked cars and the private garages serving the project.

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.

Residential development at Hamilton Field predominantly consists of single-family residences with traditional front yard landscape spaces and tree lined streets, as well as decorative stucco walls located along collector streets. The landscaping features proposed for Hamilton Cottages are considered to be compatible with the character, scale, and ambiance of the other neighborhoods in Hamilton Field recognizing the project provides:

- a stucco wall matching the same currently found along Hamilton Parkway
- the planting of a variety of shrubs along Hamilton Parkway reinforcing this road’s “parkway” appearance and importance as a key entry to Hamilton Field
- tree and shrub plantings at the perimeter of the project’s guest parking area, which, at maturity, will soften the appearance of the parking area and screen parked vehicles

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

The Project's landscape plan identifies a wide variety of native and locally naturalized trees, shrubs, and grasses, most of which are indicated to be low and medium water demand species. The project's common area landscape spaces will be connected to a recycled water system operated by North Marin Water District, thereby avoiding the use of potable water. The District will review, as a component of the building permit process, the project's irrigation details and plant materials to confirm compliance with District Regulation 15 addressing mandatory water conservation measures. Based on these observations, the project's landscape design is considered to be consistent with CI Policy 7.

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

The project is designed as a "pocket neighborhood" with a centralized common outdoor space for the enjoyment of residents and guests. In addition, a community garden is provided for resident use and each residence has a private yard area. The amount of landscape space within the project is considered to be adequate for the size and intended occupants (seniors) of the development.

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

The project's landscape design includes sidewalk connections to Hamilton Parkway and pathways throughout the site allowing residents and guests various paths of travel to residences and the various on-site amenities (outdoor kitchen, community garden, community room) and vehicle parking. The internal pathways are augmented by plaza features with decorative concrete scoring patterns and a decomposed granite pathway within the central courtyard. These features add texture and visual interest to the pedestrian circulation system.

***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.***

Hamilton Cottages, as designed, would provide for the harmonious and orderly development of the currently vacant project site, as well as create a desirable environment for future residents, those living adjacent to the project, and the visiting public recognizing:

- The project's site design/landscape plan reserves the interior of the project for pedestrian movement and outdoor gathering amenities (community garden, outdoor fire pit and seating, outdoor kitchen) for the benefit of future residents and guests.
- The landscape plan provides a wide variety of low-water demand plants creating an attractive cottage garden atmosphere, including large/medium/small scale trees, shrubs, and grasses, appropriate for a compact residential neighborhood.
- The parking area features a perimeter landscape planter proposed to be planted with trees and shrubs. This landscaping helps diffuse views of parked vehicles and the development's two car garages. The parking area landscaping creates the appearance of a neighborhood

street to the benefit of existing residents at Hamilton Field and future residents of the project.

- The project includes a perimeter wall along Hamilton Parkway that has been designed to match the existing walls at the nearby Newport and Sunny Cove neighborhoods.
- The community garden at Hamilton Cottages is a thoughtful amenity for residents and offers the option of conducting activities (e.g., vegetable gardening, social gatherings) that might not otherwise be accommodated in the compact private yards provided for each residence.

***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.***

Hamilton Cottages has been previously reviewed by local public agencies, city departments, and consulting engineering/environmental review professionals to determine if the proposal would be detrimental to the public health, safety, or welfare; materially injurious to the properties or improvements in the vicinity; interfere with the use and enjoyment of neighboring existing or future developments; and/or create potential traffic, pedestrian or bicycle hazards. This review included reviewing the landscape concepts for the project. No comments were received indicating the project's landscape design would be detrimental to public health, safety, or welfare, injurious to neighboring properties and improvements, interfere with use of property, or create traffic, pedestrian or bicycle hazards.

#### *Public Art Component*

As noted earlier in the project description, the applicant is proposing to satisfy Novato's Art Program Ordinance by installing an art piece consisting of an interactive sculpture bicycle that can be written on with dry erase markers.

The Design Review Commission is responsible for considering the context, scale, artistic quality, media, permanence, durability, public safety, and relationship of the art piece to the site where it would be located. The Design Review Commission is not responsible for reviewing the messaging of art piece.

A public art piece may be located in a manner that will enhance its enjoyment by the public. Acceptable locations include common areas of residential developments. Accordingly, the proposed location of the art piece at the south-end of the central common area at Hamilton Cottages is consistent with the requirements of the Art Program.

Staff is of the opinion the sculptural bicycle is an acceptable art piece that will add visual interest to the central common area at Hamilton Cottages and generate a point of curiosity and thought for visitors to the project. In addition, the sculptural bicycle is considered to be designed with durable materials, including a stainless steel frame and wheel assembly. Staff does not foresee the art piece creating any safety issues.

## **ALTERNATIVES**

1. Approve the final landscape details, including the public art component, for Hamilton Cottages as proposed.
2. Approve the final landscape details and public art component for Hamilton Cottages with modifications.
3. Continue the public hearing with direction to staff and the applicant.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Approve the final landscape details and art component for Hamilton Cottages as proposed.

## **COMMISSION FINDINGS AND ACTION**

1. In accordance with Section 19.42.030.F. of the Novato Municipal Code and on the basis of the discussion in the staff analysis section of this report above, the Design Review Commission finds that:
  - a. The design, layout, size, architectural features and general appearance (landscape plan and art component) of Hamilton Cottages 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.
  - b. The landscape plan and public art component for Hamilton Cottages 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.
  - c. The landscape plan and public art component for Hamilton Cottages 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.
2. The Design Review Commission approves the final landscape plan proposed for Hamilton Cottages as presented on the plans prepared by Ripley Design Group., dated February 7, 2017, and the art piece concept as designed by Tyler van der Stappen, based on the findings and staff analysis above and subject to the conditions below.

## **CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL**

1. The final Design Review approval for the Hamilton Cottages shall expire two years from the date of the Design Review Commission's action taken thereon, within which time a building permit must be obtained and remain valid.
2. No deviation from approved plans, including color changes or substitution of materials, shall be made without City approval. Minor alterations may be considered by Planning

Division staff. Significant design alterations shall be returned to the Design Review Commission for consideration.

3. The approval granted herein shall not become effective until all appropriate fees billed by the City of Novato to the application account are paid in full in accordance with the City's Cost Base Fee System. Failure to pay said fees may result in the City withholding issuance of related building permits, certificate of occupancy, recordation of final maps or other entitlements.
4. Hamilton Cottages shall be constructed in accordance with the conditions of approval specified in City Council Ordinance No. 1608, and Resolution Nos. 2016-067, -068, and -069, incorporated herein by reference.

### **FURTHER ACTION**

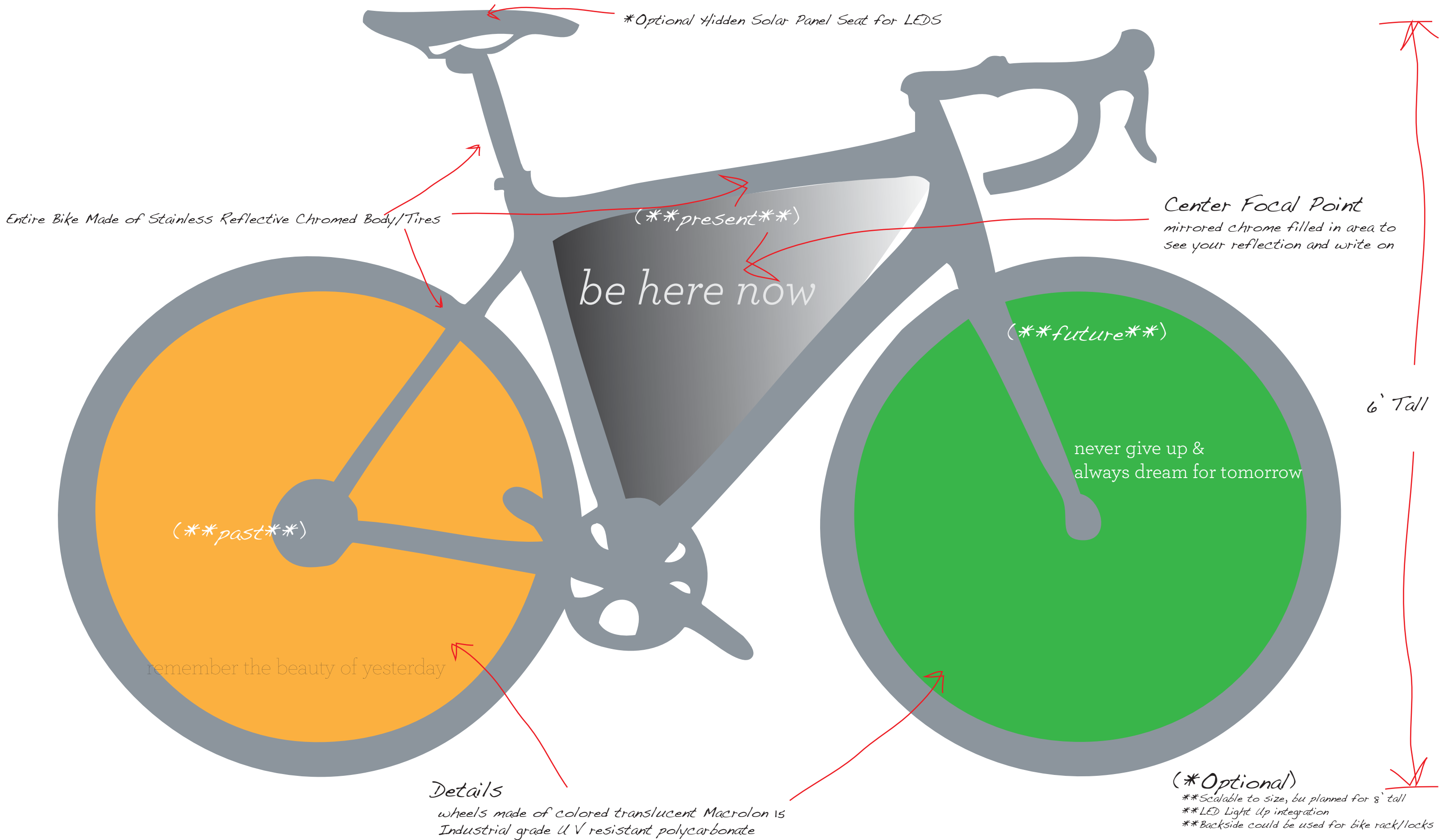
No further action will be taken on the final site design, architecture, and landscaping for Hamilton Cottages unless an appeal of the Design Review Commission's decision is filed with the City Clerk.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

1. Construction Detail Landscape Plan, Ripley Design Group, February 7, 2017
2. Interactive Sculptural Bicycle, Tyler van der Stappen,
3. Minutes, Design Review Commission, December 21, 2016



*Interactive Sculpture Bicycle that can be written on anywhere with dry erase*





*be here now*

*never give up &  
always dream for tomorrow*

*remember the beauty of yesterday*

**1. HAMILTON COTTAGES (SM)  
CEQA MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION  
P2015-071; DESIGN REVIEW  
APN 157-860-03 & 04; HAMILTON PARKWAY & B STREET**

**Conduct a public hearing to consider the final site design architecture, and landscaping details for Hamilton Cottages, a 16-unit residential development for senior aged residents.**

Planning Manager Marshall presented the staff report.

Keith McCoy, Urban Community Partners – introduced the project and covered the status of the art piece required for the development.

Adam Gardner, project architect, presented the architectural design and finishes proposed for the new residences.

Angela Carpenter, project landscape architect, reviewed the landscape plan for the project.

Commissioner Barber asked about the main entry trellis. He commented the DRC previously recommended a more monumental entry. He said it did not appear the trellis had been modified.

Commissioner Barber said the community garden was not useful as designed. He noted the landscape plan needed more detail.

Commissioner Barber commented that exterior lighting fixtures should not allow the light source to be visible; current fixtures will be too bright.

Commissioner Farrell asked for a detail of significant changes since the last time the DRC reviewed the project.

Project Architect Gardner responded by indicating significant changes had not been made. He noted more opaque glass could be used for exterior lighting. He will look at code minimums for lighting.

The public hearing was opened. There were no members of the public who wished to speak on the item.

Commissioner Farrell said he likes the project, but agrees with Commissioner Barber that the entry trellis needs more width. He liked the bike element, but wanted more detailed landscape plans. He was not concerned about exterior lighting. He recommended returning with a more detailed landscape plan.

Commissioner Barber commented that he likes the project's architecture, but there is a need to refine and provide more detail on the landscape plan.

Vice Chair MacLeamy noted he like the project's site design and architecture, but thought more detail could be added to the landscape plan. He emphasized focusing on landscaping of the correct scale; find the right tree size.

Motion/second: Farrell/Barber - Approve the final architectural and site design details for Hamilton Cottages with the applicant to return with a more detailed landscape plan, revised entry trellis feature, and the required art component.

Motion passed: 3-0-2

