



THE CITY OF  
NOVATO  
CALIFORNIA

# Design Review Commission Meeting

Location: Novato City Hall, 901 Sherman Avenue

April 5, 2017

## MINUTES

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Mayor  
Denise Athas  
Mayor Pro Tem  
Josh Fryday  
Councilmembers  
Pam Drew  
Pat Eklund  
Eric Lucan

City Manager  
Regan M. Candelario

**Present:** Marshall Balfe, Chair  
Michael Barber  
Joe Farrell  
Beth Radovanovich

**Absent:** Patrick MacLeamy, Vice Chair

**Staff:** Hans Grunt, Senior Planner  
Matt Gilster, Planner II

### CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL:

The meeting was called to order at 7:35PM.

### APPROVAL OF FINAL AGENDA:

M/s Balfe/Radovanovich to approve without changes (4-0-1)

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

CONSENT CALENDAR: None

### **1. APPROVAL OF DRC MINUTES OF MARCH 15, 2017 (MBAL, MBAR,PM,BR)**

M/s Balfe/Radovanovich to approve without changes (3-0-1-1)

PUBLIC HEARING:

CONTINUED ITEMS: None.

**NEW ITEMS:**

2. **WOODHOLLOW HOTEL (MG)  
CEQA MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION  
P2015-091; DESIGN REVIEW  
MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT  
PRECISE DEVELOPMENT PLAN  
PARCEL MAP  
APN 125-202-13 and -14; 7701 REDWOOD BOULEVARD**

**Consider a recommendation to the Planning Commission and City Council regarding the site plan, architecture, building massing, and preliminary landscaping plan for the development of a 46,865 square foot, 87 room hotel on a 4.49 acre undeveloped site at the northeast corner of Redwood Blvd. and Wood Hollow Drive, consisting of 2 parcels - Assessor's Parcel Numbers 125-202-13 and -14.**

Project Planner Matt Gilster presented the staff report and gave an overview of the project design, key issues of the project, revisions made as a result of workshops, project history, and general application process. Staff described the entitlement process forward and recommended that the Commission formally recommend approval of the project to the City of Novato Planning Commission and City Council.

Project Architect Young Kim gave a presentation reviewing the design of the project and gave a detailed description of the project height. The applicant's landscape architect gave a presentation detailing the revisions made to the landscape plan and changes made to the projects design addressing commission comments from the previous workshop.

**Commissioner Questions to Staff.**

Commissioner Radovanovitch asked staff to clarify the project's request to deviate from the standards of the Novato Zoning Code in regards to a lower wetland setback and a higher building height allowance from the hillside standards.

Staff explained that the hillside height standard of 35 feet for commercial buildings can be deviated from where the resulting project design would be superior than what otherwise would be allowed within the height limit or where site constraints create no other reasonable location to build the project. Staff then explained that the applicant had a wetland biologist prepare an initial assessment of the proposed wetland setback. The findings of the assessment suggest that the reduction in the 50 feet setback required by the City's zoning code will not have a negative impact on the value or hydrology of the wetlands and may perhaps enhance the wetlands.

**Commissioner Questions to the Applicant:**

Commissioner Barber asked the applicant to explain potential impacts to a heritage Oak Tree that is within a close distance of the rear drive wall, asked if the new drainage improvements would cause the wetlands to expand which would expand the wetland setback, and how big the 48 inch box trees would grow.

The applicant responded by explaining that the drive isle would be over 20 feet away from the Oak Tree avoiding impacts to the trees, the impacts to wetlands would be detailed in the environmental document, and the boxed trees will be approximately 12 feet in height.

## **Public Comments**

The public comment period was opened.

Jim Braid, 246 Butterflied Drive: Questioned what cliental the hotel would serve and how the hotel will earn profit, also asked how to find this information.

Ron Downing, 27 Fontana Court: 22 year resident who walks dog near project site, concerned about visual impacts and feels that the project is too massive for the site. Does not approve of the height exemption. Stated that the reference to the San Marin Master Plan was too old and comparing the proposal to firemen's fund and surrounding buildings should not be taken into account as they benefited from an old standard, referred to the project as putting lipstick on a pig.

Barbra Hernandez, 4 Little Creek Lane: New resident to Partridge Knolls and is sad and disappointed with impacts of proposal and doesn't support the relief from the height and wetland setback, is opposed to the project.

Margaret Lewis, 59 Bridle Path Lane: Pointed out a sinkhole above the project site and concerned with potential hillside and wetland impacts and the overall size of the project.

Melodie Baird, 246 Butterflied Drive: 10 year Partridge Knoll Resident, walks by the project site regularly and likes the existing wildlife and bucolic cow pasture. Stated concerns about PG&E gas pipelines. Stated that the developer should have been aware of the constraints before deciding to build. Stated that the hotel would not fit in with the neighborhood.

Thomas Langley, 83 Cobblestone Court: 26 Year Partridge Knoll Resident, Requested clarity regarding the height of the building. Questioned the size of the onsite trees and the accurate placement of story poles. Stated that he is glad the story poles were placed but would like to know if it was done accurately.

Clay Freeberg, 235 Butterflied Drive: Complemented the color change and solid balconies. Requested that a 3 foot tall screen fence at the end of the parking lot be installed to block headlights from people turning onto Woodhollow Drive.

Melissa Perry, 7 Woodgate Place: Worried that how the existing oak trees will be shaded by the buildings, concerned about impacts to the onsite wetlands, concerned about impacts to her property values, stated her concerns regarding sex trafficking in Marin and feels that a new hotel will be a location for sex trafficking.

Bertie Freeberg, 235 Butterfeild Drive: 26 year old Partridge Knoll Resident concerned with the PG&E gas lines, concerned with the height of the proposed building, stated that the new General Plan will not list the site for a hotel. Asked what the onsite signs would look like. Asked if the roof would be a reflective material.

Victoria Bridge, 175 Butterfeild Drive: Opposed to the project with concerns regarding the impact to onsite oaks, wetlands, and the PG&E gas line. Disagrees that an exception be made on the building's height.

Joe Robinson, Sundance Way: Questioned how the size of the wetland was determined and when it was delineated. Questioned if the project was accounting for climate change and the potential growth of the wetlands.

Don Banfeild, 45 Little Creek Lane: Feels that the hotel would create an urban feel and would not fit into the surrounding area, questioned the need for a new hotel.

Applicant responded to Public comments by clarifying the height of the building and explaining that the majority of the building is under the 35 foot height limit, however the City of Novato Hillside Ordinance requires the building to be measured from lowest to highest point creating a 52 foot measurement when at no point the building is higher than 43 feet.

**Commissioner Balfe closed the public hearing and opened the discussion to the Design Review Commission:**

Commissioner Barber questioned the size of the wetland as well as the proposed designs of signs. He also asked if the red colors presented on the plan for the pavers will actually be red and where employee cars will park if there only enough parking for every room.

Commissioner Balfe asked whether or not the story poles were certified by a licensed surveyor.

The applicant's landscape architect responded by stating that the wetland is measured by the types of plants that occur in the wetland not on where water is located on site, and explained the choice of colors for the pavers was a beige color and not the red proposed on the site plan. The story poles were not licensed by a surveyor as it is not required by the City of Novato.

**Commissioner Comments**

**Commissioner Barber:** Was not satisfied with the entry trellis element and was looking for more of a step back in building elevation on the north east elevation of the building. Suggested more Oaks along Redwood Boulevard and between parking spaces. Feels that the Buckskin color is still too light and suggests darker hues overall. Questions the location of the water feature and recommends it be placed closer to the entrance of the building. Feels that the height of the structure is still too excessive for the site and recommends dropping the room count to allow for a lower structure. Agrees with the public that past standards and the surrounding building heights should not be taken into account and the hotel must conform to current standards of the Novato Zoning Code. Stated that based on the concerns expressed by the public surrounding the height of the building he cannot support the project as currently designed.

**Commissioner Radovanovich:** Complemented the redesign of the project. Commented that the colors are still is too light. Commented that she is a big proponent of meeting on site to review colors before they are determined. Commented that the project should conform to the City of Novato Hillside Ordinance for height requirements and she has concerns for the onsite wetland but is here to comment on design. States that she cannot move past the height issue and cannot support the project due to the proposed height being over the allowance of the hillside ordinance.

**Commissioner Farrell:** Appreciates the audience and input, however explains that this is a challenging site and appreciates the designer's approaches to addressing the site plan and building design working with topography. The height of the entry could be lowered to be in line with college's positions and the wetland seems to be well addressed. Stated that the design is close to being completed and could support the project at this stage.

**Commissioner Balfe:** Agrees with Commissioner Farrell's comments and feels that the overall design as revised is outstanding. Commented that the height just may need to be fine-tuned.

Commissioner Balfe called for a 5 minute recess.

After the Commission reconvened Senior Planner Hans Grunt clarified height requirements, namely the applicable height measurement methodology pursuant to the Hillside Ordinance, and informed the commission that the applicant has requested that the item be continued to an unspecified date so revisions could be made to the project plans that address the commission's comments and recommendations.

The Commission moved to continue the item to a date uncertain.

M/s: Barber/ Radovanovich: 4-0-1

**PROJECT DESIGN WORKSHOP: None**

**GENERAL BUSINESS: None**

**ADJOURNMENT:** The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 p.m.