



DESIGN REVIEW COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

MEETING

DATE: October 7, 2020

STAFF:

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SUBJECT:

VILLAGE AT NOVATO
P2020-037; DESIGN REVIEW (WORKSHOP)
APNs 143-011-05 & -08; VACANT PARCELS

REQUESTED ACTION

Conduct a design review workshop to review and provide comments regarding conceptual site design, circulation, building massing, design, and landscaping for a proposed mixed-use project that includes 178 residential units and 14,000 square feet of commercial space.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The Project site is single, 5.9-acre legal parcel (with two APNS) located north and east of 7514 Redwood Boulevard (Trader Joe's store) along Redwood Boulevard and along the north side of Olive Avenue (Project site identified in Figure 1 below). The project site is vacant and relatively flat, with an average slope between 1.85 and 2.6 percent.

Immediately north of the Project site is the approved [Residence Inn](#) project (103-room hotel and 8,000 square foot commercial building). West of the project site, across Redwood Boulevard, [Atherton Place](#) (50-town homes and 1,360 square foot retail building) is under construction, and the SMART Train's railway line is located to the east.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project's site plan illustrates three (3) buildings separated by parking and drive aisles. Building A is a three-story mixed-use building located parallel to the Redwood Boulevard frontage. This building has 14,000 square feet of ground floor retail space, and 2-stories of residential units above with a total of 26 residential units. Just north of Building A is an outdoor plaza area which may accommodate outdoor seating for the commercial portion of the project. East of Building A and located towards the inner portion of project site are two 4-story buildings that are split into 94 (Building B) and 58 (Building C) residential units each. Adjacent to Building B is a 12,500 square-foot outdoor common area. Additional project components include 305 surface parking spaces located throughout the project site area, a pedestrian pathway linking all three (3) buildings, and landscaping throughout the project site area.

BACKGROUND

Applicant:	Metrovation (Chris Cole)		
Property Owner:	ROIC California, LLC.		
Property Size:	5.85± acres		
General Plan Designation:	General Commercial (CG) Affordable Housing Opportunity (AHO) Overlay		
Existing Zoning:	General Commercial (CG) Downtown (D) Overlay Affordable Housing Opportunity (AHO) Overlay (APN 143-011-08)		
Existing Use:	Vacant		
Adjacent Zoning and Uses-	North:	Planned District (PD); Hotel	
	East:	Medium Density Residential; Residential	
	West:	Planned District (PD); Residential	
	South:	General Commercial (CG); Commercial	



Figure 1: Aerial view of the Project site outlined in red (property line locations are approximated)

DEVELOPMENT ENTITLEMENTS

The applicant has submitted a design review application to garner early feedback from Planning staff, neighboring residents, and the Design Review Commission. It is anticipated that the applicant will submit additional entitlement applications subsequent to this workshop. The following City approvals are required for the proposed project:

- **General Plan Amendment.** A general plan amendment will be required to change the existing land use designation for the project site from General Commercial (CG) to Downtown Core (CD) to allow for Multi-Family dwellings in a Mixed-Use project.

- **Zoning Map Amendment.** A zoning map amendment will be required to change the current zoning classification of the project site from General Commercial (CG) to Downtown Core Retail (CDR) consistent with the CD land use designation.
- **Use Permit.** An approved use permit is required to permit Multi-Family dwellings in a Mixed-Use project within the CDR zoning district.
- **Design Review.** Design review approval is required for new multi-family dwellings and non-residential development projects

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

This project is subject to environmental review pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). An environmental assessment is not required for a preliminary project review, such as a workshop conducted by the Design Review Commission. Planning staff will determine the appropriate level of environmental review, once all entitlement applications are submitted and the project has been deemed complete.

NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING

A neighborhood meeting was held on August 27, 2020 at 6:00 PM via teleconference. This meeting was lightly attended, and staff did not receive any specific comments related to the project proposal.

STAFF ANALYSIS

The Design Review Commission (DRC) is asked to conduct a workshop to obtain public comment and provide feedback to the applicant and staff with respect to the conceptual site design and architecture proposed for the request to develop 178 residential units and 14,000 square feet of commercial space

The workshop is an opportunity to have an informal discussion regarding the project's design. As such, the DRC will not be making a decision to approve or deny the proposed project at a workshop. A formal design recommendation from DRC to the Planning Commission and City Council will be requested once a complete set of conceptual site, architecture and landscape plans are prepared and submitted.

To assist the DRC with its review of the proposed project, staff has listed the framework of findings, policies, and development standards that apply to the project. These items are provided to help guide the DRC and public's review of the project. Staff will prepare a detailed analysis on whether the proposal meets the noted findings, policies and development standards when the project returns to the DRC for a formal decision.

The following is an analysis of the project regarding consistency with applicable provisions of the General Plan and Novato Municipal Code, including Chapter 19, Zoning.

Design Review Findings

At this early stage (i.e., design workshop) in the process, the Design Review Commission should consider and provide comments regarding the proposal from the perspective of the following uniform design review findings of approval. These are the findings the Design Review Commission will ultimately be asked to make at a subsequent Design Review Commission hearing when

forwarding a formal recommendation on the project (i.e., site design, circulation, building massing, design, and landscaping) to the Planning Commission and City Council.

When the project comes back for a formal decision, the DRC will need to make the following three design review findings as listed in Novato Municipal Code (NMC) [Section 19.42.030](#) (Design Review):

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.

Novato General Plan

The 1996 Novato General Plan provides a framework of policies that were adopted to coordinate all major components of Novato's physical development over a 20-year period. These policies serve as a basis to assess whether public and private development proposals are consistent with the General Plan.

The Design Review Commission should consider the design concepts in light of the design-related policies of the [1996 Novato General Plan](#). Additionally, the project site is currently located within the [Downtown Specific Plan](#) area, however, through the new General Plan 2035 adoption anticipated for approval this year, the project site will be located within the North Redwood

Corridor area. Accordingly, the Design Review Commission should consider the design guidelines identified in General Plan 2035 for the project site, identified as site 5a on figure GP-7 (North Redwood Corridor) in the draft [General Plan 2035](#).

Housing Element

HO Policy 1.3 Neighborhood Meetings. Continue to require developers of any major project to have neighborhood meetings with residents early in the process to undertake problem solving and facilitate more informed, faster and constructive development review.

HO Policy 3.1 Housing Design Process. The City will review proposed new housing, subject to design review, to achieve excellence in development design in an efficient process.

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
 - e. or rear of buildings, or recessed, or along rear alleyways or below the building in some higher density developments).
- HO Policy 4.1 Resource Conservation. The City will promote development and construction standards that provide resource conservation by encouraging housing types and designs that use renewable and/or sustainable materials, cost-effective energy conservation measures and fewer resources (water, electricity, etc.), and therefore cost less to operate over time, supporting long-term housing affordability for occupants.
- HO Policy 4.2 Renewable Energy Technologies. Promote the use of sustainable and/or renewable materials and energy technologies (such as solar and wind) in new and rehabilitated housing when possible.
- HO Program 4.A Promote Solar Design. Promote design standards relating to solar orientation, including lot layout for subdivisions, location and orientation of new structures and landscaping.
- HO Program 4.B Implement “Green” Building Standards and Processes. Consistently implement the City’s adopted “Green Building Program” to encourage the use of green building materials and energy conservation.

HO Policy 7.2

Variety of Housing Choices. In response to the broad range of housing needs in Novato, the City will strive to achieve a mix of housing types, densities, affordability levels and designs. The City will work with developers of ‘non-traditional’ and innovative housing approaches relating to the design, construction and types of housing that meet local housing needs, which may include, but not limited to, provision of the following types of housing at varying affordability levels:

- a. Owner and renter housing
- b. Small and large units
- c. Single and multi-family housing
- d. Housing close to jobs and transit
- e. Mixed use housing
- f. Supportive housing
- g. Single Room Occupancy units (SRO’s)
- h. Shared living opportunities and co-housing
- i. Manufactured housing
- j. Self-help or “sweat equity” housing
- k. Cooperatives or joint ventures
- l. Assisted living

Community Identity

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

General Plan 2035 Design Guidelines for Site 5a

- Provide for public gathering places and ample outdoor seating throughout the area.

- Incorporate extensive landscaping with shade trees.
- Provide pedestrian and bicycle connections between retailers and public spaces to the bicycle/pedestrian facilities along the SMART corridor and along Redwood Boulevard.
- Explore incorporating design features or portions of the Dairymen’s Milling Building into the retail development.
- Create wide pedestrian sidewalks and a bicycle path along the Redwood Boulevard frontage.
- Locate buildings near the Redwood Boulevard frontage, with shop entries and/or display windows facing the street and gathering places.
- Minimize views of parking areas from Redwood Boulevard, typically by locating parking behind buildings.

Novato Zoning Ordinance

As noted above, the project site currently has a zoning classification of General Commercial (CG), however, the applicant has requested for a Zoning Map amendment to change the zoning classification to Downtown Core Retail (CDR). Accordingly, this project review is based on applicable CDR development standards.

The Design Review Commission may review the proposal’s site design, architecture, and landscape plan from the perspective of whether the project, as designed, is compatible with surrounding development and will result in a high-quality project.

This project proposal will be returned to the Design Review Commission for a formal recommendation to the Planning Commission and City Council. At that time, staff will draft detailed statements of fact to support each of the findings required to approve a general plan amendment, zoning map amendment, use permit and design review.

The following tables list key development standards and zoning sections that are applicable to this project as proposed.

Development Standards for the CDR Zoning District							
Project Parcel Size: 5.85 acres	Setback			Building Coverage	Height Limit	Floor Area Ratio	Density (du./acre)
	Front	Side	Rear				
<i>Codified Standard</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>None¹</i>	<i>None²</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>35³ ft.</i>	<i>2.0</i>	<i>20-30</i>
Project Proposal	0	60+ ft.	80+ ft.	24%	45 ft.	0.84	30.4

Notes:

¹ 6 ft. if adjacent to a single-family residential zone; 10 ft. if building is over 20 ft. in height at the building setback line, and adjacent to a single-family residential zone; none required otherwise.

² 10 ft. if adjacent to a single-family residential zone; 15 ft. if building is over 20 ft. in height at the building setback line and adjacent to a single-family residential zone; none required otherwise.

³ Within the Downtown Overlay zone, the height limit may be increased by 30 percent up to a maximum of 45 ft. for the habitable floor area (excluding roof) with Design Review approval in accordance with NMC [Section 19.20.070](#) (Height Limits and Exceptions).

Applicable Zoning Ordinance Sections

Affordable Housing Requirements: NMC [Division 19.24](#) (Affordable Housing Requirements) provides standards for residential projects of three (3) or more residential units. Based on the proposed residential unit count, 20 percent of the units are required to be affordable.

Affordable Housing Opportunity Overlay District: NMC [Section 19.16.070](#) (Affordable Housing Opportunity Overlay District) provides development standards and review procedures for sites assigned the AHO designation. A portion of the project site (APN 143-011-08) is designated and zoned with the City’s “Affordable Housing Opportunity Overlay” (“AHO”). The project site is referred to as “AHO Site No. 4” in the [2015 – 2023 Housing Element](#).

Parking: NMC [Section 19.30.040](#) (Number of Parking Spaces Required) specifies the number of parking spaces required for the project. The project proposal’s parking configuration is listed in the table below.

Parking Requirements by Land Use and Project Proposal’s Parking Configuration		
Parking Ratio Required by NMC Section 19.30.040	Project Proposal	Project Parking Required
Multi-family dwellings, condominiums and other attached dwellings within Downtown (D) overlay: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Studio unit: 1 space per unit. ▪ 1-bedroom unit: 1 space per unit. ▪ 2-bedroom unit: 1.5 spaces per unit. ▪ Add'l guest parking: 1 space for each 4 units 	Building A and B* Unit Breakdown: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Studio units: 19 ▪ 1-bedroom units: 63 ▪ 2-bedroom units: 63 ▪ Guest parking: 45 	Building A and B* Unit Breakdown: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 19 X 1 = 19 spaces ▪ 63 X 1 = 63 spaces ▪ 63 X 1.5 = 65 spaces (64.5 rounded up) ▪ 178 total units/4 = 45 (44.5 rounded up)
Parking within the AHO Overlay: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 0 to 1-bedroom unit: 1 space per unit ▪ 2 to 3-bedroom units: 2 spaces per unit 	Building C* Unit Breakdown: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 0 to 1-bedroom units: 47 ▪ 2 to 3-bedroom units: 11 	Building C* Unit Breakdown: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 47 X 1 = 47 spaces ▪ 11 X 2 = 22 spaces
1 space for each 300 sf of general retail, plus 1 space for each company vehicle, plus 1 space for each 1,000 sf of outdoor display area.	14,000 square feet for general retail	$14,000/300 = 46.7$ spaces (46.7 rounded up)
		Total Parking Required: 308 spaces

*Building C is located within the AHO portion of the project site, as such, unit and parking breakdown for the studio and 1-bedroom units are separated into the AHO portion of this parking table.

Art Program: The project will need to comply with NMC [Division 19.21](#) (Art Program), which requires an art project that has a value of not less than one-third of one percent of the construction cost of the completed development project, or payment of an in-lieu fee.

Light and Glare: NMC [Section 19.22.060](#) (Light and Glare) requires that light or glare shall be shielded to prevent emission of light or glare beyond the property line.

Landscaping: NMC [Division 19.28](#) (Landscaping) has minimum landscape standards for new development projects, including setback areas, parking lots, and open areas.

Open Space: NMC [Section 19.34.124](#) (Multi-Family Dwellings) specifies standards for open space in multi-family residential project.

Mixed-Use Projects: NMC [Section 19.34.100](#) (Mixed-Use Projects) provides developments standards and design criteria for mixed-use projects.

RECOMMENDATION

Conduct a workshop to receive public input and provide comments to the applicant and staff regarding the project's proposed conceptual site design, circulation, building massing, architecture, and conceptual landscaping.

FURTHER ACTION

This project will return to the Design Review Commission for a public hearing to prepare a formal recommendation to the Planning Commission and City Council regarding the Project's site design, architecture, and landscape plan

ATTACHMENTS

1. [Village at Novato Project Webpage](#) (City of Novato maintained webpage)
2. [Project Plan Set](#) (dated April 23, 2020)
3. [1996 General Plan](#)
4. [Draft General Plan 2035](#) (February 2020)