



THE CITY OF  
NOVATO  
CALIFORNIA

922 Machin Ave  
Novato, CA 94945  
415/899-8900  
FAX 415/899-8213  
[www.novato.org](http://www.novato.org)

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

City Manager  
Regan M. Candelario

# Design Review Commission Meeting

Location: Novato City Hall, 901 Sherman Avenue

July 19, 2017

## MINUTES

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

**Absent:** None

**Staff:** Hans Grunt, Senior Planner  
Brett Walker, Senior Planner

**CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL:** 7:35pm

**APPROVAL OF FINAL AGENDA:** Approved  
M/s MacLeamy/Radovanovich (5-0)

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** None

**CONSENT CALENDAR:** None

**PUBLIC HEARING:**

**CONTINUED ITEMS:**

- 1. WOODHOLLOW HOTEL (HG)  
CEQA MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION  
P2015-091; MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT  
PRECISE DEVELOPMENT PLAN  
PARCEL MAP  
DESIGN REVIEW  
USE PERMIT  
APN 125-202-13 and -14; 7701 Redwood Boulevard**

**Consider a recommendation to the Planning Commission and City Council regarding the site plan, building massing, architecture, 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.**

Chair Balfe introduced the item.

Hans Grunt, Senior Planner, presented a summary of the project, the requested action of the Commission i.e. a recommendation on design to the Planning Commission and City Council and the overall entitlement process, including public hearings going forward. Mr. Grunt concluded with reference to public correspondence submitted to date made available to the Commissioners.

Mr. Paul Smith, project planning consultant, described the design changes in response to the Commissions direction at the April 5, 2017 hearing and specifically described the biological studies completed to date that inform the protection/preservation of the on-site wetland.

Mr. Roshan Patel, applicant, described in more detail the design changes in response to the Commissions feedback/direction, including the reduced height to 35', further enhanced north elevation and sign concepts. The project architect also answered more specific Commissioner questions about the design i.e. a guest entry at north end of the building, finish materials and colors.

April Phillips, landscape architect, described the approach to the landscaping – focus on native plantings like live oaks and grasses to blend with and complement the existing natural setting and the parking lot pavers are intended to be soft earth/stone tones.

**Public Comments**

Melodie Baird of Partridge Knolls still concerned with mass/scale but glad to see height reduced to 35', described the proposed hotel size to other hotels throughout the City; opposed to separation from wetland.

Jim Baird of Partridge Knolls believes the project site sets tone for all who enter their neighborhood up off of Wood Hollow Dr.; feels the proposal is too massive and urge Commission not to approve.

Barbara Hernandez of Partridge Knolls suggested there are better locations for a hotel that won't impact an open hillside; will generate additional traffic.

Melissa Perry of Partridge Knolls believes the site represents primary entrance to her neighborhood, request no relief from a 50' buffer to the wetland; suggested a new hotel at former Dairymen's sites is more appropriate.

Lucy Perry of Partridge Knolls indicated she posted on social media her opposition to the hotel and received responses in support of her position; concerned the hotel will lead to sex trafficking; won't like to see a hotel on a gateway site/hillside to her childhood home.

Clay Perri of Partridge Knolls stated the design is not good enough and wont warrant a high end hotel and result in decay; design is too big for the site/setting.

Bertie Freeberg of Partridge Knolls stated she agreed with public speakers thus far; concerned that the project went from Hyatt House to a Hyatt Place in quality; landscape plan does not comply with zoning standards; plan is inadequate due to PG&E lines; suggest reducing number of rooms thus parking need which will afford opportunity for more landscaping.

Clay Freeberg observed that fewer rooms would allow for more landscaping; worried about blight with too many hotels; should focus hotel use on the former Dairymen's site.

Arlene Evans stated prior design, via full roof was more attractive but too tall; critical of landscape plan indicating that oaks won't survive in the wetland area; plans should introduce significant tree size to start.

#### Public Comments closed

#### Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Barber indicated tree planting is still limited and questioned applicable standards – Senior Planner Grunt noted allowed deviation from parking lot landscaping standards via the MP/PDP process; questioned adequacy of rooftop screening with the revised roof lines; noted the building is well settled into the base of the hillside; ok with reduced buffer of 20' from the edge of the wetland based on studies presented; believes the south/end elevation of the building as viewed from Wood Hollow Dr. still lacks interest and should be further articulated in a way like the north elevation has now been modified; still would like to see more planter boxes as feasible; generally ok with concept color scheme.

Commissioner Radovanovich asked for clarification on area of building that exceeds 35' height form existing grade – Senior Planner Grunt described area; believes bad president to push height limit in this instance given visual concerns; want to reach consensus on design revisions but not sure at this point what it will take to get there.

Commissioner MacLeamy commented there is no question the site is beautiful, but the charge of this Commission is not to question the appropriateness of existing land use designations or adequacy of environmental measures to protect a wetland (that's for Planning Commission and

City Council), but rather to insure that proposed designs for site uses are appropriate and of a quality deserved of our community or reject if atrocious; that said appropriate site design, scale, mass and design is my focus; this is a challenged site given wetland, gas lines, hills and oak woodland which result in the limited building envelope now proposed for the building; thinks the revised scale, mass and height is now appropriate; in agreement with Commissioner Barber that additional and/or larger tree planters should be incorporated in the parking area over the PG&E line to the extent feasible; likes the offer of pavers for the parking surface to give it more architectural quality and serve to recharge rainwater better not unlike the pavers used at City Hall Admin Office; agrees with use of native plantings to respect the existing native trees and grasses; still a bit of work on the architectural interest of the south elevation visible from Wood Hollow Dr.; prepare to move project design forward to Planning Commission and City Council provided details discussed come back for final review.

Commissioner Farrell agrees with the comments offered by Commissioner MacLeamy namely site design, scale, mass and building design have evolved for the better; given neighboring interest in reduced height, ok with the revised roof design; while acknowledging a determination on the wetland buffer is not this Commission's purview, believes the wetland will likely improve with the development as it will eliminate cattle grazing and allow native plants to flourish.

**M/s MacLeamy/Barber [4-0-0-1 (Commissioner Radovanovich)]**

The Design Review Commission recommends approval of the site design, massing/scale, architecture, and preliminary landscape plan for the Hotel Project as presented on the plans prepared by HRGA Architecture dated 6/03/2017 based on the following findings as more specifically discussed in the staff analysis section of the July 19, 2017 report and subject to the conditions below *as modified*.

**Findings**

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 the 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.
  - b) The 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.
  - c) The project 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. In accordance with Section 19.26.060 of the Novato Municipal Code, *Supplemental Design Review Findings Required for Hillside Development*, and based on the staff analysis above,

the Design Review Commission further finds:

- a) The design, scale, massing, height and siting of development is compatible with the character and scale of the surrounding, developed neighborhood.
- b) The design and site layout of the hillside project is respectful of and protects the natural environment to the maximum extent feasible.
- c) Site grading has been designed to be as minimal as possible to achieve sensitive hillside design, minimize tree removal, and provide safe site access and required parking.
- d) The hillside project is designed and sited to screen development, to the extent feasible, through clustering and /or avoiding of highly visible hillsides, ridgelines, and knolls.

### **Conditions**

1. The Design Review Commission shall review the final details of the site design, architecture, and landscaping for the Wood Hollow Hotel. The Design Review Commission's review of the project's final design shall include, but is not limited to:
  - a. Architectural detailing (e.g. siding, trim details, *signs*, exterior wall lights etc.);
  - b. Exterior colors;
  - c. Tree and plant species, locations and size;
  - d. Type and style of hardscape features (pavers, benches, sight lighting, and
  - e. Final design, including materials to construct the public art component pursuant to Novato Municipal Code Division 19.21, Art Program, if proposed.
  - f. The trees and planter boxes in the parking areas over the PG&E easement shall be as large as feasibly possible, and the quantity of said trees in planter boxes shall be the maximum amount feasible.*
  - g. Plans shall include design information to demonstrate that any roof top equipment won't be visible from surrounding streets (Redwood Blvd. and Wood Hollow Dr.).*
  - h. The southerly elevation of the building facing Wood Hollow Dr. shall be architecturally enhanced similar to the added architectural interest (gable element with ground support etc.) added to the north elevation.*

### **NEW ITEMS:**

#### **PROJECT DESIGN WORKSHOP:**

2. **BAHIA RIVER VIEW (BW)  
P2017-023; DESIGN REVIEW  
APN 143-151-06; Bahia Drive**

**Design review workshop to consider the preliminary designs for a seven lot single family home subdivision. The proposed lots range in size from 13,150 to 64,100 square feet (0.30 to 1.47 acres), with one and two-story single-family residences proposed for each lot.**

**Proposed homes would range from 2,200 to 4,000 square feet, with a maximum building height of 25 feet.**

Chair Balfe introduced the item and requested a staff report for the project. Brett Walker, Senior Planner, presented a summary of the project location, project description, applicable City planning documents and regulations, and listed the application materials submitted by the applicant. Mr. Walker stated that copies of comments received after the distribution of the agenda and staff report have been provided to the Commissioner's at the commencement of tonight's meeting.

Commissioner MacLeamy asked about slopes at the site and how the hillside ordinance allows new homes on a parcel with an average slope over 25 percent. Mr. Walker stated that a provision in the Hillside Ordinance allows for new home sites where the building envelope has slopes less than 25 percent. Walker referenced site plan Sheet EX 2, which depicts average slopes at the project site, including those areas under 10 percent and areas over 25 percent.

Commissioner Radovanovich asked a second question regarding slope. Mr. Walker responded.

Commissioner Barber asked a question regarding building envelopes and slopes at the site. Mr. Walker referred the Commission to sheets EX2 and A1.1. Walker stated that concept building envelopes are shown on Sheet A1.1. Barber stated that it does not appear that the building envelopes are match the benched, flat areas. Walker stated that staff has not yet overlaid the concept building envelopes with the slope analysis sheet.

Chair Balfe asked the applicant to make a presentation of the project. Scott Hochstrasser, planning consultant, described the site context and design approach. Jessica Smith, architect consultant, presented the landscape design, concept residential forms, and architectural styles.

Commissioner Farrell asked to see the cross sections. Ms. Smith projected the slide that shows the Bahia Drive slope cross section.

Commissioner MacLeamy asked a question regarding the building footprint on graded slope. Mr. Walker stated that the sloped areas within the building envelope would need to be calculated as part of the average slope of the building envelope.

Public Comments

Chair Balfe opened the public comment portion of the meeting.

Tim O'Connor commented regarding impacts to views, that the houses would encroach on the homes below, and that the development would impact the existing neighborhood.

Charles Thompson, President of Bahia Home Owners Association, stated that the staff report does not mention that the site is within the Bahia HOA, stated that he submitted a comment letter this evening, stated that the homes would need to be approved by the HOA, and that the HOA requires a minimum square footage for single-story residences.

Anne Grout described the beautiful views towards the Petaluma River and asked whether the home pads/grading would be allowed under today's regulations.

Michael Hall referenced General Plan Policy 13 regarding views of the river and bay, referenced the Hillside Ordinance Sections 19.26.050.G and J regarding lot configuration, heights, and siting, and spoke regarding views from Topaz looking up the ridge line. Mr. Hall stated that the views would be broken by the new homes. Hall referenced Section 19.26.040 regarding privacy concerns, and stated that his bedroom is located less than 50 feet from his bedroom window. Hall recommended alterations to the split-level plans.

Alan Lazure commented regarding privacy, ridgelines, and hillsides, and referenced his comment letter. Mr. Lazure stated that the Hillside Ordinance does not allow for the creation of additional lots where the homes would be silhouetted by the sky.

Kimberly Price stated that only 1 home should be allowed because the slopes exceed 10 percent and the homes will be silhouetted against the sky. The project should be reduced and story poles are needed.

Patricia Capretta commented regarding the views from the top of Bahia Drive, impacts to habitat and the natural environment, and issues regarding the ridgeline and skyline.

Sally Scotto referenced the ridge ordinance, views from Bahia Drive, wildlife corridors, and that the development will take away the views.

Patricia Ravitz stated that the developer at the meeting stated that the view won't be lost; it will. Protect our views and wildlife. The project is in appropriate.

Candy Jordan stated that she doesn't see how they can be built how they have been presented, has concerns regarding traffic safety, street parking, and drainage.

Melanie Nasson-Kurgpold commented regarding views and seeing the moon at night on the water.

Bill Cacciatore commented that the view should be preserved, that this is the gateway to the community, and that the views are an asset to Novato.

Rob Walker referenced the Hillside Ordinance and believes that there is only a small developable area available, and believes the 7 lots, if approved would be allowed on a technicality.

The public comment portion of the meeting was closed.

Commissioner Barber asked if the setbacks from Bahia Drive were known, questioned the line of sight for traffic, and thinks there may be a dangerous situation for cards. Barber stated that view studies are necessary, concerned regarding impacts to wildlife, the need for story poles, and limits on fencing.

Commissioner Radovanovich stated that if the houses are silhouetted against the sky, that is a deal breaker. Radovanovich stated that the proposed architecture is not like the existing homes in Bahia, and stated that the proposed design logic makes sense, but possibly not for this location.

Commissioner MacLeamy stated that when one drives over the ridge on Bahia Drive, there is a “Wow” factor, and that 7 homes would interrupt the view. MacLeamy suggested that the applicant try to work with the residents to develop a compromise, and suggested that the Bahia homeowners may want to consider purchasing the property to maintain the uninterrupted views.

Commissioner Farrell stated that the hillside/ridgeline issue needs to be resolved, stated the need for story poles, and suggested that the proposal may be too much development and that a lower density may be warranted.

Commissioner Balfe asked if the developer was married to the existing pads, and suggested that a solution may be to lower the home sites down the hillside. Balfe stated that limiting homes to one-story may be warranted, mentioned shared driveways to reduce the number of curb-cuts, discussed the need to possibly reduce densities, and protect wildlife corridors.

**GENERAL BUSINESS:** None

**ADJOURNMENT:** The meeting was adjourned at 10:55 PM.