



CITY OF NOVATO
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

DESIGN REVIEW COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes

ZOOM TELECONFERENCE
Wednesday, October 20, 2021 - 7:00 PM

A. CALL TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE, AND ROLL CALL

The Design Review Commission meeting began at 7:00 PM.

Commission Present: Chair MacLeamy, Vice Chair Studer, Commissioner Barber, Commissioner Farrell

Commission Absent: Commissioner Schatz

Staff Present: Planning Manager Steve Marshall, Senior Planner Brett Walker

B. APPROVAL OF FINAL AGENDA

COMMISSION ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Barber and seconded by Commissioner Farrell, the Design Review Commission voted 4-0-0-1 via roll call to approve the Final Agenda.

AYES: Commissioners Barber, Farrell, MacLeamy, and Studer

NOES: None

ABSTAIN: None

ABSENT: Commissioner Schatz

Motion carried.

C. PUBLIC COMMENT

None

D. CONSENT ITEM

D.1 Approval of Meeting Minutes of October 6, 2021 (MB, JF, PM, MS, ES)

COMMISSION ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Barber and seconded by Commissioner Studer, the Design Review Commission voted 4-0-0-1 via roll call to approve the Meeting Minutes of October 6, 2021.

AYES: Commissioners Barber, Farrell, MacLeamy, and Studer

NOES: None

ABSTAIN: None

ABSENT: Commissioner Schatz

Motion carried.

PUBLIC HEARING

E. CONTINUED ITEMS

NONE

F. NEW ITEMS

F.1. 1301 GRANT AVE MIXED-USE; HENHOUSE BREWING (BW) P2021-030; DESIGN REVIEW APN 141-281-03; 1301 GRANT AVE

Conduct a design review hearing to review and make a recommendation to the Zoning Administrator regarding the conversion and expansion of an existing 4,424 square-foot two-story office building into a 6,250 square-foot mixed-use building with 3,250 square feet of ground-floor commercial space and 3,000 square feet of second-story residential space. A 1,000 square-foot carport is also proposed.

Brett Walker, Senior Planner, presented the staff report.

Commissioner Barber asked about the parking lot design – explain the purpose of the 20-foot queuing space.

Senior Planner Walker stated a queuing space is required to allow a vehicle to wait for a parking stall without blocking the travel lane of the connecting street. This is a usual feature of more active parking lots.

Dan Macdonald, Architect, introduced the project. Tony Garza, Architect, described the proposed architecture, site planning, layout, and other design information.

Commissioner Farrell asked if the building is getting taller and asked if the rooftop AC units will be screened if the parapet does not screen them.

Architect Garza responded that no change in height is proposed and that a view study for mechanical equipment will be completed prior to issuance of a building permit. It is not anticipated that rooftop mechanical will be visible, but screening will be provided if it is visible.

Commissioner Farrell also asked about the dimension of the space between the 1st floor ceiling and second floor.

Architect Garza responded 3-feet.

Architect Macdonald commented the building would not be changing height.

Commissioner Barber asked a question regarding the parking requirements.

Senior Planner Walker described required parking for the residential units and noted the applicant's request for a commercial parking waiver.

Commissioner Barber asked about the screening wall at the rear of the building – how does that work on a windy or rainy day.

Architect Garza confirmed the area would be exposed to rain and wind – the area will have waterproof flooring and use outdoor furniture.

Vice Chair Studer noted her interest in the screening wall at the rear of the building.

Chair MacLeamy opened the public comment period.

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENT

NUMBER OF SPEAKERS: 7

Erin Lacey stated that she supports the project, that it fits into downtown, and that she lives within walking distance.

Michelle Derviss referenced a letter she sent regarding the project. She lives 300 feet from the site. She stated the perforated screening wall is not compliant and will not attenuate noise. She stated the project was incompatible with adjacent residences. She recommended a solid wall or double-paned windows be used instead of the perforated metal wall. She also noted concerns about the two different trash areas (both need to be screened), rooftop AC (needs screening), and that no detailed landscape plan was submitted.

Ken Loomis stated that he reiterates the comments made by Michelle Derviss, referenced the adjacent residential area, and that a sound barrier is needed. He was concerned about noise, dumpster divers, emptying of bottles (noise), and privacy since his residence is behind the project site.

Lisa Swanson stated that she likes the design aesthetic, that the open-air portion is nice, and supports the project.

Melissa Havel states that she supports the project, that it is an attractive design, compatible with nearby uses, is good for Novato, and that it is important to revitalize this portion of downtown.

Robert Sundberg stated his support for the project.

Emily Larsen stated that she likes the design, that it has a good aesthetic, that the residential decks are a great addition, and questioned whether it is possible to add a skylight to the middle residential unit since there are a limited number of windows.

Chair MacLeamy closed the public comment period.

Commissioner MacLeamy asked if staff had any responses to public comments.

Planning Manager Marshall addressed the distinction between land use matters those relevant to design review, noting that noise issues are regulated as a land use issue – the use permit process will be used to look at operational controls to address the potential for disturbances. Regarding equipment screening, he noted the specific details of the equipment won't be known until construction detail plans are developed – staff will review those plans to ensure compliance with noise and screening standards.

Senior Planner Walker gave a summary of the review process and noted the zoning administrator would take action on all items with the Design Review Commission providing a recommendation on the design of the project.

SUMMARY OF COMMISSION COMMENTS:

Commissioner Studer stated that she likes the design, materials, and colors of the project. She stated that the parking lot area may benefit from a climbing vine on the perforated screen.

Commissioner Barber stated that he is excited about the project and described it as being urban, cutting edge and commended its modern look - the roll-up doors are fantastic and appreciates that it is basically the same size as the existing building. He stated that not much effort was made regarding the landscaping, and landscaping needs more respect. He questioned whether the front landscaping is maintainable given the narrowness of the planter area and asked if a planter area was possible in the lobby doorway area. He commented the perforated screen does seem to be an issue regarding sound, and that sliding doors inside the screen may be a good idea to control noise and address the weather. He commented that the middle residential unit has few windows and wasn't sure the trash enclosure was optimally located behind the screen wall. He found the proposed materials to be perfect.

Chair MacLeamy stated that it is a very good project and that this block of Grant Ave needs activity. He wished a building section was included in the plans. He also stated that a lower barrier near the roll-up door would allow patrons to spill over to the sidewalk – more of a sense of activity. Overall, the project is a positive.

Commissioner Farrell stated that it is a great proposal and that the land use changes are awesome. He likes the massing, that the existing building elevations are tired, and that the Unit B floor plan needs some work. He loves the color and materials including the red-light fixtures on Grant Avenue. He is comfortable with staff reviewing the final details, including landscaping. He observed that the neighbors are over 100 feet away and that downtown needs residential uses and anticipates that the noise will be less intrusive than what one may think. He likes the perforated screen, but also agrees with Barber regarding noise – a simple solution may be glass sliders or another treatment.

Commissioner Barber stated that he is willing to support the project and that Architect Macdonald will adequately address the landscaping.

Commissioner Studer stated her support of the project and that the noise and back screen area can be resolved.

COMMISSION ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Farrell and seconded by Vice Chair Studer, the Design Review Commission voted 4-0-0-1 via roll call to recommend approval of the project's design as presented and conditioned.

AYES: Commissioners Barber, Farrell, MacLeamy, and Studer

NOES: None

ABSTAIN: None

ABSENT: Commissioner Schatz

Motion carried.

G. WORKSHOPS

NONE

H. GENERAL BUSINESS

H.1 Downtown Parklet/Streatery Program Design Review

Consider appointing a subcommittee of two commissioners to meet and collaborate with staff on the draft design standards for the Downtown Parklet/Streatery program.

Planning Manager Marshall requested the Commission consider forming a subcommittee to assist staff with formulating design guidelines.

The commissioners discussed the subcommittee and who may want to take part.

Chair MacLeamy opened the public comment period.

No members of the public wished to address the Commission.

Chair MacLeamy closed the public comment period.

COMMISSION ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Farrell and seconded by Vice Chair Studer the Design Review Commission voted 4-0-0-1 via roll call to appoint Commissioner Schatz and Commissioner Barber, with Vice Chair Studer as an alternate to the subcommittee.

AYES: Commissioners Barber, Farrell, MacLeamy, and Studer

NOES: None

ABSTAIN: None

ABSENT: Commissioner Schatz

Motion carried.

I. ADJOURNMENT

The Design Review Commission adjourned the meeting at 8:36pm.

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing minutes were duly adopted at the Design Review Commission meeting of December 1, 2021.

/Shelley Woods/

Shelley Woods, Senior Office Assistant