



CITY OF NOVATO
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

DESIGN REVIEW COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes

NOVATO CITY HALL
901 SHERMAN AVENUE
NOVATO, CA 94945

Wednesday, January 18, 2023 - 7:00 PM

A. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

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

Commission Present: Commissioners Michael Barber, Joe Farrell, Kevin Jacobs, and Mark Schatz

Commission Absent: Commissioner Patrick MacLeamy

Staff Present: Planning Manager Steve Marshall, Senior Planner Brett Walker, and Consultant Sean Kennings

B. APPROVAL OF FINAL AGENDA

COMMISSION ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Farrell and seconded by Commissioner Barber, the Design Review Commission voted via roll call to approve the final agenda.

AYES: Commissioners Barber, Farrell, Jacobs, and Schatz

NOES: None

ABSTAIN: None

ABSENT: Commissioner MacLeamy

Motion carried.

C. PUBLIC COMMENT - None

D. CONSENT ITEMS

D.1. - Minutes of August 5, 2020 (MB, ME, JF, & ES)

D.2. - Minutes of December 1, 2021 (MB, JF, PM, MS, & ES)

D.3. - Minutes of September 21, 2022 (MB, KJ, & MS)

D.4. - Minutes of November 16, 2022 (MB, JF, & KJ)

COMMISSION ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Farrell and seconded by Commissioner Jacobs, the Design Review Commission voted via roll call to approve all items on the consent calendar.

AYES: Commissioners Barber, Farrell, Jacobs, and Schatz

NOES: None

ABSTAIN: None

ABSENT: Commissioner MacLeamy

Motion carried.

PUBLIC HEARING

E. CONTINUED ITEMS – NONE

F. NEW ITEMS – NONE

G. WORKSHOPS

**G.1 VALLEY OAKS
P2021-047; DESIGN REVIEW
REDWOOD BLVD NEAR PINKSTON ROAD
APNs 125-580-23 and 125-180-38 (Portion)**

Conduct a workshop to consider and provide feedback regarding a draft package of objective development and design standards for Valley Oaks.

Senior Planner Walker presented the staff report, including a description of past DRC actions regarding the project and a description of the development standards under consideration.

Michael Hooper, applicant, introduced the project, including a description of the site layout, project history, and proposed architectural styles. He stated that Valley Oaks South is proposed to be a contemporary style based on the adjacent Verandah project currently under construction; for Valley Oaks North they would like flexibility in the architectural standards.

Chair Schatz opened the public comment period.

There were no persons wishing to address the DRC.

Chair Schatz closed the public comment period.

Chair Schatz returned the matter to the Commission and observed the need to have standards of sufficient detail to provide to a future developer and be okay with the project resulting from those standards.

Commissioner Barber asked about building step-backs in the draft standards, noting there seemed to be an error in the standards table.

Planning Manager Marshall confirmed there is a typo in the standards table regarding step-backs.

Commissioner Barber referenced a note about a 5-foot rear setback and asked if that setback applied to all parcels.

Mr. Hooper clarified that at Lot 29 there is a rear setback of 5-feet near a creek.

Commissioner Barber asked whether the proposed standards would result in a variety of each style and stated that the standards shouldn't result in "cookie-cutter" designs throughout the development.

Planning Manager Marshall responded that language can be added to require variety in design, perhaps limiting the number of times a façade could be reused or setting a minimum number of variations.

Chair Schatz referenced Traditions at Hamilton as having guidelines for mixing styles.

Mr. Hooper referenced the architectural variety of the Rose Lane development in Larkspur as an example.

Commissioner Barber commented regarding the 45-foot building height in Valley Oaks South and stated that with upper-floor step backs the height may be acceptable. He also stated a garage offset of 18-inches is not enough; 36-inches is ideal.

Mr. Hooper explained a 24-inch offset was possible in Valley Oaks North, not in Valley Oaks South given the constraint of trying to minimize encroachment into the hillside behind the site.

Commissioner Farrell stated the project works from a site plan perspective and the list of architectural styles is appropriate. He felt the building step backs and projections were reasonable and understood the constraints at Valley Oaks South. Overall, architectural details are most important and achieving variation in each style. Regarding the Mediterranean style, he mentioned the importance of recessed windows.

Commissioner Schatz stated there are no illustrations to react to, and that augmenting the text with images would be helpful. He expressed concern about inauthentic design and "fake details," and wants quality architecture. He supports a single contemporary style for Valley Oaks South with the style relating to Verandah.

Planning Manager Marshall commented that photos alone are not considered an objective standard because there are no measurable details in a photo. Perhaps wall sections with window details and dimensions could be helpful.

Commissioner Schatz reiterated the need for imagery to illustrate the standards.

Commissioner Farrell suggested that details, such as images and drawings with notations may be acceptable.

The Commission reviewed the questions that planning staff posed in the staff report and provided responses:

- a. Are the proposed architectural styles appropriate for the site? Yes. One style at Valley Oaks South is fine.
- b. For Valley Oaks North, is only one style allowed in the development, or can all four styles be intermixed? A mix of styles is acceptable. However, there needs to be variation in the details of a given style.
- c. Are the roof line and wall plane variations adequate? At Valley Oaks North a garage off-set at 18-inches is not adequate. An 18-inch garage off-set at Valley Oaks South is fine.
- d. Are the proposed design details reflective of the architectural styles? Are the roof forms and pitches appropriate? Yes, but there needs to be variation in the details of a given style and some associated imagery to show those details.

Chair Schatz reopened the public comment period to recognize a member of the public desiring to address the Commission.

Warren Hoeffler made comments regarding the need to keep areas zoned for industrial uses and employment, that developing on hills is expensive, that this project would result in the further deindustrialization of San Marin. Novato should be open to good jobs, not just cheap housing.

Chair Schatz closed the public comment period.

**G.2. 777 SAN MARIN
DRAFT OBJECTIVE DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS
P2021-077; DESIGN REVIEW
773, 775, & 777 SAN MARIN DRIVE; APNs 125-202-03, -04, & -05**

Conduct a workshop to consider and provide feedback regarding a draft package of objective design standards for redevelopment of 773, 775, and 777 San Marin Drive (former Fireman's Fund campus) into a residential community.

Consultant Kennings presented the staff report, including specific design questions and suggestions raised in the report.

Commissioner Jacobs asked about the height of the Millworks building. Planning Manager Marshall stated the height is 53- to 55-feet.

Chair Schatz asked why no site plan was presented for Commission consideration.

Planning Manager Marshall explained this effort is a master plan level of review recognizing the property is likely to be developed in phases by different developers likely relying on objective standards.

Chair Schatz inquired about the phasing of open space improvements, particularly where such an improvement is split between zones.

Planning Manager Marshall said that phasing is being worked on and a description will be part of a zoning overlay.

Riley Hurd, attorney for BayWest Development, introduced the project to the Commission.

Cindy Ma, BayWest's design representative, presented the proposed objective development and design standards for the different building types and neighborhoods within the project site. She noted the building height of 75-feet in District SM3 is based on building code regulations allowing 5-over-1 construction (5 floors of wood frame construction over one floor concrete). She addressed the open space plan noting 8-acres is planned to accommodate a variety of amenities.

Commissioner Schatz stated there needed to be accommodations for bicyclist and pedestrian amenities, as well as EV charging.

Commissioner Barber was bothered by a lack of a site plan.

Commissioner Jacobs asked what accommodations are being made for the elderly and handicapped assuming 40-foot high buildings.

Planning Manager Marshall stated the building code would address such issues as EV charging and disabled access.

Ms. Ma noted the larger apartment buildings would have elevators to serve elderly and handicapped tenants.

Mr. Hurd addressed the concern about a lack of a site plan by noting there is no site plan describing application of the standards already listed in the Zoning Ordinance. He stated the Commission could add an objective standard to include a particular feature in the site plan.

Chair Schatz opened the public comment period.

Public Comments

Judy Finn noted her affiliation with the Marin Organizing Committee. She was concerned about 3-story townhomes and the difficulty of stairs for the elderly; elevators for an aging community are good. She supports housing for all ages. She supported the proposed density, but wondered about long-term park maintenance.

Warren Hoeffler asked if the existing buildings are located in area SM1 and stated the existing office buildings should be retained. He questioned tearing down quality office buildings for less quality housing. He referenced the proximity of the Buck Institute and how the Institute could lead to business offshoots that need space.

Sylvia Barry asked why the proposed building height was 75-feet and supported a height equal to the existing office buildings. She commented on the location of sport courts within the open space areas and questioned why the project did not include a mixed-use component. She asked about the number of units in each of the planning areas and required parking.

Clay Freeberg stated he supports staff's recommended changes referring to those addressing building height, setbacks, and wall recesses.

Chair Schatz closed the public comment period.

Commissioner Barber agreed with staff's comments in the report. He liked the 10-foot setback. A height limit of 75-feet is too tall and requires an upper floor step back, perhaps at the building corners or a percentage of the building perimeter. He noted the development districts are distinctly separated and would like to see something more organic. He asked about roadways within open space areas C1, C2, and C3.

Ms. Ma explained utility easements are located within areas C1, C2, and C3 with road crossings as described in the open space table.

Planning Manager Marshall noted the open space graphic would ideally become a part of the objective standards to visually describe the location and extents of expected outdoor areas.

Commissioner Jacobs stated a 75-foot height limit is far out of bounds and supports staff's recommendation on height. He also supported staff's recommended setback change.

Commissioner Farrell noted the objective standards approach is 180-degrees from the usual process and appreciated the draft objective standards prepared for the site. He agreed with staff regarding increasing setbacks relative to building height. From an architectural perspective, he likes variety; he referenced the horizontal off-sets described in the draft standards. He suggested the possibility of upper floor step backs at the ends of the building, but noted the off-sets are key.

Commissioner Schatz was disappointed the Commission is seeing a zoning diagram and wanted a massing diagram before making a recommendation. He supported a central green space surrounded by retail uses to create a walkable community. Perhaps use ground floor space at the building corners in SM3 for retail opportunities. He agrees 75-feet is too high for District SM3, prefers 55- to 60-feet. He questioned the need for single-family residences of 3-stories and referenced duplexes at Hamilton Park as nice entry level residences. The project feels cramped and needs more open space by reducing single-family residences. He referenced his positive experience living at Marin Glenn, which featured two-story, zero lot line residences.

The Commission addressed the questions raised in the staff report:

1. Maximum Height in District SM1:

Commissioner Farrell: 40-feet with half-story at uppermost floor or dormers.

Commissioner Jacobs: 40-feet if architecturally appealing.

Commissioner Schatz: 40-feet as long as it is not all homes.

Commissioner Barber: Agrees with Commissioner Farrell.

2. 10-foot street side setback in District SM2. All commissioners agreed to this standard.

3. 10-foot setback and 60-foot height limit in District SM3. All commissioners thought 75-feet was too high and 60-feet with an 8-foot allowance for rooftop equipment screening was more appropriate.

4. Building massing (step backs and off sets) in SM3.

Commissioners Farrell and Barber: Massing shown on wall plane diagram works.

Commissioner Farrell: Perhaps a step back at building corners.

Commissioner Schatz: Wants typical projecting balcony and recessed balcony depths (5-feet referenced); doesn't want 2-foot balconies (e.g., Juliet balcony)

All commissioners agreed wall plane breaks should increase from 18-inches to 24-inches in depth.

5. Architectural Standards – All commissioners supported the styles presented in the draft standards.

6. Common Open Space.

Commissioner Barber: Wants more clarity on the open space exhibit and relationship to possible roadways and/or road crossings. A cornhole court should not be a Tier 1 open space amenity.

Commissioner Schatz: The open space exhibit should show where neighborhood amenities could be located, such as a club house or pool facility.

H. GENERAL BUSINESS - NONE

I. ADJOURNMENT

The Design Review Commission adjourned the meeting at 10:05 PM.

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing minutes were duly adopted at the Design Review Commission meeting of March 15, 2023.

/Steve Marshall/

Steve Marshall, Planning Manager