



THE CITY OF
NOVATO
CALIFORNIA

Planning Commission Meeting

Location: Novato City Hall, 901 Sherman Avenue

April 3, 2017

922 Machin
Novato, CA 94945
415/899-8900
FAX 415/899-8213
www.novato.org

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

City Manager
Regan M. Candelario

Present: Susan Wernick, Chair
Curtis Havel, Vice Chair
Dan Dawson
Justin Derby
Robert Jordan
Jay Strauss
Peter Tiernan

Absent: None

Staff Present: Robert Brown, Community Development Director
Steve Marshall, Planning Manager
Hans Grunt, Senior Planner
Michelle Johnson, Planner II

CALL TO ORDER / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE / ROLL CALL

APPROVAL OF FINAL AGENDA

M/s: Tiernan/Dawson; Passed 7 – 0 (Ayes: Tiernan, Strauss, Jordan, Derby, Dawson, Havel, and Wernick; Nays: none)

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

CONSENT CALENDAR:

CONTINUED ITEMS:

1. NORTHWEST QUADRANT NEIGHBORHOOD DRAFT FORM-BASED ZONING CODE (BB)

Consider draft form-based zoning code for the Northwest Quadrant neighborhood and provide preliminary recommendations to the City Council.

The Chair opened the public hearing. There were two speakers:

Ed Mainland, representing Sustainable Novato, spoke in favor of the proposed form-based code, suggesting it allows innovative infill development next to

Downtown at reasonable density, and will retain the neighborhood character.

Rachel Calvert owns 1104 Second Street as a rental. She indicated that neighborhood interests expressed at the March 2015 workshops are not being addressed. The form-based code is more about growth, not retaining neighborhood character. She asked if the parking requirement could be reduced through the state density bonus law. She stated that outreach to property owners is important.

Planning Commissioners had the following comments:

Commissioner Strauss stated that the existing single family homes have a nice character which should be reinforced, which he believes the form-based code will achieve. Over time it will improve aesthetics in a neighborhood that needs such. The neighborhood can be supportive of the Downtown and vice versa. Providing incentives for existing apartments to redevelop is important and needs more work. Overall he stated that the form-based code is a great step forward.

Commissioner Derby said the form-based code is trying to solve the de facto “moratorium” on redevelopment in the neighborhood, and does so in a way that will retain character. He agreed that more flexibility is needed to encourage apartment owners to rebuild. He was pleased that the City is attempting to do something proactive in the neighborhood.

Commissioner Havel complimented the level of outreach that has been done to date. He noted that some residents have expressed that they don’t want more density in the neighborhood, but that’s what the General Plan calls for. The form-based code is a good opportunity to achieve the General Plan density while preserving the character of the neighborhood.

Commissioner Tiernan noted that the neighborhood has mixed character today. Being adjacent to Downtown, he feels the neighborhood warrants this solution, addressing infill with a focus on good design. He encouraged addressing traffic calming and a neighborhood park as well, and favored more study on how to address existing apartments.

Commissioner Jordan found the form-based code to be a middle-of-the-road approach to density while keeping neighborhood character. He doesn’t favor putting an annual cap on redevelopment.

Commissioner Dawson said that conditions in the neighborhood aren’t trending favorably. The status quo isn’t desirable. The form-based code has more focus on retaining neighborhood character than typical zoning. He too said more study should occur on existing apartments to incentivize their redevelopment.

Chair Wernick said she has attended all 5 workshops. She likes the design focus of the form-based code. There would be some uptick in density, but there are advantages to the neighborhood. Parking issues exist, and she encouraged neighbors to create an advocacy group to work with the City on neighborhood issues.

The Commissioners specifically discussed whether to recommend to the City Council including an annual cap on the number of single-family properties that could be redeveloped.

On a 4-3 vote (Commissioners Strauss, Tiernan, Havel and Wernick in support) the Commission recommended development of an annual cap, supporting a gradual approach, but believing that it is unlikely there would be a rush for redevelopment.

2. 2016 ANNUAL HOUSING ELEMENT PROGRESS REPORT (HG)

Receive and recommend, to City Council, submitting the 2016 Annual Housing Element (Chapter III of the City's General Plan) Progress Report to the State Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) and the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) for their filing.

Planner II Michelle Johnson presented the 2016 Annual Housing Element Progress Report.

Members of the Commission asked questions of staff regarding:

- affordable housing project status
- in-lieu fees
- accessory structures and junior accessory dwelling units
- changes in state law standards

Motion/Second – Tiernan/Derby to recommend the City Council adopt the 2016 Housing Element Progress Report for submittal to the State Department of Housing and HCD and OPR. Passed 7-0 (Ayes: Tiernan, Strauss, Jordan, Derby, Dawson, Havel, and Wernick; Nays: none)

NEW ITEMS: None.

GENERAL BUSINESS:

UPCOMING AGENDAS AND QUORUMS:

Community Development Director Brown reminded the Planning Commission he will be presenting the draft Downtown Design Guidelines on April 17, 2017.

ADJOURNMENT: Meeting adjourned at 9:20 PM