



DESIGN REVIEW COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

MEETING

DATE: March 6, 2019

STAFF: Hans Grunt, Senior Planner
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**SUBJECT: C STREET VILLAGE COHOUSING – MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL
P2018-082; DESIGN REVIEW
APN 157-980-05; 970 C STREET**

REQUESTED ACTION

Conduct a design workshop to review the site design, building massing, and conceptual architecture and landscaping proposed for C Street Village: development of a 2.68 acre parcel with a cohousing project including 38 homes comprised of 32 two-story (single and two level) condominiums ranging from two to four bedrooms and 840 to 1,818 square feet, six 669 square foot flats over parking, two 484 square foot storage buildings over parking, and a 3,738 square foot, two-story club house.

EXISTING SETTING

The project site is a 2.68+/- acre, nearly flat parcel (average slope of 1.85%) on the northwest corner of Main Gate and “C” Streets. The project site has frontage along Main Gate Street on the south and frontage along “C” Street on the east. Immediately adjacent on the north is vacant Novato Unified School District property and immediately adjacent on the west is Lanham Village residential.

The project site is currently vacant. The previous use on the project site was a gas station, which has been removed in conjunction with soil remediation to clear the site of contaminants resulting from the former gas station facilities.

Below is an aerial photo of the existing site:



PROJECT DESCRIPTION

NBCH1, LLC has submitted a conceptual site plan (Sheet A1) that contemplates a 38-unit multi-family residential condominium project with a single driveway that terminates with a fire truck turnaround (AKA “hammerhead”), lined on both sides with open parking, and garage parking on the north side in the form of four separate garages that, combined, include six, one bedroom units above and two storage facilities. A total of 51 off-street parking spaces are provided, 22 of which are in a garage. 20% of the proposed units are required to be reserved as affordable housing. In addition to access and parking, the proposal includes the following physical site improvements to support the housing - a cohousing design:

- Club House: A two story, 3,738 square foot club house including: (first floor) a kitchen, 625+ square foot great room, 336+ square foot lounge area, 588+ square foot multi-purpose room, 210+ square foot kids room with adjacent outdoor sand box, laundry room, and restroom/shower facilities; (second floor) 392 square feet of multipurpose use area, and a bathroom with shower (see Sheets AC2.1 –AC3.2).
- Common Play Area adjacent to the club house, and integrated common pathways throughout the project – see Sheet A1.0.
- A combined 8 person hot tub and 6 person sauna with privacy screening as needed – see Sheet A1.0.

- Three common bike sheds dispersed around the site – see Sheet A1.0.
- Common clothes line area. – see Sheet A1.0
- Two separate common garden areas – see Sheet A1.0.
- Combination 5’ tall CMU sound wall with arbor entry, and 5’ tall architectural (cedar/4x4 hogwire perimeter fencing – see Sheet A6.1.
- Recycling facility – see Sheet A1-0, and a variety of green design features – see Sheets A0.5 – A0.7.

A preliminary landscape plan is not yet developed.

BACKGROUND

Property Owner: Hamilton Square, LLC
 Assessor's Parcel No. 157-980-05

Project Area: 2.7 acres

General Plan Designation: Neighborhood Commercial (CN) Existing Zoning: Planned District (PD)

Existing Use: Vacant, previous gas station

Adjacent Zoning/Uses: North – Planned District (PD): Novato Unified School District,
 South – Planned District (PD): Meadow Park Residential
 East – Planned District (PD): Novato Unified School District, Charter School/child Center
 West – Planned District (PD): Lanham Village residential

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

An environmental assessment is not required to conduct a public workshop. However, an environmental determination will be required for the Design Review Commission to take action on the request to develop a new multi-family residential condominium project. Staff will provide an environmental determination when the project returns to the Design Review Commission for formal action.

STAFF ANALYSIS

The Design Review Commission (DRC) is asked to conduct a workshop to obtain public comment and provide feedback to representatives NBCH1, LLC and staff with respect to the conceptual site design and architecture proposed for the request to develop a new multi-family residential condominium project. The workshop is an opportunity to have an informal discussion

regarding the project's conceptual 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 regarding whether the proposal by NBCH1, LLC meets the noted findings, policies and development standards when the project returns to the DRC for a formal decision.

Design Review Findings

To approve the proposed new multi-family residential townhome project, the DRC will need to make three design review findings. These findings are:

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.

1996 Novato General Plan

The project site has a current land use designation of Neighborhood Commercial (CN) in the Novato General Plan. In order to proceed with the multi-family residential project as proposed, the applicant will have to apply for a General Plan Amendment.

The General Plan land use designation that would accommodate the project would be Medium Density Multiple Family Residential (R10). The R10 land use permits a variety of residential uses, including multiple-family dwellings, two-family dwellings, detached or attached single-family dwellings, recreation, home occupations, community facilities, and other similar uses. The R10 land use designation has an allowable density range of 10.1 to 20.0 dwelling units per acre. As currently proposed, the project is approximately 14.1 dwelling units per acre.

In addition to specifying acceptable types of land uses and maximum development intensities, the Novato General Plan provides a framework of policies addressing such matters as land use, transportation and circulation, and community character. These policies are intended to coordinate Novato's physical development over a 20-year period. As the conceptual site plan and architectural design progresses into more detailed plans, the DRC should consider applicable design policies of the Community Identity Chapter of the General Plan when reviewing this proposal. Relevant Community Identity policies are:

Community Identity 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.

Community Identity Chapter Policy 7 Landscaping. Encourage attractive native and drought-tolerant, low-maintenance landscaping responsive to fire hazards.

Community Identity Chapter Policy 12 Parking Standards. Reduce the visibility of parking facilities and the amount of land necessary for them to the maximum extent feasible.

Community Identity Chapter Policy 15 Pedestrian Paths. Provide for maximum feasible pedestrian circulation.

Community Identity Chapter Policy 32 Public Art. Promote public art that enhances the cultural life of the community.

Hamilton Army Airfield Reuse Plan

The project site has a current land use designation of Neighborhood Commercial (CN) in the Hamilton Army Airfield Reuse Plan ([Reuse Plan](#)), consistent with the General Plan land use designation. In order to proceed with the project as proposed, the applicant will have to apply for a Reuse Plan Amendment.

Section 8 of the [Reuse Plan](#) includes “Design Guidelines” for development within the planning area. Applicable Goals and Policies for this site are included in Section 8.2 of the [Reuse Plan](#) (Attachment 3). The policies contain guidelines for aesthetic quality, landscaping, streetscapes, site planning, parking, lighting, walls and fencing. As the conceptual site plan and architectural design progresses into more detailed plans, the DRC should consider applicable design guidelines when reviewing this proposal.

The Design Guidelines in the [Reuse Plan](#) includes a note to the reader that the Hamilton Field Master Plan and [Design Guidelines](#) contain additional design information. The DRC may want to reference said [Design Guidelines](#) as part of its design considerations for this proposal.

Staff and the project applicant would like the DRC to comment on the conceptual site plan including the buildings location/placement, setbacks, location of open space, as well as the preliminary architectural style and any additional details.

Novato Zoning Ordinance

The project site has a current zoning designation of Planned District (PD). The proposed project will require its own Precise Development Plan, which will establish the development standards for the project.

Parking: Chapter 19.30.040 of the Zoning Ordinance specifies the number of parking spaces required for the project. The proposed project meets this standard as shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Required Parking Spaces for Multi-Family Dwellings, Condominiums and Other Attached Dwellings		
STANDARD	REQUIRED	C STREET PROPOSAL
Residential Parking:* Six 1-bedroom unit: 1.5 spaces/unit Twelve 2-bedroom unit: 2 spaces/unit Twenty 3&4-bedroom unit: 2.2 spaces/unit Guest Parking: 1 space/3 units *At least one space per unit shall be covered in either a garage or carport	Residential Parking: 77 spaces Guest Parking: 13 guest spaces	Onsite:51 spaces (22 covered, in garages) C Street: 8 spaces. <i>Note: These may not be feasible as a sidewalk may be required in the same location</i>
COMPARISON	Total Required: 90 spaces *39 of the spaces required to be covered	Total Provided: 51 spaces: *22 of the spaces are covered spaces <i>Additional 8 spaces provided along C Street – School District owned may not be feasible.</i>

Staff has significant concern with the amount of parking proposed, which is deficient relative to City standards, by approximately 39 spaces. The applicant is requesting a reduction in parking based on the intention to implement shared parking amongst the residents. To consider this, staff expects to require an independent parking study of “like” cohousing developments or some equivalent, in an effort to substantiate allowing a reduction in parking. This matter is the purview of Planning Commission and ultimately City Council. While the onsite design of parking proposed is subject to DRC’s review and recommendation, the amount of parking is not part of DRC’s discretion.

Section 19.30 of the Zoning Ordinance specifies standards for location of parking areas and access to parking areas/spaces. Section 19.28 of the Zoning Ordinance specifies standards for landscaping and Section 19.21 of specifies standards for the art program.

Section 19.34.124 of the Zoning Ordinance specifies standards for open space in multi-family residential projects. While the project site will remain PD, the density of the project falls within the R10 designation. The required open space for multi-family projects within an R10 district of the density proposed is a minimum of 300 square feet of open space area per unit. A minimum of half of the required open space shall be available to and private for the occupants of each dwelling unit, and the remainder may be combined in common areas available to other residents of the project. The project includes a combination of private porches, decks and patio yards for the attached homes in the six central buildings, and a common play area in the center of the site, which appear to comply with the multi-family open space area criteria. However, the six one bedroom flats above the garages provide no private exterior open space.

As the plans are still conceptual, they do not currently indicate area(s) for trash enclosures, but will be included as more detailed plans are developed.

The project will be required to comply with the City's Art Program Division 19.21 of the Novato Municipal Code, Zoning.

RECOMMENDATION

Conduct the public workshop and provide comments to project applicant and staff regarding NBCH1, LLC's proposed conceptual site design and architecture, and any early observations regarding landscaping.

FURTHER ACTION

The proposal by NBCH1, LLC to develop new multi-family residential condominiums and other site amenities will return with more detailed plans to the DRC for a public hearing. At this hearing, the Design Review Commission may consider taking a formal action on the project.

C STREET VILLAGE COHOUSING - PROJECT INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO VIEW AND DOWNLOAD:

1. [Project webpage](#) - maintained by the City of Novato during the entitlement process;
2. [Project Plans](#) – for DRC workshop on March 6, 2019;
3. [Applicant's Design Narrative](#);
4. [Hamilton Army Airfield Reuse Plan](#) – see Section 8, Design Guidelines, and
5. [Hamilton Field Design Guidelines](#) – a reference document for information only.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Public comments received by 2:30 p.m. on Friday, 3-1-2019

From: [meredith_parnell](#)
To: [Hans Grunt](#)
Subject: [External] In support of C Street Village
Date: Friday, March 01, 2019 1:48:15 PM
Attachments: [C Street Village ltr to Novato.docx](#)

Dear Mr. Grunt:

I am writing to you on behalf of the Marin Organizing Committee, a broad-based non-partisan citizen's organization comprised of over 20 dues-paying faith-based institutions, non-profits and unions and representing over 15,000 families throughout Marin County, many of them in Novato.

We would like to voice our support for C Street Village, the co-housing project currently being considered in the design phase of the project. Marin County is in the midst of a housing crisis, and we think that this co-housing project, which has been in the works for many years, represents an extremely creative way to address this issue from the ground up. Not only will it provide much needed affordable housing, but by its very nature will create a stable and supportive community that will strengthen the city of Novato, and serve as a model for other Bay Area communities to emulate.

Judy Slater has worked with MOC on a number of issues connected to housing, including increasing services for people experiencing homelessness and advocating for increased renter protections such as the fair housing ordinance that Novato recently passed. We are confident that she has the vision and skills necessary to see this project through to its completion, and we look forward to celebrating the C Street Village groundbreaking!

I have also attached a copy of this letter for your files.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Meredith Parnell, Congregation Rodef Sholom
MOC Housing Team
mereparnell@gmail.com

Meredith Parnell
Pronouns: she/her/hers
415.302.1383
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There's really no such thing as the "voiceless". There are only the deliberately silenced, or the preferably unheard. Arundhati Roy

From: pastor@firstchurchoakland.org
To: [Hans Grunt](#)
Subject: [External] Support Cohousing project C Street Village in Hamilton, Novato
Date: Tuesday, February 26, 2019 3:03:01 PM

I am writing in support of Cohousing project C Street Village. I live in Novato, and my wife and I own Beso Bistro and Wine Bar in Hamilton Field. We believe in this project and wish to see this housing solution happen. I am also a minister at Oakland Presbyterian Church in Oakland and witness first hand everyday the need for creative solutions to housing in the bay area. This project is a model for many other communities.

If you have any questions please contact me.

Rev. Daniel Christian

From: janicekreynolds@yahoo.com
To: [Hans Grunt](#)
Subject: [External] Support of Cohousing Project C Street Village in Hamilton, Novato
Date: Wednesday, February 27, 2019 11:51:41 AM

Dear Mr. Grunt,

I am a resident of Novato in Pacheco Valle. My husband and I spend a lot of time in the Hamilton community – walking for miles, at various meetings, dining. We deeply care the development of Hamilton and about our community in Novato.

I am writing because I am very supportive of the Cohousing project, C Street Village! Our Marin community desperately needs affordable housing! I also endorse the concept of co-housing as a way to build stronger community support that addresses the isolation problem of families and elders. I love that it is near the Smart Train. From the plans and drawings, the design is very thoughtful, practical and attractive.

I have known Judy Slater as a colleague for some years. She is strong and organized leader who has listened deeply to the needs of everyone associated with this project. She is an intelligent, fair and strong project manager; she is skillful in gaining consensus and building healthy cultures. Her vision for a co-housing community has come a long way due to her hard work, perseverance and practical leadership.

I am a clergy leader in this county who sees the huge gap between the “haves and have nots” on so many levels each day. This project is a win-win for the health and well-being of Novato and all of Marin: it will be an important housing model as our Marin cities address the critical issue of affordable housing.

Thank you for reading this and taking it to heart.

Rev. Jan Reynolds
8 Kingfisher Ct.
Novato, CA 94949