

DESIGN REVIEW COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

WORKSHOP

DATE: November 6, 2019

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SUBJECT: **HABITAT REDWOOD BOULEVARD**
P2019-054; DESIGN REVIEW
APN 125-180-49; 8161 REDWOOD BOULEVARD

REQUESTED ACTION

Conduct a design workshop to review and comment on the site design, building massing and height, conceptual architecture, and landscaping for Habitat Redwood Blvd, located at 8161 Redwood Boulevard (“Project”); a for-sale residential project with up to 80 residential units, along with a 1,600-square-foot commercial building located near Redwood Blvd. (APN 125-180-49).

PROJECT SITE DESCRIPTION

The project site is located on the west side of Redwood Blvd. and US Hwy 101, approximately one mile north of San Marin Drive. The Days Inn hotel is located adjacent to the site and the driveway for the Buck Institute for Research on Aging is located south of the site. The 13.5-acre project site has elevations that range from less than 10 feet along the eastern portions of the site, rising to approximately 70 feet near the western edge of the site. The site includes grasslands, a few scattered trees, and waterways and wetlands. Portions of the site have slopes over 25 percent. Two PG&E gas pipeline easements traverse the site. For additional site information, please refer to the [Project Plan Set](#).

Adjacent development includes: Days Inn hotel, immediately adjacent to the site; Buck Institute for Research on Aging west of the site, which includes an approved (but not built) 130-unit multi-family development, and the Birkenstock building at 8171 Redwood Blvd., north of the site.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Project features the following components:

- 80 for-sale residential units;
- 1,600-square-foot commercial building;
- Buildings would be one to three stories tall;
- Ancillary improvements include paths, active and passive open space, parking, and drive aisles.

The conceptual plan package may be downloaded at: [8161 Redwood Blvd – Project Plan Set](#)

REQUIRED DEVELOPMENT APPROVALS & PROCESS

The following development approvals are required for the Project:

- General Plan Amendment – The project site is currently designated Light Industrial Office (LIO) on the General Plan Land Use map. A General Plan Amendment is required to allow for the proposed development.
- Master Plan/Precise Development Plan – The site is currently zoned Planned District (PD) on the Novato Zoning Map. A Master Plan and Precise Development Plan are required to implement the PD zoning classification.
- Tentative Subdivision Map – Approval of a tentative map is required to create the for-sale lots.
- Design Review – Design Review approval is required because the project includes a Master Plan and Precise Development Plan.

The Design Review Commission will provide a recommendation to the Planning Commission and City Council regarding the design aspects of the project. Thereafter, the Planning Commission would make a subsequent recommendation regarding the project entitlements to the City Council.

BACKGROUND

Property Owner:	Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E)
Applicant:	Habitat for Humanity Greater San Francisco
Assessor's Parcel No.:	125-180-49
Property Size:	13.5± acres
General Plan Designation:	Light Industrial Office (LIO)
Zoning Classification:	Planned District (PD)
Existing Use:	Vacant; PG&E gas pipelines (underground)

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

An environmental assessment is not required to conduct a design review workshop. The level of environmental review required to comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) will be determined prior to a Planning Commission hearing.

STAFF ANALYSIS

The Design Review Commission (DRC) is asked to conduct a workshop to obtain public comment on and provide feedback to staff and the applicant regarding the site plan, building massing and height, and conceptual architectural and landscape theme proposed for the Project. The DRC will not be making a decision to approve or deny the Project at the public workshop.

North, North Redwood Corridor Study & Draft General Plan 2035

In January 2014, the City completed the North, North Redwood Boulevard Corridor Study (“Study”). The Study involved a public outreach and design charrette process to determine appropriate land use and general design guidelines to achieve appropriate, high quality, transit-oriented development of the properties in the North, North Redwood Boulevard corridor. The Study was used by the City Council to provide direction to staff regarding preferred land uses, development intensity, and design guidelines to study as part of the City’s ongoing General Plan update.

The Study identifies the 1996 General Plan buildout of the site, which anticipated 40,000 square feet of office space. The Study does not identify any alternative land use at the site. The community preference survey regarding land use for the project site was office, research and development, or a bus yard. Based on public input the staff recommended use and design guidelines for the site are:

- Redesignate and rezone the site from Light Industrial/Office to Business/Professional Office.
- Allow a bus storage facility if appropriately screened from off-site views and if noise impacts on the adjacent motel are mitigated.

Draft General Plan 2035 Policy LU 33b states the following regarding the project site:

Policy LU 33b: North, North Redwood Corridor Site 2. Consider redesignation of North, North Redwood Corridor Site 2, as identified in Figure GP-9, from Light Industrial/Office to Business and Professional Office and rezoning to a consistent zoning district.

1996 Novato General Plan

The applicant has not yet notified the City of the General Plan Land Use designation that will be requesting in order to accommodate the project. Based on the conceptual project submitted for review, which includes residential and commercial, potential designations include Mixed Use (MU) or a combination of a multi-family residential designation for the majority of the site, with a commercial designation on the portion of the site proposed for commercial uses. Based on the number of residential units proposed and the size of the lot, the Medium Density Multiple Family Residential (R10) land use designation may be most appropriate. The Neighborhood Commercial (CN) designation may be appropriate for the area that includes the proposed 1,600-square-foot commercial building.

The 1996 Novato General Plan is currently the operative policy document for new development proposals pending future approval of draft General Plan 2035. The 1996 General Plan provides a framework of policies that were adopted to coordinate all major components of Novato's physical development over a 20-year period. These policies serve as a basis to assess whether public and private development proposals are consistent with the General Plan. In this instance, the Design Review Commission should consider the Project's design in light of the design related policies of the Novato General Plan listed below. Once the applicant determines the proposed land use designation(s) that will be part of their entitlement request, the design related policies included in staff's analysis of the project may differ from what is listed below. Further, in addition to design, pending reports to the Planning Commission and City Council will analyze the Project in relation to other chapters and corresponding policies contained in the General Plan, including but not limited to Land Use, Transportation, Housing, Environment, Safety and Noise, and Economics.

Housing Chapter

HC Policy 3.2 Design that Fits into the Neighborhood Context. It is the City's intent that neighborhood identity and sense of community will be enhanced by designing all new housing to have a transition of scale and compatibility in form to the surrounding area.

HC Policy 3.3 Housing Design Principles. The intent in the design of new housing is to provide stable, safe, and attractive neighborhoods through high quality architecture, site planning, and amenities that address the following principles:

- a. Reduce the perception of building bulk. In multi-unit buildings, encourage designs that break up the perceived bulk and minimize the apparent height and size of new buildings, including, for example, the use of upper story stepbacks and landscaping. Application of exterior finish materials, including siding, trim, windows, doors and colors, are important elements of building design and an indicator of overall building quality.
- b. Recognize existing street patterns. Where appropriate, encourage transitions in height and setbacks from adjacent properties to respect adjacent development character and privacy. Design new housing so that, where appropriate, it relates to the existing street pattern.
- c. Enhance the "sense of place" by incorporating focal areas where appropriate. Design new housing around natural and/or designed focal points, emphasized through pedestrian/pathway or other connections.
- d. Minimize the visual impact of parking areas and garages. Discourage home designs in which garages dominate the public façade of the home (e.g. encourage driveways and garages to be located to the side or rear of buildings, or recessed, or along rear alleyways or below the building in some higher density developments).

Environment Chapter

EC Policy 25 Trees on Private Property. Encourage and, where appropriate, require actions by private property owners to protect the health of native woodlands and trees.

EC Policy 26 Trees in New Development. Require that the site planning, construction and maintenance of development preserve existing healthy trees and native vegetation on site to the maximum extent feasible. Replace trees and vegetation not able to be saved.

EC Policy 39 On-Site Recycling Areas. Require on-site areas for recycling in commercial/retail, office and multi-family residential developments as required by State law.

Community Identity Chapter

CI 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.

CI Policy 3 Variety in Design. Discourage sameness and repetitive designs.

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

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

CI Policy 14 Open Areas and Landscaping. Require provision of adequate landscaped, open areas in project design.

CI Policy 15 Pedestrian Paths. Provide for maximum feasible pedestrian circulation.

CI Policy 32 Public Art. Promote public art that enhances the cultural life of the community.

Novato Zoning Ordinance

As noted earlier, the project site is currently zoned Planned District (PD). The PD zoning district requires the approval of a Master Plan (MP) and Precise Development Plan (PDP). The MP establishes allowable land uses, density, intensity of development, and suitability of the property for the proposed development. The PDP establishes the minimum lot size and site coverage requirements, minimum setback requirements and structure height limits, off-street parking requirements, landscaping requirements, and other site planning, development standards, and special provisions and requirements as deemed necessary by the review authority.

Based on the conceptual site plan, the applicant has proposed the following development standards:

Front Setback: 25 feet
Side Setback: 6 feet
Rear Setback: 20 feet
Drainage Setback: 5 feet
Wetland Setback: 50 feet
Building Height: 15 – 38 feet (one to three stories buildings)
Parking Spaces: 126 spaces (1.575 spaces/unit)

Design Review Findings

The Design Review Commission should consider the design of the Project from the perspective of the following uniform findings of approval. These are the finding the Design Review Commission will be asked to make when forwarding a recommendation on the Project's site design, massing and height, and architectural and landscaping concepts to the Planning Commission and City Council.

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.

RECOMMENDATION

Conduct the public workshop, including any public input, and provide comments to staff and Applicant regarding the site design, building massing and height, and architectural and landscape concepts proposed for the Project.

FURTHER ACTION

A future public hearing will be scheduled with the Design Review Commission to consider making a formal recommendation to the Planning Commission and City Council regarding the Project's site design options, building massing and height, and architectural and landscape concepts.

ATTACHMENTS (available for digital download)

[8161 Redwood Blvd – Project Plan Set](#)