

# AVENUE 320 APARTMENTS

July 17, 2019

320 College Avenue  
Santa Rosa, CA

## Design Review and Major Landmark Alteration Application

### Project Description:

The Applicant proposes the adaptive reuse of an existing 3 level office building located at 320 College Avenue into rental housing as well as the construction of a new 4 story apartment building. The site is located just east of Hwy 101, lies within the Station Area Plan with a General Plan designation of Retail Business Services and a Zoning of CD-5-H. The reuse and remodeling of the existing office building will create 20 apartment units; the new building will house an additional 20 for total unit count of 40 market rate rental units. The unit mix will consist of (3) Studios, (22) 1-Bedroom and (15) 2-Bedroom units.

The existing office building is currently improved with multiple office suites on floors 2 and 3. Floor one contains the lobby entrance to the office floors, parking garage and pass-through to the parking lot at the southerly portion of the site. The subject property has suffered from poor occupancy over the past 5-7 years and has gone through 2 ownership changes. These owners had not had the desire to renovate and enhance the office environment. The proposed project is supported within the CD-5 Zoning District and per Zoning Code Section 20-16.060 A.6, multi-family uses are permitted by right without the need of a Conditional Use Permit. The project will improve the landscaping along College Avenue and Lincoln St and will provide 1 parking stall per unit; 31 stalls will be covered and 11 will be uncovered. The project will also provide a common patio area, bike storage, and private outdoor space for some of the units.

The zoning designation of CD-5 allows for a height limit of 55 feet. The project will be far below this limit. The existing structure is 3 levels and approximately 35 feet in height. Although the proposed new building will be 4 levels with an approximate height of 45 feet at its highest point, the portion closest to Lincoln Street will be 2 levels and approximately 24 feet in height. This southerly building façade is set back approximately 24 feet from the curb at Lincoln Street.

### Historic Neighborhood:

Although the property lies in the St. Rose Historic District, this block only contains one contributing historic property. (See contributing/non-contributing map attached.) It's also noteworthy that the project site is one of only two properties in the district with frontage on both College Avenue and Lincoln Street. This creates a very unique situation of trying to bridge between the Lincoln Street residential frontage, and the highly trafficked College Avenue commercial frontage. The College Avenue frontage consists of an existing office building that appears to have been built before the St. Rose District was created. Our design proposes a modest exterior renovation to modernize the College Avenue façade of the existing building while creating a continuity in overall massing between our

original structure and the proposed structure. We have attempted to be thoughtful with the massing of the new structure and its relationship to the Lincoln Street frontage. This was carried out by a setback approach to the building height, so that the 2 story elements are adjacent to the sidewalk. As previously noted, the two-story portion of the building is approximately 24 feet from the street curb, and the four-story portion is approximately 35 feet back from the curb. The new building also incorporates a recessed entry form with vertical stair tower element and vertical glazing reminiscent of Art Moderne apartment buildings from the 1930's which would be one of the architectural periods associated with this neighborhood. We have taken into account feedback from the neighborhood meeting on May 29, 2019 and softened some of the building edges with radiuses and incorporated additional architectural features associated with Art Moderne buildings. We feel this scale, massing and architectural aesthetic is more in keeping with both the visual connection to the existing office building and the historic neighborhood than conforming to the primarily single-story scale of the adjacent homes. This scale also allows us to meet the design intent and residential density of the General Plan and Station Area Plan.

There was some discussion during our neighborhood meeting about whether an Art Deco or Moderne architectural style was appropriate in this district, and perhaps a different style would be better suited. We do not agree with this opinion and make note of the following facts. There are a half dozen or so multifamily properties in the St Rose district that reflect Victorian, Spanish, Italianate, Plantation and Art Deco style. Additionally, there are several Art Deco style office buildings on B Street. There is no clear or dominant architectural style of multifamily properties within this district. We feel that the Art Moderne style is appropriate for the historic period of the neighborhood and was a commonly used style of that period for multistory commercial and residential buildings.

The building height is 4 stories, which is below the CD-5 height limit. There were several comments about building height and proximity to the public sidewalk. We believe the stepped back façade design outlined above successfully softens this relationship; additionally, the new landscaping will further enhance the transition from street to building. There are existing multifamily properties in this historic district with 3 story elements much closer to the public areas than we are proposing. For example, the building at 616 B Street has 3 story elements within about 15 feet of the sidewalk; this is considerably closer to the street than we are proposing.

We will replace 3 trees in the sidewalk planters and plant an additional 3 trees between the sidewalk and the new building to help further enhance the pedestrian streetscape and visually reduce the height of the new building.

### **Parking and Traffic:**

The parking standards for this site are governed by the Downtown Station Area Plan. The Downtown Station Area Plan (DSAP) breaks this area into 7 sub-sections. This project lies in the Historic Residential Sub-Area. According to the DSAP, this area will retain existing land use designations. The DSAP also outlines parking standards within these 7 areas. Currently, the parking standards ranges from 1 to 1.5 reserved spaces for all 7 sub sections. The parking requirement for this subdistrict of the DSAP is 1.5 spaces per unit, for a total parking requirement of 60 parking stalls. The zoning code allows for a 25% reduction in required parking by right, subject to specific guidelines. This would bring the required parking quantity down from 60 to 45 stalls. The site plan currently provides for approximately 42 parking spaces on site. We have identified 3 additional stalls on Lincoln, directly adjacent to the project

site. The City currently is in the process of amending the Downtown Station Area Plan and reducing the parking standards is one of the many adjustments being considered. We understand that the required parking standard could drop as low as 0.68 spaces per unit in certain districts. It seems possible that the standard could drop in the upcoming months to well below the ratio we are currently using.

There was some discussion at the neighborhood meeting about traffic flow to and from the property. We wish to point out that the traffic volume and patterns of a 19,000 square foot office building are actually of greater impact than traffic associated with a multifamily development. The number of trips to and from the property as a fully occupied office building is far greater than the number of trips generated by a 40-unit multifamily project. Our project is also unique, in that it provides 3 different ways to enter and leave the property. There is a driveway on both College Avenue and Lincoln Street frontages. We understand we may need to limit the turning direction of ingress and/or egress, but these two driveways will both be used to enter and exit the property. In addition, there is also the easterly ground floor parking that is accessed via College Avenue only. This area will provide parking for 12 vehicles and account for almost 25% of the project's vehicular traffic; these 12 vehicles would be on only enter and exit onto College Avenue and will not impact Lincoln Street. We are also exploring bicycle share programs and other non-auto modes of transportation to help decrease short car ride trips and promote a housing community that can have access to bicycles for these shorter trips.

### **General Plan Goals this project would satisfy:**

#### **Section (NSRSA Plan) AH-3.1 "Encourage housing of all types, including students and seniors".**

This proposed project would deliver 25 studio and 1-bedroom units all of which would be served by elevator and meet State accessibility requirements.

#### **General Plan, Section 4-8: H-A, H-C,**

The proposed project meets the goal of providing housing needs for all Santa Rosa residents by increasing the supply of apartment units.

**Section H-C: Expand the supply of Housing available to Lower Income Households.** The proposed project will be a market rate development that will provide housing near and possibly below the median rent for similar style of housing. Half of this project will not be new construction, units will be compact in size with no pool, work out room or similar amenity, the project will not command the amount of rent achievable in other parts of the community.

**Adaptive Reuse:** This project would meet the definition of Adaptive Reuse in the General Plan. The proposed project would reuse and repurpose the existing building. This approach is significantly better for the local environment than the demolition and dumping of the existing structure into a landfill. Additionally, the reuse allows to keep project costs lower, resulting in rents that are more attainable for renters.

**Summary:**

The proposed project will provide 40 units of housing of varying sizes within the downtown core. The project will provide a transition between the non-historic commercial side of College Avenue and the St. Rose Historic District. Housing continues to be a challenge for the community; the reuse concept allows for a housing project to obtain entitlements in less time, and at a lower cost than comparable bare land projects. The applicant is targeting a third quarter 2020 construction start, with units available by mid-2021. The project will offer in-unit laundry facilities, covered parking and elevator service. Additionally, the project is walking distance to downtown shops, restaurants, services and the new Courthouse Square. The project site also has easy access to public transportation, including being located 0.9 miles to the Santa Rosa SMART depot as well as near adjoining bike paths. The Applicant believes these housing units will be well received by the market and add to a vibrancy of the downtown core.



# HISTORIC PRESERVATION DISTRICT PROPERTIES

- Contributor
- Non-Contributor
- Unknown

