

CITY OF CALISTOGA

STAFF REPORT

TO: CHAIRMAN MANFREDI AND MEMBERS OF THE
PLANNING COMMISSION

FROM: KEN MACNAB, PLANNING & BUILDING MANAGER

MEETING DATE: OCTOBER 24, 2012

SUBJECT: CONCEPTUAL DESIGN REVIEW (CDR 2012-02) – 611
WASHINGTON STREET – CALISTOGA AFFORDABLE
HOUSING

1 **REQUEST**

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3 Review of revised conceptual plans to construct an 18-unit affordable housing
4 project located at 611 Washington Street (APN 011-260-027) within the “R-3”,
5 Residential/Professional Office Zoning District. The applicant is Calistoga
6 Affordable Housing on behalf of the property owner, Charles Gonzales. This
7 project was first presented to the Planning Commission on July 25, 2012.

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9 **BACKGROUND**

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11 At the July 25, 2012 regular meeting of the Planning Commission, Calistoga
12 Affordable Housing, Inc. presented conceptual development plans for an 18-unit
13 affordable housing project located at 611 Washington Street. The Planning
14 Commission commented on several aspects of the contemplated project,
15 including density, project design, parking, site circulation and project livability. A
16 copy of the staff report and meeting minutes from the July 25, 2012 Planning
17 Commission meeting are attached to this report (Attachments 2 and 3).

18
19 In response to the Commission’s comments, Calistoga Affordable Housing, Inc.
20 has submitted revised conceptual development plans for further discussion and
21 comment by the Planning Commission. Revised conceptual drawings and a
22 supporting narrative are provided in Attachments 7 and 8.

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24 The revised plans are being presented for the purpose of providing the Planning
25 Commission an opportunity to assess whether the proposed changes sufficiently
26 address comments made at the July 25, 2012 meeting. The Commission’s
27 assessment will help the applicant in determining whether to move forward with a
28 formal development application.
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30 **STAFF ANALYSIS**

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32 **A. SUMMARY OF JULY 25th MEETING COMMENTS**

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34 At the July 25, 2012 Planning Commission meeting, the Commission's
35 discussion and comments on the project were largely focused on density, project
36 design and parking. Below is a summary of comments made by the Commission
37 at this meeting.

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39 **1. Density.** The majority of Commissioners expressed concern about the
40 proposed density of the project. Specifically, there was concern that the
41 developable portion of the site is not large enough to accommodate the
42 amenities needed to support the proposed number of units, including
43 provision of on-site parking and community-oriented common space.

44
45 **2. Project Design.** The Planning Commission made the following
46 comments related to project design:

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48 Mixed Use: A number of Commissioners (as well as members of the
49 public) questioned the project's consistency with the City's Urban Design
50 Plan, which calls for mixed-use development in the lower Washington
51 Street area. The Commission encouraged the applicant to consider a
52 mixed-use development project.

53
54 Balcony Porches: The Commission expressed some concern about the
55 usability of the proposed porch space and their potential to become
56 unsightly storage areas.

57
58 Trash Enclosure: The Commission expressed some concern about the
59 trash enclosure being located at the rear of the development, requiring
60 garbage trucks to drive all the way into the project site to pick up trash. It
61 was suggested that the trash enclosure be located more toward the front
62 of the project site.

63
64 Focal Point: The Planning Commission expressed concern that the focal
65 point of the development was the central driveway and parking area. The
66 Commission encouraged the applicant to explore reconfiguring site access
67 to allow for the central area of the site to be used as a community-oriented
68 space.

69
70 Neighborhood Context: Several Commissioners concurred with comments
71 made by a neighboring property owner that the project should be designed
72 in consideration of making a positive contribution to the larger lower
73 Washington Street area.

75 **3. Parking.** The Planning Commission expressed concern about the
76 deficient number of on-site parking spaces. The Commission recognized
77 that parking conditions in the neighborhood are already impacted and that
78 the deficiency in on-site parking may further exacerbate this condition.
79

80 The Commission also discussed the tandem parking configuration. One
81 Commissioner was concerned that the tandem parking area underneath
82 the units may end up being used for personal storage instead of parking –
83 further reducing on-site parking. Another Commissioner suggested that
84 the applicant explore the possibility of securing an easement from the
85 adjoining property owner to allow for “through” access for the tandem
86 parking spaces.
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88 **B. SUMMARY OF APPLICANT RESPONSES TO JULY 25th COMMENTS**

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90 On October 5, 2012, the Planning and Building Department received revised
91 conceptual plans and explanatory narrative from the applicant (Attachments 7
92 and 8). The plans and narrative reflect a number of project changes that have
93 been made in response to the Commission’s comments. Proposed changes and
94 staff comments are summarized below.
95

96 **1. Density.** The applicant has addressed the Commission’s comments on
97 density by eliminating one unit and modifying building architecture to
98 reduce the “visual” or perceived density of the project. The development
99 is now comprised of 15 two-bedroom units and 2 one-bedroom units.
100 Ground level floor plans are shown in Attachment 8. The 2nd floor two
101 bedroom unit plans are similar to the plans shown in the original submittal.
102

103 Architectural modifications made to reduce the visual or perceived density
104 of the project include: (1) re-orientation of buildings to face Washington
105 Street; (2) combining units types under shed and gable roofs to reduce the
106 apparent number of units; (3) addition of a sloped roof-span across the
107 entry drive to “frame” or define a collective “front door” to the project site.
108

109 *STAFF COMMENT:* *The applicant has reduced the density of the project by*
110 *eliminating one residential unit. The resulting project density equates to 25 units*
111 *per acre, which exceeds the base density range for the High Density Residential*
112 *General Plan Land Use Designation but is within the density range that is*
113 *allowable for an affordable housing project (29 units maximum for the project*
114 *site).*
115

116 *Staff finds that the architectural modifications being proposed will be effective in*
117 *reducing the perceived intensity of the project. The proposed three story*
118 *buildings have been set back further from Washington Street, located behind a*
119 *two-story building proposed along the front of the property. This change helps*

120 create a “stepped” effect where less intense development is located at the front
121 of the property and more intense development is pushed further back into the
122 property. In addition, the re-orientation of buildings towards Washington Street
123 will serve to substantially screen parking and garage areas from view at
124 Washington Street.

125

126 **2. Project Design.**

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128 Mixed Use: The applicant has addressed the Commission’s and
129 neighborhoods interest in a mixed-use project by eliminating one of the
130 residential units and replacing it with a small ground-floor office space.
131 The proposed office space would be located at the front of the property
132 and oriented toward Washington Street.

133

134 STAFF COMMENT: Replacement of a residential unit with a small office space
135 reduces the residential density of the project and advances community interests
136 in having mixed-use development on lower Washington Street. Staff finds the
137 commercial space to be appropriately located and oriented towards Washington
138 Street. The size of the commercial space appears to be comparable to the size
139 of commercial spaces provided in the newer mixed-use development project
140 located up the street from the project site. Staff suggests that the commercial
141 space be designed with the flexibility to accommodate both office and retail uses.

142

143 Balcony Porches: The applicant has responded to the Commission’s
144 comments by enlarging the depth of the balcony areas from approximately
145 4 feet to 6 feet to improve the “usability” of the balcony area as living
146 space.

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148 STAFF COMMENT: Staff concurs with the applicant that the increased balcony
149 depth will make the space more usable as an outdoor space – with sufficient
150 room for furnishings (small table, chairs, etc.) now being provided. On-site
151 management controls will still be necessary to insure that the balcony spaces do
152 not become cluttered or tarped storage areas.

153

154 Trash Enclosure: The trash enclosure has been relocated further back
155 into the site than in the original proposal.

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157 STAFF COMMENT: The proposed relocation of the trash enclosure further back
158 into the site is counter to the suggestion of some Commissioners who asked that
159 consideration be given to moving the enclosure more towards the front of the
160 site. The proposed location does place the trash collection area out of site from
161 most residential units, thereby enhancing the visual quality of the internal living
162 environment. However, the proposed location would still require that garbage
163 trucks drive fully into the site for pick up.

164

165 Focal Point: The applicant has responded to the Commission's concern
166 about the quality of the living environment created by a centralized
167 driveway and parking area by: (1) adding a substantially-sized landscaped
168 area with meandering walkway in front of the two-story units; (2) adding
169 garage doors to the tandem parking stalls; (3) scaling down the size
170 (footprint) of the internal two-story building to allow for greater visual
171 exposure to the open-area located at the rear of the property; and (4)
172 relocation of the trash enclosure out of the central view corridor.

173
174 STAFF COMMENT: *Although the central portion of the site is still used for*
175 *vehicle access and parking, staff finds that the proposed modifications will*
176 *enhance the aesthetics of the central living environment. The widened*
177 *landscape strip will provide green space in what had previously been a largely*
178 *hardscaped area. Reduction of the two-story building footprint combined with*
179 *relocation of the trash enclosure will allow for greater visual exposure of the*
180 *open-space area at the rear of the site, softening the centralized environment of*
181 *the development. Finally, the addition of garage doors to the tandem parking*
182 *stalls will serve to screen vehicles and garage areas from view. Staff suggests*
183 *the use of garage doors with windows and other decorative elements to help*
184 *minimize the "wall effect" that will be created with this addition.*

185
186 Neighborhood Context: The applicant has responded to Commission and
187 community interest in enhancing the lower Washington Street area by
188 making substantial changes to the site plan and design of the project.
189 These changes include: (1) re-orienting buildings to face Washington
190 Street; (2) adding ground-floor commercial space along Washington
191 Street; (3) pushing the three-story building back from the front of the
192 property; and (4) incorporation of architectural revisions, including reduced
193 building scale, refined roof elements and exterior material changes.

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195 STAFF COMMENT: *Staff finds that the proposed changes to the site plan and*
196 *architecture are responsive to comments made by the Commission and*
197 *members of the public. The changes greatly improve the project's interface with*
198 *Washington Street and will enhance the lower Washington Street area.*

199
200 **3. Parking.** The applicant has responded to the Commission's concern
201 about on-site parking by proposing to restrict the occupancy of four units
202 to seniors (55 and older) – which would likely reduce the demand for on-
203 site parking spaces (when compared to the likely demand from a family
204 household). The applicant is also requesting that only one on-site parking
205 space be required for the commercial space and that the remaining
206 requirement be allowed to be provided in public on-street parking spaces.
207 Table 1 on the following page summarizes required and proposed parking
208 scenarios.
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TABLE 1 – SUMMARY OF REQUIRED AND PROPOSED PARKING SCENARIOS

Description	Required Spaces	Proposed Spaces
Multi-family – Unrestricted (13 units)	26	26
Multi-family – Senior Only (4 units)	8	3
Office Space – (estimated at 750 sq. ft.)	3	1
TOTAL SPACES :	37	30

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***STAFF COMMENT:** The proposed number of on-site parking spaces does not meet the minimum number of spaces required by the Municipal Code. Staff does believe that the applicant's proposal to restrict four units to senior occupancy will reduce on-site parking demand but does not have sufficient information to be able to determine if it would be to the extent that the applicant has suggested.*

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With respect to commercial parking, staff believes the request to require only one on-site parking space for the commercial space (presumably for one employee) is reasonable. As an office use, the conflict with evening and weekend on-street parking demand would be minimal. The Planning Commission has granted exceptions to on-site parking requirements for mixed-use developments in the lower Washington Street area in the past (e.g., Matsushita massage business).

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ENTITLEMENTS

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Entitlements required for approval of the project include: (A) rezoning of the project site to a Planned Development District, including preparation of preliminary and final development plans for the site; (B) Conditional Use Permit, and (C) Design Review approval. Staff would support concurrent processing of the above entitlements in the interest of facilitating expeditious review of the project.

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The applicant has also indicated a possible interest in entering into a Development Agreement with the City.

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ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

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The proposed project will be subject to environmental review pursuant to the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). However, this Conceptual Design Review does not warrant review pursuant to CEQA as no approvals or entitlements are being requested or will be granted.

245 **RECOMMENDATION**

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247 Staff recommends that the Planning Commission review the revised conceptual
248 development plans, receive comments from the applicant and the public, and
249 provide preliminary comments to the applicant and staff.

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251 It should be noted that the Planning Commission comments during conceptual
252 design review are advisory only and should not be considered by the applicant to
253 be requirements or an endorsement of the project until a complete application is
254 considered through the formal review process.

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256 **ATTACHMENTS**

- 257
258 1. Vicinity Map
259 2. Planning Commission Staff Report dated July 25, 2012 (w/o attachments)*
260 3. Planning Commission Meeting Minute Excerpt dated July 25, 2012
261 4. Originally submitted project description dated June 15, 2012.
262 5. Originally submitted site development plans dated June 15, 2012.
263 6. Correspondence addressing originally submitted plans dated July 30,
264 2012 from David and Suzan Shaw.
265 7. Narrative response to Planning Commission comments dated October 5,
266 2012.
267 8. Revised conceptual site plan and Washington Street elevation.

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270 * **NOTE:** *Attachments to the July 25, 2012 Planning Commission staff report can be*
271 *viewed/downloaded from the City's web site at the following address:*

272
273 <http://www.ci.calistoga.ca.us/index.aspx?recordid=1365&page=272>