

Excerpt

MINUTES

CALISTOGA PLANNING COMMISSION

July 11, 2018

A. ROLL CALL

Commissioners present: Chair Paul Coates, Vice Chair Tim Wilkes, Alissa McNair, Scott Cooper, Walter Abernathy. Absent: None. Staff present: Planning and Building Director Lynn Goldberg, Senior Planner Kevin Thompson.

G. PUBLIC HEARINGS

4. **1514 Washington Street Apartments Design Review DR 2018-4:** Design review application for a 4-unit multi-family project at 1514 Washington Street

Senior Planner Thompson presented the staff report. The project is consistent with the General Plan and the Zoning Code. It would fulfill the Housing Element goal of providing high-density units within walking distance of downtown and making efficient use of a site zoned for multi-family housing. In response to a question from **Vice-Chair Wilkes**, Mr. Thompson confirmed that staff is seeking to preserve the existing street trees on Washington Street, and not the cypresses on Fourth Street.

David Kesler, project architect, stated that he worked with staff and Vice-Chair Wilkes to develop a sensitive design proposal. He displayed pictures of materials and designs used in the neighborhood that are similar to those proposed for the project. In response to questions about the proposed colors, he explained that the color would be integrated into the exterior concrete material. He displayed samples of the proposed colors to the Commission. In response to questions about the proposed front yard fences, he acknowledged that their height would be limited by the Zoning Code maximum.

Norine Moses, 1419 4th Street, believes that this is a crazy and ugly project. She and her husband have spent many years and money ensuring that their yard and home are a pleasant addition to 4th Street, and her neighbors have done the same. The proposed project would affect neighborhood stability. She recognizes that it's a mixed neighborhood, with existing apartments. The street has become overrun with parked cars and this project would exacerbate the situation. This lot has been a single-family dwelling adjoining another single-family dwelling for many years. The Planning Commission needs to take into account the neighborhood's qualities.

Jeffrey Stambor, 1406 4th Street, was told in 2003 that he couldn't add one bedroom to his home. The project goes against protecting and preserving Calistoga's small town character. He is concerned about the proposed 13 bedrooms, which is too many. There is no on-street parking available now. The Washington and 4th Street intersection has very poor visibility turning left onto

Washington. The proposed design doesn't fit the character of the neighborhood. Just because the project meets the legal requirements, it doesn't make it appropriate for the neighborhood.

Donna Higgins, 1410 4th Street, wasn't contacted by the applicants about the proposed project. She understands the need for housing but is concerned the apartments' trash cans will block the street and visibility on collection day. She wants the proposed number of bedrooms and residents clarified. She doesn't understand why the project can't be smaller. No on-site manager means that there will be no accountability. The project doesn't really fit. No guest parking will be provided. The monastery is parking on 4th Street. She wants to know if there would be other entrances into the units and how far the fences would be from 4th Street.

Mr. Kesler explained that the bedroom on the lower level of the proposed four-bedroom unit would be a guest room. He worked with the project's landscape architect to provide a large open space at the intersection to maximize visibility. He is not familiar with how trash is handled in the city. Three of the units would have rear yard access. He worked hard to make sure that the project's parking spaces weren't highly-visible and tried to be as sensitive as possible to Calistoga.

In response to a question from **Chair Coates**, Alla Reykhel, co-applicant, replied that she would manage the project with her husband. She would provide phone numbers to neighbors for them to share any concerns with them regarding tenant behavior. They will carefully screen tenants to ensure that a quiet neighborhood is maintained.

Donna Higgins thinks that in reality there will probably not be nuclear families living in each of these units. There might be multiple individuals in an apartment and she wondered who she would call if there are six cars associated with it, and how the landlord would control how many people live there.

Vice-Chair Wilkes observed that there must be single-family homes on 4th Street that are rentals. If there's a problem, you can knock on the front door of one of the apartments just like any other home.

Mr. Stambor stated that it's not the proposed density of units that's a problem; it's the density of people. The project could add 24 people to the neighborhood. The area is not prepared to accommodate this population increase. The project is not the type of housing that consistent with maintaining the town's rural character. There appears to be support from the Commission for approving variances for single-family dwellings in the R-3 Zoning District, as it did for an item earlier on the agenda.

Ms. Reykhel called attention to the multi-storied building across the street from the project site and noted that their building would be much nicer looking.

In response to a question from Ms. Moses, **Chair Coates** replied that there is no provision in the Municipal Code that limits the number of cars that can be

associated with a household. He agrees that there's a parking problem in general, but it won't be changed by this project.

Chair Coates closed the public hearing.

Commissioner Abernathy acknowledged the need for housing and that the project meets the Municipal Code's standards.

In response to a question from **Vice-Chair Wilkes** regarding the maximum number of units that are allowed to be developed on the property, Ms. Goldberg stated that up to four units are allowed without a density bonus. He appreciates the history of the neighborhood and its stability. The R-3 zoning has been in place for a very long time and no zoning change is requested by the project. There has been more internal population growth in the city than housing to match it, and there is a real need for housing. The design is compatible with its surroundings in terms of architectural materials and forms. Potential problems with tenants can be addressed just like they would be with a single-family home. He is familiar with parking problems; he has the same issue on his street. However, they're public streets and public parking is allowed on them. Part of the problem is the fact that people are using their garages for storage instead of parking. The project is a legitimate proposal that meets the standards. The architect has worked hard to design a project that is compatible with the neighborhood.

Commissioner McNair noted that the street she lives on is also packed with cars and she has to park around the corner. She has a two-story building being constructed behind her, so she understands the neighbors' concerns. However, the project is providing generous setbacks and not asking for any concessions. She recognizes the great need for housing. The major failure in this case is the applicants not communicating with the neighbors before the hearing so that all of their questions were answered. In her case, she can read plans and understands how the project's trash would be handled.

In response to a question from **Chair Coates**, Ms. Goldberg confirmed that the R-3 Zoning does not allow the construction of a single-family dwelling on the vacant property. He has a three-story apartment building nearing completion near him, but he understands the need to create housing. It's going to affect neighbors wherever it's constructed. He hopes that the applicants are very respectful of the neighbors in terms of potential tenant problems. He agrees that the parking situation would be improved if people parked in their garages.

Ms. Reykhel stated that if there is a situation that leads to the need for a property manager, she will hire one, and she will stay in communication with the neighbors.

A motion by **Vice-Chair Wilkes** and seconded by **Commissioner Abernathy** to adopt a resolution approving design review application DR 2018-4 was approved 4-1 (dissent Commissioner Cooper).