

MINUTES
CALISTOGA PLANNING COMMISSION
September 23, 2020 at 5:30 p.m.

1 **Chair Coates** called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m. He read a special message
2 concerning the conduct of the virtual meeting in accordance with provisions related
3 to COVID-19.

4 **A. ROLL CALL**

5 Commissioners present: Chair Paul Coates, Vice Chair Tim Wilkes, Commissioners
6 Alissa McNair, Scott Cooper and Doug Allan. Staff present: Planning and Building
7 Director Zach Tusinger, Permit Technician Claudia Aceves.

8 **B. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

9 **C. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

10 None

11 **D. ADOPTION OF MEETING AGENDA**

12 The meeting agenda was adopted as presented.

13 **E. COMMUNICATIONS/CORRESPONDENCE**

14 Director Tusinger indicates that after the last meeting date changed, he has received
15 additional emails related to the public hearing items, which were distributed to
16 commissioners and posted on the city website.

17 **F. CONSENT CALENDAR**

- 18 1. **Minutes Approval:** Draft minutes for the September 9, 2020 meeting

 The Consent Calendar was adopted as presented.

19 **G. PUBLIC HEARINGS**

- 20 1. **1448 North Oak Townhomes - DR 2020-6, TM 2020-1** Consideration of design
21 review and tentative map applications to allow for demolition of two residential
22 structures and a tank house, and replace with six residential units in the form of
23 two, two-story townhome triplex buildings with an accompanying condominium
24 map. This proposed action is exempt from the California Environmental Quality
25 Act (CEQA) under Section 15332 of the CEQA Guidelines.

26 **Recommended Action:** Hold a public hearing and approve design review and
27 tentative map resolutions with conditions.

28 Director Tusinger provides the staff report noting that it is six for sale townhomes
29 in a two building configuration on a previously developed site across from the
30 fairgrounds. He says the proposal is two stories, features porches, backyards
31 and garage driveway parking that meets off street parking provisions of the code.
32 He shows the site plan, architectural elevations, and comments that it is

33 compliant with all development standards. He also noted that the city and the
34 applicant paid special attention to the tank house, as it is listed in the General
35 Plan's list of historic resources for the city. An architectural historian was
36 commissioned to review and evaluate the tank house and determined it was a
37 good example of vernacular architecture, but lacked context and would not be
38 considered a resource under CEQA. The city's building official and engineer also
39 determined it was seriously structurally deficient, making restoration of the tank
40 house not economically viable. He added that there are conditions of approval in
41 the draft tentative map that would require the donation or provision of the
42 materials that are salvageable to be allowed to be used for other projects.

43 Additionally, there are key offsite improvements contemplated in the project
44 including the construction of sidewalk along the frontage and 500 feet of 12-inch
45 sewer in North Oak Street. He explained how the project meets several General
46 Plan guidelines including the housing element, land use element, active
47 transportation plan and residential design guidelines. He provides a reminder that
48 the entitlements requested are a design review and tentative map.

49 **Commissioner Cooper** asks if there is possibility for low income units. Director
50 Tusinger says the affordable housing inclusionary standards only calls for the
51 requirement of below income housing when there is a net increase of five new
52 units on the site. There are two existing units on site, which makes a net increase
53 of four units. He notes that this project will pay all the standard development fees
54 required. **Commissioner Cooper** asks about the estimation of pricing per unit.

55 The applicant, **Ralph Strauss** thanks staff and comments how they described
56 the project well. He speaks to the architectural aspect and adds that the initial
57 challenge was to create nice looking architecture to face out to Oak St. He
58 describes what went into the design including the porches and walkways to
59 create a nice identity. He notes the alley helps to hide the garage doors and
60 makes visibility limited from Oak Street. He adds that the private backyards for
61 each unit are a nice feature. He says the scale is appropriate to adjacent
62 structures. He says these are the highlights from an architectural point of view.

63 A public comment by **Larry Kroman** with Calistoga Affordable Housing
64 commends the architect and says the design fits well into the community. He
65 says even though it is not low income housing, the community needs housing
66 and hopes the city will do everything it can to facilitate the project.

67 **Vice Chair Wilkes** comments that it is an outstanding architectural configuration
68 and compliments the architect.

69 **Commissioner Cooper** appreciates the multiple units, which adds to the
70 housing stock and seconds Vice Chair Wilkes' comments on the design.

71 **Commissioner McNair** echoes the previous opinions made about the exterior
72 and visual aesthetics of the project. She comments about the garage ability to
73 accommodate bike, parking and storage, as it is a minimum size. Director
74 Tusinger responds that some of the units have additional alcoves to provide
75 some space for storage. **Mr. Strauss** confirms that four of the six units have
76 alcoves and they will be working to maximize space as they move through
77 construction drawings.

78 **Commissioner Allan** thanks the developer for providing a reasonable density for
79 this area that is zoned for that, as the city needs more housing.

80 **Chair Coates** adds that he too thinks it is a wonderful job.

81 A motion by **Vice Chair Wilkes** to adopt a resolution approving a design review
82 application allowing the demolition of two residential units at 1448 North Oak
83 Street and replacing them with six townhomes is seconded by **Commissioner**
84 **Cooper** and approved unanimously.

85 A second motion by **Chair Coates** to adopt a resolution approving a tentative
86 map creating six residential condominiums on a single lot is seconded by
87 **Commissioner McNair** and approved unanimously.

88 2. **The Veranda Hotel at Indian Springs DR 2017-8, UP 2017-9, DA 2017-1**
89 Consideration of a design review, use permit, and development agreement to
90 allow for demolition of seven existing single-story structures onsite and for the
91 development a 96-room hotel, restaurant, ground floor retail, pools and spas
92 heated through a closed loop system with geothermal water, public courtyard,
93 parking and streetscape improvements to Lincoln Avenue and Fair Way as well
94 as an Emergency Vehicle Access road extending between Fair Way Extension
95 and Magnolia Drive. An Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration has
96 been prepared for this project in compliance with the California Environmental
97 Quality Act (CEQA).

98 **Recommended Action:** Hold a public hearing and approve design review, use
99 permit, development agreement, and mitigated negative declaration resolutions.

100 **Chair Coates** recuses himself due to a conflict of interest and leaves the meeting
101 and **Vice Chair Wilkes** takes over.

102 Director Tusinger presents **Olivia Ervin**, environmental consultant from M-
103 Group, and **Karen Murphy**, a representative from the city attorney's office and
104 proceeds with his staff report. He notes that this project has been in the works for
105 several years and has gone through the process of being analyzed. He
106 summarizes the project, which includes a two-story building with 96 hotel rooms,
107 restaurant and retail space and rooftop lounge. He notes it would be an
108 extension of the existing Indian Springs Resort, not a free standing resort and
109 provides a brief history of the hotel. He said it was reviewed for the California
110 Environmental Quality Act including an Initial Study and a Mitigated Negative

111 Declaration was prepared, as well as a draft Development Agreement to
112 accompany the land use entitlements, which Commissioners will review and may
113 choose to recommend to the City Council.

114 He provides renderings of the proposed architecture and elaborates into the
115 elements of the project including guest rooms, restaurant space, rooftop space,
116 pools, and off-street parking for 233 vehicles. He notes that the project complies
117 with all development and general plan standards. He also notes key
118 improvements would be completed as part of this project, including segments of
119 the Vine Trail, emergency exit to the mobilehome park and other infrastructure
120 improvements.

121 He comments on the Development Agreement, which is a contract between a
122 city and a developer, that the commission can review and recommend to City
123 Council. The DA calls for a seven year term with up to three one-year extensions
124 and requires the re-location of the existing laundromat, which sits on the project
125 site and is the only laundromat in town. He said it is an essential resource for the
126 city and will need to continue at a different location. There are also provisions
127 related to fees. He notes that there have been a large number of public
128 comments, which were overwhelmingly supportive of the project with few
129 questioning the project's size. He says that Condition 17 in the draft UP & DR
130 resolution should reference Eddy Street, not Anna Street, and asks it be
131 corrected if commissioners move forward.

132 **Olivia Ervin** shares an extensive presentation on the project's environmental
133 review done by a team of experts, including air quality specialists, biologists,
134 archeologists, historians and transportation engineers. **Ms. Ervin** summarized
135 the environmental approach, which she said included background research, field
136 investigations and early consultations. She notes that the environmental review
137 encompassed the whole project, consisting of on-site and off-site improvements.
138 She explains the initial study provides an evaluation on over 20 environmental
139 categories and is very comprehensive.

140 She provided an overview of the primary impacts that were identified and the
141 avoidance measures to reduce them to levels below significance. These included
142 water quality, mineral resources, noise, transportation and other impacts and an
143 Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) was prepared. **Ms. Ervin**
144 comments on the noticing procedures required by CEQA and how notice was
145 circulated to the public, adding that three comments were received by state
146 agencies and those comments were responded to and are included in the staff
147 report. She notes that the final IS/MND is comprised of the draft IS/MND, all
148 supporting studies, and response to comments and there were no new
149 substantial impacts identified.

150 **Director Tusinger** said the Planning Commission is charged with first reviewing
151 and consider the IS/MND and the MMRP before taking any action on any
152 entitlements. He thanks his predecessor, former Planning Director Lynn

153 Goldberg, for completing nearly 75 percent of the staff report and carrying this
154 project for the last several years.

155 **Commissioner Allan** asks about the Development Agreement laundromat
156 section and if there is a possibility to add language about the laundromat number
157 of machines remaining the same. Director Tusinger responds that the city has a
158 general expectation that the laundromat will fulfill the same role and meet the
159 same demand in terms of the capacity.

160 Applicant **Daniel Merchant** adds that based on observation, it is seldom running
161 at even 50 percent capacity because many machines are old and broken. He
162 says the existing laundromat is oversized for the community and believes they'll
163 need half the number of machines, but is open to having that discussion down
164 the road.

165 **Commissioner Cooper** asks about the location of new laundromat. Director
166 Tusinger responds that the DA as drafted does put some limitations of where it
167 can go and notes it should be in a central location easily accessed by all citizens
168 and residents.

169 **Vice Chair Wilkes** asks about the Fair Way and Lincoln Avenue intersection, in
170 regard to the exit from the Cal Mart parking lot, noting that there is a 'no left' turn
171 sign, which is often ignored. He expresses concern about the potential conflict
172 over a new left turn lane from Fair Way to Lincoln. Director Tusinger responds
173 that the city will need to do a better job at enforcing the illegal turn and adds that
174 the General Plan calls for the eventual signalization of that intersection. **Ms.**
175 **Ervin** comments that there wasn't anything specific in the environmental review
176 in terms of this turn. Staff and **Commissioner Wilkes** comment on possible
177 options to mitigate that separately in the future.

178 Applicant **Daniel Merchant** gives a presentation on the project. He discusses the
179 history of his family in Calistoga and how they came to own Indian Springs and
180 transformed the hotel over 30 years. He comments on the 75-room expansion
181 with restaurant completed six years ago. He notes the improvements have
182 generated over 8 million dollars in general fund tax revenue for the City. He
183 provides an overview of the decade-long journey to receive public input and
184 design the project according to the input and touches on the features that will be
185 included in the new transformation including a park like open space, 360 degree
186 views, and sufficient parking to encourage walking. **Mr. Merchant** says he and
187 his family are donating a half acre of land to Calistoga Affordable Housing to
188 ensure future housing gets built. He says the project presented is in conformance
189 with the zoning, requires no exceptions, no variances and is what the General
190 Plan calls for in that location.

191 **Commissioner McNair** asks about the emergency egress route and Director
192 Tusinger responds that it will only be accessible by the Fire Department for
193 emergencies and not open for daily traffic, except for pedestrian traffic.

194 **Commissioner McNair** then asks about the future of the remaining 34 acres of
195 the glider port property. **Mr. Merchant** responds that there are no plans at this
196 time. **Commissioner McNair** asks about the number of employees required to
197 run the new addition. **Mr. Merchant** responds that the number they worked into
198 was 60 new staff members and would cross-utilize current employees.
199 **Commissioner McNair** comments on the need for the laundromat and how
200 important it is to maintain.

201 **Vice Chair Wilkes** asks about the emergency egress route and if emergency
202 services would need to unlock the gate. Director Tusinger responds that he
203 understands the fire department would have to unlock the gate and this would
204 likely be added to the city's Emergency Operations Plan.

205 **Commissioner Cooper** asks about the added pedestrian traffic when Dr.
206 Wilkinson's and the Veranda opens and improving the crosswalk between the
207 two. Director Tusinger refers to again to the stoplight at the intersection and that
208 staff will continually monitor that intersection and recommend improvements for
209 safety. **Commissioner Cooper** thanks the applicant for making the necessary
210 changes to maintain the views.

211 **Vice Chair Wilkes** comments on the laundromat being completed before
212 construction of the hotel and asks if the applicant could make a commitment that
213 the new laundromat is open before the former one closes. **Mr. Merchant** says
214 the intent of the language in the DA is exactly that. **Vice Chair Wilkes** adds that
215 he is concerned about the breezeway and would like a break in the building's
216 rhythm there. **Mr. Merchant** responds that there is a prominent fountain to create
217 a seating environment which draws into the center courtyard. **Chuck Covell**
218 indicates it is already designed to have a break in the rhythm, but that there may
219 be ways to further modify it.

220 In general, public comments made by **John Hardesty, Ingrid Summerfield,**
221 **Ron Hartmann, Mario Sculatti,** and **Larry Kroman** all expressed support for the
222 project, as well as gratitude to the applicant for taking the time to listen to
223 residents' concerns and modifying the plans to address those concerns, and for
224 bringing business and housing to Calistoga.

225 **Vice Chair Wilkes** commends the Merchant family for making public the
226 commitment to donate the separate half acre site that can be used for work force
227 or affordable housing in the future.

228 **Commissioner McNair** asks about the rooftop and is satisfied that there's
229 nothing that looks like a third story up there.

230 **Commissioner Cooper** comments he is glad that they are at point where he can
231 confidently support the project due to all the changes that have been done.

232 **Commissioner Allan** thanks the public for the comments and for contributing the
233 pros and cons, which help him confidently make decisions.

234 **Vice Chair Wilkes** says he would like to a condition to ask that the new
235 laundromat is open for business before the old one is closed. Additionally, a
236 condition that asks the applicant sketches an idea to change the rhythm of the
237 breezeway. **Commissioner Cooper** says he would not want it to be a burden on
238 the applicant, but supports it as an exploratory requirement and not a mandate
239 and Vice Chair Wilkes agrees.

240 A motion by **Commissioner Cooper** that the Planning Commission adopt a
241 resolution adopting the project's MND is seconded by **Commissioner McNair**
242 and approved unanimously (**Chair Coates** absent).

243 A motion by **Commissioner McNair** that the Planning Commission adopt a
244 resolution approving UP2017-9 and DR2017-8 as modified with the change of
245 language to Condition 17 and condition to explore minor architectural changes to
246 the breezeway with staff is seconded by **Commissioner Cooper** and approved
247 unanimously (**Chair Coates** absent).

248 A motion by **Commissioner Allan** that the Planning Commission adopt a
249 resolution recommending approval of Development Agreement DA2017-1 to City
250 Council with amended on the laundromat section to include language that the
251 laundromat be operational before the prior laundromat is closed is seconded by
252 **Commissioner Cooper** and approved unanimously (**Chair Coates** absent).

253 **H. MATTERS INITIATED BY COMMISSIONERS**

254 **Commissioner McNair** asks about the removal of trees on item G1 and what the
255 fund is used for that is paid into when mitigation at 3:1 is not an option. Director
256 Tusinger responded that the fund is used for planting trees in public spaces around
257 town and adds that it is an actively used fund.

258 **Commissioner Allan** suggested recommending City Council use those funds to add
259 landscaping to the parklets. Director Tusinger said there are planters at the existing
260 parklet, but nothing has been planted. He is unsure if those funds can be used for
261 the parklets but will explore the option.

262 **J. DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

263 Director Tusinger reports that he received one late email related to the first public
264 hearing item regarding parking, ingress/egress and fire safety. He notes he will
265 include the email as part of the permanent record and personally follow up with that
266 resident. He thanks the Commissioners for keeping up with the meeting date
267 changes and says there will be one or both meetings in October.

268 **K. ADJOURNMENT**

269 The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Claudia Aceves, Secretary