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400 HEALDSBURG - PLANNING NARRATIVES

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Dear Ellen McDoowell,

Thank you for your review of our planning resubmission for 400 Healdsburg Ave. As you've requested, I've written project narratives including information regarding how the project is consistent with the city design guidelines and our design response to the planning commissioners' feedback during our planning workshop last year. Please see the narratives below.

Consistency with City Design Guidelines

We have included narratives below that discuss how the proposed design is consistent with the Design Guidelines Character Area 5 (Downtown Core), as well as Chapter 6 (Design Guidelines for Commercial) and Chapter 7.

Chapter 4: Character Area 5 - Downtown Core

- **Building Placement**

The proposed building is located at the back of sidewalk per the design guidelines except where ground-floor level setbacks have been provided for added sidewalk width and space for outdoor amenities in support of the retail and hotel lobby. To promote a safe, interesting, and comfortable pedestrian environment, we have recessed ground-floor retail spaces, an entry plaza for the lobby, narrow garage access, and a high level of transparency by using floor-to-ceiling glazed storefront at all retail and hotel amenity spaces. Parking has been hidden within the building, out of sight from pedestrians and plantings have been located within the setbacks where building access is not needed.

- **Side Setbacks, Orientation, & Entry Connection**

The project has no side setbacks, which is consistent with Character Area 5 guidelines, to create a strong "street wall" along the street. All buildings are oriented to face the street and public open spaces per the design guidelines and all entries open directly onto the sidewalk or the public entry plaza that is connected to the sidewalk.

- **Facade Composition**

To have a similar solid-to-void ratio as the surrounding buildings, the ground-floor level retail and hotel amenity spaces have been designed with floor-to-ceiling glazed storefront to provide the most transparency at the sidewalk level. Above, on the upper levels of the building,

smaller punched openings have been utilized for the guestrooms to match the surrounding buildings with punch openings.

- Roof Form

The majority of the buildings' rooflines are flat roofs that are consistent with the design guidelines to maintain the commercial character present Downtown. The only exception to this is the roofs of the townhouses to the north that use sloped, gabled roofs ("architecturally-creative") to provide interest and differentiate themselves from the other masses per the request of the planning commissioners. We feel that this is appropriate given that the use under those rooflines are of residential use.

- Materials

Given the target audience of the hotel, the project strives to use more high-quality materials than stucco or brick, however, we have been intentional in choosing materials that are compatible with the materials found on downtown buildings and materials that have been used on downtown buildings in locations where a higher level of finish materials are appropriate. Many of the materials we're using are common in the downtown core, like concrete, wood and glass storefronts, steel windows, and wood siding. Other materials that we've used, like weathered steel and standing seam metal panels, are present downtown where added significance is desired. But, most importantly, all of the proposed materials are authentic, natural materials that are durable, patina well over time, provide character, and utilize a diversity of color and texture to remain compatible with other downtown materials and convey design quality and visual interest.

All of the proposed materials are earth-tone, natural colors as suggested in the design guidelines, and have avoided bright colors and jarring contrast. Many of the materials are in the form of shingles, tile, or strips to bring a human scale to them and provide texture and pattern to the facades. We've also used premium materials as accent materials, such as the zinc metal to highlight the windows and the copper to highlight the stairs.

- Scale

The project has spent a considerable amount of time making sure that the mass and scale of the buildings are compatible with the context. The building massing has been broken down into three separated forms, which are then broken down even further using setbacks, notches, and material changes. We've setback the massing of the fourth floor at the corner to lessen the height to more appropriately match surroundings. The townhouses have been expressed individually in form for a fine grain scale that shows form following function. As detailed in a subsequent section, these changes to the first iterations of the project are in direct response to comments from both planning commissioners and members of the public who attended our open house. We're proud that the massing, scale, and articulation of the building has been the most consistent source of positive public feedback.

- Reflecting Traditional Building Widths

With the length of the site at over 200', we were aware that a successful building design would need to be articulated into smaller forms to match the traditional building widths around downtown, which range from 25-100'. At the ground level, the retail and hotel amenity facades are generally separated into widths of 25-35'. Above the podium, the building is split into masses that measure between 30-38' in width, by using a podium courtyard, balconies, and stair notches. The south mass, which is broken up with a balcony but could be viewed as one mass, has the largest width of about 60'.

Chapter 6: Design Guidelines for Commercial & Mixed-Use

As a Mixed-Use Building, the proposed project is consistent with the design guidelines laid out under Chapter 6. Hotel amenities, guestrooms, recreational open spaces, retail, parking, and service utility spaces all coexist and are designed to balance the needs of all users. The retail spaces are predominantly located at the ground-floor level directly behind the sidewalk and visible to pedestrians. Their storefront designs have entry points that are easily distinguishable and provide full-height glazed storefronts to provide transparency into the retail. The retail is set back from the property line to create an interstitial space to support retail and hotel amenity uses that activate and enliven the public realm. There are plantings along the storefronts and a building overhang above to protect from sun and rain.

All parking for the building has been consolidated into valeted, parking stacker machines within the concrete podium to minimize the visual impact from the street. That same podium has separated the hotel guestrooms from the active retail downstairs to alleviate privacy and noise impacts. The hotel's podium courtyard has been designed to open to the street below to provide interaction with the public realm. Lastly, access to any service utility spaces has been located within the garage to minimize inactive uses at the perimeter streetscapes.

Within the landscape design, we have provided a regular spacing of generously sized street trees along both Healdsburg Ave and North St with ground plantings below. The existing, mature street trees will be preserved, if possible, upon study of a tree survey. The retail storefronts each have linear planters whenever access into the retail space is not required and "vine pocket" planters are located at each concrete column to cover the columns with creeping fig vines. Vines are also utilized at the perforated steel screens at both stairs to provide sun shading and a lush, planted feeling while circulating upwards to encourage the use of stairs over the elevator. At the podium courtyard, plantings are used at townhouses to mark their entries and divide private patios. Perimeter, tall plantings are located along fencing and canopies to provide privacy at the pool and podium-level guest rooms. Many of the plant materials are native to the area and drought-tolerant and the application of the planting palette is consistent across the entire site.

Consistency with other elements of Chapter 6, like building massing, scale, rooflines, materials, and facade composition are addressed in the narrative above or the workshop comment responses below.

Chapter 7: Design Guidelines for All Development Types

As with all of our previous hotels (all having reached LEED Gold or higher), the proposed project has ambitious sustainability goals. The most ambitious aspect, by far, are our goals around water conservation and collection. At Harmon Guest House, we achieved 100% of irrigation demand with an on-site rainwater collection system. But given recent drought conditions around California and Healdsburg, this project is striving to become the first Zero Net Water hotel in California. Our aim is to achieve this goal by installing a rainwater collection system to capture rainwater on site and installing a grey or blackwater system to filter all shower, sink, and potentially toilet water. With such systems, all of the building's water needs would be met by water produced on site, an achievement unheard of in Healdsburg for commercial uses.

Beyond water initiatives, the project reduces solar heat gain, and thus energy consumption, by using exterior sun-shading devices like vines, brist-soilees, canopies, wood-slat screens, recessed windows, balconies, and deep overhangs to block unwanted sunlight while still providing adequate daylight within. All exterior materials will be installed on a z-girt, rainscreen assembly to reduce heat transfer and all windows will be thermally-broken. We'll also be taking advantage of Solar PV, low-flow

water fixtures, and efficient MEP systems to reduce water and energy use. For stormwater management, most rainwater will be captured for use on-site, but any that is not will be treated using naturally vegetated stormwater planters that comply with required low-impact development strategies.

Public art will be featured in the project as it was on our previous hotels. Hotel Healdsburg features a public fire sculpture by Shawn HibmaCronan, H2Hotel has a kinetic, water sculpture by Ned Kahn, and Harmon Guest House displays a 3-dimensional wood installation by Andy Vogt. We intend to provide public art in this project as well and will begin collaborating with an artist later in the project process. Also like the previous hotels, bicycle infrastructure will be a prominent feature of this project. We plan to have a bicycle fleet so bikes are available to guests (and employees) free of charge, helping to further encourage their use. On-site, we are showing substantial bike parking for visitors in the ground floor storage and at the sidewalks.

Response to Planning Commission Workshop Feedback

Below are the seven generalized comments from the present planning commissioners and how the project has responded to them:

Corner Massing, Height, & Setback

The planning commission was generally happy with the massing and height of the building with Phil Luks saying that he “likes the separation between buildings and thinks the north building is great”. However, the most consistent comment from all of the commissioners was that the height and massing of the corner volume, at Healdsburg Ave and North St, needed to be studied further. Luks commented that “the main issue is the height at the corner...and to consider a setback at the 4th floor along North St”. Howard Brunner and Vesna Breznikar also commented on the corner height with Brunner also mentioning a potential 4th floor setback. Finally, Conor McKay thought “the corner is a bit imposing”.

In response, the project has been redesigned to allow the corner massing to be reduced at the corner. A 10’ setback has been added to the corner volume at the 4th floor along both Healdsburg Ave and North St. This setback further breaks up the massing and reduces the height at the corner to 3 stories. We’ve also changed the material at the setback volume to accentuate the massing change. This redesign to include the requested setback caused the elimination of one guest room at the 4th floor, which we were able to gain back at the 2nd level above the previous plaza.

Roof Line Articulation

During the planning workshop, both McKay and one community member had comments regarding the articulation of the roof line, with McKay “wanting more attractive rooftop features”. No other commissioner commented on the roofline.

While this wasn’t a consensus among the commissioners, the owner agreed with this critique, so the project’s rooflines have been altered to draw one’s eye upward and to differentiate between the three main masses. The corner volume has been setback at the 4th floor and a thin, elegant brise-soleil has been added to the roofline to create shadow at the top and reduce solar heat gain in the building. The middle volume has a more traditional, tall parapet that displays a thickened top, capped with a crisp, delicate parapet detail, to differentiate it from the other two masses. Lastly, the north townhouse roofs have been angled and sculpted to reduce the height at the edges and create more attractive

forms. With the glazed, ground-floor level storefronts creating a “base” for the building, these newly accentuated rooflines provide “caps” at the top of each volume that defines each mass's “middle”.

Large Trees

Several of the commissioners requested large trees to be installed on site.

The original submission already showed, and is still showing, very large trees at the street in both plan and in the renderings. The trees shown have a canopy of nearly 16’ in diameter, which is actually larger than feasible immediately upon construction. The size of the trees shown are meant to convey what the site will be like several years after its completion. With that said, the project is committed to install as large of trees as possible. We have the goal to purchase and install 48” boxes, which is often the largest that is readily available.

Corner Plaza

A public plaza was designed into the original submission to give some of the site back to the public and to create an active, open space for all to enjoy. However, some of the planning commission was skeptical of the success that the corner plaza would bring, noting that the main Healdsburg Town Square was just one block away. The general consensus among the commission was that the plaza was not needed and that the space should be used for other uses. There were also several comments with concern for the overhead, hanger doors that were proposed for securing the plaza; that they extended over the property line and felt imposing.

In response to the skepticism of the plaza, and with space needed to respond to other comments, the corner plaza has been removed from the project. However, to ensure an active streetscape, we have set the ground floor facade back from the property line to provide generous sidewalks and space for activity related to the retail and lobby to occupy and activate the public realm. The double-height space above the plaza was utilized to regain the lost guest room from the 4th floor setback concession.

Pool / Water

One planning commissioner took exception to the project proposing a swimming pool because of community water-use issues, with two others being “okay with removing it if it’s necessary to find space to accomplish other changes”.

We were able to accomplish changes in response to other comments without needing to remove the pool for extra space. While we are not able to eliminate the pool because of market-based demands, the project has taken incredibly ambitious strides to address community water-use concerns. The project has the goal of a fully Net Zero Water hotel. This will be very difficult but, if accomplished, the hotel will use no water from outside water sources after initial operation kick-off. All water used on site will come from either on-site rainwater collection or on-site greywater/blackwater filtration systems. The pool will be initially filled from water brought in from less drought stricken areas.

More Retail Frontage & Local Retail that serve Residents

None of the planning commissioners commented on the amount of the retail, but several of the public commenters requested that there be more retail frontage and active storefront, and that the retail be a type of business that serves residents.

In response to public comments at the planning workshop and comments at our public open house, we have increase the retail from 1,228sf to 1,981sf, with the retail frontage increasing from 47’ to 106 and the active storefront increasing from 112’ to 195’ along both Healdsburg Ave and North St.

This has been accomplished by the elimination of the corner plaza and reducing the frontage taken by the garage. While the owner has limited control over available leasees for the retail, the retail spaces have been designed to be smaller and sub-dividable to accommodate small, local businesses.

Treatment behind Vines

The previous design's facade took advantage of three-dimension wire mesh to create a dry living-wall system that allowed vines to cover the building and become a sun-shading finish material. The planning commission commented that the vines were attractive, but they had concerns that it would take too long to grow in and that the building may look unfinished for some period of time. Howard Brunner suggested that a finish treatment be added behind the vines, like plaster, until the vines had time to grow to full height.

The new design has eliminated the vine facade system altogether. To avoid duplicative facade finishes, simplify the material palette, and reduce maintenance and water use, the finish material on those masses has been changed to wood siding. This new wood siding will also create a warm aesthetic at the corner. The project still takes advantage of vine planting, but only at the perforated metal panels at each stair. The finish materials at the townhouses were also simplified, by reducing from four materials down to two.

Conclusion

We are excited to submit this small-scale mixed-use development project with 16 guest rooms, located on a crucial corner where a blighted building and parking lot now stand. The project strives to serve as a shining example of resilience and sustainability, providing a new take on the downtown character while still fitting in with its surroundings. The development will include neighborhood-serving retail spaces, as well as major street activation, to further enhance the area.

To ensure the project aligns with community needs and expectations, extensive redesigns were made based on public and commissioner feedback. This development project showcases how development can be done right, with a focus on sustainability, resilience, and community engagement. The end result will be a thriving mixed-use space that benefits both residents and businesses alike, while also setting an example for responsible development in the future.

Sincerely,



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