



TO Jeremy Tejirian
Marin County Community Development
3501 Civic Center Dr # 308
San Rafael, CA 94903
415-473-6245

DATE: AUGUST 2, 2021

Design Review Submittal – 33 / 37 ALBION ST

Project History:

This is a letter requesting a Design Review for a proposed development of a multi-family project located at 33 / 37 Albion St. The property previously received approval under a Master Plan entitled: “**Albion Masterplan (Resolution No 2019-131, ORD No. 3715)**”, on 10/21/2021.

As approved, the Masterplan vests five (5) new multi-family condominiums units on a single parcel, designated “Lot 5” on Exhibit A. Per the terms of the Masterplan, the design of this multi-family lot is subject to Discretionary Design Review. The total lot size is +/-35,761 SF (0.82 AC).

Project Proposal Summary:

The project proposes a Clustered Development pursuant to the County of Marin Multi-family Residential Design Guidelines¹. The primary buildings will include five (5) detached residential condominiums, configured as up sloped split pads with stepped foundations (DG-14A). Each home will maintain a minimum 6’ building separation and will minimize height by observing the 30-foot height limit found within the surrounding community through context-sensitive massing (DG-13, DG-58). The units are approximately 2,300 NSF, with 4 bedrooms and 3 bathrooms each. A full building summary table is provided with this submittal on Sheet A.10.

Because of the significant uphill slope, a retaining wall will be placed behind the project to create a flat pad usable open space (DG-14C). The building design incorporates further opportunities for usable open space through provision of covered balconies and decks that face the street (DG-11, DG-31). Each unit features +/-570 SF of private open space (DG-29).

The project features the primary facades facing the public right-of-way (DG-6) and occupy far greater than 50% of the project frontage (DG-7). Premium Front doors and garage doors will be also be employed (DG-10). The primary massing concept features a single-sloping shed roof form in the direction of the roof slope, and punctuated by pitched dormers for visual interest (DG-15, DG-56,). The use of “warm” materials such as

¹ https://www.marincounty.org/-/media/files/departments/cd/planning/mfr/mfr_design_guidelines_lowres.pdf

exposed wood siding and railings, further contributes to the residential quality of the project. Windows and Doors will have a darker sash expression (dark bronze anodized) and will be of high-quality materials. Full Material Palette provided on Sheet A.50.

Each residential unit will be a for-sale condominium, and all common facilities will be maintained by a Homeowner's Association.

Development Pattern conformance:

Pursuant to the Multi-family Residential Design Guidelines, "most projects will be comprised of one or a combination of the development patterns". This project closely conforms to the pattern of a "Clustered Development".

Clustered Developments. Clustered developments concentrate development in one particular area or several groupings on a site in a manner that protects a substantial portion of the site from development.

The design of effective clustered developments begins with identification of natural areas and scenic qualities, and setting aside those portions of the site with high-value ecosystems or agricultural areas. Clustering should generally occur in visually inconspicuous locations, such as where buildings, roads and parking might be screened by existing vegetation, rock outcroppings or topography. New trees and landscaping that are compatible with the natural setting should be used to provide additional screening. On wooded hillsides, relax clustering requirements where a more dispersed development pattern may save trees.

Response: The project site features a prominent rock outcropping feature with old growth trees concentrated in the southern end of the lot. The development footprint (including private roadway and building footprints) includes areas that are near the toe of the slope, where most of the prominent features and trees are located further up slope.

As a general rule, grading and vegetation removal should be minimized to preserve a sense of the natural terrain. Building forms should blend in with existing terrain, such as by breaking up a building's mass, using shed roofs that roughly parallel the slope, and stepping floor levels. Clustered development can also emulate farms and other vernacular development through the use of simple forms, varied massing and rustic materials.

Response: Grading is kept at a minimum through stepped foundations and a private road that stays at a low elevation contour. The building roofline roughly parallels the slope and utilize traditional vernacular expressions through covered porches, pitched gables, and earthy material palette.

Paths internal to the project should generally be compacted decomposed granite except where high pedestrian volumes create a need for harder surface sidewalks. A swale to capture and convey storm water should generally abut roadways that do not have a parking lane, and vegetated swales should be included as important organizing elements within the project site plan. Along roadways, paths should

be separated by a planting strip. Cluster developments may also incorporate characteristics associated with pocket neighborhoods.

Response: Hardscape is designed as necessary for vehicular and pedestrian traffic, with all other footpaths as decomposed granite with landscape steps. A decorative permeable paving band is proposed at the driveway egress to Auburn St. A large planting strip provides screening along Auburn St.

Evolution of Design:

The Applicant's proposed design calls for detached condominiums, instead of "attached residential" that was approved with the Master Plan. In order to obtain clarification of the permissibility of this change, the Applicant requested an initial Plan Review on **1/22/2021**.

Staff's initial feedback was that the proposed direction was promising and met many of the Multi-family guidelines in terms of materials, massing and design as the County-wide Multi-family Design Guidelines does allow flexibility with creative housing types that meet the intention of the code.

The main objection was the prominence of the Garage Doors facing a public right-of-way (per Multi-family Design Guidelines), and directed the applicant to study a few alternative options for consideration, which included:

1. Placing parking on the sides or rear of the building.
2. Reduce garage door widths or tandems
3. Both attached and detached scenarios.

The applicant returned with three basic options for discussion:

Site Plan A is the originally submitted plan consisting of 5 detached condos.

Site Plan B proposes the reduction of a 16' wide garage door to an 8' garage door, and an open, covered carport adjacent to each unit, consisting of 5 detached condos.

Site Plan C proposes to locate 5 parking stalls to the north of the building, and reconfigure as attached units (one 3-plex and one duplex.) *These alternative Site Plans are provided by way of reference.*

The Applicant met again with Staff (Kathleen Kilgariff), on **4/1/2021** and was provided with the following feedback:

- After having visited the site, Staff (Jeremy Tejirian), felt that the visual impact of proposed garage doors could be mitigated, given the large vegetated buffer for landscape screening opportunities along Auburn St. The upslope configuration of the site makes it infeasible to tuck parking behind the buildings.
- If the project was designed as standard attached units, there would still be a covered garage visible from the street, which would be less attractive than high-quality garage doors.

- From a building design perspective, Staff felt that the proposed detached condo design provided a more varied streetscape and an overall less monolithic appearance than attached townhomes.
- Because of these factors, Staff supported either Site Plan “A” or Site Plan “B” as a preferred alternative and cleared the applicant to produce a full set of Plans for Design Review.
- Additional considerations Staff mentioned include:
 - To provide additional details on the design of the Common Open Space area behind the homes, to ensure it results in a “meaningful usable space” for the community.
 - Provide a Landscaping Planting Plan showing proposed tree screening along Auburn St.
 - Avoid exposed concrete retaining walls for features such as bio-retention areas.

The proposed project conforms to Site Plan “A” from the initial Plan Review.

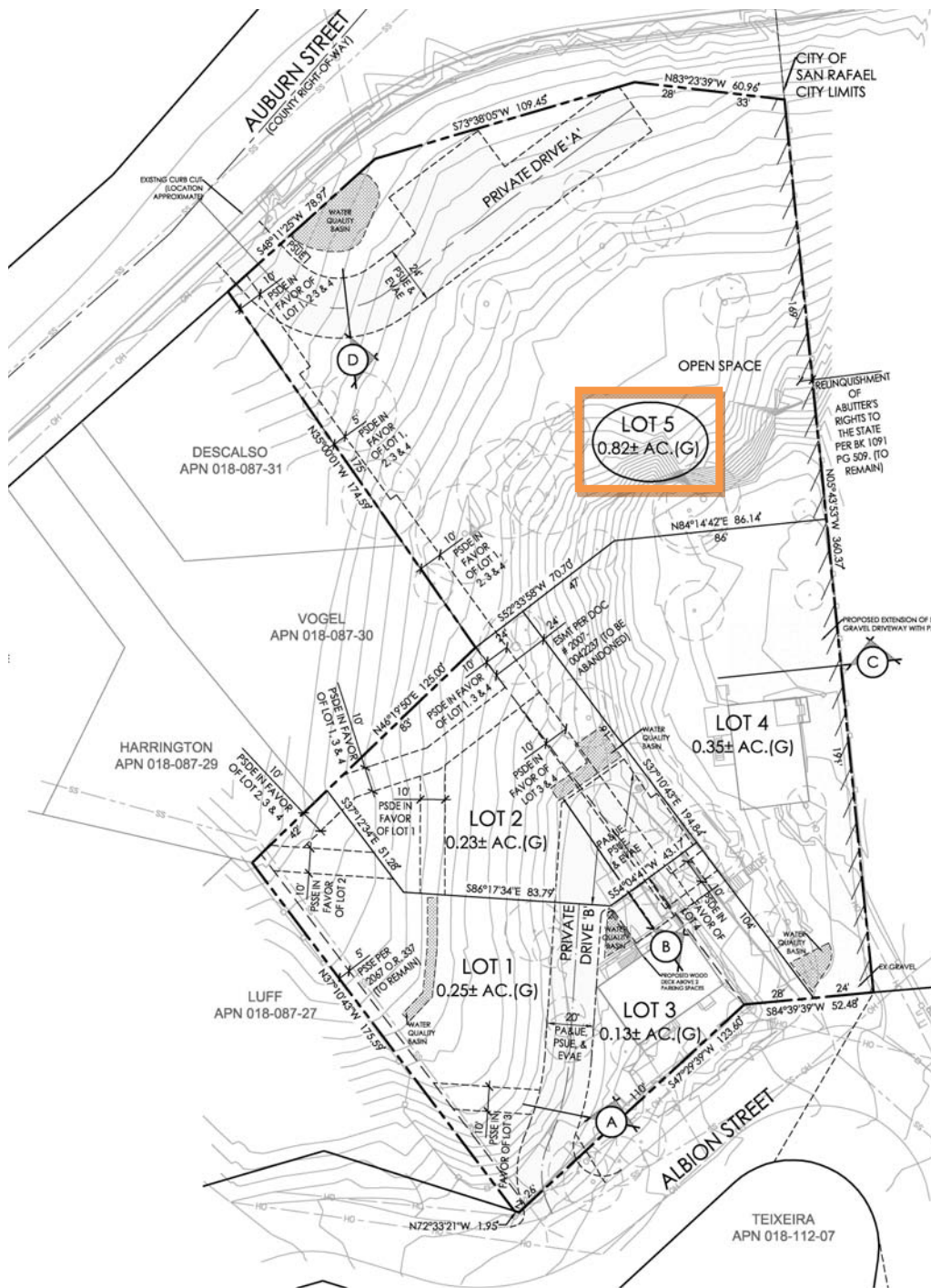
In summary, the applicant is submitting a full Planning Package in support of a Design Review application, pursuant to the approved Masterplan and the Marin County-wide Code.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H/S', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Hayes Shair, AIA, LEED GA
Albion Monolith, LLC

Exhibit A
 Lotting Site Plan



Subject Parcel