



Sonoma County Board of Zoning Adjustments STAFF REPORT

FILE: PLP18-0012
DATE: October 28, 2021
TIME: At or after 1:05 pm
STAFF: Georgia McDaniel, Project Planner

SUMMARY

Property Owner: Lok GuerneWood Park Development Company
Applicant: Kirk Lok, Lok GuerneWood Park Development Company
Address: 17155 Highway 116, Guerneville, CA
Supervisory District(s): 5
APN: 072-130-005, -007 and -009
Description: Use Permit and Design Review, followed by a Certificate of Modification to construct a new 120-room resort, implement a Streamside Conservation Plan to allow for Riparian Corridor encroachment of 4,490 square feet (SF) and habitat restoration of 1.26 acres, and to construct improved public river access with a parking lot, improved trail and restroom. The resort uses include two main hotel buildings with 100 rooms, 20 suites located in detached bungalow buildings, a lobby and hotel services area, a spa, a restaurant and bar, and two meeting rooms for special events.
CEQA Review: Mitigated Negative Declaration
General Plan Land Use: Recreation and Visitor Serving Commercial
Specific/Area Plan Land Use: None
Ordinance Reference: 26-10-030 – Allowed Uses in Commercial Zones
26-56-020 – Floodways
26-58-30 – Floodplain
26-64-030 – Scenic Corridors
26-65-030 – Riparian Corridor
26-67 – Valley Oak Habitat
26-88-010(m) – Tree Protection
26-82 – Design Review
26-90 – Local Area Development Guidelines



Zoning: K (Recreation and Visitor-Serving Commercial) with Combining Zones for LG/RRC and LG/116 (Local Area Development Guidelines for Russian River Corridor and Highway 116 Scenic Corridor), F1 (Floodway), F2 (Floodplain), SR (Scenic Resources), RC 25/50 (Riparian Corridor with 50-foot and 25-foot setbacks), and VOH (Valley Oak Habitat)

RECOMMENDATION

The Permit Resource and Management Department (Permit Sonoma) recommends that the Board of Zoning Adjustments adopt the Mitigated Negative Declaration and approve the Use Permit and Design Review request subject to the Conditions of Approval.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The applicant requests approval of a Use Permit and Design Review application to construct a new 120-room resort overlooking the Russian River at the former Guerneville Park Resort site, located 0.8 miles southwest of Guerneville. The new resort facility will operate 24 hours per day, seven days a week with up to 37 employees. On-site ancillary resort uses include a spa, restaurant and bar, conference space for events, a gym and a pool area. The proposed development will occupy approximately 3.74 acres (39%) of the vacant 9.61-acre property and include parking for 201 vehicles, 40 bicycle parking spaces, an improved public river access trail with a public restroom and dedicated public parking (25 spaces). The site is accessed directly from River Road (Highway 116) and is bordered by the Russian River and Hulbert Creek. The property contains Redwood Groves, Riparian Forest, and a flat terrace with non-native grasses.

The resort will be served by public water from Sweetwater Springs Water District and sewer from Russian River Sanitation District. The project requires implementation of a Streamside Conservation Plan to allow for 4,490 SF of habitat loss and 1.26 acres of habitat restoration in the Riparian Corridor. Following approval of the resort Use Permit, a Certificate of Modification to the Dubrava Village subdivision map is required to relocate the existing pedestrian river access and parking easements in order to accommodate resort development.

The proposed resort and public access improvements are considered consistent with Sonoma County General Plan Land Use policies for Recreation and Visitor Serving Commercial uses and County zoning regulations. An Initial Study was prepared pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act, and the project’s potential environmental impacts have been analyzed. A Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) is proposed which finds that potential environmental impacts have been fully mitigated to less-than-significant levels. All mitigation measures have been incorporated into the project conditions of approval. The MND was circulated through the State Clearinghouse and noticed for public review and comment from August 27, 2021 through September 27, 2021. Public comments have primarily expressed concerns with traffic, water supply and drought, the resort’s effects on fire evacuation for the surrounding area, resort size, and noise and visual impacts to the adjacent Dubrava Village homes. Staff has also received public comments in support of the project that generally focus on improving property management for the site, new tax dollars and jobs, and increasing property values in the area.

PROJECT SITE AND CONTEXT

Background

From the 1920’s to the 1970’s the former Guerneville Park Resort, a summer hotel, operated on the project site until it was destroyed by fire. The application for a Use Permit and Design Review (Permit Sonoma File No.



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PLP08-090) for a new resort was originally submitted on July 17, 2008. Due to the state of the economy, the applicant suspended processing of the application. In 2014, Sonoma County Board of Supervisors adopted the Riparian Corridor Ordinance and a 50-foot riparian corridor setback was established for Hulbert Creek and the Russian River- the two waterways that border the project site. When the project was re-activated in 2014/2015, the need for the resort footprint to comply with the 50-foot riparian setback from Hulbert Creek and the Russian River was raised. Permit Sonoma required the applicant to revise project plans to reduce building footprint in the riparian corridor and to submit a Streamside Conservation Plan to mitigate impacts of riparian habitat loss, consistent with the Zoning Code. In 2018, a new file number (PLP18-0012) was assigned to the application. Since 2018, the applicant has revised project plans to reduce riparian corridor impacts, updated technical reports for the project, presented before the Design Review Committee, and conducted additional public outreach on the project.

Area Context and Surrounding Land Uses

The property is located between unincorporated communities of Guerneville and Guerneville, within the Guerneville Urban Service Area boundary along the Russian River and Highway 116. The site is situated in a densely-treed area surrounded by smaller residentially developed properties to the north and southwest, the Russian River and forest/timberland to the southeast, and commercially developed properties to the northeast.

Direction	Land Uses
North	Highway 116 is immediately adjacent to the north. Across Highway 116 is Guerneville Park, a residential community.
South	The Russian River flows through the property on the southern border. Across the Russian River is forest/timberland.
East	Hulbert Creek flows along the property’s northeastern border. Guerneville is approximately 0.76 to 1 mile to the east.
West	Dubrava Village (residential condominium development) is immediately adjacent to the west.

Significant Applications Nearby

There are no significant applications nearby.

Access

The project site is located on a 9.61-acre property with 330 feet of street frontage along Highway 116. The site is currently served by an unimproved driveway accessed directly from Highway 116, near the northwestern property line. Over the years, the public has parked onsite within the highway frontage area to access the Russian River. Currently, the property is fenced along the highway preventing public parking onsite. A gap in the fence allows the public to continue to use the public pedestrian easement across the property to access the Russian River. At the front property line is a Sonoma County Transit bus stop (serving Transit Routes 20 and 28) and a pedestrian crosswalk extending from the property, across Highway 116, to Lovers Lane. The project proposes to improve the existing driveway and relocate the bus stop to the northern end of the front property line. The traffic study prepared for the project (W-Trans, February 2016, updated December 11, 2018, Addendum dated September 8, 2020) found the location of the driveway entrance provides adequate sight distance to allow vehicles to safely enter and exit the site and to avoid turning movements at nearby intersections. The hotel driveway entrance and traffic circle at the hotel lobby and restaurant entrance also provides sufficient access for emergency vehicles, buses, and service trucks.



Wildfire Risk

The project is located in a State Responsibility Area and is outside of the wildland high and very high fire hazard zones mapped by Wildland Fire Hazard Areas Figure PS 1-g of the Sonoma County General Plan 2020. The project is located in a relatively flat area and surrounded by redwood groves, riparian corridors and rural residential uses. The resort would add population to the site in the form of guests and employees. However, the site is roughly one mile from the Russian River Fire Station #1, ensuring rapid response times in the event of an emergency. To facilitate locating an emergency and to avoid delays in emergency response, the project has been conditioned to require the resort provides for safe access for emergency fire apparatus and civilian evacuation concurrently, and unobstructed traffic circulation during an emergency.

Additionally, project conditions of approval require the resort connects to the Sweetwater Springs Water District, installs fire hydrants for fire suppression, and develop fire safety and emergency plans, as well as employee training programs consistent with the requirements of the 2013 California Fire Code and Sonoma County Code. New construction on the site must conform to County Fire Safe Standards and Wildland Urban Interface building requirements. Fire Safe Standards include building requirements related to fire sprinklers, stairways to roofs, fire apparatus access roads, door panic hardware, fire resistant stairway enclosures, emergency water supply, and defensible space. Structures in Wildland Urban Interface zones are required to be built with exterior construction that will minimize the impact on life and property and help structures to resist the intrusion of flames and burning embers projected by a wildland fire and contributes to a reduction of losses.

Water/Wastewater/Utilities

Water:

The project proposes a connection to the Sweetwater Springs Water District for provision of water supplies. On March 22, 2021, the Sweetwater Springs Water District (District) issued a Will Serve Letter for the project, confirming the District has adequate domestic water supplies for the project. The Will Serve Letter is conditioned on the applicant using Building Type Construction IA and IB (noncombustible and fire resistive), IIA and/or IIIA (a combination of exterior walls of masonry or concrete and roof/floors of combustible material). A higher water flow (in gallons per minute) is needed for fire protection for Building Type Construction IA and IB (See Attachment 10 for details). If the type of construction is not Type IA, IB, IIA or IIIA, the applicant will have to construct additional water storage at the applicant's expense.

Wastewater:

The Russian River Sanitation District service lines are within the Highway 116 right-of-way along the frontage of the parcel. The Sanitation District has confirmed capacity to serve the resort. The project proposes connection to the Russian River County Sanitation District. A condition of project approval requires submittal of a Will Serve Letter from the District prior to building permit issuance.

Stormwater:

The project will require the construction of new stormwater drainage facilities. The project has been conditioned so that the final grading/improvement plans prevent and/or minimize the discharge of pollutants and waste after the project is constructed (post-construction). The project incorporates sustainable LID (low impact development) strategies that encourage infiltration and minimizes the introduction of pollutants into downstream receiving waters. The main measures incorporated include the stenciling of inlets to increase public awareness, sediment removal and erosion repair, creation of numerous bio-retention areas throughout the site and the use of flow-through planters. Of the 149,044 square feet of proposed developed site area, 115,260



square feet (78%) will be permeable surface area and 33,085 square feet (22%) will be non-permeable surface area.

Other Utilities:

PG&E will be extending power into the site from Highway 116. The project has been conditioned to comply with the County’s solid waste requirements. Project conditions of approval require the resort complies with County solid waste management and reduction requirements. All garbage and refuse on the site will be stored for no more than seven calendar days and must be properly disposed of at a County Transfer Station or County Landfill before the end of the seventh day.

Agricultural Conditions/Land Encumbrances/Contracts

There are no existing onsite agricultural conditions nor a Williamson Act contract encumbering the property.

The County of Sonoma holds easements for access and public utility purposes, pedestrian access to the Russian River, and for parking purposes on the project site. The easements were granted to the County as part of the Dubrava Village condominium subdivision approval in 1985 (O.R. #1985-043934):

- The Access and Public Utilities Easement encumbers a strip of land with a uniform width of 52 feet located on the northwestern portion of the property, identified as ‘Easement Parcel A’ on the Dubrava Village subdivision map (recorded under Book 373 of Maps, Page 30-32 of Sonoma County Records).
- The Pedestrian Access Easement encumbers a strip of land with a uniform width of 10 feet located across the west side of the property, providing pedestrians access from Highway 116 to a public river beach that has been historically used by the public for recreational purpose (see river beach easement below). The Pedestrian Access Easement is identified as ‘Easement Parcel E’ on the Dubrava Village subdivision map (recorded under Book 373 of Maps, Page 30-32 of Sonoma County Records).
- The Parking Easement encumbers land at the northern portion of the property for 25 parking stalls in the northern portion of the property, along Highway 116. Access to the parking easement is via the Access and Public Utilities Easement described above. The parking easement is required to be delineated by fence posts and signs and to have 25 parking stalls marked upon the surface of the ground within ‘Lot 1’ of the Dubrava Village subdivision map (recorded under Book 373 of Maps, Page 30-32 of Sonoma County Records). Lot 1 is the northern 1.27 acres of the project site located along Highway 116 (APN 072-130-007).

To accommodate the resort development, the project proposes to relocate the 25-stall parking easement to the northeastern portion of the property, and the pedestrian access easement to run adjacent to Hulbert Creek, ending at the public beach on the Russian River. Following approval of the resort Use Permit, Project conditions of approval require the applicant obtain the following:

- Board of Supervisor approval to vacate the existing public right-of-ways for river access (pedestrian river access and parking easements) and acceptance of a new grant of public right-of-way for the realigned trail and parking areas.



- A Certificate of Modification to reflect the relocated public right-of-ways for pedestrian river access and parking easements
- A Voluntary Merger to merge the three project parcels (APN 072-130-005, -007 and -009) into a single legal lot.

River Beach Easement:

The County also holds an easement over the southern portion of the property which contains a beach on the Russian River. The river beach easement (recorded under O.R. #1985-043933) is for recreational purposes and is described as the land within Lot 2 and Lot 3 on the Dubrava Village subdivision map (recorded under Book 373 of Maps, Page 30-32 of Sonoma County Records), which lies below the elevation of 14.00 feet mean sea level.

Sewer Easement:

An existing 12-foot wide sanitary sewer easement (recorded under O.R #1985-033307) encumbers the property. This sanitary sewer easement location extends from Highway 116 and is located under the proposed public restroom building, Tree House Suite buildings and one of the main hotel buildings. The project proposes to install a new sanitary sewer line extending from Highway 116, directly to the main hotel building. Project conditions of approval allow the applicant to submit a request for a summary vacation (“quit claim”) of the existing 12-foot wide sanitary sewer easement.

Other Environmental Conditions

Evidence of past historical use of the site exists with paved road access and cement foundation pads. In recent years, the site has been used by transients for camping and disposal of garbage. Currently, homeless encampments still exist on the site. There are also abandoned cars in the riparian corridor of Hulbert Creek. The project biologist recommends that debris from past use of the site (including old car bodies along Hulbert Creek, illegal campsites and cement foundations) be removed from the riparian corridors where reasonably feasible (some material is overgrown with roots which if removed would damage the root structure).

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Kirk Lok requests approval of a Use Permit and Design Review, followed by a Certificate of Modification to construct a new 120-room resort, implement a Streamside Conservation Plan to allow for Riparian Corridor encroachment of 4,490 square feet (SF) and habitat restoration of 1.26 acres, and to construct an improved public river access parking lot and trail. The project would occupy 3.74 acres (39%) of the vacant 9.61-acre property and include two main hotel buildings with 100 rooms, lobby and hotel services, bar, small restaurant and spa, two meeting rooms for special events, and 20 additional suites located in detached bungalow buildings, dedicated public parking (25 spaces), public restroom facility, and an improved public trail to the Russian River. The public trail and public parking components require the relocation of existing public access and parking easements. Project details are summarized below.

120-Room Resort Facility:

- Two main hotel buildings (34,359 SF total and 37,314 SF total) with building heights up to 53 feet, and 100 (one hundred) 410 SF guest rooms, lobby (2,600 SF), two meeting rooms (3,656 SF total), hotel services area (5,652 SF), a public restaurant and bar (3,334 SF), plus a guest spa (2,055 SF) and gym (538 SF).



- Five “Tree House” buildings (15,736 SF total) with building heights up to 53 feet and each building containing four guest suites (756 SF each) for a total of 20 guest suites.
- Accessory buildings including a pool house (92 SF) and a gate house (188 SF).
- Hours of operation consisting of 24 hours per day, seven days per week, with a total of 37 employees assigned to the following shifts:
 - A maximum of 18 employees onsite between the hours of 7am to 3pm; and
 - A maximum of 15 employees onsite between the hours of 3pm to 11 pm; and
 - A maximum of 4 employees onsite between the hours of 11pm to 7am.
- Parking for a total of 201 vehicles, with 176 spaces for resort guests and employees (including a zone for 15 sanded parking spaces); and 25 public spaces reserved for public use.
- Parking for a total of 40 bicycles.
- Special events, such as corporate events or meetings and potentially receptions, with amplified speech and amplified music confined to indoors only.
- A new transit shelter with a bench will be installed at the front of the property.
- Construction of related site improvements including driveways, parking lots, walkways, decks, patios, entry signage and landscaping plus public utilities and drainage infrastructure, and implementation of greenhouse gas emission reduction measures.
- Ingress and egress for vehicles via an entrance directly off of Highway 116.
- A sound wall six to eight feet in height at the western property boundary.
- Stone and hedge wall between Highway 116 and the parking areas to visually separate the resort from the highway and adjoining residential uses.
- New landscaping installed throughout the site to integrate the project with the existing visual setting and to enhance the quality of the existing riparian habitat.

Implementation of a Streamside Conservation Plan to allow:

- 4,490 SF (approximately 0.10 acres) of Riparian Corridor habitat loss due to resort building structures, patios, decks and walkways (consisting of 2,745 SF of impermeable areas and 1,746 SF of permeable areas); and
- Approximately 0.32 acres (13,939 SF) of Riparian Corridor habitat loss due to the public access trail and the pathway to the river from the hotel; and
- Mitigation for 0.42 acres (18,429 SF) of Riparian Corridor habitat loss at a 3:1 ratio for a total minimum mitigation area of 1.26 acres (55,080 SF) of riparian habitat restoration, including non-native vegetation removal and planting with native riparian vegetation.

Public Access Facilities and Improvements:

- Following action on the Project Use Permit (File No. PLP18-0012), an application to obtain a Certificate of Modification is required to reflect the vacation of the existing right of way for the public access easement to the Russian River and the public parking easement; and a grant of right of way for the public access and public parking easements, consistent with the Project approval.
- Construction of a public access trail connecting Highway 116 to the Public Parking Lot and the Russian River public beach. The upper portion of the public access trail (from Highway 116 to the top of bank of the Russian River) will be ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) accessible. The lower portion of the public access trail (from top of bank to the public river beach) will be constructed in accordance with the California State Park Accessibility Guidelines (2015 or later) and/or the Federal Access Board Outdoor



Developed Areas (May 2014 or later) in order to provide the most access while protecting the sensitive environment.

- A 25-space public parking lot and public restroom facility (128 SF) developed on the east side of the site.
- Hours of Operation for the public access facilities and improvements (public trail, 25-space public parking lot, and public restroom) are seven days per week, from sunrise to sunset.

Project History

The table below summarizes key project milestones and events.

Date	Project Event/Milestone
07/17/2008	Original application submitted
2014/2015	Project reactivated
05/22/2018	Revised application sent on referral to prominent agencies
11/7/2018	Preliminary Design Review Committee public meeting
02/20/2020	Application deemed complete
08/27/2021 through 9/27/2021	Mitigated Negative Declaration Public Comment Period
10/18/2021	Notice of Board of Zoning Adjustments Public Hearing

Prior Review

The Table below summarizes prior actions undertaken for the Project.

Date	Authority	Action Taken
11/07/2018	Design Review Committee	The Design Review Committee (DRC) supports the overall design concept and exception to maximum building height, provided that the project reduce building massing and add landscaping. The Design Review Committee requested final review and approval on the project as a condition of approval.

General Plan and Area Plans

The project site is not subject to any Area Plan. The Sonoma County General Plan designates the project site as Recreation and Visitor Serving Commercial. This land use category allows for visitor serving uses such as restaurants, lodging, developed campgrounds, resorts, marinas, golf courses, and similar types of use. The following General Plan policies provided below are applicable to the project.

Commercial Land Use Policies:

- Objective LU-15.2: Limit new uses within the floodway of the Russian River, as designated on the Federal Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM), to recreation and visitor serving commercial uses without permanent structures.
- Objective LU-15.3: Maintain a balance of commercial development between local serving and visitor oriented uses. Guerneville shall remain the primary commercial center of the area.



Open Space and Resource Conservation Policies:

- Objectives OSRC-4.1 and OSRC-4.2: Maintain night time lighting levels at the minimum necessary to provide for security and safety of the use and users to preserve night time skies and the night time character of urban, rural and natural areas. Ensure that night time lighting levels for new development are designed to minimize light spillage offsite or upward into the sky.
- Objective OSRC-6.2: Establish Rural Character as a primary criterion for review of discretionary projects, but not including administrative design review for single family homes on existing lots outside of Urban Service Areas.
- Objective OSRC-8.2: Provide standards for land use and development in streamside conservation areas that protect riparian vegetation, water resources and habitat values while considering the needs of residents, agriculture, businesses and other land users.

Noise Standards:

- Objective NE-1.4: Mitigate noise from recreational and visitor serving uses.
- Noise is required to be controlled in accordance with Table NE-2 as measured at the exterior property line of any affected residential or sensitive land use:

TABLE NE-2: Maximum Allowable Exterior Noise Exposures

Hourly Noise Metric ¹ , dBA	Daytime (7 a.m. to 10 p.m.)	Nighttime (10 p.m. to 7 a.m.)
L50 (30 minutes in any hour)	50	45
L25 (15 minutes in any hour)	55	50
L08 (4 minutes 48 seconds in any hour)	60	55
L02 (72 seconds in any hour)	65	60
¹ The sound level exceeded n% of the time in any hour. For example, the L50 is the value exceeded 50% of the time or 30 minutes in any hour; this is the median noise level. The L02 is the sound level exceeded 72 seconds in any hour.		

Water Resources:

The Water Resources Element of the General Plan includes goals and policies for managing groundwater as a valuable and limited shared resource. The County uses a four-tier classification system to indicate general area of groundwater availability: Class 1 = Major Ground Water Basin, Class 2 = Major Natural Recharge Areas, Class 3 = Marginal Groundwater Availability and Class 4 = Low or Highly Variable Water Yield. Water Resources Element Policy WR-2e requires preparation of groundwater studies to verify the quality and quantity of groundwater and assess cumulative impacts associated with discretionary projects located in the Class 3 and 4 areas of the county. Permit Sonoma also requires preparation of groundwater studies for discretionary projects located in the Sonoma Valley, Petaluma Valley, and Santa Rosa Plain priority groundwater basins.



Zoning

The table below summarizes the development standards that apply to the site as outlined in the Sonoma County Zoning Ordinance, and the existing and proposed development conditions.

Standard	Ordinance	Existing Condition	Proposed Project
Lot Area	Minimum size for new lots is 8,000 SF	Three separate legal lots totaling 9.61 acres: 072-130-005 (5.68 acres) 072-130-007 (1.27 acres) 072-130-009 (2.66 acres)	No change in overall acreage. Project results in a single 9.61 acre lot.
Land Use	Recreation and Visitor-Serving Commercial District	Vacant/undeveloped	Resort hotel and improved public river access
Residential Density	NA	No residences exist on the property.	No change.
Front Setback	45ft to the centerline of highway	No existing structures	Gate House 90± ft. Tree House Suites 270± ft. Lobby/Meeting Rooms 390± ft. Restaurant/Spa 330± ft. Restroom 53± ft.
Side Setback	5ft	No existing structures	Hotel building 135± ft. (east side) Tree House Suites 90± ft. (west side)
Rear Setback	10ft	No existing structures	No change
Height	Max 35 ft.	No existing structures	Max 53 feet Exceptions to maximum building height require Design Review or BZA approval.
Lot Coverage %	50%	0%	7%
Parking Spaces	Resort Facility requires 226 spaces: 1 space per hotel room; 1 space for manager; 1 space per 60 SF of dining area; 1 space per 75 SF for meeting rooms. Existing Public Parking Easement requires 25 spaces. 1 Bicycle Space is required per 5 spaces of required vehicle parking	0	201 total parking spaces: 176 spaces and 15 stacked spaces for Resort Facility; 25 spaces for public parking lot. 40 Bicycle spaces. Parking Standards may be reduced with Design Review or BZA approval.



Other Development Regulations or Guidelines

Recreation and Visitor-Serving Commercial (K) Zoning District:

The project site is zoned K (Recreation and Visitor-Serving Commercial). The K Zoning District encourages a compatible blend of recreation and tourist-commercial uses to maintain and enhance Sonoma County's recreational resources. Sonoma County Zoning Code Section 26-10-030 (Allowed Land Uses) and Section 26-28-150 (Lodging) allows resorts with a maximum of two hundred (200) rooms in the K Zoning District provided the site is located in an urban service area and a use permit is obtained. The Zoning Code definition for "Lodging: Hotel, motel, and resort" includes on-site ancillary restaurants, meeting facilities, personal and spa services, recreational facilities, and accessory retail uses.

Increased Building Height:

In the K Zoning District, the maximum building height is 35-feet. However, the Section 26-10-040.C of the Zoning Code allows for increased building height with a use permit in commercial zones. A building with increased allowed height may not exceed the maximum allowed building intensity in the applicable zone. Maximum building intensity is calculated by multiplying the maximum permitted building height by the maximum square footage of lot coverage permitted on a lot.

Scenic Resources (SR) Combining District:

The project site is located within a designated Scenic Corridor for State Route 116 as outlined in the Open Space and Resource Conservation Element of the General Plan. Article 64 of the Zoning Code sets forth development criteria for new development located within Scenic Corridors established outside of the urban service area boundaries for the purpose of preserving the visual character and scenic resources of lands in the county.

Design Review:

The Design Review requirements listed under Sec. 26-82-050 of the Zoning Code set forth minimum development standards and approval requirements applicable to commercial projects, industrial projects, and planned developments. Applications for design review are evaluated with an emphasis on site planning, circulation, architectural design, quality and type of materials, colors, and landscaping. The Sonoma County Design Review Committee conducts preliminary design review on significant new development projects and recommends approval to other decision-making bodies, such as the Board of Zoning Adjustments. After the project is approved, conditions of approval often require final Design Review Committee review prior to grading and building permit issuance.

Local Area Development Guidelines for Russian River Corridor (LG/RRC) Combining District:

The property is subject to the Local Area Development Guidelines for the Russian River Corridor. The Local Guidelines implement General Plan Land Use Element policies and programs to protect and enhance the unique character of specific communities and areas, as designated by the Board, while allowing for land uses authorized in the General Plan Land Use Element. The 2010 Russian River Corridor Design Guidelines address a wide range of objectives and issues, including:



- Ensure buildings are sited and designed to create a welcoming frontage that provides visual interest and encourages street vitality and safety.
- Preserve existing views of the Russian River from the scenic corridor.
- Preserve and incorporate natural features, such as mature trees and creeks, into the site design as a valuable project asset.
- Design riverfront development to capitalize on its unique location by providing riverside amenities such as viewing areas, decks, balconies, large windows, and river access.
- Design new development proposed to be located between the Russian River and the Scenic Corridor to preserve existing views of the river, to the extent feasible.
- Maintain as much of the existing vegetation as possible during site preparation to minimize soil erosion.
- Ensure that building scale and massing reflect the existing character of the surrounding area.
- Ensure that scale and proportions of architectural elements and detailing are appropriate for the building’s architectural style.

Tree Protection Ordinance:

The Tree Protection Ordinance listed under Sec. 26-88-010(m) of the Zoning Code requires development permits to minimize the destruction of protected tree species that have a diameter at breast height (d.b.h.) greater than nine inches. “Protected Tree” in the Zoning Code means Big Leaf Maple, Black Oak, Blue Oak, Coast Live Oak, Interior Live Oak, Madrone, Oracle Oak, Oregon Oak, Redwood, Valley Oak, California Bay and their hybrids. Construction activities are required to implement tree protection methods by adhering to the construction and project design standards provided in the ordinance. The ordinance does not prohibit tree removal. If trees are proposed for removal, they must be replaced at a ratio specified in the ordinance (“mitigation”) in the form of either preserving existing trees onsite, installing replacement trees, or paying in-lieu fees that are used to acquire and protect native trees on public lands. Applicants are required to use the Arboreal Value Charts provided in the Tree Protection Ordinance to determine arboreal values and applicable mitigation requirements.

Floodway (F1) and Floodplain (F2) Combining Districts:

The project site is classified as being within a 100-year flood hazard on the General Plan’s Public Safety Element. The 100-year flood zone or Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA) is defined as the area that will be inundated by the flood event having a 1-percent chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year. These areas are depicted on County zoning maps with the F1- Flood Zone and F2- Flood Plain Combining Zones. County zoning regulations apply for the F1 and F2 Combining Zones:

- F1 (Floodway) Section 26-56.030: Except as specifically allowed in this article, no building or structure shall be constructed, erected, moved, converted, altered or enlarged in the floodway, nor shall any other condition be allowed which would tend to cause significant stream channel alteration or adversely affect the carrying or storage capacity of a floodway, or otherwise constitute a threat to life and property. Ordinary maintenance and repair of existing nonconforming structures shall be permitted subject to the provisions.
- F2 (Floodplain) Section 26-58.010: The F2 district shall be applied to properties which lie within the one hundred (100) year flood hazard area as shown on the most recent FEMA maps and accompanying report. The boundaries of the one hundred (100) year floodplain as indicated on the zoning maps should



be considered approximate. The provisions of this article may be waived by the decision making body where it is demonstrated through engineering analysis, field determinations or other appropriate data, that the precise one hundred (100) year floodplain boundary differs from that shown on the FEMA maps, and provided further, that FEMA approval and sign-off is first secured.

Riparian Corridor with 50-foot and 25-foot setbacks (RC 25/50) Combining District:

The County has enacted General Plan policies that designate Riparian Corridors throughout the County, and provides for the protection and conservation of the riparian corridors, which includes both the stream or river and land alongside the stream or river. The project site is subject to 50-foot setbacks from the top of bank of the Russian River, which borders the property to south, and Hulbert Creek, which lies along the eastern property line. Section 26-65-005 of the Zoning Code prohibits new development within the Riparian Corridor setback unless a use permit for a Streamside Conservation Plan is adopted that provides for the appropriate protection of the biotic resources, water quality, floodplain management, bank stability, groundwater recharge, and other applicable riparian functions.

Valley Oak Habitat (VOH) Combining District:

The VOH zoning overlay covers the most of the project property, however the project does not result in removal of any valley oak trees.

Timberland Conversions:

Section 26-18-250 of the Zoning Code exempts minor timberland conversions of less than 3 acres of timberland from a minor timberland conversion zoning permit, provided the timberland conversion is for the purpose of constructing a structure in compliance with a valid building permit where the conversion is limited to the cutting and removal of the minimum number of trees necessary to accommodate the structure and related improvements.

ANALYSIS

General Plan Consistency

The project parcel has a Recreation and Visitor Serving Commercial land use designation in the Sonoma County General Plan. This land use category is intended to accommodate visitor-serving uses such as resorts with on-site ancillary uses. The proposed resort is consistent with the visitor-serving commercial land use policy and final Design Review Committee review and approval of the project will ensure the resort maintains rural character and reduces impacts caused by nighttime lighting. Additionally, the project is consistent with open space and resource conservation policies of the General Plan in that implementation of the proposed Streamside Conservation Plan will ensure the protection of riparian vegetation, water resources and habitat values.

The noise study prepared for the project (Illingworth and Rodkin, 2016), finds that the project will not exceed General Plan noise standards if noise reduction measures are incorporated into the project. Project conditions of approval require all noise reduction measures proposed by Illingworth and Rodkin are met, including construction of a noise barrier (fence or wall) along the westerly project property boundary, varying in height



from six to eight feet, to reduce driveway/parking lot noise impacts on the adjacent Dubrava Village homes. The project has also been conditioned to require field inspection by Permit Sonoma staff and a qualified acoustical consultant to verify all project noise reduction measures have been met.

Lastly, the project site is within a Class 1 – Major Groundwater Basin and located outside of any priority groundwater basin. However, no private wells will be constructed onsite, as the project will be served by public water from the Sweetwater Springs Water District. Project conditions of approval require a Water Conservation Plan be submitted for all buildings and landscaping prior to building permit issuance, subject to Permit Sonoma review and approval. The Water Conservation Plan must include all reasonably feasible measures to reduce water demand to the maximum extent feasible and enhance water resource recovery to maintain sustainable water supplies. Measures that must be evaluated include installation of low-flow fixtures, best available conservation technologies for all water uses, rainwater and stormwater collection systems and graywater reuse. All proposed landscaping must comply with the Sonoma County Water Efficiency Landscape Ordinance.

Zoning Consistency

The proposed 120-room resort project is located within the Guerneville Urban Service Area boundary and is allowed in the K (Recreation and Visitor-Serving Commercial) Zoning District with a use permit. The proposed project is a compatible blend of recreation and tourist-commercial uses to maintain and enhance Russian River recreational resources. The project meets Zoning Development Standards with regard to building setbacks and maximum lot coverage. Exceptions to maximum building height, parking requirements, and Riparian Corridor setbacks are discussed further below. The project is not subject to the 200-foot Scenic Corridor setback and no Valley Oak Trees are proposed for removal. The project proposes to convert 2.35 acres of coast redwood forest (timberland) to a non-forest use and is exempt from a minor timberland conversion zoning permit, as only the minimum number of trees will be removed to accommodate the resort structures and related improvements.

To evaluate the project's consistency with the Tree Protection Ordinance, the applicant prepared an assessment of construction impacts to trees on the project site (McNair & Associates, dated February 10, 2018). This report documents probable tree impacts occurring as the result the current project design. Per the Tree Inventory and Construction Impact Assessment matrix, up to 76 coast redwood trees (ranging in size from 10" to 48" DBH) may require removal. The 76 tree removal number is based upon an assumption that full removal could happen at each cluster designated for partial removal due to their close proximity to proposed buildings (adjacent) and the inability to preserve the remaining trees in the clusters. Tree protection measures will be implemented to ensure tree preservation and long-term viability. The tree protection measures are intended to protect root zones, while allowing construction close to the tree clusters. The project proposes to meet mitigation requirements in the Tree Protection Ordinance through a combination of the planting of replacement trees and payment of in-lieu fees.

Increased Building Height:

The Zoning Code states the maximum allowed building height of 35 feet (for Commercial Zones) may be increased with a use permit provided that a building with increased allowed height does not exceed the maximum allowed building intensity in the applicable zone. Per Sec. 26-10-040 (K) of the Zoning Code, Maximum Building Intensity is calculated by multiplying the maximum permitted building height (35 feet) by the maximum square footage of lot coverage permitted on a lot (50%). The maximum building intensity for the project is 7,325,710 cubic feet (35 feet multiplied by 209,306 sq. feet). The proposed building height is 53 feet (four levels)



or the equivalent of 13.25 feet per floor. Therefore, the proposed building intensity for all proposed buildings is 1,163,576 cubic feet, well below the maximum building intensity of 7,323,710 cubic feet.

Preliminary Design Review:

On November 7, 2018, the Design Review Committee (DRC) reviewed the project for conformance with Zoning and General Plan policies, including the Russian River Corridor Design Guidelines. The DRC supports the overall design concept provided that the applicant address the underlying design concerns and/or recommendations provided below (see complete DRC Record of Action under Attachment 9). Project conditions of approval require the applicant obtain Final Design Review Committee review and approval prior to any grading or building permit issuance for the project. Final Design Review Committee review will ensure the concerns raised during the November 7, 2018 DRC meeting are addressed.

DRC November 7, 2018 Comments

SITE PLAN

- 1. Consider incorporating corridor breaks between bungalow buildings to break up horizontal massing and provide for improved circulation.*
- 2. DRC supports building encroachment within riparian corridor with riverfront access improvements working to benefit the greater community as proposed*

Staff comment: The applicant has revised the site plan to include corridor breaks between the bungalow buildings (Tree House Suites) and proposes to relocate and improve the public access trail and public parking lot, and construct a new public restroom and bicycle racks as to improve public access to the Russian River.

ARCHITECTURE

- 3. DRC may support request for height limit exception from 35 to 53 feet provided that façade elevations undergo revision to reduce appearance of bulk and massing as seen from the Russian River to south and from the hotel frontage approach to the north.*
- 4. Consider stepping West Wing building back upper floors from west exterior to reduce massing*
- 5. Consider adding more articulation to north and south facades to break up continuous vertical planes.*

Staff comment: The square footages for levels 2-4 of both Hotel Buildings and the Tree House Suite buildings remain the same. Therefore, the facades have not been stepped back to reduce the appearance of bulk and massing. The Board of Zoning Adjustments may need to consider requiring the applicant reduce the number of rooms or the size of rooms on the upper levels in order to address the DRC's design concerns regarding bulk and massing.

PARKING DESIGN

- 6. DRC supports request for reduction of five (5) required on-site parking spaces if traffic study clearly upholds findings and site plan is appropriately revised to accommodate more landscaping as recommended.*

Staff comment: The applicant submitted an addendum to the final traffic study prepared for the project which finds that 176 parking spaces (including 15 stacked spaces) and the 25 spaces for public parking will accommodate the project.



LANDSCAPING

- 7. Provide additional trees throughout parking lot landscape area.
- 8. Increase planter island widths at opportune locations throughout the parking interior and along the site frontage to accommodate more landscaping
- 9. Develop a more effective screening solution between the highway and parking area.
- 10. Reconsider use of big leaf maple trees for parking lot shading

Staff comment: The applicant submitted revised a landscaping plan, which provides for additional screening between the highway and the parking areas (Hybrid Madrones and Redwood trees). Evergreen hedges and different maples trees (Japanese Maples, Big Leaf Maples and Bowhall Maples) will be planted throughout the parking areas.

COLORS / MATERIALS

- 11. Confirm use of low reflectivity window schedule for façade exteriors with southern exposure.

Staff comment: Project materials include use of plaster siding and horizontal lap siding, stone veneer, metal clad window treatment and standing seam metal roofs. Project conditions of approval require Final Design Review Committee review and approval of the window schedule for the project.

LIGHTING

- 12. Minimize use of exterior lighting that could result in off-site light spillage, such as with light bollards and shielded light fixtures, especially closer to the Du Brava property line. No tall light poles should be used.

Staff comment: The applicant is not proposing to use tall light poles. Project conditions of approval require all exterior lighting is Dark Sky Compliant. Exterior lighting standards include the following requirements: low mounted, downward casting exterior lighting that is fully shielded to prevent glare; locating exterior lighting away from the periphery of the property to avoid spill over onto adjacent properties or into the sky; prohibiting flood lights; requiring all parking lot and street lights are full cut-off fixtures; and that any security lighting is motion-sensor activated.

OTHER

- 13. Consider options or supporting workforce housing rather than feeing out.
- 14. Consider conducting additional community outreach to clarify scope of current design proposal before proceeding with BZA hearing.

Staff comment: The applicant proposes to pay fees in accordance with Workforce Housing Requirements pursuant to 26-89-045 of the Zoning Code. The estimated Workforce Housing Fee for the project (based on 2021 Fee Schedule) is \$266,834.00. The applicant has conducted community outreach on the project, as summarized in the Neighborhood/Public Comments section below.

Floodway and Floodplain:

No buildings or structures are proposed to be located within the F1 Zone, except minimal retaining walls for the public access trail. The most-current FEMA map for the area (Community Panel No. 06097C0657E, effective on 12/02/2008), indicates that the entire project site is located in Flood Zone AE, which is defined as an area where



the base flood elevation has been determined. The FEMA FIRM map indicates the base flood elevation at the site to be approximately 57 feet (NAVD 88). The applicant prepared a site-specific floodway determination (Green Valley Consulting Engineers, 2007) for the project and determined that a base flood elevation (BFE) for the project would be approximately 54.2 feet (NGVD29) or 57 feet (NAVD88).

To ensure consistency with County flood protection regulations, a project condition of approval requires preparation of a final flood elevation study to certify flood elevations across the project site and ensure finished floor elevations of project structures are at least one foot above 100-year flood elevations (58.1 feet, unless a lower finished floor elevation is determined appropriate based on the final flood elevation study). In order to accept a reduced flood elevation determination the applicant would need to apply for a letter of map revision to FEMA. Project Conditions of Approval also require construction of the public access trail to meet required waterway setbacks, provide a floodway analysis, and comply with all requirements of County code and relevant resource agencies, including State and North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Boards, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and County Water Agency Flood Control Criteria regarding flood control design.

Riparian Corridor:

The Use Permit request includes a Conceptual Streamside Conservation Plan for encroachment into the Riparian Corridor 50-setbacks established for the Russian River and Hulbert Creek, which covers approximately 1.065 acres (46,426 sq. ft.) of the project site. The Conceptual Streamside Conservation Plan was prepared to mitigate for impacts to riparian habitat resulting from the Resort facility and public trail encroachments into the Riparian Corridor and includes:

- 4,490 SF of Riparian Corridor habitat loss due to resort building structures, patios, decks and walkways (consisting of 2,745 SF of impermeable areas and 1,746 SF of permeable areas); and
- Approximately 0.32 acres (13,939 SF) of Riparian Corridor habitat loss due to the public access trail and the pathway to the river from the hotel; and
- Mitigation for 0.42 acres (18,429 SF) of Riparian Corridor habitat loss at a 3:1 ratio for a total minimum mitigation area of 1.26 acres (55,080 SF) of riparian habitat restoration, including non-native vegetation removal and planting with native riparian vegetation.

It is anticipated that the final alignment of the public access trail will be close to the conceptual alignment and will not require any tree removal. Prior to grading and building permit issuance, Project Conditions of Approval require submission of a Final Streamside Conservation Plan for Permit Sonoma review and approval. Permit Sonoma is required to verify the riparian habitat restoration activities identified in the Final Streamside Conservation Plan are implemented prior to final occupancy of the Resort building permits.

Parking Regulations:

Pursuant to Article 86 (Parking Regulations) of the Sonoma County Zoning Code, the resort facility is required to provide 226 parking spaces to accommodate for the hotel component (121 spaces), the restaurant (56 spaces), and the meeting rooms (49 spaces). Additionally, the existing public parking easement requires the property provides 25 public parking spaces for access to the Russian River.



The project proposes a total of 201 parking spaces, including the 25 public spaces and a zone for 15 stacked parking spaces. The 25 public parking spaces will be reserved for public use while the public trail is open from Sunrise to Sunset. The remaining 176 parking spaces are for use by hotel resort guests and employees. The applicant requests to implement a shared parking concept and reduce the required parking (for the resort) by 50 spaces. Section 26-86-010.i of the Zoning Code allows the Board of Zoning Adjustments to reduce parking standards when it has been satisfactorily demonstrated that fewer spaces will adequately serve the project:

Parking standards may be reduced when it has been satisfactorily demonstrated (to the BZA) that fewer spaces will adequately serve the specific use or that the applicant has encouraged transit opportunities through one or more of the following:

- (1) Participation in a comprehensive travel demand management (TDM) program including, but not limited to, provision of flex-time, carpooling, and transit passes such that VMT generated by the project is reduced;*
- (2) Provision of transit stops and/or turnouts developed in cooperation with and approved by Sonoma County Transit;*
- (3) Provision of amenities for bicyclists, bus riders, carpoolers and pedestrians beyond (Code requirements).*

The applicant completed an Addendum to the Final Traffic Impact Study with an updated parking analysis for the project (W-Trans September 8, 2020). The Addendum uses methodologies contained in the updated Urban Land Institute (ULI) publication, Shared Parking, Third Edition, 2020, to determine parking demand for the resort and its affiliated uses during different time periods. The ULI shared parking methodology ties recommended parking supply to the maximum demand period.

Shared Parking for the Leisure Hotel land use includes the total number of rooms, restaurant square footage and meeting room space. The shared parking analysis projects a peak season (June to October) parking demand of 190 spaces. Overall parking demand is projected to be approximately 30 percent lower during the off-peak winter months (December to April). The parking demand projections include parking generated by the river access public parking lot.

On November 6, 2020, the Sonoma County Department of Transportation and Public Works (DTPW) accepted the Addendum, which concludes the resort’s proposed 201-space parking supply is expected to accommodate the projected peak-season demand for 190 spaces. A project condition of approval requires the applicant submit a Final Parking Management Plan for review and approval by DTPW and Permit Sonoma, addressing plans for use of valet parking during special events and both peak and non-peak season uses. For more detailed analysis and the prescribed mitigation measures for the parking requirements, please see the Transportation Section of the CEQA Initial Study (Mitigated Negative Declaration) for the project under Attachment 11.

Required bicycle parking spaces call for one bicycle space for every 5 spaces required for automobiles, equating to at least 40 required bicycle parking spaces if utilizing 201 vehicle parking spaces if the shared parking concept is applied. If the shared parking concept is not found acceptable by the BZA, then additional bicycle parking spaces above the proposed 40 spaces may be required.



Environmental Analysis

The proposed project has been analyzed under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the CEQA Guidelines, California Code of Regulations. Staff has determined that the project is subject to the California Environmental Quality Act. Based on application materials provided by the applicant and technical specialists, an Initial Study was completed.

As a result of the Initial Study, it was determined that project impacts could be mitigated to a less than significant level, and so a Mitigated Negative Declaration was drafted for the project. This document identifies mitigation measures and a monitoring program for the proposed project. The following table lists subsections of the Initial Study that may be potentially impacted by this project. Mitigation measures for these potential impacts are detailed in the Mitigated Negative Declaration, and have been incorporated into the conditions of approval.

Environmental factors listed below were considered by evaluating the project. The Initial Study includes a discussion of the potential impacts and identifies mitigation measures to substantially reduce those impacts to a level of insignificance where feasible:

- **No Impact: The project would not have the impact described.** The project may have a beneficial effect, but there is no potential for the project to create or add increment to the impact described.
- **Less Than Significant Impact:** The project would have the impact described, but the impact would not be significant. Mitigation is not required, although the project applicant may choose to modify the project to avoid the impacts.
- **Potentially Significant Unless Mitigated:** The project would have the impact described, and the impact could be significant. One or more mitigation measures have been identified that will reduce the impact to a less than significant level.

Topic Area	Abbreviation*	No Impact	Less than Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigated
Aesthetic/Visual	VIS			X
Agricultural & Forest Resources	AG			X
Air Quality	AIR		X	
Biological Resources	BIO			X
Cultural Resources	CUL			X
Energy	ENE	X		
Geology and Soils	GEO			X
Greenhouse Gas Emission	GHG		X	



Topic Area	Abbreviation*	No Impact	Less than Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigated
Hazards and Hazardous Materials	HAZ	X		
Hydrology and Water Quality	HYDRO			X
Land Use and Planning	LU		X	
Mineral Resources	MIN	X		
Noise	NOISE			X
Population and Housing	POP		X	
Public Services	PS		X	
Recreation	REC		X	
Transportation and Traffic	TRANS			X
Tribal Cultural Resources	TCR		X	
Utility and Service Systems	UTL		X	
Wildfire	WILD		X	
Mandatory Findings of Significance			X	

For more detailed analysis and the prescribed mitigation measures for the topic areas that may have impacts that are “Less than Significant with Mitigation”, please refer to the corresponding sections of the CEQA Initial Study (Mitigated Negative Declaration) for the project:

- Section 1: Aesthetics/Visual: pages 39-43
- Section 2: Agricultural and Forest Resources: pages 43-45
- Section 4. Biological Resources: pages 50-56
- Section 5. Cultural Resources: pages 56-57
- Section 7. Geology and Soils: pages 57-60
- Section 10. Hydrology and Water Quality: pages 65-68
- Section 13. Noise: pages 70-74
- Section 17. Transportation: pages 77-81

NEIGHBORHOOD/PUBLIC COMMENTS

At the Sonoma County Design Review Committee meeting held on November 7, 2018, public comments raised the following concerns:

- Protect riparian habitat over tree restoration.
- Lighting impact from parking lot and upper floor of hotel rooms.



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- Hotel impact on local lodging
- Scenic corridor protection
- Public access easement
- Riparian Corridor setback

The DRC recommended that the applicant consider conducting additional community outreach to clarify scope of current design proposal before proceeding with BZA hearing. Since May 2018, the applicant has been conducting public outreach and participated in the following engagements:

Outreach Conducted by Applicant	Date
Russian River Chamber of Commerce Mixer	05/02/2018
Stakeholder Meeting with Guerneville Area Organizations and Community Leaders	06/04/2018
Meeting with Guerneville Neighborhoods Association	07/21/2018
Meeting with Dubrava Homeowners Association	08/25/2018
Guerneville Park Picnic with Neighbors	09/08/2018
Meetings with Russian Riverkeeper	2/6/2019 and 4/5/2019
Communication with Mike Nicholls, Lower Russian River MAC Chair	Mid-April 2019
Land-use Sub-committee Meeting of the Lower Russian River Municipal Advisory Council (MAC)	07/21/2020
Russian River Chamber of Commerce	05/04/2021
Dubrava Village Homeowner’s Association	05/22/2021
Lower Russian river Municipal Advisory Council presentation	06/17/2021
Russian River Chamber of Commerce	08/4/2021 postponed due to Covid; general outreach in August-September Chamber Newsletter.

General concerns raised during the applicant’s public outreach meetings include:

- Need for low-cost local housing for resort workers; work force housing, should improve housing for local community.
- Local program assisting low-income local workers
- Homeless encampments, theft, overflow parking, overnight parking, camping on grounds
- Sewage management, air and river water pollution
- Damage to Dubrava Village perimeter fence
- Storage of trucks and large equipment by the “caretaker” near the Dubrava Village property line
- Dumping of garbage on the Dubrava Village riverfront
- Issues of unmaintained large redwood trees compromised by large/non-native ivy growth on the Lok property
- Tree removal
- Issues with fire danger due to unsupervised “beach parties”, access to property by fire department and security of property prior to start of construction



- Some concerns expressed with the size and scope of development –development was “too big” and the height of the development was “too high”
- Concerns with the potential for increased traffic along Highway 116 and the potential safety impacts that would come along with the development
- Neighbors hope to have access to the resort and the amenities offered (potentially use of pool)
- Concerned about any noise from garbage or service trucks near the property line – and visual impacts with the fence

On January 15, 2019, the Russian River Chamber of Commerce submitted a letter of support stating that the project would meet the region’s growing demand for lodging, hospitality and overall experience in a natural setting; create jobs in the area; be a much needed boost to the local economy; increase TOT collections; turn a blighted property into one all can be proud of; and fill an important need for additional conference room space, currently not available.

The Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration was published for a 30-day public review and comment period from August 27 through September 27, 2021. Public comments were received from 70 households. Ten of the public comments express support for the project and 60 oppose the project. Public comments are included under Attachment 7.

Of the 60 opposition comments, 50 expressed concerns about local traffic congestion , 49 expressed water supply/drought concerns, 50 expressed fire evacuation concerns and 48 expressed design/size concerns. Other concerns expressed are loss of open space, noise, homeless encampments, deficient sewer system, loss of 76 Redwood trees, impact on existing small business owners operating hotels and lodges, pollution of riparian habitats, and inadequate conservation plan. The State Lands Commission submitted a comment letter requesting clarifying information on the public parking lot assessment and for new mitigation measures to be added to the project to increase protection of submerged cultural resources.

RESPONSE TO PUBLIC CONCERNS RAISED

Traffic

The Traffic Impact Study (W-Trans, December 11, 2018) found that all traffic study intersections will operate acceptability at LOS D or better. The left turn queues on Highway 116 at the project driveway will be within available two-way left-turn lane storage. A Class I bicycle pathway will be installed along the entire project frontage and 40 bicycle parking spaces will be provided. A new transit shelter with a bench will be installed at the front of the property. The Addendum to the Final Traffic Impact Study (W-Trans, September 8, 2020) presented Shared Parking methodology and a Shared Parking analysis for applying the Urban land Institute (ULI) Shared Parking methodology to the project to meet the projected peak–season parking demand.

Height and Massing of Hotel Buildings

DRC requested plan revisions to reduce building massing. DRC may support request for height limit exception from 35 to 53 feet provided that façade elevations undergo revision to reduce appearance of bulk and massing as seen from the Russian River to south and from the hotel frontage approach to the north. DRC also wants the applicant to consider stepping West Wing building back upper floors from west exterior to reduce massing and adding more articulation to north and south facades to break up continuous vertical planes.



Tree Removal

A Tree Impact Graphic Plan from the Arborist Construction Impact Review (MacNair, February 10, 2018, updated February 10, 2020) highlights the locations of the 43 coast redwood clusters. Of the 43-coast redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*) clusters within the development envelope, there will be no impact to four (4) of the clusters; twenty-eight (28) of the clusters will require special tree protection measures so as to not damage the root zones; five (5) of the clusters will require partial removal and six (6) of the clusters will be removed. Potentially 76 trees could be removed if partial cluster removal turns out to be impossible or unsuccessful. The Streamside Conservation Plan will offset the loss of coast redwood habitat.

Riparian Corridor Impacts

The Riparian Corridor covers approximately 1.065 acres. Approximately 0.06 acre will be impacted by buildings and 0.04 acre impacted by walkways, decks and patios. Approximately 0.25 acre will be impacted by the construction of the ADA-compliant public access trail and the connector path from the hotel to the river. Therefore, the total impact to the Riparian Corridor will be 0.42 acre. No trees will be removed. The remaining 0.64 acre will not be directly affected.

The Streamside Conservation Plan will provide the mitigation for the encroachment into the Riparian Corridor. The applicant has agreed to a 3:1 mitigation ratio (3 acres of mitigation for each impacted acre). Invasive species will be removed from the unaffected area of the Riparian Corridor and native riparian species will be planted.

Noise

Noise will be produced by traffic on Highway 116 plus project traffic and parking, outdoor use areas, mechanical equipment. Amplified music, amplified speech and non-amplified music will exceed the nighttime threshold. The noise will be mitigated by a noise barrier along the shared property line with Dubrava Village.

Scenic Corridor Protection

Several design elements protect the Scenic Corridor. The hotel has been set back more than 30% of the lot depth. The hotel buildings are located outside of the Scenic Corridor and set within coast redwood trees for compatibility with its surroundings. Existing vegetation screens views from Highway 116. The tone and hedge wall visually separates the resort from Highway 116. New landscaping integrates the hotel with the setting.

Water

Concern has been expressed about being in the midst of a very severe drought and considering a “luxury” hotel of this size and how the addition of another big water user can be justified. One concerned commenter is not against a hotel, just not at this time. On March 22, 2021, Sweetwater Springs Water District issued a Water Will Serve Letter stating that the District has adequate domestic water supplies to furnish the proposed project. The letter also stated that the District has sufficient storage for fire flows for Type IA, IB, IIA and IIIA building materials. The consulting engineer for Sweetwater Springs Water District (District) states the District has a water shortage contingency plan with mandatory usage reductions included, but so far have only issued the Phase I voluntary conservation request. The District has water rights that date back to 1885 (pre 1914 Water Rights). According to the consulting engineer, the District stands in good shape from the perspective of water rights and water usage.

Sewer Capacity

Concern was expressed whether the sewer could handle the project. River Sanitation has confirmed that they have capacity for the project.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Preceding Review Authority Recommendation

The Design Review Committee (DRC) supports the overall design concept provided that the requested plan revisions to reduce building massing and accommodate additional landscaping come back for further consideration after BZA decision.

Staff Recommendation

The Permit Resource and Management Department (Permit Sonoma) recommends that the Board of Zoning Adjustments adopt the Mitigated Negative Declaration and approve the Use Permit and Design Review request subject to the Conditions of Approval.

ATTACHMENTS

LIST OF ATTACHMENTS

1. Draft Conditions of Approval
2. Proposal Statement
3. Vicinity Map
4. Aerial
5. Zoning Map
6. Project Plans
7. Public Outreach Summary conducted by Applicant
8. Public Comments
9. Design Review Committee Record of Action, dated November 7, 2018
10. Sweetwater Water District Will Serve Letter
11. Guerneville Park Resort Initial Study/Mitigation Negative Declaration, Published August 27, 2021
12. Draft Board of Zoning Adjustments Resolution