

**MINUTES REGULAR MEETING
DESIGN REVIEW BOARD
JUNE 5TH, 2007**

ROLL

APPROVED

Board Members Present:	Chair Kent, Crew, Olmsted
Planning Commission Liaison:	Paul
Board Members Absent:	Dickens, Huntsberry
Community Development:	Raffi Boloyan, Principal Planner Lisa Newman, Planning Consultant Katie Korzun, Economic Development Coordinator

AGENDA

A. Staff Communications

- 1) Past City Council, Planning Commission and Design Review Board Action on Design Review Matters

B. Board Communications

C. Minutes

- 2) May 22nd, 2007

D. Consent

- 3) ED06-024 Proposed revisions to approved floor plans, elevations and landscaping to change eight units on Green Way from two-story townhouses to one-story flats.
524 Mission Ave. (San Rafael Carriage House) (Lisa Newman)

E. New Business

- 4) ED07-041 Environmental and Design Review Permit to allow the construction of an auto dealership with a 3,072 sq. ft. building and outdoor display.
440 Francisco Blvd. (Katie Korzun)

A. Staff Communications

- (1) Past City Council, Planning Commission and Design Review Board Action on

Design Review Matters

Boloyan updated the Board on the joint PC and DRB tour that occurred last Saturday. They looked at various projects built over the past couple of years. It was a beneficial tour for most members. There was general agreement that most projects had been built in conformance with what was shown on the plans. Much of the discussion centered around colors and landscaping. In regard to the planters at the Shell Station at Irwin, staff has not been able to investigate, but staff will report back once that investigation is complete. Also, the Gas N Shop on Second and D Streets is in code enforcement.

Boloyan reminded the Board about the scheduled meeting on the 19th of June and currently there are two items on that agenda. The following meeting is scheduled for July 3rd, the day before Fourth of July, which will be canceled, so the next meeting will be the regularly scheduled meeting on July 17th.

B. Board Communications

Chair Kent announced that he would be unable to attend the June 19th meeting.

C. Minutes

2) May 22nd, 2007

Chair Kent, Olmsted and Crew noted a few corrections to the May 22nd minutes.

Chair Kent asked for a motion.

Crew moved and Olmsted seconded, to approve the May 22nd minutes as amended. Motion carried unanimously.

AYES:	Members:	Crew, Olmsted, Chair Kent
NOES:	Members:	None
ABSTAIN:	Members:	None
ABSENT:	Members:	Dickens, Huntsberry

Crew pulled the following item from the Consent Calendar in order to further discuss.

D. Consent

(3) ED06-024 Proposed revisions to approved floor plans, elevations and landscaping to change eight units on Green Way from two-story townhouses to one-story flats.
524 Mission Ave. (San Rafael Carriage House) (Lisa Newman)

Crew discussed roof vents and wanted to make sure the plumbing vents are included. She wanted to clarify that plumbing vents are in the ridge vents as shown. Newman responded that a series of items must come back to the DRB before issuance of the

Building Permit and included among them are the roof vents. Crew reiterated that she wanted to make sure the plumbing vents are ganged.

Chair Kent commented on Tree No. 20 and is not quite clear why that tree needs to be removed. Newman deferred that question to the applicant.

Richard Christiani, architect, explained that fireplaces are not provided in the project and what is shown on the plans would be ganged plumbing vents and gas vents led into one area to look more as a residential fireplace.

Cliff Lowe, landscape architect, noted that the arborist report recommended removal of Tree No. 20 due to its health and also because it was very close to the proposed sidewalk along Green Way.

Olmsted expressed concern for the covered handicap parking space on Green Way, which staff suggested should be removed and asked if that is feasible. Mr. Christiani responded that their review of the code states that if there under five spaces, and in this case they have three guest parking spaces, they do not need to provide a handicap space. After five spaces, there is a requirement that 4% of the spaces must be accessible. It is his understanding that it could be removed and replaced with landscaping. They prefer the landscaping in front of the units versus the handicap space.

Chair Kent opened the public hearing on this item, and seeing no one wishing to speak, he closed the public hearing and brought the matter back to the Board for discussion and action.

Olmsted provided comment on the modifications only since he was not part of the original review. He expressed concern for the proposed scheme to change the units on Green Way from townhouses to flats in regard to access from garages to units that would require walking out of the building on to a public sidewalk, which seems to be a significant lessening of the usability of the units. The old garage plan had “man doors” exiting the units and the present plan eliminated those. This is a serious problem with power outages because without power the garage doors could not be opened. He wondered why the “man doors” from the garages were eliminated and suspects there is an opportunity that they can be added. In regard to the private open space on the upper units, the balconies were reduced in area, which makes them virtually unusable and degrades the quality of the project. The lack of access from the parking directly to the units also strikes him as a degradation of the project. He felt the project was going backwards with these changes.

Crew agreed with Olmsted’s comments about the project. Otherwise, she felt the project is fine and has always favored the project.

Chair Kent concurred with Crew. He was ready to approve wholeheartedly, but Olmsted makes great points. He believes it is a handsome project. Also, he felt the landscaping is creative and now understands the need to remove Tree No. 20.

Mr. Christiani explained the reason for the change, which was the owners are looking for an additional building type added to the mix. They wanted to provide flats in addition to the townhouses to provide a variety in housing types. They were directed to look at how they could make the change, but retain as much of the quality that has been approved on the project. The removal of man doors were an oversight, and they would add man doors back to the plans. In regard to access from garages to the flats, it revolves around issues related to the accessibility code. Because of the slope of the site, the flats are required to be accessible under the ADA guidelines. They provided access to each of the flats and wish to explore this interpretation with the Building Department as far as providing access directly for the first floor units. There are four flats which they can easily provide a stairs up from the garage, directly underneath the stairs shown on Sheet 2.2. They could provide four sets of stairs from the garage up to the first floor flats and locate the washer and dryer in the garage. It becomes more difficult for the second story flats because the stair becomes quite cumbersome in terms of circulation. It would be more difficult to provide direct access of two flights up to the second floor. They could easily accommodate that if there are no ADA issues about providing the stair and the questions about primary entrance and how that is interpreted by the Building Department. In terms of the balconies, the first story townhouses have a large deck off the family room and the first story on the flats the area has doubled, so they end up with a 192 sq. ft of area for the flats on the ground floor for each unit. The second floor of the townhouses they provided a bay window to provide architectural scale into the courtyard and tried to maintain that relationship as well for the second story flats, so they provided smaller balconies.

Olmsted noted that they lost the individual front entrances and substituted a gang of four into two different buildings. Also, they lost the ability to step the units as they rise with the grade and those add accumulatively to his feeling that the applicant is going backwards. Mr. Christiani understands the concerns, but they provided four different plan types that were not in the original mix. In terms of architecture, the townhouses allow for that, but only provide one unit type in the design. The flats give an alternative and allow for ADA access to those units, which would be impossible otherwise. He further believed there are some bonuses with the redesign.

Eve Wengler, West Bay Builders, indicated that larger balconies on those upper units could be provided, if so desired by the Board. It is just from an architectural perspective to have a difference in scale instead of having one big balcony over one big balcony, but that could be done, if desired. The balance is the ability to provide four handicap accessible units to the City, which otherwise would not be provided. That is important to the City and the neighborhood association appreciated the handicapped accessible units being provided. The primary benefit is the additional handicap accessible units to the City of San Rafael, and at times, handicap accessibility is not always that attractive, but they chose the side of the site that is not as visibly noticeable.

Crew believed having the accessible units is a great idea, so she would be in favor of having the different unit types.

Chair Kent believed the applicant put thought into some of these solutions, but did not believe the project is as good as it was originally, but felt it would work.

Crew agreed with widening the doors and adding the “person doors.” Chair Kent concurred.

Olmsted noted that he is not persuaded that the changes are beneficial to the appearance of the project. He agreed that the initial design was well thought through and well developed. He is stuck with this notion that they are degrading the units and did not see a significant reason to do so.

Boloyan summarized the Board’s comments:

- Reluctant acceptance of the design changes given the units are providing a needed unit type.
- If applicant moves forward with this design, the upper decks must be increased in their depth, expanding to a more usable size.
- Person doors must be provided in the garage spaces.

Chair Kent asked for a motion.

Crew moved and Kent seconded, to recommend approval of this project with adding the “*man/person doors*” and widening the decks on the upper most level. Motion carried 2-1. Olmsted opposed.

AYES:	Members:	Crew, Chair Kent
NOES:	Members:	Olmsted
ABSTAIN:	Members:	None
ABSENT:	Members:	Dickens, Huntsberry

E. New Business

- (4) ED07-041 Environmental and Design Review Permit to allow the construction of an auto dealership with a 3,072 sq. ft. building and outdoor display.
440 Francisco Blvd. (Katie Korzun)

Korzun summarized the staff report and asked the Board to review the proposed project and make recommendations to the Planning Commission as to whether it is consistent with the site and its surrounding environment and as well as the Design Guidelines and Review Criteria of the Zoning Ordinance.

Crew asked staff the wattage of the bulbs. Korzun deferred that question to the applicant.

Robin Bacci, RAB Motors, thanked staff for the quick turnaround, which is greatly appreciated as well as the preliminary meeting they had with the Board. They hope to satisfy the Board’s concerns this evening. They will be showcasing a fun and attractive vehicle in the new building. These will be green cars and they want to showcase and display them. They will discuss in detail the water quality and landscape feature, as they

want to support the environment not only with the green car, but also with the green building concept.

Peter Dodge, architect, provided the DRB with a sample board for their review. The design of the building is largely mandated by corporate goals. They achieved a very simple, elegant and well-detailed modern building. The building is mandated to be a certain elevation above flood plain, which was a driving consideration in the layout of the site and positioning of the building. The auto display area is along Francisco and concentrated on the north end of the site and there will be a round Smart Car demonstration track that will be paved in a different colored concrete to differentiate from the display area. The southern end of the site has public and employee parking. They added striping to define access across the pavement from the street entrance to the building. They added fabric shade structure in a color that is part of their color scheme. He believed it is a very simple, but elegant solution to accommodate the requirements of the sales operation and the site. In regard to landscaping, they augmented from the last review and have a fairly rich landscaping that fits the palette. He further noted that lighting wattage details were provided in the packet the Board received for their consideration.

Steven Wheeler, landscape architect, thanked DRB and staff for the opportunity to present updated plans. He reiterated their goals, which are to create an attractive landscape that would compliment and enhance the new Smart Car dealerships; address stormwater management and irrigation, so they can compliment the green approach to the dealership and cars; and work with the approved plant palette for the adjacent project to create more continuity along West Francisco Boulevard.

They have taken the opportunity to look in more detail at design elements. The first is the landscape water quality feature known as the bio retention area on the plans. The water quality feature is set in the center of the 20-foot landscape setback. It is 8 feet wide and starts at the back of the existing driveway and slopes 2% for 6 feet and then drops to a 4:1 slope for 6-inches, which is the bottom of the feature. It then slopes back up at a 4:1 slope to meet the proposed grade at the edge of the parking lot. The soil in the area of the feature will be removed and replaced with a new fast draining soil, under which is an under drain to carry water that filters through the soil out to the storm drainage system. The depth of the new soil is approximately 18 to 24-inches in this area. They realized the plans at the last meeting were preliminary and added more details. They have used the same groundcover next door and have the same rhythm to extend what has been happening on the project site to the south. They have taken their shrubs and placed them in the center of the water quality feature and are a mix of three shrubs used at the adjacent property and they are mixed in formal groupings along the frontage. Within that they have three clusters of crab apple trees and behind that there is a planting of Manzanita groundcover. Red maples are located at the corner of the site and located within the parking lot. On the south side they will add a hedge or shrub boarder that matches the adjacent project as well as match the three trees on the other property line. They have planters on either side of the entry and on either side of the ramps. They would like to work with day lilies that could pick up on the yellow color of the Smart logo, which are

part of the plant palette for the adjacent project. They have a pear tree located in the coffee terrace and rather than add more planting to reduce usable area, the idea of the shade structure will add a dynamic element. At the backside of the building the groundcover is Manzanita and the western red bud that surrounds the building. Along the backside of the site there is an existing fence that will remain with a hedge that will be planted in front of it as well as Boston ivy on the fence to give some depth and screening to the back side of this site.

They added two finger planters and three trees to an existing planter and the fifth tree is another western red bud to the site.

There have been a couple soils test done for the project and based on the geo technical report there is 4-foot of fill on top of bay mud. It is a mix of slit, gravel and clay and the water level was a minus 2 elevation in the boring. The existing soils may need melioration. The plants selected for use in the bio swale have characteristics of plants recommended for this type of landscape feature, which is to be able to thrive and well drain soils. Also, they have the track record of RAB Motors, a project that has existed for 20 years and landscaping has been beautifully maintained. The pear trees, palms and groundcover seem to be in good condition and they will have the same level of attention to installation and maintenance at this project as well.

Olmsted asked if the planting is pliable and compatible in an area they are attempting to collect residue from other runoff, which is the purpose of the bio swale. Mr. Wheeler does not expect heavy pollution. The plants selected have similar characteristics to plants recommended by the Alameda County Water Quality Management Agency for these types of swales. It is a large list of native plants that work in this type of environment. The purpose of the bio swale is to get the water into and percolate into the ground water and filter before it goes into the storm drain system.

Robert Stevens, engineer, explained that the Regional Board mandates water discharge and currently on every hard surface pollutants land and during rainfall events it picks up the initial chemical load and discharges directly into storm drain pipes into creeks, streams and bay that damages and hurts the water quality in those areas. If they can take the initial low flow storm event and channel that through a water quality feature, up to 80% of the pollution can be removed.

Chair Kent asked if the bio swale meets the requirement of 4% in total permeable area. Dane Johnson, engineer, responded that they met and exceeded the 4% that is mandated by the City.

Chair Kent noted that the plant palette was developed without having bio retention in mind, and giving that, he asked if the landscape architect is still confident that the plants selected will work in a bio retention environment. Mr. Wheeler responded in the affirmative. Also, they do not anticipate a higher level of runoff pollutants that might not occur along a street that does not have curb and the rainwater flows into the adjacent plantings, not the shoulder. While a few species are identified for dealing with toxic

waste sites, they do not have that condition in this case and they are not trying to emulate through planting a toxic waste site. They are simply providing the physical filtering and through the metabolic process of the plants some additional filtering. He is comfortable with the plants selected through the plant palette in combination with maintenance of the entire site.

Chair Kent asked if the soil condition would be improved outside of the bio retention area. Mr. Wheeler believed so. He explained that the preliminary soils test indicated that drainage was slow and it was basically sandy clay and gravel. They will need to amend the soil throughout the site, which is good practice and required by MMWD. Also, as at the back of the site, they are filling, so they have an opportunity to bring in additional soil.

Chair Kent opened the public hearing on this item, and seeing no one wishing to speak, he closed the public hearing and brought the matter back to the Board for discussion and action.

Crew believed it is a very handsomely designed project. She liked the building very much and felt the shade structure with the yellow canopy will be a good addition. The signage is very handsome. She is concerned about the lighting wattage and believed it should be reduced to 125 due to brightness. She desired more trees out in front. Also, there seems to be more contrast needed between the two pavers chosen for the test track, which should be addressed. There is a lot of glass on the exterior of the building and after construction is completed, she recommended reviewing the amount of brightness from the interior to the exterior. She commended the team on doing a wonderful job.

Olmsted agreed it is a well-conceived project and it will be a credit to the community. The design team has done a commendable job. His biggest concern was the compatibility of this bio swale with suitable planting in order to achieve two different objectives. The explanation he received tonight was comforting. He shares the notion of the brightness of the parking and it is hard to tell until it is built whether or not it will seem excessive and encouraged a review period. He further noted that he supports the project wholeheartedly.

Chair Kent agreed it is a handsome project and the applicant responded quite well to the Board's comments during the conceptual hearing. In terms of Boston ivy it is not a great plant choice. He felt conceptually the bio swale is a great idea, but it must work. Running water through Manzanita did not seem like a good idea, but there appears to be enough slope that it will work. He believed the plants have a reasonable chance of succeeding in the bio retention area. More thought must be given to irrigation because there are a lot of plants onsite. They must zone between the bio retention areas and what is outside. He felt one more grouping of trees could be added to the north of the main entrance to tighten it up some without any big loss. He found the color board acceptable as presented tonight.

Commissioner Paul asked staff how lighting levels compare with other dealerships. Korzun responded that they are substantially less. Boloyan added that average is in the 20

range for site lighting and outside perimeter is in the 10 or 12 range. Chair Kent felt there are no real high intensity areas and accepted the lighting.

Boloyan summarized the Board's comments:

- Well-designed project.
- Architecture, signage and colors are appropriate.
- Additional grouping of three additional trees need to be added along the frontage north to the entrance of the water.
- Lighting review needs to be conducted post construction to ensure interior lighting does not reflect to brightly out from the building.
- Incorporate a few irrigation and planting suggestions from Chair Kent.

Chair Kent asked for a motion.

Olmsted moved and Crew seconded, to approve the design as amended tonight. Motion carried unanimously.

AYES:	Members:	Crew, Olmsted, Chair Kent
NOES:	Members:	None
ABSTAIN:	Members:	None
ABSENT:	Members:	Dickens, Huntsberry

ADJOURNMENT

By order of the Chair, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Jessica Woods, Recording Secretary