



September 3, 2021

88 Vivian Street, San Rafael

ASHTON 3

Project Narrative

The context

The demand for housing of all kinds, is at record high levels across California. Fueled by historically low interest rates, extreme lack of supply, the shared economy, and most recent attitudes with the pandemic regarding privacy and work from home advantages, for-sale housing is particularly desirable. As available raw land dwindles in desirable markets, in addition to an active buyer pool who prioritizes urban lifestyle, home ownership near downtown activities and services (restaurants, shopping, farmers market, art walks, film festivals), prospects are exciting in San Rafael! The city is dynamic, diverse, and culturally rich with a downtown enviable among other cities. Couple those factors with the successful work-from-home movement, the ability to retain employment in job centers like San Francisco and Oakland makes living in the exciting city of San Rafael possible.

The site is currently home to the Country Club Bowl, a bowling alley that opened its doors in 1959. The property suspended operations in May 2020 and interested developers have seen the potential. The residential uses in the Canal Area are 91.6% rental properties, so the redevelopment and transition of this parcel into a for-sale homes neighborhood is a trend in the right direction.

New Neighborhood

This new neighborhood at 88 Vivian Street of 70 three-story townhomes on 2.41 acres results in a density of 29 homes/acre. The current zoning is Neighborhood Commercial (NC) with a 20% inclusionary affordable housing component, the site is allowed to achieve these 70 homes. These handsome contemporary townhomes face both adjacent public streets – Vivian and Belvedere and will activate the street scene with front doors and entry stoops to bring vitality and pride to the neighborhood! These homes will range in size from 1415 SF to 1588 SF and offer 2- and 3-bedroom homes with 2.5 baths, all with 2 car side-by-side garages. Seventeen of these home offer expanded garage space for bikes, scooters or merely storage rarely found in townhomes today. Seventeen other homes offer an accessible powder on the ground floor. These floorplans are varied in layout and will appeal to both healthy young and mature buyers and will be perfect in the new world of remote working from home. Additionally, 20% of the homes – 14 total - will be affordable, 10% -7 total - will be accessible homes and all will enjoy the quality housing and neighborhood envisioned.

The Walk Score for this neighborhood is 'very walkable' (74) and 'very bikeable' (75), further emphasizing this excellent location. Downtown San Rafael businesses will also benefit with the influx of must needed housing and new residents to the area.

Efficient design and livable floorplans are key elements to this neighborhood. One outdoor amenity area is located at the southernmost entry into the neighborhood. This 'outdoor living room' offers seating, attractive courtyard, and landscape planting...a social gathering area for the residents. The true amenity of this site is the location and proximity to activities within the city.

The site design has been refined to include specific concerns from the City Fire Department by redesigning the buildings and their elevations to be accordance with Section D 105 of the CA fire code by limiting the eave heights to 30'. This eliminates the need for aerial fire access and allows the traditional pumper fire truck to service this community.

The future is now, the market environment is ready, and the site is prime for this catalyst project to reinvigorate the Canal area with new attractive quality homes for sale. A win-win for the city of San Rafael and the future homeowners!

Technical Analysis and Comparison to the Zoning Code

The current zoning for the site is NC (Neighborhood Commercial)

Development Standards Comparison

Development Standard	NC	88 Vivian	Additional Standards
Minimum Lot Area (sq. ft.)	6,000	2.41 acres (104,979.6 SF)	
Minimum lot area/dwelling unit (sf) (Max. residential intensity)	1,000	1,415 SF	(A), (N), (O)
Floor Area Ration (Max. nonresidential intensity)	*		*See Section 12.16.150
Minimum lot width (ft.)	60		
Minimum yards:			
Front (ft.)	NR	4'	(B)
Side (ft.)	NR	3.5'	(B)
Street side (ft.)	NR	4'/5'	(B)
Rear (ft.)	NR		(B)
Maximum height of structure (ft.)	36 feet; 30 feet for a residential-only building	30' to eaves	(C), (D), (E), (F), (G), (H)
Maximum lot coverage	NR	50.7%	(P)
Minimum landscaping	10%	12.5%	(I), (J), (K), (L)
Usable outdoor area	NR	3,000 SF	(M)
Parking	*	2.17 space/home	*Based on use. See Section 14.18.040

A) There is no minimum lot area requirement for a boarding house.

(B) Where the frontage of a block is partially in an R district, the front yard shall be the same as required for that R district, and when the side and/or rear of the lot(s) abuts an R district, the respective side and/or rear yard shall be ten feet (10'). Parking or maneuvering shall be permitted within the required side and rear yards provided that a minimum six-foot (6') wide landscape buffer area, excluding curbs, is provided adjacent to the side and rear property lines.

(C) Exceptions may be granted for a height above thirty-six feet (36'), subject to the provisions of [Chapter 14.24](#), Exceptions.

(D) Hotels have a four (4) story fifty-four-foot (54') height limit. A one-story twelve-foot (12') height bonus may be approved as part of a design review permit by the planning commission if it finds that the hotel will provide a significant community benefit, and the design is consistent with this title.

(E) Repealed 3/18/96.

(F) Buildings existing or approved as of January 1, 1987 which are more than three (3) stories in height shall not be considered nonconforming, and are listed in [Section 14.16.040](#), Buildings over three (3) stories.

(G) See general plan downtown height map for lot-specific height limits.

(H) A height bonus may be permitted in residential development as provided for in [Section 14.16.190](#), Height bonus.

(I) Where the frontage of the lot(s) is adjacent to or across from an R district, fifty percent (50%) of the front yard shall be landscaped. Where the side yard abuts an R district, a minimum three feet (3') of buffer landscaping must be provided. Where the rear of the lot abuts an R district, ten feet (10') of buffer landscaping must be provided.

(J) In the GC district, a minimum fifteen feet (15') of the front setback must be landscaped. Landscaped portions of the public right-of-way may be included, subject to approval by the hearing body.

(K) For parking lot landscaping, see [Section 14.18.160](#), Parking lot screening and landscaping.

(L) A landscaped amenity area for employees and the public is encouraged in office and commercial projects.

(M) Provision of usable outdoor area is encouraged in residential development as part of a mixed-use project.

(N) Outside of downtown, only one unit is permitted, and no additional units are permitted, on lots less than five thousand (5,000) square feet, per [Section 14.16.300](#) (Small lots).

(O) A density bonus may be granted, as provided for in [Section 14.16.090](#).

(P) The maximum lot coverage restriction established for the office (O) district shall not apply to solar panels installed over existing paved parking spaces; consistent with [Section 14.16.307.v](#)

Revised Building summary (Response to Comment #2)

Building No.	Building Type	Plan 1	Plan 2	Plan 3	Plan 4	Plan 5	Total Units
1	400	-	-	-	3	3	6
2	400	-	-	-	3	3	6
3	400	-	-	-	3	3	6
4	400	-	-	-	3	3	6
5	200	2	2	-	-	-	4
6	100	-	-	2	1	1	4
7	100	-	-	2	1	1	4
8	200	2	2	-	-	-	4
9	300	4	2	-	-	-	6
10	300	4	2	-	-	-	6
11	300	4	2	-	-	-	6
12	300	4	2	-	-	-	6
13	400	-	-	-	3	3	6
Totals		20	12	4	17	17	70