



SAN RAFAEL

THE CITY WITH A MISSION

Community Development Department – Planning Division

Meeting Date: October 19, 2021

Case Numbers: ED21-008; EX21-011; SE21-004;
UP21-003; V21-002

Project Planner: Krystle Rizzi, Consulting Planner

Agenda Item: 2

REPORT TO DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

SUBJECT: 1580 Lincoln Avenue (San Rafael Inn) – ED21-008; EX21-011; SE21-004; UP21-003; V21-002 for demolition of a non-operational garden center and construction of a new, four-story, 46-room boutique hotel with 38 parking spaces, and guest amenities including a café located at the intersection of Lincoln Ave/Grand Ave. The project is requesting Variances to reduce the minimum front and street side setbacks, reduce the minimum landscaping requirements, and reduce parking stall dimensions. In addition, the project requests an Exception to exceed the maximum lot coverage, and a Sign Exception to exceed the maximum allowable sign area; APN: 011-075-13; Multi-Family Residential (HR1) Zone; Robert Sauvageau of RYS Architects, Inc., Applicant; 1580 Lincoln, LLC, Owner; Lincoln/San Rafael Hill Neighborhood.

SUMMARY

The project is being referred to the Design Review Board as it proposes demolition of an existing garden center and construction of a new hotel, which is defined as a major physical improvement under San Rafael Municipal Code (SRMC) Section 14.25.040. As provided therein, major physical improvements require Board recommendation to the Planning Commission, who is the ultimate decision-making body for the project. Based on the project's consistency with applicable design criteria, development standards, and findings, which are discussed in detail below, staff believes that the project is consistent with applicable design guidelines and requests that the Board review this report and provide a recommendation on the project's compliance to the Planning Commission. Specifically, the Board should consider whether the comments provided to the applicant during the Conceptual Design Review meeting on November 17, 2020, have been adequately addressed to ensure the project design is appropriate given the proposed use and setting. In providing a recommendation, the Board should consider whether to impose conditions on the project to further ensure consistency with the adopted design standards.

REQUESTED ENTITLEMENTS

The proposed project is subject to review and approval of the entitlements described below. In considering the proposed project, the Design Review Board (DRB) should focus on providing design-related comments and recommendations to the Planning Commission, and in particular should provide recommendations on the requested Environmental and Design Review Permit, Exception to exceed the maximum allowable lot coverage, Major Sign Exception, and the requested Variances for a reduction in the front and street side setbacks as well as the reduction to the required landscaping. Consistent with Section 14.02.020(J), where a single development project seeks multiple approvals, the highest decision-making body, in this case the Planning Commission, shall review and approve, conditionally approve, or deny the requested entitlements.

- **Environmental and Design Review (ED21-008).** Chapter 14.25 (Environmental and Design Review Permits) of the San Rafael Municipal Code (SRMC) sets forth regulations for types of development activities subject to environmental and design review within the City of San Rafael. As specified in Section 14.25.040, new construction is classified as a Major Physical Improvement, which is subject to review and approval by the City's Planning Commission. As detailed in Section 14.25.070, the Design Review Board (DRB) is responsible for reviewing and

providing recommendations to the Planning Commission on all major physical improvements. The project proposes new construction and as such is defined as a major physical improvement subject to review by the DRB and approval by the Planning Commission.

- **Exception (EX21-011).** As specified in Section 14.24.020(C) of the SRMC, an exception to the maximum allowable lot coverage may be granted by the Planning Director for projects where such increases are necessary for significantly improved site planning or architectural design, creation or maintenance of views, or where such increase will facilitate highly desirable features or amenities and will not unreasonably affect abutting sites. This section applies to properties located within any residential district and allows an increase in lot coverage up to ten percent. As proposed, the project exceeds the maximum allowable lot coverage by two percent and is therefore subject to review and approval of an exception. As stated previously, since other project entitlements require Planning Commission approval, the request for an exception is also subject to review by the Planning Commission.
- **Major Sign Exception (SE21-004).** Section 14.19.045 of the SRMC provides for exceptions to the established sign size, placement, type, number, design, and illumination set forth in Chapter 14.19 (Signs). As further detailed therein, a major exception applies to requests which deviate from the standard or provisions for sign size and height by more than twenty percent. The project proposes deviations from the allowed number of signs in excess of 20% and as such is requesting approval of a Major Sign Exception. As noted in Section 14.19.043, the Planning Commission has the authority to approve, conditionally approve, or deny applications for a major sign exception, with the Design Review Board serving as an advisory body.
- **Use Permit (UP 21-003).** Section 14.04.020 of the SRMC sets forth land use regulations for the City’s residentially zoned districts, including the HR1 district in which the site is located. As shown in Table 14.04.020, hotels and motels are listed as “C”, which indicates the requirement for a conditional use permit. As detailed in section 14.22.020, the Planning Commission shall approve, conditionally approve, or deny applications for conditional use permits identified in the Land Use Tables as C use permits. The project proposes construction of a new hotel and as such requires approval of a conditional use permit.
- **Variance (V21-002).** Chapter 14.23 (Variances) of the SRMC provides for flexibility from the strict application of development standards when special circumstances pertaining to the land such as size, shape, topography, or location deprives such property of privileges enjoyed by other properties in the vicinity and in the same zoning district. The project requires granting of Variances as the project proposes to encroach into the minimum required front (Grand Avenue) and street side (Lincoln Avenue) yard setbacks, reduce the minimum landscaping requirement, and reduce parking stall dimensions. As noted in Section 14.23.020, when a project is subject to approval at a higher level than the Zoning Administrator, the Variance application is also subject to approval by the Planning Commission.

PROPERTY FACTS

The following tables provide an overview of General Plan and Zoning designations for the project site and immediately surrounding area as well as existing developed land uses. In addition, this section provides an overview of the project’s compliance with applicable development standards set forth in Table 14.04.040 of the San Rafael Municipal Code.

Table 1: Designations and Existing Uses

Location	General Plan Designation	Zoning Designation	Existing Land-Use
Project Site:	HDR	HR1	Garden Center (Closed)
North:	HDR	HR1	Villa Inn (Motel)
South:	HDR /MDR	HR1 / DR	Fourplex Apartment
East:	HDR / MDR	HR1 / DR	Offices/Single-Family Residence
West:	HDR	HR1	Condominiums

HDR = High Density Residential; MDR = Medium Density Residential; HR1 = Multifamily Residential Districts: High-Density; DR = Duplex Residential

Table 2: Development Standards Summary

Development Standard	Required/Permitted	Proposed	Consistent
Lot Requirements			
Minimum lot area	6,000 s.f.	17,768 s.f. (no change)	Yes
Minimum lot width	60 feet	45 – 100 feet (no change)	Yes
Minimum Yards			
Front	15 feet	2-feet 8 ¼-inches	Variance Requested
Side	3 feet (min) 5 feet (max)	4-feet	Yes
Side (Street)	10 feet	3-feet	Variance Requested
Rear	5 feet	5-feet 1 ½-inches	Yes
Maximum Height	54 feet	44-feet 9-inches 54-feet 9-inches to tower	Yes*
Maximum Lot Coverage	60% (11,035 s.f.)	62% (13,343 s.f.)	Exception Requested
Minimum Landscaping	50% of front/street side (2,027 s.f.)	48% of front/street side (1,944 s.f.)	Variance Requested
Parking (Vehicular)	1/sleeping room (46) 1/hotel manager (01) 1/2 employees (03)	38	Yes**
Parking (Bicycle)	5% of required auto parking	2 short-term 4 long-term	Yes**
Signs	2 signs/site 25 square feet	4 signs 91.5 square feet	Sign Exception Requested

* Architectural features such as towers may exceed the height limit pursuant to SRMC Section 14.16.120. Building height is measured from an established exterior finished grade elevation to top of roof deck of a flat roof building.

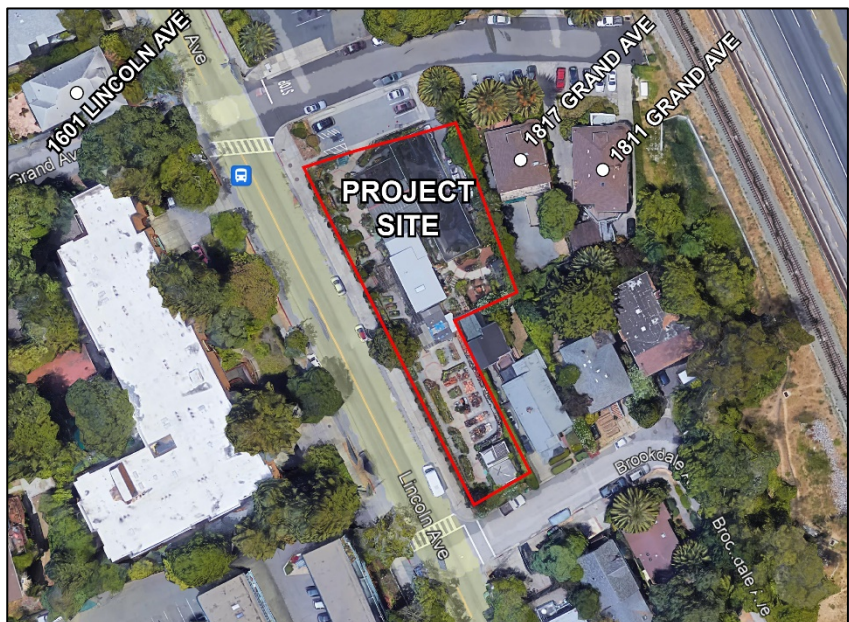
** Pursuant to SRMC Section 14.18.040, a parking study is required for hotel uses with an on-site restaurant, meeting, or banquet facility, and the required amount of parking for the project is determined through the parking study.

BACKGROUND

Site Description & Setting:

The project site is located between Highway 101 to the east and Lincoln Avenue to the west at the southeast corner of Lincoln Avenue/Grand Avenue on a reverse flag lot (Figure 1). The lot also has approximately 45-feet of frontage on Brookdale Avenue and is approximately 17,768 square feet, featuring a generally flat topography with an average northwest to southeast cross slope of eight percent. The site is currently developed with an approximately 930-square-foot commercial retail building and outdoor product sales area, formerly the Sloat Garden Center, which is no longer operational and will be demolished as part of the project. The site also contains ancillary improvements including two

Figure 1: Project Vicinity



outbuildings, concrete walkways, and wood decks, all of which will be removed to accommodate the proposed project. The site is currently developed with a small parking lot, which is accessed from an existing driveway along Grand Avenue.

Surrounding uses include multifamily residences to the west and south, offices in converted single-family residential structures to the east, and the Villa Inn motel, which is located north of the site, across Grand Avenue. The offices located at 1811 and 1817 Grand Avenue, as well as the single-family residence located at 1601 Lincoln Avenue that were constructed circa 1908 are recognized by the City of San Rafael as historical resources (see Figure 1). As such, Brunzell Historical prepared a report to evaluate potential impacts of the proposed project to these historic resources¹. Also located within proximity of the project site is the Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART) right of way, located east of the site and running parallel with Highway 101.

History:

The project previously received Conceptual Design Review (CDR20-007) by the Board on November 17, 2020, consistent with SRMC Section 14.25.030(B) which requires conceptual review by the Board for developments subject to Major Environmental and Design Review. The Board provided the following comments to the applicant at the November 2020 meeting. Each Board recommendation is shown in **bold**, followed by a brief discussion of how the applicant has addressed these comments.

1. **Applicant is encouraged to create a better sense of entry to the hotel lobby along Grand Avenue.** Added glazing to the Lincoln Avenue elevation, added awnings to Lincoln and Grand Avenue elevations, and rotated the elevator tower parallel to Lincoln Avenue to open the hotel entry vestibule (see Sheet A9 of Exhibit 1a).
2. **Applicant is encouraged to provide equal attention of design details to all facades, particularly along the southeast portion of the upper floors.** Added niche elements and architectural detailing to the first floor, did not incorporate glazed openings to address neighbor privacy concerns (see Sheet A10 of Exhibit 1a).
3. **Applicant is encouraged to explore presenting the project as a 3D model , including the immediate adjacent development.** Model views provided (see Sheets A13, A14, A15, and A17 of Exhibit 1a).
4. **Provide preliminary civil drawings (grading, stormwater drainage), a shade study and photometric study with the formal project submittal.** Preliminary Grading and Drainage Plan provided (see Sheet C2.0 of Exhibit 1b).
5. **Provide calculations (in square feet) on the amount of overall site landscaping, landscaping required and landscaping provided off-site.** Applicant provided landscape area calculations demonstrating that the project will landscape 48% of the front and street side setback area, which is slightly less than the 50% required. Additional landscaping provided within the public right-of-way and on the interior portion of the lot (see Exhibit 2).
6. **Synthetic turf should be proposed in lieu of natural grass turf.** Plans have been modified to incorporate synthetic turf instead of natural lawn (see Sheet L0.1 of Exhibit 1c).
7. **Applicant is encouraged to explore utilizing permeable pavers as much a practical to meet the project's stormwater treatment requirements and re-evaluate the proposed plant palette for compatibility with bioretention areas.** The plant list specified for the biofiltration planters has been selected based on Appendix E of the BASMAA Post-Construction Manual – Design Guidance for Stormwater Treatment and Control for Project in Marin, Sonoma, Napa, and Solano Counties.

¹ <https://www.cityofsanrafael.org/sanrafael-inn/>

General Plan and Zoning Designations

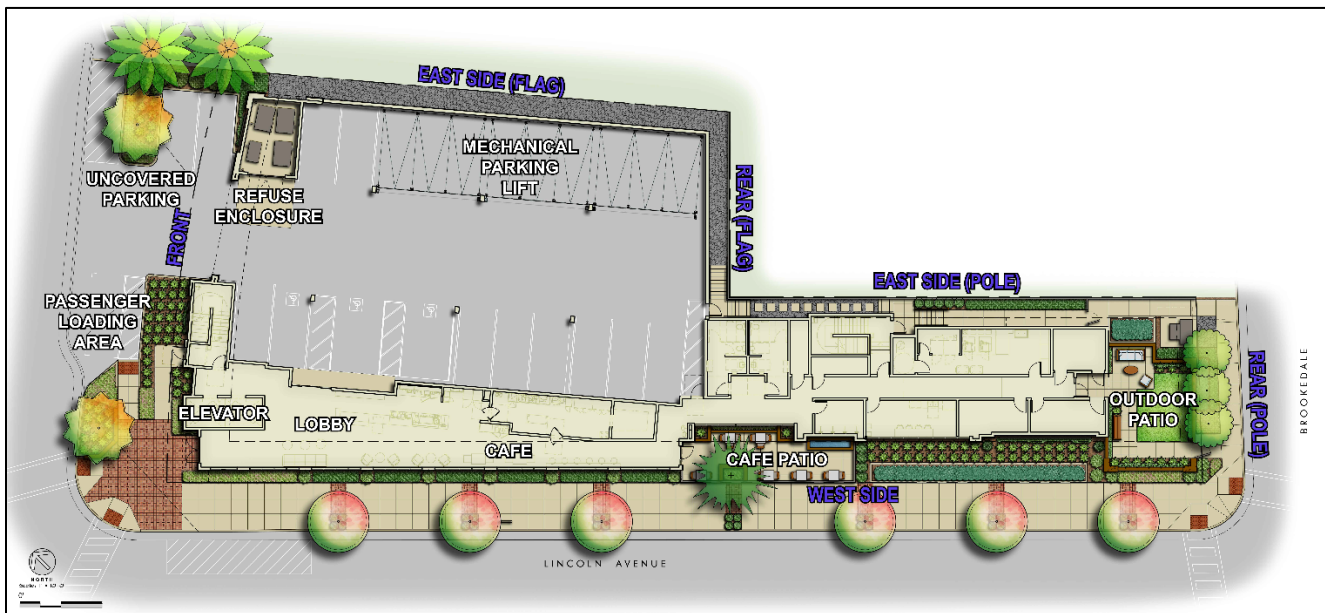
The project site has a General Plan Land Use of High Density Residential (HDR) which is the highest density category applied to residential areas, allowing up to 43.6 dwelling units per net acre. The corresponding Zoning Designation for the site is Multifamily Residential: High-Density (HR1), which provides opportunities for high-density multifamily residential developments and conditionally permits office, commercial, and visitor accommodation uses, such as the proposed hotel.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Site Plan

The project proposes to demolish the existing, approximately 930 square foot garden center building, outbuildings, and associated site improvements and construct a new, 46-room, four-story hotel with a 13,343 square foot building footprint and 44,485 square foot floor area. The project would also install 1,844 square feet of landscaping, 1,739 square feet of hardscape areas, and 842 square feet of paved surfaces including sidewalk, curb, and driveway areas. In addition, the project proposes improvements within the public right-of-way along Grand Avenue including 625 square feet of landscaping and approximately 2,000 square feet of paved surfaces to accommodate sidewalk, curbs, and the driveway (see Sheet A8 of Exhibit 1a for lot coverage diagram). Given the unique shape of the lot, there are six property lines from which the structure is measured to determine compliance with applicable setbacks including one front, two rear, two east side, and one west side. Setbacks from the rear and east side property lines are described as “flag” or “pole” to indicate the location on the lot, as shown in Figure 2. As proposed, the structure is located 2-feet 8 ¼-inches from the front property line, 5-feet 1 ⅝-inches from the rear (flag) property line, 22-feet from the rear (pole) property line, 5-feet from the east side (flag) property line, 4-feet from the east side (pole) property line, and 3-feet from the west side property line. The building has an overall height of 54-feet 9-inches as measured to the stair/elevator tower located at the southwest corner of the lot.

Figure 2: Proposed Site Plan



Floor Plan

The proposed hotel has a total floor area of 44,485 square feet inclusive of the first floor (13,343 square feet), second floor (10,852 square feet), third floor (10,256 square feet), and fourth floor (10,034 square feet). The first floor has the largest floor plate and consists of the proposed 38-car parking area, refuse enclosure, lobby, café, restrooms, secure parking for up to four bicycles, employee break room, laundry

area, storage, and mechanical/electrical rooms. The second floor consists of a boardroom and fitness room, 14 guest rooms, an employee office, linen storage area, and mechanical/electrical room. The third and fourth floors consist of 15 and 17 guest rooms, respectively, as well as employee offices, storage, and mechanical/electrical rooms.

Architecture, Colors, and Materials

The project features a Mediterranean/Spanish Colonial Revival architectural style with predominant design features including stone base and cap, ground-floor brick façade, second floor metal railings, arched entries and windows, decorative arched wall niches, decorative wall brackets and sconces, and a metal tile roof. Proposed colors and materials include cement plaster in four shades of brown, brown/red brick veneer, bronze aluminum windows, and terra cotta-style metal roof tiles. As proposed, the project is consistent with Section 14.16.227, which states that colors and materials, shall be designed to avoid creating undue off-site light and glare impacts.

Access and Circulation

Vehicular access to the site would be provided via Grand Avenue and would use the existing, approximately 30-foot wide driveway, which provides access to two uncovered parking spaces, the passenger loading zone, and the covered parking area, which is located on the first floor of the proposed building as shown in Figure 2 above. From the covered parking area, access to the main portion of the first floor is provided via one set of interior swinging doors near the ADA parking stalls, and one interior swinging door at the southwest portion of the parking area. Bicycle and pedestrian access to the site is provided via existing and proposed facilities, including short-term bicycle parking on Lincoln Avenue, and long-term bicycle parking on the interior portion of the first floor. Access throughout the site is provided via interior and exterior stairs and an elevator.

Landscaping, Lighting, and Fencing

The project proposes landscaping along the north, south, and west portions of the project site including landscaping within the Grand Avenue and Lincoln Avenue public right-of-way. In total, the project will provide 3,293 square feet of landscaping including 1,944 square feet within the front and street side yard setback area, 884 square feet within the public right-of-way, and 465 square feet within the interior portions of the lot. Proposed plantings include six 15-gallon trees along the Lincoln Avenue frontage, six 24-inch box trees along the Brookdale Avenue and Grand Avenue frontages, shrubs and groundcovers along the front and west sides of the proposed structure and within the outdoor pet area at the southern portion of the lot, and containers with accent plantings on the second level patio. In addition to traditional landscaping, the project also proposes two bioretention areas which are intended to treat stormwater onsite including one, 206-square-foot planter along the western building façade and one, 57-square-foot planter within the pet area at the southern portion of the project site. As shown on the Conceptual Landscape Plan (Sheet L0.1 of Exhibit 1c), the project also includes brick accent paving at the primary building entrance at the intersection of Lincoln Ave/Grand Ave, as well as in line with the tree wells along Lincoln Avenue.

Lighting along the Grand Avenue elevation includes two single-head LED pole lights, one double-head LED pole light, two wall sconces at the building entrance, LEDs integrated into the metal awning, and LEDs integrated into the second-floor balcony railing. Lighting along the Lincoln Avenue frontage includes seven wall sconces, 21 LEDs integrated into the railing at the outdoor café patio, and three in-grade LED accent fixtures. Lighting at the outdoor pet area includes 13 LED recessed wall lights, two LED ceiling surface mounted lights, two wall mounted sconces, and LED bollards. Lighting along the Brookdale Elevation includes five LEDs integrated into the second-floor railing. As proposed, the project incorporates lighting that is designed to conceal light sources from view off-site and avoid spillover onto adjacent properties, consistent with Section 14.16.227 of the SRMC.

Proposed fencing is minimal and includes retention of the existing property line fence located along the flag portion of the eastern property line, and a new, approximately 6-foot wood fence with stone veneer

columns along the pole portion of the eastern property line. In addition, an approximately 10-foot privacy wall around the perimeter of the outdoor patio.

Signage

The project proposes four signs including two, approximately 32-square-foot blade signs at the north and west elevations, an approximately 1.5 square foot identification plaque at the west elevation, and an approximately 26 square foot window sign at the west elevation. As proposed, signage for the project exceeds the maximum number and square footage allowed by Chapter 14.19 (Signs) of the SRMC. As such, the project is requesting a Major Sign Exception, which is further discussed in the analysis section below.

Grading/Drainage

As proposed, the project includes grading throughout the site and within the public right-of-way. As indicated on Sheet C2.0 of Exhibit 1b, the project will result in 853 cubic yards of cut, and 906 cubic yards of fill, resulting in a net import of 53 cubic yards.

ANALYSIS

Staff is seeking feedback and recommendations from the DRB on the following design-related standards of review. A complete analysis of both design and non-design related standards of review will be included in staff's report to the Planning Commission:

- San Rafael General Plan 2040
- San Rafael Design Guidelines
- San Rafael Municipal Code
 - Division IV, Chapter 14.19 (Signs)
 - Division V, Chapter 14.23 (Variances)
 - Division V, Chapter 14.24 (Exceptions)

General Plan 2040 Consistency:

The project is consistent with the applicable design-related General Plan policies listed below. An analysis of the project's consistency with all applicable General Plan policies will be included in staff's report to the Planning Commission, which will be scheduled for a later date pending the Board issuing a recommendation on the project

Policy CDP-3.3: Use landscape design in public rights-of-way to soften the built environment, showcase San Rafael's natural environment, and advance City goals related to walkability, climate change, conservation, and hazard reduction. Landscaping should control heat build-up from pavement, provide shade, reduce air pollution, and improve visual quality.

The project proposes landscaping along Lincoln Avenue and Grand Avenue within the public right-of-way. Landscaping includes street trees along Lincoln Avenue as well as between the sidewalk and the building, which softens the overall appearance, reduces the perceived mass, and provides an enjoyable, walkable pedestrian experience. In addition, the proposed landscaping provides shade along Lincoln Avenue and Grand Avenue and improves the overall visual quality of the project. As such, the project is consistent with General Plan policy CDP-3.3.

Policy CDP-4.1: Use design guidelines and standards to strengthen the visual and functional qualities of San Rafael's neighborhoods, districts, and centers. Guidelines and standards should ensure that new construction, additions, and alterations are compatible with the surrounding neighborhoods while still allowing for innovative, affordable design.

Policy CDP-4.3: Encourage creative architecture while respecting the context of each site.

Policy CDP-4.7: Design larger scale buildings to reduce their perceived mass. Encourage the incorporation of architectural elements such as towers, arcades, courtyards, and awnings to create visual interest, provide protection from the elements, and enhance orientation.

Policy CDP-4.8: Require sensitive scale and height transitions between larger and smaller structures. In areas where taller buildings are allowed, they should be designed to minimize shadows, loss of privacy, and dramatic contrasts with adjacent low-scale structures. Exceptions may be made where taller buildings are also permitted on the adjoining site.

The proposed project is in a transitional area where several types of uses currently exist including single- and multi-family residences, offices, and other visitor accommodations, including the Villa Inn, located north of the site across Grand Avenue. The project is also located near high volume traffic roadways including Highway 101 and Lincoln Avenue, the latter which is identified as a minor arterial in the City's General Plan, carrying between 10,000 and 20,000 vehicles per day. The building is designed to step back as it increases in height, reducing the overall bulk and mass, and providing a design that is compatible with surrounding residential uses. Though the building is substantially taller than surrounding structures, it is in an area where such design and use is appropriate given the transitional context and existing transportation network and is approximately 9-feet lower than the 54-foot height permissible in the General Plan. The proposed structure provides visual articulation and enhances the buildings orientation toward Lincoln Avenue using design elements such as accent paving, ground-floor brick façade, second-floor patio with metal railings, arched entries and windows, metal awnings above the main lobby entrance, elevator tower, decorative wall elements, and an outdoor café patio which will activate the space between the hotel and Lincoln Avenue. Furthermore, as shown on Sheet A13 of Exhibit 1a, though the new building will increase shadowing on adjacent properties during the 3 p.m. winter solstice, impacts will be marginal as existing buildings and vegetation also shade nearby structures. Lastly, the proposed building has minimized windows along the eastern "pole" portion of the property to reduce privacy impacts of the adjacent residential uses on Brookdale Avenue. As such, the project has been designed consistent with General Plan policies CDP-4.1, -4.3, -4.7, and -4.8. **Policy CDP-4.9:** Encourage parking and circulation design that supports pedestrian movement and ensures the safety of all travelers, including locating parking to the side or rear of buildings, limiting driveway cuts and widths, and minimizing large expanses of pavement. Parking should be screened from the street by landscaping and should provide easy access to building entrances.

Proposed parking is located within the interior portion of the first floor, effectively screening parking and eliminating interaction between vehicular traffic and pedestrians accessing the site. In addition, the project will utilize the existing driveway cut along Grand Avenue and will not result in new, large expanses of pavement. Lastly, the two uncovered parking spaces located within the public right-of-way along Grand Avenue are screened by proposed landscaping along the eastern property line. As such, the project is consistent with General Plan policy CDP-4.9.

Policy CDP-4.11: Encourage lighting for safety and security while preventing excessive light spillover and glare. Lighting should complement building and landscape design.

In general, proposed lighting is consistent with the City's regulations which specify that lighting shall be shielded to conceal light sources from view off-site, avoid spillover onto adjacent properties, and shall be of minimum intensity to provide a sense of security. Section 14.16.227 of the SRMC specifies that the foot-candle intensity should fall below one at the property lines. Though first floor lighting along the eastern "pole" portion of the property will exceed the lighting intensity identified in the SRMC, this portion of the project includes a six-foot fence which will shield light from spilling over onto adjacent properties, and as such the project complies with this requirement. Furthermore, proposed lighting is complementary to the building and landscape design, and as conditioned will comply with the City's standards. As such, the project is consistent with General Plan policy CDP-4.11.

San Rafael Design Guidelines for Non-Residential Development:

In general, the project is consistent with and incorporates design recommendations and guidelines contained in the City's Design Guidelines for non-residential development. A bulleted list of applicable design guidelines is included under each subheading below, followed by a brief analysis of the project's consistency with each design area (e.g. parking lots, landscaping, etc.).

Parking Lots:

- **A logical sequence of entry and arrival as part of the site's design should be provided; On major arterials, where possible and appropriate, consolidate curb cuts and reduce entry and exit conflicts.** The parking area for the proposed project will utilize the existing curb cut along Grand Avenue, providing a logical entry to the site and avoiding additional curb cuts along Lincoln Avenue, which is identified as a minor arterial in the City's General Plan.
- **Where possible, design entrances from the street to direct views towards the building entry; Parking should be distributed to provide easy access to building entrances.** The vehicular entrance from Grand Avenue is immediately adjacent to the building entry and convenient access to the front lobby and reception area is provided within the parking area.
- **Design for adequate vehicle maneuverability in parking areas. Vehicles should not back out from a parking space onto the street.** The parking facility design has been reviewed by the City's Department of Public Works to ensure that adequate vehicle maneuverability is provided, and vehicles are not required to back out onto the adjacent public right-of-way.
- **Parking areas should be screened from the street with hedges, walls, fences, or berms, subject to security considerations.** The main parking is in an enclosed area and as such is screened from view. In addition, the two parking spaces within the public right-of-way at the front portion of the property are screened by proposed landscaping along the eastern property line.
- **Auto and pedestrian entrances into the development should be easy to find. For example, special entry treatments, such as colored concrete, special planting and signage should be located at the entries to the site.** The project proposes accent paving at the intersection of Lincoln Avenue/Grand Avenue, providing easily identifiable access to pedestrians accessing the site.

Landscaping:

- **Landscaped areas should be planned as integral parts of the development and to create a strongly landscaped character for the site; Trees should be planted in a variety of locations, such as along the side property lines, clustered in planting areas, or distributed throughout the parking lot, consistent with the zoning ordinance; Pedestrian areas should be made visually attractive with special planting and flowering trees.** The project proposes installation of landscaping throughout the site and within the public right-of-way along Lincoln Avenue and Grand Avenue, including installation of six street trees along Lincoln Avenue. The northwest portion of the site includes accent plantings, paving, and trees, providing a visually attractive area for pedestrians and drawing attention to the main point of entry.
- **Commercial signage or displays should not be hidden with landscaping.** Proposed signage is located at the main entry and will not be blocked by proposed landscaping.

Lighting:

- **Limit the intensity of lighting to provide for adequate site security and for pedestrian and vehicular safety; Shield light sources to prevent glare and illumination beyond the boundaries of the property; Lighting fixtures should complement the architecture of the**

project. The applicant has submitted a photometric study demonstrating lighting levels throughout the project site. As proposed and conditioned, lighting will be adequate to provide site security for pedestrian and vehicular safety and is designed to complement the proposed architecture while avoiding off-site light and glare impacts.

Pedestrian Circulation:

- **Consider pedestrian orientation when designing building entries, windows, signage and doors; Include a well-defined pedestrian walkway between the street and building entries; Special design elements should be included, such as bollards, pots, benches, trash cans, unique paving, tree grates, tree guards and pedestrian lighting to add visual richness to areas designed for pedestrian access.** As proposed, the project incorporates several elements that provide clear pedestrian entry to the building. The northwest portion of the site includes accent paving to articulate the building entrance. In addition, the site includes signage at the entrance as well as accent plantings along the front and street side frontages which add to the pedestrian environment.
- **Adequate facilities should be provided for bicycle parking, consistent with zoning requirements.** Short-term bicycle parking is provided along Lincoln Avenue, consistent with applicable zoning requirements.

Building Form:

- **Consider the pedestrian experience when designing the ground floor of buildings.** The project has been designed with the pedestrian experience as a focal point, providing articulating elements along the Lincoln Avenue frontage which break up the overall massing, providing an interactive and enjoyable pedestrian experience.
- **A continuity of design, materials, color, form and architectural details is encouraged for all portions of a building and between all the buildings on the site.** Though the building proposes to exceed the base 36-foot height limit set forth for the HR1 Zoning District, it has been designed to incorporate a substantial amount of glazing along the Lincoln Avenue elevation as well as a second floor patio, which effectively breaks up the overall building mass along this elevation. The proposed colors and materials are consistent throughout and include stone base and cap elements, brick accent siding at the base, and varying shades of brown cement plaster.
- **Consider the development's visual and spatial relationship to adjacent buildings and other structures in the area.** Though adjacent buildings are smaller in scale than the proposed hotel, the building provides various stepped roof forms along the interior elevation which is intended to provide a transition between the smaller residential structures and the proposed building. As such, the project is consistent with design guidelines related to building form.

Entryways:

- **A defined sense of entry with pedestrian orientation should be provided; Building entrances should be defined with architectural elements such as roof form changes, awnings or other architectural elements.** As discussed previously, the project includes several elements that clearly define the pedestrian entry including accent paving, metal awnings over the entrance, and project signage. As such, the project is consistent with design guidelines related to entryways.

Towers:

- **If a tower is included in the design, it should perform a definite on-site function, such as delineating an entrance to a site or a building entry or emphasizing a display window; Where appropriate, the visual bulk of the upper portion of the tower should be reduced to reduce its apparent bulk, for example with openings through it or with open latticework.** The stair/elevator tower is located at the northwest corner of the site adjacent to the hotel entry and includes decorative brackets and window openings that reduce the apparent bulk, consistent with the City's design guidelines.

Materials and Colors:

- **Use articulation, texturing and detailing on all concrete exposed to exterior view; Exterior materials should minimize reflectivity; Use color to provide appropriate accents on a building.** The proposed colors and materials are varied and provide articulation through the use of different textures and colors. The proposed palette provides neutral, warm tones that are not reflective in nature. The various shades of brown provide accents that help to break up the massing of the building and as such, the project is consistent with design guidelines related to colors and materials.

San Rafael Municipal Code (Title 14 – Zoning)

Chapter 19 – Signs

Chapter 14.19 of the SRMC sets forth regulations for the location, size, type, and number of signs permitted in the various zoning districts. In the HR1 district, projects are permitted up to two signs and a maximum of 25 square feet of signage. Permitted sign types include wall, projecting/blade, awning, monument, directory, and changeable copy. The project includes two, approximately 32-square-foot blade signs at the north and west elevations, an approximately 1.5-square-foot identification plaque at the west elevation, and an approximately 26-square-foot window sign at the west elevation. As specified in Section 14.19.045, when proposed signage deviates from the established standards, an exception may be requested. The project requests a Major Sign Exception as it proposes signage which deviates from the standards for sign size and height by more than 20%. Major Sign Exceptions are subject to review by the Design Review Board, and approval by the Planning Commission subject to the findings listed in Section 14.19.045(C) of the SRMC. An analysis of the project's consistency with the applicable findings is summarized below. Staff is seeking feedback and recommendations of the proposed Major Sign Exception and in particular, requests that the Board comment on the appropriateness of the sign exception, and provide any recommendations related to the proposed sign location, size, type, and design.

Major Sign Exception Findings:

The project is located on a flag-shape lot with frontage on Grand Avenue, Lincoln Avenue, and Brookdale Avenue and is proximate to and visible from Highway 101. Given that the proposed visitor accommodation use is conditionally permitted within the multi-family zoning district, sign limitations set forth for multi-family developments do not necessarily meet the signage needs appropriate for a hotel use. Hotel uses are not subject to floor area ratio requirements and are permitted a maximum height of 54-feet, resulting in larger and taller buildings than that which may otherwise be developed in multi-family zoning districts. Given the permissible size and height of the building, two signs and a total of 25 square feet of signage would not be appropriate or compatible with the project. For comparison, commercial districts permit two signs per frontage and a maximum sign area equal to the linear distance of business or use frontage. The proposed building contains approximately 313 linear feet across the Grand Avenue, Lincoln Avenue, and Brookdale Avenue frontages. The project proposes to exceed the maximum number of signs by two and the maximum size by approximately 67 square feet. Though this will result in larger and a greater number of signs than what is typically permitted in the multi-family zoning district, the

signage is compatible with the proposed commercial use and the size and height of the building. Furthermore, signs are located along the Grand Avenue and Lincoln Avenue frontages, oriented away from adjacent residential uses and towards the public right-of-way. As such, the proposed signage is generally consistent with the applicable findings for a sign exception and staff requests that the Board provide any recommendations to the Planning Commission related to the proposed sign location, size, type, and design. Chapter 14.23 – Variances

As proposed, the project deviates from the established development standards of the HR1 Zoning District including the minimum front and street side yard setbacks, minimum landscaping, and parking dimensions set forth in Chapter 14.18 of the SRMC. The Planning Commission may approve the requested Variances if the applicable findings in Section 14.23.070 of the SRMC can be made. A full analysis of the project's consistency with the applicable Variance findings will be included in staff's report to the Planning Commission. . In considering the overall design of the project, and in particular the site plan, staff requests that the Design Review Board provide any recommendations to the Planning Commission with regard to the proposed reduction in setbacks and landscaping.

Chapter 14.24 – Exceptions

As proposed, the project exceeds the maximum lot coverage permitted in the HR1 Zoning District by two percent. As specified in Section 14.24.020(C) of the SRMC, in any residential district, the maximum lot coverage may be increased by up to ten percent, where it can be found that such increases are necessary for significantly improved site planning or architectural design, creation or maintenance of views, or where the exceedance will facilitate highly desirable features or amenities, and where such increases will not unreasonably affect abutting sites. Like approval of Variances, the Planning Commission may approve an Exception if the applicable findings in Section 14.24.060 of the SRMC can be made. A full analysis of the project's consistency with the applicable findings will be included in staff's report to the Planning Commission. In considering the overall design of the project, and in particular the site plan, staff requests that the Design Review Board provide any recommendations to the Planning Commission regarding the proposed lot coverage exceedance.

NEIGHBORHOOD CORRESPONDENCE

Notice of hearing for the project was conducted in accordance with noticing requirements contained in Chapter 29 of the Zoning Ordinance. A Notice of Public Hearing was mailed to all property owners and occupants within a 300-foot radius of the subject site and all other interested parties, 15 calendar days prior to the date of all meetings, including this hearing. Public notice was also posted on the subject site 15 calendar days prior to the date of all meetings, including this hearing.

Public comments have been received and include concerns related to the appropriateness of the proposed hotel use, the overall height and scale of the building, parking, traffic, and loss of views. Copies of all written public correspondence on the proposed project received to date are attached to this report as Exhibit 3.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, staff recommends that the Board review the project and determine whether the comments provided to the applicant during the Conceptual Design Review meeting on November 17, 2020, have been adequately addressed to ensure the project design is appropriate given the proposed use and setting and should determine whether to impose conditions on the project to further ensure consistency with the adopted design standards. In particular, staff requests that the Board provide recommendations, and conditions where appropriate related the following:

- Proposed sign location, size, type, and design
- Reduction in front (Grand Avenue) and street side (Lincoln Avenue) setbacks
- Reduction in minimum landscaping requirements

- Proposed lot coverage

If the Board determines that the design of the building is in compliance with applicable design guidelines and regulations, staff recommends that the Board forward a recommendation for approval or conditional approval to the Planning Commission.

EXHIBITS

1. Project Plans

- a. Architectural, dated June 22, 2021, available online:
https://storage.googleapis.com/proudcity/sanrafaelca/uploads/2021/09/1580-Lincoln_01-ARCH.pdf
- b. Civil, dated June 22, 2021, available online:
https://storage.googleapis.com/proudcity/sanrafaelca/uploads/2021/09/1580-Lincoln_03-CIVIL.pdf
- c. Landscape, dated June 22, 2021, available online:
https://storage.googleapis.com/proudcity/sanrafaelca/uploads/2021/09/1580-Lincoln_02-LAND.pdf
- d. Lighting, dated June 22, 2021, available online:
https://storage.googleapis.com/proudcity/sanrafaelca/uploads/2021/09/1580-Lincoln_04-LIGHT.pdf
- e. Signage, dated January 22, 2021, available online:
https://storage.googleapis.com/proudcity/sanrafaelca/uploads/2021/09/1580-Lincoln_05-SIGN.pdf

2. **Landscape Areas**, dated January 22, 2021, available online:
<https://storage.googleapis.com/proudcity/sanrafaelca/uploads/2021/09/1580-Lincoln-Landscape-Areas-Exhibit-21062.pdf>

3. Public Comment

- a. Bernardi
- b. Coiner
- c. Garbosky
- d. Levin
- e. Welte
- f. Cole

Other project documents are available on the project website at: cityofsanrafael.org/sanrafael-inn/

cc: Robert Sauvageau, 10 Monterey Blvd., San Francisco, CA 94131
1580 Lincoln, LLC, 1600 Lincoln Ave, San Rafael, CA 94901

EXHIBIT 3: PUBLIC COMMENTS

- a. Bernardi
- b. Coiner
- c. Garbosky
- d. Levin
- e. Welte
- f. Cole

Hotel at 1580 Lincoln Avenue

Sue Bernardi [REDACTED]

Tue 10/5/2021 9:23 AM

To: Krystle Rizzi <Krystle.Rizzi@cityofsanrafael.org>

Hello Kyrstle,

We don't need another hotel on Lincoln Avenue. There are 2 already and a MARRIOTT was just built DOWNTOWN, which would be the preferred Hotel where people would want to stay.

The motel across the street from the proposed hotel is the same owner.

1. Why don't they make that property more appealing instead of building another hotel.
2. There has been a witness who says that the property is used for rooms for hire.....Would the proposed property turn into the same kind of business?

The property is too narrow for the proposed building. It's a small lot for a 46 room hotel. Do you know how big the rooms will be? Would people want to stay in a small room?

A lift for parking; the noise. Remember, it's a residential area not an industrial area.....There is already a parking problem on Lincoln Avenue.

We are in a drought, and I am concerned about water usage.

The LOCATION is in a residential area.

It would block views of 1579, making it a tunnel affect reducing the already lack of sunshine.

My property value....Will that be affected? Who wants to look at a hotel from their living room? Would you?

We all understand that the cost of building is expensive. But does that mean we have to ruin a residential area by building 4 and 5 story buildings on Lincoln Avenue.

Again, ask yourselves, would you want this to be in the area where you LIVE, and look at a hotel for a view?

Thank you,
Sue Bernardi

1580 Lincoln Proposal

Mon 10/4/2021 11:57 AM

To: Krystle Rizzi <Krystle.Rizzi@cityofsanrafael.org>

Dear Krystle,,

As a long time owner of a condo on Lincoln Ave in San Rafael I want to express my dissatisfaction with the proposed building at 1580 Lincoln Ave for the following reasons (I will be brief):

The building is HUGE and does not fit in at all with the rest of the nearby neighborhood buildings. We already have 2 motels within a couple of blocks of one another. Why a third motel/hotel? Plus there is the Marriott in downtown San Rafael that will soon be completed. That seems to be more than enough motels/hotels within this small area.

The proposal will create more traffic and the parking solution is crazy! The car lifts will be noisy and I live right across the street from this proposal.

The building as proposed will take away the views, the sunshine and privacy for the units facing Lincoln. I fear my property value will be decreased due to this.

Water! We are in the middle of a severe drought. Now is not the time to build something of this magnitude.

Please reconsider and put something smaller in that conforms to the neighborhood. It is your job to do so!

Linda Coiner

San Rafael, CA 94901

Linda Coiner (this is my signature)

Lincoln Hill Projects



Sat 10/2/2021 1:04 PM

To: Steve Stafford <Steve.Stafford@cityofsanrafael.org>; Krystle Rizzi <Krystle.Rizzi@cityofsanrafael.org>

Hi Steve and Krystle,

My wife and I have been living in the Lincoln Hill neighborhood since 2005.

We would like to advise you of our issues with and opposition to the two large projects now being considered for the area.

These are the Senior Living Center at 800 Mission and the Hotel proposed for 1580 Lincoln.

In both cases the scale of the buildings is totally out of character for the neighborhood and the anticipated traffic and overall impact poorly addressed.

Parking is sorely inadequate and overall scale and size of both very inappropriate.

Developers are always pushing to maximize return and minimize investment .. to the detriment of the significant impact these types of projects have on quality of life for existing residents.

In my opinion the proposals need to be scaled back significantly, not allowed height exemptions and realistic parking needs to be addressed with the builds.

We are all for progress ... and opposed to uncontrolled development.

Thank you for your consideration,

RJ Garbosky

////////////////////



San Rafael



Hotel at 1580 Lincoln

Carol Levin [REDACTED]

Thu 9/30/2021 6:53 PM

To: Krystle Rizzi <Krystle.Rizzi@cityofsanrafael.org>

I am opposed to the tentative hotel planned for Lincoln Ave. It is far too big to blend with the character of the neighborhood. The idea of a car lift is ridiculous. Likely guest will be too hassled by such a lift and choose to park on the street, further impacting the neighbors. Moreover, inevitably, the planned parking, even with the lift, will be inadequate. It is only wishful thinking to believe that all the guest won't have a car, and at times, even more than one car, as busy family members scramble to meet at the appointed rendezvous. Please only approve a project that is a reasonable size, and has easy parking for all the guest, so it does not impact a neighborhood that already has parking challenges.

Carol Levin

[REDACTED]
San Rafael, CA 94901

RE: San Rafael Inn 1580 Lincoln Ave- Proj# ED21-008, UP21-003, V21-002, SE21-004

Stuart Welte [REDACTED]

Sat 10/2/2021 2:07 PM

To: planning <planning@cityofsanrafael.org>; Krystle Rizzi <Krystle.Rizzi@cityofsanrafael.org>; April Miller <April.Miller@cityofsanrafael.org>

Cc: 'Valarie Welte' [REDACTED]

RE: San Rafael Inn 1580 Lincoln Ave- Proj# ED21-008, UP21-003, V21-002, SE21-004

Hello Ms. Miller, Ms. Rizzi, and City Planning, and Public Works/Engineering:

My family and I have lived in Central San Rafael and Lincoln Hill for decades, and we love the City and have always supported bringing a renewed vitality to the Lincoln Ave and Downtown areas.

*****Please require all new projects to UNDERGROUND All Existing and New utility services along their street frontages.**

This is required in every jurisdiction we design for, and it's the responsible method for providing utility service in light of so many health, safety, and wellness reasons, including fire prevention.

This should Not be negotiable.

Thank you very much,

STUART WELTE, AIA, LEED ap, ICC

EID ARCHITECTS



Kingston Cole
[REDACTED]
San Rafael, CA 94901
[REDACTED]

Tuesday, October 12, 2021

Ms. Kristie Rizzi
Consulting Planner
Krystie.rizzi@cityofsanrafael.org

Ms. Rizzi:

I am writing in support of the 1580 Lincoln Avenue Hotel Project. I am a 26-year resident of the San Rafael Hill neighborhood. I was a founding member of the Lincoln San Rafael Neighborhood Association; and am also a recent president of that Association. I wrote the comments for our Association that were submitted for the San Rafael 2040 General Plan (I wrote the same for the 2020 Plan as well). I am retired but very active in civic involvement—currently serving as:

- Member, Coalition of Sensible Taxpayers (CO\$T) Board of Directors
- Member: Citizens Oversight Committee for Transportation Authority of Marin (TAM)
- Member: Citizens Oversight Committee for the Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority (MWPA)
- Member: Residence Committee for Digital Marin Broadband Project

The vacant Sloat Gardens site at the corner of Lincoln and Grand Avenues has been an eye sore for all the neighbors in the Lincoln/San Rafael Hill Area for almost two years. It will finally, I hope, be developed by the Fonio family into a boutique hotel that will provide vibrancy and life to our neighborhood as well as downtown San Rafael. It is in the LSRHNA's "zone of influence." When I was president, we solicited neighborhood comments and did a sight inspection with Marcello Fonio to understand better the parameters of the project.

We forwarded some criticisms to the City after that review. Unfortunately, those comments were unduly negative and did not reflect the full range of opinions that I have personally received from neighbors on the Hill. Most of written comments received by the LSRHNA were submitted by the Oaks condominiums across the street from the project. Predictably, they complained of the potential traffic and noise problems as well as views being obstructed. My home is directly behind the Oaks. I can say in all honesty and with full irony that I have had the same complaints about the Oaks as they have about the project—and have had those views for the last 26 years!

More importantly, I took the time to talk with neighbors up and down San Rafael Hill. I have walked the Hill almost daily for 25+ years and now enjoy many friendships and acquaintances throughout the neighborhood. My informal "polling" of these folks was revealing and relevant to the project: Those people living farther up the Hill have an overwhelmingly favorable opinion of the project. Many can hardly wait to have a friendly coffee shop nearby! The vast preponderance of neighborhood opinion is in favor of the project.

A new, rump group has taken over the LSRHNA and is now attempting to void the boutique hotel, using the older comments and other, unsubstantiated claims that it is “too big, “too tall,” “esthetically bland,” “too noisy at all hours of the day and night,” and will somehow, “devalue all surrounding properties.”

The members of the Design Review Board to Planning Commission should certainly review all comments, exercise their discretion, and require any amendments to the proposal that they deem necessary or desirable. I do ask them, however, to put all comments, particularly negative ones, into their proper context in reaching a final decision.

I also support the 1580 Project for the following, more civic-minded reasons:

- We have endured the COVID pandemic now for over two years and counting. We must all look for new ways to revitalize our community. I don't believe we should cancel a project because it is “too big” or “too tall”, i.e., traditional NIMBY objections, as we are recovering from this very painful recession.
- I believe we have to balance the equities in our San Rafael Hill neighborhood—allowing beneficial, zoning-compliant businesses in and along Lincoln Avenue to co-exist with our single-family dwellings. This has been the case for decades. This type of development was permitted in the 2020 General Plan—as it is in the 2040 Plan.
- 1580 Lincoln is a small (46 rooms) hotel project in size and scope. It's not going to dominate, much less destroy our neighborhood. We must grow—and do it intelligently.
- I believe we should welcome our new hotel guests and employees to the neighborhood. Many jobs will be created—both in construction and ongoing operations of the hotel. All of these people will add to the vibrancy and diversity of our entire neighborhood.

Finally, I ask that the Design Review Board, Planning Commission and the City Council act in an expeditious manner. This is an important project that will add many benefits to our neighborhood and the adjacent downtown area. I ask that you approve the 1580 Lincoln Avenue Project, after your due deliberations.

Sincerely yours,

Kingston Cole