

Proposed Affordable Housing Development at 20269 Broadway: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Updated December 11, 2015

The Sonoma County Community Development Commission (CDC) recently issued a request for proposals (RFP) seeking a development partner to design and implement an affordable housing project on a site owned by the CDC, located at 20269 Broadway. This FAQ is intended to provide information to the public about the property, the anticipated development process, and other issues.

1. Where is this property located and what are its characteristics?

The property in question is a flat, rectangular parcel located at the northwest corner of Broadway and Clay Street. It appears to have an area of 1.97 acres, but its exact size has not yet been verified by a survey. The property was formerly used as a residence and farm. The buildings associated with those uses were demolished in 2008. Currently, development on the property is limited to two billboards at the southeast corner of the site. In addition, there are number of trees on the site.

2. What is the zoning of the property?

The property is located within the city limits of Sonoma and it has a General Plan land use designation and zoning designation of Mixed Use. The Mixed Use zone allows a residential density of up to 20 units per acre, although that may be increased with a density bonus for affordable housing. A commercial component is not required in the Mixed Use zone, meaning that a 100% residential development may be allowed on the site. The property is also identified in the City's Housing Element as a "Housing Opportunity Site," meaning that it is considered to be a suitable candidate for development with affordable housing.

3. How did the Sonoma County Housing Authority acquire the property?

The Community Development Agency (the City of Sonoma's Redevelopment Agency) purchased the property in 2008 with the intent of developing it with affordable housing. In 2012, ownership of the site was transferred from the City of Sonoma Community Development Agency (CDA) to the Sonoma County CDC, as parent agency of the Sonoma County Housing Authority and in its capacity as Successor Housing Agency, as a result of the termination of redevelopment agencies throughout California.

4. Why didn't the City of Sonoma develop the site with affordable housing?

Earlier in 2008, the Sonoma CDA purchased another site for affordable housing, located on Sonoma Highway. The CDA focused on the development of this site first, completing the Sonoma Valley Oaks project in 2012. The Broadway site was next on the list, but it was transferred to the CDC before the City could begin working on its development.

5. What type of affordable development is contemplated?

The RFP calls for the development of rental housing affordable at the very-low and low-income levels, which means rents ranging from \$724 for a very low-income studio to \$1,340 for a low-income 4-bedroom apartment, depending upon the number of bedrooms in the unit, although units targeted to even lower income levels may be implemented. Rental units have been identified as the objective because there is a critical shortage of rentals in Sonoma City and Sonoma Valley, especially at the lower income levels.

In addition, the RFP also suggests that a component of units be made available for households that have become homeless. California Community Redevelopment Law, which governs development of the property because it was acquired with Redevelopment Housing Set-Aside funding, requires 30 percent of the units in the project to be restricted to very low-income households.

6. Would it be possible for the project to include a commercial component?

The Mixed Use zoning of the property allows for a commercial component, but a commercial component is not required in new development. The RFP allows for proposals having a commercial component.

7. Would an affordable housing project qualify for any special considerations in terms of development regulations?

Yes. Any project that sets aside a certain percentage of units affordable at the low and/or very low income level may qualify under State law for a density bonus and other incentives. A density bonus is an increase in the number of housing units that would otherwise be allowed under zoning regulations in exchange for building affordable housing units and helping a community meet its housing goals. The maximum density bonus that a project may receive is 35%. The developer of an affordable housing project may also ask for other incentives, such as changes in building height and setback allowances. In addition, State law establishes a parking ratio for qualifying affordable housing developments that supersedes local parking standards.

8. What is the role of the “development partner”?

Implementing an affordable housing development is a complex process that requires specialized expertise and an extensive time commitment. Therefore, local government housing agencies typically seek a partner when developing a site with affordable housing. The development partner undertakes the following responsibilities: 1) conducting neighbor outreach, in conjunction with government partners; 2) project design, from initial site planning to final construction drawings; 3) obtaining financing for construction, including applying for tax credit financing; 4) managing the process of obtaining required permits and entitlements; 5) constructing the project; and 6) owning and managing the project post-construction in conformance with affordability requirements imposed by the City and/or the CDC, including programs for residents. The responsible local government agency oversees and participates in these assignments.

9. How will the selection of the development partner be made?

The staff of the Sonoma County CDC is reviewing the responses in terms of the criteria set forth in the RFP, with input from the planning staff of the City of Sonoma. Staff will make a recommendation to the Executive Director of the CDC, and will then bring their recommendation first to the Community Development Committee for their review, and then to the Board of Supervisors in their role as the Board of the Commission, who will make the final decision at a public meeting, which is anticipated to occur sometime in February.

10. What is the development review process and are there opportunities for public input?

Although the property is owned by the CDC, any development application will be subject to the City of Sonoma planning review process, which means that the approval or denial of a the development application will be a City decision. In terms of the development review process, the major approval needed for a project is a use permit, which may be granted by the City’s planning Commission. Major steps in the process include the following:

- City Council review of Growth Management exemption. The City will need to decide whether or not to exempt the project from the Growth Management Ordinance. The Council may also discuss options for providing financial assistance to the project. (Public meeting)
- Planning Commission study session. Prior to submitting a formal application, a study session allows an early opportunity for input from the public and the Planning Commission on a draft development proposal. (Public meeting.)
- Filing of an application for planning entitlements, including a use permit and environmental review.
- Preparation of draft initial study. The preparation of an initial study, which provides a preliminary assessment of environmental issues, would be done internally by the City's Planning staff.
- Planning Commission review of draft initial study. (Public hearing.)
- Review by the Sonoma Valley Citizens Advisory Committee. Because this project will be subject to environmental review, it will be referred to the Sonoma Valley Citizens Advisory Commission for comment, once a draft initial study is completed. (Public hearing.)
- Use Permit review. Once the environmental review is complete, the Planning Commission will review the application for use permit approval of the project. (Public hearing.)
- Architectural review. If the project is approved by the Planning Commission, it would then be subject to architectural review, which is conducted by the Design Review and Historic Preservation Commission. (Public meeting.)

As identified in the preceding list, public hearings occur at each stage of the review process. Any Commission decision may be appealed to the City Council.

11. How long is the development review process likely to take?

Typically, the development review process for a project of this scope takes approximately eight months to one year, although a longer period is possible depending on issues that may arise in the course of review.

12. Will there be any direct public outreach or interaction with the development partner?

The development partner will be required to perform public outreach, to include neighborhood meetings. This requirement, along with an outreach implementation plan, will be mandated by the CDC as part of any agreement with a development partner.

13. Will an Environmental Impact Report be required?

At this time it is not known what level of environmental review would be required. That determination would be made by the Planning Commission following the preparation of an initial study and possible supplemental studies in specific areas, such as traffic generation.

14. I live nearby. Will the development of affordable housing on this site affect my property values?

Studies consistently show that the development of affordable housing does not adversely affect property values:

http://www.shelterforce.org/article/2891/fear_of_affordable_housing_perception_vs_reality/
<http://www.mhponline.org/files/AffordableHousingImpact-CommunitiesandHouseholds.pdf>
http://furmancenter.org/files/media/Dont_Put_It_Here.pdf
<http://www.realtor.org/field-guides/field-guide-to-effects-of-low-income-housing-on-property-values>
<http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/research/publications/spillovers-and-subsidized-housing-impact-subsidized-rental-housing>

15. What is the status of the billboards?

The billboards are subject to a lease agreement with the CDC that allows for their removal at such time as the property is developed.

16. Where can I get more information?

CDC: The lead CDC staff person for the project is currently John Haig, Deputy Director of the CDC. His contact information follows:

John.Haig@sonoma-county.org
707-565-7508
1440 Guerneville Rd, Santa Rosa CA 95403

Additional CDC staff will be assigned to the project after the RFP process is concluded.

Additional CDC Contact Information:

Sonoma County Housing Authority:
707-565-7500 (main number)

City of Sonoma: The staff person currently assigned to this project by the City of Sonoma is David Goodison, Planning Director. His contact information follows:

dgoodison@sonomacity.org
707-933-2201
#1 the Plaza, Sonoma CA 95476

In addition, the CDC and the City have created a website for the project to facilitate the distribution of updated information, including meeting dates, as it becomes available.

20269 Broadway Website: <http://www.sonomacity.org/Government/Resources/Broadway-Affordable-Housing-Project.aspx>

17. What is the timeline and current status for the staff recommendation regarding the selection of a development partner based on the RFP responses and review and action by the Board of the Commission/Board of Supervisors?

A tentative timeline for the selection process follows:

- Release of Request for Proposals (RFP) – September 14, 2015 (completed)

- Deadline for Submittal – October 30, 2015, 5:00 p.m. (completed)
- Screening and Analysis – November 2015 (in progress)
- Interview Finalists – Mid-December 2015
- Recommendation to the Community Development Committee - January 12, 2016
- Recommendation to the Board of the Commission for Developer Selection – February 2016
- Development, Negotiation, and Execution of Disposition & Development Agreement (DDA) – 2016
- Board of Supervisors Hearing on DDA – 2016

Seven responses to the RFP were submitted. Based on staff review, three responses were rejected and four responses were selected for further analysis, to include interviews with the prospective development partners by CDC and City staff. The four responses selected for further review, which are are posted on the project website, were received from:

- [Burbank Housing](#)
- [Mid-Pen Housing Corporation](#)
- [Resources for Community Development](#)
- [Satellite Affordable Housing](#)

Staff interviews with the four remaining respondents will occur in mid-December.

18. How can I sign up to receive notifications of future meetings or other updates?

Please email your contact information to David Goodison, Planning Director, City of Sonoma:

dgoodison@sonomacity.org