

BEFORE THE TOWN OF CORTE MADERA PLANNING COMMISSION

<p>In the Matter of: Recommendation to the Town of Corte Madera Town Council for approval of a Resolution approving a Conditional Use Permit and Hotel Floor Area Bonus for the Corte Madera Residence Inn application submitted by Reneson Hotels Inc. c (APN 024-031-15).</p>	<p>Resolution No. 22-003 Permit No. PL-2021-0023</p> <p>Adoption Date:</p>
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WHEREAS, in February 20, 2018, the Town Council of the Town of Corte Madera directed staff to prepare a draft Hotel Floor Area Bonus Ordinance to update the existing Fifer/Tamal Vista Planning Area; and

WHEREAS, On June 16, 2020, the Town Council passed Ordinance 995 to adopt and incorporate the Town of Corte Madera Hotel Floor Area Bonus Ordinance; and

WHEREAS, Reneson Hotels, LLC. submitted an application on March 2, 2021 for a Preliminary Plan, Precise Plan, Conditional Use Permit, Design Review, and Sign Permit to develop a new 149 room hotel, and associated landscaping, tree removal, and site improvements at 56 Madera Boulevard (APN 024-031-15); and

WHEREAS, the requested development application, includes a Preliminary and Precise Plan to redevelop the project site with a new 149 room hotel and associated landscaping and site improvements; and

WHEREAS, the requested development application, includes project design details that provide consistency with bird-safe design measures related to the use of non-reflective glass, no exterior up-lighting of buildings, tree screening of lower floors, and reduction of interior lighting. The proposed project includes three of five bird-safe design options required by Municipal Code Chapter 18.13.040; and

WHEREAS, on November 17, 2021 the Notice of Completion and Draft Initial Study/Environmental Checklist for the project was filed with the State Clearinghouse beginning a 30-day public review period; and

WHEREAS, on November 17, 2021 the Notice of Availability and Notice of Intent to Adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration for the project was filed with the Marin County Clerk; and

WHEREAS, on November 17, 2021 the Notice of Availability of the Draft Initial Study/Environmental Checklist and Notice of Public Hearing for the project were mailed to residents within 500 feet of the

subject property; and

WHEREAS, on January 21, 2022 the Town sent a notice to all properties within 500 feet of the project site announcing a January 25, 2022 Planning Commission hearing to review the application; and

WHEREAS, on January 25, 2022, the Corte Madera Planning Commission held a public hearing on the project, heard testimony from the applicant and interested parties, and at the close of the public hearing voted to adopt Resolution No. 22-003, recommending to the Town Council of the Town of Corte Madera that it adopt the Mitigated Negative Declaration, and approve the requested Conditional Use Permit, Preliminary Plan, Precise Plan, Design Review, and Sign Permit for the project.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Planning Commission of the Town of Corte Madera does hereby **recommend that the Town Council of the Town of Corte Madera approve** a Conditional Use Permit and Hotel Floor Area Bonus application for the 149 room Corte Madera Residence Inn project submitted by Reneson Hotels, Inc., based upon the findings listed below:

1. Recitals

The foregoing recitals are true and correct and are incorporated into the findings herein.

2. Record

The Record of Proceedings ("Record") upon which the Planning Commission makes its recommendation includes, but is not limited to:

(1) the FEIR certified for the 2009 General Plan, including the appendices and technical reports cited in and/or relied upon in preparing the FEIR, (2) the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration for the Hotel Floor Area Bonus, (3) all staff reports, Town files and records and other documents prepared for and/or submitted to the Commission relating to the Corte Madera Residence Inn Project, and its request for a Conditional Use Permit, a Preliminary Plan, Precise Plan, Design Review, and Sign Permit, (4) all documentary and oral evidence received at public hearings or submitted to the Town relating to the project, and (5) all matters of common knowledge to the Commission and the Town, including, but not limited to, Town, state, and federal laws, policies, rules, regulations, reports, records and projections related to development within the Town and its surrounding areas.

The location and custodian of the Record is the Planning Director of the Town of Corte Madera, 300 Tamalpais Drive, Corte Madera, CA 94925.

3. Findings

CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT

In order to grant a Use Permit for the Hotel in the MX (Mixed-Use) zoning district Section 18.13.040, the Planning Commission must make the following findings required by Sections 18.26.050 of the Corte Madera Municipal Code:

- 1. The proposed location of the conditional use is in accord with the objectives of this title and the purpose of the district in which the site is located.**

The proposed project is the redevelopment of an existing outdated hotel and restaurant with a new modern hotel facility. The project is consistent with the district it is located in and is strategically

located near major transportation and commercial opportunities

- 2. The proposed location of the conditional use and the proposed conditions under which the use would be operated or maintained will not be detrimental to the public health, safety or welfare.**

Redevelopment of the existing hotel will provide a new and improved entry way to the Town of Corte Madera and adjacent to a major commercial and retail center. The hotels hours of operation will be almost identical existing uses and therefore it will not be disruptive to surrounding uses. No aspects of the new hotel operations will be detrimental to public health, safety or welfare. Impacts to surrounding properties have been reduced with the addition of conditions of approval that restrict night-time lighting.

- 3. The proposed conditional use will comply with the general plan and with each of the applicable provisions of this title.**

The proposed conditional use will be located on a property the General Plan designates as Mixed Use Region-Serving Commercial, which includes hotel uses capable of attracting patrons from a wide geographic range. The proposed conditional use falls squarely within the Region-Serving Commercial designation (hotel use capable of attracting patrons), as evidenced by the existing use of the property. The proposed use will enhance the existing hotel opportunities in Corte Madera and will in turn promote the community's economic development, protect and enhance the Town's tax base. In addition, the project requires consistency with the MX district for increased Floor Area for hotels. Pursuant to Section 18.13.040 of the Corte Madera Zoning Ordinance, the Planning Commission may recommend approval or conditional approval of the project based on the following findings:

- 1. The project provides a significant contribution to the aesthetics of the town's built environment and integration with natural features and incorporates all of the below site and architectural design principles:**

- A. The totality of the project is designed with a coherent, site-specific architectural idea, that harmonizes the relationships between project components and between the project and adjacent buildings, streets, open spaces, and natural setting, through the use of appropriate building scale, massing, fenestration, exterior materials, landscape architecture, and landscaping; and**

The architectural and landscape design utilizes high quality materials and appropriate planting and hardscape materials. The project includes the minimal amount of grading work necessary to elevate the first floor of the project above the flood hazard zone and to provide access to the building. The building has been designed to echo the best of Central Marin vernacular architecture. The preservation of the existing pond creates an opportunity for neighbors to make use of the project as an amenity without impacting native wildlife. In addition to an enhanced pathway along the east edge of the site, the project proposes improvements to the Tamal Vista streetscape, with undergrounding of utilities and a mix of hardscape and softscape areas. This streetscape is to be linked to the project by an internal pathway which will deliver pedestrians to the courtyard or the lobby along a route lined with preserved, mature trees. Two existing curb cuts along Madera Blvd are proposed to be consolidated into a single site entrance and exit, with a drop-off area set back from the street so as not to crowd the street frontage.

The project is designed as an extended stay hotel with open space areas and architecture that provides visual appeal and an internal sense of order. The project includes enhanced pedestrian safety by installing a new pedestrian wayfinding and control measures, including associated ADA improvements and sidewalk extensions. Therefore, the project, as conditions and with CEQA

mitigations incorporated, creates an internal sense of order, in a visually pleasing setting, and provides safe and convenient access to the property for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles.

B. The project respects and exhibits natural systems, including ponds and wetlands and other natural features, through building siting, programming, and orientation; and

The project includes the preservation and improvement of the existing pond at the northeast corner of the site as a habitat and visual amenity. The habitat area around the pond will be maintained as open space in perpetuity with new native plantings to enhance the existing conditions. In addition, the non-orthogonal layout of the surface parking area is designed around existing trees to minimize removal of significant trees. This approach to tree loss ensures that the tree removal remains at a less-than-significant level and that sensitive habitats on the site are enhanced and remediated as a result of the project. Thus the proposed design will not unnecessarily remove trees and habitat, will preserve natural landforms, and will not otherwise adversely affect the natural beauty of the town.

C. The project organizes components of hotel uses and site design to complement and engage the public realm, with particular focus on the pedestrian and bicycle scale and experience;

The proposed project has been segmented into a serpentine form rather than a simple 'I' or 'L' bar-shaped building. This design is sensitive to the existing pond habitat to be preserved and creates the appearance of a number of smaller buildings rather than one large one. The height of the building has been varied between three and four floors to further differentiate the overall massing. Taller building elements are located at the southeast corner of the site, presenting the largest elevation and mass to the freeway and adjacent retail-commercial developments, whereas three story elements step down towards the residential-scale neighbors across and along Tamal Vista.

The front drop-off area only features one driveway access point which should calm traffic within the site, promoting pedestrian and cyclist safety. The project proposes to incorporate short term bicycle parking in prominent areas, such as directly adjacent the main entrance and close to the meeting rooms. Bicycles will be made available for guest use, promoting car-free exploration of the surrounding neighborhood.

D. The project utilizes building materials, construction techniques, and external finishes for the quality, durability, and aesthetic appeal they provide, rather than the cost savings they may achieve.

The building facade composition is comprised of repetitive guestroom modules to achieve continuity and variation. Building mass is stepped at the third floor in key locations to provides segmentation between upper and lower floors. The building façade design appears as horizontal strata, separated and defined by exaggerated floor bands and includes tall, narrow fenestration, and pronounced window planes that create myriad opportunities for shade and shadow. Juxtaposition of smooth planes with horizontally and vertically banded siding (emulating local Eichler-era architecture) provides further texture at the micro level. Material and color variations are introduced throughout the façade to create accent highlights and eliminate static repetitive patterns.

In total, the detailed site planning and design information presented by project architect, AxisGFA, is consistent with this requirement. The project requested 12 total points specific to architecture, design, and site planning, and the Town can award all 12 points for the Floor Area Bonus.

- 2. The project incorporates quantifiable environmental sustainability measures as described in the table in paragraph (b)(2) that exceed existing environmental requirements or mitigation measures, and building code requirements in existence at the time of permit application(s), that are intended to minimize energy and water use, solid waste, greenhouse gas emissions, or otherwise improve a project's environmental sustainability. This finding shall be met if a project is assigned additional floor area in the environmental sustainability category pursuant to paragraph (b)(2); and**

As required for the Hotel Floor Area Bonus, the project is required to include sustainability features as part of the proposal. In addition to the CALGreen Tier 1 consistency for project design and energy efficiency, the project also includes the following sustainable features such as solar PV panels, laundry water reuse/recycle system, and an internal guestroom energy management system. In addition, the project includes bicycle share program for guests and a local shuttle system to assist guests to airport transportation, local shopping, and other local businesses.

The project requested 8 total points specific to CALGreen Tier I certification, and sustainable features including solar PV panels, laundry water reuse/recycle system, and an internal guestroom energy management system. In total, the project incorporates quantifiable environmental sustainability measures and is consistent with this requirement and the Town can award all 8 points for the Floor Area Bonus.

- 3. The project includes on-site programmatic elements, site planning strategies, and/or operational commitments that encourage public use, community gathering, or supports community health and well-being. This finding shall be met if a project is assigned additional floor area in the community integration category pursuant to paragraph (b)(2); and**

The project includes enhancing the existing onsite pond habitat by selectively removing non-native ground cover, shrubs and trees and replace with native species to provide habitat diversity. The pond restoration will also preserve and restore appropriate landscaping around the pond that can support roosting, black-crowned night herons. In addition, the project includes a dedicated landscaped area with seating adjacent to the pond for public engagement, and a plan to restore the foot path between the pond and the highway. Public parking near the pond is also included in the design.

In addition to the physical improvements of the site, the project includes programmatic proposals to provide community integration. This includes the above-mentioned pond enhancements, pedestrian trail and available public parking. Furthermore, the project proposes use of meeting facilities by the public (to be operated as a for profit business similar to the facilities currently available at the Corte Madera Inn). The project proposes to make the meeting rooms available without charge to certain qualifying organizations such as the Corte Madera Chamber of Commerce, Corte Madera Bike Coalition, Corte Madera Flood Control Board, Corte Madera Beautification Committee.

The project requested 6 total points specific to on-site programmatic elements, site planning strategies and community integration specific to the pond enhancement and community/conference facilities. The project incorporates these on-site programmatic elements and site planning strategies and is consistent with this requirement. The Town can award all 6 points for the Floor Area Bonus.

- 4. The project includes enhancement of the public realm through upgrades to existing or proposed pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure in excess of that required by environmental mitigation measures or other regulatory requirement. This finding shall be met if a project is assigned additional floor area in the public realm category pursuant to paragraph (b)(2).**

The project includes a 15' wide landscape/pedestrian easement with public improvements to enhance the pedestrian and bicycle circulation, and the visual character, of this street. The project includes

undergrounding of utility poles along more than 300 feet of Tamal Vista frontage. Improvements along Madera Boulevard include modifications to the sidewalk and landscaping used to provide a soft barrier and “funnel” pedestrians west on Madera Boulevard and provide for a safer street crossing. The single access point will also provide a safer vehicular turning area, and the front drop-off area should calm traffic within the site, promoting pedestrian and cyclist safety. The project proposes to incorporate short term bicycle parking in prominent areas, such as directly adjacent the main entrance and close to the meeting rooms. Bicycles will be made available for guest use, promoting car-free exploration of the surrounding neighborhood.

The project requested 3 total points specific to public realm enhancements related to landscaping and pedestrian improvements. The project incorporates these on-site infrastructure improvements, and the Town can award all 3 points for the Floor Area Bonus.

The proposed project requests a total Floor Area Bonus of 29 additional points for a maximum FAR of 0.63 while only needing 24 points to achieve the proposed FAR of 0.58. The project is consistent with the requirements of the Hotel Floor Area Bonus and can achieve the requested bonus as proposed.

Compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

The Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration was prepared for the project in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Review Act and that based on the whole record, including public comments received during the public review process, there is not substantial evidence that the project will have a significant effect on the environment as more fully set forth in the Findings in Resolution 22-002.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Town of Corte Madera Planning Commission forwards its recommendation to the Town Council to approve a Conditional Use Permit and Hotel Floor Area Bonus application to construct a 149-room hotel, associated landscaping, tree removal, and site improvements by Reneson Hotels, Inc at 56 Madera Boulevard (APN 024-031-15).

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PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Corte Madera Planning Commission on January 25, 2022 by the following vote:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSTAIN:

ABSENT:

Peter Chase, Chair

Adam Wolff, Planning Director