



City of Colusa California

STAFF REPORT

DATE: May 7, 2025
TO: Planning Commission
FROM: Jake Morley, Planning Consultant

AGENDA ITEM: Use Permit—Rancho Colus Phase II 1717 Highway 20 (APN 002-120-029) to construct 48 residential units on 3.66 acres. The subject site contains a split zoning designation, with R-4-HD - General Apartment District-High Density Zoning on the eastern side, which contains Rancho Colusa Phase I, and MUB- Bridge Street Mixed Use on the eastern side that abuts Highway 20.

Recommendation: Staff recommend that the Planning Commission approve the project and adopt the required findings contained in the resolution subject to conditions of approval (**Attachment A**) and find the project is exempt from review under the California Environmental Quality Act pursuant to Section 15332 (In-fill Development).

BACKGROUND:

The proposed project is a 3.66-acre site located at 1717 Highway 20, directly north of the Assembly of God church (see **Attachment B, Location/Aerial Photo**). The subject site contains a split zoning designation, with R-4-HD – General Apartment District-High Density Zoning on the eastern side which contains Rancho Colus Phase I, and MUB – Bridge Street Mixed Use on the eastern side that abuts Highway 20. Because the western portion of the site is in the MUB zoning district, a Use Permit approval is necessary to permit the construction of the project (**See Attachment C, Zoning Map**), while the housing on the eastern side of the property was by right.

Phase I of the project has already improved and contains a total of 48 units, with a mix of one-, two- and three-bedroom units, along with a manager unit, parking stalls and outdoor common area improvements. The common area contains raised gardens beds, community center, play structure, picnic area 74 parking stalls and trash enclosure (See **Attachment D – Applicants Project Description**).

The two new structures (Building 3 and 4) are proposed to have a total of 48 units, with a mix of one-, two- and three-bedroom units. The structures are placed in a manner where the front doors face each other and creates a common walk-up courtyard (See **Attachment E – Site Plan**). At 34-feet and 7-inches in height the structure will contain horizontal panels and composition shingle roofs (Sagewood). The structures and railings will be painted in five assorted colors (Sherwin

Williams – Oakmoss, Simplify Beige and Sundried Tomato, Brevity Brown and Greenblack) provide interest and to alleviate the massing of the building (See **Attachment F – Elevations**).

Pursuant to the Colusa General Plan, the total maximum number of units per acre is 20 which would permit up to 73 total units of the entire site. However, the applicant is invoking the right to utilize State Density Bonus Law (SDBL), which permits projects that guarantee the construction and occupancy of affordable units within the project to exceed local density restrictions and request concessions from the Colusa Municipal Code (CMC). In this instance, the applicant is proposing to increase the total number of units to 96 (new density of 26.2 units per acre).

ANALYSIS:

The California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) determines how much housing, at a variety of affordability levels, is needed for each region of the state through the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) process. HCD then notifies local governments of their RHNA numbers, which are then adopted into each agencies Housing Element.

For the current cycle of 2020-2028 Housing Element, the following affordable units have been allocated to the City:

Income Limits	Total Units
Very Low	76 Units
Low	64 Units
Moderate	79 Units
Above Moderate	160 Units

Rancho Colus Phase II would bring to market a total of 48 Affordable units, of which 28 would be available at Very Low Income while 20 Low Income. These Affordable income levels mirror those as found in Rancho Colus Phase I. Phase I improvements include a 3,193 square foot community center, with a leasing office, computer stations, mail center, counseling office, great room with hospitality kitchen which can hold onsite events, restrooms and laundry facility. Outdoor amenities include a children's play structure, picnic/BBQ area, outdoor games, dog park and raised planter beds.

By utilizing SDBL, the applicant can have an 80 percent affordable bonus because the project is 100 percent affordable for Very Low- and Low-income brackets. Phase II contains 1.53 acres, based upon current zoning, up to 20 units would be permitted, or 30 total units. At 48 total units, the increase is 60 percent over permitted density and below the 80 percent allowed by SDBL.

As part of the project, the applicant is requesting two design concessions:

1. Reduction in parking from the CMC requirement of 1.5 stalls per unit to 1.3 stalls per unit.
2. Relief from CMC requirement that parking be covered.

Pursuant to the SDBL applicants are permitted to request parking reductions and design concessions as part of the process. There are no special findings that need to be made to permit approval of the request. However, local agencies can deny the request if the local agency can provide a parking analysis that was completed in the last seven years that illustrates that the area is impacted by the lack of parking and that the reduction would further burden parking in the study area. Such a study has not been completed.

As far as design concessions go, the local agency would have to prove that such a concession would not aid in the financial cost of constructing the affordable units. In this instance, the CMC notes that parking stalls need to be covered. Such an improvement would add to the cost of construction of the overall project and by granting the concession, it would aid in the ability to bring the units to the market.

Given the location of the project, which is approximately 0.20 miles from Town Country Center, a major commercial hub and that this portion of Highway 20 contains a Class II bicycle lane, the parking request to reduce the total of overall stalls from 144 to 123 can be supported (ratio of 1.5 to 1.3 stalls per unit). So, too can the relief from CMC that requires parking stalls to be covered (carport), as by removing such an improvement would directly benefit the financial ability to construct the units.

Regarding the site plan, the proposal would utilize the exiting curb cut and access point that benefits Phase I, with a row of new parking stalls on the southern portion of the site. Access then turns to the north to allow for additional stalls and terminates into a hammerhead/basketball court. The two new structures would be placed in a manner that allows them to also take advantage of Phase I improvements in a seamless manner. The structure placement also creates a courtyard with additional improvements and gathering places. Utilities are noted on the eastern side of Building 3 and 4 and screened. But HVAC systems and other wall mounted utilities are not noted on the site plan, therefore staff recommend a condition of approval to have such elements painted to match the structure and/or screened in the event they are visible from the public right of way.

Landscaping is proposed throughout the site, including small, medium, and large trees. Such trees are appropriately placed with larger trees placed in the parking lot, while smaller trees are used as accent and points of interest near structures and walkways. The landscape plan notes that at maturity, parking lot shade should be at 50% of the paved surface area. The landscape plans further note that the irrigation will be drip system, on timers and grouping of plants by water usages will be established. This note advances General Plan policies that discuss minimizing utilization of water resources, while also following AB 1881 (Water Conservation Act of 2006).

Lighting is proposed on both the structure and within the parking lot. Structure lighting is noted on the elevation around all sides of the structure. Details note that such lighting will be LED and directed downward, thereby being dark sky compliant. Parking lot lighting is also noted as LED and at pedestrian height of 16 feet, which also meets dark sky requirements.

REQUIRED FINDINGS FOR APPROVAL

GENERAL PLAN

The following General Plan Goals, Policies and Actions are applicable to the project:

Goal HSG-1: To provide a continuing supply of affordable housing to meet the needs of existing and future Colusa residents in all income categories.

Policy HSG 1.1: The City shall enforce its land use policies that allow residential growth to be accommodated with a variety of housing types within a range of densities.

Policy HSG 1.4: The City shall provide for future (long-term) regional housing needs by maintaining an adequate supply of developable land for all housing types and affordability levels.

Policy HSG 1.5: The City shall encourage the production of for-sale and rental housing units that will provide a variety of housing type, tenure and density—at all levels of affordability.

Policy HSG 1.6: The City shall promote more intensive residential development of vacant and underutilized land contiguous to existing development, particularly within walking distance of downtown Colusa, in order to reduce the cost of off-site improvements and create a compact City form.

Policy HSG 5.1: The City shall maintain sufficient capacity in the appropriate land use districts to allow for the Regional Housing Needs Allocation.

Policy HSG 5.2: The City shall maintain sufficient multi-family designated land use and zoning districts to provide sufficient capacity for the low- and very low-income housing needs.

Policy HSG 7.4: The City shall continue to encourage innovative housing types, site planning and mixed-use developments.

Policy LU 5.2: Development patterns shall extend primarily from Highways 20 and 45. To the extent feasible, initial phases of new developments shall begin as close as possible to existing urban areas.

Policy LU-6.1: Growth shall provide a strong diversified economic base and a reasonable balance between employment and housing for all income groups.

Policy LU-6.3: Growth shall be managed to ensure that adequate public facilities and services are planned for and provided in a manner that protects the public's health, safety, and welfare.

Policy CCD-2.4: New development shall ensure that public utilities are screened from view and do not detract from the surrounding environment.

Policy CCD-3.17: Parking lots shall not dominate street frontage, public spaces, or buildings.

Goal 6: To create distinctive community-gathering locations within new developments while maintaining connectivity to the entire community.

Policy CCD-6.1: New developments shall include community and neighborhood activity centers at appropriate locations that create recreational opportunities, encourage social interaction, and provide a sense of public space and centers for neighborhood activities.

Policy CCD-2.4: New development shall ensure that public utilities are screened from view and do not detract from the surrounding environment.

Policy CCD-3.15: The City shall include landscaping and use street trees in street rights-of-way to create a shaded environment in summer and to define the clear separation of uses.

Policy CCD-3.17: Parking lots shall not dominate street frontage, public spaces or buildings.

Goal PRC-9: To manage and protect the City's water resources.

Action PRC-9.3.a: As part of the development review process, the City will evaluate the incorporation of water conservation techniques in all new developments.

Goal PRC11: To reduce consumption of energy source in Colusa.

USE PERMIT

According to Colusa Municipal Code section 33.01 – Major Use Permits, the Planning Commission shall determine whether or not a project adequately meets adopted City standards based upon the following finding:

- 1. That the establishment, maintenance or operation of the use or building applied for will not, under any circumstance of the particular case, be detrimental to the health, safety, peace, morals, comfort and general welfare of persons residing or working in the neighborhood of such proposed use, and not be detrimental or injurious to property and improvements in the neighborhood or to the general welfare of the city.*

The project provides additional affordable housing units and density in an area of the City that has accessible access to goods, services and employment opportunities (Goal HSG-1, Policy HSG 1.1, HSG 5.1). The project itself provides benefit for tenants by providing onsite parking, residential facilities such as a community center, play structure and raised garden beds. All of which will engage residence with enrichment activities, social connection while providing a sense of place and opportunities to learn, interact and play (CCD Goal-6, Policy-6.1).

The project has been conditioned to ensure utilizes are screened (CCD-2.4) and parking is placed in a manner to minimize its view from the public right of way (CCD-3.17). Landscaping is proposed in a variety of species which will introduce interest, seasonal colors while also softening the structure's appearance.

ENVIRONMENTAL REIVEW

The project has been determined to be categorically exempt pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Sections 15332 (Infill Development Projects). Consistent with this exemption, the project is less than five acres, surrounded by urban uses, and can be adequately served by all utilities and public services. The proposal is consistent with the General Plan policies and regulations for the MUB Mixed Use Bridge Street zoning district.

PUBLIC CONTACT

A 20-day public hearing notice was published in the Pioner Review on February 21, 2025 and a notice was also placed at the planning counter. A mailed notice was also sent to all properties that are within 300 feet of the project site.

At the March 19, 2025 Special Planning Commission Hearing, the item was opened during the public hearing and continued to May 7, 2025 Planning Commission hearing by request of the applicant.

BUDGET IMPACT: None Expected

ATTACHMENTS:

- A. Resolution
 - Exhibit I – Conditions of Approval
 - Exhibit II – Use Permit Plat
 - Exhibit III – Landscape Plat
- B. Location/Aerial Photo
- C. Zoning Map
- D. Applicant Project Description
- E. Site Plan
- F. Elevations

DISTRIBUTION

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