

MINUTES APPROVED AT THE DRB MEETING ON DECEMBER 13, 2023

**DESIGN REVIEW BOARD REGULAR MEETING
Multi-Purpose Room, Community Services Building, Basement Level
440 Civic Center Plaza, Richmond CA 94804**

October 25, 2023
6:00 P.M.

BOARD MEMBERS

Kimberly Butt
Marcus L. Christeson
David Plotkin

Brian Carter
Leah Marthinsen
Vita Rey

Chair Brian Carter called the regular meeting to order at 6:16 P.M.

ROLL CALL

Present: Chair Brian Carter, Vice Chair Marcus Christeson, and Boardmembers Kimberly Butt, and Leah Marthinsen

Absent: Boardmembers David Plotkin and Vita Rey

INTRODUCTIONS

Staff Present: Planning Manager Hector Rojas and Heather McLaughlin from the City Attorney's Office.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: September 27, 2023

ACTION: It was M/S/C (Christeson/Butt) to approve the minutes of the September 27, 2023 meeting, as submitted; approved by a voice vote: 3-0 (Ayes: Butt, Christeson, and Marthinsen; Noes: None; Abstain: Carter; Absent: Plotkin and Rey.)

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: None

MEETING PROCEDURES: None

PUBLIC FORUM

No written comments were submitted, or oral comments made, by any member of the public.

CITY COUNCIL LIAISON REPORT: None

CONSENT CALENDAR: None

APPEAL DATE

The appeal date for actions taken by the Board at this meeting will be no later than 5:00 P.M. on Monday, November 6, 2023.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

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1. **PLN19-442** **VARO-REAL SINGLE-FAMILY DWELLING AND ADUS**
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| Description | DESIGN REVIEW FOR CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW SINGLE-STORY, SINGLE-FAMILY DWELLING WITH TWO ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS ON A 5,950 SQUARE-FOOT VACANT PARCEL. |
| Location | 159 1 ST STREET |
| APN | 538-342-003 |
| Zoning | RL-2, SINGLE-FAMILY LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT |
| Owner | VARO-REAL INVESTMENTS, INC. |
| Applicant | ARMANDO ESPINOSA |
| Staff Contact | HECTOR ROJAS |
- Recommendation: **CONDITIONAL APPROVAL**

Hector Rojas presented the staff report dated October 25, 2023, for design review of a new single-story, single-family dwelling with two accessory dwelling units on a 5,950 square-foot vacant parcel in the Iron Triangle neighborhood that used to have a single-family dwelling that had been demolished in 2014 because it had become a dangerous and substandard building. Since then, the City had abated a homeless encampment, abandoned vehicles, weeds, trash and debris. The current property owner had purchased the property in 2019 and had submitted an application to develop the site that same year. The site was characterized by residential development including one- and two-story single-family and multifamily structures, with a convenience market to the north, Atchison Village to the west and a single-family dwelling to the south.

Mr. Rojas reported that of the two single-story residential structures proposed for the site, the largest would be located on the front half of the site and would include a 1,119-square foot primary dwelling and a 470 square foot Junior Accessory Dwelling Unit (JADU). The primary dwelling would include three bedrooms, two full bathrooms, a kitchen/living room, and an attached two-car garage. The JADU would include a bedroom, a full bathroom, and a kitchen/living room. The smaller structure would be constructed in the rear yard and would contain a 720 square foot Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU). The ADU would include two bedrooms, a full bathroom, and a kitchen/living room.

The structures would have a Spanish design with hipped red tile roofs, white stucco siding, and flagstone wainscotting along the base of each building façade. Site improvements would include a new driveway along 1st Street; concrete pathways along the northern property line leading from 1st Street to each unit; 1,000 square feet of landscaping throughout the site including street trees, shrubs and groundcover; a 4-foot to 6-foot-tall wood fence along the western property line; and a 6-foot-tall wood fence along the rear property line.

Mr. Rojas reported that the proposed development would help address a long history of code enforcement activity at the project site and provide a source of affordable housing in the neighborhood, the project was consistent with the General Plan designation, and complied with the applicable zoning district standards. He recommended conditional approval of the application.

Mr. Rojas identified some discussion points with respect to the application relating to the placement of the detached ADU, the design of the detached ADU's entry, and the placement of the trash bins throughout the site. He noted that if the detached ADU was moved closer to the southern and western property lines while observing the minimum four-foot setbacks, it could provide a more spacious front yard for the future tenants. The detached ADU's entry could also be revised to more closely mimic the primary structure's entry, which included a nicer arched design. The trash bins for both ADUs should also be relocated further away from high traffic areas. He suggested that concrete pads and walkways should be provided for all trash bin areas.

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to facilitate rolling them out to the street on pick-up days.

Mr. Rojas reported that the applicant had presented the proposal to the Iron Triangle Neighborhood Council, which had provided a letter of support for the application. He also reported that one comment letter had been received from Kieron Slaughter, a former Planner with the City, for a recommendation to swap the location of the existing great room with the front bedroom to allow better visibility of street activity for a safer design. He explained that the applicant was amenable to the design presented by Mr. Slaughter for that change.

Chair Carter opened the public hearing.

ARMANDO ESPINOSA, the applicant, stated he was in agreement with the recommendations from staff and with the recommendation from Mr. Slaughter, although he stated there was as yet no solution to the placement of the trash bins, as recommended. He clarified that they were also amenable to the requested adjustment of the ADU.

Mr. Espinosa responded to questions from the DRB and clarified that the roof of both buildings would be red tile; the Spanish design had been selected given that his firm was very experienced with the Spanish design; the desire was to make the best use of the space and provide as many bedrooms as possible; provide more units to keep a presence in the area; and the intent was for the design to stand out. He commented that if there was a concern for an over-the-top Spanish design since there were few tile roofs in the area, the red tile roofs could be changed to shingles and there could be a light stucco pattern with black shingles that would offer a more modern appearance.

Further responding to questions, Mr. Espinosa explained why the property owner, who was from Southern California, had come to Richmond due to the property owner's desire to increase its portfolio and move to the construction side of development.

Boardmember Butt pointed out some historic Spanish style homes in the area and Mr. Rojas concurred and identified a mix of heritage neighborhoods which had a mixture of styles including Spanish Revival, Richmond Bungalow, Minimal Traditional, and Craftsman that all co-existed in pretty good harmony.

Mr. Rojas explained that a lot of the Spanish Revival houses in the North and East Neighborhood had really smooth stucco and he confirmed with the applicant that a smooth Santa Barbara style stucco had been proposed in this case.

Discussing aspects of the design and the configuration of the site, Boardmember Butt supported a simplification of the design and the elimination of the stone on the base; Boardmember Marthinsen supported moving both buildings to allow more width for the access walkway to the house; wall lighting was recommended to be placed along the edge of the building; and it was noted that not all the windows were the same with some opening horizontally and some opening vertically.

On the discussion of the trash bins and whether each unit would require their own trash bins, Mr. Espinosa verified that the property owner would be the primary owner of all of the residences. The units would not be built for sale.

Mr. Rojas clarified with respect to the request for an increase in the width of the access walkway that there was a minimum five-foot setback for the zoning district while a minimum four-foot

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setback applied to the detached ADU.

PUBLIC COMMENTS OPENED

SYLVIA HOPKINS, an Atchison Village resident, explained that the adjacent Atchison Village was comprised of 450 units built in 1941 to accommodate the shipyards during WWII, and in 1957 the government sold to homeowners who then owned a share in the corporation but did not own the structure or the land. She identified a hydrology study for the buildings related to long-standing flooding issues and questioned whether those same issues applied to the subject property. She asked whether the buildings would be rented or be owner occupied, commented that there was a lot of noise at times on 1st Street, suggested that all of the art painted on the back of the convenience market could be an issue, and added there were a number of unhoused people on 4th Street and there may be homeless people in the vicinity.

Boardmember Marthinsen referred to Richmond's Spanish Revival and noted the flat roofline and then hips. She liked all the pieces but suggested that the articulation of the roof be revisited. She did not like the tile on the face and supported stucco.

Boardmember Butt recommended the front façade be simplified by not having the base stone, agreed that moving the living room to the front would allow the use of a large window, suggested that the JADU trash bins be placed in the same area with the other ADU trash bins, and asked if there was a way to lower the roof.

Boardmember Marthinsen suggested the JADU entrance appeared to be understated while the side entry appeared to be a random door in the wall. As such, she recommended some articulation at that entry to make it a place and suggested playing with that portion of the roof. She also wanted smooth stucco all the way down in the front façade.

Chair Carter recommended a dormer over the JADU entry door to announce it as another residential unit versus just a side door to the garage, and he supported the elimination of the shutters and widening the windows to that width.

Boardmember Marthinsen strongly recommended that the gutter line be raised given that it was low and resulted in a squat appearance proportionally. She recommended that the plate height be at least 8 feet to the first floor, which would help on the sides as well. She also recommended that the slope of the 6:12 roof be reconsidered and be tied back to the existing architecture that tended to have lower slopes, which might allow more freedom to produce an arch for the JADU entrance.

Vice Chair Christeson agreed the shutters should be eliminated. He objected to the mix of windows on the ADU unit with double hung and a mix of others on all four sides of the structure and noted that some windows were casement windows and some were not. For the revised floor plan for the great room, he did not support the door on the side since that would eliminate interior wall space that might be needed for a big screen TV or other furniture.

Boardmember Marthinsen did not support a hip roof for the ADU. She suggested some design questions remained, and while she did not want to impede the process and appreciated the responsiveness of the applicant, she remained concerned.

Boardmember Marthinsen suggested raising the plate height of the walls to a minimum of nine feet, reducing the slope of the roof, eliminating the hip at the front of the ADU and the main

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building, and eliminating the wainscotting. She also recommended adding detail at the JADU entranceway with trim.

Boardmember Butt recommended that the applicant review the City's heritage documents to see how ADU/JADU entries had previously been addressed to provide an entry in a more graceful way.

Mr. Espinosa stated that the windows could be changed, he agreed to raising the plate height to nine feet, and he was amenable to incorporating the recommendations to the greatest extent possible.

Mr. Rojas explained that the application had been in process for some time. He suggested that the DRB's revisions could be presented in a format acceptable to the DRB through a subcommittee or staff review, with revised plans to return to the DRB for approval if they did not comply with the DRB's intent.

Boardmember Butt referred to the water issue referenced by one of the neighbors and commented that some adjacent homes seemed to have been raised up a bit.

With respect to the flood question, Mr. Espinosa stated they intended to elevate the lot, and Mr. Rojas noted that was not on the plan and if that was the approach to be taken that would come under the building permit review, although if there was an intent to grade the site the building design would have to be revised to do that.

Mr. Espinosa noted that the house would be elevated instead of grading the site. He also noted with respect to the recommendation to remove the brick or tile of the masonry base at the front that the intent was to keep that area clean from splashes.

Chair Carter closed the public hearing.

ACTION: It was M/S/C (Carter/Christeson) to approve PLN19-442, Varo-Real Single-Family Dwelling and ADUs, subject to the four Findings and Statements of Fact with 13 Conditions of Approval and additional DRB conditions as follows: 14) Adjust the location of the ADU to the west to maintain the four-foot minimum setback; 15) Revise the floor plan to flip the great room with Bedroom #1; 16) Remove the OG trim below the windows; 17) Remove the brick or tile of the masonry base at the front and just do stucco; 18) Remove the shutters at the front window and widen it; 19) Raise the eave to nine feet and reduce the roof slope to 4:12; 20) Move the JADU trash to join the location of the main ADU trash; 21) Recommend a review of the Richmond City Heritage document to consider how ADU entries had been detailed and potentially add something at the eave line or roofline to identify the JADU entry, and align the configuration of the front porch of the rear ADU with the entry door to make them parallel; 22) Clean up the drafting errors such as the garage peak which should look more like a gable than a hip; and 23) All window trim to match; approved by a Roll Call vote: 4-0 (Ayes: Butt, Christeson, Marthinsen, and Carter; Noes: None; Abstain: None; Absent: Plotkin and Rey.)

Board Business

A. Staff reports, requests, or announcements:

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Mr. Rojas referred to the ongoing process for the Hilltop Horizon Specific Plan Area related to the Hilltop Mall site and other areas that encompassed 143 acres in total, explained the area was currently zoned for mixed use and higher density, and the intent of the process was to see if that area could be reimagined for something else. The property owner was looking to redevelop the mall area with a mixture of 10 to 30 dwelling units/acre of single-family homes and townhouses with outdoor and commercial amenities. A virtual community workshop had been scheduled for November 1 at 5:30 P.M., and members of the DRB were invited to attend consistent with Brown Act requirements.

The outcome would be to get feedback on various land use scenarios and move the item forward to the Planning Commission and the City Council to arrive at a preferred alternative, and ultimately for the adoption of the Hilltop Horizon Specific Plan before January 2025.

Mr. Rojas also reported that two items had been scheduled for the November 8, 2023, DRB meeting, with one item the continued hearing for the industrial buildings at Svendsen's Bay Marine.

Mr. Rojas added that the City would also close the last week of December for the holidays. He added that another big project, the Marina Point development, had proposed a townhouse style development of 70 lots, 30 of which would have JADUs, which was consistent with the zoning and the General Plan for that area. The application would not come to the DRB before next year given a number of issues involved. He also provided updates on the Quarry Project, the Terminal One project, and the PG&E property.

B. Boardmember reports, requests, or announcements: None

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:05 P.M. to the regular Design Review Board meeting on Wednesday, November 8, 2023.