



COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

HISTORIC RESOURCES COMMISSION PLANNING DEPARTMENT

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October 18, 2011

AGENDA: October 28, 2011

HISTORIC RESOURCE PRESERVATION PLAN REVIEW

Applicant:.....Mid-Peninsula Housing
Owner:.....John Anthony Miller
Application No.:.....101134
APN:.....039-471-09
Situs:.....7839 Soquel Drive, Aptos, CA
Location:.....East side of Aptos Rancho Road approximately 500 feet north of Soquel Drive
Historic Name:.....Vicente Castro House
Current Name:.....Miller House
Rating:.....NR3

Existing Site Conditions

Parcel Size:.....Approximately 5.55 acres
Use: Residence (vacant)

Planning Policies

Planning Area:.....Aptos
Zone District:.....RM-2-R-L, RM-2-R, PR
General Plan Land Use Designation:.....Urban Open Space, Urban High Residential
Coastal Zone:.....No

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Application for an Historic Resource Preservation Plan for the Vicente Castro House (NR3) to preserve and rehabilitate the residence for use as a community building, modifying the interior to accommodate the new proposed use while preserving the exterior of the residence with only minor changes. The Historic Preservation Plan requires review and approval by the Historic Resources Commission. The application is being submitted as part of the Aptos Blue development application, which proposes to construct six residential buildings containing a total of 40 affordable rental units on the subject parcel while preserving the historic residence. Development of the property is subject to specific conditions and mitigations for preserving the historic residence that are part of the Planned Unit Development (PUD) for the parcel. Development of the site is also required to conform to Chapter 16.42 (Historic Preservation) of the Santa Cruz County Code. As required by the PUD, the application includes an historic resources preservation plan (Exhibit C), project plans (Exhibit D), and a historic structures report (Exhibit E) which provides a detailed evaluation of the condition of the residence, evaluates the

interior for character defining features and other historically significant attributes, and provides detailed recommendations for preserving and rehabilitating the structure. Also included with the staff report is a copy of the approved PUD with required conditions and mitigations (Exhibit F), and a copy of the HRC minutes from August 2008 (Exhibit I), detailing your Commission's recommendations to the Board of Supervisors to approve the PUD subject to additional conditions.

Vicente Castro House Setting

The proposed project will preserve the historic setting area around the residence as mapped in the PUD (Exhibit F, page 1), setting the historic residence/ proposed community building apart from the new development at the site and helping to retain the historic integrity of the structure (Exhibit D, page L1.0). The setting area around the residence will be maintained as open space, with no new structural encroachments or parking. A low grapestake fence will be installed along the north and south boundary of the setting area, helping to further demarcate the historic setting area. The plan would preserve all existing oak and redwood trees within the setting area, and one existing apple tree (Exhibit D, page TPZ). The remaining apple trees within the setting area are generally in poor condition due to age and lack of maintenance and would be removed. The setting area would be landscaped with new apple trees, historically appropriate foundation planting around the house, a lawn, and native shrub plantings at the perimeter of the setting area. Two new concrete walkways would connect the community building to the housing units. An emergency vehicle access route, required by the PUD, will be located to the north of the Castro House and will be planted with turfblock to minimize paving and any visual impacts.

Based upon recommendations from your Commission, the Castro House will be the focal point of the development, framed at the end of the viewing corridor when entering the property from Aptos Rancho Road. Consistent with the PUD, the residential buildings proposed for the site are less than 37 feet in height. The buildings incorporate features and materials that are compatible with the historic residence, including wood lap siding, board and batten detailing, gable roofs, and small balconies with wood railings. Proposed buildings adjacent to the setting area also comply with requirements in the PUD. The portion of building # 6 that would be constructed adjacent to the footprint of the existing garage would be 24.3 feet in height, to minimize visual impacts to the historic residence, as required by the PUD. All buildings would be set back at least 10 feet from the required setting area, providing additional visual separation for the historic residence beyond that required in the PUD. The proposed project design provides a view of the historic residence from Soquel Drive, increasing the visibility and presence of the Vicente Castro house in the community. As is consistent with the PUD, the existing garage and rental units on the property, constructed in the 1950's outside the period of significance for the residence, would be demolished.

Vicente Castro House preservation and rehabilitation

The preservation plan proposes to preserve the exterior of the Vicente Castro residence to the greatest extent feasible, including the preservation of all exterior character-defining features, as is consistent with the PUD (See Exhibit J, and page 12.4 of Exhibit D). Several changes to the exterior are proposed in order to provide accessible entrances. These changes include revising doors and door openings at the North (front) and West elevations, and replacing the small sets of steps that currently access these entrances with gradually sloping concrete walkways. A non-historic bay window at the East elevation would be replaced with a more historically appropriate window. The plan proposes to replace the existing lattice skirting the foundation with new skirt board.

The preservation plan proposes to modify and rehabilitate the interior of the house to accommodate the proposed use as a community building (Exhibit D, Page A-12.3). The change in use and rehabilitation of the structure interior was not considered as part of the PUD. However, as required in the PUD, the proposed interior rehabilitation follows the recommendations provided in the Historic Structures report. The proposed interior modifications include removing and reconfiguring interior walls, opening up portions of the second floor to the first floor below, to accommodate the proposed use. Some of the

interior wall and floor finishes would be stripped, in part to address mold and water damage. As recommended in the HSR, the proposed rehabilitation would retain in place or reuse elsewhere in the interior all of the interior character-defining features and materials. Interior character defining features include the exterior windows and French doors in the den, and the fireplace in the living room, which would be retained in place. The fireplace in bedroom C would be relocated to the community room, and the stairwell railing would be used for the new interior stairwell. Interior doors would be reused elsewhere in the interior as part of the interior renovation.

DISCUSSION

A. Background and Site Description

Historic Significance of the Vicente Castro House

The property was listed in the County's Historic Resources Inventory (HRI) in 2001 with a historic rating of NR3, which the County Code defines as "a property eligible in the opinion of the County Historic Resources Commission, to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places."

As noted in the DPR form for the resource (Exhibit H), the Vicente Castro property was originally part of Rancho Aptos, granted in 1833 to Rafael de Jesus Castro. Vicente Castro constructed the residence in the mid-1800s. The HRI notes that "the historic Vicente Castro House is one of the few remaining late rancho-period residences relating to a prominent family associated with Alta California." The HRI further notes that "the Castro family association with this residence, as well as that of Bartley Crum during the 1940's, would appear to enable eligibility for the National Register under Criterion B." The HRI further notes that the residence is "a distinctive representation of Colonial Revival residential architecture in the 1860's, and would therefore qualify for the national Register under Criterion C."

In the Historic Structures Report (Exhibit E), JRP Historical Consultants identified two periods of significance for the residence – the primary period of significance from 1876-1887 when the residence was built and owned by Vicente Castro, and a Secondary period of significance from 1942-1952, when the residence was owned by the Crum family. JRP identified specific character-defining features of the residence exterior, including the two-story section of the house, the historic windows, the wood siding, the spindlework and decorative verge board, the flat roof extensions on the east and west sides, and the immediate historic setting area of the house.

The Historic Structures Report submitted with the Preservation Plan includes a detailed evaluation of the residence interior (page 65). The HSR notes that "although there is little design cohesion evident in the interior of the property, there are isolated areas and remnant features that exhibit attributes from the property's identified periods of significance. The retention of these features, whether *in situ* or through salvage, reuse, and interpretation, will aid in conveying aspects of the property's significance as a nineteenth century farmhouse and twentieth century vacation and summer home." The identified interior features "that modestly contribute to the house's Character-Defining features" include the enclosed exterior windows and French doors in the den, the fireplace in the living room, the fireplace in bedroom C, the stairwell railing, and interior doors considered as a whole.

Approval of the Planned Unit Development

In 2004, the State of California mandated that Santa Cruz County rezone 30 acres for high-density housing, providing for a minimum of 20 units per acre "by-right", as a condition of approval of the County's Housing Element. The Vicente Castro site was identified as one of only a few sites in the County that could potentially accommodate high-density housing. The Board of Supervisors directed the Planning Department to develop a Planned Unit Development (PUD) for the site, establishing criteria for future development on the site while protecting the Vicente Castro residence and other important resources. The County retained JRP Historical Consultants to assist with environmental

review, to analyze potential impacts of the proposed high density housing project to the Vicente Castro House, and recommend appropriate mitigation measures to protect this important historic resource. In August 2008, your Commission reviewed the draft PUD for the property, and recommended several additional changes to the PUD to ensure that the historic house and its setting were protected. Planning Staff revised the PUD to incorporate the concerns of your Commission. The revised PUD was approved by the Board of Supervisors in November 2008.

B. Purview of the HRC

Your Commission is requested to consider a Historic Resource Preservation Plan (Exhibit C) as provided for in Section 16.42.060 of the County Code to address alterations to a designated historic resource and new construction on a historic property. As your Commission previously considered development on this site in your review and recommended approval of the PUD, your Commission is being asked to focus specifically on the consistency of the Preservation Plan with the specific criteria and mitigations in the PUD relating to protection of historic resources. Your Commission is also being asked to evaluate proposed modifications to the interior of the residence for consistency with Chapter 16.42, as interior modifications were not considered as part of the PUD. In so doing, your Commission will be considering the effect of the proposal on the architectural and historic integrity, significance, and setting of the historic residence.

C. Consistency of the proposed project with the Approved PUD and with County Code Chapter 16.42 (Historic Preservation)

Project Consistency with PUD Mitigation Measures

The PUD includes a number of mitigations to protect the Vicente Castro house and its setting (pages 19-30 of Exhibit F). As noted in the project description of this report, the project complies with overall mitigation measures regarding development of the site.

Setting Area for the Vicente Castro House:

Of primary importance is the establishment and preservation of a setting area around the residence, to maintain the historic setting area as it existed during the secondary period of significance and help to preserve the historic integrity of the residence. The PUD states that no new structures should be allowed within the setting area, requires retention of significant trees to the greatest extent feasible, and requires fencing around the setting area. As noted in the project description section of this report, the proposed development complies with these and other requirements for the setting area (Exhibit F, page 23, and Exhibit D, page L1.0).

The PUD further dictates that the driveway for the residence should be located to the north of the residence, and could be either paved or constructed with turfblock. The PUD would allow for up to nine parking spaces within the setting area, using turfblock or similar materials. The proposed project would provide a concrete walkway and a turfblock emergency access route in this location. No parking would be allowed within the setting area, providing additional protection of the setting area beyond that required in the PUD.

Preservation of the Castro House

The PUD notes that "the appropriate treatment as mitigation for this project shall be preservation." However, the PUD also notes that future rehabilitation of the structure would be appropriate, as "the house would very likely need to be remodeled for use by a subsequent owner, who would also need to comply with the county historic preservation ordinance for any changes he or she may wish to make to perform character-defining features of the historical resource." The PUD requires the preparation of a Historic Structures Report to guide future rehabilitation of the residence. As discussed below, the preservation plan follows the HSR recommendations, preserving the exterior of the residence and

rehabilitating the interior while preserving significant interior character-defining features. Therefore, staff believes the Preservation Plan complies with requirements in the PUD for preservation of the Castro House.

Historic Structures Report

As required by the PUD, the applicant has prepared a Historic Structures Report (HSR) "identifying the elements of the house that are historically important, the preservation condition of the house's important architectural elements, and providing recommendations that could be employed to rehabilitate the house." As noted in the project description, the preservation plan would preserve the residence exterior, including the preservation of all identified character-defining features, in accordance with recommendations in the HSR. The preservation plan would modify entrances as needed to provide accessibility, and replace non-historic windows with historically appropriate ones. Recommended conditions would ensure that entry doors are modified only as needed to provide accessibility, and that new skirting material is historically appropriate.

As the interior of the house was not evaluated previously, the HSR focused particularly on identifying historically significant features of the interior that should be preserved. As noted in the project description section of this report, the proposed project would preserve interior character-defining features in place or reuse them for the interior remodel, as recommended in the HSR. To ensure compliance with all recommended conditions in the HSR for the residence interior, the attached conditions would require reuse of interior doors to the greatest extent feasible, and retention or reuse of interior historic materials and finishes where feasible, such as flooring, decorative wood scallop edging at window interiors, and shelving.

Documentation and Recordation of the Historic Resource:

Mitigation measure for historical resources in the PUD (pages 19-22) require that the historic significance of the resource be documented through preparation of a HABS-like data set including photographs, an oral history project, and dissemination of the documentation to appropriate repositories. Work on documentation has begun, and this report includes recommended conditions (Exhibit B) to ensure that documentation is completed in accordance with the PUD.

Interpretation of the Property:

The PUD requires that the developer install one or more interpretive displays on the property to provide information to visitors and residents regarding the history of Aptos, the Castro family rancheros, and the Castro and Crum families. Project plans show an interpretive sign will be installed at the west side of the residence near one of the building entrances. Additional conditions recommended by staff would require interpretive signage also be installed at the interior of the Vicente Castro House/ community building illustrating the historic use of the residence and providing information regarding the reuse of historic materials and features in the remodeled interior.

Consistency of the proposed project with County Code Chapter 16.42 (Historic Preservation)

As was noted, in 2008 your Commission determined that the PUD for this site complied with requirements in Chapter 16.42 of the County Code for Historic Preservation. Staff has analyzed the Preservation Plan, and has determined the aspects of the project relating to the preservation of the setting area and the exterior of residence are largely consistent with the approved PUD, and are therefore consistent with County Code Chapter 16.42. However, the proposed rehabilitation of the interior of the residence and use of the building for a community center was not considered previously as part of the PUD. Therefore, proposed alterations to the interior of the Castro House, and use of the residence as a community building, should be evaluated for consistency with Chapter 16.42.

In general, criteria in Chapter 16.42 pertaining to alterations of historic resources do not apply to the interior of historic structures, and the interior of historic structures can be altered without requiring

historic review. However, to protect the historic significance and NR-3 rating of the Castro House, the structure must remain eligible for listing on the National Register. Therefore, it must be considered whether the proposed alterations to the interior of the structure would compromise the NR-3 rating of the historic residence.

Staff has reviewed the proposed rehabilitation of the interior, and found it to be consistent with the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation (Exhibit G). By retaining the character-defining features of the structure interior, the proposed project will retain the overall historic significance of the resource, and protect its historic integrity. As such, the structure would retain its NR-3 rating.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Staff has reviewed the attached Preservation Plan, Historic Structures Report and project plans for the Vicente Castro House for consistency with the Planned Unit Development that was approved by your Commission and the Board of Supervisors. Staff has also reviewed the proposed rehabilitation of the residence interior, and proposed use of the residence as a community building, for consistency with County Code Chapter 16.42, and to ensure that these changes would not compromise the NR-3 rating of the resource. CEQA review was completed for this project as part of the PUD approval.

After reviewing the proposed project as discussed above, and with the recommended conditions, staff has concluded that the project is consistent with the approved PUD and with Santa Cruz County Code Chapter 16.42. Therefore, it is recommended that your Commission Approve the Historic Resource Preservation Plan as submitted (Exhibit C), the project plans (Exhibit D), with the expiration date for the project to be determined by the Planning Commission, based upon the attached findings (Exhibit A), and the recommended Conditions of Approval (Exhibit B).

Action Date: _____

Effective Date: _____

Expiration Date: To be determined by the Planning Commission

ACTION: **Ayes:** _____

Noes _____

Absent _____

Date: _____

Annie Murphy
Secretary to the Commission

Exhibits

- A. Findings
- B. Conditions
- C. Historic Preservation Plan, prepared by JRP Historical Consultants

- D. Copies of the Project Plans
- E. Historic Structures Report, prepared by JRP Historical Consultants
- F. Ordinance granting a Planned Unit Development for parcel 039-471-09
- G. Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation, as relating to the proposed rehabilitation of the Interior of the Vicente Castro House
- H. Historic Resources Inventory pages (DPR form) for the Vicente Castro House
- I. HRC Minutes from August 28, 2008 regarding the Vicente Castro House
- J. Photographs of Character Defining Features, by JRP Historical Consulting
- K. Aerial Photograph of site