

September 2024

Planning Department Activity Report

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Monthly Statistics for September 2024

New Applications: 5

Issued Applications: 2

Active Applications: 9

Active Long-Range & Grant Projects: 5

Noteworthy Information:

1. The Planning Commission held a public hearing to consider an application from Kathy Austin for 24 residential units at 7621 Healdsburg Ave. The Commission adopted a Resolution recommending approval to the City Council, who will hear the item in November.
2. On September 10, 2024, the Planning Commission held a walking tour led by Paul Fritz. The tour focused on how current zoning regulations may stifle development within parts of our downtown area and adjoining neighborhoods by looking at buildings that would not be permitted under our current zoning standards and downtown parking standards. At their September 24 meeting, the Commission discussed the tour and formed a subcommittee to examine how our zoning regulations could facilitate good development in the downtown and surrounding neighborhoods.
3. On September 24, 2024, the Planning Commission discussed the Vacation Rental ordinance. The Commission considered the number of rentals currently permitted, hosted vs non-hosted, and how other cities handle these permits. Questions arose about complaints, enforcement, and Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT). The Commission is considering recommending changes to the Ordinance to protect existing housing stock while still allowing a limited number of rentals.
4. The Department is currently working on five long-range planning or grant projects which include the AmeriCorps Trail project; the Sustainable Transportation Grant and Main Street Redesign; Housing Element implementation; the Priority Development Grant and work force housing overlay; and the Sebastopol Active Transportation Plan.
5. The Department is processing 8 various permits for land use entitlements which range from staff level administrative permits to conditional use permits requiring discretionary approval to the Barlow Hotel Development Agreement, which will require City Council approval in early 2025.
6. In addition to the above discreet projects, planning staff spend significant time on issues as they arise during any week. One example is the illegal placement of the "Cock Robin" signage on the building at the corner of Sebastopol Avenue and Morris Street, which signage exceeds the size limit allowed under ordinance and under the Barlow's approved Sign Program. The Design Review Board denied a request for a variance to allow the additional signage on September 24, a week after the signage had been installed without benefit of permit. The property owner has appealed the DRB's denial, and staff have requested removal of the unapproved signage pending the appeal.