

Rispin proposal advanced

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CAPITOLA — After an 18-month absence, an alternate 14-lot single family subdivision proposal on this historic Rispin Mansion site on Wharf Road is back.

A draft environmental report on the project has been completed and presently in its 45-day public review period. Assistant Planning Director Sue Tupper said the project's tentative subdivision map application should come before the city Planning Commission within two months.

Applicant Howard Dysle still has an option to buy the 6½-acre Wharf Road site for \$950,000. His proposal calls only for subdividing the property and making necessary off-site improvements to ready 14 lots for sale as single family plots. Neither construction of units nor remodeling or rehabilitation of the existing four story, 9,000-square foot Rispin Mansion are part of the proposal.

The lot on which the mansion stands is designed to allow for future remodeling and rehabilitation of the mansion for use as a bread and breakfast inn. Like the other 13 residential lots any plans to develop the site will be subject to separate city review.

The proposed 14 residential lots range in size from 9,350 to 56,000 square feet. Except for the mansion lot, which is 56,000 square feet, the lots range from 9,350 to 15,750 square feet and have building envelopes of around 3,000 square feet.

In addition to the 14 residential lots, Dysle's applications calls for the subdivision of two more lots. One, of 12,460 square feet, covers much of the area formerly used as a formal garden of the mansion. It is proposed as a common open area. The other is slightly more than an acre and lies immediately adjacent to Soquel Creek. It is proposed for dedication to the city as open space.

The proposal is much different from Dysle's original plan that came before the city in 1983. That called for a 100-unit senior citizen facility, but was killed by the City Council when it set a maximum density of 10 units per acre. The present proposal comes in at less than two units per acre.

Unlike, the original proposal, however, Dysle will not have to spend some one million to renovate the historic, but deteriorating mansion.

The Rispin Mansion has been part of Capitola's history for 62 years, having been built in 1923 by San Francisco oil millionaire Henry Rispin. It has stood empty since 1960, when the St. James Monastery of Poor Clare's which had been using it as a retreat moved. The property is now owned in partnership by Louie Rittenhouse of Santa Cruz.

According to the draft environmental impact report by Integrated Land Services of Capitola, the impact of the proposed project on the mansion is both positive and negative.

"If left vacant and unused, the mansion will be open to continued vandalism and, at worst, complete destruction by arson," says the report. "If subdividing the Rispin site makes it economical feasible for the mansion to be rehabilitated in the near future for the use of the residents or bread and breakfast inn then this would be a beneficial impact."

The lone "significant" environmental impact in the report is biotic resources, which relates to a Monarch butterfly clustering site that exists in the eucalyptus grove on the southern part of the site.

According to the report though, the six lots in that area could be built "without significant loss of overall butterfly colony size if certain precautions are strictly adhered to."

Those precautions include maximum building setbacks from the butterfly cluster sites, prohibiting the removal of many trees and also the planting of additional trees for further butterfly protection.

So-called "moderate" environmental impacts from the proposed project are in the geology soils and historic resources sections.

Also recommend are specific grading and erosion-control plans and a construction schedule to begin after April 15th when winter rains stop. As far as the historic resources of the mansion are concerned, a qualified architectural historian will be required if and when the mansion is rehabilitated.

Listed as "minimal" in the environmental impact report are such impacts as traffic-circulation, noise, hydrology, fire and wastewater disposal.