

December 16, 2019

Kari Svanstrom
Planning Director, City of Sebastopol
7120 Bodega Ave.
Sebastopol, CA 95472

Dear Kari,

The developer's request for variances (or are they concessions) to the side and backyard setbacks should not be approved. Since the density for multiple housing unit development in Sebastopol was established many years ago and the assignment to these properties was made then; much has changed. Numerous rules have been enacted. These include a larger number of designated parking spaces, handicapped accessibility, open space requirements, etc. It is also the case that the developer is pushing the R7 zoning requirements to the limit. Density ranges are 43 to 89 units on this acreage. Their proposal calls for 84. For developers to obtain the generous governmental benefits that are available, all of these requirements necessitate squeezing the space for the actual housing and pushing the parking and other needs into the perimeter setbacks. I can't imagine that the intent of the Sebastopol Zoning Board is to allow this to happen since the setbacks are there for a purpose: to protect the neighbors and the neighborhood and also significantly, in this case, protect Heritage and native trees from such intrusions.

The need for a much larger setback than 10' in the rear lot has already been addressed in Marcia Lavine's letter of 12/10/19. An additional concern is that Pacific Properties stated desire to be a good neighbor is countered by the report from their arborist that all of the neighbors' trees that abut the project must be destroyed. Knowing that they continue to plan for a 10' rear and 5' side setback.

Although removal of heritage oaks on our property is a tremendous concern, there are other issues that relate to the Woodmark development that need to be raised. You may also see on their website that there numerous photos of completed projects which all show virtually no trees; in sharp contrast to the elaborately planted drawings of their Woodmark project. Of course the proposed landscaping with trees in 15 gallon pots is a minimal gesture to conform with City regulations and will take many years to show any real impact.

It's difficult to determine due to the paucity of elevation marks on their drawings but it appears that the lot's highest point (NW corner) is at 185 ft and the street level is at 150 ft. The plan calls for numerous retaining walls starting at the back at about 16' high getting lower as one moves away from that corner. We know from this that substantial grading is part of the plan. From website photos of their projects, it appears that their MO is to clear the site of all trees, level it out as best they can and then place their 'standard' structures on the site as needed. Unfortunately they have not, to my knowledge, provided a set of 3-D renderings of their proposal. Here are a few images from their Healdsburg project to illustrate those points.



Some of the comments from the meeting of November 21st are also troubling. The plans shown at that meeting have changed substantially particularly in the back of the lot. The back buildings (north) are now sandwiched between a parking lot and a high (15') retaining wall. Does 'low income housing' need to suffer from such uninspired architectural and landscape design?

Another concern is the transformation of the acreage from a permeable to a non-permeable surface and the sewer drainage required to service that runoff. It appears that about 70% of the site area will produce runoff that will end up on or under Bodega Avenue. Is the City ready to deal with that during a flash flooding rainfall?

Traffic is a constant problem that development at this density will only further exacerbate. As all the residents on the west side of town know, if you are trying to travel east on Bodega Avenue the traffic light at Main Street is a filter that only lets about 5 eastbound cars through every cycle. That's the number of cars waiting from the traffic light to City Hall. If cars are backed up all the way to Robinson Rd., as they frequently are, that's a lot of cycles. The evacuations during the wild fires also showed near impossible traffic flow. It took us over three hours to get from our house to the edge of town on 116. I hope that the City will conduct a thorough assessment of the impact of traffic resulting from all of the ongoing and proposed housing development.

Please know that I am not against development or low income housing development in particular. In fact my wife and I have financially supported non-profit, local housing for several years. What I don't support is the apparent design of this project to push to the limits the boundaries, the density and the disrespect for the neighboring trees.

Thank you so much for noting my concerns,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charles F. Lavine". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Charles F. Lavine
7702 Washington Avenue