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City of Sebastopol Design Review Board Staff Report

Meeting Date: October 21, 2020
Agenda Item: 7A
To: Design Review/Tree Board
From: Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director
Alan Montes, Associate Planner
Subject: Preliminary Review of Woodmark Apartments
Recommendation: Provide feedback to staff and applicant
Applicant/Owner: Pacific West Communities, INC., Ken Koss, Lauren Alexander,
Caleb Roope / Vincent G. Whitesell & JB Whitesell 1999 Trust and
Richard Raymond Shone
File Number: 2020-043
Address: 7719 & 7760 Bodega Avenue
CEQA Status: To be evaluated upon formal submittal
General Plan: High Density Residential (HDR)
Zoning: Multifamily Residential (R7)

Introduction:

The applicant has submitted a second Preliminary Review, based on the feedback provided by the Design Review Board/Tree Board (Board) at their December 18, 2019 meeting. The Preliminary Review is for an 84-unit affordable housing development located at 7716 and 7760 Bodega Avenue. Currently the sites are developed with two single family residences and apple orchards (noncommercial).

Preliminary Review is meant to provide an informal critique and evaluation of a project's design approach. It gives the Board an opportunity to work with the applicant to achieve a quality project. The Board will identify relevant issues and significant concerns and provide comments on the appropriateness of the preliminary design and its compliance with the Zoning Ordinance and the Design Review Guidelines. No actions are taken with a Preliminary Review.

The applicant has submitted several technical studies (arborist report, traffic analysis, noise, etc.), which staff and the City's consultants have reviewed on a preliminary level. Staff anticipates revisions to address changes to the project and to address department comments. Several of these studies are not necessarily pertinent to the project's design approach for the Preliminary Review and have been left out of this report. However, all the provided studies have been uploaded to the City's Special Projects & Notices page on the City Website. A link to this page has been provided at the end of this report.

This staff report provides a project description, staff analysis of the project regarding applicable regulations, public and city departmental comments, and specific areas where staff and the applicant are seeking feedback from the Board.

Project Description:

The preliminary project proposes to merge 7716 and 7760 Bodega Avenue to construct an 84-unit affordable housing project. The units are proposed be constructed in six (6), 3-story, multi-family residential structures, including a community room with residences located above it. The preliminary project will require significant site modifications including the demolition of existing structures, grading (14,600 cy of cut, 3,600 cy of fill, resulting in a net off haul of 11,000 cy), the construction of retaining walls up to 9.5', and the removal of most of the existing on-site trees. The application is still in a preliminary stage, site design and the proposed number of units may change, though the use is not anticipated to significantly change.

The Board had previously reviewed this project at their December 18, 2019, meeting and made the following comments relating to the site planning and architecture:

- This is a flat lot project on a sloping lot.
- Flattening this sloped lot will destroy all the trees and is not supportable.
- Not supportive of phasing the project, due to large cuts, removal of trees and possibility that second phase does not occur.
- Suburban architecture is being placed on a site that does not call for it.
- The proposal does not fit the character of Sebastopol or the site.
- Why is the community building a one-story standalone building when the rest of the site has three-story buildings.
- There is very little variety in the volume of the buildings.
- The materials should make sense in how they are used and cannot be just surface applied.
- The project could have an urban front with buildings being placed right on the street with courtyard possibilities and parking in the back.
- A parking lot on Bodega Avenue is not supportable.
- The retaining wall needs to be positioned in a way that would ensure the long-term health and safety of the property line trees.
- The project should be designed around the trees.
- Retaining walls with 8' or 16' drop off are not supportable transitional elements.
- Retaining walls shall be no more than 3-4' tall.
- Placing three-story buildings at the very perimeter of the site adjacent to single-family dwellings is unacceptable.
- The amenities should be centralized.

Since the Board had last seen the proposal the following items have been modified, per the direction provided:

- Reduced the total number of buildings from eight (8) to six (6).
- Added units above the community room.
- Reduced the amount of grading (cut) to the site, which has reduced the retaining walls from 16' to approximately 9.5' tall.
- The applicant has indicated that the retaining walls will likely be soldier pile and drilled pier with grade beams.
- Relocated the recreation area from the rear of the site (at the base of a retaining wall) to the center of the site.

- The development has been shifted further south and towards the center resulting in a greater rear and side setbacks.
- The original proposal had an approximate 10' rear setback, whereas this iteration of the has a 60' rear setback.
- Moved the parking originally at the frontage along Bodega Ave to behind the front row of buildings.
- The buildings fronting Bodega Ave. have been stepped down to two stories at the ends and step up to three stories in the middle.
- The rooflines have been modified to vary both vertically and horizontally.

The architecture has been slightly modified in that the roof forms have been modified, the buildings step in and out more, and the buildings facing Bodega Ave. have the third stories removed at the ends. However, despite these changes the overall architecture still appears to have a suburban design and utilizes the same materials.



IG A - BUILDING A - FRONT ELEVATION

Original (12/18/2019) Proposal - Building A Front Elevation ("Fronting" Bodega)



IG A - FRONT ELEVATION

Current (10/21/2020) Proposal - Building A Front Elevation (Fronting Bodega)

Site Context:

The project is situated in a unique area in that the General Plan and Zoning Ordinance have designated most of the properties on Bodega Ave. for high density residential. However, the block is still transitioning and is currently made up of an eclectic mixture of development. To the east is a high density (13.1 du/ac) Planned Community housing development consisting of 2- to 3-story multifamily structures and are developed with significant front yard setbacks to minimize the massing. On the south side of Bodega Avenue, properties are zoned Multifamily Residential (R7) and General Commercial (CG) and the development pattern is a mixture of 1- and 2-story multifamily developments, duplexes, commercial and single-family structures. To the west the properties are zoned Single Family and Multifamily Residential (R6) and Single Family

Residential (R4) and are primarily composed of 1- and 2-story single family structures. To the north the properties are exclusively zoned Single Family Residential (R4) and are entirely made up of 1- and 2- story single family residences.

Environmental Review:

Upon submittal of a formal application, the level of California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) will be evaluated. If City Planning staff believes there are potential significant environmental impacts from the project, an Initial Study will be prepared to determine whether the project will have significant impacts on the environment. The Initial Study will determine the type of environmental review required (Mitigated Negative Declaration, Environmental Impact Report). Where potential significant impacts are identified, project mitigation will be required to address, or 'mitigate' these impacts.

General Plan Consistency:

Both parcels are designated as High Density Residential land uses. The intent of the High Density Residential (HDR) land use designation is as follows:

***High Density Residential:** Designates areas suitable for multifamily dwellings at a density of 12.1 to 25 units per acre. This designation is suitable for duplexes, apartments, townhouses, and other attached dwelling units.*

These parcels (3.59 acres) are required to provide a density between 43-89 units. The project as proposed is consistent with the HDR designation in that the project is proposing to build 84 units and the combined parcels will be developed at a density of 23.4 units per acre.

The Housing Element of the General Plan identifies sites with the potential for residential development as part of a 'Site Inventory.' The parcel at 7716 Bodega Ave is included in this inventory and recognizes it as an appropriate site for multi-family development.

Land Use (LU) Policy LU 5-4, states that the design of new residential developments are to be consistent with the City's design guidelines, to ensure harmony with Sebastopol's unique, small-town character and compatibility with existing land uses.

Based on the prior review the Board found that the preliminary design was inconsistent with the City's Design Guidelines, and that the design was not compatible with the existing land uses.

A more detailed analysis of the General Plan Consistency will occur upon a formal submittal.

Zoning Ordinance Consistency:

17.20.030 – Development Standards

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD	R7 Standards	Project Proposal	Prior Proposal
Minimum Lot Area	8,000	156,270 sq. ft. (3.59 acres)	156,270 sq. ft. (3.59 acres)
Minimum Lot Width	80'	482'	482'
Maximum Building Height	30' ¹ /2 stories or 40' ¹ /3 stories for affordable housing projects	39.6', 3 Stories	Approximately 35', 3 Stories
Building Setbacks			
<i>Front</i>	10'	10'	17'
<i>Side – Interior (west)</i>	9' ¹	64'	12'
<i>Side – Interior (east)</i>	9' ¹	62'	11'
<i>Rear – Main Bldg.</i>	30' ²	60'	10'
Lot Coverage	40% ³	23%	25%
Minimum Res. Density	1 du/3,600 sf (43 Units)	1 du/1,860 sf (84 Units)	1 du/1,860 sf (84 Units)
Maximum Res. Density	1 du/1,743 sf (88 Units)		
General Plan Density	12.1 – 25 du/ac	23.4 du/ac	23.4 du/ac
Minimum Usable Open Space	50 sf/du (4,200 sf required for 84 dwelling units)	95 sf/du (7,997 sf of open space) (5,104 sf of private open space and 2,887 sf of common recreation space)	113 sf/du (9,450 sf of open space) (4,200 sf of private and 5,250 sf of common recreation space)
Parking Requirements – Auto	151 Parking Spaces ⁴	152 Parking Spaces	152 Parking Spaces
Parking Requirements – Bicycle	38 Bicycle Parking Spaces ⁵	48 Bicycle Parking Spaces	48 Bicycle Parking Spaces

¹ 10% of lot width, or 5 ft., whichever is greater, not to exceed 9 ft

² 20% of lot depth, not less than 20', nor greater than 30'

³ Planning Commission may approve up to 50% where certain conditions apply

⁴ Two- and three-bedroom units are required to provide 2 parking spaces per unit. However, deed restricted affordable housing projects are allowed to provide 90% of the applicable parking requirement

⁵ Deed restricted affordable housing projects are required to provide 25% of the required vehicles spaces as bicycle parking

17.100.050 – Recycling and Waste Collection Areas

The project as proposed will provide three (3) 17'x14.5' trash enclosures to screen the dumpsters. The adequacy of the trash enclosures has not been reviewed by Recology at this time but will be reviewed as part of a formal submittal.

17.110 - Off-street parking Regulations

The applicant is proposing 152 parking spaces, which exceeds the City requirement of 151 parking spaces. However, the dimensions of the parking spaces appear to be inconsistent with the City Standards. The applicant is proposing to utilize a 2' overhang into sidewalk areas, when the sidewalks are 6' or wider and over landscaped areas for many of the parking spaces (See Sheet A1.1). The Sebastopol Municipal Code states that "*Parking is not permitted on lawns or landscaped yard areas*" and is silent on vehicular overhangs into sidewalks. For reference the Barlow Crossing Townhomes (Formerly Dan Davis Townhomes) do not utilize 2' overhangs. It is not uncommon for cities (Santa Rosa, Rohnert Park, Windsor, and San Rafael) to allow

overhangs into landscaped areas or 6'+ wide sidewalks, but those cities all have an ordinance to allow the overhang and each city has specific regulations for what is allowed. For example, San Rafael and Rohnert Park do not allow overhangs for compact spaces (likely because those spaces are already shortened, and any additional shortening would likely result in protrusion into drive aisles).

Additionally, staff has concern regarding the 8'x16' compact spaces that have a 24' backup distance, located along the northwest corner of the property. The City's standard is to require additional backup space for smaller parking spaces (for 90 degree parking, the required backup space for a 19' long space is 25' for a 9' wide space, and 27' for a 8.5' wide space; compact spaces are allowed to be 8' x16', staff believes the full 27' should be provided, as the additional maneuverability is often needed when the spaces are smaller. Additionally, a number of these spaces are along a curve, which makes maneuvering more difficult and warrants additional backup area. Staff inquired about this with the applicant, who stated that the dimensions were from the City of Santa Rosa's Municipal Code, Section 20-36.070 Exhibit G. However, the Santa Rosa Municipal Code references a 9'x16' compact space with a 23' backup distance. Staff believes the intent is that the compact spaces are supposed to be dispersed amongst standard spaces and comply with the standard space's backup distance stated in Table 17.110-1. Off-Street Parking Chart.

17.255 – Affordable Housing Density Bonus

The project is proposing to provide 100% affordability targeting families with incomes ranging between 30% to 60% of the Area Medium Income (AMI), defined as Very Low-Income and Low-Income households. Currently the applicant proposes to dedicate 48 of the units to families whose substantial income is from agriculture, aquaculture or retirees from these industries. The remaining units will be dedicated to seniors and other individuals with incomes ranging between 30% to 60% of the AMI. By providing deed-restricted affordable housing at this level, the project is eligible to take advantage of the City and State's Density Bonus Law. As proposed the project is entitled to a 35% density bonus, modified parking ratios, and three (3) concessions, which can be used to reduce site development standards including but not limited to setbacks, open space requirements, or lot coverage, as long as the applicant can show the concessions are needed to make the project financially feasible.

The project at this time has not requested to utilize the density bonus, or the concessions.

17.450 – Design Review

Design review is required for any new development that includes three (3) or more dwelling units. The Design Review procedures allows the City, through the DRB, to review and assess the design to ensure the proposal would be compatible with the neighborhood and with the general visual character of Sebastopol; that the design provides appropriate transitions and relationships to adjacent properties and the public right-of-way; that it will not impair the desirability of investment or occupation in the neighborhood; that the design is internally consistent and harmonious; and that the design is in conformity with the City's adopted Design Guidelines. Staff's initial review of the project in relation to the Design Guidelines is included in the analysis section below.

Required Findings

Upon formal submittal, the project will be required to apply for and obtain several planning entitlements including a Lot Merger, Design Review, Tree Removal, and Environmental Review. Findings specific to each planning entitlement will be analyzed upon formal submittal and the analysis will be presented to the appropriate hearing bodies.

Public Comment:

Noticing is not required for Preliminary Review. However, the Planning Department had elected to send a mail notice to all property owners within 600 of the subject sites and installing a physical posting on the site. Staff has also emailed interested persons who have previously provided an email (at prior community meeting and DRB preliminary review or through public comment).

As of the writing of this staff report staff has received three public comments. All three comments object to this project, for various reasons including, scale, traffic and density. Copies of all written public comments received as part of this public noticing process are included as an attachment to this report.

Staff Analysis:

Departmental Comment:

The Planning Department circulated the application to the following City departments for review: Building and Safety, Fire, Engineering, Traffic Consultant (W-Trans), Public Works, Police, and City Manager. The following comments were received:

City Arborist

The City Arborist has provided preliminary comments on the project citing concern for the health of the trees located along the north property line. The concerns include the impacts that may occur from drilling the piers, which may damage the existing root structures and depending on how tall the drill is, it is possible that limbs will need to be removed. The extent of these impacts do not appear to have fully investigated at this time.

Engineering/Traffic

Given the complexities of this site and its access onto Bodega Avenue, staff requested the City Engineer, and traffic consultant for the project, W-Trans, provide a review of the plans and the Draft Traffic Study (Study) prepared by the applicant. As part of the prior application W-Trans requested that the Study evaluate impacts along the Bodega Avenue corridor and nearby streets as well as two downtown intersection. The prior comments also required that two access alternatives with full operational analysis at both access points to the project be evaluated. The two scenarios should include:

- a) Full Access (ability to turn left and right) at both project access points.
- b) Full Access at the eastern project access and Right-turn in/Right-turn out only at the western project access.

W-Trans has reviewed the draft Study and provided the applicant with a handful of comments that will need to be implemented into the Study and to be reevaluated, prior to a formal submittal. W-Trans comments have been provided as an attachment to this report, several of their comments include:

- The signal warrants for the Robinson Road intersection should be based on higher volume conditions (Access Scenario 2 with all left-turn movements at the Robinson Road access) since it is the worst-case condition. Please clarify and ensure that these warrants are based on this condition and note it in the report.
- Under access scenario 1 (full access on the west), there is no mention that there is an existing median almost immediately west of the driveway. The following issues need to be addressed: 1) Once the driveway is widened, will there be any conflicts with the median? Will vehicles be able to turn left into the project without interference from the median and/or will these vehicles block the path of eastbound through vehicles? 2) Will there be any anticipated vehicle conflicts with the midblock full access? 3) Because of these issues, it is unlikely that staff will support full access from the western driveway unless the project proposes geometric modifications to address this. 4) The close proximity between the Robinson Road (north)/Bodega Avenue and Robinson Road (north)/Project Driveway should be discussed in greater detail including potential vehicle conflicts and queuing caused by southbound Robinson Road queuing impacting northbound left turns into the project which in turn may cause queuing onto Bodega Avenue. The resolution of this issue is critical, and the proposed design should address this.
- The need for additional pedestrian crossing improvements and impacts of additional pedestrian crossings should be evaluated at the intersections of Bodega Avenue/Nelson Way and Bodega Avenue/Robinson Road. Additionally, this section of sidewalk is not ADA compliant, and will need to be brought up to compliance as part of the project development.

Tree Removal and Preservation

The applicant has submitted a Tree Preservation and Mitigation Report, prepared by Horticultural Associates on June 4, 2020. The project as currently proposed will require the removal of most of the trees on the site. The Tree Preservation and Mitigation Report evaluated all trees 10 inches or greater in diameter, except for Acacias.

The Tree Preservation and Mitigation Report evaluated 76 trees, some of which are property line trees. Of the evaluated trees, twenty-six trees (26) were identified as potentially preservable, the previous plans determined that only (11) were capable of preservation. The Tree Preservation and Mitigation Report calls for preserving four (4) Silver Dollar Eucalyptus trees (escaped exotics), nine (9) Coast Live Oaks, nine (9) Black Oaks, one (1) Valley Oak, one (1) Oregon (white) Oak, one (1) pine, and one (1) Juniper.

Given the prior review, staff has particular concern regarding trees #56, 57, 58, and 59 as they are located on neighboring property, and the plans identify that retaining walls be located within their existing driplines. Staff brought this concern to the applicant and received the following response from the applicant:

“Overhanging driplines on #56 and #57 are somewhat asymmetrical and grow further into the project than they do into the property where they originate. As such

they may not accurately represent where significant roots are growing. They are also exceptionally large with 80” diameters.

Referencing our Tree Inventory Chart we identified the Expected Impacts to trees #56, #57, #58, and #59 as a (2), which equates to ‘A moderate impact on long term integrity can be expected as a result of proposed development’. This moderate expected impact will occur as a result of the intrusion into the dripline by the adjacent walls. The impacts will not be minor, and they will not be significant. As noted, they will be moderate at worst.

Healthy trees are expected to tolerate a moderate impact.”

At this time, it is unclear as to what the impacts of a “moderate impact” will be, other than the applicant anticipates that the tree will survive. Upon a formal submittal staff will require additional details regarding potential impacts.

The Tree Preservation and Mitigation Report identifies 50 trees that will be removed as part of the project due to either poor existing conditions (11 trees) or would be removed due to the proposed development impacts (39 trees). A summary of the trees is included in the table below.

Tree Species	Tree Identification No.	Preserved Trees (Tree ID No.)	# of Trees Proposed for Removal		
			Protected	Non-Protected	Total
Black Oak	7, 8, 13, 14, 23, 24, 25, 31, 33, 52, 53, 54, 56, 57	9 (7,8,14,24,52,53,54,56,57)	4	1	5
Coast Live Oak	3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 26, 28, 29, 30, 32, 34, 49, 50, 55, 59, 60, 61, 63, 64, 65, 66, 68, 70, 71, 73, 75, 76	9 (3,4,5,6,49,55,59,68,75)	25	4	29
Valley Oak	58	1 (58)	0	0	0
Oregon (White) Oak	27, 69	1 (69)	1	0	1
Douglas Fir	51, 62, 72	0	3	0	3
Almond	1	0	DBH not provided	DBH not provided	1
Willow	67	0	0	1	1
Silver Dollar Eucalyptus	44, 45, 46, 47	4 (44,45,46,47)	0	0	0
Pine	2	1 (2)	0	0	0
Glossy Privet	74	0	0	1	1
Monterey Pine	35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43	0	0	9	9
Juniper	48	1 (48)	0	0	0
Total		26	33	16	50

Staff recommends the Design Review/Tree Board review the proposed tree removal due to both the extensive removal of trees on-site, and the potential impacts on neighboring trees, as assessed the applicant's arborist. Additionally, given the pyrophytic nature of Juniper, pines, and eucalyptus, it is somewhat disappointing that the applicant is preserving these species, while other natives are being removed. Staff would encourage the applicant, and the DRB/Tree Board, to review this item as well.

Design Review Guidelines Analysis:

Overall, the project as revised is more consistent with the Design Review Guidelines than the prior submittal reviewed in December of 2019. However, there are still many areas where the preliminary project conflicts with the Design Review Guidelines. This section of the report will focus on conflicts with the Guidelines and areas where staff is seeking the Board's feedback. A complete copy of the City of Sebastopol Design Review Guidelines has been provided as an attachment.

Site Planning: (Guidelines are in italics)

- **Neighborhood Context**
 - *Infill development should be sensitively designed to respect existing patterns and reinforce the character and context of existing neighborhoods consistent with applicable development regulations.*
 - *Significant natural site features such as natural ground forms, significant trees, large rock outcroppings, water and significant view corridors should be identified and addressed.*
 - *In areas where there are changes in land use or density, new development should be designed to provide a transition between current and planned future uses through the use of setbacks, site plan, building massing and height, landscaping, driveways locations, etc.*

Staff Analysis: The preliminary project has modified the design of the buildings facing Bodega Ave. by reducing the ends to two-story and stepping up to a three-stories in the middle of the buildings. The project has also relocated the buildings throughout the site to be more centered on the lot. The retaining walls are further set back from the property lines in order provide a larger setback from trees on adjacent properties. However, staff still has concerns regarding the revised proposal. The project is still removing most of the trees on the site (both protected and non-protected trees). There are no other three-story buildings facing Bodega Avenue in this vicinity, this area is anticipated to continue to transition given the General Plan and Zoning along the Bodega corridor. However, this is also a transitional area to rural areas west of Sebastopol, and staff believes additional larger landscaping at the frontage could help ease this transition, screen the taller areas of the structures, and provide shading for these units.

Staff is seeking the Board's feedback on the current design and transitions.

- **Building orientation**
 - *Buildings should generally be oriented parallel to the streets they face.*
 - *Buildings should relate to the street and should be located on the site so that they reinforce existing street frontages and setback patterns.*
 - *The first floor should relate to the street by providing pedestrian-scale elements, design features, and amenities.*

- *Buildings and landscaping should be located to maximize solar access during cooler months and to control it during warmer months. Natural ventilation, sunlight and views should be maximized for each building and residential unit.*

Staff Analysis: The preliminary project has moved the buildings closer to the street and moved the parking behind the buildings, from the last iteration. However, the current design of the buildings back up to the street and requires all access to the buildings to be from inside the development, rather than having entries to the residences off of the street. Additionally, the building entrances face inside the buildings, resulting in a closed off appearance from the street. The current design reinforces the street, but it does not interact with Bodega Ave. Staff believes the inclusion of ground floor entrances facing Bodega Ave and additional pedestrian access points from Bodega Ave. would further assist in relating to the street and provide welcoming pedestrian elements to the design.

Staff is requesting the Board provide feedback on the building orientation and interaction with the street.

- Pedestrian
 - *In residential developments, pedestrian access which is separate from driveways should be provided directly from the sidewalk to the front door.*

Staff Analysis: As stated in the analysis above, the design of the building directly facing Bodega Ave. should incorporate pedestrian access from Bodega Ave. to the buildings.

- Grading
 - *Grading should be minimized to the extent feasible to reflect existing topography and protect significant site features, including trees.*
 - *When designing a grading plan, balancing the cut and fill is encouraged when it does not result in further adverse effects to the natural topography.*
 - *Terracing should be considered as an alternative to the use of tall or prominent retaining walls.*
 - *Proposed grading under the drip line of protected trees must be clearly identified on plans and will be reviewed by the City Arborist prior to issuance of a grading permit.*

Staff Analysis: The project site includes a gentle slope at the front of the site, which continues sloping up towards the rear and with the highest point being a knoll at the northwest corner of the site. There is an approximately 30-foot rise between the front of the site (approx. 155' elevation) and the knoll (186').

The prior submittal leveled the site and proposed finished floors range from 158' to 168' through several tiers and significant site excavation ('cuts') and retaining walls. The current proposal has tiered the site a little more than the previous submittal and would have finish floors ranging from 162' to 176'. The retaining walls have been reduced from 16' to 9.5' tall, and the amount of cut has been reduced from 20,000+ cy to 14,600 cy (cubic yards). These are all improvements from the prior submittal. However, at the prior Board meeting the consensus was that retaining walls

shall not be more than 3' to 4' tall. Additionally, 14,600 cy of cut (approximately 11,000 cy of off haul) is still a significant amount of grading and off-haul of soils.

Staff has concerns about the amount of grading and modification of the natural topography, and its impacts on the natural elements of the site, including the trees as discussed above, and the relation of the development to adjoining properties. The adjacent townhome development to the east also has an upward slope, particularly at the rear of the site, but was able to design a project that stepped the buildings up the hillside to work with the slope instead of modifying it.

Staff has requested on several occasions that the applicant demonstrate why terracing the site is infeasible. The applicant has provided brief explanations, attached, stating that an alternative site plan that more closely mimics the natural slope of the site would result in placing all vehicular parking fields in an aggregate location away from required accessible routes, resulting in a reduction in parking spaces and density of dwelling units. The applicant also asserts that industry best practices involve placing parking spaces on a maximum 5% cross slope for 90-degree parking spaces. Staff has requested sketches of the alternative designs and a detailed explanation of why 1:12 slopes cannot be utilized. At this time no additional information has been provided to staff.

Staff is requesting the Board review this overall site strategy and provide direction to the applicant and staff.

- Walls, Fences, and Screens
 - *Long or tall sound walls, masonry walls or fences should be designed to minimize visual monotony through changes in plane, height, material or significant landscape massing where appropriate.*
 - *The height and length of retaining walls should be minimized and screened with appropriate landscaping. Retaining walls should incorporate design elements of other architectural or natural features of the project.*

Staff Analysis: The retaining wall is proposed to utilize soldier pile/wood lagging and CMU or Concrete, breaking up the materials. The retaining wall will vary in height ranging from less than 1' up to 9.5' and utilize landscaping above the retaining wall. The retaining wall in the front of the property is identified as ranging from 1.5' to 4.75' in height and is a single long plane that is directly adjacent to the sidewalk.

Staff is requesting the Board's feedback on whether the retaining wall heights are appropriate, whether the location is appropriate and whether breaks should be incorporated in the retaining wall. One suggestion that could be discussed is reducing the number of parking spaces slightly to eliminate the compact parking at the northwest part of the site to bring the retaining wall closest to the adjoining structures which are located close to the property lines on both Nelson and Washington Avenue due to the presence of two flag lots (175/177 Nelson and 7708 Washington) and the property line trees discussed earlier in this report. A reduction in parking would be allowed under Density Bonus regulations.

Architecture:

- Relationship to surrounding architecture
 - *Architectural design should be compatible with the developing character of the area, and should complement the unique aspects of the site. Design compatibility includes complementary building style, form, size, color and materials. Consider architectural styles of existing structures on the site, as well as other structures in the area when designing a new building and provide for a harmonious integration of the new improvements.*

Staff Analysis: The proposal is in an eclectic neighborhood that does not have a predominant design character. The proposal appears to be placing an existing design into a neighborhood and does not consider the existing building styles, size or form. It was previously stated by the Board that this design is very suburban, and the site does not call for suburban architecture. Staff finds the design to be substantially like the prior iteration.

The Board should provide comments on the appropriateness of the project in relation to the surrounding architecture. Staff is also seeking additional comments on whether the modifications to the architecture is in line with what the Board previously requested.

- Massing
 - *Large structures should be designed to reduce their perceived height and bulk by dividing the building mass into smaller-scale components.*
 - *Buildings over two stories high should "scale down" their street-facing facades to reduce apparent height.*
 - *Box-like forms with extensive unarticulated facades or large, unvaried roofs should be avoided.*
 - *A variety of levels and planes should be encouraged to reduce the massing of larger buildings.*
 - *Multiple buildings on the same site should be designed to create a cohesive visual relationship between the buildings.*
 - *When possible, individual, street-oriented, ground level entries to commercial tenant spaces and dwellings should be provided.*
 - *When feasible, provide each building and residential unit with its own visual identity and individual address.*
 - *Façades of horizontal buildings should be broken up into smaller components by utilizing vertical elements.*

Staff Analysis: The project has modified the structures facing Bodega Ave (Buildings A) and has reduced the ends of these buildings to two-stories while going up to three-stories in the center of the building. This assists in breaking up the massing and transitioning to the increased height. However, the overall design of the buildings has not significantly changed.

Staff is seeking the Board's input on the transitional elements, whether the building should be further "scaled down" when facing the street, and whether the facades should be further broken up to create a more individual identity for the units.

- *Materials*
 1. *Building materials and color should be complementary to the design and to the surrounding area.*
 2. *Exterior materials should be durable and of high quality.*

Staff Analysis: The preliminary project proposes to clad the buildings with brick veneer, limestone, cementitious clapboard siding, and cementitious board and batten siding. The color selection are primarily earth tones ranging from brown, grey, and tan. The materials remain unchanged from the previous review, in which the Board stated that “minimal effort has been put into the material selections”.

Technical Considerations:

In addition to the design and engineering elements discussed above, as the project progresses, other items that will need to be resolved / include the following technical issues:

- Undergrounding of utilities
- Traffic study and frontage improvements (as outlined above)
- Stormwater management and site drainage
 - The applicant has provided a preliminary stormwater mitigation plan, provided in supplemental materials received on September 25, 2020. Given the short timeframe the Engineering Department has not commented on this study at this time. However, the project will need to comply with the City’s Low Impact Design (best practices) for stormwater management, and the project will be evaluated against pre-development run-off rates compared to post-construction rates to ensure no overall increase in volumes, which can cause flooding.
- Construction management plan (access, truck traffic especially off-haul of soils given the tight-turning radius and traffic patterns, phasing, etc.)
- Phasing considerations if the project is phased as proposed (such as breakdown of phased elements; overall timeline to final build-out, contingency if 2nd phase is never completed; impacts of construction for new residents of phase 1 during construction, etc.).

Recommendation:

Currently, the applicant is presenting the project for Preliminary Review. This provides the applicant with an opportunity to identify any design options as/ it relates to site planning, tree preservation and removal, and design of the structures for the Board to provide feedback. This also provides the Board the opportunity to make comments on the application and seek clarification on any components that may be unclear.

The Board does not take any votes under Preliminary Review. However, the applicant is seeking a general consensus or direction on the proposed site strategy, design, and tree removal, to the extent feasible. This would allow the applicant to gain a general understanding, regarding the design of the project as it relates to the removal of protected trees and any recommended revisions that should be considered.

Staff recommends that the Board receive a presentation from the applicant, hear from any interested members of the public, and provide comments on the project.

Specific questions posed by staff include:

- The appropriateness of the amount of tree removals.
- Whether the extent of grading and potential off haul is supportable.
- Whether the board is supportive of the use of retaining walls up to 9.5' in the rear of the property and 4.75' in the front.
- Whether additional pedestrian interaction with the street should be implemented.
- Whether compact parking spaces should be distributed throughout the parking lot.
- Appropriateness of the design, materials, transitions, and massing of the structures.

Attachments:

- Application Materials
 - Application
 - Introduction Letter
 - Project Description
 - Response Letter to Prior DRB Meeting
 - Consistency Analysis
 - Traffic Study Summary
 - Tree Preservation and Mitigation Summary
 - Landscape Design Narrative
 - Additional Details per initial Staff Comments
 - Tree Preservation and Mitigation Report
 - Draft Transportation Impact Analysis (minus appendixes)
- Project Plans (full size plans have been provided to the Board).
- W-Trans Peer Review Comments (attachments removed)
- City of Sebastopol Design Review Guidelines
- Public Comments, received due to sign posting and noticing for this application
- December 18, 2019 Plans (floorplans omitted)
- December 18, 2019 Minutes

Technical Studies are available for review at:

<https://www.ci.sebastopol.ca.us/City-Government/Departments-Services/Planning/Projects>