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UNAPPROVED DRAFT MINUTES

TREE/DESIGN REVIEW BOARD
CITY OF SEBASTOPOL
MINUTES OF October 21, 2020
4:00 P.M.

The notice of the meeting was posted on October 15, 2020.

DESIGN REVIEW BOARD:

1. CALL TO ORDER: Chair Luthin called the meeting to order at 4:00 P.M. and read a procedural statement.

2. ROLL CALL:

Present:	Ted Luthin, Chair Lars Langberg, Vice Chair Christine Level, Board Member Ron Hari, Board Member Cary Bush, Board Member Gregory Beale, Board Member
Absent:	None
Staff:	Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director Alan Montes, Associate Planner

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: October 07, 2020

Board Member Bush made a motion to approve the minutes as submitted.

Board Member Hari seconded the motion.

AYES: Chair Luthin, Vice Chair Langberg, and Board Members Hari and Bush
NOES: None
ABSTAIN: Board Members Level and Beale
ABSENT: None

4. PLANNING DEPARTMENT UPDATE ON MATTERS OF GENERAL INTEREST:

Director Svanstrom updated the Board on the following:

- The City Council and Caltrans approved installation of 3 or 4 temporary parklets in downtown.
- The City has adopted both the Capital Improvement Budget as well as the revised budget for the year.

Vice Chair Langberg acknowledged the hard work and perseverance of architect, Paul Fritz, member of the Planning Commission, if it were not for Mr. Fritz those parklets would not be approved, I can say that with confidence.

Director Svanstrom concurred with Vice Chair Langberg and commented that Mr. Fritz was very instrumental.

5. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC REGARDING ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA: There were none.

Kyle Falbo

I just wanted to let the public know that the City is inviting interested citizens to apply for three openings on this Board, if you are interested in helping to make the decisions and guiding the direction of our City in terms of the Design Review Board I encourage you all to apply, the application can be picked up from the Planning Department at 7120 Bodega Avenue and the application needs to be submitted no later than November 19, 2020, encourages active participation by applying to be on the Design Review Board, restricting video content is infringing on my freedom of public speech so I would encourage this group to stop restricting my video content on this zoom meeting,

6. STATEMENTS OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST: None.

7. REGULAR AGENDA:

A. PRELIMINARY REVIEW – 7716 AND 7760 Bodega Avenue – Preliminary Review of a proposal from Pacific West Communities, INC, for a residential development including approximately 84 dwelling units, along with various site improvements and modifications. This application first came before the Board for Preliminary Review on December 18, 2019, the project has since been revised. This is a preliminary review which is meant to provide an informal critique and evaluation of a project's basic design approach. No decision will be made.

Alan Montes, Associate Planner

Presented the staff report.

Steve Weinberger, Traffic Consultant

Presented a summary analysis of the applicant's traffic study.

Alan Montes

Continued his presentation of the staff report.

Christine Level, Board Member

The traffic study delineates the peak traffic hours as 7am to 9am and 4pm to 6pm, and I would state without a question that those are not actually the peak traffic hours in Sebastopol. Were other times analyzed for their traffic impact, or was it just these timeframes 7am to 9am and 4pm to 6pm on weekdays?

Steve Weinberger, Traffic Consultant

It's pretty standard in traffic studies to look at the 7am to 9am and 4pm to 6pm periods. What is done is traffic counts are collected for those four hours and then the am peak and the pm peak hour are determined within each of those two-hour periods. I am a resident of Sebastopol, so I understand your comments. In my experience with that comment, although the noon hour and the school hour have volumes within a 15 minute period that can be at or exceed the level during those am and pm peaks, but all evaluation of traffic happens over an hour period so when you are looking at that sort of peak school time but including a full hour around it it is not the peak hour of the day for traffic in Sebastopol. It may have been the peak 15 minutes, but the way the city standards are and the standard approach for traffic is you evaluate a peak hour condition. The traffic study did do counts from 7am to 9 am and 4pm to 6pm and then determine a peak hour within each of those times and evaluated that.

Christine Level, Board Member

What about on the weekend, the weekend was discounted entirely.

Steve Weinberger, Traffic Consultant

The inclusion of weekend conditions is generally applied when a usage is more of a weekend generator, like you will see traffic studies for commercial uses that look at a weekday pm peak and a Saturday midday peak. In this case, given that it is residential, the highest traffic that the project is going to generate is going to be that weekday morning or evening period. The project itself is going to have a low vehicle trip generation in the middle of the day, and not as high on weekends. The focus in these traffic studies is to look and say when are the kind of top couple hours that the project is generating traffic and that is the weekday am and pm for residential uses.

Christine Level, Board Member

When we get into this Table 1 Level of Service on sheet 13 of their report, it describes these different levels of service A through F and I was surprised to see that the transition from Jewell to Main Street was not awarded an F. In their report it says a delay of more than 80 seconds, vehicles may wait through more than one cycle to clear intersections. I would say that that is very often, many cycles to clear intersections going east from Jewell through Main Street. I think they awarded it a C, which is a delay of 25 to 30 seconds, many pass through without stopping, that surprised me.

Steve Weinberger, Traffic Consultant

You are reading from the description of each of the levels of service. I don't disagree with you that the level of delay in that eastbound direction in the morning is more than what you see in that, but keep in mind that's an average delay over an hour for every car that enters the intersection. You can have certain approaches, in this case southbound South Main Street generally gets more green time in the morning than does eastbound Bodega. It is operating at a better delay than the average where Bodega has a worst delay than the average. The way the standards are written is the average delay for the whole intersection. There is a signal timing study that was done by us for the City in the last year, and we have made recommendations for revising the signal timing that will provide some equity. Since Bodega is not a state highway, but South Main Street is, and the leg of that intersection is Caltrans, Caltrans is always going to favor their facility over a local facility, it is just the way they operate. The City has been providing those comments to Caltrans to try to get them to make changes there. In general, the average delay for the entire intersection is presented in the report. Some legs may be better, some legs may be worse.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

Requested that staff give a background on how Sebastopol rates in general, how much affordable housing we have, and the density bonus concept.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

While redevelopment was going on, the City did develop quite a number of affordable apartment locations and homeowner locations. Named a number of affordable developments and individual affordable units in town.

Alan Montes, Associate Planner

In response to the question on density bonus, typically speaking, there is the density bonus law, which is a sliding scale based on the number of dedicated affordable units. You get a certain amount of density bonus on top of the City's standard limit. Essentially a density bonuses is saying that you're providing a certain amount of affordable housing, and then the State allocates a certain amount of bonus to exceed the city maximum.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

Right, you could be denser and have more units, but then it also gives you accommodations if you want fewer cars, for example.

Alan Montes, Associate Planner

Like setbacks, but the developer would have to demonstrate that these concessions are required due to financial feasibility.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

We received comments from the public ahead of this meeting, all of which were opposed to this project. Has the City received any comments from the public from people who are in favor of this project?

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

At this time, I have not received any comments from the public in favor of the project.

Ted Luthin, Chair

If the applicant were to ask for the parking concession, what would the maximum concession be?

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

It is quite a large reduction that they can get. I know the applicant is someone who's a little bit more of an expert on this, so I am happy to have her chime in during their presentation as part of that. Either way, I can do a quick flip to that page in my law book, and review that while the applicant is making their presentation as well.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

It is 90% according to what we got.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

That is our own regulations, that's not the State Density Bonus Law, which allows a greater reduction, and I believe if it hasn't changed, that it is based on the number of bedrooms for cars.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

It could be even more from the State side than Sebastopol's reduction?

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

As a point of reference, I calculated that Sebastopol's reduction went from 151 to 136.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

Correct.

Alan Montes, Associate Planner

I believe the project is currently utilizing that 90% of the City's requirement already. The standard requirement is a little bit higher than what they are currently showing, but it's still within the City's requirement for a 10% reduction.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

According to the report the applicant is proposing 152 parking spaces which exceed the City's requirement of 151.

Alan Montes, Associate Planner

The City's requirement is 151 per that 90% of required. If this were not an affordable housing project, they would be required to provide 162 spaces.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Okay, but there might be a State law that allows reduction even further.

Alan Montes, Associate Planner

Correct.

Ted Luthin, Chair

I want to be 100% clear, I thought I heard you say that they did not apply for the added density bonus.

Alan Montes, Associate Planner

That is correct. They are slightly below the maximum density for these two lots. I believe they are about three or five less than what the maximum is.

Cary Bush, Board Member

Regarding lot coverage and requirements in general, can you break down where this project is in terms of coverage?

Alan Montes, Associate Planner

This lot has a maximum lot coverage allowance of 40%. 40% of the lot can be covered with structures, car ports, residential buildings, etcetera. I believe this current application is in about the 20% lot coverage range, so it is below the lot coverage requirement.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Hearing no further questions, Chair Luthin invited the application to make a presentation.

Lauren Alexander, Project Manager for TCP

Presented

Doug Gibson, Architect

Presented

Caleb Roope

Presented

Ted Luthin, Chair

Hearing nothing further, Chair Luthin asked for questions of the applicant team from the Board.

Christine Level, Board Member

Regarding the parking spaces, we have 151 parking spaces, but a certain amount of that number is designated for ADA and a certain other amount are designated for electric car charging stations. Are these numbers reduced from the 151 parking spaces because the ADA spaces cannot be used unless somebody has a placard and I'm not sure about the electric car charging stations and whether people can park there if they're not charging an electric car.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

I can address those questions in terms of what our code requires. Our code for electric vehicles, yes, I believe if there isn't anyone with an electric car, they're not restricted from being allowed to assign that parking space to a resident with a regular car. For ADA, that is inclusive in our code in the 52 spaces that are required. Mr. Roope may be able to speak to the likelihood of those spaces being needed for the ADA units.

Caleb Roope

We find that our ADA spaces are consistently used. We do not make them available if there isn't a resident that qualifies with the placard.

Caleb Roope

We have about 5% of the units that would be handicap compliant or accessibility serving, and 2% with century impairment opportunities, that is the mix. Depending on financing sources, sometimes we do even more, but that's kind of the minimum and those spaces do tend to get used by folks that need them.

Christine Level, Board Member

Do the 151 spaces include the ADA spaces?

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

Yes.

Christine Level, Board Member

For the electric car charging spaces, you are saying that anybody can park there.

Caleb Roope

First you look at who has electric vehicles, and those spaces are reserved on a priority basis. I am kind of getting into the management of the property now, but that is okay. If you have an electric vehicle, you have a priority parking space effectively to use that. We have not seen a heavy ownership level of electric vehicles for lower income residents thus far. I think as vehicles become more affordable; you will start to see that trend emerge. We are doing electric vehicle charging stations all over our properties now, because that's code, but the usage rate is very

low. We have not found much occasion to have to restrict those to folks that just have electric cars, because we can use the parking.

Christine Level, Board Member

Basically what you're saying is unless a person signs up and says, I have an electric vehicle, so let's just say you have one person that signs up for that, and in this project you have 23 spaces, which is the 15% of the 152, then those other 22 spaces are just made known to be available for parking?

Caleb Roope

That is correct. They are not going to be restricted and sit there unused if no one's going to use them. When someone comes forward and has an electric vehicle or has a guest with electric vehicle, the management company knows to give them a permission placard to use that, and then that space is reserved for them. At this point it is pretty rare that that happens, but it does happen.

Christine Level, Board Member

In terms of the parking, if anybody could use all the ADA and electric vehicle charging stations, which is not the case, we would end up with 1.8 vehicles per unit. It seems like you are going to need a lot more parking than that in the real world. What is your idea for the parking because there is no street parking in this location? Do you have a plan?

Caleb Roope

State density bonus law and other laws are even more favorable for reduced parking to really exasperate the problem you might be referring to. I think if we did the calculation correctly, if we used State density bonus law, we could do 96 parking spaces on this site, versus what we are proposing. Again, just because we can do something does not mean we are going to do something, we want to try to make a project that works and is operationally efficient and is not a problem for the neighborhood. In cases where we do have reduced parking, which I wouldn't call this one of those cases because we are almost 2:1 parking ratio here, but in those cases where we do, we actually go through the process of limiting the vehicles that any one resident can have on the site. For example, a one-bedroom we might say that is one car per unit. For a two-bedroom, we might say that's no more than one car per unit, for a three-bedroom we might give them two cars per unit, and we balance that out when we do run into parking issues. It has happened over the years, but that's where management comes in and it becomes key to limit the parking on site, and basically specify in the lease that a tenant can only have one car and live here. If they have a separate car, they have got to be in a public parking lot or something like that.

Christine Level, Board Member

I was not able to designate the location and the sizes of the bioswale, is that on the civil plan? It says we are using bioswales to deal with the runoff.

Ron Hari, Board Member

I would like to know more about the State funding for the project. When the project is done, who manages the apartment, there is supposedly one manager, who does he work for? What are all the requirements are from the State to build this affordable project, it seems like they have to level out the block and quarter to pass State requirements for accessibility. If this were not an affordable housing project, they could probably terrace it and stay within our current guidelines anyway.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

While it can be discussed, this cannot be a consideration in terms of project direction in terms of State housing law.

Ron Hari, Board Member

Why not?

Ted Luthin, Chair

I think it is because we are a design review board, so we're really giving input on design, specifically related to the approved design review guidelines. Our commentary needs to be limited to the items that are related to the City's design review guidelines because that is where our authority comes from. The operations, the management, and the financing is out of our purview.

Ron Hari, Board Member

I guess what I was trying to determine there was why does the lot have to be level?

Caleb Roope

It would probably be better for Mr. Gibson to weigh in on overall accessibility for any building that is built on the site, multifamily of any kind, but generally speaking, what I can tell you about affordable housing is that we have to have an accessible path throughout the site, to the public amenities, as well as down to a public street. That is a requirement. I believe that kind of a requirement would extend to any type of building, but I am not an expert. With our affordable housing, we certainly have to have these requirements met including access to those accessible parking spaces, an accessible route throughout the development, and to public infrastructure as needed.

Ron Hari, Board Member

Who is going to manage this, and who will pay for the managers, is that the State or you?

Caleb Roope

We pay for the onsite manager, there is a 24-hour onsite manager that lives there, we pay for that through the rental income from the property. The management company would be a professional management company, like a Burbank housing, if you know them locally, they manage their own assets. It would be a company like that, that has professional management experience, we have about 15 different ones that we work with and use depending on the area. That is our responsibility.

Caleb Roope

On top of that, the State requires us to have regular inspections of these assets, make sure they look great, that we are renting to the right folks, that the property is well maintained, that it's not causing issues for the neighborhood, for the city, et cetera. That is all part of the program, and we are regulated that way based on the affordable housing resources we get.

Doug Gibson, Architect

The Americans with Disability Act as enforced by the California Building Code is a civil statute that provides for enforcement of universal accessibility for all building types that are used in this sort of residential application. Whether or not it was a tax credit project, or a luxurious condominium development, or just regular market rate apartments, the site would need to be

graded to provide for universal accessibility, accessible paths of travel to and from public right of ways, and then to any of the on-site amenities regardless of the type of use, the federal statute applies for uniform and accessibility provisions.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

In your description, you talk about the potential for LEED Platinum certification for the project as well as Department of Energy Zero Energy Ready program. The latter I do not know about, but LEED Platinum is a very high standard to me. If you guys are shooting for that, that is exciting. Can you talk a bit about that?

Caleb Roope

Currently, we have got five other projects that we are working with the Pacific company on that are LEED Platinum level projects. One of the things that we show on our entitlement exhibits are solar panels up on the roof structure, for example, because we want to make sure that the City understands that in order to get this net zero provision, we would have to have solar arrays, solar PV, we work with a company out of Eureka, California called Redwood Energy. They helped us put together energy budgets, if you will, for the project. I believe that this project would be called 105% PV or energy, so they would produce more energy than they use, and we would be putting energy back into the grid. All of our building products will be LEED certified; we'll be doing the specific provisions as necessary to meet the requirements for LEED Platinum. Benjamin Peterson, the architect in my office that's responsible for this project, is LEED AP so he has his own prerequisites and requirements that he will be managing, as this project sets into construction document stage.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

As far as I know, solar is required now on all new construction in California, but it is great if you have more than you need. To me, LEED Platinum is an above and beyond kind of level certification. Could you name one or two things that are unique to this project that wouldn't be on another apartment complex down the street, so to speak?

Caleb Roope

The design and construction are really what is the critical component of LEED certification. The use of low energy PHTP units, which are like furnaces and air conditioners, they are all designed specifically to be high efficiency units. We also will design in detail the structures to include provisions for termite control, whether it is a metal barrier at the sill plate or wire mesh where the sanitary sewer comes up through the podium foundation. Within the interior of the unit, all of the units would be door pressure checked, if you will, it's a standard that each one of the units has to be sealed, so there's consistent cocking and detailing and all of the unit production so it reduces indoor air quality issues. It also makes sure that it is a tight unit, we use a product called ERVH which provides for indoor air quality so there is not issues with off gassing or concerns along those lines. Our design and engineering firm that we do work with consistently has partnered with them on 10 separate LEED projects, not all of them platinum, but they have the capabilities to manage all of the design components for electrical, lighting, as well as mechanical systems.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

That is great, I really appreciate that effort. I appreciate that you guys have listened to a lot of our comments for site strategy, turning the building so that on Bodega Avenue your building is parallel to the street. Can you talk about the site strategy, specifically how pedestrians access it, and how it will feel when passing by this project?

Caleb Roope

Referred to the earlier graphic showing the rendering of the project, looking to the north west, where you can see the Robinson Avenue intersection, where the intent is it will provide for pretty high density ground growth that would come over the top of any of the retaining wall components along Bodega Avenue. At that portion of the site, we have stairs that have been built into the design, and that would be primarily for those individuals who are ambulatory. At the far west portion of the entry, we have a sidewalk that has been designed to be fully compliant with accessibility provisions. If you have individuals in a wheelchair, they could get to the bus or get down onto the public sidewalk on the west side, but for individuals that are just going to walk to the high school or walk downtown, they would be able to walk down the steps. That was our main consideration. I think that is a pretty good view of how we would anticipate the structure to be integrated into the overall landscape of that portion of Bodega Avenue. Keep in mind, this is a rendering, it's meant to be a representation of what we believe the final product will be, but we haven't made final selections on landscape materials, et cetera, we've just provided schematic proposed plans.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Could you give us a walk around and talk about the retaining walls around the perimeter? I noticed that a large percentage of the perimeter has retaining walls and you have to dig a little bit to understand them. Can you give us a little tour of what is happening around the site?

Doug Gibson, Architect

Referred to the site plan and various renderings and gave a tour of the site. He suggested that the Board review the C1 Civil Plan that was produced by Mr. Dalby as it has a keynote with a listing of all of the retaining walls on the project.

Ted Luthin, Chair

There is reference to 11,000 cubic yards and 14,600 cubic yards.

Lauren Alexander, Project Manager for TCP

14,600 is the cut, and because we are going to be doing some fill the net is 11,000.

Ted Luthin, Chair

I get the ADA access, but why so much dirt moving? That seems like a lot.

Tina Wallis

I will speak briefly and then asked Mr. Roope to chime in. Under your design review guidelines, which remember, are precisely that, guidelines, in fact, at the beginning, they say that they are not intended to be strict standards. What the guideline requires is that the balancing of cut and fill is encouraged when it does not result in further net adverse effects, et cetera. What you heard from the Mr. Gibson is that this project went through multiple designs, each time reducing the grading on site. What you heard from Mr. Roope is that you need a certain number of units for this project to be cost effective. We are now at that density where the project is cost effective and we cannot have a further reduced density.

Caleb Roope

Those economics are right, we cannot reduce density any further. The land cost we pay for a fixed site, we are paying for all the land, the fewer units we do, the more our land costs per unit are. An answer to your question specifically, I think, if you take Bodega, and you say that's a

fixed point of access, you have got to get people to Bodega in a wheelchair, let's say, for example, the meaning of that is, in order to do that the site can only slope so much upward and if the slopes get too steep then you no longer comply with the accessibility requirements. Imagine you are at Bodega at one level, and the hill is going up, you have to cut into it to make that slope work out. We have tried as best we can to step buildings, minimize the impact, and cost. We have got these trees we are trying to protect. One of the alternatives would be for us to snake driveways up and down but that gobbles up a lot of space and chews up density. You can see on the site that between parking and drive aisles and building footprints there is not a huge amount of open space here, there's a nice pocket between the buildings, but that's pretty much it, it's not like you can fit other buildings or other physical space on this property, and keep it cost affordable. We're trying to cap out at three stories maximum, if we go up, that can open up things, but now you have a four story building and quite frankly we took this approach to cut into the site to a meaningful degree so that we could actually lower the overall profile of the development from a neighborhood view perspective, and protect as many trees as we can while doing it. To me, that's the layman's issue because I was digging into this thing every which way trying to figure out how not to have to cut and haul so many yards away, there is an expense to that too. We are kind of stuck in terms of what more we can do on that front, we've kind of done all we can.

Ted Luthin, Chair

I appreciate that. The other design review guideline, just to just to put it out there, is that grading should be minimized to the extent feasible and reflect existing topography and protect significant site features including trees. To finish the section that was cited earlier, 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. That is what triggered my question, that does not seem to go along with that section of our design review guidelines. I was wondering why, and I guess the answer to that is that there is a minimum density and we are at that minimum density. Using up all the site is a design decision that has been made so now you have to cut and fill. I just wanted to understand the design decision behind why that is happening. Is the western driveway going to be right in, right out or are you planning on reconfiguring that median?

Lauren Alexander, Project Manager for TCP

The western driveway is planned to be right in, right out. There aren't any plans to change the median so far.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Is the sidewalk planned to be done at curb level, or is it planned to be a split level like it is now?

Doug Gibson, Architect

The sidewalk will be 6" above the asphalt parking area. It will be curb and gutter. As part of the evaluation that we made to try to determine how we could reduce grading, we looked at the possibility of splitting the sidewalk away from the parking stalls. Besides the inherent liability of people trying to step over landscape features to get through a sidewalk, we realized that there was no practical way that we could divorce the sidewalk from the parking area in any effective manner that would consistently reduce grading requirements, or that would allow for a smooth transition into the entry ways into the units. We looked at it and we made the determination that it was not feasible and that it would probably cause more long-term issues than it was worth pursuing.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Vice Chair Langberg mentioned this earlier and I'd like to echo it as well, from a site planning standpoint, I appreciate that a lot of the input was listened to, that there's been some moving back from some of the neighboring trees and things like that. I would like to hear from the City's arborist about the potential impact on those trees. I do appreciate the work that has been done on this.

Gregory Beale, Board Member

I cannot recall if this was brought up in December, but this lot seems challenging for what your business model is and for what you are wanting to accomplish. The word challenging might be an understatement. I just would really like to hear from architect from a member of the applicant team, I am aware of a lot of flat lots that are currently listed for sale and I am just really curious, what is it about this lot that is the fit for this project.

Caleb Roope

Like anything, is it available for sale, what is the price, what is the zoning, all of the iterations you go through, what are the utilities, what is the process to get it approved? These are all things that we consider on every occasion. Quite frankly, we always look for sites that do not have these kinds of challenges. We do not want to build projects if we can help it in adverse situations for us economically. We want to try to find the flattest sites we can. As you look around the community, you know that the sites need to be of a certain size. We took a run at a couple other sites, I know, and they were not available, or one site was but the other one was not. All those factors kind of come together to make you end up where you do. Then you try to say, well, I have got this site, how do I make this one work, what do I have to do? A lot of times the answer is financing sources. We do recognize fully that this site has its challenges. I will be the first to tell you, I have been on this thing for a while now. It is what it is, and we are doing the best we can with it.

Gregory Beale, Board Member

I understand that you have tried a couple other places, but is there a specific formula that is within Sebastopol city proper that is necessary, or is it Sonoma County? That is what I'm trying to understand. Because you are right, if you are looking into just Sebastopol proper, it is very limited with what the options are, but I can think of a lot of other locations.

Caleb Roope

We were looking for Sebastopol, specifically. We were doing that because Sebastopol is considered a rural area for the financing sources that we typically use. To your point, we have a 10-acre site in Rohnert Park that is perfectly flat that is just finishing up on 218 units. We have another 5-acre site in Santa Rosa where 96 units are under construction right now. We were specifically looking for a property within the city limits of Sebastopol because of its rural status, which allowed us to get some special financing from the Federal government that is providing the money which will allow us to do the LEED certification, net zero energy production, and all that. Those are the nuances behind the scenes that you would not necessarily see.

Ron Hari, Board Member

I spent a couple hours last week on the property, mainly walking around and talking to the neighbors most affected by this with the retaining wall in the back.

Ron Hari, Board Member

I noticed the survey stakes but they're very confusing up there, is there a possibility that your survey crew could come back and at least put up chalk lines or something that would mark

where the retaining wall is actually going to be? It is very difficult from that upper left-hand corner to determine what is going on there. Also, I think I have determined the northwest corner boundary, but it's very vague. I would like to know where that actual stake is, because it looks like it's about two feet away from one person's house. Is it possible to do that?

Caleb Roope

We are happy to if there is a specific area that you'd like us to look at. I would be willing to have our surveyor stake something in that area. We obviously do not want to go stake the whole site, because that is expensive.

Ron Hari, Board Member

No, it is the upper boundary, up in the corner, mainly where the oak trees are, and in that area, it is very vague and almost impossible to figure out. It would be good for that to be clear for benefit of the neighbors and the Board.

Caleb Roope

Ms. Alexander can arrange for that; we can accommodate that request.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

With no further questions for him at this time, Mr. Weinberger (City Traffic Engineer) departed the meeting.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Hearing nothing further, he adjourned the meeting at 6:01 p.m. for a 5-minute break.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Reconvened the meeting at 6:06 p.m. and asked members of the public if they wished to comment on this item.

PUBLIC HEARING

Jacque Lefler

I sent in a written statement via email today, I do not know if people go that. I am mostly talking about density. We are talking about our two properties. We collectively have about the same acreage. In our two properties, we have a total of 43 units, and it is about the same size property. For the new project, that would be twice as much, twice the density that we have. From what I am hearing, the company is saying that they are just really trying to fit a show that does not fit them. It does not fit us very well, either. 9 or 10 of our units would be looking into their covered parking that is 13' high by the time you get the slope of the roof. I think we may have a couple of people that live in that row of houses, so I would like to hear from them. I do not know how many of them have noticed that. I do not find it a good fit. If they are having two out lanes at the east end of the property, and we have both an in and an out lane there, we are going to run into each other all the time. Right now, we and the property next door, which only has one house on it, use the same driveway so I am not sure how that would fit either. The other thing is it looks like they would have maybe a 4' sidewalk going across the front of the building where the retaining wall is, and nobody in a wheelchair can do that. At what point are we going to widen Bodega Avenue so that it works for all of us? Right now, if you walk downtown on Bodega Avenue, you are walking on something that is 3' in some places, and it's not safe. I never walk that way, I do the raised walkway, go to Nelson, and then go into town. So those are my complaints. I asked someone in the office if this property is sold, and I understand

that they have it on contingency, they've made a deposit on the property, but it's a contingency again, they haven't really said finalize the sale.

Renee

I wrote a letter before the last meeting and it still stands, I resent it I thought to everyone though I am not sure I have everyone on my list. I'm very concerned about the retaining wall because I live at the very top of the hill at the very end of that property adjacent to Washington Avenue, the very back of Bears Meadow, and that retaining wall would be degrading the hill, the natural hill that would then degrade the foundation of this building that there are 10 units in. I would like to know what they have planned for that if that should happen, who is going to pay for it? Are they going to have a trust fund set up to pay for that in advance like an oil company would have to do if they were leaving oil in the ground? I think it will destroy the integrity of the building, and for sure of our fences, not to mention the tree. We are talking about people's lives. In the case of an earthquake, how unstable will you be making the ground by digging it up that deep. It is just totally outrageous to dig that much dirt out of the ground. This does not fit that piece of property. One of the engineers said that they were doing it because they wanted a rural property, but they are turning a rural property into Rohnert. Park, which we call rodent park, they would be creating a bunch of rats by taking up all that dirt. It would be unlivable to live next door to that for three years, there is just no way. I just cannot imagine that we could accept such a plan. The density that Ms. Lefler spoke to is also very, very high in the cars. If we had a fire and we all had to leave at once, we would all die, we would never be able to get out of the driveway. We could not get across to Robinson, we could not get out to the right or the left. We would be dead, there is just no way that that is a livable situation as far as I am concerned. I could say a lot more, but that is enough.

Janis

I have sent a couple and emails and I hope you have received my comments. After listening to this, this is a pig of a project and the whole thing with LEED is putting lipstick on a pig. What Renee said having to do with entering and existing our property is something that I think is very important. The exit and entrance to our property, which is exactly east of this property, has one entrance for 27 units. This morning when I left, I clocked it, it took two minutes to cross Bodega to go over to Leland because of the timing of the lights at Jewell and probably up at Pleasant Hill. Once one direction goes, then the next direction comes in, and this was not at a peak hour. The fact that the weekend was eliminated from the traffic study, I can tell you that the traffic backs up to Robinson Road as traffic comes from the coast through Sebastopol. On the weekend, it sits all the way to Robinson, and it takes many cycles of lights for that traffic to move, and it is impossible to cross. The amount of parking that is scaled for this, they said 152, is completely untenable. I did not do the math on one car for one-bedroom, two cars for a three-bedroom. There will be no room for all the cars. I would ask the Design Review Board and the Tree Board to just read my email because I don't want to read it out loud here. One of the things that I did say though, and came around, I think it was Mr. Roope who spoke of it, this project is all about the money, it's all about the financing, we're going to put this in Sebastopol specifically for its rural status, so we can get the financing for this. I do not know who said it last year, but it's trying to fit a square peg in a round hole type of project. I strongly object to this for so many reasons, but I put as many as I could into my email. I will stop. Thank you.

Nick Stewart

I live on Washington Avenue. My career spanned about 30 years developing affordable housing. I understand the issues that the developers are confronting, however, I have got a bad taste in my mouth from the initial presentation. The applicant had such a cavalier attitude

towards the trees on the north property line and the impact on those neighbors. I appreciate that the retaining wall has been redesigned and repositioned but am skeptical of moderate impact trees since there will be a retaining wall right at the trunk. Sebastopol derives its water from groundwater, and this looks like a lot of hardscape. Are the requirements for permeable hardscape being complied with? With respect to traffic, we all know how the traffic backs up on Bodega Avenue and goes past Robinson Road. I am pretty sure that a lot of these residents right turn out of that property, going to Nelson Avenue, heading down Washington and through town to get out, otherwise it's going to be really difficult. I am concerned about that and I would like to be sure that if this project does get approved, that there will be traffic calming measures taken. Also, just to slow things down, cars come very quickly down Washington, I would like to see speed bumps to be sure that our neighborhood is safe. There are no sidewalks on Nelson Way or Washington Avenue. I am concerned about the safety. I'm not sure I'm reading the plans right, but for the frontage buildings it looks as though there is a retaining wall that runs the entire length of the property from one driveway to the other with an opening between the two buildings. Why not create pedestrian access to break that up?

Nick Stewart

I'm glad to see that there's some two-story elements, but they're on the sides of those buildings and they don't really provide much relief on the streetscape, I think that is a design element that should be looked at more carefully. There is a lot of other things I think other people are going to pick up on. I do appreciate the staff report. Thank you.

Kyle Falbo

This project seeks to increase the population of Sebastopol by 3%. That is how much growth we have seen in the last 10 years. 84 units is on the upper end of our city's limits for approved high density. Mr. Roope can make claims about this level needing to be as high as it is, but our city has needs of our own, and if you aren't able to meet the city's needs, I suggest the developer move on. The density could be lower and doing so would still provide any developer with significant income. If not this one, then another developer will meet our city's needs. I appreciate the honesty about being able to access rural funding. It is just unfortunate the developer does not choose to develop the property recognizing our rural values and needs. The purpose of this level of density at such an early phase of Sebastopol's transition into high density residential on the recent General Plan update is too much too soon. Sebastopol's General Plan update was quite ambitious as its goal of increasing the availability of high-density low income residential. Unfortunately, the city does not have the ability to maintain its current infrastructure as it is, recent discussions regarding Sebastopol roads notes that one third of Sebastopol streets are rated as very poor. Until the city can be fiscally planned for the regular maintenance and slow upgrade of infrastructure to accommodate high density residential in this neighborhood, a development of this magnitude is unacceptable. The development as currently proposed is drastically uncharacteristic of the neighborhood's charm, the agricultural history, and the community values of being pedestrian centric. Sebastopol's values are rooted in alternative modes of transportation. This project should reflect this by reducing the proposed available parking by two thirds the number that is proposed. Urban density along a major highway should require a rethinking of automobile centric housing. The apartments across the street provide a good example of this. Parking for this complex is eight spaces on Bodega. A parking lot exists for the structure off Bodega and even those do not attempt to provide spaces for every unit of the complex. If the proposed development instead provided its primary vehicle access on Washington near Murphy, or even Nelson, this volume of vehicles as proposed might be acceptable to explore. With the only vehicle access provided at Bodega, the proposed volume of 150 vehicles is unacceptable. Realistically any vehicle volume to Bodega greater than the two

housing developments immediately east of the proposed development result in unacceptable increases in traffic, noise, and pollution.

Kyle Falbo

The proposed 150 vehicles will result in increase in over 600 metric tons of carbon dioxide each year. If only the developer would consider thinking outside the box and recognizing the values and the needs of our community. I suggest those interested in a model more appropriate research Frogson community in Cotati. On two acres, Frogson has 30 residential units which consist of eight two-bedroom, one bath flats, eight, two- and three-bedroom lofts above commercial space, and 14 three and four bedroom townhouses. Frogson is a cohousing community. A similar cohousing community exists just a quarter mile away on Robinson Road. I encourage our community to seek housing alternatives that reflect the values of Sebastopol, the currently proposed development is not it. Thank you.

Rena Morris

I want to speak up as the person whose property line is about two feet away from where they proposed the retaining wall on the northwest corner. This will significantly impact her property, not just because it's so close, not because the retaining walls are so hideous, but because of the thick oaks that are in that corner and the lovely downslope, I really fear for that. The perimeter of my property is going to be extremely impacted by a lot of traffic as they come down that driveway and try to go to downtown, they are going to be turning right on Nelson Way. Because this \$4 billion dollar company wants to aggregate even more profits, they are really putting the burden in terms of impacts on the neighboring properties and me. That is pretty much it.

Unnamed Caller 1

I live next to Mr. Falbo on Bodega. I have been here since 1992. I am full time Sonoma County born and raised. A couple of items come to mind. Regarding home values, we have seen an appreciation in home value recently. Is there any part of the study that increases the home value by putting an 84-unit complex just down the street? I would be curious to find that out. Traffic is terrible now. Multiple cars have entered my front yard due to it being late at night, or early in the morning and drivers falling asleep at the wheel. We do not need more traffic. The noise pollution alone on the weekends and how that did not get populated in a traffic study is just amazing to me. Somebody needs to revisit who we are hiring for traffic studies. I do not mean that in a bad way, it is just plain and simple, inaccurate. The beating of music, loud music, and sometimes honking. The cars already back up. The only time that the traffic on Bodega has been reasonable was back in March when COVID hit, and it was only that way for about a month or two. Now it has picked up to significant volumes again. With regards to the ingress and egress on Robinson Road, just a year ago, we were all in a mandatory evacuation, and someone that would have gone towards Santa Rosa on Bodega would not have gotten out for three hours. Having been a longtime resident, I did not do that. I went out and went west, all the way west past Pleasant Hill, and took backroads and got out of the county in about an hour. If that means that I have to turn left and enter more traffic to get west, because I can't go towards town at any time during traffic volume, I go down Robinson right now and back on Leland to get out of town when I want to go south during high traffic currently. The center turn lane, people want to be bike friendly, but I have a trailer that I need to back into my driveway periodically and that center turn lane is pretty much the only way I enter my driveway, when I'm headed westbound, I have to make a left hand turn into my driveway, which is on a busy corner. The roads are in terrible repair, I have filed complaints, the City came out and put a patch in them. I know everybody wants grants, but we are going to increase the terrible road loading that is

already seeping soil out of the base of the asphalt during the winter because the potholes get so severe. The reduction in parking spaces, and the affordable housing, where people are going to access public transit, the only public transit is down by the post office currently, how is someone, they're expected to get all these low income folks that don't have cars, and they're going to walk down in the middle of the rain, there's no bus stops in front of this area, I don't understand how that's even a solution that's viable. That was something that just did not make sense when I heard it described. The bike lane issue, I used to be a cyclist for years and I am afraid to ride on the roads. I am an advocate for bike lanes, but Bodega Avenue is not a good place for bike lanes in this county. I think I hit my time limit although there is probably more I could talk about, water use, obviously.

Unnamed Caller 2

My main concern is about the evacuation issue. With our new normal of fires, Sebastopol has the one evacuation and the previous speaker addressed it correctly. Spending three hours trying to get out is an ethical and moral issue to me. I would like to have them address the traffic issue and how we are going to get out because Sebastopol has not been hit yet with a fire and the lives will be on them. I am concerned about that.

Unnamed Caller 2

If they do get away with having this built, what about fire retardant roofs and sprinklers that they are starting to design because most amber flames hit the roof. Is the Design Review Board going to make them have fire retardant roofs and sprinklers that are on the roof, not in the houses but on the roof, that go off if there is a fire? My anxiety around fire and being able to exit is a major concern, traffic is also a major concern. I also agree that the roads are horrible up here, they need to be fixed. Thank you so much for your time and your energy.

Tiffany

The evacuation and the fires are a major concern, as everyone is already commented about. It took people between three and four hours to get out of town. To increase by an additional 152 cars is an extreme concern for the safety of the people in our town. Concerned about doing a traffic study during a pandemic, when a lot of businesses were closed, a lot of people were not working, and kids were not in school. I am concerned about the traffic study being accurate once the pandemic passes and we go back to normal traffic. I do not understand why the traffic study was done during that time other than they are trying to push this project through. It is a concern that the traffic study is not an accurate account of the current volume. The fact that you're turning right and sending a bunch of traffic back through Washington Avenue in a school district is another major concern for me. The actual visuals that they provided of the Napa development shows landscaping completely different than their rendering, which looks like there is just tons of landscaping and development of the trees and landscaping, but doesn't really match some of their actual projects. I am concerned that these renderings are trying to indicate that it will look a certain way and that is not actually going to be the true look and feel of the actual project. My other concern is the density. If we have surrounding projects where the density is about 15 units per acre, this one is upwards of 25. I am concerned about why the density of this project is not matching the density of the surrounding projects. That is all.

Marty Roberts

I am wondering if Leland Avenue was considered at all in the traffic study because that little country road with no curbs or sidewalks is already used by so many people as a shortcut. I live on Robinson Road. We see people cutting through here all the time. I am wondering if Leland was considered. I was really surprised to hear that the low end of income for affordable housing

was \$48,000, I doubt there are many farmworkers that make \$48,000. I was coming in planning to say that I am supportive of affordable housing and that I think Sebastopol needs it, but listening to this, there sure seem to be a lot of concerns. My understanding, though, is that this project is already approved. Is that correct? Is all you are talking about now the design of it? I do not know if you can answer now, but I thought it had been approved by the Planning Commission.

Alan Montes, Associate Planner

In terms of land use, housing is an allowed use, so it doesn't need to go to the Planning Commission, however, this is a preliminary application. Nothing has been approved by the City at this time.

Chuck Levine

A lot of what I have to say has already been said, but I have prepared some graphics that kind of illustrate some of the points we want to make. The way that they want to determine the root extension of the trees is by where the drip lines are. We recently had our trees pruned so that the drip lines have been set back considerably from the property. I think the appropriate way to measure the extension of the roots is using the equation of a foot per every inch of trunk diameter. I prepared this drawing, which shows the north end of their lot with our lot, which is abutting it, and the trees that are on our property showing the rings surrounding them that represent the root extent. Much of that enters beyond their retaining walls, into their driveways, into their parking areas, and so on, so that those roots will be destroyed, and ultimately, the trees will die. It's our concern that they do not use the drip line as the designation of where the root impact is but use the more common formula using the diameter of the trunk. The other area that I would like to talk about has to do with traffic and many people have already talked all about that. I have prepared a drawing that shows basically what I call the residential ring roads around downtown Sebastopol. These are roads that everybody currently is taking and the people that leave a proposed Woodmark development that can only turn right out of their driveway would go down Nelson, go down Washington, and then disperse through various other ways of getting around the lights in downtown Sebastopol, going by parks, schools, you name it, basically going through a residential area and turning the residential roads into ring roads around the downtown. There are issues about that, and there are certainly issues during a planned evacuation for a fire. We spent over three hours getting from our home to the edge of Sebastopol during the last evacuation. I think fires travel faster than two miles in three hours. That is a big concern. Finally, I really do not appreciate the way the property looks, as they have been designed, from the Bodega Avenue point of view, they have everything on the plane. I think several people have mentioned, why not break it up? If we want to give constructive criticism to this, it looks like they have leveled the lot out, put everything on a plane, and then let the land go the way it wished. Let me turn the rest of this over to Marcia who is going to detail more about the destruction of our trees.

Marcia Levine

I am presenting a couple of drawings. I think there are disparities in the drawings presented by the developer to the impact on our property trees. The first sheet shows a 10' setback, which is the dotted line, and it has a 9 1/2' retaining wall in the upper left corner. The retaining wall cut is only 5' because they cut into their 10' setback. It appears to me that they are taking a concession without acknowledging it. My drawing for trees number 53 and 54, you can see that they have a cartoon tree, as do I, but mine is based on the actual size of the trees. As Mr. Levine said, we had all our trees pruned back for the health of the trees in 2019. Because of that, their overhang is greatly reduced. Trees 53 and 54 are approximately 7' from the retaining

wall. On both trees, between 45 and 48% of their roots will be destroyed. If we move east on the retaining wall to the next set of heritage trees, these trees are significant, this is a real tree, the real size based on these are 45 and 50 inch wide diameter trees that are about 50 feet tall. Additional soil will also have to be taken out to construct that wall. The roots will be cut at 28 feet and 33 feet from these two trees. Approximately 40% of tree number 56 and 35% of tree number 57 will be destroyed. These trees are at the top of our property where the land drops dramatically down towards the house. If they fall, they will not fall up, they will fall on to our house. The retaining wall continues and cuts back to 10' from the property line and our neighbor's oak trees, I assume their numbers 58 and 59, will have significant loops destroyed. They say that there are trees that should be saved. It's crazy. They have 10 Monterey pines, trees number 35 to 43, and 4 Eucalyptus, it seems disingenuous to me because they should be removed as the Monterey pines are dropping big branches. If you look at their drawings, there are multiple examples of housing that is on flat land, they have already said that's what they like, it's what they do. I think this does not work. Our trees will die. We are happy to have the Board come and look at this, we can measure it out. Thank you very much.

Redwing Keyssar

Thank you to all the people who have made comments. It seems clear to me that although affordable housing is necessary, this site is inappropriate for a development this size. For all the reasons people have stated around traffic, around evacuation, around noise pollution, and around the fact that the roads are not even maintained without an extra 200 cars. Most of us want to live in a place like Sebastopol because of its quiet rural community nature. We appreciate the developers admitting that some other funding came because this was a rural community, but that really does not make sense to those of us who live in a rural community. Finally, just to say the contradiction of affordable housing being built to afford developers to make a huge profit does not make any sense. Thank you.

Jeanne Hennessy

I'm really not clear about the east part of the ingress and egress. I live right east of the proposed development. As you have heard, it is not fun getting in and out. Are they going to use the same driveway that I use? If so, that does not make any sense. It looks to me from the slideshows that we have seen that the western driveway into the proposed development, that they all have to go to the right. I am not clear on coming in from Robinson Road, are they going to be using the same driveway that I use? It is obvious that I am not really in favor of this so I would like to do just what John McCain did (thumbs down).

Catherine

I want to repeat what somebody else mentioned, a traffic study done in May of 2020 is the most absurd joke, and if that does not get addressed, then this whole thing is a farce. It is so absurd. Just two days ago, in the Chronicle, there was an article about birdsong in the Bay Area, the Golden Gate Bridge had the traffic level of 1954, when that traffic study was done here in Sebastopol, we're in 2020, we're not in 1954. So if you guys don't have another traffic study done with regular traffic, which you could even argue hasn't quite even returned yet, given that restaurants aren't functioning and that we're still in lockdown to some degree, then this whole thing is a farce and that's really serious. If you want to look serious, you need to do studies properly. The fact that they are thinking that that is an okay thing to do does not look well on them. They seem to say that because they have come from such a terrible plan, that it is okay to suggest that 26% of the retaining walls are still higher than 4', which was the recommendation by the City. The 26% is still okay. Wow, woo hoo, should we be excited that they have done that much? Also, that there is going to be less impact on the trees, woo hoo, it is still going to be

significant. Should we take it just because it is less and that they have done a great job? No, we should not. This is going to be almost twice as dense as any other residential development that I can think of in Sebastopol. They say they have done their best. Well, really? It is possible to develop this land without having it be this dense, without having it destroy the topography, without having to destroy the trees.

Catherine

Because of their funding, what they say is to meet the needs of the financing sourcing, let us be clear, it is because they have only got money for agriculture. So, they are going to have 48 units for agricultural workers. The reports that I have read have shown that agricultural workers need access to public transportation, which somebody else has already pointed out, is down at the post office, there's not good public transportation here. Also, agricultural workers being very low income, pack themselves in in a much higher density into each two- and three-bedroom apartment. They do not have two or three people in those apartments, they have like 6, 7 or 8 in bunk beds. You think those people are not going to be having more vehicles than two per household for the ones who are not taking a bus. That is all I will say.

Alan Montes, Associate Planner

I believe the traffic counts and the traffic study were conducted on December 12 and December 17 of 2019. The applicant can comment on that further later if needed.

Robert Morris

I spent much time in the past eight years or so, in a property that we own on Nelson Way, which is absolutely adjacent to this development in the top northwest corner. We think it is probably 2 or 3' away from a retaining wall. I am not going to say more about retaining walls, I think the points been made time and time again. The points also been made about the traffic coming out of that western driveway, turning right, and then turning right along Nelson and then into Washington, and all through that maze of streets to get downtown, or to go to Santa Rosa, or to go north, or to go south. Those points have been reiterated many times, and I support them absolutely. There's one other point that I do want to make though. One of the things I love about Sebastopol is it is very much like an English country village in a way.

Robert Morris

It has an atmosphere of green, of the environment, a love of open air, it has a wonderful night sky. It has sometimes torrential rain, but it is mostly beautiful. There is a feeling of being in the country, of living amongst trees and wildlife. I used to wake up in the morning and have deer nuzzling at the screens of my bedroom there and that is all disappearing for all sorts of reasons. Do I think that having right next door to that house, there will be floodlit parking, will that help the night sky, will that improve it at all? The environment is going to be really, really damaged by this project. I feel bad about people who are needing affordable houses. This is not the site for it. We hear that from the builder himself. I do not understand why it's being continued. For all these reasons to be done. That is all I want to say.

Linda Ruder

I just wanted to point out ironically that I live at 7720, and most of my neighbors are seniors. I was really worried about them when we had our fire evacuation. Some of my neighbors, my friends, have to make a right out of here, they cannot even make a left because of the traffic. Though some of the people will actually make a right, I feel that some of the lower income seniors living in Sebastopol might be living close, like we live here, or over at Luther Burbank, I just really want to think about our community, I want to think about everybody here and how

safe it is when we already live on a busy street. We all know that to get to the bus, you have to go way far down to the post office to catch a bus ride. So I just want to think about access for everyone who's already living here as well and not make their access even harder for them to just be able to walk around Sebastopol and drive around Sebastopol and be able to come home, especially with evacuations as that's going to be our new normal, unfortunately. Thanks.

Chris Newman

The problem is that there is several problems. One is the nature of the height of this project with three stories when most of the places surrounding are single story or two story at most. The traffic problem is totally absurd. I live on Nelson and the other small streets around, we already have people cutting down our street because of the Bodega backup down on Main Street, and before that at Murphy. To have you say that there is going to be 150 cars in their spaces. How many trips are those people going to be doing, they are going to be going, they are going to be coming back, they're going to go to the grocery, this, that, and the other thing. It is not just 150, it is probably more like 500 or up to 1,000 different trips.

Chris Newman

To go down our little streets, it is just going to be horrible. It makes me want to say I want our street to become a cul-de-sac. I do not want to have to exit onto Bodega, it's already hard to get on Bodega as it is, especially on the weekends, the weekend traffic is abominable because it's one of the only coastal accesses. The other thing is the sound, there's going to be all this parking around the perimeter of those places, early in the morning people going, we're going to have all that sound. God knows how many parties and so forth. It just does not make sense. I feel like it is kind of a rip-off scenario, a company that's doing this because they can get away with taking advantage of different things that the government will give them in terms of cuts and so forth. I do not know; it is just very upsetting that it is even being considered. I think it is going to ruin the environment of this part of Sebastopol. Also, just the noise of construction for that bigger project, geez, it is going to take a year or more of chainsaws, skill saws, nail guns, et cetera. The trees are a major concern. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, please do not accept this project. Just say, I am sorry, it is not going to happen. Thank you.

END PUBLIC COMMENT

Ted Luthin, Chair

Thank you, everyone, for your thoughts and your input. Asked for Board discussion and comments. There was an offer to stake the property line a little better so we can have a little better look at where the trees and retaining walls go as recommended by Board Member Hari. We also have the City Arborist that might be able to give us his input on the viability of trees with the cuts that are being proposed for the retaining walls. Something that keeps in my mind is to install a retaining wall, you don't just cut back to the wall, you need to cut back to a safe working distance beyond the wall when you do your excavation, so I wouldn't mind getting a better feel for where exactly those walls are going to go out there relative to exactly where those trees are, because it is kind of vague right now. Interested in hearing from the Board on that, we could continue this meeting to allow for that.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

Staff may be able to coordinate further discussion of this at the next Board meeting, the arborist should be on board by the end of this week, or very early next week.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Conversely, if the board feels very strongly that we continue, I'm happy to continue on.

Gregory Beale, Board Member

What is our intent, our goal for today, compared to continuing the conversation to another meeting?

Ted Luthin, Chair

The Board could continue the discussion on design guidance. The reason I was thinking about continuance was to have a better look at the tree situation and to hear from the City's arborist that is not quite on board yet. To be able to go out there and see where the trees are, and how close the retaining walls are going to be, and actually get a personal feel for it, because I have been up there and you see trees everywhere, and I'm not really clear on exactly where the property line is. Like Board Member Hari was saying, it is hard to say exactly where things are out there. My thought is that a continuance might be valuable for that reason. That back northwest corner I think is kind of a critical corner, it is where the biggest retaining walls are, it is where the biggest cuts are, it is where the significant tree impact is. For me personally, that is one of my biggest concerns. The Bodega frontage is something else that is a concern for me. I have got a pretty good idea of the Bodega frontage and I do not really need extra time for that, but that corner could use a little extra attention.

Gregory Beale, Board Member

The goal is for the Board to give the applicant guidance, and feedback. I feel like more discussion on my end is probably not the best use of our time to do now if we are waiting on additional information. I agree with the additional information that you are seeking as well. I feel like I do not really have much to say at this point until we can get the arborist on board and get some more information on that.

Cary Bush, Board Member

A lot of those trees are tagged, if I remember right, because I have been on site, and you can sort of, it's kind of hard, but I have still the original that was given to us and that helps kind of orient yourself to where you need to be. If they're willing to tag, flag, and stake trees that are pretty prominent, that'd be even more helpful, because I probably spent about two hours out on site last year, and it takes a while to really sort of reorient yourself to what is currently there, for a good tree inventory, which is a pretty extensive list of trees, especially some of the trees that are of significant value, we've seen a good presentation by our clients tonight, and let's just be real here that these trees are perched, these significant trees are significant landforms that are sitting on a significant piece of property that will be impacted. To state that you can reduce the root zone by 30%, and it's still survives is still a bit of a, it's a mystery, no one knows when a tree will fail, especially when there's a given target, which would be the folks that we heard from tonight, it's going to be their house. It is concerning, it is very concerning, and understanding what our place is as a Tree Board is where we are tonight, really, so I am kind of jumping in here. I have been there, and I have seen the trees, and we got to start to recognize what is significant to us. We must also as a community, I think, as a public forum here, hearing what we have heard, it is important to understand that we are in an urban environment. We are not in the rural properties; we are in the city. We are in the city boundaries, we operate under city conditions, not rural property. This is urbanism. We are all asking for affordable housing, and we're all asking for places for people to live with some affordability, but in a lot of ways, no one wants it in their backyard, which I agree, I don't either. That is a beautiful site. It is gorgeous. Does this footprint really marry site conditions? I think we have seen this before and we all said

no. Do we also still say no? Is it better? Yeah, it is better. Is it still relative to the site? The applicants are in a hard place here, via Planning they are zoned for this. This is not a Design Review Board issue; this is a Planning issue. We are talking about the site being zoned for this use, there's heights across the street, down the street, up the street, that have a higher density than our rural properties that happens to be this one. We have all taken a lot of time in the State housing law that is now mandated by the State of California and we're also in a hard place, all of us as a community, this isn't about me. It is about an applicant trying to build something that is allowable, right. So, the Design Review Board, and me, I feel like we are in a hard place here. They are trying to push 84 units, which is the low end, they are not maximizing it to the 150 or 160 units they could do. Can you imagine what that place would look like with 160 units on it? They are allowed to do that. We are going to have to really start to think about this for the community, what is going to be our best foot forward?

Cary Bush, Board Member

Trying to uphold our common policies as a Design Review Board, is to look at this from a public perspective. That is why we are here. We keep looking at significant natural site features, natural ground forms, and these are the things that this proposal violates. What do we do? We have traffic, we are going to have traffic, we are going to have more traffic. That is urbanism, we are in the city, we are in downtown. We are going to have noise, more and more and more noise, the sounds going to bounce off those walls left and right. You are not going to get in and out, you are not going to get down the street when a fire is going to come, we are going to be backed up. That is what we are going to have. What does the Board have, other than the natural sight features that protects it site? It is the trees; in a lot of ways it is the trees. I go back to that. I have been a Design Review Board member for a while now, we are trying to look at how does this thing fit. Off hauling 11,000 cubic yards, 423 truckloads later, that is not what good site development is. We have to look at this from what is allowable.

Ted Luthin, Chair

No, that is good to hear, because that is exactly where we are. We have some design review guidelines, we have got a tree ordinance, and we have got a project that meets all the standards of zoning and entitlement. That is where we are, but it is asking to do some crazy stuff like off hauling 11,000 cubic yards of dirt.

Ron Hari, Board Member

One thing that seems to be coming up a lot is the suburban versus urban. I do not consider Sebastopol suburban, and I sure do not consider it urban at all. This is small town America. It still is, and that is I think what we are trying to keep it. I do not understand those two terms. I do not think either one of those terms fit the town. What are we going to call this?

Christine Level, Board Member

I really appreciate what Board Member Bush said. We have more that we can say about this project. I am just going to start with the design standards here. So, the design is compatible with neighborhood and with general visual characteristics of Sebastopol? I am going to say absolutely no, this project is much, much, much larger than anything else in Sebastopol. It is not compatible with the neighborhood. They are coming down here and saying, oh, it is the bungalow style, and it is this and that, come on, this project exists in so many locations. In fact, my son in Oregon lives in this project, even the floor plan is the same. They take these standardized things, and they try to tell us they are bungalow and compatible with Sebastopol, no they are not, it's just a big box. It's the strip mallization of Sebastopol, that's not our town, that's not the character of our town, these big box standard boilerplate construction things, while

I understand why they would do it because of the cost of construction, that is not in the character of our town. For number 1 on our design standards, it is a no. Then we get to where it says that the design provides appropriate transitions and relationships to adjacent properties, how can you even imagine that that's true with these retaining walls up against these trees, and 9' retaining walls, and he one gentleman walked 2' away from his house and there's a retaining wall, that's not an appropriate transition, that's not even close. I cannot even imagine that you would think that. We have got those two things right there besides the trees. We can argue the point on. Besides the traffic, and I think we are involved with the traffic, and we can say that they are allowed to do it. What I am saying is, there has got to be some reason in appropriateness. It is obvious what this is. This is an attempt to take funded monies for low income housing, and use all the capacities and I appreciate this as a business model to bring it into Sebastopol, we're going to be bringing, these are not people that live in Sebastopol that are going to live here, these are more people coming in, and put this thing in here from an economic point of view, and I appreciate that. I think we have heard enough from the city that says this is not what we want. I have not heard it a yes. We have standards that we can use in our own design standards, besides the whole big issue with the trees. The tree issue is huge, and I think we need to continue this for the reasons we have stated above. Thirdly, we did not get to unmute the Civil Engineer on the project so we can ask questions about the retaining walls, how the retaining walls are going to be constructed, you don't just make a vertical cut and put in a retaining wall, you have to lay back to get drainage in, you've got these steel columns that are coming in, they're going to have to be vertically dropped down into holes that are going to be at least as deep as the height of the whole retaining wall, which means they're going to be up in the canopy of the tree and somehow drop those things down. These are all practical realities and I think we need to hear from the Civil Engineer also. I think we need to continue this; we need to continue the discussion.

Cary Bush, Board Member

Looking at it from a design perspective, and I am not here to redesign anything, but it seems a little clunky. Specifically, in the northwest corner. We're looking at a lot of stalls, I don't even know if phase two building even orients itself more orthogonal to Bodega, but if you take that footprint and drop it down another foot or two, or three, and you lose all the parking stalls along that back northwest corner, where those go I don't know, but it just seems like phase two rear building could really orient itself to that rear property line, which becomes a real pinch point. That northwest corner then creates the encroachment on a lot of these root zones, which will be impacted. There is some give and take there. Maybe the design team can rustle up some new, inventive ways of figuring out the grading challenges, but ADA has got these guys pinched between point a and point b, and I don't think they're going to be able to hit any new finished floor elevations that are going to be dramatically different to disallow 11,000 cubic yards to go away. Other than that, the lot coverage is still 20%, and I asked about that earlier, it is allowed 40. Quite amazing, it did not look like it based on the density. But it is, it is there. I think there is a 3% pure grade along Bodega Avenue, which 5 would be the max allowed for ADA compliance on that sidewalk, that was based on my scale and calculations. That kind of does work. Is it a comfortable place to walk? I do not think it would be as a pedestrian using that.

Gregory Beale, Board Member

Between the civil engineer and the arborist, there needs to be a lot more information regarding anything within 20-40 feet up where there is retaining walls and significant cuts. It seemed like there was some clever selection with how they showed the grading, and the biggest cuts seemed to be a small detail in the corner, or not shown at all. There's one area, I think between the cross section of A and E on the north end of the lot, bordering the Levine's property that had 3 or 5 parking spots there that I think would be a section that needs to be shown, especially if

it's potentially within a drip line or setback of the roots of their tree as well. Also, the northwest end of this property, it is getting close to that structure there. To Board Member Level's point, I think the logistics of how a retaining wall would actually get constructed, not just the end result, but the process they would have to go through to get there, could be significantly on the lines that are the finished result. The effects on neighboring properties is something that the Tree and Design Review Board can talk about. This is a unique setting that may be common for these developers to deal with in terms of having a property that is zoned for high density that borders single family homes, and not inexpensive ones at that. To Board Member Bush's point earlier, the fact that this property is zoned this way is frustrating for us, because it gives this applicant the sense that this project should fit here on paper. Walking the site, being there, and seeing what is in the neighboring properties, and what has been there for a long time, the zoning and what is on paper is really conflicting. It's really hard to wrap my head around it, it just doesn't feel right. It is not our purview to weigh in on the motivations of the project. The explanation of why this site was picked makes me understand why they are proposing what they are, and kind of justifies my feeling of why this project does not feel right there. When I walk onto a job site or a lot that I am interested in myself or for a client, I think what does this property say to me? What is the experience I want to have? How does it impact neighbors, the environment, all these different things? The design and layout of this project feels like something that I would have done in college as an experiment of just looking at a border outline of a lot and figuring what you might try to fit in there, without a human factor or any real kind of reality being tied to it.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

To Board Member Beal's point about the zoning, and Mr. Falbo from the public said it well, which was that the zoning of this property in this part of town and the city's infrastructure is not up to speed. It seems like this would be more appropriate in the downtown because we want to bring more people to the center of town. I have a lot of comments, but I just do not know that they make any sense almost because this is allowed project and the accessibility of it makes the architecture have to look a certain way. It is not an architecture that I think works. The one staircase up is great, but most people will walk up the driveway. Part of our design review guidelines include doors on the street, but you are not going to do that there, the entries are on the back side which makes sense in that design when it's way up there. I have a list of specific architectural comments, but it is hard to even go there because the whole site strategy just does not work in a way. It works economically, it works for accessibility, but it does not work for the community, and it does not work for this site in this part of our town. I can go into some of the specifics. I appreciate that they have worked at it, that they have done iterations and have now gotten to a little bit better place. That great. I appreciate the economics of it, I appreciate that we need more housing around here, there is no question. Mr. Falbo brought up Frogson Cohousing. Cohousing is a great model; Two Acre Wood is right down the street. The community building does not even front the playground, its main entrance is on the parking lot. You come out of the community building towards a playground and there is a 5' high wall with a bocce court in front of it. There is an opportunity to create a community on site that it is not really taking advantage of. Those are a few comments. I do not know if we are going to get more information. Is it our time to make recommendations about the project, or are we just pushing that off?

Ted Luthin, Chair

I think we are probably pushing that off. We made some preliminary comments. If we are going to get a little more information out on site and reconvene, then that would be the time to summarize comments.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

I did just check with the arborist and he has been following along on livestream so he can be up to speed on this. He said he would prefer if we were able to do perhaps a special meeting. I would suggest doing that on Wednesday, November 11 to give him a little more time given the complex nature of this project as he wants to make sure that he is prepared to answer the Board's questions.

Ted Luthin, Chair

November 11 works for me.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

Our normal next meeting is November 4, which I believe we have facade improvement program applications to review. This would be a special meeting on the following Wednesday with the regular start time of 4 p.m.

Tina Wallis

We agreed to do some staking. We would need to get that done. This hearing would be continued to a date certain on November 11 at 4 p.m.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

Yes, we would continue the meeting to the 11th which would give the arborist a chance to review and for you to better mark the locations of the retaining walls.

Tina Wallis

I do have a conflict during the day. To the extent the applicant team's availability is relevant, 4:00 p.m. is better.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

I must be somewhere at 6:00 p.m. on that date. I do not know if we can restrict the time of the meeting, especially if public comment is going to happen again, I would prefer 3 p.m.

The rest of the board expressed being flexible on the start time for the special meeting.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

Sounds like everyone can make the earlier time understanding that Ms. Wallis was not necessarily available at that time.

Board Member Bush made a motion to continue this item to a Special Board meeting on Wednesday, November 11 at 4 p.m.

Director Svanstrom noted that the Board agreed to a 3 p.m. start time.

Board Member Bush amended his motion to continue this item to a Special Board meeting on Wednesday, November 11 at 3 p.m.
Board Member Level seconded the motion.

With no further discussion, the Board voted on the amended motion as follows:

AYES: Chair Luthin, Vice Chair Langberg, and Board Members Hari, Level, Beale and

Bush
NOES: None
ABSTAIN: None
ABSENT: None

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

We can do a more limited public comment. We have heard well, the concerns from folks today. I think that the applicant and the public will be very interested to hear the Board's deliberations.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Sounds good. If I could just follow up on the staking, if we could get the property lines staked and the retaining walls, that would be fantastic, so we can really see the relationships out there.

Tina Wallis

Just to make sure that we meet the Board's expectations, I thought I heard that we were staking the property lines and the retaining walls only in the northwest corner, not the entire property.

Gregory Beale, Board Member

The retaining wall that gets in between section line A and E gets close to the north border, and along the northwest there.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Highlighted the areas requested to be staked on screen and said that it would be helpful to have the structural engineer cut some sections to see exactly what is going on in certain sections that he highlighted on screen as well.

- 8. ADJOURNMENT:** Chair Luthin adjourned the meeting at 07:29 p.m. The next regularly scheduled Tree/Design Review Board meeting will be held on November 04, 2020 at 4:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted By:

Kari Svanstrom
Planning Director