

City Council

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Planning Director

Kari Svanstrom

Associate Planner

Alan Montes

Senior Administrative Assistant

Rebecca Mansour

City of Sebastopol Design Review Board Staff Report

Meeting Date: November 19, 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:

At the October 21, 2020 Tree/Design Review Board meeting for the Woodmark Apartments project (2020-043), the Board voted 6-0 to continue the meeting, in order to have the applicant stake sections of the north, west, and east property lines, as well as the retaining wall between section line A and E. On October 29, 2020, the applicant informed staff that the stakes had been placed and this news was relayed to the Board.

Staff is also working to finalize a contract with a consulting arborist for peer review of the plans and site to provide feedback on the proposal. However, due to several challenges the contract has not been finalized at this time and the City does not have updates at this time. However, we fully anticipate that a contract arborist will be on board in time for a formal application.

Lastly, staff would like to note that this is a Preliminary Review which 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.

Public Comments

Since the October 21, 2020 meeting staff has received six public comments. These comments are in opposition citing an array of issues ranging, but primarily focusing on traffic, trees, site design. These comments are provided as an attachment to this report.

Attachments:

- Public Comments received after the October 21, 2020 Board meeting.

October 21, 2020 Report and Attachments are available at:

<https://www.ci.sebastopol.ca.us/Meeting-Event/Design-Review-Board/2020/Design-Review-Board-Meeting-of-October-21,-2020>

Technical Studies are available for review at:

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

Hello Mary Gourley,

We have created a list of reasons for denial of 7716/7760 Bodega Ave. Project:

1. Traffic is already very bad and backed up frequently on Bodega Ave on weekdays especially during commute time and even more so on weekends. This project would generate additional work trips of 302 and more with also many other trips for groceries, school, recreation, and visitors; thus probably creating as much as 600 trips additional per day. The residential streets surrounding the proposed Rohnert Park style mega project would be greatly impacted by people avoiding traffic on Bodega Ave., including Nelson Way where we reside as well as Washington Ave. What about extra parking for other family members and visitors? Will they be parking on Nelson Way and Washington Ave. taking parking spaces for our neighborhood residents?
2. The height of the proposed buildings is not appropriate in this neighborhood.
3. Most of the new residents would most likely not work in Sebastopol.
4. There is no access for public transportation nearby in this area.
5. Many trees would be removed and many of the remaining trees would die due to root destruction and water loss endangering animals' habitats and their lives as well as people's lives.
6. The noise of the proposed complex would be considerable and would vastly impact the peace and happiness of adjacent residents. The lighting of the buildings would also create eye pollution in the dark night-time sky.
7. The reasoning of the developers to allow many people to enjoy living in Sebastopol and work here seems based more upon their corporate greed with no concern for the existing residents and overall community.
8. There is no guarantee that the "affordable low income housing" would remain so! How would that be policed? How many people with their cars would realistically be in use by large families which means that our small residential streets would be overflow parking for visitors, relatives, children able to drive, etc.
9. The flattening of the hillside even in their new plan would still be unusable by disabled people. All of the costs and the work needed to level this site is absurd and unnecessary as there are plenty of available sites that are already flat.
10. This development is not consistent with the overall nature of our Sebastopol community and these two properties should be more consciously developed. There are much better sites that can be developed that are more appropriate and a lot less damaging such as areas in Santa Rosa and Rohnert Park for example that are designed for high density projects.
11. The addition of more cars in the event of an emergency, such as fire evacuation, would be added to an already existing traffic problem and would pose a threat to people's lives.

For so many reasons this project needs to be denied due to the safety, health and well-being of the existing neighbors.

We hope that the Design Review Board and the Planning Department will listen to the neighboring residents to deny this project and find a more appropriate plan for these Bodega Ave. properties.

Please contact us further for any questions, clarification or information.

Thank you,

Chris and Juli Inman
173 Nelson Way

Alan Montes
Associate Planner

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Thank you,

Chris and Juli Inman
173 Nelson Way

-----Original Message-----

From: jlefler <jlefler@sonic.net>

Sent: Monday, October 26, 2020 11:42 PM

To: Rebecca Mansour <rmansour@cityofsebastopol.org>

Subject: Woodmark Apartments Project

I sent the following email to Alan Montes and the DRB before the open meeting last week. It bounced back as "host not found" and I would like to resubmit it for the DRB members and Planning Commission members in attendance to review. Please forward.

To Alan Montes:

I am an owner in residence at 7720 Bodega Ave #20 and will be attending today's meeting at 4pm via Zoom.

My questions for the meeting are:

- 1) How do the DRB and City Planning Commission interpret "high density" dwellings in Sebastopol?
- 2) Is the E/W boundary for high density housing from Parkside School to Ragle Park along the Bodega Ave corridor?

If I assume density to be in terms of living units per acre and I compare existing properties of 6620-6636 Bodega Ave (Pine Trees) plus 7720 (Bear's Meadow), these 2 properties combined equal about the same 3.25 acres as the proposed Woodmark Apts project.

However, 6620+7720 have a total of 43 units on combined sites compared with 84 units proposed at Woodmark. Thus Woodmark doubles the density per acre. Also, most of their proposed buildings would be 3 stories, on higher ground, thus dwarfing adjacent surrounding properties. and all of their parking is outside, filling most of the possible permeable land.

Thanks for your attention,
Jacque Lefler

I presented the above content at the beginning of the public comments. I was one of 10-12 owner/residents of the townhomes at 7720 who attended, and also spoke. I appreciated the DRB et al's discussion that followed and agree with the tentative conclusion that this project is not appropriate for this site. It is a very bad fit.

Many of the board members have explored the sites. What would be ideal projects for this interesting land and how would you recruit creative backers? Could it be mixed low/middle income renters or buyers? And what is the ideal density?

Keep us posted,
Jacque

From: Chuck Hoffman <forcdh@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, November 05, 2020 10:17 PM
To: Bodegaavehousingdev@gmail.com
Cc: Alan Montes
Subject: The Woodmark Threat

I am interested in staying informed about the Woodmark housing project threatening to destroy my community, my well-being and that of my neighbors — the very sanctity of my neighborhood. Stated simply: This project represents a horrendous threat to the people who have sought the peace, quiet and safety of this little niche of Sebastopol. That Woodmark remains under consideration is nothing short of a profound insult, a disgusting travesty.

I went to an open meeting about this proposed nuclear bomb for my community at the library in Sebastopol some months ago, before Covid restrictions were put into place. After the presentations, I got up to speak and asked those assembled, “have any of you driven on Bodega Avenue lately?” It was not meant to be a joke. But. People chuckled, knowingly. But. It isn’t a joke. It’s impossible. Has been. Is Now - Before this huge, unwarranted, proposed monstrosity is imposed on us. Since the meeting, while I assumed no one with any responsibility in Sebastopol could, in good conscience, support proceeding with this insane project, I have also spent some time noticing just how truly devastating the increased traffic, and the crippling destructive effect this project would also have, more generally, to the town of Sebastopol — particularly the area nearest by the proposed location for this fiasco. My community. My home. Our homes.

Keep me informed, please.

Thank you,

Chuck

Chuck Hoffman

7590 Washington Avenue

Sent from my iPad

From: Kevin Holman <kevinjholman@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, November 14, 2020 12:00 PM
To: Alan Montes
Subject: Woodmark project

Mr Montes,

As a resident of the Washington/Murphy Ave neighborhood, I would like to register my opposition to the Woodmark project on Bodega Hiway as it currently stands. While I support more low and middle income housing in Sebastopol, our solutions need to be developed and implemented by local groups with roots and knowledge about Sebastopol, not by for-profit enterprises from out of state who will build, profit and leave our community less well off in the process.

Specifics of my opposition are:

#1 The placement of this project and its high density virtually guarantees that residents will use alternative backroads to travel to 116 north and south as well as into the town center. Nelson, Washington St , Murphy Ave and Robnson will all be heavily impacted and all are currently major pedestrian and bicycle thoroughfares. I base this assumption on the drivers making the easier right turn out of the development and circling around Nelson to Washington St.

#2 Washington St is a Green Belt safe walk to school corridor that will bear the brunt of this new traffic, effectively destroying its current value to our pedestrian community. It is also the corridor to Parkside school and the route of many school outings.

#3 Both Nelson and Washington Sts feature limited sidewalks, and increased traffic will inevitably increase pedestrian vs motor vehicle accidents. This is especially critical as these streets are a major dog walking corridor for the neighborhood toward the Willard Libby park. These streets also are a major walkway for seniors walking into town from the Luther Burbank Senior housing. Accidents are inevitable in both these instances.

#5 This project is a cookie cutter design maximizing occupancy to maximize profits. It is taken from similar projects on flat agricultural land and implementing it on this site requires removal of massive amounts of soil to replicate this design. This will irrevocably alter the landscape, affecting ground water runoff and recharge.

#6 Who chose this density? Profits undoubtedly. Once again low income housing is turned into a high density, industrial version of worker housing. This is not a human scale design. Look across the street at Luther Burbank for a successful version of community housing.

#7 What will be the effect on evacuation routes? With wildfires on the rise, this is a growing concern. Recent evacuations of our neighborhood already took greater than 3 hours.

Suggestions for alternatives:

A) find a local non-profit with ties to our low and middle income community and develop the site with an eye towards people not profits and create a human scale design that fits the site, and encourages community and humanity, NOT profits and efficiency.

B) Lower the density! This project is 23+ units per acre while I understand Luther Burbank is 15. This is too much!

B) Consider traffic flow and mitigate this with a stop light to allow safe left turn onto Bodega Highway linking to Highway 12 and 116. And as a last resort if you ignore all these other concerns, speed bumps on the surrounding neighborhood streets to discourage backroad travel.

In short:

Right idea, Wrong Project!

Human scale housing not Warehousing!

People before profits!

Thank you for allowing my input to this project,

Kevin Holman,

236 Murphy Ave

From: Charles Lavine <clavine@mailc.net>
Sent: Thursday, October 29, 2020 2:24 PM
To: Alan Montes
Subject: Woodmark traffic
Attachments: Screen Shot 2020-10-29 at 11.54.05 AM.png.pdf

10/29/2020

To: Alan Montes, Associate Planner, Sebastopol Planning Department

From: Charles and Marcia Lavine

Re: Preliminary Review of Woodmark Apartments.

Dear Alan,

Thank you for reviewing these concerns about traffic generated by the proposed Woodmark development.

Attached are photos showing several of the roadway issues along Nelson Way and Washington Avenue west of Murphy.

Of primary concern are the lack of continuous sidewalks and curbs, narrow streets, street parking and the general decay of the pavement surface. These defects amplified by increased traffic impose dangers upon walkers that use these routes regularly. It is important to recognize that with the 'right turn only' option from the western exit of the proposed development that Nelson Way will become part of a 'ring road' for residents wishing to travel in all directions, N, S or E.

Thanks in advance for passing this on to the Traffic Department and any other appropriate departments in the city.

Best,

Chuck and Marcia Lavine

Washington looking W. at Nelson



Washington looking West near Murphy



Washington looking East to Murphy



