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**Cc:** [Mary Gourley](#); [Tiffany Lucas](#); [Marcia Lavine](#)  
**Subject:** Woodmark Development - Agenda Item 17 on August 3rd Agenda  
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Dear Una - I'm writing in advance of the City Council's discussion of the Woodmark Development Tuesday night. I also ask Mary Gourley to please forward this message to the other City Council members in advance of the meeting.

As you know, I had a 30 year long career in the field of developing and financing affordable housing, first as a project manager for Burbank Housing for over 20 years, then as the Affordable Housing Supervisor for the Sonoma County Community Development Commission. So it's with very mixed emotions that I convey my concerns about the Woodmark Development proposed for Bodega Avenue. As much as I expected to support an affordable housing project in Sebastopol, I was appalled at their initial presentation of a plan that had no regard or consideration for the impact on neighboring properties. One of the worst aspects was their design of a 16 foot retaining wall well within the drip line of heritage trees, as well as calling for the removal of trees that weren't even on their property. Their approach seemed so cavalier that it reinforced my distaste for out of state, for-profit affordable housing developers who see the tax credit program as a cash cow more than a tool to serve communities with well designed and managed projects. In an extremely rare move, ALL members of the Design Review Board spoke against the proposal. Now with SB35 on the books, they believe they can avoid further such scrutiny.

I realize that recent California legislation, especially SB35, make it very difficult for the City to deny this project. However, that legislation does allow for cities to apply "objective standards" in conditioning affordable housing projects. I have written twice to Sebastopol Planning Director Kari Svanstrom inquiring about what "objective standards" the City can impose, so far without a response, unfortunately. She had informed me in a phone conversation this past spring that the City had engaged an outside attorney to investigate this matter. **Please ask Ms Svanstrom about the advice she has received and specifically what "objective standards" the City can use to impose conditions on this project.** I suppose that SB35 seeks to restrict cities from imposing onerous requirements to obstruct projects purely because they are "affordable," and that these allowed standards must be codified in City policies and ordinances prior to considering a project covered by the state legislation.

There must be a number of codified standards that would survive an SB35 challenge. I am no longer so familiar with the City's municipal code and associated policies that I can do a thorough assessment of what those standards might be, so please ask Planning Director Svanstrom about this issue and to address some of my ideas about what might apply:

1. I am pretty sure that the City has a **tree ordinance that should protect the neighboring trees that the developer previously wanted to remove or adversely impact**, since my wife helped to write it many years ago. The civil engineering plans for this development must not create conditions that threaten heritage trees.
2. I believe the City must have **standards regarding the volume of excavations and nature of retaining walls that could impact on the integrity of neighboring property lines.**
3. Zoning Ordinance Section 17.440.050 addresses **Development Agreements; will one be required for this project?** A Development Agreement can (in this case should) **specify the developer's responsibility for financing or constructing "necessary public improvements."** What would those be? At a minimum they must address traffic issues exacerbated by the project, such as a new intersection at Robinson Road to permit traffic from the development to access Bodega Avenue.
4. I believe the City is relying on a traffic study conducted last year during the covid-19 shut downs that of course would minimize recorded traffic volumes. Is that true, and if so, **will the City require a new traffic study** now that things are a little more back to normal?
5. I am concerned about traffic impacts in my neighborhood, particularly on **Nelson Way and Washington Avenue.** Given that traffic often backs up on Bodega Avenue, I'm sure many Woodmark residents would opt to turn right onto Bodega Ave, then right onto Nelson Way, and

right on Washington Ave to avoid that congestion. Both of these streets ***should be Safe Routes to School*** as recommended by the federal Dept. of Transportation, the California Bicycle Association, the California PTA, and other advocacy groups. The conditions on both Nelson Way and Washington Avenue are currently only marginally safe for school children walking to Parkside and Brookhaven Schools. ***The streets are full of potholes, and most of the lengths of those streets have NO sidewalks. Putting more traffic on those streets would truly endanger children and other pedestrians.***

6. I would ask the City to ***close Nelson Way at Bodega Avenue***, to preserve the safety of our neighborhood.
7. The City has a policy for "***Traffic Calming Measures.***" ***Does it constitute an "objective standard?"*** Although that policy suggests that street closures are not recommended, the situation on Nelson Way and Washington Avenue seems to skirt that prohibition. The rationale for discouraging street closures. is based on not causing "a diversion of traffic to other residential streets due to limited number of connection points between neighborhoods." However, ***Nelson Way and Washington Avenue are not collector streets***, as identified in the policy, and therefore do not serve as connection points for other neighborhoods; Washington Avenue deadends at Golden Ridge Avenue, and Nelson Way is only 1 block long. If any thing, closure of Nelson Way would discourage drivers from using that route as a bypass for Bodega Avenue.
8. Closing Nelson Way at Bodega Ave would have the further advantage of ***preventing spill over parking from the development onto Nelson Way***, a likely outcome considering the reduction in parking required of the project.
9. There are probably other policies and/or codes that could apply to this project. ***Please ask for a thorough study by the City planning Dept. and outside council to enumerate the City's options for enforcing "objective standards."*** Thank you for your consideration of these issues and for holding the safety of our neighborhood and community foremost in handling this project's application.

With regard, Nick Stewart