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UNAPPROVED DRAFT MINUTES

TREE/DESIGN REVIEW BOARD
 CITY OF SEBASTOPOL
 MINUTES OF November 19, 2020
 4:00 P.M.

The notice of the meeting was posted on November 16, 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
Absent:	Gregory Beale, Board Member (excused)
Staff:	Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director Alan Montes, Associate Planner

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: October 21, 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, Board Members Level, Bush and Hari
 NOES: None
 ABSTAIN: None
 ABSENT: Board Member Beale

4. PLANNING DEPARTMENT UPDATE ON MATTERS OF GENERAL INTEREST: None.

5. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC REGARDING ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA: None.

6. STATEMENTS OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST: Board Member Bush and Board Member Beale were absent due to a conflict with item 7A.

7. REGULAR AGENDA:

A. PRELIMINARY REVIEW CONTINUED – 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. This item was continued from the Board meeting of October 21, 2020.

Chair Luthin introduced this item and opened public comment for members of the public wishing to speak on this item if they had not done so previously.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Matthew Long

I live at 7717 Bodega Avenue directly across from the proposed housing area. We would like to express our concern about the significant addition of traffic. Two weeks ago, we had someone run into our wall on our street because there is already so much traffic on Bodega with very little control of it, and speed, and all that. We are extremely concerned about that. Also, we all walk our dogs and walk along there and there are very little sidewalks on the routes that would be accessing this new housing development. Folks already cut through Leland and Robinson at great speeds, and without sidewalks, and that is clearly going to be the route that people will take to access this new development. I think we are all concerned in this neighborhood about that level of traffic adding up to probably 500 new trips coming from that area a day on to this area. I sympathize with finding new housing opportunities for people, but we have pretty great concerns about it. Thank you.

A member of the public

I live on Washington, right across from the elementary school. The first time that you had a meeting, when it was live at the library, I commented about the traffic on Bodega and how horrific it is, but everybody knows that. What I really want to drive home is what it is like walking around this neighborhood now, we have a huge volume of cars cutting across from Bodega to 116 and vice versa because the alternative is to go down straight on Bodega to get to the 12 and into town. Nobody wants to do that because it is often backed up for blocks, it is backed up from Main all the way up to Pleasant Hill sometimes, it is very difficult to turn on the road. Their plans to have people only turn right is obscene, but more than that, it is going to increase the amount of traffic going through the neighborhood and I think it is already impossible. I certainly support finding more housing in the community. This part of town has paid it is part. We have more apartments right at Bodega and Pleasant Hill down to Washington than anywhere else in town. It is extremely crowded, and extremely dangerous. People fly up and down Washington, making that cut, and on the other streets as well, and I am very concerned about it. Having this as a preliminary thing, means we are waiting for the approval to come, we are in a stage where something is being held over our heads and there is not a thing we can do about it. It feels really powerless given the level of threat that is involved to our community. Thanks for listening.

Chris Inman

In my emails to Associate Planner Montes, I wanted to find out how many units would have three bedrooms, two bedrooms, and one bedroom for these apartments. Associate Planner Montes communicated to me that 12 one-bedroom units, 36 two-bedroom units, and 36 three-bedroom units were being proposed. My mother lived in several low-income housing projects in Santa Rosa. From my experience relating to her over a long time, there is a lot of stacking of people. Because of the cost and the economic reasons, in a three bedroom, there might be four adults, that is four cars. It would include grandparents, uncles, aunts, teenage drivers. What about visitors? 150 of 168 parking spaces only includes mother and dad in 84 units. That means that our little streets that are already crowded with parking, are going to have to supply parking for all these people. It is probable that some of the units may only have two adults. I think that is an unreasonable idea, I just do not think that is going to work. We have quite a bit of low-income housing here. To have the traffic turning right and going down Nelson and Virginia and Robinson, and tunneling around through this side of town, it is a problem. The number of adults that could be, and would not be policed or controlled, could be three or four times what they are saying it is going to be. Thank you very much Director Svanstrom and staff.

Tamaki Myers

I live on Washington and my property abuts this land on the north side. I have three main concerns I wanted to bring up. I agree with so much of what has been said so far. I have a couple of large trees that I am very concerned about that are on the property line. One of my concerns is that no one from the Pacific West group ever came and measured the trees. The trees are represented as 20 inches on their drawings, but they are actually larger. Besides the fact that that affects how close they can build a retaining wall; it just makes me wonder about the accuracy of other things and the integrity of this group that they would misrepresent something like that. Hopefully, the city arborist will come on board and help clarify that matter. My second concern, as I think Chuck mentioned before, is the traffic issue. I have two young kids; I know there are at least a dozen kids in the elementary to high school age who live on Washington. There is a school nearby. I am really concerned about safety issues with all the traffic that is going to be diverted on our road. Thirdly, I feel like the character of this neighborhood is not appropriate for such a large complex. One of the things that attracted me to this area when I moved here four years ago was the friendly neighborhood and small town feel of it. I really think that there should be opportunities in the future for something smaller scale that fits the character of this area. Thank you.

Hearing nothing further, Chair Luthin closed public comment.

Lauren Alexander, Project Manager for TCP Woodmark

I want to let the Board know that we do have some time constraints with some of the engineers on the call. Our civil engineer, Dennis Dalby, will be available until about 4:30. Our geotechnical engineer, Eric Chase, and his colleague, Brian Padgett are on until 4:00. If you have any specific concerns or comments that they would need to address, please keep that in mind.

Eric Chase (App. Geotech Engineer) and Brian Padgett (App. Geotech Engineer) presented.

Christine Level, Board Member

How do the retaining walls drain?

Eric Chase

You can put spacers in between the lagging to allow, if there is water, because drainage behind the retaining wall is there as part of the design procedure, because you design for a drain condition, so you must allow for pressure relief. You can put spacers between the lagging, which will allow built up pressure to come through it, you can feed rock down behind the wall, when you are putting the lagging in as well, to fill up a little bit of annular space back there.

Christine Level, Board Member

I am not quite understanding that. You are drilling these pier holes, so those holes that you are drilling are going to have to be equal to the diameter required to support the wall. Probably 18 inches diameter at least. You are going to have a steel beam, you are going to have the space, you are going to have a hole and then your wide flange is going to be smaller than that. You are going to drop that all the way down, for a nine-foot wall, what are you looking at your pier depth being from the top of the new grade? 12 to 15 feet?

Eric Chase

Probably, somewhere around that. A 22- to 24-foot-long wide flange will get dropped in. Yes, you drop a wide flange and pour the concrete around it up to the top of the pier. Now, when you look down in the hole, you will have a part of the hole with a wide flange in it and then you start between adjacent piers with the wide flange, you excavate down whatever your lagging size is, and you slide the lagging in between the flanges and then you keep excavating below that and the lagging will drop down as you go.

Christine Level, Board Member

Right, I understand that. If you are going to be starting out with a 22- or 24-foot piece of steel that you are going to have to drop straight down into the hole. We are going to have these tree canopies coming over there, how are you going to address that issue because you are going to have to come across, they are going to have to be completely vertical, when they drop down into the hole, right? You need vertical clearance of at least the length of the piece of steel. If I am understanding correctly, you are going to have to come in with a crane to lift that sucker up, he is going to have to be 22 to 24 feet above the existing unexcavated grade to drop it down into that hole. I am wondering how we are planning to address the tree canopies that are all kind of cascading over that. There is a lot of concern from the public about the trees.

Eric Chase

I am not an arborist, so I cannot answer that question. That is the kind of means and methods as to how you would do it, but you do have to drop it down, and you do have to be

able to slide it in there, yes, this is true. There are ways of holding it lower and dropping it in.

Christine Level, Board Member

I cannot imagine how you could do it because you will only have an 18-inch diameter hole, it is just going to have to be a vertical drop. How else could you do it?

Eric Chase

I do not know the size of the holes for sure.

Christine Level, Board Member

They are going to be at least 18 inches diameter, that is going to be the design for something like this, then we are going to have a smaller wide flange, let us say a W12, maybe a W14, you are going to have very little space left to put any gravel, you are talking about putting gravel in. There is really not going to be any drainage whatsoever, except for what you can obtain by gapping the lagging boards. I suppose since you are dropping them in one at a time, I suppose you are coming back and spacing them after you have all the boards in, how else could you do it?

Eric Chase

You can put spacers in as you drop them down or you could pull them back up and slide the spacers in, that is not that complicated to do.

Christine Level, Board Member

Basically, we are going to have a wall that is going to drain between the boards.

Eric Chase

You will have a wall that will allow drainage through the boards.

Caleb Roope (Applicant)

We are also a general contractor. We have done this procedure (dropping soldier piles) probably no less than 30 or 40 times. We are doing a huge job right now in Burlingame, California, where the depth of these walls are over 25 feet. When you run into a condition where you have, let us say, an obstruction above the pier that is going down, you can bolt those together as well. If you had to go down 20 feet, you could go down in two 10-foot sections or, three 6 foot or 7-foot sections. You slide one in, and then you bolt the beams together at the connection point, and then slide it down again and bolt the top one. I guess I am just addressing the concern of hitting a tree. There are means and methods to avoid hitting anything above you and this condition must be done when there is overhang sometimes on existing structures. It is a manageable condition.

John Meserve (Applicant Arborist)

Let me add from the arborist perspective. I have worked on a number of projects, same thing, there might need to be some very selective pruning here and there to create that access, but it is totally doable just the way Mr. Roope described.

Eric Chase

Thank you, Mr. Roope and Mr. Meserve, we have had them where we have bolted them to put them in it as well. I know it works. You must make sure your design accounts for it, but that is not a complicated thing to do.

Christine Level, Board Member

We are going to have to be using the ground contact pressure treatment for this, correct?

Eric Chase

I would assume we are going to be dealing with it being in contact with the ground. Yes.

Christine Level, Board Member

I am wondering about the toxicity level of the pressure treated when you have got that much of it exposed going around with this retaining wall. I am just putting that on the table because that stuff is very toxic.

Caleb Roope

That often depends on how you treat it. There are means and methods and codes that we have to follow. You cannot just drop arsenic treated board in the ground. We can bring experts in to talk about that, but this is kind of a standard construction methodology that happens all over the country all the time to deal with the very kinds of conditions that we have here.

Christine Level, Board Member

When we got the phase one and the phase two of the project here, which is noted on the plans, am I to presume correctly that it would be proposed that the whole project would be excavated out. You would have a phase one, and then you would have basically a lot behind it until phase two came about? This whole excavation and wall thing would happen in phase one, and then phase one would also include just the buildings in the front, is that a correct assumption?

Caleb Roope

We could do it either way. The site layout has been designed to accommodate either incremental construction or complete construction. We could do it either way. I think the first question would be talking to your fire department and just making sure they are satisfied with all the life safety issues. We have set the site plan up to where you could have a firetruck turn around through kind of a T shape at either end of the drive aisle there, which would, in that case, not require the driveway to be built all the way around and would not require this work we are discussing now with the soldier pilings to be done, we can actually do it either way. That flexibility does exist. It would depend on what the fire department would want to see. If the fire department needs us to make the drive aisle all the way around the site, that would dictate the need for this work with a first phase.

Christine Level, Board Member

If you were to phase the grading, would you then have to put a wall across somewhere that you would later abandon? Because you still have the slope going up, and you have the parking, presumably, to remain the same, when you put phase two in.

Caleb Roope

We would have to do just enough work to keep whatever the grades would be for phase one. With more room and more distance, the need for walls kind of diminishes, because there would not necessarily be a structure adjacent there so we could do natural sloping there. Let us say two to one type sloping would be possible in that condition. Part of what the engineers would work out is those very questions. We do this all the time when we phase a project, and that would just be part of the phase and plan that the City would review and approve.

Cary Bush, Board Member

What is the life expectancy of a soldier pile wall like we have seen here? Is there an expected longevity date that this wall should remain structurally viable?

Caleb Roope

It is a standard wall design that is been used all over. I am not really putting a timeline on it; I am not sure how you would. That is not an easy question to address. It is just a standard wall construction; I imagine it would be there for the life of the project.

Cary Bush, Board Member

Well, would a wood wall last the life of a project?

Caleb Roope

The wood is treated so it will last. I am not an expert in wood lagging and the timeframe on that. I am sure that there are aspects of the design that can assess the life of it, or that the lagging can be designed for a certain lifespan. The overall lifespan of the property is about 50 years, that is the standard constructability quality that happens now. What happens with these assets is after, usually 30 years, you are moving into some type of renovation, or rehabilitation. Obviously, some capital improvements will have been done along the way. Rehabilitation continues on, but generally speaking, useful life, the regulatory period is a 55-year regulatory period for the affordability covenants to give you one measure that the state uses which might be helpful to consider. The other thing that can be done, I think engineers would specify the conditions of the soil in that area. For example, if the soil tends to be moist for some reason then concrete dividers might be warranted instead of treated wood. There is other means and methods that can be done, it just depends on the condition.

Cary Bush, Board Member

I have a question for Mr. Meserve. Trees have been a big topic on the project itself. Can we hear a general assessment on trees number 52, 53, 54, 56, and 57? Is there any kind of general assessment you can give us regarding existing conditions and possible proposed construction impact?

John Meserve

Sure. Those are all trees in good condition. I did not find any significant distress or decline. They are vital trees for the for the most part. We are encroaching some on some drip lines and I am sure that is going to be a topic here before we are done. I think the amount of encroachment is reasonable. I have said in some of my documentation that you might have read, on the two big trees, 56 and 57, I am calling that a moderate impact, I do not want to downplay the fact or try to convince you that There is going to be no impact, because there will be some impact. But that impact will be moderate, and moderate is very acceptable on large, healthy, vital trees, I fully expect those trees to survive, and to not have a problem, I can show you examples of trees all over the county where we have impacted to that degree, or greater, I can show you examples in Sebastopol where we have had that that kind of impact, or greater and trees are doing just fine. That is just a quick overview, I can address any specific questions the Board may have.

Cary Bush, Board Member

That is fantastic. Just curious to hear your thoughts overall. Trees 56 and 57 are significant landmarks. We are just trying to minimize any impact because it does not belong to the applicant, it belongs to the neighbors. We are just trying to understand how that soldier pile wall and/or retaining wall would impact the trees. No one ever knows, once you start digging, but what we may expect based on what you have experienced throughout your career and how this relates to the real world.

John Meserve

I love the soldier pile wall; I think that is the best choice there is short of not putting a wall in at all. It really minimizes the distance from the tree to the wall, I have been fooled in the past by wall locations, they look good, but then we find that we must over excavate for drainage. This kind of a wall really eliminates that impact behind the wall keeps the wall as far away from the tree as possible. I am a big fan of soldier pile walls. In terms of my comments about moderate, I think it is important to consider what trees go through in their lives. They are not protected from the world and from impacts from pest disease, from lightning, from storms, from soil conditions, if they are healthy to start with, which we for the most part have very healthy trees, they are very capable of tolerating a little bit of root loss, just like they tolerate canopy and foliage loss when we go through and prune a canopy. There really is not a lot of difference. Roots regrow, just like branches regrow. The critical part here is that we do not take too much canopy when we are pruning and damage the tree. It is also critical that we do not take too much root system when we are excavating and damage the tree. I think we are in the category of yes, there will be some impact, but the trees should respond just fine.

Cary Bush, Board Member

Great, thanks, Mr. Meserve. A question for staff, will the City Arborist be reviewing these trees long after the soldier pile wiles are in? Would that be useful?

Dennis Dalby, Civil Engineer

I am going to insist that fencing be in place and that appropriate mulch is placed prior to starting any work on the site. I will also insist that nothing gets behind those fences at any time for any reason. Those would be my criteria, and that should be checked regularly and periodically during the construction process to be sure that it is in place and kept in place through the duration of construction.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

I agree. That is super critical. I see it all the time. That stuff just comes down. Excavators love to park their excavators in the shade. It is super critical that the City does require, and will certainly require for this project, a tree protection plan to be incorporated into construction documents. That is something that yes, we would stop work if we saw any indication that that was not being followed. Chapter 8.12 of our Municipal Code is on tree protection. We require a tree removal permit if there are going to be permanent impacts to a tree, not just taking it out. If you are going to prune more than a third of the crown, or if you are going to do something with construction that is going to have lasting impacts on a tree, we do require a tree permit due to the impact, even if not directly.

Ted Luthin, Chair

We have some very big landmark trees as somebody just called them, I think that is an appropriate term, and we have an arborist saying that there is moderate impact. If this project moves forward, and something happens to one of those landmark trees, and they do not survive because of construction impact, what happens, is it just, oh well, we knew there was moderate risk and we accepted it?

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

I think that is what we are trying to avoid, and really trying to encourage the applicant to minimize and get the impact below moderate. I cannot recall the potential for significant lasting impacts to the trees, there are a couple of different venues we can require a deposit for as part of the tree protection, that if the trees do not survive for a certain amount of time afterwards, that the City would keep. That is usually for trees on the project site. In this instance, I think that the big difference is that these are actually not the applicant's trees, these are an adjoining neighbor's trees. Frankly, there is a lot of civil California tree law and property owners can sue for the value of a tree, which can run into 10s of thousands of dollars. I look at other ways you can modify this drive aisle to not bump into it so much. I do look at the encroachment on that property line. I question if there are ways that this can be pulled further back because money is one thing, but you still lose the resource of the tree and the privacy and the shade. What you have on a property is a property owner trying to be a good steward of environment if the tree does not survive.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Thank you for that response.

Tina Wallis

If I could just ask the arborist, Mr. Meserve to give his opinion. I think the goal of having the arborist on site monitoring the construction and requiring the fencing is to prevent that

type of damage. The tree protection plan and Mr. Meserve's presence would all be geared towards making sure that no damage occurs in the first place.

Dennis Dalby, Civil Engineer

Of course, if that is part of my assignment, my job would be to keep impacts at a very minimum. You were talking about fencing earlier, typically, I see a lot more damage to trees when fences come down and contractors do not pay attention, than from approved grading or improved activities near the tree. That is absolutely critical. Like Director Svanstrom said, fences come down quickly. That is an issue, it is got to be in place, it is got to be monitored to keep that kind of additional impact from happening that could move it from an acceptable moderate impact into something more significant that is unnecessary.

Tina Wallis

The project could be conditioned to require an arborist to be on site overseeing these critical issues, it could also be part of our tree protection plan. Again, there are multiple mechanisms to put in place, all with the goal of preventing any harm so that the situation you have articulated does not come to be. On just a slight digression, and I apologize, there were a number of questions for our civil engineer at the last hearing, and I note that it is 10 minutes to 4 p.m. and he has a hard stop at 4:30. Obviously, it is the Board's pleasure as to what order they address the issues. I just wanted to point that out since there were a number of questions and we do have Mr. Dalby available tonight.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Thank you for that reminder. Do we have any more questions for our civil engineer?

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

Chair, if the Board does not, I do have one that is sort of the junction between the trees and retaining walls that is a little bit of a question. It is from my own experience monitoring a number of construction projects, I know there are rules of thumb about how many larger roots you can cut and still have a tree be viable. I do not know if this is for the civil engineer, or for the arborist, or both. What happens if, as you are excavating down, you get fourth or fifth board down, and you find a number of significant roots, what happens to the project at that point?

John Meserve

I will jump in there with my opinion and my experience. We prune those roots properly, and roots that are pruned properly respond just like a branch that is pruned properly. You have all seen a branch that is cut, and then it resprouts all around it. A root does the same thing if it is cleanly cut. Where that happens, if they are cleanly cut, we would expect those to resprout and regenerate. The moderate impact I am talking about is not a permanent, moderate impact. It is a temporary, moderate impact, allowing those roots to regrow, respond, and regenerate themselves.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

Looking back at the staff report, there is a kind of overall question about the grading of the site, terracing of the site. Staff has requested on several occasions that the applicant

demonstrate why terracing of this site is not feasible. Since we have the civil engineer here, we have seen the project go from a more dramatic grading to less, and we have heard the explanation of accessibility as to why this is the case, but I just thought we could get the engineers input on all the while they are here.

Dennis Dalby, Civil Engineer

With our latest plan, you can see in Section A that we are terracing the site. We are terracing the site at the bocce court, and we are terracing the site at the upper building area. All of those retaining walls you now see in the site are now taken away from the perimeter retaining walls that are shown on the plans. We are terracing the site; we are terracing as much as we can while still meeting our objectives to meet the building code for accessible paths of travel. We are maintaining 5% maximum on our contiguous sidewalks around the parking for both parking comfort and for accessibility.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

Okay, thank you. That brings up questions, maybe more for the architect as I do not do this level of architecture myself. The requirement for this kind of housing complex is that the whole site must be accessible to every person by 1:12 ramps or less, is that right?

Dennis Dalby, Civil Engineer

That is correct. We do have ramps where we can find room for them. Unfortunately, when you have got sidewalks and paths of travel adjacent to parking, contiguous with the curb, we cannot get 1:12 ramps in those areas. 1:12 ramps are generally all the ramps you see interior, around the tot lot, bocce court, and up to that most northerly building. Yes.

Chuck Hoffman

Can I ask a quick question? I made a comment at the beginning.

Ted Luthin, Chair

You may ask a question but please keep it brief.

Chuck Hoffman

It is very interesting to hear the concerns about the trees. Is there a committee that considers the impact of the development on the community? I mentioned the traffic. I am concerned about the character of the community, given that we are being treated in an exceptionally negative way within the city.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Yes, we are the Design Review Board, and we are also the Tree Board. Community design and those sorts of things are in our purview. What is outside of our purview is things like zoning and densities and those sorts of things. This Board is authorized under what is called the Design Review Guidelines for the city, which are essentially the source of our authority. The Design Review Guidelines can be viewed on the City's website, they can also be downloaded from there. The Board will reference these guidelines specifically when commenting on projects and the staff report keys in on those items as well because those are where the Board's purview and authority lives in design.

Christine Level, Board Member

I have a question for Mr. Dalby. I am back on the drainage behind the retaining walls. We have retaining walls going up to nine feet. How do you see this this drainage working behind these retaining wall? How will they drain and where will it go? If drainage goes through the wall, it will drain to the parking lot, which will then drain to bioretention beds where it will be cleaned and it will be captured. Where exactly are these bioretention beds?

Ted Luthin, Chair

There are bioretention beds in the planter islands, right where the lower D is on Section DD. You have got a little planter island right there in between the parking, there will be bioretention there. Anywhere you see FD that is a field drain that drains the high flows that come into the bioretention beds. You can see the drainage pattern along the compact parking spaces heading south. As you go south and turn the corner, there is another compact space, and that little hatch pattern, the little dots you see, that is all bioretention along that property line also. There are other bioretention beds interior that are catching roof drainage near the top line.

Christine Level, Board Member

If I understand correctly about this bioretention drainage, then there is no further drainage from that point, that just then goes down to earth?

Dennis Dalby, Civil Engineer

Sonoma County has regulations through the regional board where we are required to capture and treat stormwater runoff for a particular size storm. It is considered a two-year storm, which is about two inches of rainfall. That is required to be treated and captured in these bioretention beds. The bioretention beds will percolate and recharge groundwater and also the field drains you see in them are to catch the higher flows, because they have to work for the 10-year storm and such for the watering usage.

Christine Level, Board Member

A certain amount of the water can go into the storm drain system and a certain amount must be retained on the site, is that right?

Dennis Dalby, Civil Engineer

Correct.

Christine Level, Board Member

Okay. It would have to be treated before went into the bioretention zone, correct?

Dennis Dalby, Civil Engineer

The bioretention are all landscape base, and that is part of the treatment.

Christine Level, Board Member

You can take the runoff water and the retaining wall runoff, or whatever you have, and you can just divert it directly into the bioretention bed and that would be considered your treated bioretention?

Dennis Dalby, Civil Engineer

Correct.

Christine Level, Board Member

That would be expected to, in those little beds there, take that water back down into the aquifer system, or down into the water table?

Dennis Dalby, Civil Engineer

Correct. The real reason that we are providing volume capture is so that we limit the amount of runoff leaving the site through the storm drain pipes.

Christine Level, Board Member

You also want to be able to recharge the aquifer, correct?

Dennis Dalby, Civil Engineer

That is the bonus that comes with it. It is more about the effect of downstream outlets into creeks and to rivers where degradation occurs. That is the intent of the SWLID program.

Christine Level, Board Member

What is happening in Sonoma County right now, if you ask any well driller, is our water table is dropping, and it is a serious problem. We are taking a site here, which is taking all the water now currently back into the water table by capturing it and all that land that is there, and we are removing the capacity for it to be recaptured and sending it into the storm drain system, which is basically running out to the ocean. Is the intent of the bioretention to try to mitigate this in some way?

Dennis Dalby, Civil Engineer

That is not my understanding. It is about erosion, and it is about downstream waters that are prone to sediment, i.e., the Laguna. It is an additional benefit that the volume capture recharges the aquifer.

Christine Level, Board Member

Okay, thanks for the information. I appreciate it.

Dennis Dalby, Civil Engineer

You are welcome. As part of this submittal, we did a preliminary stormwater mitigation plan that you all should have received in your package. If you read through that it explains in a little more detail what the SWLID requirement of the State Water Board is.

Ron Hari, Board Member

One thing I do know from where I live, which is about a 1/4 mile away, and Chair Luthin probably does too as he is also nearby, is that this part of town was originally called Calder Springs. I do not think the applicant is taking the fact that Sebastopol is full of springs, all over, especially on a hill area like this is, into account. The water table in my backyard in the winter is about three or four feet. I have several pumps to move the water out. Originally, when I bought my house, water was flowing through the walls and through the

basement, not into the street. I really think the real problem on a hillside location are springs, which run long after the rainy season. Calder Creek, which goes through the park, has water running through it almost year-round. That is coming through springs, that is not coming from runoff. I think the problem here are more springs than runoff.

Dennis Dalby, Civil Engineer

If the Geotech's are still around, I think that would be part of the geotechnical investigation.

Member of the applicant team

We did our test pits in May, and we did not see any water in our pits.

Ron Hari, Board Member

When did you do that?

Member of the applicant team

That was in May. We did a supplemental investigation as well, but I do not believe that we had much water in our boring logs, but I am going to pull that up to check.

Ron Hari, Board Member

Sebastopol has a very high-water table overall. It is kind of a secret, but we are in pretty good shape water wise. Anybody that knows anything about it will agree. One thing that we brought up the last meeting, which bothers me is the fact that over 50% of this is saved for farmworkers. To me, that means somebody not from Sebastopol would be coming here. I am not against farmworkers, I came from an Amish farm in the Midwest, but I think this project would be much more welcome if this was allocated to Sebastopol or West county people no matter what they did. I do not know if you can change that. I have a feeling it has to do with financial allocation, you are getting more money for that, which is fine, but I really would prefer this to be for Sebastopol or West county first as opposed to somebody from Healdsburg or Petaluma. Another question I have is, is there any plan whatsoever to accommodate the increase in traffic? I have a feeling there is not, other than maybe a stoplight. On the meeting last night, some guy was advocating putting bike lanes on Bodega Highway which would make it even worse.

Tina Wallis

Our traffic engineer, Janice Spooler, is scheduled to join us if I remember correctly, and she would be the person best equipped to respond to that question.

Janice Spooler

Our studies review the need for a stop or signal warrant. That would be something that the City would have in their future plans to include. There are some traffic calming measures if that is one of the concerns.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

We do have in our General Plan analysis and a number of improvements on Bodega, they are generally related to not necessarily expanding the roadway, which is, as you probably know, not really a feasible thing, but there are a number of things that will help the flow as

well as look at pedestrian and bicycle safety along the way. The HAWK, flashlight beacons and the crosswalks. This is a city road from Main Street to our western city border. This part of Bodega is a city road, we are looking at doing both a sidewalk gap closure. There are some places along Bodega where there are not sidewalks, like over by the Huntley Square project and a couple other places. I believe we do have some additional sidewalk widening that would be required for this project as it is rebuilt as well as flattening of it to make sure that it meets ADA requirements. The city does have plans for bicycle lanes along this. There are two things. One is There is the sort of overall amount of traffic on the roadway. Frankly, there have been a couple of studies done and most of it is actually pass-through traffic so it is not generated within the city. It is between Bodega Bay and Santa Rosa saying we have experienced an uptick in the drive thru traffic, working with the County to look at possible alternatives. People driving right through downtown Sebastopol when all they are doing is getting from A to B, are there alternative routes that we can look at for that is in our General Plan and that obviously requires cooperation from the County. In speaking with Mr. Weinberger of W-Trans, he did request that we get a little bit more analysis from this particular project because right now it is proposed with an entry and an exit on the west side. Right now, that conflicts with an existing median and it is very close to the intersection and that is not something that is likely to be allowed. We will be having the applicant look at left turns. Left turns will generally need to be, I would imagine, from the eastern side at the Robinson Road entry. He also asked for some additional analysis of the impacts on Nelson.

Ron Hari, Board Member

I heard Director Svanstrom say that the City is considering widening sidewalks and putting in bike lanes. There is only so much space there. How does any of that improve traffic? That is what we are talking about here, everybody is concerned about traffic, not bike lanes or widening the sidewalk, it has not even come up. Common sense tells me that that will not improve traffic at all, if anything, it is making it worse. There is not enough room for all that. I do not have to be an engineer to know that.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

Sure, that does not improve the flow in itself. However, I think that looking at alternative routes for those who are coming from outside of the city and are not actually coming to Sebastopol, we have a huge number of pass-through trips, and that is a solution that needs to be worked out with the County. I know Henry Mikus, our Engineering Manager, has talked with them about people who are just trying to get to 116, or they are trying to get to Santa Rosa, they do not necessarily have to come right through our downtown, there are other routes for us to distribute that traffic better, because a large number of trips are pass through only and they are not actually coming to town. It is not a road widening effort because there is no road, there is no area to wide, the sidewalk will be on the project side. The real solution is, can we find alternative routes for people who are not coming into downtown, and I believe Pleasant Hill is a potential area where the County and City have looked at in the past or are potentially going to look at in the future. Guerneville, on the northside of town, is another one of those where it is people that are not coming into town. If they are coming into town to get to Santa Rosa, can we encourage them through signage or improvements to other roadways? I do not think anyone coming through wants to get stuck in traffic either. Can we make the alternatives easier?

Ron Hari, Board Member

You are talking about alternatives here, but that is what the neighbors were talking about, as far as people coming off Bodega and going through their neighborhood to avoid this. Alternatives is exactly what the homeowners there were talking about. They realize that people are looking for alternatives, and we all have, because Bodega and 116 are jammed so they go through the neighborhoods. I do not see that as a solution at all, that makes me worry.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

I am talking about people passing through Sebastopol.

Ted Luthin, Chair

For people who are passing through, is there a bypass? That is been a topic of conversation since I moved here almost 30 years ago.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Yes. Well, I guess that brings up another question. What is this board's authority related to traffic?

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

There are a couple of things. This project is subject to CEQA. The density for this project is in our General Plan and it is zoned for this number of units. Those thresholds for the big picture in terms of traffic have been analyzed and the City has accepted that yes, traffic will be a consequence of additional development. The larger scale trips have already in that way been accounted for and recognized. CEQA is a disclosure document to understand what the impacts are. When we looked at these sites, the eastern, rectangular site was identified as a potential housing site for higher density housing in our Housing Element. This whole corridor is zoned for higher density housing. It was recognized for about 40 units, I think, which is about half of what is proposed to be placed on this and the adjacent site. We are wanting to look at the particular impacts of this particular project to better understand and look at what can be done to make sure that these intersections will continue to function without additional impact on the neighborhood. It is tricky to look at that, especially the western entry exit point if it can only be an exit right turn, or an enter from the right.

Caleb Roope

I will take Board Member Hari's farmworker question. Right now, the financing that we have would restrict 47 of the 84 units to just a person (a farmworker) in a household. Farm workers have a pretty broad definition. The most common farm worker in the Sonoma County area tends to be someone that works in the vineyards, or the wine industry in some way, shape, or form. That is the common type of resident we would see there.

Farmworkers, generally speaking, want to live in towns, they do not want to live on the farm any more than a nurse would want to live in a hospital or a teacher in a school. They want to live where there are grocery stores, and schools for their kids and everything else.

It is often common for them to have two jobs as well, especially since they are lower income, it is very expensive to live in Sonoma County, as you all know. We see certain

farmworkers that will have a job in the fields, picking grapes, processing, or packing, and then have a retail or restaurant job. All of those things are common in our farmworker type housing. The other thing I would say, in the context of your question about these farmworkers would come from, is that it is very common for local jurisdictions to have the very concern that you have, which is having a lot of new residents coming to town. We also have live preferences. The very first thing that we will do, generally, especially if the city desires, is to have a preference for folks that already live in the city of Sebastopol. You have farmworkers that live in your city somewhere. A lot of them are in substandard housing, or their perhaps bunked up in a way that is overcrowded. It is very common for us to see folks that do not come from within the community and that kind of preference we are allowed to do. Those are some of the ways we address that issue. It is really not like farm labor camps, or seasonal housing, or any of the things you might think of for just farmworkers being here, it just happens to be that one member of the household could be in some type of related agricultural industry, and that is who our residents are going to be.

Ron Hari, Board Member

I do like your proposal there as far as first choice preference going to people from Sebastopol, or at least West County. I like that proposal; I would be much more inclined to vote for your project if that was the case. I hope I am not showing any prejudice or anything else, but if you can somehow mandate that they would be Sebastopol or West County first, whether they work on a farm or not, I would be inclined to vote for your project.

Caleb Roope

That is something we have agreed to many times and we would have no problem agreeing to that as a condition from whatever body would make it.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

Of the 47, does that also include retirees that were in that industry?

Caleb Roope

It does. It could include retirees as well.

Ron Hari, Board Member

I have a real guess that there are very few farmworkers living within the city limits but there may be some. My other question was on the water table.

Member of the applicant team

I looked at our boring logs and we did not get free groundwater down to 30 feet in our borings. They were left open for about an hour. It is possible that water could seep in over time, but in sitting for an hour, we did not collect groundwater.

Ron Hari, Board Member

In my backyard I have an 8" well casing, and it is down 6' and, in the winter, it is usually half full.

Member of the applicant team

That is not surprising in the Wilson Grove formation, the water tends to flow through the soil near the surface and on top of the bedrock and it fills pretty quickly during storm events.

Christine Level, Board Member

Earlier Mr. Roope made mention of a 55-year regulatory period, what is that exactly?

Caleb Roope

That is the period of affordability that comes with the financing that is very typical for affordable housing projects. We access federal tax credits in the state of California, as the administer of those federal tax credits that they allocate to projects that qualify and compete for those credits, have a minimum affordability period of 55 years. The meaning of that is that for 55 years, we have to rent to the income level specified in the application. At the end of 55 years, the property at that moment is free to go to market rate unless There is some other funding condition or local condition that would restrict it to a greater degree. That is how that works.

Christine Level, Board Member

What is the income qualification on this project?

Caleb Roope

The income qualification is up to 60% of the area median income. That probably is a little too vague, so I will go ahead and pull up the current chart.

Christine Level, Board Member

That is around \$48,000. Is that for a household? Can you explain how that works?

Caleb Roope

It is based on household size. The figure you quoted, so nice job knowing that, is right around \$47,750 for a single person. That would be the qualifications for a single person, let us say, if you move on up to a four-person household, so call that a two or three bedroom, perhaps, that income level is combined for the household of approximately \$68,000. That is how that works. Basically, the rents are all set for each unit type based on the income level. When an applicant comes in, we qualify all sources of income that they have, and then that determines whether or not they are allowed to move in based on income.

Christine Level, Board Member

Once they move in, if their income goes up and it exceeds that amount, do they get evicted?

Caleb Roope

They do not. They basically cannot be evicted for an increase in income. Generally speaking, this is a 100% affordable property, so there are no market rate units. I will give you an example. If this had market rate units in it, then the income level at which they could graduate to would be 140% of AMI before you would actually need to convert a market rate

unit to an affordable unit based on the income going up of the person living in the low-income unit. We do not really ever see that, primarily because if someone's income actually graduates that much, they will immediately try to find their way into a single-family home, or a condo, or something like that they will choose to do. There are no evictions for income increase associated with the property.

Christine Level, Board Member

Let us say you have a one-bedroom, and somebody applies as a single person, meets the AMI requirement, and moves in. Then four or five of their friends move in to the one-bedroom.

Caleb Roope

We have a lease, which is a contract, that we of course have with the tenant. One of the terms in the contract, and we often provide our leases to cities if they would like to review them, specifies that they cannot have anybody move into their unit without the permission of management. It generally has to be a household member. For example, let us say a single person moved in there, and they have a friend that that they want to bring into this unit, well, they are not part of the household, if they were married that would be different, or had some type of other approval where they had a household to designate as a household, but they are not a household. The income of that person moving in would then have to be studied to determine whether or not they would then be over income, and then they could not do that. We have the ability, through professional management, to monitor everybody's lease, and that kind of unauthorized move in is an immediate term for an eviction, it is a violation of their lease. That is what would happen.

Christine Level, Board Member

Okay, thanks for the info.

Hearing no further questions, Chair Luthin asked for Board discussion.

Ted Luthin, Chair

I will lay out my issues, and then I would like to hear what everybody else's issues are. Then the Board can focus on segments and give targeted feedback based on a group of issues. My big issues are trees, grading, design transitions (neighborhood context), pedestrian access, walls, and fences. By walls and fences, my main concern is the front retaining wall that seems to go the length of the property. Those are my big-ticket items. Does anybody have a different list or have anything to add to that list?

Christine Level, Board Member

I will add in traffic and parking. I am really concerned that There is not adequate parking for the number of people that are actually going to have cars on this project, and that they will then be parking on the neighboring streets.

Cary Bush, Board Member

Additionally, I have an issue with the total denuding of nature. We have got a completely natural sight there and we are turning the whole thing into buildings and concrete, with a

couple of trees placed in there. That is a big concern that I have. The transition from one thing to this other thing that is totally different.

Ron Hari, Board Member

I think I agree with most of what you are talking about. I have already stated mine, I think, and I do not think I could add much more than we have already talked about really. We have been over this for hours and hours and hours now. Nothing new here.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

We have not talked about the buildings at all. The architecture. There are some issues to me with the character of the architecture of the buildings and some of the actual layout of the spaces, such as the community building in relation to the public space. I would like to talk about what I would call the community within.

Ted Luthin, Chair

As the Design Review Board, we have got a traffic study, and we have comments on the traffic study. The traffic study seems to indicate that the traffic is kind of acceptable at a City code level. I am wondering what our authority is related to traffic as the Design Review Board.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

In terms of the additional volume, CEQA has changed how you look at traffic to look at vehicle miles traveled. As most of you may know, we do have a fairly high VMT because there are a lot of people who commute from town to jobs out of town. We do have a fairly high vehicle miles traveled for any given household, on average, so the requirement is generally that any new development be under a certain percentage, I believe it is 15%. There are certain projects that are exempt from that review, generally, it is not every single project, but generally, and that includes affordable housing projects. In terms of the volume of traffic in terms of an environmental consideration that this board can consider, the overall is limited. That said, the specific block and adjacent block impacts are something that we will be looking at. I think There is some continued and additional analysis that needs to be resolved for the project that is under the purview of this board through CEQA. You are doing design review, but because you are the decision-making body, we will also be looking at the CEQA review in terms of the impacts from that, and the design of that, and how we can try to make it work so that the local area is not negatively impacted are under the purview of this board. As I noted, Mr. Weinberger from W-Trans made comments and discussed the turn lane issue previously. Our engineer had some additional comments about the slope of the driveway at the Robinson Avenue entry. Mr. Weinberger asked for some additional analysis for the turning movement with the revised driveway and looking at Nelson Way as well.

Ron Hari, Board Member

I kind of think I look at this a little differently, probably because of my background with Bucky years ago. I think Bucky had a term for this, I think he referred to it as synergy. Synergy is about how this particular project effects the whole. To me, that is what design is about, maybe not the Design Review Board, but I think we are supposed to look at more

than just pretty buildings. If we are just looking at pretty buildings, I am probably in the wrong area. That is my feeling. We have not even talked about the buildings, like Board Member Langberg said, because it is a minor part of the whole. If we approve this project, or start liking it, then we will go to the buildings and see if they are pretty or not. I think design is much larger, there is no pure definition of what design means except maybe in the Design Review Board's guidelines. This project will affect, not only during construction but for years to come, the entire city. I think that is what we should be looking at, not necessarily whether it is pretty or not.

Ted Luthin, Chair

I do agree that, for me anyway, the site issues are the most significant. But I think we can also do both, I think we can review the buildings and review the site issues and talk about the traffic and all that sort of stuff at the same time. Why do not we start with site issues, specifically grading and retaining and those sorts of things. One of the one of the things that really stuck with me is 11,000 yards of dirt leaving the site. It really struck me when I was on the site. Standing on the ridge that runs down the property, right above where this 9' wall is going to be, and probably a 10- or 11-foot cut is going to happen, I really came to realize what they are proposing to do. For the grade to be 9 or 10 feet below my feet when standing on that ridge, to me that is a big deal, side to side, that ridge is gone. It is just completely going away, we are flattening the site and then sloping it back with a couple terraces (one 2' and the other 5'). I get the ADA access issue and a part of that stems from the design. I feel like we have got sort of the tail wagging the dog saying, well, we cannot do it because we do not have room on the site. Well, you do not have room on a site because you packed so much stuff on the site, and now the only way to make it happen is to off haul 500-600 truckloads of stuff.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

The traffic associated with that off haul is also something that is under this Board's purview. It is something that staff has already talked to the applicant about in terms of our concerns since There is no way of loading, they are going to be making a really tight turn.

Ted Luthin, Chair

My 500-600 truckloads assume they can get a big truck in there. If they can only get a little truck in there, you are talking about 1,00 truckloads leaving this site.

Ron Hari, Board Member

The average truck is 10 yards by the way.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Yes, a small truck. My calculation was based on a 20+ yard truck.

Ron Hari, Board Member

That would be even worse.

Ted Luthin, Chair

They will not be able to get that in here.

Ron Hari, Board Member

No, it would be a 10-yard truck.

Ted Luthin, Chair

When I look at things like our design review guidelines that say that grading should be minimized to the extent feasible to reflect existing topography and protect significant site features, including trees, we are not doing any of that, we are eliminating the topography as much as possible, getting rid of site features and getting rid of all of the trees and also possibly, potentially endangering neighbor trees. Not only are we kind of removing almost all the trees from our site, but we are also putting our neighbor's trees at a moderate level of risk. When designing a grading plan, balancing the cut and fill is encouraged when it does not result in further adverse effects to the natural topography, terracing should be considered as an alternative use. My opinion on site and grading is that it needs to reflect item 'E.' in our design review guidelines a little bit more than it does. I do not know if anybody else has different feelings about that.

Christine Level, Board Member

You have spoken my words exactly. I appreciate what you did with the rendering. Their Section A cut is a little bit deceptive because if you move a little bit to the west, you quickly have a much taller wall. What we are doing here is we are completely destroying the natural environment. We are just taking all of the dirt out of it. I do not know what is going to be down at that level, it is going to be hard Franciscan formation. You could not be more destructive of nature than this project in that location. I am very concerned about that.

Ted Luthin, Chair

The rendering is being compressed horizontally, so we are not really seeing the actual impact.

Christine Level, Board Member

Correct. We have got nature there with all the effects of nature that we have right now. We have the natural soil exposed, we have the capture of the water going into the aquifer, we have got the natural trees and the wildlife, and we are taking all of that away. Because of the nature of this project, is just becoming 99% concrete, asphalt buildings, it is a huge heat sink, it is large enough that it is going to have a major impact on every single house around it in the environmental sense. It is just the wrong project for the site. I feel very strongly about that.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Yes. After I walked the site to look at the staking the other day, I walked across the street to the Burbank project, which is also on a very sloped site, it has got significant change from front to back. What you see there is, you see buildings that are split level, and you actually see, I think, a very creative approach to access. You have got 2-story buildings that are stacked units, one above the other, and it graded it so that you reach the lower buildings on ramps going down, and then There is a berm above, and There is a bridge crossing over to the upper buildings. By today's standards, that was probably built in the

70's or 80's, I do not think that what they have there is probably accessible, but what they have there is someone taking a creative approach to the slope and designing something that works with the slope, rather than just flattening out the slope of that property. We are not really seeing that; we are not seeing that anybody took a creative architectural approach to designing something that works with the topography.

Christine Level, Board Member

Could accessibility on a site be achieved by using an elevator, lifts and/or ramps with terracing?

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

Sure, elevators are accessible, but they do not go horizontally. You cannot access every part of the site that way.

Christine Level, Board Member

If you had a terraced wall, and then you had an elevator, instead of a ramp system to get up, you have a lift, like they have at Hopmonk.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

I think that there would probably be a way to do it, but I am not sure if it would satisfy the whole site. The whole site has to be accessible. To say that they have not been creative with grading here, I do not agree with entirely because they are trying to fit 86 units onto the site. They have actually come a lot further and were more creative than from where they were before and made it better. To get that many units on this property, fully accessible, maybe they cannot be more creative.

Ted Luthin, Chair

That is very possible. Maybe we have reached the limit of what is even possible in terms of getting this many units, this many parking spaces, fire access, and all that sort of stuff to work on this site. I agree, I think that the creativity to me has been in the sitework. Burying the wall above the bocce ball court and some of the ramping that is going on. I do not mean to discount that, because I actually think a tremendous amount of work has gone into getting the accessibility to work. But again, I think that is maybe shoehorning too much program into not enough space.

Ron Hari, Board Member

I am glad you brought up Burbank housing. As far as I know, Burbank housing is owned by a church, I think, which is technically private. The difference between these two projects, and what they are required to do, is because this is funded with federal and state tax money, Burbank housing had nothing to do with that. The problem here, in my opinion, is the requirements of what they need to do to get funding.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

Yes. We are dealing with a certain formula; they need to get a certain number of units on to make it work and to make it profitable.

Ron Hari, Board Member

I have nothing against anybody making any money whatsoever. But no, I think the requirements here are too severe to put on this particular lot.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

I would like to just take a moment to say, I do not think it is the right project for this site, but I am very impressed with the work that they have done.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

When you think of all the steps that go into putting this together. Even just taking on affordable housing as a development idea is challenging, finding the funding sources, finding a site, then starting to do all the engineering and the architecture and all of that. I appreciate the effort that goes into this a lot. I have no problem with it being farmworker housing, it is a big part of our community. That is fine. We need affordable housing. It just feels like, it is hard to go against it, but the work to try and make this all play out in this very hilly rural site is just so challenging.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Yes. I totally agree with that. I have a lot of respect for this application. I agree that a tremendous amount of work has gone into this. Just getting this to work on this site, to this point, I am sure have been an exceptional challenge. I agree, we need we need affordable housing. I do not have any problem with the funding source. I do not have any problem with farmworkers or any other people that are eligible for affordable housing. When it comes right down to it, these properties are zoned for this. This project ticks all the boxes in terms of zoning and entitlement. It has some design issues. One of the big design issues for me is the amount of off haul that is required to get this thing to work. My second issue is trees. We have got an application here that is removing most of the types of trees that the Tree Board works to protect. They are proposing to remove most of those trees that are on the property and it is endangering some of them that are on neighboring properties. To me, that is not really acceptable in terms of what our mission is as a Tree Board. It is one thing to say, okay, we want affordable housing, this property is zoned for it, the removal of the trees on site, if they have to be removed, we are willing to accept that, but I think we are really crossing the line when we start endangering neighboring trees that are not on the applicant's property, even when the risk is considered moderate. Two of the rear trees on the neighboring property are huge old trees and I do not feel comfortable accepting a moderate level of risk to those trees. I do not know how the rest of the board feels about it. I feel like there must be something that can be done to this back wall, to this back part of this property, to where very little or no retaining is needed so we can get out of the moderate risk zone of those trees.

Ron Hari, Board Member

I think very possibly those trees as well as some of the old oaks in Sebastopol are what you would call old growth. I am pretty familiar with this being from Armstrong. I think There is a good possibility that those were not planted. I do not know what the native trees were here. I asked the local arborist, and she did not really know. Those oaks are old growth, in my opinion.

Christine Level, Board Member

I am just going to get keep beating the drum here, we have got this natural environment that exists right here, and it is creating its own ecosystem. What we are talking about by removing all of the trees, is completely transforming this ecosystem into something different. It is something to think about, because if you are adding high density, I do not know how you do it on the site like this. I know it is zoned for this. To take away all of the natural sources that soak up carbon, soak up water, and to take it all away and create concrete and asphalt is a big issue. Another thing I just want to chime in here on the fact that this is low-income housing is completely irrelevant. I would be saying the same things regardless of it being low income, market rate, or for billionaires only. The environmental impact of such a huge, offloading of dirt, and dig out and destruction of trees in nature to create something that can never be. This is completely high-density urban in the middle of rural. I am really concerned about it. I am not willing to accept a moderate danger to the trees on other people's property.

Ron Hari, Board Member

On this subject I did talk to my neighbor, Paul Fritz. I asked him whether there is any possibility of this being rezoned out of high density like it is now. He basically said no, or unlikely anyway. This particular lot is a poor example of high-density zoning. I understand why because that whole quarter is pretty much flat. But he basically said if it is not this one, there will be another one. Some other project which will be similar and high density also. I think we have a zoning problem here. I do not know how you correct that. Or maybe we cannot, I do not know. Any comments?

Ted Luthin, Chair

Yes, I think you are right. We went through a zoning period of time where we, for some strange reason increased the density of the zoning districts as we moved away from the downtown which is kind of odd. This is a little bit of a remnant of that. Combining that with highway corridors and I think that is kind of how it came to be.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

I am not sure about that. I think this parcel was rezoned as part of the general plan update that was recently done.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

I can confirm this has actually been zoned R7 for quite a while. The last general plan, which was in 1994, I think. We got a question, before the applicant had even submitted when the property was for sale. I can clarify, yes, you cannot spot zone. You cannot down zone under state law when you are talking about residential zoning. This corridor was zoned for high density because it is a highway, it is a major thoroughfare, it is a place where there is transit, which will grow over time.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

Director Svanstrom said that the City sort of looked at that I considered half as many units on here when they were identifying this parcel.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

Yes, for our housing element, we are required to identify sites that could accommodate housing, whether it is a vacant single-family lot, which can be shown as a housing site because it is available and appropriate for development. You need to identify the number of sites that is the same as the 8-year regional housing allocation, which is the number that you are allocated by the state and regional government. This one in our last housing element, I do not know if it dates back to a prior housing element, certainly in our current housing element it was identified and in general we did not go through and do site analysis of what is appropriate, what is viable. The triangular lot was not included, but the rectangular one was. Normally, there is a formula applied, looked at a certain percentage of a certain percentage, not everything is expected to be developed at 100% of the maximum density because a lot of developers do not want to do that. We have another site where someone wants to keep the existing house and then build around it, and they will not meet the maximum density, it still needs to meet the minimum density. For this site, I believe it was 80% of the density that is allowed for the rectangular site that was identified.

Ron Hari, Board Member

Something else I picked up from Mr. Fritz is he said that if we were able to rezone that the City would be liable for the difference in the value of the property and the City would have to pay the owner the difference because the property would not be worth as much at a lower zoning rate.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

I would need to consult an attorney; I am not sure how that works. But I do know, under state law, you cannot down zone, you cannot reduce the density of sites that are zoned for housing. I might suggest inviting conversation with the developer to see if there is some way we can move the project forward in the direction that the Board has been talking about in terms of the issues.

Ron Hari, Board Member

Another thing I asked Mr. Fritz, frankly, is what does high density mean. Mr. Fritz said that for Sebastopol, high density means somewhere between 12 per acre on the low end and somewhere near 25 on the high end. He further said that no developer would touch anything on the low end because they could not make any money. Is that correct?

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

I am not going to comment on that. I think people have all sorts of different motivations for doing what they are doing and There is a lot of different economic models out there.

Ron Hari, Board Member

Are the 12 and 25 figures correct?

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

I believe that is our range for R7, which is high density, and is what this property is zoned for. The 84 units is a few units less than what they could actually do under regular zoning,

as we discussed, and they are not asking for the density bonus of units, which would be an even greater number.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Further comments on trees?

Cary Bush, Board Member

We all talk about the macro. The macro being what zoning allows which we just talked about. This has put the Board in a really tough position. I went through all 16 pages of our Design Review Guidelines again. Just to reiterate, it is hard, this is not going to fit. Shoehorning this into not enough space is a good analogy. The overall significant impact is going to be on the trees, the ones that are really even not on site, or the ones that are of value. No one can predict when a tree fails, but to increase any, or impose any new impacts on what is natural is always a risk. Everyone has to recognize that as the elephant in the room. With regards to the trees, I think the report has been really well written. Mr. Meserve is well respected, and his report is well documented. Again, we are just trying to fit too much on site, and the trees will be at risk because of it. That is going to be the indicator. I really appreciate your studies, and the level of work put into these exhibits that the Board is reviewing is great. My words before about the project itself, and its orientation is clunky and it goes right back to that northwest corner, which is actually the area that is probably most disputed, if you want to say that. There is some design work to go back to, I think, in order to make certain things really work. If we really had to look at the bigger picture, which is what I meant when I used the word macro, it comes back to neighborhood context. While zoning may allow it, we have guidelines to follow, does this really meet the neighborhood context? That is a tough one to answer as a member of the Design Review Board. That is what really makes me think hard about these projects. We talked about grading, drainage, design context, access for pedestrians, we've already kind of beat our drum on the whole bigger picture.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Yes. Why do not we talk about pedestrian access? Something that struck me, because I did the exact same thing and went back to the design guidelines, is that in general pedestrian circulation should take precedence over vehicular circulation, provide pedestrian accessibility to the street and adjacent uses with pathways, gates, pedestrian walkways, crossings, etc. and pedestrian access which is separate from driveways. I know that that was talking a lot about single family homes and that is what we have used that for in a lot of cases, but one of the things that really struck me about this view of the property and really about the site plan is that the front door of this thing is purely vehicular. I know that most people are going to arrive in cars, but there really is not even a gesture to the pedestrian. We have got a continuous wall that becomes a continuous fence. There is also a design review guideline related to that that jumped out at me which says that long or tall sound walls, masonry walls, or fences should be designed to minimize visual monotony. I know that this is exaggerated, that this wall really is not this tall, at least that is what the grading plan says. If it is to be trusted, this is only a four- or five-foot wall. From a pedestrian standpoint, you are walking along this wall, and now you are walking along this fence and there is no break in it. There is no gesture in the middle signaling an entry point

that is separate from a driveway. The pedestrian access point is this sort of ramp that becomes a staircase over here. It is right next to the driveway.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

What makes you say that you do not think that the rendering is accurate?

Ted Luthin, Chair

The civil drawing tells me that that wall is not that tall. I am not sure which to believe because usually the model is rendered from a civil base.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

I think it is kind of a stepped condition, there is a double wall with planting in between it. I think the rendering may not show it. That is all to me very well said. They brought the building up to the street, which it was not before, which is part of our guidelines. Conceptually that works but then it is up high with no breaks in it. Multifamily development can also have front porches and walkways to the front door from the street. I used to be on the board in Cotati, there is a whole mess of developments there that are like that. It can work, even in a big development, but not when this is the grading condition. We have a guideline that says you should access the front door from the street. I do not think that every unit has to do that, but it should be welcoming to the street. This totally feels like you are encouraged to go up the back. People are either going to arrive by car or walk up the driveway and find the entry somewhere on the back side. Breaks along the way, some stairs up the middle or in a couple different places, would be so helpful to have.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Yes. I walked through the Petaluma Avenue Homes project right downtown. While it is not at this scale, it has a 3-story building, that size or maybe slightly bigger. What they did in terms of transition was where they came down to the neighborhood, they broke it down, and it became more townhome like, so they kind of varied their scale and actually varied their unit type as they transition to the neighborhood. I think it is a pretty successful project and a pretty creative site design as well.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

It has a very wide welcoming stair right at the corner.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Yes, right at the corner and it takes you right up to the central courtyard. It is another example. I walked through that again after I went to Burbank and walked away from that going, okay, someone took a really creative approach to a kind of challenging site that had a big grade change from the street, it had to interface with a single-family neighborhood, and do that fairly successfully. It does it pretty successfully.

Christine Level, Board Member

I am glad you brought up the Petaluma Avenue Homes because I feel like that is a unique project for that site, like somebody attempted to design around the site a little bit. This project here, I have seen this. Like I said, my son lives in this apartment complex in

Newberg, Oregon. It is sort of a standard, it is not considering the site, they just carve it out and put it in there. I think that there can be creative solutions. Petaluma Avenue Homes is a really great example.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Yes. This condition, and the inability to transition up here and needing this retaining wall speaks to the elephant in the room, which is that it has to be there because they had to pack as much stuff onto the site, so the building had to be shoved all the way down as close to Bodega Avenue as they could possibly get it to get a two to one slope down to a reasonably sized retaining wall. You keep seeing that, bumping into that, all around the whole project.

Cary Bush, Board Member

Yes, I think it is trying.

Ted Luthin, Chair

It is trying hard.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

Yes.

Christine Level, Board Member

I think it gets back to the idea, I wish whoever were designating this one when the plan was being made about the high density because it was not thought through, obviously, at that point, what this applicant is doing is really what he needs to do.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Yes.

Christine Level, Board Member

It just does not work on this site. The site is too sloped, and the impact on the neighboring properties is huge. We must consider that. We have got the one guy up in the northwest corner, whose house wall is 15' from the 9' retaining wall.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Right.

Christine Level, Board Member

15 feet.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Yes.

Back to that comment. Board Member Level, didn't we make an initial suggestion that we would not want to see walls higher than four or five feet?

Christine Level, Board Member

Four feet, yes, I said that. I do not know how you make it work on this. That is why I was asking if you could do the terracing, if you could have some kind of a lift or something to get around the ADA, I just do not know. This is the problem you have to look at. Every single property that surrounds this thing has a huge negative impact from this because of the proximity of this grading to their buildings. When I went over and looked at the Bears Meadow buildings on that side, and I said, wow, there is a big wall up high, you go out to their backyard and there is a big wall up high. These buildings, if you look at this design standard that talks about the detriment to the value of the neighboring properties, and here we are. If we could somehow terrace up, I do not know if that is possible with the ADA standards and the other requirements and the number of units, they need which is outside the Board's purview. This is an issue. I appreciate their attempt and like I have said, I've seen their projects. There is one, I believe it is on Santa Rosa Avenue on a flat lot, and it is a nice little project. It is these same buildings, the same thing, the same formula, but it is on a flat lot and it works.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Yes.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

In terms of other ideas that are possible on the site, they are eligible for density bonus, which means they are eligible for concessions. One of those concessions can be height. I am curious if not all the buildings, but if there are select buildings, perhaps the buildings in the middle that do not face the 2-story or 1-story adjacent homes, how would the Board feel about exploring potentially 4-stories instead of 3 for some of those where it is not visible off site, but it could help with making the footprint smaller by shifting some of those units. Similar to the last round, I think the applicant heard, I think there were all 3 bedrooms at the initial preliminary review. The density number is one thing, the number of square feet is another. What they did is they reduced the number of three bedrooms and replaced them with two bedroom and one-bedroom units. I am looking for potential strategies for that. We permitted a 4-story hotel downtown and affordable housing is just as important if not more than a hotel. I realize it is not in downtown, it is a different context. I am suggesting the interior of the site where it would not be visible from off site. Density is number one thing, but then on square feet as a modern So what they did is they reduced, they took out a number of the three bedrooms and two bedrooms, one bedroom and that reduced a little bit as well. I am just looking for potential strategies for that. Here we are. We permitted a four-story hotel downtown fordable housing is just as important if not more than a hotel. I realize it is not in downtown. It is a different context. And I am suggesting the interior of the site reflection, not actually visited from off site.

Ron Hari, Board Member

It would still be the same amount of traffic no matter how high the buildings are.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

Yes, I am trying to look at the overall site and see how the impact on the site could be less stretching from corner to corner.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Director Svanstrom is suggesting that we could you get the same number of units in a smaller footprint which might free up some space.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

Yes, that is what I am suggesting.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Yes. By doing so we can eliminate some retaining walls, create more buffer to neighbors, maybe even create a larger setback against Bodega Avenue. Do these Bodega buildings, the end buildings, become more townhome like or something to transition ones do the end ones become more townhome like or something to transition to the neighboring townhomes? That might open up some possibilities.

Cary Bush, Board Member

Yes, I feel like I am going on record the last meeting that this rear building, the north building, is just cutting right through a ridge. Losing that building entirely would free up a ton of space. That is sort of a benchmark, that finished floor height is becoming a very fixed point that really creates some major grading constraints, as well as all the retaining that is needed on that northwest property line. To go taller definitely means a smaller footprint, that is what real density is. Even though again, we are sort of right on this cusp of what is considered a rural quasi urban environment.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Yes. Something else, as I was walking up there the other day, thinking about 3-story buildings, there is a 3-story building nearby and it does not bother me. It is setback from the street a little bit more than what we are talking about, if the buildings along Bodega were 3-stories that would not bother me, especially out along Bodega. Internal to the site, if we allowed one or two of these centralized buildings to go four-stories which could eliminate one, I would be for that, I think.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

If the back building were eliminated the amount of off haul would probably be significantly reduced.

Cary Bush, Board Member

I looked at it as a designer and a site designer. All those compact stalls and that quarter round back there, and even the three compact stalls that are sitting with the other ones closer to the building, those 14' deep stalls, those are sort of a waste of space. You lose those you can drop that whole parking segment down, so you do not have this weird little swoop of curb in there that actually cuts into that bank, it becomes foreshortened from that cut. To me, you lose those three goofy compact stalls right there, and that corner becomes a lot cleaner, probably even better for fire, and then it gets off a lot of the roots of the trees that are of significant value.

Cary Bush, Board Member

I keep thinking that building right back here, it still seems twisted almost to the back of the property line versus parallel to the main buildings along Bodega Avenue. Something is going on with the little lot top court that is making all that twist a little. I think that is probably the 5% ADA that the civils worked out, that puts everything where it wants to be. But that is only a bit of a guess for me. That will help a little. To remove that rear building entirely would be a game changer.

Ron Hari, Board Member

Regarding Bears Meadow, I think most of the first story are garages, they are not really living spaces. If we went to a 4-story or even a 3-story next door, what is the possibility of making parking underneath the houses themselves? That would eliminate a lot of parking spaces, and they can park underneath the structure itself? Similar to, maybe not a garage, but open parking underneath the building itself which would free up a hell of a lot of space. Is that a possibility?

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

If you go up in the housing and the buildings, you have to put the unit somewhere.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

Yes, you would give up a unit for a garage or a part of a unit for a garage if you went for storage.

Christine Level, Board Member

Board Member Hari makes an interesting suggestion here. If we move some of that hardscape away so that we could have some more green, and took that parking underneath the building, and possibly increase the height of the building so the 3-story buildings are 4-story buildings, but the parking moves underneath. I agree with Board Member Bush, I think eliminating that back building is a game changer, but where do you replace those units?

Cary Bush, Board Member

Yes. Is it cost effective to do that?

Christine Level, Board Member

Can be replaced elsewhere? I mean, I do not know off the top of my head, can they be added to a 4-story building?

Ted Luthin, Chair

Right.

Christine Level, Board Member

Or, if they are going to be doing all this grading in the front, do you subterranean the parking a little bit like the building that Chris Pellascini did across from the old Starbucks?

Ted Luthin, Chair

Yes, you kind of go for one bigger terrace across the middle, you have some centralized, lift based, or elevator based, or something, access point to get you up to the podium level or whatever you want to call it. Are we all in agreement that we would be open to seeing a 4-story building central to the site if that allowed us to get some more space around this thing?

Christine Level, Board Member

Well, I certainly would like to see that. If we could get more of the property that is not covered with buildings and asphalt and concrete, and we moved away from that back area more so that we do not have such a big impact on those trees, and in the northwest corner, there is those two houses that are essentially right on the property line. That is a huge negative impact to those people. They could get more space off the back. I could see that, and I think we could move some of the parking underneath the building. I think that is a good idea which is worth exploring.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Yes, if that allowed a larger floor plate and that allowed more units on the floor.

Christine Level, Board Member

The play area and bocce court could be part of the green space in the back.

Cary Bush, Board Member

Yes. That is actually kind of what I was thinking a little bit. You could have a stairway up from the back for the neighbors of the back down into this and they could all play at the park there, that would be great.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

Yes.

Cary Bush, Board Member

Because there is this neighborhood context, it is been treated like a park, it is been abandoned which makes it feel like a park. Every bit helps. It is about lessening this footprint. There could be a long, curving, swooping, curvy path all the way up there with a slope of 5%.

Ron Hari, Board Member

It would have to be ADA accessible too, so that is another situation.

Christine Level, Board Member

It is a tough problem to solve. This type of a development is flat lot development period.

Cary Bush, Board Member

Yes.

Christine Level, Board Member

That is where it works because There is just so many different problems to work out. ADA, parking, etc. We designers know that it is hard to solve these problems. We have to consider the impact on the whole neighborhood and the environment there.

Ted Luthin, Chair

It sounds like we are all in agreement that if the core of this thing becomes denser in exchange for having more land left exposed, we are in favor of that.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

You may want to get feedback from the applicant on that idea.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Would anyone from the applicant team like to comment on this idea, has your team studied this?

Doug Gibson, Architect

We can do anything with an unlimited budget. I definitely appreciate speculative planning. Yes, we can do a central building with tuck under parking, four-story, more than likely, we would end up having to go with an elevator, which is about \$100,000. There are additional structural requirements and seismic considerations that we would have to make. By losing that back building and consolidating, it would basically be a redesign. For the record, the project down the road in Santa Rosa is a different footprint and prototype. This development has a unique design, all of the unit plans, the building footprints, exterior elevations, and programmatic elements are all specific to this project. By changing the overall program, it would be anywhere from two to three months in redesign time, at this point. I am not saying that we cannot do it, I just want to make sure that I advocate for a reasonable approach.

Doug Gibson, Architect

And as part of that, I would request that we get the speculation in writing from the Board. If I am going to be designing to a specific program, and now I have two masters, I am going to request that the Board provide written specific instructions on how to meet the performance requirements of their design package, because it would be critical for us to hit it the first time and not have additional continuances and additional time taken. With every package that we put together, it is another month or two and there are always continuation costs. We want to do what is right by the city, but I am under contract to provide specific design services necessary to meet my contract with the developer. I will do whatever the developer requests that I do, as requested by the Board.

Tina Wallis

If I could articulate a concern. One of the many reasons beyond engineering and architecture for the height of these structures, is that the neighboring property owners do not want taller structures next door. They are concerned about their views, their privacy, and those types of things. There is been significant neighborhood pushback against taller structures at this site. The Board's direction, or potential direction, appears to be pushing us

into a direction of escalating conflict with neighbors. One of the reasons again, one of many reasons for these particular heights was to not incur additional neighborhood opposition, because people did not want taller structures next door.

Ted Luthin, Chair

I think in asking the question, what we are hoping is that we would just get some sort of feedback that says, no, 4-story buildings do not work because of XYZ or we studied them, and we discarded them because of this. I am not sure that we are taking any steps to say anything prescriptive. I think we are just kind of brainstorming and wondering whether what we are brainstorming has any validity. I do understand the concern about the neighbors, but I also understand that I think probably an equal maybe larger concern about the neighbors is the physical proximity. A lot of their concern, I think, came from the initial application when we had buildings way out on the perimeter of the property, and they were 3 stories tall and they were 5' from somebody's building. I think that There is a balance to be met there between height and buffer. I do not want to speak for the neighbors, specifically, and it would be interesting to know how they felt about height versus buffer, which one is more valuable to them? I think both of those things are important to them.

Doug Gibson, Architect

To that point, yes, design is an iterative process. As Mr. Roope said, this is an asset that is going to be in place for 50 to 70 years if it is done right. I cannot even imagine what California is going to be like in 50 years, let alone a property of this size and financial investment, because we want to be part of the community more than anything else.

Doug Gibson, Architect

Yes, that is the point. We really only have one opportunity to do this right. Respectfully, if that is the sort of direction and the speculation that the Board wants to provide, I would just need something a little bit more concrete, as a programming element, that then I can meet with the client on so we can all wrap our heads around these types of things. Please also note that we have done schematic review internally to know what it would look like if we tried to take the same density and put it onto the footprint. We can we make those types of changes and modifications work, it is just that nexus of feasibility for the project financially, and if it gets to the point where now we are looking at significant upgrades because of seismic considerations and lateral forces, then it is not a feasible project. I just want to make sure I am up front with the Board about that.

Ron Hari, Board Member

I would like to make a comment about the view possibility. The houses in the rear of the property, the main focus we are talking about are below the property line, there is quite a drop between that property line there and their house. There is a berm there so visually in the backyard you really cannot see what is going on there. Yes, they will probably see the top of 4-story buildings, but everything is about compromises. They would probably compromise because they might save their trees and there would be a greenbelt there, as opposed to a house closer to them. All the ones on Nelson Way are facing the other. None of these properties are what you would call view property, even though it is on a hill. That is my guess, nobody is going to be happy with everything anyway. It's a compromise.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

The cost of all the grading and retaining, if you save some there, maybe then it could offset some of the additional costs.

Ted Luthin, Chair

In general Mr. Gibson, have you done affordable projects of this nature, at 4 stories? Do they work?

Doug Gibson, Architect

Usually. We have done several podiums. We have got a project right now under construction in Santa Cruz, it is 65 units, I believe. It is a three over one podium type structure. There are a lot of unique challenges at that site, because it is a stepped podium structure. Most of the podiums that we have done, we currently have one under construction at 21st and 23rd and Nevin in Richmond, California and that is a full five story over one story working structure. We are familiar with doing podium structures. My intuitive approach is, if we go with a podium or something where we do tuck under parking, if it is not done, right, it will really feel urban. I know that that is part of the transition. This is not an urban project; it is a suburban type of project and that is why we have approached architectural design for the scope and the massing. That is something we would have to come up with some sort of understanding of. How do you do a project that is neither urban nor suburban? That is why I would be looking for fairly specific instructions or directions from the Board to get a handle on that.

Ted Luthin, Chair

If we took the tuck under parking out of the equation, so it is not no longer a podium structure, have you done just 4-story residential structures as affordable housing? Do they work?

Doug Gibson, Architect

Yes, we have done them. It is probably about 10% of the product line that we have done. Three to four stories, when you get to four stories it becomes more of a walkability issue vertically, if you will, because of residents having to carry their groceries up for 4 stories and not having it as an elevator, but we have done it.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Okay.

Tina Wallis

I think Chair Luthin, just to make sure that we are clear. The Board has articulated thoughts, but you are not necessarily providing a formal direction. I mean, first of all, please, to all of the Board members, be assured that we take your comments seriously. We can explore certain things, but we cannot guarantee that it is going to be economically or physically feasible, or that it is not going to engender more neighbor opposition. With regards to the view, to speak to Board Member Hari, it was not only the neighbors view of the structure, but it was also the ability of the residents of this site to look into the neighbor's yards and houses. We are happy to take all of that into consideration, and to

take a stab at it, but I just want to be clear that we cannot promise that that is going to work out.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Yes. Well, the nature of preliminary review is that it gives the Board the opportunity to give guidance and recommendations to the applicant and that is where we are in the process. I am not sure we are going to be giving a lot of highly prescriptive direction that says, this needs to be a 4-story structure, and it needs to be so many units. That is not really what we are here to do. We are here to say, explore the possibility of a smaller footprint, 4-story buildings and see if that is feasible. We might say something like that.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

One of the other things that Mr. Gibson or others may be able to address is, if there are site modifications to address the Board's comments about the retaining walls, the trees, the amount of impervious surface and development versus natural on the site because we are trying to grasp for solutions, or the Board is trying to brainstorm some ideas. I do not know, if your team has any response or ideas about those issues.

Tina Wallis

It takes time to consider and study these things so that we can really put our best foot forward and put our best effort into looking at them. We do not have any substantive responses. We have all taken copious notes, and I believe we will have the luxury of being able to rewatch this hearing if we are confused about any of these comments. We have heard the feedback on these things, we do appreciate the feedback, and we will certainly give them due consideration, but we would like to do that, again, in a measured thoughtful way where we can really think and analyze things carefully.

Christine Level, Board Member

We still have the issue of parking and that is a big, big concern, a very real concern for the neighbors. There is only an average of two parking spaces per unit, and then you have to take out the ADA spaces because those do not count, they are only for ADA. In the real world, people are going to be parking on those neighborhood streets and that is going to have a big impact on the neighbors. I drove up those streets, and they are already kind of parked out. I am just putting that out there because realistically, that is what is going to happen in today's auto driven world. It is two parking spaces per unit, but actually less than that, probably more like 1.6 when you take out the ones that are designated, and that is not realistic for a number of parking spaces.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

Yet, it is hard to imagine more parking spaces on this site.

Christine Level, Board Member

I know. The problem is There is too many units on this space for it to meet the other criteria. I understand it from the point of view of needing to have a certain number of units to make the numbers work on it. That is an issue, and we should all admit that by approving this we are forcing parking into the neighborhoods. These people are going to

have their own cars, but they are going to have friends and family and all that too. There is nowhere to park on the street. Nelson Way right off the bat, and across the street and around, we are forcing that on to the neighborhood. That is just real. I have no solution for this whatsoever, just throwing that out there.

Ted Luthin, Chair

The question on that is that it meets the City's parking requirements.

Christine Level, Board Member

It meets the City's parking requirements, and you can get away with that, but this is what you are doing when you meet the City's parking requirements. That is the reality of the matter. My concern with this project in the design review standards is the impact that it is having on the surrounding area, the neighbors, the area, from the point of view of these different things that we have discussed. The problem with it, fundamentally, is too many units on this size of space. At the same time, I totally understand why they are doing it. That is the issue, that is where this thing fails. From everything that we seem to be saying, it is just bottom line, too many units.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

We had a good public comment yesterday about the goals of the city, longer term for less vehicular focus, and more bicycle. To me, if anything, it should go the other way as far as parking.

Christine Level, Board Member

If you restrict the number of parking spaces, you do not restrict the number of cars, that is the thing. They are just going to go somewhere else to park.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

I know what you are saying. I just wanted to talk about the long term as well, not just this property and its cars right now. I am not necessarily talking about the reality of the moment, I am just wanting to point out that there are goals in the city that are related to bikes, and is this development an appropriate development because of that?

Christine Level, Board Member

Right, of course, because the goal of this this lot with those goals would be to have people there that could walk and bike to work, they live in town and work in town. That is the ideal.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

Yes.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Yes, there is an argument to be made that it is under parked, and I think There is probably an argument to be made that it is over parked as well.

Christine Level, Board Member

The argument is that there are too many units.

Ted Luthin, Chair

There is trying to shoehorn too much program onto this piece property that has challenges.

Ted Luthin, Chair

What are our thoughts on traffic since we are talking about parking? We have got these two driveways. The driveway at Robinson is really going to be the main one. The people in the know are going to take a right out of here, and either head to the west county where they work, or they are going to go Nelson Way, work their way through town, and head north, that sort of thing. I cannot envision this being a left in, left out. I do not think we want that.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

Yes. This might be where if the traffic consultant were still here, they could talk about what their thoughts were behind that, or if they see any other solutions. There are two buildings along Bodega, if those are separated, I do not know if There is a way to do something in there, or if that is too close to Robinson to get a left in, left out that would allow for that. I am not sure the strategy behind putting it right at the very end where it bumps into a median.

Lauren Alexander, Project Manager for TCP Woodmark

I will take a note so we can respond to that.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Yes. I am not sure, I am not a traffic engineer, so I do not really know, but it seems like x number of cars need to come and go. I do not know that that number of cars is going to overload. Well, it is going to overload this driveway because the traffic is so stacked up on Bodega Avenue during peak hours that these people are not going to be able to get out. I do not think it matters where that driveway is, making a left just is not going to be possible at certain hours, the hours when people want to make a left. So, people are going to make the right, median or no median, wherever that driveway is.

Ron Hari, Board Member

I do not think we really need a traffic engineer. We can use common sense. Anybody will tell you; it is going to be worse. All the studies you do, any common person around here knows it will be worse, unless there is a drastic change, other than a stoplight, and that is not going to happen. They are talking about actually making them less by putting bicycle lanes in with wider sidewalks. This is common sense; it has nothing to do with engineering at all.

Ted Luthin, Chair

The reality is, bike lanes and wide sidewalks or not, we have only got two lanes.

Ted Luthin, Chair

It is what it is. Development of empty parcels and underdeveloped parcels getting replaced with more development will occur. Traffic pressure is going up and there is nothing we can do about it. I am not sure that this project is really to blame, or to be held accountable for. Traffic is increasing in Sebastopol and most of it is people that either live west of here trying

to go east or east of here trying to go west. It is not really related to the people that are going to live here or the people that live in the residential neighborhoods around here, it is more the pressure from the outside, there is really nothing we can do about that. This development is not going to fix it, if this development does not happen it is not going to change it. It is still going to be bad. I read the traffic study, this development is sort of a BB in a boxcar, it is a drop in the bucket of a traffic problem, it is not going to make it any worse. According to the traffic study, it is really not going to make it significantly worse. It is not going to make it any better either.

Christine Level, Board Member

It is going to create some interesting problems though, just to contemplate that. If Robinson Avenue is where most of the entering and exiting is going to occur, because at the other side, you might come in on that side, but you can only make a right turn at the other one, and they you are going up Nelson Way.

Christine Level, Board Member

You think about the traffic, we all know it very well. You come up to that stop sign and you do not have a light there, and you are waiting and waiting and waiting to turn left, and then the next car comes and the next car comes, right? Then you have got people coming from Bears Meadow and they are not too happy about this because they have a hard enough time getting out of there already. I am not saying I know what to do about this, but you can see it, it is coming.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Absolutely. Anybody that lives here that needs to leave during peak hours is not going out Robinson.

Christine Level, Board Member

Yes, they are going to backlog at Robinson, or they are going to turn right and go up Nelson.

Christine Level, Board Member

The neighbors again, right, because they are going to just start seeing all these people racing up Nelson and turning and going through town. They have got a bad enough problem. I am not saying yay or nay to this project because of this. I am more concerned about the parking and the people walking through the neighborhood and taking up the parking. If you go up Nelson, and I did it today, it is all parked out with the people that already live there.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Yes, I view traffic as kind of a non-issue in terms of our role here. I do not think from a design standpoint that there is much we can do about it. I do not know that creating a second left is going to solve it, I do not think it will. I do not think it will have any effect at all. I think it will still be impossible to go left. People are going to go right and up Nelson. That is just what is going to happen.

Ron Hari, Board Member

One of the things that we have not talked about is actually Robinson. In our neighborhood, Chair Luthin, Robinson is one of the accesses to alternative ways to get out of here.

Ron Hari, Board Member

I use it all the time. Robinson is a terrible road, and then whatever that cross street is over to Jewell, I do not know what the name of that is.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

I believe that is Leland.

Ron Hari, Board Member

That is a major thoroughfare at this point and that is going to increase over time. Robinson is overloaded the way it is right now just escaping through the normal way.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

We have been at this for almost three hours. These kind of comments and discussion to me are just not really helpful. To Chair Luthin's comment about what we can do about the traffic, it is minimal. I just would like to throw that out there, so we are not just going back and forth for another hour.

Ted Luthin, Chair

I agree. I am all for moving on.

Members of the Board concurred.

Ted Luthin, Chair

I guess that brings us down to architecture.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

I will just make one comment on that, which is that I think this idea of opening up more space is kind of related to my comment, which was thinking of the community within, so it is not just a series of parking spots, and you walk in and you go into your house. To me, the entries are not very welcoming. Even more so, the community room as the main entrance is focused into the parking lot as opposed to the playground and all that area. It just seems like a missed opportunity. We talked last time, I think one member of the public brought up the example of housing like that, to think of this as a whole community, making the community room an indoor/outdoor community gathering area is something I would love to see. I do like that the community building does not just have to stand alone, but the entry of it should relate more to the heart of that area.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Yes. I think Petaluma Avenue Homes is a good example of that to. The community building opens to the play yard, has big windows and doors, it is really inviting.

Ted Luthin, Chair

I think we have covered everything that is on my list, does anybody have anything else?

Hearing none, Chair Luthin provided the following recap:

Ted Luthin, Chair

We started with grading; I think we need to encourage the applicant, kind of like we did before, to look at item E. in our design review guidelines which says that grading should be minimized. I think that reflects a lot of the neighborhood concerns as well about buffers, especially in that northwest corner. I really felt that when I was out there looking at the property line, I could not believe the property corner was really in the back of that house at the very northeastern corner. Terracing should be considered balancing the fill and cut. I think we are all feeling that there is just way, way, way too much off haul. Proposed grading under the dripline of protected trees. I think we all agree that the risk level to neighboring trees, especially trees off property, needs to be significantly less than moderate. I think we need to go into this with a clear expectation there will be no impact to neighboring trees, especially gigantic trees that out age all of us. We talked about pedestrian access along the front, citing our design review guideline relative to fences which says that long and tall sound walls, masonry walls, or fences should be designed to minimize visual monotony. Doing something with that front edge, and something that also provides pedestrian access that is not associated with a vehicular access point is something the applicant should address and look into. Height and length of retaining walls should be minimized. Originally, we said 4' is the highest reasonable retaining wall we can envision. I do not think we have really changed on that for walls anywhere on the site. With regards to traffic and parking, I do not think There is much to say on traffic, and I do not really know what to say about parking.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

For traffic, we have already outlined additional traffic things to look at in terms of that western most entry and exit to the site.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Architecturally speaking, if we could get the community building to relate more to the common area, that would be good, rather than relating to the parking area. I think that kind of goes along with some of the things in our design review guidelines, but I do not have one highlighted to refer to. The Board would be open to increased density at the center of the project if that meant that we could get more space around the perimeter, protect neighboring trees, and reduce or eliminate retaining walls. I do not know that we need to say anything more than that. Is everybody in agreement with that?

Members of the Board concurred with Chair Luthin's recap.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Hearing nothing further, Chair Luthin thanked the applicant for their cooperation in all of this. The staking was super helpful, thank you for doing that. Thank you for bringing the

team here tonight. We appreciate the back and forth and the input and we look forward to seeing your formal submittal in the future.

8. ADJOURNMENT: Chair Luthin adjourned the meeting at 7:59 p.m. The next regularly scheduled Tree/Design Review Board meeting will be held on Wednesday, December 02, 2020 at 4:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted By:

Kari Svanstrom
Planning Director