

Chair Fernandez asked for Planning Commission questions of staff. Seeing none, he opened public comment.

The applicant gave a presentation and was available for questions.

Chair Fernandez asked for Planning Commission questions of the applicant.

Paul Fritz, Vice Chair

It was a little unclear in the staff report, but this is for the greater community to go to the café during open hours, or is it only for church members?

Christy Laborda Harris, Applicant

It is only church members, but anyone is welcome to join the church. We will have on the playground website the membership guidelines for how one could become a member, but it will be a membership license. Guests of a member will also be welcome. Our hope is to make it accessible to people, as church always is, but we will not be functioning as a commercial café.

Deborah Burnes, Commissioner

You mentioned in the beginning of your presentation that you welcome 12-steps and all these other organizations, so they are not members of the church I'm assuming, and will the café be available to them? I thought you said in the beginning of the presentation you're concept was to welcome all different people who have different views, so how is that diversity obtained if it's only church members?

Christy Laborda Harris, Applicant

Our plan and hope is we view the church community as everyone who uses the property. I don't want to force a membership title on anyone, because it is such a diverse crew, but in the same way that we are happy to have all of these disparate groups on the property, we view them as part of the membership. We're encouraged to view everyone, even the folks walking their dogs on the property, as a part of that community, and there are neighbors who have lived there longer than I've been alive and they feel that connection to the property and to the church, so we would consider them as part of the church community that has access to this, and we would ask to collect contact information so that we could keep a membership roll for folks who want to have access to that.

Deborah Burnes, Commissioner

The 10pm at night closing time for the café was a bit of a concern for some of the neighbors, and with it being child-friendly how would that affect you, and why did you choose 10pm for the closing time?

Christy Laborda Harris, Applicant

We asked for a lot more days and hours than what we would plan to actually do so that if we were to have a special event that went until 9:30pm and we would cleaning up until 10pm, we would not be breaking the permit. The real anticipation is maybe in the summer to have a couple of evenings that end by 9pm with cleaning up happening after that, but I would not anticipate it being open until 10pm on a regular basis, however we would not want to rule out the possibility of having an occasional event that goes a little later than 9pm.

Deborah Burnes, Commissioner

How are you staffing the restaurant, through your church?

Christy Laborda Harris, Applicant

Our hope is to lease out the kitchen to a chef so that we would not have our hand on the food. We would hopefully build a great relationship, and I could see even changing who the chef is over time, but we don't want to be directly involved in the food. Then for the beverage portion we would hire staff, figuring out the number of days and hours and the amount of staffing needed for those different times. There is the possibility of church members being involved, and folks are interested in volunteering and some have already done some alcohol training work for previous events we've had, but we are looking at a paid staff, not a volunteer staff.

Linda Kelley, Commissioner

My main concern is this sounds like a little more than just a member-only project. Who would monitor it? Do folks have to show a membership or an application? It seems a little too open, even though I think the food service sounds wonderful. I know you're also an inclusive, welcoming community, but I'm still not clear how the alcohol control part of this would be maintained and that folks aren't going to just come in because they know alcohol is being served and it's another place to buy it.

Christy Laborda Harris, Applicant

There would be an application form and we would need to have folks' contact information and either cards or folks would sign in to have proof that they are a member, and then we would also limit folks to three drinks in any one visit. But yes, for folks to be at the café they would need to show that they are members. We're trying to walk the fine line of being welcoming in the tradition of the church but also respecting that this needs to be a club license and is not open to the general public, although the public is welcome to become a member and part of this community.

Linda Kelley, Commissioner

Do you have an indoor area for folks in bad weather?

Christy Laborda Harris, Applicant

We do not; this is an outdoor endeavor. We have indoor bathrooms obviously, and I dream of being able to tent portions of it, such as picnic tables and child play areas.

Linda Kelley, Commissioner

How about recycling and trash? We have limits with alcohol permits, especially The Barlow, with respect to how late you can throw your recyclables away to limit the noise. Is there a plan in place?

Christy Laborda Harris, Applicant

I was not aware of that, although it makes perfect sense because bottles are loud. Our hope is to have everything on tap. I just talked to a local family that owns one of our top bars and they're eager to support us and help us plan how to do this, and particularly how to get kegged wine so that we're not going through a lot of glass, because we want to minimize our impact on the environment as much as possible by decreasing our waste. But we would comply to that if we need to recycle.

Linda Kelley, Commissioner

Staff, is it 9pm for a cutoff to throw away recyclables?

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

That's what we've used in the past, so that's a good starting point. I suspect there may be some discussion on hours after we get through questions. And we did include that they need to have something like that without specifying those hours as part of Condition 1B.

Linda Kelley, Commissioner

Have you done some neighborhood outreach? If so, how was that done and were you satisfied with the feedback you got?

Christy Laborda Harris, Applicant

Yes, I wrote a letter to our neighbors in mid-December and some of the letters were hand delivered by parishioners. We mainly focused the hand delivery along northern Bodega Avenue since there are mostly apartments and smaller dwelling units along that side. Then due to it being so close to the holidays I mailed to Robinson Road, Two Acre Wood, Stephanie Court, and one or two houses down Leland. I was really satisfied with the response. We had folks show up at our Christmas Eve Carol Song and somebody mentioned to me their support. I spoke to Dean LaCoe, who had a letter posted on this meeting's website, and was able to answer all his questions. All the feedback I've received from our letter has been positive.

Kathy Oetinger, Commissioner.

I like the concept of this pocket park within a neighborhood that people can walk to easily, but I understand how you would want to register them and give them a card so you know who is on your private property at all times. I think it would be a great way for people in your neighborhood to have a nice place to go and sit and get some food and walk there easily if they're close by. There aren't a lot of restaurants in that neighborhood area, so farther for people to walk, particularly some of the seniors nearby, so as long as they aren't causing problems you wouldn't have any problem registering them as your members?

Christy Laborda Harris, Applicant

Absolutely not. That is the hope, to form a broader community, and hoping that organically if somebody wants to read a book with other people they'll put it on the calendar at the playground and will form cohorts and smaller groups within this larger community. I've talked to a lot of parishioners as they go into retirement that could use a group to sit and chat with about what it's like to make that transition.

Kathy Oetinger, Commissioner

My feeling is if anyone is serving alcohol there should be some food available, and while you don't need it for that license, is it your intent to have something available?

Christy Laborda Harris, Applicant

Absolutely. The vision from this came from the fact that the sweet time for my family to leave the house is the 4:00 o'clock to 7:00 o'clock window where we feed our kids and ourselves and we can have a drink while we're eating dinner, and it wouldn't be acceptable in this setting to have wine and beer and not have food available. Simple and not a huge menu, but I'm thinking about dinner and food for kids and parents specifically.

Kathy Oetinger, Commissioner

One suggestion from our planners is that we use the Noise Ordinance hours, which is 8:00am to 10:00pm on weekdays, 9:00am to 10:00pm on Saturdays, and 9:00am to 7:00pm on Sundays. Would that plan work for you, supposing that you could get an occasional exception?

Christy Laborda Harris, Applicant

Sunday would be the most difficult one, because it can be treated as a weekend night, especially if there's a Monday off or it's summertime and kids aren't in school, but I would say in terms of weekdays, definitely. Saturday I could see people wanting to be there a little earlier than 9:00am with coffee, but I also think if that is the way that it goes, that's fine, but the 7:00pm on Sunday would be the hardest one, especially in the summertime.

Kathy Oetinger, Commissioner

I could see extending it to 10:00pm on Sundays if you have a specific event that doesn't include noise.

Evert Fernandez, Chair

I always think it's a good idea when an applicant is asking for hours to have them be a little later than they might need, because that way they don't have to come back to the Commission. My recommendation would be to make it 8:00am to 10:00pm Monday through Saturday, and because you're serving coffee I don't see any reason why you couldn't do it earlier. People having coffee is not the same as having wine in the evenings, so if you think that would be helpful to have that as an option, whether or not you use those hours, I'm thinking 8:00am to 10:00pm or 7:00am to 10:00pm for all seven days. Regarding the liquor license, for the Type 51 club license there are probably certain requirements you need to meet with ABC along with questions that we're asking. On the website you mentioned what someone would have to do to become a member, but it might be a good idea to post it so people know and follow that procedure, and I'm sure ABC asked you to do that type of thing. I'm leaning toward requiring food as a stipulation for approval even though the type of license you have does not require it. I encourage you to use local wine and beer, and vendors and farmers to build community. We have stipulated that for other licenses, but here it's not a requirement but more of a recommendation.

John Jay, Associate Planner

Within the hours of operation we can add in the conditions of approval up to 8:00pm or 9:00pm with two events per month that could go to 9:00pm or 10:00pm.

Chair Fernandez opened public comment.

David and Alison

We live across the street from the church and are frequent visitors of the church community and playground. The church is a great community member and neighbor, the property is a real treasure in the neighborhood, and we fully support the project.

Portia Sinnott

I live down the street at Two Acre Wood co-housing. Everyone I have talked to in the neighborhood is thrilled with this wonderful idea, as I am. It's great to have more community in the neighborhood.

Tom Kuhn

I echo what Portia Sinnott just said. This is a wonderful idea and I really support it. I also live at Two Acre Wood down the street and we walk our dog there just about every day. It's a wonderful thing to have in the neighborhood and I look forward to this further enhancement and support and welcome this work. I'm very confident that the church will be able to manage this, particularly any alcohol related problems, either through controlling the membership or whatever it takes, and I'm not concerned.

Liza Weaver Brickey

I'm a member of the church. This land has provided so much already with the labyrinth, sacred outdoor space, seed garden, playground, and the food forest. In terms of timing, in the summer the sun sets at 8:30pm, so perhaps operating hours should be thought of seasonally instead of across the whole year. Right now if people go The Barlow to have a beer, if they have their children with them they have to hang out in a parking lot, but to be with your family in nature with a playground and the other features and have a bite to eat and perhaps a drink is a new concept the church is involved in.

Michael Jacob

I also live in the neighborhood at Two Acre Wood. The church has been very supportive and allowed us to use their facilities as we developed our property even before we moved in, and they have been great neighbors since then. I feel very comfortable and confident that this will be a success.

Kate Sefton

I'm a deacon at St. Stephen's and a retiree. I was part of the neighborhood outreach and walked door-to-door and talked with folks, and they all knew the church and who we are, and said they had used the facilities or walked their dog there. I expected concerns from the neighbors but all I heard was they thought this is a great idea and they are not worried about extraneous noise, and in fact many enjoy overhearing the outdoor concerts in the summer and acknowledged that the church is already a part of their lives and they are ready to partake of this new idea.

Marty Roberts

I also live at Two Acre Wood and I want to add to the support my neighbors have already given. This is a wonderful idea. St. Stephen's has been a fabulous neighbor and provides such a beautiful space for the whole neighborhood. I love the idea of being able to wander over for a sandwich or beer.

Chair Fernandez asked for further public comments. Seeing none, he closed public comment.

The Commission asked questions of the applicant and staff and discussed the application as follows:

Kathy Oetinger, Commissioner

I agree with staff's comments that there should be no alcohol before 10:00am, but I'm not firm on that. I think the Noise Ordinance should apply according to the hours that we normally set, so if that's the case I'm okay with the events and food and service going on until 10:00pm as long as the Noise Ordinance applies. My personal preference is that there is always food when alcohol is served, but I can leave that up to them. I like the idea that with noise on Sundays that maybe they could be allowed two events until 10:00pm per year. Those are my only concerns, that we apply the same kind of concerns for neighbors that we would for anyone else in town.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

In terms of the Commission this is a bit unusual since it's a church and a use permit. They had originally thought that it could just be open retail like a restaurant, however, that is not allowed in this zone. Legally it couldn't be allowed underneath a use permit because they're a church and not a retail, so it's not something the City can allow under our zoning, and so they've revised it to be the club license similar to what the Masonic Lodge and other

nonprofit organizations might have as well. We recognize that it's pushing the boundaries a little bit on the commercial use in a residential zone.

Kathy Oetinger, Commissioner

I had that question too, because I thought if it was a church it could already do these things on its own anyway and we wouldn't have a say, but since the City does have a say I would think that as long as they follow the local laws about noise and nuisance that they could have done anything they wanted.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

It's actually because it's outside of what their original use permit would be for, so that goes back to the original use permit did not include this large outdoor use, and it also allows for the community participation and input we've seen, because staff had some of the same concerns the Liza or Kate mentioned, that neighbors might have concerns.

Paul Fritz, Vice Chair

In terms of the hours, I'm open to going beyond the Noise Ordinance hours for this facility to be open. I would be open to 8:00am to 10:00pm every day. They would still have to comply with the Noise Ordinance, but it sounds like they're not planning on staying open until 10:00pm every day. I'm willing to give them the flexibility because I've heard positive things about them as neighbors, so I want to extend the trust to them that they can manage the noise outside the noise hours and I'm fine with them being open until 10:00pm, because I agree that in the summer it's nice to be outside in the evenings and I don't think it's going to be raucous, noisy place like The Barlow on a Saturday night. I'm okay with no alcohol before 10:00am, and I'm sure the church doesn't want to serve alcohol before 10:00am either. I think this is a great idea, as we've heard from the neighbors. I see this as being a community-building kind of place. I enjoy walking around the church property myself and think it is a great community resource and wish the church luck with it.

Linda Kelley, Commissioner

I love the idea and can't wait to go myself. I agree with Vice Chair Fritz about extending the hours. Christy, do you have plans for live or amplified music?

Christy Laborda Harris, Applicant

My focus is that people can talk to each other, and I sometimes find that music can make that difficult, but there are folks who are excited about parishioners being able to provide music at times. We do have speakers installed on our outdoor sacred space for outdoor worship, but if there were anything amplified it would have to abide by the Noise Ordinance hours. I could imagine special events that are focused around music, but that wouldn't be a daily part of the life of this. This is much more low-key background music where it's easy for people to have conversations.

Linda Kelley, Commissioner

And also requiring some kind of food all the time that you're serving alcohol is very important, so I support that as well. Before this I didn't know much about Episcopalians and I appreciate the church being an inclusive, welcoming community helping to expand love more.

Deborah Burnes, Commissioner

I am so excited about this project that brings people together. I mirror the thoughts of my fellow commissioners about timing, alcohol, etc., but I can see a lot of people wanting to come to this unique setting and experience, especially young parents, and I'm still confused about what it means to be a member. Could I come there with my child? Would I just have

to give you my name and number? Also, you had mentioned leasing out the kitchen, and we also talked about events and cleanups. Would the chef leasing the kitchen be responsible for table busing, cleaning, and keeping the area maintained, or is that something church would do?

Christy Laborda Harris, Applicant

I'm imagining that the hired church staff that would man the beverage portion would be responsible for the overall area and that the chef would be staffing whatever they need to be producing food at the rate that they need to produce it, but they would not be staffing the overall area. In terms of the membership, it would be collecting people's information with an expressed hope that they would be regular active participants in this community. As church members we also commit to supporting the church financially, so there would probably be a recommended due level and expressing that if that is a hardship for anyone that it should not bar from them from participation. The basic expectations of being part of that community would be that, and we would post it, and I love the idea of having it visible at the location as well.

Linda Kelley, Commissioner

I wanted to standardize the recycling or garbage that is noisy. At The Barlow I remember it being 9:00pm, but I don't remember if they're opening early in the morning, especially on a Sunday morning and you're now hearing bottles and other things going into recycling. I still hope we can come up with an agreement that will work for that.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

Yes, normally we don't have morning hours. I'm not sure what the coffee service in the morning would be, but I've heard at least two Commissioners agreed with staff's recommendation of no alcohol before 10:00am. In the commercial areas we have a 9:00pm limit for the bottle dumping, because oftentimes our commercial zones backup to residential zones.

Linda Kelley, Commissioner

I think the 10:00am to 9:00pm is fine.

Evert Fernandez, Chair

To make it simple, and to be able to serve coffee and that kind of thing, I'd recommend 7:00am to 10:00pm, whether they decide to open early or not. Oftentimes when we have these types of project there are noise concerns, hence the Noise Ordinance that is separate from this. I think they also have put thought into where it's located and the shrubbery around it. I definitely would support the requirement for food. We've heard the intent to do that, but things change and people come and go, so I think I'd like to have it on there as a requirement. The bottles and recycling noise, whatever goes with the Noise Ordinance. Kari, a technical question. When we are considering alcohol permits, page 4, Item C, normally we would consider distance of a use from churches, schools, hospitals, playgrounds, etc. Do we address that or ignore it?

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

In this case, because it's not a commercial endeavor but is a club and therefore controlled by the church, that changes that requirement.

Evert Fernandez, Chair

And if that's in there, perhaps there should be something to address that as part of our approval, that it's private.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

Would you like us to add something to the finding that says, "Although this is on a church site it is a club license, not a retail license"?

Evert Fernandez, Chair

Yes, if the other Commissioners are okay with it on there. I also wanted to comment how thrilled I am about this concept. I really appreciate the fact that this property could have been fenced out, but the idea that people can walk through there, it's welcoming and the neighborhood supports it, I think it's great and will bring people together. I don't believe that in this instance there should be a concern regarding competition, because I believe someone would go there or wouldn't go out at all. I think it would be fantastic to have a playground with tent covering; parents would love to be able to get out on rainy days. I also appreciate the applicant's neighborhood outreach.

Chair Fernandez made a motion to approve a Conditional Use Permit for 500 Robinson Road, subject to additional conditions of approval:

- No alcohol shall be served before 10:00am.
- Hours of operation shall be 7:00am to 10:00pm.
- Membership and guest rules shall be posted on the site.
- Food shall be served at all times alcohol is served.
- Bottles shall not be dumped outside of the hours of 10:00am to 9:00pm.

Vice Chair Fritz seconded the motion.

AYES: Chair Fernandez, Vice Chair Fritz, and Commissioners Burnes, Kelley, and Oettinger

NOES: None

ABSTAIN: None

ABSENT: None

6. PUBLIC HEARINGS:

A. KATHERINE AUSTIN / PRELIMINARY REVIEW / HEALDSBERG TOWNHOME PROJECT

The applicant is proposing to build 15 two-story townhomes in the R7 zone and a 3,360 square foot +/- two-story commercial building in the CO zone. The townhomes are planned to be 1,120 square feet with two-bedrooms and two-and-a-half baths. The commercial building is proposed to have six 760 square foot one-bedroom and one-bath apartments above the commercial space. Both the townhomes and the mixed-use building will have their own separate 20-foot driveways. This is a Preliminary Review and no decisions or CEQA determination will be made at this time.

Associate Planner Jay presented the staff report.

Chair Fernandez asked for Planning Commission questions of staff.

Evert Fernandez, Chair

Does the proposal include the entrances from two ways?

John Jay, Associate Planner

When Kathy's group came in for a pre-application conference the first site plan that she showed was the original design and the departments were okay with the continuous connection between Healdsburg Avenue and Murphy Avenue. Kathy and her team then went over some of staff's comments and came back with the second site plan. I'll let Kathy go into the specifics, but the majority of that second site plan was the amount of grading work that needs to be done on this site, because it climbs up the hill and there's a huge elevation change from the front of the site, which is on Healdsburg, to the back to the site, which goes back toward Bately Court. A 10-foot retaining wall proposed along the front townhome driveway is stepped a little bit, but the majority of the work that would be done with that first driveway orientation is really difficult to pull off and there are a lot of steep slopes that may make it hard for vehicles to get in and out of the site if it does queue up trying to get back onto Healdsburg Avenue as that intersection is a difficult one to navigate, especially if trying to turn left onto Healdsburg. The reasoning behind that change was to mitigate some of the additional grading work that would be done, and it does include the hammerhead turnarounds that would be required by the fire department, but from a safety standpoint for emergency vehicle access the staff recommendation was the continuous one as the more ideal layout of the through design.

Commissioner Fernandez asked for further questions of staff. Seeing none, he invited the applicant to speak.

The applicant gave a presentation and was available for questions.

Chair Fernandez asked for Planning Commission questions of the applicant.

John Jay, Associate Planner

Kathy, we spoke about the driveway orientation maybe shifting a little bit farther west along Healdsburg Avenue. I think there was a Caltrans minimum requirement, if you could explain that.

Katherine Austin, Applicant

Generally speaking, Caltrans wants you to have a driveway as far away from an intersection as possible. At the same time we have a power pole right here, so we are as far east as we can be. One of the Design Review Board members asked why we don't put the driveway between the buildings, but my feeling is that Caltrans would not want traffic to come out so close to the intersection. Also, if there's queuing going on here there's a greater opportunity to make a left turn than if you were here. Maybe three cars would block a driveway here, whereas here you have more room.

Deborah Burnes, Commissioner

When you're looking at the rents, is there typically any low-income occupancy there? Are the current owners building it and then selling it? Are they planning to also manage it and rent it or sell the townhomes?

Katherine Austin, Applicant

I think they will not be selling them, only because interest rates are so high and the need is greater for rentals. I think the intention is that should things change eventually that these townhomes could be for sale, but I'm pretty certain that the client is going to want to rent them out. At this point the owner is intending to build this out, and we will be under your Inclusionary Ordinance, and so depending on what units make the most sense and at what price point will determine what units would be deed restricted. I mentioned in design review that I had read an article about a gentleman in Sebastopol who has been renting out to

Section 8 tenants and having a lot of success at that and I was considering suggesting that to the owner; I don't have any control over that, but I think it's an excellent way of getting some affordability that isn't deed restricted. The other thing too is those one-bedroom apartments are going to be a lot less expensive than a larger apartment, and if we do get to make the first floor of the commercial into residences, I'd like to have some studio apartments as well so that we would have a range of price points.

Deborah Burnes, Commissioner

Commercial property has not been in great demand in Sebastopol, and it's not just recently. We've had a lot of vacancies in our industrial properties, so having more industrial property really isn't in the best interest, but housing, especially lower- and middle-income, would be. Lastly, I'm not sure if there is a traffic evaluation that happens before we approve more housing. I'm looking at all the units in general that are going into Sebastopol, and with the marriage of El Molino Lane and Anay and all the units we have coming in, we already have issues, so where are we at with that? I have no idea what the occupancy is now at the high school, but as we bring in all of this new housing we have to look at the infrastructure and whether we can support it. I'm not sure if a traffic evaluation is part of that or separate.

John Jay, Associate Planner

It would come later on. We haven't made a CEQA determination on this project yet, and traffic would definitely be one of those considerations when we do. So yes, some sort of traffic study would more than likely be done on this, and I know the intersection of Murphy Avenue and Healdsburg Avenue has been identified as a problem intersection, so it could eventually get a light or some sort of traffic calming measure in the future.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

Our General Plan identifies three potential intersections that would need upgrading within the City as we continue to develop. The one that wouldn't be affected by this or the other projects is Fircrest and Highway 116, because a recently done pedestrian safety analysis for a crosswalk down there shows it is nowhere near warranting a signal. The two intersections on the north side of town are Healdsburg Avenue and Murphy Avenue and Covert Lane and Highway 116. Obviously City Ventures has submitted the 80 units up on the north side behind O'Reilly; those are both components that we'll need to study. Normally a traffic study gets triggered if there are more than five or six units, so we did not have to do a traffic study for the Habitat for Humanity four-unit townhome development, but anything like Huntley Square, which is ten units, triggers a traffic study because of these types of impacts. I know Caltrans prefers to have things as far away from their intersection as possible, but along that road there are a lot of encroachments for driveways a lot closer than the site is, so you shouldn't preclude that as Caltrans won't allow it. We also need to take back our City a little bit from doing whatever is best for Caltrans and make sure we're doing what's best for our city too, but that would also be part of the traffic study, so you'd have the maneuvering parts of it as part of the study, not just the volumes.

Kathy Oetinger, Commissioner

Did you consider doing a 40-foot, three-story unit or townhome on either of the parcels? Is there any reason why you wouldn't consider that?

Katherine Austin, Applicant

My understanding is to go higher than two stories it has to be deed restricted affordable housing, and my client can't afford to do the subsidy that is necessary. It's about \$250,000 per unit of subsidy to produce an affordable housing unit in the area, and so that's why you see Burbank Housing and other nonprofits providing that type of housing, because they can apply for all the federal and State funds that a private developer in this situation can't do.

Kathy Oetinger, Commissioner

I like the mix of the original mixed uses, but it is appropriate not to have more small live/work or retail spaces on that site, because there are so many available. I like the idea of studio apartments, but if you are considering inclusionary units could you include one to be a larger family home? I think there might be opportunity there to turn one unit into something that could become two units but basically is intended as one.

Katherine Austin, Applicant

Yes, that's something that we could look at, and I totally agree with you. I can check if there are any statistics of what is ideally needed. I know when I did projects for Burbank Housing they would check and see who was on their wait list, and what size families, and who needs what. We'll research as to what the real need is.

Kathy Oetinger, Commissioner

I thought it would be nice also with those units on the ground to have a bedroom on the main floor, because none of the other units do, but if that could be done in the studio apartments or in that particular larger unit, it could solve the ADA problem more easily.

Katherine Austin, Applicant

Even if we have residents on the first floor we will still maintain the elevator, so all the units above are fully accessible, making the entire building accessible.

Kathy Oetinger, Commissioner

Could people coming out of the upper townhomes walk directly in a staircase? I thought I saw some on the side. It seems like it might be better if that staircase could be on the east side, because that's the direct path for going.

Katherine Austin, Applicant

It's the steeper side though. There definitely is stairs and a path, so that's easy to go through, and it would be between the existing building and the oak tree that's there and our building. It's the least steep, meaning fewer stair.

Paul Peck, LACO Associates

Kathy, we forgot to mention the walkway on the west side and the stairs, so there's pedestrian access on that west side and also it leads all the way up to the townhomes with the steps there.

Kathy Oetinger, Commissioner

I'm happy to hear that there are rentals, because it's needed, and that you solved the problem with downstairs bedrooms. I also like the idea that there are two master bedrooms in those upper units, because it allows for more generational housing.

Katherine Austin, Applicant

That's was my intention, because the rents are so high that two individuals could share, or a parent and an adult child could share the rent and still have their privacy.

Linda Kelley, Commissioner

The design review was on YouTube, so I watched their discussion twice and I was appreciative of your commitment to them that you would try to implement some of the suggestions they had in terms of the buildings and their design. My issue and question is the accessibility of the townhomes. The way I read the site plan for those units, none of the townhomes are accessible. You said you're going to have units that are adaptable, but how

do you get upstairs if the bedrooms are upstairs and you have a staircase, other than putting in some aftermarket appliances? I know you are committed to accessibility. We have a Universal Design Ordinance that applies mostly to accessibility if it's going to be sold and not for renters. That's my big concern; because I'd hate one more time to lose the opportunity to have as many accessible universally designed units as possible.

Katherine Austin, Applicant

It's always an issue. One of the things I plan to come back with is a redesigned townhome. I don't want to give anything away right now, but I did take a lot to heart from the design review and with the revisions I plan to make I think we will be able to provide the kind of accessibility you're looking for in some of the townhomes where we are more flat. The townhomes on the eastern side are very flat, but unfortunately I can't get away from having stairs most of the ones that are going in the east/west direction, although some I can have a zero step entry, and where I can do a zero step entry I am looking at making adjustments to allow for exactly what you're saying. I think I was pushing the envelope with this initial design and I do feel like I can provide that. I won't say I can do it in all of them, but I will do them where I can get a zero step entry.

Linda Kelley, Commissioner

That's wonderful. I'm hoping that the City staff is reviewing our universal design guidelines and Chapter 15.8 of our municipal code in looking at all of our projects. Often the universal needs are not necessarily when you are aged, but because of traumas, accidents, or illnesses that necessitate that. I know it's easier to put the adaptability in as you're building it than to try to do it after it's already built. With the inclusionary, I also agree that mixing as much as possible would be important. I didn't see if we're also going to be using heat pumps when I saw compressors on the flat roof.

Katherine Austin, Applicant

Yes, that's a heat pump. All heat pumps for both heating and cooling, and I think I'm going to move to hot water heaters that are now for heat pumps and go all electric, and even some other things that aren't required by code but provide fresh air intake.

Linda Kelley, Commissioner

Will there be charging ports for electric vehicles built into the garages?

Katherine Austin, Applicant

Yes, they would have them in the garages, and then on the commercial building we'll be putting in 40% on charging units in the parking lot. If you've had a chance to go over to the Barlow Crossing townhomes you'll see the charging stations that we've put in there, and there's one stanchion that serves two, so there would be opportunities for electric car charging in both the townhomes and in the commercial building.

Linda Kelley, Commissioner

And I think I saw that there is going to be solar available?

Katherine Austin, Applicant

Yes, everything has to have solar now, and actually Sebastopol was ahead of the State on that.

Linda Kelley, Commissioner

Then it would be solar assigned to each individual unit?

Katherine Austin, Applicant

Correct, each townhome would have its own solar, because they're on individual lots.

Paul Fritz, Vice Chair

We have a development standard table in the staff report that doesn't have column headings. I don't understand this table and the density, because I don't know what the columns are laying out. I'm guessing there's a column for the commercial office standards and our seven standards?

John Jay, Associate Planner

That's correct. I was having a hard time transferring the table over and a few columns got chopped off.

Paul Fritz, Vice Chair

I'm looking at page 3 of the staff report. My question is what is the allowable minimum and maximum density for the whole site? I'm trying to understand where this falls into the range of density allowances.

Katherine Austin, Applicant

I'd like to hear what Associate Planner Jay has to say. When I did my first pass at the design I know I met it. I think I may be reducing the density and I want to make sure I don't fall below the required, but then if we're converting some of the commercial building into residences, how does that play into it? We are going to apply for a use permit to have the 100% residential, and I think under the use permit process there might be some flexibility in that; that might be an avenue to tailor it to meet the requirement.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

This happened at the Barlow Townhomes as well where you have a driveway easement that needs to be recorded, which you obviously would have in this. Those areas can be taken out of the site area, so they don't necessarily reduce your density if you're bumping up against the max density, but they can be. For those of you who were on the Commission when we did the Barlow Crossing townhomes, there is a public access for the roadway that is the driveway through the parking lot for the townhomes, but that's also an access for Park Village and then there's a bicycle path, and so those areas could be subtracted from the total lot area when you're calculating density.

Katherine Austin, Applicant

Would that include the parking lot too, Kari, or just the driveways?

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

Not the parking lot, and I'm assuming you would have those assigned to individual tenants, so it would just be the access easement through.

John Jay, Associate Planner

The maximum for the R7 would be 31.97 units, so you guys were proposing...

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

21 and 24, so that should be fine.

John Jay, Associate Planner

Then for the commercial aspect of it, it's one dwelling unit per 2,900 square feet of lot area.

Katherine Austin, Applicant

That might be a problem.

Paul Fritz, Vice Chair

So basically 32 max; that's just the R7 portion?

John Jay, Associate Planner

Correct.

Paul Fritz, Vice Chair

So then in addition there's the maximum allowed on the CO zone?

John Jay, Associate Planner

Correct.

Katherine Austin, Applicant

If we go 100% residential, could we look at the entire area and divide that up for the 2,900 per square foot unit? I'm concerned about the commercial building with the apartments above and below, that that wouldn't calculate out, or is it something different? This is something we can hash out as well, but it is good to discuss it because if it's going to impact on the design we should know.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

We don't normally have split zoning like this, so it's usually one or the other. I agree we could deal with it through the use permit, because you're a fully residential-only on one parcel and what does that mean? Certainly there are amenities for each in both of those areas, and I believe when it came in for the preliminary review the way we interpreted it was you would calculate the two different densities separately, so for the back park where it's R7, divide that by the 29 units per acre, and then the commercial part is divided by the number of units per acres, or by the square foot per unit—same thing, just a different way of calculating it—that's based on the commercial zone.

Katherine Austin, Applicant

I'm thinking of reducing some of my density in the townhomes to get wider townhomes to provide the accessibility that Commissioner Kelley was talking about, and I'm worried if there is a minimum that I have to be on that R7?

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

We do have a minimum density for R7. I think you're above it, but let's see what it is.

John Jay, Associate Planner

I have it calculated out to 15.48 units.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

Okay, so you're fine.

Katherine Austin, Applicant

But if I reduce it from 15, would I still be fine? In order to make the units wider to meet the accessibility I'm going to have to lose some units.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

I think you'd still be fine, because you have the shared driveway and you would be able to take out of that.

Paul Fritz, Vice Chair

The site currently has the split zone, the commercial office zone and the residential zone, and the way the site was developed addresses those two things differently. The front is commercial so we're doing it this way, and the back is residential so we're doing it this way. If the site is allowed to be 100% residential, would you still approach it in the same way or would you would rethink the kind of overall layout. So if it goes to 100% residential would you rethink the site layout, or would you stick with the way it is and just make it more residential at the front street side?

Katherine Austin, Applicant

I did approach it with the split zoning, but I'm also approaching it with where the leveler areas of the site are at the back and at the front and avoiding the really steep middle, so it's a combination of both. But I also do feel strongly that the building on the front should continue with that commercial feel of Healdsburg Avenue and that at some point it might make more sense for that lower level to revert back to a retail or office use, and so it maintains the greater flexibility going into the future if I keep it designed pretty much the way I have it now. I do intend to make significant changes to the way the buildings look based on the design review comments that I received, but my intention is to keep the high ceilings of that first floor so that it can convert to a commercial use at some point, so having that flexibility, but also the fact that the site slopes and where the leveler areas are will continue to define how the project is laid out.

Evert Fernandez, Chair

Will there be a central mailbox site as opposed to each location?

Katherine Austin, Applicant

Yes, it's required now. The post office won't let us do anything differently, so I will contact them to find out the optimum location for them. The changes I'm making will probably lead to a location for that. For the front commercial building it will be a ganged, but it will be a separate location for the group of townhomes, so there would probably be two mail hubs.

Evert Fernandez, Chair

I appreciate your thought on keeping that space flexible for the future, but are you giving up certain things? In other words, what are the disadvantages of keeping that flexible? Do you lose some residential amenities? I find it hard to think about taking a living space and converting it to commercial and taking that living space out.

Katherine Austin, Applicant

My proposal will be to get rid of some of the parking in the parking lot to create a common green space for those residences, and should it ever convert back to commercial, unless the City has changed its parking requirements, that green space would have to be eliminated and parking go back in. This site is so walkable and on a bus route, and I don't want to over-park it, but I don't want to not meet your requirements either; I don't think we're losing anything by retaining that flexibility. It would be a little bit more expensive to build the first floor units, because the ceilings are quite a bit higher, because usually in a commercial space the minimum is a 12-foot ceiling and we wouldn't normally have that in a residence. On the other hand, it could create an opportunity to have some loft storage area for the units that I put in there. I will mention that we have to step the building in three locations. I don't know if you noticed the way the first floor is divided into thirds, but we go up a foot at each line because of the slope of the site, and so it would limit to a degree how I design units in there, which is why I'm saying I can have either two studios or one one-bedroom, or one two- or three-bedroom units in that rectangle, but more an industrial loft

type feel to the studio, because the ceilings are so high. I want to work with my owner to find out what he wants to build, so that's why I'm being a little noncommittal. I would have to step for bathrooms for each individual tenant space anyway, and so that isn't going to make any difference; I'll have a bathroom in each. I would be putting in a kitchenette or a kitchen, which is more expensive. We would be spending more to make the residences as opposed to just having a bare space that a tenant improvement would do, but my client knows he can easily rent them out because the need is so great. Right now there's no need for commercial space, so it would be cheaper to build but he couldn't rent it out versus more expensive to build but you know you can rent it out.

Evert Fernandez, Chair

I'm concerned that if it's more expensive to build, then he might have to charge a higher rent for that space as opposed to just making it residential.

Katherine Austin, Applicant

Like a townhome type situation?

Evert Fernandez, Chair

Yes.

Katherine Austin, Applicant

No, actually because the townhomes have more surface area to treat than these internal spaces, so they actually would be less expensive than doing a townhome, if that makes sense.

Evert Fernandez, Chair

I'm assuming you'd have to run different power to those in case it does turn industrial?

Katherine Austin, Applicant

There are never going to be kitchens because we can't meet all those requirements, and so they would just be retail or office space, nothing extraordinary, but the number of meters would be about the same.

Evert Fernandez, Chair

Does working from home come into play as well? Are there certain things that are thought out for that type of space, like including more outlets?

Katherine Austin, Applicant

In this case the units are all really small, so I can't have a dedicated flexible space; it's more making sure that the Internet cables are in place and that sort of thing. I suppose somebody could rent one of the townhomes and use one of the bedrooms as an office. If I had a larger unit I would do more. These are just going to have to be really flexible within the space that I have to work with.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

Kathy, did you do the calculations for the commercial parking lot just based on the commercial space? Our code now includes a shared parking reduction that's an automatic percentage.

Katherine Austin, Applicant

I did use the shared parking reduction, and my proposal is to take one of the parking spaces and convert it into the bicycle parking location under the covered area.

Paul Fritz, Vice Chair

In your parking calculations did you use the street parking? I believe we allow you to count the street parking spaces towards your overall parking count.

Katherine Austin, Applicant

This was asked in design review and Kari said only the deed-restricted units are allowed to count on-street spaces, and so I'm not sure if that's the case. There is probably room for four on Murphy Avenue, which would be much closer for the townhomes, and I thought there is no parking on Healdsburg Avenue because of the bike path, but I noticed when I looked at my photographs there's at least one parking space.

Paul Fritz, Vice Chair

There is a parking lane there. You do have the bus stop, so you obviously can't park there, but you have a lot of frontage. I'm looking at Google Earth and there's definitely a parking lane there, so I'm going to throw it out there that you could use that space and maybe create some more green space in the parking lot if you use the street parking.

Katherine Austin, Applicant

If I'm allowed under the use permitting process we could definitely look at that.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

I think it's in our parking provisions that for commercial and multi-family you can count the on-street spaces towards... I'll send you the section of the code that refers to that.

Katherine Austin, Applicant

The more green space we can get and fewer parking lots in the back, I'm happy, but at the same time I want to make sure I'm meeting all of your requirements.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

I wanted to clarify one thing that I don't think our retired fire chief had a chance to loop back around with Kathy and Paul on regarding the access road being through versus not through. While the hammerhead technically meets the requirements, he much prefers a through route as well for safety, access issues, evacuation, and all sorts of other things, because the hammerhead works technically for a fire truck but it doesn't work so well for emergency vehicle access, so he really prefers a route that goes through.

Katherine Austin, Applicant

And I did too, but I think you heard Paul's presentation. I really don't think we're going to be able to make that work. I'll have no units with zero step entry at the townhomes if that's the case. We can't make it work and save the roots of the oak trees behind because of the way we'd have to depress the road and that 12% grade; it's just not a safe road condition, so I want to be honest that I don't think we're going to go that way even if it is preferred. It would be even worse if we were to get closer to the Healdsburg Avenue/Murphy Avenue intersection. When Paul first did it he had all these retaining walls at the back of the property, but that would have chopped all the roots off the oak trees and so we couldn't do that, so that's how we came up with the proposal. I'm also proposing to reduce some of the density of the townhome area in order to meet the wider units, so there wouldn't be as many people using that section if that helps.

Evert Fernandez, Chair

Kari, when you mentioned preference versus requirements, it's a preference and wouldn't be a requirement?

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

I hate to speak for the fire chief; he's also retired now so we have a situation in flux. He was extremely concerned about the emergency vehicle access to the back of the units and also for evacuation, having people trapped and not able to get out while vehicles are trying to come in; the access is a lot easier if you have two ways out. I wish there was a way to explore things like a bit more feathering grading on one side versus the other, or relocating things. I think it would be worth it given the fire chief's concerns, and that's probably a technical detail we need to look at offline.

Katherine Austin, Applicant

We can make Paul available to the new fire chief to go over it as well.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

I think that would be good to do some sketching. We have an interim chief right now, but he is quite experienced and has been a volunteer in Sebastopol so he knows the City well, and was on the Santa Rosa fire department staff.

Katherine Austin, Applicant

If you can get that information to Paul we can arrange a meeting right away.

Linda Kelley, Commissioner

About street parking on Healdsburg Avenue, the bus stop is somewhere in there and then there are queuing issues for Murphy Avenue. How many on-street parking spots do you see available on Healdsburg in front of the project?

Katherine Austin, Applicant

I didn't think any was allowed because of the bike path, so I didn't try to measure that out. Right now the bus stop is smack in the middle, so I'm not sure; I'd have to look at how much is used for the bike path. I know on Murphy Avenue I could fit four to the south of where our driveway meets Murphy. I don't know how many I could fit on Healdsburg.

Chair Fernandez asked for further Planning Commission questions of the applicant. Seeing none, he opened public comment.

Carol Capria

I live on Healdsburg Avenue across the street from the proposed project. I attended the Design Review Board meeting and the members made thoughtful comments, questions, and suggestions. I'm happy changes have been made to the project already and will continue to be made. I support the need for residential housing. Having a traffic study would be great, because Bodega Avenue backs up and people use Murphy as a cut-through, and Murphy already backs up. Another serious consideration is for affordable housing units to include Section 8 housing.

Chair Fernandez closed public comment.

The Commission discussed the application as follows:

Paul Fritz, Vice Chair

I am 100% behind this being 100% residential, because I don't see the commercial being of real value at this point. My preference would be to make this a residential project without the option to be commercial in the future, because we'll always have a need for residential in Sebastopol and I don't see us making that conversion to commercial. It's one thing to have a loft-style flexible residential and possibly commercial space, but probably not for a

three-bedroom family apartment in Sebastopol. There are things that would have to be compromised in trying to make a flexible space: the windows for example. A commercial space would have a lot of window on Healdsburg Avenue and residential would not want that. If you design first for residential it would mean minimal windows, and then it would never be commercial, because who is going to want a commercial space with no window. I could see other opportunities for this project, maybe for the circulation, and could see the site developing in a different way, but don't want to make Kathy completely redo everything, which puts us in a awkward position. This site is unique and challenging, and because of the way it has been developed to this point it almost ignores some of its unique aspects because of trying to develop two different pieces to two different zoning districts. Having to put in an 11-foot retaining wall, even if it's stepped, is unfortunate. It would be interesting to work the design into the slope a bit more rather than just having a big cut. From a Planning Commission standpoint, I'm not sure what we're looking for other than whether it should be 100% residential or not; I don't know if there are other specific planning issues that you want us to address.

Katherine Austin, Applicant

I assume the best way to go is not trying to rezone something, because that's in the General Plan as well as the Zoning Code; it seems like the path of least resistance is to do a use permit to allow 100% residential in the CO zone.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

Yes, I agree with that. A use permit is all that's needed for this. You have the exterior setbacks that you're maintaining at the other property lines and residential-only is allowed with a use permit, so that could allow us to have the flexibility in terms of the odd split zoning and how that works with the site.

Paul Fritz, Vice Chair

The big issue is the use permit and whether we are supportive of that, because obviously we're not deciding anything tonight and you're trying to get some feedback on if you should go the 100% residential route or not, so I want to put out there that I'm definitely for that, but I'm asking if there are other planning or zoning issues that you want us to specifically weigh in on?

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

It would be helpful to know if you have any environmental concerns you'd like us to address. We will be doing an initial study or an exemption with the technical studies; we haven't determined that yet. I'd want to know any thoughts about reduction of asphalt on the site. That's a design review purview, but because it's a subdivision it will also go through the Planning Commission and the City Council.

Paul Fritz, Vice Chair

An interesting idea—and this doesn't address the drive-through idea, it's kind of anti that—but I've been to several 100% residential projects where the parking is very separate from residential, and it made such a nice, quiet pedestrian zone; and on this site perhaps having that southern portion that is flatter as parking and putting all the parking up high, and then having the residential stepping down the hill to still have the hill perceived as more of an amenity of the project. I hear the two-access issue and agree with Chair Fernandez that for a seven-unit project that's super important, for a 15-unit project it would be ideal, but it seems like it's workable to have the hammerhead situation in preference versus practicality.

Linda Kelley, Commissioner

At the Petaluma Avenue homes the fire department wanted to have through-flow, but it ended up placing bollards placed on Walker so they had a way of getting in and out in an emergency. I don't know if that's something to pursue. I'm concerned about the traffic going in an out of Healdsburg Avenue.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

Healdsburg Avenue does have a turn lane on it for people who are going west and need to turn into it, so on the roadway it's probably not as much of an issue as potentially coming out of the site. Trying to take a left turn can be difficult at certain times of the day and traffic can get a little backed up to the right, but on most places it's easier to go right in that kind of a situation, so when we do the traffic study we'll want to make sure we have appropriate queuing in that driveway coming down to Healdsburg. I think that was Planning's preference originally, that you could go out Murphy Avenue, and since there is a likely future signal at Healdsburg and Murphy, that helps resolve the issue in that way.

Evert Fernandez, Chair

Like Vice Chair Fritz, I would prefer to just consider it to be 100% residential and not worry about the commercial flexibility.

Katherine Austin, Applicant

It sounds you're fine if I re-look at that building to be more residential. I wouldn't keep the storefront windows the way I'm showing them if I made it residential, but the opening could be made commercial again, but that sounds like that's not all that important to you.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

Not at this particular site, Kathy.

Katherine Austin, Applicant

The Design Review Board was similar in that regard, so I'm not going to try to keep a commercial look on that lower level and I'll rethink what that building looks like. I wasn't aware that there was any parking on Healdsburg Avenue, so we will look at that. I will ask Paul, my civil engineer, to connect with the interim fire chief and discuss what we're proposing to do for the hammerhead. I'm going to come back with slightly less density in the townhome area in order to provide some of the accessibility issues that Commissioner Kelley has identified. We are going to look at minimizing the parking for the building in the front so that we can create more green space. Paul and I will look at the retaining wall again to see if there are any adjustments we can make based on changes we are considering, but because it is still a split zoning and we're not proposing to rezone the property we are probably going to keep the two entrances pretty much as proposed. It is incredibly steep right through the middle of the site, and even if we were to try to move the north/south connection, no matter where you put it in there it's so steep that I don't think we could make it work. I want to be honest about that, so if I come back and we still have two separate access points you're not surprised, because the site is driving that.

Evert Fernandez, Chair

I appreciate you salvaging the trees and incorporating as many as you have been able to.

Katherine Austin, Applicant

We are proposing to bring in as large specimen trees in our planting plan as possible, because we recognize that this is a beautiful site filled with trees and we're proposing taking out a bunch of trees, because to make the site usable trees have to come out.

Evert Fernandez, Chair

Just keep in mind gutter covers.

Katherine Austin, Applicant

Absolutely, and in fact that’s why I have pitched roofs for the townhomes.

Paul Fritz, Vice Chair

I did fine out about the street parking issue, that it’s allowed for commercial and multi-family, and that’s Zoning Code section 17.110.10(b), so multi-family does allow the street parking to be counted.

Katherine Austin, Applicant

That’s great, because that was unclear to me after the Design Review Board meeting, so I will look at that, but I have to take out the part that’s the bus stop.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

It needs to be the extension parking spaces, yes.

Paul Fritz, Vice Chair

Maybe that can move a little bit farther to the west down toward your project next door.

Katherine Austin, Applicant

Yes, it might. That’s something we could coordinate with Kari and the traffic study.

Paul Fritz, Vice Chair

You may have to bring Sonoma County Transit into the equation.

Chair Fernandez asked for further Planning Commission comments. Seeing none, he moved to the next item.

7. SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES

None.

8. PLANNING DIRECTOR’S REPORT

Director Svanstrom provided updates.

The Commission asked questions of Director Svanstrom.

9. ADJOURNMENT: Chair Fernandez adjourned the meeting at 9:14 p.m. The next regularly scheduled Planning Commission meeting will take place on Wednesday, January 24, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.