

**From:** Kate Haug  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 25, 2024 4:58 PM  
**To:** John Jay  
**Subject:** Public Comment for Planning Commission

Dear Planning Commissioners,

In reading the recent article in the Sebastopol Times regarding the Planning Commission's rethinking of zoning to restore "charm" to more of Sebastopol, I wanted to send in a few comments.

The first is that we need to acknowledge that we live in a car dependent, semi-rural area. Parking needs to be affiliated with any new developments as most people use cars on a regular basis, especially if they have children. Working class people often have tools associated with their work and need cars/ trucks to perform their jobs. If a family has a child or two, there are trips that require cars from sports practice to work to grocery shopping. As public transportation is not robust, most working adults and most families need at least one car.

The second is that setbacks have a lot of merit. The Woodmark Apartments have a minimal set back. The buildings could have benefitted from at least 24" more setbacks. This would reduce interior noise for residents and make the project more appealing for neighbors and pedestrians using the sidewalks.

Wide sidewalks and setbacks encourage pedestrian activity and make streets more appealing. I was just walking around New York City and the buildings are typically "set back" not by trees but by the use of stoops. See attached photograph.

I also read that you are discussing vacation rental ordinances. It is crucial that Sebastopol limit its vacation rentals, especially non hosted to preserve housing stock and to limit impacts on neighborhoods. Once Sebastopol has another hotel in the pipeline, the Commission and the City should start to wind down existing short-term rentals. As we don't have a downtown hotel, we need the existing rentals to bring revenue to the City. Once there is a hotel in the pipeline, we can return the housing stock back to long-term rentals.

As you might be aware, there is a high level of vacancy in downtown Sebastopol, which is impacting local revenue and the sustainability of existing stores.

Funk and Flash just announced they will be closing at the end of September.

The Livery looks like it will not be proceeding forward as planned.

Has the Planning Commission the ability to address any of the downtown buildings to move them toward occupancy?

The ground floor of the Livery building could be used for holiday pop-ups, craft making, wreath making and small choir concerts and other activities. It could serve as the town square during rainy weather. It could house the Legacy holiday boutique.

In addition, the upper floors of the Livery could be converted to office space above its ground floor retail.

The Funk and Flash building used to house a school. Could it be converted to live/work spaces? It has a huge parking lot that could accommodate residents with cars. Does zoning allow that? Has anyone approached the landlord? If there were people living in the building, it would add foot traffic and vibrancy to that area of Main Street. The ground floors facing Main Street could remain retail.

The vacant Longs/CVS building in the Redwood Marketplace is a giant, empty space. Has anyone approached them to have the space converted into an alternative use such as:

- a. Indoor pickleball courts: <https://www.pressdemocrat.com/article/north-bay/pickleball-courts-rohnert-park-ca/>
- b. Indoor Roller skating rink like the Church of 8 Wheels in San Francisco: <http://www.churchof8wheels.com>
- c. Holiday ice skating rink: <https://www.precisionicerinks.com>

The old Mary's Pizza Shack has a full kitchen in it. Many people rent commercial kitchens. Has anyone spoken to the commercial real estate agent to see if there might be interest in converting that space to a commercial kitchen?

Jasper's is a fully renovated bar space. I am assuming there is a liquor license associated with it. It has the disadvantage of no parking. Has anyone brainstormed on what a good use for the space would be? What is preventing it from being rented?

Paul Fritz (<https://fritzarchitecture.com>) and Lars Langberg (<https://larsarchitects.com>) are both architects who have graciously volunteered on our Planning and Design Commissions. Perhaps, they might weigh in on how to address some of these vacancies and what uses might be appropriate for these spaces? Could you task the Planning Commission and Design Board with looking at the current vacancies to generate some uses with may or may not be currently in circulation. What types of spaces are needed along the commercial corridor? More office space? Live/work? What types of services - occupational therapy offices, speech therapy, other professional services?

Could you ask these commissions for a list of low-cost ways to 1) make commercial corridor sidewalks more appealing, 2) to make the Town Square a connective area between downtown and the Barlow, 3) to make Ives a Downtown centerpiece and ADA compliant. Could you task these Commissions with thinking of how to do these things with budgets less than \$10,000?

The Commission seems to be taking a more active role in supporting local business and downtown. I applaud this and think it is a step in the right direction. I would love to see the Funk and Flash and the Livery buildings occupied. I would love to see urban infill if it had parking. I am hopeful Sebastopol will have a hotel within the next 5 years and can begin returning some of the short term rentals back to housing stock.

Best,  
Kate Haug



