



City of Sebastopol
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UNAPPROVED DRAFT MINUTES

TREE/DESIGN REVIEW BOARD
CITY OF SEBASTOPOL
MINUTES OF October 24, 2023
3:30 P.M.

The notice of the meeting was posted on October 19, 2023.

DESIGN REVIEW BOARD:

1. CALL TO ORDER: Chair Langberg called the meeting to order at 3:30 P.M. and read a procedural statement.

2. ROLL CALL:

Present:	Lars Langberg, Chair Melissa Hanley, Vice Chair Marshall Balfe, Board Member Lynn Deedler, Board Member Christine Level, Board Member
Absent:	Cary Bush, Board Member (Recused)
Staff:	John Jay, Associate Planner

Chair Langberg noted that Board Member Bush had recused himself from participating in the public hearing for Item 7.A., 6809 Sebastopol Avenue, because of his residence’s proximity to the subject site.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: None

4. PLANNING DEPARTMENT UPDATE ON MATTERS OF GENERAL INTEREST:

Associate Planner Jay reported that:

- SCTA and Fehr & Peers will host a workshop for the Active Transportation Plan at the Sebastopol Farmers Market on November 5th as their first public outreach.

5. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC REGARDING ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA:

Steve Pierce, a member of the public

A UPS store moved into South Main Street 10 months ago and one of their windows has 2x4s facing the street with some kind of boards on the other side. That is probably not in the Design Review Board intention for their storefront. Is that what the rules are, or did the applicant do that after the fact? Next, there was been “unfortunate tree selection” for Libby Park that has been installed in the past few months. Redwood trees that are not on the

City's list of preferred trees but are being planted in a public park, although I can think of three instances of redwood trees falling in the past 20 years. We all know redwood trees have very shallow roots systems. These are scary trees that do not belong in an urban environment, and the park where they have been planted has houses right next door. Also, there is now an 8-foot wide road that goes directly through the venue in Ives park that has a long history of plays and events that bisects the park with a 7-inch curb drop-off in parts on both sides, so these are trip and fall hazards.

Lars Langberg, Chair

The UPS store as a tenant improvement does not come into front of the Board for approval.

John Jay, Associate Planner

They just recently had an admin sign approval, and part of their conditions of approval is to obscure that first row of panes of glass to block that ugliness from the street. As far as Ives Park goes, the Planning Commission is the body that handles all park related issues and concerns. As far as the tree species for planting in the parks goes, that might with the Public Works Department; I'd have to double check with them to see if that was a recommendation that they got from the Parks Commission, Planning Commission, or if it was just on their list of trees to replant.

Lars Langberg, Chair

Libby Park is a public park, so if tree are to be planted that's going to go to the City and Public Works or the Planning Commission to spearhead that process?

John Jay, Associate Planner

Correct.

Lars Langberg, Chair

Would there be a public review part of that, or they may just do park improvements as they see fit?

John Jay, Associate Planner

Correct, unless there are major improvements. The Planning Commission had a special meeting last year where they looked at the fence that goes around the pond at Libby Park as far as upgrades go, because they would be the body to review that. But as far as any other maintenance, if it is tree related it probably just goes through the Public Works Department; I don't know that there is any public input process for that.

Lars Langberg, Chair

As a side comment, we on the DRB Tree Board have had discussions about the approved list, and for us it's more like a project that you're going to see today that might be planting new trees as part of a development. They pick from a certain list, and we've had concerns in the past of this very thing, if the wrong thing is planted in the wrong location. But as far as I know, there hasn't been coordination between that DRB discussion and the Planning Commission and a bigger picture thing to follow up on.

John Jay, Associate Planner

The Tree Ordinance itself is a project on my list to revise and update, so I am aware that it is not in the greatest space right now, especially with some of the trees on that list, so in the future we will look at modifying and updating the Tree Ordinance section.

Lars Langberg, Chair

Is the work at Ives Park part of the master plan? I know there are ADA upgrades that have been approved at one point, and then the Calder Creek piece is moving ahead.

John Jay, Associate Planner

My understanding is those recent upgrades are part of the ADA upgrades to the park itself to prepare some of those walkways that were in worse condition. They are raised higher off the ground, but I'm not sure if in the future they'll bring in some sort of fill to make that less of a tripping issue.

Christine Level, Board Member

I have a general question for staff. What exactly is the role of the alternate in this body, especially when we have a full seating of the Board?

John Jay, Associate Planner

If there is a member that's missing, to fill that position to make sure that we have a quorum.

Christine Level, Board Member

Right, but when we have a full board. I bring this up because I was an alternate for a very long time and I was not allowed to make a motion or vote when there was a full board. In fact, there was even a movement to not even allow me to speak at all, which fortunately got squashed by Council.

John Jay, Associate Planner

I don't know, I'd have to reach out to the Planning Director for that one.

Christine Level, Board Member

I would suggest that possibly we had a significant procedural misstep in our last meeting, or I was held to a different standard than everybody else when I was the Board alternate.

Lars Langberg, Chair

I think the way Board Member Level describes it is probably correct, that it's an alternate who if we have a full board can voice their opinion but does not vote, but it's been an informal standard. The alternate at different times has been more or less active in how they participate. It feels like it's not a policy we're holding to.

Christine Level, Board Member

It would be interesting to know, because that policy was held to me when I was the Board alternate and I could not vote or make a motion. That was made quite clear to me.

Lars Langberg, Chair

So we should clarify that and uphold that, or else get rid of the term altogether.

Christine Level, Board Member

I think this is a matter you might want to take seriously given some other circumstances that are happening. I think it's really important right now to be procedurally correct about everything, especially when you're touching anything that has to do with SB 35.

Lars Langberg, Chair

I think without qualification we should be procedurally correct, so yes, let's do that.

Associate Planner Jay asked for further public comments regarding items not on the agenda. Seeing none, Chair Langberg closed the item.

6. STATEMENTS OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST: None.

7. REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS:

- A. 6809 Sebastopol Avenue – Benedetti Car Wash** – The applicant is seeking approval of the design for a two-story building that includes ground floor car wash and upstairs mechanical, equipment, storage rooms; tree removal (10 Heritage trees, 3 Oaks, and 7 Redwoods); and a sign permit. This project’s entitlements of a Minor Subdivision, Variance and Use Permit were approved by the City Council on March 2, 2021.

Associate Planner Jay presented the staff report and was available for questions.

The Board had no questions for Associate Planner Jay.

The applicant did not give a presentation, but was available for questions.

Christine Level, Board Member

These dark dashed lines indicate property lines on the streetscape, and it seems to be shared with another property. Can you speak to that? The parking looks like it’s partially on one property and partially on the other.

Patrick, Applicant

The project currently is one parcel, and the proposal is to subdivide it into three parcels so each parcel has it’s own building, business, and conditional use permit, which are all in place with Planning. What you see there are the lines for what has been submitted as the final map for Engineering review, and part of the final map is the shared use and maintenance agreement, so the three lots will be independent legal parcels and function largely as a seamless single parcel from a functional standpoint.

Christine Level, Board Member

And these current businesses are all single ownership?

Patrick, Applicant

Yes.

Christine Level, Board Member

With the proposed new business.

Patrick, Applicant

Single ownership.

Lars Langberg, Chair

What is the reason for subdividing and creating those three parcels?

Patrick, Applicant

Construction financing, insurance reasons, and during the Council’s discussion, because they were the body that approved the conditional use permit and all the approvals, the ability to trifurcate the conditional use permit so each individual business has its own individual use permit, simplifies things. If in 30 years there are different owners for the different

businesses and there was one use permit, it would be messy, so it was easier to do it that way.

Christine Level, Board Member

So right now we're considering this as sort of one parcel, so like Tree 2, because that appears to not be on the parcel that we're considering for this building, then we can just consider it all one parcel.

Patrick, Applicant

Those trees at the south end of the lot are actually the property of the City. There is a City parcel that I think is planned as a future street, and so those trees intersect the property line.

Christine Level, Board Member

Right, that's Trees 8, 9, and 10, and then Tree 2, I guess, would be on the parcel that will eventually be the tire center parcel?

Patrick, Applicant

I don't have it in front of me. I'm not sure which Tree 2 is.

Lars Langberg, Chair

Trees 1 and 2 are as you drive into the cash wash. Near Barnes and Abbott there are two redwood trees as you turn in that driveway.

Christine Level, Board Member

This may be nitpicking. We've got three parcels, but not really, but if we do have three parcels then we're proposing to remove trees that are not on the parcel that's with the business in question, but technically we still have one parcel?

Patrick, Applicant

It's still one parcel.

Christine Level, Board Member

So these dividing lines are sort of suggestions for the future.

Lars Langberg, Chair

For the near future. They're under consideration right now?

Patrick, Applicant

Yes.

Lars Langberg, Chair

We got a few public comments emailed to us about the trees, so just to clarify, there are the ten trees being removed, and how many are proposed to replace them?

Patrick, Applicant

I believe there are 14 crepe myrtles, which are the new City standard for the street trees, and along Sebastopol Avenue the plan is to re-landscape what is now the entire single parcel and include the new standardized street trees in that direction, which will help unify the downtown in a way that other parcels along there are not able to do due to zero lot lines and the lack of street trees.

Lars Langberg, Chair

So similarly, to remove or replacement is not just the car wash site, it's the whole parcel?

Patrick, Applicant

Yes.

Lynn Deedler, Board Member

The sound wall is tentative in that presentation. Aren't there very similar types of car washes that you can go out and check the sound coming off them and get a pretty definitive idea of exactly what you need?

Patrick, Applicant

Yes, and one of the construction consultants, his business is building car washes, so he is completely up to date on the technology and the equipment and he provided a couple of recent projects of similar size. The Council was concerned at that point about the accuracy of the data that was provided and wanted to have a condition in place, if under these specific circumstances and once the equipment is turned on, to mitigate the noise. There were significant studies that were done during the Council's process that showed an idea of a wall that would likely work without Engineering, without being able to take onsite measurements of the equipment and the actual noise on the actual site with the ambient sounds, so it is theoretical at this point. It was a condition of the Council, so we don't know what it would be like yet because we don't know what the conditions would be.

Melissa Hanley, Vice Chair

Is the 10 feet a conservative estimate based on that data?

Patrick, Applicant

That data I believe showed a 9- or 10-foot tall wall in a sound study that was run on a computer modeling, just what the equipment might output and what the noise might be.

Melissa Hanley, Vice Chair

I actually consulted two acousticians that I work with and they felt pretty confident that you could get some accurate understanding based on ratings from these pieces of equipment.

Patrick, Applicant

We felt we did.

Melissa Hanley, Vice Chair

So is Council just not comfortable with approving a 10-foot tall wall?

Mark Reese, Project Owner

This was a large concern for everybody involved, including myself because I don't want to create any more noise than what we already do, and we're in a noisy area to begin with, so Tunnel Vision, who is the contractor for the car wash, has done all these studies we talked about. We did a sound study along with the City and we come in under the ambient noise that's there right now. The biggest concern was the adjoining neighbors. They do a lot of construction outside, grinding, welding, which is much higher than the ambient noise outside. The sound wall is the fail safe catch net in case when we get the car wash the blower system is louder than it should be, it comes out with some sort of amplified noise, that's where the sound wall comes in to mitigate that and take it back down to a level that would not be a problem. Because the project has taken quite a while to come to fruition, they continue to make leaps and bounds regarding the blower systems, primarily the drying

system, and they continue to lower the decibels on it, so even what we had back then is even better and a lower decibel now.

Christine Level, Board Member

Is there a proposed hour of operations?

Mark Reese, Project Owner

I don't have that in front of me and I wouldn't want to speak out of hand, so I would recommend consulting the packet, but the Council approved it. Primarily normal business hours, although I think it extends to 6:00pm or 7:00pm but not past that, and on the weekends I know it's earlier than that.

Lars Langberg, Chair

It's 8:00am to 7:00pm Monday through Friday, and 9:00am to 5:00pm Saturday and Sunday.

Marshall Balfe, Board Member

Where will the sound wall be located?

Mark Reese, Project Owner

The wall will be at the end of the wash, which would be between the back exit of the car wash itself before it loops around to come back through the vacuum stations. If we need it, it will be on that one corner and make almost a 90-degree turn there to be able to make a barrier between our building and the adjacent building as well as the front side toward the express loop.

Marshall Balfe, Board Member

The three trees that are behind the site that are proposed to be removed, will those stay there until the City develops that area, or will they come out now? Why are they part of your proposal?

Mark Reese, Project Owner

When the City Council made the approval they wanted to make sure they had access for a potential street that could go back through there, and that of course would also include a sidewalk, so the sidewalk goes in the direct replacement of where the trees are. The trees will probably have to be removed at some point just because the construction would be adjacent to it and would damage their roots.

Marshall Balfe, Board Member

Your construction would damage them regardless?

Mark Reese, Project Owner

Potentially.

Patrick, Applicant

If you take a look at those trees onsite, they've grown through the fence, and the fence is in very poor condition.

Lynn Deedler, Board Member

Your words were the construction is going to damage the roots and they'll probably need to come out anyway. Could you elaborate on what would kill them or injure them so badly they must come down?

Patrick, Applicant

That location is where the driveway for the access to the car wash is proposed, and it runs along that south line of the property. I don't remember what the measurement is from the trees to the property line and then to the driveway, but the utilities are coming all from that direction as well, so there would be trenching, road base, road construction, and curbs, and then new landscaping that goes in on what would become that 5-foot easement for a future sidewalk. As noted in the arborist report the trees are not in great health, so it's highly unlikely that they would survive construction, and the greater question is does it make sense to try to save trees that are in quite poor health?

Lynn Deedler, Board Member

My take on it is that the health looked fairly good. As close as I could get, they appeared attractive. You mentioned trenching. Can't you stay 12-feet away from root lines and get your trench where you need to go? Have you made a real effort to try to save those trees? Have you come up with a lot of different layouts and decided from the many layouts that this couldn't be done?

Mark Reese, Project Owner

We've gone through quite a few different configurations as to what works best for everything involved, including trees and landscape, along with what the Council wants to see at the end of it, because they're also looking for a barrier between the backside of that particular building and the proposed lot behind, so there were quite a few things involved with the design of that particular plan. The arborist report gives a big tell tale that the trees are not in great condition as they are. We're not even sure that they would survive the fence coming down, because they have become one with the fence already.

Lynn Deedler, Board Member

One of my concerns is the great majority of this site is paved and there is minimal landscaping, and it would seem that there must be a way, given the size of the property, that you can get more landscaping on it. That's why I asked about how many tries did you put into this to try to save the trees and increase the amount of landscaping that is possible there.

Patrick, Applicant

If the question is how many different design did we look at, every slight iteration becomes its own design, so probably thousands of different iterations. We probably had a couple grand schemes, and something that was logical that worked, probably had a couple of iterations, but I would say that there was no design we were able to identify that had the potential of protecting or saving existing trees that are, as a member of the public noted earlier, quite poor urban tree choices, and so if any design were going to be constructed to save a couple of these trees it would be only a matter of time before those redwood trees started to create a problem for any proposed development.

Lars Langberg, Chair

Another way to raise that question is to staff. Is there a requirement for percentage of pervious surface on a lot like this?

John Jay, Associate Planner

Not anything that comes to mind.

Lars Langberg, Chair

So it could be all paved as far as our standards go for this lot?

Patrick, Applicant

I believe that is the case. In the application it was a matter of answering the questions on the application as best as possible in relation to this particular proposal, and I believe that there are percentages or square footages of landscaped areas, building areas, and hardscaped areas.

Lars Langberg, Chair

Melissa is looking it up right now, but that's a good concern.

Melissa Hanley, Vice Chair

The landscape plan is a bit low-resolution and I can't see the size of the replacement trees that are being proposed. Can you speak to the maturity of the trees that will be planted in lieu?

Gayleen Brown, Landscape Designer

The crepe myrtles that are in the plan are roughly mature at around 25 feet.

Lars Langberg, Chair

What is their size when they go into the ground?

Gayleen Brown, Landscape Designer

They are 36-inch boxes. That is just as a fully mature tree as a 36-inch box. 24-inch boxes are also pretty common.

Melissa Hanley, Vice Chair

Could you speak to the choice of those low-range shrubs along the plan south aspect? There are no trees along that property line or any larger species; it all seems pretty low. I'm talking about the property perimeter, and the island too; it backs up into a wetland and open areas noted on our zoning, so I'm curious to know what you are doing to blend into that area?

Gayleen Brown, Landscape Designer

Some of those are vines along the fence; and then others like Carolina Jasmine; and Oleanders, which are a shrub to create a flowering block.

Melissa Hanley, Vice Chair

Did you exploring doing any taller specimens? We've received feedback from the public that they're looking to see more large species trees here.

Patrick, Applicant

Because of the Council's condition for the 5-foot easement for a sidewalk there was concern that if larger landscape species were planted along there that it would be a potential problem in the future to have large specimens that were planted in an area that then needed to be grated to create a sidewalk.

Christine Level, Board Member

It's nice to talk about these 24-inch and 36-inch box trees, but the condition of the tree in the box at the time of planting will be crucial as to whether that tree will perform well or not. I wonder if these urban trees are kind of a fool's errand anyway. In one of these letters we have comments about trees on Main Street, and they never grow and always look terrible. I would suggest just doing landscaping that has more shallow, rooted, taller brush type things. I wonder if even bothering with these trees is worth it? I know we have this idea about trees, but I never see them succeed.

Gayleen Brown, Landscape Designer

That's kind of why I chose this particular tree, the crepe myrtle, because if you look around urban landscaping you just don't find a hardier tree. It is a pretty tree with low water usage and tends to be fairly successful in urban situations. The box it goes in could be adjusted fairly easily to be larger or smaller.

Mark Reese, Project Owner

If you were not at the Council meeting you may not be aware that the landscape redesign is not a condition of approval for the project; it is a condition of approval for the new building, but not for the rest of the location. We decided to do that because the landscaping that's there we originally put in over 30 years ago and it has run its course, and I want the entire project to look really nice.

Melissa Hanley, Vice Chair

The color scheme and material choices are a bit of a departure from the other buildings onsite. Is there a reason to bring in stucco and different materiality?

Patrick, Applicant

It was a conscious decision to bring in the additional materials that speak a bit more to the other, newer construction to the west. There are brick elements, cement, stucco, and it was a way to bring an aesthetic to the project that was more upscale than the existing shop building and the adaptive reuse project to the east that was originally constructed as a automobile dealership service shop. The idea is to have it be more upscale, but with hard-wearing and workaday type of materials used in an interesting composition with interesting colors seemed. Also, down the road those materials would be readily adaptable to an aesthetic retrofit for the other two shop buildings onsite, and elevate the entire parcel sort of as an aesthetic bridge.

Lynn Deedler, Board Member

I think the design of the building is very good. I find it interesting and I second all the applicant's comments. I like the upbeat colors, except it seems like there is a lot of grey in there, so I hope that gets downplayed a little bit; it seems a little too contemporary.

Marshall Balfe, Board Member

The sections, I know these aren't working bones, but are you suggesting a concrete structure involved here?

Patrick, Applicant

ICF, insulating concrete forms.

Marshall Balfe, Board Member

I'm familiar with it and I like that.

Lynn Deedler, Board Member

I have several questions about the vacuum system. First, you have 17. Why so many? Second, you have shade structures over those vacuum areas. Are those for solar panels?

Patrick, Applicant

Regarding the quantity, that was simply the calculation of required parking in the zoning ordinance, and if the parking stalls need to be installed it made sense to have vacuum stations. I believe the shade structures are just nylon cloth on framework. The project is going to have an extensive solar array that will feed back into the grid and make the

electricity basically for operating the business, so the need to have those shade structures at the vacuum stations as solar is not necessary from an engineering standpoint for the solar.

Lynn Deedler, Board Member

The piping on the vacuum system is overhead and it seems like putting plumbing up in the sky. Is there a reason to have it above ground like that?

Patrick, Applicant

The only above ground portion of the vacuum system would be the hose that comes out and is mounted to the standard for the shade structure, and those hoses may come on arms, but those are the only bits that are above-ground.

Lynn Deedler, Board Member

I swear one of the pictures showed something coming out of the vacuum system itself and running parallel to the ground and into one large manifold.

Patrick, Applicant

We have our contractor on Zoom, Ed and Braden, from Tunnel Vision.

Lars Langberg, Chair

Could we call on Tunnel Vision to talk about the vacuums? We had a question about the vacuum stations in that system.

Braden, Tunnel Vision

The document I believe Board Member Deedler is referring to is an industry standard document provided by our manufacturer, and it is the industry standard to put those plenums overhead, those pipings, and that's where we differ from the industry standard. We take the extra effort to actually bury those plenums underground so all of that is outside of view.

Melissa Hanley, Vice Chair

So the cut sheet then shown on Sheet A401 is not accurate?

Patrick, Applicant

Yes. That is not the equipment that is proposed.

Lars Langberg, Chair

Patrick the architect clarified, so A401 is, as you called it, is sort of an industry diagram that is not actually what is being installed.

Braden, Tunnel Vision

The equipment itself is what is being installed. The only difference is the elevation of the equipment. We're undergrounding everything, so it's not overhead.

Patrick, Applicant

Related to the question from Board Member Balf about the type of construction, the vacuum equipment itself will all be enclosed in that second story with concrete walls around it, and so the noise mitigation is very real from being encased in a concrete bunker and it will make it quieter overall, so there is this simpatico that happens between the material choice and the use of the building. The other benefit to that is that any excess heat that would have been waste heat is captured with the equipment and then put into the blowers to assist with

the drying, therefore reducing the amount of air that's needed to move because it's elevated in temperature.

Lynn Deedler, Board Member

You mentioned that all the parking that is on this drawing is required, so I think 17 or 18 parking places are required, but for whom?

Patrick, Applicant

The zoning ordinance has a standalone section related to car washes, so there are special requirements for the number of parking stations that are required as well as the amount of queuing area that is required. Those are special requirements for this very particular land use, so that is where those numbers came from.

Melissa Hanley, Vice Chair

This is not an open space requirement for this use type in this zoning district other than related to dwelling units that are included.

Lynn Deedler, Board Member

I don't quite understand why a car wash that you don't get out of your car needs 17 parking places. I also don't understand why you have a property line going right through about five parking places. Who is using those and who counts those as their parking places?

Patrick, Applicant

In the time between when this application was made several months ago to now that property line has moved easterly down the center of the landscape strip, so those parcels are no longer bifurcated by a proposed property line. It is correct that one should not exit a vehicle while the wash cycle is going on, but it is fine for somebody to exit their vehicle to use a vacuum station, which his not enclosed in the building; those are in the parking area outside the building.

Marshall Balfe, Board Member

I realize that parking regulations might require 17 or 18 spaces, but you're being generous with the vacuum machines and probably don't need all of those; maybe one row would have taken care of it. I'm not being critical, I'm just asking.

Patrick, Applicant

We're actually less than industry standard in the area. There are several other car washes that are built under the same similar type format and they all have more spaces per. There are car enthusiasts who want to finish doing things after washing the car, such as vacuuming the car, wiping down the windows, etc., and it gives them the option.

Melissa Hanley, Vice Chair

Can you speak to the use of the staff area reception? Is this a car wash where you basically pay at a terminal and carry on and never have to get out, or do you have to engage with someone?

Patrick, Applicant

Theoretically you never have to engage with anybody if you don't want to. The equipment nowadays is extremely good and will wash a car 95-98% without anybody touching the car, but there are certain cars and certain conditions, such as heavy dirt, where the car may come out still dirty. We have the ability with one personnel who sits in the front to pre-wash those areas of the car the machine can't get to, such as the front grill area, the area between the rear taillights, and sometimes the lower rocker panels. That person would also

be in charge if you have a problem at the pay station. That also allows that building to be standalone in the area that you're speaking of, because if we need to interview somebody, if we want to have a conversation with staff, we think we'll only need to add two to three personnel, but they also need a place to be able to meet and congregate and go over things as well. That front area, it was a matter of the function of the business not really needing a front door, but wanting the building to have one from an aesthetic standpoint. It is needed to have a place for staff, but it is also front door, a visual greeting to the customers.

Chair Langberg asked for further questions of the applicant. Seeing none, Chair Langberg opened public comment.

Jim Wheaton

Being the direct neighbor at the Chimera Art & Maker Space, I think we would potentially be the most impacted by this project, except for the office upstairs in the back corner of the Ford building. I'm not trying to be not-in-my-backyard, but it is in our back yard and so I have to raise our concerns. I'm most concerned about the noise factor and I'd like some clarity about that. Is the wall going to be built, or is the wall conditional upon some sort of complaint or future measurement that forces construction of the wall? And if it's not going to be built right away, what is the process that determines that the sound wall is needed? I was not really in favor of this. I know the Planning Department was overruled by the City Council to allow this project. There are many reasons I don't think it's a great project for the City in terms of cars idling as they go in there with their air conditioning on. We raised all this stuff at the meeting about downtown use and how it doesn't conform to trying to prevent more auto uses, but it was approved, and when projects are approved I really do want to hold the project to the mitigation that was promised. For instance, we hold classes in our jewelry studio, which is in the rear corner of the Ford building, and we don't have air conditioning, and even though we aren't allowed egress from that roll-up door we open it up a little bit to get air flow through, so there is going to be noise and potential vapors or exhaust is going to come through there. I'm also concerned that this is the last step of oversight and construction is going to happen. We make noise too with hammering and grinding, so I'm not saying we can't have any noise, but if it is bothersome to us we want to have a place to go and we want to know that there is some sort of mitigation that can happen.

Lars Langberg, Chair

John, can you clarify? We were tasked to talk about the potential design or proposed preliminary design for the sound wall, but what are the actual conditions for its building?

John Jay, Associate Planner

The project is conditioned in a way that once construction begins and the equipment is installed a sound test is conducted, and based on those levels we'll determine the wall that needs to be potentially installed for mitigation based off of the sound report that was part of the mitigated negative declaration that the City Council approved.

Lars Langberg, Chair

Not potentially installed, but yes, installed to a certain now-found data? So it will be installed, it's just a question of how high or what it is after data is collected, is that right?

John Jay, Associate Planner

Correct. I don't know if there is a mitigation that says that there is no sound wall needed; I'd have to go back and check.

Patrick, Applicant

This was a point of significant discussion on the part of the Council. The way that it was conditioned was the project is constructed, the equipment is installed and tuned, and then noise measurements are taken along with comparison to ambient noise, time of day, all those different things that a professional sound study would do, and if mitigations are required then the wall would be proposed, it would be engineered, and it would be designed and constructed using the data that is now-known and hard.

Lars Langberg, Chair

So the data could show that no sound wall is really necessary?

Patrick, Applicant

Correct, and our understanding is with the current modern equipment the project team is quite comfortable that it will not be required, but we don't know that for sure, so that's why we're completely open to the condition.

Melissa Hanley, Vice Chair

The landscaping plan doesn't take into consideration a sound wall, and I'm wondering which will come first, the landscaping or the study, design, engineering, construction, you'll have to build new footings for the sound wall if it's 10 feet tall; that's not a small project.

Patrick, Applicant

The measurements would be taken prior to the landscaping being installed. At that point it's bare ground and it's easy to retrofit one point of connection to the building.

Melissa Hanley, Vice Chair

So we could be a year out at Final Delivery of Building before we start seeing landscaping going in?

Patrick, Applicant

Only in that one area.

Melissa Hanley, Vice Chair

So we're phasing, we're comfortable with phasing. But it also means that our next-door neighbors could potentially be a year-ish.

Patrick, Applicant

If the wall is required for mitigation, the condition of approval from the City Council discussion is that there is no operating permit until it's bullet proof.

Mark Reese, Project Owner

Also keep in consideration that the sound wall more than likely will be the ICF construction as well, which is cement and it's over 6 inches thick, and it goes up very quickly.

Lars Langberg, Chair

Let's go back to our public comment.

Huck Hensley

I second everything Jim Wheaton had to say. I'm the owner of the Ford building next door, and it was my greatest hope the maker space would take that entire building. They wound up with about a third of it, but the car wash is going to have a negative impact not just on noise there but on traffic and air quality, and would impact the nearby sensitive habitat of the Laguna as well. I wonder what kind of remediation all of these impacts will have. I don't

hear much coming in the way of answers; all I see is a lot of negative impact on the surroundings. Also, this project is not generating any sales tax because of a quirk in the law, and they're asking to cut down trees for this? I'm kind of ashamed of it, and I think a lot of Sebastopolians would be if they knew about it. It's kind of an irony to me that you're reviewing this in the same month that the City is considering emergency contingency plans for an extended drought. Surely this would be one of the first businesses to be closed if those contingency plans came into place. It's like we're reverting to the 1950s and 1960s and cherishing this doomed car culture. It's like find paradise, put up a parking lot on an industrial scale, a two-story automated car wash with 17 vacuum stations and room for 14 cars to idle in line. I don't see any reason to cut down anything to accommodate this.

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

The Board discussed tree removal as follows:

Christine Level, Board Member

I think the trees are wonderful and believe they have carbon capture, but in this circumstance I think what we have on this site more like weeds. The redwood trees are just a hazard in this type of an environment, so there is no question about removal of all of them. The two little oaks on the property line are in poor condition and are intertwined in the fence. In driveway construction you have to over-excavate at least a foot and there is no way they're going to survive. Although I love trees, I think there is reason to remove every one of these trees to have this project go forward.

Lynn Deedler, Board Member

I have a lot experience with trees, particularly live oaks and redwood trees. Trees can put up with a little fence in them. Next, redwood trees respond to the way they are planted. If they start out young and their roots spread out on their own they do much better than a tree that's been in a bucket for a year or two and gets planted and the roots get twisted and don't do as well. I've done experiments and found that after five years a redwood seedling will look as good as a 5-gallon potted tree, and after that the seedling exceeds the growth of the potted redwood trees. These redwood trees look good for their environment surrounded by pavement. If you want to see a redwood tree become healthy give it some water and it will green up grow well. I think given the huge amount of pavement in this area and the location, backed up to an open space and very well-treed area, and the trees where they are and as big as they are seem to fit in or be needed to soften the environment. I think they would look good. I'd really like to see all the trees saved, or as close as possible, and I'd really like to talk to arborist Becky Duckles about this, because I value her input on this; I'm sorry I did not get her report on this. If you cut half the roots away on an oak tree, just cut half the top away and it will be off and running again. They are very durable trees; you see live oaks growing in the harshest of conditions around here. I think the trees would add to your project.

Melissa Hanley, Vice Chair

I do know that the tree evaluation from the applicant says that all but two of the trees are in either good or good/fair condition, and some of them appear to be drought-stressed, but they seem to be healthy otherwise based on this evaluation. I'm in the camp though with Board Member Level that for the project to proceed we have to be pragmatic about it and I'm really a fan of the comprehensive approach you're taking to the landscape plan. It is nicely done, it feels really unique and varied with a lot of stuff going on, and I think it will be really nice and a great way to counter the loss of these trees.

Lars Langberg, Chair

In this day and age cutting down healthy trees is unfortunate, but this is a car-centric site already and they're adding a car-centric program, and it's unfortunate that program means cutting down healthy, mature redwood trees, though I know they're not the best species and they're not in a good spot, so I would agree with a couple of my fellow Board members that for the project it makes sense to take them down. It is more likely the oak trees could be saved, because they're at the edge of the project, but unless the layout changes it doesn't seem like they would survive.

The Board discussed building and site design, a sound wall, and signage as follows:

Marshall Balfe, Board Member

The design is quite good and very compatible with the site, location, and surrounding buildings. Regarding trees and property rights, sometimes properties are bought without knowing their future use, and I have seen many unfortunate situations where all the trees had to be removed, but property rights cannot be taken away for the sake of the trees and it is a difficult thing, but the fact that the applicant will be planting more trees than those removed is very good and all that could be done in this situation, and I support the project.

Melissa Hanley, Vice Chair

I'm not a fan of the stucco on this project and think the corrugated and standing seam materials elsewhere in the project are really sympathetic to the surrounding buildings, but the stucco feels like a left turn based on the immediate context of this project. I would like to see it replaced with a material that brings in the rhythm and verticality of the standing seam or corrugated, and there are a variety of corrugations and they could change the scale of corrugation to get extra texture, but I don't think the stucco is giving the higher-end refinement the applicant has mentioned. The green feels like a side move based on the other buildings in that space and I would suggest simplifying the color scheme, and while I understand the red reference to the eaves in the other buildings, it is the one color that feels like what is going on? The proportions are lovely with the variation in shape, the kind of cupola reference to the Ford building is very nice, and the shape and scale is spot on.

Lynn Deedler, Board Member

The sound walls have been discussed and it sounds like they will be adequately taken care of. I can envision minor shifts in the design to save a few more trees and I'd really like to see that happen, and hold off on an enthusiastic approval until a little more effort is made to keep those redwood trees. Otherwise, it is an attractive and well thought out building. I'll wash my car there, but given the number of people that will come through that landscaping and view it, and how they view it, how hot it is and that kind of thing, the landscaping should be dressed up a little bit to be more presentable. That aside, I like the project.

Christine Level, Board Member

Overall this is really a nice addition to this property, because you've got that dead corner with the old, beat up asphalt and now we can tie the whole property together with the symmetry and the landscaping doing a nice job with that. Adding that building back there will be a big improvement to the whole project. I like the buildings just the way Patrick designed them; they have a mix of materials that are consistent, and I like the way they blend in with the Ford building, but also the stucco is trying on over the Boblitt building too. I support the project 100%.

Lars Langberg, Chair

I also like the unification of the site and the applicant's plan to revamp the 30-year-old landscaping. There is a lot of pavement on the site, so the more landscaping the better.

Overall this is a very nice project that would be compatible with its context. If a sound wall has to be built, does it have to come back to the Design Review Board, or could it be approved at the staff level? To me, the design is really good and I'm sure whatever Patrick comes up with I would be comfortable with staff-level approval.

Christine Level, Board Member

Given the concern of the neighbor, it might be a good idea to go through the formal design review process, even though I think it will be approved, but just from a neighborly consideration.

Lars Langberg, Chair

John, is it in our purview to say that?

John Jay, Associate Planner

The sound wall is part of the conditions of approval for the use permit.

Lars Langberg, Chair

Director Svanstrom has put it out to the DRB as to whether we would want to see that again if it comes forward, that it could come back to the Board from the Director's point of view.

John Jay, Associate Planner

Part of the staff report is to get feedback if there is a sound wall that is triggered for the meeting to provide feedback to the applicant and staff.

Lars Langberg, Chair

So we could comment on the design now, but the design may not ever happen. That's a little tricky.

John Jay, Associate Planner

It's hard for this circumstance, because we won't know if a sound wall is needed until those things are done.

Christine Level, Board Member

It's my understanding that the signage in general complies with the standards and would not normally be presented to the Board?

John Jay, Associate Planner

Correct, it's just part of the overall package.

Melissa Hanley, Vice Chair

This image is so low-resolution that I can't determine what the material is.

Patrick, Applicant

The body of the sign is proposed as a plaster/cement/stucco finish; then this would most likely be made from aluminum or steel, powder-coated or painted, as appropriate; then infill panels that stand proud of this so that it's got a real three-dimensionality about it; and with lettering that mimics the lettering that's on the building fascia with a bit of relief so they would stand off of the surface; it wouldn't just be a painted panel, it would have some three-dimensionality to it. Illumination is not proposed; that does not seem needed. The location is adjacent to existing established businesses in the same realm of service, so it didn't feel to the project team like this needed a big, fancy, flashing sign of any real monument.

Melissa Hanley, Vice Chair

What about site way-finding signage? You're proposing accessing mostly from the CVS it seems.

Patrick, Applicant

The primary access to this part of the business is from that southwest corner, and I think initially the community may be a little confused but that would rapidly solve itself in familiarity with the project and where the access/egress points are, and people would find that the logical layout meets their needs. Part of the reason for the site design is to allow vehicular traffic to filter into more than just dumping straight onto the busiest street in town, that southwest corner, which really is ideal as a secondary egress and access to the site.

Board Member Level moved to approve the application as submitted, with the sound wall if needed presented to the Design Review Board at some future time.

Board Member Balf seconded the motion.

AYES: Chair Langberg, Vice Chair Hanley, and Board Members Balfe and Level

NOES: Deedler

ABSTAIN: None

ABSENT: Bush

8. SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES:

None.

9. ADJOURNMENT: Chair Langberg adjourned the meeting at 5:16 p.m. The next regularly scheduled Tree/Design Review Board meeting will be held on Tuesday, November 28, 2023 at 3:30 P.M.