

Dear Commissioners,

I am writing in regards to the application for 7621 Healdsburg Avenue.

Currently the project has allotted 3600 square feet of commercial space on the ground level.

Given the fact that Sebastopol has a high commercial vacancy rate, with many properties vacant for over 12 months, I encourage you and the developers to use the 3600 to build 2 units of low or moderate income family housing. 3600 would yield (2) 1800 square foot units, ample for three bedrooms. Many houses in San Francisco have three bedrooms and one bath within a 1400 square foot area.

Sebastopol needs affordable family housing; current housing element documents reflect this need. The "missing middle" is a huge issue for Californian communities and this project would be an opportunity to address that gap in housing stock.

Sebastopol already has a plethora of restaurants and bars and too many vacant commercial spaces.

As the space is being developed primarily for housing, many of the considerations for residential development are already baked into the project.

Given the need for affordable family housing and the lack of need for commercial space, I hope the Commissioners and developer would consider replacing the 3600 of commercial space with 2 units of low/ moderate family housing. This would help satisfy RHNA requirements and also create space for families in our town.

Cities all across California are struggling with high commercial vacancy rates and lack of affordable housing for families. San Francisco has an all time commercial vacancy rate. Given the shift to remote and hybrid work and online retail, many cities are looking to convert commercial units to residential units.

Sebastopol could be a leader in acknowledging these shifting community needs by promoting affordable, family housing instead of commercial units, especially in developments that are primarily residential. There is already precedent for residential units on Healdsburg Avenue, from the SAVS RV Village to single family homes.

While the fate of the commercial space would be unknown, it is almost certain that families would move into the units if it were offered at the appropriate price point.

I hope that the Commission will take the bold and much needed action to look at using the 3600 square feet for affordable family housing.

Best,  
Kate Haug