



**City of Sebastopol**  
*Incorporated 1902*  
Planning Department  
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## **UNAPPROVED DRAFT MINUTES**

PLANNING COMMISSION  
CITY OF SEBASTOPOL  
MINUTES OF JANUARY 23, 2024

### **PLANNING COMMISSION:**

The notice of the meeting was posted on January 18, 2024.

**CALL TO ORDER:** Chair Fernandez called the special meeting to order at 6:00 P.M. and read a procedural statement.

**1. ROLL CALL:**

<b>Present:</b>	Chair Fernandez, Vice Chair Fritz, and Commissioners Burnes, Hanley, and Oetinger
<b>Absent:</b>	None
<b>Staff:</b>	Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director John Jay, Associate Planner

**2. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC ON ITEMS NOT ON AGENDA:** None.

**3. STATEMENTS OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:** None.

### **4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

**April 11, 2023; July 11, 2023; July 18, 2023, November 28, 2023, and December 12, 2023**

Members of the Commission amended the minutes of April 11, 2023.

Commissioner Oetinger moved to approve the minutes as amended.

Vice Chair Fritz seconded the motion.

AYES: Chair Fernandez, Vice Chair Fritz, and Commissioner Oetinger  
NOES: None  
ABSTAIN: Commissioners Burnes and Hanley  
ABSENT: None

Vice Chair Fritz moved to approve the minutes of July 11, 2023 as presented.

Commissioner Oetinger seconded the motion.

AYES: Chair Fernandez, Vice Chair Fritz  
NOES: None  
ABSTAIN: Commissioners Burnes, Hanley, Oetinger  
ABSENT: None

Director Svanstrom noted the motion passed with less than a quorum based on the rule of necessity.

Vice Chair Fritz moved to approve the minutes of July 18, 2023 as presented.

Commissioner Oetinger seconded the motion.

AYES: Chair Fernandez, Vice Chair Fritz, and Commissioner Burnes  
NOES: None  
ABSTAIN: Commissioners Hanley and Oetinger  
ABSENT: None

Vice Chair Fritz moved to approve the minutes of November 28, 2023 as presented.

Commissioner Oetinger seconded the motion.

AYES: Chair Fernandez, Vice Chair Fritz, and Commissioners Burnes, Hanley, and  
Oetinger  
NOES: None  
ABSTAIN: None  
ABSENT: None

Members of the Commission amended the minutes of December 12, 2023

Vice Chair Fritz moved to approve the minutes as amended.

Commissioner Oetinger seconded the motion.

AYES: Vice Chair Fritz, and Commissioners Burnes and Oetinger  
NOES: None  
ABSTAIN: Chair Fernandez, Commissioner Hanley  
ABSENT: None

## **5. REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS:**

### **A. CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA) OVERVIEW –**

Informational overview of CEQA.

Director Svanstrom presented the overview.

Chair Fernandez asked for Planning Commission questions of staff.

#### **Evert Fernandez, Chair**

I guess it's subjective when you talk about mitigations. How is it determined? There is no book that says that this is the project and this and the level of mitigation. Is there general guidance for that, or is it just subjective?

**Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director**

It's not necessarily subjective at all. For example, with the vehicle mile traveled (VMT), which is the newest metric, reducing VMT by 15% is the going rate that the State sets unless you adopt local standards, which we'll do in the next couple months, but we're not there yet so we have the 15%. If a project did not meet that they would need to mitigate until they meet that threshold, and those mitigations—the Office of Planning and Research has done scenarios—if you were to do this or that to change the number of VMT, it would change by X percentage and that's based on research they and others have done.

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

**Laura Duggan**

One of the slides said that you could determine if something was not significant and didn't need mitigation or wasn't worth consideration; that's not subjective. Is it based on some standard?

**Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director**

Correct. So will you impact any agricultural land, or will you impact mining? The project isn't near a mine site so you're not going to impact mining; it's a yes or no question.

**Laura Duggan**

Something like noise that seems to be subjective; there must be a standard where you say this noise level doesn't need to be considered.

**Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director**

We as a City have adopted Noise Ordinance standards, and so that is that standard.

**Kyle Falbo**

I want to remind the Chair that during public comment for items that are not on the agenda there are also Zoom participants, so closing public comment prematurely without making reference to those Zoom participants is putting them at a disadvantage. It seems we're being given clear messaging that tonight's public comment needs to be directly related to the CEQA report. I think that in order to be able to make that judgment call on whether or not a public comment is within that frame of reference, it would be great to provide some guidance to the public. Does the public need to be citing particular section numbers of the CEQA report? I would hate to see participants of the public in good faith make efforts to make public comment about the CEQA report itself, but this body decides that those comments may stray too far away from the CEQA report and then to decide to not make some sort of a reference to those or respond to those as a result of that. So some guidance as to how members of the public can meet the standard that you're holding for staying within the scope of commenting on CEQA would be helpful.

**Unidentified Female**

It was frustrating that there were signs up in front of the property, but it would have been lovely if the information about how to actually read the CEQA reports had been covered; it just said that it existed.

**Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director**

The public notices that were published and mailed to residents did note that the report was available and gave the link for that. In terms of Mr. Falbo's comment in terms of what is CEQA and what is not, you are welcome to comment on whatever you want, but we'll

determine whether it is part of this document or not, and if it is it will be responded to as part of the final EIR. If we hear concerns, we'll try to address those when we do the staff report for the non-CEQA items that will be coming back in March. You don't have to editorialize yourself; please talk about what you want to say about the project, and we will do the work of how to bring it all together as we go through the project.

Chair Fernandez asked for public comments from Zoom participants regarding any items not on the agenda.

**Kyle Falbo**

Sebastopol is growing with high-density residential developments and other developments within the City limits. The General Plan contains specific language regarding revisiting and revising our Noise Ordinance. As someone who has experienced violations of the Noise Ordinance with no significant reporting or enforcement mechanism, the developers do not recognize the ordinance's specific daytime hours, either by a City-granted variance or by just the nature of the development itself. What are the Planning Commission's plans in terms of looking at the Noise Ordinance as we move into the future with so much development?

Chair Fernandez closed public comment for Items Not on the Agenda.

**6. PUBLIC HEARINGS:**

**A. 1009-1011 GRAVENSTEIN HIGHWAY NORTH – CANOPY DRAFT EIR HEARING**

The proposed project would involve the construction of 80 solar all-electric, three-story townhome-style condominiums, with the potential for up to 16 ADA ADUs. Requested entitlements include a conditional use permit, site development review, and vesting tentative tract map. In addition, the project application proposes the use of a State Density Bonus to allow for a waiver to increase the building height to three stories. In accordance with the CEQA Guidelines, an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was prepared and is available for review on the "Special Projects" page of the City website at <https://www.cityofsebastopol.gov/our-community/buildingprojects/>, at the Sebastopol Library, and Sebastopol City Hall, 7120 Bodega Avenue, Sebastopol, California 95472

Associate Planner Jay presented the staff report.

Chair Fernandez asked for Planning Commission questions of staff.

**Kathy Oetinger, Commissioner**

You talk reference a pedestrian sidewalk you are talking about the one to the south of the project, you're not talking about a potential sidewalk that would go north to the West County Trail?

**John Jay, Associate Planner**

Correct.

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

**Jacob Harris**

I live on Hurlbut Avenue. My neighbors are not very excited about the Canopy project for a few reasons. The main complaint is that it does not conform to the neighborhood. The Sebastopol General Plan Policy CD1-2 says, "City will ensure that new residential and commercial development is sensitive to the surrounding architecture, topography, landscape, character, scale, and ambience of the surrounding neighborhood," the point being there are no three-story and hardly any two-story buildings in the neighborhood, and Canopy's plan does not conform to the City plan. Also in the General Plan, "The Land-Use Element provides for development and resource conservation pattern that preserves and protects Sebastopol's unique character, small town feel, and family oriented neighborhoods," and we don't feel it conforms there as well. Goal LU-2 of the General Plan says, "It will maintain an urban growth boundary in order to promote orderly growth." We don't feel that we have orderly growth because: 1) the traffic backs up to Hurlbut from downtown, and that won't be made any better with the addition of 96 units and close to 200 more people, so that does not conform either. Goal LU-2.4, "The proposed development will provide a minimum of 50% of its dwellings units for low and very-low income households as defined by the Housing Element of this General Plan." I don't think this plan provides for 50% for low-income, so again, not conforming to your General Plan. Policy COS9-1 requires all new public and privately constructed buildings to meet and comply with CALGreen tier 1 or successor program standards. That one I don't know about, but if this project does go through, I'm assuming you will. I'd like to know if you're going to follow that.

**Sean McGuire**

I'm curious how this project is going to integrate with the school, specifically around pick-up and drop-off times, and how that traffic is going to impact the school and the surrounding streets. Will questions from the public be addressed at the end or at all?

**Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director**

This is the unusual nature of EIRs. We are accepting comments tonight, but we are not responding to them. This is actually something that would be responded to as part of the EIR written responses.

**Troy Eggleston**

I live on Hurlbut Avenue. When we look at the visual aesthetics of the impacts that were viewed as not significant, or something that is three stories at 36 feet, that's noncompliant with the designs of the existing community. I have a hard time looking at the policies in the General Plan, and looking at the proposal and how that would not be viewed as a significant impact being that the type of function or the design that's being applied is really noncompliant to the existing community. It doesn't comply with the General Plan, although we understand there is an outside influence on the height from the State for these density bonuses. It is still in conflict and we don't find that to be a comprehensive approach to this application; it is not conforming. Also, the pad height needs to be evaluated through drainage and grading. In order for this to be able to actually drain the pad heights are going to have to be raised. Aside from the 36 feet, which would be noncompliant to the extension community, additional pad heights to be able to acquire for drainage, passageways, and overall improvements, we don't really know how tall that's actually going to be until the subdivision improvement plans come in, and by then it's too late. It needs to be evaluated about what type of impact this has, because it really stands out from that existing community; it's not compliant and it doesn't blend in with anything, once again outside of the policies in Community Design 1-2. We are going to have an issue with soil remediation enforcement. Are the policies in place regarding soil removal, grading, infrastructure improvements, and sound attenuation going to be monitored and enforced? What are the tools we can rely on? We don't have any faith that it would be monitored or enforced, and it

needs to be, and we would need to have a daily policing for this. I look at the overall design circulation of this as not compliant with all the rules and policies in the General Plan. This was not taken into full consideration. They took a highly initial design, they reduced the overall unit count to be something more acceptable, but really they're just essentially avoiding the existing trees for the project that was built 20 years ago when we told them not to.

### **Kyle Falbo**

In Section 2 of the CEQA report with respect to zoning there is the idea that somehow the surrounding neighborhood for this site is residential, and that is not true. It borders a residential neighborhood, but there is no actual inlet to that residential neighborhood, so there is no transportation network involved where you would say that the surrounding neighborhood would be residential. The current location zoning is light industrial, and its neighbors are commercial, and the CEQA report specifically references the General Plan's desire for having commercial districts and industrial parks of this nature. The only other residential neighborhood in the surrounding area is on the other side of the street, and it is not neighboring in the sense that there is any sort of frontage residential, and there is a reason for that. Highway 116 is a major highway, and producing residential neighborhoods on a major highway would have negative impacts, which the CEQA report also references. It is important to look at community impact, impacts to the residential neighborhood behind the project site, on the traffic flow in this area. How does long-term how does jumping from an industrial zoning to not just Residential, but the highest density of Residential allowed, straight to R-7, in a neighborhood that has historically not had an residential look? How would that look in the future in being able to provide sustainability for property owners? It is not clear that this project meets the goals of the General Plan about providing housing based on the mix of properties. I hope the process can be opened up with transparency in the way the City communicates what we see through CEQA and the public opinion regarding this property. I encourage the Planning Commission to look at the Alternatives section of the CEQA report.

### **Anne Casey-Nielson**

I own property on Hurlbut Avenue. I propose for a disallowment of a State density bonus striking any and all potential waivers to increase the building height to three stories. Any allotment of a waiver would be a direct violation with the General Plan Policy CD1-2. Let's ensure that new residential commercial development is sensitive to the surrounding architecture, topography, landscaping, character, scale, and ambience of the surrounding neighborhood. The project is 100 units and would be over 40 feet tall. There are now zero residential buildings in the neighborhood with this higher density. I am strongly opposed to the project; however, I am willing to compromise to the two-story edifice instead. I moved to Sebastopol because it is tiny and quaint, but if this project is allowed then everyone will join and I might as well move back to Silicon Valley.

### **Richard Murphy**

I reside on Hurlbut Avenue, and I definitely do not approve of this project. I echo what the previous speakers have said. A lot of traffic comes up East Hurlbut from High School Road and cuts over on Hurlbut to Highway 116. They're going north on 116 up to Forestville or some other area, so the traffic is already getting pretty bad coming through there, and there are no speed bumps except the one at the trail, so it's only going to get worse. It is ridiculous to think of three stories at 40 feet tall on Hurlbut Avenue and Highway 116. It should be a residential situation, two stories maximum. When is our final time to look over the EIR?

**Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director**

The EIR has been out for 45 days and tonight is the final comment day. That was on all the notices that were sent out. We can consider things received after, but the staff and the consultant need to begin work on the responses to those comments, so if something comes in after tomorrow we are not going to be able to accept it.

**Richard Murphy**

I did not get any public notice in the mail. I'm sure a lot of my neighbors would like to be here tonight if they knew what was really going on.

**Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director**

We mail within 600 feet of the subject property, basically two blocks. The notices are sent ten days before the hearing, and also posted in the Press Democrat at that same time.

**Nina Redmond**

I live on East Hurlbut Avenue where there are an awful lot of pedestrians, and we don't have any sidewalks, so anything that increases traffic worries me.

**Unidentified Female**

Under CEQA protocol could there be an extension of the 45 days under certain conditions? Some people have said they need more time to review the EIR.

**Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director**

That's usually for a circumstance not part of the normal component, so we won't be extending this. It's already been a month-and-a-half. There is no extension policy.

**Evert Fernandez, Chair**

The end of tomorrow is the deadline?

**Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director**

Tonight is technically the deadline, so we don't have to consider any comments after that. If people have comments they made tonight that they want to type up and send to us, that would be fine. To legally extend it is a more formal thing in terms of CEQA, so we need to keep it at tonight, because today is the 45<sup>th</sup> day. I want to make sure everyone knows, the project hearing isn't until March 2024, so we'll still be able to look at comments and take those into consideration.

**Phill Carter**

The sidewalk is broken on that side of the main road. Does this project include development of pedestrian or cyclist ways around the entrance to Hurlbut Avenue?

**Sean McGuire**

It's good for residents of Hurlbut Avenue that there is no exit out there, but this project is trying to have the residents of 100 units enter and exit through a business parking lot. How will people turn left from O'Reilly onto Highway 116 South crossing traffic? They wouldn't be able to. They'll go through the entrance and exit to the school and mornings and afternoons will be an absolute nightmare. From a safety standpoint, 100 units of people trying to exit through a parking lot during a wildfire or other emergency situation is not a good idea.

**Emily Ocon**

I live at 896 Hurlbut Avenue on the south side of the project, sharing the property line with that field, and I am a resident with a family that is impacted. I echo the comments made by previous speakers regarding the project density and height. My bathrooms are north-facing

and a residential building at 40 feet would really impact the kind of natural light in my house, as well as privacy. I have previously voiced a concern about contaminated soil on the site and I'd like to determine whether that was solved within the EIR. Are there plans for any kind of community space in the project? I'd like to know what the distance is from the building to my property line.

**Irenne Magoulas**

I've lived almost 20 years across the street from the O'Reilly building. Gravenstein Highway North used to be somewhat quiet and has gotten worse over the years, so much so that my house shakes when trucks pass by. When the school is in session it is hard for me to get out of my driveway because of the traffic going down Gravenstein, and there are more people coming onto my property because of it. We also have the homeless RV park down the street, which has caused people to come down from there and come onto my property, and Sebastopol police don't respond because I am not in the City limits. Our property floods, and we have livestock, and it comes down from when people build, and the same thing happened at The Barlow a couple of years ago. We were evacuated during the fires, and when you add 100 more units you are adding 150-200 more cars in a small area. How can the City assure that everyone can evacuate safely? That will increase the fire danger for my property. The question is what will the City do to keep us safe? You'll probably have to widen the roads, which will cause problems on my property, on Hurlbut Avenue, and other properties with all the new traffic. The project makes no sense.

Chair Fernandez closed public comment.

The Commission discussed the application as follows:

**Deborah Burnes, Commissioner**

I feel for all the public who are by this project, because I see a lot of flaws with the project that the Commission needs to consider. With respect to Sebastopol's infrastructure issue, traffic is absolutely outrageous. The amount of time it takes to get into the City will dissuade people from visiting or working in Sebastopol. I'm very concerned about there being no Hurlbut Avenue exit or entrance, even if it is just for emergencies. I don't know how we would evacuate all these people in an emergency. I don't know what the water impact would be. The EIR said there would be sufficient water, but where does it come from? I don't believe this three-story project fits in our General Plan. I understand we are under pressure from the State to increase housing, but I don't think we are addressing the low-income housing issue we have here. We are at a stage where there are so many things going on that there is a lot for the Commission to consider for this project to move forward, such as the impact to entire community, environmental access in and out, infrastructure with traffic, and the amount of extra cars from the project. Sebastopol has not built the infrastructure to keep up with the demand of all the growth we have, so we must look at infrastructure to continue the demand, and how to migrate both of these and stay within our master plan and meet all the housing needs? I would like to see more conversation about how to tackle these bigger issues.

**Paul Fritz, Vice Chair**

I provided a lot of comments to staff in written form, so I don't have any other public comments on the draft EIR. They have been given to staff, and I expect to see them in the report.

**Seth Hanley, Commissioner**

The same goes for me.



**Kathy Oetinger, Commissioner**

I have a couple of edits. The first is that the West County Trail is not to the east. I also noticed that page ES-7, Impact AQ-2, the mitigation says none required, but the residual impact is less than significant with mitigation, so I think that needs to be fixed. There is a typo on 4.13-11, which is page 236. They said "onside" and I think they mean on a site. And they are referring to the new HAWK (High Intensity Activated Crosswalk Beacon) Crossing, not the signal at Mill Station, is that true? It was unclear to me. On that same page they say that the property owner, which is the school to the north, doesn't want a sidewalk extending from the project to the West County Trail, and I just cannot believe that. I really think they need a sidewalk, because people are going to walk there, there is no way to avoid that. Furthermore, the County allowed them to put their driveway over the public trail, and I don't see how they cannot want people to get to the public trail and not use the improvements that they've made. I think a sidewalk should go there; it's the only way to mitigate a pedestrian problem in that area. Is the new HAWK crossing at Mill Station?

**Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director**

The new HAWK is at Danmar Drive.

**Kathy Oetinger, Commissioner**

Is it an actual HAWK or it a walk light?

**Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director**

That's an actual signal light at the crosswalk.

**Kathy Oetinger, Commissioner**

The problem is if you're walking almost from any one of those houses to go north, that's where people are going to walk, and I don't see why the project sidewalk shouldn't be required to extend to the schools and amenities that are already there, because if it doesn't, then it's a very dangerous situation.

**Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director**

There is currently a sidewalk there that goes to the trail.

**Kathy Oetinger, Commissioner**

I don't see it extending all the way to where your arrow is now.

**Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director**

It does. I've walked it many times. Just to clarify, for the central part of the property, on the south side there is both a trail and new curb cut for vehicles. The other mitigation component is a more centralized pathway somewhere in this area. We're proposing is it to be on the south side and then connect through, so that's the mitigation that will show up in the Final EIR.

**Kathy Oetinger, Commissioner**

I agree with the fire and evacuation, so while I'm pleased there is a pedestrian trail to the east the goes to Hurlbut Avenue so neighbors can walk in this area if they want to get off roads with no sidewalks, I think that should be a fire safe exit as well; I don't think it's safe enough without that. It could be opened up in an emergency or bollards taken out. I agree with the problem of exiting those three driveways and all the cars turning onto the highway left and right from that position. We can look at the drawings to see if there are left-turn lanes.

**Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director**

Steve from W-Trans, our traffic consultant for the project, is here tonight and listening to your comments.

**Kathy Oetinger, Commissioner**

Regarding the traffic, I do not understand why the intersection of main Highways 116 and 12 is not part of the study. It looks like fewer cars are going from High School Road and 116 toward Bodega Avenue, but I think there would be significant numbers and it's important to realize the impact that intersection already has. Regarding the impacts at Occidental Road and 116, I was surprised to see those impacts being as great as they are. Will the County be able to make improvements at that intersection ahead of the project being built? Is that included in the mitigations? If not, something should be stated about that. There must be a lot of other projects anticipated in the West County that would be coming through that intersection over the next few years, so it's very important to look at safety there as well as the traffic impact and slow downs. Did I miss the projected left turns coming out of the project from those driveways in the traffic study?

**Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director**

It should be there. In terms of fire access, I know vehicle access to Hurlbut Avenue was very much not wanted by the neighbors, and the applicant heard that and designed the project without that access. We suggested they proposed a bicycle and pedestrian path for those living in the eastern buildings to be able to get to East Hurlbut, to have a pedestrian gate so a pedestrian can catch the trail on that side instead of walking all the way to the north side. The applicants have noted in terms of their fire access that they would never use East Hurlbut to fight a fire or for an emergency, because it very narrow and nothing something the Fire Department would use, so the access worked out here is what the Fire Department requires for their access.

**Evert Fernandez, Chair**

There is a crossing at Mill Station and Highway 116 where the cars come out. What is the next pedestrian crossing after that? Is it all the way down on Hurlbut Avenue?

**Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director**

Right now there is not anything until Hurlbut Avenue, however, Caltrans is putting in a crosswalk at Danmar, so that is right at the main entry to the O'Reilly area, and that's where we want to make sure there are the sidewalks that go through.

**Evert Fernandez, Chair**

The other impact is the West County Trail that crosses East Hurlbut. You have to be very careful crossing there as a pedestrian or cyclist. What that impact is going to be is not really taken into consideration; you almost need a crossing light with the cars going through there, and it's kind of a blind spot too. You're got cars coming in from Hurlbut and then down East Hurlbut.

**Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director**

This has been referred to Regional Parks and they are aware of the connection on the site, but obviously also potential for any impacts here. All of the West County trails within the City limits have signage telling pedestrians and cyclists to stop to look for traffic.

**Evert Fernandez, Chair**

I know it takes the surrounding area into consideration, for example, the effect it would have with the other project off Bodega Avenue that has another 80 units. Taking those vehicles and the vehicles from this project and adding them into the downtown area, it's

going to be pretty hectic. The public comments were right on target that this project does not fit into the character of the neighborhood. I think there are some comments about the General Plan in the EIR, but I don't know how specific they address it to say this does or doesn't conform. I appreciate all the formulas used for impact and mitigation, but is it really going to reduce traffic because they've opened up some pedestrian walkways? Maybe during the summer, but not during the winter. I have a lot of concerns with this regarding different impacts such as heights and use of water, but a lot of it has been addressed or reviewed in the EIR.

**Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director**

In terms of traffic, our consultant W-Trans is aware of those other projects and we discussed that. You can't make them do every single improvement; that's why we collect traffic impact fees and we have a master plan with what those improvements would be, which we do, as does the County. But we also need to look at the other projects in the pipeline or that are approved that we know are happening, and you have to look at those cumulatively; that's what the last section is, the cumulative impact section.

**Evert Fernandez, Chair**

I believe people coming to his development would not come down Highway 12, they're going to come down Occidental Road, maybe High School Road, and then take Hurlbut possibly to get to that location, or continue down Occidental and then go left on Highway 116 and come in that way, which again, it's just a long line of cars there; I don't know if this is going to add to it.

**Deborah Burnes, Commissioner**

I'm confused too, because are we looking at the impact of traffic during different hours of the day? It's fantastic that they're putting in a bike path, but people can't bike to work, people can't take their children to school on a bicycle, so while it might mitigate some of the traffic, it's not practical for grocery stores, commuting, working, or going downtown. I couldn't see in there definitively that we're looking at all this traffic from all these projects and how we're going to deal with this massive congestion, and broken down specifically for hours of the day, how many cars we anticipate commuting, where we anticipate them commuting. Note that this is going to also migrate into that other project, because people do commute to Santa Rosa, so they're going to go down Highway 116.

**Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director**

I want to remind the Commission that at our next meeting we'll be talking about vehicle mile travel (VMT). We used to use level of service, which is a measure of congestion as a CEQA impact. That is no longer a way to analyze CEQA per our General Plan and State law. The measure we now use is vehicle miles traveled per resident. It's a little confusing, because we do a traffic study that does look at the congestion at particular intersections, and that is so we can better understand if there is a safety issue at the intersection and ensure it is functional. We did that with Woodmark as well with their two driveways into the project and the adjacent intersections. Just in terms of CEQA, how many vehicle miles traveled for the residential for this development is the metric, not if the road is going to be more congested. We will review that at the next Planning Commission meeting.

**Evert Fernandez, Chair**

Vehicle miles traveled is great, but looking at all the time, etc. is also crucial.

**Kathy Oetinger, Commissioner**

The way that this neighborhood is consistent with our General Plan in that it is adjacent to bus lines, shopping, and a highway; it focuses this urban growth where it is closer; and

reduces traffic because these people will drive less than if they were in a location farther from those amenities. There have been a lot of projects around town over the years when neighbors over the fence had the same concern about the height of a building, and if you look around town you will see many properties on the back side have their homes shedded; the roof is designed in such a way that it looks lower and it makes it feel more consistent with the adjacent buildings, and that is one way to mitigate the juxtaposition and it could be done on this one. The roofline of the old O'Reilly project is slanted in the way it is for this same reason; they wanted to feel like it's set into the property and didn't stand out, and it could be repurposed for housing some day as well. So that is the comment I would make to mitigate the public's concern over the juxtaposition of the urban properties next to the rural properties. I also think the trees would go a long way to do that, and I respect how they have created a parklet feeling by putting in those trees.

Director Svanstrom noted for the record that Commissioner Burnes had left the meeting, but the Commission maintained a quorum.

## **7. SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES**

### **Friends of Ives Park, Chair Fernandez**

A meeting for the Friends of Ives Park will be held in January 2024.

## **8. PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

- A.** Update on Planning Commission Workplan (adopted by Council December 19, 2023)
- B.** Other Updates

Director Svanstrom and Associate Planner Jay provided updates.

The Commission asked questions of Director Svanstrom.

- 9. ADJOURNMENT:** Chair Fernandez adjourned the meeting at 7:56 p.m. The next regularly scheduled Planning Commission meeting will take place on Tuesday, February 13, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.