

From: D Bell [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, October 14, 2026 2:31 PM
To: Eli Arreola <earreola@cityofsebastopol.gov>
Subject: Comment on 8100 Valentine Avenue Project ID:2025-067

Dear Eli Arreola,

Below (and attached) is a letter of comment regarding the project at 8100 Valentine Avenue for the City Council Hearing on Tuesday, October 20, 2026. We can not attend, but would like this letter to be included in the meetings commentary.

Can you please reply to this email confirming receipt and inclusion in the meeting's input?

Thank you,

Dave Bell

Dave & Kathy Bell

10/14/2026

Eli Arreola, Associate Planner
Sebastopol Planning Department
earreola@cityofsebastopol.gov

Re: City Council Hearing, Tuesday, October 20, 2026, 6:00 PM
8100 Valentine Avenue – Tentative Subdivision Map, Density Bonus, and Related Entitlements

Applicant: Rob Toste (Grupe Company) | Project ID: 2025-067 | Zoning: R4

Dear Mr. Arreola and Members of the City Council:

Our neighborhood, like the community as a whole, supports housing.

It does not support this project, and the city's own documents show why:

The density is nearly double what the zoning allows, and the project is not a simple subdivision. The R4 zone caps density at 8.7 units per acre, about 23 homes on this 2.69-acre site. The project delivers 39 homes, roughly 14.5 per acre. It gets there by building 19 ADUs and then converting each into a separately sold condominium under AB 1033, which the staff report says “do not count toward density.” These are not accessory units. They are a second home on every lot, sold to a second owner.

Architect and former Planning Commissioner Colin Doyle has pointed out in his written comments that clustered housing, shared parking and a common drive is not a conventional R4 subdivision. It is a Planned Community under SMC Chapter 17.40, which requires a policy statement, a conditional use permit, and a rezone. The applicant has submitted none of these. A Planned Community is a discretionary approval, so the city can deny it or set the number of lots, and Mr. Doyle argues AB 1033 should not be used to exceed the maximum density on such a project. He also notes that Section 17.40.050 requires setbacks along the project's edge to be compatible with the abutting R4 lots, meaning 20 feet or more along most of the shared rear property lines, not the 10 feet proposed. The city should look closely at whether this project is being processed under the wrong standard.

The lots and setbacks are not a neighborhood fit. The smallest lot is 2,501 sq ft against a 5,000 sq ft standard. Rear yards shrink from 20 feet to 10, side yards from 9 feet to 4, and many walls sit on the property line. Two-story homes will look into the backyards of single-story neighbors, and it is noted that the blank two-story property-line elevations were left out of the submittal package. Eight waivers are requested, and lot coverage is listed as “not shown.”

The city's own staff found a public health and safety impact. To save trees, the developer asked for a concession from the tree ordinance. The staff report states that this concession “would have a specific adverse impact on public health and safety.” Seven of the protected trees would be removed, and Planning Commissioners questioned whether the remaining redwoods will survive construction.

The emergency access falls short on the traffic study's own terms. The project has one 545-foot dead-end drive aisle and a 12-foot secondary route. The W-Trans study says that route is “inadequate for passage by fire trucks,” recommends widening it to 24 feet or looping the road, and says it is unclear the hammerhead turnaround is big enough for fire equipment.

Traffic and parking are undercounted. The study treats the 19 ADU homes as “patio homes” and projects 284 daily trips, but it admits no traffic counts exist for Valentine Avenue. Observed speeds average 30 mph on a 25 mph street. The project provides 83 stalls, mostly 9' x 18' stalls under carports, which invites spillover onto a street that has none to spare.

The sewer fix is conditional. The city’s consultant found capacity only after the existing 6-inch line is cleaned of root intrusion, and the study covered dry-weather flow only. It did not evaluate heavy rain.

The affordability is thin. Three of 39 homes are restricted, at 120% of area median income (about \$192,000 for a family of four). The rest are market-rate, with no price estimate.

The Commission’s chair, who cast the lone dissenting vote, called the process “out of our hands.” The commissioners themselves criticized the privacy impacts, parking and tree plan, and then voted 4–1 because they felt state law gave them no choice. This is tract-style density imposed on a quiet single-family neighborhood, and it is not the “missing middle” it claims to be. It is not what the people of Sebastopol want. The people have been clear. Outside developers are not your constituents. As City Council, take a stand to protect our community from this degradation.

Sincerely,

Dave & Kathy Bell

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Dave & Kathy Bell.

Dave & Kathy Bell

10/14/2026

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