From: Gavin W[redacted]
Sent: Thursday, October 15, 2026 8:56 AM
To: info <info@cityofsebastopol.gov>; Public Comment Received For City Council <citycouncil@cityofsebastopol.gov>
Cc: Mary Gourley <mgourley@cityofsebastopol.gov>
Subject: Public Comment - 8100 Valentine

Honorable Council Members and Staff,
I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed 8100 Valentine Avenue Housing Project in its current location, and to urge the City to steer this level of density where it truly belongs: downtown Sebastopol.
While I firmly support increasing our housing stock, this high-density layout belongs in our urban core rather than expanding onto an ecologically valuable site on the city's outskirts. Our planning strategy should be guided by the proven principles of the Strong Towns organization, which demonstrate that small towns generate far more long-term tax revenue and maintain fiscal resilience by building densely within their existing urban cores. Downtown infill utilizes infrastructure that is already paved and paid for, whereas expanding density into peripheral neighborhoods creates long-term municipal liabilities. The perfect location for a project of this scale is a site like the vacant former Rite Aid lot downtown, where residents can easily use public transit or their own feet to access daily needs, rather than relying on cars.
I request that the City Council address the following critical flaws and implement strict mitigation requirements if this project moves forward:
1. Reject Native Tree Removal
The current proposal requires removing 7 heritage trees. While I have no objection to removing non-native trees, the removal of native Valley Oaks and Live Oaks is unacceptable. This site could act as prime habitat if returned to its natural state. If any native trees are permitted for removal, the developer must be legally mandated to pay for native tree planting at Libby Park (or another suitable location) **equivalent to the total mass—not just the numerical count**—of the trees removed. Pragmatically, removing 7 grandmother trees should generate a requirement for 50+ saplings.
2. Establish Parking Maximums & Mandate Bicycle Infrastructure
This project perfectly illustrates why Sebastopol desperately needs a *parking maximum* ordinance. The developer is putting in even more car parking than our outdated parking minimums call for. This encourages driving and worsens car traffic. Instead, the City should require the developer to build copious, secure, covered bicycle parking in place of excessive, non-permeable asphalt.

Since the state has severely restricted parking *minimums* (via AB 2097), the Council still retains the right to establish **parking maximums** to stop developers from paving over code-compliant land with excessive non-permeable asphalt. This can be done before approval of the project.

3. Traffic Impacts and Required Infrastructure Funding

Every single car added to 8100 Valentine Avenue is another vehicle making short, compounding trips across town just to get groceries and other conveniences, worsening the "car nightmare" already caused by poorly regulated building in West County. To mitigate this, the developer must be held financially responsible for multi-modal infrastructure. They should be required to fully fund:

- **Cycle improvements and traffic calming measures** directly on Valentine Avenue.
- **The critical cycle improvements to Ragle Road** that local residents have actively demanded for the last decade.
- **Expanded local bus service for a minimum of 10 years** to offset the project's vehicle miles traveled (VMT). Even with expanded bus routes, inserting this level of density into a historically non-dense neighborhood requires a long-term transit subsidy from the developer.

4. Expand the Public Arts Ordinance Before Approving This Project

Residential developments of this scale should not be exempt from contributing to the community's cultural fabric. The developer must be required to pay directly into Sebastopol's Public Art Fund under an expanded public arts ordinance designed to capture arts revenue from commercial-scale residential development. You should immediately instruct the City Attorney to draft an expansion of the Public Arts Ordinance so that commercial-scale residential developments are no longer exempt from funding local culture.

5. Council should explicitly direct staff to agendize an **Emergency Update to the Commercial / Residential Zoning Code** for downtown parcels—specifically referencing the Rite Aid site—to ensure the *next* 40 units in town build municipal wealth downtown rather than destroying canopy on the outskirts.

An infill project of 39 units is a great asset for California's housing goals, but it is being built in the wrong location simply because it is more convenient for a company from Sacramento. Sebastopol needs to update its zoning laws to push this type of development into our core. Let’s protect our native canopy, prevent further traffic congestion on our outskirts, and focus our density downtown where it builds true economic and environmental resilience.

Sincerely,

Gavin Waters

Hayden Ave