

April 30, 2026

Dear Members of the Sebastopol City Council,

I own property adjoining the empty lot that is proposed for division from St. Sebastian Church. I understand that the Church needs money and that our town needs more housing. And I recognize that the division already approved by the Planning Commission is more than likely to go through. At the same time, I am very concerned about how the development of the currently empty lot will impact the quality of life in the neighborhood and the character of the neighborhood overall. Hoping that you will proceed very carefully, I write with a few requests.

I am troubled by what seems to me the inappropriate R7 zoning of this property, located in an area of single-story, single-family homes and on a street that is not a major thoroughway. Because of that zoning, the 2.47-acre property could have on it as many as 60 units and the buildings could be as tall as three stories. Right now, this is a quiet, airy, and peaceful neighborhood; children play safely in the well-used park across the street from the empty lot. A sizable development is already proposed a few blocks away, also on Valentine Avenue (zoned R4), that will add considerably to traffic and noise. The additional traffic from development of the St. Sebastian lot as high-density, multi-unit housing could be devastating to this neighborhood—and could be dangerous both for families using the park and for students going to and from Brookhaven Middle School a block away. (Importantly, there will be no option other than Valentine Avenue as the location for the entrance to the development.) For those of us living right next to the lot, high-density development promises to mean a terrible loss of privacy, quiet, daytime light and night-time dark skies.

My first request, then, is that you reconsider the zoning of this property. I do understand that Sebastopol is under pressure from the state for housing development, but I'm sure you agree that development must not be done in ways that sacrifice what makes Sebastopol a special place to live. Please do not sacrifice the quality of our local community to state pressures; re-zone this lot for less dense development.

My second request pertains to the future. When the proposal for development comes in, whether as R4 or R7 housing, I ask that it be very carefully handled to ensure maximum protection of the quality of the neighborhood overall and the quality of life for those like myself living in adjacent properties. That will mean thoughtful negotiation around set-backs, the location of green spaces, outdoor lighting, etc. When there is a proposal, I hope you will respond to input from nearby residents like myself.


I also want to alert you to a few very specific environmental concerns. Though not designated as a flood zone, the location of my home (and my neighbors' homes) is in fact very wet in winter. There is standing water in my yard throughout the rainy season, and my neighbors and I depend heavily on the functioning of our sump pumps. (I have been told that the road St. Sebastian Church will continue to own runs over an old creek bed, though I don't know if that's true.) Paving over a large portion of the empty lot could worsen flood conditions for surrounding homes if drainage does not take into account the surprising amount of water here.

The wetness of this property also means that future environmental review needs to include looking for breeding areas of the California tiger salamander. I have happened upon three of the endangered salamanders on my property since purchasing it in the summer of 2022. I hear lots of frogs on the empty lot during the spring, suggesting that it is a wet area, and since there have been salamanders on my property, it makes sense that they may well live on the other side of my fence (in the empty lot) as well.

I can attend only the first half-hour of the meeting on May 5. Particularly since I may not be able to speak, I am grateful for your attention to this letter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lynn Keller".

Lynn Keller (Roberta Lynn Keller, )