

From: Mara Kiggins [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, July 16, 2026 12:09 PM
To: City Council <citycouncil@cityofsebastopol.gov>
Subject: Public Comment: Major Subdivision at 8100 Valentine Avenue

I am writing to submit official public comments regarding the pending major subdivision application by Grupe Development Inc. at 8100 Valentine Avenue (the former Mormon Church site). As an adjacent property owner, we have deep concerns regarding the developer's stated intent to remove 7 protected redwoods.

A closer examination of the site reveals that these 18 mature coast redwoods actually form two distinct, ecologically significant clusters that must be evaluated individually rather than treated as disposable landscape obstacles:

1. **The East Grove Clump (approx. 16 Redwoods):** This significant, high-density cluster forms a massive, contiguous canopy on the east side of the parcel. It serves as a vital local carbon sink, neighborhood microclimate regulator, and essential stormwater retention asset for Valentine Avenue. Removing nearly 40% of this specific grove constitutes a substantial adverse environmental change. A simple categorical exemption under CEQA is entirely inappropriate here; an independent arborist audit must evaluate this east grove as a single, indivisible ecological unit.
2. **The West Property Line Clump (2 Redwoods):** On the west side of the property, there is a pair of mature redwoods located directly across the fence line from our own individual mature redwood. These three trees function biologically as a single root-interlocked network.

Under **Sebastopol Municipal Code Chapter 8.12 (Tree Protection and Preservation)**, these trees meet the criteria for Heritage and Protected status. The proximity of the west clump to our property line creates two major planning and legal conflicts:

- **Critical Root Zone (CRZ) Infringement:** The high-density layout proposed by Grupe—which packs 39 total housing units onto 2.96 acres—demands tight setbacks and aggressive foundation grading. Any trenching or heavy machinery compaction on Grupe's side of the fence will fatally sever the root networks of the 2 west redwoods, **which will directly impact and destabilize our own connected redwood tree.**
- **Civil Property Liability:** If the developer compromises the root stability or windbreak integrity of the west clump, it puts our home and property at direct risk of tree failure. Under California common law, causing a boundary-adjacent tree to die or become hazardous triggers severe civil liability and triple timber damages.

We urge the Planning Department and the Design Review / Tree Board to reject the current site plan and mandate a layout revision. By adjusting the lot configurations and re-evaluating the grading plan near the east grove and the western property line, Grupe Development can easily preserve these heritage resources while building their project.

Please enter this letter into the official public record for the 8100 Valentine Ave files and forward it to the Tree Board ahead of their upcoming public hearing. Kindly reply to confirm receipt.

Sincerely,

Mara Kiggins