Morris, Erin

From: Brian DeWitt <BDeWitt@coombslaw.com>
Sent: Wednesday, September 4, 2019 4:41 PM
To: Morris, Erin
Subject: Heritage House project - Valle Verde Drive, Napa

[EXTERNAL]
Ms. Morris:

I am writing regarding the Heritage House project (project) and to urge that the project EIR not be approved. My wife, daughter and I live on Ranch Court in the Christensen subdivision. Our opposition to the project is based first, upon the environmental impacts on the immediate area and, second, on the population to be served and project location. The site is in a residential neighborhood which is not an appropriate location for housing for the chronically homeless, which includes persons with drug and alcohol addiction and who are exiting institutionalized settings, such as prison, jail and mental hospitals.

1. Environmental Impacts

In terms of environmental impacts, Salvador Creek is a habitat for salmon and steelhead trout which are on the endangered species list (this fact is noted on a wooden sign that the City of Napa erected on the creek trail not far from the project site). The creek is severely eroded (concave) at the existing parking lot behind the Sunrise building. This will be made worse by project when residents access the creek. The proposed retaining wall will not adequately address the erosion and is not sufficient to keep residents out of the creek. Cutting down trees around the project site will negatively affect the Salvador Creek riparian corridor, which is the main natural resource of our neighborhood. Footings and pilings from an old concrete bridge in Salvador Creek are an attractive nuisance and should be removed, but the project EIR does not state that they will be removed. Removal would create further environmental impacts and require mitigations. Add to this noise, traffic impacts, parking impacts, trash and crime and the project will have significant environmental impacts that the proposal does not adequately mitigate.

2. Population to be served by Heritage House

The project is being financed in part with a $7.9 million grant from California's "No Place Like Home" program. According to the NPLH website, the population served by the project will be:

- "adults with serious mental illness, or children with severe emotional disorders and their families and persons who require or are at risk of requiring acute psychiatric inpatient care, residential treatment, or outpatient crisis intervention because of a mental disorder with symptoms of psychosis, suicidality or violence and who are homeless, chronically homeless, or at risk of chronic homelessness" and

- "persons with mental illness exiting institutionalized settings with a history of homelessness prior to institutionalization" and

Welfare and Institutions Code Section 5849.2 is referenced, which defines "chronically homeless" to include adults "exiting institutionalized settings, such as jail or prison, hospitals, institutes of mental disease, nursing facilities, or long term residential substance use disorder treatment, who were Homeless prior to admission to the institutional setting, and "Transition Age Youth" "who, prior to entering into one of the facilities or types of institutional care listed herein, had a history of being homeless" [], or who are exiting "a state hospital, hospital behavioral health unit, hospital emergency room, institute for mental disease, psychiatric health facility, mental health rehabilitation center, [] residential treatment program, residential care facility, community crisis center, board and care facility, prison, parole, jail or juvenile detention facility, or foster care."

To be clear, it is not that Heritage House residents may include persons in these categories. The population will be persons fitting within these descriptions.

According to the NPLH website, residents may not be denied housing or evicted for failing to maintain sobriety or refusing treatment for substance abuse or mental health disorders.

The areas to the west, north and east of the project site are single-family residential (the exceptions are the apartments on Firefly Lane and The Springs retirement community on Villa Lane). Joggers and walkers from the neighborhood pass through our subdivision and over the foot bridge on the riparian corridor. Many people use the walking path along the corridor the goes past Summerbrooke Circle up to Vintage High. My wife and I have met many neighbors on these walks. Housing a chronically homeless population in the middle of this area is not good planning. Given the NPLH program mandate, better locations should be considered. The Sunrise Building was a nursing home, which made sense given the doctors' offices on Valle Verde and Villa Lane. The site could be used again as a nursing home or retirement home.

The Gasser Foundation put on a neighborhood meeting in the summer of 2018. At that meeting, which I attended, Gasser representatives said the project would be managed by Abode, that residents with drug or alcohol issues would be required to maintain sobriety and receive on-site treatment, and that access to the building would be controlled. Because of the NPLH grant, the project changed but Gasser never held another meeting to inform the community. Those who attended the 2018 meeting, or who heard about it from those who attended, may still think the information provided then is accurate -- but it is not. The Gasser Foundation should be required to hold another community meeting where accurate information about the project is provided to the public.

Advocates of the project rightly urge that we consider the needs of the homeless. The City must also consider the project's impact on other vulnerable persons. Our teenage daughter, who lives with us full-time, is developmentally disabled (autism), has very limited communication ability, lacks understanding of her surroundings and lacks safety awareness. She has full-time supervision, but I worry that putting this project 300 feet from our front door could put her at significant risk of becoming a crime victim. What assurance can the City of Napa give us that we should not worry?

Brian L. DeWitt