



City of Sebastopol
Incorporated 1902
Planning Department
7120 Bodega Avenue
Sebastopol, CA 95472

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APPROVED MINUTES

TREE/DESIGN REVIEW BOARD
CITY OF SEBASTOPOL
MINUTES OF June 16, 2021
4:00 P.M.

The notice of the meeting was posted on June 10, 2021.

DESIGN REVIEW BOARD:

1. CALL TO ORDER: Vice Chair Langberg called the meeting to order.

Director Svanstrom read a procedural statement.

2. ROLL CALL:	Present:	Lars Langberg, Vice Chair Marshall Balfe, Board Member Christine Level, Board Member Cary Bush, Board Member
	Absent:	Ted Luthin, Chair (excused)
	Staff:	Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director Jeff Setterlund, Contract Planner

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

April 21, 2021

Board Member Bush moved to approve the minutes as submitted.

Board Member Level seconded the motion.

AYES: Vice Chair Langberg, and Board Members Bush and Level

NOES: None

ABSTAIN: Board Member Balfe

ABSENT: Chair Luthin

May 05, 2021

Board Member Bush moved to approve the minutes as submitted.

Board Member Level seconded the motion.

AYES: Board Members Bush, Level, and Balfe
NOES: None
ABSTAIN: Vice Chair Langberg
ABSENT: Chair Luthin

4. PLANNING DEPARTMENT UPDATE ON MATTERS OF GENERAL INTEREST:

Director Svanstrom updated the Board on the following:

- Recent Council actions.
- Upcoming Council items.
- Façade Improvement updates.
- Sebastopol Community Sculpture Garden project and Call for Artists.

The Board had no questions for Director Svanstrom.

5. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC REGARDING ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA: None.

6. STATEMENTS OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST: None.

7. REGULAR AGENDA:

A. DESIGN REVIEW AMENDMENT – Barlow Crossings Townhomes, Wright Residential – 6737 Sebastopol Avenue (Project No. #2021-26) – The applicant is seeking a Design Review Amendment to apply a new exterior color scheme on the proposed residential structures of the Barlow Crossings Townhomes located at 6737 Sebastopol Avenue. These structures are located in the ESOS (Environmental and Scenic Open Space) overlay zone and have a specific condition of approval that requires approval of changes to the color scheme.

Director Svanstrom provided a brief introduction.

Contract Planner Setterlund presented the staff report.

The Board asked questions of staff.

Dylan Eacret, Project Manager, presented and was available for questions.

Jacob Sourjohn, Wright Residential, commented and was available for questions as well.

The Board asked questions of Mr. Eacret and Mr. Sourjohn.

Vice Chair Langberg opened public comment.

Hearing none, Vice Chair Langberg closed public comment.

Christine Level, Board Member

Yes, I will start, and I will probably have further comments as we go down the line. For the benefit of the applicant too, I can see what you are doing, and I appreciate what you are doing, and I want to say that. We had this original design that came in from the architect and we were using the colors to try to dress it up and make it no so monotonous and repetitive as my fellow board members that were at these meetings will recall.

Members of the Board concurred.

Christine Level, Board Member

That was one of the big issues that we had, to knock down the repetitive nature of all the units lumped together so we brought in the colors. We discussed the colors specifically relating to the natural environment. All of this was very important in our discussion, as you hopefully recall. Now, we are taking that away and changing the look of the building from being separate units defined by the colors, to basically one big building for each collection of buildings. It is now going to look like just one big building as I can tell from the applicant's submittal here. That is a rather significant change to our original design approval. Like I said, we were trying to use the colors to break down the repetitive monotony of the identical units. I am just putting that out as a thought for discussion. Additionally, we have once again, a situation where we have a design review approval that just basically gets ignored and it did to a certain point with the roofing. There was no attempt to try to get that preapproved ahead of time. This is sort of a constant thing that happens in this city with the Design Review Board. I am starting to wonder, at this point, why we even have a Design Review Board? While I see why they wanted to do what they did, I understand as I have 30 years of experience in building. I would have appreciated some attempt to address it with the Planning Department ahead of time. Those are my two discussion points; I would like to hear what the rest of the Board has to say about them.

Vice Chair Langberg asked Board Member Level if she wished to comment on the colors themselves.

Christine Level, Board Member

The colors are repetitive and monotonous which is what we were trying to avoid. It is a couple of tones of sort of repetitive and monotonous colors. This is very contrary to what we were trying to accomplish in our original approval. If we had gone back and in the original approval it had been those repetitive browns, or whatever, and all the units pretty much the same, then this would be a like-kind change, but this is a change in the thinking and what we were trying to accomplish with these identical units, because they are all identical. There is 18 identical units. I am eager to hear what other Board members have to say about this.

Cary Bush, Board Member

Sure, I will follow up on that. Thank you for your comments, Board Member Level. It is a different project in looks. Maybe that is not such a bad thing. I have been on record to say that a lot of what had been proposed from the initial proposal, and/or there was a preliminary also, the final hearing, the architect really pushed this contextual theme. The idea that the blend in nature would be individual, and intimate, cozy, and happy. I called it out as row houses, and they are row houses. That is what they are, and that is what they will be. They are big, massive solid buildings that have a lot of kitsch to them. It was also pitched that this project would be cost effective. I went on record to say that all these additional colors would add more maintenance and add more cost to the project which is not honest to good architecture. I said that, and I am saying it again. I also do not feel that these row houses fit the environmental scenic corridor in any way whatsoever. To paint them gray, and white, and have a red door and/or have them with green roofs, brown roofs, and gray and black roofs, with multiple colors, to me, it still does not matter. You could paint these the color that was initially slotted for this project and a year later you could paint them this color so, I am not here to fuss about the color. I was really more concerned about the notion that, what this Board reviewed was a concept, it was the pitch that it was contextual. The word contextual was brought up about a million times, that this would be cozy, and happy, and now it is not. It will be a solid, massive building and will show that for what it is. That is just the honesty of it. From me to you, as the applicant, putting on a black roof is probably bad for a start, but it is what it is. You have my blessing to paint this the colors that they want to be because I still do not feel like it meets the project and being

in the environmental scenic corridor. It sort of wanted to before, and now it will not. Those are my comments.

Mr. Sourjohn

The buildings will have separate colors based on what we submit to the City. It is not going to be one solid blue, and then the other one is going to be gray. It is going to have the color scheme which will make each building look different. They will not be a solid blue, I am with you on that, that looks funky. I just want to make sure that you know that the buildings will look separate from, or different from the other ones too.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

We can see the drawing, and there is variation from one to the next. They are not radically different, but they are different.

Marshall Balfe, Board Member

If there was some playfulness in the units, a little in, a little out, or whatever, then it makes the different color idea really work well, in my opinion. Once you start simplifying the buildings the way they are, the colors, to me, would just look pasted on if they were different colors. When I looked at the building and the condition it is in, with all the battens and the little things going on all over the place, I tried to visualize different colors. It is already busy to the eye. I think the idea of calming all that down is a good one. I really like what was just suggested about each building being a different color. I like that. Some design review boards do not get involved in color at all, which I never agreed with. I think it is excellent to discuss color, how can you not? Is the concept good, are all the elements good, is everything the designer is thinking about good, or not? I really like this discussion about color. That is my opinion. I just thought I would throw that in there.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

That is great, we appreciate that, thank you Board Member Balfe. I will make a couple comments, then we can decide how we want to go forward with it. I agree with Board Member Bush. The architecture is what is suffering here. Painting it one color or another, they are not that different. We struggled with that in the initial approval and in the end sort of gave in to 18 housing units being built in our city, which is a good thing. We are fighting that in some way. I think that fewer colors are better because there is enough stuff going on on these buildings already. I appreciate that fewer colors have been proposed. In terms of how the colors themselves work with the site, it is a challenging site. I would go back to, when we were reviewing it, talking about this site being at the nexus of a lot of different things. If you look at it now, when you are going down Morris, and you see the construction, that view is a very urban view. Right on the other side is a very nature-based view, it has a very environmental sense going out to the Railroad Forest. How do you balance all those? I do not think color is the way to do it. From the City view, so to speak, this one may be more appropriate than the other, but to me it is not that much different. We have been asked to either approve this theme or give suggestions on how to temper it, that is what staff is asking us to do. To clarify with staff, there are carports and trash enclosures, but we are just talking about color on all those things.

Contract Planner Setterlund responded in the affirmative.

Christine Level, Board Member

First, just briefly, the carport and the trash enclosures have no color scheme presented in the document that I am looking at.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

Further down on the page there are details that give a sense of what they are doing to match those.

Christine Level, Board Member

Okay, I found it. I completely agree with Board Member Bush on his comments about these things not really being part of the nature and the whole aspect of this, "architecture" that we have here. I think I am hearing Board Member Bush and Vice Chair Langberg saying, at this point, what difference is the color going to matter? I tend to agree with that, but I am just wondering if that is where your heads are at too?

Cary Bush, Board Member

Yes, thanks Board Member Level, I feel the same as Vice Chair Langberg said it, probably less is more at this point. The architecture is what it is going to be. I do not think that having more colors is blend to nature, or not, is going to make it a different project. I am comfortable with the colors as suggested, personally.

Christine Level, Board Member

Going back, I do not remember, was it the architect that pushed for the variety? I forget. I agree with Board Member Bush and Vice Chair Langberg about the scope of the "architecture" here. It is what it is. I can see what this is. By the way, Mr. Eacret, Mr. Sourjohn, and Mr. Van Heusen, I do tip my hat to you for your process. Is my understanding that there are going to be rentals correct?

The applicant team responded in the affirmative.

Christine Level, Board Member

I hear this story. For example, we have these similar units at the corner of Pleasant Hill and Bodega Avenue. They are similar and they were presented to be rentals to become townhouses, but they never did, they just stayed rentals. Continuing next door we have Section 8 housing, but then we have the same thing again next door. It is just going to be that sort of inexpensive construction rental type of a place. I could point them out around town. I am not objecting to it; I am just making a statement about this. I agree that the colors do not matter. What I think I wanted to make sure about was that we had this intent of approval and I do not honestly recall why we were going with those colors, I thought it was to break up the repetitive architecture that the architect that designed this project is so famous for. Does the Board have any recall about that? It has been a while, maybe even 2 years ago.

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

My understanding was that the variety of the colors was to make them feel like individual units because, even though they are townhomes, they are for sale. I will note that we do have an approved tentative map and my understanding is that Wright Residential is moving forward with the final map. I just conversed with Mr. Eacret regarding a time extension for that. But you are correct, even if it is subdivided to townhomes, there is nothing to require the owner of selling those parcels. If you recall, I believe Dan Davis was intending on potentially renting a bunch for a while and maybe selling a few, he had not quite figured that out. Wright Residential will still need to do two inclusionary units. Once the final map is done, there will be separate parcels and they will be able to be sold individually in the future. I think Kathy Austin, the architect, I believe her intent was to create them more as individual units and to break down the masses, and the colors were to work with the tans and the browns that were coming through in the landscape.

Vice Chair Langberg thanked Director Svanstrom for the explanation.

Christine Level, Board Member

I have one more clarification with Director Svanstrom. Director Svanstrom, this does not have a tentative map?

Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director

This does have an approved tentative map. They have not done the final map yet which is pretty typical for a subdivision when they have required improvements, to wait until the improvements are done before doing the final.

Christine Level, Board Member

Right, okay. I thought I remembered it had a tentative map.

Cary Bush, Board Member

I was just going to say for the record and for the benefit of our applicant team. We have seen this presented preliminary for comment and review. The Board pushed really hard on trying to maximize its density, allowances for going taller, higher, more aggressive, and more inventive. It is this word contextual, which we do not see, but we are being sold the idea of it being relative to the Laguna and it having a real connection to that Laguna in some architectural form. We are here to try to make sure that people are housed in some fashion, I think that was also part of the process. The downturn of the economy, Covid, and that sort of thing. Here again, we are here, and it is really just another color.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

It feels to me like these are all really good comments for the public record. Maybe they will influence the next project that comes along. We are now tasked with approving, disapproving, or amending the color scheme. Based on what I have heard, it sounds like this color scheme is okay, and may be better in that there are fewer colors. It seems to me like we would be willing to approve it as presented.

Christine Level, Board Member

Cautioned the use of the word, "we" because I, personally, am not part of the "we" on the high-density agenda. I am concerned that we are following protocol, and that we are not contradicting ourselves with the prior approval. I feel satisfied that the colors were really not that much of a reason for the prior approval and feel comfortable with the color change.

Cary Bush, Board Member

Fair deal, Board Member Level, I will speak for myself from here on out.

Christine Level, Board Member

Appreciate that.

Board Member Level moved to approve this scheme as presented.

Board Member Bush seconded the motion.

Vice Chair Langberg asked for discussion of the motion.

Christine Level, Board Member

It is outside of the motion to approve this project. Personally, I would have appreciated it if you had made some attempt right off the bat to propose your color changes to the roof because it makes it appear like you are trying to pull a fast one here, and that disrespects the Board, and the process. I understand why you did what you did, but I am just putting that out there.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

That is a fair point, for sure. There are other ways and alternatives to move forward and we all know about that.

AYES: Vice Chair Langberg, and Board Members Bush, Balfe and Level

NOES: None

ABSTAIN: None

ABSENT: Chair Luthin

Vice Chair Langberg thanked the applicant team for bringing forward this proposal.

The applicant team thanked the Board.

8. ADJOURNMENT: Vice Chair Langberg adjourned the meeting. The next regularly scheduled Tree/Design Review Board meeting will be held on Wednesday, July 07, 2021 at 4:00 p.m.