

## Streeter, Patrick

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**From:** Teri Shore <tshore@greenbelt.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 03, 2018 4:11 PM  
**To:** Burch, Michael; Hedgpeth, Warren; Grogan, Joel; Zucco, Kevin; Kincaid, Scott; Briere, Sabra; Weigl, Drew  
**Cc:** Streeter, Patrick; Julie Combs; Jack1 Tibbetts; Rogers, Chris; Coursey, Chris; Sawyer, John; Olivares, Ernesto; Schwedhelm, Tom  
**Subject:** Design Review - Emerald Isle Senior Center - Jan. 4 Item 6.1  
**Attachments:** EmeraldIsleGAComments1..18.pdf

**Follow Up Flag:** Flag for follow up  
**Flag Status:** Flagged

Dear Santa Rosa Design Review Board,

Please find attached comments from Greenbelt Alliance regarding the design review of the proposed new Emerald Isle senior facility in the burned area of Round Barn in Fountaingrove.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Teri Shore

cc: Santa Rosa City Council

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Teri Shore  
Regional Director, North Bay

**Greenbelt Alliance**  
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*Bay Area greenbelt lands are at risk of being lost to sprawl development. [Get the facts here.](#)*

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January 3, 2017

Santa Rosa Design Review Board  
100 Santa Rosa Ave # 3,  
Santa Rosa, CA 95404

Re: Emerald Isle Community Care Facility, Agenda Item #6.1 – Jan. 4, 2018

Dear Design Review Board,

Greenbelt Alliance urges the Santa Rosa Design Review Board to closely scrutinize the location, design, site plan configuration and overall effect of the proposed new Emerald Island Senior Community Care Facility at the end of a cul de sac on Gullane Drive in the heart of the burned area of Round Barn in Fountaingrove.

Because this is the first new development proposed in the burned area since the fires of October 2017, it seems prudent to discuss in full the public health and safety and fire risk issues related to the project and the implications of housing more vulnerable seniors here.

Greenbelt Alliance supports the city of Santa Rosa's actions to implement a resilient recovery and rebuild after the fires. However, the city has not yet had a full discussion about how to consider new development in the burned areas.

While Emerald Isle was in the works before the fires, we urge the Design Review Committee to consider the changed circumstances since the fire. We also urge you to take the lead in a broader discussion about post-fire new development across the city.

This type of discussion falls under the purview of the Design Review Committee, per Zoning Code Chapt. 20-52.030 as stated in the staff report [*emphasis added*]:

Zoning Code Chapt.20-52.030 F. Project review. The review authority shall consider the *location, design, site plan configuration*, and the *overall effect* of the proposed project upon surrounding properties and *the City in general*. Review shall be conducted by comparing the proposed project to the General Plan, any applicable specific plan, applicable *Zoning Code* standards and requirements, consistency of the project within the City's Design Guidelines, *architectural criteria for special areas*, and *other applicable City requirements (e.g., City policy statements and development plans.)*

Please consider the following when reviewing this project:

## 1. Fire risk and mitigation

Given the devastation of the recent fires, please consider seeking the highest possible fire prevention and mitigations for the project. Please consider requiring better access into and out of the site, given that it is on a cul de sac.

Please consider the bigger picture of fire mitigation, prevention and response when deliberating on this project. It may make sense to convene experts at the state and federal level for recommendations and find out about any changes being made to fire codes in the near-term given the devastating fires across California in 2017. Now is the time to begin to rethink the way that development the wildland-urban interface and other high fire risk areas is considered. It seems prudent to pause before placing more people in fire risk areas.

## 2. Public Health and Safety

The fact is that most of the people who died in the fires in Santa Rosa were seniors who were unable to escape. The senior facilities that burned down faced tremendous difficulties in evacuating the residents. The State of California is investigating the challenges faced by the senior centers during the fire.

According to a recent article in Health Care Quarterly, “Older adults are more vulnerable to fires compared to the general population; at age 65, people are twice as likely to be killed or injured by fire. That's why it's important for older adults to carefully consider their living environments, and to make sure they're adequately protected from fire and related risks.

While it's often assumed that any residence for people ages 55 and older will include the fire and life safety provisions needed to maximize their safety, that's not necessarily the case.” See full article and related articles attached.

Please ensure that the proposed development will meet or exceed state and federal standards for senior facilities, such as the National Fire Protection Association developed NFPA 101, Life Safety Code.

## 3. Overconcentration

The proposed project is in area of overconcentration for senior centers, per the staff report and General Plan.

## 4. Resilient City Ordinance

The City of Santa Rosa is beginning to develop a new citywide Resilient City Ordinance to address new development after the fires. Perhaps it makes sense to delay approval of this project until the new code is developed. Or request that the developer meet any new fire safety and/or resiliency measures included in the new code.

## 5. Transfer of development rights

The city and the developer may want to explore other options to move the proposed project from the fire-risk parcel to a better, more accessible location in the city center. Fire relief and recovery funds from state and federal

resources could potentially be leveraged to transfer development rights away from the fire prone areas if feasible. Greenbelt Alliance would be interested in assisting the city in developing such a program.

Thank you for your consideration of our views.

Sincerely yours,



Teri Shore

Regional Director

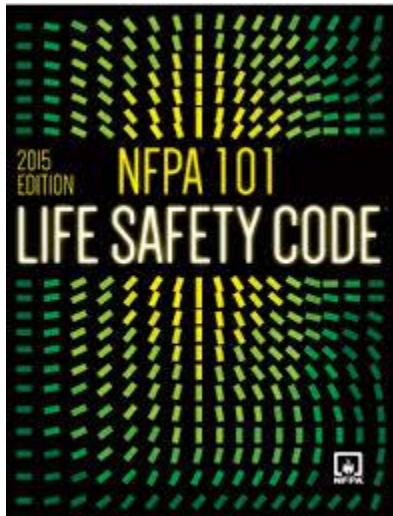
<https://community.nfpa.org/community/nfpa-today/blog/2016/10/12/senior-housing-provides-varying-degrees-of-fire-safety>

## Senior housing provides varying degrees of fire safety

Blog Post created by [Robert Solomon](#) on Oct 12, 2016

- Like • Show 1 Like
- Comment • 0

*Here's an article I wrote this summer, which speaks to the two fires that occurred at senior living facilities in California this week:*



Older adults are more vulnerable to fires compared to the general population; at age 65, people are twice as likely to be killed or injured by fire. That's why it's important for older adults to carefully consider their living environments, and to make sure they're adequately protected from fire and related risks.

While it's often assumed that any residence for people ages 55 and older will include the fire and life safety provisions needed to maximize their safety, that's not necessarily the case.

Depending on how a senior living residence is categorized, it may or may not include the fire safety measures, designs and features that other senior living occupancies such as an assisted living facility incorporate. Anyone either currently living in or considering a move into a residence that is advertised as senior housing or otherwise caters to older adults needs to be aware of what safety measures are — or are not — in place, so they can make an informed decision about where they live.

The National Fire Protection Association developed NFPA 101, Life Safety Code, which serves as the most widely used source for strategies to protect people from fire and related hazards based on building construction and occupancy features.

While NFPA 101 must be used by facilities that fall under certain federal guidelines, buildings identified simply as senior housing have no obligation to follow NFPA 101 unless the code is adopted at the state or local level. Buildings that fall under the federal criteria include assisted living facilities, long-term care and nursing home facilities. Although individual states can and do adopt NFPA 101 for other types of occupancies, Nevada is not among them.

In a section of NFPA 101 called "Residential Board and Care," stringent requirements for assisted living facilities include the installation of smoke alarm systems and fire sprinkler systems, as well as building construction features that ensure adequate means of egress in the event of a fire or other emergency. The building managers of assisted living facilities are also required to establish emergency evacuation plans and procedures for residents which are supervised by 24 hour on-site staff. Meanwhile, the residents themselves must be evaluated by qualified staff to determine whether or not they're capable of living in an assisted living facility.

However, occupancies referred to as "senior housing" or "senior apartments" oftentimes are simply apartment buildings whose only requirement is that residents are 55 years of age or older. They offer no fire safety provisions specific to the needs of older adults, and the occupancy owners and managers of these residences are not required to follow NFPA 101 unless state or local adoption of the code is in place. This puts older adults living in those residencies at increased fire risk.

Firefighters don't always have the ability to get multiple people, particularly those who are disabled or use medical equipment at home. This challenge is multiplied if the senior housing occupancy consists of multiple stories.

Fortunately, there are many steps people living in senior residences can take on their own to reduce their risk of fire. One should talk with the building manager to learn what, if any, fire protection systems are installed in the building, and to find out about emergency evacuation plans that may be in place. Buildings with multiple stories that are protected with automatic sprinkler systems will be inherently safer than buildings that have no similar protection.

Regardless of what features your building does or doesn't have, NFPA's [\*Emergency Evacuation Planning Guide for People with Disabilities\*](#) is a valuable resource that can be used for any specific situation. *The Guide*, addressing the main evacuation elements needed for the disabled community, can be easily applied to older adult communities and is [available online for free](#). If a building manager doesn't have a plan in place, providing him or her with the guide will give them the information, guidance and resources needed to implement one.

For more information on fire safety, visit [www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org). For information specifically on fire safety for at-risk populations, visit [www.nfpa.org/disability](http://www.nfpa.org/disability).

*This article was originally published in the July issue of Health Care Quarterly/Las Vegas.*

## New Building Code System Could Revolutionize Senior Living Construction

April 15, 2013 by [Elizabeth Ecker](#)

Assisted living communities have long struggled with being classified along with other types of institutional-type buildings such as hospitals and nursing homes. Under

national building and fire safety codes, this has led to costly and sometimes unnecessary building features to adhere with codes that are not specifically geared toward assisting living resident safety. Until now.

A forthcoming guide and toolkit published through the work of the Assisted Living Federation of America (ALFA) and some vested individuals will explain the proposed new changes to the International Building Code providing—for the first time—a consistent building code for assisted living communities.

While the changes are not expected to be published for several years, some states are adopting the new rules even sooner in order to bring greater alignment between the state building codes, fire safety codes and assisted living regulations.

“As fire safety code goes, people have learned what assisted living is,” says Maribeth Bersani, senior vice president of public policy for ALFA. “Thankfully, people understand we don’t need to be built like a nursing home or hospital. We’re different.”

The initiative has been the work of ALFA with the help of a small group of architects and fire safety experts for the past five years. The work will come to fruition in the 2015 International Building Code (IBC), and sooner in some states like Oregon that may be implementing ahead of the curve.

Individual developers also have the option of proposing to use this new building code for their specific projects within their local jurisdictions before the 2015 publication.

The IBC changes also generally align with the recent editions of the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 101 Life Safety Code in its Residential Board & Care (Assisted Living) regulations. NFPA 101 is referenced or enforced by many state assisted living licensing agencies.

“Eventually [the code] will create consistency across the country,” says Dan Purgiel, principal in charge of senior housing with LRS Architects. “Most jurisdictions will not adopt until 2015 to 2018, so it’s still in the future. But some will adopt early.”

Rather than viewing assisted living communities as health care buildings, all new assisted living construction will require conformance to what has essentially become a national building code, the IBC. The communities will have to comply, taking into consideration that some residents need assistance getting out of the building.

Providers currently have two options: classifying the community under health care standards, or restricting residents to those who meet evacuation requirements. This can cause problems for providers and developers building new communities.

Take, for example, the placement of smoke detectors in nursing homes. Because residents sleep with unit doors open and there are higher levels of staffing to assist in

the event of evacuation, having smoke detectors in the hallways, rather than in the rooms could be considered sufficient.

Apply the same standard to an assisted living community, in which residents may have private rooms with closed doors and fewer staff to help evacuate, and there's a disconnect. Smoke detectors in the halls are less responsive in the case of a fire within a resident's room.

Yet because of the building code, assisted living providers had to adhere to something, even if it wasn't the most fitting for the residents' needs.

The discrepancy also explained why so many assisted living developers were having problems when applying the building code requirements.

"The issue is predicated on the fact that acuity rates in assisted living are going up and evacuation capabilities are going down," says Tom Jaeger, president of Jaeger and Associates and former fire life safety consultant to the long term care industry. "The requirements for assisted living communities, up to recent times, didn't anticipate that the ability of the residents to evacuate would be as low as it is today."

Under the new IBC, providers will have a new option of providing fire safety measures within their communities to meet the new assisted living building code.

Many state regulators, too, have supported the change, which aligns the interests of owners and residents as well as the jurisdictions, which have been tasked with keeping up with regulating in an ever-changing assisted living environment.

"This recognizes who we are, and comes up with a life safety code supportive of who we are to keep buildings and residents and safe," Bersani says.

Written by [Elizabeth Ecker](#)

*This article is sponsored by the Assisted Living Federation of America (ALFA) as part of its efforts to advance excellence and explore topics impacting the future of senior living. For more information about ALFA, visit [www.alfa.org](http://www.alfa.org).*

## <https://seniorhousingnews.com/2015/02/09/6-layers-defense-fires-senior-living/6> **Layers of Defense Against Fires in Senior Living**

February 9, 2015 by [Emily Study](#)





Fires in senior living apartments and communities have swept national headlines recently, detailing the destruction that these disasters can cause, and sparking conversations around fire safety — particularly as it relates to buildings' construction.

In a suburb of San Antonio, Texas, five people died and 10 were injured late last year after a [three-alarm fire](#) broke out in an 11-story high-rise that housed about 700 residents.

More recently, a [cigarette caught bedding on fire](#) at a senior living community in Golden, Colo., leading to the death of one resident. In Westland, Michigan, 20 units at a community [were evacuated](#) when a fire broke out in the early morning hours, leaving 50 to 60 residents displaced.

And there could be more fires to come before the season is over, as home fires and resulting deaths peak in the colder months, according to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA).

In light of the dangers that fires can cause, particularly at senior living communities where residents are less mobile, providers are looking for ways to prevent them entirely.

But some suggest the best way to prevent a fire is to build with it in mind. While fire safety requirements vary by property type and by state, industry experts say best practices call for the highest level of construction, regardless of the regulations.

Here are six best practices for senior living providers to consider:

### **1. Install a Sprinkler System**

All long-term care facilities were [expected to be fully sprinklered](#) as of August 2013, according to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS).

However, some communities may have received extensions if they were not able to meet the deadline due to the magnitude of the undertaking.

Costs, in particular, can be a significant hurdle for organizations looking to retrofit a sprinkler system in existing buildings, says Tom Jaeger, a fire protection engineer based in Great Falls, Va.

Depending on various factors, the cost of retrofitting a sprinkler system could be double what it costs to install one in a new build.

“It’s much cheaper to install anything in a building while it’s under construction,” Jaeger says.

Despite the challenges, industry architects suggest having a sprinkler system is the No. 1 way to prevent fires in senior living.

“It’s the best line of defense,” says Mark Warrick, who leads the Austin, Texas-based firm Pi Architects, along with Greg Huntman. “A best practice is [to have] the building fully sprinklered with quick response heads.”

Doing so could be a matter of life or death.

“I’ve investigated every multiple-death fire in a nursing home since 1972, and every one of those was a non-sprinklered building,” Jaeger says.

## **2. Construct Smoke and Fire Barriers**

The next layers of defense are smoke and fire barriers, which make it easier for residents to move to a different area of the community during fire emergencies.

In essence, these barriers break up the building into several compartments, which can contain the fire and smoke from spreading for a period of time, allowing residents to get to safety without having to take flights of steps.

“For nursing homes and higher-acuity assisted living [communities], it’s dangerous to evacuate residents outside in inclement weather,” Warrick says. “It’s much safer to have a ‘defend in place’ methodology, and that’s where the smoke walls and fire walls come into play. You can take residents from one compartment to another and the fire and smoke are contained.”

However, problems related to improper fire and smoke barriers remain some of the top deficiencies in health care facilities, according to the NFPA.

While state regulations on these barriers vary for senior living communities, Warrick and Huntman say installing them — and doing so properly — is a best practice in protecting against fires and fire-related injuries.

## **3. Use Noncombustible Materials**

Building with noncombustible materials — steel, metal or concrete, for example — can prevent the spread of fires in senior living, and is among the best practices for doing so.





## [Inside the Future of University Partnerships in Senior Living](#)

University partnerships are revolutionizing senior living. Learn how innovative operators are forming these partnerships for success.



## [The Home Care Opportunity: Big Risks, Big Rewards](#)

Home care is hot. As senior living providers test these services, learn about common pitfalls and success stories around in-home care.



## [Inside The Rise of Multi-Venue Dining In Senior Living](#)

Senior living communities are shifting toward high variety dining options that are wow-ing residents and changing senior living dining as we know it.

As defined by the NFPA, a noncombustible material is one that, in the form in which it is used, and under the conditions anticipated, will not ignite, burn, support combustion or release flammable vapors when subjected to fire or heat.

Belmont Village Senior Living, which has 24 assisted living communities nationwide, constructs all of its buildings with steel or concrete, as opposed to wood, in order to add an extra layer of defense.

“Our communities are built to the highest life safety standard, recognizing that a senior is going to take much longer to evacuate in the event of an emergency than a younger person,” says CEO Patricia Will. “You have to be able to protect the senior for a longer period of time, and your construction type dictates that.”



**Belmont Village Senior Living uses noncombustible materials to construct its properties, such as Belmont Village Hunters Creek in Houston, Texas (above), as well as Belmont Village Turtle Creek in Dallas (at top).**

Will also notes that nobody at Belmont Village — including employees, residents or family members — are permitted to smoke in the buildings. Different states, cities and jurisdictions have different rules regarding smoking in senior living communities, but Belmont Village has standardized the prohibition of smoking since its inception.

“No matter what the state rules are, nobody smokes. The risk is huge when it comes to someone smoking in bed or dropping a cigarette,” she says.

#### **4. Upgrade Kitchen Cooktops**

Cooking equipment, data shows, is the [leading cause](#) of home structure fires and home fire injuries, with two in every five (42%) home structure fires starting in the kitchen.

With that in mind, providers should update their kitchens, either with new appliances or with safety devices that can extinguish fires, experts say.

Roanoke, Virginia-based Friendship Retirement Community and Richfield Living Community are [installing Stove Top Fire Stop devices](#) in about 150 apartments after receiving a grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

These devices are automatic stovetop fire suppressors that will open when a sustained flame comes in direct contact with its underside.

Other providers are upgrading to equipment that has a fire suppression system built into the hood of the cooktop, says Hunteman, noting that Pi Architects installs these in all kitchens in senior living buildings now.

#### **5. Separate the Laundry Facilities**

Despite the prevalence of kitchen fires, Warrick and Hunteman say laundry rooms are also common areas of fire origin in senior living communities.

“Most fires are started in laundry rooms and soiled linen rooms, so extra care should be taken in those areas too,” Warrick says.

Hunteman suggests providers separate the laundry facilities from the main building to ensure resident safety, even if it might be harder on the provider’s operations.

#### **6. Maintain Fire Prevention Systems**

Having fire prevention and suppression systems are essential in senior living, but maintaining them is even more important.

“The big key is making sure a building is constructed correctly from the get-go,” Hunteman says. “The other key is that the operator maintains it.”

For example, if smoke and fire barriers are penetrated, these holes must be sealed in order to maintain the barriers' resistance.

Proper maintenance and regular review of these systems is a best practice for providers, Warrick says.

Ultimately, it falls on the provider to make sure their buildings are safe for residents. In the event that a fire occurs, it is also their responsibility to investigate the cause and address structural issues, if necessary.

“There is an expectation for senior living communities to have clear fire warning and suppression systems — including alarms and sprinklers — and that the building meet all appropriate safety standards in state and local law,” says Helio Fred Garcia, a crisis management consultant. “To the degree that any of those expectations are unfulfilled, then part of the corrective path going forward is to identify what didn't meet expectations and then fix it.”

**Written by** [Emily Study](#)

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4 January 2018

Michael Burch, Chair  
Warren Hedgpeth, Vice Chair  
Joel Grogan  
Kevin Zucco  
Scott Kincaid  
Sabra Briere  
Drew Weigl  
Santa Rosa Design Review Board

Via email

Re: Item 6.1 on 1/4/18 Agenda  
Oakmont of Emerald Isle

Dear Chair Burch, and members of the Design Review Board:

As was made clear by the Santa Rosa City Council very recently, there is a concern and desire to have a community/Council discussion about the future of the areas of Santa Rosa that were impacted by the Tubbs Fire. Although rebuilding has been expedited, as it should be, before considering new construction in the burn areas, the City Council is obviously interested in having more discussion before approvals are granted.

Oakmont of Emerald Isle is a very clear example of new construction in a burn area, and the Planning Commission gave their approvals prior to the City Council making their wishes known, unfortunately.

However, as this Design Review approval is discretionary, I respectfully request that you put over consideration of this concept and final design review until such time as the City Council has had an opportunity to come to agreement about new construction in burn areas, and give your Board and staff explicit direction.

There is absolutely no need for this project to receive this incredibly quick review and approval. Of course, I understand the applicant's interest in as quick a process as possible, but the applicant's interest is not necessarily the same as the City's interest. Your job is to consider the City's interests.

In addition, there is absolutely no question that this proposed new development is in a high fire hazard area. I am attaching my letter of November 29, 2017, which covers the inadequacy of the Mitigated



Negative Declaration prepared for this project. Although staff is correct that the public comment period for this Mitigated Negative Declaration closed on October 25, 2017, since a reconsideration of that Mitigated Negative Declaration was submitted on November 6, 2017, I would argue that the public comment period for the underlying Mitigated Negative Declaration was reopened, making my November 29, 2017 comments timely.

Regardless, there is no question that building a new skilled nursing facility, which will be occupied by elderly, disabled individuals, in a high fire hazard zone should give you – and anyone – pause.

This is why I am asking you to delay consideration of this requested Design Review approval until a later date, after you have received Council direction.

If you believe you must move forward, I request that you deny this approval, for the following reasons:<sup>1</sup>

1. A neighborhood meeting was held on July 6, 2016. Since that time, not only has the design of the project changed, but the fires happened. Since both of those are significant events, I believe that you should require another neighborhood meeting to take place prior to your consideration of this approval. Staff believes that neither the design changes, nor the fire, are significant enough to require another neighborhood meeting. I disagree. In fact, I believe that if another neighborhood meeting were held now, we would all hear very deep concerns about the proposed project.
2. You are required to make findings that “the proposed development will not be detrimental to the public health, safety, or welfare or materially injurious to the properties or improvements in the vicinity.” I don’t see how you could possibly make that finding.

There is no question that the possibility exists that this development will be detrimental not only to the public health and safety of properties and people in the vicinity, but also to this proposed property and the residents of this proposed project.

This project is on a cul-de-sac. There is only one way in and one way out of the project. Given the fact that this project would be occupied by elderly, disabled individuals, in the event of a required evacuation, a cul-de-sac is unacceptable for this project.

This project is within 1000 feet of another similar facility, which can be viewed as “overconcentration” of this type of facility under City Codes. Although apparently staff doesn’t see this as a problem, given the population this project would be serving, and the extraordinary difficulties with evacuations of everyone, but in particular of our elderly during the recent fires, having another facility of this type in this location is not a good idea. Particularly not on a cul-de-sac.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

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<sup>1</sup> I understand that the Planning Commission was told by staff that “their hands were tied” and that they had to approve the project. Unfortunately I was in Scottsdale, and there is no recording of the hearing, so I cannot verify this instruction, but have it on good authority. I hope that you will not be told the same thing. Obviously, that is an absurd statement on its face. Both the Design Review and the Planning Commission approvals are discretionary. If you and they had no discretion, the approval wouldn’t even be before you. You can vote NO if you believe that is the correct course of action, with the proper findings, as could have the Planning Commission.

Thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours,

Sonia E. Taylor

Attachment

Cc: Santa Rosa City Council  
William Rose  
Kevin McCallum  
Paul Gullixson

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29 November 2017

Patti Cisco, Chair  
Casey Edmondson, Vice Chair  
Vicki Duggan  
Curt Groninga  
Julian Peterson  
Peter Rumble  
Karen Weeks  
Santa Rosa Planning Commission

Via email

Re: Planning Commission Agenda Items 8.1 and 8.4, 11/30/17 Meeting

Dear Chair Cisco and Members of the Santa Rosa Planning Commission:

On your November 30<sup>th</sup> agenda you have two items that I find concerning.

Item 8.1 is a request by Oakmont Senior Living/OSL Santa Rosa Properties LLC requesting approval of Oakmont of Emerald Isle Assisted Living's request for a Conditional Use Permit for construction and operation of a 49-unit assisted living facility, for a Hillside Development Permit for the same project, and for adoption of a Mitigated Negative Declaration for the same project.

Item 8.4 is a request by City Ventures/Arterial Vascular Engineering, Inc. for the "Round Barn" project, requesting approval of a General Plan Amendment and Rezoning of the site, and for adoption of a Mitigated Negative Declaration for the site (ultimately to be approved by the City Council).

Both of these proposed actions are for properties in Fountaingrove. Not to overstate the obvious, but substantial portions of Fountaingrove burned during the Tubbs fire, including existing properties in the immediate vicinity of the properties on which you are requested to take actions.

### **APPROVALS ARE PREMATURE**

Santa Rosa, as a community, has agreed that burned properties should be allowed to rebuild, and agreed to expedite that rebuilding. That discussion has taken place, and the City Council has confirmed that community decision.

These two proposals, however, are for **new** development in an area substantially burned. Neither the community, nor the City Council, has as yet had an opportunity to discuss whether and/or what we want to do about **new** development in areas such as Fountaingrove, and I believe it is necessary to have that

discussion prior to approving actual new development (the Emerald Isle proposal) or a General Plan Amendment/Rezoning that will inevitably lead to new development (the Round Barn proposal).

It is premature to consider, let alone approve, either of these projects. Not only does our community and the City Council deserve the right to have the conversation about new development in burned areas, but I strongly believe that it would be prudent to wait until Cal Fire and Santa Rosa have had the time and opportunity to fully evaluate and assess the Tubbs fire, and potentially revise maps and other building regulations, prior to taking any actions that would result in new construction on vacant lands in Fountaingrove.

I would request that you put Items 8.1 and 8.4 on hold for at least six months to allow for such community conversation and assessment of the impacts of the Tubbs fire.

### **THE MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATIONS ARE INACCURATE AND INADEQUATE**

**Both** of the Mitigated Negative Declarations for 8.1 and 8.4 (coincidentally prepared by the same firm – FirstCarbon Solutions), and the November 6, 2017 Memo from FirstCarbon Solutions responding to the Tubbs fire with regard to the Emerald Isle project, state that there is **Less than a Significant Impact** for any significant risk of loss, injury or death from wildland fires for both proposals, in virtually identical language.

Because their conclusion, for both projects, is that those actions will have a Less than a Significant Impact, there are no mitigation measures proposed in the Mitigated Negative Declarations.

I do not believe that these assertions are accurate, based both on the information they provide (and don't provide), as discussed below, and based on the real life experience we have with the Tubbs fire. In fact, I believe that both of these Mitigated Negative Declarations are disingenuous, at best.

Both of the Mitigated Negative Declarations reference a variety of materials in support of their conclusions that these project sites are located in **“Non-Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone.”** Unfortunately, they neglect to reference the two documents that actually matter in this regard:

1. **City of Santa Rosa Local Hazard Mitigation Plan, dated October 2016** (they do reference an earlier version of this Plan, but fail to reference the most current version, or any pages that I believe would be useful to your decision making). This report is available at: <https://srcity.org/DocumentCenter/View/3982>

2. **City of Santa Rosa Wildland – Urban Interface Fire Area Map, dated 28 January 2009** This map is available at: <https://srcity.org/DocumentCenter/View/4775>

Fire Hazard Severity Zones/Wildland-Urban Interface Fire Areas:

Both Mitigated Negative Declarations reference the CalFire “Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones in LRA [Local Responsibility Area]” map, and use that map (along with a similar U.S. Forest Service Wildfire Hazard potential map) to support their contention that neither of the project locations is in a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone.

While I agree that those maps do support that conclusion, I do not believe that those maps are the best information that should have been used in the preparation of these Mitigated Negative Declarations, leading to what I believe are erroneous and potentially dangerous conclusions.

If you refer to the October 2016 Local Hazard Mitigation Plan, you will discover on page 59 (page 63 of the pdf document) that:

. . . On February 24, 2009 the Santa Rosa City Council approved an amendment to Chapter 47 Section 18-44.4702.1 of the 2007 California Fire Code (CFC) defining a Wildland Urban Interface Fire Area as follows:

**"Wildland-Urban Interface Fire Area is a geographical area in the City of Santa Rosa at significant risk from wildfires as designated on the map titled Wildland-Urban Interface Fire Area, dated January 28, 2009** and retained on file in the City Geographic Information System and in the Office of the City's Fire Marshall. The Wildland-Urban Interface Fire Area shall include Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones recommended by the Director of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection pursuant to Public Resource Code sections 4201 – 4204 and Government Code sections 51175 – 51189." (emphasis added)

If you refer to Santa Rosa's current Wildland-Urban Interface Fire Area Map, you will see that both of the potential projects you are being requested to approve are within this area of "significant risk from wildfires."

Further, at page 63 of the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (page 67 of the pdf document), the following statement is made:

Exposure to future wildfires is expected to increase. Areas in Santa Rosa with higher potential for wildfire risks include hillside residential neighborhoods in the northern and eastern areas of the City with tall grasses and chaparral, which provide fuel for wildfires. With population growth and urbanization, a larger number of people and homes may be located in areas of wildfire risk. However, the General Plan designates the density of homes in Santa Rosa's WUI as primarily low density, including Very Low Density Residential (0.2–2.0 units per acre), Land Low Density Residential (2.0-8.0 units per acre).

Both of the proposals before you would increase residential density in the current Wildland-Urban Interface Fire Area, and the Emerald Isle proposal would increase it with a population of elderly and disabled residents.

In the November 6, 2017 Memo prepared for the Emerald Isle project, to discuss the CEQA evaluation after the Tubbs fire, the following statements are made:

Implementation of the proposed Project would not substantially alter the risk of wildfire on the site, and continued implementation of existing wildfire mitigation strategies by responsible agencies in the area as well as implementation of any additional strategies to be developed and implemented in the coming months would be sufficient to ensure that the associated impacts from Project implementation remain less than significant. Therefore the analysis contained in the Draft ISMND remains valid.

While I agree that the risk of a wildfire remains substantially the same whether this project is built or not, I strongly object to the reaffirmed conclusion that this project is in a **“Non-Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone.”** In fact, since the Mitigated Negative Declaration declares this to be “Less than a Significant Impact,” no mitigation measures are proposed. Any future “additional strategies to be developed and implemented in the coming months” are in fact mitigation measures that must be included in the Mitigated Negative Declaration so that the Planning Commission can evaluate the adequacy of said possible mitigations. Of course, they can’t be included, because said mitigation measures are presently unknown.

I believe that the evidence available indicates that there may be a significant environmental impact of fire danger for both of these proposed projects. I would even go further, and state that there is no question that fire danger is unquestionably a significant environmental impact for both of these proposed projects.

Since both of the Mitigated Negative Declarations fail to properly evaluate or even acknowledge that environmental impact, they are inaccurate, inadequate, and you should reject them both.

### **PROJECT SPECIFIC COMMENTS**

#### Emerald Isle Project, Item 8.1:

Beyond the fact that neither the community, nor the City Council, has had the opportunity to have the conversation about permitting new development in burned areas, I have one very specific problem with this proposal.

This project is built on a cul-de-sac. There is only one way in and one way out of the project. As we all learned through our experience with the recent fires, safe evacuation is both difficult and extremely important. To permit a project of entirely elderly and disabled residents on a cul-de-sac is a very poor idea. I am quite sensitive to this problem, since I live on a dead end street, and only have one way in and one way out of my home – this was very challenging and frightening during the fires.

I would request that you require that this project – if/when it comes back to you after the community conversation has taken place, and after the Mitigated Negative Declaration has been corrected – have two means of egress. A cul-de-sac is a terrible idea, particularly for this sensitive population of residents.

#### Round Barn Project, Item 8.4:

First, I generally dislike General Plan Amendments and Rezoning that come forward without an actual project that will be built.

Second, assuming the community wants to approve new development in Fountaingrove, I very much oppose the General Plan amendment to medium low density residential and rezoning of this property to R-1-6, single family residential. Although City Ventures has a plan for potential townhomes in the future, they may or may not come to fruition. This redesignation and rezoning could permit building of more single family homes at some point in the future, and because of the location, it is likely that they would in no way be affordable.

If there is agreement to permit new residential development in Fountaingrove, I believe it more appropriate that this property be redesignated and rezoned for at least medium density residential, and no project should be approved without a requirement for legally affordable housing to be built as part of the ultimate development. Although City Ventures' proposed project would be for units that would be "more affordable" by design (since they will not be single family homes), I do not believe that they have made any provision for legally affordable units.

I would request that you require that this project – if/when it comes back to you after the community conversation has taken place, and after the Mitigated Negative Declaration has been corrected – be required to be for medium density housing, and that you make clear that you want to see any development project coming back on this property with legally affordable housing as part of the proposal.

Thank you for your consideration. As always, please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Sonia E. Taylor

Cc: Mayor Chris Coursey  
Vice Mayor Jack Tibbetts  
Councilmember Julie Combs  
Councilmember Ernesto Olivares  
Councilmember Chris Rogers  
Councilmember John Sawyer  
Councilmember Tom Schwedhelm  
David Guhin, Director of Planning and Economic Development  
Clare Hartman, Deputy Director, Planning  
William Rose, Supervising Planner  
Aaron Hollister, Planner  
Patrick Streeter, Planner  
Kevin McCallum, Press Democrat  
Paul Gullixson, Press Democrat  
Greenbelt Alliance  
Accountable Development Coalition  
Sonoma County Conservation Action  
Sonoma County Transportation and Land Use Coalition  
Housing Advocacy Group