

## ACACIA VILLAGE: 9-12-24 PUBLIC HEARING

### “Austin Creek Neighbors” Comments

(submitted 9/4/24)

Austin Creek Neighbors (Neighbors):

- Understand the need for increased housing in Santa Rosa, including affordable housing.
- Feel that the ends shouldn’t justify the means at the expense of existing neighborhoods/residents.
- Feel that small-lot subdivisions, especially those with Density Bonus incentives and concessions, don’t fulfill the City of Santa Rosa (City)’s Small-Lot Subdivision design guideline, “to establish design and development standards for these projects to ensure that they are compatible with the surrounding neighborhood”.

We are concerned that aspects of the proposed Acacia Village High-Density, Small-Lot Subdivision are not compatible with the Austin Creek Subdivision/Neighborhood, including the construction of higher-density housing next to low-density residential neighborhoods, allotted parking, lot size and setbacks. We understand that with the Density Bonus concessions, the City can’t condition the project for setbacks or lot size, and that the Developer/Applicant has met the City’s requirements for parking. That said, our understanding doesn’t diminish our issues and concerns.

In 2018-19, and now in 2024, Neighbors have worked with City of Santa Rosa Senior Planner Susie Murray, City Planner Suzanne Hartman, and Robert Upton of the development firm, Campus Property (Developer/Applicant), on our issues and concerns. We’ve also met with City Traffic Engineering, Engineering and Fire Department staff. We appreciate the time they have spent listening to and addressing our issues and concerns. We feel we understand their positions... and we still have issues and concerns, including, but not limited to, the following:

- [Breeden Street Resident Privacy, Light, Shade and View, etc.](#)
  - Neighbors are concerned that the proximity of Acacia Village houses (~ 10’ setback) and parking lot/garages (~ 4’ setback) to Breeden Street residences will result in increased/loud noise, artificial light, blocked sunlight, strong odors, increased crime and, most importantly, loss of privacy.
  - This is especially important for the Austin Creek subdivision homes along Breeden Street adjacent to the proposed Acacia Village, particularly as the main living areas and windows of the Breeden Street houses face west toward Acacia Lane where the units will be built.
  - Both City staff and the Developer/Applicant have assured us that there won’t be any 1.5-story/second-story windows overlooking adjacent Breeden Street houses.
    - This is good.

- The Developer/Applicant has stated the following in the Acacia Village Project description:
  - “As a result of detailed discussion with adjacent owners the applicant has agreed that the homes along the rear (northeast) property line will be the smaller, single level homes.”
  - We greatly appreciate the Developer/Applicant’s commitment to building only single-story houses behind Acacia Village-adjacent, Breeden Street single-story houses.
  
- **CONCERN:** The project is being sold. We would like to ensure that the new owner/builder will keep the commitment to building single-story houses only behind Acacia Village-adjacent, Breeden Street single-story houses.
  
- **QUESTIONS FOR THE COMMISSION:**
  - Is the Acacia Village Project Description binding regarding construction of only single-level houses on lots behind Breeden Street houses...
    - For the Developer/Applicant?
    - For the new Owner/Builder if/when the project is sold?
  - Can those lots be conditioned to require that their houses be constructed as single-story houses?
  
- [Austin Creek Neighborhood Parking Issues due to inadequate on-site parking planned for Acacia Village.](#)
  - Although the Developer/Applicant has met the City’s requirements for parking, Neighbors are concerned that the proposed on-site and Acacia Lane parking for Acacia Village residents, their visitors and service providers will be functionally inadequate. We are concerned that the lack of adequate parking would add significant parking overflow onto our neighborhood streets which would:
    - Make it difficult to park our own cars.
    - Make it extremely difficult for our visitors and service providers to find parking.
    - Cause difficulties with postal and garbage services.
      - Austin Creek Subdivision mailboxes are at the curb.
      - Garbage cans must be placed on the street in front of the curb.
      - Currently, USPS mail carriers frequently refuse to deliver mail if there is a car or garbage bin blocking their vehicle access for delivery.
      - Austin Creek neighbors place their curbside garbage can and park their cars so that our mailboxes aren’t blocked.
      - Non-residents parking their cars in our neighborhood would block our mailboxes and not leave room for our garbage cans, causing multiple problems for neighbors.
    - Increase noise and disturbance.
    - Compromise our safety and quality of life.

- Smaller-lot subdivisions generally don't provide adequate on-site parking, so residents, their visitors and service providers all park on the streets.
  - Per an Austin Creek neighborhood resident who worked for the City of Santa Rosa's Parking Division, the Aria neighborhood (Avignon Circle, Orleans St., etc.) near Piner High School as well as the neighborhood by Tuxhorn and Pebblecreek near Elsie Allen are examples of higher-density neighborhoods that experience significant traffic and parking impacts.
    - The Parking Department employee said that frustrated residents in these neighborhoods complain to City staff on a regular basis about the lack of available on-street parking and the sheer number of cars parked in their neighborhood.
  
- Our understanding of the planned parking for the 25-housing unit project is as follows:
  - The (6) 2000 sf units are listed as having 3 parking spaces, one (1) in the narrow driveway and 2-car, tandem garages stacked behind the driveway space.
    - Functionally, that is only 1 parking space as the car in the driveway is the only one that can freely come and go without moving the other 1-2 cars.
    - It's unrealistic to expect homeowners with two cars to park them both in a stacked, "tandem" garage.
      - Realistic best-case scenario: Residents would use the back portion for storage and park one car in their garage as mandated by the CC&Rs.
        - Any extra cars would be parked on the street.
      - Likely scenario: The garage is used for storage with one car in the driveway and the other 1-2 cars parked on the street.
  - The (9) 1660 sf and (10) 1000 sf housing units have one assigned garage parking spot per dwelling unit where residents are likely to have more than one car.
  - The 19 open, on-site parking spaces aren't assigned and must accommodate unit owners' additional vehicles as well as visitors' and service providers' vehicles.
  - 12 parking spaces are "projected" to be available on Acacia Lane.
    - It's unrealistic to think that there will be 12 parking spots available on Acacia Lane given the small-lot subdivision that has been built across Acacia Lane and the existing senior housing, both with inadequate parking.
  
- Given that the Developer/Applicant has met the City's parking requirements, Austin Creek Neighbors will be documenting our current parking situation as baseline proof for any future parking issues.
  - On 7-11-2018, Austin Creek residents, Lisa Joslen and Allyn Kaufmann, met with Ian Hardage of the Fire Department.

- He said that if we can document our current parking situation to set a baseline and compare it with documented changes after the construction of Acacia Village and the Winding Creek Avenue extension, we will have a better chance at getting the City to mitigate any future parking and traffic issues.
  - On 8-28-24, Deputy Director of Traffic Engineering, Rob Sprinkle, provided guidance on how to photographically collect “adequate documentation” of our current parking situation.
- [Traffic.](#)
  - Neighbors feel that that the traffic impact outlined in the August 7, 2018 W-Trans Acacia Village Traffic Study is unrealistic and significantly underestimates the number of resident trips during peak hours.
    - Acacia Village is a 25-house development with the potential for 50 + inhabitants.
    - It is unrealistic, to the point of absurdity, to estimate that residents would only make 18 vehicle trips during peak hours as stated in the study.
  - **COMMISSION REQUEST:**
    - Given the unrealistic findings of the original traffic study, we request that the Commission require a new study of Acacia Village traffic patterns and their impact on existing neighborhoods before approving the project. A study that:
      - Uses more realistic generation factors.
      - Includes a in-depth explanation of why the factors being used are appropriate for this project.
  - Neighbors are working with City staff on implementing traffic calming measures for Winding Creek Avenue and Acacia Lane.
- [Grading and Irrigation/Storm Water Drainage.](#)
  - Neighbors have met with the Developer/Applicant and City staff regarding these issues.
  - We accept “in good faith” what we’ve been told as follows:
    - That there won’t be any grading elevation increases for lots/houses adjacent to Breeden Street homes.
    - That the swales designed for irrigation and storm water drainage will be sufficient to keep Acacia Village water from negatively impacting Breeden Street properties.
      - We understand that it will be the HOA’s responsibility to keep the swale areas behind the parking lot/garages clear of debris, etc.

In closing, we express our appreciation for all who have worked with us as we have sought, and continue to seek, to protect our neighborhood's character, our privacy and our quality of life. We hope that the Commission will consider our issues, concerns, questions and requests, as outlined above, and make any needed decisions and/or changes before approving the project.

Commissioners, thank you for your time and consideration.

**Austin Creek Neighbors:**

Lisa Joslen and Sasun Torikian, 329 Breeden Street

Allyn Kaufmann and Bruce Dicoskey, 325 Breeden Street

Frank and Tricia Rivera, 333 Breeden Street

Christina Rivera, 331 Breeden Street

Peggy Christensen, 315 Breeden Street

Zephram and Sarah McMinn, 324 Breeden Street

Marissa Eleccion and Brian Pritchard, 328 Breeden Street

Rob and Leni Kearns, 316 Breeden Street

Oscar and Maribel Chora, 311 Breeden Street

Monica Kangas and Ronnie Fuiava, 307 Breeden Street

Paul Tarantino and Jill Merrigan, 308 Breeden Street

Karen Smith, 301 Breeden Street

Nancy and Gerry Ausiello, 320 Breeden Street

Dick and Earlene Reichert, 345 Breeden Street

Jami and Jim Collins, 4710 Winding Creek Avenue

Bill and Barbara O'Rear, 4732 Winding Creek Avenue

Joe and Lori Pandolfo, 4748 Prospect Avenue

Tim and Karla Carroll, 4752 Prospect Avenue

Gil and Margie DeMeo, 337 Schiappino Street

Luci and Jim Selby

Carol Mork, 300 Acacia Lane (Acacia Lane neighbor)

Mark and Claudia Perez, 769 Acacia Lane (Acacia Lane Neighbor)

NOTE: There are many Austin Creek residents who want to attend the public hearing, but won't be able to. Many residents:

- Will be out-of-town.
- Are unable to leave work early for a 4:30 public hearing.
- Are senior and unable to attend.
- Have prior commitments that can't be changed.

This, by no means, reflects a lack of interest in having our issues and concerns heard and acted upon by the Planning Commission. We want our voices heard which is why neighbors have submitted this "Austin Creek Neighbors" Comments document, and many are writing individual letters.

Lisa Joslen and Sasun Torikian  
329 Breeden Street  
Santa Rosa, CA 95409

September 4, 2024

Santa Rosa Planning Commission  
Santa Rosa City Hall  
100 Santa Rosa Avenue  
Santa Rosa, CA 95404

**Subject: Acacia Village Project**

Dear Planning Commission,

I'm submitting these comments about the Acacia Village Project on behalf of myself and my husband, Sasun Torikian. We live at 329 Breeden Street in Santa Rosa's Austin Creek subdivision/neighborhood. Our home is on the west side of Breeden Street, sharing a property line with Acacia Village.

We agree with Austin Creek Neighbors' key issues, concerns and questions about the Acacia Village Project (density, parking, traffic, drainage and privacy) as covered in the Austin Creek Neighbors Comments document submitted on September 4, 2024. The following are Sasun Torikian's and my personal issues, concerns, comments and questions.

**Privacy, light, shade, views, and minimizing the impact of noise, artificial light and foul odors.**

I am disabled/ill and spend most of my time at home. Privacy, light and shade as well as minimal noise, artificial light and foul odors are vitally important to my ability to sleep/rest and, therefore, to my peace of mind and health maintenance. We currently enjoy those qualities in our Breeden Street home where most of our living space, including our bedroom, is at the back of the house with multiple windows facing Acacia Lane.

Our nights are quiet and undisturbed. During hot weather, we can open our doors, windows and blinds in the evening to cool down the house without compromising our privacy. During cooler weather, we're able to open the doors, windows and blinds during the day to let in light and fresh air with unimpeded sky views... while maintaining privacy. We also enjoy this privacy, light and views in our backyard where we have outdoor furniture and a spa.

We're concerned that the Acacia Village project will make it difficult to have privacy (visual and quiet, etc.), especially when opening our blinds, windows and doors and as related to the following:

- **Housing Units.** We are pleased that the Developer/Applicant has committed to single-story houses behind adjacent Breeden Street, single-story houses as outlined in the project description.
  - That said, we are concerned that the project is being sold.
  - We would like the new owner/builder to be committed to this as well.
  - **QUESTIONS:**
    - Is the Acacia Village Project Description binding regarding construction of only single-level houses on lots behind Breeden Street houses...
      - For the Developer/Applicant?
      - For the new Owner/Builder if/when the project is sold?
    - Is there any way that those lots can be conditioned to require that their houses be constructed as single-story houses?
  - We are concerned about any Acacia Village 1.5 or 2-story houses having views into our yard/home, especially as our main living areas and windows are at the back side of our house, facing future Acacia Village houses.
    - City Planner, Suzanne Hartman, and the Developer/Applicant have both assured us that no Acacia Village second-level (1.5- or second-story) windows would overlook Breeden Street properties.
      - This is good.
  - The 10-foot (previously 11-foot) Acacia Village housing unit rear setback behind our home and others on Breeden Street is still a privacy and noise issue.
    - That said, we understand that the City can't condition the project for setbacks due to the High-Density Bonus considerations given to the Develop/Applicant.
- **Garages and Parking Lot.** Our bedroom is approximately 20 feet from the property line. The garages, given no setback requirements, will be built ~ 4 feet from our property. That means that ~ 24 feet behind our bedroom, people will be using/going in and out of their garages, with accompanying garage door noises and conversation, even when we are trying to sleep. We are concerned about the noise of cars going in and out of the parking lot at all hours. Frankly, this greatly disturbs me given my need for sleep and rest.
  - The Developer/Applicant said that:
    - The 4-foot area between the back of the garages and our property line will be empty, so there will be no sound attenuation there.
    - The garages will be wood exterior with drywall interior, but no insulation.
    - That they will consider low-decibel garage door openers, which we appreciate.
- **Noise, Odors and Rodents: Trash Enclosures and Garbage Pick-up.** We're concerned with the noise and foul odors generated by ongoing trash enclosure access/trash dumping by residents of 19 homes.

- We are concerned about increased foul odors and numbers of rodents if/when the dumpsters become overfull, and the lids won't close... which is frequently the case with dumpsters.
  - We're concerned that trash/unwanted household items (with related rodents and foul odors) will accumulate in the 4 feet of space between garages and Breeden Street residents' property lines/fences.
  - In 2019, Senior Planner, Susie Murray, conditioned the project stating, "The HOA will provide regular maintenance for all common areas including landscaping, garbage enclosures, pavilion/gathering area and parking lots in around structures.". We are concerned about:
    - Actual follow-through with this by the HOA.
    - What recourse we'd have if the area isn't properly maintained.
  - NOTE: The Developer/Applicant is willing to put gates behind the garages.
    - City Planning staff have said they have no problem with that.
  - **QUESTION: Can the project be conditioned to stipulate that gates be installed behind the garages?**
- **Artificial Light: Parking Lot, Garages, House, Walkways and Commons Lighting.**
    - The Developer/Applicant has assured neighbors of adjacent Breeden Street homes that the lighting will be designed so that it doesn't shine into our yards/homes.
    - We accept this in good faith.
  - **Crime/Safety: Parking Lots and Garages.** We're concerned about our safety related to possible loitering, vagrancy and criminal behavior in parking lots, particularly behind garages next to Breeden Street residents' property lines/fences.
    - There is access into our yards from behind garages and at open parking spaces.
      - Although there will be a fence between our backyard and the garages, the space will be dark, making an easy access point into our yard.
    - HOA CC&Rs state, "Prohibition of nuisances and offensive activities including graffiti, illegal drugs, violent acts and criminal gang behavior."
      - We are concerned about enforcement of that stipulation.
      - **Installing gates behind the garages would help with this issue as well.**

In summary, we are frustrated that the High-Density Bonus incentives allow for higher density housing to be built next to low-density residential neighborhoods and for the project to be built without the City's ability to condition it for lot size and setbacks, especially as minimal setbacks will negatively impact our privacy and quality of life.

We are concerned about maintaining our privacy and hope that the Developer/Applicant's commitment to building single-story houses only behind Breeden Street houses will be honored by the new owner/developer... or that the Commission is able to condition those lots for single-story houses only.

We are concerned with the drainage space behind the garages being used as storage and/or filled with waste, which could:

- Impact the effectiveness of the drainage system and negatively affect our property with overflow irrigation and storm drainage water.
- Lead to foul odors and rodents.

We hope that the Commission can act to ensure that gates will be built behind the garages to keep this from happening as well as minimize access to our property.

We greatly appreciate everyone who has worked with us regarding those concerns and issues which can be addressed.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Joslen and Sasun Torikian.  
329 Breeden St.  
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707.538.8697