



Madrone Audubon Society

INCORPORATED

Transmitted by email 06/06/2021

To: msheikhali@srcity.org

June 6, 2021

Monet Sheikhal, City Planner
City of Santa Rosa
Planning and Economic Development Department
100 Santa Rosa Ave., Room 3
Santa Rosa, CA 95404

Re: Comment - Hearn Veterans Village, 2149 West Hearn Avenue, Santa Rosa, Sonoma County, California 95407 (APNs 134-011-012 and 134-011-013) – MIN 21-001, Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration

Dear Ms. Sheikhal:

I write on behalf of Madrone Audubon Society, a 501c3 nonprofit conservation organization and the Sonoma County Chapter of National Audubon. Our organization serves approximately 3000 members in Sonoma County. Our organization is headquartered in Santa Rosa.

We are opposed to the present Hearn Veterans Village proposal and support the community that has organized in opposition to the above-referenced proposal. Our comment considers this inappropriate development proposal and environmental impacts created by this proposal.

We begin with acknowledging the City of Santa Rosa's Climate Emergency, established via Resolution 2020-002, with directions and plans to immediately mobilize and act to restore a safe climate for Santa Rosa residents. That Resolution describes the multiple human activities which have led to the global, national, regional and local climate emergencies that have already led to accelerated ice mass loss, resulting in sea-level rise, as well as species extinction. The Resolution further acknowledges marginalized communities ... people of color, immigrants, indigenous communities, low-income people, those with disabilities, and the unhoused, already disproportionately affected by climate change, who must benefit from a transition to a sustainable and equitable economy.

Madrone Audubon Society is qualified as an organization recognized under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Contributions are deductible by the donor under Section 170. Federal Tax I.D. 94-6172986

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<http://madroneaudubon.org>

We request the development proposal before you be viewed through the lens of the City of Santa Rosa's Climate Emergency. Every planning decision should result in environmental protection and enhancement, provision of appropriate housing, and balance for communities.

The W. Hearn Avenue neighborhood is **distinctly rural** and was part of Roseland annexed to the City of Santa Rosa. We are informed that members of the W. Hearn Avenue neighborhood negotiated with the City regarding annexation to ensure a residential density designation that would maintain and sustain their neighborhood's special rural character. The existing Veterans Village at 2149 W. Hearn Avenue is consistent with that neighborhood, density and rural character.

We understand residents of W. Hearn Avenue have communicated they would not oppose additional housing for Veterans Village under the current and agreed-upon density and zoning. Such housing would support expanding the Village to serve additional veterans, the character of the neighborhood would not be destroyed, and balance of significantly abundant biological resources in the area could remain and survive.

The Biological Resources report of Wildlife Research Associates and Jane Valerius Environmental Consulting, on p. 22, states:

The project area is within a highly urbanized environment. The surrounding area is either developed as sidewalk, streets or housing with landscaped yards. The project area is mowed by the property owners in the late spring for fire control. There was no evidence of herbicide use. The vegetation is predominantly non-native species that are common and have mostly naturalized in the landscape. Native species such as oaks, native grasses and a few native forbs were also observed. The site conditions observed during the 2020 survey were the normal conditions for the site.

This statement, providing the context for the proposed project site, is false. The project site exists in a rural neighborhood. The north property line abuts a recent Santa Rosa apartment complex development, which is separate from the W. Hearn Avenue longstanding neighborhood. This distinction is important, in view of the attempt in the Biological Resources report to minimize biological resources, ranging from native oaks, a combination of non-native and native grassland, open space on W. Hearn Avenue, a nearby seasonal creek with a riparian corridor, and the abundant variety of wildlife, birds and other creatures relying on existing remaining habitat along W. Hearn Avenue for survival. The proposed project site is also located in the Santa Rosa Plain, and in proximity to the North Point open space mitigation site as well as a FEMA mitigation site.

The proposed development, if approved, would completely alter the existing rural neighborhood character of W. Hearn Avenue **to** an urban environment. The proposed development would occupy the majority of what is now existing open space with seasonal wetlands, native trees and vegetation, and would destroy the balance of existing community character. Biological resources on the site and in the neighborhood would be dramatically negatively impacted.

Any proposal for off-site mitigation should not be considered. In the Climate Emergency declared by the City of Santa Rosa, a conscientious and proactive approach to preserve existing open space with biological resources on-site must be a priority. The days of 1980s planning decisions can no longer apply to housing decisions in Santa Rosa and other communities in Sonoma County. An informed approach to ensure we provide affordable and adequate housing while prioritizing protection and enhancement of our environment must be the new paradigm in planning review and decisions.

We are aware the community group on W. Hearn Avenue provided detailed information about their long-term observations of wildlife, birds and other species that coexist with the rural neighbors of W. Hearn Avenue. The migratory and resident bird nesting that the neighbors document reflects the health and perceived safety of an ecosystem by nesting birds, ranging from Bewick's Wren to White-tailed Kite to Red-Shouldered Hawk. Again, the proposed project site is in the Santa Rosa Plain and conditions are compatible to support California Tiger Salamander in its habitat. If the Community Housing Foundation submits a proposal to expand the existing Veterans Village and provide housing under current zoning and density requirements, the community has expressed interest to help support habitat enhancement and permaculture on the Veterans Village property. Such willingness and cooperation of neighbors is an important component of neighborhood life and harmony.

We encourage the City of Santa Rosa to consider this component as well. Neighbors helping neighbors with appropriate new housing in a community support the fabric of a healthy and vibrant City. In addition and as important, the habitat, wildlife, birds and other species would not be negatively impacted, displaced or destroyed, which directly relates to the City of Santa Rosa's Climate Emergency Resolution.

On behalf of Madrone Audubon Society, I urge you to deny the proposal before you and to encourage the applicant to return to planning. Plan for a reasonable and overall positive enhancement in housing and community life for W. Hearn Avenue.

Sincerely,

Susan Kirks

Susan Kirks, President
Madrone Audubon Society, Sonoma County

susankirks@sbcglobal.net, 707-241-5548

From: [Alice Hampton](#)
To: [Sheikhali, Monet](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Hearn Veterans Village
Date: Monday, June 7, 2021 1:50:26 PM

I'm writing to express my concern regarding the proposed development of the Hearn Veterans Village. This development is too large. The existing W. Hearn Avenue is zoned Rural Residential (RR) AND Rural Heritage (RH), zonings that carry a "very low density rating. I'm writing because the City of Santa Rosa has a unique opportunity with this situation. When looking for information regarding the Rural Heritage designation in the City Code, the W. Hearn Avenue is listed. As far as I know, W. Hearn Avenue is the only area that has a Rural Heritage zoning designation. This is because when this neighborhood was being annexed to the City of Santa Rosa several years ago, my neighbors worked with the City and County of Sonoma to help preserve our unique neighborhood and ecosystem.

Here is where it gets exciting... Because there is no precedent in regards to Rural Heritage zoning, the City of Santa Rosa can make this what they want. Does the City want a project like the Hearn Veterans Village in an area that is designated Rural Heritage? Especially one that does not fit within the nature of the existing neighborhood, or respect and preserve the existing ecosystem, or even what the neighbors want? The development of a vision for what our Rural Heritage zoning designations will look like is an important task, and the City's responsibility. Defining what the City wants in these neighborhoods is similar to what the City of Santa Rosa Cultural Heritage Board provides for, "...undertaking and updating historic inventories or surveys, recommending designation of Landmarks and Preservation Districts, reviewing proposed alterations to historic buildings, and promoting public awareness of preservation issues." (City of Santa Rosa website). The Cultural Heritage Board ensures that these goals are a priority. We need a similar government body, or at least some work on, deciding what our Rural Heritage neighborhoods should look like. We should be "promoting public awareness and preservation issues" in regards to what our Rural Heritage is. This is the job of the City Council members and the Planning Commission.

I also would like to disagree with some of the components of the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) document. It is interesting that no one involved in this project thinks that adding thirty-two residents, and an untold number of support and service staff, will make a difference in the traffic patterns or risks to pedestrians, cyclists, and other vehicles. It is also interesting that no one thinks that adding eight new structures to a small lot will impact the level of light/light pollution in the area. It is interesting to me that no one thinks that a project this size, "will not substantially degrade the visual characteristic of the neighborhood". It is interesting to me that no one thinks that the proposed Hearn Veterans Village will impact the local ecosystem and the related flora and fauna on the site. Yes, I understand that with the Rural Residential zoning designation allows for all of these things, even relocating tiger salamanders (if found), but is it what we want? Is it the best for this specific site and proposed development?

Thank you for your time and commitment to undertaking the due diligence necessary to accurately and inclusively, (this includes respecting and incorporating the W. Hearn Avenue neighbors input) make a decision on the development of the Hearn Veterans Village.

Paul Moosman
W. Hearn Avenue neighbor

From: [Dixie Kemper](#)
To: [Sheikhali, Monet](#)
Cc: [Rogers, Natalie](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Hearn Veterans Village
Date: Monday, June 7, 2021 2:34:25 PM

We are opposed to the mitigated Negative Declaration and Tentative parcel map to subdivide a 2.01 acre lot into 4 lots and the development which would follow.

West Hearn Ave is a small (less than 1 mile) Heritage street with a VERY LOW DENSITY designation. The developer has had to purchase an extra parcel which we were told would only be used as an emergency fire for the new development that was going in at the time it was built. This road is now designed to be used as an entrance and parking lot for this new development. It borders a wet lands area and the old Santa Rosa Creek. Hearn Ave. is an old gravel road which has been paved over and lacks a base foundation. At the present time, it is a mess consisting of many cracks, pot holes and crumbling sides; not at all ready to handle cars that 48 new people and the support staff would bring.

There are around 100-120 people now residing on Hearn Ave. in 53 houses. This includes a Level 2 home which includes 5 residence with 3 support staff, a senior living home with 2 residents and 2 support staff. These figures do not include the Veteran's Care building that is already in place on Hearn Ave. (I believe this is a 15 to 17 bed unit). The density level of this development exceeds the amount allowed for a Heritage Street and the rural aspect of our community.

The proposed units are labeled as "single family units." We believe this shows a lack of transparency since the units are to house 12 unrelated veterans per unit. (4 units x 12 veterans = 48). No guidelines have been mentioned for 4 accessory dwellings (more density issues and a total lack of transparency).

Sincerely,
Mr. and Mrs. Kemper
Residents on West Hearn Ave.

Sent from my iPad