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August 1, 2002

Sebastopol City Council Members,

The Rural Alliance has been actively involved in helping to preserve the environment that supports our quality of life here in Western Sonoma County for almost 25 years.

Of our 300 members, many live within the city limits of Sebastopol, but clearly all of us will be affected by any major development in the area, so we have looked carefully at the proposed Laguna Vista project taking into account the guidelines of the current General Plan.

We are urging you TO MAKE THE DIFFICULT DECISION OF DENYING ANY PERMITS TO THE PROPOSED huge scale Laguna Vista housing development and to fulfill your mandate as a forward thinking city council, that can shape sustainable policies and allow Sebastopol to remain a livable city, even while increasing population and providing affordable housing.

The reasons for rejection of such an oversize project are numerous and have been well stated and widely publicized. The sudden increase in population and traffic, the unresolved issues of storm drainage, water quality, police/fire services and the loss of the possibility of a public park in the southern part of the city.

end

There is tremendous concern about the effects, known and unknown on the ecology of the Laguna de Santa Rosa, a natural wetlands area that ought to be carefully preserved for the long term health of our lands and community rather than threatened for the immediate present day concerns that can be remedied with creativity, courage and cooperation.

One of the most compelling of those concerns is the need for affordable housing and we recognize that this at first appears to be an argument for the developers' project. However, the tradeoffs and hidden costs are too high for the long term economic, social and environmental health of our community.

There are viable and more sustainable solutions such as encouraging infill by remodeling and renovation of existing properties to include rental and granny units and by developing and supporting efforts to make Sebastopol, even with a denser population, a less car clogged place but a livable, accessible town (for its citizens.)

Our California governor recently signed a bill to decrease green house gas emissions in the state. There is no compelling reason for Sebastopol to deliberately move to increase traffic at this time, especially when workable alternatives can be found.

We all know that over the entire earth we are blindly degrading, polluting and threatening natural systems that sustain us and all life