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## LAGUNA DEVELOPMENT

# Third time charm for Palm Terrace?

A revised version of the controversial Palm Terrace subdivision overlooking the Laguna de Santa Rosa behind Palm Drive Hospital drew scant resistance when it was presented in conceptual form to the Sebastopol Planning Commission Sept. 9.

The new version of the project has dropped the larger portion of the previous application, which was called the Saddleburr subdivision. That project was turned down last year by the city Planning Commission after an Environmental Impact Report found several serious problems for which there was no available mitigation. The remaining 8.26 acres proposed for development are entirely within city limits and are zoned PC (Planned Community), a designation that allows maximum flexibility in accommodating city standards and requirements.

The new Palm Terrace project utilizes that flexibility by creating 21 single-family home lots, four of which are slated to have small second units built above detached garages at the rear. An improved alleyway along the rear of the property will provide access to the garages, leaving the frontage facing the Laguna as a staggered row of home faces. They would look across a broad, tree-lined street to the Laguna uplands, which would be bordered by a pedestrian pathway that is envisioned as linking with the other existing and planned paths in the Laguna Park Master Plan. The presentation, said Sebastopol Planning Director Richard Spitzer, is "their interpretation of what the Laguna plan is looking for."

The 26 total units would give the overall subdivision a density of just over three units per acre, one of the lowest ratios of any subdivision in the city. The homes, ranging in size from 1,800 to 2,300 square feet, would be expected to sell for \$300,000 or more, said project developer Hugh Futrell.

Using a series of colored drawings, Futrell explained how the design was intended to create a sense of neighborhood for the residents while at the same time attracting others to visit a gazebo overlooking the Laguna adjacent to the footpath. The goal, he said, was to "lead people to the Laguna," and emphasize pedestrian uses over the presence of automobiles.

There was little reaction from the handful of citizens on hand for the presentation. Jeff Elliott, a strong opponent of the Saddleburr project, called the new plan "very attractive," although he expressed concerns about the noise impacts from the Palm Drive Hospital helicopter pad near the site.

Commission members also appeared pleased with the new design. "This is far superior to what we've had before us in the past," commented Fran Murphy. The original Palm Terrace project, proposed in 1988, called for 29 single-family homes. When combined with the 32-acre Saddleburr property, the project swelled to 47 homes plus 24 duplex units. An earlier project on the smaller Palm Terrace property proposed a dense cluster of townhouses. That Laguna Vista project was approved and gave the land the PC zoning it still holds, but the condos were never built and the approval expired.

Spitzer suggested that the current developers consider an alternative layout that would place the main road at the rear of the property, further removed from the Laguna, and several commissioners agreed that possibility should be explored.

Chairman Howard Levy sounded the most skeptical notes, characterizing the plans as a conventional subdivision that had made few concessions to its location. "Where's the sensitivity?" he asked. "We're still talking about people with dogs, people with pesticides. What makes this sensitive to the Laguna?"

The comments and concerns of the commissioners are expected to be folded into the next round of revisions of the project design before it is formally submitted to the city for approval.

—Bruce Robinson