



Thursday, April 23, 2009

Sonoma County Board of Supervisors  
575 Administration Drive, Room 100A  
Santa Rosa, CA 95403-2887

**RE: 5<sup>th</sup> & Mill Project – SUPPORT**

Dear Sonoma County Supervisors:

For over 50 years, Greenbelt Alliance has protected the scenic rolling hills and forests that define our region, while promoting a responsible way to grow—one that involves walkable streets, mixed-use development, and homes we can all afford. We write to you to share our support for the Fifth and Mill development proposed by Burbank Housing. This project meets our endorsement team's stringent endorsement criteria and will be a gain for Guerneville, as well as for the county and region as a whole.

Burbank Housing's development includes 48 compact homes for low-income residents that will help fulfill a severe need for affordable housing in Sonoma County. All of the homes on site will serve residents with incomes less than 60% of the area median income, ensuring that those who work low-wage jobs in Guerneville can also afford to live there. The project will set aside up to 17 units for special needs populations such as persons with mental disabilities, a history of substance abuse, a history of homelessness, or HIV/AIDS, meaning it will provide a clean and safe environment for underserved members of the community. Since the Bay Area remains one of the most unaffordable places to live in the United States, development like the Fifth and Mill project is of critical importance in making sure our communities remain diverse and vibrant.

The location of this project is such that residents will have wonderful access to needed goods and services. Since they will be located within walking distance of the Main Street commercial core, residents will not have to drive to go to the grocery store, and will be within walking distance of a senior center, restaurants, shops, cafes, schools, a church, and a library. Burbank Housing will also provide ample bicycle parking as part of the development, ensuring that those who bike to work or to run errands can do so comfortably. Moreover, residents will have the option to take public transit, as Sonoma County Transit bus lines headed to Santa Rosa stop nearby. Building affordable homes in places like downtown Guerneville helps stop the steady march of sprawl at our region's fringes, and will help make Sonoma more pleasant and livable.

The site of the proposed development is currently occupied by four buildings comprised of 13 total homes. Current tenants will be offered relocation benefits estimated at approximately \$30,000 per home. As the new homes will be more affordable than the current ones, the project is a net gain for the community, and will also contribute various streetscape improvements including sidewalks, pedestrian plazas, and landscaping. Unlike existing homes on the site, the new apartments rest upon a podium, out of the reach of the 100-year floodplain. We applaud Burbank Housing's commitment to the local

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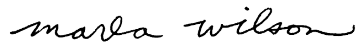
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community in hiring Overland Pacific Cutler to aid current residents with relocation, and in gathering community input in numerous public meetings that shaped their current proposal.

An existing abandoned house on the site has been found to be historically significant and eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. We applaud Burbank Housing's efforts to explore various options of preserving the historic structure. We also encourage the developer to commit to a strict green building scheme, as a large portion of our region's carbon dioxide emissions come from our buildings.

In closing, Greenbelt Alliance encourages the Board of Supervisors' support of the Fifth and Mill Project proposed by Burbank Housing. The proposal provides affordable homes for a community with a large amount of service industry jobs, enhances the surrounding neighborhood, and is in a good location for infill homes. This is an appropriate place for the county to grow. It is development like this that eases pressure to develop the Bay Area's working farms and natural areas, meaning better air quality, less traffic, fewer dangerous greenhouse gas emissions, and a better quality of life for us all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "marla wilson".

Marla Wilson  
Sustainable Development Associate