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Commentary

A win-win situation

Commentary — The opponents of building a new community pavilion and farmers market continue their effort to derail the process. They even had the gall to ask the Foley Family Foundation to spend their generous \$7 million donation in another location or for another project. If they were to succeed, an expansive community effort — including an impressively strong petition — would end in civic embarrassment. They would be responsible if the Foley Family Foundation retracts its gift, and offers it to a more grateful, forward-thinking city.

It bears noting that moving forward with the existing plans for the 3 North Pavilion would allow the council to fulfill one of the goals it set in its newly adopted five-year Strategic Plan: to “prioritize public input and places a high value on proactive communications and meaningful (not selective) engagement with all residents and businesses, including its Latino community.” The public’s desire to develop the 3 North St. project is overwhelming, as evidenced by over 1,160 petition signatures, a unanimous parks and recreation commission, the farmers market board, the chamber of commerce and the Raven Theater Board, which all support it. How can city council ignore this without betraying its own Strategic Plan?

By contrast, here is what Healdsburg 2040, as the custodian of the SDAT report, thinks will happen if the city accepts the gracious gift and creates the new Community Pavilion and Farmers Market at 3 North St.

First, the unique and historic central location will benefit the entire community. Think about El Dia de los Muertos, one of the biggest and most unifying gatherings for our community. Last year it was held on closed-off Grove Street attracting a record crowd. With the new community pavilion this event would have a permanent location. The same could be said for the Jazz Festival, the Turkey Trott, Shakespeare in the Park, the Arts & Antiques Fair, and many more events.

Second, the project would allow development of the parking lot on Grove Street just north of city hall. It is mostly empty, but it’s a perfect location to build affordable housing on a City-owned lot. It’s shovel ready and close to town amenities.

Third, the city can prioritize additional affordable housing options. Healdsburg’s pipeline of income-restricted housing already includes 41 Mill District units, which will be completed before any of the above projects, and 54 North Village units.

Additionally, the city should move forward with the 155 Dry Creek Road property. Council already agreed to proceed with a project there that would be a combination of first level commercial space with 45 affordable housing units above. The commercial space would make affordable housing units economically viable for a developer and it could provide additional services for the residents living above, as well as current residents at the north end of town. The SDAT report was clear, and we enthusiastically agree, that 155 Dry Creek is an excellent site for a mixed-use affordable housing site.

We also support the option to dedicate the 14 acres at Montage (formerly Saggio Hills) as open space in return for the developer providing another parcel (or payment towards a location that is more appropriate for affordable housing). Alternatively, the Montage site could be used to build starter family homes which are desperately needed.

Finally, the underutilized community center parcel on Healdsburg Avenue also needs further review. The SDAT report recommends, and we support, a comprehensive (not selective) master planning effort to determine the best use(s) of this, and all other potential housing sites in the city.

Conclusion: We can create the community pavilion and farmers market at 3 North, and, we can build affordable housing at the same time. A win-win situation.

The time for divisiveness is past. The time for common sense and action — on a thoroughly vetted and previously approved project at 3 North St — is now.

Healdsburg 2040 is a group of interested citizens advising the city on the implementation of the SDAT report.