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Environmental Review Begins for Proposed Senior Project

By Cathy Tyson

At a recent meeting of the Planning Commission, the City of Orinda announced the Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report for a senior housing facility near Gateway Boulevard and Highway 24.

Developer Agemark Corporation has owned a 1.1 acre parcel near the entrance of the Wilder development for approximately two years and is interested in building a congregate care facility on the site. The proposed project, "Astoria at Wilder," consists of a two story, roughly 40,000 square foot facility with 45 units of assisted living, 15 of those for Alzheimer's or dementia patients, along with surface parking and landscaping.

"We are very excited about our boutique assisted living community and feel that the site provides a great opportunity for us to serve an unfulfilled need in Orinda," said Forrest Westin, Vice President of Agemark.

The Draft Environmental report examines probable environmental effects like aesthetics, air quality, land use, hydrology, traffic and more. There was some concern at the meeting that adjacent ball fields will have lights and noise late into the night that may disturb

Architect's rendering of proposed Astoria project near Wilder. Image provided

the residents. The environmental report is a preliminary step in the planning process, and there will continue to be opportunities for public comment.

Michael O'Hara, Project Director with Brooks Street, representing Wilder, commented, "The location is inappropriate," explaining that the proposed project is inconsistent with the scenic corridor and the semi-rural character of Wilder. Attorney Amanda Monchamp, also representing Wilder, added that there are a number of categories omitted from the environmental report that should have been included.

Agemark has been in business since 1987, and has three types of senior facilities throughout the country: Astoria Gardens focuses on assisted living and memory care, Country House Residences are exclusively designed for Alzheimer's patients, and Kensington-Evergreen for independent seniors.

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