

City of Sebastopol

## **PRESS RELEASE**

December 9, 2005

### ***Re: City of Sebastopol approves first-ever Graywater System in Housing Project as part of Aggressive Green Building Program***

SEBASTOPOL, CALIFORNIA: Building permits were recently approved by the City of Sebastopol for Sonoma County's first-ever official "graywater" system. Approval of the graywater proposal is part of Sebastopol's "green building" program, intended to promote energy and water conservation.

Graywater systems are intended to reduce water use and wastewater generation by recycling water from sinks, showers and other sources.

The graywater system of the 12-unit mixed-use "Florence Avenue Live-Work Project," currently under construction at the intersection of Florence Avenue and Healdsburg Avenue, will divert wastewater from kitchen and bathroom sinks, showers and washing machines to a filtration and irrigation system to irrigate the project common area landscaping, primarily during dry weather. The estimated diversion of water to the graywater system would reduce wastewater flow from the project by approximately 17%.

This is the first such system ever approved in Sonoma County, and exemplifies the efforts of the City of Sebastopol to promote cutting-edge technology and aggressive policies to promote energy and water conservation, intended to address broader environmental concerns about sustainability and climate change.

The City staff and the project developer, Steve Sheldon, worked closely with staff of the Sonoma County Permit Resource Management Department, Well and Septic Division, to review plans for the system and ensure that it would meet all applicable State requirements, that provision was made for appropriate operation, maintenance, monitoring and reporting on the system function, and that the system would not create potential adverse impacts to public health, surface water or groundwater. Other agencies consulted included the City of Santa Rosa Subregional Water Reclamation System and the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board.

Thanks to the developer's willingness to be a "test case" in the process of securing the required approvals for the system through many meetings, plan reviews and discussions, the City and County were able to develop appropriate processes and standards which will serve as a model for future graywater applications.

Asked why he was willing to take on the challenging task of obtaining approvals for the first graywater system in Sonoma County, the developer, Steve Sheldon, said, "Because it's the right thing to do." The Florence Avenue Live-Work Project will also include an array of photovoltaic panels, with the ambitious goal of meeting all of the electricity needs of the development. The City of Sebastopol City Council was willing to approve a non-traditional home design to accommodate the solar collectors, as well as the use of permeable paving and a bio-retention

system to promote groundwater recharge and reduce storm water flows. Mr. Sheldon is seeking the highest level of LEED certification (Gold) for the development. Sebastopol has one of the most innovative and progressive green building programs in the State of California. While “green building” practices are encouraged by many jurisdictions, Sebastopol is one of just a few jurisdictions in the State that mandates a minimum level of performance through a flexible points system, where designers make the choices to achieve a level of energy and water conservation to achieve performance in excess of minimum Building Code requirements. Sebastopol also has one of the most progressive wood smoke ordinances in the Bay Area to address wood smoke air pollution concerns.

This month, a new water and energy conservation ordinance approved by the City Council takes effect, which pushes the regulatory envelope to require that development projects incorporate a range of water and energy conservation measures.

These are set forth in Municipal Code Chapter 15.74 and exceed what nearly any city in the State is requiring, including mandating the use of waterless urinals in non-residential construction, use of ultra-low-flow dual flush toilets for all new construction, pre-wiring for photovoltaics for new residential construction, pre-plumbing for solar hot water for new residential construction, use of Energy Star appliances for new construction, and retrofitting or payment of an in-lieu fee to mitigate the wastewater impact of new residential development. These requirements are expected to produce new development in Sebastopol that substantially reduces energy and water impacts.

***Contacts:***

Glenn Schainblatt, *City of Sebastopol Building Official* (707) 823-8597

Steve Sheldon, *Florence Avenue Live-Work Project Developer-Architect* (707) 823-6331

Randy Leach, *Sonoma County Well & Septic Division Manager* (707) 565-3636

Sam Pierce, *City of Sebastopol Vice-Mayor* (707) 321-8864