

HUMBOLDT COMMONS

A KENDAL AFFILIATE

March 11, 2026

Humboldt County Planning Commission

County of Humboldt

3015 H Street

Eureka, CA 95501

RE: Supplemental Petition for Exception Request, Hiller Road Widening

Humboldt Commons Subdivision

Application # PLN-2025-19246 PMS

APN 508-251-060 and 510-133-013

Dear Planning Commissioners,

The Humboldt Commons two-lot subdivision is on your March 19, 2026 agenda. The project is consistent with the McKinleyville Town Center Q Zone Ordinance and Humboldt County General Plan infill development policy, and we agree with all conditions of approval except one. We are requesting an exception under Humboldt County Code Section 325-9 to the requirement to widen Hiller Road by paving approximately 15,400 square feet between our new curb and the existing edge of pavement.

This petition supplements the January 30, 2026 Exception Request submitted to County Surveyor Robert Bronkall and addresses the County's updated requirements following the March 5, 2026 meeting with Public Works staff. At that meeting, the County confirmed this paving requirement, which we estimate would cost an additional \$200,000. This would bring total Hiller Road frontage improvement costs to approximately \$700,000, and total County-required subdivision improvements to approximately \$1.5 million.

Exceptions to the requirements and regulations of the Code may be granted if the following conditions exist:

1. That there are special circumstances or conditions affecting said property.
2. That the exception is necessary for the preservation and enjoyment of a substantial property right of the petitioner.
3. That the granting of the exception will not be detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to other property in the territory in which said property is situated.

In addition, in granting such exceptions, the Advisory Agency must secure, substantially, the objectives of the regulations to which the exceptions are granted as to light, air and public health, safety, convenience and general welfare.

ITEM 1: EXCEPTION TO HILLER ROAD INFILL PAVING REQUIREMENT

Section 2.5(b) of the Public Works memorandum requires Humboldt Commons to install full infill paving across the gap between the proposed curb location and the existing edge of pavement, approximately 11 to 13 feet in width along the full project frontage, totaling approximately 15,400 square feet.

Humboldt Commons has committed to installing curb, gutter, and sidewalk along the full project frontage on the south side of Hiller Road, consistent with standard subdivision requirements. We request an exception to the additional requirement that the developer widen Hiller Road. In lieu of paving, Humboldt Commons proposes to:

1. Install curb, gutter, and sidewalk at the final design curb-line location.
2. Restore the gap area to its existing condition as a vegetated buffer, to be maintained by Humboldt Commons.

Finding 1: Special Circumstances Affecting the Property

Seniors drive less than the general population. Humboldt Commons is an age-restricted senior housing campus classified under the ITE Trip Generation Manual as a Congregate Care Facility (Land Use Code 253). This type of housing generates approximately 2.4 trips per unit per day. Phase 1 will consist of 109 units and add approximately 260 daily trips to Hiller Road. Current traffic counts on Hiller Road are approximately 3,000 trips per day between McKinleyville Avenue and Central Avenue, per the W-Trans traffic study prepared for the McKinleyville Town Center Environmental Impact Report (MTC EIR). This development will be responsible for approximately 8% of traffic demand on this segment. The MTC EIR also concluded that the development represents a “less than significant addition to traffic.”

Despite this modest proportional impact, the full infill paving requirement would require Humboldt Commons to finance 15,400 square feet of paving within the public right-of-way. This paving may need to be removed and replaced if the Hiller Road ultimate design (a complete boulevard with center median, travel lanes, bicycle lanes, and landscaping) moves forward. At the March 5, 2026 meeting, Public Works staff confirmed that no funding or timeline exists for the ultimate Hiller Road improvements, which may be 10 to 20 years away.

Special circumstances exist here because the cost burden is disproportionate to the project’s traffic impact, the pavement may need to be removed and replaced before it reaches the end of its useful life, and the project’s nonprofit financing structure has a fixed proforma approved by all investment partners that cannot absorb unanticipated cost increases.

Finding 2: Exception Is Necessary to Preserve a Substantial Property Right

The infill paving requirement represents approximately \$200,000 in additional costs beyond the \$500,000 already budgeted for Hiller Road frontage improvements, bringing total frontage costs to approximately \$700,000. When combined with all other County-required subdivision improvements, Humboldt Commons is spending approximately \$1.5 million just to subdivide this parcel. Humboldt Commons is a mission-driven nonprofit development operating under a fixed proforma approved by all financing partners and investors. The project cannot absorb unanticipated cost increases without increasing resident monthly fees beyond levels the Humboldt County market will support, or going back to financing partners to renegotiate the project budget. Neither option is feasible. The exception is therefore necessary to preserve the applicant’s ability to develop the property as approved and to deliver the senior housing the community needs.

The granting of the exception is also consistent with the constitutional standards established in *Nollan v. California Coastal Commission* (1987) and *Dolan v. City of Tigard* (1994), which require that development exactions have an essential nexus to the impacts of the project and be roughly proportional to those impacts. Requiring a nonprofit senior housing developer responsible for approximately 8% of existing traffic demand to fund a full travel lane of paving that may be removed in future reconstruction does not satisfy the rough proportionality standard.

Finding 3: Exception Will Not Be Detrimental to the Public Welfare

The proposed alternative, restoring the gap area to its existing condition as a vegetated buffer, is a safer interim treatment than infill paving. Installing 11 to 13 feet of paving adjacent to the existing travel lane would create a non-standard, abnormally wide lane or shoulder that:

- Creates driver confusion about the intended travel path;
- Encourages unsafe vehicle speeds due to the perceived widened roadway;
- Does not meet dimensional standards for a formal parking lane; and
- Would likely need to be removed when the ultimate Hiller Road improvements are constructed, representing a poor use of limited nonprofit resources.

This concern is not theoretical. Comparable infill paving required of prior developments on Hiller Road, including the parcels to the west, created an unstructured, oversized shoulder rather than a functional roadway improvement, with no clear purpose until the ultimate road design is implemented.

A maintained vegetated buffer is stable, drains naturally, and provides a safe, visually consistent interim surface that preserves the right-of-way for the ultimate design without creating the safety risks described above. Humboldt Commons will maintain this area consistent with County standards until the ultimate improvements are constructed.

Preserving the gap area also keeps open the possibility that the County could pursue Active Transportation Program (ATP) or other grant funding to construct a Class 1 bike path within this corridor in the future, which would deliver meaningful bicycle infrastructure to McKinleyville residents, a much greater community benefit than a paved shoulder with no clear use.

Humboldt Commons is proceeding with full curb, gutter, and continuous sidewalk improvements along the entire Phase 1 project frontage, which represent the principal pedestrian safety improvements generated by the subdivision. If Humboldt Commons is not required to spend limited funds on infill paving, we would redirect those resources toward extending the sidewalk along the Phase 2 frontage, the portion of the parcel between future Nursery Way extension and the affordable housing parcel, providing a continuous and lasting pedestrian safety benefit to the community.

The project, as proposed, satisfies all other requirements for land subdivision. Granting this exception does not provide special privileges not available to others, but upholds the preservation and enjoyment of a substantial property right of the applicant consistent with the proportionality requirements of applicable law. Humboldt Commons is already investing approximately \$1.5 million in County-required subdivision improvements. Denying the exception request would impose additional costs disproportionate to the project's traffic impact and jeopardize the feasibility of needed senior housing in McKinleyville.

The granting of this exception is not detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to other properties in the vicinity. Based on the above, we respectfully petition that this exception request be granted.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ann Lindsay". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and slightly larger than the others.

Ann Lindsay

President of the Board

Humboldt Commons

ann@lifeplanhumboldt.org

cc: Board of Directors, Humboldt Commons

Emma Haskett, Project Manager, Humboldt Commons

Robert Bronkall, County Surveyor, Humboldt County

Erin Cearley, Assistant Engineer, Humboldt County Public Works Department

Michael Holtermann, Associate Planner, Humboldt County Planning Department