

**Final Minutes subject to approval**



**Design Review Board  
Special Meeting**

**Tuesday September 6, 2023 6:00 P.M.  
MINUTES**

**Participate In-Person:**

**San Rafael City Council Chambers  
1400 Fifth Avenue, San Rafael, CA 94901  
Or**

**Participate Virtually:**

**Watch on Webinar: <https://tinyurl.com/drb-2023>  
Telephone: 1 (669) 444-9171  
Meeting ID: 885 6816 1418**

This meeting will be held in-person. The public may attend in-person or participate virtually using Zoom.

How to participate in the meeting virtually:

- Submit public comment in writing before 4:00 p.m. the day of the meeting to [PlanningPublicComment@cityofsanrafael.org](mailto:PlanningPublicComment@cityofsanrafael.org)
  - Join the Zoom webinar and use the 'raise hand' feature to provide verbal public comment.
  - Dial-in to Zoom's telephone number using the meeting ID and press \*9 to raise your hand, and \*6 to unmute yourself, then provide verbal public comment.
- If you experience technical difficulties during the meeting, please contact [PlanningPublicComment@cityofsanrafael.org](mailto:PlanningPublicComment@cityofsanrafael.org)

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Kovalsky called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m. Chair Kovalsky then invited Staff & Senior Planner Jeff Ballantine to call roll.

**RECORDING OF MEMBERS PRESENT AND ABSENT**

Present: Chair Sharon Kovalsky  
Board Member Michael Alexin  
Board Member Sarah Rege  
Board Member Stewart Summers  
Alternate Board Member Donald Blayney

Absent: Vice Chair Jeff Kent

Also Present: Jeff Ballantine, Staff, Senior Planner & DRB Secretary  
Alicia Giudice, Community Development Director,  
Heather Hines, Consultant Planner  
Nira Doherty, Consultant City Attorney

**PUBLIC NOTIFICATION OF MEETING PROCEDURES**

Chair Kovalsky invited Staff & Senior Planner, Jeff Ballantine, to inform the public that members they can provide public comment either in person in the Council Chambers, by telephone or via zoom with the raise hand feature. Written comments submitted prior to the

meeting time would be read aloud into the record during the public comment portion of each item.

Chair Kovalsky reviewed the procedures for the meeting.

### **URGENT ORAL/EMAIL COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

Chair Kovalsky called for any comments from the public on items NOT on the agenda. No public comment was received.

### **CONSENT CALENDAR**

Chair Kovalsky invited public comment on the Consent Calendar. There was no comment on the Consent Calendar.

#### **1. Approval of the Design Review Board Meeting Minutes of July 18, 2023**

Member Summers moved and Member Alexin seconded to approve the Minutes as submitted.

AYES: Members: Alexin, Blayney, Kovalsky, Rege, Summers

NOES: Members: None

ABSENT: Members: Kent

ABSTAIN: Members: None

Motion passes.

### **ACTION CALENDAR**

Chair Kovalsky introduced the Action Calendar and invited staff to present the Staff Report.

#### **2. 5800 Northgate Drive – Northgate Town Square**

Request for Planning Commission recommendation for an Environmental and Design Review Permit to allow the comprehensive redevelopment of the existing Northgate Mall into a new, phased mixed-use development with retail and 1,422 residential units on a 44.76-acre site. APNs: 175-060-12, -40, -59, -61, -66 & -67; General Commercial (GC) District; Permit # PLAN21-039, ZC21-001, UP21-007, ED21-024, TS21-002.

**Project Planner:** Heather Hines ([hhines@m-group.us](mailto:hhines@m-group.us))

*Recommended Action – Review and provide input on items discussed in staff report*

Consultant Planner, Heather Hines, provided a staff presentation on the project.

Applicant Team gave a presentation on the project.

Applicant Team and Staff responded to questions from the Board Members.

Chair Kovalsky asked for public comments. Public comment was provided by 35 members of the public. A number of the comments expressed the following concerns: emergency evacuation routes becoming congested; increased traffic congestion; water supply impacts to the City and region; desire for shorter buildings; desire for a larger town square; desire for no drive-thru restaurants; inclusion of universal design; and inclusion of public space for use during extreme weather events.

Board Members provided comments.

Member Summers moves, Member Alexin seconds motion to recommend Planning Commission approval of Environmental and Design Review permit for Northgate with the recommendation that the following items are addressed.

#### Overall Comments

- Consensus that the massing of the overall project is too big
- Make the town square significantly larger
- Eliminate dog park from town square
- Eliminate rocks in town square
- Eliminate use of faux landscape materials (faux rocks/logs, synthetic turf, etc)
- Utilize permeable paving throughout the project to the extent possible
- Provide additional awnings and other shade options
- Consider alternative design features on the east facing elevation of the cinema building in lieu of the proposed mountain relief
- Consider providing a landscaped green screen or other design solution to break up the rear façade of the cinema structure across from the townhomes
- Consider shading orientation of all buildings and open spaces
- Increase visual interest on all elevations of each buildings (four sided architecture)
- Maximize use of shade trees in where possible
- Increase level of detailing on the landscape plans versus what is shown on the renderings

#### Residential 1

- Consensus that this was the Board's least favorite residential building
- North elevation and south elevation lack articulation
- Limit use of CMU to base level only or not at all
- The design of the exterior of the lobby needs to be more clearly defined.
- Use "warmer" colors and materials
- Consider including another material and/or color such as a warm colored trespas or tile
- The proposed green screen at the garage level will need planting details as part of building permit submittal to ensure success
- Consider different design approach instead of green screen to break up garage level

#### Residential 2

- Consider increasing building setback from Northgate Drive
- Evaluate addition of greenscreen or greater articulation on rear elevation of cinema building facing townhomes
- Consider flipping units facing cinema such that their front doors no longer face the cinema.

#### Residential 3

- Add greater variation in the material and color palettes
- Consider reorientation of the roof deck or provide other means to screen it to minimize impacts to the senior living community south of the proposed building
- Add horizontal break at pedestrian level and or additional stepping on the east elevation along Los Ranchitos
- Exterior of the lobby areas needs additional articulation
- At the corner of Northgate Drive and Los Ranchitos Road, introduce additional material and/or color to break up the cream stucco
- Consider stepping building back on the upper levels on the west elevation

#### Residential 4

- Consider stepping building back on upper levels

- Consider bringing warmer colors further up the building to reduce the layer cake appearance of the building
- Consider adding gabled canopies at lower levels as well
- Consider a different variety of materials to provide scale at the pedestrian level

#### Residential 5

- The corner of the building with white brick (Belden brick) needs articulation at the base level.
- Consider providing additional articulation/treatment on the northeast corner to reduce blocky appearance
- Reconsider redesign/relocation of the common outdoor area to minimize shading impacts

#### Residential 6

- Consider integrating horizontal variety into to avoid the appearance of one white horizontal element and one dark horizontal element (layer cake)
- Consider improving the pedestrian scale of the southwest corner
- Consider a more continuous detail to replace or augment the awkward screens in the openings (RE-94)
- Consider making the lobby more prominent to make it clearer that it is a lobby
- Bring more variety in color between the ivory plaster and the tile

AYES: Members: Alexin, Blayney, Kovalsky, Summers

NOES: Members: Rege

ABSENT: Members: Kent

ABSTAIN: Members: None

Motion passes.

#### **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

No Director's report was provided.

#### **BOARD COMMUNICATION**

No Board Communication was provided.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Kovalsky adjourned the meeting at 11:15 p.m.

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Planning Manager