

June 4, 2024

Planning Division
Community Development Department
City of San Rafael
1400 Fifth Avenue
San Rafael, CA 94901

Re: Northgate Town Square: Application Refinements for Proposed Project

Planning Division Staff:

Merlone Geier Partners appreciates the City of San Rafael's ongoing review of our pending development application to transform Northgate Mall into Northgate Town Square, a vibrant and open-air, mixed-use town center. Last year, in response to input from community stakeholders, we extensively modified our comprehensive redevelopment plans for the proposed project. Since then, we have received further input, including from the Design Review Board.

Today, we are proposing modest refinements to our pending project application both to respond to what we heard recently and to better align our project with the City's inclusionary housing requirements. These limited refinements include the following:

- The project's 2025 Master Plan phase previously was designed to exceed the City's affordable housing requirement for that phase by locating 96 low-income units within a single building dedicated exclusively to affordable housing. The refined application materials submitted today instead integrate inclusionary affordable units throughout residential structures that also contain market-rate units in all project phases.
- The refined plans include 38 units in townhome buildings where the 96-unit affordable housing building previously was proposed. The 58 units that no longer can be accommodated on the new townhome site have been relocated onto the site identified in project plans as "Residential 5." Because Residential 5 may not be constructed until the 2040 Vision Plan, this means that 864, rather than 922, units would be constructed as part of the 2025 Master Plan and that 558, rather than 500, units would be constructed as part of the 2040 Vision Plan. To accommodate this unit shift, the Residential 5 building would be six, rather than five, stories tall, increasing the building height (to parapet) from 60 to 68 feet. Building heights on Residential 1 would be reduced from 60 feet to 35 feet.
- The proposed project now will set aside 10 percent of units for affordable housing, a slight decrease from the previous proposal but in full compliance with the City's inclusionary

housing ordinance. A total of 143 affordable units would be constructed, 87 under the 2025 Master Plan and 56 under the 2040 Vision Plan.

- Under the 2040 Vision Plan, there would be a minor increase in new commercial space of 1,860 square feet. The revised residential mix would also result in a small 19,391 square-foot increase in total residential square footage at buildout of the 2040 Vision Plan due to reappointment of units to the later phase.
- In response to DRB and other comments, the refined plans also increase the square footage of the Town Square from 48,075 square feet to 56,975 square feet and make improvements to its visual quality and functions. Modest changes also are proposed to project architecture, open space areas, and the cinema, in response to City comments.

Given the minimal scope of these refinements and their responsiveness to decision-maker comments, we do not anticipate these changes should result in any meaningful effect on the timing of the entitlement process. While we expect City staff may wish to circulate these refinements internally, we believe the City's determination on February 27, 2024, that our application was complete should not be affected by today's limited submittal.

In addition, these refinements do not change any significant conclusions or mitigation measures identified in the Draft EIR. A minimal decrease in the square footage of building construction in Phase 1, followed by a corresponding slightly larger but still minimal increase in Phase 2, would not affect any of the construction and operational impact analyses provided in the Draft EIR. And as evidenced by pages 4.3-25 – 4.3-39 of the Draft EIR, the 8-foot increase in building height at Residential 5 would leave intact the City's determination that the project would not "substantially or completely block public views of identified scenic resources."

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions you may have regarding these proposed refinements or any other issues. Thank you for your continued work on our project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "D. Geiser", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

David E. Geiser
Managing Director
Design and Construction

Enclosures