

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE RESPONSE TO COMMENTS DOCUMENT

This document has been prepared to respond to comments received on the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) prepared for the proposed Northgate Mall Redevelopment Project, also known as the “Northgate Town Square” (project). The Draft EIR identifies the likely environmental consequences associated with development of the proposed project and recommends mitigation measures to reduce potentially significant impacts. This Response to Comments Document (RTC Document) provides responses to comments on the Draft EIR and makes revisions to the Draft EIR, as necessary, resulting from those comments or to clarify material in the Draft EIR. This document, together with the Draft EIR, constitutes the Final EIR for the project.

1.2 ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

According to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), lead agencies are required to consult with public agencies having jurisdiction over a proposed project and to provide the general public with an opportunity to comment on the Draft EIR.

On December 9, 2021, the City of San Rafael (City) circulated a Notice of Preparation (NOP) notifying responsible agencies and interested parties that an EIR would be prepared for the proposed project and indicated the environmental topics anticipated to be addressed in the EIR. The NOP was mailed to public agencies, organizations, and individuals likely to be interested in the potential impacts of the proposed project. A scoping session was held as a public meeting before the Planning Commission on January 11, 2022, to solicit feedback regarding the scope and content of the EIR. Comments received by the City on the NOP were considered during preparation of the Draft EIR.

The Draft EIR was made available for public review on January 5, 2024, and was distributed to local and State responsible and trustee agencies. The Draft EIR and an announcement of its availability were posted electronically on the City's website at: <https://www.cityofsanrafael.org/northgate-town-square-environmental-review>. The Notice of Availability (NOA) for the Draft EIR was provided to all individuals and organizations who made a written request for notice, was filed with the Marin County Clerk, and was posted at the project site.

The NOA stated that the review period would occur over a duration of 45 days, as mandated by CEQA. Due to a procedural error, the local review period was extended for a total period of 60 days and ended on March 5, 2024. The City held a public hearing on the Draft EIR with the Planning Commission on February 13, 2024. The City received a total of 269 comment letters from State and local agencies, organizations, and individuals during the comment period, and 2 comment letters after the close of the comment period. Copies of all written comments received during the comment period, the two late comments, and a transcript of the verbal comments received at the public hearing are included in Chapter 4.0, Comments and Responses, of this document.

1.3 DOCUMENT ORGANIZATION

This RTC Document consists of the following chapters:

- **Chapter 1.0: Introduction.** This chapter discusses the purpose and organization of this RTC Document, and the Final EIR, and summarizes the environmental review process for the project.
- **Chapter 2.0: Revised Project.** This chapter includes a description of refinements to the proposed project that have been developed by the project sponsor since publication of the Draft EIR (the “revised project”). An evaluation and comparison of the impacts and mitigation measures identified in the Draft EIR to those of the revised project are also included in this chapter.
- **Chapter 3.0: List of Commenters.** This chapter contains a list of agencies, organizations, and individuals who submitted written comments during the public review period or provided verbal comments at the public hearing on the Draft EIR.
- **Chapter 4.0: Comments and Responses.** This chapter contains reproductions of all comment letters received on the Draft EIR, as well as the transcript of verbal comments provided at the public hearing. A written response for each CEQA-related comment received during the public review period is provided. Each response is keyed to the corresponding comment.
- **Chapter 5.0: Draft EIR Text Revisions.** Corrections and edits to the Draft EIR that are necessary in light of the comments received and responses provided or are necessary to amplify or clarify material in the Draft EIR are contained in this chapter. Double underlined text represents language that has been added to the Draft EIR; text with ~~strikeout~~ has been deleted from the Draft EIR.