

Tuesday, February 17, 2026

San Rafael City Council

Mayor Kate Colin

Councilmember Maika Llorens Gulati

Councilmember Eli Hill

Councilmember Maribeth Bushey

Councilmember Rachel Kertz

RE: Public Comment - 700 Irwin Street Project

Dear Esteemed Elected Officials:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment at this pivotal moment for San Rafael. As we confront the interrelated challenges of sea level rise, housing instability, and economic vulnerability, we cannot treat these issues as separate problems. The data is clear: thousands of residents in the Canal neighborhood already live below today's high-water elevation.

The Canal remains one of San Rafael's most vital economic and cultural centers. It is home to the essential workers, immigrant families, and small business owners who serve as the backbone of our city, working in healthcare, education, and local commerce. Yet, these very residents face entrenched housing stress, overcrowding, and rising displacement pressures within flood-prone buildings. By supporting them, we are not just addressing a housing need; we are investing in the long-term resilience of our entire community.

Because of these realities, San Rafael urgently needs integrated, "multi-solving" solutions. A cross-sector approach offers the clearest path forward, enabling investments that jointly strengthen health, housing stability, and economic vitality.

Recognizing that 85% of Marin County is restricted from new housing, Canal Alliance has been proactively developing partnership models with mission-aligned, for-profit developers. Our goal is to expand climate-resilient, deeply affordable housing while stabilizing the families most at risk.

The collaboration with Urban Pacific Development at 700 Irwin Street exemplifies how private, nonprofit, philanthropic, and potentially public partners can unite to deliver meaningful, climate-informed benefits to the community. The partnership is designed to address the Canal neighborhood's dual challenges of climate-driven flooding and housing instability. This mixed-income development will feature roughly 200 units, including a

minimum of 30 affordable units, with a focused effort to increase very-low-income (50% AMI) units supported by philanthropic and impact-investment predevelopment financing.

- The partnership includes a Master Lease Agreement giving Canal Alliance 55 years of oversight of the 50% AMI affordable units, including tenant selection, income-eligibility compliance, and service coordination, ensuring they serve the families most connected to San Rafael's local workforce and economy.
- The affordable housing protections are structured to be binding on all future owners, guaranteeing stability that extends far beyond the initial development.
- This structure reflects real risk-sharing: Canal Alliance is taking on expanded long-term obligations precisely to secure deeper affordability and climate-resilient housing outcomes.

As the City continues its own review of project-related considerations, including design, community impacts, and infrastructure, we hope these decisions will be grounded in the broader context of climate vulnerability, affordability needs, and long-term community stability.

The City of San Rafael has not yet made critical policy decisions that explicitly recognize residents of the Canal neighborhood as "climate-vulnerable" and prioritize them for all upcoming affordable housing developments or clarify how housing access will align with climate-risk data. This absence of policy is not a barrier. It is an opportunity for leadership.

The partnership with Urban Pacific Development represents exactly the kind of multisolving, cross-sector innovation San Rafael needs. It blends development with climate resilience, affordability with stability, and long-term stewardship with shared responsibility.

Thank you for your leadership and consideration.



Omar Carrera
CEO, Canal Alliance
OmarC@canalalliance.org

From: Craig Middleton [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, February 17, 2026 11:42 AM
To: Mayor Kate <Kate.Colin@CityOfSanRafael.org>
Subject: 700 Irwin - proposed skyscraper

Dear Mayor Colin,

While I understand that state law limits the ability of the Council or Planning Commission to control housing construction, and while I support the apartment complexes that have been proposed other than the monstrosity proposed for 700 Irwin, I would like the Council to draw the line and take a stand on 700 Irwin. The building is proposed at 17 stories, which is twice the height of any other existing building in the city and would completely transform the feel of San Rafael. It would be squeezed into a small lot at the edge of the freeway and off ramp. It would contribute significantly to traffic in an area that is already severely congested during many periods during the day. It is entirely inappropriate in San Rafael.

I would like to see the City take a stand on this one, even if doing so might risk drawing a lawsuit. There is no better local example of developer overreach than 700 Irwin, and this provides us an opportunity to challenge a state law that may have been well intended but has eviscerated local control over development and is a gift to developers.

I cannot be at the Council meeting tonight but will follow closely the Council's actions on this matter.

Thank you very much for your consistent leadership of our city.

Sincerely,
Craig Middleton
[REDACTED]
San Rafael

From: Craig Middleton [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, February 17, 2026 11:46 AM
To: Lindsay Lara <Lindsay.Lara@CityOfSanRafael.org>
Subject: Letter to the Council - for tonight's meeting

Dear City Clerk Lara,

Would you please be sure that the following is included in the Council packet (comments) under the 700 Irwin discussion. Thank you very much!

Dear Mayor and Councilmembers,

While I understand that state law limits the ability of the Council or Planning Commission to control housing construction, and while I support the apartment complexes that have been proposed other than the monstrosity proposed for 700 Irwin, I would like the Council to draw the line and take a stand on 700 Irwin. The building is proposed at 17 stories, which is twice the height of any other existing building in the city and would completely transform the feel of San Rafael. It would be squeezed into a small lot at the edge of the freeway and off ramp. It would contribute significantly to traffic in an area that is already severely congested during many periods during the day. It is entirely inappropriate in San Rafael.

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I cannot be at the Council meeting tonight but will follow closely the Council's actions on this matter.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,
Craig Middleton
[REDACTED]
San Rafael

From: Darcelle Curtis [REDACTED]

Sent: Tuesday, February 17, 2026 1:08 PM

To: Distrib- City Clerk <city.clerk@cityofsanrafael.org>

Subject: Appeals of Planning Commission Approval for Mixed-Use Development at 700 Irwin Street & Appeal of Planning Commission Approval for Mixed-Use Development at 1030 3rd Street (Also Known As 900 A Street Project)

I am a resident of San Rafael, and I have one simple question.

Why do we need 331 additional housing units and 1000's of additional mixed use and commercial space in San Rafael, when currently:

On Zillow: over 301 units for rent or sale are available! In San Rafael

On Loopnet: Over 160 commercial spaces are available in San Rafael

And 4th street has over 80 empty storefronts!!

PLEASE ANSWER MY QUESTION !!

Thank you very much,

Darcelle Curtis
[REDACTED]

FOR THE PUBLIC RECORD

700 Irwin Project, Appeal for Remand - Tuesday, February 17, 2026

Prepared by: Ken Dickinson & Paul Kasbar, Appellants

Slide 1 Please

Mayor and Councilmembers,

This appeal is about whether the requirements for granting waivers and concessions were clearly demonstrated in the record before they were approved. Let's look at one of them.

Slide 2 Please: The Bicycle Parking Requirement - Waiver #2

- The Downtown Precise Plan requires a minimum of 271 bicycle spaces.
- The project was granted a waiver to provide 60 which is a 78% reduction.
- The justification was that compliance would **physically preclude construction**.

During the Planning Commission hearing, the applicants stated that the mechanical parking system was only at a 25 percent conceptual design level and that an additional lift might be added depending on further study.

Time Code: 01:02:06.000 --> 01:02:14.000 & 01:02:14.000 --> 01:02:19.000

If the parking system is not fully engineered and if additional vertical infrastructure may still be added and if internal circulation remains adjustable, then the building shell is still not set in stone.

Where in the record is the analysis demonstrating that **271 spaces** would have **physically prevented construction**, rather than a required redesign? How many units would be lost if they were reconfigured?

It is our understanding that the statute protects density, not design preference. If the analysis exists it should be clearly identified. If it does not, then aren't we just guessing instead of proving it can't be built?

Slide 3 Please: There is a related safety consideration as reducing bicycle parking does not reduce bicycle ownership.

- California Civil Code section 1940.41 protects tenants' rights to store and charge micromobility devices, including e-bikes, inside dwelling units.
- Lithium Battery safety concerns recently led to the passing of SB1271
- The Marin IJ recently reported that a lithium battery charger caused a residential fire here in San Rafael.

Reducing bicycle storage by more than 200 spaces in a 17-story building will shift a lot of that storage into apartments.

Under the State Density Bonus Law, waivers may not create a specific adverse impact under **objective safety standards**. So, where in the record was that foreseeable safety condition evaluated?

Slide 4 Please: If major exceptions are granted first, and operational realities are addressed later, the decision-making sequence is backwards.

The record itself acknowledges several operational concerns, how traffic will be processed, whether vehicles may queue onto nearby streets, how emergency access will function, and how the mechanical parking system will operate under real-world conditions.

These issues may eventually be resolved. But the question tonight is simple: were the major exceptions approved first, with the practical consequences left to be worked out later? That sequencing deserves clear explanation.

At the February 2nd Housing Study Session, it was noted that the City loses its primary leverage once its remaining waiver tools are granted.

As noted in the other appeal here tonight, the height waiver for 700 Irwin appears to have been approved without a clear, apples-to-apples comparison. If the analysis relied on different parking or layout assumptions, the public record should clearly show that.

This appeal asks the Council to ensure we have all the facts before giving up its final say on the project's design. And your decision this evening is not just about 700 Irwin. How you treat waivers and concessions becomes precedent for every future high-density project here.

If major exceptions are treated as automatic, without clearly demonstrating why they are necessary under the State Density Bonus Law, then that becomes the template for the future.

Housing should be strong enough to stand on a clear record and if these exceptions are required, then the record should show it.

We respectfully ask you to remand the project so that clarity is provided before these exceptions are finalized.

Thank you.

From: Rosie Brekke [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, February 17, 2026 1:42 PM
To: Mayor Kate <kate.colin@cityofsanrafael.org>; John Stefanski <John.Stefanski@cityofsanrafael.org>; Maribeth Bushey <maribeth.bushey@cityofsanrafael.org>; Maika Llorens Gulati <maika@cityofsanrafael.org>; Rachel Kertz <rachel.kertz@cityofsanrafael.org>; Distrib- City Clerk <city.clerk@cityofsanrafael.org>
Subject: Re: 700 Irwin Known Risks- my email update

Sent from my iPhone

On Feb 16, 2026, at 9:54 PM, Rosie Brekke [REDACTED] wrote:

From: Rosie Brekke [REDACTED]
Date: February 16, 2026 at 12:35:22 AM PST
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Fwd: Known risks: 1)Living by freeways & busy roads risk health& stress issues (corroborated w/ recent gold standard studies-UC Davis, BAAQMD, EPA, LATimes, etc. 2)Traffic chaos per 3 pedestrian deaths in last 5 months at 2 dangerous downtown crosswalks; 1 at Pt.San Pedro crosswalk 3)Bay Mud fill-instability of Bldg;sharing bay mud fill w/ freeway infrastructure;4)San Rafael's plan of alternate evacuation

From: Rosie Brekke [REDACTED]
Date: February 16, 2026 at 12:09:35 AM

1.UC DAVIS3/7/24”New Report highlights impact of roadway air pollution on indoor air quality” UC Davis Health Researchers told the state legislature “Evidence shows people who live near major roadways & freeways have an increased risk of developing multiple health conditions.”-“respiratory(bronchitis,asthma, infections) ;cardiovascular(heart,stroke,clots,artery disease);reproductive(premature birth w/ poor lung development, miscarriage) ; cancer (breast,lung& leukemia)in spite of Ca. push for clean air policies “

“Freeway stop & go on/off ramps add toxic exposure indoors even w/ closed doors& windows;outside pollution continually seeps in thru normal exchange. Weather trends, construction gaps & building vents let VOC gases & particulate (super fine particles) build up indoors. Particulate (PM2.5)enters the bloodstream&goes deep into the lungs. Diesel vehicles emit black carbon w/ 50%> chance of asthma than PM 2.5. Carbon monoxide within 200meters show cardiovascular & Respiratory damage. Besides air quality, the stressor of traffic & noise elevates heart rate&blood pressure-our fight or flight response to triggers.”

"Tire, road & brake particles release zinc, iron, copper metals, etc. Stop & go traffic causes 3x more pollution than flowing traffic, making very hazardous urban freeway corridors.

Recent stats are 3 pedestrian deaths in 5 months, 1 at pt. San Pedro crosswalk & 2 at downtown San Rafael crosswalks. Factor accidents, increased traffic chaos & gridlock, bikes, pedestrians, construction—all increase hazards. A dangerous 18 story bldg proposal - 700 Irwin - 101 central San Rafael off-ramp, the City used traffic study 2019 baseline w/ 2022 update by Hexagon traffic Consultants. Current traffic studies for all downtown San Rafael developments—must not be piecemeal—not an obsolete baseline post pandemic, people worked remotely or were laid off. Hexagon didn't use current VMT (Vehicle Miles Traveled) stats for the City of San Rafael. This faulty presumption was the "project would result in a less than significant transportation impact & a detailed VMT is not required. "The intersection of 700 Irwin is already considered dangerous due to: high traffic vehicle volume, pedestrian traffic from 101 freeway off-ramp; chaotic road layout of 101 freeway turning into 5 lanes at Irwin which have confusing turning options at traffic lights; poor infrastructure design impedes driver & pedestrian visibility.

I was almost killed by a car barreling backward into me as I walked south to 3rd & Lincoln (9/16/21) 10+ scans, multiple major injuries & almost 4 1/2 years later, SR still has done 0 to mitigate known dangers of 2nd & Irwin, 3rd & Lincoln & 3rd & Grand, 2nd & Grand; 2nd & Lincoln. Our community is collateral damage to a mayor who is supposed to keep SR safer. In fact the mayor has no idea what a "big picture" really is. Our mayor admitted in Daily Mail interview she didn't take the time to "bring everyone along" on a project in the works for years. Our city pretends community input matters. In fact any city meetings go thru the motions the structure of which isn't transparent. Instead of mitigating known dangers city actions compound all dangers at Lincoln between 2nd & 3rd, etc. San Rafael roads r falling apart in inches deep crevices & potholes, making a car ride feel like one has flat tires & making crosswalks more dangerous. U the mayor r so excited that u & SRCC forgot to be transparent or interact w/ current residents re: traffic. Negligent misrepresentation by local gov. of their communication & action mislead others to losses physical, mental & financial. Example is no current traffic study nor a health study of people living on stop/go freeway off-ramp w/ 3x higher Health risks.

Re: 700 Irwin on bay mud fill sharing freeway off-ramp infrastructure also on bay mud fill, seems like a possible rerun of SF leaning Millenium million\$ tower, now worthless still settling w/ no fix & no market w/ Lawsuits the settlement of which may land on the shoulders of the City of SF or taxpayers. In addition, drilling to bedrock likely stirs up sediment with chemicals left by prior industries. A toxic chemical chromium is of concern as it could affect our environment & canal waters.

There should be disclosures re: bay fill, as well as toxic exposure so that potential 700 Irwin St. residents are aware of all health & other risks of living there.

Thursday 2/5 I had emergency Dr. appt. In Corte Madera at 3:45 with scans at MGH. I left my house at 2:00. Gridlock was at a standstill on Pt. San Pedro Rd.. There was a ruptured gas line so police rerouted all traffic before United Market to get to Francisco Blvd. There was no other route to get out of that San Rafael jam. It took an hour to get from Montecito

center to Corte Madera

What alternative safety exit route is planned for one to get out of driving gridlock in the known dangerous San Rafael downtown intersections- due to high density building & a flawed traffic study?. I understand the traffic study was project specific to 700 Irwin, but doesn't include the composite of vehicle count generated by all the remaining residential building. The traffic study isn't accurate, complete, or transparent.

Even with mitigation of toxic pollutants, the risk of cardiovascular, lung, reproductive damage to residents of 700 Irwin is huge collateral damage for the Mayor & SRCC to be accountable. Low income residents will have less access to medical care for conditions they may develop. 700 Irwin is not a Gateway to San Rafael, rather a gateway to a complete lack of regard for rational decisions & to a new hell that San Rafael creates but isn't prepared to deal with.

Finally: 1.) who benefits from this? 2.) Is it an opportunity zone w/ all tax benefits for developers to get a full 10 yr. appreciation then no capital gains tax on sale. 3.) Is there any conflict of interest? 4.) Will 700 Irwin go into an LLC formed to receive real estate in California or a Delaware Trust to conceal who is really benefitting?

if u look at the articles with gold standard corroborating health info, u know this project should not be built.

Lacking transparency to the community re: 700 Irwin w/ 2019 baseline obsolete VMT traffic stats, who will ultimately be developers?, is there any conflict of interest by county officials & city officials that might be, should be or are being investigated as a breach by any officials involved in 700 Irwin. There are many gold standard articles by environmental & health researchers that corroborate important info as to multiplied health risks of living at stop/go off ramps & freeway corridors.

Rosie Brekke

Acknowledgment to email requested asap.

From: Skip Allyn [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, February 17, 2026 3:15 PM
To: Distrib- City Clerk <city.clerk@cityofsanrafael.org>
Subject: City Council Meeting - 700 Irwin Street, 1030 3rd Street

Dear City Clerk-

I write to support both of these projects. Housing, especially affordable housing, is desperately needed in San Rafael. Thank you.

Skip Allyn

[REDACTED]
San Rafael, CA 94901
[REDACTED]