



NOTICE OF PREPARATION

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT FOR WHISTLESTOP MISSION PLAZA PROJECT

Date of Mailing: January 22, 2016

The City of San Rafael is preparing an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the proposed development of the Whistlestop Mission Plaza project ("project") located at 930 Tamalpais Avenue, San Rafael, California (see Figure 1). The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires that the City conduct environmental review of the project, which has the potential to result in physical change in the environment. The City is the "Lead Agency" for the project and is the public agency with the principal responsibility for approving and carrying out the project. The applicant is Eden Housing and Whistlestop (Marin Senior Coordinating Council, LLC).

The City is issuing this Notice of Preparation (NOP) to invite comments on the scope and content of the EIR prior to its preparation. This NOP is being sent to local agencies, nearby residents, and other interested parties. The City has determined that an EIR shall be prepared and an Initial Study Checklist is not required for this project. When the Draft EIR is published, it will be sent to all parties who respond to this NOP or who otherwise indicate that they would like to receive a copy of the Draft EIR.

RESPONDING TO THIS NOP: Responses to this NOP and any related questions or comments regarding the scope or content of the Draft EIR must be directed in writing to: **Kraig Tambornini, Senior Planner, City of San Rafael, 1400 Fifth Avenue, 3rd Floor, San Rafael, CA 94901, or by email to Kraig.Tambornini@cityofsanrafael.org.** Comments on the NOP must be received at the above mailing or e-mail address within 30 days of receipt of this notice, by **February 23, 2016, at 5:00 p.m.** Verbal and written comments will also be received at the NOP scoping meeting to be held by the City Planning Commission on **February 23, 2016, at 7:00 PM, in the City Council Chambers, 1400 Fifth Ave., San Rafael, CA.** Please reference the project title shown in the heading above in all correspondence.

Responses to this NOP should focus on the potentially significant environmental effects that the project may have on the physical environment, ways in which those effects might be minimized, and potential alternatives to the project that should be addressed in the EIR. This focus aligns with the purpose of the EIR to inform the public about these factors of the project.

EXISTING CONDITIONS: The 14,836+/- square foot rectangular project site for the Whistlestop Mission Plaza project is currently developed with a 14,228+/- square foot two-story building that is now occupied by Whistlestop, which offers classes, events, low cost lunches at the Jackson Café, and other services for seniors. The building also houses several non-profit organizations. The building was one story when it was built in 1929 as a rail depot, and altered over the years to include building additions, modifications and a second story level. The building served as a rail depot until it was leased for private use and occupied by Marin Senior Coordinating Council (Whistlestop) in early 1970. The Marin Senior Coordinating Council subsequently purchased the building from the railroad in 1980, with a 12 space, on-site parking lot and access to offsite parking within the adjoining railroad right of way parcel.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The existing building is proposed to be demolished for new construction. The new building would contain housing and services for seniors. The new building would be five stories in height in a Mission Revival style with components such as arched openings, deeply set windows with sloping sills, detailed metal work in the balconies and awnings, and tile accents. The north end of the

building would step down to three stories near Fourth Street. The total square footage of the new building would be 57,100+/- gross square feet.

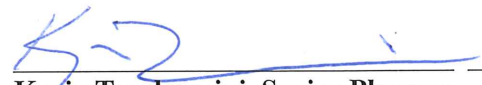
Uses within the building would include residential units on the third, fourth, and fifth floors, with communal spaces on each of these floors for residents. The second floor and a portion of the third floor would be used for the Whistlestop Active Aging Center, with classrooms, a dance/exercise studio, offices and meeting rooms. The ground level would contain parking and utility uses, along with the Jackson Café, which would remain a café component serving Whistlestop Active Aging Center as well as the general public. The café would be located at the north end of the ground floor adjoining an open-air, 1,250-square-foot outdoor plaza at the corner of Tamalpais Avenue and Fourth Street. This plaza space would serve as a community gathering space as well as outdoor dining area for Jackson Café.

The building would provide 41 residential units in a mix of 13 one-bedroom units, 1 two-bedroom manager's unit, and 27 studio units. Each residential unit would include a kitchen, bathroom, and living, dining, and sleeping spaces. Amenities would include a community room, a computer center and library, outdoor courtyards (elevated and at ground level), and furnished lobbies for casual social interaction. As noted above, low-cost lunches for residents would remain available for residents at the Jackson Café on the ground floor. A central laundry room for residents' use would be provided on the upper floors.

Access to transit would be available via, (1) van service (Marin's Whistlestop Wheels Para Transit) with access at the ground-level garage, (2) buses at the adjacent Bettini Transportation Center, and (3) regional rail at the SMART station to be located at the east edge of the site. At the Bettini Transportation Center, there are 16 separate bus routes operated by three carriers (Marin Transit, Golden Gate Transit, and Sonoma County Transit). A total of 20 parking spaces would be provided in a street level garage for use by Whistlestop employees and guests. A van drop-off location would be provided within the garage so that users could enter the lobby from the garage and be protected from adverse weather conditions. Other ground-floor enclosed facilities would include mechanical equipment, electrical/communications utilities, and garbage/recycling facilities. Fourteen bicycle parking spaces would also be provided.

PROBABLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS: The EIR will address the following potential environmental effects: Aesthetics, Air Quality, Cultural Resources, Geology and Soils, Hazards, Noise, Public Services, Recreation, Greenhouse Gases, Hydrology and Water Quality, Land Use and Planning, Transportation/Traffic, Energy, and Utilities. The EIR will examine project and cumulative effects and a reasonable range of alternatives to the project that may be capable of reducing or avoiding potential environmental effects that may be identified for the project. The topics of Agriculture and Forestry Resources, Biological Resources, Mineral Resources, and Population and Housing are not anticipated to require analysis in the EIR as these do not apply to the project or project site. There are no agricultural or forestry uses or land at the site; no biological habitat exists at the site, which is completely developed with paved surfaces or building area; no mineral resources have been mapped at the site; and no housing would be removed from the site. Growth inducement would be addressed as its own topic in the EIR.

Please direct questions regarding the project or information in this NOP to **Kraig Tambornini, Senior Planner, City of San Rafael, Community Development Department, 1400 Fifth Avenue, 3rd Floor, San Rafael, CA 94901 (Marin County), phone (415) 485-3092, or email Kraig.Tambornini@cityofsanrafael.org.**


Kraig Tambornini, Senior Planner **Date** 1/14/16
City of San Rafael, Planning Division
Community Development Department

