



SAN RAFAEL
THE CITY WITH A MISSION

Community Development Department – Planning Division

Meeting Date:	September 14, 2021
Agenda Item:	3
Case Numbers:	ZC21-001, UP21-007, ED21-024, TS21-002, IS21-002 & DA21-001
Project Planner:	Tricia Stevens/916-698-4592

REPORT TO PLANNING COMMISSION AND DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

SUBJECT: Northgate Mall Redevelopment Project (5800 Northgate Drive)– Study Session for a request for a Rezone to the Planned Development (PD) zone, a Use Permit, an Environmental and Design Review Permit, and a Tentative Map to allow the comprehensive redevelopment of the existing Mall into a new, phased mixed-use development with retail and approximately 1,320 residences on a 44.76-acre site. APNs: 175-060-12, -40, -59, -61, -66 & -67; General Commercial (GC) District; MeloneGeier Partners, owner/applicant; File Nos: ZC21-001, UP21-007, ED21-024, TS21-002, IS21-002 & DA21-001

STUDY SESSION PURPOSE AND FORMAT

This Study Session is intended to provide an opportunity for early Planning Commission and Design Review Board project feedback on land use and design and allows early opportunity for public input. This Study Session is not intended to result in any decisions regarding the project merits or official action on the project, but rather would allow the Commission and Board to provide preliminary feedback on the project design and attributes.

The redevelopment of the almost 45-acre Northgate Mall into a mixed-use development with a town center and housing units is a unique opportunity for the City to re-envision a 1960s standard mall development into a vibrant mixed-use community, including the provision of 1,320 residential units on what has been identified as an opportunity site in the 2015-2023 Housing Element. Due to the importance of the project and the project site, staff is soliciting feedback on from the PC, DRB, and community on how the design and layout of the project can be optimized to best contribute to the creation of a vibrant and successful long-term project that blends with and enhances the fabric of the surrounding neighborhood and the City as a whole.

PROPERTY FACTS

Address/Location:	5800 Northgate Drive	Parcel Number(s):	175-060-12, -40, -59, -61, -66 & -67
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Property Size:	44.76 acres	Neighborhood:	North San Rafael Commercial Center
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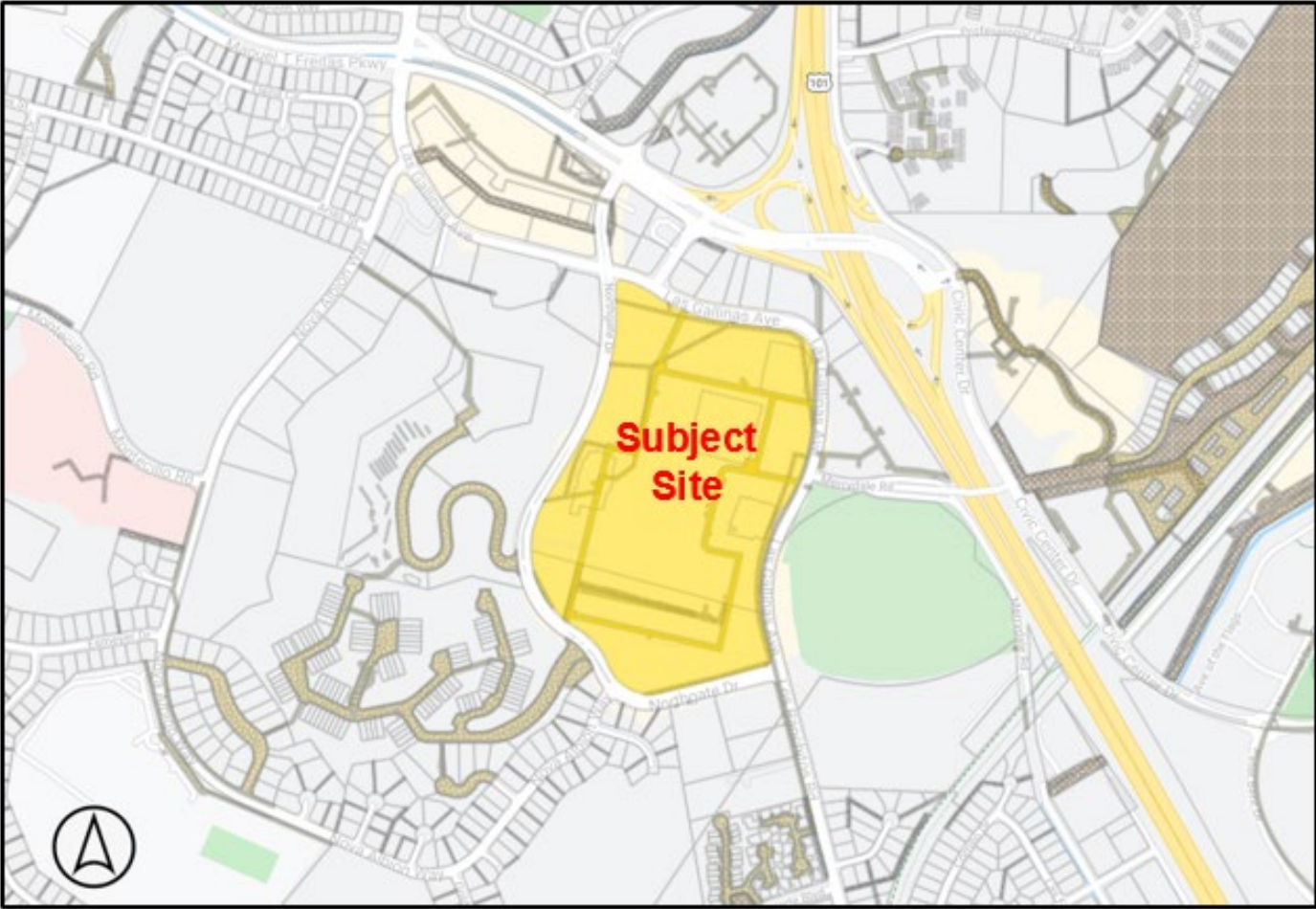
Site Characteristics

	General Plan Designation (2040)	Zoning Designation	Existing Land-Use
Project Site:	Community Commercial Mixed Use	(E): General Commercial (GC) (P): PD Overlay	Existing Mall

REPORT TO PLANNING COMMISSION AND DESIGN REVIEW BOARD - Case No's: ZC21-001, UP21-007, ED21-004, TS21-002, IS21-002 & DA21-001
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North:	Community Commercial Mixed Use Office Mixed Use	O C/O GC	Existing Office and Commercial
South:	Low Density Residential Office Mixed Use Medium Density Residential	PD (1821) O R7.5-EA P/OS PD (1635)	Existing Office Residential
East:	Community Commercial Mixed Use Parks, Recreation, and Open Space	PD/QP O GC	Mount Olivet Cemetery Existing Commercial
West:	Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Office Mixed Use	P/OS PD (1639) O	Villa Marin Retirement Manufacturing facility Existing Office

Figure 1: Vicinity Map



Site Description/Setting:

The 44.76-acre Northgate Mall site consists of six parcels currently developed with 766,512 square feet of commercial space with surface parking lots and one parking garage. The site is located to the west of Highway 101 and to the south of the Manuel T Freitas Parkway, and is bounded by Northgate Drive and Las Gallinas Avenue. The site is also accessible via Nova Albion Way and Los Ranchitos Road, from the south. The site is relatively flat except on the west side where there is a grade change of approximately 10 feet between the site and Northgate Drive.

Surrounding uses include a grocery-anchored neighborhood shopping center, as well as the Northgate Apartments, to the northwest. Standalone retail commercial and parking lie to the north and northeast in a narrow buffer strip between the site and Highway 101. A large cemetery, Mt. Olivet San Rafael, lies directly to the east. To the south and southeast lie several apartment buildings as well as a residential area of predominately single-family homes. Directly to the west lies Villa Marin, a large retirement home, and a manufacturing facility.

Background of Subject Site:

The Mall opened in 1965 with The Emporium as its original anchor tenant. In 1987, it underwent a major renovation that primarily enclosed the original open-air design and added the cinema. The Mall underwent another renovation in 2008. At present, the Mall's anchor tenants are Macy's and Kohl's Department Stores. A third major anchor, Sears closed in February 2019; a Restoration Hardware Outlet currently occupies the space. The Northgate Mall remains the only enclosed regional shopping center in Marin County.

MeloneGeier acquired the project site in 2017 and filed an application for the redevelopment of the Mall in March 2021. In May 2021, the City engaged the services of MIG, Inc. to assist in the project management and design review of the project.

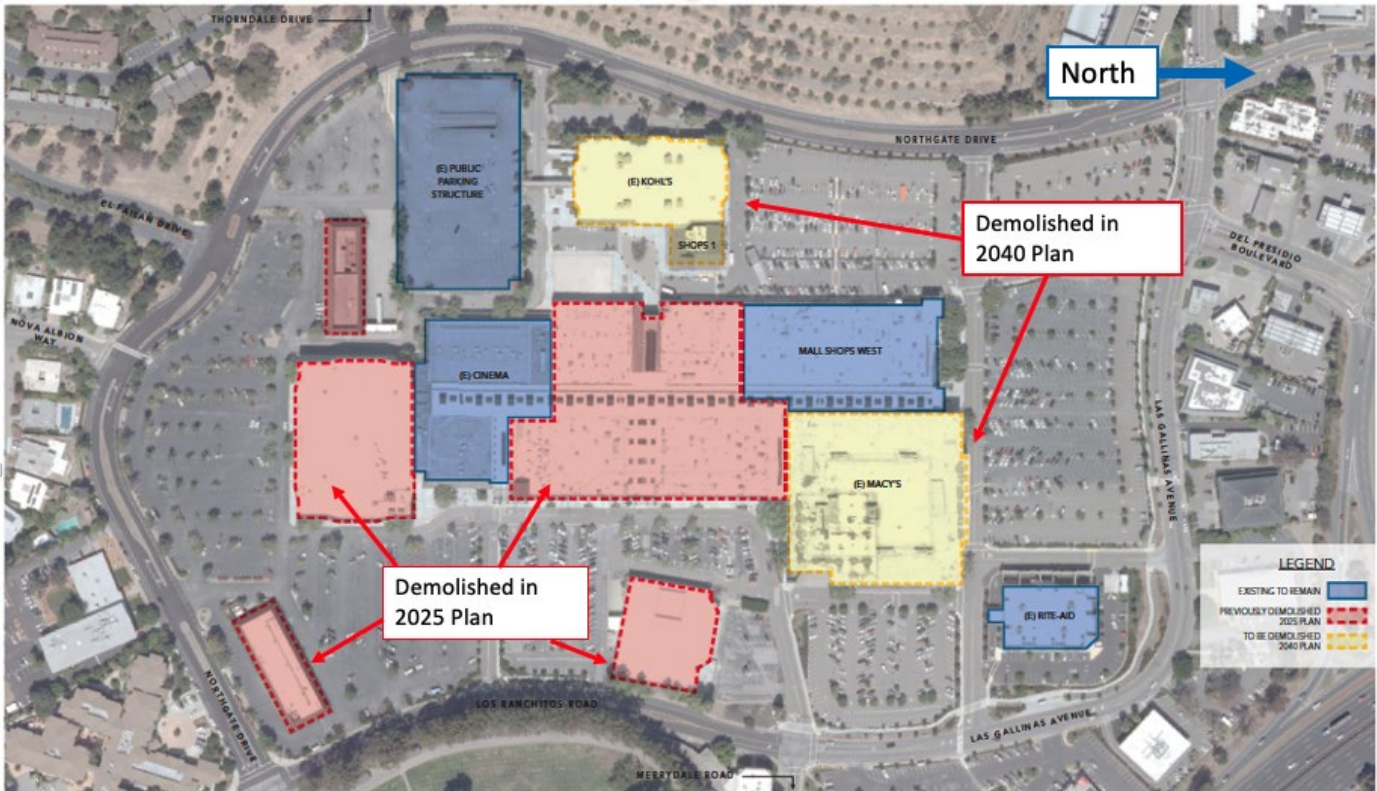
Public Outreach:

On March 18, 2021, city staff referred the application to seven neighborhood and citizen groups via email with a link to the proposed plans. Several groups responded with comments that are summarized later in this report. In addition, the applicant conducted two neighborhood information virtual meetings on March 30 and April 20, 2021 via Zoom. Approximately 200 people attended the March 30 meeting and 150 attended the April 20 meeting. The applicant sent a postcard to every resident in San Rafael, sent an email notice from their database, and issued press releases with both dates. A recording of these meetings can be found on the applicant's website at: <https://futurenorthgatemall.com/>

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant proposes a new mixed-use redevelopment project of the project site through the demolition of most of the Mall structure (see Figure 2). This proposal would transition the Mall to an all-outdoor shopping center and would introduce housing to the site. The redevelopment of the site would occur in two phases, as follows:

Figure 2: Demolition Plan



Phase 1 Northgate 2025

Phase I consists of the following main elements:

- I. Demolition of the Sears anchor, HomeGoods pad, and approximately 140,932 square feet of the Mall structure (see Figure 2 for Demolition Plan)
- II. New construction and renovation of retail and residential uses, corresponding to letters on Figure 3. Residential density is 20.5 units per acre and commercial floor area ration (FAR) is .27.
 - A. Remodel of the current multi-screen cinema with IMAX theatre (65,000 square feet), and the addition of small shops and restaurants in the front of the cinema.
 - B. Construction of new retail on the east end, targeting a specialty grocery (Major 3), with housing units above.
 - C. Renovation of a portion of the existing Mall structure west of Macys with a Major 2 store, and retention of the existing Macy's. The landscaping and parking in the north area (north of Macy's) would largely remain as is.
 - D. Retention of the existing Kohl's and adjacent small shops and restaurants.
 - E. Addition of a 26,000 square foot plaza in the vicinity of the Kohl's building, and preservation of a portion of the Mall pavilion as a focal point and new parking and landscaping in the central portion.
 - F. Addition of new restaurant pads on the north end of the site adjacent to Las Galinas Avenue.
 - G. Retention of the existing parking garage.
 - H. Phased construction of 911 housing units in six apartment-style buildings not exceeding five stories in height, located on the southern, eastern, and western perimeters of the Project property. Parking for the residential units would be both structured and surface parking.
 - I. Construction of Affordable housing on Parcel 1 consisting of 96 units.

Figure 3: 2025 Phase I Plan



Phase 2 Northgate 2040

Phase II consists of the following main elements:

- I. Demolition of the remaining Macy's and Kohl's anchors and the demolition and reconstruction of the "Shops 1" structure adjacent to the Kohl's anchor (see Figure 2 for Demolition Plan)
- II. New retail and residential uses, corresponding to letters on Figure 4. Residential density is 29.5 dwelling units per acre and floor area ration (FAR) is .13.
 - A. Addition of a 35,000 square foot town square plaza in the central portion of the project.
 - B. Construction of new retail including Major 1, with housing above, to replace the Kohl's anchor and existing shops.
 - C. Construction of an additional 409 housing units.
 - D. Construction of additional standalone restaurant pads along Las Gallinas Avenue.
 - E. Construction new retail shops including Major 4, with housing above, to replace the Macy's building.

Figure 4: 2040 Phase II Plan



Summary of total changes after Phase II:

- The site's commercial gross leasable area (currently 755,6771 square feet) is decreased by a total of approximately 509,000 square feet.
- The resulting commercial square footage after Phase II will be 246, 677 square feet.
- The site would have a total of 1,320 dwelling units.
- The site will have a total of 1,445 parking spaces for retail uses and 2,225 parking spaces for residential.
- The residential density would be 29.5 units per acre and the Floor Area Ratio (FAR) would be .13.

Required Planning and Land Use Entitlements from City of San Rafael

The following entitlements will likely be required to facilitate development of the project:

Zone Change – A Zoning Map and Zoning Text Amendment to the Planned Development (PD) Overlay Zone that outlines allowable land uses, development standards, and a development plan for the proposed project.

Development Agreement – A Development Agreement that sets forth the terms and requirements of the City.

Parcel Map – If the property is to be subdivided, a tentative parcel map application will be required.

Use Permit - Given that the proposed zoning will be PD and will include a mix of uses, a Master Use Permit would be required. The Use Permit will address the phasing plan.

Environmental and Design Review Permit – Required to evaluate the site plan, architecture, landscaping, building design and other site improvements.

REGULATORY STRUCTURE

For purposes of this study session, the following key General Plan policies are highlighted, though numerous other General Plan policies are applicable to this project. Consistency with the General Plan is determined by reviewing the project proposal and weighing the goals and policies of all elements of the General Plan 2040 in relation to the project. A table outlining the applicable General Plan policies with more detailed analysis will be provided at a future date when the project is brought back for a formal recommendation.

SAN RAFAEL 2040 GENERAL PLAN

The General Plan identifies the Northgate Mall and the surrounding area, known as the North San Rafael Town Center, as a priority area for neighborhood planning. The North San Rafael Town Center includes Northgate Mall, the Northgate One and Northgate Three shopping centers, and the commercial and institutional properties along Freitas Parkway, Las Gallinas Avenue, and Los Ranchitos Road.

The site is designated Community Commercial Mixed Use in the 2040 General Plan. The General Plan allows for a density up to 43.6 dwelling units per acre and a non-residential Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of .3. A height bonus of 24 feet with provision of affordable housing is also permitted by the General Plan. The General Plan also requires the use of Planned Development (PD) zoning for development on parcels greater than five acres. The PD zoning designation allows flexible design standards that are more responsive to site conditions.

The 2040 General Plan recognizes the changing outlook for retail and the need for housing (particularly affordable housing), changing modes and patterns of transportation, issues related to climate change and natural hazards, and opportunities to restore creeks and natural systems. The General Plan recognizes that continued community dialogue on these issues should guide decision-making as a new plan takes shape.

The following policies provide the primary guidance for the North San Rafael Town Center, including the Northgate Mall:

Policy NH-4.2: North San Rafael Town Center

Strengthen the role of the North San Rafael Town Center as an attractive, thriving heart for the North San Rafael community: an economically viable centerpiece of commerce and activity with diverse activities for persons of all ages. This should include revitalizing Northgate Mall and surrounding business areas by encouraging:

- a) A distinctive and vibrant mix of uses, consistent with the area's characteristics*
- b) A variety of high-quality stores, entertainment uses, and services to foster local patronage and adapt to the ongoing evolution of retail and commercial activities*
- c) Upgrading of anchor and specialty stores, including an additional high-quality retail anchor if needed for economic vitality, consistent with traffic circulation standards*
- d) Nightlife activities, such as a late-night restaurant or coffee shops that harmonize with existing activities*

- e) *Upgrading the appearance of the buildings and landscaping*
- f) *Additional outdoor public places that support public gatherings and public art*
- g) *Continued community services, which may include an expanded public library*
- h) *Completion of the North San Rafael Promenade through the site*
- i) *Allowing the addition of housing, including maximizing the potential for affordable housing*

The scale of any improvements should be compatible with the surrounding community and should not exceed infrastructure capacity. New or expanded structures should demonstrate how views, sightlines, visual integrity, and character will be impacted and addressed. Promenade improvements described in the North San Rafael Promenade Conceptual Plan (2002) should be included in any substantial rehabilitation or expansion of the Mall. Opportunities to include green infrastructure and low impact development (LID) methods also should be pursued.

Program NH-4.2B: Outdoor Gathering Places. *Include outdoor public places that support community activities and entertainment such as a public plaza for periodic arts and cultural events, outdoor cafes with music, restaurants with sidewalk or patio dining, children's play areas, teen-centered spaces, and other uses that provide outdoor seating. Design of retail spaces should be flexible enough to support these types of activities in the future.*

Program NH-4.2D: Farmers Market. *Consider a partnership with the Agricultural Institute of Marin (AIM) to bring the Farmers Market to the Town Center as a permanent feature, as feasible.*

Policy NH-4.3: Design Excellence

Encourage harmonious and aesthetically pleasing design for new and existing development in the Town Center area, including upgrading of landscaping, signage, lighting, and building design. Uses on the perimeter of the area should "step down" in height and intensity along edges where the Town Center adjoins lower-density residential uses.

Program NH-4.3A. Pedestrian-Friendly Design. *Provide design guidance through the Town Center planning process. One of the objectives of this process should be to give the area a stronger pedestrian feel and improve its walkability, including landscaped walkways and improved connectivity to surrounding neighborhoods.*

Housing Element

The 2015-2023 Housing Element provides guidance for meeting the City's obligation to provide its fair share of projected future Regional Housing Needs (RHNA). The City's fair share of housing is 1,007 units for the 2015-2023 RHNA Cycle and 3,220 units in the draft 2023-2031 RHNA allocations issued in May 2021.

The Northgate Mall site is identified as an opportunity site in the Housing Element, with a potential target of 200-1,333 housing units.

Policy H-1. Housing Distribution. *Promote the distribution of new and affordable housing of quality construction throughout the city to meet local housing needs.*

Policy H-2. Design That Fits into the Neighborhood Context. *Recognize that construction of new housing and improvements on existing properties can add to the appearance and value of the neighborhood if they fit into the established character of the area. Design new housing, remodels, and additions to be compatible to the surrounding neighborhood. Incorporate*

transitions in height and setbacks from adjacent properties to respect adjacent development character and privacy. Respect existing landforms and minimize effects on adjacent properties.

ZONING ORDINANCE

The project will need to demonstrate consistency with applicable regulations of the Zoning Ordinance and provide justification for any deviations that are proposed as part the PD Zoning. The PD zoning encourages innovative design on large sites by allowing flexibility in development standards such as setbacks and parking. The PD zoning does not permit modifications to density, Floor Area Ratios, and height as these standards are prescribed by the General Plan. Although a more detailed Zoning Consistency discussion will be provided as part of the formal review for the project, the following regulations are most relevant to the discussion at the study session:

Affordable Housing Requirement – Section 14.16.030

Zoning Ordinance Section 14.16 outlines affordable housing requirements. The City Council adopted Resolution 14890 on February 16, 2021, “Guidelines for the Administration of the Affordable Housing Requirement Program.” Projects over 15 housing units must provide 10 percent of the units for low-income households by meeting both the Primary Requirement and the Secondary Requirement. The Primary Requirement is five percent of the proposed units must be affordable to and occupied by a low-income household. The Secondary Requirement provides a menu of alternate means to provide an additional five percent of affordable units either on-site, off-site, by paying an in-lieu fee, or by donating land to the City.

The Resolution also requires that affordable housing units be dispersed throughout the residential development project. Units may be clustered within the residential project when the city determines that such clustering furthers affordable housing opportunities. The affordable housing units shall be of a similar mix and type to that of the residential development project as a whole.

Phase I of the project includes 96 affordable units on one parcel, which is 9.7 percent of the Phase I units, or 7.1 percent of the total units under the Phase II plans. Pursuant to General Plan policy LU-1.18, if a project in the North San Rafael Town Center provides affordable housing units in excess of the minimum requirement as stipulated in Resolution 14890, it is eligible for a 24-foot building height bonus. The project is proposing buildings ranging in height from 35 to 60 feet in a location that has a base height of 36 feet (GP2040 Figure 3-3). Provided the project exceeds the affordability requirements, the proposed heights are allowable.

Parking Regulations – 14.18.040

Although the Zoning Code contains minimum parking requirements, the PD zoning allows flexibility in applying the standards. This site provides an opportunity for shared parking given its size and mix of uses with the goal of reducing the reliance on single occupancy vehicles and fostering bicycle and pedestrian activity. General Plan Policies M-7.1, 7.3, and 7.6 support optimizing existing parking supply and use of parking technology to improve parking efficiencies. A complete analysis of parking will be provided at a future date when the project is brought back for a formal recommendation. For purposes of the study session, the Planning Commission and Design Review Board should focus on location and design of parking facilities.

To inform the parking discussion, the applicant has stated that Macy's and Kohl's require a minimum of 4 spaces per 1,000 square feet of retail and 2 spaces per 1,000 square feet for Macy's furniture. In the 2025 Phase I plan, a total of 1,722 spaces are provided resulting in a parking ratio of 3.9 spaces per 1,000 square feet of retail and 2 spaces per 1,000 square feet for furniture. The 3.9 spaces per 1,000 recognizes existing non-compliant parking. Although the cinema and restaurants individually require a higher ratio of parking,

they are included in the retail parking ratio under the assumption there is shared parking for all commercial uses. The 2025 Phase I plan includes 1,512 parking spaces for the residential uses at an average ratio of 1.55 spaces per unit.

The Phase II 2040 provides 1,445 retail parking spaces at a ratio of 5.78 spaces per 1,000 square feet. A total of 2,225 spaces for residential uses is provided at a ratio of 1.62 spaces per unit.

RESIDENTIAL AND NON-RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

The San Rafael Design Guidelines (City Council Resolution No. 11667; adopted November 15, 2004) strive to improve the design of all residential and non-residential development. The project is subject to the City of San Rafael Residential and Non-Residential Design Guidelines. The entire text of the San Rafael Design Guidelines can be access on the City's web page using the following link:

<https://storage.googleapis.com/proudcity/sanrafaelca/uploads/2019/06/design-guidelines.pdf>

The following relevant design criteria should be considered as part of this discussion:

Residential Design:

- Building facades should be varied and articulated. Design techniques should be used to break up volume of larger buildings.
- Incorporate the use of stepped facades.
- Consider existing adjacent buildings and use transitional elements to minimize height.
- Orient entrances to the street and provide a well-defined sense of entry from the street.
- Windows should be directed toward the street and public areas to provide surveillance.
- Use alternative materials to minimize large paved areas.
- Parking should be distributed to provide easy access to units and/or building entrances. Visible front or structured parking should be screened, landscaped or have an articulated design.

Nonresidential Design:

- A logical sequence of entry and arrival as part of the site's design should be provided.
- A defined sense of entry with pedestrian orientation should be provided.
- Parking should be located to the rear or side of a building in order to reduce the visual impact of parking areas.
- Landscaped areas should be planned as integral parts of the development and to create a strongly landscaped character for the site.
- Clearly define pedestrian movement through the parking lot.
- Include outdoor gathering places and seating for the public.
- Consider the pedestrian experience when designing the ground floor of buildings.
- A continuity of design, materials, color, form and architectural details is encouraged for all portions of a building and between all the buildings on the site.

DISCUSSION

This Study Session is intended to solicit the Commission's and the Board's initial review and preliminary feedback on the main land use and design matters associated with this project. The goal is to recognize that this project involves extensive investment into the plans, materials and technical studies; therefore, input from the public and decision-makers is critical during the early stages of the project entitlement process.

To assist in the processing of this application, staff has identified, with buy-in from the applicant team, Guiding Principles for the project. These principles are intended to supplement the principles outlined in General Plan Policy NH 4.2 and the City's Design Guidelines. As a starting point, staff presents the Guiding Principles below to set the framework for discussion.

Guiding Principles:

- A. **Mixed-Use Community.** Create a distinctive and vibrant mixed-use community as a place for retail, dining, services, housing, parks and entertainment with a welcoming Town Square for public gathering at the heart of the development.
- B. **Internal Connectivity.** Use a network of streets to create robust multi-modal connections that result in a walkable, bicycle-friendly environment.
- C. **External Connectivity.** Establish strong external connections to enhance safe and inviting access to and from surrounding neighborhoods, nearby destinations, and local transit facilities.
- D. **Housing.** Provide diverse housing that is accessible and affordable to all people who live and work in San Rafael and Marin County, in a manner that strengthens the retail components of the site and creates a livable neighborhood for residents.
- E. **Sustainability.** Ensure sustainable and environmentally friendly-design to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, minimize water use and energy use, improve surface water quality, and increase opportunities for pedestrian, bicycle and transit travel.
- F. **Flexibility.** Provide necessary flexibility and infrastructure to ensure viable commercial activities that can adjust to changing market demands, while still meeting the overall goals of the Guiding Principles.
- G. **Edge Conditions.** Provide edge conditions that respect the adjacent neighborhoods and surrounding uses and welcome people into the development.
- H. **Architectural Cohesion.** Ensure that the overall site architecture and specific building and landscape elements work together to create a strong, harmonious sense of identity and place.

City staff met with the applicants on three occasions to explore and refine these principles and frame the planning, design and architecture topics for the Planning Commission/DRB study session. The following discussion is categorized into five main topic areas to further guide the Commission and Board's feedback. Each category provides an overview of City staff questions and concerns as well as notes on the applicant's stated rationale.

1. Overall Site Planning

Both the Phase I 2025 and the Phase II 2040 plan essentially divide the project into three subdistricts: 1) a residential neighborhood on the south and east, 2) a Town Square in the central portion, and 3) an auto-oriented commercial area on the north side of the site. In both Phases, a portion of the existing Mall west of Macy's remains with shops and restaurants oriented to the west and south. As depicted in Figure 3 above, Major 2 orients to the north in Phase I, with a loading area oriented to the south. As depicted in Figure 4 above, Major 2 opens up into a north-south corridor with the primary entrance to the north in Phase II. On the north side adjacent to Las Galinas Avenue, the project proposes a series of retail and restaurant pads.

- ***Does the plan create a distinctive and vibrant mixed-use community as a place for retail, dining, services, housing, parks and entertainment?***
- ***Does the project ensure sustainable and environmentally friendly design?***

Specific topics to consider:

- *Does the orientation of the retail strengthen the concept of a mixed-use community?*
- *Are the retail and restaurant pads on the north side cohesive with the remainder of the project?*
- *What elements create a special destination for San Rafael and West Marin?*
- *Could housing or other high intensity uses be incorporated on the north and west ends to reduce the auto orientation of these areas?*
- *Are the highest standards of energy- and water-efficient designs incorporated into the design?*

The applicant has provided the following notes for the Commission and Board's consideration:

- The proposed location of the commercial buildings on the north side are driven by market demand and, as currently designed, are integral to the overall success of the project.
- The major anchors in both the 2025 and 2040 Phases need the visibility to Northgate Drive and Las Galinas Avenue.
- A complete package addressing sustainability will be provided.

2. Residential Neighborhoods

The provision of 1,320 housing units (911 in Phase I and 409 units in Phase II) supports the City's needs and goals to provide more housing. The proposed housing is located on the south and east sides of the site with five story residential buildings lining Northgate Drive and Los Ranchitos Road. Stepbacks and recreational amenities are used to provide relief and interest. The affordable housing component is located on Parcel 1 and would provide 96 units for low-income households in one building.

- ***Does the housing plan provide diverse housing that is accessible and affordable to all people who live and work in the County, in a manner that strengthens the retail components of the site creates a livable neighborhood for the residents?***

Specific topics to consider:

- *How does the proposal satisfy the policy of integrating and dispersing affordable housing throughout the project?*
- *Do the residential edge conditions on the south side respect the neighborhood to the south?*
- *Is the residential neighborhood oriented and designed in a manner that creates a livable neighborhood?*

The applicant has provided the following notes for the Commission and Board's consideration:

- The number of units in the affordable housing project does not fully meet the requirements of the ordinance which requires 130 affordable units over the life of the project. The remaining units will be dispersed throughout the remainder of the project. The applicant intends to partner with an affordable housing developer to deliver the affordable units in the first phase of development.

- The applicants stated that the market can only bear 1,320 units over the 18-year life of the project, and they are concerned about the impacts to traffic and infrastructure (and related CEQA analysis) if more housing is included in the project through year 2040. They indicated that housing on the northern portion could be considered after 2040.

3. Town Square

The design of the Town Square in the central portion of the site is a key focus of discussion. The 2025 Phase I plan includes a 26,000 square foot plaza in the front of Kohl's and the preservation of a portion of the Mall pavilion in the central portion of the project. The 2040 Phase II includes a 35,000 square foot central Town Square. The central portion of the site in both phases contains auto circulation and a large parking area adjacent to and surrounding the open space.

- ***Does the design create a welcoming Town Square for public gathering at the heart of the development?***

Specific topics to consider:

- *What design revisions could promote less reliance on parking and more open space, pedestrian pathways, and bicycle routes in the center of the site, recognizing that some parking around the plaza could help activate that space? Can parking be deemphasized by locating some of the parking to the north, south, and east of Major 3?*
- *Is there a way for the retail to better "frame" the Town Square? Should at least one side of the Town Square be framed by active ground floor retail?*
- *How does the loading zone next to Major 2 relate to the adjacent Town Square and are there options for relocation?*
- *Similarly, how does the parking structure ingress/egress next to Major 3 relate to the adjacent Town Square and are there options for relocation to foster a more pedestrian-friendly environment?*
- *Is the pedestrian open space on the east side of the cinema appropriate? Should this open space be moved to a more central location?*
- *Is there a way for the Town Square in Phase I to be more prominent and central to the project?*

The applicant has provided the following notes for the Commission and Board's consideration:

- The Town Square plazas in both the 2025 and 2040 are right-sized and appropriately located to connect the space with the surrounding retail. The applicants are willing to close off some of the parking with bollards during busy times, such as events and a farmers market.
- The amount of parking in the central portion is needed, in particular for the proposed market/specialty grocer on the east side (Major 3). The market would be a very active use. The applicants have noted there is some parking on the south side of the market in the parking structure for the residential building.
- The pedestrian open space on the east side of the cinema is a transition between the residential and commercial portions of the project to reduce commercial traffic through the residential area. The applicants have designed the east façade of the cinemas to be attractive and inviting.

4. Circulation

- ***Does the project use a network of streets to create robust multi-modal connections that results in a walkable, bicycle-friendly environment?***
- ***Does the project establish strong external connections to enhance safe and inviting access to and from surrounding neighborhoods, nearby destinations, and local transit facilities?***

Specific topics to consider:

- *Are there design revisions to employ a stronger, more navigable grid pattern?*
- *Does the project create direct bicycle and pedestrian connectivity into the site from the SMART station and other points? Does the project provide a strong central transit “hub”, including facilities such as bicycle parking and storage and locations for future transit/shuttle stops?*
- *Do the entryways into the project convey a strong sense of arrival with prominent gateways??*
- *Is there a way to extend the North San Rafael Promenade through the project?*
- *Does the project ensure safe, accessible crosswalks across all intersection segments?*

The applicant noted that they are willing to examine stronger interconnectivity and bicycle and pedestrian routes.

5. Architecture and Landscaping Design

The renderings of the project show a wide variety of architectural styles with the use of articulated features such as towers and varied roof lines, with many different colors and materials. The renderings provided do not provide information on any proposed upgrades to the existing Majors (Kohl's and Macy's) in Phase I.

- ***Are the retail components designed, organized and interconnected to be harmonious and in a manner that creates a sense of place?***

Specific topics to consider:

- *Is the architecture of the project cohesive, harmonious, and unifying?*
- *Have long blank walls adequately minimized or mitigated?*
- *Is the use of public art incorporated to mark internal and external gateway features?*
- *Will the facades of the existing Macy's and Kohl's be adequately upgraded to strengthen cohesion?*

The applicant noted they are willing to consider modifications to the architecture.

6. Other Comments

The above items are the major topic areas where staff would like input from the Commission and Board. Staff welcomes any additional input and contribution from the Commission and Board.

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT

It is anticipated that an Environment Impact Report (EIR) will be prepared for the project. An EIR consultant will be selected in the fall. As part of the EIR preparation, the applicant will submit the following technical studies:

- Photo simulations
- Traffic Study
- Infrastructure Studies
- Air Quality Assessment
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Health Risk Assessment
- Noise Study
- Cultural Resources
- Geotechnical Investigation
- Phase I Environmental

The results of these technical studies will certainly inform the project design and project requirements.

PUBLIC NOTICE/ CORRESPONDENCE

Notice for this Study Session by the Planning Commission and Design Review Board was conducted in accordance noticing requirements contained in Chapter 29 of the Zoning Ordinance. A Notice of Public Meeting was mailed 15 days in advance of the meeting to all property owners, residents, businesses and occupants within a 300-foot radius of the project site and to representatives of a neighborhood and citizen organizations.

Attachment 2 provides correspondence received as of the date of staff report preparation. Following is a summary of preliminary comments by three neighborhood/citizen groups, the Mont Marin/San Rafael Park Neighborhood Association (MM/SRPNA), the Terra Linda Homeowners Association (TLHOA), and the Responsible Growth in Marin (RGM) citizens' group. Other individuals commented on a wide range of topics, including greenhouse gas emission reduction, transportation, the town square, and architectural design.

MM/SRPNA felt the affordable housing should be all on site and front-loaded. They questioned the impacts of 1,320 housing units and wanted to ensure the units are suitable for workforce housing. They would like to see a cap on "formula" businesses and focus on unique, local retailers. They questioned the size of the plaza in the 2025 Plan and felt there should be more outdoor seating. They felt there should be a pedestrian boulevard through the town center. There was no support for drive-through restaurants.

TLHOA felt the town square should be larger, greener, and more accessible to bicyclists and pedestrians without traversing large parking lots. They recommend adding another parking structure. They had multiple comments about the relationship to the surrounding residential areas, including softening the profile on the south side and clarification of access points. They also questioned the number of housing units and subsequent impacts. They recommend that the North San Rafael Promenade should be an artery through the project. They placed an emphasis on green infrastructure and support of access to bus transit.

RGM commented on the size of the surface parking in the Town Center and lack of adequate area for gathering places. They would like more emphasis on decreasing VMT by aligning neighborhood serving retail with the housing. They had a number of comments on circulation, including extending the North San Rafael Promenade through the site and the need to articulate full circulation concepts within the site and from the surrounding neighborhoods.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Planning Commission and the Design Review Board conduct the review in the following manner:

- Staff overview
- Applicant presentation
- Staff review of topic areas
- Planning Commission and Design Review Board clarification questions
- Receive public comment
- Planning Commission and Design Review Board comment and feedback

The study session is not an official public hearing since no official action is being taken. However, the City is committed to providing opportunities for community engagement during all phases of a development review process. As such, public comment is encouraged prior to discussion by the Commission and Board.

Study Session Review is part of the City's ongoing commitment to find ways for early feedback in hopes of streamlining the project review process. This concept has been used for the past couple of years and has been effective in providing guidance to the applicant as they move forward and prior to preparation of the EIR.

Next Steps and Schedule:

- **Preparation of the EIR:** Fall 2021 to Spring/Summer 2022. The public will have the opportunity to comment on the EIR Notice of Preparation and the Draft EIR after it is released.
- **Public Outreach:** The City will continue to keep the community informed as the project moves forward via the City's website and through periodic notifications to interested parties. At this time, it has not been determined if additional community meetings or study sessions will be held prior to public hearings.
- **Public Hearings:** Public hearings on the project will be held with the Planning Commission and City Council after release of the Draft EIR, likely in summer or fall 2022. The DRB will also provide design recommendations to the Planning Commission and City Council. These public hearings will consider the following entitlements:
 - Zone Change to the Planned Development (PD) Overlay Zone
 - Development Agreement
 - Parcel Map
 - Use Permit
 - Environmental and Design Review Permit
 - Certification of the EIR

ATTACHMENTS

1. Project Plans, dated June 11, 2021 (click on item for link)
 - a. [Overall Site Design](#)
 - b. [Residential Details](#)
 - c. [Retail Details](#)

- d. [Civil Drawings](#)
 - e. [Landscape Plan](#)
2. Correspondence received
- a. Mont Marin/San Rafael Park Neighborhood Association
 - b. Terra Linda Homeowners Association
 - c. Responsible Growth in Marin
 - d. Other Individual Comments Received
 - e. Comments Received after Writing of the Staff Report

MONT MARIN/SAN RAFAEL PARK NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION
MMSRP_ADMIN@MONTMARIN.ORG
PO BOX 6662, SAN RAFAEL, CA 94903

April 13, 2021

Steve Stafford
Senior Planner
City of San Rafael
Steve.stafford@cityofsanrafael.org

Comments on Formal Application for Northgate Town Square Redevelopment

Dear Steve,

Thank you for providing the opportunity to review and comment on the application materials.

The Mont Marin/San Rafael Park Neighborhood Association Board of Directors reviewed the materials. Rachel Kertz, a member of the Board recused herself from our discussions and from providing input on this letter.

This letter reflects a summary of comments from various members of the Board. Overall, there is support for investment and revitalization of the Northgate Mall. However, we found the application package and staff analysis did not contain enough information for us to provide specific comments. We look forward to learning more through the development process and in responses to these questions.

HOUSING

The Description indicates 5% affordable housing plus an unspecified component, that could include an in-lieu fee. There is ample opportunity to provide affordable housing onsite, so the use of an in-lieu fee does not seem appropriate. Also, affordable housing should be front loaded, its anticipated the project will be built in phases, and support that the early buildings contain above the affordable percentage.

A total height of 60' would be helpful to understand with some scale. The materials show the current highest building is Macy's at 54'. Will they be erecting story poles for the new buildings?

The description of 1356 units is very vague without size details. The reaction was that sounded like too many units. We would want to insure that there is adequate parking provided and traffic will not exacerbate nearby intersections.

It would be helpful to understand the monthly salaries of the employees projected to work at the mall versus the projected rents if the goal is to provide workforce housing – which we support. Its expected that the bulk of the units would need to be small, like 350 to 600 square feet, to be able to be rented by

employees at the typical target rate of 30% of their monthly salary. To understand traffic impacts, this jobs/housing balance needs to be quantified. Workforce housing is a different issue from the affordable housing set aside, which can be market sized units with rents capped.

The application indicates a tentative map, but one was not included. If condos are proposed, it seems difficult to support since they would likely be priced beyond the reach of employees.

The application supports bicycle use. To be effective, each unit will need secure lockable bike storage at the ground level. Bike racks are not adequate.

How will the City insure the residential units are well-maintained after construction so that the “town center” continues to be an attractive place to visit?

RETAIL

The application proposed reduction from 775,667 square feet to 246,667. This is a substantial change. It would be helpful to get perspective, what is the square footage of nearby Northgate 1 and 3? The malls in Corte Madera?

There is concern that there is not a need for another grocery store in the neighborhood. Northgate 3 used to have a store that closed. The County is under contract for a permanent market nearby. [Farmers Market Agreement OK'd by Supervisors \(marincounty.org\)](#). There is a concern that any additional market here will further disrupt other retail centers which will lead to their decline, potentially closing Scotty's and Marinwood Market. Provide a market analysis.

It looks like the proposal is for chain retailers, which are more of a regional attraction than a local attraction. That will attract more traffic and is not consistent with the objectives of the General Plan. Other communities have addressed this issue [Formula Business Restrictions – Institute for Local Self-Reliance \(ilsr.org\)](#). The Council should adopt a cap on formula businesses, and encouraging more unique retailers.

For examples of the type of retailers desired in our town center we can look nearby. Downtown has T&B Sports, which has informed sales people and is engaged and connected to the community and local sports teams. Northgate 1 has Big 5, a formula retailer that is the complete opposite – no enthusiasm for the products or local engagement. Another example, Northgate 1 has Silverman's Ice Cream – an institution in Terra Linda that regularly has new creative flavors, and is connected to the local community. Downtown has Cold Stone Ice Cream, a formula retailer which focuses on upselling your order with add-ins and has no community connection.

Great examples of venues exist in our nearby communities like Hopmonks outdoor concert venue in Novato, Brewsters open air seating in Petaluma, Sweetwater concert hall in Mill Valley, Fish in Sausalito with its ever-changing menu of fresh fish, Marin Comedy Show at the Barrel Room inside Trek Winery in Novato, etc. At a recent presentation by the developer, Dave and Buster's was mentioned as a tenant.

That type of use seems more appropriate at a Pier 39 type development, the “town center” should focus on entrepreneurial community serving businesses like those mentioned.

The existing plaza area hosts Concerts by the Oaks. Generally, the quality of the performers is high and we have observed the crowds have steadily grown over the years. However, the site architecture does not connect well to the adjacent businesses, and the formula retailers don’t engage with the event. They completely ignore it, instead of being entrepreneurial and engaging. We need a different type of retailer in our town center, not formula chains.

A small grocery store onsite that provides essentials for residents seems fine, like Andy’s Local Market at the Tam Ridge apartments in Corte Madera.

The application proposes a tentative map and shows lots. There is a lack of support to sell different buildings to different owners. The site is so integrated, it needs to work as a collective whole. If the subdividing was proposed for financing, another mechanism should be pursued.

The site proposes bicycle use. Those uses that provide outdoor dining need bike parking adjacent and highly visible from the tables. Marin’s bicyclists will not park their expensive bikes at bike racks that are out of the way. For the theaters or retail stores bicycle parking will need to be in secure lockers or a secure facility for patron use; there are systems in use at BART for example.

Pad 1 and Pad 4 show drive thru restaurants. This supports freeway travelers, not the north San Rafael community. There is a lack of support for this.

The Promenade was a good idea but not well implemented. It is not integrated into current land uses, and that concept continues with the proposed plan. All the buildings ignore it, instead of embracing it. It is not used much now and that will continue. Why would someone want to walk between a busy street and a parking lot? It should be the pedestrian boulevard through the town center.

The cinema is way bigger than needed to serve the north San Rafael community. It would be much better to have a variety of entertainment venues, including performing arts and music.

The outdoor seating near restaurants looks way too small. It would be helpful to show how many seats are in each area. They should be a focal point.

The plaza looks too small to be a cultural center as shown on Page 13 of the application for 2025. Why not add the entire parking area between Shops 2A and 3 to the plaza and provide for some expansive outdoor uses that will attract the surrounding community? Even worse, Page 21 for 2040 shows the plaza completely eliminated. Provide some detailed event and activity planning to confirm this is adequately sized.

Why not include a play area for children, of a scale like nearby Hartzel Park for residents and guests to use within viewing distance of outdoor seating?

The buildings are very tall. A shading study during different seasons is needed to show whether the outdoor seating and plaza will be blocked from the sun.

CIRCULATION

The application shows bicycle routes along the perimeter. None of those routes currently have bike lanes. Please add more detail. Bike lanes are especially needed along Northgate Drive near Las Gallinas where today onstreet parking fills the shoulder and bicycles must share the travel lane with cars. With limited offstreet parking proposed for the residential uses, proposed onstreet parking areas should be highlighted. The existing promenade while well intended, was not designed by someone who understands bicycle travel. It is not currently used much by bicyclists who continue to travel in the street along Las Gallinas, provide adequate onstreet bicycle facilities.

The circulation plan should be expanded to show the connections required in General Plan policy NH-139.

In addition to the traffic analysis required in the EIR, an analysis of intersection delay is needed for the merits review of the project. Scenarios that look at different residential unit totals would be helpful. Unit size and auto commute to offsite workplaces versus onsite work assumptions should be clear.

The pedestrian connection along Merrydale Avenue from the site to the SMART station pathway on the west side of 101 is not inviting and could use improvement. At night it is particularly dark.

SOLAR

There is support inclusion of solar panels on rooftops and over parking areas.

DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT

The application proposes a Development Agreement. This seems a reasonable request to freeze the development terms for an extended period for this long-term development. This concession, and relinquishment of the opportunity to address issues by future City Councils is to be mitigated with community benefits over and above those required during the normal development process. Additional details are requested to provide comments on the proposal.

2020 GENERAL PLAN

The application does not contain reference to a general plan amendment, so it's assumed these policies will be implemented. There is an understanding that a zone change is an ordinance and is not subject to the Permit Streamlining Act, and the action will need to be consistent with the General Plan in place at the time the City Council acts on the ordinance. Therefore, the review process will need to look at both the 2020 and 2040 General Plan's since we don't know which one will be in effect. Items in bold are not well addressed in the current application. A similar analysis is needed for the draft 2040 General Plan.

From the 2020 General Plan:

Vision of North San Rafael Commercial Center One of the key concepts in Vision North San Rafael is the development of a “**town center**” in the heart of the Northgate commercial area. As described in the Vision: A “town center” is a focal point where the values and history of the community are expressed and supported, where community identity is strengthened and neighborhood cohesion is fostered. It is a place where **residents and workers can gather—formally and informally—to share community life**. The Town Center will have public art, a wide variety of unique shops, many places to eat, and a number of entertainment options. Our town center will be a major destination point on the promenade, a place where everyone feels welcome, something is always happening, and strolling is a pleasure. It will also include one of North San Rafael’s principal gathering places—in the form of a town square! Over time, the Town Center would change, expand and evolve to become the **heart of the North San Rafael community**. The priority actions for the Town Center are to create a sense of enclosure, pedestrian-scale and easy accessibility and to provide high quality retail stores for local residents as well as the broader community.

NH-131. North San Rafael Town Center. Create an attractive, thriving heart for the North San Rafael community: a centerpiece of commerce and activity with a diversity and synergy of activities for all ages.

NH-132. Town Center Activities. Create a Town Center with high quality retail stores for local residents as well as the broader community. Broaden the appeal of the Town Center area by improving pedestrian traffic, increasing the number of local shoppers, and attracting a mix of high-quality stores, entertainment, and services. a. Encourage a distinctive commercial niche for the Town Center consistent with the area’s characteristics. b. Encourage a variety of stores and services to **foster local patronage**. Examples include a library; restaurants; a produce market; and music, book, family clothing, housewares, and variety stores. c. Encourage upgrading of anchor stores and specialty stores. d. Support an additional high quality retail anchor store if necessary, for economic vitality, consistent with traffic circulation. e. **Support nightlife activities**, such as a late-night restaurant, diner or coffee shops that harmonize with existing theaters and cultural activities.

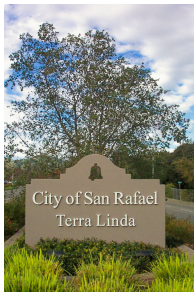
NH-134. Outdoor Gathering Places. Encourage **outdoor public places** that support activities and facilities that will encourage people to gather (such as outdoor cafes with music, entertainment for children as families dine and shop, and periodic cultural and arts events), promote **a public plaza, a small music venue**, and/or a children’s feature, and provide outdoor cafes, **sidewalk restaurants**, or other uses that provide outdoor seating.

NH-139. Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety and Accessibility. Improve access and bicycle/pedestrian connections between Northgate One, the Mall at Northgate and Northgate Three. NH-139a. Promenade and Other Improvements. Through the development review process, encourage improvements consistent with this policy. Considerations include: 1. Support routing of the North San Rafael Promenade in the Town Center area to **include safer and more convenient pedestrian and bike crossings from the Civic Center to Northgate Three, Northgate Mall, Northgate One**, and along Freitas Parkway. 2. Support routing of Marin County **north-south bicycle route along Northgate Drive**, and increased availability of bicycle racks at the Town Center.

NH-140. Pedestrian Scale. Create a sense of enclosure, pedestrian-scale and easy accessibility by improving the pedestrian “feel” of the Town Center area. Examples include welcoming, pedestrian friendly entrances to the shopping areas; pleasant, landscaped walkways between the shopping areas as part of the North San Rafael Promenade; and a focal point at a **public plaza**.

Sincerely,

Craig Tackabery
Board member



Terra Linda Homeowners' Association

P.O. Box 6167
San Rafael, CA 94903-0405

Attachment 2b

Northgate Mall Redevelopment Project
PC DRB Study Session September 14, 2021

April 28, 2021

Steve Stafford, Senior Planner
Community Development Department
City of San Rafael
1400 5th Avenue
San Rafael, CA 94901

RE: TLHOA comments on Merits, Conditions and/or Environmental Concerns related to Northgate Town Square Redevelopment Project

Dear Mr. Stafford,

The Terra Linda Homeowners' Association (TLHOA) appreciates the opportunity to provide the following comments on the formal application presented by Merlone Geier Partners, LLC (MG) for redevelopment of Northgate Town Square.

As you are aware, Northgate Mall, the single largest commercial zone in North San Rafael (as acknowledged in General Plan Update 2040), is situated at the entrance to our community. This means that any decisions about the future of this space, while relevant for all San Rafael residents, will have a particularly direct impact on quality of life, home values, resource availability, and preservation of natural assets in Terra Linda. For this reason, TLHOA is committed to participating actively in the public process surrounding the proposal and to providing our neighbors with information and opportunity to take part in the discussion directly.

As a preface to our comments, we would like to thank Merlone Geier for having reached out to our association and other local stakeholders before going public with their vision, and for their efforts to communicate directly with residents through two recent Community Forums. MG representatives have indicated their interest in hearing feedback from the community and taking our perspectives into account as subsequent iterations of the proposal are defined. We believe this commitment is essential to the ultimate success of the proposed project.

TLHOA considers the following to be merits in this preliminary version of the Northgate Town Square Redevelopment Project proposal:

- a. *Elimination of the big box anchor store concept*, not to mention numerous gas pumps, which makes this proposal a welcome alternative,

- b. *Introduction of a multi-use vision* that combines locally-owned retail (in addition to some national retailers) with much-needed residential units;
- c. *Emphasis on the concept of a Town Square*, which has been an important yet unrealized element in the North San Rafael section of the General Plan for more than 30 years and continues to be a priority in GP2040;
- d. *Attractive architectural renderings* with emphasis on *pocket parks* and various *community gathering spaces*.

Guided by the North San Rafael Vision as articulated in General Plan 2040, we have identified the following concerns or areas that we believe require attention in the form of additional information and/or modification:

- a. *Limitations in Town Square Design* -- The space designated as a Town Square in this proposal is not much larger than the space currently used for winter ice skating and a handful of concerts, and experience has shown that both the location (surrounded by parking lots) and size of that space have never allowed it become a true gathering place. In order for a Town Square to be realized, the space must be larger, greener and accessible for bicyclists and pedestrians without having to traverse parking lots. It should include patios and green spaces for outdoor dining and gathering, a children's play area, an outdoor performance area, and possibly a water feature (consistent with the original Northgate Mall), among other ideas.

In order to expand the Town Square as a true community gathering area and reduce surrounding car traffic, we recommend that MG add one or more low-profile parking structures in areas such as adjacent to the new IMAX theatre or on the property's north side near Macy's and new retail locations. The addition of a two-story structure would cut the parking footprint significantly without reducing access for retail customers arriving by car, thereby creating additional space for a real Town Square.

- b. *Interface with Surrounding Neighborhoods* – We agree with Responsible Growth Marin's statement (April 15 letter) that the plans must demonstrate how the proposed development will integrate with surrounding residential areas, in particular the adjacent historic Eichler housing to the south of the development, without compromising privacy, solar access, or design integrity. This goal warrants design modifications to include features such as step backs on floors two to five as well as landscaping to soften what could otherwise be an imposing profile.

We also request clarification of access points from surrounding neighborhoods for pedestrian, bicycle and auto traffic. We believe the North San Rafael Promenade should be augmented as a central artery running through—not just around—the development as a way to connect it with the surrounding community and transit options in the Civic Center area.

- c. *Reassessment of Number of Housing Units* – While we understand the need to provide San Rafael residents, particularly those employed locally, with strategically located housing options, we believe the total number of units proposed is excessive without serious consideration of implications for local infrastructure and resources, including water consumption, disaster preparedness, school funding, storm water and sewer management, and goods and service requirements.

The proposal review process must delineate whether the City of San Rafael or Merlone Geier will be responsible for ensuring that infrastructure needs are fully assessed and additional requirements are met. In addition, the project should demonstrate areas of green infrastructure including bioswales, carbon-sequestering trees that provide canopy cover and mitigate urban heat island effects of pavement, native plants that provide habitat, and other integration of nature-based infrastructure support.

Finally, we encourage the City of San Rafael to look actively for other North San Rafael locations—including post-pandemic underutilized office buildings or warehouse locations east of Highway 101—as opportunities to distribute new housing beyond the Northgate location.

- d. *Traffic* – We are committed to ensuring that all residents, current and new, are able to get in and out of our community without difficulty, particularly in scenarios of natural disaster. Currently there is one primary access point from Highway 101 with two secondary options (Lucas Valley and North San Pedro roads), which means even a small accident on the highway creates a bottleneck that impacts access in all directions. With an estimated 20 percent increase in population¹ within the Terra Linda neighborhood boundaries that depend on Freitas Parkway as the primary access point to Highway 101, this challenge will only be exacerbated.

We ask MG and the City to pay particular attention to this issue during consideration of this proposal, as well as in the upcoming North San Rafael PDA process. While this development implies an inevitable increase in VMT, that increase can be stemmed by ensuring commercial development—particularly goods, but including public and commercial services—keeps pace with residential growth so that residents can avoid using their vehicles to access daily necessities. Early stage options should include food markets, salons, exercise venues, co-work space, clothing and other retail stores.

¹ <https://www.zipdatamaps.com/nh-san-rafael-neighborhood-terra-linda>

An important aspect of developing in a designated Priority Development Area will be to demonstrate how the project will decrease rather than increase greenhouse gas emissions, how it will avoid increasing local congestion and other unmitigated impacts usually associated with growth and higher density development, and how it will support access to bus transit as well as safe and comfortable bicycling and walking around, as well as to and from, the project.

- e. *Energy and Environment* – We believe MG, with San Rafael’s Planning and Community Development support, has the opportunity to make this development a model for a Sustainable Community while also meeting economic goals.

We call for full commitment to compliance with San Rafael’s Climate Action Plan in the design and execution of this project, and we ask MG to delineate specifically how it will meet San Rafael’s, as well as regional, land use and transportation planning goals intended for Priority Development Areas designations to prepare the Bay Area to accommodate population growth, accelerate climate change mitigation, protect natural resources, and ultimately support economically sustainable, livable and healthy communities.

We appreciate the opportunity to voice these initial comments and trust they will be communicated to Merlone Geier and taken into consideration by City officials as the project review process advances.

Sincerely,

The Terra Linda Homeowners’ Association (TLHOA) Board of Directors

Kimberli Keith-Brown, President

Gina Daly, Past-President

Denis O’Leary, Secretary

William Bacon, Treasurer

Kate Powers, Liaison to the Federation of San Rafael Neighborhoods



Responsible Growth in Marin

April 15, 2021

Steve Stafford, Senior Planner
City of San Rafael
1400 5th Avenue, 3rd floor
San Rafael, CA 94901

RE: Completeness review from RGM
Merlone Geier Northgate Square March 10, Pre-Application Package

Dear Mr. Stafford,

Responsible Growth in Marin (RGM) has reviewed the Merlone Geier (MG) Northgate Square General Application Package and requests that you consider our comments regarding the completeness of the drawings, concepts and documentation provided. While we are heartened that this is a much more complete package than was previously submitted with the Costco proposal and is more responsive to the North San Rafael Vision plans of 2010, 2020 and 2040, we believe there is more information needed to fully realize the community vision and bring the project to compliance with the City of San Rafael General Plan.

The issues we see that require more information and revisions to the plan include:

1. **Master Plan:** The package is incomplete because both Northgate and the adjacent Northgate III property should be included in the Master Plan. Even if Northgate III is not included in Phase I, it is in the City and community’s interest to understand the long-term plans, concepts and relationships of these two properties. There are interconnected items that should be addressed such as:
 - a. How could additional housing be added above retail at Northgate III? We believe this is a good property for Workforce Housing given its perfect adjacency to the bus, train and bike paths.
 - b. What is the exact circulation plan between the two sites and how will they seamlessly connect to the SMART Train Station?
 - c. How will the North San Rafael Promenade connect these properties together and what is the planned route of the Promenade to serve both properties and to enhance the walkability and bike access into the Town Center from the surrounding communities?

2. **Town Center:** The requirement of a Town Center element has been in the San Rafael Vision and General Plans for more than 20+ years and is NOT included in this package. The area dedicated to the Town Center (or “hub of the project” as described in the MG Community Meeting) is currently two very large surface parking lots. There is no space for the required programmatic elements such as gathering/performance/event spaces. No landscaped outdoor space is provided to create a public heart or village green for North San Rafael, a feature that has been included in every planning document for over 20 years including GP 2040. This would allow the community to Live, Work and Play in a creative and thoughtful way. Additional structured parking may be required to accommodate this requirement.

We request that MG and their team provide a full programmatic description of the functions and plans for the Town Center showing how these critical elements can be accommodated in a flexible but dedicated space. These plans should reference the requirements in the General and Vision plans for the site. RGM is pleased to collect the already existing program documentation for the Town Center from various City documents and provide it to MG if this would be helpful.

3. **Goods and Services Requirements:** The package is incomplete because the plan is not consistent with the goal of decreasing VMT and therefore GHG emissions for the development. In order to decrease car traffic and GHG emissions, the plan should clearly define retail and other services necessary for daily living and that new residents and those in the surrounding North San Rafael community will continue to be able to access core retail, entertainment, and home and personal services without generating additional vehicle trips to outside areas.
4. **Consideration of Surrounding Residential Neighborhoods:** The plans should delineate clearly in the application process a commitment to defining the interface with existing surrounding neighborhoods so that General Plan 2040 goal of “conserving and strengthening existing neighborhoods” is achieved. (Draft GP2040, LU p. 3-4) The plans need to detail how the new residential housing will be consistent and integrate with existing surrounding neighborhoods. In 2016 the adjacent historic Eichler neighborhood succeeded in imposing a one-story overlay ordinance to preserve the design, serenity, privacy and solar access to all homes in the district. (Draft GP2040, H-2 p. 43-45) This should be noted and preserved in the design and layout of the new Northgate residential district. The plan should commit to solar and sound transmission studies not only for the site but also for the surrounding neighborhoods.
5. **Phasing:** The plan is incomplete because it should show more clearly the phasing of the project and adjust as necessary to assure that too much housing isn’t built without adequate outdoor space, services and appropriate retail for the new residents. We believe that the density of housing in Phase I will create a long period of time where housing exists without the necessary support. Consider moving some of the housing density to later phases so that retail/services/outdoor spaces to serve the community can be created in step with the additional housing. Consider adding more housing to the Northgate III property to allow a more logical and measured growth of the new community.

6. **Affordable Housing Distribution:** The plan is incomplete because it does not consider the recent data studies and concerns expressed by the City about how to distribute affordable units in a given project. The plan should assure inclusionary and equitable distribution of affordable opportunities disbursed throughout the project as recently discussed in City meetings and delineated in the Housing Element of the General Plan.
7. **Circulation Master Plan:** The plan is incomplete because it does not delineate the full circulation concepts within the site and from the surrounding communities. A circulation overlay should be provided to show:
 - a. Easy, clear and inviting walking, biking pathways and auto access should be shown from the surrounding communities to the Town Center element.
 - b. The North San Rafael Promenade should be shown and be committed to completion in its entirety around the site, and the Town Center, Northgate III, and the SMART train station.
 - c. Circulation to the Town Center should be carefully considered from Northgate Drive, Merrydale Road and Freitas Parkway. An optimized auto traffic path should be provided from the surrounding communities to the shopping areas and Town Center.
 - d. Design should specify measures to not exacerbate the existing traffic issues from Terra Linda High School and Vallecito Primary School on Nova Albion to the site.

We at RGM sincerely appreciate your consideration to communicate these issues to MG and add these requirements to the application process to assure that all things are considered as the project moves forward to the next phase of planning and approvals.

Respectfully,

Grace Geraghty, Executive Director

Responsible Growth Marin

info@rgmarin.org

*GP 2040 draft H-2 Housing Element 2015-2023, page 45

“Design That Fits into the Neighborhood Context.

Recognize that construction of new housing and improvements on existing properties can add to the appearance and value of the neighborhood if they fit into the established character of the area. Design new housing, remodels, and additions to be compatible to the surrounding neighborhood. Incorporate transitions in height and setbacks from adjacent properties to respect adjacent development character and privacy. Respect existing landforms and minimize effects on adjacent properties.”

Shawna Brekke-Read

From: Carl Lenox <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Sunday, April 18, 2021 5:33 PM
To: Steve Stafford; Paul Jensen
Subject: Fwd: Input to Northgate Mall project

Hi Steve, Paul,

I sent the below to MerloneGeier in advance of the April 20th community forum on the future of Northgate Mall. Responsible Growth Marin suggested that I loop you in.

Thanks in advance for your consideration of these points as you evaluate this project.

Best,

Carl

Email: [REDACTED]
Phone: [REDACTED]
LinkedIn: [REDACTED]
Projects: [REDACTED]

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Carl Lenox <[REDACTED]> [REDACTED]
Date: Wed, Apr 14, 2021 at 7:26 PM
Subject: Input to Northgate Mall project
To: <[REDACTED]>

(also sent separately to Marin County District 1 Supervisor Connolly)

Hello,

Thanks for taking input on the Future Northgate Mall project.

<https://futurenorthgatemall.com/>

I am a local resident and excited to see Northgate transformed into a vibrant hub for our greater community. I am also an expert on clean energy technology and policy, the energy transition in California, and the importance of designing for resilience against the effects of climate change.

Given the timeframe over which this project will roll out and the impacts of infrastructure decisions for 30+ years thereafter, these considerations are critical. At a global level, we face the daunting task of reaching net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. At a local level, it is critical that this large-scale redevelopment project support and advance this objective.

My questions and comments follow.

1) What specific aspects of the design / plan support California's policy to be net-zero greenhouse gas emissions statewide by 2045?

a) How will Title 24 net-zero requirements for the new residential units be met?

b) Title 24 net-zero requirements for new commercial construction come into effect in 2030, and CA has a goal of to retrofit 50% of commercial building stock by 2030. Will you commit to meeting these requirements early? What is your plan to meet them?

c) Will this be an all-electric (no natural gas service) build? If not, why not? "Locking in" natural gas infrastructure is in direct conflict with decarbonization goals. Given current technology, including commercial electric (inductive) cooktops and high efficiency electric HVAC (heat pumps), there should be no reason to continue to have gas service at this property after renovation.

d) Will you commit to using low carbon building materials, including low carbon concrete and steel?

2) What specific aspects of the design / plan support the need for community resilience in the face of climate change driven events, including wildfires and blackouts, or other natural disasters such as earthquakes?

a) Will the site have onsite energy resources (eg solar power and energy storage) enabling at least 'critical loads' in residential and some commercial units to continue to function in order to serve residents and the broader community in the event of an extended power interruption? What specifically is planned in regards to this?

b) Will the site be designed to serve as a community 'safe haven' under emergency conditions that may require evacuation / sheltering of surrounding nearby communities? If so how?

3) How are you planning for mobility patterns to change over the coming decades? The site appears to be largely designed around a mid (20th) century mobility pattern. There seems to be a core assumption that most people will travel to the site by private car, and even move around the site by car, per the renderings (which are charmingly 1970s retro, but seem to bear little resemblance to what we should be envisioning for our community in the 2030s and beyond). By 2035 fossil fuel vehicles will no longer be sold in California and long before that, electric vehicles are likely to be a majority of the vehicles sold in the state. In addition to passenger vehicles, commercial vehicles are expected to transition to electric including trucks and vans delivering stock to your commercial tenants.

a) What specific transportation modes are planned to enable seamless connections to the SMART train?

b) What specific aspects of the design are intended to encourage and enable the utilization of bicycles, e-bikes, electric scooters, and similar that are likely to be very popular zero emission, 'last miles' transportation options? Within the community, how will pedestrians, and bicycles / scooters be given priority (over cars) and how will these different modes be safely separated to make non-car modes safe and pleasant?

c) What flexibility is built into your planning process to both accommodate and take advantage of the potential need for far less parking? In addition to expanded convenient non-car 'last miles' transportation options, within the coming decades (and even within the next 5 years) it is very likely that fully autonomous vehicles will make private car ownership less popular and ride-hailing more popular, even in the suburban context.

d) For the parking spaces that are planned, how specifically will electric vehicle charging be accommodated? Significantly more electrical infrastructure in the parking lot areas (and potentially for the site overall) will be required if EV charging is offered as a service / amenity - which is strongly recommended, and will be required for residents to some extent (depending on convenience of shared transportation modalities). Also, how will charging services for commercial vehicles be accommodated?

One note on the housing aspects -- personally I am supportive of relatively high density, mixed use development and do not have any particular concerns about 'scale, density and height'. We need more housing, and particularly more affordable housing and rental housing in California (and Marin) and I applaud this aspect of the project. However I strongly encourage you to focus strongly on how this housing will be coupled with transportation modes and on site services to make it possible to have a pleasant lifestyle in this community without having to own a car.

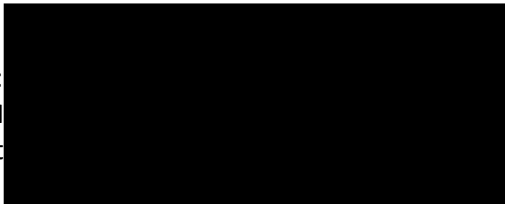
Thanks for your consideration of these questions. I look forward to learning more about how you plan to transform Northgate into a vibrant, sustainable, and forward-looking community hub during your April 20th community forum.

I want to feel comfortable being an advocate for this project, so I hope you are able to 'lean into' these challenges and see them as the opportunities they truly are.

Best Regards,

Carl Lenox

Email:
Phone:
LinkedIn:
Project



Shawna Brekke-Read

From: Carolyn Lenert [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, April 2, 2021 5:40 PM
To: Steve Stafford
Subject: RE: Northgate Town Square Project

Thanks!

No, I am a retired rabble-rouser 2011 Citizen of the Year. There isn't a neighborhood association (that has reached out to me), the 2007-2012 Great Recession eliminated any spare time and civic engagement.

Just have any developer bring the water necessary (esp. for apartments that won't have their own meters and have no way of knowing about conservation). Throw in a new hook 'n' ladder (\$550,000+) if the building is more than 4 stories. And oh, new classrooms and teacher pension plans for the hundreds of new students. And a park since there really is no social space at the Oak Tree Plaza (it's a roadway with a tree stuck in the middle). BTW: no rooftop firepits for Terra Linda. We would like a Teen Center for TL with a library and computer center (and jobs for the teens).

Thanks!

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows 10

From: [Steve Stafford](#)
Sent: Friday, April 2, 2021 5:30 PM
To: [Carolyn Lenert](#)
Subject: Northgate Town Square Project

Hi Carolyn,

I sent you a referral on the recently submitted Northgate Town Square project which was returned to Planning as 'undeliverable'. I had forgotten that I had your email so I am forwarding a copy of the referral plus a link to the project on Planning's Major Projects webpage: <https://www.cityofsanrafael.org/northgate-town-square/>. On this webpage, you find all of the submittal documents provided to the City. We welcome your comments. I'm presuming you are still the President of the Santa Margarita Neighborhood Association. If you do have comments, please disregard the due date and provide them as soon as you can so that I can forward them to Merlone Geier, owners of the Northgate Mall. I will be providing them with a completeness review letter week after next. Thanks. Enjoy your weekend and Happy Easter.

Steve

Steve Stafford | City of San Rafael
Senior Planner
1400 5th Avenue, 3rd floor
San Rafael, CA 94901
(415) 458-5048



As a result of the County Public Health Order to Stay At Home, the City of San Rafael will be offering only essential services and City offices will be closed to general walk-in customer service until further notice. For questions about City services, as well as updates and resources visit www.cityofsanrafael.org/coronavirus.

****You can now apply on line at <https://www.cityofsanrafael.org/apply-to-planning-online/> for all permits!****

***** Check out the new "Community Development Virtual Counter" *****

If you need more in-depth help with a question or project you can schedule a 15 min. appointment for a video meeting with Building, Planning & Public Works every Tuesday and Thursday.

Click here for more information <https://www.cityofsanrafael.org/virtual-counter/>

Shawna Brekke-Read

From: Jan Vazquez [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, April 23, 2021 1:34 PM
To: Steve Stafford; info@futurenorthgatemail.com
Subject: Northgate application

Sirs,

The applicant has spoken of creating a "**town center**" at Northgate, but the site plan reveals no such thing. The center of the project is parking lots 5 and 6. The existing three-quarter acre plaza area near Kohl's would be replaced with retail and housing in the 2040 plan. I suggest creating a plaza on Lot 6 with new development in all directions moved closer to that location, in particular Major 3 moving onto Lot 5. Put a plaza at the center and it will be used. The existing space near Kohl's is a no man's land all year except for when the ice rink goes in.

FYI: The plaza in the middle of the Town of Sonoma is 8 acres and heavily used. Northgate's doesn't need to be that large, but I'd prefer to concentrate the amenity spaces to get utility.

The applicant needs to consider the walking distance between the various retail and service buildings. If a customer goes to Rite-Aid and then wants to go to a business in Shops 3, are they really going to walk? I think they will be tempted to drive. The Institute of Traffic Engineers has good data on how much walking the public is willing to do from one end to another at a mall. Check it. It may be another good reason to bring the buildings in around a central plaza.

Architectural style has been discussed and the applicant has ruled out tile roofs characteristic of Spanish/Mediterranean. If that is the final word, then I suggest the Arts & Crafts style represented by the Irwin House (Greene & Greene architects) in Pasadena: low gables, stone base, shingles, heavy timber, exposed rafters and trusses, horizontal lines. It is a sympathetic cousin to the Eichler homes and readily adapted to the multi-storied buildings proposed. The existing Northgate monument signs already are in this style.

Another topic is who will own the residences? A lot has changed since Northgate was built and lot will change in the next 50 years that cannot be anticipated now. **Keep the residences as apartments** under the same ownership as the mall. Retain the flexibility to respond to future forces. Condos or PUDs will lock in the land uses and reduce the options for future redevelopment.

There is a lot I liked about the **residential design and placement**. It is at the periphery mainly facing existing residential and providing a transition to the retail. Contrary to one comment, facing the cemetery is good. It's quiet and green. Parking at each level is great! The raised front "stoop" creates a marked private patio but also a connection to people passing on the sidewalk and easy access to the sidewalk. Instead of calling it a stoop (so unattractive), try calling it a front porch. If a direct pedestrian/bike access to SMART can be created, that would be a boon to the whole neighborhood.

Thanks for the opportunity to comment on the plans while they are still flexible.

Jan Vazquez



Update on Northgate Redevelopment Project

Craig Tackabery <[REDACTED]>
To: Tricia Stevens <[REDACTED]>

Sat, Aug 14, 2021 at 3:09 PM

Thank you Tricia for the update. I shared it with the Board of the Mont Marin/San Rafael Park Neighborhood Association last Thursday.

When I looked at the epermits site, I did not see any completeness comment letters from Planning. In my opinion, the submittal is difficult to digest, because it goes straight to detailed plans. Public Works and Building provided typical completeness letters regarding the need for technical details which will drive the applicant to go deeper into details, without a big picture plan first. .

I would have expected a higher level planning effort first. I've seen similar efforts first conduct an opportunities and constraints analysis of the site and other similar exercises. For example, the community is surrounded by beautiful hillsides, are there view corridor opportunities? Are those enhanced at a second story level? What else can be leveraged? What does the community feel the needs are? What does the developer's marketing studies show? Are those in alignment? How can the City craft a win-win? Is planning staff and key stakeholders involved in charrettes with the applicant? How is creatitiity being encouraged?

And second, I see some text in the application, but don't really understand the site's vision. What are the architect and landscape architect public oriented objectives? How are those proposed to be addressed? Is there a planning document that provides that overview? It seems like it will be difficult to get Commissioner and public feedback without starting at a higher level of dialogue.

I hope the City takes a proactive role in land use planning for the site. Perhaps that will be led by Chris Beynon? The City already seems behind in this process. The property owner is willing to make a significant investment in the property. I feel the City should show them the way. The window of opportunity is open now. The workshop you mention is one month away - I'm hoping significant work takes place on the City's side over these next 4 weeks regarding the most important item - the land use planning.

The Board did express an additional concern that was not in our letter. The mall is mostly vacant today, and was wondering what tools the City has to encourage tenant vacancies during this period. With over 1200 condos proposed, we would expect absorption to be pretty slow, therefore there will be a transition of demos and construction over many years. And the entitlement process is probably a few years. There was a strong desire not to have vacancies lingering during this period. What can the City do about that?

[Quoted text hidden]

—

Craig Tackabery

From: Deirdre [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, March 13, 2021 10:24 AM
To: planning <planning@cityofsanrafael.org>
Subject: Encouraged by new, housing-rich plans for Northgate that drop the Costco

Dear San Rafael Planning Department,

As a longtime Marin resident who has lived on the Tiburon Peninsula and Black Point in northeastern Novato for long periods each, I have been a regular shopper at the Northgate mall since the 1970s, especially Northgate's outer sections where Safeway, Magic Flute, the sports store, Sonoma Taqueria, ice cream, FedEx, and the sewing/vacuum store store are. I admit I haven't been in the main indoor shopping center since certain stores and Macy's departments closed. Over time, I came to believe that the shopping center owners and property management (who lease the spaces, I assume) were completely out of touch with the customer base here. Northgate's main interior mall has been gradually filled with schlocky stores. It wasn't even a nice place to walk inside in the winter, because the floor wasn't cushioned and is very hard on the feet of shoppers. Everyone I know avoids that movieplex, as the parking (during nonCovid times) was scarce, individual screening rooms and the routes to them are badly designed, and they show the worst movies. It is not a good moviegoing experience.

The shopping center definitely was ready for a complete makeover and a whole new approach, and I think Terra Linda, and the greater San Rafael and Marin residents recognized that. However, the proposed redesign that would have involved a Costco was a terrible idea. Costco has its place and that is where it is now — at Vintage Oaks. We don't need more than one Costco in Marin. Dropping a Costco into Northgate would have profoundly changed Northgate in a really, really bad way. That shopping center should be serving us, not abusing us.

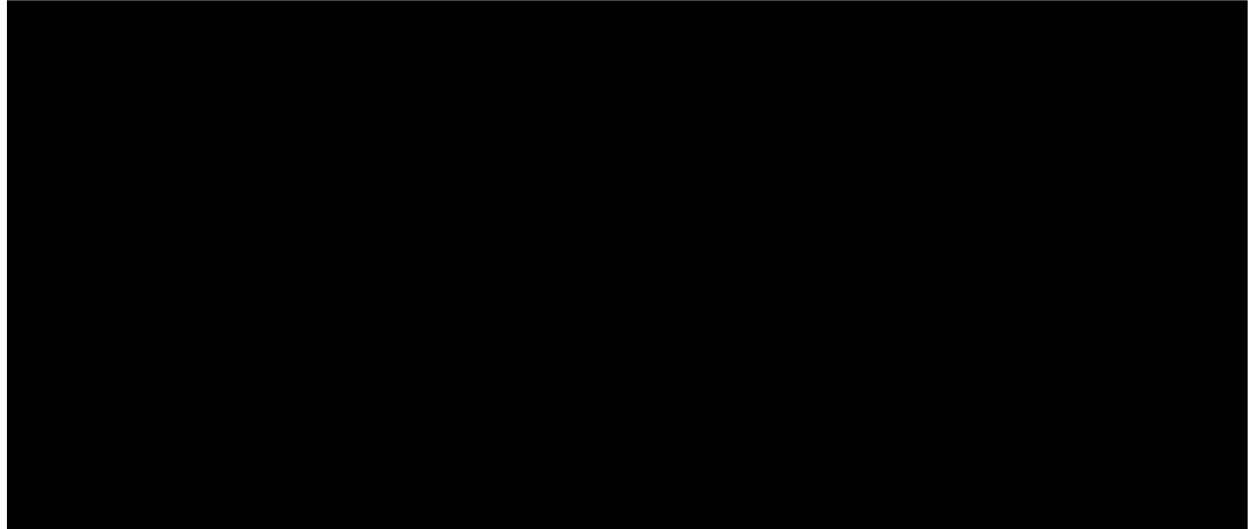
I read the story about the new design in the Marin IJ today. In concept, my reaction is, thank god. In concept, turning Northgate back into an outdoor shopping center is a great idea — I remember Northgate when it was outdoor and it was wonderful. People on the Facebook group Lost Marin still wax poetic about it. It also offers more opportunities for outdoor evening dining, which Marin is short of and which northern Marin can support, because it's warmer in the summer. Furthermore, Marin desperately needs the additional housing units; San Rafael would have missed a giant opportunity if the design did not make that a center feature of the plans. I tentatively applaud the new direction this project has taken. If I were to add anything else, it would be to encourage the shopping center not to insist on renting only to national chain stores. More Independently-owned businesses would add a much nicer, community-friendly vibe and, when it comes to restaurants, probably would result in additional healthy, gourmet eating options. I never eat at places like Panera's,

Applebee's and B.J.s', (or whatever it's called... it's really just a bar) and I don't think the shopping center's owners and executives would ever eat at them, either. If you're going to look for models among shopping centers that tend to rent to just national or regional chains, at least look at better models, such as Stanford Shopping Center and Marin Country Mart in Larkspur. The San Rafael Planning Department can help steer the ownership in that direction.

While the shopping center owner is at it, the part of Northgate over by CVS and Michael's really needs attention badly. It's tired and worn looking and doesn't enhance the main shopping center. It's also westward-facing, so it gets the full sun in the afternoons. Some design features could be added to shelter people and encourage people to linger. It's really a shame that the delicatessen (gone at least 10 years now) was allowed to go out of business. That place was a real community and local business gathering place. Something like Tagliaferri's in Novato would be a great addition there.

Very truly yours,
D. McCrohan
Mill Valley

From: Michael Toschi <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Thursday, March 18, 2021 4:01 AM



Hi,

I am complaining about the Future Northgate Mall Project because we still need an indoor shopping mall in Marin County for when it is raining outside and/or when it is cold outside as it is not like Marin County is a tropical place with tropical weather all year round and Marin County needs to continue to have middle-class retail if not additional middle-class retail so things like a luxury movie theater to replace the existing Century movie theater there is not a good idea as the existing Century movie theater in Corte Madera should be where a luxury movie theater should go as the existing Scandinavian Designs location in San Rafael is now going to relocate to the former Toys “R” Us space in San Rafael instead of the Century movie theater site in Corte Madera like originally and Marin County being segregated like the Deep South like Marin County already is where Corte Madera is upper-class class for the most part at least if not pure upper-class while San Rafael at least has some more middle-class but still upper-class in a “psycho way” as it is further north but still segregated there in a “psycho way” like all of Marin County is as you might as well just put the luxury movie theater in the Southern Marin area where the upper-class is the most segregated in instead of putting the luxury movie theater in the Central Marin area as the current demographics of Corte Madera “matches” better for a luxury movie theater than the current demographics of San Rafael does so can any of this please be considered for the project as part of the current environmental phase of the project?

And one of the other many things about how I think this project is just **psycho** like Marin County contains so much of like the Deep South like **psycho segregation** and **psycho conservativeness** and **psycho hypocrisy** and **psycho illegitimacy** is that a need for a second Costco location in Marin County besides the existing Novato one as people in Marin County are just so **psycho** to think that residents who live all the way in Southern Marin County driving all the way to Novato and spend all of that fossil fuel is better than just simply having a second Marin County Costco that is closer to where they live and on top of everything else Marin County has been “**the place**” on an ongoing basis where being “green” including shopping closer to where you live being so strongly encouraged so that not as much fossil fuel is spent driving further in the county

to shop - talk about a bunch of hypocrisy of Marin County right there - and even if ok Northgate Mall is really not the right location for a second Marin County Costco store then how about on Shoreline Parkway on that vacant land facing the waterfront across the street from Target where not residents from the south and wherever that is further away from the existing Costco store in Novato then would spend even less fossil fuel by the second Marin County Costco store being even closer there than it would be at Northgate Mall?

Or how about this how about because Novato “blew it” for fulfilling all that vacant land in Downtown for the very last big-box retail opportunities for all of Marin County not just Novato all because of people in all of Marin County not just Novato were **psycho** and them being really that **psycho** like that made that happen as how about Northgate Mall puts a different National big-box chain that Marin County currently does not have like Lowe’s or Walmart or JCPenney or Dick’s Sporting Goods instead of Costco if Marin County really “insists” on “one location of each national big-box chain only for Marin County” like Costco currently is and like Target used to be for many years so that residents of Marin County at least do not have to spend even more fossil fuel having to drive out of Marin County to shop at national big-box chains that Marin County does not have at all not even one location within the county?

So can all of my comments in this e-mail for this please be addressed as part of the environmental review phase per my complaint?

-Michael Tosci (Complainant, And No I Am Not The Shoe Guy And I Am Not Related To The Shoe Guy By Blood As The Shoe Guy And I Just Have The Same Exact First Name And Last Name)

Sent from my iPhone

Attachment 2e

Northgate Mall Redevelopment Project
PC DRB Study Session September 14, 2021



Responsible Growth in Marin

September 9, 2021

San Rafael Planning Commission
San Rafael Design Review Board
1400 Fifth Avenue
San Rafael, Ca 94901

Re: Comment on Northgate Town Square Development
NOTE: PLEASE INCLUDE IN PUBLIC COMMENTS

Dear Planning Commissioners and Design Review Board Members,

Responsible Growth in Marin appreciates the opportunity to review and comment on the Northgate Town Square Development that will be reviewed on September 14th.

Attached is a PDF of the key community and RGM priorities we would like you to take into consideration at the joint review session next Tuesday.

We look forward to Tuesday's discussion.

Respectfully,
Grace Geraghty, Executive Director
Responsible Growth Marin
info@rgmarin.org

**PLEASE INCLUDE IN INFORMATION PACKET TO THE CITY OF SAN RAFAEL DESIGN REVIEW BOARD
AND PLANNING COMMISSION FOR JOINT SESSION ON SEPTEMBER 14TH**

PREPARED: SEPTEMBER 8, 2021
BY RESPONSIBLE GROWTH IN MARIN (RGM)

CITY OF SAN RAFAEL PLANNING COMMISSION AND DESIGN REVIEW BOARD JOINT SESSION
SEPTEMBER 14, 2021

RE: NORTHGATE TOWN SQUARE PROJECT

KEY COMMUNITY PRIORITIES



LEGEND

INLINE SHOPS	[Yellow Box]
RESTAURANTS	[Orange Box]
ANCHOR STORES	[Red Box]
CINEMA	[Purple Box]
RESIDENTIAL	[Blue Box]
RESIDENTIAL AMENITIES	[Dark Blue Box]
COMMUNITY SPACE	[Light Green Box]
STRUCTURED PARKING	[Grey Box]
SIGNALIZED INTERSECTION	[Traffic Light Symbol]

ORIGINAL PROPOSED SITE PLAN

2025 MASTER PLAN - STREET LEVEL

NORTHGATE TOWN SQUARE

REDEVELOPMENT PLAN | 6.11.2021

MerloneGeier Partners

CSW ST2

URBAN ARENA

STUDIO T-SQUARE

FIELD PAOLI

SD-7



HOUSING MASSING, DENSITY AND VARIETY OF TYPES

New residential units should include ample workforce housing, senior housing, rental and ownership options instead of the proposed "all the same" option of predominantly one and two bedroom rental units. Affordable housing should be integrated vs isolated. The height and density of the housing should be carefully modulated adjacent to the current 1 story Eichler neighborhood to the South. Massing should be more gradually stepped with increased setbacks and lower heights at this portion of the site.

See GP2040 CDP p. 5-8, Goal CDP-2, p. 5-12, Policy LU-3.2, p. 3-33

THE TOWN CENTER DESTINATION IN PHASE I

The Town Center element has been described in planning documents since 1997 and was clearly embraced by the owners of this property at purchase. It was included in the North San Rafael Vision 2010 as well as GP2020 and GP2040. This key feature will be crucial to getting the buy-in of the local community and is critical to the success of the "sense of place" with activated public spaces, and to provide onsite parks and recreational space at the Northgate project.

See GP2040 sections: Neighborhoods Element p. 4-53-4-57, Goal CDP-2 p. 5-12, Goal CDP-3.1 p. 5-16, Policy PROS 1.13, p. 7-12, Policy CDP-3.1, p. 5-16 also see San Rafael Municipal Code Title 15.09

CRITICAL COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS IN PHASE I

The current proposed plan does not optimize connections to existing transit (bus and train) nor to the surrounding community. The Promenade must be completed to fully circle the property, extend into the new Town Center and to the Civic Center area/SMART train station. Bus stops should be consolidated and made safer along Las Gallinas Avenue. Thoughtful and beautiful pedestrian walkways and bike paths should be optimized to the Town Center.

See GP2040 sections: Goal M-5, p. 10-37, Goal M-6, p. 10-40, Policy M-6.1 p. 10-43, Policy M-6.3, p. 10-44, Policy CDP 2.4, p. 5-14, Policy CDP 2.6, p. 5-15, Policy NH-4.4, p. 4-57, 2012 San Rafael Station Area Plan p. 11

RGM KEY COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

NORTHGATE TOWN SQUARE

REDEVELOPMENT PLAN | 6.11.2021

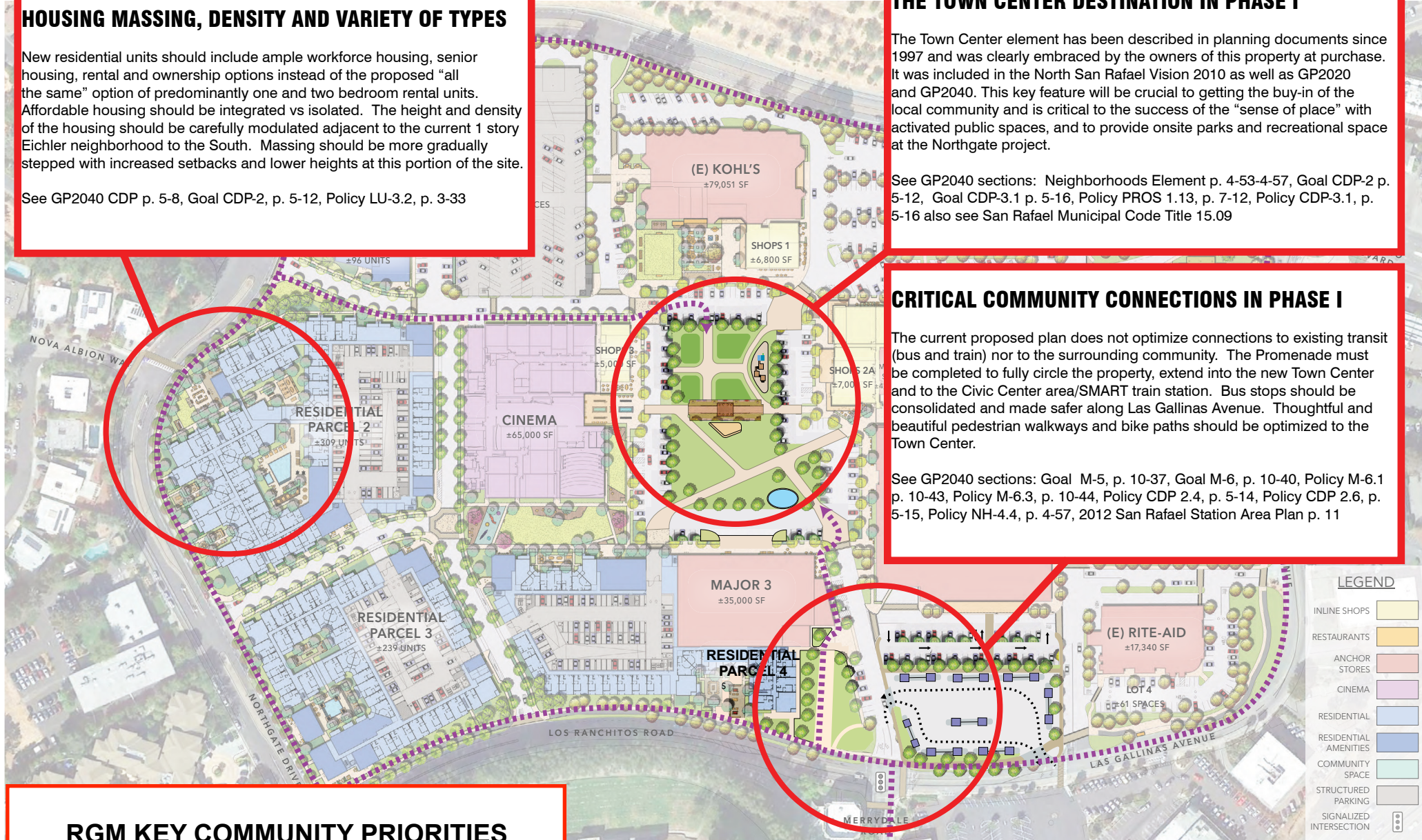
2025 MASTER PLAN - STREET LEVEL

MerloneGeier
Partners

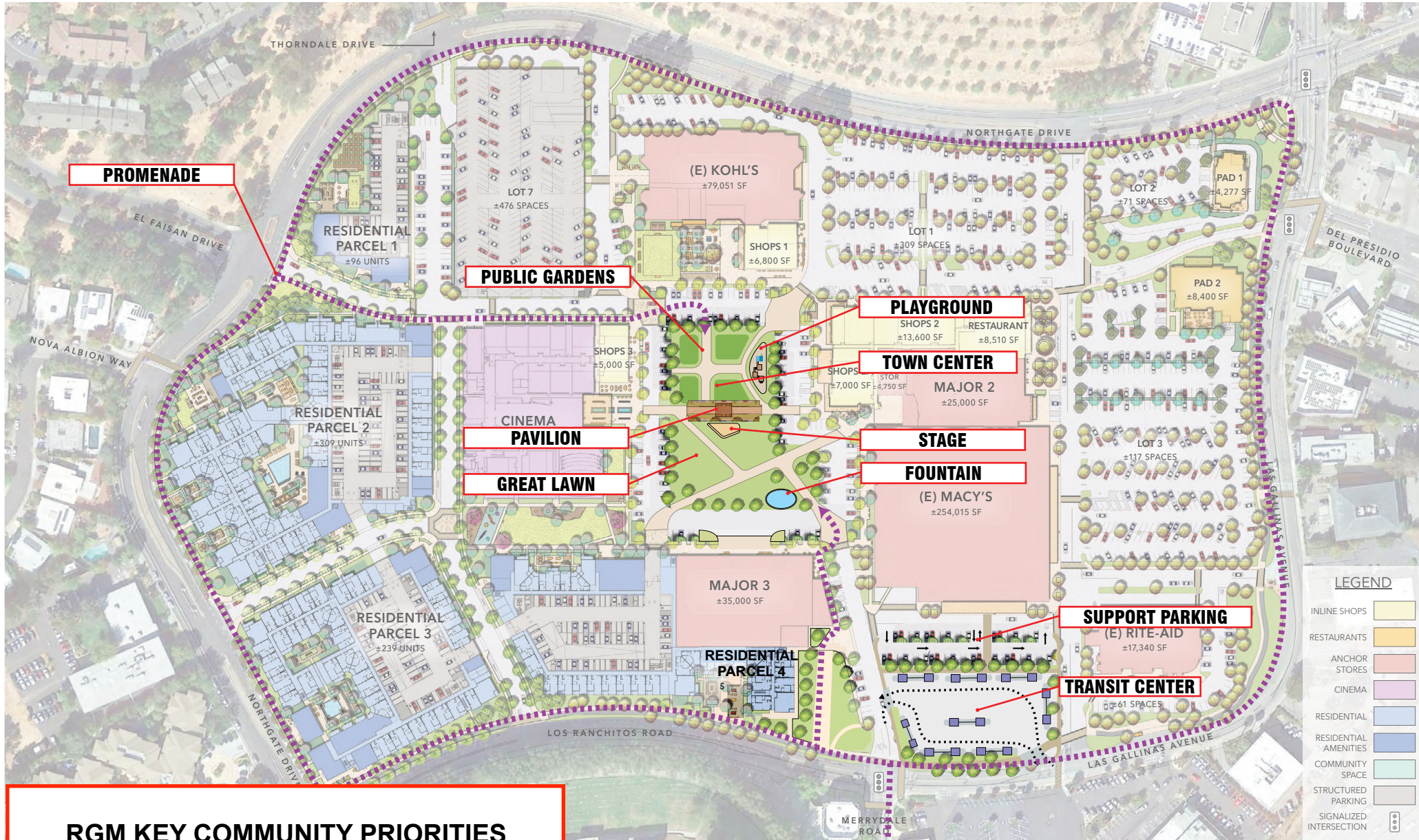
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SD-7



LEGEND	
INLINE SHOPS	[Yellow box]
RESTAURANTS	[Orange box]
ANCHOR STORES	[Red box]
CINEMA	[Purple box]
RESIDENTIAL	[Light blue box]
RESIDENTIAL AMENITIES	[Dark blue box]
COMMUNITY SPACE	[Green box]
STRUCTURED PARKING	[Grey box]
SIGNALIZED INTERSECTION	[Traffic light icon]



RGM KEY COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

NORTHGATE TOWN SQUARE

REDEVELOPMENT PLAN | 6.11.2021

2025 MASTER PLAN - STREET LEVEL

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