

Leslie Mendez

From: Claire Halenbeck <claire@rma.studio>
Sent: Tuesday, January 11, 2022 10:02 AM
To: Planning Public Comment
Subject: Don't Delay Realization of the Town Center at Northgate - FOR PUBLIC COMMENT - CORRECTION

DON'T FORGET THE TOWN CENTER

Please do not allow 1000+ new dwelling units in Phase I of the Northgate development to be built in a concrete jungle with no Town Center as has been envisioned for more than 20 years. The new residents will have virtually no parkland to access. The children and pets will have no way to play outside. The only parks within .5 miles are two tiny pocket parks that are non-functional and in disrepair. In the time of COVID, we can't allow this many new residents (2,000+) to live in an unhealthy place **WITHOUT** hospitable outdoor areas - only parking lots!

Respectfully,
Claire Halenbeck, Terra Linda



Claire Halenbeck, IIDA, CID
principal
415.720.7090 | www.rma.studio

Leslie Mendez

From: Cecil Nielsen [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, January 11, 2022 10:06 AM
To: Planning Public Comment
Cc: Michael Sharp
Subject: Northgate Town Square

Dear Planning Commission,

As a member of VIA (Vision in Action) for many years and having worked on many projects at Northgate, I would like to recommend that the following be considered for the Northgate Town Square:

It is important that we not forget that our main focus should be on **recreation and health for all**. Here are some ideas for you to keep in mind:

1. That the bicycle and pedestrian path connections be upgraded and finished all the way to public transportation (train, etc)
2. That existing trees be respected and more native trees be planted; solar panels on all roof tops;
3. Children and Seniors be the priority. A **NEW park for children**, a **healthy park for adults** with benches, exercise bars, etc. A park that can be used year round;
4. More residents, **means more people**. A **PUBLIC** swimming pool, tennis courts, park for children, dog park and a library. An amphitheater for concerts;
5. An indoor track for our residents to use during excessive heat during the hot months and rainy season. (Currently, many use the mall for walking)
6. Bike rentals, bike lockers, charging stations. Good lighting, but lighting that does not take away from our night skies.

Lastly, it is imperative that this development be **inclusive of all**. That it be a place where people can go to cool off in the hot summer months. A place where people can go walking on those rainy and hot days and feel safe. A place you can ride your bike to and park it in a safe location and go shop, eat, exercise, watch a movie, etc.

Good luck and thank you,

Cecil Nielsen

Leslie Mendez

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, January 11, 2022 11:40 AM
To: Planning Public Comment
Subject: Public Comment on Northgate Development

Please include in public comment-I am very excited and appreciative of many of the changes that have been proposed for the Northgate Mall, but I would ask for additional consideration for an expended town center for the project. Merlone Geier has done similar open air spaces with other projects, but something of substantial size and function that creates a center and a “heart” of the location. Something more similar to the size of Sonoma or Healdsburg Squares, where there could be open grass areas for kids/people to play, a large gazebo or stage for drama performances, bands, or weddings, trees and water features to match the surroundings and places for kids to play, and space for activities such as bocce courts and dog park. This could be surrounded by various outdoor restaurants around the perimeter that create an inclusive feel and allows adults to have a nice dinner on the patio of their favorite restaurant while they watch their kids play in the grass and listen to a band play on the stage. This all creates the reality of a true “live/work/play” concept, rather than just talking about it. The housing proposal of this size needs legitimate space of this magnitude and caliber. Please don’t miss this opportunity. This kind of space has also been outlined in both 2020 and 2040 Master Plans. Please hold true to that vision. Thank you.

Eric Boales, 7 year Terra Linda resident
[REDACTED] San Rafael, CA 94903
[REDACTED]

Eric Boales

SVP | Business Banking Manager, California Region
Small Business Relationship Banking

Wells Fargo | 333 Market, 14th Floor | San Francisco, CA 94105
MAC A0103-40 | Office: 415-738-0978 | Cell: 415-516-6887

eric.s.boales@wellsfargo.com

Pronouns: He/Him

"This message may contain confidential and/or privileged information. If you are not the addressee or authorized to receive this for the addressee, you must not use, copy, disclose, or take any action based on this message or any information herein. If you have received this message in error, please advise the sender immediately by reply e-mail and delete this message. Thank you for your cooperation."



GALLINAS WATERSHED COUNCIL

PO Box 4284, San Rafael, CA 94913

Jan. 10, 2022

San Rafael Planning Commission
PlanningPublicComment@cityofsanrafael.org

RE: Comments for Northgate Town Square Project Scoping Session for EIR

Dear San Rafael Planning Commission:

Gallinas Watershed Council (GWC) is an all volunteer organization founded in 2008, following on the work of the Friends of Gallinas Creek, in efforts to restore our creek that is contained in a trapezoidal channel flowing between traffic lanes along Freitas Parkway. As such, we have also been involved with the city in the work of the Vision Committee and their Promenade plans for a safe walkway/bikeway from Del Ganado at Freitas to the mall, and then to the SMART station and under 101 to connect with the Civic Center and the Santa Venetia area.

We look at the Terra Linda/Santa Venetia area from a whole watershed perspective, one that knits the open space to the bay via natural creek areas, safe pedestrian and bike pathways, connecting both the people and neighborhoods of the upper watershed and baylands to Mall shopping, the Farmer's Market, and a future town center at Northgate.

We are very pleased that Merlone Geier (MG) is addressing our need for housing and creating a town center at Northgate. We are also grateful that the previous proposal for a big box store with numerous gas pumps has been abandoned. We have the following watershed related suggestions for scoping this project, in hopes that these will help create an even more dynamic, aesthetic and environmentally sensitive project.

Restoration of Gallinas Creek/Mitigation Fund

The restoration of Gallinas Creek is now called for in SR GP 2040. We request a mitigation bank be set up in order for the city to help collect the funds necessary for doing the restoration. Should this project (and/or future projects) require mitigation that cannot be done onsite, we would ask MG to envision the Gallinas Creek restoration as part of their project, and as the nearest possible mitigation location, which is the preference of regulatory agencies. If the creek, or any of its feeder streams, are located on or under this property, daylighting them to allow a

Gallinas Watershed Council is a fiscally sponsored project of MarinLink, a California nonprofit corporation exempt from federal tax under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service #20-0879422

www.gallinaswatershed.org

gwc@gallinaswatershed.org

(415) 578-2580

natural flow through the property would enhance the public and residents' experience. Maps of historical waterways (see Appendix) and storm drain maps should be used to determine best methods and locations. We envision people, like water, flowing along the creeksides towards this project as a welcoming public gathering space. This was the Vision of the Promenade, produced by the citizens of San Rafael over 20 years ago.

Stormwater Capture and Treatment/Permeable Surfaces

State law is requiring more stringent stormwater treatment. The prior property owner built an underground filter rather than the community supported rain gardens throughout the parking lots. To our knowledge, this infrastructure has never been inspected or monitored for effectiveness. This should be done before relying on it if MG is intending to keep this system. It is encouraging that MG has planned for more green spaces than currently exist to reduce storm runoff, but there is still a great deal of impervious surfaces. We ask that appropriately sized bioretention basins, rain gardens, green roofs, vertical gardens¹, pervious pavement, and other LID alternatives be explored for stormwater capture, reuse, and treatment, to protect the downstream watershed from pollutants. MCSTOPPP has guidelines but these are minimal. Climate forecasts include heavier storms, such as we had in Oct. 2021, as well as drought conditions. Preparation for these predicted extreme weather events should be part of the scoping process.

Recycled Water/Dual Plumbing

Recycled water (RW) is available onsite from MMWD/LGVSD. As well as using RW for onsite landscaping, over time dual plumbing throughout the complex will save massive quantities of potable water. Onsite treatment should also be considered, which could save energy costs. As years of drought are also predicted, relying on RW is smart economically in the long run and should be used wherever possible.

Traffic Study

Traffic on the 101/Freitas Parkway and North San Pedro Road exits, as well as all major intersections leading to and around the mall, will need to be studied. We request the study include the residential areas of the Meadows, Los Ranchitos and Upper Terra Linda to study impacts from the proposed housing at the mall as well as any additional developments, such as the NorthGate Walk project at the Four Points Sheraton site, that are in process or projected to occur. Now is the time to take a "Master Plan" look at the area to see what is supportable and what the community might benefit from for motorist, transit, pedestrian, and bicycle safety. A full restoration of Gallinas Creek also would need a traffic study to see if lanes

¹ https://info.habitathorticulture.com/living-walls-1/?utm_source=googleads&utm_campaign=9788711744&utm_content=103869276447&utm_keyword=living%20wall%20san%20francisco&utm_medium=c&gclid=Cj0KCQiAieWOBhCYARIsANcOw0wkQ5aYZWkM0pHlfKcMPDPN21dnDaQ1Q1xbFRSX1m6kVLbhxzX5bGYaAkioEALw_wcB The Vertical Garden Wall at 2232 Webster in SF is being described online as a tourist attraction. What better way for the mall to reinvent itself and draw visitors as well as residents?

upstream of Las Gallinas can be reduced. All these projects should be considered as one, to address CEQA and the requirement for these cumulative impacts to be analyzed together rather than piecemeal. Principles of Green Streets² and those for traffic calming should also be explored for creating a more aesthetic and peaceful environment.

If Northgate Mall is truly to function as a Town Center, pedestrian access to the site should be improved. Improving the attractiveness of the site, as planned, is important, but so is implementing the Promenade Concept, as previously mentioned. Currently, the Mall is designed to attract cars, not pedestrians. Safe pedestrian access along Frietas Parkway, Las Gallinas Avenue, Merrydale and other feeder streets will be vital in attracting Terra Linda residents to walk to restaurants, stores, entertainment, and public events at the new Town Center.

Lighting

Dark Skies lighting principles should be employed throughout the site. Motion activated safety lights are preferable to “always on” lighting. No light spillover into neighborhoods or all-night neon signs should be allowed. Warm colored LED lights are preferable to cold harsh blue.

Energy, Water, Livable Buildings

Pumping water is one of the largest energy costs in California. Any project that can capture, treat and reuse water onsite will help reduce energy use, which helps reduce GHGs from nonrenewable sources. The design principles of the Living Building³ movement, which surpass LEED standards, should be explored and considered for any new building on the site. Living buildings can be designed to be zero net carbon, can be built with carbon sequestering concrete to reduce their carbon footprint, and can be set with solar panels to capture energy. Solar panels should also be erected over all parking lots, for energy capture and to reduce urban heat island effects which will grow yearly. Climate change is real, and we must do everything we know how to do in order to survive it. Building in this way, while initially perhaps more expensive, often pays off dividends over time. The city should support MG in accessing infrastructure grants and other financial support to bring these necessary changes to our city.

Farmer’s Market

Outreach to the Agricultural Institute of Marin should be made, as they have been looking for a location for classrooms and a permanent Farmer’s Market in addition to their very successful Thursday and Sunday markets at the Civic Center. Local produce and crafts would be a welcome addition to the new mall complex. This location would also move AIM upstream and out of the path of sea level rise and flooding that will be problematic at the location they are currently considering (the

² <https://www.epa.gov/G3/learn-about-green-streets>

³ <https://living-future.org/lbc/>

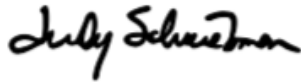
unpaved Christmas Tree lot at the Civic Center). Tenating a building at the mall would also reduce adding more impervious pavement to our watershed.

Plastic Reduction

Petroleum is going into creating ever more plastics, which are primarily used one time and then thrown away, as plastic recycling is essentially non-existent.⁴ For the restaurants and the food court, single use plastic items need to be banned, including take out containers, plastic ware, plates, straws and lids. The trash from such items is a cost borne by every resident in their garbage bill and impacts our rapidly filling limited landfills. The environment also suffers when people throw it away as litter, where it washes into our rivers and oceans and then breaks down into microplastics that get taken up the food chain and into our own bodies. There is currently an ordinance banning single use plastics working its way through Marin cities and the county. We envision the possibility of a centralized dishwashing area for the food court, with reusable ware and plates branded for the Northgate Mall, as a way to reduce plastic use and call out MG as environmental leaders.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit our comments.

Sincerely,

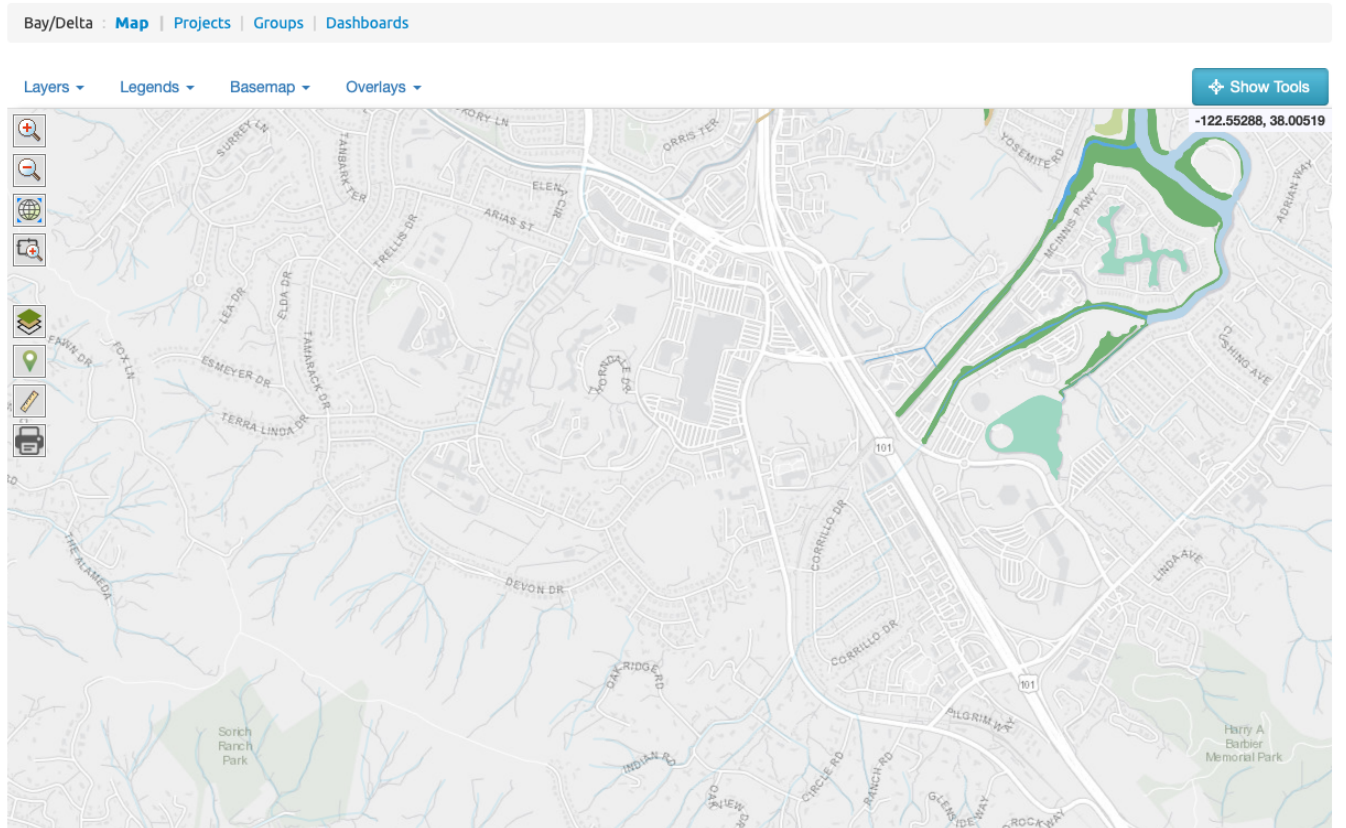
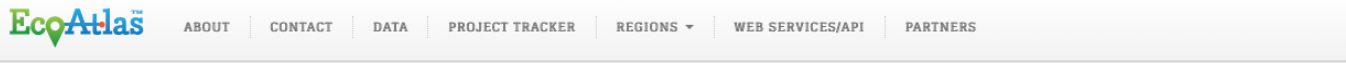


Judy Schriebman
Secretary GWC

⁴ <https://www.greenmatters.com/p/what-percent-recycling-actually-gets-recycled>. “This will likely come as no surprise to longtime readers, but according to *National Geographic*, an astonishing 91 percent of plastic doesn’t actually get recycled. This means that only around 9 percent is being recycled. As if that weren’t enough, nearly all of that **plastic** that does get recycled is actually **downcycled**, which means it gets less and less useful every time, eventually becoming so flimsy that it can no longer be recycled properly.”

Appendix:

EcoAtlas <https://www.ecoatlas.org/regions/ecoregion/bay-delta> as one source for historical maps of the area. The faint blue lines or the ephemeral and intermittent streams coming down from the hills have all been routed to cemented ditches, underground pipes, or in some cases remain above ground in natural channels. All flow to the south fork of Gallinas Creek and thence to San Pablo Bay.



<https://www.ecoatlas.org/regions/ecoregion/bay-delta>

Leslie Mendez

From: Jean Mazza [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, January 11, 2022 10:46 AM
To: Planning Public Comment
Subject: Planning Commission Meeting Jan 11, 2022

As a 35 year resident of Quail Hill Townhomes, I am concerned about the proposed plan to convert Northgate to mostly residential occupancy.

1.). Speeding on Northgate Drive

This area is rarely patrolled by San Rafael police for traffic violations. The speeders are usually going 20 to 25 miles faster than the posted speed limit of 25. Stop signs are ignored and my observation of violators is of people usually under 40. Apartment dwellers are in this age group. I can see more of this speeding happening and eventually a tragedy occurring. Speed bumps on Northgate would be annoying but may prevent some of the blatant speeding.

2.). We're in a water crisis and it's unlikely that will change much in the coming years since global warming is not going away. More people, more water use. How do we manage that? And the great amount of water used in construction will add to our problems.

3.). There's a great need in our community for affordable housing. 10% seems stingy in this project. And, what's "affordable"? We need to have housing for the folks that provide essential services but earn minimum wage. The traffic coming from the East Bay in the morning jams up our highways, and those commuters are the ones we need to provide housing for to get them off the commuter grid.

Thank you for considering my concerns.

Jean Mazza

[REDACTED]
San Rafael

Sent from my iPhone

Leslie Mendez

From: Laura Silverman [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, January 11, 2022 9:04 AM
To: Planning Public Comment
Cc: TriciaStevens@cityofsanrafael.org
Subject: FOR PUBLIC COMMENT - PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING - 11, 2022

Dear Tricia,

The development of a true Town Center in Phase I that serves all of the community including the new residence in Northgate is a critical aspect of the success and vitality of Northgate.

Throughout the last 25 years, in various planning documents, the community has supported a Town Center at Northgate and now we have the perfect opportunity to do so.

Merlone Geier, in their Project Description, promotes the concept of a Town Center, so why is this not being promoted and instead we're seeing a postage sized Town Square which is a parking lot. Plus their proposal is to develop the Square in Phase II (2040), not Phase I (2025). Why???

It doesn't seem logical to not use this beautiful space to welcome not only our community but other Marinites to enjoy a vibrant welcoming Town Center with views of the surroundings hillsides with retail/restaurant, open space, entertainment and close to public transportation.

Why force us to drive South to other communities to participate in their Town Centers when we can make Northgate a perfect destination conveniently located, offering a unique live-work-play community (in OUR ownbackyard)?

We will miss out on opportunity to meet the needs of the community and deprive the city of valuable revenue if we don't enforce a genuine Town Center in Phase I and carefully consider what is needed to make the Town Center the 'heart' of Northgate, not just an afterthought.

Best regards,

Laura Silverman
[REDACTED]
San Rafael

Leslie Mendez

From: Michael Sharp [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, January 11, 2022 1:58 PM
To: Planning Public Comment
Subject: Northgate Town Square Public Comment

Dear Planning Commission,

I support the plans to improve the Northgate Center, it is currently no longer appealing to many members of the community, the plans look great. However, there are currently a lack of usable recreation areas for younger children and adults outside of the High School facilities in our area, especially during the fall and winter months when there are no community lighted facilities. With an additional 1,300 residences being proposed, the city in partnership with the developer needs to improve the current recreational spaces near the center to accommodate the additional residents as well as modernize the current recreational spaces that are unusable for the currency members of the community.

1) Vellecito park is in need of a major upgrade and the additional property tax revenue should be used to update and modernize this huge space, add artificial turf, improve the running track. Add exercise areas, water stations etc.

I also think it is important to invest in the access routes to the proposed new Town Center to encourage people to take public transportation and ride bikes to the center.

1) The path to the SMART Train needs to be updated and made more appealing for people to use.

2) Improve and add new walking and bike trails to the center.

3) Add bike lockers, charging stations.

4) Include lighted pickleball courts

5) include a large lawn for kids to play, the designs show some areas but they look small and not ideal for families with energetic children.

6) Engage with local teenagers to come up with facilities they can use.

Regards
Michael Sharp
[REDACTED]



January 10, 2022

San Rafael Planning Commission
1400 Fifth Avenue
San Rafael, CA 94901

RE: Northgate Town Center EIR Scope

Honorable Commissioners,
Sustainable San Rafael welcomes the opportunity to recommend critical items for inclusion in the scope of the environmental analysis of the proposed Northgate Town Square.

We do so from the perspective of the key principles of sustainability: environmental quality, economic vitality, and social equity. We believe that the redevelopment of Northgate offers a generational opportunity to integrate these values into a true town center for North San Rafael, a regional commercial and entertainment destination, and a model of twenty-first century place making.

We consider the following environmental impacts, alternatives, and mitigations essential for a comprehensive EIR and a successful project:

Aesthetics

The heart of the proposed development is its namesake “town square.” The draft EIR needs to include an alternative with a central green space scaled and designed to immediately establish the identity of the entire 45-acre site. The site plan of the current proposal clearly frames the potential for such a space at its core, but then fills it with a surface parking lot. Nothing could be more antithetical to a lively, thriving, attractive town center. The EIR must analyze the erosive impact of such parking on the identity of the site and its surroundings, and then offer alternatives and mitigations that instead build a strong sense of place. Such measures include:

- Locating parking under the new buildings (such as the cinema and ‘major 3’ retail) or in structures (such as over the surface lot on the western portion of Northgate Drive).
- Ringing the central open space with lively cafes and restaurants.
- Scaling up the open space to occupy the entire space north of the cinema.
- Framing the green space with a perimeter promenade defined by an allee of trees and planted trellises, buffering the space from any peripheral parking (e.g., to the west).
- Designing the green space for both casual play and frequent performances, then committing to curate and support its activation.
- Most importantly, anchoring the new identity of Northgate and North San Rafael by completing the central square in Phase I.

Energy and Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Climate change is the greatest environmental threat we now face, and a project of this scale inherently poses a significant environmental impact. The EIR should assess how the new Northgate meets the objectives of San Rafael’s Climate Action Plan, that is, a 40% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 (from 1990 levels) and zero net emissions by 2045. Since

such complex metrics can sometimes be misleading or misused, the EIR should also include the mitigations needed to achieve these goals, which are straightforward:

- All-electric HVAC, water heating, cooking, and other building systems and appliances.
- A commitment to using only fossil-fuel-free electricity to power these and other uses.
- EV charging stations sufficient to meet 2040 levels of use.
- State of the art building insulation and other energy-efficient measures.
- Sufficient solar and battery storage to meet more frequent power outages.
- AC and air filtration in all enclosed spaces sufficient to meet more heat and smoke events, including emergency community use of retail spaces (e.g., the cinema).
- Use of low-GHG building materials and techniques, including paving and roofing.
- Solar arrays and/or high-sequestration trees to cool parking lots and other spaces.
- Sufficient provisions for residential and commercial recycling, especially of organics.

Land Use and Planning

The EIR should analyze the project's fit with all programs and objectives in San Rafael's new General Plan 2040, with particular regard to those addressing aesthetics and place-making, energy and greenhouse gas reduction, equity, housing, and transportation. The project's fit with its immediate land use and planning context will be largely determined by key pathways connecting a highly walkable neighborhood within Northgate to the neighborhoods and other developments surrounding it. These key pedestrian connectors include:

- Completion of the North San Rafael Promenade around Northgate.
- Tree-lined residential connections to El Faisan Drive and Albion Way to the south.
- An extension of the Promenade east along Merrydale to the SMART Station and Civic Center (with a potential Marin Transit bus connection at Las Gallinas).
- A potential new pathway extending north through the parking lot to the Promenade from the existing main mall entry (retaining that portion of the interior mall in alignment with the central square and cinema, and creating a more compelling sense of arrival to the overall project).

Population and Housing

Space for new housing in San Rafael is a limited resource that must be used wisely to support an economically diverse population. The EIR should analyze how the project can produce as much housing as possible within the City's regulations, with an emphasis on on-site affordable workforce housing which is what San Rafael needs the most. The analysis should include:

- The equity advantages of inclusionary units throughout the residential parcels instead of the separate all-affordable parcel proposed (unless there are real benefits to the latter, such as more units, better supportive housing services, or an extended period of affordability, for instance through a long-term leasehold with a non-profit provider).
- Likewise, any ownership housing should include consideration of how ownership could be used to build economic equity for low-and-moderate-income households.

Transportation

Again, the EIR should assess how the project can best create a walkable, bike-friendly, and transit connected neighborhood, which will benefit all the concerns discussed above.

Thank you for your close consideration of this important project.

Sincerely,

William Carney
President, Sustainable San Rafael

Leslie Mendez

From: timothy hale [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, January 11, 2022 11:57 AM
To: Planning Public Comment
Subject: PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING JANUARY 11, 2022 PUBLIC COMMENT

Why can there not be a set back with less density on the south side of the development?

In Merlone Geier presentation I viewed the designer said "it will be like Emeryville, only bigger." That does not seem appropriate to the area.

Is there going to be available recreation area within the development? The center parking lbracketed by existing shops and a new grocery marked as open space does not seem ideal for renter's greenspace.

Merlone Geier statement that the existing roadways "where built for this kind of traffic" does not match the existing complaints about exit roads and freeway access. Also the Las Gallinas Sanitary already seems to have problems with yearly flooding.

Tim Hale

Leslie Mendez

From: Vikki Johnson [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, January 11, 2022 12:26 PM
To: Planning Public Comment
Subject: Planning Commission meeting - Northgate

In strong agreement with the comments submitted below by Claire – but also want to add that my only expertise being retail development, I find the layout and positioning of the retail components is not beneficial to way-finding and customer experience. Specifically as mentioned below, the parking in the middle area further alienates the walk-ability of a customer to travel from one retail door to another without crossing a parking lot. Retail requires a strong GLA and on-point merchandising in close proximity to each other to succeed. Movie theaters can be destination – retail cannot. Restaurants should open onto the center courtyard – not be freestanding pads. The separation and distance between the buildings is not conducive to impulse buying and window shopping. In today’s culture , where in-person shopping is not a necessity, it is more important than ever to create that environment as the draw for the customer. Further, with the extensive residential component, the residents will become a significant customer base, which is a different customer profile than the existing neighborhood, therefore the mix has to serve both bases. Converting an enclosed regional center to a mixed-use town center is not an easy undertaking. If Merlon Geier does not have an in-house person with that specific expertise (understandably), I would suggest they hire an outside consultant for this important role. (...can provide recommendations).

Vikki Johnson

PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING JANUARY 11, 2022 PUBLIC COMMENT

DON'T FORGET THE TOWN CENTER

Please do not allow 1000+ new dwelling units in Phase I of the Northgate development to be built in a concrete jungle with no Town Center as has been envisioned for more than 20 years. The new residents will have virtually no parkland to access. The children and pets will have no way to play outside. The only parks within .5 miles are two tiny pocket parks that are non-functional and in disrepair. We can't allow this many new residents (2,000+) to live in a place with no heart.

DON'T LEAVE OUT THE PROMENADE BIKE/WALKING PATH

Please require the owner to fulfill their promise to complete the Promenade on their two properties (Northgate and Northgate III). They promised to do this in their Project Description of March 2021.

BUILD A NEW NEIGHBORHOOD, NOT HEARTLESS HIGH-RISES ON THE SOUTH

Please require a more sensitive interface to the existing one-story Eichler homes on the South side of the site. Walkable, treelined streets, gentler set-backs, more open spaces for outdoor activities.

ONE AND TWO BEDROOM APARTMENTS ARE NOT FAMILY HOUSING

The entire development is planned as 1 and 2 bedroom rental units only. As promised by the owner, please provide options for families and require a varied palette of housing types, including ownership options such as townhomes and condos.

Also attached is RGM's comment package on the Draft EIR Scope. Been working on it all weekend due to extremely short notice!

thanks everyone!
/claire



January 11, 2022

Ms. Tricia Stevens
Project Planner, City of San Rafael Planning Division
1400 Fifth Avenue, Top Floor
San Rafael, CA 94901

RE: Northgate Mall Redevelopment Project

Dear Ms. Stevens,

PURPOSE

I am writing today to share WTB-TAM's recommendations for the Northgate Mall Redevelopment Project. WTB-TAM is a non-profit organization with a 30-year record of advocating for, designing, and funding green mobility infrastructure in Marin County and around the world.

Traffic, climate change, and a lack of affordable housing are major problems facing the citizens of San Rafael and the surrounding region. Merlone Geier Partners' vision for Northgate Town Square makes important step towards addressing these problems. However, we believe that with additional steps, Northgate Town Square could be truly transformative and serve as a national model for sustainable urban infill, transit-oriented, and bike-oriented development.

PROJECT NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT

Northgate Town Square is geographically situated at the center of the Marin County Sustainable Mobility Network. This network is composed of continuous and interconnected bicycle and non-motorized pathways that connect every major population and employment center in the county. Three of these primary pathways—the North - South Greenway, North - South Bikeway, and Northgate Promenade—converge or nearly converge right at Northgate Town Square (see Appendix Exhibit 1).

Northgate Town Square is ideally located to take advantage of this sustainable mobility network. It is within a short bike ride of parks and open space, schools, hospitals, public transportation, civic institutions, and some of the biggest employers in the County (see Appendix Exhibit 2). For this reason, we urge the City and Merlone Geier Partners to rethink the primary mobility orientation of the project from the automobile to the bicycle.

WTB-TAM urges the City of San Rafael to make approval of the Northgate Town Square project dependent on Merlone Geier Partners agreeing to pay for the design, permitting, and construction of the following bicycle-pedestrian improvements inside and just outside of the Northgate property on the City's right-of-way:



- Replace the existing unprotected Class II bike lanes on both sides of Las Gallinas Ave between Freitas Pkwy and Golden Hinde Blvd with Class IV protected bike lanes (see Appendix Exhibit 2).
- Construct a Class I multi-use path (i.e. the “Northgate Promenade”) parallel to Merrydale Rd between Las Gallinas Ave and SMART’s Marin Civic Center Station.

The two above links are both necessary and essential to connecting Northgate Town Square to sustainable transportation options like SMART and regional bike paths. The construction of these links will benefit Northgate Town Square and Merlone Geier Partners in the following ways:

- Bringing more customers to the shops, cinema, and town square
- Making the apartments more desirable by making it easier and safer for residents to commute to work and school
- Reducing the need for wasteful automobile parking, freeing up valuable land for more productive, beneficial uses

PROJECT SITE PLAN

The Site Circulation Diagram (SD-6) shows several “bicycle routes” as indicated by dotted green lines. The nature of these “bicycle routes” needs to be clarified. Are these to be fully realized bicycle facilities, such as bike lanes or multi-use paths? The Site Plan (SD-7) indicates no such facilities.

WTB-TAM urges the City of San Rafael to make approval of the Northgate Town Square project dependent on Merlone Geier Partners adapting its site plan to include Class IV protected bikeways on the following (as yet unnamed) streets within the Northgate Town Square property (see Appendix Exhibit 3):

- The street between Residential Parcel 2 and Residential Parcel 3
- The street between Residential Parcel 2 and the Cinema
- The street between Residential Parcel 1 and Residential Parcel 2
- The street between Lot 7 and Residential Parcel 6
- The street between Major 1 and Lot 1
- The street between Lot 1 and Lot 2
- The street between Lot 2 and Lot 3 (extension of Del Presidio Blvd)
- The street between Major 2 and Major 4
- The street between Residential Parcel 4 and Residential Parcel 5

These interior bikeways, like the radial strands of a spiderweb, serve to seamlessly connect those who live, work, and play at Northgate Town Square to the outside world in the safest and most environmental sustainable way possible.



WTB-TAM further urges the City of San Rafael to make approval of the Northgate Town Square project dependent on Merlone Geier Partners adapting its redevelopment plan and site plan to include completion of the Class I multi-use path that currently rings the property on the north and east sides. This path should be extended on the west and south sides of the property to make a complete 360° loop (see Appendix Exhibit 3).

When complete, there will be six points of ingress and egress to Northgate Town Square oriented to cyclists and non-motorized modes. These can be divided into three major and three minor points of ingress and egress, as summarized below:

Major Points of Ingress and Egress

- From the southeast corner of site (the intersection of Northgate Dr and Las Gallinas Ave), Las Gallinas Ave leads to the North - South Greenway (i.e. the SMART Multi-Use Pathway), which leads to Downtown San Rafael and the Larkspur Ferry Terminal. Until SMART completes the pathway gap on Puerto Suello Hill, this route temporarily follows Los Ranchitos Rd to the top of Puerto Suello Hill.
- From the eastern side of the site (the intersection of Las Gallinas Ave and Merrydale Rd), the future Northgate Promenade multi-use path will lead to SMART's Marin Civic Center Station, as well as to all destinations on the eastern side of US 101, including:
 - The Marin Civic Center and Farmer's Market
 - Marin Center Auditorium and Fairgrounds
 - Business and offices along Redwood Highway
 - The future North - South Greenway multi-use path to Smith Ranch Rd and points north in Novato
- From the northwest corner of the site (the intersection of Northgate Dr and Las Gallinas Ave), Las Gallinas Ave leads to the rest of Terra Linda, Kaiser Permanent Hospital, Vallecito Elementary School, Miller Creek Middle School, and the North - South Bikeway route to Novato.

Minor Points of Ingress and Egress

- On the southern side of the site, Nova Albion Way leads to Terra Linda High School.
- On the eastern side of the site, Thorndale Dr leads to the Villa Marin hilltop apartment complex.
- On the northern side of the site, Del Presidio Blvd leads to Los Gamos Dr and the new Kaiser San Rafael Park medical offices.



We make the following recommendations regarding bicycle parking (see Appendix Exhibit 3):

- There should be two secured bike parking spaces provided for every proposed unit in the complex.
- Residential parking garages should limit ground floor parking to accessible spaces and bike parking.
- Bike parking should be in gated, enclosed areas, preferably with security cameras, and access limited to residents only.
- Three bike parking areas should be provided for visitors to the Town Square and shops. These should be located on the northwest, east, and southwest sides of the Town Square.

We also strongly urge Merlone Geier Partners to expand the footprint of the proposed Town Square to stretch all the way from Shops 3 to Shops 2, and to complete the Town Square as part of Phase 1, rather than putting it off until 2040. This is the heart of the project. It's in the project's name. You can't have "Northgate Town Square" without the "Town Square".

Finally, we make the following recommendations to improve and fill in the gaps in the SD-5 Multi-Modal Site Connectivity Map (see Appendix Exhibit 2):

- Use the standard color scheme for different types of bikeways, as followed in the San Rafael Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan (see Appendix A Exhibit 1).
- The map should show existing Class II bike lanes on Freitas Pkwy west of Las Gallinas Ave, Las Gallinas Ave north of Freitas Pkwy, Merrydale Rd east of Las Gallinas Ave, and Civic Center Dr north of McInnis Pkwy.
- The map should show planned Class I paths along the SMART ROW north of McInnis Pkwy, on Monticello Rd west of Nova Albion Dr, Nova Albion Dr between Monticello Rd and Freitas Pkwy, Freitas Pkwy from Scotty's Market to Del Presidio Ave, Civic Center Dr from Freitas Pkwy to Professional Center Dr, and
- Civic Center Dr between Marin Center and N San Pedro Rd.

Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,



Patrick Seidler
President

Matthew Hartzell
Director of Planning & Research

cc: Leslie Mendez
Planning Manager, City of San Rafael
Stephen Logan
Vice President of Development, Merlone Geier Partners
David Geiser, AIA
Managing Director, Merlone Geier Partners
Christopher Beynon
Principal, Director of Planning and Design Services, MIG
Warren Wells
Policy and Planning Director, Marin County Bicycle Coalition
Tarrell Kullaway
Executive Director, Marin County Bicycle Coalition

Exhibit 1: Project Vicinity Primary Bikeways

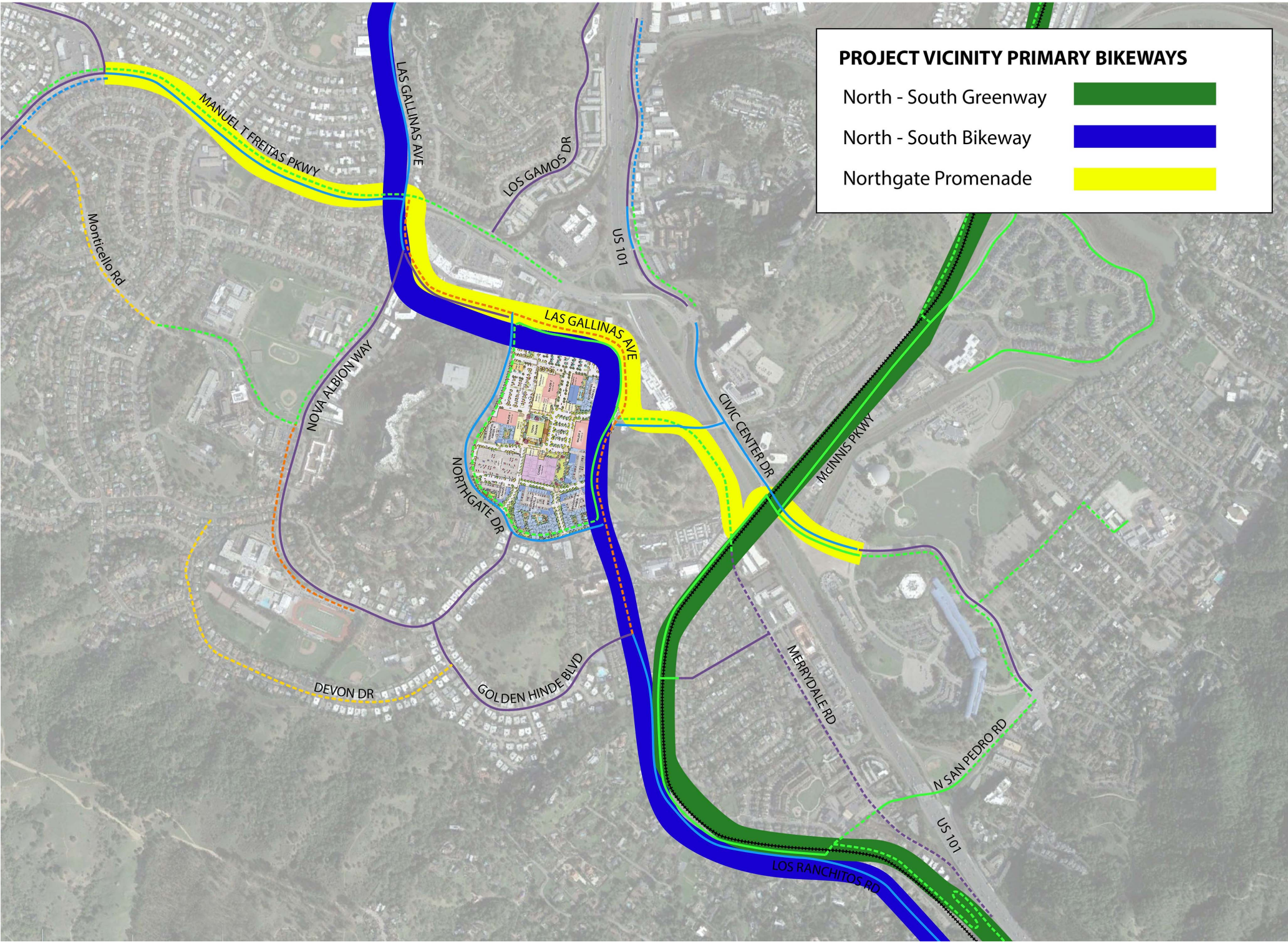
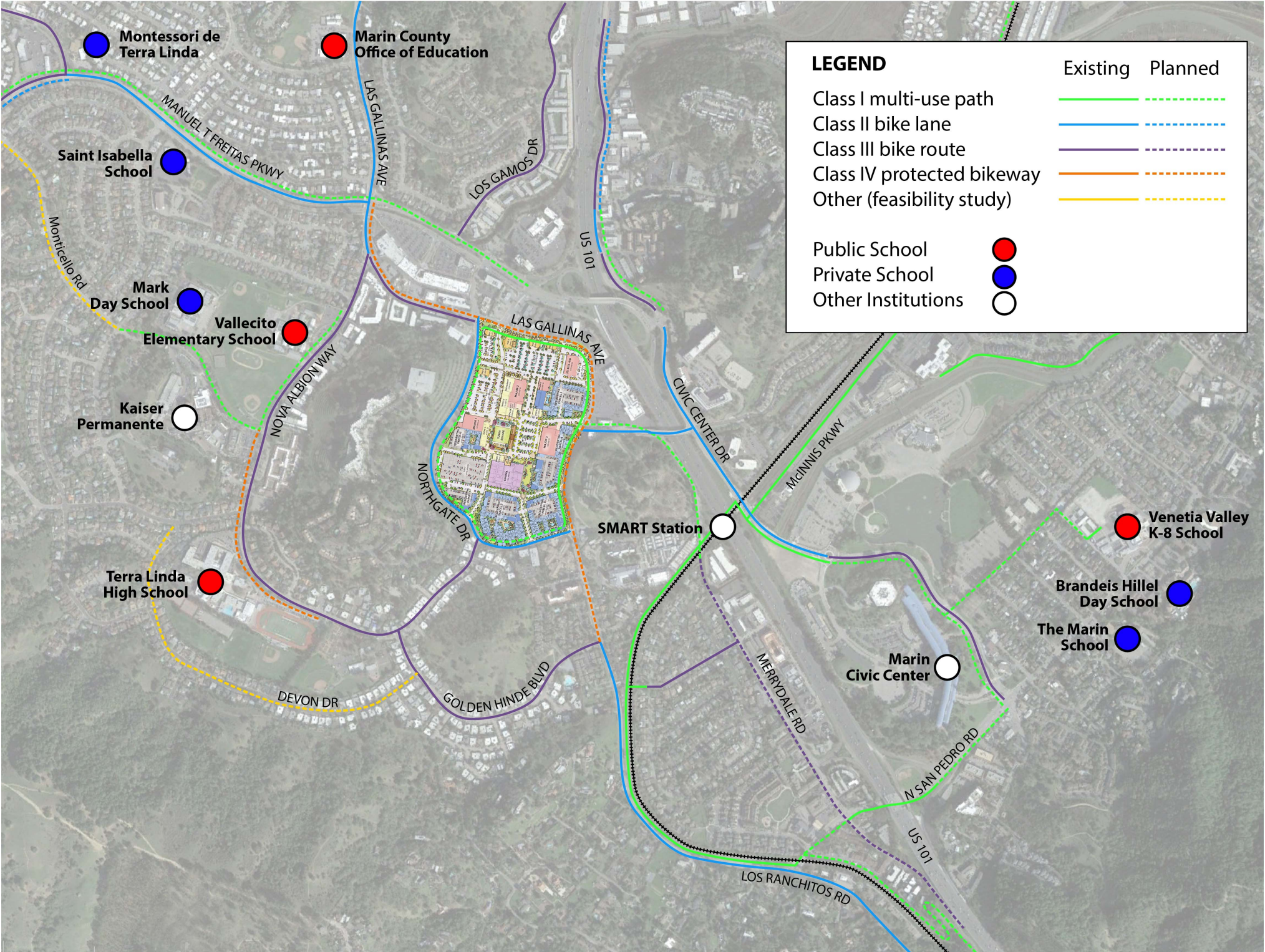


Exhibit 2: Modified SD-5 Multi-Modal Site Connectivity Map



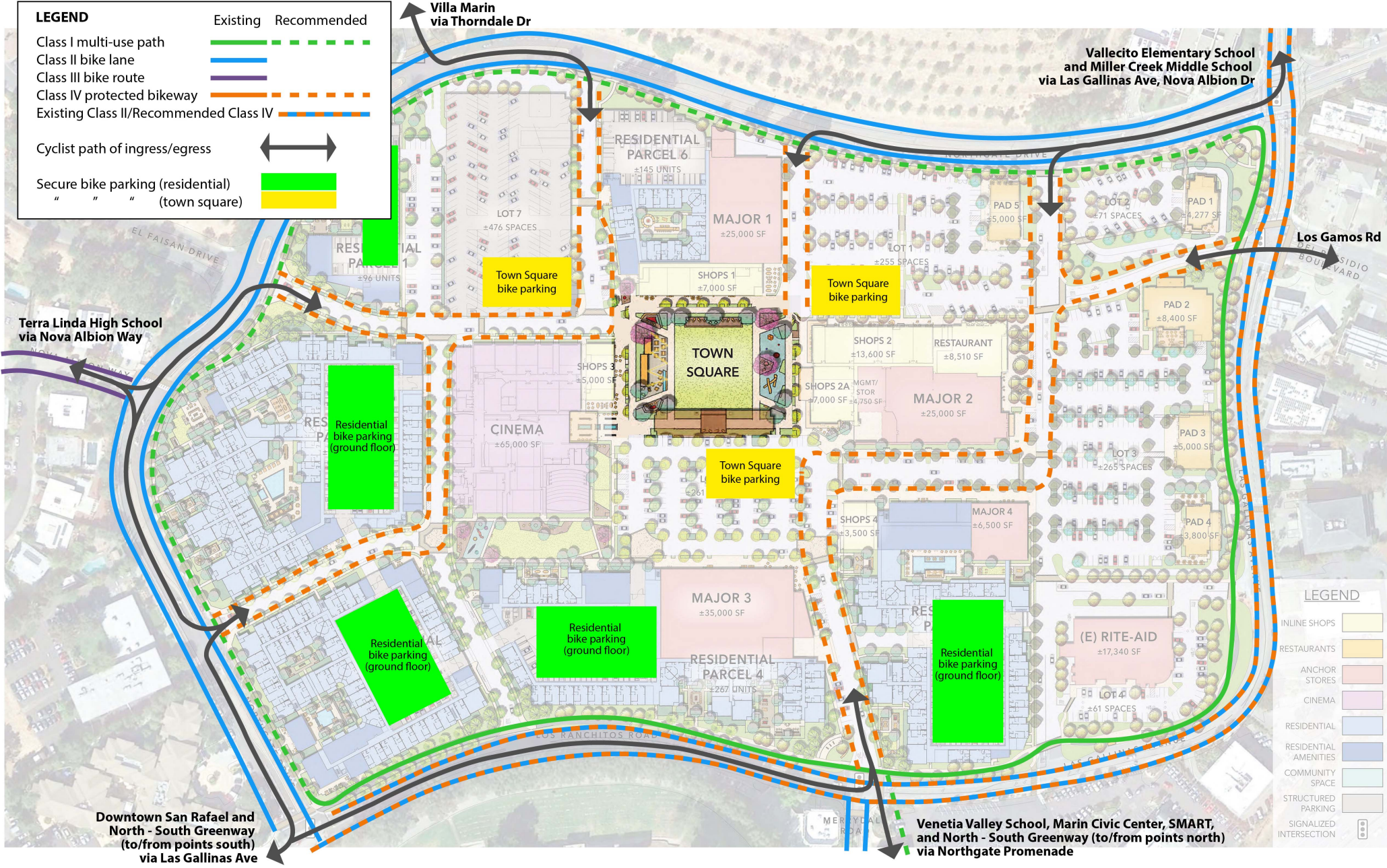
LEGEND

	Existing	Planned
Class I multi-use path		
Class II bike lane		
Class III bike route		
Class IV protected bikeway		
Other (feasibility study)		
Public School		
Private School		
Other Institutions		

Exhibit 3: Site Plan with recommended bicycle facilities and regional connections

LEGEND

	Existing	Recommended
Class I multi-use path		
Class II bike lane		
Class III bike route		
Class IV protected bikeway		
Existing Class II/Recommended Class IV		
Cyclist path of ingress/egress		
Secure bike parking (residential)		
" " " (town square)		



LEGEND

INLINE SHOPS	
RESTAURANTS	
ANCHOR STORES	
CINEMA	
RESIDENTIAL	
RESIDENTIAL AMENITIES	
COMMUNITY SPACE	
STRUCTURED PARKING	
SIGNALIZED INTERSECTION	

Northgate Mall Redevelopment Project EIR

Rachel Zwillinger [REDACTED]

Tue 1/11/2022 1:27 PM

To: Planning Public Comment <PlanningPublicComment@cityofsanrafael.org>; Tricia Stevens <Tricia.Stevens@cityofsanrafael.org>

Ms. Stevens,

I live on Devon Drive, approximately .5 miles from the proposed project site. I'm writing to request robust consideration of traffic impacts to communities surrounding the project site. Under existing conditions, traffic on Nova Albion Way is a major problem, particularly during morning and afternoon commute hours. Traffic from Terra Linda High School often backs up all the way to Northgate Drive, and the traffic continues past Kaiser and Vallecito Elementary School. Adding a high-density development to this area will exacerbate these traffic problems, and I am eager to understand what mitigation measures are being proposed.

I am also concerned about parking in the region surrounding the project area, and request that the EIR investigate parking impacts in nearby neighborhoods. I have noticed that other apartment complexes in the region -- particularly those across from Vallecito Elementary School -- include insufficient parking, and have had a major impact on parking availability in surrounding neighborhoods. How will the project be designed to accurately account for residents' parking needs and mitigate impacts to surrounding communities? For example, will the city consider resident-only overnight parking permits for neighborhoods surrounding the development to ensure adequate parking for current residents?

Many thanks for considering these comments.

Rachel Zwillinger



HOUSING CRISIS ACTION

...To Create, Build, and Preserve Much-Needed Housing in Marin County

housingcrisisaction@gmail.com | housingcrisisaction.org

COALITION MEMBERS

Coalition for a Livable Marin

Community Land Trust Association of Marin

Homeward Bound of Marin

League of Women Voters of Marin

Legal Aid of Marin

Marin County Young Democrats

Marin Environmental Housing Collaborative

Marin Kids

Michael Barber Architects

North Bay Leadership Council

San Geronimo Affordable Housing Association

San Rafael Chamber of Commerce

Sustainable Marin

Sustainable San Rafael

United Educators Association for Affordable Housing

January 11, 2022

Subject: Northgate Town Square

Dear San Rafael Planning Commission,

On behalf of Housing Crisis Action, a robust network of over 800 Marin County housing advocates and 17 organizations working to tackle our housing crisis, we ask the Planning Commission to direct the EIR consulting team to study several alternatives.

We ask that the team explore alternatives and analyze the impact of including more overall housing units and more affordable units throughout the project, as well as the alternative and impact of not doing so. Northgate is a rare opportunity to create housing at various income levels in an ideal location and contribute to the 3,000 housing units needed for the next RHNA cycle. It's imperative to understand the impact of building the currently proposed project and the impact of building this project to its fullest potential. Specifically, we would like to see an analysis of an alternative with at least 10% more overall housing units than currently proposed and an alternative with at least 10% of the units being designated as affordable.

As a group of business leaders, union workers, environmental advocates, public servants, and educators living and working in Marin, we're excited about the opportunity to revitalize Northgate Mall into a new mixed-use town center with new homes near transit and jobs at varying level of affordability. We hope the EIR will explore alternatives that utilize this unique site and its potential for more housing and more affordability.

Sincerely,

The Housing Crisis Action Steering Committee

Cynthia Murray *CEO, North Bay Leadership Council*

Jeff Bialik *Marin Organizing Committee*

Diana Conti *Trustee, College of Marin*

Linda M. Jackson *Program Director, Aging Action Initiative*

Larry Kennings *Board member, Marin Environmental Housing Collaborative*

Ethan Strull *Marin Housing Activist*

Joanne Webster *President and CEO, San Rafael Chamber of Commerce*