

*Expanding the range of opportunities for all by
developing, managing and promoting quality
affordable housing and diverse communities.*



March 11, 2022

City of San Rafael
1400 Fifth Avenue
San Rafael, CA 94901

Re: Northgate Mall Redevelopment, Affordable Housing Component

Dear Ms. Stevens and City Staff,

EAH Housing is eager to partner with Merlone Geier on affordable housing for the Northgate Mall redevelopment. We have a long history in San Rafael, where our organization was founded and is headquartered.

As envisioned in Parcel 1 of the master plan, our recommendation and firm belief is that the development of affordable housing in the initial phase of the revitalization of Northgate Mall has its own parcel as part of the broader redevelopment plan. The standalone building will allow the greatest number of affordable units, diversify the mix of income levels, ensure that the needed services are available for residents, and that these apartments remain affordable for the future.

Building a standalone affordable apartment development will best leverage the necessary financing resources available to create the greatest number of affordable apartments. As modeled with 96 apartments, the affordable development exceeds Merlone Geier's inclusionary obligation in the first phase and through Parcels 1-4. As a standalone building, EAH Housing may also access additional financial resources such as leveraging the Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities Fund (AHSC), which could support the development of affordable apartments and provide the City with funding for transportation infrastructure and contributions to local transportation agency needs.

EAH Housing would be unable to provide the aforementioned services if the affordable apartments were scattered within the master-planned community. A standalone development would also best serve affordable housing residents at Northgate Mall as EAH Housing would manage the property and provide services to its residents. Programs for families include job training and job search programs, parenting classes, financial literacy, tax preparation

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assistance, English as a second language and translation services, expanded learning and summer programs for youth, after-school homework help, and training through our on-site computer learning centers and technology lounges.

The perception that scattering the Affordable apartments throughout the development somehow provides greater social benefits is not the reality. It is true that concentrating affordable housing in low-cost neighborhoods leads to increased adverse outcomes and economic integration in mixed-income communities offers dramatic benefits, especially to low-income children. But the same research consistently finds that the benefits of integration come from locating in opportunity-rich, healthier, and safer *neighborhoods* and not from direct social interaction with higher-income neighbors. Meaning that while neighborhood-level integration is essential, building-by-building integration may offer no additional social benefits.

EAH Housing is committed to our properties for the long term. In our 52-year history, we have never sold a property that we developed. As a standalone development, the affordable housing component will have stable, consistent ownership and an owner committed to keeping the development affordable for the future. We are committed to continuing our work with the City of San Rafael and Merlone Geier Partners to ensure that the needs of low-income residents of San Rafael are not only met, but these families are given the opportunity to thrive.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Laura Hall".

Laura Hall
President and CEO, EAH Housing