



**SAN RAFAEL**  
THE CITY WITH A MISSION

Community Development Department – Planning Division

Meeting Date: May 17, 2022  
Case Numbers: PLAN21-039, ZC21-001, UP21-007, ED21-024, TS21-002, IS21-002 & DA21-001  
Project Planner: Tricia Stevens  
tricia.stevens@cityofsanrafael.org  
Agenda Item: 2

## REPORT TO DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

**SUBJECT: Northgate Town Square Project.** Requests 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 at 5800 Northgate Drive into a new, phased mixed-use development with approximately 225,000 square feet of retail and 1,441 residential units on a 44.76-acre site. APNs: 175-060-12, -40, -59, -61, -66 & -67; General Commercial (GC) District; MeloneGeier Partners, owner/applicant.

An EIR is being prepared for this project pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act.

### BACKGROUND

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 up to 1,441 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, the project should 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.

The proposed project was previously reviewed by the Design Review Board (DRB) on September 14, 2021, in a joint study session with the Planning Commission. This Study Session was an opportunity for early Planning Commission and Design Review Board project feedback on land use and design and allowed early opportunity for public input. Guiding Principles for project development were presented and served as a guide for preliminary review.

The Board and the Planning Commission discussed the project and made comments on the design. See attached memorandum (Exhibit 3) summarizing comments made by the Board and Commission.

On March 14, 2022, the applicant submitted revised plans. Staff requests the Board review the project revisions to determine whether the Board's comments have been adequately addressed. If so, staff requests the Board provide a recommendation to the Planning Commission regarding the proposed site plan layout, architecture, and landscaping.

This staff report focuses on the revisions to the site plan dated March 14, 2022 (Exhibit 1). The September 14, 2021, staff report is provided as Exhibit 2 and includes a thorough discussion of the overall project including requested entitlements, and the project's general consistency with applicable design-related policies, standards, and guidelines.

## SUMMARY OF REVISIONS

The Northgate Mall Redevelopment project proposes a comprehensive redevelopment of the existing 44.76-acre mall into an open-air "main street experience," surrounded by mixed-use development of retail and up to 1,441 residences. The Project proposes to reduce the existing commercial retail from 775,677 sq. ft. to 225,100 square feet and construct high-density multifamily residential buildings in the form of townhome units and five-seven story apartment buildings.

The complete revised plans received on March 14, 2022, can be viewed at the link under Exhibit 1. The applicants have submitted detailed plans, including retail and residential architectural plans, civil plans, landscape plans, and a Master Sign Program. Although some details, such as fencing and lighting, have not yet been provided, these details can be reviewed at staff level.

Following is an overview of the revised plans.

Figure I – Revised 2025 Proposed Site Plan



Figure 2 – Revised 2040 Proposed Site Plan



Following is a summary of the major changes from previously submitted plans, with corresponding letters:

- **Town Square.** An enlarged 50,000 square foot town square destination is proposed to be constructed in Phase I. **Labeled A in 2025 Plan.**
- **Housing Choices.** 85 three-story, for-sale townhomes have been added along the southern parcel. The previously proposed 224 multi-family apartments would be transferred along Los Ranchitos/Las Gallinas Avenue. The project requests a height bonus/concession for a multi-family apartment building with a total height of 75 feet. **Labeled B in both 2025 and 2040 Plans.**
- **Affordable Housing.** EAH Housing has joined the applicant team and will create 96 new units of affordable rental housing within Phase I. Phase II will include an additional 42 affordable units distributed throughout the market rate housing. A total of 10% of the units would be affordable to meet the City's Affordable Housing requirements. **Labeled C in 2025 Plans.**
- **Bicycle Amenities.** Between the town square and movie theater, the project proposes a Cycle Center with a 9,000-square-foot outdoor area. **Labeled D in 2025 Plans.**
- **Site Connectivity.** New multimodal pathways have been integrated throughout the interior of the site. **Labeled E in 2025 Plans.**
- **Sustainability.** The project is proposing all of the residential buildings to be 100% electric to reflect the goals within the City of San Rafael's Climate Change Action Plan 2030.

- **Community Uses.** Next to the town square, the project would provide a new location for the city's existing satellite public library and proposed to expand the space to include a public meeting room for use by local community groups. **Labeled F in 2025 Plans.**

Revised Elevations

Following are images of the revised elevations. See project plans for full set of drawings.

Figure 3 - Aerial View 2025



**NORTHGATE TOWN SQUARE**  
REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

MARCH 09, 2022

2025 - AERIAL VIEW

MerloneGeier  
Partners

CSW ST 2



FIELD  
PAOLI

SD-14

This image is an aerial view looking from the south to the north showing the overall scale and massing of the project.

Figure 4 – View of Town Square and Pavilion



This image a view of the proposed Town Square with amenities and pavilion, looking from north to south towards the cinema.

Figure 5 – View of Residential 4 Seven Story Apartments



This view shows the seven-story apartments (Residential 4) looking easterly from the Town Square.

Figure 6 – View of Cinema with Bicycle



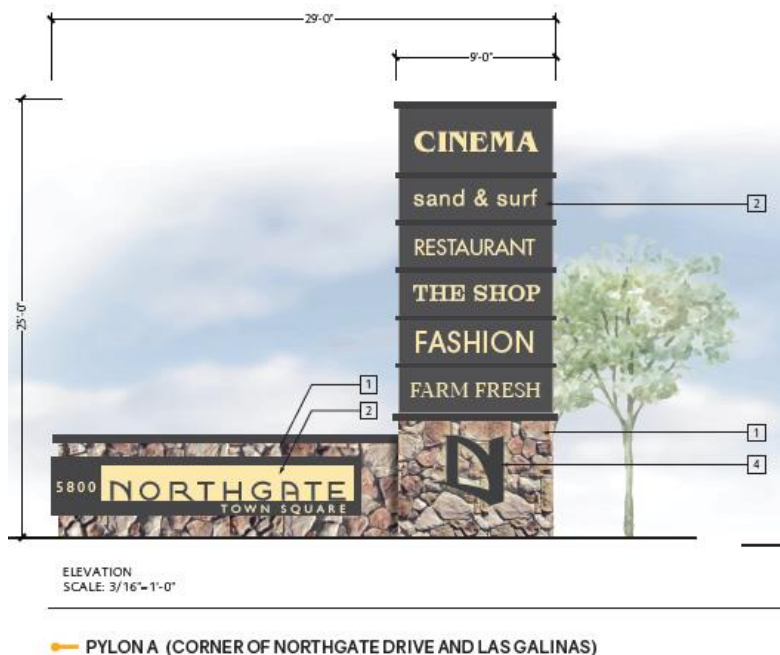
This view shows the front of the cinema with the bicycle area in front, looking southerly.

Figure 7 – View of Residential 3 Townhomes



This view shows the proposed three-story townhomes looking northerly from Northgate Drive, showing the massing from the residential areas to the south.

Figure 8 – Pylon Sign A



This image shows the proposed main entryway sign at the corner of Northgate Drive and Las Galinas.

### **DRB PURVIEW**

The purview of the DRB is to provide professional design analysis, evaluation and judgment as to the completeness, competence and appropriateness of development proposals for their use and setting and to recommend approval, approval with conditions, redesign or denial based on design standards adopted by the city council (SRMC Section 14.25.070). The applicable design standards for this project are the San Rafael Design Guidelines (see summary below), General Plan Policies NH-4.2 and 4.3 (Exhibit 5), , and the Environmental and Design Review Permits review criteria in San Rafael Municipal Code (SRMC) Section 14.25.050 (Exhibit 5).

This DRB meeting is an opportunity for the DRB and the public to review the project's design. The purview of the DRB is particularly relevant for the following items for this project:

- The design of the Town Square and it's relationship to the overall layout.
- The bicycle and pedestrian circulation system to ensure optimal connectivity.
- The architecture of the proposed buildings to ensure the design is cohesive and unifying.
- The proposed landscaping.
- The entryway features to ensure a sense of arrival, including the proposed pylon signs at the two key entries

The entire text of the San Rafael Design Guidelines can be accessed on the City's web page using the following link:

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

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

#### 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.

### **NEIGHBORHOOD CORRESPONDENCE**

Notice of hearing for the project was conducted in accordance with noticing requirements contained in Chapter 29 of the Zoning Ordinance. A Notice of Public Hearing was mailed to all property owners and occupants within a 500-foot radius of the subject site and all other interested parties, 15 calendar days prior to this hearing. Public notice was also posted on the subject site 15 calendar days prior to the date of this hearing.

Responsible Growth Marin has submitted additional comments dated April 11, 2022 (Exhibit 4). Exhibit 6 provides an additional public comment dated May 10, 2022. Any additional comments will be forwarded to the DRB prior to the meeting.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff is requesting the DRB provide a recommendation to the Planning Commission on site layout; bicycle and pedestrian circulation; architecture; landscaping; and entryway features/signage. Although further review of details, such as lighting and fencing, would occur at the staff level, DRB may wish to provide recommendations on standards for review. Acknowledging that the project is large and complicated, the DRB may determine an additional meeting is required to review all aspects of the project. The Board may also recommend design-related conditions of approval if deemed necessary.

### **EXHIBITS**

1. Project Plans *available electronically at <https://www.cityofsanrafael.org/northgate-town-square/>*
2. September 14, 2021, Study Session Staff Report *available electronically at [this link](#).*
3. Summary of Planning Commission and DRB comments from study session
4. Responsible Growth Marin letter dated April 11, 2022
5. Applicable General Plan and Zoning Ordinance text relating to design
6. Lacour comment letter dated May 10, 2022.





# SAN RAFAEL

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THE CITY WITH A MISSION

Community Development Department – Planning Division

## MEMORANDUM

TO: MerloneGeier Partners

FROM: Leslie Mendez  
Planning Manager

DATE: September 27, 2021

Thank you for your detailed and robust plan for the Northgate Mall redevelopment, as well as the collaborative presentations and discussions with the City of San Rafael and greater community. Below is a high-level summary of comments provided by the Planning Commission, Design Review Board and community members. We look forward to meeting to discuss the next steps in addressing the items below. .

### Community Input

The overall comments from the community were positive. The Community understands the need for the proposed densities and expressed support for this. Comments about the project also included the following:

- The North San Rafael Promenade should extend directly into and through the site. Provide connections to the SMART train.
- Town square should be designed in manner that is a keystone for the Terra Linda community with amenities, gathering places, and seamless accessibility for all modes

### Planning Commission-Policy Items

- Expressed support for the densities proposed (one commissioner suggested maximum density allowed).
- Expressed an interest in seeing a mix of for sale and rental housing.

- The location of the affordable housing parcel is acceptable provided the remainder of the affordable housing be demonstrably dispersed throughout the project.
- Incorporate a viable and community-oriented town square in the first stage (Phase I) of development.
- Make town square a keystone for the Terra Linda community with visible amenities, gathering places and easily accessible by pedestrians and cyclist.
- Include internal and external bicycle and pedestrian
- Consider a reduction in parking
- Incorporate strong sustainability elements. Provide plan details demonstrating a high level of sustainable elements for energy and water efficiency, and low impact development standards.

### **Design Review Board Items**

The DRB the following design related comments

- Town square should be designed in manner that is a keystone for the Terra Linda community with amenities, gathering places, and seamless accessibility for all modes. The DRB encouraged the applicant to find a solution that reduced the amount of parking surrounding the park.
- Ensure that the architecture design is cohesive and unifying. Avoid long blank walls, consider ground floor pedestrian passageways, and ensure active, pedestrian-oriented ground-floor frontages.
- All entryways should have a strong “sense of arrival” with gateway features that emphasize pedestrian and bicycle connections and promote a distinct sense of place.
- The DRB agreed with the Planning Commission comments regarding sustainability and including the use of low impact development standards.
- The North San Rafael Promenade should extend directly into and through the site

To: Tricia Stevens

cc: Leslie Mendez

Re: Revised Merlone Geier Town Square Plans

We greatly appreciate that Merlone Geier has put forward revised plans incorporating input from the City, Planning Commission, Design Review Board, Responsible Growth in Marin (RGM) and the community at large. We are heartened especially by their willingness to work to make this a better project on several fronts.

Now that we've had a chance to review the plans, we would like to meet with you to address several of the following concerns:

- 1) Insufficient Open Space (Refer to Exhibit 1)
  - a) Less than 4 acres for 3,000 to 4,000 people is not adequate to provide a healthy environment for the new residents and surrounding community. City of San Rafael GP 2040 Standard is 4 acres/1,000 so this design falls far short of the City's own goals and certainly does not meet the aspirations of the community.
  - b) For the ownership sub-division (Parcel 2), the Quimby Act is enforceable, i.e., for 500 people the City can require 2 acres for that piece alone.
  - c) Phase II increases residential units by 413 and approximately 1,456 residents but removes the Public Lawn at the west end. This green space should not be eliminated. Parking Lot 6 to the west of the Pavilion should be converted to additional open green space to accommodate additional residents and units in Phase II.
- 2) Ideas to Create a Larger Town Square: (current plans show about 1 acre but 3 acres should be a target size)
  - a) The bike repair area doesn't need its own dedicated outdoor gathering space. This space could function at the edge of the Town Square and maybe incorporate a beer pub? Bike parking is great and could be accommodated logically around the Town Square in a few places to encourage alternative transportation.
  - b) The current 30 parking spaces between the Town Square and bike repair/cinema entrance should be eliminated permanently to increase the size of the Town Square. It would create a place to stroll, sit, eat in a hardscaped urban-like setting under a canopy of trees. This would directly connect the retail area to the Town Square without interruption by cars/parking. If a fire lane is needed, this can be accommodated in the hardscape plan for emergency situations. This will effectively increase the size of the Town Square from approx. 1 acre to 1.5 acres. The food trucks, booths, etc. can be relocated to Lot 6 for special events in Phase 1.
  - c) The Pavilion should be accessed from both east and west sides so the Lot 6 parking area to the west can become expanded park for larger crowds at concerts/events in Phase 1. (Trees currently blocking the western access.)
  - d) In Phase 2, Lot 6 should be permanently dedicated to the Town Square. This will hopefully achieve the full 3-acre goal for the Town Square.
  - e) The dog park should be accommodated at one of the pocket parks and not in Town Square where people will be sitting on the lawn, etc. Not everyone wants to be near a dog park.
  - f) Capacities for various events in the Town Square should be noted on detailed program diagrams showing a range of functions/activities.
- 3) How will Shadow, Noise and Light affect the Town Square and Surrounding Neighbors?

- a) Shadow
  - i) The 7-story bldg. (#4) will most likely create shading and be massive. Is 7-stories necessary? That section of Los Ranchitos is going to feel like a mountain as one proceeds along Los Ranchitos
  - ii) Will the 7-stories “looming” over the Town Square affect the quality of light?
  - iii) Will the building create a wind tunnel?
  - iv) Will Building #3 which is adjacent be affected?
- b) Noise
  - i) How will noise from rooftop pools and Town Square events be analyzed and mitigated to avoid disturbing Quail Hill, Eichler and the new Northgate Townhouse neighbors?
- c) Light - As with noise, light can be a concern from rooftops and from nighttime events, will the City require lighting to be ground level without up-lighting?

We would like to understand the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) studies in more detail. We know that a noise study is included in the EIR. We want to know what criteria is used to measure noise and whether noise measurement to the existing residents is included?

Will shadow, wind, and light studies be included in the EIR? If so, how will this be measured, analyzed, and will impact to existing surrounding neighborhoods be included in the studies?

Often drawings/plans make spaces look bigger and nicer than they will be in real life. Therefore, RGM requests the City ask Merlone Geier develop 3D computer-rendered visual simulations. This would provide the Planning Commissioners, City Staff, and the public a proportional perspective and realistically show how the project components will really look given this is such a huge complex project spanning 20 years and changing Terra Linda’s landscape and character forever.

Tricia, please send some time options so we can meet to discuss all these items which critically impact the community’s quality of life. Attached as Exhibit 2 is a detailed analysis of Merlone Geier’s revised plan which will help us stay focused when we meet with you.

FYI - RGM has already received many comments and similar questions from our supporters. Below are some excerpts from emails so you have a flavor for the community sentiment.

Regards,

Grace Geraghty, RGM Executive Director

Claire Halenbeck, IIDA, CID, RGM Community Vision Team Leader

Attachments:

Exhibit 1 - RGM Analysis of Open Space in Merlone Geier Revised Project Plans

Exhibit 2 - 2022-03-14 Merlone Geier RESUB Residential Plans Northgate Project

**Excerpts from emails:**

“I want housing and retail but am totally against the density. 1400+ units and over 4000 people is simply too much!”

“I’m happy they included owned properties in the development in the form of 85 townhomes. This creates ‘pride of ownership’ and a stable anchor for the entire residential component of Northgate.”

“Noise and light pollution must be kept to a minimum. How will the city measure and mitigate to existing residents?”

“The town square is a bit bigger but not nearly enough to accommodate the thousands of new residents plus existing.”

“What about the water, classroom size, traffic on single lane streets, this is too much, makes no sense!”

2022-03-14 Merlone Geier RESUB Residential Plans Northgate Project

RESIDENTIAL PARCELS										
PHASE 1										
Parcel	# floors above ground	# units	*max residents	ground floor courtyards	roof deck	outdoor space per person	parking	parking per max residents	pool	pool location
Res. 1	5	96	408	11,223	-	25	96	24%	no	
Res. 2	3	85	525	12,969		22	194	37%	no	
Res. 3	6	280	883	10,665	8,847	16	471	53%	yes	rooftop
Res. 4	7	446	1545	14,498	9,452	16	845	55%	yes	rooftop
<b>TOTALS</b>		<b>907</b>	<b>3,361</b>	<b>49,355</b>	<b>18,299</b>		<b>1,606</b>			
PHASE 2										
Parcel		# units	*max residents	ground floor courtyards	roof deck	outdoor space per person	parking	parking per max residents	pool	pool location
Res. 5	5	266	866	19,618	1,213	24	458	53%	yes	ground level
Res. 6	5	147	592	9,343	-	16	250	42%	yes	ground level
<b>TOTALS</b>		<b>413</b>	<b>1,458</b>	<b>28,961</b>	<b>1,213</b>		<b>708</b>			
<b>GRAND TOTAL PHASE I &amp; 2</b>		<b>1,320</b>	<b>4,819</b>	<b>78,316</b>	<b>19,512</b>		<b>2,314</b>			

COMMON OPEN SPACE AREAS		
	SF	Acres
Phase I	97,396	2.24
Phase II	71,419	1.64

ASSUMPTIONS RE: MAX RESIDENTS	
*max residents per unit type calculation	
Studio	2
1BR	3
2BR	5
3BR	7

TOTAL OPEN SPACES		
Phase I	SF	Acres
Courtyards	49,355	1.13
Rooftop	18,299	0.42
Commons	97,396	2.24
<b>Subtotal P1</b>	<b>165,050</b>	<b>3.79</b>
Totals P1 and P2		
Courtyards	78,316	1.80
Rooftop	19,512	0.45
Commons	71,419	1.64
<b>GRAND TOTAL P1 and P2</b>	<b>165,482</b>	<b>3.80</b>

NOTES:

City of San Rafael GP 2040 Standard 4 acres/1,000 new residents	1,000 residents	2,000 residents	3,000 residents	4,000 residents
SF	174,240	348,480	522,720	696,960
acres	4	8	12	16

SR Standard: Ownership Parcel 2 - 525 Residents	SF	87,120
	acres	2
Provided in MG Plans: Parcel 2 - 525 Residents	SF	12,969
	acres	0.30

## RGM Analysis of Open Space in Merlone Geier Revised Project Plans

### TOWN SQUARE AND OVERALL PROJECT OPEN SPACE

- Approx. 3.8 acres is not adequate to provide a healthy environment for the new community. San Rafael GP2040 states 4 acres per 1,000 new residents.
  - Phase I: Based on RGM calculations, Phase I could house a maximum 3,361 new residents. (\*see calculation assumptions below). Open space is provided by housing block and in public areas.
    - Residential Open Space
      - Ground Floor Courtyards: 49,335 SF
      - Roof Decks: 18,299 SF (Block 3 and 4 only)
    - Community Open Space
      - Town Square: 47,818 SF (approx. 1 acre)
      - Bike Hub: 14,025
      - Open Space at Kohls: 25,977 SF (this is eliminated in Phase II)
      - Open Space near BJ's 8,984 SF
    - Phase I: Total Combined Open Space: 3.79 acres
  - Phase II: Based on RGM calculations, Phase II could house an additional maximum 1,458 residents and plans show a reduction in Community Open Space.
    - Phase II: Total Combined Open Space: 3.8 acres
- One acre is not adequate for the Town Square. A minimum of 3 acres should be the target size.
  - RGM requests programmatic studies of the Town Square showing the City/public the capacity for a variety of events and functions.
    - Performance Event (how many people could be standing and/or seated)
    - Food Truck event
    - Farmers' Market event
    - Art/Craft show
    - Daily capacity of seated areas

## EXHIBIT 5

### APPLICABLE GENERAL PLAN AND ZONING ORDINANCE SECTIONS RELATING TO DESIGN

#### City of San Rafael 2040 General Plan

##### **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.*

##### **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.*

#### City of San Rafael Zoning Ordinance Section 14.25.050

##### **14.25.050 - Review criteria.**

**C. Design Criteria.** Review shall be guided by the following criteria to assure that, with regard to buildings, structures and physical improvements, each proposed development shall carry out the purposes of this chapter, the general plan policies and any design plans. Any or all of the following criteria may, upon recommendation of the design review board, be waived by the planning commission when the applicant has demonstrated that alternative design concepts carry out the objectives of this chapter and where such development is consistent with the



general plan. Hillside residential design criteria may be waived by the city council with the following findings:

1. The project design alternative meets the stated objectives of the guidelines to preserve the inherent characteristics of hillside sites, display sensitivity to the natural hillside setting and compatibility with nearby hillside neighborhoods, and maintain a strong relationship to the natural setting; and
2. Alternative design solutions which minimize grading, retain more of the project site in its natural state, minimize visual impacts, protect significant trees, or protect natural resources result in a demonstrably superior project with greater sensitivity to the natural setting and compatibility with and sensitivity to nearby structures.

**D. Competent Design.** The development plans shall be designed by, and bear the signature of a person who, under the building code, has been designated as legally competent to submit such development proposal. Plans for a development subject to a major environmental and design review permit before the design review board shall be prepared by, and bear the signature of, an architect and/or landscape architect licensed by the state of California Department of Consumer Affairs.

**E. Site Design.** There should be a harmonious relationship between structures within the development and between the structures and the site. Proposed structures and site development should be related accordant to existing development in the vicinity. There must be a consistent organization of materials and a balanced relationship of major elements.

1. Views. Major views of the San Pablo Bay, wetlands, bay frontage, the Canal, Mt. Tamalpais and the hills should be preserved and enhanced from public streets and public vantage points. In addition, respect views of St. Raphael's Church up "A" Street.
2. Site Features and Constraints. Respect site features and recognize site constraints by minimizing grading, erosion and removal of natural vegetation. Sensitive areas such as highly visible hillsides, steep, unstable or hazardous slopes, creeks and drainageways, and wildlife habitat should be preserved and respected.
3. Access, Circulation and Parking. The development should provide good vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian circulation and access, on-site and in relation to the surrounding area, including public streets, waterways, shorelines and open space areas. Safe and convenient parking areas should be designed to provide easy access to building entrances. Parking facilities should detract as little as possible from the design of proposed or neighboring structures. Entrances to parking structures should be well-defined and should include materials compatible with those of the parking garage. Traffic capacity of adjoining streets must be considered.
4. Energy-Efficient Design. The site design shall show that due regard has been given to orientation of structures to streets and climatic considerations.
5. Drainage. Special attention shall be given to proper site surface drainage and an adequate drainage system. (Note: The details of drainage systems shall be subject to approval of the director of the department of public works.)
6. Utility Service. Utility connections shall be installed underground. Proposed method of sanitary sewage disposal for all buildings shall be indicated. Refuse collection areas shall be screened and located in areas convenient both to users and to persons who make collections. There shall be adequate ingress and egress to all utilities. (Note: Recycling facilities must meet Standard of Resolution 93-57.)

**F. Architecture.** The project architecture should be harmoniously integrated in relation to the architecture in the vicinity in terms of colors and materials, scale and building design. The

design should be sensitive to and compatible with historic and architecturally significant buildings in the vicinity, and should enhance important community gateways, view corridors and waterways as identified in the general plan.

1. Design Elements and Approaches. Design elements and approaches which are encouraged include:
  - a. Creation of interest in the building elevation;
  - b. Pedestrian-oriented design in appropriate locations;
  - c. Energy-efficient design;
  - d. Provision of a sense of entry;
  - e. Variation in building placement and height;
  - f. Dwelling units accessible to the mobility-impaired;
  - g. Equal attention to design of all facades in sensitive locations;
  - h. Bedrooms and decks oriented away from high noise sources;
  - i. Common usable areas should offer residents a convenient and attractive place to exercise, relax and meet one another;
  - j. Private yard areas should be oriented away from high noise sources and take advantage of view opportunities and solar orientation.
2. Materials and Colors. Materials and colors should be consistent with the context of the surrounding area. To minimize contrast of the structure with its background as viewed from the surrounding neighborhood, color selection shall coordinate with the predominant colors and values of the surrounding landscape and architecture. High-quality building materials are required. In hillside areas, as identified in [Section 14.12.020](#) of this title, natural materials and colors in the earth tone and woodnote range are generally preferred. Other colors and materials may be used which are appropriate to the architectural style, harmonious with the site and/or compatible with the character of the surrounding environment.
  - a. Earthtone/woodtone colors are considered to be various natural shades of reddish-brown, brown, grey, tan, ocher, umber, gold, sand, blue and green.
  - b. Natural materials include adobe, slump block, brick, stone, stucco, wood shakes, shingles and siding, and tile roofs.
  - c. Concrete surfaces shall be colored, textured, sculptured and/or patterned to serve a design as well as a structural function.
  - d. Metal buildings, roofs, or finishes that develop an attractive oxidized finish (such as copper or weathering steel) may be used. Unpainted metal, galvanized metal or metal subject to rusting is discouraged.
  - e. Glare-reducing and color-harmonizing finishes may be required on glass surfaces when they constitute fifty percent (50%) or more of a wall or building face, or when they permit a view of pipes, utilities and other service units.
  - f. Reflective glass, such as mirror or glazed, is discouraged. Such glass may be prohibited where it has an adverse impact, such as glare on pedestrian or automotive traffic or on adjacent structures.
  - g. Roof materials shall minimize reflectivity.
3. Walls, Fences, and Screening. Walls, fences and screening shall be used to screen parking and loading areas, refuse collection areas and mechanical equipment from view. Screening of mechanical equipment shall be designed as an integrated architectural component of the building and the landscape. Utility meters and transformers shall be incorporated into the overall project design.
4. Exterior Lighting. Light sources should provide safety for the building occupants, but not create a glare or hazard on adjoining streets or be annoying to adjacent properties or residential areas.

5. Signs. Signs shall be designed consistent with the guidelines in [Chapter 14.19](#), Signs.

**G. Landscape Design.** The natural landscape should be preserved in its natural state, insofar as practicable, by minimizing grading, and tree and rock removal. The landscaping shall be designed as an integral enhancement of the site, sensitive to natural site features.

1. Outdoor Amenity Areas. Outdoor amenity areas should be designed to minimize noise impacts on adjoining uses.
2. Water-Efficient Landscape Design. Water conservation shall be considered and incorporated in the design of landscape and irrigation plans for all projects. For projects that are required to provide a water-efficient landscape pursuant to [Section 14.16.370](#) of this title, the landscape plan and supportive materials shall comply with Marin Municipal Water District (MMWD) Ordinance, and future amendments, as adopted. Where available and when deemed appropriate, reclaimed water shall be used for irrigation.
3. Landscaped Buffer Area. Landscaped buffer areas may be required near wetlands and other sensitive habitat areas. A landscaped berm around the perimeter of parking areas is encouraged.
4. Street Trees and Landscaping. Street trees shall be shown on plans submitted for a project within the downtown area, and shall be provided and protected in accordance with the city street tree planting guidelines and recommendations of the city arborist. Street trees and landscaping should be consistent with the following:
  - a. Provide smaller scale, seasonal color and street trees for pedestrian-oriented streets;
  - b. Provide high-canopy traffic-tolerant trees and landscaped setbacks for primary vehicular circulation streets.
  - c. Existing mature trees proposed to be removed as part of a project should be replaced with an equivalent number, size and alternate species.
  - d. Trees proposed to remain shall be protected during construction.
  - e. All trees shall be installed, protected and pruned in accord with accepted arboricultural standards and practices.

**Re: Important Northgate meeting on May 17, at 7 pm**

Tricia Stevens &lt;Tricia.Stevens@cityofsanrafael.org&gt;

Wed 5/11/2022 8:17 AM

To: Jayme Lacour [REDACTED]; Responsible Growth in Marin [REDACTED]

Thank you for your comments and we'll attach to the DRB report.

Best regards,  
TriciaTricia Stevens, AICP  
City of San Rafael Contract Planner  
Email: Tricia.stevens@cityofsanrafael.org  
Phone: (916) 698-4592

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**From:** Jayme Lacour [REDACTED] >**Sent:** Tuesday, May 10, 2022 10:51 AM**To:** Responsible Growth in Marin [REDACTED]; Tricia Stevens <tricia.stevens@cityofsanrafael.org>; [REDACTED]**Subject:** Re: Important Northgate meeting on May 17, at 7 pm

Why is there no "architecture" in this project? It falls back on the same tired design tropes of the past 20 years: Multiple materials to "break down the mass," quasi-Craftsman details, brown brown brown (and some silver!), faux brise-soliel cornices, faux-industrial exposed beams and tin roofs, etc. Where is the imagination? What in the context of this site even suggests this outdated, trite look?

Look around the site: One of the largest concentrations of mid-century residential design; hills, trees, and sky; the largest Frank Lloyd Wright-designed project only about 100 yards away. Instead, the developer falls back on banal, canned, early 21st-century developer architecture.

Again, where is the imagination? This project has come a long way from a Costco with 20 gas pumps plopped down from the sky. Couldn't the architects make this place look a little different from every crappy, backwards-looking thing built in San Rafael in the past 20 years?

On Tue, May 10, 2022 at 7:49 AM Responsible Growth in Marin [REDACTED] > wrote:

[View in Browser](#)

**Responsible Growth in Marin****ATTEND IMPORTANT MEETING AND  
HELP SHAPE THE FUTURE OF  
NORTHGATE**

[JOIN - click here - ZOOM!](#)

Or call: (669) 900-6833, Meeting ID: 880 1015 9251#

Dear RGM Supporters,

On Tuesday, May 17th @ 7 pm, please attend the San Rafael Design Review Board's virtual meeting to review [The Northgate Town Square Project](#) and the developer, Merlone Geier's, recently submitted request for a Rezone to the Planned Development Zone, a Use Permit, an Environmental and Design Review Permit, and a Tentative Map.

This is the first **significant** step enabling the re-development of the existing Mall to move forward into a new phase of mixed-use development with retail and approximately 1,441 residences on a 44.76 - acre site.

As was recently explained in RGM's March/April newsletter [attached](#), we support the revitalization of Northgate, but we also have numerous **concerns and questions**. It's extremely important that this first of its kind project, extending over a 20+ year process in Terra Linda, meet San Rafael General Plan 2040 guidelines and honor the goal of the community with respect to

- A minimum 3-acre Town Square
- Sufficient open space for its 4000+ new residents
- Density and height of structures
- Noise, light, shading, and wind impact on existing neighbors and new resident

**Please attend to have your VOICE heard—  
remember this is a 20+ year project.**

[JOIN - click here - ZOOM!](#)

Or call: (669) 900-6833, Meeting ID: 880 1015 9251#

*Best, RGM*

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RGM, PO Box #6147, San Rafael, CA 94903, USA

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Jayme Lacour