

# **Public Comments**

**Submitted after DRB Packet Distribution**

**7/18/2023**

## **Lou and Sophie Shehi**

Design Review Board-

We are long time Lucas Valley-Terra Linda and Quail Hill residents. Since 1958.

The mall at Northgate used to be a viable-well run-asset to the whole Marin County community. Since the current owners have taken over the property-they have let it become a rundown eyesore and criminal activity attractant. They obviously have had a plan to make it so horrible that the local residents would prefer a 7 story tenement building to a decent shopping center. They consistently claim that malls are a dying thing. If this is true-then why is every single mall in Marin doing well except the one that they are running?

The locals that I talk to are not opposed to a mixed use Center. The 7 stories is not conducive to the feeling of our neighborhood. Having the buildings right up against the roads is a terrible idea. The esthetics of the architecture are not fitting with the neighborhood. Shoving over 1400 units in to this one site is a horrible idea.

We understand that the city and county have to address the housing shortage. But-why is the city trying to put it all in one place? 1400 units put all together is taller than the Salesforce building in San Francisco. Is that what you think is a good fit for our suburban area? Not to mention the strain on all of the local infrastructure and our resources-Police-Fire-Schools-Water-Environment-Roads. Please reconsider and don't let them build this monstrosity of a New City in our lovely neighborhood.

Thank you-  
Lou and Sophie Shehi

## **Lisa Michl**

While some native plants are planned for this new development, it would be great to see more native plants used. CalScape.org is a great resource for what is found in this area and where to buy those plants. Native plants use less water, support pollinators and other wildlife, can reduce the effects of climate change, support biodiversity, and just look amazing (ask all the visitors to CA open spaces especially during super blooms!).

Thanks

## **Janet Shirley**

Dear Design Review Board Members,

I have lived in Terra Linda for more than 25 years. During that time, I have witnessed our Northgate Mall go from being a vibrant hub of community activity to an intentional ghost town. I do not use the word “intentional” lightly. Northgate Mall has suffered severe neglect at the hands of the current property managers who care very little about the residents who live close by.

I am writing to you not in direct opposition to the current development plan for the Northgate Town Center, but want to urge you to consider the following:

1. The introduction of seven story buildings is out of sync and does not conform in any way to the surrounding neighborhoods. Bringing 5 and 7 story apartment buildings to our neighborhood will ruin the aesthetic and architectural character of Terra Linda FOR DECADES. Such buildings are not in harmony with the streets and housing of the adjacent area and will not foster a sense of community. The introduction of such high-density buildings will put an enormous burden on local resources, not to mention creating a surge in traffic congestion and parking shortages.
2. The plan needs to include a much bigger town square center that conforms with the density and size of housing units that are being proposed. A 1.1 acre town square will be DWARFED by such a large housing development. No one will want to enter a town square space that is completely overshadowed by 5 and 7 story buildings and never gets sunlight.
3. North San Rafael currently has no viable community meeting spaces for residents to congregate at. Starbucks and PEETS are way too small, offering just a couple of tables outside. The new town square center should offer an attractive café with an adequate meeting space—which includes both inside and outside seating. The square should offer attractive restaurants, a bakery, and not simply chain stores.
4. Drive through restaurants are the ANTITHESIS of community building. Drive-ins produce more carbon footprint, not less. They do not foster community spirit, but produce the opposite— attracting crowds that are simply transient with no invested interest in the local community. Please do not allow that idea to move forward!

I hope you will take these points into consideration as part of your review and recommendation process. Developers come and go, but the residents of Terra Linda are going to have to live for years with the decisions made by your board and the recommendations that you give moving forward. Please help us develop a beautiful, community-oriented space for everyone. Housing is important but it should be thoughtfully planned—and not done hastily in the name of urgency from state regulators, or for economic pragmatism.

Thank you,  
Janet Shirley  
San Rafael

## **Laura Mogannam**

Laura Mogannam would like to question why a school is not an integral part of this new development plan.

Per the proposal to redevelop The Northgate Mall in San Rafael a 45 acre property:

San Rafael badly needs a school - believe acreage requirement 5 acres. San Rafael has been looking to build a new school for years but supposedly cannot find the land. This is a very old problem in San Rafael.

This project has 45 acres at their disposal to build 1,300 new residences.

1. How many more children are projected to live there?
2. How much more will the schools be impacted? **90+% of the children at San Pedro elementary are being bussed from the Canal area.** My family was sent to Glenwood Elementary because of this. We were told San Pedro, our attendance area school, was not for us when we enrolled our daughter in Kindergarten back in the 90's.
3. Where will children living in this new development go to school?
4. Will they be denied attendance at their designated school?
5. Will families be denied access to these new residences? "Not qualify"?

Something to consider. Timing is critical.

If you are planning a whole new mini neighborhood **a school should be part of this new development.**

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Laura Mogannam

San Rafael resident since 1990 to date

Past PTA president at local public school

Past SRCS, first5marin, and Community Action Marin employee

## **Joan Wlodaver**

Dear San Rafael Design Review Board,

I have been a resident of Marinwood for 25+ years and I have frequented the businesses in the Northgate Mall for all of those years.

I have some concerns about the project you are about to approve, especially regarding the height and density of the project, which is severely out of proportion to the community in the surrounding neighborhoods. The seven stories proposed is completely out of proportion to the surrounding area and can only be thought of as an eyesore, blocking views of the nearby hills and negating the aesthetics and architectural character of the community forever. The huge size and height of the buildings will do nothing to contribute to the attractiveness of the area. Surely there must be some thought given to contributing to the attractiveness of the area. Is there any way that the height of the buildings can be reduced? Please.

The size and density of the project will severely stress local resources, like water, and create traffic congestion, especially during high-peak travel times and if there should ever be an evacuation emergency. Reducing the height and density would alleviate some of these concerns. Is there any way that the height and density of the buildings can be reduced? Please.

I hope that the drive-thru restaurant is negotiable. Please don't approve a drive-thru restaurant. There are already two (McDonald's and A&W) less than a mile away on Merrydale. Why are we encouraging more greenhouse gas emissions when we don't have to? Shouldn't we be forward looking and seeking ways to reduce carbon emitting transportation? Please say no to a drive-thru restaurant.

There are so few community meeting spaces that this seems like an excellent opportunity to add some attractive areas for people to gather and want to be, like cafes, restaurants, a supermarket, bakery and onsite services within the complex, places with both outdoor and indoor seating areas so people would not have to get in their cars and drive. I'm hoping that residents like me, and the new residents, will find enough onsite businesses and services to use and enjoy. Can the plan include these? Please.

The proposed plan appears to have a minuscule town square center in proportion to the enormously huge high density buildings planned. Can the plan include a much bigger town square center that will be an attractive area where people will want to go to and to be? Please.

Please rethink these points and reconsider the impact of such a humongous project to make it a more beautiful community oriented space for everyone, to fit in with our incredibly beautiful natural area where we are all so very lucky to live. Please.

Thank you,  
Joan Wlodaver  
San Rafael



July 18, 2023

RE: Northgate Town Center Trees

To Whom It May Concern,

I am sharing my professional thoughts on the landscape plan for Northgate Town Center based on viewing the PDF version (very small and hard to read on my computer). I am clear I may be missing many important items, so I am weighing-in strictly based on my experience and observations over many years in urban forestry across California.

One of the things that is important, and often is not addressed, is that the trees planted in parking lots should be large canopy shade trees to cool and shade the asphalt/urban heat island, especially now as we face climate change issues.

The tree choices seem very appropriate for locations specified with a few exceptions I'll mention here:

- The Arbutus Marina are excellent but small trees in confined spaces - not great for parking lots but could be used elsewhere successfully.
- The Ginkgo Biloba are very slow growing, a great tree but it will be a long time till there will be a canopy of significance.
- The Pyrus Calleryana, are often multi-stemmed based on how they are grown at the nursery, creating potential future pruning issues. They rarely achieve proper tree form and suffer from Fire Blight (no cure) and are generally not recommended.

Tree wells/planting areas need to be as large as possible for trees to survive and thrive. I couldn't find the planting schematic though I'm sure one exists.

I image the planting areas are appropriately designed, but the old 3'x3' tree well cutouts in parking lots, set trees up for failure - not allowing trees to grow to the point where the desired health and environmental services will be achieved.

How will the landscape be managed, cared for? Who will be responsible for the maintenance, and will there be certified arborists on the team to manage the trees over the long-term? On-going care is everything!

Studies show that people will travel further, linger longer, and spend more money in shopping districts with healthy urban tree canopies. I, being a remote observer here, believe this is professionally done, and I applaud the designers and developer in including significant amounts of urban greening in their plans to support improved quality of life for the residents and shoppers.

Feel free to contact me with any questions,

Sincerely,

Executive Director