



SAN RAFAEL
THE CITY WITH A MISSION

Community Development Department – Planning Division

Meeting Date: February 13, 2024
Agenda Item: 7.A
Project Planner: Heather Hines, Consulting Planner

REPORT TO PLANNING COMMISSION

SUBJECT: 5800 Northgate Drive (Northgate Town Square Project) – Public Hearing to receive public comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the proposed Northgate Town Square Project (also referred to as the Northgate Mall Redevelopment Project), which includes requests for a Rezone to the Planned Development (PD) zone (PLAN21-039 and ZC21-001), a Use Permit (UP21-007), an Environmental and Design Review Permit (ED21-024), a Tentative Map (TS21-002), a Development Agreement, State Density Bonus, and a Master Sign Program to allow a comprehensive redevelopment of the existing mall at 5800 Northgate Drive into a phased mixed-use development with approximately 217,520 square feet of commercial space and 1,422 residential units on the 44.76-acre site. APNs: 175-060-12, -40, -59, -61, -66, and -67; General Commercial (GC) District, Merlone Grier Partners, LLC, owner/applicant.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of San Rafael is the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Lead Agency responsible for overseeing environmental review for a project proposing the redevelopment of the existing Northgate Mall through demolition, renovation, and new construction with a mix of commercial and residential land uses. At full buildout the project would include a total of up to approximately 217,520 square feet of commercial space and up to 1,422 residential units in six areas of the project site. Building heights across the project site would vary, with a maximum of approximately 78 feet. The proposed project would also include various associated site improvements, including a town square, modifications to the internal circulation and parking, and improvements to infrastructure and landscaping. Individual project components are further described below.

On December 9, 2021, the City released a Notice of Preparation (NOP) for an Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The NOP process established that the scope of the project would have potential impacts to the following topical areas: Aesthetics, Agricultural and Forestry Resources, Air Quality, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Energy, Geology and Soils, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Hydrology and Water Quality, Land Use and Planning, Mineral Resources, Noise, Population and Housing, Public Services, Recreation, Transportation, Tribal Cultural Resources, Utilities and Service Systems, and Wildfire.

The Planning Commission (Commission) conducted a public hearing on the NOP on January 11, 2022 and established that the scope of the EIR should evaluate the formerly identified topics, based on the NOP and public comments. The City’s environmental consultant, LSA, has prepared a Draft EIR (DEIR) and, consistent with CEQA has released the DEIR for a 60-day public review and comment period, commencing on January 5, 2024 and set to conclude on March 5, 2024. This

review period was extended fifteen days to allow for additional review time, due an error in the mailing of postcards noting the availability of the DEIR.

The DEIR concludes that the majority of the project’s impacts can be reduced to a less-than-significant level, if recommended mitigation measures are implemented. However, the DEIR also concludes that two impacts to Greenhouse Gas Emissions and one impact to Noise remain significant and unavoidable despite applying feasible mitigation measures. Therefore, when the project merits come before the Commission and the City Council at a later date for final consideration (along with the Final EIR), adoption of a statement of overriding considerations accepting the significant unavoidable impacts will be required if the project as proposed is approved.

In addition to the scoping meeting held on January 11, 2022, five prior meetings have also been held to provide revisions, recommendations, and to receive public comments on the project, inclusive of two Planning Commission study sessions and three Design Review Board meetings.

The purpose of this hearing is limited to acceptance of comments on the adequacy of the DEIR. Comments should focus on the environmental issues and project alternatives evaluated in the DEIR, not on the merits of the project, which will be the subject of future public hearings before the Commission and City Council. Members of the public wishing to provide verbal comments are also strongly encouraged to submit comments in written format so that they can be accurately and adequately responded to in the Final EIR. As noted in the public hearing notices, no formal action regarding the project will be taken at this hearing.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Planning Commission complete the following steps:

1. Accept public comments on the DEIR; and
2. Direct staff to prepare a Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR), inclusive of a comprehensive Response to Comments, and any necessary revisions to the DEIR.

PROPERTY FACTS

Address/Location:	5800 Northgate Drive Northgate Mall at the intersection of Las Gallinas Avenue and Northgate Drive	Parcel Numbers:	175-060-12 175,060-40 175-060-59 175-060-61 175-060-66 175-060-67
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Property Size:	44.76 Acres	Neighborhood:	San Rafael Town Center
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Site Characteristics:			
	General Plan Designation	Zoning Designation	Existing Land Use

Project Site:	Community Commercial Mixed Use	General Commercial	Shopping Mall, Movie Theatre. Retail Stores, Parking Structure
North:	GC, O	GC, C/O, O	Commercial and Office
South:	HDR, LDR, OS, O	PD, O, R 7.5, P/OS,	Single and Multi- Family Residences, Offices, Park
East:	GC, P/QP	GC, O, P/QP	Commercial, Office, Mt Olivet Cemetery
West:	OS, O, HDR, MDR, LDR	O, PD, HR1.5, HR1.8, OS	Multi-Family Residences, Villa Marin Retirement Community, Office
Notes: GC = General Commercial; O = Office; C/O = Commercial/Office; HDR = High Density Residential; MDR = Medium Density Residential; LDR = Low Density Residential; OS = Open Space; PD = Planned Development District; HR1.5, HR1.8 = Multifamily Residential Districts: High Density; P/QP = Public/Quasi-Public; R7.5 = Single-Family Residential			

Site Description/Setting:

The project site is currently developed with the enclosed Northgate Mall, which is generally oriented on a north-south axis, with the main building located in the center of the project site and surrounded by surface parking and standalone buildings and structures. The main mall building, which is a total of approximately 605,283 square feet in size, consists of five sections: (1) Mall Shops East; (2) Mall Shops West; (3) Century Theatre; (4) RH Outlet; and (5) Macy’s. West of the main building is a Kohl’s department store, which also includes a small attached unoccupied retail space, a two-level parking structure, and a vacant retail building. A Rite Aid, HomeGoods, and an additional vacant retail building are located east of the main building. The existing gross leasable area (i.e., the total building square footage on the project site without the parking structure) is approximately 766,507 square feet. Currently there are a total of 2,899 parking spaces on the project site, comprising 2,380 standard spaces, 22 handicap spaces, and 15 van-size spaces within the surface parking lot, 473 spaces within the parking structure, and 9 on-street parking spaces between the main building and Kohl’s building. Automobile access to the project site is provided via driveways from Las Gallinas Avenue and Northgate Drive. Landscaping on the project site consists of ornamental landscaping, including landscaping strips along the boundaries of the site that contain street trees and shrubs, planters with trees within the surface parking lot, and some mature trees located adjacent to the existing buildings. A total of 679 trees are located on the project site.

BACKGROUND

Prior Public Meetings

As stated previously, the project has been the subject of several public meetings. The following provides a summary of the City’s review of this project to date:

- Planning Commission and Design Review Board – Joint Study Session, September 14, 2021:
 - [Video](#)
 - [Staff Report](#)

- Planning Commission Scoping Session – January 11, 2022
 - [Video](#)
 - [Staff Report](#)
- Design Review Board – May 17, 2022
 - [Video](#)
 - [Staff Report](#)
- Planning Commission Study Session – November 29, 2022
 - [Video](#)
 - [Staff Report](#)
- Design Review Board – July 18, 2023
 - [Video](#)
 - [Staff Report](#)
- Design Review Board – September 6, 2023
 - [Video](#)
 - [Staff Report](#)

Environmental and Project Review

The subject of this public hearing is limited to receipt of comments by the public and Commissioners on the DEIR prepared for the project. Following completion of the DEIR public review period, the City’s environmental consultant will commence preparation of the FEIR, inclusive of a comprehensive response to all written or oral public comments and the DEIR, as well as any needed revisions to the DEIR.

Once the FEIR is complete, the project will return to the Planning Commission for review of the FEIR, concurrent with a review of the project merits and all planning entitlements. This hearing(s) is anticipated to occur in Spring 2024. At that hearing(s), the Planning Commission will be asked to provide recommendations to the San Rafael City Council regarding adequacy of the FEIR, and all project entitlements.

Following the Planning Commission’s review and recommendation of the FEIR and the project merits, the City Council will hold a public hearing(s) and take final action on the project. This would include the certification of the FEIR, all planning entitlements, and if approving the project, adoption of a statement of overriding considerations.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant is seeking a zoning amendment to rezone the site from General Commercial (GC) to a Planned Development zoning; Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map to create 6 parcels for new residential and mixed use buildings and 18 parcels for existing and new commercial buildings and existing parking lots; a Master Use Permit designating the uses of the site with a mix of residential and commercial uses; Environmental and Design Review Permit for overall site plan, building architecture, landscaping, and other site improvements; Master Sign Program to establish uniform standards for building and other signage; and Density Bonus to allow exceedance of maximum density requirements and to approve requested concessions and waivers, consistent with local and state density bonus law.

The DEIR analyzes impacts of the proposed project which includes a comprehensive redevelopment of the existing Northgate Mall into a phased mixed-use development. The two primary phases of the project consist of the 2025 Master Plan and the 2040 Vision Plan. At full buildout, the project would include a total of up to approximately 217,520 square feet of new and existing commercial space and up to 1,422 residential units in six areas of the project site (1,746,936 square feet of residential area), 147 of which would be affordable units. A total of

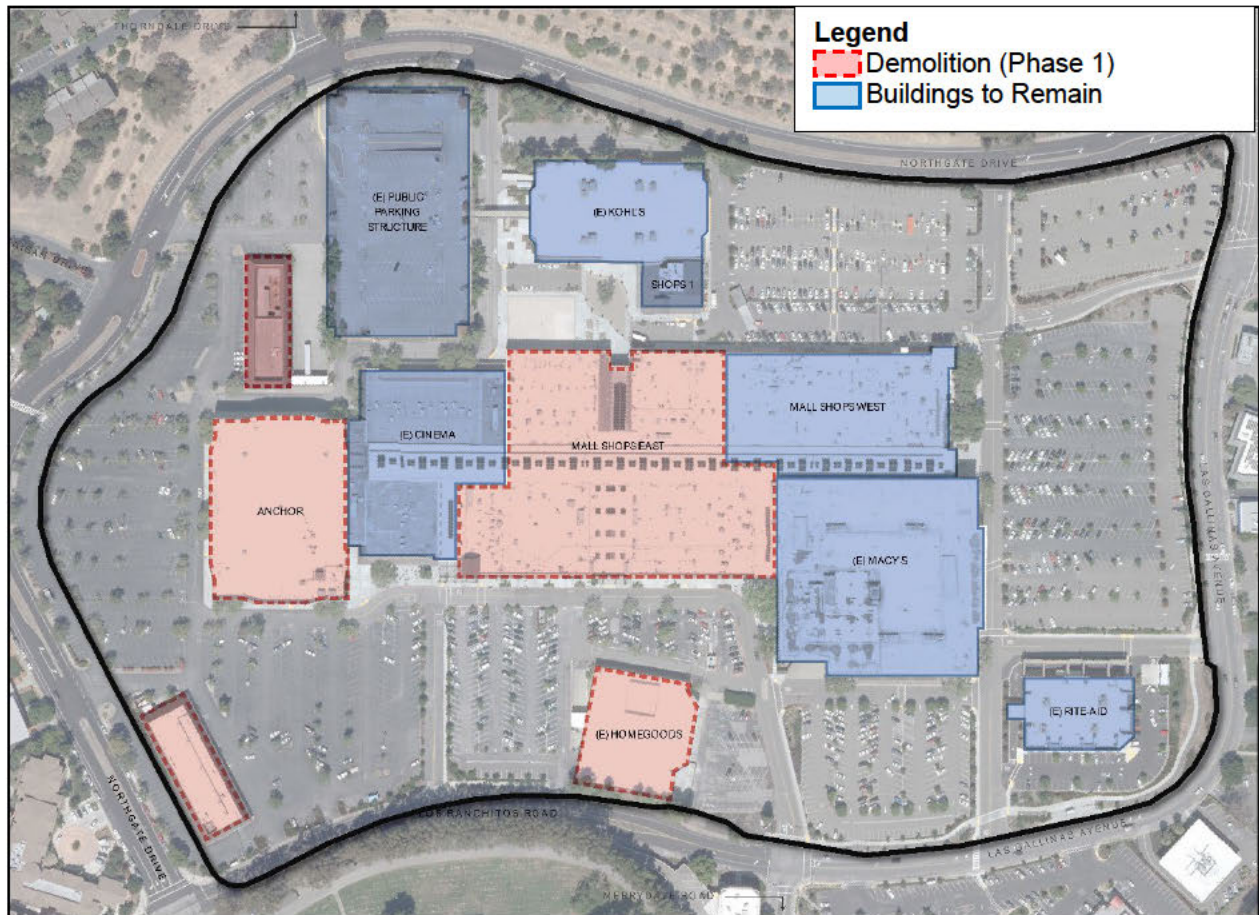
648,807 square feet of existing building space would be demolished, and the total commercial area would be reduced by a total of 548,987 square feet. Building heights across the project site would vary, with a maximum of approximately 78 feet. In total, approximately 3,849 parking spaces would be provided on the site, 2,524 of which would be reserved for use by residents and guests of the residential buildings, the remaining 1,325 of which would be for commercial use.

The proposed development for each phase is generally summarized as follows:

2025 Master Plan (Phase 1) (Sheet SD-10):

- Demolition of 308,946 square feet of existing commercial space (see Figure 1 below)
- Construction of 44,380 square feet of new retail (see Figure 2 below)
- Development of 922 residential units inclusive of 96 affordable units (see Figure 2 below)
- Creation of 48,075-square foot town square and 12,934-square-foot bike hub with amenities (see Figure 2 below)

Figure 1: Phase 1 Demolition Plan



New Retail

- Century Theatre (20,000 sf)
- Ounces (480 sf)
- Shops 3 (5,000 sf)
- Shops 4 (6,200 sf)
- Pad 1 (8,400 sf)
- Pad 2 (4,300 sf)

Figure 2: 2025 Master Plan

Location of 96 Affordable Units



Town Square w/Bike Hub

Phase 1 commercial space is shown in the following table.

Table 1: Phase 1 Commercial Space

Space	Existing (sq ft)	Demolished (sq ft)	Existing to Remain (sq ft)	New (sq ft)	Total (sq ft)
Macy's	254,015	--	254,015	--	254,015
Major 1 (Existing Kohl's)	74,500	--	74,500	--	74,500
Major 1 (Existing Kohl's Unoccupied)	4,551	--	4,551	--	4,551
RH Outlet	106,476	106,476	--	--	--
Sears Auto Center	16,300	16,300	--	--	--
Sears Seasonal Building	12,200	12,200	--	--	--
HomeGoods	29,538	29,538	--	--	--
Rite Aid	17,340	--	17,340	--	17,340
Main Building	199,792	144,432	55,360	--	55,360
Century Theatre	45,000	--	45,000	20,000	65,000
Ounces	--	--	--	480	480
Shops 1	6,795	--	6,795	--	6,795
Shops 3	--	--	--	5,000	5,000
Shops 4	--	--	--	6,200	6,200
Pad 1	--	--	--	8,400	8,400
Pad 2	--	--	--	4,300	4,300
Total	766,507	308,946	457,561	44,380	501,941

Phase 1 of the proposed project would also include the construction of a total of 922 residential units within three apartment-style residential buildings, each on their own parcel, and 15

townhome buildings (containing 100 townhome units), all located on a fourth parcel. Of the 922 units, 96 would be set aside for low-income households, while the remaining 826 units would be offered at market rates. Accordingly, 10.4 percent of units provided under the 2025 Master Plan would be affordable to low-income households.

In total, Phase 1 would provide approximately 601,227 square feet of open space, which would consist of approximately 295,659 square feet of useable open space and approximately 305,568 square feet of landscaped area. Usable open space would include open space for each of the residential buildings. In addition, common open space would be provided adjacent to the Century Theatre building that would consist of approximately 12,934 square feet of outdoor amenity space with a bike hub/fix it station, a shipping container cafe with associated outdoor dining tables, a fire feature, and lounge seating. It should be noted that the proposed fire feature was originally proposed as a natural gas fired-feature, however, Mitigation Measure GHG-1 requires that recreational fire pits not include natural gas. Adjacent to the Kohl’s building would be another outdoor amenity space consisting of 25,725 square feet of flexible turf area, a shipping container café, outdoor dining, lounge seating, and fire features. West of the Macy’s building would be an approximately 8,984-square-foot common open space area with landscaping and common seating areas. Phase 1 would also include the construction of a Town Square near the center of the project site, which would be approximately 48,075 square feet consisting of a large flexible lawn space, a dog park, children’s nature play features, a water feature, a flexible stage, fire features, lounge seating, and game tables.

In addition to the parking structures and private parking garages provided for each of the residential buildings, Phase 1 would also include nine surface parking lots throughout the project site. The following table provides an overview of the parking included in Phase 1.

Table 2: Phase 1 Parking Supply

Parking Lot/Structure	Residential Spaces	Commercial Spaces	Total Spaces
Residential 1 Structure	96	--	96
Residential 2	215	--	215
Residential 3 Structure	471	--	471
Residential 4 Structure	805	40	845
Retail Parking Structure	--	473	473
Retail Surface Parking ¹	--	1,390	1,390
Total	1,587	1,903	3,490

¹ - Includes 170 surface parking spaces for the Macy’s furniture store.

2040 Vision Plan (Sheet SD-14):

- Demolition of 339,861 square feet of existing retail (see Figure 3)
- Construction of 55,440 square feet of new retail
- Development of 500 residential units inclusive of 51 affordable units
- Elimination of an existing 25,725 square foot open space area

Figure 3: Phase 2 Demolition Plan

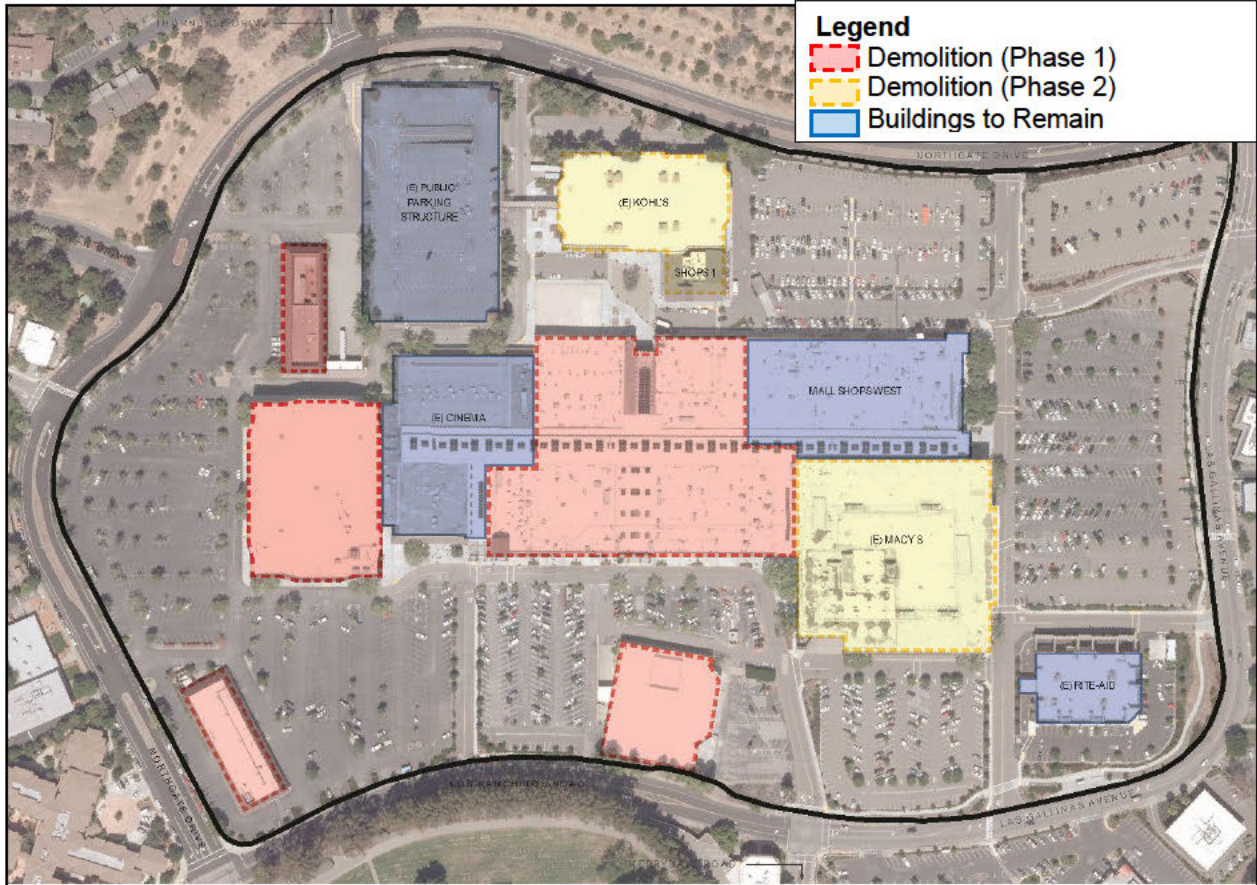


Figure 4:2040 Master Plan



Phase 2 commercial space is shown in the following table.

Table 3: Phase 2 Commercial Space

Space	Phase 1 (sq ft)	Demolished (sq ft)	New (sq ft)	Total (sq ft)
Macy's	254,015	254,015	--	--
Kohl's	79,051	79,051	--	--
Rite Aid	17,340	--	--	17,340
Main Building ¹	55,360	--	--	55,360
Century Theater	65,000	--	--	65,000
Ounces	480	--	--	480
Shops 1	6,795	6,795	--	--
Shops 3	5,000	--	--	5,000
Shops 4	6,200	--	--	6,200
Shops 5	--	--	3,500	3,500
Shops 6	--	--	5,000	5,000
Major 3	--	--	10,000	10,000
Major 4	--	--	23,140	23,140
Pad 1	8,400	--	--	8,400
Pad 2	4,300	--	--	4,300
Pad 3	--	--	5,000	5,000
Pad 4	--	--	3,800	3,800
Pad 5	--	--	5,000	5,000
Total	501,941	339,861	55,440	217,520

¹ - Includes Major 2, Shops 2 and 2A, Restaurant

Phase 2 of the proposed project would include two new residential buildings that would contain a total of 500 residential units within two apartment-style buildings, each on their own parcel. Of the

500 units, 51 would be set aside for low-income households, while the remaining 449 units would be offered at market rates. Accordingly, 10.2 percent of the new units provided under the 2040 Vision Plan would be affordable to low-income households.

In total, Phase 2 would provide approximately 705,384 square feet of open space, which would consist of approximately 377,409 square feet of useable open space and approximately 327,975 square feet of landscaped area. All open space constructed during this phase would serve the residential uses.

In addition to the parking structures provided for each of the residential buildings, Phase 2 would also include eight surface parking lots throughout the project site. The following table provides an overview of the parking included in Phase 2.

Table 4: Phase 2 Parking Supply

Parking Lot/Structure	Residential Spaces	Commercial Spaces	Total Spaces
Residential 1 Structure	96	--	96
Residential 2	215	--	215
Residential 3 Structure	471	--	471
Residential 4 Structure ¹	845	--	845
Residential 5 Structure	458	--	458
Residential 6 Structure	319	--	319
Retail Parking Structure ²	120	353	473
Retail Surface Parking	--	972	972
Total	2,524	1,325	3,849

¹ – The 40 parking spaces in the Residential 4 structure that would be set aside for commercial use in Phase 1 would be reallocated to residential use in Phase 2.
² - In Phase 2, 120 spaces in the retail parking structure would be reallocated to residential use for Residential Building 6.

DRAFT EIR

Notice of Preparation (NOP)

On December 9, 2021, a Notice of Preparation (NOP) was mailed and published consistent with the 30-day public review requirements established by the CEQA Guidelines and extended by one week to account for the winter holidays. On January 11, 2022, the Commission held a scoping meeting to receive public comment on the scope of the DEIR. A video of the Planning Commission scoping meeting is available to view online at [here](#). At the conclusion of the January 11, 2022 scoping meeting, the Commission directed staff to prepare the DEIR. Comments received during the NOP comment period related to: consistency with the San Rafael General Plan and other planning and policy documents; residential density and inclusionary housing; visual character, scenic views, and nighttime lighting; archaeological and tribal resources; stability of site soils; water quality, stormwater treatment, and nearby waterways; hazards and hazardous materials; vehicle trips, vehicle miles traveled, circulation, emergency access, alternative modes of travel, and parking; air quality and health risks; greenhouse gas emissions, energy consumption, and use of backup energy sources; noise and vibration; public services; parks and recreational services; water supply, infrastructure improvement, and solid waste services; nesting birds, bats, and wildlife corridors; wildfire and emergency evacuation; and cumulative impacts. Verbal comments were accepted at the NOP scoping meeting and were combined with submitted written comments.

The purpose of the DEIR is to identify potential impacts to various environmental topics, analyze the extent to which the project design and alternatives would result in significant environmental

impacts, and identify appropriate project modifications or mitigation measures to reduce or eliminate these impacts. Based on comments received on the scope of the DEIR, the environmental topic areas listed below, enumerated by the corresponding DEIR chapter, were fully analyzed:

- Chapter 4.1 - Land Use and Planning
- Chapter 4.2 - Population and Housing
- Chapter 4.3 - Visual Resources
- Chapter 4.4 - Cultural Resources
- Chapter 4.5 - Tribal Cultural Resources
- Chapter 4.6 - Geology and Soils
- Chapter 4.7 - Hydrology and Water Quality
- Chapter 4.8 - Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Chapter 4.9 - Transportation
- Chapter 4.10 - Air Quality
- Chapter 4.11 – Greenhouse Gas Emissions (includes analysis of energy impacts)
- Chapter 4.12 - Noise (including vibration)
- Chapter 4.13 - Public Services and Recreation
- Chapter 4.14 - Utilities and Services
- Chapter 6.0 – Other CEQA Considerations (includes discussion of Biological Resources (6.3.2) and Wildfire (6.3.4))

Cumulative effects are addressed in each topic-specific chapter, and a reasonable range of alternatives are discussed and analyzed in Chapter 5.0. Refer to page 2-3 of the DEIR.

The DEIR's evaluation of environmental effects identifies the **net** change in conditions as a result of the project. It compares Northgate Mall as it currently exists with the project site after all demolition and construction are completed. It is important to understand that this comparison assumes that the Mall buildings are fully occupied – even if some currently are vacant. This approach is required by recent court decisions. Thus, studies for some environmental topics result in a **decrease** in activity or effects.

Notice of Completion (NOC) and Publication of DEIR

The City's environmental consultant, LSA, has completed the DEIR and a Notice of Completion was distributed on January 5, 2024 pursuant to Section 15372 of the CEQA Guidelines. A notice was posted throughout the project site and published in the Marin Independent Journal newspaper on January 5, 2024. Additionally, a Notice of Availability was mailed to all interested parties, including public agencies, neighborhood organizations, property owners within the same zip code as the project site as well as individuals likely to be or who had previously expressed an interest in the potential impacts of the proposed project. Unfortunately, an error occurred in the mailing of the notice to the property owners in the zip code. This mistake was remedied with the subsequent mailing of the notice for this Planning Commission hearing, and an extra fifteen days were added to the CEQA-mandated 45-day public review period to allow for additional time for the community to consider the DEIR. The review period now ends on March 5, 2024.

The DEIR was electronically submitted to the State Clearinghouse (SCH# 2021120187) and responsible State agencies at the start of the public review period. The DEIR was also made available for review online at the City of San Rafael website: www.cityofsanrafael.org/northgate-town-square, at the San Rafael Public Library, the Northgate Mall Library, and at San Rafael City Hall Planning Division offices. A limited number of printed copies have also been available for review on-site.

Draft DEIR Summary and Conclusions:

- Less than Significant Impact: Potential impacts to the following topical areas were determined to be less than significant and would not require further mitigation: *Land Use and Planning, Population and Housing, Visual Resources, Public Services, Recreation, and Energy*.
- Less than Significant, with Mitigation: Potential impacts to the following topical areas were determined to be reduced to less than significant levels with recommended mitigation measures and incorporated best management practices consistent with the City of San Rafael General Plan and Zoning Ordinance: *Cultural Resources, Tribal Cultural Resources, Geology and Soils, Hydrology and Water Quality, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Transportation, Air Quality, Utilities and Service Systems*.
- Significant and Unavoidable Impacts: Potential impacts to the following topical areas were determined to result in three potentially significant and unavoidable impacts to *Greenhouse Gas Emissions* (Impact GHG-1 and GHG-2) and *Noise* (Impact NOI-2).

Under CEQA regulations, all impacts must be mitigated to the extent feasible. Pursuant to Section 15093(a) of the CEQA Guidelines, the City would be required to adopt a Statement of Overriding Considerations prior to approving any project having significant and unavoidable impacts.

The following section provides a summary of the project's potential impacts including those that are less than significant with mitigation or significant and unavoidable. Mitigation measures are briefly described below and can be found in full on pages 2-7 to 2-19 of the DEIR.

Less than Significant with Mitigation

Cultural Resources:

Cultural resource impacts are analyzed in Chapter 4.4 (pages 4.4.1-4.4.30) of the DEIR. The DEIR concludes that the project would have less than significant impacts on archaeological resources and no archaeological cultural resources were identified at the project site. However, the project site has moderate potential for the discovery of prehistoric archaeological resources due to the flat topography and the previous presence of a drainage to South Fork Creek and as such, ground-disturbing activity during project construction has been determined to result in potentially significant impacts.

Recommended Mitigation Measures for Cultural Resources:

Implementation of *Cultural Resources* mitigation measures CUL-1a, CUL-1b, and CUL-1c, would reduce ground disturbing impacts to cultural resources to a less than significant level with mitigation.

- **Mitigation Measure CUL-1a** requires preparation of a Cultural Resources Monitoring Plan (CRMP) in consultation with the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria. As specified in the measure, the CRMP is required to identify the person(s) responsible for conducting archaeological monitoring, Native American monitoring, procedures for notification in the event of a cultural resources find, methods for protection of resources, and a requirement that if significant archaeological or tribal cultural resources are identified, all work shall stop immediately within 100 feet of the resource(s).
- **Mitigation Measure CUL-1b** requires all personnel involved in project-related ground-disturbing activities to participate in a cultural resources and tribal cultural resources sensitivity and awareness training program. The measure stipulates that the training shall

take place prior to any ground-disturbing work at the site and shall be developed by an archaeologist that meets the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards in archaeology, in consultation with Graton Rancheria. Specifics of the content of the training are further described in the DEIR.

- **Mitigation Measure CUL-1c** requires archaeological monitoring be performed in compliance with the CRMP prepared pursuant to CUL-1a during initial ground-disturbing activities of sediments on the project site (including building foundation removal).

Tribal Cultural Resources

Tribal Cultural Resource impacts are analyzed in Chapter 4.5 (pages 4.5.1-4.5.8) of the DEIR. Although the project site is fully developed, tribal cultural resources still may exist below the paved areas on the project site that originally experienced limited and shallow soil disturbance, or at a deeper depth below existing buildings with shallow foundations. Additionally, the eastern portion of the site is covered by fill up to 20 feet deep. Placement of fill materials could have removed or dispersed native soils and any associated archaeological materials across the site. While excavation across the entire project site is not anticipated to extend to this depth, excavation could occur to this depth in areas of the project site, especially where basement levels are being removed or utility trenches would be installed. If significant tribal cultural resources are unearthed during project construction, a substantial adverse change in their significance could occur from their demolition, destruction, relocation, or alteration such that the significance of the resources would be materially impaired through loss of information important to local Native American Tribes. The proposed project would have a potentially significant impact on tribal cultural resources unless the measures prescribed under Mitigation Measures TCR-1a and TCR-1b, provided in full below, are implemented.

Recommended Mitigation Measures for Cultural Resources

Implementation of the *Tribal Cultural Resources* mitigation measures TCR-1a and TCR-1b would reduce ground disturbing impacts to tribal cultural resources to a less than significant level with mitigation.

- **Mitigation Measure TCR-1a** requires Native American monitoring by a representative of the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria (FIGR) during all initial ground-disturbing activities on the project site (including building foundation removal) in accordance with the CRMP prepared as part of Mitigation Measure CUL-1a. Additionally, any excavations that extend below sediments that were previously monitored are also subject to Native American monitoring.
- **Mitigation Measure TCR-1b** requires the applicant to retain the services of a professional to conduct a site survey using trained human remains detection dogs with an FIGR tribal monitor present following demolition of structures, structure foundations, and paved areas but prior to trenching, grading, or earthwork. Steps to be taken in the event of discovery are set forth in the mitigation measure.

Geology and Soils

Geology and soil impacts are analyzed in Chapter 4.6 (pages 4.6-1-4.6-24) of the DEIR. The potential impacts related to these hazards are analyzed, including impacts from strong ground shaking, liquefaction, differentiated settlement, and unstable or expansive soils. The DEIR concluded that there would be no substantial adverse impacts related to surface rupture, landslides, or topsoil erosion and no mitigation would be required. The project could potentially

create a risk to proposed and existing improvements due to expansive soil conditions as well as result in subsidence as a result of the new loads on the project site.

Recommended Mitigation Measures for Geology and Soils

Implementation of *Geology and Soils* mitigation measures GEO-1, GEO-2, and GEO-3 would reduce impacts associated with expansive soils, settlement, subsidence or collapse, and paleontological resources to a less than significant level with mitigation.

- **Mitigation Measure GEO-1** requires review of the proposed bioretention planter designs by the project geotechnical engineer to determine whether the designs meet the geotechnical recommendations regarding lining of stormwater drainage swales to address expansive soil conditions.
- **Mitigation Measure GEO-2** requires preparation of a design-level geotechnical report for the project by a qualified Geotechnical Engineer. The measure specifies that the design-level report shall include a design-level analysis of total and differential settlement that may occur for shallow foundations installed over areas of ground improvement, a design-level analysis of potential total and differential settlement associated with the placement of defined amounts of fill material, ground improvement activities, construction of other improvements, and dewatering activities on the project site, allowable settlement estimates for planned and existing improvements, recommendations to minimize the amounts of subsidence/settlement and differential settlement that would result from the project, recommendations addressing potential damage to proposed and existing improvements. If the analysis indicates that existing off-site improvements could be adversely affected by settlement as a result of the project, the mitigation measure requires development of a pre-construction survey and settlement monitoring program.
- **Mitigation Measure GEO-3** would halt excavation activities should a paleontological resource be encountered. and would reduce impacts to a less than significant level with mitigation.

Hydrology and Water Quality

Hydrology and Water quality are analyzed in Chapter 4.7 (pages 4.7.-1 to 4.7-28) of the DEIR. The project is generally consistent with local water quality control plans and would not result in construction or operational impacts related to erosion and tsunamis. Development of the project could result in impacts to offsite ground water contamination and the operation of groundwater management practices in the Santa Rosa Plan Subbasin due to an increase in water supply demand. Additionally, run off from the project may exceed the capacity of the proposed stormwater infrastructure and result in flooding on the project site.

Recommended Mitigation Measures for Hydrology and Water Quality

Implementation of *Hydrology and Water Quality* mitigation measure HYD-1, HYD-2, and HYD-3 would reduce impacts associated with offsite groundwater contamination, water supply, and on- or offsite flooding to a less than significant level with mitigation.

- **Mitigation Measure HYD-1** requires coordination with the appropriate regulatory agency (most likely the Regional Water Quality Control Board ([RWQCB]) to evaluate whether groundwater beneath the shopping center adjacent to the eastern perimeter of the project site has been contaminated by release of hazardous materials. If contamination has occurred, the project sponsor shall evaluate whether proposed dewatering activities could

result in migration of off-site groundwater contamination and if so, shall modify the dewatering system design prevent off-site groundwater contamination.

- **Mitigation Measure HYD-2** requires the Water Supply Assessment (WSA) prepared for the project to be provided to Sonoma Water for review so that increased water supply demand generated by the project can be accounted for in groundwater management efforts.
- **Mitigation Measure HYD-3** requires a qualified Civil Engineer to perform hydraulic modeling to evaluate the 100-year storm event hydraulic grade line water elevations on the project site under proposed project conditions. If the evaluation demonstrates that the 100-year storm event could result in on-site flooding, the project shall be modified to incorporate additional stormwater retention systems and/or additional stormwater conveyance systems. Any changes to the project's stormwater management system designs will be subject to City for review and approval.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials

Hazards and Hazardous Materials are analyzed in Chapter 4.8 (pages 4.8-1 – 4.8-30) of the DEIR. The project does not have the potential to create a significant hazard through transport, use or disposal of hazardous materials nor would it release hazardous materials or emissions during construction or near a school. However, demolition, construction, and operational activities may result in the release of PCBs and other subsurface hazardous materials to the environment.

Recommended Mitigation Measures for Hazards and Hazardous Materials

Implementation of *Hazards and Hazardous Materials* mitigation measure HAZ-1 and HAZ-2 would reduce impacts associated with release of hazardous building materials and release of subsurface hazardous materials to a less than significant level with mitigation.

- **Mitigation Measure HAZ-1** requires preparation of a comprehensive Hazardous Building Materials Survey (HBMS) documenting the presence or lack thereof of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) containing equipment and materials, and any other hazardous building materials. The HBMS shall identify appropriate abatement specifications of hazardous building materials.
- **Mitigation Measure HAZ-2** requires additional subsurface investigation and preparation and implementation of a Soil and Groundwater Management Plan (SGMP) under the oversight of the appropriate regulatory agency (e.g., the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board [RWQCB] or Department of Toxic Substances Control [DTSC]). The measure provides specifications on additional subsurface investigation to be performed as well as components to include in the SGMP.

Transportation

Transportation impacts are analyzed in Chapter 4.9 (pages 4.9-1 – 4.9-32) of the DEIR. The project does not have the potential to conflict with applicable plans, ordinances, or policies addressing the circulation system, would not create an impact related to Vehicle Miles Traveled, and would not result in inadequate emergency access. However, as currently proposed, the current site plan could result in a safety hazard at Northgate Drive/Thorndale Drive due to poor visibility caused by existing vegetation.

Recommended Mitigation Measures for Transportation

Implementation of *Transportation* mitigation measure TRA-1 would reduce impacts associated with hazardous design to a less than significant level with mitigation.

- **Mitigation Measure TRA-1** requires submittal of plans showing that vegetation would be removed from the sight triangle.

Air Quality

Air Quality impacts are analyzed in Chapter 4.10 (pages 4.10-1-4.10-44) of the DEIR. The DEIR determined the project would result in air quality impacts from construction activities that would generate fugitive dust emissions from particulate matter (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}) as well as from reactive organic gases (ROG) and the ozone precursor nitrogen oxide (NO_x) in excess of standards established by Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD). These impacts would also result in conflicts with implementation of the San Francisco Bay Area Clean Air Plan. Additionally, construction may expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations.

Recommended Mitigation Measures for Air Quality

Implementation of *Air Quality* mitigation measure AIR-2, AIR-3, AIR-3a, AIR-3b, and AIR-4 would reduce impacts associated with a conflict with the San Francisco Bay Area Clean Air Plan, construction-related fugitive dust, emissions in exceedance of established thresholds, and exposure of sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations to a less than significant level with mitigation.

- **Mitigation Measure AIR-2** requires implementation of BAAQMD basic construction best management practices (BMPs) for construction-related fugitive dust emissions throughout all phases of construction. These BMPs would ensure that short-term impacts associated with the generation of particulate matter and fugitive dust would be reduced to the extent feasible.
- **Mitigation Measure AIR-3a** requires the construction contractor to demonstrate that all 75 HP or greater diesel-powered equipment are powered with California Air Resources Board (CARB)-certified Tier 4 Final engines.
- **Mitigation Measure AIR-3b** requires all interior paints and other architectural coatings to be limited to 50 grams per liter or less of volatile organic compounds (VOCs).
- **Mitigation Measure AIR-4** requires all off-road diesel-powered construction equipment of 50 horsepower or more to meet, at a minimum, the California Air Resources Board (CARB) Tier 2 with level 3 diesel particulate filters emissions standards or equivalent, including Tier 4 Final engines.

Noise

Noise impacts are analyzed in Chapter 4.12(4.12-1-4.12-36) of the DEIR. Noise impacts were evaluated in the DEIR for the temporary (construction) and long term (operational) period. Noise impacts specific to temporary short term construction activities would be less than significant with mitigation. However, during project operations the project would result in significant and unavoidable impact that would exceed the City's land use compatibility thresholds for future on-site sensitive receptors. Significant and Unavoidable impacts related to noise are further discussed below.

Recommended Mitigation Measures for Noise

Implementation of *Noise* mitigation measure NOI-1 would reduce impacts associated with short-term increases in ambient noise levels to a less than significant level with mitigation.

- **Mitigation Measure NOI-1** requires implementation of a temporary construction barrier near construction activities during Phase 1 construction at a height of 10 feet and 11 feet during Phase 2 construction.

Utilities and Service Systems

Utility and Service System impacts are analyzed in Chapter 4.14 (pages 4.14-1 – 4.14-24) of the DEIR. The project would not require mitigation measures to maintain less than significant impacts from construction and operation as it relates to utility infrastructure for water, stormwater, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunication. However, the proposed project would generate wastewater that could exceed the capacity of the existing sewer infrastructure that serves the project site.

Recommended Mitigation Measures for Utilities and Services

Implementation of *Utilities and Services* mitigation measure UTL-1 would reduce impacts associated with generation of wastewater in exceedance of existing capacity to a less than significant level with mitigation.

- **Mitigation Measure UTL-1** requires the existing 12-inch-diameter Terra Linda Trunk Sewer line downstream of the project site to be upsized to 15 inches in diameter in coordination with the Las Gallinas Valley Sanitation District and prior to construction of any of the proposed residential units.

Significant and Unavoidable Impacts

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Greenhouse Gas Emission impacts are analyzed in 4.11(4.11-1-4.11-32) of the DEIR. The proposed project would generate significant and unavoidable impacts to greenhouse gas emissions due to its usage of natural gas in commercial kitchens. The project originally proposed to use natural gas in recreational fire pits, however, implementation of Mitigation Measure GHG-1 prohibits use of natural gas in recreational fire pits. Although use of natural gas would decrease compared to existing conditions, the BAAQMD's thresholds for evaluation of greenhouse gas emissions impacts require that all new development not include any use of natural gas or new natural gas connections in order to find impacts to be less than significant. The DEIR recommends prohibiting natural gas use in fire pits but would allow commercial kitchens in new project restaurants to use natural gas. Therefore, the proposed project would result in a significant unavoidable impact related to the generation of greenhouse gas emissions (Impact GHG-1) and conflicts with local and State policies adopted for the purpose of reducing greenhouse gas emissions (Impact GHG-2). These impacts are determined to be significant and unavoidable, despite implementation of mitigation measures.

Recommended Mitigation Measures for Greenhouse Gas Emissions

- **Mitigation Measure GHG-1** prohibits the use of natural gas-fired recreational fire pits in the proposed project design.

Noise

Noise impacts are analyzed in Chapter 4.12(4.12-1-4.12-36) of the DEIR. Noise levels during project operations are not possible to confirm that they would absolutely be below the applicable

City's established thresholds, and as such impacts associated with increases in ambient noise levels during project operation (Impact NOI-2) would be **significant and unavoidable** as the project would exceed the City's land use compatibility thresholds for future on-site sensitive receptors.

Recommended Mitigation Measures for Noise

- **Mitigation Measure NOI-2** requires incorporation of noise control and sound abatement features and consideration of stationary equipment during nighttime hours into the proposed project design to reduce operational noise effects to on-site sensitive receptors to the extent feasible. Documentation on proposed sound abatement features shall demonstrate whether these measures, or any additional feasible mitigation measures, will reduce the sound level to below the established 55 dBA L_{eq} daytime and 45 dBA L_{eq} thresholds for on-site sensitive receptors.

Statement of Overriding Considerations and Public Benefits

The purpose of the DEIR is to inform decision makers and the public to understand potential impacts of a project. If a project has significant, unavoidable impacts, the City may still approve a project, but as part of the approval, the City would have to make and adopt a Statement of Overriding Considerations. These considerations reflect the ultimate balancing of competing public objectives (including environmental, legal, technological, social, and economic factors). Put another way, the City would need to find that on balance, the benefits of the project outweigh the significant unavoidable environmental impact(s). As identified in the DEIR, there are no feasible mitigations for the three impact areas identified above (Impacts GHG-1, GHG-2, and NOI-2) therefore the project will result in significant and unavoidable impacts. Due to these significant and unavoidable impacts, the Commission (and ultimately the City Council) would need to adopt a Statement of Overriding Considerations prior to approval of the project as proposed. Staff will address this aspect of the project review at later public hearings.

Project Alternatives

CEQA requires that a DEIR describe a range of reasonable alternatives to a project which would feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project. A total of three alternatives have been identified and analyzed. According to the project sponsor, the objectives of the proposed project are to:

- Implement the San Rafael General Plan 2040 vision for mixed use, transit-oriented development, and high-density housing on the project site.
- Implement the City's and regional agencies' designation of the project site as a Priority Development Area (i.e., a place with convenient public transit service that is prioritized by local government for housing, jobs, and services).
- Redevelop the existing mall facility into a town center with a relevant mix of commercial and retail offerings to support the local economy and provide tax revenues and employment opportunities.
- Create new housing offerings to meet the needs of families of varying sizes and reduce the recognized regional and local deficit of housing.
- Create a town center/urban village through a combination of retail, dining, and residential uses within a pedestrian-oriented urban core.

- Provide new outdoor amenities and open spaces, main street improvements, and recreational opportunities interconnected by pedestrian links throughout the project.

The following summarizes the key aspects of the three alternatives focusing on whether the alternatives lessen the severity of the project's environmental impacts and would meet key project objectives:

No Project Alternative (as required by CEQA):

Under the No Project Alternative, the project site would continue to be occupied by the existing Northgate Mall. A total of approximately 2,190 people could be employed on the project site at full occupancy, though this would continue to fluctuate based on market conditions.

The No Project Alternative would avoid all the construction-related impacts of the proposed project. Full occupancy of the Northgate Mall with commercial uses would result in more vehicle trips compared to operation of the proposed project, with resulting air pollutant and greenhouse gas emissions. No mitigation measures would be required for the No Project Alternative. The No Project Alternative would not achieve any of the objectives of the proposed project.

Reduced Development Alternative

Under the Reduced Development Alternative, only Phase 1 (also referred to as the 2025 Master Plan) of the proposed project would be implemented. Phase 1 would consist of the demolition of the two vacant retail buildings (Sears Auto Center and Sears Seasonal) totaling 28,500 square feet on the southern portion of the project site. Phase 1 of the proposed project also would include demolition of the RH Outlet building, the HomeGoods building, and Mall Shops East, which is approximately 144,432 square feet of the main building. A total of 44,380 square feet of new commercial space would also be constructed, resulting in a net total of 501,941 square feet of new and existing commercial space. Phase 1 would include the construction of a total of 922 residential units within three apartment-style residential buildings (containing 822 units) and 15 townhome buildings (containing 100 units), all located on a fourth parcel, resulting in a residential population of 2,295. At least 10.4 percent of the 922 dwelling units constructed would be below market rate units set aside for low-income households (minimum of 96 dwelling units). It is estimated that Phase 1 would result in a reduction in employees from approximately 2,190 to 1,434.

The Reduced Development Alternative would meet all the identified project objectives. The Reduced Development Alternative would slightly reduce the less than significant impacts related to air quality, energy, and noise for the proposed project due to the reduced construction and operation intensity and would avoid the noise impact on Phase 1 residents from Phase 2 construction; but would not eliminate any of the required construction-period mitigation measures. The Reduced Development Alternative would also slightly decrease impacts associated with GHG emissions and heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) operational noise on project residents but would not reduce those impacts to less than significant levels.

Reduced Residential Alternative

Under the Reduced Residential Alternative, the total number of residential units would decrease by 63 units compared to the proposed project, for a total of 1,359 units at buildout and a resulting residential population of 3,384. The reduction in the number of units would occur during implementation of Phase 1, with development of 859 residential units. Specifically, Residential 1 would be developed with 33 townhomes units (63 fewer units and a different unit mix than the apartments proposed by the project), Residential 2 would be developed with 100 townhome units, Residential 3 would be developed with 280 apartment units, and Residential 4 would be

developed with 446 apartment units. With the exception of the reduction in residential unit count and mix, all other elements of the Phase 1 2025 Master Plan and Phase 2 2040 Vision Plan proposed by the project would occur. At full buildout, the Reduced Residential Alternative would include a total of up to approximately 217,520 square feet of commercial space and up to 1,359 residential units, including 136 below market rate units set aside for low-income households. The below market rate units would be constructed throughout the project site and in compliance with Section 14.16.030 of the San Rafael Municipal Code.

The Reduced Residential Alternative would meet all of the identified project objectives although to a lesser extent due to the reduction in the total number of residential units to be developed. The Reduced Residential alternative would slightly reduce the less than significant impacts related to air quality, GHG emissions, energy, and noise for the proposed project due to the reduced operational intensity and reduction in vehicle trips associated with fewer residential units but would not eliminate any of the required construction- or operation-period mitigation measures or eliminate the significant unavoidable project impacts.

Environmentally Superior Alternative

CEQA requires that an Environmentally Superior Alternative be identified; that is determining which of the alternatives evaluated in the DEIR would result in the fewest or least significant environmental impacts. The DEIR concludes that the Environmentally Superior Alternative is the No Project Alternative. However, under CEQA, if the No Project Alternative is the environmentally superior alternative, the EIR must identify an environmentally superior alternative from among the other alternatives (*State CEQA Guidelines* Section 15126.6(e)(2)). While the No Project alternative would be environmentally superior in the technical sense in that contribution to the aforementioned impacts would not occur, it would also fail to achieve any of the project's objectives.

The Reduced Residential Alternative would slightly reduce some of the significant impacts of the proposed project through reduced construction and operational building intensities, including an overall reduction in the number of vehicle trips generated to and from the site, although none of the significant unavoidable project impacts would be avoided, and all project mitigation measures would still be required. The project objectives would also be largely met, although to a lesser extent than the proposed project, and the Reduced Residential Alternative would provide 63 fewer residential units than the proposed project, slightly reducing its contribution to alleviating the City's housing deficit. Due to its slight reductions in some environmental impacts, the Reduced Residential Alternative is considered the environmentally superior alternative.

The Planning Commission should consider which, if any, alternative would be preferable to the project as proposed or which combination of alternatives and the project would best achieve the project objectives.

CONCLUSIONS

The DEIR has been prepared in accordance with the provisions of the CEQA Guidelines and the City's Environmental Assessment Procedures Manual. The purpose of the DEIR is to identify a project's potential impacts on various facets of the environment and identify any mitigation measures that are required to minimize significant impacts. The scope of the Commission's review at this DEIR hearing is to receive public comments regarding the DEIR and provide additional comments the Commission members may have regarding the DEIR's evaluation of impacts and consideration of alternatives.

CORRESPONDENCE

All correspondence received on the DEIR to date, in response to the NOC, are attached to this report as Exhibit 1. At the time of the printing of this staff report, 21 comment letters specific to the DEIR have been received.

Comments generally address the project merits and express concerns related to transportation and parking impacts, hazardous materials contamination and releases during construction, and adequate water supply.

OPTIONS

The Planning Commission has the following options:

1. Accept public comments on the DEIR; and direct staff to prepare a Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR), inclusive of a comprehensive Response to Comments, and any necessary revisions to the DEIR.

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1 – Public Comments

Copies of the DEIR, DEIR Appendices and project plan can be found at: www.cityofsanrafael.org/northgate-town-square.

From: [REDACTED]
To: [April Talley](#)
Subject: 500 Northgate Drive, Northgate Town Square
Date: Thursday, February 1, 2024 12:34:22 PM

Dear April,

I am a resident of Terra Linda. I am very concerned about the impact of adding 1,422 units to our little valley. Currently there are 1,009 households (according to the latest census report). I cannot see how more than doubling the households is considered a good, or equitable idea for Terra Linda.

Just the impact of traffic with all those additional cars will be nothing short of a nightmare. Already, traffic gets snarled at all hours at the one exit and entrance to the freeway. Are there plans for another freeway entrance/exit? And where will all these cars park? I can't imagine there will be enough room for resident parking and customer parking after adding all those units and also building 225,000 square feet of retail space.

Also, what will happen to the existing Kohl's and Home Goods? I'd hate to see them leave Terra Linda. They are the staples of this community.

Please understand that I'm not against a residential/retail plan. Yes, it's needed and yes there is space. My concern is that this plan seems much too large in scope.

Respectfully,
Kate Twitchell

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: [April Talley](#)
Subject: Comments on the Northgate Development
Date: Tuesday, February 6, 2024 12:49:59 PM

Hello April,

Environmentally, are the checking the possible carbon output from the potential development, going in the direction of Villa Marin and how high it might reach? As a resident of Villa Marin, on the 4th floor, I don't want bad air floating in my window.

Thank you,

Ivy Wellington

From: [Community Development](#)
To: [April Talley](#)
Subject: FW: Northgate Mall - don't lose SR's one and only pedestrian mall
Date: Monday, February 5, 2024 2:22:00 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

Public comment for Northgate. Thank you.

Brandi Caulfield | City of San Rafael

Building Division | Permit Technician II

1400 5th Avenue
San Rafael, CA 94901
(415) 458-2395



From: Ram Z <ramentop2@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, February 5, 2024 12:41 PM
To: planning <planning@cityofsanrafael.org>; frontdesk@srchamber.com; Mayor Kate <kate.colin@cityofsanrafael.org>; Rachel Kertz <rachel.kertz@cityofsanrafael.org>; Maribeth Bushey <maribeth.bushey@cityofsanrafael.org>; Eli Hill <eli.hill@cityofsanrafael.org>; Maika Llorens Gulati <maika@cityofsanrafael.org>
Subject: Northgate Mall - don't lose SR's one and only pedestrian mall

Dear Planning Dept, City Council, Chamber of Commerce, Mayor Kate, and Damon Connolly,

The Lawrence Halprin-designed Northgate Mall has been the center of North San Rafael's built environment since its debut in 1963. It's been through a couple of unfortunate remodels, but now with remote work and post-covid would be poised to make a comeback. It could be San Rafael's equivalent of the wildly popular Corte Madera Town Center. But unfortunately, Merlone Geier does not know how to run a mall - just look at their portfolio - and the Northgate Mall is about to be buried under multiple 7-story behemoth housing blocks more suited to Los Angeles. Once that happens, it's never coming back as a mall.

A walkable community gathering space and retail hub that everyone can get to easily is good town planning and has been for towns all over the world and throughout history, A mall would be great for the City of San Rafael, attracting economic activity, upgrading SR's reputation, and improving our quality of life. The City does not have a real mall and does not have another space for one. The City is very gung-ho about frequently closing off downtown's streets and sidewalks to make temporary pedestrian malls - but for some reason, the City and the Chamber of Commerce have shown absolutely zero interest in North San Rafael's already-existing, permanent pedestrian mall.

We've got a nice setting here for a mall, with plenty of room, easy and adequate parking and bike/walk/bus/Smart access, and with less of the urban, modern ills of downtown San Rafael like being too crowded, your terrible traffic problem, crime, and other nuisances. As you know, North

San Rafael is geographically separate from South/Central San Rafael, ringed by some impressive hills (Loma Alta, Big Rock Ridge, and the San Pedro Mt massif), borders the Bay, and is a gateway to West Marin via Lucas Valley Road. Being a big valley, we still have a bit of a sem-rural feel held over from our post-Miwok dairies and ranches. We have lots of multi-family housing as well as more stylish modern architecture (Civic Center, Eichlers) than the rest of Marin put together. We are a great place for a mall - something interesting and Marin-y, practical and welcoming would be great. With no need to dine a foot away from speeding cars like downtown.

Merlone Geier's plan leaves us with only a dinky (1-acre) public space, which will bring no one there except the immediate residents.

Why isn't the City of San Rafael advocating for its only real mall? Please do so and make us an even better place to live and an asset to the City of San Rafael.

Thank you,
R. Moezzi
North San Rafael

From: [Community Development](#)
To: [April Talley](#)
Subject: FW: Northgate Mall - don't lose SR's one and only pedestrian mall
Date: Monday, February 5, 2024 2:22:00 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

Public comment for Northgate. Thank you.

Brandi Caulfield | City of San Rafael

Building Division | Permit Technician II

1400 5th Avenue
San Rafael, CA 94901
(415) 458-2395



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Sent: Monday, February 5, 2024 12:41 PM
To: planning <planning@cityofsanrafael.org>; frontdesk@srchamber.com; Mayor Kate <kate.colin@cityofsanrafael.org>; Rachel Kertz <rachel.kertz@cityofsanrafael.org>; Maribeth Bushey <maribeth.bushey@cityofsanrafael.org>; Eli Hill <eli.hill@cityofsanrafael.org>; Maika Llorens Gulati <maika@cityofsanrafael.org>
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Why isn't the City of San Rafael advocating for its only real mall? Please do so and make us an even better place to live and an asset to the City of San Rafael.

Thank you,
R. Moezzi
North San Rafael

From: notify@proudcity.com
To: [April Talley](#)
Subject: New submission from Northgate Town Square Draft EIR Comments
Date: Sunday, January 21, 2024 12:07:01 PM

Name

Patricia Mitchell

Email



Comments

The project is far too dense. Looking down at it, it looks like a ghetto. Where else in Marin would it be even proposed—surely not in southern Marin.
We have the civic leaders to thank for giving us the beautiful Civic Center, and the hills, please spare the Northgate Plaza.

From: notify@proudcity.com
To: [April Talley](#)
Subject: New submission from Northgate Town Square Draft EIR Comments
Date: Tuesday, January 16, 2024 9:35:21 PM

Name

Larry Boeck

Email

[REDACTED]

Comments

On 1st glance the towers seem too large.

What about 3 -4 story towers vs. One 7 story and one 5 story.

Larry0

From: notify@proudcity.com
To: [April Talley](#)
Subject: New submission from Northgate Town Square Draft EIR Comments
Date: Monday, January 8, 2024 3:44:54 PM

Name

Allan Noxon

Email



Comments

Traffic is currently backed up during commute hours getting on 101 on ramp from MT Freitas. Project traffic will cause extensive delays and accidents when getting on and off the freeway during commute hours. Project will make terra linda less desirable to live here due to extensive traffic. Will cause home values to stagnate and loss of house taxes to county. Great job on bait and switch putting a Costco first knowing people would reject that proposal and then be stuck with the multiple housing. Costco would not have had the same commuter traffic problems.

From: notify@proudcity.com
To: [April Talley](#)
Subject: New submission from Northgate Town Square Draft EIR Comments
Date: Tuesday, January 9, 2024 11:40:12 AM

Name

Robert Langenhan

Email

[REDACTED]

Comments

My worries stem from soil contamination at Sear's automotive area from disposal of hazardous substances; existing roads will not support increase in vehicle activity(not everyone will walk or use bicycles)especially when 101 is backed up and local Terra Linda roads are the natural spillover. When 2295 new tenants flush toilets, shower, etc-the water availability is crucial in drought years. Sewers get clogged when residents and restaurants think everything gets flushed down leading to clogged sewer system. Perhaps a 5 story high parking structure at an open space fed by an electric shuttle

From: notify@proudcity.com
To: [April Talley](#)
Subject: New submission from Northgate Town Square Draft EIR Comments
Date: Thursday, January 11, 2024 6:30:47 PM

Name

Heidi Pay

Email

[REDACTED]

Comments

I am very concerned about the lack of parking. Despite the proximity to public transportation I expect more than 1 car per unit and I didn't see sufficient parking. That area in Terra Linda already looks like a parking garage on the street. I am very supportive of growth in our community but the parking is a reality that needs to be properly addressed to make this work..

From: notify@proudcity.com
To: [April Talley](#)
Subject: New submission from Northgate Town Square Draft EIR Comments
Date: Friday, January 12, 2024 3:13:31 PM

Name

Stephen Bingham

Email

[REDACTED]

Comments

I'm astonished that the only transportation environmental impact mentioned is TRA-1, Sight Triangle Maintenance on p. 2-15. While I'm in favor overall of providing much more housing, especially low- and very low-income housing, the environmental impact of this project will be huge. I live across from Safeway on Hibiscus Way and experience very considerable traffic backup on Freitas during commute hours. Unless an access ramp to US 101 is built, the increased traffic from the new housing development will be unacceptable. It's inexcusable that the EIR doesn't discuss traffic impact.

From: notify@proudcity.com
To: [April Talley](#)
Subject: New submission from Northgate Town Square Draft EIR Comments
Date: Monday, January 15, 2024 1:18:19 PM

Name

Mark Brennan

Email

[REDACTED]

Comments

San Rafael City planners and approvers: please stop one false assumption that so many city planners keep making - the assumption that by being close to transit, a development project doesn't need as much parking, because people will take public transit. We all know that this is patently false, and that the cost of this false assumption is a significant parking shortage in the surrounding area. This is not Paris or Tokyo. Public transit is useful only for the elderly and the very poor. Everyone else will have a car. Please get real with this before it's too late.

From: notify@proudcity.com
To: [April Talley](#)
Subject: New submission from Northgate Town Square Draft EIR Comments
Date: Tuesday, January 16, 2024 9:35:21 PM

Name

Larry Boeck

Email



Comments

On 1st glance the towers seem too large.

What about 3 -4 story towers vs. One 7 story and one 5 story.

Larry0

From: notify@proudcity.com
To: [April Talley](#)
Subject: New submission from Northgate Town Square Draft EIR Comments
Date: Saturday, February 3, 2024 12:45:49 PM

Name

Pamela Macknight

Email

[REDACTED]

Comments

It is too dense. You are building a city inside a town.

You have not required the developers to contribute to the surrounding roads, schools, police and fire services needed to support this huge increase in use and population.

Air and noise generated from it is at such high levels it is pollution.

The increase of water needed is beyond what is available without making the public pay for it.

From: notify@proudcity.com
To: [April Talley](#)
Subject: New submission from Northgate Town Square Draft EIR Comments
Date: Monday, January 29, 2024 10:27:54 AM

Name

Todd Lancaster

Email

[REDACTED]

Comments

Who is the general contractor on this project?

From: notify@proudcity.com
To: [April Talley](#)
Subject: New submission from Northgate Town Square Draft EIR Comments
Date: Wednesday, January 17, 2024 3:41:27 PM

Name

Ray Lorber

Email



Comments

RE: Northgate Town Square Draft EIR

Please stop this project.

Terra Linda does not need another 1422 units in our neighborhood. To name a few issues there will be an increase of over 2,000 cars on Freitas Parkway, and Route 101 etc. With a population of 7,000 currently, this 25% increase in residents will cause congestion in all areas. For example, to mention a few : the schools, the grocery stores, the roads, the parks the fire departments, the police and our general life will become crowded. Congestion brings about unrest and crime.

We love our peaceful uncongested Terra Linda

From: notify@proudcity.com
To: [April Talley](#)
Subject: New submission from Northgate Town Square Draft EIR Comments
Date: Tuesday, January 16, 2024 8:32:09 PM

Name

Petra Pless

Email



Comments

Hi,

The weblink to Appx. E, Phase I ESA, is not functional
(https://storage.googleapis.com/proudcity/sanrafaelca/uploads//%date_year/date_month%/2024/01/App-E-Phase-I-ESA-compressed.pdf+) . Please repost the document.

Thank you,
Petra Pless

From: notify@proudcity.com
To: [April Talley](#)
Subject: New submission from Northgate Town Square Draft EIR Comments
Date: Saturday, January 13, 2024 10:23:45 PM

Name

Christopher Tung

Email



Comments

Please proceed with the project and find a path forward ASAP. Im a Terra Linda home owner and we need housing, shops, and investment quickly. We do not need abandoned parking lots.

From: notify@proudcity.com
To: [April Talley](#)
Subject: New submission from Northgate Town Square Draft EIR Comments
Date: Thursday, January 11, 2024 9:24:21 PM

Name

kirk thole

Email



Comments

it need a gold panning business state lottery store buffet restaurant recycling buyback center gofundme in person service

From: notify@proudcity.com
To: [April Talley](#)
Subject: New submission from Northgate Town Square Draft EIR Comments
Date: Tuesday, January 9, 2024 4:50:32 PM

Name

Sophia Beavis

Email

[REDACTED]

Comments

I think the benefits to the community outweigh the impacts outlined in the draft EIR. As a resident of Terra Linda I truly look forward to this projects completion and the amenities and housing it will bring to our community.

From: notify@proudcity.com
To: [April Talley](#)
Subject: New submission from Northgate Town Square Draft EIR Comments
Date: Monday, January 8, 2024 8:36:51 PM

Name

LJ Roberton

Email



Comments

Please provide information about traffic mitigation plans, including the impact on freeway on and off-ramps during peak usage times.

From: notify@proudcity.com
To: [April Talley](#)
Subject: New submission from Northgate Town Square Draft EIR Comments
Date: Saturday, February 3, 2024 12:45:49 PM

Name

Pamela Macknight

Email

[REDACTED]

Comments

It is too dense. You are building a city inside a town.

You have not required the developers to contribute to the surrounding roads, schools, police and fire services needed to support this huge increase in use and population.

Air and noise generated from it is at such high levels it is pollution.

The increase of water needed is beyond what is available without making the public pay for it.

From: [Robert Hicks](#)
To: [April Talley](#)
Cc: [Carol Hicks](#)
Subject: Northgate Town Square
Date: Sunday, February 4, 2024 9:04:10 AM

This email is concerning the project at

5800 Northgate Drive, Northgate Town Square
[REDACTED]

My residence is at 1044 F Los Gamos Road, San Rafael, CA 94903

I have 2 major concerns with the impact that the Northgate Town Square project will have on our neighborhood.

Adding the more than 1320 vehicles to our neighborhood will adversely impact the traffic here, especially the on-street parking. This project must include adequate parking for each residence, taking into account that many of the residences will have multiple vehicles, each requiring its own space.

Northgate Town Square is the third, and by far the largest housing construction project in a neighborhood that is already parking challenged.

The other two projects are:

Los Gamos Apartments

APN 165-220-06 & -07

Project Number: GPA20-001/ ZC20-002/ED20-058

192 apartments

Northgate Walk

1005, 1010, 1020 & 1025 Northgate Drive

Project No.: ED16-038, UP16-018, S16-001, LLA16-003, PTA 16-001

Total units: 136 units

My second concern is the ecological invasion of our beautiful Marin County flora. Please make sure that the landscaping design of the Northgate Town Square project uses only plants native to Marin County as designated by the Marin Chapter of the California Native Plant Society: <https://cnpsmarin.org>

Robert E. Hicks
[REDACTED]

From: [mkforcm](#)
To: [April Talley](#)
Subject: Re: Terra Linda Mall conversion to a "Mixed-Use," development
Date: Thursday, February 1, 2024 8:30:33 AM

Forgot to add that it's a nightmare for pedestrians, as well, due to current traffic conditions.

Thank you.
C. Mehas

[Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android](#)

On Wed, Jan 31, 2024 at 9:18 PM, mkforcm

I am opposed, as are so many others, due to traffic.
It's already a nightmare, as to traffic, as is.

Pls reconsider and keep as a mall, only.

I have lived here since 1968.
The traffic changes I have witnessed are drastic.

~~Thank you,~~
Christine Mehas

[Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android](#)

From: [REDACTED]
To: [April Talley](#)
Subject: Re: Terra Linda Mall conversion to a "Mixed-Use," development
Date: Thursday, February 1, 2024 8:30:33 AM

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[Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android](#)

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[REDACTED]

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Christine Mehas

[REDACTED]

[Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android](#)