



State of California – Natural Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
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GAVIN NEWSOM, Governor
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February 21, 2020

Governor's Office of Planning & Research

February 21, 2020

STATE CLEARINGHOUSE

Ms. Lindy Chan, Acting Planning Manager
City of Redwood City
Planning Services
1017 Middlefield Road
Redwood City, CA 94063
Lchan@redwoodcity.org

Subject: South Main Mixed-Use Project, Revised Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report, SCH #2019070208, City of Redwood City, San Mateo County

Dear Ms. Chan:

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) has reviewed the Notice of Preparation (NOP) of a draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) prepared by the City of Redwood City for the proposed South Main Mixed-use Project (Project) located in the City of Redwood City, San Mateo County. CDFW is submitting comments regarding potential impacts to biological resources associated with the proposed Project.

CDFW is a Trustee Agency with responsibility under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA; Pub. Resources Code, § 21000 et seq.) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15386 for commenting on projects that could impact fish, plant, and wildlife resources. CDFW is also considered a Responsible Agency if a project would require discretionary approval, such as permits issued under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA), the Native Plant Protection Act, the Lake and Streambed Alteration (LSA) Program, and other provisions of the Fish and Game Code that afford protection to the State's fish and wildlife trust resources.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND LOCATION

The proposed Project area is located at the edge of Redwood City's Downtown core and is comprised of five contiguous blocks and one separate block.

The revised proposed Project includes the development of 570 residential units, approximately 530,000 square feet of office space, an 8,400-square-foot childcare facility, and 29,000 square feet of retail space.

The CEQA Guidelines (§§15124 and 15378) require that the draft EIR incorporate a full Project description, including reasonably foreseeable future phases of the Project, and require that it contain sufficient information to evaluate and review the Project's environmental impact. Please include complete descriptions of all Project features and phasing.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The state special-status species that have the potential to occur in or near the Project site, include:

- American Peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus anatum*), State listed under Fish and Game Code as fully protected;
- White-tailed kite (*Elanus leucurus*), State listed under Fish and Game Code as fully protected; and
- Nesting birds

COMMENTS

Comment 1: State Fully Protected Species

State fully protected species may occur within the Project area. CDFW has jurisdiction over fully protected species of birds, mammals, amphibians, reptiles, and fish pursuant to Fish and Game Code §§ 3511, 4700, 5050, and 5515. Take, as defined by Fish and Game Code § 86 is to “hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill, or attempt to hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill”, of any fully protected species is prohibited and CDFW cannot authorize their incidental take. Without appropriate mitigation measures, Project activities conducted within occupied territories have the potential to significantly impact these species.

Without appropriate avoidance and minimization measures for fully protected species, potentially significant impacts associated with Project activities may include, but are not limited to inadvertent entrapment, reduced reproductive success, reduced health and vigor, nest abandonment, loss of nest trees, and/or loss of foraging habitat that would reduce nesting success (loss or reduced health or vigor of eggs or young), and direct mortality.

To evaluate potential impacts to fully protected species, CDFW recommends incorporating the following mitigation measures into the Project’s EIR, and that these measures be made conditions of approval for the Project.

Recommended Mitigation Measure 1: Fully Protected Habitat Assessment

CDFW recommends that a qualified biologist conduct a habitat assessment, before Project implementation, to determine if the Project site or its vicinity contains suitable habitat for fully protected raptors.

Recommended Mitigation Measure 2: Fully Protected Species Surveys

To avoid impacts to fully protected species, CDFW recommends that a qualified biologist conduct species-specific surveys (using standard protocol or methodology, if available) of the Project site before Project implementation. If Project activities will take place when fully protected species are active or are breeding, CDFW recommends that additional pre-activity surveys for active nests or individuals be conducted by a qualified biologist no more than seven (7) days prior to the start of Project activities.

Recommended Mitigation Measure 3: Fully Protected Species Avoidance

In the event a fully protected species is found within or adjacent to the Project site, CDFW recommends that a qualified wildlife biologist develops an appropriate no-disturbance buffer to be implemented. The qualified wildlife biologist should also be on-site during all Project activities to ensure that the fully protect species is not being disturbed by Project activities.

Comment 2: Nesting Birds

CDFW encourages that Project implementation occur during the non-nesting season (late September to January); however, if ground-disturbing or vegetation-disturbing activities must occur during the breeding season (February through early-September), the Project applicant is responsible for ensuring that implementation of the Project does not result in violation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act or relevant Fish and Game Code sections:

To evaluate Project-related impacts on nesting birds, CDFW recommends that a qualified wildlife biologist conduct pre-activity surveys for active nests no more than seven (7) days prior to the start of ground or vegetation disturbance to maximize the probability that nests that could potentially be impacted are detected. CDFW also recommends that surveys cover a sufficient area around the Project site to identify nests and determine their status. A sufficient area means any area potentially affected by the Project. Prior to initiation of Project activities, CDFW recommends that a qualified biologist conduct a survey to establish a behavioral baseline of all identified nests. Once Project activities begins, CDFW recommends having a qualified biologist continuously monitor nests to detect behavioral changes resulting from the Project. If behavioral changes occur, CDFW recommends halting the work causing that change and consulting with CDFW for additional avoidance and minimization measures.

If continuous monitoring of identified nests by a qualified wildlife biologist is not feasible, CDFW recommends a minimum no-disturbance buffer of 250 feet around active nests of non-listed bird species and a 500-foot no-disturbance buffer around active nests of non-listed raptors. These buffers are advised to remain in place until the breeding season has ended or until a qualified biologist has determined that the birds have fledged and are no longer reliant upon the nest or on-site parental care for survival. Variance from these no-disturbance buffers is possible when there is compelling biological or ecological reason to do so, such as when the Project site would be concealed from a nest site by topography. CDFW recommends that a qualified wildlife biologist advise and support any variance from these buffers.

REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

California Endangered Species Act

Please be advised that a CESA Permit must be obtained if the Project has the potential to result in "take" of plants or animals listed under CESA, either during construction or over the life of the Project. Issuance of a CESA Permit is subject to CEQA documentation; the CEQA document must specify impacts, mitigation measures, and a mitigation monitoring and reporting program. If the Project will impact CESA listed species, early consultation is encouraged, as significant

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modification to the Project and mitigation measures may be required in order to obtain a CESA Permit.

CEQA requires a Mandatory Finding of Significance if a project is likely to substantially impact threatened or endangered species [CEQA section 21001(c), 21083, and CEQA Guidelines section 15380, 15064, 15065]. Impacts must be avoided or mitigated to less-than-significant levels unless the CEQA Lead Agency makes and supports Findings of Overriding Consideration (FOC). The CEQA Lead Agency's FOC does not eliminate the Project proponent's obligation to comply with Fish and Game Code section 2080.

Lake and Streambed Alteration Program

Notification is required, pursuant to CDFW's LSA Program (Fish and Game Code section 1600 et. seq.) for any Project-related activities that will substantially divert or obstruct the natural flow; change or use material from the bed, channel, or bank including associated riparian or wetland resources; or deposit or dispose of material where it may pass into a river, lake or stream. Work within ephemeral streams, washes, watercourses with a subsurface flow, and floodplains are subject to notification requirements. CDFW, as a Responsible Agency under CEQA, will consider the CEQA document for the Project. CDFW may not execute the final LSA Agreement until it has complied with CEQA (Public Resources Code section 21000 et seq.) as the responsible agency.

FILING FEES

CDFW anticipates that the Project will have an impact on fish and/or wildlife, and assessment of filing fees is necessary (Fish and Game Code section 711.4; Pub. Resources Code, section 21089). Fees are payable upon filing of the Notice of Determination by the Lead Agency and serve to help defray the cost of environmental review by CDFW.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Project's NOP. If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Ms. Monica Oey, Environmental Scientist, at (707) 428-2088 or monica.oey@wildlife.ca.gov; or Ms. Randi Adair, Senior Environmental Scientist (Supervisory), at (707) 576-2786 or randi.adair@wildlife.ca.gov.

Sincerely,



Gregg Erickson
Regional Manager
Bay Delta Region

cc: State Clearinghouse #2019070208