

**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

DISTRICT 4

OFFICE OF TRANSIT AND COMMUNITY PLANNING

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Governor's Office of Planning &amp; Research

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December 9, 2019

SCH #2019119040

GTS # 04-MRN-2019-00153

GTS ID: 17694

MRN/101/PM 13.16

Caron Parker, Project Planner  
City of San Rafael  
Community Development Department  
1400 Fifth Ave. P.O. Box 15160  
San Rafael, CA 94915-1560

**350 Merrydale Project – Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND)**

Dear Caron Parker:

Thank you for including the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in the environmental review process for the 350 Merrydale Project. We are committed to ensuring that impacts to the State's multimodal transportation system and to our natural environment are identified and mitigated to support a safe, sustainable, integrated and efficient transportation system. The following comments are based on our review of the November 2019 IS/MND.

***Project Understanding***

The applicant proposes to construct a mixture of 45 for-sale town homes and stacked flats, and a multi-purpose community room on an approximate 2.28 acre site. There are 41 three-story town homes proposed and four stacked flats in five different building types. A total of nine buildings will range from four to eight units. The Merrydale Road frontage will be improved with new curb, gutter, sidewalk and landscaping and create five new on-street parking spaces along the east side of Merrydale Road. Combined with the five existing spaces, there would be a total of nine on-street parking spaces along the Merrydale project frontage. Regional access is provided from US-101 and Merrydale Road about a half mile away.

***Highway Operations***

The Transportation section of the IS/MND discusses the possibility of signalization for the south bound (SB) US-101/Merrydale Road intersection. Please note that any proposal to modify the ramp terminal intersection of SB US-101/Merrydale

Road would require an Intersection Control Evaluation (ICE) per Caltrans' policy to evaluate other alternatives for traffic control/calming operation besides signalization. Such evaluation would have to be coordinated and concurred by Caltrans.

### **Aesthetics**

US-101 is directly adjacent to the project site and the site can be seen by drivers on the roadway.

On page 35 of the IS/MND, regarding the discussion on aesthetics checklist Question A, the document states, "*Although the Civic Center is considered a scenic resource, no scenic vistas have been identified in the General Plan at or in the immediate vicinity of this site*". Consider removing this sentence because page 9 of the San Rafael General Plan 2020 states "*We revere our natural setting, bathed in a Mediterranean climate, nestled in **grassy wooded hills**, with shoreline vistas and wetlands rich with wildlife and vegetation.*" The hills surrounding the site may be considered a scenic vista in the San Rafael General Plan 2020.

On page 36, regarding the discussion on aesthetics checklist Question C, the document states, "*Although the structure would not project over ridgelines or **block views to** cause potentially significant impacts on visual resources...*" This statement is inconsistent with what is shown in the architectural plans on sheet A-2, East View, where the simulations block the hill ridgelines. Please update the simulations in the architectural plans and visual assessment to show low impact on the hill ridgelines. Also, please remove the "*block views to*" section. Although the structure will block views, there is minimal impact on visual resources.

### **Lead Agency**

As the Lead Agency, the City of San Rafael is responsible for all project mitigation, including any needed improvements to the State Transportation Network (STN). The project's fair share contribution, financing, scheduling, implementation responsibilities and lead agency monitoring should be fully discussed for all proposed mitigation measures.

### **Encroachment Permit**

Please be advised that any work or traffic control that encroaches onto the State right-of-way (ROW) requires a Caltrans-issued encroachment permit. To obtain an encroachment permit, a completed encroachment permit application, environmental documentation, six (6) sets of plans clearly indicating the State ROW, and six (6) copies of signed, dated and stamped (include stamp

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expiration date) traffic control plans must be submitted to: Office of Encroachment Permits, California DOT, District 4, P.O. Box 23660, Oakland, CA 94623-0660. To download the permit application and obtain more information, visit <https://dot.ca.gov/programs/traffic-operations/ep/applications>.

Thank you again for including Caltrans in the environmental review process. Should you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Andrew Chan at 510-622-5433 or [andrew.chan@dot.ca.gov](mailto:andrew.chan@dot.ca.gov).

Sincerely,



Mark Leong  
District Branch Chief  
Local Development - Intergovernmental Review

c: State Clearinghouse