DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

DISTRICT 4 OFFICE OF TRANSIT AND COMMUNITY PLANNING P.O. BOX 23660, MS-10D OAKLAND, CA 94623-0660 PHONE (510) 286-5528 TTY 711 www.dot.ca.gov



Governor's Office of Planning & Research

February 8, 2021

STATE CLEARINGHOUSE

February 8, 2021

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Katie Meador, Senior Planner City of Menlo Park, Planning Division 701 Laurel Street Menlo Park, CA 94025

Re: 123 Independence Drive Mixed-Use Project + Notice of Preparation (NOP)

Dear Katie Meador:

Thank you for including the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in the environmental review process for this 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 January 2021 NOP.

Project Understanding

The project proposes to demolish the five existing office and industrial buildings (a total of approximately 103,900 square-feet) and create four parcels which would encompass 316 rental apartments, 67 for-sale townhomes, and 88,750 square feet of office space. The project intends to comply with the City's Below-Market-Rate ordinance; as such 58 units would affordable. The site is located north of US-101 and south of State Route (SR)-84, accessible via Independence Drive and Chrysler Drive.

Travel Demand Analysis

With the enactment of Senate Bill (SB) 743, Caltrans is focused on maximizing efficient development patterns, innovative travel demand reduction strategies, and multimodal improvements. For more information on how Caltrans assesses Transportation Impact Studies, please review Caltrans' Transportation Impact Studies, Study Guide.

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If the project meets the screening criteria established in the City's adopted vehicle miles travelled (VMT) policy to be presumed to have a less-thansignificant VMT impact and exempt from detailed VMT analysis, please provide justification to support the exempt status in align with the City's VMT policy. Projects that do not meet the screening criteria should include a detailed VMT analysis in the DEIR, which should include the following:

- VMT analysis pursuant to the City's guidelines. Projects that result in automobile VMT per capita above the threshold of significance for existing (i.e. baseline) city-wide or regional values for similar land use types may indicate a significant impact. If necessary, mitigation for increasing VMT should be identified. Mitigation should support the use of transit and active transportation modes. Potential mitigation measures that include the requirements of other agencies such as Caltrans are fully enforceable through permit conditions, agreements, or other legally-binding instruments under the control of the City.
- A schematic illustration of walking, biking and auto conditions at the project site and study area roadways. Potential safety issues for all road users should be identified and fully mitigated.
- The project's primary and secondary effects on pedestrians, bicycles, travelers with disabilities and transit performance should be evaluated, including countermeasures and trade-offs resulting from mitigating VMT increases. Access to pedestrians, bicycle, and transit facilities must be maintained.
- Clarification of the intensity of events to be held at the location and how the associated travel demand and VMT will be mitigated.

Mitigation Strategies

Location efficiency factors, including community design and regional accessibility, influence a project's impact on the environment. Using Caltrans' *Smart Mobility 2010: A Call to Action for the New Decade*, the proposed project site is identified as a Close-In Compact Community where community design is moderate and regional accessibility is strong.

Given the place, type and size of the project, the DEIR should include a robust Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Program to reduce VMT and greenhouse gas emissions from future development in this area. The measures Katie Meador, Senior Planner February 8, 2021 Page 3

listed below have been quantified by California Air Pollution Control Officers Association (CAPCOA) and shown to have different efficiencies reducing regional VMT:

- Increase in number of affordable housing units in project;
- Orientation of project towards non-auto corridor;
- Pedestrian network improvements;
- Transit access supporting infrastructure (including bus shelter improvements and sidewalk/ crosswalk safety facilities);
- Bicycle network improvements or fair share contributions to such measures;
- Traffic calming measures;
- Implementation of a neighborhood electric vehicle (EV) network, including designated parking spaces for EVs;
- Limiting parking supply;
- Unbundled parking from property costs;
- Transit and trip planning resources such as a commute information kiosk;
- Real-time transit information system;
- Transit access supporting infrastructure (including bus shelter improvements and sidewalk/ crosswalk safety facilities);
- VMT Banking and/or Exchange program.

Using a combination of strategies appropriate to the project and the site can reduce VMT, along with related impacts on the environment and State facilities. TDM programs should be documented with annual monitoring reports by a TDM coordinator to demonstrate effectiveness. If the project does not achieve the VMT reduction goals, the reports should also include next steps to take in order to achieve those targets.

Please reach out to Caltrans for further information about TDM measures and a toolbox for implementing these measures in land use projects. Additionally, Federal Highway Administration's Integrating Demand Management into the Transportation Planning Process: A Desk Reference (Chapter 8). The reference is available online at:

http://www.ops.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/fhwahop12035/fhwahop12035.pdf.

Transportation Impact Fees

Please identify project-generated travel demand and estimate the costs of transit and active transportation improvements necessitated by the proposed project; viable funding sources such as development and/or transportation

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impact fees should also be identified. We encourage a sufficient allocation of fair share contributions toward multi-modal and regional transit improvements to fully mitigate cumulative impacts to regional transportation. We also strongly support measures to increase sustainable mode shares, thereby reducing VMT.

Lead Agency

As the Lead Agency, the City of Menlo Park 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.

Thank you again for including Caltrans in the environmental review process. Should you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Laurel Sears at laurel.sears@dot.ca.gov. Additionally, for future notifications and requests for review of new projects, please contact LDIGR-D4@dot.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Mark Long

MARK LEONG District Branch Chief Local Development - Intergovernmental Review

c: State Clearinghouse