



SAN MATEO, SANTA CLARA & SAN BENITO COUNTIES

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San Mateo City Council ([CityCouncil@cityofsanmateo.org](mailto:CityCouncil@cityofsanmateo.org), [clerk@cityofsanmateo.org](mailto:clerk@cityofsanmateo.org))

**Subject: City-Owned Downtown Affordable Housing**

Thank you for providing the opportunity for the Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter Sustainable Land Use Committee (SLU) to comment on the proposed City-Owned Downtown Affordable Housing project scheduled for your August 17, 2020 meeting. SLU is the section of the local Sierra Club chapter that advocates on land use issues like major development projects. As an environmental organization working towards reducing local greenhouse gas and other emissions, we encourage the development of higher density, mixed-use development near major transit stations.

As part of our efforts to encourage sustainable development we have established a set of [Guidelines for Residential, Commercial and Mixed-Use Transit Oriented Development \(TOD\)](#).

These Guidelines include a scoring system for evaluation of projects.

**Attached is our Guidelines with our current scoring** for this project. After reviewing the plans and talking with the developer, the proposal received a total of 103 points; however, many of those points were for features that were given to us verbally by the developer, but are not yet final until they are included in either the Plans or the Development Agreement. We consider 100 points (out of a maximum possible score of 180) a minimum for consideration for supporting a project. We cannot however consider fully endorsing the project at this time, as we need to go through additional process steps, to confirm compliance, which will require additional information.

The project scores well in our Guidelines considering that it is a 100% affordable project which targets low and very low-income residents. This means the project will have a relatively lower revenue and so it is not reasonable to expect it to score high in our Guidelines, where many items are there to encourage additional optional features that improve the environment. But this project scores very high in the fundamental areas of concern.

- It provides a high number of housing units for lower income people, the group most likely to have to live outside the Peninsula and incur long commutes to work in the Peninsula.
- The location is a prime TOD area near Caltrain and buses, thereby reducing the need for cars.
- The location is extremely walkable, thus further reducing car impacts.
- The parking for residents is restricted to only 70% which will reduce car dependency even more.

These fundamental features are strong and positive for this project. They are at the root of having a housing project that will improve the environment as well as the lives of the residents and the overall San Mateo community.

We are pleased (based on the plans and verbal assurances by the developer) that the proposal includes:

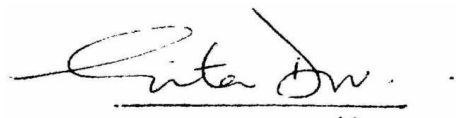
1. High amount of new affordable housing with 225 units, including 60 3BD.
2. Targets Low and Very Low income for affordability
3. Near Caltrain and bus /shuttle lines as a TOD
4. Very walkable with all the amenities of Downtown nearby
5. Helps improve the local jobs/housing imbalance
6. Encourages fewer cars by limiting parking spaces for residents to ~70%
7. All electric residential units
8. Includes pedestrian friendly sidewalks and intersections
9. Native landscaping
10. Monitored Traffic Demand Management Program
11. Lots of bicycle parking (over 1 per unit)
12. Electric car charging stations
13. Near many local amenities, (shopping, restaurants, theaters, parks, etc.)

There are also areas where we encourage the city to seek additional benefits from the project. This includes:

1. The new public parking structure provides more parking spaces than the old parking lot. This could encourage more car traffic with the associated negative impacts. We encourage the City to commit that it will remove other downtown parking places over time to, at least, offset this increase.
2. All of the positive aspects of the development listed (1–13) above should be included in the Development Agreement or as a Condition of Approval. We urge the City to require that all the developer's promises be codified in the Development Agreement and ensure that these are in fact executed.

We ask that you consider the information in the Guidelines and our scoring as you consider this project.

Respectfully submitted:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gita Dev", is written over a horizontal line.

Gita Dev, Co-chair, Sustainable Land Use Committee, Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter (SCLP)

CC Gladwyn D'Souza. Conservation Committee, SCLP  
James Eggers, Executive Director, SCLP