



SIERRA CLUB

LOMA PRIETA CHAPTER

SAN MATEO, SANTA CLARA & SAN BENITO COUNTIES

November 15, 2022

City of Redwood City Planning Department
Evelyn Garcia Associate Planner
Via email to: egarcia@redwoodcity.org

Subject: 1205 Veterans Blvd project

Dear Ms Garcia,

The Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter's Sustainable Land Use Committee (SLU), advocates on land use issues in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties.

We've recently reviewed the plans for the 1205 Veterans Blvd proposal and have the following observations:

1. We were pleased to see it includes 409 new rental units and affordable housing, however, we are concerned about the overall architectural character of the project.
2. We have long advocated for high density housing development along transit corridors, but this project seems to be the poster child of everything the general public hates about high density housing.
 - a) Floor Plans, Landscape Plans, and Exterior Elevations do not seem to be consistent. The first-floor plan and landscape plans show what appear to be first floor units with stairways out to the sidewalk but configure the stairways differently in each plan. The elevations show no stairways. This needs to be clarified, because based on the elevations alone, the project does not seem to engage in any way with the streetscape. The stairways to the sidewalk, along with well-designed green landscaping, would help greatly to visually connect this project to the streetscape and soften the visual massing of the buildings so should be encouraged. See rendering and photo at end.
 - b) Based on the very sterile renderings of the perspectives and elevations, the buildings appears very monolithic and bulky as viewed from the street and need to be broken down into visually smaller, human scale, elements including better window and door detailing and additional elements that add texture and shadow to visually break up the facades.
 - c) The site plan does not seem to include any significant publicly accessible green open spaces. Instead, it buries the open spaces in interior private courtyards and a central courtyard with a pool which will all clearly not be publicly accessible. This is important because well designed high density housing needs to be paired with green open spaces for relaxation and recreation and to give the tenants a sense of nature and the outdoors, but it also should provide publicly accessible green spaces to make the project more appealing to the general public.

- d) By not engaging the street and not providing enough green space, this project reinforces the public perception of "stack and pack" housing and this is not good for public acceptance of the design.

3. You may wonder why Sierra Club is concerned about the architecture of this particular project. It's because we want higher densities in urban infill locations to be an acceptable alternative to more suburban sprawl development, as well as an acceptable approach to helping resolve the current jobs/housing imbalance in most of our Peninsula cities. This means we need examples of higher density housing that are attractive and inspiring, and which include a range of community benefits (including green open space) that are a welcome asset to the city and the neighborhood. Unfortunately, we feel this proposal fails that aspiration.

Please share with the Architectural Advisory Committee to get the developer to modify this proposal and come up with a development that is an attractive asset to the community and an example of inspiring design so it will be easier to get community buy-in for similar scale developments in the future.

Respectfully Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gita Dev", with a horizontal line underneath.

Gita Dev, FAIA, Co-Chair
Sustainable Land Use Committee
Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter

Cc: Redwood City Architectural Advisory Committee
James Eggers, Executive Director, Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter
Gladwyn d'Souza, Conservation Chair, Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter



Fig. 1 of 3, Porches and steps off the sidewalk with planting for privacy add visual interest for passers by



Fig. 2 of 3, "Link 33" Condos, El Camino Real/Hopkins, Redwood City



Fig. 3 of 3, “800 High Street” Palo Alto – The raised planters provide some privacy to ground floor patios and visual interest to passers by.