



Loma Prieta Chapter serving San Mateo, Santa Clara & San Benito Counties

City of Redwood City
Attn: Aaron Aknin, Assistant Community Development Director
Community Development Department
1017 Middlefield Road
Redwood City, CA.
94063
aaknin@redwoodcity.org

Re: Proposed Mixed Use development at 1601 El Camino Real

Although we recognize that it is very early in the review process, the Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter, Sustainable Land Use Committee has received preliminary statistics on this proposed project and have serious concerns about the scope and nature of the development as currently defined.

As an environmental organization working towards reducing local greenhouse gas emissions, we encourage the development of higher density, mixed-use development near downtowns and major transit stations.

Transit “adjacent” not transit oriented

While just outside the Downtown Precise Plan, this development potentially meets the criteria for a Transit Oriented Development since it is within ½ mile of the Caltrain station and in the El Camino Precise Plan area; however the parking ratio, even as proposed, is too high for a TOD. A comfortable standard, currently being widely adopted for TOD, is not more than 1.5 cars per 1,000 SF office / retail + 1 car per unit for housing which for this project = 900 cars for the office / retail + 272 cars for units = total 1,172 cars. This proposal includes 2,034 parking spaces (862 cars over parked).

Rather than spending money on 862 extra parking spaces, the developer should be encouraged to use that money- and the allowable volume -to build more affordable units on site¹. In addition, we ask the city to require a very robust Traffic Demand Management (TDM) program for this development that will actually reduce traffic inflow and outflow from the development by requiring unbundled parking, shared parking and provisions for bike and auto share on-site as well as providing bulk transit passes for both Caltrain and SamTrans for a minimum of five years to encourage transit use and ride-share. Transparent reporting and a clear requirement to meet TDM goals, followed by fines for non-performance, should also back this up.

¹ Each parking space requires about 350sf, which is the size of a studio apartment, and costs upwards of \$50,000.

We do commend the inclusion of a clear effort at pedestrian-priority design for Beech Street and strongly suggest that auto-style curbs be eliminated in favor of using a more pedestrian vocabulary such as bollards or planters to control where cars can go².

Residential Permit Parking Program

We further recommend the city consider creating a residential parking permit program in adjoining residential neighborhoods, funded by developments such as this, to mitigate any potential parking overflow from the project.

Housing-jobs imbalance

We are also concerned about the current imbalance between jobs and housing in the county as we see it leading to traffic congestion and economic inequality that contributes to GHG emissions, and air and water pollution. This project exceeds the EIR done for the Downtown Precise Plan and the jobs-housing balance was not adequately addressed in that Precise Plan. This is now a regional crisis that needs to be actively addressed by all cities.

1601 El Camino Real is a very unbalanced mixed-use development with 589,700 SF of office, 10,100 SF of retail and only 272 rental units. Redwood City, like all the cities in the county, should require the developer to lay out where the new employees are expected to live with emphasis on housing nearby and strong incentives to encourage transit use to jobs on-site. If the development does not include feasible solutions to employee housing, the developer should be asked to submit a plan that will not add to the current housing shortage. We recognize that Redwood City has built a lot of housing recently, but still not enough to balance the number of jobs in the city.

Based on 300 SF per job for office, which is conservative (150 SF per job is becoming more common today), the developer needs to include an estimate of where future employees will find a minimum of 1,310 housing units at 1.5 jobs per unit or 2,620 units at 150 SF per job, so as not to exacerbate the current jobs / housing imbalance.

This project is woefully under-housed and will just add to the ongoing jobs-housing problem without a more responsible plan.

We believe, because of these serious shortcomings, this project should be required to be redesigned with more housing and reduced parking or it should be rejected as submitted.

Respectfully submitted:

² *As an example, Santana Row in San Jose eliminates curbs when creating a pedestrian priority stretch of street and uses large planters to designate the edges of the "street" for cars.*

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

Gita Dev
Gladwyn D'Souza
Co-chairs, Sustainable Land Use Committee
Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter (SCLP)

cc Redwood City Planning Commission members
Redwood City City Council members
James Eggers, Executive Director SCLP
Mike Ferriera, Conservation Committee Chair, SCLP
Katja Irwin, Conservation Co-Chair, SCLP
Gladwyn D'Souza, Conservation Committee Co-Chair, SCLP