



Tuesday, May 20, 2008

Mayor Carole Groom
Members of the City Council,
Planning Commission
City of San Mateo
330 West 20th Avenue
San Mateo, CA 94403

RE: 121 North San Mateo Drive Proposal - SUPPORT

Dear Mayor Groom and Councilmembers, Planning Commissioners:

For 50 years, Greenbelt Alliance has protected the region's working farms and natural areas while making the Bay Area's cities better places to live. A key component of our work is identifying where new growth should occur and which development proposals best meet the needs of the region. Our Compact Development Team (CDT) endorses and advocates for livable, transit-accessible communities with a wide range of housing options for families of all sizes and income levels. The Compact Development Team evaluated the 121 North San Mateo Drive development proposal, proposed by Nick Podell Company, using an established set of guidelines. We have endorsed the project because of its prime location near Caltrain, because of its livable, environmentally friendly features, and also due to its smart use of the State Density Bonus to achieve good urban design. We encourage your support of the 121 North San Mateo project in upcoming hearings.

It has been said that the three key aspects of real estate are location, location, and location. When it comes to high-quality infill development, location is of primary importance. Nick Podell Company proposes 33 compact homes to be located a 5-minute walk away from the San Mateo Caltrain station, aligning well with City of San Mateo's broader efforts to focus infill development near its three Caltrain stations. These homes will enjoy an excellent location near downtown San Mateo, including the commercial center on Third Street. Nearby are the Mills Peninsula Hospital, medical offices, houses of worship, and other multifamily homes, and in the surrounding area are Trag's grocery store, multiple restaurants, dry cleaners, and other community amenities. Future residents of this development will be able to live a lifestyle that involves running errands on foot and even commuting north or south via Caltrain or on El Camino bus routes.

The 121 North San Mateo Drive project is designed with livability in mind, and therefore its environmental benefits are many. It will have a central courtyard where residents can gather, providing open space, and will feature 10% affordable homes. Since the desire for affordable places to live fuels sprawl development, building affordable, transit-oriented homes is particularly effective in addressing the problem of sprawl. The development's pedestrian-friendly elements, including underground parking, serve to enhance the pedestrian experience in this neighborhood.

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Additionally, Greenbelt Alliance is pleased that Nick Podell Company is using Build it Green's green building checklist as a way to pursue practical ways of reducing the project's carbon footprint.

Since 121 North San Mateo Drive is a transit-oriented development, it makes sense to apply the State Density Bonus in a situation like this. Reduced parking and increased compactness is what makes projects like this successful in promoting cycling, transit ridership, walking, and alternative means of transportation beyond car use. This is the kind of urban design that is appropriate for San Mateo's downtown, where many other projects of similar size and scale are nearby.

In closing, Greenbelt Alliance applauds the City of San Mateo's focus on infill sites for new development. This kind of growth combats climate change and alleviates pressure to pave over natural areas and working farms while providing homes for the people who live and work in the community. Greenbelt Alliance urges the City Council and Planning Commission's support of this project.

Regards,

/s/

Marla Wilson
Sustainable Development Associate

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