



Tuesday, February 3, 2009

Mayor Jim Leland
And Councilmembers,
Planning Commissioners
City of Novato
75 Rowland Way #200
Novato, CA 94945

RE: Warner Creek Project – SUPPORT

Dear Mayor Leland and Councilmembers, Planning Commissioners:

For over 50 years, Greenbelt Alliance has protected the scenic rolling hills and forests that define our region, while promoting a responsible way to grow—one that involves walkable streets, mixed-use development, and homes we can all afford. We write to you to share our support for the Warner Creek Senior Housing Development proposed by Eden Housing. This project meets our stringent endorsement criteria and will be a gain for Novato, and for the region as a whole.

Eden Housing has proposed 61 compact homes for low-income seniors to occupy this long-vacant lot at 806 Diablo Avenue. It helps fulfill a severe need for affordable housing in Marin, and continues Novato's record of meeting its affordable housing needs and providing places for seniors to "age in place." All of the homes on site, with the exception of the manager's unit, will serve residents with incomes less than 50% of the area median income, providing stability for an often-overlooked population. Since Marin County remains one of the most unaffordable places to live in the United States, development like the Warner Creek project is of critical importance in making sure our communities remain diverse and vibrant.

The location of this project is such that the seniors will have wonderful access to needed goods and services. The development is only 0.4 miles from the Margaret Todd Senior Center, connecting residents with activities, friends, and resources to complement their lifestyle. Retail is located nearby, as is a public library and Golden Gate Transit bus lines. The Novato Fair Shopping Center, also only 0.4 miles away, includes stores such as Safeway, Wells Fargo, and Big Lots that would appeal to seniors of modest means. Hill Park is only 0.3 miles from the project, meaning that residents can enjoy easy access to open space near home. The amenities within the project, including the proposed garden for the seniors and the community library for the residents, will make the environment pleasant and livable.

The 2.27-acre site for the proposed development includes a 0.15-acre swath of land deemed a "seasonal wetland" by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Eden Housing has taken steps to ensure that the site design addresses the environmental demands presented by the area within the 100-year floodplain. The building will be placed above the base flood elevation, meaning that there will be no net loss of flood retention capacity on-site and that any water that accrues will flow under the building and into Warner Creek. Eden Housing plans to add bioswales to capture and filter runoff into Warner Creek, supporting any native plants and species that may be present. They will comply

MAIN OFFICE • 631 Howard Street, Suite 510, San Francisco, CA 94105 • (415) 543-6771 • Fax (415) 543-6781
SOUTH BAY OFFICE • 1922 The Alameda, Suite 213, San Jose, CA 95126 • (408) 983-0856 • Fax (408) 983-1001
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with the City of Novato's required 50-foot riparian setback and will also offer 2:1 off-site mitigation for the wetlands by purchasing mitigation credits from the Mount Burdell Mitigation Bank. Greenbelt Alliance feels the mitigation measures proposed by Eden Housing are appropriate for this site and that the developer has shown appropriate care and caution in protecting this riparian corridor. Eden Housing has successfully balanced the environmental needs of Warner Creek with the strong environmental benefit of providing affordable infill housing where services and infrastructure already exist.

In closing, Greenbelt Alliance encourages the Planning Commission and City Council's support of the Warner Creek Senior Housing Project proposed by Eden Housing. It is development like this that eases pressure to develop the Bay Area's working farms and natural areas, meaning better air quality, less traffic, fewer dangerous greenhouse gas emissions, and a better quality of life for us all.

Sincerely,

/s/

Marla Wilson
Sustainable Development Associate

CC: Louise Patterson