



# Notice of Preparation Environmental Impact Report City of San Rafael

**Date:** December 9, 2021

<b>To:</b>	State Clearinghouse State Responsible Agencies State Trustee Agencies Other Public Agencies Interested Organizations and Individuals Property Owners in the Vicinity	<b>From:</b>	Tricia Stevens Consulting Planner City of San Rafael 1400 Fifth Street San Rafael, CA 94901
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**Subject:** Notice of Preparation of an Initial Study and Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Northgate Mall Redevelopment Project

**Lead Agency:** City of San Rafael Community Development Department

**Project Title:** Northgate Mall Redevelopment Project  
(ZC21-001, UP21-007, ED21-024, TS21-002, IS21-002, DA21-001  
APNs: 175-060-12,-40,-59,-61,-66 & -67)

**Project Area:** North San Rafael Town Center, City of San Rafael

Notice is hereby given that the City of San Rafael (City) will be the lead agency and will prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the proposed Northgate Mall Redevelopment Project (project) and will hold a public meeting to receive comments on the scope of the EIR, as detailed below. Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15206, the proposed project is considered a project of Statewide, regional, or areawide significance. The City, acting as the Lead Agency, determined that the proposed project could result in potentially significant environmental impacts and that an EIR is required.

The City will prepare an EIR to address the potential environmental impacts associated with the project consistent with CEQA Guidelines Sections 15161 and 15168. The EIR will evaluate the proposed project for potential impacts on the environment and determine the potential environmental consequences of project implementation. An evaluation of project alternatives that could reduce significant impacts will be included in the EIR. The proposed project, its location, and potential environmental effects are described below

The City is requesting comments and guidance on the scope and content of the EIR from interested public agencies, organizations, and individuals. Comments on the NOP are due no later than the close of the NOP review period (5:00 p.m. on **January 14, 2022**). However, we would appreciate your response at the earliest possible date. Please send your written comments to Tricia Stevens at the address shown above or by email to [Tricia.Stevens@cityofsanrafael.org](mailto:Tricia.Stevens@cityofsanrafael.org) with "Northgate Mall Redevelopment Project EIR" as the subject. Public agencies that provide comments are asked to include a contact person for the agency.

A scoping session will be held before the San Rafael Planning Commission on **January 11, 2022, at 7:00 p.m.** In response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Planning Commission meeting will be held remotely via Zoom, which can be accessed at: <https://www.cityofsanrafael.org/planning-commission-meetings/>.

The scoping session is the time when the City solicits input from the public and agencies on specific topics they believe should be addressed in the environmental analysis. The scoping process is designed to enable the City to determine the scope and content of the EIR and identify potentially significant environmental effects, alternatives, and mitigation measures to be analyzed in the EIR.

**PROJECT LOCATION AND EXISTING CONDITIONS:** The project site is located west of US Highway 101 (US 101), in the City of San Rafael, Marin County, as shown in Figure 1. The approximately 44.76-acre project site consists of the Northgate Mall, which is located within the San Rafael Town Center in the northern portion of the city. The project site is generally surrounded by a mix of uses, including commercial, residential, open space, and institutional. The project site is bordered by Las Gallinas Avenue to the north and east and Northgate Drive to the south and west.

The project site is designated as General Commercial on the City's General Plan Land Use Map and is within the General Commercial zoning district. The mall, which originally opened in 1965, is generally oriented on a north-south axis, with the main building located in the center of the project site surrounded by surface parking and standalone buildings and structures. Current major tenants within the mall include Century Theatre, Macy's, Kohl's, Rite Aid, and HomeGoods. A total of 2,908 parking spaces are provided on the project site. Vegetation on the site consists of ornamental landscaping, including landscaped strips along the boundaries of the site that contain street trees and shrubs, planters with trees within the surface parking lot, and some mature trees located adjacent to the existing buildings.

**PROJECT BACKGROUND:** The project sponsor, Merlone Geier Partners, LLC, submitted an application for the proposed project on March 10, 2021, and a revised application was submitted in June 2021. The City of San Rafael Planning Commission (PC) and Design Review Board (DRB) held a joint study session on September 14, 2021. In addition to feedback and input from the PC and DRB, the public was given the opportunity to provide initial comments on the project at this meeting.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION:** The proposed project would result in the redevelopment of the existing mall through demolition, renovation, and new construction with a mix of commercial and residential land uses. As shown in Table 1, the proposed project would be developed in two phases, and at full buildout is currently proposed to include a total of approximately 225,100 square feet of commercial uses and up to 1,443 residential units, of which 10 percent would be restricted to a minimum of low-income households.<sup>1</sup>

Phase 1 (also referred to as the 2025 Master Plan) would generally include the demolition of the RH Outlet, HomeGoods, and approximately 140,932 square feet of the main building and construction of approximately 1,013 residential units. Phase 1 would also include the construction of a town square near the center of the project site. Phase 2 (also referred to as the 2040 Vision Plan) would generally include the demolition of the Macy's and Kohl's buildings and the construction of 430 residential units.

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that proposed square footages, residential unit mix, and other elements of the project may be subject to continued refinement after publication of this NOP and prior to consideration of project approval. The analysis in the EIR will evaluate the maximum development potential for the proposed project.

**Table 1: Proposed Project Buildout Summary**

Phase	Existing Commercial (square feet)	Demolished Commercial (square feet)	Existing Commercial to Remain (square feet)	New Commercial (square feet)	Total Commercial (square feet)	Residential Units
Phase 1	766,507	305,446	461,061	44,100	505,161	1,013
Phase 2 <sup>a</sup>	505,161	339,861	165,300	59,800	225,100	1,443

Source: Merlone Geier Partners LLC (2021).

a: Phase 2 represents the proposed project at full buildout, and therefore includes development from Phase 1.

**PROBABLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS:** The EIR will address the proposed project’s potential impacts to the following environmental topics:

- Aesthetics
- Agricultural and Forestry Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Energy
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Mineral Resources
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Transportation
- Tribal Cultural Resources
- Utilities and Service Systems
- Wildfire

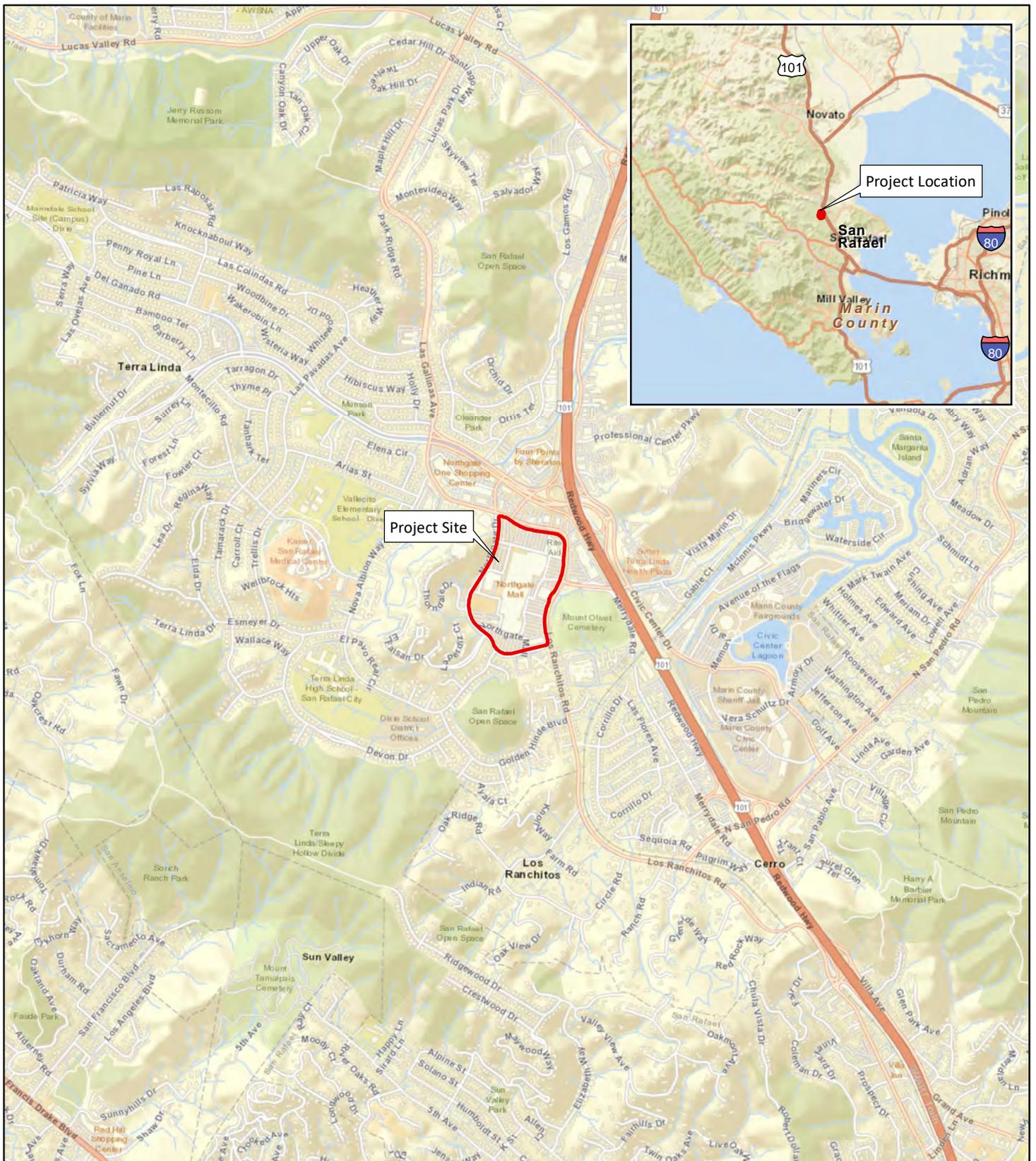
**ALTERNATIVES:** Based on the significance conclusions determined in the EIR, alternatives to the proposed project will be identified and analyzed to reduce identified impacts. Section 15126.6(e) of the CEQA Guidelines requires the evaluation of a No Project Alternative. Other alternatives may be considered during preparation of the EIR and will comply with the CEQA Guidelines, which call for a range of reasonable alternatives to the project, or the location of the project, which would feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project.

**EIR PROCESS:** Following the close of the NOP comment period, a draft EIR will be prepared that will consider all NOP comments. In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15105(a), the draft EIR will be released for public review and comment for a required minimum 45-day review period. Following the close of the 45-day public review period, the City will prepare a final EIR, which will include responses to all substantive comments received on the draft EIR. The draft EIR and final EIR will be considered by the Planning Commission and City Council in making the decision to certify the EIR and approve or deny the project.

*Tricia Stevens*

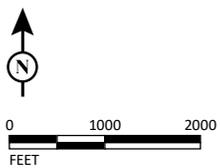
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Tricia Stevens  
 City of San Rafael  
 December 9, 2021



**LSA**

FIGURE 1



SOURCE: ESRI World Street Map (2020).

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Northgate Mall Redevelopment Project NOP  
Project Location and Regional Vicinity



**LEGEND**

- EXISTING TO REMAIN █
- TO BE DEMOLISHED 2025 PLAN █

**LSA**

FIGURE 2



*Northgate Mall Redevelopment Project NOP*  
 2025 Master Plan -  
 Proposed Remaining and Demolished Buildings



**LEGEND**

- EXISTING TO REMAIN ■
- PREVIOUSLY DEMOLISHED 2025 PLAN ■
- TO BE DEMOLISHED 2040 PLAN ■

LSA

FIGURE 3

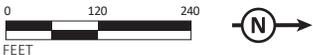


*Northgate Mall Redevelopment Project NOP*  
 2040 Vision Plan -  
 Proposed Remaining and Demolished Buildings



FIGURE 4

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SOURCE: MerloneGeier Partners, 6/11/2021

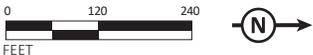
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Northgate Mall Redevelopment Project NOP  
Proposed Conceptual Site Plan - 2025 Master Plan



FIGURE 5

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SOURCE: MerloneGeier Partners, 6/11/2021

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Northgate Mall Redevelopment Project NOP  
Proposed Conceptual Site Plan - 2040 Vision Plan