

**RESPONSES TO COMMENTS ON THE CITY-OWNED DOWNTOWN AFFORDABLE
HOUSING AND PARKING GARAGE SITE
PA19-033**

I. INTRODUCTION

This memorandum addresses the issues raised in public comments received by the City of San Mateo on the Initial Study for a Draft Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) prepared for the proposed “City-Owned Downtown Affordable Housing and Parking Garage Site” project.

II. BACKGROUND

The project involves redevelopment of two City-owned properties into 225 affordable housing residential apartments (480 East 4th Avenue) and a separate above-grade 696-space parking garage (400 East 5th Avenue). The project site is currently used as surface parking lots that are operated by the City as part of the overall Downtown parking supply. The project requires a Site Plan and Architectural Review (SPAR) for demolition of the existing improvements and the construction of a new seven-story residential building and five-level parking garage. In addition, the project requires a Site Development Planning Application (SDPA) for the removal of major vegetation including heritage trees and a Special Use Permit (SUP) for the parking garage.

The Initial Study/Environmental Assessment and draft Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) were circulated for public review for 30 days, from May 26, 2020 through June 24, 2020. Six comment letters were received and are attached to this memo. This memo provides responses to the environmental issues raised in the public comment letters.

III. CEQA REQUIREMENTS FOR ADOPTION OF A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION

An MND is a statement by a public agency that a non-exempt project will not result in significant unavoidable environmental impacts. Adoption of an MND is appropriate when the lead agency determines that the administrative record contains no substantial evidence of a reasonable possibility of a significant unavoidable environmental impact. Conversely, if the lead agency identifies substantial evidence in support of a fair argument that a project may result in a significant environmental impact that cannot be mitigated or avoided, an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) must be prepared. The lead agency is not allowed to weigh conflicting evidence or expert opinion but must resolve all doubts in favor of preparation of an EIR if substantial evidence has been provided of a reasonable possibility of a significant effect.

Under CEQA, “substantial evidence” means enough relevant information and reasonable inferences from this information that a fair argument can be made to support a conclusion, even though other conclusions might also be reached.

Substantial evidence includes facts, reasonable assumptions predicated upon facts, and expert opinion supported by facts. Argument, speculation, unsubstantiated opinion or narrative, evidence which is clearly erroneous or inaccurate, or evidence of social or economic impacts that do not contribute to or are not caused by physical impacts on the environment do not constitute substantial

evidence. (CEQA Guidelines §15384). Based on the findings presented in the Initial Study, it is concluded that all potential impacts identified in the Initial Study can be mitigated to a less than significant level; therefore, an EIR is not required, and the residential project qualifies for an MND.

IV. CEQA REQUIREMENTS FOR RESPONDING TO PUBLIC COMMENTS ON NEGATIVE DECLARATION

CEQA Guidelines Sections §15073, 15073.5, and 15074 provide direction on the public review of a draft MND, when a draft MND must be recirculated for additional public review, and the process for consideration and adoption of an MND, respectively. Written responses are not mandated for public comments received on a draft MND. No specific requirements are placed on a lead agency as to how to address issues raised in public comments received on the draft MND, other than to be vigilant for the presence of substantial evidence in support of a fair argument the project at issue may result in a significant impact, as discussed in the preceding section.

V. RESPONSE TO PUBLIC COMMENTS RECEIVED ON THE INITIAL STUDY FOR A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION

A total of six comment letters on the Initial Study/Environmental Assessment and draft MND was received during the public comment period. Responses to the issues raised in the comment letters are provided below. The comment letters are also attached to this memo.

A. Central Neighborhood Association Board Members, June 24, 2020

Comment A.1: These are our comments on the MidPen Housing & Parking Garage Site IS/Environmental Assessment MidPen Housing & Garage - Aesthetic Questions:

City of San Mateo General Plan states:

1UD 2.2 Building Scale - Ensure that new multi-family developments respect the existing scale of the neighboring buildings by providing a change in the building face at spacings common to existing buildings and by stepping down building heights toward the street to more closely match the height of existing buildings.

The MidPen Housing and Garage does not respect the scale of the surrounding neighborhood. The surrounding buildings are mostly one and two stories in height. There are 9 ft ceilings on each floor which can be reduced a foot to 8 ft. ceilings on each floor to help reduce the scale and stepping down heights. We would like to see a reduction of 1 ft on each floor to reduce the shadow impacts.

Response A.1: This comment addresses the project's conformance with a General Plan policy regarding the scale of new buildings near neighborhoods, and requests reducing the floor-to-ceiling heights in a desire to bring the overall project height down. Aesthetics are an inherently subjective matter for discussion, and opinions about the proposed design of a new building(s) can vary widely. As noted in the Initial Study, the aesthetics effects of residential development near transit are now considered by law to be less than significant.

The proposed residential building and parking garage would not be out of scale with existing development in the Downtown area. The buildings would be similar in terms of mass and scale as the adjacent office/residential building currently under construction to the north of the site (four-stories or approximately 53 feet) and to the multi-story buildings located to the west of the site across the railroad tracks and further into the Downtown core. The maximum height of the new buildings (75 feet) would exceed the City's Zoning Ordinance height restrictions for the CBD/S zoning district; however, AB 1763 allows 100 percent affordable developments located within a half mile of a major transit stop a height increase of up to three stories or 33 feet. As a result, the project would be allowed to develop up to a height of 88 feet.

The Applicant studied the shadow impact of changing the building height from 5 to 7 stories. The increase in shadow across S. Claremont Street was insignificant, even on the winter solstice. Reducing the building height by a few feet will not affect the shading in an impactful way.

Comment A.2: UD 2.3 Style and Materials - Encourage the design of new multi-family developments in areas with a dominant type of exterior building materials to complement the style and incorporate the common materials of the area.

The architectural style of the surrounding area has traditional buildings. There are 16 properties over 45 years old in the surrounding area, and 415 S. Claremont Street residence and 503 E. 5th are eligible for listing in the NRHP and CRHR. 505 -509 S. B Street has been found eligible as a local landmark. Red and colored brick is a common material used throughout the Central Neighborhood and the historic Downtown.

The two Windy Hill mixed use buildings at 405 East 4th Avenue and 406 East 3rd Avenue both have red and colored brick.

In contrast, the style of the 7 story 225 unit MidPen Apartment is a very contemporary building with very sharp rectilinear contemporary lines and does not draw in the dominant exterior building materials or incorporate common materials of the area. The MidPen project uses white brick for a modern look versus red or colored brick for a more blended look.

The garage is also very modern and contemporary and uses aluminum materials with meshed fins. Aluminum is not a dominant materials used in the historic area of Downtown San Mateo or in the Central Neighborhood.

The Central Neighborhood is part of the oldest neighborhood on the East side of San Mateo. The styles of the bungalow homes include: Craftsmen, Mediterranean, Cape Cod, Victorian, Tudor, Cottage, and Country French.

The 2 MidPen buildings are very different and the 2 buildings are not a transitional style of architecture. This could be detrimental to the harmonious and orderly growth of the City.

Response A.2: This comment pertains to architectural style and building materials, which are addressed in the project's urban design review. The project design was informed by multiple design review processes including study sessions, community meetings, and review by the City's design review consultant. The Downtown area is

characterized by a mix of design styles and uses. As noted by the commenter, the residential building would be designed in a contemporary architectural style, incorporating a mix of exterior building materials and coloration which would function to reduce the appearance of the building mass. In response to comments received from the public during the community engagement process, the applicant has incorporated brick at exterior locations along the first-floor to visually provide added articulation and warmth. The parking structure would be designed to complement the residential building and would also provide space for public art installations on the South Railroad Avenue frontage and include perimeter landscaping; these facets of the project would improve the appearance of the site. Additionally, the final building designs would be subject to the City's Site Plan and Architectural Review (SPAR) process. Through the SPAR process, design modifications can be made to the project in order to preserve the visual character and quality of the surrounding area and reduce aesthetic impacts.

Comment A.3: UD 2.7 Respect Existing Scale - Encourage new commercial development to respect the scale of surrounding buildings by providing breaks in the building face and spacings common to buildings in the area and by stepping back upper floors.

This is the first 7 story building on the East side of San Mateo. There are no horizontal set backs at lower or higher levels in the current design to more closely match the height of the existing buildings. We would like to see a 10 ft set back at the upper levels facing the neighborhood.

The MidPen housing and garage buildings are more massive, bulky, and heavy-looking and do not respect the existing scale in single family/duplex neighborhood or the older buildings on Figure 4.5-1. The project is not in scale with the character of the neighborhood.

MidPen Housing did reduce the height on another affordable housing project in Half-Moon Bay to 28 ft and reduced the density to more closely match the adjoining residential neighborhood from 148 to 71 units. The overall number of units was decreased by 75% of the total proposed development according to the Daily Journal article, MidPen coast-side affordable proposal gets latest approval from Monday, June 22, 2020.

Response A.3: AB 1763 allows 100 percent affordable developments located within a half mile of a major transit stop a height increase of up to three stories or 33 feet beyond code. As a result, the project would be allowed to develop up to a height of 88 feet. The maximum height of the new buildings at 75 feet would not exceed the limit established under AB 1763.

Refer to response A-1 regarding the project's scale and bulk.

Comment A.4: It is stated that the MidPen housing density is 91 units an acre. Physically, there are 225 units on 1.16 ac, not 91 units an acre. The current design appears very heavy and massive. Can MidPen work with the neighborhood to reduce the density so the building has a better fit to the surrounding area? The very first version of the MidPen project in March 7, 2019 had features which blended well with the neighborhood. It was much lighter and more transitional in style. There is a picture on Neighborhood Meeting Presentation March 7, 2019.

Response A.4: To clarify, the Initial Study does not state that the project would have a density of 91 units per acre. As noted in the Initial Study, the project would exceed

the density allowed under the Downtown Retail Core General Plan designation. The proposed project utilizes the provisions of State Density Bonus and Other Incentives Law – State Government Code Section 65915. AB 1763 amended the State Density Bonus Law to provide housing developments that are 100 percent affordable and within a half-mile of a major transit stop unlimited density, an increase of building height up to three additional stories or up to 33 feet, and up to four incentives or concessions as defined by Government Code Section 65915. The project’s proposed scope of work (i.e. 100 percent affordable units) and proximity to the Downtown San Mateo Caltrain Station (i.e. less than a half-mile) qualifies the project for the aforementioned provisions of AB 1763.

The final building designs would be subject to the City’s SPAR process. Through the SPAR process, design modifications can be made to the project in order to preserve the visual character and quality of the surrounding area and reduce aesthetic impacts.

Comment A.5: What can be done to mitigate the canyon effect created by having two tall buildings adjacent to the sidewalk on either side of 5th Avenue? The housing portion will be 74.5 ft in height and the garage will be 61 ft in height with a pedestrian bridge overhead connecting the two taller structures.

Response A.5: This comment pertains to the design of the project, and not to any environmental issue under CEQA. It is common throughout the Bay Area to have a situation where mid-rise buildings are on either side of a public street in Downtown urban environments. According to the project civil drawings, the 5th Avenue right-of-way is 60 feet wide, and so the two buildings will be roughly as tall as the street is wide, unlike in more densely developed Bay Area urban settings where the building heights can be several times taller (or more) than the adjoining street width, creating the canyon effect the comment is concerned about. The “canyon effect” does not typically occur until the buildings are taller than a one-to-one ratio with the street width. The project as been designed to create a comfortable pedestrian experience through the creation of visual interest on the ground level. In addition, the pedestrian bridge will provide an enhanced view and bring down the scale at 5th Avenue.

Comment A.6: Residential Parking is on a separate site. It will be more inconvenient for residents who live on the lower levels on the 1st, 2nd, 3rd floors to drive through the multiple levels of the garage to get to the pedestrian bridge level or higher level to park. Residents have to take an elevator to the pedestrian bridge level to cross the bridge with groceries and kids and take another elevator to the 1st, 2nd, or 3rd level to their unit. To get to their car, they take the elevator to the floor of the pedestrian bridge, walk across the bridge, and drive multiple levels to get to the street level to get out. This will be repeated 10 times for each trip in and out of the garage.

It doesn’t sound practical to have the residential parking in a separate site with an expensive pedestrian bridge. Why wasn’t podium parking considered under the Housing with a driveway on S. Claremont? This could have reduced the number of cars coming out to 5th Avenue.

Response A.6: This comment questions why the residential parking is proposed across 5th Avenue rather than on-site. The comment does not raise a specific

environmental issue related to the adequacy of the Initial Study/Environmental Assessment.

Placing the required parking onsite would physically preclude the project from building to the maximum density permitted under AB 1763, as the Staff Report for the April Study Session indicated approximately 34 affordable housing units would need to be eliminated to accommodate the required parking onsite.

Comment A.7: The development may impact public health with a large population of lower income families in two and three bedroom units which may make it more difficult to socially distance. The 50% reduction in private open space with the current impact of Covid-19 may impact public health.

Response A.7: The project would finish construction in August of 2023 according to the current schedule, and it requires speculation to comment on the prevalence of the COVID-19 pandemic more than three years into the future. The comment does not raise a specific environmental issue related to the adequacy of the Initial Study/Environmental Assessment. The purpose of environmental review under CEQA is to identify the significant impacts, if any, of a project on the environment. CEQA does not require lead agencies to assess the effects of the environment on future residents or users of a project except where explicitly directed to by statute. This legal understanding was affirmed by the *California Supreme Court in California Building Industry Association v. Bay Area Air Quality Management District*, 62 Cal. 4th 369 (*BIA v. BAAQMD*). Additionally, NEPA regulations do not address COVID-19. Accordingly, any potential impacts associated with COVID-19 on future residents and users of the project is outside the purview of this environmental review.

Once operational, the proposed development would be required to comply with any effective orders issued by the Health Officer of the County of San Mateo pertaining to the COVID-19 pandemic (i.e. Order No. c19-11, effective June 18, 2020).

Comment A.8: There may be limitations to opening windows for fresh air due to the noise impacts of Caltrain and the high traffic volumes.

Response A.8: Section 4.14.3 of the Initial Study/Environmental Assessment includes, for informational purposes, a discussion of the existing noise environment. Based on a preliminary analysis of a standard bedroom proposed by the project, windows with a sound rating of up to STC 42 and exterior wall assemblies up to STC 55 are likely to be required to meet the interior noise standard of 45 dBA Ldn. Any balcony doors should also achieve the same sound ratings as the windows. Corner units and units with a larger percentage of window area would require higher STC ratings. As noted in the comment, windows and doors would be required to remain closed to adequately reduce noise from Caltrain, and units would be provided with forced-air mechanical ventilation.

The window and balcony door sound ratings along with the final exterior wall construction that are included in the construction documents shall be determined by

an acoustical consultant during the detailed architectural design phase. Implementation of the Conditions of Approval discussed above, for noise impacts of the existing environment on the proposed project, would sufficiently reduce levels of noise that residents and users of the proposed project would experience. This would ensure that the project is consistent with General Plan policies pertaining to acceptable noise levels.

Comment A.9: The project may create substantial glare through windows which would impact day views and generate more heat for others across from the project. This issue was raised in a virtual meeting with MidPen on June 10, 2020. How can MidPen reduce the glare and heat from the windows? Can more awnings be provided?

Response A.9: As noted on page 32 of the Initial Study/Environmental Assessment, the project is subject to the SPAR process. This review would ensure that the proposed design and construction materials are consistent with community standards for multi-family development, and would not adversely affect the visual quality of the area, or create a substantial new source of light and glare. Glare from windows would be controlled by use of appropriate glazing. The request for more awnings could be considered during the SPAR process.

Comment A.10: Social distancing may impact the usage of the on-site facilities for families with children and the Seniors who might want to find a peaceful space to relax and read. How will MidPen accommodate these many people on site if children and residents need to sit 6 feet apart?

Response A.10: The comment does not raise a specific environmental issue related to the adequacy of the Initial Study/Environmental Assessment. Refer to response A-7.

Comment A.11: There is one more historic evaluation that will be submitted for 1007 East 5th Avenue. It qualifies as a State Historic Resources in the Central Neighborhood under 2 classifications. There is Criterion I (History) and Criterion II (Persons). The property is significant for its association with the Japanese-American community in the San Francisco Peninsula area during the post-World War II era. The property is significant for its association with Yoshiko Yamanouchi a member of the pioneer Issei generation in San Mateo, who was the owner of a successful business (the Blu White Laundry) and a leader in the Japanese American community and the local Buddhist church.

There are 3 major components: A Ranch Style House, the Katsura Villa, a Japanese Style Garden located in the south east corner of the property. The Katsura Building, Walkway, and Garden is on the north part of the property. The Katsura Building is a traditional Japanese style building that references features of the Katsura Imperial Villa in Kyoto, Japan, which is one of the world's most recognizable and influential creations of traditional Japanese architecture and landscape. The property retains a high degree of integrity.

Additionally, the Japanese style hill and pond garden located in the Southeast corner of the property appears to be individually eligible for the California Register under Criterion 3 as an example of a private Japanese style garden in San Mateo and as an example of the work of Nagao Sakurai, who is recognized as one of the leading designers on the West Coast of Japanese style garden in the decades following World War II.

Response A.11: As part of the environmental review process, a historical resource evaluation report was prepared for the project site by the historic consultant firm *ARG* pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and the CEQA to evaluate the potential architectural resources located within the area of potential effect (APE). The Architectural APE is the “geographic area within which (the) undertaking may cause changes in the character of or use of historic properties” (36 CFW 8002 (c)). The property referenced in the comment (1007 East 5th Avenue) is located five blocks to the east, well-beyond the APE for the project site (refer to Figure 4.1-1: APE Map in the Initial Study). For these reasons, proposed project would not result in changes to the character or use of the potential historic property located at 1007 East 5th Avenue.

Comment A.12: The back-up traffic from 4th/Humboldt and 5th/Humboldt will bring more air pollution and traffic noise impacts. Both intersections will be at LOS F. The intersection does not warrant a traffic signal. How do you plan to reduce the vehicular and truck impacts to protect this property at 1007 East 5th Avenue? We would like to see traffic calming on 5th Avenue from Delaware to S. Amphlett and along S. Humboldt from 4th Avenue to 9th Avenue to reduce the cut-through traffic.

Response A.12: It should be noted that the Humboldt Street & 4th/5th Avenue intersections operate at level of service (LOS) F in the PM under existing conditions. The project would not generate substantial increases in intersection delay based on the City’s General Plan criteria at these intersections. Further, with the passage of SB 743 and the adoption of related Guidelines implementing SB 743 (see Guidelines Section 15604.3) LOS traffic impacts (i.e. increased vehicle delay) are required to be considered insignificant under CEQA.

The project’s air quality and noise impacts are addressed in Sections 4.4 and 4.14 of the Initial Study/Environmental Assessment, respectively. It should be noted that traffic noise increases as cars travel faster, as opposed to congested conditions. The Initial Study/Environmental Assessment disclosed that the project would result in less than significant impacts (with the incorporate of mitigation) to these resources.

The City’s Neighborhood Traffic Management Program (NTMP) provides a formalized procedure for the public to request traffic calming measures along their streets.

Comment A.13: Estimated Future Traffic Volumes:

Site Generated Estimated Future Traffic Volumes:

This is the highest 1 hour peak traffic for AM and PM

AM In traffic is 190 cars and AM Out traffic is 81 cars for a total of 271 cars

PM In traffic is 111 cars and PM Out traffic is 206 cars for a total of 317 cars.

These are very high one hour peak traffic numbers for AM and PM. What percentage go east to 101 and what percentage go west to ECR? How do we reduce these impacts?

Response A.13: It should be noted that the project is generating net new trips only for the residential component, which is estimated to generate 71 AM peak hour

trips and 84 PM peak hour trips. The public parking spaces within the garage would serve as an alternative parking location for existing and approved project traffic. This traffic is not net new traffic generated by the project because the trips are either already part of the existing traffic conditions or part of an approved development project. The project has also prepared a Transportation Demand Management plan to promote alternative modes of transportation and reduce its vehicle trip generation. As shown on Figure 9 of the General Plan Conformance Transportation Analysis report, approximately 40 percent of the project-generated traffic is expected to be going to/coming from U.S. 101, and 35 percent to/coming from El Camino Real.

The General Plan Conformance Transportation Analysis report contains recommended improvements for project generated intersections, which include restriping eastbound 5th Avenue with two through lanes and retiming of the signal at the intersection of Delaware Street and 5th Avenue.

Comment A.14: Anticipated Impacts on Traffic Operations:

How will MidPen address the substantial increase in delay during the PM peak hour at the El Camino Real intersections with 3rd, 4th, and 5th Avenues and during both AM and PM peak hours at the Delaware St/5th intersection?

Response A.14: As noted above in response to comment A.11, LOS traffic impacts are required to be considered insignificant under CEQA with the passage of SB 743. As such, the comment does not raise a specific environmental issue related to the adequacy of the Initial Study/Environmental Assessment.

However, the City of San Mateo General Plan includes policies addressing potential project effects on intersection operations. The project's effects on intersection levels of service are discussed in a separate General Plan Conformance Transportation Analysis report. Recommended improvements for project-generated substantial increases in intersection delays are described in this report. These recommendations include the removal of on-street parking on 5th Avenue between the project driveway and Delaware Street to allow for a second eastbound through lane that converts into a left-turn lane at Delaware Street. Crosswalks are also recommended at the intersection of Claremont Street and 5th Avenue. The project is also preparing a Transportation Demand Management Plan to promote alternative modes of transportation and reduce its vehicle trip generation.

Comment A.15: Simulations of traffic operations reveal potential gridlock in Downtown San Mateo. Many intersections will operate at Level F.

On the 6/5/2020 -Table ES - 2, Intersection Levels of Service Summary – Background plus project:

There were 21 ratings of level F - over saturation at 26 intersections in the Downtown and in 2030; there are 40 ratings in AM/PM at level F over saturation at the same 26 intersections projected.

Response A.15: This comment accurately summarizes Table ES-2 of the General Plan Conformance Transportation Analysis report. As noted above in response to comment A.11, LOS traffic impacts are required to be considered insignificant under CEQA with the passage of SB 743.

Comment A.16: Many intersections in the project vicinity are to operate at LOS F over saturation indicating drivers will experience long unacceptable delays. These include: El Camino Real, B Street, Claremont, Delaware, Fremont, and Humboldt Street with 3rd, 4th, 5th Avenues. These delays are forecast for future background conditions plus the project. How can this MidPen Project impact so many intersections?

Response A.16: As noted in the General Plan Conformance Transportation Analysis report, under background plus project conditions, the project would generate substantial increases in intersection delays based on the City's General Plan criteria at five intersections (El Camino Real & 3rd Avenue, El Camino Real & 4th Avenue, El Camino Real & 5th Avenue, Delaware Street & 5th Avenue, Humboldt Street & 3rd Avenue). While the project would add relatively little traffic to the roadway network, the baseline congestion (background conditions¹) is such that small traffic increases can cause the delays to trigger the City-adopted criteria of 4-second increase in average delay.

LOS traffic impacts are required to be considered insignificant under CEQA with the passage of SB 743.

Comment A.17: Proposed Remediation:

Re-stripe eastbound 5th to form two through lanes by removing on-street parking between the project driveway and Delaware Street. We agree on modifying the signals timing at 5th/Delaware, but have mixed feelings on lane creation and taking out the parking.

Response A.17: The commenter's opinion is acknowledged. This comment does not raise a specific environmental issue under CEQA; therefore, no further response is required. The comment is noted in the public record for consideration by the decision makers

Comment A.18: How will improvements to 5th/Delaware resolve queuing on eastbound 5th Avenue, eliminate potential gridlock in Downtown, and eliminate the substantial increases in delays at ECR intersections and Humboldt/3rd intersection? How are all these related to this remediation.

Response A.18: Micro-simulation models were used to simulate traffic conditions along the Downtown corridors under all study scenarios. The simulations found that under background plus project conditions, the project generated outbound traffic would result in long queues on eastbound 5th Avenue that would extend into the upstream intersections, causing simulated gridlock conditions in Downtown, resulting in substantial increases in delays at five intersections. The simulations also found that by allowing more throughput on eastbound 5th Avenue at the Claremont Street intersection and providing more queuing space on eastbound 5th Avenue between Claremont Street and Delaware Street (through the addition of a dedicated left-turn lane), the project-generated queuing issue could be resolved, eliminating the substantial increases in intersection delays at intersections that were affected by the queuing issue.

¹ Background conditions reflect the trips from approved but not yet constructed projects.

Comment A.19: How will the proposed traffic remediation - adding a left turn lane, creating two travel lanes and removing on-street parking along 5th Avenue support creation of the proposed Bike Lane on 5th Avenue from Edinburgh to Delaware?

Response A.19: There appears to be sufficient right-of-way to accommodate the recommended improvements and the proposed bike lanes through the removal of on-street parking.

Comment A.20: How will the additional project-generated traffic avoid conflicts with the operation of the planned Bike Boulevard along 5th Avenue? We need traffic calming on 5th Avenue to reduce the current and future vehicular traffic to make the area safer for bicyclists versus adding more lanes of traffic. Creating additional traffic lanes goes against the Sustainable Streets Plan, and conflicts with the Pedestrian Master Plan and the Bicycle Master Plan.

Response A.20: As indicated in the response above, the recommended improvements do not interfere with the proposed bike lanes on 5th Avenue. The proposed addition of a third lane on 5th Avenue between the project driveway and Delaware street (as a second through lane up to Claremont Street and as a left-turn lane to Delaware Street) is approximately 390 feet in length and can be accommodated within the existing right-of-way. The project will also be conditioned to install crosswalks at the intersection of Claremont Street and 5th Avenue to improve the pedestrian network.

Comment A.21: What is the plan for replacing the existing parking spaces along 5th Avenue to be removed to allow for the physical improvements?

Response A.21: The recommend improvement would result in the removal of approximately 22 on-street parking spaces (9 marked on-street parking space west of Claremont Street, and approximately 320 feet or 13 vehicles spaces east of Claremont Street). Parking stalls are not environmental resources, they are physical features to accommodate vehicle trips to/from a site or that exist in the public right-of-way to support adjacent land uses. Parking supply was removed from the CEQA Appendix G Checklist as an impact topic for analysis in the prior decade.

The project proposes to construct a 696-space parking garage. In addition to providing parking for the residential component (164 spaces), the parking garage would provide 298 new parking spaces for the downtown and thereby adequately replacing the 22 lost on-street spaces.

Comment A.22: What is the plan for replacing the on-street parking to be converted to a loading zone, as recommended by Hexagon Consultants? Loading zones are very convenient for Recology, moving vans, GrubHub, shuttles for Seniors who need rides to medical appointments, residents who need to drop off groceries before parking in the garage, Lyft and Uber stops, easy pick-up and drop-off of friends who will live at MidPen without having to circle around the block.

Response A.22: As indicated in the General Plan Conformance Transportation Analysis report, the project site should provide one loading zone, consistent with City

of San Mateo Municipal Code Section 27.64.390. The site plan does not indicate a loading zone. However, the municipal code (Section 27.64.390 a1) allows the Development Review Board to modify the loading requirements if there is adequate on-street parking along the project frontage to accommodate a loading vehicle. The residential building is surrounded by on-street parking spaces along its building frontage on 4th Avenue, 5th Avenue, and Claremont Street. Therefore, there are opportunities to create an on-street loading zone. Any lost on-street parking would be adequately replaced by the 298 new parking spaces to be provided by the proposed parking garage.

Comment A.23: Where do you plan to locate the temporary parking for the residents?

Response A.23: The proposed residential building and parking garage would be constructed concurrently. Therefore, there is no anticipated need for temporary residential parking.

Comment A.24: How does the developer plan to address the shortage of day-time residential parking described in the Hexagon report? The consultant states that similar residential complexes require 0.8 spaces / dwelling unit or 180 parking spaces which exceeds the 164 spaces to be provided. It is assumed that public areas of the garage would be used to accommodate this unmet residential demand.

Response A.24: The residential project is an affordable housing project and qualifies for the State Density Bonus Law parking requirement of 0.5 space per unit. Therefore, the project proposing 225 residential units would be required to provide 113 parking spaces. The project is proposing 164 spaces, which would exceed the parking requirement.

As noted in the comment, Hexagon's analysis determined that the project would generate a peak demand of 180 parking spaces, which exceeds the 164 spaces to be restricted for the residential component. However, the parking garage would remain open to the public overnight and could be used by future residents to meet additional residential parking demand. It would be expected that these vehicles would vacate the garage in the early morning hours before free parking ends. Since the parking garage would be located on the periphery of downtown, it is assumed that it would not be as heavily utilized as the more centrally located garages and could accommodate the unmet residential demand of 26 vehicles within the 532 public parking spaces during the evening hours when residential parking demand peaks.

In addition, the project would implement a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program to facilitate residents using alternative modes of transportation and to encourage forgoing vehicle ownership. The project's TDM plan includes measures such as encouraging walking and transit use through building design and orientation, car sharing programs, provision of SamsTrans bus passes, on-site bicycle repair station, transportation information kiosk/board, promotional programs to ensure new tenants use available transportation options, and a designation of TDM Coordinator.

Comment A.25: How does MidPen plan to handle this deficit parking so the overflow doesn't impact the neighborhood? There are 225 units and many couples own 2 cars.

Response A.25: See response to Comment A.24.

Comment A.26: What is the number of the Visitor Parking spaces in the MidPen Complex? Where will Visitor Parking be located? AB 1763 states that a development cannot provide their parking through on-street parking.

Response A.26: The project qualifies for the state density bonus law parking requirement of 0.5 space per unit, and the project parking will be provided in the parking garage, not through on-street parking. The project is not required to provide visitor parking spaces. Visitors may park within the public parking section of the garage or on-street.

Comment A.27: The Transportation Analysis states that 5th Avenue, a local street provides direct project access. The ADT has increased to 6200 from 2250 during peak hours before the Traffic Action Plans (TAP). What is the main contribution to the ADT increase? We need to reduce the ADT since this is local street.

Response A.27: It is unclear what the commenter is referencing by stating the ADT has increased to 6,200 from 2,250. It should be noted that the project is generating net new trips only for the residential component. The public parking spaces within the garage would serve as an alternative parking location for existing and approved development project traffic. This traffic is not net new traffic generated by the project because the trips are either already part of the existing traffic conditions or part of an approved development project. The project has also prepared a Transportation Demand Management plan for the residential portion of the project to promote alternative modes of transportation and reduce its vehicle trip generation. The comment also inaccurately states that 5th Avenue is a local street. The City's General Plan classifies 5th Avenue as an arterial street.

Comment A.28: We need to make 5th Avenue safer for Central Neighborhood families with children who walk and bike to the Downtown and Central Park. The MidPen Housing and Garage will have a safety impact to the bicyclists and pedestrians in this area since the driveway impacts a local residential street.

Response A.28: The project would reduce the number of curb cuts along its project frontage from five down to one. This would improve pedestrian safety by minimizing pedestrian exposure to vehicles while walking on sidewalks. The project will also be conditioned to install crosswalks at the intersection Claremont Street and 5th Avenue. The project is found to be in conformance with the Pedestrian Master Plan and Bicycle Master Plan.

Comment A.29: How do we reduce the vehicular cut-through impacts on 5th Avenue from 101 to and from the project site since 5th Avenue is a narrow residential street?

Response A.29: The General Plan Conformance Transportation Analysis estimated that the project would add approximately 14 vehicles during the AM peak hour and 30 vehicles during the PM peak hour onto the peak direction of 5th Avenue. This represents approximately one vehicle per two to four minutes. It should be noted that the majority of this added traffic is due to the rerouting of the existing/approved offices that would be parking in this garage. It is expected that this traffic would travel on 5th Avenue to Idaho Street to access the US 101 southbound on-ramp because it is shortest and most direct route to access southbound US 101.

Comment A.30: We are very concerned about the Essex Central Park Project which will come through 5th Avenue from the 101 Freeway.

There will be cumulative traffic impacts from the Essex Project. There are 967 vehicles coming through EB/WB through 5th Avenue to S. Delaware (460 plus 507) in PM peak 4-6 pm from the 9/22/18 traffic study in the Essex Negative Dec. There are 896 vehicles coming through EB/WB through 5th Avenue to S. Delaware (459 plus 410) in the AM peak from the 9/22/16 Study in the Essex Negative Declaration.

Response A.30: An Initial Study/MND was prepared for the Essex Project and circulated for public review. The public review period on the Essex Project Initial Study/MND ended on July 30, 2018. The project was subsequently approved by the Planning Commission on August 28, 2018.

The approved Essex Project is included in the background and cumulative analysis for the project, meaning the project traffic analysis has accounted for the trips from the Essex Project in forecasting future conditions with and without the project. The purpose of the current Initial Study/Environmental Assessment is to evaluate potential transportation issues generated by the additional trips resulting from the proposed MidPen Affordable Housing project, while also taking into account approved projects that are not yet built as well as pending and reasonably foreseeable development in the area.

Comment A.31: How will MidPen and the City direct the employees who use the garage and tenants to take 3rd Avenue to S. Claremont to 5th Avenue and not cut through 5th Avenue from this MidPen Garage? Directional signage would be helpful to guide new residents and office workers who will drive and park in the in-lieu spaces. We have 298 spaces in the City Garage from 4 recent developments, 234 spaces for replacement public parking, 164 spaces for MidPen residents. This comes to 696 total parking spaces which impacts the Central Neighborhood.

Response A.31: Garage users will be inclined to use take 3rd Avenue to S. Claremont and Delaware as primary routes of access. These routes are the path of least resistance with fewer stop controls/intersections.

Comment A.32: This MidPen Housing and Garage project lacked preliminary traffic studies to reduce the traffic impacts and conflicts with the Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plans. There needs to be more mitigation for the Central Neighborhood to reduce the traffic impacts and MidPen needs to pay for the traffic mitigation.

Response A.32: Hexagon Transportation Consultants, Inc. completed a CEQA Transportation Analysis and General Plan Conformance Transportation Analysis for the project, in accordance with City requirements. The project proposes detached sidewalks along the streets fronting the project site. Detached sidewalks provide barriers between pedestrians and roadway traffic and would improve pedestrian safety and comfort levels. Therefore, the project would be in conformance with the Pedestrian Master Plan. In addition, the project would be conditioned to install crosswalks at the intersection of Claremont Street and 5th Avenue to complete the pedestrian network within the immediate project vicinity.

The recently adopted Bicycle Master Plan 2020 identifies a list of proposed bicycle network improvements. The identified improvements along the project frontage include bike lanes on 5th Avenue and bike boulevards on Claremont Street. The project footprint would not intrude onto the public right-of-way and would not be in conflict with the adopted Bicycle Master Plan 2020.

Comment A.33: How do we mitigate the cut-through traffic impacts to 5th Avenue and S. Claremont Bicycle Boulevards? This 5th Avenue Bike Boulevard runs from Delaware to Amphlett to Sunnybrae Blvd to Delaware Street. We need a safe route for the bicyclists.

Response A.33: The City's NTMP provides a formalized procedure for the public to request traffic calming measures along their streets. Reducing vehicular cut-through traffic is one of the nexuses for initiating the NTMP process. The General Plan Conformance Transportation Analysis estimated that the project would add approximately 14 vehicles during the AM peak hour and 30 vehicles during the PM peak hour onto the peak direction of 5th Avenue. This represents approximately one vehicle per two to four minutes. It should be noted that the majority of this added traffic is due to the rerouting of the existing/approved offices that would be parking in this garage. It is expected that this traffic would travel on 5th Avenue to Idaho Street to access the US 101 southbound on-ramp.

Comment A.34: There have been 5 bike accidents on 5th Avenue between San Mateo Drive and Humboldt Street (2013 - 2017) Fig. 3.5 - Bicycle Collisions. How do we make this area safer for bicyclists and reduce the number of bicycle accidents on 5th Avenue and the surrounding area? We have a Class III bike route on 5th - from San Mateo Drive to S. Humboldt. We need to reduce the vehicular traffic along 5th Avenue to reduce the bike accidents. Residents in the Central Neighborhood have also stated that 5th Avenue needs a safer bike route to the Downtown. Page 24 - 2020 Bicycle Master Plan.

Response A.34: The comment correctly states that the Bicycle Master Plan proposes bike lanes along 5th Avenue. The project is in conformance with the Bicycle Master Plan, including installation of Class 2 bike lanes on 5th Avenue from existing railroad track to Delaware Street.

Comment A.35: 5th Avenue is also the pedestrian path to the Downtown, Central Park, and to the Transit Center. The additional lane of traffic being proposed coming east makes this area unsafe for pedestrians and bicyclists. How do you plan to improve safety during the AM and PM hours?

Response A.35: The project would reduce the number of curb cuts along its project frontage from 5 down to 1. This would improve pedestrian safety by minimizing pedestrian exposure to vehicles while walking on sidewalks. The project will also be conditioned to install crosswalks at the intersection Claremont Street and 5th Avenue. The project is found to be in conformance with the Pedestrian Master Plan and Bicycle Master Plan (refer to response A.28 and 32).

Comment A.36: We also need to reduce the vehicular impacts of drivers using 5th Avenue as the preferred street to and from the 101 Freeway to the garage. MidPen needs to provide Traffic Calming

on 5th Avenue from Delaware to S. Amphlett so the Bike Boulevards can come in on 5th Avenue. This is a high priority #16 on page 67 the cost will be \$190,000 for traffic calming on 5th Avenue from Delaware to Amphlett. (Bicycle Master Plan 2020).

Response A.36: The project will be installing Class 2 bike lanes on 5th Avenue from the existing railroad tracks to Delaware Street. In addition, the project will be installing crosswalks at the intersection Claremont Street and 5th Avenue

Comment A.37: Has any thought been given to various (signs e.g. keep clear) and a new crosswalk at Claremont/5th Avenue for pedestrian safety?

Response A.37: The project would be required as a Condition of Approval to install crosswalks at this intersection, consistent with the recommendations of the General Plan Conformance Transportation Analysis report.

Comment A.38: How will construction worker parking be handled on site? What is the construction route for the trucks? Can they take ECR to 92 the State Highways versus our residential streets in the Central Neighborhood?

Response A.38: Construction parking and routes for construction vehicles are subject to review and approval by the City Engineer prior to the start of construction. Specifically, the project is required to comply with the following condition of approval:

The applicant shall provide a construction-parking plan that minimizes the effect of construction worker parking in the neighborhood and shall include an estimate of the number of workers that will be present on the site during the various phases of construction and indicate where sufficient off-street parking will be utilized and identify any locations for off-site materials deliveries. Said plan shall be approved by the City Engineer prior to issuance of City permits and shall be complied with at all times during construction. Failure to enforce the parking plan may result in suspension of the City permits.

B. Bob Whitehair, June 24, 2020

Comment B.1: Please accept these comments on the proposed project:

I agree that the proposed Negative Declaration for the Downtown Opportunities site should move forward with these conditions:

1. The project include at least 106 EV parking spaces, as shown in earlier staff report
2. The project is all-electric, with NO “NATURAL GAS”, which means electric heat pump water heaters, no gas water heaters, either individually, ganged, or central; heat pump heating and cooling, no gas furnaces; no gas fire places and no gas stoves.
3. The City of San Mateo actively seek PCE funding for EV charging systems
4. The 225 spaces truly are for low income.

Response B.1: The commenter’s opinion is acknowledged. This comment does not raise a specific environmental issue under CEQA. The commenter accurately states

that 106 electric vehicle spaces (EV) would be provided. 81 of the 532 total public parking spaces will be EV ready or have electric vehicle supply equipment (EVSE) installed. A total of 25 of the 164 proposed residential parking spaces will be EV ready.

The comment accurately states that the project would be all-electric, with no natural gas.

The City actively seeks grant funding to assist with the expense of EV charging stations.

The residential project is 100 percent affordable – meaning all 225 units would be for low-income individuals.

C. Diana C. Pettit, June 24, 2020

Comment C.1: TOD of Mid-Peninsula 100% Affordable Housing project on the Downtown Area of San Mateo has areas of Pedestrian Crossing at the intersection of South Claremont and 5th Avenues being under estimated in traffic flow during 7 to 10am Monday to Friday.

Response C.1: Intersection counts revealed relatively low existing pedestrian crossing at this intersection and have been accounted for in the traffic analysis.

Comment C.2: The children who will be living at 480 East 4th Avenue housing will be crossing this intersection with others driving their children to schools in the area. The specifications do not show a traffic calming solution even though it has made extra lane notations for left and right turn lanes.

Response C.2: Intersection counts revealed relatively low existing pedestrian crossing at this intersection and have been accounted for in the traffic analysis. As noted in previous responses, the project will be conditioned to install crosswalks at the intersection of Claremont Street and 5th Avenue to improve the pedestrian network.

Comment C.3: This intersection at the hours between 7am to 10am have deliveries of lumber with large flat bed trucks to the San Mateo Lumber at 501 South Claremont Street storage sheds of lumber. The business has the trucks driving over the sidewalk to load the lumber to customers trucks too. It makes a difficult sidewalk for pedestrians to be seen walking. Across the street is Builders Hardware at 476 South Claremont Street. These two business operate 7am to 5pm Monday to Friday.

If the children are either walking South on South Claremont this sidewalk is unsafe. If the children are trying to cross the intersection of South Claremont and 5th Avenue going east, it could possibly cause a congested traffic situation that time in the morning with a Municipal Garage for 164 for residents and people working Downtown looking for parking.

Response C.3: The project would reduce the number of curb cuts along its project frontage from 5 down to 1. This would improve pedestrian safety by minimizing pedestrian exposure to vehicles while walking on sidewalks. The project is also recommended to install crosswalks at the intersection Claremont Street and 5th Avenue. The project is found to be in conformance with the Pedestrian Master Plan and Bicycle Master Plan.

Comment C.4: The other concern is the bicycle lanes that will be provided both going West and East on 5th Avenue during the Monday to Friday 6am to 8am. It is great concern that this will be a very busy intersection, street crossing, and bicycle path at this time of the day, 6am to 9am during a Monday through Friday.

Response C.4: The comment correctly states that the Bicycle Master Plan proposes bike lanes along 5th Avenue. The project is in conformance with the Bicycle Master Plan. This comment does not directly address the proposed affordable housing project and public parking garage, but rather the City’s plan to provide bike lanes along 5th Avenue.

Comment C.5: This street previously was used as a parking lot for approximately 300 vehicles with a Workers Center.

Response C.5: As described in the Initial Study/Environmental Assessment, the project site is comprised of two parcels located at 480 East 4th Avenue and 400 East 5th Avenue. Existing development on the 1.16-acre parcel (480 East 4th Avenue, APN 034-183-060) and 1.25-acre parcel (400 East 5th Avenue, APN 033-281-140) consists of existing surface parking lots, containing a total of 234 parking spaces. The 400 East 5th Avenue parcel also includes two buildings which house the Worker Resource Center, a local non-profit offering day laborer services. The Worker Resource center would be vacated and relocated elsewhere in the City prior to the start of construction.

Comment C.6: The pedestrian of children walking to The Sunnybrae Elementary School located on 1031 South Delaware has not in previous years has been in this viable situation. The children of Central neighborhood only have residences from 600 East 5th Avenue east. Other residents in this neighborhood live continuing down South Delaware to 19th Avenue.

Is this a safe pedestrian/bicycle intersection during Monday to Friday 7am to 10am?

Response C.6: The comment is unclear about which specific intersection is at issue. The project would reduce the number of curb cuts along its project frontage from 5 down to 1. This would improve pedestrian safety by minimizing pedestrian exposure to vehicles while walking on sidewalks. The project will also be conditioned to install crosswalks at the intersection Claremont Street and 5th Avenue. The project is found to be in conformance with the Pedestrian Master Plan and Bicycle Master Plan.

D. George Derby, June 24, 2020

Comment D.1: Even though these are parking lots, they have provided some "open space" and trees in the Downtown area. Nearby, the former Kentucky Fried Chicken lot had also provided some "open space" with its surface parking lot and a small lawn area and trees until it was recently demolished for redevelopment as mixed-use office space.

Response D.1: Parking lots are not traditionally considered open space. As defined by the City’s General Plan, “Open-space land" is any parcel or area of land or water which is essentially unimproved and devoted to an open-space use and which is designated on a local, regional, or state open space plan as one or more of four types of use.”

The project proposes to remove 67 trees from the site (45 from the 480 East 4th Avenue site and 22 from the 400 East 5th Avenue site). Four Heritage Trees are designated for removal; therefore, the project would be required to obtain a tree removal permit in accordance with the Heritage Tree Ordinance. In addition, the City of San Mateo's Site Development Code sets forth requirements to be met when the removal of existing trees with diameters of six inches or larger is proposed. The proposed project would remove 54 trees with diameters greater than six inches. As a condition of approval, the project applicant will be required to plant trees on the project site equivalent to the Landscape Unit (LU) value of trees to be removed or pay a fee in lieu of planting trees at the rate established in the annual Comprehensive Fee Schedule.

Comment D.2: Given the loss of open space in the area for development, I would strongly recommend that this current project offer a significant tree-lined offset around the entirety of the complex to compensate for the loss of and to create a public open space.

Response D.2: The project's landscape plan includes street trees and planting areas. The project includes a new public plaza at the corner of 4th Avenue and Railroad Avenue. The public plaza will provide open seating opportunities and plantings of flowering trees and drought tolerant understory along the building façade. As noted above, the project applicant will be conditioned to plant trees on the project site equivalent to the LU value of trees to be removed or pay a fee in lieu of planting trees at the rate established in the annual Comprehensive Fee Schedule.

Comment D.3: The City-developed apartment complex in the San Mateo Creek neighborhood by Gateway Park at 3rd Avenue east of South Fremont Street comes to mind as an example of such a treelined canopy alongside a building complex.

Response D.3: The commenter's suggestion to consider the example provided is acknowledged. This comment does not raise a specific environmental issue under CEQA. The final site design would be subject to the City's SPAR process.

Comment D.4: And the nearly adjacent Metropolitan Apartments between 3rd and 4th Avenues below Eldorado Street also sport a tree-lined canopy, albeit smaller, surrounding the complex, though I would recommend a sidewalk 3 to 4 feet wider in this case, (in addition to, not taking away from the remainder of the green setback), in anticipation of increasing foot traffic in the Downtown area in the future.

Response D.4: The commenter's suggestion to consider the example provided is acknowledged. This comment does not raise a specific environmental issue under CEQA; therefore, no further response is required. The comment is noted in the public record for consideration by the decision makers.

Comment D.5: If you were to also add bike lanes to the streetscape of this project, you'd probably be doing yourself a favor by getting a step ahead on future demand and city-wide planning.

Response D.5: The recently adopted Bicycle Master Plan 2020 identifies a list of proposed bicycle network improvements. The identified improvements along the project frontage include bike lanes on 5th Avenue and bike boulevards on Claremont Street. The project footprint would not intrude onto the public right-of-way and would not be in conflict with the adopted Bicycle Master Plan 2020.

Comment D.6: You might also consider reclaiming sidewalk space from streetlights by either affixing streetlights directly to buildings, or stringing them between buildings (European style). Sidewalk space is a bigger problem in the Downtown core, but it's still a good idea to place streetlights up and away from foot traffic where you have the building density to do so.

Response D.6: The commenter's opinion is acknowledged. This comment does not raise a specific environmental issue under CEQA; therefore, no further response is required. The comment is noted in the public record for consideration by the decision makers. As proposed, the project is designed with sidewalk widths that are consistent with the Pedestrian Master Plan.

Comment D.7: As to the buildings themselves, permitting larger, maybe overhanging, balconies can make a great difference to the feel of spaciousness with smaller apartments. We are blessed with a wonderful climate; balconies take advantage of that by expanding smaller interior space into the outdoors.

Response D.7: The commenter's opinion is acknowledged. This comment does not raise a specific environmental issue under CEQA; therefore, no further response is required. The comment is noted in the public record for consideration by the decision makers.

Comment D.8: You've maybe already considered and dismissed due to cost, but taking advantage of the space underneath for additional underground parking is an option that is only available now at initial construction.

Response D.8: The City and the applicant had discussed the concept of underground parking early on in the process and it was determined that underground parking is cost prohibitive.

E. George Derby, June 24, 2020

Comment E.1: Another consideration with this project is the very real possibility that sometime in the future the adjacent Caltrain/freight rail lines will be trenched underground, with open green space and building construction appearing above said trench. This is a development path that has occurred in many places in the US and around the world. So these current structures should take into consideration in their design that a large trench will be dug alongside their foundations and utilities sometime in the not all that distant future.

Response E.1: There are no publicly available plans to underground Caltrain or rail lines in the vicinity of the project site. Any design consideration factoring in future undergrounding of Caltrain would be speculative. Any impacts arising from future undergrounding would be the responsibility of the transit agency to address, if such a proposal ever advanced to the point of the environmental review stage.

F. Wesley Taoka, June 24, 2020

Comment F.1: I am writing concerning the Planned Downtown Affordable Housing and Parking Garage Project. I have also spoken directly with representatives from MidPen Housing about this and other things.

Specifically, I am writing to ask about parking spaces for persons with disabled person parking placards and plates during construction. Currently, there are spaces for persons with such placards and plates. Since the plans were changed and both the housing and parking garage are to be constructed simultaneously, I am writing to ask that a couple of spaces for disabled persons be made

on the street on the east side of the railroad tracks. I realize that there may be such parking available west of the railroad tracks, but it is not reasonable to expect disabled persons to walk across railroad tracks.

The San Mateo Japanese-American Community Center is at the corner of Claremont Street and 5th Avenue (415 South Claremont Street and 503 East 5th Avenue). Seniors attend some of the activities that are held during the day, and some park in the disabled person spaces. The activities include senior men's and senior women's clubs, a ukulele class, and a Japanese conversation class.

Response F.1: The commenters note on parking for persons with disabilities is noted. A construction parking and traffic management plan is required prior to commencing construction (refer to response A.38 above).

Appendix A: Initial Study Comment Letters



Central Neighborhood Association

June 24, 2020

Dear Mr. Brennan,

These are our comments on the MidPen Housing & Parking Garage Site IS/Environmental Assessment

MidPen Housing & Garage - Aesthetic Questions:

City of San Mateo General Plan states:

1. UD 2.2 Building Scale - Ensure that new multi-family developments respect the existing scale of the neighboring buildings by providing a change in the building face at spacings common to existing buildings and by stepping down building heights toward the street to more closely match the height of existing buildings.

The MidPen Housing and Garage does not respect the scale of the surrounding neighborhood. The surrounding buildings are mostly one and two stories in height. There are 9 ft ceilings on each floor which can be reduced a foot to 8 ft. ceilings on each floor to help reduce the scale and stepping down heights. We would like to see a reduction of 1 ft on each floor to reduce the shadow impacts.

2. UD 2.3 Style and Materials - Encourage the design of new multi-family developments in areas with a dominant type of exterior building materials to complement the style and incorporate the common materials of the area.

The architectural style of the surrounding area has traditional buildings. There are 16 properties over 45 years old in the surrounding area, and 415 S. Claremont Street residence and 503 E. 5th are eligible for listing in the NRHP and CRHR. 505 -509 S. B Street has been found eligible as a local landmark. Red and colored brick is a common material used throughout the Central Neighborhood and the historic Downtown. The two Windy Hill mixed use buildings at 405 East 4th Avenue and 406 East 3rd Avenue both have red and colored brick.

In contrast, the style of the 7 story 225 unit MidPen Apartment is a very contemporary building with very sharp rectilinear contemporary lines and does not draw in the dominant exterior building materials or incorporate common materials of the area. The MidPen project uses white brick for a modern look versus red or colored brick for a more blended look.

The garage is also very modern and contemporary and uses aluminum materials with meshed fins. Aluminum is not a dominant materials used in the historic area of Downtown San Mateo or in the Central Neighborhood.

The Central Neighborhood is part of the oldest neighborhood on the East side of San Mateo. The styles of the bungalow homes include: Craftsmen, Mediterranean, Cape Cod, Victorian, Tudor, Cottage, and Country French.

The 2 MidPen buildings are very different and the 2 buildings are not a transitional style of architecture. This could be detrimental to the harmonious and orderly growth of the City.

3. UD 2.7 Respect Existing Scale - Encourage new commercial development to respect the scale of surrounding buildings by providing breaks in the building face and spacings common to buildings in the area and by stepping back upper floors.

This is the first 7 story building on the East side of San Mateo. There are no horizontal set backs at lower or higher levels in the current design to more closely match the height of the existing buildings. We would like to see a 10 ft set back at the upper levels facing the neighborhood.

The MidPen housing and garage buildings are more massive, bulky, and heavy-looking and do not respect the existing scale in single family/duplex neighborhood or the older buildings on Figure 4.5-1. The project is not in scale with the character of the neighborhood.

MidPen Housing did reduce the height on another affordable housing project in Half-Moon Bay to 28 ft and reduced the density to more closely match the adjoining residential neighborhood from 148 to 71 units. The overall number of units was decreased by 75% of the total proposed development according to the Daily Journal article, MidPen coast-side affordable proposal gets latest approval from Monday, June 22, 2020.

4. It is stated that the MidPen housing density is 91 units an acre. Physically, there are 225 units on 1.16 A, not 91 units an acre. The current design appears very heavy and massive. Can MidPen work with the neighborhood to reduce the density so the building has a better fit to the surrounding area? The very first version of the MidPen project in March 7, 2019 had features which blended well with the neighborhood. It was much lighter and more transitional in style. There is a picture on Neighborhood Meeting Presentation March 7, 2019.

5. What can be done to mitigate the canyon effect created by having two tall buildings adjacent to the sidewalk on either side of 5th Avenue? The housing portion will be 74.5 ft in height and the garage will be 61 ft in height with a pedestrian bridge overhead connecting the two taller structures.

6. Residential Parking is on a separate site. It will be more inconvenient for residents who live on the lower levels on the 1st, 2nd, 3rd floors to drive through the multiple levels of the garage to get to the pedestrian bridge level or higher level to park. Residents have to take an elevator to the pedestrian bridge level to cross the bridge with groceries and kids and take another elevator to the 1st, 2nd, or 3rd level to their unit. To get to their car, they take the elevator to the floor of the pedestrian bridge, walk across the bridge, and drive multiple levels to get to the street level to get out. This will be repeated 10 times for each trip in and out of the garage.

It doesn't sound practical to have the residential parking in a separate site with an expensive pedestrian bridge. Why wasn't podium parking considered under the Housing with a driveway on S. Claremont? This could have reduced the number of cars coming out to 5th Avenue.

7. The development may impact public health with a large population of lower income families in two and three bedroom units which may make it more difficult to socially distance. The 50% reduction in private open space with the current impact of Covid-19 may impact public health. There may be limitations to opening windows for fresh air due to the noise impacts of Caltrain and the high traffic volumes.

8. The project may create substantial glare through windows which would impact day views and generate more heat for others across from the project. This issue was raised in a virtual meeting with MidPen on June 10, 2020. How can MidPen reduce the glare and heat from the windows? Can more awnings be provided?

9. Social distancing may impact the usage of the on-site facilities for families with children and the Seniors who might want to find a peaceful space to relax and read. How will MidPen accommodate these many people on site if children and residents need to sit 6 feet apart?

10. There is one more historic evaluation that will be submitted for 1007 East 5th Avenue. It qualifies as a State Historic Resources in the Central Neighborhood under 2 classifications. There is Criterion I (History) and Criterion II (Persons). The property is significant for its association with the Japanese-American community in the San Francisco Peninsula area during the post-World War II era. The property is significant for its association with Yoshiko Yamanouchi a member of the pioneer Issei generation in San Mateo, who was the owner of a successful business (the Blu White Laundry) and a leader in the Japanese American community and the local Buddhist church.

There are 3 major components: A Ranch Style House, the Katsura Villa, a Japanese Style Garden located in the south east corner of the property. The Katsura Building, Walkway, and Garden is on the north part of the property. The Katsura Building is a traditional Japanese style building that references features of the Katsura Imperial Villa in Kyoto, Japan, which is one of the world's most recognizable and influential creations of traditional Japanese architecture and landscape. The property retains a high degree of integrity.

Additionally, the Japanese style hill and pond garden located in the Southeast corner of the property appears to be individually eligible for the California Register under Criterion 3 as an example of a private Japanese style garden in San Mateo and as an example of the work of Nagao Sakurai, who is recognized as one of the leading designers on the West Coast of Japanese style garden in the decades following World War II.

a. The back-up traffic from 4th/Humboldt and 5th/Humboldt will bring more air pollution and traffic noise impacts. Both intersections will be at LOS F. The intersection does not warrant a traffic signal. How do you plan to reduce the vehicular and truck impacts to protect this property at 1007 East 5th Avenue? We would like to see traffic calming on 5th Avenue from Delaware to S. Amphlett and along S. Humboldt from 4th Avenue to 9th Avenue to reduce the cut-through traffic.

MidPen - Traffic and Parking Questions:

1. Estimated Future Traffic Volumes:

Site Generated Estimated Future Traffic Volumes:

This is the highest 1 hour peak traffic for AM and PM

AM In traffic is 190 cars and AM Out traffic is 81 cars for a total of 271 cars

PM In traffic is 111 cars and PM Out traffic is 206 cars for a total of 317 cars.

These are very high one hour peak traffic numbers for AM and PM. What percentage go east to 101 and what percentage go west to ECR? How do we reduce these impacts?

2. Anticipated Impacts on Traffic Operations:

a. How will MidPen address the substantial increase in delay during the PM peak hour at the El Camino Real intersections with 3rd, 4th, and 5th Avenues and during both AM and PM peak hours at the Delaware St/5th intersection?

b. Simulations of traffic operations reveal potential gridlock in Downtown San Mateo. Many intersections will operate at Level F.

On the 6/5/2020 -Table ES - 2, Intersection Levels of Service Summary - Background plus project:

There were 21 ratings of level F - over saturation at 26 intersections in the Downtown and in 2030; there are 40 ratings in AM/PM at level F over saturation at the same 26 intersections projected.

c. Many intersections in the project vicinity are to operate at LOS F over saturation indicating drivers will experience long unacceptable delays. These include: El Camino Real, B Street, Claremont, Delaware, Fremont, and Humboldt Street with 3rd, 4th, 5th Avenues. These delays are forecast for future background conditions plus the project. How can this MidPen Project impact so many intersections?

3. Proposed Remediation:

a. Re-stripe eastbound 5th to form two through lanes by removing on-street parking between the project driveway and Delaware Street. We agree on modifying the signals timing at 5th/Delaware, but have mixed feelings on lane creation and taking out the parking.

b. How will improvements to 5th/Delaware resolve queuing on eastbound 5th Avenue, eliminate potential gridlock in Downtown, and eliminate the substantial increases in delays at ECR intersections and Humboldt/3rd intersection? How are all these related to this remediation.

4. How will the proposed traffic remediation - adding a left turn lane, creating two travel lanes and removing on-street parking along 5th Avenue support creation of the proposed Bike Lane on 5th Avenue from Edinburgh to Delaware?

5. How will the additional project-generated traffic avoid conflicts with the operation of the planned Bike Boulevard along 5th Avenue? We need traffic calming on 5th Avenue to reduce the current and future vehicular traffic to make the area safer for bicyclists versus adding more lanes of traffic. Creating additional traffic lanes goes against the Sustainable Streets Plan, and conflicts with the Pedestrian Master Plan and the Bicycle Master Plan.
6. What is the plan for replacing the existing parking spaces along 5th Avenue to be removed to allow for the physical improvements?
- a. What is the plan for replacing the on-street parking to be converted to a loading zone, as recommended by Hexagon Consultants? Loading zones are very convenient for Recology, moving vans, GrubHub, shuttles for Seniors who need rides to medical appointments, residents who need to drop off groceries before parking in the garage, Lyft and Uber stops, easy pick-up and drop-off of friends who will live at MidPen without having to circle around the block.
- b. Where do you plan to locate the temporary parking for the residents?
- c. How does the developer plan to address the shortage of day-time residential parking described in the Hexagon report? The consultant states that similar residential complexes require 0.8 spaces / dwelling unit or 180 parking spaces which exceeds the 164 spaces to be provided. It is assumed that public areas of the garage would be used to accommodate this unmet residential demand.
- d. How does MidPen plan to handle this deficit parking so the overflow doesn't impact the neighborhood? There are 225 units and many couples own 2 cars.
7. What is the number of the Visitor Parking spaces in the MidPen Complex? Where will Visitor Parking be located? AB 1763 states that a development cannot provide their parking through on-street parking.
8. The Transportation Analysis states that 5th Avenue, a local street provides direct project access. The ADT has increased to 6200 from 2250 during peak hours before the Traffic Action Plans (TAP). What is the main contribution to the ADT increase? We need to reduce the ADT since this is local street.
- a. We need to make 5th Avenue safer for Central Neighborhood families with children who walk and bike to the Downtown and Central Park. The MidPen Housing and Garage will have a safety impact to the bicyclists and pedestrians in this area since the driveway impacts a local residential street.
- b. How do we reduce the vehicular cut-through impacts on 5th Avenue from 101 to and from the project site since 5th Avenue is a narrow residential street?

c. We are very concerned about the Essex Central Park Project which will come through 5th Avenue from the 101 Freeway.

There will be cumulative traffic impacts from the Essex Project. There are 967 vehicles coming through EB/WB through 5th Avenue to S. Delaware (460 plus 507) in PM peak 4-6 pm from the 9/22/18 traffic study in the Essex Negative Dec. There are 896 vehicles coming through EB/WB through 5th Avenue to S. Delaware (459 plus 410) in the AM peak from the 9/22/16 Study in the Essex Negative Declaration.

9. How will MidPen and the City direct the employees who use the garage and tenants to take 3rd Avenue to S. Claremont to 5th Avenue and not cut through 5th Avenue from this MidPen Garage? Directional signage would be helpful to guide new residents and office workers who will drive and park in the in-lieu spaces. We have 298 spaces in the City Garage from 4 recent developments, 234 spaces for replacement public parking, 164 spaces for MidPen residents. This comes to 696 total parking spaces which impacts the Central Neighborhood.

10. This MidPen Housing and Garage project lacked preliminary traffic studies to reduce the traffic impacts and conflicts with the Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plans. There needs to be more mitigation for the Central Neighborhood to reduce the traffic impacts and MidPen needs to pay for the traffic mitigation.

a. How do we mitigate the cut-through traffic impacts to 5th Avenue and S. Claremont Bicycle Boulevards? This 5th Avenue Bike Boulevard runs from Delaware to Amphlett to Sunnybrae Blvd to Delaware Street. We need a safe route for the bicyclists.

b. There have been 5 bike accidents on 5th Avenue between San Mateo Drive and Humboldt Street (2013 - 2017) Fig. 3.5 - Bicycle Collisions. How do we make this area safer for bicyclists and reduce the number of bicycle accidents on 5th Avenue and the surrounding area? We have a Class III bike route on 5th - from San Mateo Drive to S. Humboldt. We need to reduce the vehicular traffic along 5th Avenue to reduce the bike accidents. Residents in the Central Neighborhood have also stated that 5th Avenue needs a safer bike route to the Downtown. Page 24 - 2020 Bicycle Master Plan.

11. 5th Avenue is also the pedestrian path to the Downtown, Central Park, and to the Transit Center. The additional lane of traffic being proposed coming east makes this area unsafe for pedestrians and bicyclists. How do you plan to improve safety during the AM and PM hours?

a. We also need to reduce the vehicular impacts of drivers using 5th Avenue as the preferred street to and from the 101 Freeway to the garage. MidPen needs to provide Traffic Calming on 5th Avenue from Delaware to S. Amphlett so the Bike Boulevards can come in on 5th Avenue. This is a high priority #16 on page 67 the cost will be \$190,000 for traffic calming on 5th Avenue from Delaware to Amphlett. (Bicycle Master Plan 2020).

12. Has any thought been given to various (signs e.g. keep clear) and a new crosswalk at Claremont/5th Avenue for pedestrian safety?

13. How will construction worker parking be handled on site? What is the construction route for the trucks? Can they take ECR to 92 the State Highways versus our residential streets in the Central Neighborhood?

Sincerely,

Michael Weinbauer Laurie Watanuki Maurine Killough Ben Portusach
Central Neighborhood Association Board Members

Note: Historic Resources Evaluation Report for 1007 East 5th Avenue San Mateo, CA 94402 will be hand delivered to Phillip Brennan at City Hall.

From: [Bob Whitehair](#)
To: [Phillip Brennan](#)
Subject: Comments on Proposed Negative Declaration
Date: Wednesday, June 24, 2020 4:58:12 PM

Please accept these comments on the proposed project:

I agree that the proposed Negative Declaration for the Downtown Opportunities site should move forward with these conditions:

1. The project include at least 106 EV parking spaces, as shown in earlier staff report
2. The project is all-electric, with NO "NATURAL GAS", which means electric heat pump water heaters, no gas water heaters, either individually, ganged, or central; heat pump heating and cooling, no gas furnaces; no gas fire places and no gas stoves.
3. The City of San Mateo actively seek PCE funding for EV charging systems
4. The 225 spaces truly are for low income.

Thank You

Robert Whitehair
San Mateo

June 24,2020

City of San Mateo City Council

Re: Initial Study/ Environmental Assessment PA19-033

TOD of Mid-Peninsula 100% Affordable Housing project on the Downtown Area of San Mateo has areas of Pedestrian Crossing at the intersection of South Claremont and 5th Avenues being under estimated in traffic flow during 7 to 10am Monday to Friday.

The children who will be living at 480 East 4th Avenue housing will be crossing this intersection with others driving their children to schools in the area. The specifications do not show a traffic calming solution even though it has made extra lane notations for left and right turn lanes.

This intersection at the hours between 7am to 10am have deliveries of lumber with large flat bed trucks to the San Mateo Lumber at 501 South Claremont Street storage sheds of lumber. The business has the trucks driving over the sidewalk to load the lumber to customers trucks too. It makes a difficult sidewalk for pedestrians to be seen walking. Across the street is Builders Hardware at 476 South Claremont Street. These two business operate 7am to 5pm Monday to Friday.

If the children are either walking South on South Claremont this sidewalk is unsafe. If the children are trying to cross the intersection of South Claremont and 5th Avenue going east, it could possibly cause a congested traffic situation that time in the morning with a Municipal Garage for 164 for residents and people working Downtown looking for parking.

The other concern is the bicycle lanes that will be provided both going West and East on 5th Avenue during the Monday to Friday 6am to 8am. It is great concern that this will be a very busy intersection, street crossing, and bicycle path at this time of the day, 6am to 9am during a Monday through Friday.

This street previously was used as a parking lot for approximately 300 vehicles with a Workers Center.

The pedestrian of children walking to The Sunnybrae Elementry School located on 1031 South Delaware has not in previous years has been in this viable situation. The children of Central neighborhood only have residences from 600 East 5th Avenue east. Other residents in this neighborhood live continuing down South Delaware to 19th Avenue.

Is this a safe pedestrian/bicycle intersection during Monday to Friday 7am to 10am?

Thank you for giving consideration to the safety of this residency.

Diana C. Pettit

221 South Fremont Street#208

San Mateo, CA 94401

From: [George](#)
To: [Phillip Brennan](#)
Subject: Comment on PA19-033 City-Owned Downtown Affordable Housing and Parking Garage
Date: Wednesday, June 24, 2020 4:47:08 PM

Dear Mr. Brennan,

Even though these are parking lots, they have provided some "open space" and trees in the Downtown area. Nearby, the former Kentucky Fried Chicken lot had also provided some "open space" with its surface parking lot and a small lawn area and trees until it was recently demolished for redevelopment as mixed-use office space.

Given the loss of open space in the area for development, I would strongly recommend that this current project offer a significant tree-lined offset around the entirety of the complex to compensate for the loss of and to create a public open space.

The City-developed apartment complex in the San Mateo Creek neighborhood by Gateway Park at 3rd Avenue east of South Fremont Street comes to mind as an example of such a tree-lined canopy alongside a building complex.

And the nearly adjacent Metropolitan Apartments between 3rd and 4th Avenues below Eldorado Street also sport a tree-lined canopy, albeit smaller, surrounding the complex, though I would recommend a sidewalk 3 to 4 feet wider in this case, (in addition to, not taking away from the remainder of the green setback), in anticipation of increasing foot traffic in the Downtown area in the future.

If you were to also add bike lanes to the streetscape of this project, you'd probably be doing yourself a favor by getting a step ahead on future demand and city-wide planning.

You might also consider reclaiming sidewalk space from streetlights by either affixing streetlights directly to buildings, or stringing them between buildings (European style). Sidewalk space is a bigger problem in the Downtown core, but it's still a good idea to place streetlights up and away from foot traffic where you have the building density to do so.

As to the buildings themselves, permitting larger, maybe overhanging, balconies can make a great difference to the feel of spaciousness with smaller apartments. We are blessed with a wonderful climate; balconies take advantage of that by expanding smaller interior space into the outdoors.

You've maybe already considered and dismissed due to cost, but taking advantage of the space underneath for additional underground parking is an option that is only available now at initial construction.

George Derby, City of San Mateo resident
t. 415.223.4350

From: [George](#)
To: [Phillip Brennan](#)
Subject: Re: Comment on PA19-033 City-Owned Downtown Affordable Housing and Parking Garage
Date: Wednesday, June 24, 2020 4:57:08 PM

Another consideration with this project is the very real possibility that sometime in the future the adjacent Caltrain/freight rail lines will be trenched underground, with open green space and building construction appearing above said trench. This is a development path that has occurred in many places in the US and around the world. So these current structures should take into consideration in their design that a large trench will be dug alongside their foundations and utilities sometime in the not all that distant future.

George Derby
t. 415.223.4350

On Wed, Jun 24, 2020 at 4:46 PM George <george.derby@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear Mr. Brennan,

Even though these are parking lots, they have provided some "open space" and trees in the Downtown area. Nearby, the former Kentucky Fried Chicken lot had also provided some "open space" with its surface parking lot and a small lawn area and trees until it was recently demolished for redevelopment as mixed-use office space.

Given the loss of open space in the area for development, I would strongly recommend that this current project offer a significant tree-lined offset around the entirety of the complex to compensate for the loss of and to create a public open space.

The City-developed apartment complex in the San Mateo Creek neighborhood by Gateway Park at 3rd Avenue east of South Fremont Street comes to mind as an example of such a tree-lined canopy alongside a building complex.

And the nearly adjacent Metropolitan Apartments between 3rd and 4th Avenues below Eldorado Street also sport a tree-lined canopy, albeit smaller, surrounding the complex, though I would recommend a sidewalk 3 to 4 feet wider in this case, (in addition to, not taking away from the remainder of the green setback), in anticipation of increasing foot traffic in the Downtown area in the future.

If you were to also add bike lanes to the streetscape of this project, you'd probably be doing yourself a favor by getting a step ahead on future demand and city-wide planning.

You might also consider reclaiming sidewalk space from streetlights by either affixing streetlights directly to buildings, or stringing them between buildings (European style). Sidewalk space is a bigger problem in the Downtown core, but it's still a good idea to place streetlights up and away from foot traffic where you have the building density to do so.

As to the buildings themselves, permitting larger, maybe overhanging, balconies can make a great difference to the feel of spaciousness with smaller apartments. We are blessed with a wonderful climate; balconies take advantage of that by expanding smaller interior space into the outdoors.

You've maybe already considered and dismissed due to cost, but taking advantage of the space underneath for additional underground parking is an option that is only available now at initial construction.

George Derby, City of San Mateo resident
t. 415.223.4350

From: [San Mateo JACC](#)
To: [Phillip Brennan](#)
Subject: Downtown Affordable Housing and Parking Garage Sites Project (PA19-033) - Disabled Person Parking
Date: Wednesday, June 24, 2020 4:24:39 PM

Dear Mr. Brennan,

I am writing concerning the Planned Downtown Affordable Housing and Parking Garage Project. I have also spoken directly with representatives from MidPen Housing about this and other things.

Specifically, I am writing to ask about parking spaces for persons with disabled person parking placards and plates during construction. Currently, there are spaces for persons with such placards and plates. Since the plans were changed and both the housing and parking garage are to be constructed simultaneously, I am writing to ask that a couple of spaces for disabled persons be made on the street on the east side of the railroad tracks. I realize that there may be such parking available west of the railroad tracks, but it is not reasonable to expect disabled persons to walk across railroad tracks.

The San Mateo Japanese-American Community Center is at the corner of Claremont Street and 5th Avenue (415 South Claremont Street and 503 East 5th Avenue). Seniors attend some of the activities that are held during the day, and some park in the disabled person spaces. The activities include senior men's and senior women's clubs, a ukulele class, and a Japanese conversation class.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Wesley Taoka
Executive Director
San Mateo Japanese-American Community Center
415 South Claremont Street
San Mateo, CA 94401
(650) 343-2793; sanmateojacc@gmail.com