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September 12, 2023

TO:

Mike Schaller
County of San Mateo
Planning and Building Department
455 County Center, 2nd Floor
Redwood City, California 94063

COMMENT ON:

DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT FOR THE CYPRESS POINT
AFFORDABLE HOUSING COMMUNITY PROJECT, SAN MATEO COUNTY,
CALIFORNIA

The EIR identifies numerous Significant and Unavoidable impacts, in the area of transportation/VMT, where the product is not compatible with CEQA guidelines, even with mitigations.

As such, the permit for this project must be denied. A Statement of Overriding Considerations to work around this is not appropriate.

I agree that affordable housing is a crucial need locally, countywide, statewide, and nationally. However, this need exists within the context of the existential threat of climate change, which is unarguably linked to human activity, and prominently with the human activity of transportation. Until and unless we attain the pipe dream of zero carbon emissions for transportation, we have to work within the reality that we face currently. And that is of internal combustion engines powering vehicles to get people from place to place.

The most successful and environmentally compatible affordable housing developments are transit oriented developments, built in urban centers around transportation hubs. The reason that this project fails the VMT standards is because it is located near absolutely zero jobs, and apart from the local elementary school, located near no schools, and near no opportunities to shop for essentials such as food or medical care. Isolated as it is, walking and bicycling are not feasible alternatives to driving a car to accomplish any of these activities.

Mitigations proposed to somewhat ameliorate the Significant and Unavoidable impacts are rather laughable – encouraging bicycling for example in an area where the street conditions are known to be hazardous to pedestrians and bicycles. Encouraging car pooling is a laudable idea, but given the realities of lower income people working

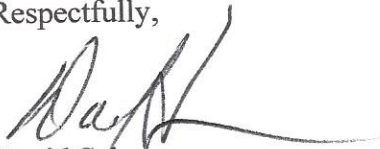
multiple jobs, along with shuttling children to and from schools and activities, is highly unlikely to provide benefit.

Public transportation options on the Coastside are minimal at best, and of no significant benefit to people trying to get around. The local school district discontinued school bus service several decades ago, and shows no signs of reinstating what could be a part of the solution. Therefore, VMT will continue to exceed standards.

VMT goes hand-in-hand with greenhouse gas production, and while the analysis in this EIR shows GHG emissions to be below the bright line threshold for significance, the amount of GHG emissions generated by VMT associated with this project are quite large, and alarming. Here on the Coast, we are on the sharp end of the spear of climate change, increased temperatures, and sea level rise – we literally have infrastructure falling into the ocean as a result of these impacts. To approve a housing project far removed from jobs, schools, shopping and transportation flies in the face of logic considering the existential threat we face from climate change. Yes, we need affordable housing. It should be built in transit oriented developments within existing population centers.

The momentum this project has developed over the past decade or so appears unstoppable to people who have other thoughts about it. Funding has been allocated, and a good deal of resources have been put into planning for this project. And Mid-Pen wants to make a buck on it. All of that is putting the cart before the horse, in light of the realities of the logistics and location of this project resulting in exceedances of VMT standards, and creating a lot of GHG emissions, even if that does not rise to the level of “significance” as defined in this EIR. Plain logic dictated years ago, as it does now, that this is a poor location for this particular project, and the permit for this project should be denied as a result.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Schorr', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

David Schorr
Half Moon Bay, California