



# Appeal of Final Subsequent Environmental Impact Report – Balboa Reservoir Project

**DATE:** August 3, 2020  
**TO:** Angela Calvillo, Clerk of the Board of Supervisors  
**FROM:** Lisa M. Gibson, Environmental Review Officer – (415) 575-9032  
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**RE:** File No. 200804, Planning Case No. 2018-007883ENV  
Appeal of the Final Subsequent Environmental Impact Report for the Balboa Reservoir Project  
**HEARING DATE:** August 11, 2020

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**PROJECT SPONSOR:** Joe Kirchofer and Brad Wiblin, Reservoir Community Partners LLC  
**APPELLANT:** Stuart M. Flashman on behalf of Madeline Mueller, Alvin Ja, and Wynd Kaufmyn

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**DEPARTMENT’S RECOMMENDATION:** Uphold the SEIR certification and deny the appeal

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## INTRODUCTION

This memorandum is a response to the letter of appeal to the Board of Supervisors (the “Board”) regarding the Planning Department’s (the “department”) issuance of a final subsequent environmental impact report (“final SEIR”) under the California Environmental Quality Act (“CEQA Determination”) for the Balboa Reservoir Project (the “proposed project” or the “project”). The final SEIR (provided via email to the Board on April 29, 2020) was certified by the Planning Commission (the “Commission”) on May 28, 2020.

The appeal to the Board was filed on June 18, 2020 by Stuart M. Flashman on behalf of appellants Madeline Mueller, Alvin Ja, and Wynd Kaufmyn (“the appellant”). The five-page appeal letter from Mr. Flashman incorporates by reference the following evidence in support of the appeal: Undated set of graphics entitled “High Level Program Review” showing the five-year construction phasing plan for City College (Exhibit A), City College of San Francisco Transportation Demand Management (TDM) and Parking Plan prepared by Fehr & Peers, dated March 15, 2019 (Exhibit B), and Planning Commission Motions M-20730 and M-20731. The appeal letter and supporting exhibits and attachments are part of Board of Supervisors File No. 200804 and can be accessed here: <https://sfgov.legistar.com/Legislation.aspx>.

The decision before the Board is whether to uphold the certification of the final SEIR by the Commission and deny the appeal, or overturn the Commission’s decision to certify the final SEIR and return the project to the Planning Department for additional environmental review.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The City and County of San Francisco (the City), acting by and through its San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC), selected Reservoir Community Partners LLC (a joint venture between BRIDGE Housing Corporation and Avalon Bay Communities), to act as master developer for the redevelopment of a 17.6-acre site in the West of Twin Peaks area of south central San Francisco known as the Balboa Reservoir. The proposed project would develop the site with mixed-income housing, open space, a childcare facility/community room available for public use, retail space, on- and off-street parking, and new streets, utilities, and other infrastructure.

The SEIR studied two different options for the site’s residential density to capture a range of possible development on the project site as shown in **Table 1. Project Characteristics**. The project that the Planning Commission adopted in Motion No. 20731 is analyzed in the SEIR as the Developer’s Proposed Option, except that the height limit of the easternmost 58 feet of Blocks TH1, TH2 and H is 48 feet, as analyzed in the Additional Housing Option, instead of 35 feet, as analyzed in the proposed project.

**TABLE 1. PROJECT CHARACTERISTICS**

<b>Project Characteristic</b>	<b>Developer’s Proposed Option</b>	<b>Additional Housing Option</b>
<b>Proposed Land Use Program</b>	<b>Area (gross square feet)</b>	<b>Area (gross square feet)</b>
Residential	1,283,000	1,588,000
Commercial (retail)*	7,500	7,500
Community facilities (childcare and community room for public use)	10,000	10,000
Parking	339,900 (residential and public)	231,000 (residential only)
<b>Total Building Area</b>	<b>1,640,400</b>	<b>1,836,500</b>
Proposed Dwelling Units	1,100	1,550
Proposed Vehicle Parking Spaces	1,300 [550 residential + 750 public garage]	650 [residential only]
Publicly Accessible Open Space	4 acres	4 acres
<b>Building Characteristics</b>		
Stories	2 to 7 stories	2 to 8 stories
Height	25 to 78 feet	25 to 88 feet

\*At hearings during the week of July 27, 2020, various committees of the Board of Supervisors discussed eliminating retail use from the project. This project change would not change the CEQA analysis presented in the SEIR or elsewhere in this appeal response. Removal of 7,500 square feet of retail space would slightly reduce vehicle trips and related impacts, such as vehicle and transit trips, and air pollutant emissions; however, it would not change the SEIR impact conclusions.

The project would include transportation and circulation changes, including the extension of existing north-south Lee Avenue across the site, and a new internal street network. The project would also include Ocean Avenue streetscape modifications consisting of the conversion of five 21-foot-long metered parking spaces along the frontage of 1150 Ocean Avenue to metered loading spaces between the hours of 6 a.m. and 2 p.m. (subject to SFMTA approval). The project would include a roadway network that would be accessible for people walking, including people with disabilities, bicycling, and driving. The project would also add new utility infrastructure

to supply the site with potable water, wastewater collection, stormwater collection and treatment, electricity, natural gas, and communications. The SFPUC would retain ownership of an 80-foot-wide strip of land located along the southern edge of the site where an underground water transmission pipeline is located.

## **PROJECT BACKGROUND**

### **Balboa Park Station Area Plan Environmental Review**

The department initiated the Balboa Park Station Area Plan (“area plan”) planning process in 2000. The area plan covers an approximately 210-acre area generally bounded by parcels along the northern edge of Ocean Avenue, the southern boundary of Archbishop Riordan High School, Judson Avenue and Havelock Street to the north; the northeastern edge of City College, and San Jose and Delano avenues to the east; Niagara and Mount Vernon avenues, and parcels along the southern edges of Geneva and Ocean avenues to the south; and Manor Drive to the west. The area plan’s objectives and policies were developed to implement a set of land use and zoning controls; urban design and architectural guidelines; and transportation/infrastructure, streetscape, and open space improvements that would enhance the overall urban environment and encourage new development, particularly housing and neighborhood-serving commercial uses.

The department prepared the Balboa Park Station Area Plan [Program] Environmental Impact Report (the “area plan PEIR” or “PEIR”), which analyzed transportation/infrastructure and public space improvements and potential future development in the plan area expected in the near future (2009–2010) or within the long-term (2010–2025) timeline. The near-future development program analyzed also included two individual near-term projects named “Phelan Loop Site” and “Kragen Auto Parts Site,” which are now built.<sup>1</sup> On April 7, 2009, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors adopted the area plan. The Mayor subsequently signed the legislation for the area plan, which was enacted on May 18, 2009.

The PEIR provided a first-tier, plan-level analysis of the environmental impacts associated with the development program proposed for the entire plan area, including the Balboa Reservoir project site. The area plan and the PEIR do not place a cap on the number of housing units within the plan area or the project site. In order to conduct a program-level analysis, the department made appropriate development assumptions at the time of the PEIR. The PEIR analyzed a development program of 500 residential units and 100,000 square feet of open space for the Balboa Reservoir site.

### **Balboa Reservoir Project EIR**

The SEIR is tiered from the previously certified PEIR in accordance with CEQA Guidelines section 15168(c), which provides for environmental review of subsequent activities under the same program. The proposed project at the Balboa Reservoir site is the first development project under the adopted area plan in which conditions triggering a subsequent EIR are met pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15162.

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<sup>1</sup> The “Phelan Loop Site” (1100 Ocean Avenue) is bounded by Lee Avenue to the west, Ocean Avenue to the south, San Francisco Fire Department Station 15 to the east, and Balboa Reservoir to the north. (It is noted that Phelan Loop is now referred to as the City College Terminal. The terminology here is from the PEIR.) This site is a mixed-use development with residential above ground-floor retail and public open space (Unity Plaza). The “Kragen Auto Parts Site” (1150 Ocean Avenue) is bounded by Ingleside Branch Library to the west, Ocean Avenue to the south, Lee Avenue to the east, and the Balboa Reservoir to the north. This site is a mixed-use development with residential above ground-floor retail.

The SEIR is a project-level environmental review that includes more details on the currently proposed project at the Balboa Reservoir than were in the PEIR. The SEIR analyzed the proposed development at the project site compared to the development assumed in the PEIR to determine whether it would be within the scope of the program-level analysis or whether the project would result in new significant impacts or substantially more severe significant impacts than those identified in the PEIR.

The initial study (SEIR Appendix B), explains why the project would not have new significant impacts or substantially more severe significant impacts than those previously identified in the PEIR for 19 of the 22 resource topic areas.

Where the project might have significant impacts that have not been adequately addressed in the PEIR, either due to the nature of the project, or due to new information that was not previously available, those issues were carried forward for detailed analysis. The department determined that the proposed project would result in new significant impacts and substantially more-severe significant impacts than previously identified in the PEIR for transportation and circulation, air quality, and noise.

**PROCEDURAL BACKGROUND**

**Table 2. CEQA Procedural Background**, identifies the dates of the major CEQA milestones for the Balboa Reservoir Project’s environmental analysis.

TABLE 2. CEQA PROCEDURAL BACKGROUND	
CEQA Milestone	Date
Notice of preparation (NOP) of a subsequent EIR published	October 10, 2018
<i>NOP public scoping period</i>	October 10, 2018 – November 12, 2018 (33 days)
<i>Public scoping meeting</i>	October 30, 2018
Draft SEIR published	August 7, 2019
<i>Draft SEIR public review period</i>	August 8, 2019 – September 23, 2019 (46 days)
<i>Public hearing on draft SEIR</i>	September 12, 2019
Responses to comments (RTC) document published	April 29, 2020 (30 days prior to certification hearing; local requirement is 10 days)
Final subsequent EIR certified	May 28, 2020
Appellant files appeal of SEIR certification <sup>a</sup>	June 18, 2020
<p>a. Alvin Ja, of the appellant, submitted supplemental materials to the clerk of the board on August 1, 2020, past the deadline for the appellant to submit supplemental materials pursuant to chapter 31 of the Administrative Code. Even so, the late supplemental materials raise no new issues not previously responded to the final SEIR and/or this appeal response.</p>	

**CEQA GUIDELINES**

The department prepared the final SEIR in accordance with CEQA, the CEQA Guidelines, and local CEQA procedures under chapter 31 of the San Francisco Administrative Code. The purpose of the final SEIR is to disclose any potential impacts on the physical environment resulting from implementation of the proposed project and provide an opportunity for public review and comment before decision-makers

decide to approve or deny the project. The SEIR is an informational document intended to inform public agency decision-makers and the public of the significant environmental effects of a project proposal, identify possible ways to minimize the significant effects, and describe feasible alternatives to the project to reduce or eliminate those significant effects. Certification of an environmental document does not constitute a project approval of any kind.

## **STANDARDS OF ADEQUACY FOR CERTIFICATION OF AN EIR**

On May 28, 2020, the Planning Commission reviewed and considered the final SEIR at a duly noticed public hearing. The Commission found that the final SEIR reflected the independent judgment and analysis of the City and County of San Francisco. The Commission found that the final SEIR was adequate, accurate and objective, and that the responses to comments (“RTC”) document contained no significant revisions to the draft SEIR. The Commission certified the final SEIR in compliance with the requirements of CEQA, the CEQA Guidelines, and chapter 31 of the San Francisco Administrative Code.

Under San Francisco Administrative Code section 31.16(c)(3), the grounds for appeal of an EIR:

“shall be limited to whether the EIR complies with CEQA, including whether it is adequate, accurate and objective, sufficient as an informational document, correct in its conclusions, and reflects the independent judgment and analysis of the City and whether the Planning Commission certification findings are correct.”

The standards for adequacy of an EIR are set forth in CEQA Guidelines section 15151, which provides:

“An EIR should be prepared with a sufficient degree of analysis to provide decision makers with information which enables them to make a decision which intelligently takes account of environmental consequences. An evaluation of the environmental effects of a proposed project need not be exhaustive, but the sufficiency of an EIR is to be reviewed in the light of what is reasonably feasible. Disagreement among experts does not make an EIR inadequate, but the EIR should summarize the main points of disagreement among the experts. The courts have looked not for perfection but for adequacy, completeness, and a good faith effort at full disclosure.”

San Francisco Administrative Code section 31.16(b)(6) provides that in reviewing a CEQA decision on appeal, the Board of Supervisors “shall conduct its own independent review of whether the CEQA decision adequately complies with the requirements of CEQA. The Board shall consider anew all facts, evidence and issues related to the adequacy, accuracy and objectiveness of the CEQA decision, including, but not limited to, the sufficiency of the CEQA decision and the correctness of its conclusions.”

## **CEQA FINDINGS AND STATEMENT OF OVERRIDING CONSIDERATIONS**

As described in CEQA Guidelines section 15093, if the final EIR identifies significant effects for a proposed project, but the effects are not avoided or reduced to a less-than-significant level (i.e., significant and unavoidable impacts), a decision-maker that approves the project must find that any such unavoidable significant effects are acceptable due to overriding economic, legal, technological, social, or other policy considerations. This is known as a statement of overriding considerations. In making these findings, the decision-maker must balance the benefits of the proposed project against its unavoidable environmental effects.

The Commission has authority to recommend to the Board of Supervisors approval of the Balboa Reservoir Project development agreement; to approve associated General Plan and Planning Code amendments, including amendments to the Zoning Map to create a new Balboa Reservoir Special Use District; and to approve the Balboa Reservoir Design Standards and Guidelines. The Commission was the first decision-maker under CEQA that was required to adopt CEQA findings, including a statement of overriding considerations, when it approved the project. On May 28, 2020, following Commission certification of the final SEIR, the Commission approved the project and adopted CEQA findings as part of its approval action in Planning Commission Motion M-20731.

## **PLANNING DEPARTMENT RESPONSES**

One appeal letter was timely filed concerning certification of the final SEIR for the Balboa Reservoir Project. The concerns raised in the letter are responded to below.

### **Response 1: The SEIR adequately and accurately describes the project area and existing conditions and appropriately analyzes impacts on schools.**

The appellant contends that the SEIR does not provide adequate information concerning surrounding uses, both present and future, for the City College Ocean Campus, Archbishop Riordan High School, and Lick Wilmerding High School, as well as how they would be affected by the project.

The SEIR meets CEQA requirements for describing the existing or baseline physical conditions and evaluates the impacts of the project on public services, including nearby schools and City College Ocean Campus. The adjacent land uses in the site vicinity, including City College and Archbishop Riordan High School, are adequately described on SEIR pp. 2-9 to 2-12, consistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15125, which states, “[t]he description of the environmental setting shall be no longer than is necessary to provide an understanding of the significant effects of the proposed project and its alternatives.” As described in RTC Response CEQA-2 (p. 4.A-23), pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15125(a)(1), the physical conditions existing when the notice of preparation was published (October 10, 2018) were used to establish the baseline for the project-level analysis in the SEIR and initial study. The SEIR reflects the existing conditions in the vicinity, including City College and nearby high schools, as of 2018.

The appellant’s statement that future City College projects should be included in the project setting is incorrect, as the future City College projects are considered under cumulative future conditions and do not represent existing or near-term baseline conditions. The SEIR adequately analyzes cumulative impacts, including potential impacts associated with future City College facilities master plan projects funded by the March 2020 bond, and this topic is addressed in Response 3 below.

In addition, each SEIR section and initial study section also describes the existing context of the project site and vicinity relevant to the topic’s impact discussions, consistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15125. **Table 3. Location of Existing Setting Descriptions for Each Topic Area** (the same as Table RTC-4 in the RTC document) provides the location of the existing setting discussion for each topic area in the SEIR.

**TABLE 3. LOCATION OF EXISTING SETTING DESCRIPTIONS FOR EACH TOPIC AREA**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Location in Draft SEIR</b>
Transportation and Circulation	Draft SEIR pp. 3.B-5 to 3.B-31
Noise	Draft SEIR pp. 3.C-6 to 3.C-11
Air Quality	Draft SEIR pp. 3.D-3 to 3.D-21
Land Use and Land Use Planning	Draft SEIR Appendix B, p. B-13
Aesthetics	Not Applicable. Public Resources Code section 21099(d) provides that aesthetic impacts of a residential mixed-use residential, or employment center project on an infill site located within a transit priority area shall not be considered significant impacts on the environment.
Population and Housing	Draft SEIR Appendix B, p. B-18 (construction jobs) Draft SEIR Appendix B, p. B-19 to B-21 for the Balboa Park Priority Development Area and citywide (population, housing, and employment)
Cultural Resources	Draft SEIR Appendix B, p. B-27 (site history and past reconfiguration) Draft SEIR Appendix B, p. B-28 (archeological resources)
Tribal Cultural Resources	Draft SEIR Appendix B, p. B-34
Greenhouse Gas Emissions	Draft SEIR Appendix B, pp. B-37 to B-28
Wind	Draft SEIR Appendix B, p. B-42
Shadow	Draft SEIR Appendix B, pp. B-46 to B-47
Recreation	Draft SEIR Appendix B, pp. B-52 to B-54
Utilities and Service Systems	Draft SEIR Appendix B, pp. B-59 to B-60 (water supply) Draft SEIR Appendix B, pp. B-73 to 75 (wastewater/stormwater collection and treatment) Draft SEIR Appendix B, pp. B-76 to B-77 (solid waste)
Public Services	Draft SEIR Appendix B, p. B-82 (fire protection services) Draft SEIR Appendix B, p. B-83 (police protection services) Draft SEIR Appendix B, p. B-85 to B-86 (public schools) Draft SEIR Appendix B, p. B-87 (public libraries) Draft SEIR Appendix B, pp. B-87 to B-89 (other public facilities – City College)
Biological Resources	Draft SEIR Appendix B, pp. B-93 to B-94
Geology and Soils	Draft SEIR Appendix B, pp. B-100 to B-101, B-104
Hydrology and Water Quality	Draft SEIR Appendix B, pp. B-108 to B-110
Hazards and Hazardous Materials	Draft SEIR Appendix B, pp. B-121 to B-123
Mineral resources	Not Applicable
Energy	Draft SEIR Appendix B, pp. B-126 to B-127
Agriculture and Forest Resources	Not Applicable
Wildfire	Not Applicable

The SEIR analyzes impacts of the proposed project on public services, including schools, and determines that the project would not result in the need for new facilities, the construction of which could result in significant impacts on the environment (SEIR Appendix B, pp. B-82 to B-90). As stated in RTC Response PS-2 on RTC p. 4.H-60, “[t]he CEQA Guidelines Appendix G question for public services, with respect to educational facilities, asks whether the project would ‘result in substantial adverse *physical* impacts associated with the provision of new or physically

altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives for ... schools....” [emphasis added]. It is noted that Response PS-2 was provided in response to a comment alleging that the loss of the project site’s use as a parking lot for City College would decrease access to educational opportunities. Please see Response 4, below, for a discussion of secondary impacts related to parking.

Concerning Archbishop Riordan High School, the SEIR adequately describes the school and thoroughly analyzes construction period noise and air quality effects on that institution; please refer to Response 6 below for a discussion of noise impacts. There are no reasonably foreseeable future construction projects on the high school campus that would require cumulative impact analysis. Regarding Lick Wilmerding High School, this institution is more than 1,000 feet from the project site and very close to I-280. Therefore, the proposed project would be unlikely to result in any noise, air quality, or other impacts on Lick Wilmerding. The appellant has not made any specific allegation as to any specific impacts on either Archbishop Riordan or Lick Wilmerding high schools and, therefore, no more specific response is possible. Moreover, the appellant has provided no evidence that the project would require the construction of new off-site public service facilities, or that any such facilities would have significant environmental effects not already disclosed in the SEIR.

**Response 2: The affordable housing percentage is adequately identified in the SEIR.**

The appellant contends that the affordable housing percentage in the project description is inaccurate and inconsistent. The appellant states that lower income households are more likely to use public transit; thus, the unspecified final percentage of units and level of affordability makes VMT, air quality, pedestrian and bicyclist safety, and transit delay analysis inaccurate.

It is true that affordable residential units tend to generate lesser vehicle travel than moderate- and above-moderate income units based on research of households throughout California that live within one quarter-mile of high-quality transit.<sup>2</sup>

The SEIR transportation analysis follows the travel demand methodology presented in the department’s San Francisco Transportation Impact Analysis Guidelines for Environmental Review in 2019 (2019 TIA Guidelines), which do not distinguish between below-market-rate residential units and other residential units in their travel demand calculations. This is because the San Francisco data collection and analysis used to create the travel demand methodology did not separate market rate and affordable housing. Accordingly, the quantitative analysis assumes, for example, a one-bedroom market-rate unit would have the same trip generation rate and mode split as a one-bedroom affordable unit.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> City and County of San Francisco, *Transportation Demand Management Technical Justification*, updated January 2018, [http://default.sfplanning.org/transportation/tdm/TDM\\_Technical\\_Justification\\_update2018.pdf](http://default.sfplanning.org/transportation/tdm/TDM_Technical_Justification_update2018.pdf), page 31. Accessed July 24, 2020.

<sup>3</sup> The supporting trip generation and travel demand data is provided in SEIR Appendix C1, Travel Demand Memorandum.



As detailed in the 2019 TIA Guidelines, trip generation rate methodology accounts for the size and type of land use to estimate the number of project person trips. Residential trip generation rates are based on the number of bedrooms in a dwelling unit.<sup>4</sup>

The ways people travel, also known as mode split, refers to the estimated way or method people travel, which include automobile, taxi, TNC, walking, public transit, and bicycling. The department developed mode splits based on data collection at typical office, retail, residential, and hotel land use sites throughout San Francisco in 2017. The mode split ratios are different depending on the land use type and place type (urban low density, urban medium density, and urban high density), due to factors that influence travel behavior. Whether a dwelling unit is below-market-rate or not was not accounted for in the San Francisco data collection and is therefore not considered in the mode split percentages.<sup>5</sup>

Developments that provide 100 percent affordable housing are exempt from the City's TDM Program. According to the TDM program technical justification, this is because most new affordable housing developments are constructed with little or no off-street parking. The technical justification documents research finding that decreased parking availability results in decreased driving, other factors being equal, and concluded that "a reduced Parking Supply is the most effective TDM measure available."<sup>6</sup> It is this link between parking supply and driving that provides the justification for excluding 100 percent affordable housing developments from the TDM program.<sup>7</sup> However, as noted above, housing occupancy based on the number or level of affordable units alone may decrease driving. Accordingly, the SEIR analysis may somewhat overstate vehicle trips and VMT and to somewhat understate transit demand. However, because the 2019 TIA Guidelines do not quantify the differences in mode split based on affordability, it is not possible in this SEIR to quantify the potential differences using local data.

The travel demand analysis for the proposed project is therefore conservative in that it assumes the same trip rates and mode splits for market rate and affordable housing. This is because it may somewhat overestimate vehicle trips and VMT, thereby somewhat overestimating potential transportation, air quality, and noise effects, but not to unrealistic levels. These effects could be incrementally overstated because vehicle trips contribute to potentially hazardous conditions (including those resulting from conflicts due to passenger loading activity), transit delay resulting from congestion, emissions of criteria air pollutants, and traffic noise. Of these impacts, the SEIR identified significant and unavoidable impacts related to potentially hazardous conditions (as a result of loading along the existing segment of Lee Avenue north of Ocean Avenue), transit delay, and emissions of criteria air pollutants. Even if vehicle trips were changed to account for the overestimation of trips, all these impacts would remain significant and unavoidable, although their severity could be incrementally reduced. It is noted that the potential overestimation of vehicle trips would mean that the analysis slightly underestimated transit trips and transit trips factor into the transit delay analysis too.

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<sup>4</sup> San Francisco Planning Department, *Transportation Impact Analysis Guidelines for Environmental Review*, Updated October 2019, Appendix F: Travel Demand, <https://sfplanning.org/project/transportation-impact-analysis-guidelines-environmental-review-update#impact-analysis-guidelines>, accessed July 24, 2020.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> City and County of San Francisco, *Transportation Demand Management Technical Justification*, updated January 2018, [http://default.sfplanning.org/transportation/tadm/TDM\\_Technical\\_Justification\\_update2018.pdf](http://default.sfplanning.org/transportation/tadm/TDM_Technical_Justification_update2018.pdf), page 33. Accessed July 24, 2020.

<sup>7</sup> City and County of San Francisco, *Transportation Demand Management Technical Justification*, updated January 2018, [http://default.sfplanning.org/transportation/tadm/TDM\\_Technical\\_Justification\\_update2018.pdf](http://default.sfplanning.org/transportation/tadm/TDM_Technical_Justification_update2018.pdf), page 11. Accessed July 24, 2020.

Construction period air quality and noise impacts are based on the scale of the project and location of nearby sensitive receptors. As a result, the SEIR provides a conservative, worst-case assessment of potential environmental effects from the construction of the new housing units regardless of whether those units are affordable or market rate. Refer to Response 7 below, which explains why noise, air quality, and transportation impacts would remain regardless of the affordable housing percentage.

The appellant is correct that the SEIR notes “up to 50 percent” of the units would be designated affordable; however, as explained below, the project’s affordable housing share has now been confirmed to be 50 percent. The SEIR specifies on p. 2-13 that the units would be designated affordable to persons earning between 55 and 120 percent of the area median income. The RTC document on p. 5-11 further updates the project description to state that as part of the project’s 50 percent affordable housing element, 150 of the units would be deed-restricted to occupancy by educator households with an average income of 100 percent of the area median income. The development agreement that the Commission recommended for approval by the Board of Supervisors would obligate the developer to cause 50 percent of the units constructed on the project site to be affordable.<sup>8</sup>

**Response 3: Cumulative impacts on noise, air quality, transit delay, and pedestrian and bicycle safety are adequately identified in the SEIR. The SEIR adequately and accurately identifies all feasible mitigation measures to reduce the project’s transportation, noise, and air quality impacts.**

The appellant contends that the SEIR fails to identify and mitigate significant impacts related to cumulative impacts on noise, air quality, transit delay, pedestrian and bicycle safety from construction of the project and adjacent City College construction projects (e.g., Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math [STEAM] building and Diego Rivera Theater, both of which would be built on City College property on the Balboa Reservoir “east basin,” which is between the project site and Frida Kahlo Way). The appellant argues that the cumulative impacts of the proposed project combined with those of the City College Facilities Master Plan (facilities master plan) projects are ignored and would exacerbate the already identified significant and unavoidable impacts in the SEIR.

The cumulative impact analysis in the SEIR is consistent with the requirements of CEQA and the state CEQA Guidelines. CEQA Guidelines section 15355 defines cumulative impacts as “two or more individual effects which, when considered together are considerable or which compound or increase other environmental impacts. (a) The individual effects may be changes resulting from a single project or a number of separate projects. (b) The cumulative impact from several projects is the change in the environment which results from the incremental impact of the project when added to other closely related past, present and reasonably foreseeable future projects.”

Potential cumulative impacts of the City College east basin facilities master plan projects are considered in the SEIR, and the approach to the analysis is described on SEIR pp. 3.A-10 and 3.A-14.<sup>9</sup> Contrary to the appellant’s

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<sup>8</sup> City and County of San Francisco and Reservoir Community Partners, LLC, *Balboa Reservoir Draft Development Agreement, Exhibit D – Affordable Housing Program*. This document is found by searching Board of Supervisors File No. 200423 here: <https://sfgov.legistar.com/Legislation.aspx> and selecting document 17.

<sup>9</sup> The Planning Department is aware that the City College Board of Trustees at its August 6, 2020, hearing will be considering terms to include in a future memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the project sponsor. A draft MOU prepared by City College staff represents internal staff discussions. The project sponsor has not agreed to or committed to MOU terms that exceed the physical improvements that have been specifically identified in the final SEIR. Consequently, any such potential improvements that may go beyond those identified in the final SEIR could not have been known at time of the Planning Commission certification of the final SEIR, are considered speculative at this time, and are not addressed further herein.

assertion, the RTC document acknowledges the passage of the City College bond measure in March 2020 (RTC p. 4.G-4). RTC Response CU-1: Cumulative Analysis describes the range of projects that could be funded by the bond, including the STEAM building and fine and visual arts and performing arts facilities (RTC p. 4.G-4).

The RTC document thoroughly responds to the appellant's points regarding cumulative construction impacts on noise, air quality, transit delay, and pedestrian and bicycle safety. The following summarizes where each topic is analyzed in the SEIR, the mitigation measures identified to reduce those impacts, and further discussed in the RTC document:

- Cumulative construction-related transportation impacts are discussed under Impact C-TR-1 starting on SEIR p. 3.B-91. As stated on SEIR p. 3.B-91 "construction of the proposed project or variant may overlap with construction of other cumulative development and transportation infrastructure projects, including new development and/or modernization of existing buildings as part of the City College Facilities Master Plan..." The SEIR explains that as part of the construction permitting process, development projects are required to work with various City departments to develop detailed and coordinated construction logistics and contractor parking plans, as applicable, that would address construction vehicle routing, traffic control, transit movement, pedestrian movement, and bicycle movement adjacent to the construction area. The SEIR concludes that through compliance with the City's requirements and adherence to the blue book regulations, construction-related transportation impacts would be less than significant and no mitigation measures are required.
- Cumulative transit impacts are discussed under Impacts C-TR-4 to C-TR-6b on SEIR pp. 3.B-92 to 3.B-102. As discussed on SEIR p. 3.B-95, the transit delay contribution from the project, City College facilities master plan projects, and other cumulative development is expected to cumulatively increase transit delay and could exceed the threshold of significance for individual Muni routes. The SEIR analysis identifies a significant impact related to cumulative transit delay and contains Mitigation Measure M-C-TR-4 (Implement Measures to Reduce Transit Delay) requiring the project sponsor to fund several SFMTA projects in the project vicinity to reduce transit delay. The SEIR concludes that even with implementation of Mitigation Measure M-C-TR-4, the impact would be significant and unavoidable, given the uncertainty of SFMTA approval of the identified capital improvement measures in the future. The SEIR identifies a significant impact related to cumulative secondary effects on people bicycling and public transit delay due to potential conflicts associated with the existing off-site freight loading activities on Lee Avenue between Ocean Avenue and the project site that are associated with Whole Foods and other Ocean Avenue businesses. No feasible mitigation measures are identified, given the uncertainty regarding the ability of Whole Foods and other businesses to manage their loading activities to avoid pedestrian and bicycle conflicts and potential transit delay; thus, the SEIR concludes that cumulative impacts would be significant and unavoidable.
- Cumulative construction-related noise impacts are discussed under Impact C-NO-1 starting on SEIR p. 3.C-38. As explained on RTC p. 4.G-6, the analysis is conservative in that it considers the worst-case cumulative noise scenario in which the facilities master plan project closest to Archbishop Riordan High School (the East Basin Parking Structure) is constructed at the same time that noise-generating construction is occurring at the project site. The SEIR analysis identifies a significant impact related to cumulative noise impacts on sensitive receptors and identifies Mitigation Measure M-NO-1

(Construction Noise Control Measures). The SEIR concludes that even with implementation of Mitigation Measure M-NO-1, the impact would be significant and unavoidable.

- Cumulative operational noise impacts related to traffic increases of the project in combination with cumulative projects are discussed under Impact C-NO-2 on SEIR p. 3.C-40. The SEIR analysis concluded that the proposed project, in combination with the City College facilities master plan projects could result in significant cumulative substantial permanent increase in ambient noise levels; however, the proposed project's contribution would not be cumulatively considerable and the impact would be less than significant. No mitigation measures are identified for operational noise impacts related to increases in traffic because the cumulative impact is less than significant.
- Cumulative mechanical equipment noise impacts of the project in combination with cumulative projects, including the City College facilities master plan projects, are discussed under Impact C-NO-3 on SEIR p. 3.C-41. The SEIR analysis concludes that the proposed project in combination with the City College facilities master plan projects and other nearby projects could result in a significant cumulative permanent noise impact related to mechanical equipment; however, the proposed project's contribution would not be cumulatively considerable with the implementation of Mitigation Measure M-NO-3 (Fixed Mechanical Equipment Noise Controls) and the impact would be less than significant with mitigation.
- Cumulative construction-related air quality impacts are discussed under Impact C-AQ-2 starting on SEIR p. 3.D-91. As explained on RTC pp. 4.G-5 to 4.G-6, the "project-level health risk assessment identified sensitive receptors that are close to where the new City College facilities master plan projects might be located, and acknowledges the possibility that these projects could generate construction-related toxic air contaminant emissions *at the same time as the proposed project* (emphasis added)." The SEIR analysis identifies a significant impact related to cumulative health risk on offsite and onsite sensitive receptors with respect to increased cancer risk and identifies Mitigation Measures M-AQ-2a (Construction Emissions Minimization), M-AQ-4a (Diesel Backup Generator Specifications), and M-AQ-4b (Install MERV 13 Filters at the Daycare Facility). The SEIR concludes that even with implementation of Mitigation Measures M-AQ-2a, M-AQ-4a, and M-AQ-4b, such impacts would be significant and unavoidable, because such mitigation doesn't reduce air pollutants to below thresholds of significance.
- As discussed on SEIR pp. 3.A-3 and 3.B-31, the proposed project meets the Public Resources Code section 21099(d) criteria as a residential, mixed-use infill project in a transit priority area; therefore, parking, and/or its displacement, is not considered a significant impact on the environment pursuant to CEQA. Refer to Response 4 below regarding how indirect parking effects are addressed in the SEIR and RTC document.

In conclusion, the SEIR's cumulative analysis appropriately considers the growth and development information available for City College, including the future buildings on the east basin and passage of the March 2020 bond measure. As explained in RTC Response CEQA-3, Administrative Record (RTC p. 4.A-31), the planning department staff engaged in communications with City College staff regarding the cumulative projects.

Although not a concern raised by the appellant, department staff acknowledges that City College, as a separate lead agency, has conducted separate CEQA analysis for its facilities master plan projects, including its 2004 facilities master plan EIR and a recent addendum to that EIR. Subsequent to the publication of the Balboa

Reservoir RTC document on April 29, 2020, the San Francisco Community College District filed a Notice of Determination on June 29, 2020 for Addendum No. 2 to the City College of San Francisco 2004 Facilities Master Plan EIR. Addendum No. 2 (the addendum) addressed proposed changes to the projects analyzed in the 2004 facilities master plan EIR, which involved revisions to the Arts Center (now known as the Diego Rivera Theater), the Child Development Center (now known as the Childcare Center), and the Advanced Technology Learning Center and Administration Building (together now known as the STEAM Building).<sup>10</sup> The projects analyzed in the addendum are consistent with the facilities master plan projects considered in the SEIR's cumulative analysis. For example, the facilities master plan Childcare Center is included as a sensitive receptor in the SEIR's air quality analysis. The SEIR's noise analysis is conservative in that it considers the worst-case scenario at sensitive receptor locations nearest to the project site where the maximum noise levels from construction equipment would occur. The SEIR analyzes cumulative noise impacts from construction of the potential east basin parking garage on a sensitive receptor 80 feet away (Archbishop Riordan High School), whereas the Diego Rivera Theater and STEAM Building would be approximately 300 feet from that receptor. Therefore, noise impacts of Diego Rivera Theater and STEAM Building on Archbishop Riordan High School would be less than that identified in the SEIR.

The appellant does not identify any additional feasible mitigation measures to reduce cumulative impacts beyond those identified in the SEIR. For the reasons stated above in the SEIR and RTC document, including but not limited to the responses identified above, the final SEIR meets the standards of adequacy of an EIR, as set forth in CEQA Guidelines Section 15151.

**Response 4: The SEIR adequately and accurately analyzes secondary impacts related to parking.**

The appellant contends that the SEIR does not take into consideration (1) that expansion of the City College campus would increase student enrollment and require more student parking, and (2) VMT and air quality impacts due to cumulative parking shortage.

The SEIR discloses that the project would displace the existing parking that currently occupies the project site, some of which is used as overflow parking by City College students, faculty, and staff on SEIR p. 2-7. It should also be noted that the development agreement recommended for approval by the Planning Commission requires the project sponsor to replace a portion of the existing parking spaces used as overflow parking by City College such that some overflow parking would remain available to students, faculty and staff. The SEIR appropriately evaluates impacts to public services, including secondary impacts related to the loss of City College parking, as discussed in Impact PS-1 on SEIR Appendix B, pp. B-85 to B-91. RTC Response PS-2 (beginning on p. 4.H-59) thoroughly addresses the appellant's concerns regarding indirect or secondary effects due to the loss of parking. RTC Response TR-7: Parking (beginning on p. 4.C-61) addresses concerns regarding parking supply and utilization for informational purposes.

As noted on SEIR Appendix B p. B-87, a parking loss or deficit in and of itself does not result in direct changes to the environment. In 2013, Governor Brown signed California SB 743, which amended the CEQA statute itself with respect to parking, among other things. Specifically, the bill stated that, effective January 1, 2014, parking (and aesthetics) shall not be considered significant impacts on the environment for residential, mixed-used residential, or employment center projects on an infill site within a transit priority area, as defined in CEQA. In 2018, the Office of Planning and Research (OPR) developed a *Technical Advisory on Evaluating Transportation*

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<sup>10</sup> City College of San Francisco, *Addendum No. 2 to the City College of San Francisco 2004 Facilities Master Plan EIR*, May 2020; and Notice of Determination filed with the California Office of Planning and Research, SCH No. 2003102086 on June 25, 2020.

*Impacts in CEQA* (technical advisory), which contains OPR's technical recommendations regarding a project's effects on vehicle travel. The technical advisory states that projects that remove off-street parking spaces would not likely lead to a substantial or measurable increase in vehicle travel, and therefore generally should not require an induced travel analysis.<sup>11</sup> As described in Response 2 above, the department issued the 2019 TIA Guidelines, which included guidance regarding methodology and impact analysis related to a suite of transportation topics including VMT and induced automobile travel. And, as also noted in Response 2, less parking leads to less vehicle travel, other things being equal. The 2019 TIA Guidelines documents existing research on travel behavior that supports and furthers substantial evidence in OPR's technical advisory document regarding the removal of off-street parking not requiring additional induced travel analysis.<sup>12</sup> The department adequately assessed transportation impacts in accordance with the methodology presented in the 2019 TIA Guidelines.

RTC Response PS-2: Public Services and Secondary Impacts, explains that CEQA Guidelines Appendix G question relates to public services, and that per CEQA Guidelines section 15358(b), effects under CEQA must be related to a physical change. As further stated in RTC Response PS-2, the CEQA Guidelines Appendix G question for public services, with respect to educational facilities, asks whether the project would "result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives for ... schools...." RTC Response PS-2 explains in detail, on p. 4.H-61, that the reasoning with respect to the potential effect of the removal of the surface parking lot and the Appendix G question as it relates to public services is as follows:

"a) Would the loss of the existing use of the project site for City College parking conflict with one or more performance objectives established by City College?

b) If a) is yes, would that require the need for new or physically altered City College facilities, such as TDM or replacement parking?

c) If b) is yes, would the construction or operation of such new or physically altered City facilities, such as TDM or replacement parking, result in any adverse physical effects? Examples include an increase in VMT, increased emissions of criteria pollutants and/or toxic air contaminants, increased noise, or other impacts.

Only if questions a), b), and c) were all answered in the affirmative would a significant impact result under CEQA."

RTC Response PS-2 explains that with regard to question a), "As discussed on draft SEIR Appendix B, p. B-90, the City College sustainability plan has a performance objective to reduce automobile trips, with which the removal of parking at the project site would not conflict. City College does not have performance objectives or other standards related to the provision of parking, except insofar as it seeks to reduce automobile trips, which would

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<sup>11</sup> California Office of Planning and Research, *Technical Advisory on Evaluating Transportation Impacts in CEQA*, December 18, 2018, p. 21, [http://opr.ca.gov/docs/20190122-743\\_Technical\\_Advisory.pdf](http://opr.ca.gov/docs/20190122-743_Technical_Advisory.pdf), accessed July 24, 2020.

<sup>12</sup> San Francisco Planning Department, *Transportation Impact Analysis Guidelines for Environmental Review*, Updated October 2019, Appendix L: Vehicle Miles Traveled/Induced Automobile Travel, <https://sfplanning.org/project/transportation-impact-analysis-guidelines-environmental-review-update#impact-analysis-guidelines>, accessed July 24, 2020.

serve to decrease parking use.” It is the foregoing analysis that the SEIR relies upon to determine that effects on City College resulting from the loss of parking on the project site would result in a less-than-significant impact.

Although the answer to question a) is no, the department provided additional discussion regarding questions b) and c) for informational purposes. Indirect or secondary effects due to the loss of parking and City College’s performance objective to reduce automobile trips are appropriately analyzed on SEIR Appendix B, p. B-90. The SEIR states that the hypothetical shortfall in parking supply “would cause some drivers to shift to another mode of travel,” among other things such as rearranging travel or parking elsewhere. As stated above in Response 2, the City’s *Transportation Demand Management Technical Justification* explains that evidence supports a direct connection between a reduction in parking and a reduction in vehicle travel. Therefore, the removal of parking would likely cause some drivers to shift to another mode of travel; thus, the information in the SEIR regarding this shift is based on substantial evidence. As explained in RTC Response PS-2, the *Transportation Demand Management Technical Justification* references research that has been used to confirm that the availability of parking increases private car ownership and vehicle travel and that parking supply can undermine incentives to use transit and travel by other modes.<sup>13</sup> Additionally, the technical justification document summarizes research conducted in San Francisco that found that reductions in off-street vehicular parking for office, residential, and retail developments reduce the overall automobile mode share associated with those developments, relative to projects with the same land uses in similar context that provide more off-street vehicular parking.

The appellant claims that the facilities master plan will significantly increase City College enrollment, and as a result, parking demand would increase. RTC Response PS-2 includes for informational purposes a summary of past and future enrollment projections. The data reviewed shows that the projections vary, and as noted in RTC Response PS-2, neither California Community Colleges nor City College uses parking availability as a variable for projecting future enrollment or as an enrollment strategy (p. 4.H-61).

The appellant provides no new information to substantiate the claim that secondary impacts related to parking would result in significant impacts. For the reasons stated above in the SEIR and RTC document, including but not limited to the responses identified above, the final SEIR meets the standards of adequacy of an EIR, as set forth in CEQA Guidelines Section 15151.

**Response 5: The SEIR adequately and accurately analyzes the project’s land use impacts.**

The appellant contends that the SEIR fails to identify and mitigate significant impacts associated with land use, further stating that the project is inconsistent with two of San Francisco’s priority policies; specifically priority policy 2 (conservation and protection of existing housing and neighborhood character to preserve the cultural and economic diversity of neighborhoods) and priority policy 8 (protection of parks and open space and their access to sunlight and vistas).<sup>14</sup>

The SEIR adequately and accurately analyzes the project’s land use impacts. The potential impacts of the project with regard to land use are analyzed under Topic E.1 of the initial study, on SEIR Appendix B, pp. B-12 to B-15. Under CEQA, a project would result in a significant land use impact if it (1) would physically divide an established community, or (2) would cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with any land

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<sup>13</sup> City and County of San Francisco, *Transportation Demand Management Technical Justification*, updated January 2018, [http://default.sfplanning.org/transportation/tdm/TDM\\_Technical\\_Justification\\_update2018.pdf](http://default.sfplanning.org/transportation/tdm/TDM_Technical_Justification_update2018.pdf), accessed July 24, 2020.

<sup>14</sup> The appellant incorrectly lists policy number 7 in the appeal letter.

use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect. As discussed on p. B-14 of SEIR Appendix B, the proposed project would not divide an established community; instead the project would add connections through the community by extending pedestrian and bicycle facilities through the project site, and extending Lee Avenue to connect to the proposed interior streets.

Compatibility with existing zoning and plans and land use impacts are analyzed in SEIR Appendix B pp. B-2 to B-7 and pp. B-12 to B-15. CEQA Guidelines section 15125(d) requires an EIR to “discuss any inconsistencies between the proposed project and applicable general plans, specific plans, and regional plans.” This consideration of plan inconsistency is part of the discussion of the project’s environmental setting, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15125(d). As discussed on SEIR Appendix B, pp. B-3 and B-14, a conflict between a proposed project and plans, policies, and regulations do not, in and of itself, indicate a significant effect on the environment within the context of CEQA. CEQA Guidelines section 15382 defines a significant effect on the environment as “a substantial or potentially adverse change in the physical conditions within the area affected by the project, including land, air, water, minerals, flora, fauna, ambient noise, and objects of historic or aesthetic significance.” Therefore, for a project to result in a significant impact under CEQA with respect to a conflict with the general plan or other policies, the project must be inconsistent or otherwise conflict with a plan or policy adopted for the purpose of mitigating an environmental effect *and* result in a physical environmental effect related to the identified policy conflict. As stated in RTC Response PP-1 (p. 4.H-10), to the extent that such physical environmental impacts may result from such conflicts, the SEIR discloses and analyzes the physical impacts under the relevant resource topic.

RTC Response PP-1 (p. 4.H-11) explains that changes to neighborhood character are not considered significant environmental effects under CEQA unless the changes would result in a substantial adverse physical change in the environment. That response explains that physical environmental effects related to building height, such as wind and shadow, are discussed in the SEIR Appendix B, Sections E.10 and E.11, respectively. As stated on SEIR Appendix B p. B-12, aesthetic impacts of residential or mixed-use residential project on an infill site in a transit priority area shall not be considered significant impacts on the environment, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 21099; therefore, the environmental review does not consider aesthetics in determining the significance of a project’s impacts under CEQA. RTC Response PP-1 acknowledges that the Balboa Park Station Area Plan includes language accompanying Policy 6.4.1 stating that “new development should add to the district’s character, create a human scale public realm, and fit within the city’s traditional fabric.” Consistency with land use policies may be evaluated by the Board of Supervisors in its deliberations on the project.

The potential shadow impacts of the project are analyzed under Topic E.11 of the initial study, in SEIR Appendix B, pp. B-45 to B-51. As stated on SEIR Appendix B, p. B-46, the significance of shadow impacts is evaluated based on whether a project would “create shadow that substantially and adversely affects the use and enjoyment of publicly accessible open spaces.” The analysis concludes that the proposed project would not substantially affect the use of Unity Plaza (approximately 200 feet from the project site’s southeastern border), and the shadow impact would be considered less than significant (SEIR Appendix B, p. B-50). No other publicly accessible open spaces would be shaded by the project, and project shadow would not reach any City parks.

The SEIR has not failed to analyze and disclose significant environmental impacts in regards to land use. The appellant has provided no information to demonstrate that the proposed project is inconsistent with any priority policy, or that such an inconsistency would result in significant environmental effects not already disclosed and evaluated in the SEIR. For the reasons stated above in the SEIR and RTC document, including but not limited to



the responses identified above, the final SEIR meets the standards of adequacy of an EIR, as set forth in CEQA Guidelines Section 15151.

**Response 6: The SEIR adequately and accurately analyzes the project's construction and operational noise impacts on sensitive receptors.**

The appellant contends that the SEIR fails to identify and mitigate significant impacts related to construction and operational noise impacts on children participating in child behavior observation classes in the City College Multi-Use Building and other childcare facilities and schools. The appellant also states that the SEIR erroneously identifies the time of least noise sensitivity as between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m., stating that these are during City College class times and childcare facility operations.

Construction noise impacts are evaluated under Impact NO-1 on SEIR pp. 3.C-23 to 3.C-31. Operational noise impacts are evaluated under Impact NO-3 on SEIR pp. 3.C-33 to 3.C-38 and Impact NO-4 on SEIR pp. 3.C-36 to 3.C-38. The appellant incorrectly asserts that the SEIR does not disclose and mitigate the project's impact. The department fully responded to comments on the draft SEIR regarding children attending child behavior observation classes in the Multi-Use Building, and schools in RTC Response NO-1: Noise Baseline (pp. 4.D-2 to 4.D-5), RTC Response NO-3: Construction Noise Impacts (pp. 4.D-11 to 4.D-17), RTC Response NO-5: Operational Noise (pp. 4.D-20), and RTC Response NO-6: Noise Mitigation Measure (pp. 4.D-21 to 4.D-23).

As described on SEIR p. 3.C-25 and in RTC Response NO-1: Noise Baseline, the construction noise analysis is based on the closest sensitive receptors to the project site and include residences along Plymouth Avenue, San Ramon Way, and 1100-1150 Ocean Avenue, and Archbishop Riordan High School. As stated in RTC Response NO-1 (RTC p. 4.D-3), the "predicted construction-related noise levels at sensitive receptors are evaluated to determine whether the project would result in a (1) an increase in sustained noise levels that are 10 dBA above the ambient background noise levels over a substantial period of time, or (2) noise levels above the Federal Transit Administration's limit of 90 dBA. The analysis and disclosure of maximum potential project-specific increases over existing ambient environments (i.e., a 'worst-case' assessment) follows standard methodology for the evaluation of noise impacts."

RTC Response NO-1 explains that construction-related noise levels are measured at the nearest sensitive receptor locations to identify the maximum combined noise impacts from construction equipment. No childcare facilities were included in the impact table because they are substantially more distant than the nearest sensitive receptors shown in Table 3.C-8 of the SEIR (p. 3.C-27). Tables RTC-5 and RTC-6 provide for informational purposes construction-related noise levels at other childcare locations such as Mighty Bambinis Childcare and the future City College daycare at Judson Avenue and Frida Kahlo Way (see RTC pp. 4.D-4 to 4.D-4). As shown in Tables RTC-5 and RTC-6, the resultant construction noise levels at childcare receptors more distant from the project site would not exceed the FTA's 90 dBA daytime standard or the "Ambient + 10 dBA" standard.

The appellant asserts that the hours between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. are not times of least noise sensitivity due to classes held at City College and childcare facilities in operation. As explained in RTC Response NO-3 on p. 4.D-12, City College classes are not defined as noise-sensitive receptors based on the Governor's Office of Planning and Research's *General Plan Guidelines 2017*. The child behavior observation classes are held daily inside of the Multi-Use Building for three-hour durations and are distinct from a traditional school or daycare facility. The RTC document conservatively provides the potential noise impacts at the exterior of the Multi-Use Building nonetheless.

As explained in RTC Response NO-3, “construction noise heard inside the building would be further attenuated by the building which is of recent construction”. Additionally, Mitigation Measure M-NO-1: Construction Noise Control Measures would further reduce the construction noise impact heard inside the building at this receptor. Nevertheless, as stated on SEIR p. 3.C-31, the overall construction noise impact of the proposed project is significant and unavoidable with mitigation.” The SEIR appropriately analyzes construction impacts on sensitive receptors and concluded that impacts would be significant and unavoidable with mitigation.

Operational noise impacts from fixed mechanical equipment are analyzed in the SEIR under Impact NO-3, pp. 3.C-33 to 3.C-38. The SEIR identifies Mitigation Measure M-NO-3 (Fixed Mechanical Equipment Noise Controls) to reduce potentially significant operational noise impacts to a less-than-significant-level. Impact NO-4 presents the operational traffic analysis associated with implementation of the proposed project. The SEIR concludes on p. 3.C-41 that there would be no substantial traffic noise increase from the project along any roadways adjacent to sensitive land uses, and impacts would be less than significant.

The appellant provides new information to support the assertions that the SEIR fails to identify and mitigate significant noise impacts related to sensitive receptors in the vicinity of the site. For the reasons stated above in the SEIR and RTC document, including but not limited to the responses identified above, the final SEIR meets the standards of adequacy of an EIR, as set forth in CEQA Guidelines Section 15151.

**Response 7: The SEIR adequately evaluates a reasonable range of feasible alternatives.**

The appellant contends that the SEIR fails to include a range of feasible alternatives, and that there is no supporting evidence that a 100 percent affordable project is infeasible. The appellant argues that a 100 percent affordable City-owned project with fewer than 1,100 units and no market-rate units is an alternative that should be given consideration. The appellant specifically states that a smaller project alternative with roughly the same amount of affordable housing and no market-rate housing would have reduced transit delay, air quality, and noise impacts.

The SEIR alternatives analysis is consistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15126.6. Pursuant CEQA Guidelines section 15126.6(a), an EIR is required to set forth alternatives necessary to permit a reasoned choice and shall be limited to alternatives that would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant physical effects of the project on the environment and that would meet most of the project sponsor’s basic objectives.

An EIR need not consider every conceivable alternative to a project but instead “must consider a reasonable range of potentially feasible alternatives that will foster informed decision making and public participation.” (CEQA Guidelines section 15126.6(a).) That is, an EIR does not have to identify and analyze alternatives that would not meet most of the project sponsor’s basic objectives, nor does it have to discuss every possible variant or permutation of alternatives, or alternatives that do not further reduce or eliminate significant environmental impacts of the project. (*Id.*) Under the “rule of reason” governing the selection of the range of alternatives, the EIR is required “to set forth only those alternatives necessary to permit a reasoned choice.” (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(f).) CEQA generally describes “feasible” to mean the ability to be accomplished in a successful manner within a reasonable period of time, taking into account economic, environmental, social, technological, and legal factors. Site suitability, economic viability, availability of infrastructure, General Plan consistency, other plans or regulatory limitations, jurisdictional boundaries, and the ability of the proponent to attain site control

may also be taken into consideration when assessing the feasibility of alternatives (CEQA Guidelines section 15126.6(f)(1)).

The analysis presented in Chapter 6 of the SEIR represents a reasonable range of alternatives and complies with the CEQA Guidelines. The main purpose of presenting a range of alternatives to a proposed project is to focus on alternatives that are capable of reducing or eliminating any significant environmental effects of the proposed project identified in an EIR (CEQA Guidelines section 15126.6(b)), not to focus on other issues such as potential socioeconomic effects. The SEIR identifies and analyzes four alternatives to the project: (1) the CEQA-required No Project Alternative; (2) the Reduced Density Alternative of 800 units; (3) the San Ramon Way Passenger Vehicle Access; and (4) the Six-Year Construction Schedule Alternative. The alternatives selection process consisted of several steps, consistent with CEQA, and described in the SEIR on pp. 6-3 to 6-7 as follows:

- The first step is to use the project objectives in the identification, selection, and evaluation of the alternatives;
- The second step presents a summary of all the significant and unavoidable environmental impacts that are identified in SEIR Chapter 3, which consist of secondary operational loading impacts, transit delay impacts, and noise and air quality impacts during construction (SEIR pp. 6-3 to 6-5);
- The third step focuses on strategies to address the significant and unavoidable impacts:
  - Alternative Strategy to Address Secondary Loading Impacts (SEIR p. 6-5 to 6-6)
  - Alternative Strategy to Address Transit Delay Impacts (SEIR p. 6-6 to 6-7)
  - Alternative Strategy to Address Construction-Related Impacts (SEIR p. 6-7)
- The strategies to address the significant and unavoidable impacts are screened for their feasibility and ability to meet most of the project objectives

RTC Response AL-1: Range of Project Alternatives (pp. 4.F-12 to 4.F-17) contains a detailed analysis of why the SEIR need not evaluate a 100 percent affordable housing alternative or a smaller project with the same number of affordable housing units. The following summarizes the RTC document's findings in this regard. As described on SEIR p. 6-59 and repeated in RTC Response AL-1, a 100 percent affordable housing project would be a fundamentally different project. In addition, housing ownership issues are not, on their own, related to the physical environment that is the subject of CEQA review. Among the project objectives is "[b]uild a mixed income community with a high percentage of affordable units to provide housing options for household at a range of income levels" and "[r]eplace the reservoir's abandoned infrastructure with new infrastructure improvements." As described in the CEQA findings adopted by the Planning Commission, the financial structure for the project assumes that the market-rate units, combined with various state funding sources, would finance the required new infrastructure improvements and two-thirds of the affordable units, with the City subsidizing one-third of the affordable units.

The Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development (MOHCD) provided the following information regarding funding of affordable housing:

The affordable housing will be funded using a typical mixture of sources such as Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, state grants, and “gap funding” provided by the developer and the City. The developer requirement for on-site affordable housing per the Planning Code would otherwise be 18 percent. But for this project, the developer is responsible for funding the “gap” amount for 33 percent affordable units (363 units) and the City will provide “gap” funding for 17 percent affordable units (187 units). This funding collaboration was stipulated in the City’s request for proposals for the Balboa Reservoir and ensures that the SFPUC will receive fair market value for the sale of their land based on a basis of 33 percent affordability.

City funding will come through MOHCD in the same way that the City funds the “gap” on affordable developments throughout the City. MOHCD will use funding acquired through the 2019 affordable housing bond and the affordable housing trust fund. The developer will fund their “gap” amount using funds generated from the market rate housing component of the project. The 150 educator units will be funded solely by the developer using equity and conventional debt, with no City funding or external subsidy.

For the same reasons explained in RTC Response AL-1 (pp. 4.F-16 to 4.F-17), a 100 percent affordable project (including housing for educators), or a reduced density project as explained in RTC Response AL-4: Alternative B, Reduced Density Alternative (pp. 4.F-24 to 4.F-28), would not reduce the significant and unavoidable transportation, noise, and air quality impacts identified in the SEIR. As explained in Response 2 above, based on the City’s transportation analysis methodology, affordable housing does not have different impacts (e.g., mode splits) than market-rate housing. Response 2 explains that affordable housing may generate slightly fewer vehicle trips; however, it is not possible to precisely quantify the potential difference. A project at a smaller scale may lead to less vehicular travel. However, for the same reasons explained on RTC p. 4.F-27 to 4.F-27, the impacts under such a scenario would likely remain significant and unavoidable for the following reasons:

- The construction air quality and noise impacts would occur regardless of the scale of the project or the income levels of its future residents, as these impacts are associated with demolition of the existing reservoir berms and asphalt paving, grading, excavation, and/or building construction activities and proximity to sensitive receptors. As explained on RTC p. 4.F-26, regardless of the number of units, construction would require the initial phase to prepare the project site. The construction equipment and use characteristics would not change and the air quality and noise impacts would still occur (discussed on SEIR pp. 6-21 to 6-24).
- Cumulative impacts related to public transit delay are based on the addition of vehicle and transit trips generated by the proposed project *in combination with the City College facilities master plan projects and other cumulative development*. Due to the uncertainty surrounding the development at City College’s Ocean Campus and the uncertainty of SFMTA approval of other measures under its jurisdiction, cumulative transit delay impacts would be significant and unavoidable. The impacts to transit delay would occur irrespective of potential changes in travel demand or patterns from affordable housing.
- The cumulative impact to passenger and freight loading (Impact C-TR-6b, discussed on SEIR pp. 3.B-101 to 3.B-102) is determined based on the impact to existing loading zones along Lee Avenue between Ocean Avenue and the project site. Under all build alternatives or a 100 percent affordable projects, the Lee Avenue extension would still occur, and impacts to loading on Lee Avenue would occur irrespective of

potential changes to travel demand or patterns from affordable housing. Thus, the impact conclusion would be significant and unavoidable.

As explained in RTC Response AL-1 and RTC Response AL-4, a 100 percent affordable project or a reduced density alternative would neither meet the basic objectives of the proposed project nor avoid or substantially lessen significant effects of the proposed project. Per CEQA Guidelines section 15126.6(b) and (e), the SEIR evaluates the No Project Alternative, and three other alternatives with the intention of reducing the environmental impacts of the proposed project while still meeting most of the project objectives.

**Response 8: The SEIR is adequate and complete, and complies with CEQA, the CEQA Guidelines, and chapter 31 of the San Francisco Administrative Code. The COVID-19 pandemic and shelter-in-place order does not result in new significant environmental effects not previously disclosed, would not change the SEIR's conclusions, and does not require recirculation.**

Citing CEQA Guidelines section 15088.5, the appellant contends that the SEIR should have been recirculated due to changed circumstances and new information as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and shelter-in-place order. The appellant states that the RTC document ignores the changed circumstances such as decrease in public transit availability and usage, increase in telecommuting, reduction in hiring, and increase in rental housing vacancy rates. The appellant claims that by releasing the RTC document, the department ignores the changed circumstances and the analysis does not take these changes into account.

The SEIR is adequate, complete, and complies with CEQA, the CEQA Guidelines, and chapter 31 of the administrative code. Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15088.5, new information added to an EIR is not "significant" unless the EIR is changed in a way that deprives the public of a meaningful opportunity to comment upon a substantial adverse effect of the project or a feasible way to mitigate or avoid such an effect. Significant new information requiring recirculation include disclosure showing that:

- (1) a new significant environmental impact would result from the project or from a new mitigation proposed to be implemented;
- (2) a substantial increase in the severity of an environmental impact would result unless mitigation measures are adopted that reduce the impact to a level of significance;
- (3) a feasible project alternative or mitigation measure considerably different from others previously analyzed would clearly lessen the environmental impacts of the project, but the project's proponents decline to adopt it;
- (4) the draft EIR is so fundamentally and basically inadequate and conclusory in nature that meaningful public review and comment were precluded (CEQA Guidelines section 15088.5(a)(1)-(4)).

The SEIR does not require recirculation because none of the standards articulated in CEQA Guidelines section 15088.5(a)(1)-(4) are met. Furthermore, the appellant has provided no evidence demonstrating how the changed circumstances would result in new significant environmental impacts or an increase in severity of impact.

The SEIR describes the conditions at the time the Notice of Preparation was published in October 2018, in accordance with CEQA Guidelines section 15125. CEQA Guidelines section 15144 acknowledges that drafting an

EIR involves some degree of forecasting and “[w]hile foreseeing the unforeseeable is not possible, an agency must use its best efforts to find out and disclose all that is reasonably can.” The analysis in the SEIR reflects a reasonable, good faith effort by the department and its outside experts and is based on substantial evidence consisting of recent data and research of travel behavior. The recent research trends are consistent with decades of data of how people travel in cities.

In reviewing for changed circumstances, CEQA does not require a review of the nature, scope, or extent of the changed circumstances, but rather on whether the changed circumstances will lead to new significant environmental impacts not previously considered. In the case of the proposed project, although COVID-19 has changed certain aspects of our daily lives, COVID-19 does not alter the environmental impact of the proposed project. Further, the proposed project would not be operational before 2023, and because long-term effects of the pandemic on the transportation system are unknown at this time, it would be unreasonable to speculate how travel behavior will change in the future. Thus, COVID-19 is not a changed circumstance that would necessitate EIR recirculation.

Changes in hiring practices or housing vacancy rates are not considered environmental impacts under CEQA unless there would be a physical impact on the environment resulting from such effects, or if such effects result in the need for the construction of new or physically altered facilities that would result in significant physical environmental impacts. There is no evidence that speculative long-term changes related to COVID-19 would lead to adverse physical effects or necessitate construction of new or altered facilities leading to significant effects.

The SEIR and RTC satisfy the best efforts requirement of CEQA and present the best available information at the time. For the reasons stated above in the SEIR and RTC document, including but not limited to the responses identified above, the final SEIR meets the standards of adequacy of an EIR, as set forth in CEQA Guidelines Section 15151.

**Response 9: CEQA procedures have been followed appropriately, and the CEQA Findings and Statement of Overriding Considerations are outside the scope of this appeal.**

The appellant contends that the findings made in support of the SEIR certification in Planning Commission Motion M-20730, and the CEQA findings in Motion M-20731, are inadequate. As noted above under Standards of Adequacy for Certification of an EIR, Chapter 31 of the City’s Administrative Code establishes the types of environmental review decisions that may be subject to appeal as well as the grounds for such an appeal.

Chapter 31.16(c)(3) states that the grounds for appeal of an EIR shall be limited to whether the EIR complies with CEQA, including whether it is adequate, accurate and objective, sufficient as an informational document, correct in its conclusions, and reflects the independent judgment and analysis of the City, and whether the Planning Commission certification findings (Motion M-20730) are correct. The appellant does not specify how the certification findings are inadequate.

The CEQA Findings and Statement of Overriding Considerations (Motion M-20731) support the project approvals, are separate from certification of the SEIR, and are not subject to this appeal. The final SEIR provides a full and complete analysis, and the Board of Supervisors’ role in this appeal is to conclude whether the final SEIR itself was prepared appropriately and adequately, as stated in the Commission’s certification findings.

The Board will consider whether the Planning Commission's CEQA Findings and Statement of Overriding Considerations are correct and adequate when it considers the project approvals, including the development agreement and rezoning actions. However, the following is provided for informational purposes.

The appellant has not specified in what way the CEQA Findings and Statement of Overriding Considerations are inadequate and incomplete and not supported by substantial evidence. The CEQA Findings attached to Planning Commission Motion 20731 adopting Environmental Findings pursuant to CEQA (motion attached to the appeal letter) are consistent with the requirements of CEQA Guidelines Section 15091. Within Planning Commission Motion 20731, the Section III findings regarding significant impacts identified in the SEIR that can be avoided or reduced to a less-than-significant level through mitigation are supported by substantial evidence. Within Planning Commission Motion 20731, the Section IV findings regarding significant impacts that cannot be avoided or reduced to a less-than-significant level are also supported by substantial evidence. As required by Public Resources Code Section 21083, separate findings are made for each significant effect and the findings are supported by substantial evidence related directly to the facts presented in the SEIR. CEQA findings regarding rejection of the SEIR alternatives as infeasible are also supported by substantial evidence, including an economic feasibility report prepared by Economic and Planning Systems, Inc. (EPS) and independently review by the City through its economic consultant.

CEQA Guidelines Section 15093(a) provides that "[i]f the specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other benefits of a proposed project outweigh the unavoidable adverse environmental effects, the adverse environmental effects may be considered 'acceptable.'" Per CEQA Guidelines Section 15093(a), if significant and unavoidable impacts are to be accepted with approval of a project, the lead agency must "balance, as applicable, the economic, legal, social, technological, or other benefits of a proposed project against its unavoidable environmental risks when determining whether to approve the project." The Statement of Overriding Considerations provided in Section VI of Planning Commission Motion 20731 complies with CEQA Guidelines Section 15093(b) by stating the specific reasons why the Commission finds, after consideration of the final EIR and the evidence in the record, that each of the specific overriding economic, legal, social, technological and other benefits of the project independently and collectively outweighs the significant and unavoidable impacts of the project. Those benefits are listed on pages 24 through 27 of Attachment A to Planning Commission Motion 20731 (motion attached to the appeal letter).

In conclusion, although the Commission's adoption of CEQA Findings and a Statement of Overriding Considerations for the proposed project are outside the scope of the appeal per Administrative Code Section 31.16(c)(3), they are nevertheless consistent with Public Resources Code section 21081 and CEQA Guidelines sections 15091 and 15093.

**Response 10: The appeal hearing schedule and cost of property are outside of the scope of the grounds for appeal.**

The appellant makes several requests related to the appeal hearing time and allotted times. The appellant also questions whether the negotiated price of the parcel represents fair market value.

Chapter 31.16(c)(3) states that the grounds for appeal of an EIR shall be limited to whether the EIR complies with CEQA, including whether it is adequate, accurate, and objective, sufficient as an informational document, correct in its conclusions, and reflects the independent judgment and analysis of the City, and whether the Planning Commission certification findings are correct. Therefore, requests regarding the appeal hearing schedule and

statements regarding the cost of the project site are not comments on the adequacy or accuracy of the SEIR, are outside of the scope of the grounds for appeal, and do not require further response from the department.

## **CONCLUSION**

For all the reasons provided in this appeal response, the final SEIR complies with the requirements of CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines and provides an adequate, accurate, and objective analysis of the potential impacts of the proposed project. The appellant has not demonstrated that the Planning Commission's certification of the final SEIR was not supported by substantial evidence in the record. Therefore, the department respectfully recommends that the Board uphold the Planning Commission's certification of the final SEIR and deny the appeal.