

To: Ms. Rebecca Bustos  
Associate Planner, Planning Division  
Community Development Department  
City of Santa Clara, California

From: Frank Fuller, Partner  
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Urban Field Studio

November 14, 2017 – D R A F T

**MEMORANDUM: Review of Proposed Design for the “Catalina” Development in the City of Santa Clara**

Urban Field Studio (UFS) has reviewed the design for the proposed “Catalina” development on El Camino Real in the City of Santa Clara. Heidi Sokolowsky and I have met with the developer team and City Planning staff to listen to a presentation of the proposed project design. In addition, we have received the following documents for architectural design review via email that describe the proposed design:

- Design package, 14 sheets excerpted from full design set, dated August 2017,
- 1 sheet of images, dated October 17, 2017,
- 1 sheet of site plan, dated October 17, 2017, and,
- Full design set of 41 sheets, dated August 2017 and received November 8, 2017.

The role of Urban Field Studio is to review the design of the proposed project and to give advice to the City of Santa Clara about the design. Prior to our evaluation, the project has been designed and submitted to the City in at least a Design Development form, so that since we are evaluating in the middle of the design process, our comments will have two parts: Design Issues and Design Recommendations. Issues of the proposed design will be general in nature and recommendations will be more specific. Issues about which we think we need to give advice to the City include the following:

Design Issues

*Affordable family housing for ownership:* It is hoped that these dwellings will help to fill a need for family housing that is affordable and able to be purchased. By building rather compact and efficient three bedroom townhouses, it should be a goal that these dwellings will be within the budgets for ownership by families of all kinds.

*The project and its context:* The design of the project needs to be understood within the context of its surroundings, including other proposed development nearby (if any), the block from Monroe Street to Lincoln Street (including Civic Center Park) and from the north side of Civic Center Drive to the south side of El Camino Real. Plans for the project need to show the larger context in order to understand the project within its surroundings.

*Linkages and relationships:* It is important that the project be connected for pedestrians and bicycles to the surroundings, including El Camino Real and Civic Center Drive. It appears that in the documents there are no gates preventing access to sidewalks and streets within the site, and it is understood that the streets will be privately owned.

*Public and private open space:* The amount of open space on the site is an issue, in terms of location, size, use, and access to all residents. The design of space for the use of residents needs to be larger, more central on the site and designed for active and passive uses; differently from than the spaces depicted on Sheet C-8. The C3 storm drainage retention, children's play areas, and gathering for outdoor activities for residents, all should be provided on the site.

*Orientation and livability of the dwellings:* Along the east and west property lines, given uses on adjacent properties, the dwelling units are very close to current and future development. On the west the row of Italian Cypress will help; however, on the east the dwellings are facing a neighboring house and the existing drive-through area of KFC.

*Children playing outside:* Since the dwellings have three bedrooms and will be for ownership, it can be assumed that families with children will occupy some of the units. The smaller children will play near the house wherever they can, in the private walkways and in the private streets on the site. Kitchens and other well-used rooms should have visibility to the outside to see the play areas; however, the dwelling unit plans show the kitchens in the middle of the dwelling on the second floor.

*Residential dwellings or live-work:* Live-work units are shown along the frontage of El Camino Real. Due to the set back and yards in front of the units, the small amount of parking with rear access from Civic Center Drive for commercial uses on site, and the residential nature of the architectural design, it seems that the site plan is better suited to all residential use.

*Architectural expression:* The townhouse buildings are shown as six buildings with rows of eight and nine dwellings in “Italian” and “Spanish” architectural styles. The length of the buildings, the articulation of dwellings, and the building color palettes should all be considered to give individuality to the townhouses and variety to the buildings.

*Parking spaces and access:* The site plan shows a very compact arrangement for townhouses with parking on grade. The private streets are tight, have two dead ends and large radii to accommodate fire and garbage trucks. The site would be more livable and manageable without the demand for commercial parking and with a few less dwellings to allow better movement and expanded amenities for the site.

*Streetscape & landscape:* El Camino Real and Civic Center Drive, as well as the private on-site streets, need to have careful attention paid to streetscape design, including planting and hardscape for the small spaces available. El Camino frontage seems fairly successful with setbacks, large trees, a wide sidewalk and on-street parking with permeable paving (as shown on C-3 and L-1). Civic Center Drive needs to be carefully considered with utilities along the frontage and against the dwellings, less of a setback, and curb cuts for driveways. The interior streets should have a couple additional feet of width to accommodate more significant planting along the rows of garage doors. In addition, it should be possible to vary the tree and shrub species in the front of the dwellings, even though the public streets are shown to have a consistent plant palette.

### Design Recommendations

It is our advice to the City that the following recommendations be required of the development team:

1. The development team should provide the City with a plan showing the buildings and property improvements of the neighboring properties to the east and west of the site. In addition, the development team should draw site section drawings of east-west and north-south cuts, in order to show the relationships of the buildings to the adjacent streets, properties, sidewalks, and storm water retention. The team also should complete elevations from the four sides of the project, North along Civic Center Drive, South along El Camino Real, and east and west. Currently there are no section drawings and the elevations are only of each building in isolation.

2. The elements of the site that are not softscape, bio-retention or buildings are indicated in plans and on Sheet L-2, Illustrative Images, and on the building elevation drawings. The Development team should show how the many walls, gates and hardscape areas will be designed and built. Walls are indicated around the yard of each dwelling and at perimeter walls with retention on the east and west property lines of the site.
3. At least two dwelling units should be removed from the plan in order to provide a usable and amenitized open space for the residents of the project to use, including children's play space. The dwellings could be removed from the southern end of one of the north-south buildings without substantial impact to the layout of building. Even if four dwellings were removed from the 53 units, 49/2.23 acres = 22 dwellings per acre, which is above the minimum of 19 dwellings per acre required by the City's General Plan.
4. The live-work dwelling units do not seem to be a valid solution for the use along El Camino Real. The articulation of the ground level facades of the buildings and the separation of the buildings from the street do not have a significant commercial presence. We recommend that the dwellings along El Camino Real be townhouses for residential use only and not live-work units.
5. Building materials and component samples, in addition to manufacturer's literature, should be provided to the City by the development team. Items to be included would be exterior finishes, walls and roofing, windows, doors, railings, exterior light fixtures, and other items that are of importance to the architecture of the project.
6. The elevations of each building, with eight and nine dwellings in a row, should be considered with more articulation for each dwelling or groups of dwellings. Perhaps the long roofline of each building could be interrupted with an element that connects dormers across the project and is evident on the facade. Another means would be to articulate a dwelling or pair of dwellings in either a symmetrical or non-symmetrical manner. Also, the color scheme of each building should be considered as a separate palette for both the "Italian" and "Spanish" styles.
7. The extra nine parking spaces (14 minus 5 required guest spaces) that are provided for the live-work units should be partially given to usable open space in conjunction with the

minimum of two dwellings removed for the residents' amenitized open space. The extra space could also assist with access and manoeuvrability at the dead ends of the interior street system.

8. The landscaping plan should have variety of tree species at the entry to each dwelling. Currently the Bloodgood Japanese Maple is shown in front of each dwelling for every building (the tree is not illustrated on sheet L-2). Trees are known to get diseases, so that in addition to a variety of tree color and canopy, varying the species protects against a disease eliminating the entry tree for all the townhouses.
9. Above ground utilities should be screened from view and from noise as much as possible on the site. In addition to providing quiet and attractive condensers in the yards of each dwelling, particular attention should be paid to the locations and visual simplicity of meters, backflow prevention devices and double check detectors along Civic Center Drive.

Cc: Andrew Crabtree, Community Development Director, City of Santa Clara  
Kevin Riley, Interim Planning Manager, City of Santa Clara  
Jane Lin, Partner, Urban Field Studio