

November 7, 2019

Mayor Howard and Redwood City Council Members
Chair Bondonno and Planning Commissioners
c/o Diana O'Dell, Senior Planner
1017 Middlefield Road
Redwood City, CA 94063

via electronic transmittal: dodell@redwoodcity.org

RE: SPUR Endorsement of Preliminary Plan for Sequoia Station / Redwood City Transit Sub-Area

Dear Redwood City Councilmembers and Planning Commissioners:

The Lowe project team presented the Sequoia Station project (also known as the Redwood City Transit Sub-Area) located at James Street and El Camino Real to SPUR's Project Review Advisory Board at our October 11, 2019 meeting for review and consideration. **The SPUR Project Review Advisory Board finds this development proposal to be an appropriate set of uses for this location and endorses the Sequoia Station proposal as it is currently envisioned.**

SPUR is generally focused on policies, plans and codes rather than on individual projects. In order to make infill development easier, we prefer to help set good rules around zoning, fees, housing affordability, sustainability, etc. However, on occasion, our Project Review Advisory Board will review and endorse development proposals of citywide or regional importance, evaluating their potential to enhance the vitality of the city and region according to the policy priorities and principles of good placemaking supported by SPUR.

We understand that Sequoia Station is a major mixed-use development project proposed for the 12+ acre Sequoia Station site located in the Redwood City Transit Sub-District. Currently occupied by a low-rise shopping center with a Safeway, CVS, Old Navy, Pier 1, Barnes & Noble and several other retail tenants, the proposed project will transform the site into a mixed-use urban center with densities and design intentions appropriate to the downtown core and on a regional transit line. As currently proposed, Sequoia Station and the adjacent Caltrain property will provide up to 1,635,000 square feet of commercial office space, up to 440 residential units, up to 175,000 square feet of neighborhood serving retail and a two-level below-grade parking structure. Specific to Sequoia Station, a total of 225 affordable units are proposed for extremely low-, very low- and low-income residents.

SPUR affirms that Sequoia Station:

- ✓ **Is located at an appropriate location for development**, near transit and infrastructure and not on a greenfield site. This downtown site sits right at the Redwood City Caltrain station, one of the Bay Area's most important regional transit systems today and one that will be even more critical in the future after electrification and high speed rail. This plan also includes land dedication for future Caltrain expansion, which supports Caltrain's 2040 business plan and the ongoing vitality of Downtown Redwood City.
- ✓ **Provides an appropriate mix of land uses** of residential and retail, contributing to a diverse stock of housing, fostering economic development, and providing amenities and services to the surrounding community. This is the right location for concentrating jobs. Office jobs tend to cluster, and commuters are most likely to use transit when their job is close to the transit stop or station. The Sequoia Station location – in the downtown core and at a transit station – is ideal for a jobs-heavy mix of uses. Safeway will remain on the site, and a significant amount of retail is called for in the plan. In addition, the proposed project would bring a large number of new affordable housing units to downtown Redwood City, close to new market-rate housing.
- ✓ **Provides sufficient density at the site** with a floor area ratio (FAR) of 3.4, supporting adjacent transit and preventing underutilization of land, serving the future needs of Bay Area residents. This project makes good use of this key downtown site, which has been until now a single-story shopping center surrounded by parking.
- ✓ **Creates a good place for people and contributes to a walkable environment** with active ground floor uses and planned improvements to the street network. While the plan is too preliminary to analyze in detail at this time, we are encouraged by the vision to improve bike lanes, create new walkable streets, improve connectivity, incorporate art, create new community gathering spaces and eliminate surface parking. We look forward to learning more about the design as the proposal develops further.

We understand that this is just the beginning of a City-driven process for Central Redwood City and the Transit District. **The SPUR Project Review Advisory Board finds this development proposal to be an appropriate set of uses for this location and endorses the Sequoia Station proposal as it is currently envisioned.** This is a key site for transit-oriented development in the region, and this proposal shows great potential to create an exemplary station area in Redwood City and to support the city's broader visioning process for the Transit District and central Redwood City. The downtown location and adjacency to transit make this site highly appropriate for office, *and* we are happy to see a significant number of affordable housing units included in the plan.

SPUR appreciates being brought into the conversation at this early date. We understand that this will be a challenging project to execute given the complexity of ownership and leasehold interests on the site, so we

hope to be kept in the loop by the project sponsor as the proposal and design evolves over time. Please do not hesitate to contact us or Kristy Wang, SPUR's Community Planning Policy Director, with any questions or clarifications.

Sincerely,

Charmaine Curtis
Co-Chairs, SPUR Project Review Advisory Board

Diane Filippi

cc: SPUR Board of Directors