



August 12, 2019

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Submitted electronically to [lina\\_velasco@ci.richmond.ca.us](mailto:lina_velasco@ci.richmond.ca.us)

RE: Response to NOP of SEIR for Point Molate Mixed-use Development Project

Dear Ms. Velasco,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the City of Richmond's Notice of Preparation of a SEIR for the Point Molate Mixed-use Development Project.

I write on behalf of the Pt Molate Alliance (PMA) to express concern that the City is moving forward with the proposed Pt Molate Mixed-use Development project. The project is the result of a settlement with the Casino Developer (Upstream) and Indian Tribe in violation of California's Open Meeting Act. The project was decided upon without public input. The settlement was then used to limit public input during the City's Pt Molate public planning meetings. Despite the limit set by the City on public input at the meetings, the majority of the public's comments were not in support of the proposed project. The majority of the public comments were ignored by the City. The City should not move forward with the proposed project before it undertakes to cure its violation of California's Open Meeting Act and hold a public planning process that honors open public debate and input in Pt Molate planning.

In addition, the proposed development at Point Molate cannot be adequately evaluated by simply amending the Pt Molate Mixed-Use Tribal Destination Resort and Casino (Casino) FEIR as the City proposes. There have been significant changes since the Pt Molate Casino's Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) was researched and then finalized in 2009. The Casino project also differs significantly from the proposed Mixed-use Development project in size and intensity. Impacts from the proposed project cannot be evaluated by an FEIR based on research that was completed over a decade ago for a different project in size (a different footprint) and intensity with significantly different environmental, socio-economic and other circumstances. A new Environmental Impact Study specific to the proposed project and the current circumstances is required to adequately assess impacts and longer-term implications of the project.

Since 2009 we know a great deal more about climate change, its intensifying impacts and the limited time we have to address them, and this requires a reframing of how we think about development at Pt

Molate and how to analyze the changing circumstances that have taken place since 2009. The proposed Pt Molate project has triple the number of residential units. Traffic has increased on 580 since 2009 to the degree that there are daily backups, and not only during rush hour. The only Pt Molate entrance and exist is at the 580 interchange at the Bridge. The global perspective and methods used to measure and analyze traffic, carbon emissions, and the other impacts the proposed project would have on climate change are not utilized in the Casino EIR. A new EIR must employ current knowledge, methods and measures to analyze and mitigate proposed project impacts of triple the number of residential units, as well as all the alternatives, specific to traffic, carbon emissions and climate change.

Current and impending climate change impacts have also changed where we locate residential developments. Richmond has Preferred Development Areas (PDAs) near transit, commercial centers and with existing infrastructure to reduce traffic, lower carbon emission, protect critical habitat and provide a buffer from rising sea-levels. Pt Molate is not a PDA. A new EIS/EIR is needed to analyze the impacts of locating a luxury residential development in a remote site without existing infrastructure outside of Richmond's PDAs. How will the proposed project impact gentrification and displacement of Richmond residents? Richmond has a very small planning department. How will the proposed Pt Molate project impact the Planning Department's ability to achieve the full build-out of PDAs as soon as possible to meet Richmond's growing need and requirements for affordable and mixed income housing near transit and commercial centers?

Pt Molate has rare biological resources that have greater significance in the context of climate change than they did in in even 2009. Pt Molate has the healthiest eelgrass beds in the SF Bay, approximately 50 acres. They provide vital habitat for commercial fisheries, like the Dungeness Crab, and for other marine life, native and migratory bird species and marine mammals, such as the seals that frequent Pt Molate waters. The eelgrass absorbs carbon and slows coastal erosion. The Casino EIR did not address impacts to the eelgrass beds. These beds are part of the California native grassland habits that make up the south valley watershed where over a thousand residential units are planned to be built in the proposed project. Analysis of impacts and long-term consequences of the project must analyze the native plant habitats and the eelgrass beds as a single ecological system using current scientific knowledge of this living system. The proposed project EIS must also include economic impacts to the Dungeness Crab and other Bay fisheries and their families from any negative impacts to Pt Molate's eelgrass beds.

Knowledge and methods and baselines for the assessment of human safety has changed since the Casino EIR was finalized. There have been accidents at the Richmond Chevron refinery since 2009, and significantly increased flaring at the refinery since the modernization project. Recent posted on social media show clouds of black smoke over Pt Molate. The proposed project EIR must employ current knowledge and methods to analyze air quality impacts and human safety in the event of an evacuation in the current circumstances.

Pt Molate is public land. The pressure to privatize and develop public land is intensified by rising population pressure and the current weakening environmental protections while at the same time we need the services these lands provide more than ever before to combat climate change. The pressures and need will become greater with time. A new project EIS is needed to analyze the impacts of the loss of Pt. Molate as public land. This is not encompassed in a "no project" alternative. The benefits of public land are different than those of privately held land. Public land provides a public-to-land relationship that engenders meaningful interactions with nature through public decision-making, citizen-stakeholders, volunteer work, outdoor education programs and recreation programs for public benefit, decided and designed through public input. Public ownership provides the foundation for a connection

with nature for urban residents and knowledge about healthy ecosystems that support broad-based public support for a sustainable use of ecosystems needed for human and environmental health. The loss of the benefits of public ownership must be addressed in a new EIS. Public ownership of Pt Molate would also ensure the preservation of Ohlone historical and cultural sites and Pt Molate's rich public history, the impacts of the loss of which must be addressed in a new project EIS.

Pt Molate is truly unique in the potential it holds for Richmond, the region and future generations. The above comments are only a few of the issues that a new EIS/EIR must address. A new EIS/EIR specific to the proposed project and current environmental and socio-economic conditions is necessary to evaluate the consequences and long-term implications of the project. There is so much at stake in this project for the people of Richmond and the environment that doing less than a full EIS/EIR for this project would be unconscionable.

Sincerely,

—Pam Stello  
Pt Molate Alliance Co-Chair