

**DATE:** July 5, 2017  
**TO:** Curtis Havel, Community Development Agency and John Roberto, Contract Planner  
**FROM:** James Raives, Marin County Parks  
**SUBJECT:** **Easton Point (Martha Company) Modified Master Plan  
Assessor's Parcel 059-251-05; Off Paradise Drive**

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the above-referenced project. Marin County Parks has reviewed the submittal and has determined that the application materials lack information and sufficient details to assess the project. Specifically, Marin County Parks needs additional information to evaluate the preservation of Parcel B, ensure the protection of special-status plant species, assess the long-term management of Parcel A, evaluate impacts to the Old St. Hillary's Open Space Preserve from the proposed water tank, and to evaluate impacts on recreational use from the elimination of the Spanish Trail from the master plan. As proposed, the Marin County Open Space District is not willing to accept title to Parcels A or B as a result of potential impacts to sensitive species, landslide potential and a host of other issues detailed below.

### **Parcel B**

As part of the modified master plan submittal, the Martha Company included a letter from LSA assessing the revised landscape plan for compliance with the biological resource mitigation measures from the 2008 draft environmental impact report (EIR). This assessment consists of a review of the landscaping and grading plans but does not include an update to the biological surveys of the site. It has been at least ten years since project biologists have conducted a biological assessment for the project site. In the interim, six years of drought followed by a heavy rain year in 2016-17 have affected the habitat values of the site. The existing biological information is no longer up to date or sufficient to assess potential impacts. Marin County Parks staff requires an updated biological assessment of Parcel B and the adjacent portions of the Old Saint Hillary's Open Space Preserve. This revised assessment should also evaluate habitat condition on the preserve adjacent to lots 4 and 5.

As part of the development, the applicant is proposing to transfer Parcel B to the Marin County Open Space District, which Marin County Parks manages. In its previous communications on the original master plan, Marin County Parks staff stated that it would not support the acquisition of this parcel. Staff was primarily concerned about the size of the parcel, proximity to adjacent development, and its isolation from other habitat areas on the open space preserve. The revised plan addresses some of these issues by increasing the size of the parcel and connecting it to Old Saint Hillary's Preserve. However, Parks staff remains concerned that the parcel is not large enough to sustain a viable habitat for these sensitive plants.

The modified master plan still includes several houses within the serpentine soil habitat that have the potential to affect special-status plant species. Not only will these houses result in a direct loss of this habitat, they may have indirect impacts on these resources from use of invasive non-native landscaping on private land, people and pets using the protected area, and the need create defensible space

around the homes. These impacts have the potential to degrade the biological values of this serpentine habitat and Marin County Parks staff remains unsure whether it would accept the donation of this parcel.

### **Parcel A**

In most of its previous comments, Marin County Parks staff has made it clear that it would not support the acquisition of Parcel A by the Marin County Open Space District. This area is heavily affected with existing and historic landslides and the developer is proposing to encumber the property with several easements that would make it difficult to manage. The modified master plan does not appear to address any of these issues and Marin County Parks staff remains opposed to the acquisition of this area.

The project relies heavily on the transfer of both Parcels A and B to the Marin County Open Space District to mitigate for impacts from the proposed development. In its previous communications, Marin County Parks has made it clear to the applicant and CDA that the district is not willing to accept title to Parcels A or B (although the district may be more interested in Parcel B if the applicant resolves the issues described above). Despite these previous statements, the project still includes the transfer of these parcels to the district and relies on the benefits associated with such a transfer. Although the EIR allows for transfer of the land to another public agency, it is unlikely that there is another such agency. The applicant needs to come up with a contingency plan to preserve and manage these properties that does not involve transferring the land to a public agency.

### **Spanish Trail**

The original master plan included an alignment for the trail known as the “Spanish Trail.” The modified master plan no longer includes this trail alignment. This is an existing trail that is regularly used by people from the adjacent neighborhoods and by other members of the public. This trail is an important asset to the community and the applicant should revise the master plan to include this trail. The developer’s submittal should include a proposal to create a public access easement on the Spanish Trail, should the project not transfer Parcel A to a public agency.

### **Water Tank**

The proposed project includes the construction of a water tank on a parcel adjacent to the Old Saint Hillary’s Preserve. From the grading plans, it appears that there is an approximately 20-foot drop off from the Old Saint Hillary’s Preserve to the new tank. The geologic and geotechnical site reconnaissance submitted as part of the modified master plan did not address this issue. Therefore, there is insufficient information in the modified master plan submittal to determine if the construction of the tank will affect the geological stability of the open space preserve or require the construction of retaining walls or other structure to provide stability. Additionally, the abrupt drop off could create a potential hazard for members of the public that are recreating on Old Saint Hillary’s Preserve. Without better information on this issue area, Marin County Parks staff cannot assess the impacts to its preserve.

### **Road Impacts**

Although it may be late in the process to make this comment, after reviewing the modified master plan, Parks staff identified a potential concern that it has not previously commented on. The road, Tam View Court, directs people directly to the Old Saint Hillary’s Preserve in an area that supports special-status plant species. Typically, the public will use road ends to access the preserve and potentially create a

social trail through the sensitive habitat. Marin County Parks staff recommends that the project incorporate measures to discourage access onto preserve at this location.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the modified master plan lacks sufficient information necessary for Marin County Parks to determine the feasibility of the proposed open space preservation included in the master plan and the significance of the environmental impacts to the Old Saint Hillary's Open Space Preserve. Specifically, staff lacks sufficient details to assess the preservation of Parcel B, protection of special-status plant species, the long-term management of Parcel A, impacts to the preserve from the proposed water tank, and impacts on recreational use from the elimination of the Spanish Trail. If you have any questions on this matter, please contact me at (415) 473-3745 or [JRaives@marincounty.org](mailto:JRaives@marincounty.org).