



Office of the President
Nicola Pitchford, PhD

August 2, 2024

Hon. Mayor Kate Colin (kate.colin@cityofsanrafael.org)
City of San Rafael
1400 Fifth Avenue, Room 203
San Rafael, CA 94901

cc: Alicia Giudice, Community Development Director (alicia.giudice@cityofsanrafael.org)
cc: Robert Epstein, City Attorney (rob.epstein@cityofsanrafael.org)
cc: City Clerk (city.clerk@cityofsanrafael.org)

Dear Mayor Colin and members of the City Council:

This letter regards the Dominican Valley Residential Development Application submitted to the City by Dominican Valley LLC, proposing to build 50 homes plus 14 ADUs on the vacant Dominican Valley land.

Dominican University of California is a residential university with more than 400 students living on campus. Our three residence halls are located either immediately next to or within a short distance of the proposed development. An additional 1,400 students attend courses on campus. Our workforce includes about 450 faculty and staff. In addition, we host community lectures and events throughout the year. In the summer, several thousand school children attend our summer camps.

As you will know from our previous letter dated January 11, 2024, Dominican University of California previously owned the two vacant lots at the intersection of Gold Hill Grade and Deer Park Avenue where the proposed development is to be sited. The sale of that land in May 2023 was undertaken after the University had secured professional assessment of the land's value and its limited potential for development, followed by targeted marketing by a broker to generate competitive bids for the property.

While the good-faith sale of the land leaves Dominican with no contractual or legal involvement in, or control over, plans for its further development, we wish again to bring two issues to the City's attention – as the largest single neighbor to the property and as an entity with profound responsibilities both to our own campus community and to the surrounding neighborhood.

First is that the currently proposed scale and density of the residential development on the two vacant lots differs significantly from anything Dominican understood to be feasible or reasonable, either in our

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50 Acacia Avenue, San Rafael, California 94901
p. (415) 485-3200 | f. (415) 485-0483 | president@dominican.edu | www.dominican.edu

investigations of potential land use prior to the sale or during – and even immediately after – the sale, including in our discussions with the current developer. The number of units far exceeds the maximum discussed with us as likely or even possible on this land.

We therefore reiterate with great concern – and this is the second issue – our respectful request that the City give all due weight to the corresponding health and safety considerations. We urge the City to consider both our densely populated campus community and our neighbors when reviewing the application.

For all of us, fire safety is a significant and growing concern – especially in areas like ours where wild lands meet residential areas. This is already a neighborhood with significant challenges to swift mass evacuation, including the presence of high-density student housing and narrow roads, many made even more narrow by extensive residential parking.

Dominican University seeks earnestly to contribute to solutions to the major challenges facing San Rafael and our wider community, including both the need for additional housing and also the imperative that all of us plan innovatively and defensively in acknowledgment of the greatly increased dangers posed by climate crisis. We wish it to be known that within that commitment, we did not envision development of the type and scale currently proposed in Dominican Valley.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nicola Pitchford". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Nicola" being more prominent than the last name "Pitchford".

Nicola Pitchford
President

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