

East Richmond Neighborhood Council

August 20, 2024

Hector Lopez, Senior Planner
City of Richmond Planning Division
Richmond Civic Center via email: Hector_Lopez@ci.richmond.ca.us

Traffic Safety Study Comments and Requests - 12300 San Pablo Ave. - Dollar Tree Conditions of Approval

Dear Mr. Lopez:

This letter outlines East Richmond Neighborhood Council's (ERNC) comments and requests to the Kimley-Horn Traffic Safety Study proposal commissioned by the Planning Department.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the study and provide additional details based on neighbors' long experience with this busy section of San Pablo Avenue.

Background

Below is some background information to help explain on Traffic Safety Study why we recommend that the study include an analysis and toolbox of mitigations for the specific conditions we've outlined.

As you recall, East Richmond neighbor's primary concern with the Dollar Tree project recommended by the Department and approved by the Planning Commission was and is the safety of entering and exiting an intensive retail operation on San Pablo Avenue, as well as preventing traffic impacts on nearby residential streets. A traffic study was provided by the applicant, along with a second traffic study, but they primarily reported on "level of service" impacts - a traffic engineering term for traffic volume and flow, not safety. These reports concluded that the level of service impacts from estimated 800+ vehicles entering and exiting the site each day would be acceptable.

In response to our concerns that traffic safety and other impacts to Richmond residents were not being addressed, the City Council responded to our appeal of the Planning Commission's decision by adding additional Conditions of Approval requested by our Neighborhood Council. With regard to this issue, the Council voted 5-1-0 to adopt Conditions of Approval that require that the applicants "address traffic safety issues by requiring a traffic safety study and implementation of safety mitigations prior to the store opening" and "effectively control added traffic into surrounding neighborhood streets" as part of the study..

This spring we discovered that construction was taking place at this site after the Department issued a permit in response to the applicant's request to proceed with modifications to the building and property. However, the required traffic safety study had not yet been initiated to

also implement traffic safety improvements at the site. Therefore, we met with the Department to request that an independent traffic study be commissioned by the Department, and there is now a Traffic Safety Study proposal to that effect.

The proposal states that the safety analysis will review and consider the recommendations and observations from a traffic analysis, identify any additional safety concerns, and present recommended mitigations. In response to your contacting the Neighborhood Council, we are submitting the following comments and specific requests. They are based on neighbors' direct experience and familiarity with this section of San Pablo Avenue. We strongly recommend that each of the below requests be addressed and we look forward to the study moving forward.

Requests

Task Order 2 – Data Collection and Site Review

- a. **Traffic volume data** – The study will tally “existing turning movement counts” at San Pablo Avenue/Barrett Avenue and San Pablo Avenue/Roosevelt Avenue/1-80 Ramp intersections over two hour periods during the weekday AM and PM peak periods at these locations.

Our understanding of “turning movement counts” is that they focus on the amount of traffic entering and exiting an intersection. Since traffic can take any of three directions through an intersection, for the purposes of this safety study we request that specific turning movement counts be reported by:

- **the peak hour traffic volume in both directions *that passes 12300 San Pablo Avenue* (hereafter referred to as the “site”).**
- **the current baseline traffic counts *into Roosevelt Avenue* from San Pablo Avenue.**

- b. **Traffic speed data** – The study will collect data to understand the existing speeds of vehicles on San Pablo Avenue at 12300 San Pablo Avenue over a 24 hour period.

We request that that traffic data be additionally be reported on the range of vehicle speeds and average speed of traffic:

- **coming from downtown Richmond and taking a left turn at the San Pablo/Barrett intersection onto San Pablo Avenue where the traffic passes the site's entrance/exit**
- **driving north on San Pablo Avenue from the San Pablo/Barrett intersection where the traffic passes the site's entrance/exit**

- c. **Site observations** – We are glad to hear that Kimley-Horn will conduct at least one field visit during a weekday peak period and off-peak period to observe existing traffic conditions and patterns, drive the corridor, identify any additional safety concerns, and note physical observations such as roadway widths and constraints.

Therefore we are providing some additional information to Kimley-Horn for the field visit. At project review meetings, the ENRC and many neighbors expressed concerns about likely conflicts with traffic entering and exiting from the site. Initial Planning reports also noted the risk of rear end collisions as cars slowed to enter the site's driveway entrance. Within the last

couple of years San Pablo Avenue was repaved and restriped in and between the San Pablo Avenue/Barrett Avenue and San Pablo Avenue/Roosevelt Avenue/1-80 Ramp intersections. In the process it was determined that a solid white striped line was needed for I-80 East onramp lane. This is a fast-moving and heavily-used onramp lane that site users will also use to enter and exit the parking lot (see photo #1 and #5 below).

Task Order 3 - Analysis and Evaluation

We request that the following specific traffic and neighborhood safety concerns be analyzed as part of the Traffic Safety Study's review and recommendations:



1. Entering the site coming from the south and after a U-turns at the intersection.
2. Effectively control exiting traffic going south from entering Roosevelt and using residential streets
3. Exiting the site to head south by crossing San Pablo Avenue
4. Entering San Pablo Avenue from the north and crossing San Pablo Avenue
5. Exiting the site to head north on San Pablo Avenue

We request that each of these traffic concerns receive the following:

- An estimate of risk - high, medium, and low
- A toolbox of mitigation options, and estimates of risk after installation of these options.
- recommended actions
- evaluation methods in case another traffic safety mitigation from the toolbox needs to be implemented to reach the desired risk level.

Below is a further description of these safety concerns.

1. Entering site from the south and after U-turns at intersection



Issue: Risk of rear end

collisions to cars slowing down to enter the site from a fast-moving, heavily used I-80 onramp lane. Issue noted in early staff reports to the Planning Commission. Also, traffic that comes from the north on San Pablo and takes a U-turn at the intersection to enter the parking lot will face the same issue.

2. Effectively control exiting traffic going south from entering Roosevelt and using residential streets

Narrow residential streets at McLaughlin & Roosevelt



Issue: Because left hand turns from the parking lot are prohibited, patrons will want to enter Roosevelt Avenue to the north to and use neighborhood streets to double back to go south through residential streets, resulting in significant safety and traffic impacts on surrounding residential streets.

3. Exiting site to head south by crossing San Pablo Avenue (violating the proposed Right Turn Only sign from site parking lot)



Issue: This issue came up during Planning Commission hearings, but the applicants argued against adding a center median in favor of allowing large delivery trucks to turn into the parking lot from the north on San Pablo. During recent construction at the site we observed a worker crossing northbound San Pablo lanes to exit the site and go south on San Pablo Avenue, indicating that - without a center median - this practice will be an attractive shortcut to some patrons, too.

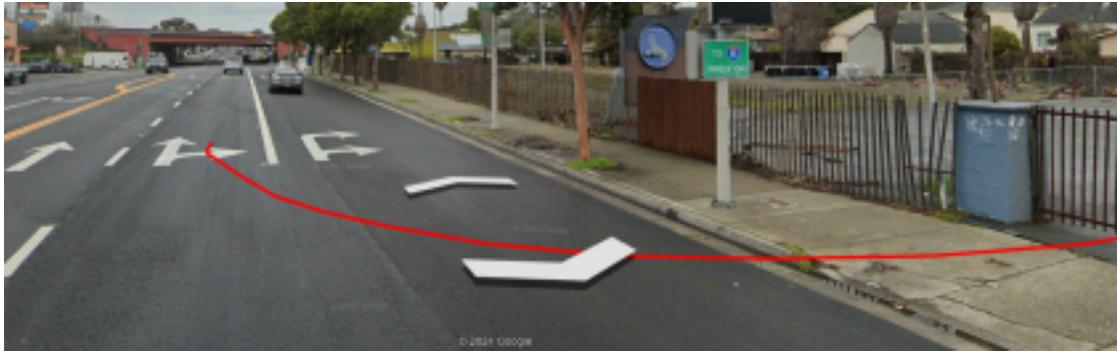
4. Entering San Pablo Avenue from the north



Issue: Left turn into driveway from San Pablo Ave. May be less likely since there is now a left-hand turn lane at the San Pablo Ave/Barrett Ave intersection that allows U-turns to enter the site. However, after the U-turn the driver is still at risk from a collision from behind as they slow to enter the parking lot (see #1 situation above).

Also, please comment on the safety risks of the applicant's plan to have large delivery trucks come in from the north on San Pablo Avenue and take a left turn into the parking lot as shown in the above photo.

5. Exiting site to head north



Issue:

Risk of T-bone collisions to cars exiting the site by needing to cross a fast-moving, heavily used I-80 onramp lane to go north on San Pablo Avenue

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposal. We will be available to answer any questions and assist Kimley-Horn in any way we can. We look forward to the opportunity to review the study when it is completed and provide comments as the Department determines the traffic safety measures that will need to be in place prior to the opening of an intensive retail operation at this location.

Sincerely,

Jim Hanson, President
East Richmond Neighborhood Council

cc: Lina Velasco, Community Development Director