

From: David Schorr <mail@1stvoice.com>
Sent: Monday, March 2, 2020 12:12 PM
To: Jill Ekas <JEkas@hmbcity.com>
Subject: Hyatt hotel proposal

Dear Ms. Ekas;

This email is addressed primarily to the members of the Architectural Advisory Committee. Please forward it to the Planning Commissioners and City Council Members as well.

I will be traveling and unable to attend the AAC meeting on March 19, where the Hyatt design will be considered. I want my comments and attachment to be part of the public record.

Briefly, the proposed Hyatt is the largest downtown project ever proposed, and has the potential to irrevocably alter the appearance and functioning of the downtown area, with collateral damage spreading far and wide. Apart from the obvious concerns of traffic and circulation impacts, my primary concern is one which is the direct purview of the AAC – visual impact.

At its current proposed size of 129 rooms plus a conference center, this proposed project is clearly incompatible with Guiding Principle #1 of the General Plan Update – to preserve the small town charm and character of Half Moon Bay.

On this criteria alone, the proposed size of the project must be rejected.

The question before the AAC is not whether or not it is pretty, or if the design is pleasing, but I ask the AAC to focus on the size and massing of the proposed project, and its undeniable visual impact, specifically in the context of existing site conditions and viewshed.

Currently, the City is spending considerable effort and money on the "Southern Gateway" project – including new signage and wayfinding. The City project is a relatively modest and low profile piece of infrastructure. However, it will be completely dwarfed by the scale of this proposed hotel immediately behind it, when viewed from the south. The hotel will effectively become the Southern Gateway – the first and primary impression that people get of our charming little community. It will no longer be viewed as a charming little community, but the home to a monster hotel, if you give approval to these proposed plans.

I urge you to not be distracted or swayed by the gauzy marketing presentations from the project applicant and his architect. Previous presentations, and plans submitted in 2018 included elevation renderings which were deliberately deceptive in their representation of the buildings against the currently visible backdrop of our beautiful coastal hills. Their renderings purposely distorted the perspective, and showed views of the surrounding and background hills to be largely un-impacted by the buildings – 35 feet tall, over 600 feet long, running along Highway 1.

It took my graphics consultant only 30 minutes to accurately take the building dimensions from their plans and put them onto the same Google Earth views, from eye-level of 7 feet above Highway 1 (the lowest that Google Earth will allow – actual visual impact from eye-level of approximately 48 inches from the average vehicle will be even worse). Clearly, the applicant and architects took much longer than that to purposely manipulate and distort the views to present their project in a more pleasing manner. Those PowerPoint slides are attached here for your consideration, comparing current views to the applicant presented views, as contrasted with the actual renderings of their proposed plans.

The renderings attached are from the 2018 plans. Since then, the applicant has modified the project, reducing room count from 141 to 129, if I have that correctly. They have moved the buildings very slightly to the east, to avoid wetland issues. None of that will significantly lessen visual impacts.

The applicant has submitted revised elevation renderings, January 2020, available to you. At the time of my writing this email, actual measurements for these drawings are not available to the public, so the renderings I provided cannot be updated.

However – please look carefully at the elevations presented in 2018 versus 2020, specifically at the relative height of the main structure compared with Guest Building 2, at the north end of the project. In 2018, elevations show that the maximum height of Guest Building 2 is LOWER than the height of the main run of buildings. The 2020 elevations (without associated measurements) show that the maximum height of Guest Building 2 is HIGHER than the height of the main run of buildings. I am skeptical that the applicant has decreased the height of the main buildings, so (absent complete information from the applicant) I am left to conclude

that the height of Guest Building 2 has been increased in the new (final) plans, further worsening the visual impact of this proposed project. I'm quite sure that the applicant does not want you to notice this detail.

I do not believe that the AAC should render a judgment on the design without story poles going up, so that you have the opportunity to see real-time, in situ impact of this proposed project on that part of town, and views of the surrounding and background coastal hills. You are making decisions on behalf of the public, but few people will be able to attend a weekday 8:30 AM meeting on such a consequential matter – the public should have a chance to see the visual impact of this proposed project, and weigh in, at this stage, before decisions are made. I ask that you table any decision or recommendations on this project until story poles are erected.

The applicant will tell you that this is the size of project he needs for this to pencil out. That is not your concern, and cannot be considered as you look at the size, scope, scale, and visual massing of this project.

The applicant will state or imply that he has spent many hundreds of thousands of dollars on design fees, planning, etc., as if that alone entitles this project to approval. That is not your concern, and cannot be considered as you look at the size, scope, scale, and visual massing of this project.

The applicant may imply that he will bring legal action against the City if his project is not approved as presented. That is not your concern, and cannot be considered as you look at the size, scope, scale, and visual massing of this project.

The applicant claims that this project will be of great benefit to the City. I disagree – the City does not need the additional income from another hotel project, and this will quite clearly negatively impact the way our town looks, feels and functions. The applicant has maintained that building this hotel would actually decrease traffic on the weekends – that is laughable and completely illogical.

When I met with the applicant to discuss his preliminary plans nearly 3 years ago, he said "I just want to make some money on this". That's the bottom line. Not benefit to the community, not employing locals (not likely anyway) – just another developer pursuing his own personal benefit, to the detriment of the community. All else is window dressing.

Here's what's at stake (GPU Guiding Principles):

1. Maintain Half Moon Bay's small-town character and quality of life.....
2. Enhance the city's scenic visual quality and coastal landscape setting....

Those are the guidelines we should be working with here. This project, as proposed, is simply not compatible with the stated goals and values of our community, and cannot be allowed to go forward as proposed. Objection to large-scale development is only becoming stronger as time goes by. I urge you to act for the benefit of the greater community, not an individual developer.

Sincerely

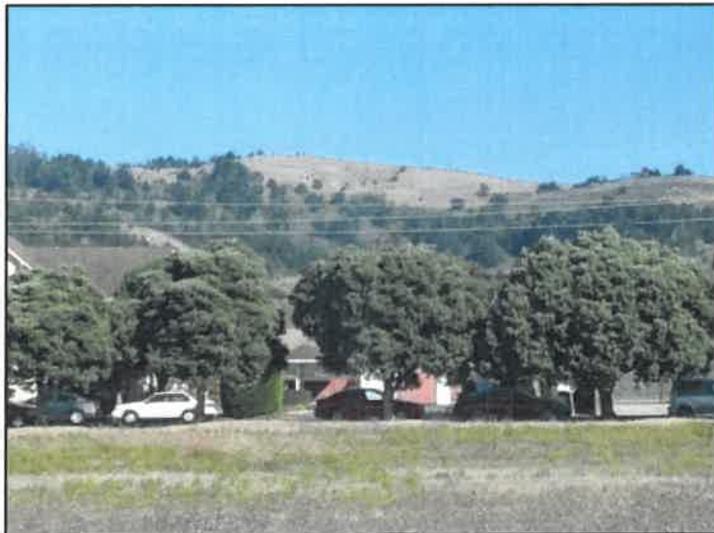
David Schorr
Half Moon Bay
650-726-2842

1. Existing viewshed conditions

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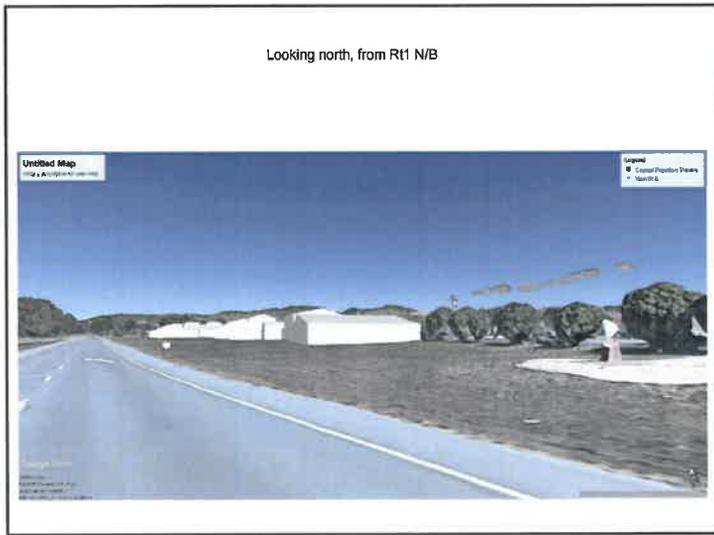
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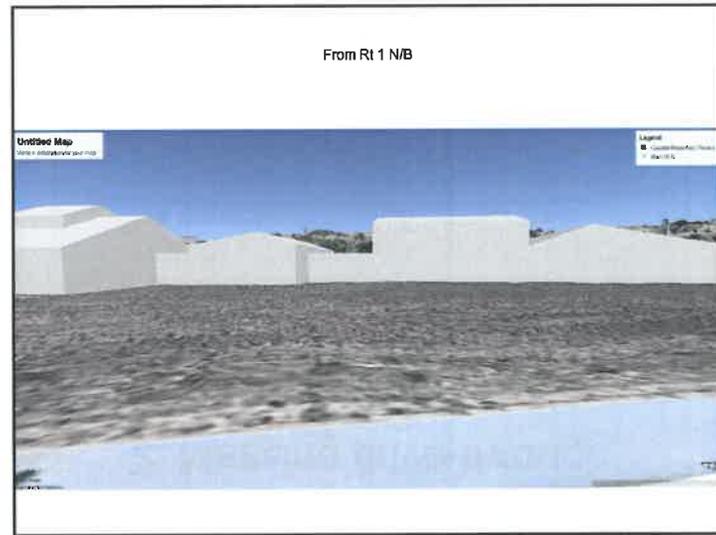
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2. Massing drive-through

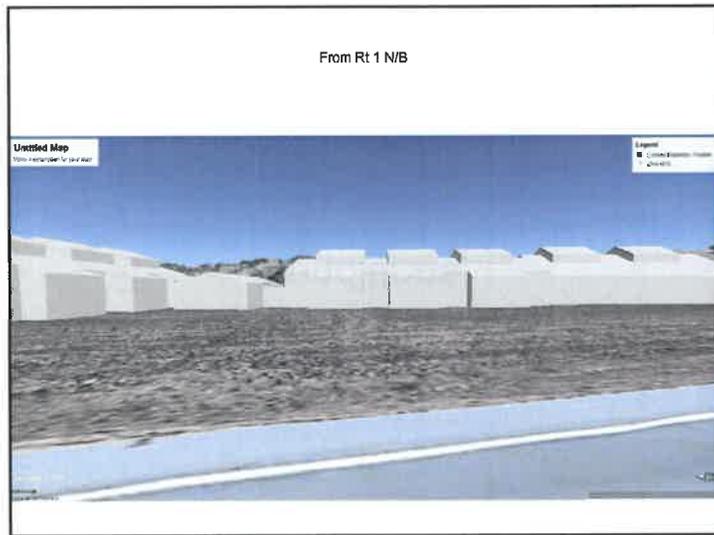
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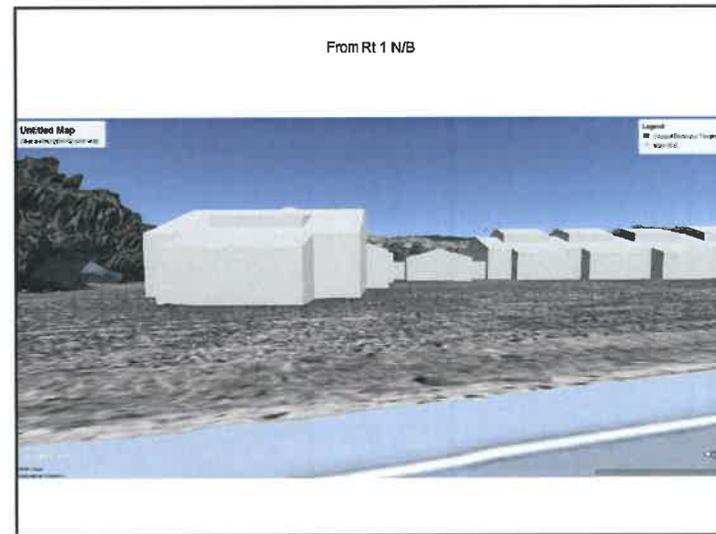
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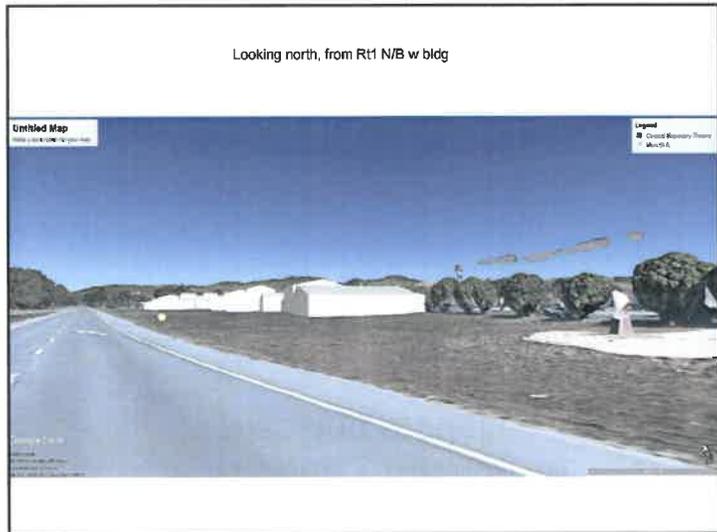
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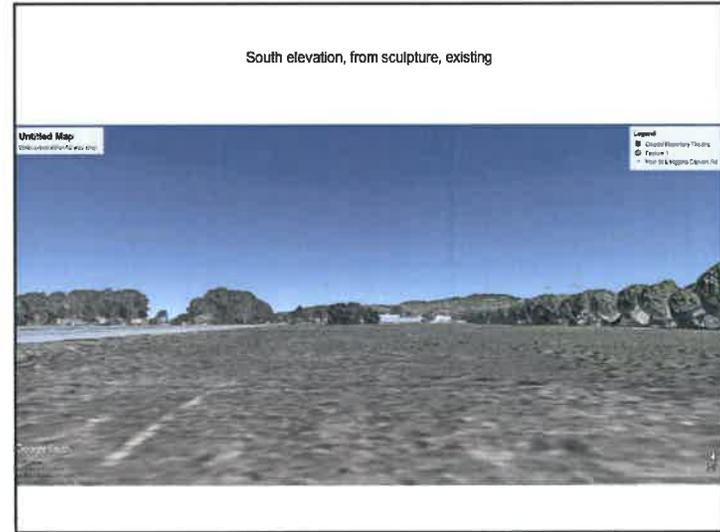
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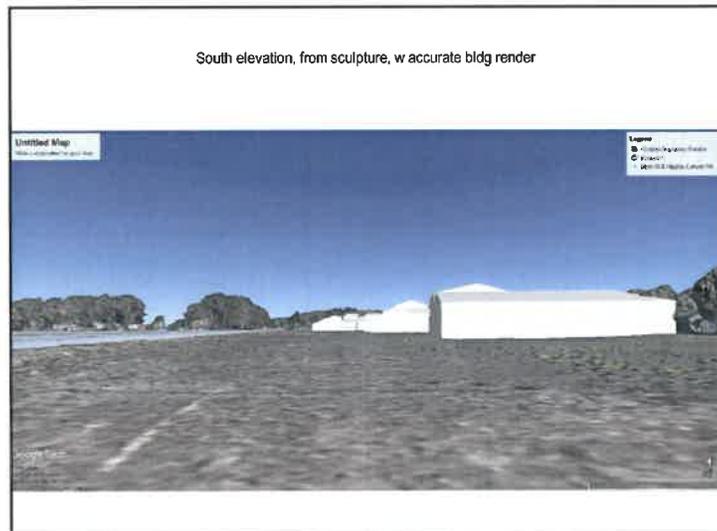
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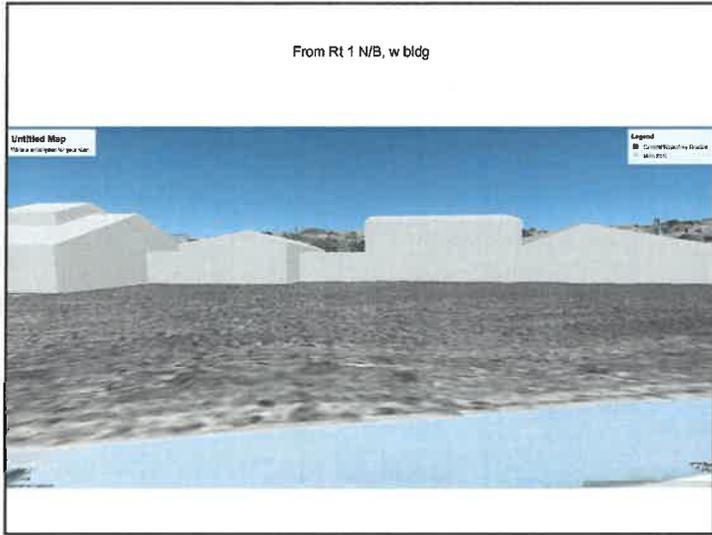
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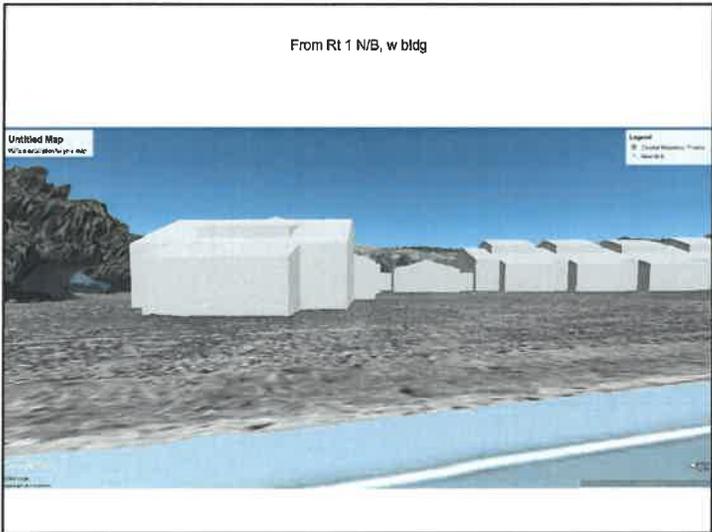
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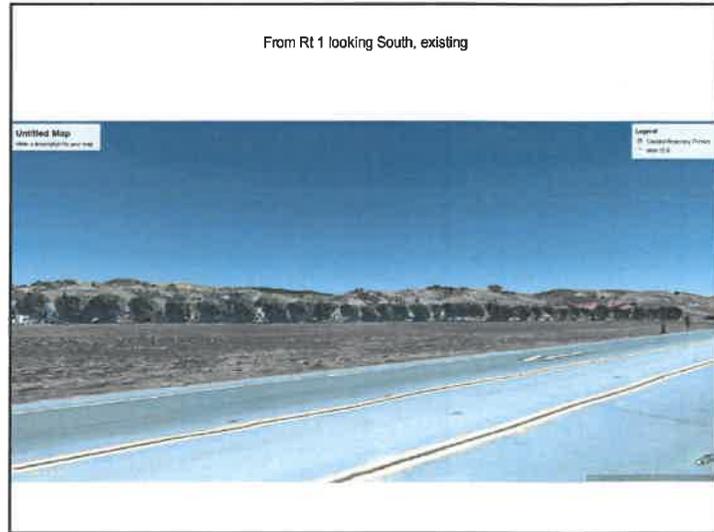
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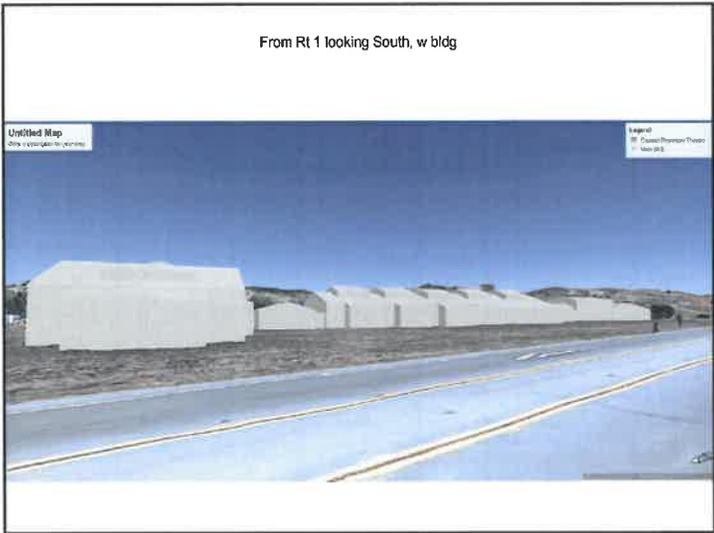
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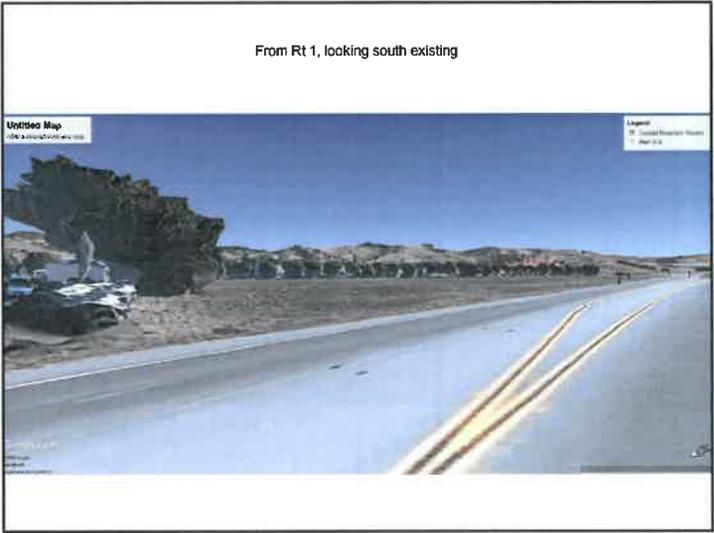
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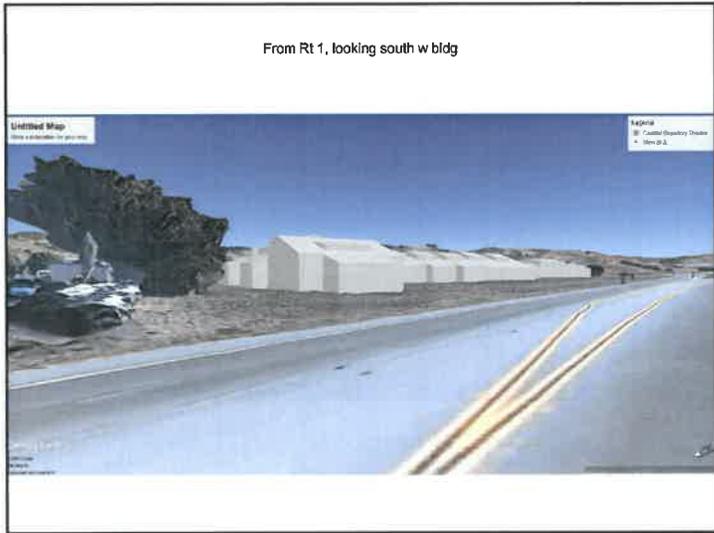
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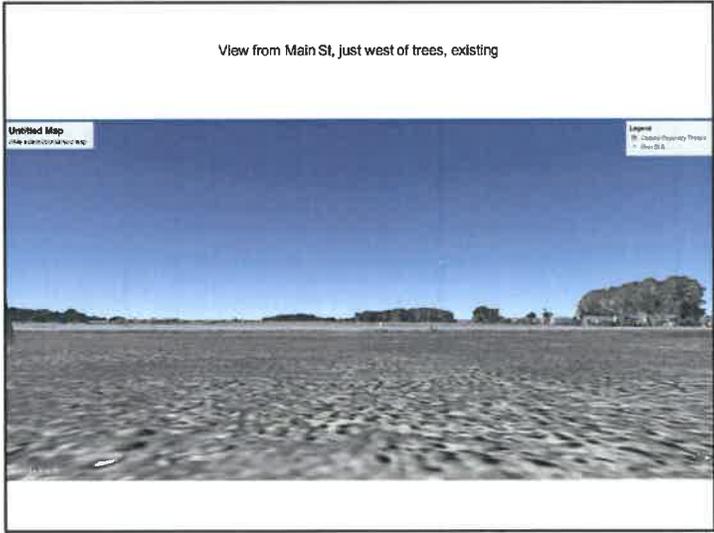
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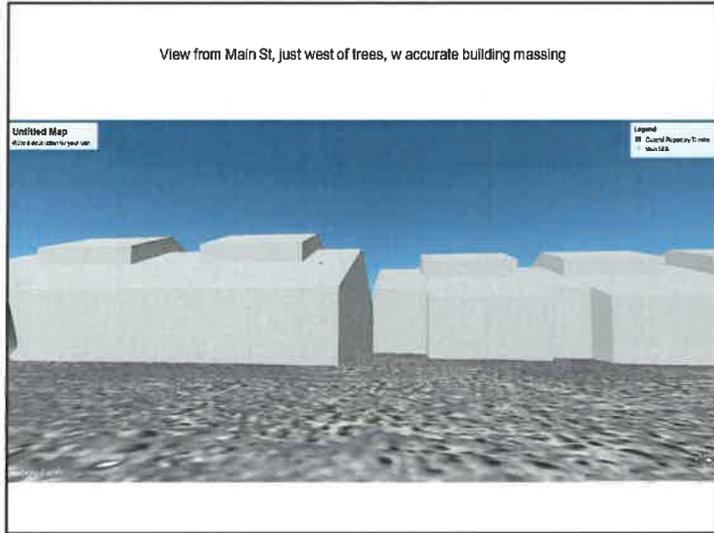
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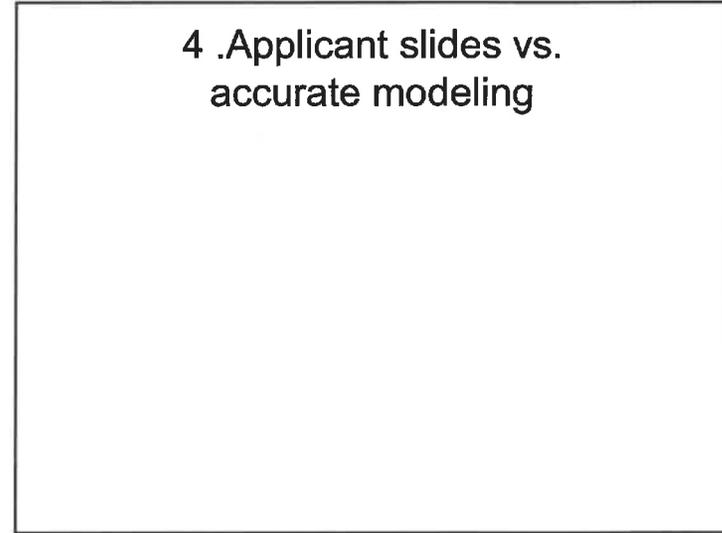
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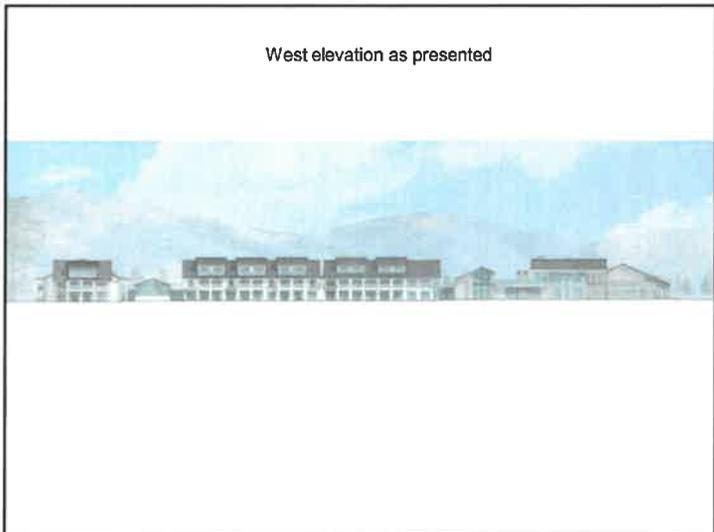
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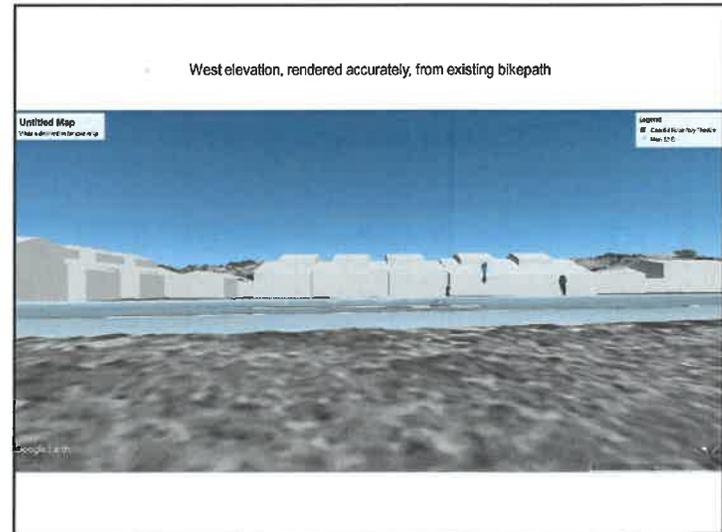
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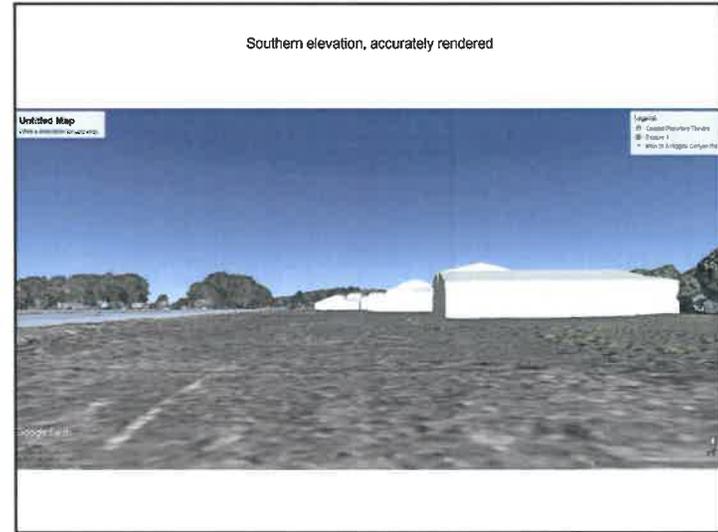
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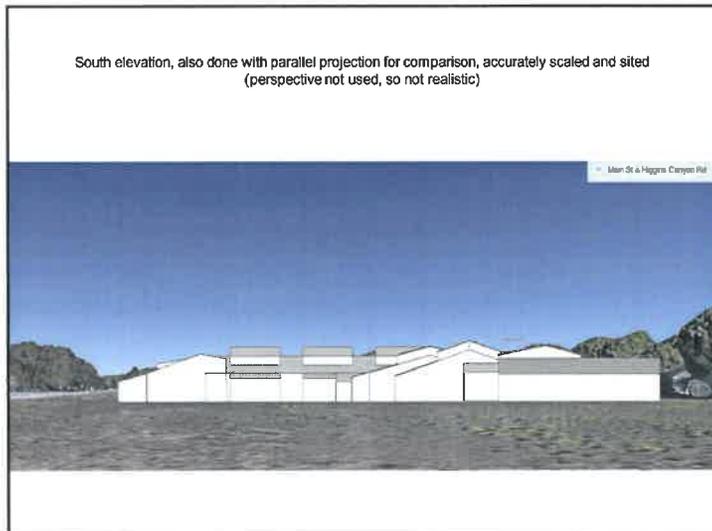
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Southeast view, accurately rendered



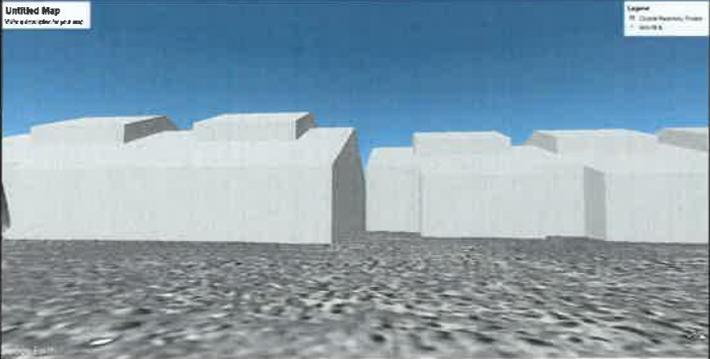
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East elevation, from direction of Main St.



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View from Main St, just west of trees, w accurate building massing



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