



October 21, 2015

Morgan Hill Planning Commission  
City of Morgan Hill  
17575 Peak Avenue  
Morgan Hill, CA 95037

Re: MWest Properties RDCS Application for Butterfield Village located at  
Butterfield Boulevard, Monterey Road and Jarvis Drive, Morgan Hill, CA

Dear Members of the Planning Commission:

On behalf of MWest PropCo XXIII, LLC (“MWest”), we are pleased to present the following information in support of MWest’s application for allocations in the 2015 RDCS Competition for the proposed Butterfield Village project (the “Project”), located along the south side of Jarvis Drive between Monterey Road and Butterfield Blvd in the City of Morgan Hill, CA (the “City”). We appreciate Staff’s thoughtful review of our application and the opportunity to provide additional support for our project.

Due to the timing of the City Council’s approval of the General Plan Amendment for the project (May 2015), MWest regrets that we were not able to complete the project design in sufficient time to apply for a pre-application review by the July 1<sup>st</sup> deadline. Nevertheless, we have been working with members of the community, Staff, the Planning Commission and the City Council for over a year now to develop a comprehensive vision for this important, 65 acre property near one of Morgan Hill’s core employment centers.

Butterfield Village and Technology Center is an innovative and vibrant mixed-use community and Morgan Hill’s first “live/work/play” environment. MWest Properties’ new, state-of-the-art campus will offer up to 600,000 SF of premier office/R&D/industrial space on 33+/- acres within the Morgan Hill Ranch Business Park. The flexible, “next generation” work environment will meet the needs of companies at all growth stages, with outstanding amenities including access to new parks and recreational facilities, open space and trails, and resort-style living within walking/biking distance.

With Butterfield Village, our goal is to meet the City’s need for a greater diversity of housing options by creating an exceptional and highly livable apartment community unlike any other in Morgan Hill.

## **SCORING OVERVIEW**

As new applicants in the RDCS competition, we were unfamiliar with the categories and did our best to interpret them. At the outset, Staff advised us that it was difficult for projects to score well the first time through, which was one of the reasons we felt it was important to participate in this year’s competition. We felt this was a valuable opportunity to learn about the process and to gain feedback from Staff and the Planning Commission to help us further refine our plan.

Please note that one of the decisions we made early on was to invest in design elements that would create an exceptional and high value project, and in amenities that would directly benefit the surrounding neighborhood and support the plan's overall vision – to create a successful live/work/play community. Thus, we did not “purchase points” in the competition. (By comparison, all of the other candidates in the competition – across all density categories – purchased an average of 16 – 20 points, at a cost of \$12,000 to \$15,000 or more per unit. After subtracting points awarded for these contributions, none of the projects in the competition earned a minimum passing score of 160; the average score was around 150.)

MWest self-scored the Project at 165.5 points (out of a possible 200, though a large percentage of the points are applicable only to single family or downtown projects). Staff awarded the project a much lower than expected overall score of 140.5. Attached is a detailed list of the specific categories in which we feel the project merits points, and for which we would appreciate the Planning Commission's feedback and consideration.

The disparity between Staff's score and our self-score is primarily related to elements of architectural design, lot layout and orientation. Staff's overarching comment can be found in Item 5: Orderly and Contiguous: *“The applicant has not worked with staff to address design issues, including parking layout (site is dominated by parking and is visible from public streets). Building and massing do not transition well with the adjacent neighborhood. The building designs and articulation require refinement.”* Similar design related comments repeat throughout the various scoring categories, resulting in a cumulative net loss of 18 points or more in our total score. Of course, we welcome ideas to further refine and enhance the project and anticipated we would have the opportunity to do so as part of the “post RDCS” entitlement process. However, we stand by the strength of our land plan and feel the comments raised by Staff discount the many superior and thoughtfully designed features of the project. We offer the following supplemental information to help Staff and the Planning Commission gain a broader understanding of our design approach.

## **DESIGN APPROACH**

Our architect, TCA architects, is an award winning residential architect and specialist in multi-family product design. Our landscape architect, Populous, is internationally known for its signature open spaces and land plans. Ware Malcomb is our experienced group of industrial specialists skilled at creating first class business park environments throughout the Bay Area and beyond. Together, our team has created an exceptional and unique project for Morgan Hill, but one perhaps that doesn't fit squarely into the criteria prescribed by the RDCS “box”. We are sympathetic to the challenges Staff faces when attempting to apply the criteria in a literal way to projects of different “shapes and sizes”. Most of the residential projects built in Morgan Hill over the last 25 years are variations of townhomes, condominiums and tract single family, and the RDCS criteria seem to be written in contemplation of these product types. We hope the Commission will be able to look at how the project serves the intent behind the criteria, as well as how all of the thoughtful design pieces of the plan work together to create a highly livable and desirable neighborhood.



#### Connectivity among Residences, Streets, Internal Parks and Open Space

A quality residential project must consider its environmental context and create appropriate transitions to adjacent neighborhoods. It is also imperative that the project create a highly livable environment in consideration of the experience of those who will one day call this place “home”. Our approach is to design a new neighborhood of apartment homes that caters to the lifestyle of its residents: quality architecture that feels “high end,” rich resort style amenities for active recreation and leisure, and gracious open space and pedestrian connections with inviting spots for people of all ages to congregate and socialize.

One major distinguishing feature is that our site plan “breathes”. The project includes a total of 5.69 acres of private recreation facilities, small parks (“parklets”), green buffers and useable open space areas both within the interior of and around the perimeter of the project (not including the 1.7 acre Central Park). (Please see pgs. L-1.0, L-2.0) Rather than trying to squeeze buildings, roads and parking into the envelope of the site, our design employs the idea of “integral landscape” to create a framework of green infrastructure that links residences, vehicles and pedestrians together in a generous and open park-like setting.

The plan creates an internal network of parklets and tree-lined pathways that allow the pedestrian to navigate internally and externally to the myriad of useable outdoor amenities. Perimeter trails along the Sutter Connector and Monterey Road have been designed to enrich the pedestrian experience and to invite our residential and industrial neighbors to visit Central Park, which will be privately owned but open to the public. Central Park is not intended to be “centrally located” within the residential project; rather, it is centrally located between industrial and residential uses so that the amenities can be shared equally by both future residents and employees, many of whom we hope will live, work and play in our

community. Amenities contemplated within Central Park are designed to appeal to this generation of innovation based companies, whose employees enjoy daytime opportunities to exercise and socialize. Amenities include a sports court, 3 x 3 soccer field, picnic and barbeque areas, and Food Truck Alley.

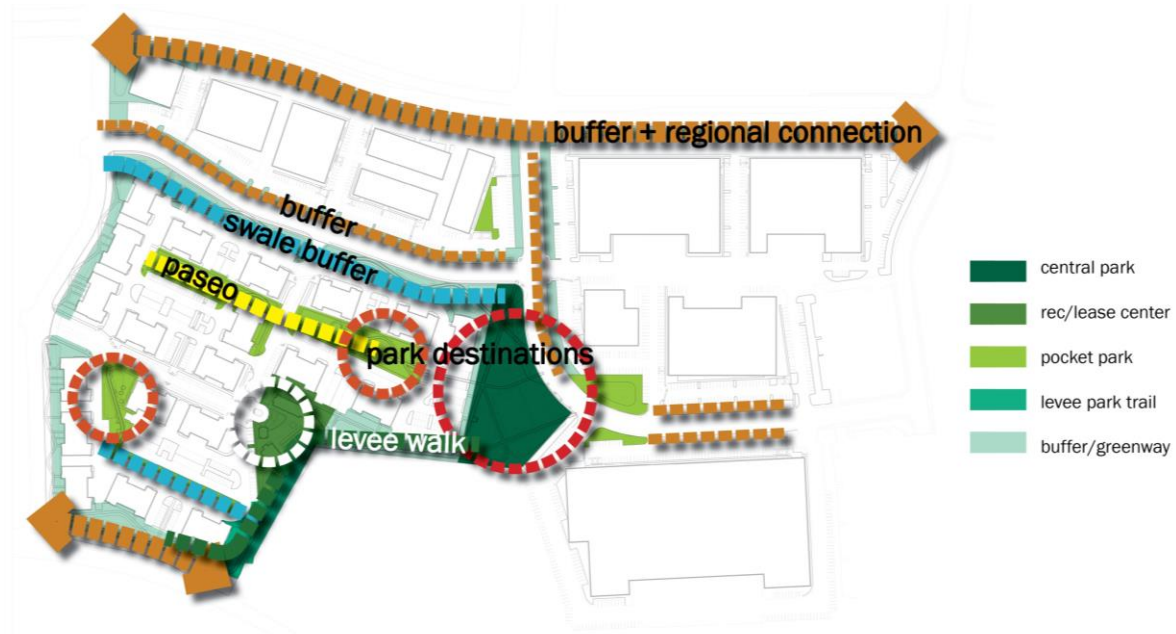


### Site Planning Considerations

The site plan can be divided into three areas by the use of an internal “Main Street” that acts and feels like a small public street, even though it is private. Entering the project at the Jarvis Gateway, the use of parallel parking along this street slows traffic and the eye is drawn towards a village of buildings with distinctive architecture containing the Leasing Center, Fitness Center, Club Room and Wifi Café, which surround a Junior Olympic pool and spa. The street is oriented such that residents and guests entering the community will have a view of El Toro in the distance.

Each of the three zones of the site plan has its own outdoor park space that residents can conveniently access. These create “opportunity” areas for people to meet, interact and socialize with their neighbors, something that tends to be lacking in apartment community design today. Each of these parks contain playful design elements (see pg. U.1.1E) and are connected via meandering pathways as well as to the main recreation center, the 1.7 acre central park and the pedestrian trails along Monterey and the Sutter Connector.

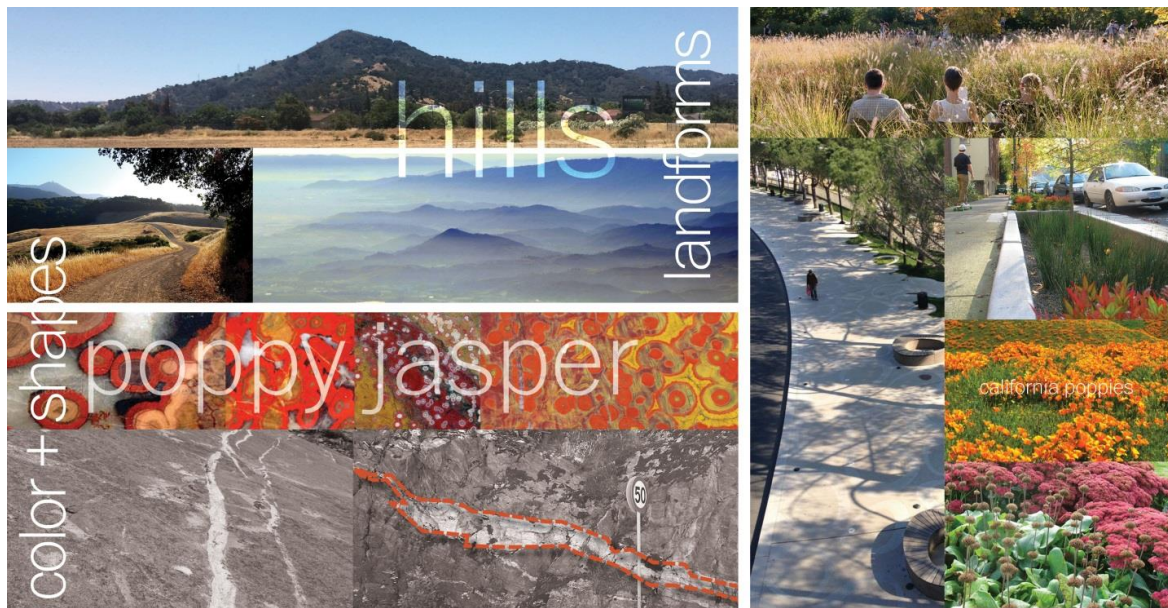




## Planting Plan

The concept for the open space design is inspired by the local ecologies and the geology that make Morgan Hill unique. Landforms that remind us of the hills that surround the city and native planting create a dynamic and colorful edge along the generous buffer zones that envelope the site on all four sides. The characteristic shapes of the native poppy jasper stone were the inspiration for the multiple play and gathering pods distributed within the pocket parks.

Sustainable design and multiple use of landscape areas and rain gardens for recharge and biofiltration is a key component of the project.



## landscape character

BUTTERFIELD VILLAGE AND TECHNOLOGY CENTER  
MORGAN HILL, CALIFORNIA  
24.07.2014



MWEST PropCo XXIII LLC

MARK MALCOWSKI



POPULOUS

### Parking Design and Orientation

Staff suggests that our plan is “dominated by parking”. We disagree. We understand that it’s difficult to judge the look and feel of the project environment by simply looking at a flat, one dimensional, “site utilization plan”. Therefore, we provided a number of 3 dimensional renderings in our submittal intended to afford a better sense of how all the design elements work together to create a highly livable and attractive environment in which parking is conveniently located but not at the forefront, dispersed and minimized to the extent possible. (see pgs. L-3.0, L-3.1, L-3.2, L-3.3)

Parking is a tricky design element. Although we want to encourage people to use alternative means of transportation, we recognize that we are still an auto dependent culture. We don’t want to provide too much parking, but providing too little can be problematic. We heard loud and clear from both our residential and industrial neighbors that there is inadequate parking in the Madrone Plaza community and thus parking spills over to Jarvis and has become an inconvenience for many.

The City’s requirement in the R-3 zone is 2.1 spaces per unit, which we believe is higher than necessary for a rental community of 1 and 2 bedrooms. Most of our residents are expected to be singles and couples. Typical suburban ratios for comparable projects are about 1.85 spaces per unit. This is something we would like to discuss with the Planning Commission at the appropriate time. For now, we have provided, on average, one covered (enclosed garage) and one uncovered space per unit. (Please see the attached data table.) As most of the parking is internal to the project in order to meet City requirements, the design challenge is how to break up the parking fields. We have accomplished this in large part through the use of our three parklets and strategic placement of internal landscape connections, carefully situating parking where it is obscured by tree-lined spaces. Parking is distributed throughout the site, thereby breaking down the overall appearance of these areas. With these thoughtful design techniques, parking spaces tend to vanish as they are enveloped by trees, shrubs and pathways. The vehicular and pedestrian experience becomes a pleasant one verses one of vast parking lots and garage doors.





Staff also raises a concern that parking is visible from public streets, but in all conditions, our parking will be largely shielded from view. Along Monterey, parking is shielded through a combination of the placement of buildings and grading conditions (the road being higher than our site). Along Jarvis, parking will not be visible due to the way the buildings and landscape work together, and garages are located on the interior of the project. Along the Sutter Extension, parking within the residential community will be shielded either by buildings and/or by the placement of Central Park between the project and the road. Within the project, our internal Main Street is lined with units that address the street, not garages.

In response to concerns raised by our industrial neighbors, we paid careful attention to the transition between industrial and residential uses. Along the Sutter Connector, we felt that it was important to place the most sensitive uses – the residences – as internal to the project as possible to protect the integrity of the residential environment. The residences that line Sutter do have garage doors that face outward towards the Sutter Connector, but they are a minimum of 90' away from the street and there are residences above. The parking area will be separated from the road by 40' of dense landscaping, berms, and trees, which will also obscure the garages and most of the buildings from view. This placement allows us to face the residences towards the interior parks within the project, which helps activate and provide “eyes” on these spaces as well.



### Massing, Articulation and Neighborhood Transition

Staff commented that the architectural massing and level of articulation proposed did not transition well with the Madrone Plaza neighborhood. Again, with respect, we disagree.

#### Style

First, the choice of the Spanish Monterey architectural style was deliberate. The beauty of the style is its simplicity, elegance, and timelessness; as the landscaping matures, the architecture retains its rich character and the neighborhood matures along with it. More contemporary or even modern styles bring something new to the community, but unfortunately run the risk of becoming dated over time. Our goal is to create a superior quality community that retains its value over time, and enhances the quality of the surrounding neighborhood. The Project draws context from surrounding neighborhoods while also forging its own identity. As indicated in the Addendum to our application, we are open to exploring other architectural styles if the Planning Commission and community have strong preferences.







### Massing

In deference to our Jarvis neighbors, we designed a customized building with a combination of 2 and 3 story elements, so that the 2 story façade faces Jarvis. This mirrors the homes in the Madrone Plaza neighborhood, which also *appear as* 2 story (they are actually 3 story) from the street and step back to 3 stories. In Butterfield Village, our buildings have 2 story edges that drop the building down to a scale that is commonly found in single family neighborhoods. The 3 story edge, which is only a third of the building facade, steps back more than 8 feet to further distance itself from the street and our Jarvis neighbors. The height of the 3 story portion however corresponds to the height of our neighbors due to their split level floor plan.

The building plan we designed also takes into consideration the need to create 4 sided architecture. Garages either tuck into the building, or the plan is flexible such that we can remove the garages as needed and replace them with dwellings to create more visual interest within the site plan. The plan shape, much like a capital "I" allows for movement along the facade while also tucking parking out of view. This façade movement breaks down scale and creates even more visual interest than what might be seen in a typical row-town type of building. Even technical items such as meters and electrical rooms are contained within the building and hidden from view. (Please see sheets A-1.2 – A-2.9)



### Articulation

Architecture is subjective but it is not necessary to “clutter” the façade to give it visual interest. As stated above, we purposely selected a more traditional architectural style (Spanish Monterey), which has clean, simple lines and employs classical detailing, such as iron balcony railings, accent shutters, shaped rafter tails, stone patio walls, awnings, corbels, accent eave tiles, etc. to create a richness and quality typically seen in for-sale type product. The roof plans also help to break down scale while creating additional visual interest with the use of a-symmetrical forms. Where we pop up to three stories along Jarvis, we have intentionally enhanced our elevation with the use of a large cantilevered balcony, reminiscent of classic Spanish homes. Unfortunately, the computer generated models do not do justice to the style, as much is gained from the texture of the building, richness of paint colors, and contextual and complimentary landscape elements.

Moreover, landscaping and streetscape design are vital elements in creating a soft transition between neighborhoods. To enhance the single-family scale of our streetscape, the project includes a meandering walk within a varying setback of at least 20 to 50 feet of landscaping designed to resemble front yards along Jarvis. A meandering 6 foot sidewalk and connecting pathways lead to front stoops, which mimic our neighbors across the street. The additional step back in our building design allows for even more landscape opportunities along Jarvis making this street a beautiful, lush environment. These design touches will create a consistent look and feel along Jarvis and a high end residential community.

Combined, the above design elements will provide more than sufficient articulation and interest to create a smooth transition to our neighbors along Jarvis. Notwithstanding the above, we are happy to revisit additional ways in which we can enrich the exteriors.

### Summary

As demonstrated above, we believe the Butterfield Village meets the intent of the various scoring criteria related to architecture, massing, articulation, and neighborhood transition listed in the attached table. We believe the project deserves to move forward in the competition and ask the Planning Commission to award the points indicated for these categories.

We are excited about the project and the many benefits it will bring to Morgan Hill. Butterfield Village will be both uniquely Morgan Hill, and a unique project for the City. The various design elements described above create a sense of place and community that celebrates the wonderful characteristics of this town and the beauty of the surrounding region. Butterfield Village will address an urgent need by giving current and future residents a highly attractive alternative to ownership housing, and play a key role in enticing companies to expand or locate in Morgan Hill Ranch.



Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to partnering with the City and community on this signature project.

Very Truly Yours,

*Chad Froman*

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MWest Properties

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w/Encl.

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