San Francisco
HOUSING
ACTION
COALITION

February 9, 2012

Mr. Mark MacDonald
DM Development
448 Linden Street
San Francisco, CA 94102

Re: 8 Octavia Project

Dear Mr. McDonald,

On behalf of the San Francisco Housing Action Coalition (SFHAC), I am pleased to inform you of our support for the 8 Octavia project. Following review and discussion, our Endorsement Committee believes the project has many merits and can make a substantial contribution to SFHAC's mission of increasing the supply of well-designed, well-located housing in San Francisco. We believe that it embodies very good urban design principles and meets the needs of present and future San Franciscans.

A copy of the endorsement guidelines we applied in reviewing your project is attached. The proposed project meets our guidelines in the following ways:

Project Description

The project is an 8-story mixed-use project with 7 levels of residential (49 units) above a ground-level retail space. The project is approximately 75 feet high at Market St. and 50 feet high at Haight St., with open space provided by the roof deck. Of the proposed 49 units, approximately 73 percent of them are two and three-bedrooms.

Land Use:

The use of the site for housing and ground floor commercial use is consistent with and promotes the land uses called for in the Market-Octavia plan. The high-density, transit-friendly nature and the imaginative provision of open space by the proposed project will improve the livability of the neighborhood and the quality of life for existing and future residents. It is clearly an appropriate use of the property.

Density:
The project uses the maximum unit density allowed under the existing zoning as it essentially occupies the entire site and its height is the maximum allowed on the Haight Street frontage.

Affordability:
The Project will provide seven on-site affordable units, consistent with Code requirements. Most of those will be two bedroom units. The project will also be responsible for payment of the special Market-Octavia affordable housing fee.

Alternative Transportation and Parking: The proposed project meets the SFHAC guidelines with 25 spaces at an overall ratio of .5-to-1. SFHAC applauds your inclusion of 26 bicycle spots, although we encourage you to add more if you are able. We also recommend looking into putting a City CarShare space in or around the surrounding streets.

Historic Preservation:
There are no historic resources to be demolished as a result of the project as it is a vacant lot formerly occupied by a portion of the Central Freeway. The design acknowledges the general height and massing scale of the historic residential buildings across the boulevard and its unique fenestration works well as a counterpoint to the classical church building and the LGBT Community Center across Octavia at the entrance to the boulevard. It appears that no proximate historic resources are to be negatively affected by the project.

Urban Design:
The proposed project promotes the principles of quality urban design. The SFHAC believes it will be compatible with the adjacent streetscape and neighborhood character [see our discussion above in the Historic Preservation section. We particularly applaud the inclusion of the four "vertical courtyards" that help break up the massing while also providing light and air into the interior areas of the units.

The SFHAC urges you to pull back the open space on the south side of the building to create a place for tables and chairs at the sidewalk level to accommodate a restaurant or café that may go into the ground floor retail space. Further, we feel that the suburban style landscaping at the entrance could be reconsidered with something in a more urban form appropriate for the entrance to the new boulevard. These will create a greatly improved sense of place along the adjacent portion of Market Street.

Environmental Features:
The SFHAC is highly supportive of the project's feature of the vertical courtyards that maximize the use of natural light and ventilation and minimize energy use instead of the standard back yard. The SFHAC encourages you to consider other greening measures, including rooftop solar panels for the building to the degree that it meets the confines of the budget. We urge you to also consider other on-site energy technologies as well as individual water metering.

Community Input:
The SFHAC applauds DM Development and the design team led by Natoma Architects for engaging the community, including the pre-application meeting that was attended by a representative of the Hayes Valley Neighborhood Association and others. The SFHAC always encourages project sponsors to meet with the surrounding neighbors and other community groups as the project moves forward and we commend you for your efforts to date.

Thank you for submitting this project to the SFHAC Endorsements Committee for our review. Please keep us abreast of any changes or updates with this project. We are pleased to support your excellent project as it moves forward, and let us know how we may be of assistance.

Sincerely,

Tim Colen
Executive Director

ENDORSEMENT GUIDELINES

Adopted January 2010

The SFHAC will consider endorsing housing developments and mixed-use projects with a housing component. The following guidelines will be used to evaluate the project:

Land Use: Housing should be an appropriate use of the site given the context of the adjacent properties and the surrounding neighborhood and should enhance neighborhood livability.

Density: The project should take full advantage of the maximum unit density and/or building envelope, allowable under the zoning rules.

Affordability: The need for affordable housing, including middle income (120-150 of median) housing, is a critical problem and SFHAC gives special support to projects that propose creative ways to expand or improve unit affordability beyond the legally mandated requirements.

Parking and Alternative Transportation: SFHAC expects the projects it endorses to include creative strategies to reduce the need for parking, such as ample bicycle storage, provision of space for car-share vehicles on-site or nearby, un-bundling parking cost from residential unit cost, and measures to incentivize transit use. Proximity to transit should result in less need for parking.

In districts with an as-of-right maximum and discretionary approval up to an absolute maximum, SFHAC will support parking exceeding the as-of-right maximum only to the extent the Code criteria for doing so are clearly met. In districts where the minimum parking requirement is one parking space per residential unit (1:1), the SFHAC will not, except in extraordinary circumstances, support a project with parking in excess of that amount.

Preservation: If there are structures of significant historic or cultural merit on the site, their retention and/ or incorporation into the project is encouraged. If such structures are to be demolished, there should be compelling reasons for doing so.

Urban Design: The project should promote principles of good urban design: Where appropriate, contextual design that is compatible with the adjacent streetscape and existing neighborhood character while at the same time utilizing allowable unit density: pleasant and functional private and/or common open space; pedestrian, bicycle and transit friendly site planning; and design treatments that protect and enhance the pedestrian realm, with curb cuts minimized and active ground floor uses provided.

Projects with a substantial number of multiple bedroom units should consider including features that will make the project friendly to families with children.

Environmental Features: SFHAC is particularly supportive of projects that employ substantial and/or innovative measures that will enhance their sustainability and reduce their carbon footprint.

Community Input: Projects for which the developer has made a good faith effort to communicate to the community and to address legitimate neighborhood concerns, without sacrificing SFHAC's objectives, will receive more SFHAC support.