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July 19, 2012

San Francisco Planning Commission
Rodney Fong, Commission President
Cindy Wu, Commissioner
Michael J. Antonini, Commissioner
Gwyneth Borden, Commissioner
Ron Miguel, Commissioner
Kathrin Moore, Commissioner
Hisashi Sugaya, Commissioner
John Rahaim, Director of Planning

RE: 100 Van Ness Project

Dear President Fong, Commissioners and Mr. Rahaim:

On behalf of the Civic Center Community Benefit District (CBD), I am writing to formally endorse the proposed changes to the 100 Van Ness Avenue property.

We believe converting the property to a combination of residential units and ground-floor retail uses will be extremely beneficial to the neighborhood while also fulfilling many of the City's planning and civic priorities.

The 100 Van Ness tower, formerly home to the AAA Insurance Company, is a major anchor building in the Civic Center neighborhood. It is also uniquely situated to have a drastic and profound positive impact on the area.

The Civic Center neighborhood has seen the development of more residential units in the past few years to meet demand, such as 77 Van Ness, and more to come, such as the Crescent Heights development at Tenth and Market. A neighborhood with mixed uses increases the activation of the sidewalks and streets, which leads to enhanced safety and vitality of the area. The proposed ground floor retail space will activate the entire block of Van Ness near Fell Street.

The property is also in the City's Market & Octavia Neighborhood Plan, which seeks to develop and promote high-density infill housing along transit corridors. The 100 Van Ness site is one block from the Van Ness MUNI station and a couple of blocks from the Civic Center MUNI/BART Station. Several bus lines also serve the area, as will the Van Ness BRT.

The project also calls for "re-skinning the tower" which will not only modernize the building, but will allow for wind baffles and other treatments to significantly reduce the force of the infamous winds along the Van Ness corridor.

(continued)

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The goal of the Civic Center CBD is to improve coordination and communication around the management, image, safety, beautification and cleanliness of the greater Civic Center area for the benefit of patrons, residents, employees, merchants, property owners and other visitors within the district.

We believe that the proposed changes to 100 Van Ness is in perfect alignment with our CBD's goals, as well as long-established goals of the Planning Department and the City and County of San Francisco.

We strongly urge you to support this vital redevelopment of 100 Van Ness.

Sincerely,

Donald W. Savoie, Executive Director
Civic Center Community Benefit District

San Francisco
HOUSING
ACTION
COALITION

May 9, 2012

Mr. Marc Babsin
Emerald Fund
532 Folsom Street, Suite 400
San Francisco, CA 94105

Re: 100 Van Ness Project

Dear Mr. Babsin,

On behalf of the San Francisco Housing Action Coalition (SFHAC), I am pleased to inform you of our enthusiastic support for your project at 100 Van Ness Avenue. Following review and discussion, our Endorsement Committee believes the project has many merits and will 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 excellent 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 a conversion of an existing 400 foot tall office tower into 399 residential family-sized units. The modifications of the project include demolition of the 29th level mechanical floor (the top floor) to create a ~12,000 sf open space roof deck in its place. The three levels of subterranean parking garage will include approximately 118 car parking spaces (including the conversion of two existing spaces for car share use). Approximately 121 bicycle parking spaces will be added in the garage and on the third floor.

Land Use:
The use of the site for housing is consistent with and promotes the land uses called for in the Downtown Area Plan and Market-Octavia Plan. The high-density, transit-friendly nature and the addition of open space by the proposed project will improve the livability of the neighborhood and the quality of life for existing and future residents. The housing is especially appreciated on this site since it will help activate the neighboring streets during non-bus hours. It is clearly an appropriate use of the land.

Density:
The project uses the maximum square footage density allowed under the existing zoning as it essentially occupies the entire site and its height is the maximum allowed on the Van Ness frontage.

Affordability:
You've indicated that the Project will provide fifteen percent on-site affordable units, consistent with Inclusionary Ordinance requirements. Of the BMR units, 60 units will be made available to those earning no more than 60 percent AMI. This is seen by the committee as a benefit to the community.

Alternative Transportation and Parking:
The SFHAC understands your reasons to keep the three stories of subgrade parking intact and that parking spaces will be leased separately, or "un-bundled" from apartment rentals. We are glad to learn that this project will decrease the number of automobile trips to and from this site from its current use as office since offices generate substantially more automobile trips than residential. The SFHAC applauds your inclusion of 121 bicycle spaces, and encourages you to add more City CarShare space on site and/or on the surrounding streets if you are able.

Historic Preservation:
There are no historic resources to be demolished as a result of the project as the structure was built in 1973. Because of the fact that the existing large building is not projected to be enlarged further, it appears that no proximate historic resources are to be negatively affected by the remodeling project.

Urban Design:
The proposed project promotes the principles of excellent urban design. The SFHAC believes it will be compatible with the adjacent streetscape and neighborhood. We particularly applaud the inclusion of the open space via roof deck and second-level balcony, enhancing the streetscape with ground floor retail, protecting the sidewalk and pedestrian entrance from downdrafts with the projecting "marquee" and creating some unit balconies to give the project a residential feel.

The SFHAC urges you to eliminate the existing curb cut on the Van Ness frontage and re-route the garage access to the neighboring parcel access as soon as practical.

Environmental Features:
The SFHAC is highly supportive of the project's commitment to meet either the LEED standards or Green Point certification system. 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 your budget and physical constraints. We urge you to also consider other on-site energy technologies as well as individual water metering.

Community Input:
The SFHAC applauds Emerald Fund and the design team for starting the process of engaging the community. 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 commencing those efforts.

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.

SPUR

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July 18, 2012

Marc Babsin, Principal
Emerald Fund, Inc.
532 Folsom Street, Suite 400
San Francisco, CA 94105

Dear Marc,

On behalf of the members of the SPUR Project Review Committee, we would like to thank your team for bringing the proposed residential redevelopment at 100 Van Ness to our group for consideration and review at our May 2012 meeting.

The mission of the SPUR Project Review Committee is to consider projects that are of citywide importance and to evaluate them according to criteria related to land use, public realm interface, building design and environmental effects. In all cases, we are seeking a combination of excellent planning and design solutions that will ensure the positive contribution of each project to a safe, comfortable, visually appealing and useful urban setting for the people who live and work in San Francisco.

As a result of our review and discussion of your project, we provide the following comments for your information and possible action.

Land Use

The Committee is very pleased with the proposal to convert the existing, 400 foot tall office tower at 100 Van Ness Avenue into 399 multi-family, residential units. The area is extremely well-served by mass transit, just a short walk from the main Market Street trunk of the MUNI and BART lines. The ratio of less than 0.3 parking spaces per unit, combined with over 100 bike spaces, is also welcome. The retail spaces on Van Ness are consistent with other uses in the neighborhood, and are currently lacking on this stretch of Van Ness.

Public realm Interface and the Promotion of a Pedestrian-Oriented environment

The proposal to retrofit an existing building has little impact on the public realm except insofar as the addition of high-ceilinged retail space on Market Street, wrapping around the corner at Fell Street, will prove a welcome addition to the street front. The committee understands the logistical access challenges in realizing the north portion of the retail space right away, but hopes that this can be completed as quickly as possible.

Building and Landscape Design

The proposal to strip the 400' tower of its 1970's era, pre-cast concrete skin and replace it with a glass curtain wall façade is at once bold in its conception and elegant in its simplicity. Color selection of the glass and pleasing fenestration rhythms will be

critical to the success of the design. While the renderings the committee viewed were only at a conceptual stage, we urge the designers to maintain their current direction of simplicity and consistency in the façade design, eschewing excessive variations, which might be tempting in a residential setting but would be in appropriate for a building of this size. We encourage the sponsor to keep the committee updated as the façade design takes shape.

The rooftop garden design shows creativity and promises to be a unique and lively space. Views from atop the 29th floor will, of course, be extraordinary, and the 12' glass wind screen will be essential to the garden's use.

The set back curvilinear storefront façades at the ground level are a pleasing counterpoint to the strong rectilinear tower rising above, and promise to create a lively street presence. The curved wrap around the corner also creates a strong unifying transition between the two intersecting streetfronts. We hope this design element survives through the design process into the final project.

The units themselves show the challenges of converting a commercial floorplate with its structural system into residential spaces. The layouts show considerable thought, though the committee had some concerns over the viability of clerestory windows bringing sufficient light into the interior bedroom of the 2-bedroom units.

Environmental Effects

Reuse and repurposing of a nearly half million square foot building into an attractive residential community offers tremendous environmental benefits before any other design decisions are made. The buildings will be constructed with environmentally appropriate materials consistent with the City's and State's green building codes, and given the environmental "headstart" this project has, we urge the sponsors to consider certification beyond the minimums required by San Francisco codes. Also given the nature of the rehab, we expect that special consideration will be given to the construction debris plan. SPUR always looks to projects to build environmental sustainability into their design and function and encourages the project sponsor to regard sustainability as an ongoing priority throughout the design and construction process rather than as an add-on at a later stage.

Conclusion

In sum, the SPUR Project Review Committee finds this project to be an exciting and welcome upgrade to one of the City's larger buildings in a very prominent location. The combination of a design upgrade, the introduction of residential usage and the addition of retail at street level combine to make this a winning project. We thank you for committing your time and resources to the presentation at SPUR, and hope that you will take our recommendations into consideration. We will follow further refinements of this project with great interest and invite you to keep us informed on its progress.

Consideration for Endorsement

Should you intend to request SPUR to consider this project for endorsement, you should contact the Committee co-chairs at the appropriate time. Endorsement by SPUR is reserved for projects of the highest quality and significance to the city. Consideration for endorsement begins with a formal response by project sponsors to this review letter, including an update on any significant changes to the project program or design since the project was presented at SPUR. The project is then taken up for discussion by an endorsement subcommittee of SPUR board members who serve on committees in the areas of project review, urban policy, housing, sustainability, and transportation. We normally require a month's lead-time to schedule a meeting of the endorsement subcommittee.

Please do not hesitate to contact us for questions/clarifications.

Sincerely,

Reuben Schwartz Mary Beth Sanders Charmaine Curtis

Co-Chairs, Project Review Committee

Hayes Valley Neighborhood Association

July 12th, 2012

Dear Marc,

Thank you for the very informative presentation on your development plans for 10(Van Ness. The Hayes Valley Neighborhood Association's Transportation and Planning Committee was very pleased to see your plans and strongly supports your project. We found the design to be exciting, were very pleased that you were doing on site affordable housing units and were close to a .25 parking ratio.

As we discussed, one of the few areas where we would suggest change would be to include a higher number of car share spaces within the 118 parking spaces you are planning. The transit rich character of your location and the likely demographic of your renters should make car share a very popular option for your residents; we would hope that you would look at 100 resident parking (.25 parking) and 18 car share spaces.

We look forward to staying in touch with you as further design elements evolve.

All the best,

Jim Warshell
(For Jason Henderson, Chair of the HVNA T&P Committee)