



January 23, 2013
Mr. Gary Testa
San Francisco Overlook
San Francisco, CA

Re: San Francisco Overlook Project

Dear Mr. Testa,

On behalf of the San Francisco Housing Action Coalition (SFHAC), I am pleased to inform you of our endorsement of your project on Crestmont Drive. Although there were differing views within SFHAC regarding the location of this development, a Westside opportunity for new housing is rare and we strongly support increased density on this side of the City. Following review and discussion, a large majority of our Endorsement Committee believe the project has many merits and will make a substantial contribution to SFHAC's mission of increasing the diverse supply of well-designed housing in San Francisco and trying to meet the need for more housing on the Westside. We believe that your proposal embodies 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 proposes 34 units, including 24 duplex homes and 10 townhouses.

Land Use:

This project's addition of housing will improve the character of the Forest Knolls neighborhood and the quality of life for existing and future residents. It is an entirely appropriate use of the land and is similar in scale to the surrounding neighborhood.

The SFHAC also believes both the project and neighborhood would be improved by a pedestrian access from the project site on Crestmont down the steep slope to Fifth Avenue below. We recognize that the developer has made an extensive, long-term effort to accomplish this but has not been successful. We urge the City to recognize the value in an amenity like this and become active in helping secure an easement for this purpose.

Density:

While SFHAC supports taking full advantage of the allowable density, we recognize this is sometimes constrained by topography and the context of the existing neighborhood. Although less than the maximum density is being proposed in this case, we endorse using attached homes wherever possible and other features to thoughtfully intensify land use.

Affordability:

The project will pay the Inclusionary Housing Ordinance *in-lieu fee*.

Alternative Transportation and Parking:

While SFHAC strives to reduce the need for car use and parking in the projects it supports, the proposed project is located in an area that is poorly served by public transportation, which is both distant and infrequent. Additionally, because of topography, the new roadway cannot support on-street parking due to emergency vehicle access requirements. With these factors in mind, the sponsor proposes to exceed the allowed 1.5 off-street parking spaces per residential unit, requesting a variance to increase to a level of two parking spaces per unit based on concerns expressed by neighbors.

Historic Preservation:

There are no designated historic buildings or structures of cultural merit on the site or affected by the project

Urban Design:

The SFHAC believes that the Levy Design proposal promotes the principles of excellent urban design. It is designed to complement both its built and natural surroundings. Many of the duplexes are separated, creating views through the site at street level. The proposed buildings are sized to match the character of the adjacent neighborhood and we are impressed with Levy Design's use of building colors that blend into the hillside when seen from the north and west.

We also like that this project has a substantial number of multiple bedroom units and includes features that make the project friendly to families with children. With the exception of Parkmerced, almost all new housing in San Francisco has been located on the east side of town. This project looks to provide new housing for those families who wish to live on the west side of San Francisco. The proposed homes, the majority of which are 3 bedrooms, range in size from 1650-2550 square feet, making them ideal for families with children. It is worth noting that this site is relatively close to many of the best public schools in the City.

Environmental Features:

The SFHAC commends your compliance with the City's Build-It-Green requirements. We urge you to also consider individual water metering and additional water conservation measures if it is feasible. In addition, the effort you've put into assuring that the project is engineered to reinforce the steeply sloped site from any erosion or sliding issues is impressive.

Community Input:

The SFHAC applauds the project sponsor and the design team for engaging the neighbors at multiple community open houses and making presentations to neighborhood groups. The SFHAC always encourages project sponsors to meet with the surrounding neighbors and other community groups as the project moves forward. We recognize that this can be an arduous process and may not achieve consensus so 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 project as it moves forward. 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 Mr.

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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.