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June 11, 2012

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Dear Mr. MacDonald,

On behalf of the members of the SPUR Project Review Committee, we would like to thank your team for bringing the proposed residential development at 8 Octavia Street to our group for consideration and review at our February 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 pleased with the proposed housing at the site at the portal to Octavia Blvd. This pedestrian-friendly urban space will benefit from the additional residents in the 13 one-bedroom, thirty-three two-bedroom and three three-bedroom units. The ratio of 25 parking spaces, 26 bicycle spots, and one car sharing space is also welcome. The restaurant at the corner of Octavia and Market is consistent with other nearby neighborhood land uses.

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

The building creates a strong portal at the east side of the entrance to Octavia Blvd. It hugs the street line, creates a vibrant façade (further noted below), and offers a welcome pedestrian refuge with the restaurant/café at the Market Street corner. The committee also appreciated the combination of the strong presence of the building while still respecting the scale of the neighborhood. A successful gesture in achieving this is the way the building maintains a consistent roofline as Octavia goes uphill, giving the structure a stronger presence (more height) where need at the Market Street intersection. Positioning the parking entry on Hayes St. minimizes pedestrian disruptions.

Building and Landscape Design

The building will create an extraordinary and vibrant façade and streetscape along Octavia Blvd. The transparent glass shielded by controllable vertical colored metal shades will produce a rhythmic, subtly changing, eye-catching reflection of the activity within the building. At night the building will glow.

The units themselves combined simplicity, transparency, options for privacy when desired, and immediate access to light and interior green courtyards. The committee found these one- and two-bedroom units to be highly desirable urban living spaces.

As noted previously, keeping the roofline of the building consistent as the street climbs the hill creates strong presence at the primary intersection of Market Street and maintains a consistency in the street wall while transitioning gently to the scale of the neighborhood.

The committee appreciated the placement and scale of the two-story restaurant at the corner, but had some questions as to the workability of the triangular outdoor space at its entry. We could not tell whether the space would function successfully as either a sitting courtyard or an entry, and would be pleased to see the design team examine this further. And while the east façade of the building faces a lot line, it nevertheless will be visible from the east on Market Street, and we would also like to see a view of it from this perspective.

Environmental Effects

The buildings will be constructed with environmentally appropriate materials consistent with the City's and State's green building codes. In addition to these, the incorporation of controllable vertical louvers on the long west-facing façade create not only a dramatic tableau but are also the optimal way to shade the building from that direction, reducing its solar heat gain. The committee applauds how this feature integrates both design and sustainability, as 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 a very positive addition to the Octavia Blvd corridor. It creates a strong visual presence at the prominent portal to the boulevard while fostering a positive pedestrian experience; it adds needed housing to the neighborhood; and it does so with an extraordinarily imaginative and compelling design of understated force. 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