



SPUR URBAN CENTER
654 Mission Street
San Francisco, California
94105

415.781.8726

www.spur.org

SPUR SAN JOSE
38 West Santa Clara Street
San Jose, California
95113

408.510.5688

www.spur.org/sanjose

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July 27, 2012

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

Dear Mr. Babsin,

Thank you for submitting the proposed residential redevelopment at 100 Van Ness to our group for consideration by SPUR's Endorsement Subcommittee. We are pleased to inform you that we have endorsed this project.

SPUR's endorsement is reserved for projects of citywide importance. 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.

Land Use

We support 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.

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. As the renderings have been updated we are glad that the designers will 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 inappropriate for a building of this size. We appreciate that the façade design will be maintained.

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.

The units themselves show the challenges of converting a commercial floorplate with its structural system into residential spaces. The layouts show considerable thought and we hope that the viability of clerestory windows bringing sufficient light into the interior bedroom of the 2-bedroom units can be resolved.

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 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.

Please do not hesitate to contact us for questions.

Sincerely,

Reuben Schwartz

Mary Beth Sanders

Charmaine Curtis

Co-Chairs, Project Review Committee

Cc. SPUR Board of Directors