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January 24, 2013

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Dear Ms. Weld and Mr. Knorpp,

Treasurer
Bob Gamble

On behalf of the members of the SPUR Project Review Committee, we would like to thank your team for bringing the proposed development at Mission Rock to our group for consideration and review at our December 2012 meeting.

Immediate Past Chair
Andy Barnes
Lee Blitch

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.

Advisory Council
Co-Chairs
Michael Alexander
Paul Sedway

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

Board Members

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Will Travis
Jeff Tumlin
Steve Vettel
Cynthia Wilusz-Lovell
Cindy Wu

Land Use

The Committee is supportive of a creating a mixed use neighborhood on this site. The site has unquestionable desirability as a neighborhood in which to both live and work, with proximity to the waterfront, the ballpark, and the SoMa and Mission Bay areas. In the development's land use plan, the project sponsor proposes to allow flexibility, based on shifting market demand through the phases of development, in its allocation of parcels to either residential or commercial uses. The committee is intrigued by this approach, but cautions that the minimum proposed thresholds for residential use must be respected regardless of market conditions.

Another factor critical to the success of the proposal is whether the significant proposed retail presence can be sustained over time. We have no doubt that the retail will thrive during the baseball season and on game days in particular, but the neighborhood must be viewed as a city-wide or even regional destination to cultivate a dynamic retail neighborhood. An important component in achieving ongoing prosperity will be nurturing unique, local businesses.

The project is proposed to be built in four phases from 2015-2025. While phasing may be a financial necessity, it also carries a risk to the realization of a cohesive urban design as priorities shift along with changing circumstances. We trust that the sponsors, with their long-term commitment to the site in such close proximity to AT&T Park, are aware of this risk and will remain dedicated to realizing the original and vital vision.

The site is reasonably well-served by public transit, with a T-line stop near its southwest corner (3rd and Mission Rock) as well as a regional Caltrain stop at 4th and King to the north. Given the relative distance of the T-3rd Mission Rock Street stop from the center of the development's pedestrian and retail core, its location behind the large two-block parking structure located at the south of the project site, we encourage the sponsors to explore options for a more transit-friendly gateway to the neighborhood, perhaps at Channel St. We also hope that the project sponsors find ways to connect the project with the future 22-extension along 16th Street and support proposals for a future 16th Street Bus Rapid Transit Line, as well as advocate for service improvements to the T-Third Line to help ensure the success of the project as a transit oriented development.

Public Realm Interface and the Promotion of a Pedestrian-Oriented Environment

The new Mission Rock Square, in the center of a grid of small walkable blocks and welcoming pedestrian scale streets, anchors the urban design. Both the square and the scale of the grid lend themselves to an inviting pedestrian scale experience, and if thoughtfully designed, the square will be the focal point of the neighborhood. In addition to the design of the square itself and its perimeter buildings, a key element of its success as a vibrant public space will be its ability to be glimpsed from the 3rd Street corridor and its connection to the waterfront, each one short block away on opposite sides. Connections should likely balance the need for a "special" connector that is wider than the other streets leading to the square, yet not so open so as to erode the cohesion and identity of the space as an urban oasis and gathering place. Striking this correct balance will also help ensure the success of the retail lining the square, providing visibility while maintaining a strong sense of place.

We expect that the proposed China Basin Park on the waterfront at the northeast edge of the site will become a cherished and iconic San Francisco open space.

Building and Landscape Design

As this plan is still in the conceptual urban design phase, we are not in a position to comment on specific building design features. We are enthusiastic, however, about the height differential of the highrises. Rather than propose *a priori* specific heights for specific parcels, scaling and differentiating heights of buildings relative to one another to create a cohesive skyline and balanced use mix is a solution that is organic, elegant, and born of common sense. Views will be preserved, the skyline will be visually appealing, and the mistakes of Mission Bay's chunky and repetitive blocks will be avoided. We also applaud the use of different design teams for each building, all functioning under a set of site-wide guidelines. This diversity of design will be essential for the height differentials to translate into the desired visual richness and diversity.

The large parking structure at the southern end of the development, while necessary for game day parking, presents urban and architectural design challenges that have yet to be resolved. The building's bulk obscures views of the square and discourages access from the south. It also impedes access from the 3rd Street MUNI line. As a two block monolith, it also disrupts the neighborhood street grid, forming an abrupt terminus to the new main street paralleling the square. If the garage retains its current massing, this terminus will need to be designed to create a welcoming and enticing

focal point. The expansive roof of the garage, comprising perhaps 15-20% of the entire built footprint of the development, also presents unutilized opportunities for public space, solar generation, urban gardening or other creative uses to optimize the space.

Environmental Effects

We are encouraged by the sponsor's stated desire to explore district-scale environmental infrastructure and amenities in this development. We look forward to seeing more specifics as the design progresses and urge that these measures be made intrinsic to the design at this early stage. This development, with its density and mix of uses, and being constructed from the ground up, is particularly suited to a pioneering exploration of what ecodistrict benefits and efficiencies can be achieved with neighborhood scale planning.

Conclusion

In sum, the SPUR Project Review Committee finds this project to be a well-conceived and even potentially visionary project if concepts being explored are brought to fruition. We are encouraged by the development team's sensitivity to the site's urban context, and are optimistic that your long-term commitment to the site will enable you to robustly realize the vision you have set forth.

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 also look forward to following the project as the design progresses and issues we have raised are further refined and resolved.

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