



SPUR

San Francisco | San Jose | Oakland

February 27, 2017

San Francisco Planning Commission
1650 Mission Street, #400
San Francisco, CA 94103

**RE: 555 Howard Street, San Francisco
March 2, 2017 Agenda, Items 15a-c (2015-008058DNXCUIAVAR)**

Dear Planning Commissioners,

Pacific Eagle Holdings and SKS Investments presented the 555 Howard project to SPUR's Project Review Advisory Board at our February 2017 meeting for review and consideration.

In general, SPUR is focused on policies, plans and codes rather than on individual projects. In order to make infill development easier, we prefer to help set good rules around zoning, fees, housing affordability, sustainability, etc. However, on occasion SPUR's Project Review Advisory Board will review and endorse development proposals of citywide or regional importance, evaluating their potential to enhance the vitality of the city and region according to the policy priorities and principles of good placemaking supported by SPUR.

555 Howard Street is a 36-story mixed-use residential and hotel building located within the Transbay Transit Center District. The LEED Platinum-targeted project includes 69 residential units, a 255-room hotel, meeting and ballroom facilities, a spa and fitness center, ground floor restaurant, a bar/café on the top floor that will be open to the public and a rooftop public open space with views of the city and bay.

The advisory board appreciates how this project meets the street at the ground floor and will provide a high-quality publicly-accessible space at the rooftop. The ground floor is extremely tall, with a more than triple-height ceiling, and at this tight site, we are particularly impressed with how little of the ground level street frontage is occupied by inactive uses and how open and transparent it is to the public. It will be key to make sure that the intended transparency remains through the design and construction process. In addition, given the city's previous experiences with rooftop public spaces, it will be important that the project sponsor take great care in making it clear that the rooftop is open to the public.

The project at 555 Howard Street:

- ✓ **Is located at an appropriate location for development**, near transit and infrastructure and not on a greenfield site. This site is part of the Transbay Transit Center District Plan and is ideally located with access to transit and other amenities.
- ✓ **Provides an appropriate mix of land uses** of hotel, residential and retail, contributing to diverse stock of housing, fostering economic development, providing amenities and services to the surrounding community.

SAN FRANCISCO

654 Mission Street
San Francisco, CA 94105
(415) 781-8726

SAN JOSE

76 South First Street
San Jose, CA 95113
(408) 638-0083

OAKLAND

1544 Broadway
Oakland, CA 94612
(510) 827-1900

spur.org

- ✓ **Provides sufficient density at the site** with a total FAR of 26, 207 dwelling units/acre and 765 hotel rooms/acre, which supports adjacent transit and prevents underutilization of land, serving the future needs of Bay Area residents.
- ✓ **Creates a good place for people and contributes to a walkable environment** with both day and nighttime active ground floor uses, including a proposed restaurant use and residential and hotel lobbies, minimizing parking and curb cuts, and providing only 70 parking spaces for 69 units and 255 hotel rooms. We appreciate the limited amount of space devoted to back-of-house, loading, parking and other vehicle uses, which we recognize comes at a cost to the project.

In sum, the SPUR Project Review Advisory Board finds this development to be an appropriate and welcome use for this site and endorses 555 Howard Street. This project stands out for its attention to public space and the treatment at the ground floor level, particularly with the freeway ramp overpass immediately adjacent.

Please do not hesitate to contact us or Kristy Wang, SPUR's Community Planning Policy Director with any questions or clarifications.

Sincerely,

Charmaine Curtis
Co-Chairs, SPUR Project Review Advisory Board

Diane Filippi