

October 10, 2012

San Francisco Planning Department  
Attention: Bill Wycko  
1650 Mission Street, Suite 400  
San Francisco, CA 94103

To the Planning Department,

The Board of the San Francisco Verdi Club, MUNA neighborhood association, and immediate Potrero Hill neighbors and homeowners respectfully want to appeal the Mitigated Negative Declaration, 2011.0430E related to the project proposed for 480 Potrero Avenue.

Our objections fall under the items addressed in Attachment B, the Community Exemptions list.

**LAND USE AND LAND USE PLANNING**

c) Have a substantial impact upon the existing character of the vicinity.

This section of Potrero Avenue contains two and three story residential housing on the east side of Potrero and a three story housing development on the south side of Mariposa. The proposed six story building is completely out of character with the existing housing and buildings (both residential and commercial) on the block. In fact, there are generally no buildings higher than three stories (along the main roofline) on Potrero Street from Cesar Chavez Street to Division Avenue, except San Francisco General Hospital.

Additionally, a six story building containing 84 units is completely out of character with the existing residential units, as it is so dense, that it does not provide sufficient open space for residents.

**AESTHETICS**

a) Have an adverse effect on a scenic vista.

The corner of Utah and Mariposa streets provides a unique and stunning vista of Twin Peaks, Saint Ignatius Church and is enjoyed by residents and visitors as they walk or drive to their destinations. So much so, it has even been featured by international artist, Gabriele Basilico who presented his photography at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art as well as his book. Having precious moments where a lovely view is part of your daily experience is one of the reasons why San Francisco is a desirable place to live. Constructing a six story building on Potrero would erase that view, obstruct views from both the Mini park (on Utah St. and 18<sup>th</sup> St) and McKinley park, and give the feeling of living in a degraded community with a misplaced high-rise.

c) Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.

The character of the surroundings would be degraded. Across the street are three Victorian homes built in the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They have been maintained and cared for by their resident owners. On the south side is the Mariposa Gardens. This low income housing unit was designed to fit into the neighborhood and to provide greening for the occupants to enjoy. It is not a densely populated development and helps to set the aesthetic character of the neighborhood. A six story box development would not be in the aesthetic character of the neighborhood and block.

**POPULATION AND HOUSING**

a) Induce substantial population growth in an area directly.

Eighty-four units assuming 2.5 people per unit would add 210 people into a lot the size of 15,000 square feet provides about 72 square feet per person. Granted, given the height is 58 feet, these people would have more room, since they would be on stacked top of each other in six stories. But currently a 25x100 lot supports about

five people, giving 500 square feet per person. The plan for 84 units in a 15,000 square foot area will radically change the ratio of person to land and be out of character with the neighborhood.

### **TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION**

The Traffic Analysis quotes 53 cars being added during the peak traffic times. Those cars cannot be accommodated in 38 parking spaces that the building provides. Bike parking in the plan is not sufficient. MUNI employees use the street to park as their own parking has been reduced. The Pre-Natal Building at the corner of Potrero and 18th, Planned Parenthood, and UPS use the area around the lot for employee and patient parking. The city's new policy of adding meters and 1-2 hour maximum parking restrictions has made it harder for people to find street parking. The Body Shop next door uses the lot for parking currently. Those approximately 30 cars/day from the Body Shop will be added to the public parking spaces once the space they are using is removed.

The existing conditions for parking in the area of the development will make it impossible for residents to park cars. Particular consideration should be given to the Pre-Natal mothers and the senior citizen members of the Verdi Club to avoid adding additional hardships to their experiences in the neighborhood. The Verdi Club is a neighborhood institution that has existed since 1926 and provides a space for community activities. It serves senior citizens as well as youth with its programs. The project intends to supply 38 parking spaces for 84 units. This will result in removing the available parking from the users of the Verdi Club.

### **RECREATION**

Section 135 of the planning code requires 80 square feet of open space or 54 square feet of common open space per dwelling unit or some combination. The 8/17/2012 drawing proposes 84 units. This would require 4536 square feet of open space. The plan proposes a common courtyard of 25x100 ft on the first story. This courtyard would be above the garage and not suitable for greening. In order to satisfy the requirement, the plan proposes open space on the roof. The intent of the regulation is to provide an area suitable for gardening, trees and greenery. These two solutions do not meet the intent of the regulation. This development would not provide sufficient on-site recreation for inhabitants.

The community plan exemption checklist considers RECREATION and is concerned about overuse of existing parks. Franklin Square Park is the closest park to the project. District 10 has been identified by the SF Parks Alliance and SPUR as a district that is deficient in the number of parks. Franklin Square is already heavily used. Adding the occupants of 84 housing units to the number of park users would degrade the park through overuse.

### **HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS**

Bondo, a Spray Booth, Toxic Paint, petroleum and metal are either used or present in the air because of the body shop next to 480 Potrero. This is hazardous for the residents living near the body shop. Some mitigation needs to be put in place to prevent harm or future lawsuits due to negligence. In addition we believe that the rock outcropping and rock base of the lot is serpentine which is known to have a very high natural asbestos component. Given the close proximity of family housing to the project and the potential exposure to traffic along Potrero this potential exposure needs extensive study before any project is approved.

### **GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS**

a) Generate greenhouse gas emissions.

The shadow fan analysis produced by the planning department shows that shadows would be cast on the houses on the east side of Potrero. These shadows would affect these homes by markedly reducing the natural light and heat produced by the sun which warms and brightens the homes. They would need to use more light and heat energy during daylight hours to keep their houses warm and well lit which is an unnecessary creation of greenhouse gas emissions.

**ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS**

a. Living conditions for New Building Occupants

There is insufficient Open Space reducing the quality of the living experience of occupants. There are no three or more bedroom apartments. Within the UMU the planning department encourages family-sized units. To be consistent with this neighborhood, family sized units should be part of the development.

The building elevator is too far from the south-west apartments.

First Floor apartments are too near the sidewalk. This is a neighborhood that has a relatively high crime rate and it is not good for people to be living on the first floor. Graffiti is an issue for buildings along Potrero Avenue.

b. Affect on Neighborhood

Page 23 of the review states: *"However, because the height of the proposed building would not be substantially taller than the surrounding buildings, and because of the existing configuration of surrounding buildings, the net new shadow would not be considered substantial and would not increase the total amount of shading in the neighborhood above levels that are common and generally accepted in urban areas. Due to the dense urban fabric of the city, those of sunlight on private residences or property is rarely considered to be significant environmental impact and the limited increase in shading as a result of the proposed project would not be considered a significant impact under CEQA."*

Six stories and 58 feet is significantly taller than the buildings surrounding which are not greater than three stories. In fact this building would be the tallest building along the entire length of Potrero except the new expansion of General Hospital. It will stand out for miles and will impact views of hundreds of residences on Potrero Hill. It will also add a "wall" along Potrero Avenue, making a drive along Potrero much less scenic. This is not the direction that the neighborhood would like to see new development taking. We understand from review of other projects, particularly those near Telegraph Hill, that a project needs to be considered in the context of how it fits into the general character of the surrounding neighborhood. This neighborhood is not one of "dense urban fabric", it is mainly single family or two unit residences. We oppose creating a dense urban fabric, which currently does not exist, in our neighborhood by building this six story project.

Because of the reasons cited above, we the undersigned wish to appeal the MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION and would like to collaborate with the developers in creating a design that is more suitable for the neighborhood.

Thank you,

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