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November 29, 2005

Mr. Lou Vasquez
Build Inc.
315 Linden Street
San Francisco, CA 94102

Re: Proposed Residential Development at 900 Minnesota (The Cooperage)

Dear Mr. Vasquez:

Thank you for submitting the proposed residential development at 900 Minnesota for consideration by our Endorsement Subcommittee. We are pleased to inform you that the Subcommittee voted in support of this project at our October 18 meeting.

The mission of the SPUR Project Review Committee and Endorsement Subcommittee 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.

We believe your project is of particular significance for the city. As part of the Central Waterfront Better Neighborhoods Area Plan, it participates in a larger effort to bring diverse housing opportunities and mixed uses to a predominantly industrial area with many underutilized or vacant sites, and to concentrate housing near the Third Street light rail corridor. Just as importantly, it re-uses a significant historic resource within the Dogpatch Historic District. Respecting the distinctive architecture of this area will contribute greatly to its character as a special place in its own right—a neighborhood both connected to the city at large and yet rooted in its own particular history and urban sensibility.

In particular, both the Project Review Committee and Endorsement Subcommittee note the smart approach to urban design and aesthetics. This is a project that respects the industrial character of the neighborhood without repeating the ineffectual use compromises we have seen in many live/work projects. We also note the intensive and elegant approach to landscape design that softens

this industrial architecture and renders it more habitable. We encourage the project sponsors to continue to refine this approach—paying particular attention to sun and light in the courtyards and working proactively with the city Recreation and Parks Department to make Esprit Park a real front yard both for the residents of 900 Minnesota and the community at large.

Land Use

SPUR finds the project to be an appropriate use for the site. Just as importantly, we note that the project conforms to the goals and spirit of the Central Waterfront Better Neighborhood Plan currently under review by creating a high-density, distinctively urban, pedestrian friendly setting for people to live and work.

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

In general, SPUR not only supports but is genuinely excited by the proposed design for public realm interface, which works not only to retain and enhance the current walkability of Minnesota Street, but also addresses Indiana Street, which is far more desolate and industrial. Viable street trees will be retained and new street trees added. Access to underground parking is economical and discreet, with only one curb cut disrupting the sidewalks, allowing for residential stoops in many cases. Interior courtyards mediate the transition between public and private areas, while a café/courtyard will activate the corner near Esprit Park. With respect to this last amenity, we hope that sufficient ceiling heights will be maintained on the ground floor to make this a truly welcoming and vibrant place.

The greatest challenge to this site is the freeway overpass that provides a concrete "canopy" on 20th Street and creates a sort of no-man's land between the project site and Esprit Park. Much discussion at SPUR was directed toward encouraging the project sponsor to work proactively with Recreation and Parks to create a better transition between this private development and Esprit Park as a precious public resource. Also discussed was the possibility of working with the constraint of the overpass and "re-purposing" at least its underside through public art or some comparable intervention. We are pleased to know that the project sponsor hosted the Burning Man De-Compression event on this site and hope that the collaboration with Burning Man, or similar groups, will continue.

Building & Landscape Design

SPUR responded very positively to the mix of historic architectural fabric and textures

and contemporary additions that comprise this project. We note that this was one of the most comprehensive and thoughtful landscape designs ever seen by the Project Review Committee. It is very exciting to think about greening the Central Waterfront in general and in this respect as in others, the Committee only urged the project sponsors to go even further, encouraging residents to create gardens on their rooftop decks and seeking opportunities to create green roofs in general.

Environmental Effects

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 build process rather than as an "add-on" at a later stage. The Committee was strongly supportive of the project sponsor's commitment to as many as six carshare spaces, as well as the project sponsor's decision to unbundle parking from the cost of each residential unit in order to give those who choose alternative forms of transportation the option of opting out of parking subsidies. Further, the Committee also supported the project sponsor's plan to create high-efficiency units using LEED certification standards. Finally, the Committee noted that adaptively re-using existing buildings is itself a form of environmental/green building.

In sum, SPUR is pleased to support this project, which has significant potential to contribute to the vitality of the Central Waterfront as a dynamic and distinctive neighborhood. We look forward to watching the development of a project that could set a standard for high quality, thoughtful design in the Central Waterfront neighborhood.

Please do not hesitate to contact us for questions/clarifications.

Sincerely,

Jeannene Przyblyski
Co-Chair, SPUR Project Review Committee

cc: Steve Vettel, Esq.
SPUR Board of Directors