August 14, 2013

Kim Diamond, Development Director
Trumark Urban
90 New Montgomery, Suite 750
San Francisco, CA 94105

Re: Proposed Development at 346 Potrero Avenue

Dear Ms. Diamond:

On behalf of the members of the SPUR Project Review Committee, we would like to thank you for bringing the proposed development at 346 Potrero Avenue to our group for review and consideration at our June 2013 meeting.

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, visually appealing, and vibrant urban setting for the people who live and work in San Francisco.

After reviewing and discussing the 346 Potrero Avenue project, we provide the following comments for your information and action.

Land Use

Located within the Eastern Neighborhoods plan zone, the proposed project is for mixed-use development on a transitional block between Potrero Hill and the Mission district, in a transit-rich neighborhood. The project sponsor proposes a 9-story building comprising 72 for-sale residential units, with approximately 2,700 square feet of commercial space. The residential units are a mix of 57% one-bedroom and 39% two-bedroom units, with two 3-bedroom units and one studio. Required affordable units will be included on-site. The 2,700 sf ground-floor flexible commercial space will have 17-ft ceilings. The proposed height of the building meets the 85-ft limit for this parcel.

Though the immediate area surrounding the site currently hosts low-rise commercial buildings, we agree that the proposed 85-ft building height is an appropriate response to both current and future density needs of the neighborhood and the City.

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The committee is supportive of the mixed-used nature and proposed residential density at this location. We welcome the introduction of a substantial "for-sale" investment in this neighborhood and look forward to more developments following suit. We are pleased to see the inclusion of affordable housing on-site and the emphasis on modest size units that will appeal to more moderate income buyers.

We understand that the project sponsor is consulting with SF Made and acknowledge the efforts to find a small, local artisan-type tenant for the ground-floor commercial space.

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

Project sponsors have taken considerable care to emphasize and enhance the pedestrian interface along Potrero Avenue. The 346 Potrero Avenue site is well served by public transportation and the 17th Street bikeway. The project sponsor proposes a 0.6:1 parking at the ground floor, in a stackable configuration, including 1 car share space, as well as 1:1 bike parking. In addition, the multi-story residential development—on a site currently occupied by a car wash—will reduce existing curb cuts from 8 to 1, a significant step in the transition from auto-centric pedestrian oriented environment for this area.

The committee agrees that the two-story, transparent streetscape, with its 3-ft setback to accommodate planters and trees, may well have a very positive influence on future development in the area. The project might benefit from a bit more emphasis on the front entrance, but on the whole the committee is very satisfied with the Potrero Avenue streetscape. We encourage the project sponsor to continue the thoughtful design of what has the potential to be a very vibrant urban streetscape.

Building & Landscape Design

The proposed building design at 346 Potrero Avenue is a modern mix of metals, translucent acrylic, and tile, with cement plaster on the building sides. The committee understands the unusual challenge presented by the introduction of a mid-rise building, on a mid-block site, surrounded by low-rise retail and a gas station. However, though we are pleased overall with the articulated Potrero Avenue façade, the North and South facing façades (adjacent to McDonald's and the service station) are less satisfactory. We appreciate the attempt to mitigate the large blank wall with windows, but suggest the project sponsors revisit this aspect of the design.

A combination of public and private open space in the form of roof deck, second floor deck, and rear yard is proposed to satisfy open space requirements. The committee especially liked the green wall proposed as a solution to the extreme grade change at the back of the building.

In reviewing the floor plans, the committee noted that the logistics surrounding trash disposal may need more careful attention. The small trash collection room on the first floor appears to be both inadequate and difficult to access for all tenants of a nine-story building.

Environmental Effects

SPUR believes it is essential for projects to build environmental sustainability into their design and function. We understand that the project sponsor intends to exceed the minimum Greenpoint rating and possibly seek a Silver or Gold LEED rating. Though not specified by the project sponsors, the committee suggested that solar roof panels would be a good choice in this relatively sunny location.

We are happy to see the project sponsor's commitment to sustainable design and encourage them to include sustainable systems in the earliest stages of development. We look forward to hearing more as the project progresses

Conclusion

The SPUR Project Review Committee finds the proposed project at 346 Potrero Avenue to be an appropriate use of the site. The increased density in the residential development will enliven and enhance this transit-rich neighborhood. We are also encouraged by the project team's genuine commitment to building an affordable, for-sale project in this transition neighborhood.

We thank you for committing your time and resources to the presentation at SPUR, appreciate the fact that you have presented your proposal to us at an early stage in its development so that you may take our recommendations into consideration. We will follow further refinements of this project with great interest and invite you to keep us informed on its progress.

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

Sincerely,

Charmaine Curtis Mary Beth Sanders Reuben Schwartz
SPUR Project Review Committee Co-Chairs

cc: SPUR Board of Directors