



Friday, November 7, 2008

Mr. Moe Hackett
City of Oakland
CEDA, Planning and Zoning Division
250 Frank Ogawa Plaza, Suite 2114
Oakland, CA 94612

RE: 720 East 11th Street - SUPPORT

Dear Mr. Hackett:

For 50 years, Greenbelt Alliance has worked to promote livable cities and protect open space around the nine-county Bay Area. Our Compact Development Team (CDT) endorses projects that meet the diverse needs of communities around the region, providing new homes and jobs near transit, including homes we can all afford. The CDT evaluated the 720 East 11th Street project proposed by Resources for Community Development using an established set of guidelines. We write in support of this development because we feel it will be a gain for this neighborhood. This project provides desperately needed affordable and family-oriented homes in a great location, is the product of an extensive community process, and makes the neighborhood friendlier to pedestrians and cyclists, among other environmental benefits. Greenbelt Alliance encourages the Design Review Committee and the larger Planning Commission to support this model development as an example for others to follow.

Resources for Community Development proposes 55 homes for this site, and fortunately, the location is ideal. The project redevelops a fenced off outdoor storage space into an attractive new community. The surrounding area has restaurants, shops, open space such as Clinton Square Park, bus stops, and the Lake Merritt BART station, meaning future residents of 720 East 11th Street will have the opportunity to live near jobs, needed services, and public transportation options. The development itself also includes stoops, trees, and other design amenities that will foster lively streets.

One of the greatest assets of 720 East 11th Street is its provision of affordable, family-oriented housing in an area in desperate need of housing options. All homes in this development will be affordable, and the majority will be 2-bedrooms, 3-bedrooms, and 4-bedrooms. As you know, Oakland and the entire Bay Area is struggling to meet its housing needs, and many who work here cannot afford to live here. By ensuring new infill development has homes we can all afford, we can combat undesirable sprawl by addressing one of its root causes: the search for affordable places to live. By providing affordable homes tailored to families, we can ensure they are not forced to live in overcrowded environments.

An extensive and healthy community process led to this current proposal, as Resources for Community Development listened to community concerns and adjusted its plans accordingly. In order to communicate with neighbors most effectively, written translations in Spanish, Vietnamese and Cantonese were provided, showing the developer's commitment to an inclusive community planning process. The developer also sponsored a tour in which residents could visit other comparable developments in the neighborhood to get a feel for how this proposed project would blend in with the area. Thanks to this effort, 720 East 11th Street is in character with the existing neighborhood and in concert with the desires of its community.

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Other than its compactness and location, there are numerous other environmental benefits of this proposal. For one, secure bike parking is provided for residents, giving residents the option of keeping bicycles on-site. Parking is provided in moderation and is pushed to the interior of the site away from the street, allowing a lively street with residential and community uses. The development also creates two new public areas, adding needed gathering spaces to the neighborhood. The developer will incorporate a series of green building technologies so that the project adheres to the GreenPoint rating system. Resources for Community Development is also working with Alameda Stop Waste to integrate green construction and design elements into this building.

In closing, Greenbelt Alliance encourages the City of Oakland to approve this well-designed and desperately needed development, which will fit in well in this transit-rich neighborhood. This kind of affordable infill development is a step toward combating the threat of climate change. It is no surprise that Resources for Community Development enjoys a decent relationship with many nearby residents, as they have made a strong effort to address neighborhood concerns. Greenbelt Alliance urges the Design Review Committee and the larger Planning Commission's support for 720 East 11th Street.

Regards,

/s/

Marla Wilson
Sustainable Development Associate