



Wednesday, November 12, 2008

Steve Lawton
Community Development Director
City of Hercules
111 Civic Drive
Hercules, California 94547

RE: Hercules New Town Center - SUPPORT

Dear Steve:

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 Hercules New Town Center project proposed by the Red Barn Company using an established set of guidelines. We write in support of this development because we feel it will be a gain for Hercules. Its chief benefits include its compact, walkable design, its mix of uses, and its adjacency to transit. Greenbelt Alliance encourages the Planning Commission and the City Council to support this model development as an example for others to follow.

The New Town Center project represents one of the districts identified in the Central District Plan, created in the 1990s through an inclusive community charrette process. It includes a total of 1,650 homes in three phases: Market House, Cinema Town, and Transit Town. The project will be able to bring exciting new amenities to Hercules, including a 16-screen cinema and grocery store, due in part to its successful design elements. Particularly, the compactness of the development proposed for these 35 acres is the key to the project's success. The compact design creates the level of demand that makes the grocery possible and the transit viable, and also frees up valuable space for plazas, pedestrian pathways, and other active public areas.

Climate change and record high gas prices have taught us that we need a new way to grow in the Bay Area. We must design new communities with homes, jobs, and shops nestled together, so residents are able to get to work, to the store, or to a friend's house without having to drive. New Town Center includes a diverse mix of uses in one project, including entertainment, office space, housing, neighborhood-serving retail, and open space. The parking will be provided in garages that are wrapped by building facades within the development, in an effort to preserve the pedestrian environment. Since a healthy mix of uses includes mixed-income housing, Greenbelt Alliance is also pleased that Red Barn Company will be offering 15% of the homes at below-market rates.

What truly makes this project green is the fact that its adjacency to transit means that residents will have a real alternative to driving. The City's Mobility Plan will specify the ways in which residents and visitors of this community will get around, but what we do know is that relocating bus service to the Cinema Town phase of New Town Center will allow the current bus facility to double in size. The project will be served by the City of Hercules' new shuttle service, providing connections to BART, jobs, and future ferry service. We support City efforts to ensure the bike and pedestrian path between Market Town and Cinema Town is safe and well-designed, as the highway represents a significant site planning barrier to be overcome. Additionally, in the

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event that wBART becomes a reality in the future, this project will be prepared to accommodate this additional expansion of transit services.

In conclusion, Greenbelt Alliance applauds the City of Hercules for its ambitious plan to create a vibrant core for the community. We are also pleased that Red Barn Company will seek LEED certification from the U.S. Green Building Council for its green building features. Greenbelt Alliance urges the City Council and Planning Commission's support for the Hercules New Town Center project.

Regards,

/s/

Marla Wilson
Sustainable Development Associate