



Tuesday, October 27, 2009

Mayor Abe-Koga and City Councilmembers,
Environmental Planning Commissioners
City of Mountain View
500 Castro Street
Mountain View, CA 94104

RE: Minton's Lumber (455 West Evelyn) Development Proposal – SUPPORT

Dear Councilmembers and Commissioners:

For over 50 years, Greenbelt Alliance has protected the Bay Area's working farms and natural areas while making the Bay Area's cities better places to live. Our recently released **Grow Smart Bay Area** report (www.growsmartbayarea.org) served as our challenge to the region to grow sustainably. This report—which was the culmination of an extensive research project examining all parcels of land in the region that were likely to redevelop—proved that the Bay Area can comfortably accommodate all of the growth coming to the region through infill development within our existing urban footprint. Greenbelt Alliance recognizes that the City of Mountain View has a history of building compact, transit-oriented communities, and we commend the City for these efforts. Our **Grow Smart Bay Area** research identified Mountain View as one of the region's top cities in terms of infill potential. This means that as we look to the future and how the region can best accommodate growth, we encourage the City of Mountain View to continue its role in providing homes for those who work in Mountain View.

Our Compact Development Team seeks to fulfill one aspect of our **Grow Smart Bay Area** vision by endorsing and advocating for livable, transit-accessible communities with a wide range of housing options for families of all sizes and income levels. We have evaluated the 455 West Evelyn project proposed by Prometheus Real Estate group using a set of endorsement guidelines. We write in support of this development because we feel it will be a major gain for the neighborhood. Due to its prime infill location with strong regional transit connections, pedestrian-friendly aspects, and the developer's efforts to make the project fit in with the character and scale of the surrounding neighborhood, we strongly encourage the Environmental Planning Commission and City Council to support this project. This development is fortunate enough to be situated in an area that the community identified last year as appropriate for this kind of development via the Community Visioning Process.

The proposed project will use the site currently occupied by Minton's Lumber on West Evelyn Avenue. It is hard to imagine a more ideal site for this type of high-quality, compact residential development. The site is a mere stroll away from Castro Street's shops and cafes—a key feature in attracting future residents back to our town centers and away from far-flung suburban development. Furthermore, the site is the epitome of "transit-rich," with Caltrain Baby Bullet, VTA light rail, and bus connections all across the street at the transit hub. Such transit amenities, combined with frequent service by private employer shuttles that operate along West Evelyn, will provide excellent connections to both the rest of

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the region and to local job centers. Additionally, the developer plans to enhance the site's inherent connectivity with the provision of well over 200 bicycle stalls. It is our understanding that the City of Mountain View is considering parking on a citywide level as a part of the General Plan update process, and accordingly, it is our hope that neighbors' concerns about parking can be addressed by taking into consideration this larger process and the overall supply of parking in the downtown area. We are encouraged by the fact that future residents of 455 West Evelyn will have every opportunity to reduce unnecessary car travel. This should help allay local concerns about increased traffic—as nothing attracts excess traffic more than excess parking provided for cars.

Another key feature that Greenbelt Alliance looks for when evaluating development proposals is whether or not the project enhances the pedestrian realm. The Minton's proposal excels in this area. The developer will construct a paseo bisecting the site, which will allow safe and inclusive pedestrian access between West Evelyn Avenue and Villa Street. The paseo will feature landscaping, street furniture, and a landscape or art feature in the center. Additionally, the ground floor patios will be oriented towards the street, activating the edge of the development and providing a pleasing, varied visual experience for the pedestrian. These amenities will be available to all Mountain View residents and will ensure the project is incorporated well into the existing neighborhood.

Greenbelt Alliance understands that this project has generated concerns from local residents due to its compact nature. With approximately 59 homes per acre, the project is indeed compact, though density is only part of the story. Density without smart design can appear overwhelming; however, density that pays attention to form, and is respectful of both scale and context, can be quite attractive. The developer has made every effort to make sure the Minton's project falls in the latter category, engaging in an iterative process with the local community in order to make sure that the design of the development reflects the vernacular of the surrounding neighborhood. Similarly, Prometheus is taking into account the health of future residents, neighbors, and the environment by pursuing Build It Green protocols, currently achieving nearly 100 points.

In closing, Greenbelt Alliance strongly urges the Environmental Planning Commission and City Council's support of the 455 West Evelyn project.

Regards,



Marla Wilson
Sustainable Development Associate

CC:
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