



Monday, March 24, 2008

Mayor Chuck Reed
And Honorable Councilmembers, Planning Commissioners
c/o Ella Samonski
City of San José Planning, Building, & Code Enforcement
200 East Santa Clara Street, Third Floor
San José, CA 95113

RE: South Second Street Studios - SUPPORT

Dear Mayor Reed and Members of the City Council and Planning Commission:

For 50 years, Greenbelt Alliance has protected the region's working farms and natural areas while making the Bay Area's cities better places to live. A key component of our work is identifying where new growth should occur and which development proposals best meet the needs of the region. Our Compact Development Team endorses and advocates for livable, transit-accessible communities with a wide range of housing options for families of all sizes and income levels. We write to inform you of our endorsement of the South Second Street Studios development proposed for the area south of downtown San José.

The South Second Street Studios project is fortunate to be well located, near several bus routes, including VTA #82, which connects to Tamien Caltrain/VTA light rail station. Future residents of this development will also be able to hop on the VTA #68 bus for quick service to the San José Diridon Caltrain station, providing access to San Francisco; the Peninsula; and links to Amtrak, BART, and other transit service. These residents will have great access to jobs and services in the immediate area as well, due to their proximity to downtown San José. Clearly, this is an ideal infill location and an ideal location for affordable homes.

San José has in many ways become a bedroom community for the South Bay, providing a large amount of homes for Silicon Valley workers and others who wish to live near their jobs. The City should continue its commitment to housing all kinds of San José workers by approving projects such as South Second Street Studios. Since this development is 100% affordable, featuring homes offered to those earning 30 to 60% of area median income, it presents a great opportunity for San José. These 139 homes will facilitate independent living for those with modest means and those who face chronic illness and developmental disabilities. Further adding to this independence will be First Community Housing's provision of complimentary Santa Clara County VTA Eco Passes for all residents, meaning that residents will have the ability to save money on transportation by avoiding unnecessary car trips and car ownership. Given First Community Housing's reputation for securing high-quality property management at all of its sites, this project will be a boon for the neighborhood. Other amenities on-site, such as a gym, computer lab, lounges, shops, and activity rooms, will make South Second Street Studios an enjoyable place to live.

The main benefits of this project, however, are its environmentally friendly features. The South Second Street development will be mixed-use, with active retail storefronts and wide sidewalks, and there will be easy access to bike parking and storage. Although this is a compact project in an urban area, First Community Housing has creatively found a way to provide open space through the project's green roof, which will include a butterfly garden. The project will receive LEED certification from the U.S. Green Building Council, placing it

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among an elite few that are able to meet this high standard. Its strong pedestrian orientation and its use of Eco Passes as a means of reducing the amount of needed parking are praiseworthy. In addition, the project's density indicates that it uses land efficiently and takes advantage of existing infrastructure, providing a good amount of homes in an appropriate place for them.

In summary, Greenbelt Alliance urges the Planning Commission and City Council's support of South Second Street Studios as a means of protecting open space by promoting high-quality, livable communities.

Regards,

/s/

Marla Wilson
Sustainable Development Associate