San Francisco
HOUSING
ACTION
COALITION

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August 3, 2009

Mr. Deny Sepaher
Birch Tree Properties LLC
4061 East Castro Valley Blvd
Castro Valley, CA Suite 502
94552

Re: Proposed Project at 1 Capitol Avenue

Dear Mr. Sepaher,

The San Francisco Housing Action Coalition (SFHAC) is pleased to inform you of our enthusiastic endorsement of your proposed residential development at Ocean View Villas. Our Endorsement Committee believes this project has strong merit and will make a substantial contribution to SFHAC's goals of increasing the supply of appropriately located housing that meets the needs of present and future San Franciscans.

The proposed project meets our endorsement criteria in the following ways:

Land Use:
Housing is an appropriate use of the site given the surrounding context, which is predominantly residential with RH=1 or RH=2 zoning to the north, although its proximity to the freeway immediately to the south requires measures to deal with the environmental constraints presented by the freeway.

Density:
By rezoning the property to RH-2, use of the Planned Unit Development (PUD) provisions, and obtaining various exceptions, the project will maximize the density potential of the site.

Affordability:
We are pleased that you plan to build all of your below-market rate housing onsite. We also note that your site design and unit size provide a commendable measure of "affordability by design".

Transit Orientation and Parking:
The SFHAC's endorsement guidelines state that a parking ratio of greater than 1:1 requires a finding of extraordinary circumstances. We believe the reasons set out in your review submittal do constitute such circumstances and consequently we find that your parking ratio of 1.46:1 meets our guidelines. SFHAC is pleased to see that you have incorporated storage for bicycles and that you will have a designated carshare space.

Preservation:
There are no historic preservation issues related to the project site.

Urban Design:
The proposed project promotes the general principles of good urban design. The architectural design, style and scale are a significant improvement on the character of the surrounding area and is in keeping with the better elements within the surrounding neighborhood. Although your heights of two and a half and three floors are higher than the adjacent two story houses on Sagamore, your units face the rear of those units and, given the adjacency of the tall landscape buffering the freeway, they do not block views or cast undue shadows.

We are impressed with the approach you have taken to the reality of the adjacent elevated 280 freeway to the south. Your orientation of the units and the open space toward the existing residential neighborhood and away from the freeway is an example of wise site design and we expect that the occupants will appreciate it.

Elimination of the rear yard and creation of the mews in front of the units is a creative solution to the narrowness of the site, which does not face a public street. The site plan creates a greater separation from the new units and the rear of the houses facing Sagamore Street. However, with no rear yard and the required open space on the roof, it is likely that the mews will be a play space for children as well as circulation space for autos, requiring use of effective traffic calming devices. We suggest you consider incorporating some segregated play areas within the mews.

Greening and Energy Efficiency:
The SFHAC is especially supportive that the proposed project will use green materials and techniques wherever possible including, including Energy Star appliances and water efficient fixtures.

Community Input:
The SFHAC is supportive of your coordinated outreach and information efforts in the area and encourages you to continue this important dialogue with neighborhood residents and community organizations.

Thank you for submitting the Ocean View Villas to SFHAC's Endorsement Committee. If you contemplate significant additional changes to this project we would appreciate an opportunity to review them. However, we are pleased to fully endorse this excellent project. It meets our guidelines in an exemplary fashion. Please let us know how we may be of assistance.

Sincerely,

Tim Colen, Executive Director