



Mr. Richard Hannum, CEO
Forge Land Company LLC

July 21, 2014

Ref: 145 Leavenworth Street and 351 Turk Street – Mixed-use Group Housing Development

Dear Mr. Hannum,

Thank you for bringing your proposal for 145 Leavenworth Street and 351 Turk Street to the San Francisco Housing Action Coalition's (SFHAC) Project Review Committee. Upon review, we believe your project has many merits and will contribute to SFHAC's mission of increasing the supply of well-designed, well-located housing in San Francisco. Please review this letter, which explains how your project meets our guidelines as well as areas in which improvements are suggested. Also see our report card, which grades the proposed project according to each guideline. We have attached a copy of our project review guidelines for your reference.

We will forward a copy of this letter to the Planning Commission prior to your approval hearing.

Project Description

Your project proposes the development of two seven story buildings, totaling 238 group-housing, rental units with ground-floor retail on two sites that are currently occupied by surface parking lots.

Land Use

The two sites are currently occupied by surface parking lots. The SFHAC believes the surrounding neighborhood would be much improved with more housing and your proposal includes one such type of housing not often seen in the City.

Density

Your project is far denser than most new developments we see and proposes a unique design that will accommodate 238 group -housing units. The SFHAC supports new housing that maximizes the building envelope while creating attractive living arrangements. We feel your project does both.

Affordability

Because your project qualifies as group housing, it is not subject to the Inclusionary Housing Ordinance and is not required to provide any subsidized housing. However, you said that because of the unique construction type and size of the units, these homes would be affordable to middle-income residents earning between the 100 and 130 percent of the area median income. The SFHAC is particularly supportive of projects that pursue creative ways to address housing affordability for this under-served population. While this product is untested in San Francisco, we are interested in this project's outcome and encourage you to move forward with your current plans.

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Parking and Alternative Transportation

Your project exemplifies smart urban infill, transit-oriented development. The site is located within walking distance to the Civic Center BART/Muni Metro stations, is accessible to several Muni bus lines and the busy Market Street bicycle corridor.

The project will provide two car share spaces and zero private automobile spaces. The SFHAC believes this is an excellent site for what is essentially a car-free project and supports development that does not encourage private car usage. You did not yet have an exact count for bike parking, but you assured our Project Review Committee that you would exceed the required number of spaces.

Preservation

While the Tenderloin is a National Historic District, there are no structures of significant cultural or historic merit that would be affected by your project. We believe your project, while very contemporary in appearance, is designed to be in scale with and complementary to the adjacent early 20th Century apartment buildings that are contributory to the historic district.

Urban Design

The SFHAC believes you have created a design that fits favorably with the surrounding neighborhood. You acknowledged to our Committee that you took inspiration from the surrounding buildings and community character. You have stepped back the building along the perimeter to create more space between your project and the surrounding buildings. Finally, your plans propose an engaging ground floor that will activate the public realm and provide neighborhood-serving retail.

There were comments made within the Committee that, as it oxidizes, the copper exterior may create a very dark façade facing the tight urban fabric of the Tenderloin. We encourage you to consider other finish options for the exterior. Additionally, we would like to see more landscaping on the building frontage along the sidewalks, which would create a more active public realm.

Environmental Features

You indicated that your project is inherently energy efficient because of its construction type - prefabricated modular steel, which reduces structural weight and construction resources, and is far more environmentally friendly than a typical concrete frame. You expressed to our Committee that this project would consume significantly less water and less energy. In addition, it will only require a foundation excavation of three feet.

Community Input

The SFHAC encourages you to continue your efforts to engage the surrounding community regarding your project and, where possible, incorporating their input.

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Thank you for bringing 145 Leavenworth Street and 351 Turk Street to the SFHAC for review. We are pleased to endorse the project without condition. Please keep us abreast of any changes and let us know how we may be of assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tim Colen", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Tim Colen

CC: Planning Commission

SFHAC Project Review Criteria

Land Use: Housing should be an appropriate use of the site given the context of the adjacent properties and the surrounding neighborhood and should enhance neighborhood livability.

Density: The project should take full advantage of the maximum unit density and/or building envelope, allowable under the zoning rules.

Affordability: The need for affordable housing, including middle income (120-150 of Area Median Income) housing, is a critical problem and SFHAC gives special support to projects that propose creative ways to expand or improve unit affordability beyond the legally mandated requirements.

Parking and Alternative Transportation: SFHAC expects the projects it endorses to include creative strategies to reduce the need for parking, such as ample bicycle storage, provision of space for car-share vehicles on-site or nearby, un-bundling parking cost from residential unit cost, and measures to incentivize transit use. Proximity to transit should result in less need for parking.

In districts with an as-of-right maximum and discretionary approval up to an absolute maximum, SFHAC will support parking exceeding the as-of-right maximum only to the extent the Code criteria for doing so are clearly met. In districts where the minimum parking requirement is one parking space per residential unit (1:1), the SFHAC will not, except in extraordinary circumstances, support a project with parking in excess of that amount.

Preservation: If there are structures of significant historic or cultural merit on the site, their retention and/or incorporation into the project consistent with historic preservation standards is encouraged. If such structures are to be demolished, there should be compelling reasons for doing so.

Urban Design: The project should promote principles of good urban design: Where appropriate, contextual design that is compatible with the adjacent streetscape and existing neighborhood character while at the same time utilizing allowable unit density: pleasant and functional private and/or common open space; pedestrian, bicycle and transit friendly site planning; and design treatments that protect and enhance the pedestrian realm, with curb cuts minimized and active ground floor uses provided.

Projects with a substantial number of multiple bedroom units should consider including features that will make the project friendly to families with children.

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Environmental Features: SFHAC is particularly supportive of projects that employ substantial and/or innovative measures that will enhance their sustainability and reduce their carbon footprint.

Community Input: Projects for which the developer has made a good faith effort to communicate to the community and to address legitimate neighborhood concerns, without sacrificing SFHAC's objectives, will receive more SFHAC support.