

Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development
City and County of San Francisco



Edwin M. Lee
Mayor

Olson Lee
Director

May 3, 2016

Via Email

RE: Comments on Environmental Assessment for 4th and Folsom Street Housing Development:

Dear Ms. Enrile:

Thank you for your comments on the Finding of No Significant Impact of the proposed project at 4th and Folsom Street. Our office received your comments on Sunday May 1, 2016 at 3:39 pm via email. Our response to your comments are below.

COMMENT 1. Disrupting the nearby landscape

The neighboring buildings of the northwest corner of 4th and Folsom are nowhere near high as the proposed project. Lulu Restaurant is only on one floor. The Yerba Buena Children's Creativity Museum is would only be 4 floors from the same level that LuLu is built at and the Alt School across the street at 300 4th Street is only 4 levels as well. Having a building exceeding that height would disrupt the current landscape to what existed there before and what currently surrounds the area.

RESPONSE:

This comment raises concerns regarding the height of the proposed project and its effect on the current landscape. The proposed project is situated within the Central SOMA Area, which is a medium-density urban environment and contains a variety of commercial, residential and public land uses. As is the case with most urban area, the project area is composed of buildings of varying heights reflecting the course of development over time. Two parcels within the project area are four stories in height but several others are considerably taller. 829 Folsom Street is 10 stories in height, as is 832 Folsom Street, 765 Folsom is six stories in height and 240 4th Street is seven stories. The addition of a seven story building to the project area is entirely consistent with the current urban landscape which encompasses an area greater than the immediately adjacent parcels.

The project site is currently zoned M-1 Light Industrial and allows for industrial uses within building up to 130 feet in height. The project would be up to 75 feet in height and thus

compatible with existing height requirements. Under the pending Central SoMa Plan, the lot would be reclassified to MUO (Mixed Use Office), which allows for housing and increases the height limit to 180 feet.

COMMENT 2. Devaluing existing buildings

Many of the existing buildings close to the 4th and Folsom corner have views of the city skyline overlooking the yerba buena gardens to buildings in the financial district. This plays a significant part to the valuation of the condos in this area and in turn has valued this corner to much higher than west of the 4th and Folsom corner. With the high valuations, it has increased higher property taxes in the area and benefited the city entirely. If a 7 story building were to be implemented it would devalue this neighborhood entirely, its current residents would no longer enjoy or monetize on the current view of the city skyline that has always existed and currently exists.

RESPONSE:

The effect of the proposed project on the value of the surrounding properties is outside the scope of the environmental review.

COMMENT 3. Increase existing 4th and Folsom traffic

On a day to day basis the 4th and Folsom traffic is among the worst in the city. A bottleneck is created during high traffic times from those who are driving to get on the Bay Bridge, biker's who are trying to get to work, or many times pedestrians walking to and from the Caltrain station. With plans of the Yerba Buena station there are already existing plans to increase the 4th and Folsom traffic, but on top of having a building at the location, the density of this area will increase. By having an additional 100 people or so living in a very high traffic area, it will worsen the existing bottleneck that many people face on a daily basis at this intersection.

RESPONSE:

The project site is adequately served by pedestrian, bicycle, transit, and parking facilities. While there will be an increase in residents as a result of the project, the addition of the new Central Subway station at the project site will increase accessibility to the public transit system. The project is located in an infill area where new residential uses are anticipated to maximize use of public transportation and average vehicle miles traveled would be consistent with the project area.

COMMENT 4. Increase disruption for current neighbors with the ongoing construction

Many residents of this area have already experience terrible disruption for the past 3 years with the ongoing construction resulting in sleepless nights, detoured commutes, and terrible respiratory issues due to the dust and dirt that the construction emits. The Yerba buena station will not be open till 2017 and to have an additional several years after that of construction of the proposed project will have resulted in many years of disruption and construction in this area.

Many years of disruption for the residents have and will continue to harm their health and well being.

RESPONSE:

The impacts from construction activity were evaluated in the Environmental Assessment and were found to be less than significant.

Thank you for your interest in this development. Please do not hesitate to contact me at Eugene.flannery or at 415-701-5598.

Sincerely,


Eugene T. Flannery
Environmental Compliance Manager