

Midtown Neighborhood Association

Creating a strong community and a clean, safe and thriving neighborhood through partnerships

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October 22, 2016

VIA EMAIL

Mr. Michael Hanebutt, Assistant Planner
City of Sacramento Community Development Department
300 Richards Boulevard, 3rd Floor
Sacramento, CA 95811

Re: Support for DR16-202 (19J Project)

Dear Mr. Hanebutt:

The Midtown Neighborhood Association (MNA) supports the 19J project, and we appreciate the opportunity to share our comments with you. We also thank you and the other Planning and Design staff who worked with our association during the last several months as this project progressed.

For several months, Ms. Mohanna and her team have worked with our board and made themselves readily available to us as we shared project information with our community. Our association posted the developer's narrative on our website's "developments" page. We also posted all City staff reports for the project, and links to the September 8 Planning and Design Commission review and comment meeting. In addition, we posted links to the information on our Facebook page as well as reposted news articles on the project. The public has the ability to leave comments on both our Facebook and website pages. Our website averages about 400 unique visitors per week. More than 800 people have indicated that they "like" our Facebook page, and more than 700 people are registered within the Midtown boundaries on Nextdoor. We also have an email list of more than 400 people.

On multiple occasions over the last several months, the 19J development team met informally with various MNA board members, and Ms. Mohanna and her team were always responsive whenever questions or concerns arose, dedicating unlimited time to discuss matters and have an open dialog with us. Some of our board members also attended the 19J community meeting held in August at the former Metro Electronics building.

On October 10, MNA held a special 19J community meeting in the auditorium of the E. Claire Raley Performing Arts Center. This meeting focused solely on the 19J project to ensure we allowed adequate time for the developer to present the project and that the community had ample time to ask questions and voice concerns. We announced the meeting on our Facebook page, where it was "shared" by several people. We also posted the announcement on Nextdoor and sent a meeting announcement to all recipients on our email list. City Planning Staff attended the meeting to answer any city-related questions that arose. The developer gave her presentation, and afterward, community members engaged in a Q&A with Ms. Mohanna, who also answered community questions that MNA received by email before the meeting. We gave every attendee at the meeting a survey to complete after the presentation, asking their opinion of the project and if they had any follow-up questions or concerns for the developer, MNA or city staff. We counted 24 people at the meeting, and after the meeting, we received nine completed surveys. Of those, seven people said they support the project, and two said they had no opinion. No one indicated they had any questions or concerns that required any follow up. At

our October 13 monthly board meeting, the MNA board discussed the project and the community responses, after which our board voted to support the project.

We have numerous reasons for supporting this project, but the primary reason is that it provides much-needed housing. As you know, our nation is in a severe housing crisis, and Sacramento has some of the most rapidly increasing rents in the nation. In addition, Midtown is a diverse community that includes not only established middle- and high-income residents but also many workforce residents and people who are working entry-level positions. We need diverse housing stock for our diverse community, and this is the first nonsubsidized project to attempt to bring housing that is attainable to many of our residents and workers who have not been able to find or afford housing in our area. This project also helps the City meet its goal of adding 10,000 housing units to the Central City.

California is the global leader for adopting policies to address climate change. This project aligns with Senate Bill 375, the Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008, which Mayor-elect Darrell Steinberg authored while he was in the California Senate. SB 375 supports California's goals to address climate change by reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by coordinating transportation and land use planning to create more sustainable communities. According to the Air Resources Board, transportation contributes about 40 percent of the state's GHG emissions. Creating housing near jobs reduces our vehicle miles traveled, and if jobs and housing are close enough to each other, it can help eliminate vehicle dependency.

The 19J project also aligns with the Sacramento Area Council of Government's (SACOG) *Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy* that "supports the Sacramento Region Blueprint, which implements smart growth principles, including housing choice, compact development, mixed-use development, natural resource conservation, use of existing assets, quality design and transportation choice. It also provides increased transportation options while reducing congestion, shortening commute times, and improving air quality."

The 19J project will bring an attractive design to J Street, one of the Central City's main transportation arteries, and Ms. Mohanna has stated that the building will be a net-zero energy building. The energy efficiency of the building not only will help conserve natural resources, but it will help 19J's residents with utility costs. The environmental benefits were one of the many selling points of the project, and as such, we would like to see some assurance that the final project indeed has all the energy efficiencies that are proposed.

Many residents in the Central City are deeply loyal to our small, independently owned businesses. Ms. Mohanna stated that she will encourage small retail businesses in the project. We ask that to help ensure that the neighborhood retain its charm, preference be given to small, local, independent businesses.

We heard three primary concerns from the community: the limited parking, the uncertainty that the units would remain "affordable," and the height deviation.

The concern we heard most was over parking, which has been and will continue to be a challenge in the Central City. People seemed to understand the challenges of parking when considering the cost and square footage required for parking (approximately 350 sf each space), once they were explained. Many people seemed to understand that each parking space built increases rent cost and means one less housing unit. Furthermore, the project site is in front of the J Street bus line and across from the proposed streetcar. It is also walking distance to many of the area's restaurants, shops, services and job centers. Ms. Mohanna has stated that she will offer incentives to people who do not own cars, and that the 19J building will include car, bike, and scooter sharing. As people move toward a less vehicle-dependent lifestyle, including several of our own board members, we are confident Ms. Mohanna will find no shortage of people who do not own cars or who are

willing to abandon their vehicles to live in 19J. To protect our existing residents, we ask that strategies to address the parking concerns, including car, bike, and scooter sharing be part of the project's entitlements.

The second most commonly voiced concern was that there is no guarantee the units will remain "affordable." Ms. Mohanna explained to the community that these units will be "affordable by design." This means that the units will be market rate, but smaller square footage than the typical market-rate units that have been built or entitled, and therefore, even if market rates increase, the rent for these smaller units will be less than the larger units we've seen to date.

The third concern we heard, though not voiced as often as the two previously mentioned concerns, was regarding the height and density. We found that most often, when the economics of creating housing without subsidies were explained and that the density and height helped the project "pencil out," contributing to the "affordability," most people found the height and density more tolerable.

To support the goals of SB 375 and SACOG's *Sustainable Communities Strategy*, we ask that people who work within the Central City be given priority at 19J so that we can continue to reduce vehicle miles traveled.

We also ask that no major construction be permitted on Sundays or before 8 a.m. on Saturdays to give residents breaks to enjoy quiet.

We applaud Ms. Mohanna's excellent community engagement and her forward thinking and innovative way of bringing attainable housing to our workforce while helping create a more sustainable community.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to comment. We hope the City will approve this much-needed project to bring attainable housing to our community.

Sincerely,



Angela Tillotson, Chair

cc: Steve Hansen, Councilmember, Sacramento City Council District 4
Jose Bodipo-Memba, Chair, Sacramento Planning Commission
Cornelius Burke, Vice-chair, Sacramento Planning Commission
Douglas Covill, Commissioner, Sacramento Planning Commission
William Farrell, Commissioner, Sacramento Planning Commission
Todd Kaufman, Commissioner, Sacramento Planning Commission
Lynn Lenzi, Commissioner, Sacramento Planning Commission
Alan LoFaso, Commissioner, Sacramento Planning Commission
Darryl Lucien, Commissioner, Sacramento Planning Commission
Alix Ogilvie, Commissioner, Sacramento Planning Commission
Phil Pluckebaum, Commissioner, Sacramento Planning Commission
Matthew Rodgers, Commissioner, Sacramento Planning Commission
Jia Wang-Connelly, Commissioner, Sacramento Planning Commission
Joseph Yee, Commissioner, Sacramento Planning Commission
Evan Compton, Senior Planner, City of Sacramento
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John Hodgson, The Hodgson Group
Emily Baime Michaels, Executive Director, Midtown Association

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