



Mountain View Coalition for Sustainable Planning
Mountain View, CA 94041

March 6, 2013

City of Mountain View Environmental Planning Commission
City Hall, 500 Castro Street
PO Box 7540
Mountain View, CA 94039-7540

Dear Chairperson Matchak and Environmental Planning Commissioners:

The Mountain View Coalition for Sustainable Planning (MVCSP) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on the proposed residential development at 100 Moffett Boulevard.

We have reviewed the site plan and support the FAR and density at this location given the proximity to many modes of local and regional transit, such as Caltrain, VTA bus and light rail, and employer shuttles. The project is less than a five-minute walk to the downtown transit station and many of the local services in the downtown area. It is an unprecedented opportunity to provide housing directly adjacent to the most transit accessible area in the city, which makes it truly possible to live and thrive at this location without a car. The pedestrian and bike paseo are strong, well-designed elements. However, given the zoning variance, we have several ideas that we hope the EPC will consider when making a recommendation to council, as follows:

GROUND FLOOR COMMERCIAL: The applicant has provided lobbies, leasing, and fitness areas along Moffett Boulevard to help activate the street and avoid the "blank wall" look. This is a good step, but we believe **ground floor commercial space at this location is imperative — due to the proximity to the transit station — and is an excellent opportunity to continue the active pedestrian frontage from Downtown.** Future grade separations can further strengthen this connection; however, in the near term, the presence of ground floor space in this site will provide a unifying element to start improving north-south connectivity.

We recognize that ground floor retail can be challenging to implement; nonetheless, there is significant **foot traffic** at this location, which is a key element of successful ground-floor, mixed-use retail property. According to the city's *Pedestrian Master Plan*, the city's busiest intersection for pedestrian traffic is one block away at Castro and Villa Street, with approximately 600 persons counted during a weekday

two-hour period. Many pedestrians and bicyclists also utilize the Central/Castro intersection, as it is the only at-grade connection from downtown to neighborhoods north of the Caltrain tracks for several miles. This will likely generate strong foot traffic for ground floor retail.

To provide further incentive for the applicant to provide this space, they should be allowed to lease the **ground floor space as office in the near term**, such space being in high demand for locations near Caltrain. As pedestrian traffic increases, the applicant could lease the space for retail. Pedestrian traffic is likely to increase significantly at the site since the proposed bike/pedestrian paseo bookends the most direct connection to North Bayshore, which will draw many more cyclists in the future based on goals from the *North Bayshore Transportation Plan*.

On-street parking is often cited as a key component for successful ground-floor retail. Spaces could potentially be provided on the Moffett Boulevard frontage with the provision of additional right-of-way for a new parallel parking lane. This request would be justified because the city is vacating right of way for the proposed Stierlin Road paseo in addition to the zoning variances.

PARKING: This location presents an opportunity to mitigate several neighborhood-parking concerns, further increase in transit use, and decreased driving in the area. We realize that the surrounding neighborhood has parking issues independent of this project and are concerned that new development will exacerbate them. We believe that a potential solution is for the applicant to provide a **trial neighborhood parking permit program** for the neighborhood. Instituting a neighborhood parking permit program would implement one of the goals from the city's *Downtown Mountain View Parking Study* (2011) while further leveraging the project's unmatched location to reduce car use.

Additionally, we encourage the EPC to recommend that the applicant **reduce parking ratios** and/or **provide unbundled parking**, where the cost of the parking space is provided independently of the rent. This allows tenants to make the cost of driving more transparent, as underground garages costs upwards of \$30,000 per space to provide. The presence of a neighborhood parking permit program would discourage tenants from parking on the surrounding streets to avoid renting a parking space in the building.

AFFORDABLE UNITS: MVCSP supports the concepts for affordable housing at this site put forth by *Advocates for Affordable Housing* and *The League of Women Voters*. Specifically we support **units on-site** and echo this comment from the LWV letter regarding the, project:

"We hope that the EPC will recommend to the Council that Prometheus be encouraged to provide BMR units instead of paying the rental housing impact fee; this would be equivalent to building 4.5% of the units as BMR's at rents affordable to those at 65% area median income (AMI). In addition, Prometheus should be asked to provide additional BMR units because of these numerous concessions requested from the City."

Providing units on site would be an excellent community benefit and would help mitigate the loss of the transit-adjacent County Social Services Center, which is currently located at the site and will be displaced.

STIERLIN ROAD PASEO & SITE DESIGN: We support the design alternative that **closes the freeway-style onramp** to Central Expressway and replaces it with a bicycle and pedestrian paseo. This connection is a key bicycle and pedestrian link between the transit center and North Bayshore, since it is the most direct route. The *North Bayshore Transportation Plan*, recently approved by Council, sets a goal for approximately 30% of commute trips to be completed by walking and biking, which means bicycle and pedestrian access will have to be prioritized in some areas of the city.

We strongly believe this is one of those areas. The existing freeway-style interchange at Shoreline Boulevard provides generous auto connectivity to Central Expressway. Additionally, with the growth in bike and pedestrian traffic through this paseo, it will be key to separating cyclists from pedestrians to avoid conflicts. The alternative that closes the onramp is the only proposal that meets this criterion.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bruce England". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bruce England
for the Mountain View Coalition for Sustainable Planning