



Mountain View Coalition for Sustainable Planning
Mountain View, CA 94041

May 2, 2015

Mountain View City Council
City Hall, 500 Castro Street
PO Box 7540
Mountain View, CA 94039-7540

In re: Agenda Item 6.1, May 5, 2015 Council meeting: North Bayshore Precise Plan Bonus Floor Area Ratio Applications

Honorable Mayor McAlister and Members of the City Council:

Members of the Mountain View Coalition for Sustainable Planning (MVCSP) have reviewed the staff report on the North Bayshore Precise Plan Bonus Floor Area Ratio Applications. We are disappointed in the lack of quantitative evaluation and analysis in the report. Therefore, at this time MVCSP has decided not to endorse any particular project. Members would, however, like to endorse a number of planning principles that we feel strongly should be utilized in the consideration of the Bonus FAR applications, as detailed below.

- 1. Exemplary Urban Design:** Urban design is not included as a distinct and important evaluation criterion for the bonus FAR application consideration, and we believe this is a significant oversight. Urban design concepts are particularly important as North Bayshore transitions from a traditional suburban business area to a vibrant mixed-use village with a high-functioning blend of housing, office and retail uses. It is an opportunity for innovative place-making, enjoyable shared spaces, and forward-thinking urban design. The community and public spaces criterion addresses important habitat and ecosystem expectations as defined in Attachment 4. However, the phrases “vibrant neighborhood,” “urban design,” and “place-making” are not even mentioned in the staff report. In addition, site design standards are buried in the sustainability criterion. To build a healthy, wonderful neighborhood in North Bayshore, these concepts need to be front-and-center, not buried or on the back burner.
- 2. Improved Pedestrian/Bicycle Access:** There is significant opportunity for North Bayshore to become a walkable and bike friendly community. Several of us participated in the Environmental Sustainability Task Force and we used the phrase “Feet First...Powered by the Heart” to denote this intent. Bicycle and pedestrian access is only tangentially referred to in the criteria on transportation improvements and meeting the Plan’s 45% SOV goal through TDM measures. There should be a stronger criterion and performance standards utilized to determine if the application contributes to a “Feet First” goal.
- 3. Superior Environmental Sustainability:** Sustainability is included as an evaluation criterion, but the qualitative scale from “exceeds expectations” to “meets expectations” does not give anyone evaluating these plans sufficient qualitative or quantitative information to

make much of a distinction between Bonus FAR applications. The use of more quantitative measures such as the community benefits measurement will help to better evaluate proposed projects. In the Environmental Sustainability Task Force, we were directed to calculate potential greenhouse gas reductions for each recommendation. Could staff develop a consistent methodology based on estimated GHG reduction or energy consumption to quantify what it means to exceed expectations? We were hoping to find more detailed analysis, but Attachment 8 is one page and a repeat of the the summary table in the staff report. Net zero energy or Net XXX energy should be included as a performance standard for the environmental sustainability criterion.

- 4. Support and Encourage Housing Overall, and Affordable Housing in Particular:** We appreciate the addition of a housing criterion, but we believe this measure should go well beyond a binary consideration; particularly as the updated Precise Plan is in development. We encourage you to give enhanced consideration to applicants who want to be part of the housing supply solution in North Bayshore. MVCSP would like to see firm and legally binding commitments to housing development before an application is ultimately approved. Bonus FAR applications are discretionary, and given recent City Council action to include housing in North Bayshore, now is the time to require that commitment.
- 5. Inclusive Planning for True Mixed Use:** The staff report specifically eliminates particular areas of land from development consideration in the bonus FAR process. The statement at the bottom of page 22 implies that the three projects that are in areas where housing is being studied are therefore eliminated from the commercial development process. We would like to remind you that the Council voted 7-0 against this strategy in the February 3, 2015 council meeting, an outcome we strongly supported. We are hopeful that the development process will lead to true mixed use development, including housing, retail, and office -- possibly even in the same building! It is not appropriate to eliminate commercial development from specific plots of land at this time. The updated Precise Plan will determine if and how such mixed use could be achieved, and we encourage you to maintain your collective position not to eliminate any areas of land from any development consideration for any specific use until the precise plan process is complete.
- 6. Preserve and Enhance the Natural Environment:** We applaud the evaluation criterion on habitat and ecosystems. MVCSP fully believes that protection of wildlife and habitat should be a critical priority in the review all development applications. However, it is not clear what distinguishes a project that meets expectations from one that exceeds them. Attachment 4 should be expanded to provide more distinguishing characteristics.
- 7. Maximize Community Benefits to Achieve the North Bayshore Vision:** We applaud this quantitative measure, and would like to see a better balance of qualitative and quantitative measures before you make a final decision. There should be significantly more analysis in Attachment 8 in describing how the community benefits proposed will help to achieve the other evaluation criteria, but more importantly how the proposed benefits will contribute to the overall vision for a vibrant neighborhood in North Bayshore. Additionally, housing should be an allowable community benefit.

In closing, MVCSP feels that the staff analysis is insufficient to enable informed decision-making on the North Bayshore Bonus FAR applications. We recommend that City Council provide specific input to staff on the evaluation criteria that would be most useful to make informed decisions, and request that city staff create a more meaningful evaluation of the proposals according to those performance measures.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cliff Chambers". The signature is written in black ink on a light gray rectangular background.

Cliff Chambers

for the Mountain View Coalition for Sustainable Planning

cc: Martin Alkire
Randal Tsuda
Daniel H. Rich