

LETTERS IN SUPPORT OF PROJECT

Architect, on 401 Colusa Development

Shelly Meron's fairly-presented July 4 Journal article, and two Letters to the Editor in the same issue opposing Carol Chisholm's project at 401 Colusa, commonly lack one important feature. They fail to mention that the subject parcel has since 1983 carried with it a P-1 (Planned Development) Zoning and an approved specific Development Plan for a fully 3-story commercial building with parking at only 43% of current County parking standards. Ms. Chisholm's design proposal steers well shy of those approved limits.

The article and editorials do not describe what the neighborhood might stand to gain by the proposed design, and instead frame only what might be "lost". As architect for the project, I think it important that the public understand and consider the positive aspects of our proposal. We plan a modest mixed-use residential and retail building that will enrich the Circle neighborhood, without creating undue traffic and parking stresses.

The project will contribute responsibly to reducing the East Bay's shortage of multi-family residential units. Colusa Circle is the logical site for denser housing within Kensington; it is a mixed-use precinct served by both local and trans-bay bus lines, and located within walking distance of El Cerrito BART. This residential component will also add much-needed vitality to the Circle's streetscape and businesses.

By all measures, our proposal refines the Development Plan approved under the P-1 zoning. Overall traffic generation is measurably diminished. We propose to provide parking at 67% of current County parking standards, significantly up from the approved 43%. This translates to a "shortage" of only 5 spaces in our proposal, compared with 29 approved. Building bulk is reduced 29%. Maximum height is slightly reduced, and perceived height is further diminished by way of stepped massing. While this will not be the first 3-story building in the neighborhood, it may well be the most polite. Distance from residential neighbors is markedly increased. Our design also presents a second "front" to our Oakview Avenue neighbors, in sharp contrast to the un-designed building-backside described by the approved Development Plan.

In 1983, the P-1 Zone and 3-story Development Plan were adopted as being beneficial to the community, gaining approval through a deliberative process including extensive community input. It would be simply unfair, if not a legal travesty, were the County now to deny the Owner her development - particularly when her proposal embodies a voluntary down-grading of approved impacts, by ALL measures. The Owner purchased the property with the knowledge that County Zoning allowed an intensity of development well beyond that which she thought proper, and equally beyond that which she currently proposes. Ms. Chisholm deserves a lot of credit for that.

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cc

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Subject colusa circle

Hello Mr. Hernandez and Mr. Gioia,

I'm a north Berkeley resident who lives about 4 blocks from Colusa Circle, and visit it frequently.

I'm writing in support of the development proposal at 401 Colusa. Another Berkeley resident has written letters to the editor of several local papers opposing this without adding more parking, and included your email addresses.

I disagree. Bring on the TOD please. An AC 79 bus goes right through there. Parking can be had within a block or two in many directions quite easily, and in the lot across the street from SemiFreddies if necessary.

Why do people insist on being provided parking two steps from their destination? Not necessary. It is available nearby, and the exercise to walk a block will help them overcome their indolency, if involuntarily.

I usually walk up there anyway. It's better for you.

Please, bring it on.

Thanks for listening.