

Attachment 3

From: Business Seven <business77@gmx.com>

Sent: Tuesday, April 2, 2019 5:31 PM

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Cc: citizensformyrnadevera@gmail.com

Subject: Development Plans for Hercules Waterfront - Blocks M, P, and O

Good day,

I am a resident of Hercules and an architectural historian who is very interested in the development of the Waterfront. I am devoted to making sure that Hercules gets the best development possible and that it lives up to the aspirations and requirements outlined in the Hercules Waterfront Master Plan. As such, I would like to share with you my thoughts on the development proposal for blocks M, P, and O.

(<https://hercules.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=3906618&GUID=9640F997-BCE5-48F9-BFDF-FCF9AA56BB34&Options=&Search>)

Overall, I think the plans are good, though there are a few major concerns I have that I would like to share with you now. Some of my comments highlight actual violations of the code, others are just my opinion. I try to suggest solutions to each problem I identify. Although my comments below only detail those concerns, please understand that I support the goals of developing the waterfront; I believe the developer, architect, and city government are all committed to ensure we get the best result possible; and although in the interest of brevity, I don't go into detail about what I liked in the proposal, please believe that I did find a lot to like in it. Please take these criticisms in the constructive way they are intended.

Thank you.

- Douglas Bright
Hercules, Calif.

Blocks M and P =

- **This does not conform to Waterfront Warehouse Style.** Most of the buildings are sheathed in painted stucco. This is not allowed in this Style. The exterior must be “brick or brick veneer walls with stone, cast stone, concrete, or metal details” (Waterfront District Master Plan, Chapter 2: Architectural Styles, Waterfront Warehouse Style, page 2-6). I cannot stress enough how stucco fundamentally impairs this Style. Masonry gives variation in its texture and provides a three-dimensional aesthetic. Stucco feels two-dimensional and reads as a blank wall. Additionally, the plans depict scarcely any ornamentation; no gabled roofs; and no rooflines with parapets. Even more than Block O below, it seems the architect was influenced too much by a modernist aesthetic which led to a stripped down, boring version of what the Waterfront Warehouse Style that the Master Plan requires. Interesting buildings that will do our Waterfront justice need to have fine grain details. These buildings need to inspire interest and curiosity, not yawns. Blocks M and P have really lost their way and need much more work. The most important improvement it needs is to replace all the stucco with masonry. This is absolutely essential to ensure conformity with the Master Plan requirements. Preferably, alternate the masonry between bricks and stones of varying color, coursing, and texture. It also needs more attention to ornamentation along the cornices, window surrounds, and doors; and a more varied roofline (perhaps including the addition of a gable).

- **HVAC and mechanical may be visible on roof.** According to Exhibit B1, page A06.8, the flat-roofs may have unshielded HVAC and mechanical machinery visible from the street or from residents living across the street. This should be relocated or shielded via a parapet or other means.
- **The driveways are too wide and should be relocated.** The Waterfront District Master Plan (Chapter 1: Building Form Standards, Parking Standards for all Zones, page 1-35) specifies they should be a maximum of 20' wide, but the plans (According to Exhibit B1, page A06.1) specify they will be 22' wide. They should be narrowed. The Hercules Regulating Code (page VI-5) states that "alleys shall be the primary source of access to off-street parking." The garage entries should be relocated to the alleyway behind the building, rather than on Bayfront Loop. This would greatly improve pedestrian safety and traffic congestion along Bayfront Loop.
- **Plant natives on public streets** – According to Exhibit B4 – Planting Plan (L401.B), the developer intends on planting the Chinese Elm (*Ulmus parvifolia*) along Bayfront Loop. This tree is non-native and not drought tolerant. I suggest planting a native tree instead, such as Coast Live Oak (*Quercus agrifolia*). This tree also drought tolerant and commonly used in landscaping.

Block O =

- **There is a lack of pedestrian entryways.** The Waterfront District Master Plan (Chapter 1: Building Form Standards, T5-VN: Neighborhood General Standards, page 1-24) requires that all ground floor units fronting a street must have a direct entry to the unit from the street or from a forecourt along the street. Ten of the thirteen residential units on the ground floor of the north, east, and south elevations do not meet this requirement (see Exhibit B3, A26.0, A29.1 and A29.2). The requirement that ground floor units have their entries directly onto the street they reside is important to maintain a vibrant and interactive street life between the building and the neighborhood. The existing plans create dead zones on the north, south, and east elevations, because they allow very little pedestrian interaction between the building and the neighborhood. As a great place to start, I would suggest that the decks which eight of those ten non-conforming residential units are already planned to have along Bayfront Loop could easily be converted into direct entries for those units.
- **The Bayfront Loop is too wide.** Waterfront District Master Plan (Chapter 4: Street and Circulation Standards, Neighborhood Street II, page 4-10) requires the curb face to curb face width be 36' with travel lanes 10' wide. However, the plans (Exhibit C2.0) show 42' curb face to curb face widths with 13' travel lanes. It is important to have narrow lanes in residential neighborhoods to calm traffic, which benefits noise and safety concerns. In fact, I would suggest making the street even narrower by removing one of the lanes and turning Bayfront Loop into a one-way street. This would allow for wider sidewalks, more street furniture, and of course making the neighborhood even quieter and safer.
- **John Muir Parkway is incorrectly proportioned.** It should have two travel lanes and two bicycle lanes (Waterfront District Master Plan (Chapter 4: Street and Circulation Standards, John Muir Parkway, page 4-6). The plans (Exhibit C2.0) present no bicycle lanes and three travel lanes. This needs to be corrected.
- **The building is too tall.** According to the Waterfront District Master Plan (Chapter 5: Appendix, page 5-7), a story is "a habitable floor level within a building, typically 8' to 14' high from floor to ceiling. A half story is a conditioned space that rests primarily underneath the slope of the roof...occupying about half the area of the...floors below. Individual spaces...may exceed one story in height. The number of stories are measured from the sidewalk of the primary street" (i.e. John Muir Parkway). The maximum number of stories allowed for this block is four (Chapter 1: Building Form Standards, T5-VN: Village Neighborhood Standards, page 1-24). As you can see by Exhibit B3, page A27, this building well exceeds that limitation. Using the definition in the Master Plan, this building has 6.5 stories. Calling the 1st story "Level P", the sixth story "Mezzanine", and the half story "Mezz Roof Plate" doesn't mean these aren't counted as stories. Remember, "[i]ndividual spaces...may exceed one story in height."; so just because Level P/Level 1 and Level 4/Mezzanine are individual spaces, doesn't mean they are single stories. They "exceed one story" and are in fact two stories; and clearly "Mezz Roof Plate" meets the definition of "a conditioned space that rests primarily underneath the

slope of the roof” and is therefore a “half story.” If they want the same number of residential units within the allowable building height, I suggest they put the parking an extra level below ground to make room for them.

- **The driveways are too wide.** The Waterfront District Master Plan (Chapter 1: Building Form Standards, Parking Standards for all Zones, page 1-35) specifies they should be a maximum of 20’ wide, but the plans specify they will be 22’ wide. They should be narrowed.
- **This is not a bay area eclectic style.** As you can see from Chapter 2 of the Waterfront District Master Plan (page 2-27), there are several elements of this style that are lacking in the proposed plans. The proposed plans are entirely too boxy and modernist. The metal entry canopies and storefronts; glass doorways and curtain walls; complete lack of cross-gable roofing and inconsistent use of roof parapets; and dearth of architectural flourishes all betray a more stripped-down, modernist aesthetic with an inappropriate nod to a more industrial design. This is especially true of the architectural elements of what is identified in Exhibit B3 (pages A28.3-A29.2) as “Bay Area Eclectic Style ‘03’”. I believe this building shows promise, but it needs more work to remove these incompatible elements and incorporate more bay area eclectic ones.
- **Too much frontage along John Muir Parkway is squandered.** The Waterfront District Master Plan (Chapter 1: Building Form Standards, T5-MST: Main Street Transition Standards, page 1-15) intends for the ground floor spaces along John Muir Parkway to accommodate an evolution of use from residential or live/work, to commercial, to retail in order to respond to the evolving needs of the community as it grows. Devoting so much of this space to bike storage, pet spa, electrical, trash, lounge, lobby, and mail for the exclusive use of the residents of the apartment complex betrays this intention. Many of these non-public uses can be relocated farther into the interior of the building, allowing that space to be accessible the present and future needs of the community.
- **HVAC and mechanical may be visible on roof.** According to Exhibit B3, page A26.3, the flat-roofed portions of the roof may have unshielded HVAC and mechanical machinery visible from the street or from residents living across the street. This should be relocated or shielded via a parapet or other means.
- **Plant natives on public streets** – According to Exhibit B4 – Planting Plan (L401.B), the developer intends on planting the Chinese Elm (*Ulmus parvifolia*) along Bayfront Loop. This tree is non-native and not drought tolerant. I suggest planting a native tree instead, such as Coast Live Oak (*Quercus agrifolia*). This tree also drought tolerant and commonly used in landscaping.

Side Note: The Exhibit B3 plans (pages A25.1-A25.3) depict the Block O development oriented in the reverse direction on the reference map on the bottom right corner.