

CORRESPONDENCE

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via Mark Jomsky, City Clerk, at mjomsky@cityofpasadena.net
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SUBJECT: Heritage Square South Project

Dear Mayor and City Council Members:

I wholeheartedly support the staff recommendation to approve the 69-unit permanent supportive housing, mixed use commercial Heritage Square South Project for our homeless seniors. As an Elder in the Pasadena Presbyterian Church, I am significantly involved in the church's Food Ministry held each Sunday night at our Evening Worship service. I know first-hand the toll homelessness takes on our senior population. The need for senior permanent supportive housing should not be in dispute, particularly in view of the devastating economic and health impacts of the COVID-19 crisis.

The City Council's discussions at its public hearing on May 11, 2020, were both deliberative and encouraging. But for the availability of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR), the City Council was unable to take formal actions on the Project. Hopefully, that will be remedied and the City Council will approve the Project at its next meeting. This site has been the subject of many meetings for over fifteen years, including early the debates regarding the possible sole use for commercial development.

I support the proposed project for the following major reasons:

1. There is overwhelming support for the Project from the leadership of the Northwest, neighbors adjacent to the Project site, and churches, including PPC, Friends in Deed, the First United Methodist Church, the Pasadena Community Christian Church, the Orange Grove Friends (Quaker) Meeting, and the Neighborhood Unitarian Universalist Church.
2. It is an ideal location for seniors because it is within walking distance of services, retail, grocery stores, a major bus line, and is just north of Old Pasadena, the major business district of the City.
3. The 7,500 sq. ft. commercial component on the first level facing North Fair Oaks will do much to link Northwest Pasadena to the areas south of the 210 Freeway by enhancing walkable continuity from that area to Old Pasadena. As the City is very well aware, the 210 Freeway, completed 50 years ago, did significant and long-term damage to the social and physical fabric of the City.
4. The financial terms and funding sources have been carefully developed by the City's highly respected Department of Housing staff, Bill Huang, Director and Jim Wong, Senior Project Manager. The funding sources involve a combination of federal, state and non-General Fund local sources which can only be used for this type of project. If the Project is delayed, it could jeopardize Federal Housing and Urban Development funding for site purchase.

4. Both the City staff and the community have faith in the proposed developer, BRIDGE Housing, to perform on this project. BRIDGE Housing has a track record of outstanding performance with its Heritage Square Senior Housing project adjacent to the north of the proposed project. Also, services for the Heritage Square South residents would be provided directly by or coordinated through Union Station Homeless Services under a resident supportive services contract with BRIDGE. Importantly, the Project will be managed by an experienced property management firm that specializes in special needs housing.

5. The City's Local Benefits requirements will apply to the Project including 15% local hiring, 20% local contracting, and 30% local purchasing. BRIDGE Housing has a track record of performance with its Heritage Square Senior project adjacent to the north of the proposed project. It has more than met its Local Benefit requirements for that project and there is every expectation that it will do the same for the proposed Project.

6. The Project is consistent with the applicable General Plan designation, applicable General plan policies, and applicable Zoning Code rules and regulations.

The timing is responsive to the growing need for such housing, particularly because of the COVID-19 crisis. The time to act is now to make this Project happen.

Respectfully submitted,

[Marsha V. Rood]

cc: Pasadena Presbyterian Church, Local Mission Committee