



November 20, 2020

Pasadena City Council
City of Pasadena
100 North Garfield Avenue
Pasadena, California 91101

RE: Exclusive Negotiations with HRI for Property at 78 N. Marengo Ave.

Dear Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council:

Tonight you have before you a staff recommendation to enter into exclusive negotiations with the HRI team for development of the former YWCA and adjacent land for a new hotel.

Pasadena Heritage has long supported a hotel use for this important National Register site and Julia Morgan-designed building as a good and appropriate use. As the market has now repeatedly shown, a hotel presents a feasible project that can support the substantial cost of properly rehabilitating and restoring the former YWCA building. New construction can be designed as a fitting addition to the Civic Center and can frame a Centennial Plaza as envisioned in the Bennett Plan. We believe a hotel will add vibrancy, economic vitality and pedestrian activity in the Civic Center and will permit public access to the historic building, where the original layout and design features can be successfully translated into similar uses.

The recommendation of the HRI proposal for further negotiation, based on the staff report presented, is based in large part on the financial pro forma and demonstration of a noteworthy track record and experience in hotel development coupled with historic buildings. We understand staff's conclusions that this is the superior proposal and certainly it appears to have much to offer.

We are critically concerned, however, that the architectural team chosen to design this project, rehabilitate the former YWCA, and properly respect and address the Civic Center as a whole must be the right one. We note that the staff recommendation includes language to this effect, and we strongly urge the Council to stress that this point is of critical importance and should, in our view, be a deal breaker. The preliminary renderings we have seen showed an intent to be contextual but leave much to be desired!

The architectural team for this project should include a primary or design architect who truly understands and embraces the fact that this new building will become a prominent new addition to a nationally recognized Beaux Arts Civic Center and the public heart of the City. He or she must also know how to design a building that will respectfully join the Julia

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Morgan YWCA which will provide essential components of the hotel. There are only a few noteworthy architects who do this well and have a real understanding of and commitment to this unique place that is so highly regarded and so important to us all. An experienced historic preservation architect or firm must also be included to design and oversee the rehabilitation of the YWCA building, a complex project that requires, perhaps, a different skill set and experience. We understand that ARG is on HRI's team and believe they are an excellent choice for the restoration part of this project.

Lastly, a landscape architect, if separate from the lead architect or design architect, must be one who sees the Civic Center as a whole and can design landscape plans that enliven and enhance Centennial Plaza and the public realm. This person must work collaboratively with the National CORE team as they develop the Water & Power site across the street. The landscape and public realm plans for both projects should be conceived as a unified whole. As the Olin firm reminded us in their previous study of the Civic Center, the landscape and hardscape elements of the Civic Center can be the most important unifying factor that will allow the Civic Center to be experienced as a cohesive, beautifully designed place.

Therefore, we believe you should support this recommendation to enter into exclusive negotiations with HRI if you feel they are the superior proposer. But we urge you, in fact beg you, to stress the importance of hiring the right architectural team to bring this project to fruition. We stand ready, as always, to work with the city and the developer in any capacity we can offer to help realize the very best project that can be achieved and what the Civic Center and the community deserve.

Pasadena Heritage has been involved with and concerned about the former YWCA and the Civic Center since our founding more than 40 years ago. We remain committed to the realization of the best possible outcome for this treasured historic place. Thank you for your attention to our comments.

Sincerely yours,



Susan N. Mossman
Executive Director



Andrew Salimian
Preservation Director

cc: Steve Mermell, City Manager
David Klug, Senior Project Manager
David Reyes, Director of Planning

Martinez, Ruben

From: Beth Gertmenian <
Sent: Monday, November 23, 2020 3:26 PM
To: PublicComment-AutoResponse
Subject: YWCA BUILDING

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November 23, 2020

Dear Mayor Tornek and Members Pasadena City Council,

As a retired social worker, a former YWCA board member, and a very concerned person who volunteers with children and young people in the foster care system, I am advocating for using the YWCA building as a residence for supportive transitional housing for young people over the age of 18 in foster care and for those transitioning out of foster care. (Housing is not provided for young people over 18 who continue in foster care; they can receive a monthly stipend for housing). A number of non-profit organizations in the city have the knowledge, experience, and expertise to develop and manage such a program in the proposed facility as well as the possibility of securing funding for transitional age youth through Measure H.

Since retiring, I have volunteered with several community agencies to improve the quality of life of transition aged youth. One of the major obstacles which they face is the lack of housing.

Well grounded statistics indicate that when young people transition out of foster care, within the next five years a significant number are homeless, parenting, under- or unemployed or incarcerated—or a combination of these. Supportive transitional housing is an intervention that works with these young people to help them become productive, self-sufficient citizens.

At a time when the hotel industry is in a severe slump, it doesn't make any sense to me to enter into a plan to build more hotel rooms. It makes profound good sense to address the critical need for housing young people transitioning out of the foster care system. And it seems most appropriate that this should happen in a structure created in 1923 to house single young women starting out in the world.

Sincerely,

Beth Gertmenian, MSW

Pasadena, CA 91106

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Martinez, Ruben

From: Susan F <scflaming1@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, November 23, 2020 4:04 PM
To: PublicComment-AutoResponse
Subject: RE: YWCA Development Plan - discussion tonight, Nov. 23

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Dear Mayor Tornek, Steve Madison and other Pasadena City Council members
Tonight a plan for development of the YWCA historical building will be reviewed by you, to determine whether to develop it as a hotel.

As a long term resident of Pasadena, since 1990, I oppose the proposed plan to develop the YWCA as a hotel.

Other plans were recently reviewed that allocated space for affordable housing units. *Pasadena is acutely lacking this type of housing.*

It is urgently needed, especially for our emancipated foster youth. I have worked with these youth through PCC's Stars program for the past 8 years, and have witnessed how increasingly unavailable housing housing is for them.

Please do not enrich for-profit developers. Rather demonstrate Pasadena's commitment to helping our regional homeless crisis, particularly for former foster youth, who are trying to move their shattered lives forward but unable to do so because of lack of affordable housing.

Thank you for your consideration of my viewpoint.

Susan Flaming, PhD

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