

Craig Lawson & Co., LLC

Land Use Consultants

January 23, 2020

Via E-mail

Councilman Harris-Dawson and Honorable Committee Members
Planning and Land Use Committee of City Council
City of Los Angeles
200 N. Spring Street, Room 395
Los Angeles, CA 90012
c/o City Clerk (clerk@lacity.org)

Re: Council File CF 20-0077
Weingart Center Association Restricted Affordable Mixed-Use Project
600 South San Pedro Street, Los Angeles, CA 90014
CPC-2017-589-GPAJ-VZCJ-HD-SPR, ENV-2017-615-SCEA-REC1
Related case: VTT 74864

Dear Councilman Harris-Dawson and Honorable Committee Members

We write on behalf of applicant Weingart Center Association ("WCA") which is proposing a 302-unit mixed-use affordable housing and commercial use project at 600 South San Pedro Street (site). The project will contain 298 Restricted Affordable units, on-site supportive services for the residents, and ground floor commercial spaces within two structures located at the southeastern corner of San Pedro and 6th Street in the Central City portion of the City of Los Angeles (Project). This project is Phase 2 of a two-phased development that will construct 676 urgently needed Restricted Affordable units in Downtown Los Angeles.

On December 18, 2019, the City Planning Commission issued a letter of determination approving the Project's Site Plan Review and recommending approval of the General Plan Amendment, the Zone Change and the Height District change. On January 7, 2020, the Project successfully navigated the site plan review appeal period without challenge and the Project is now moving forward to the City Council for consideration of the general plan and zoning amendments. We would respectfully request that you schedule the project for the Planning and Land Use Management (PLUM) Committee meeting on January 28 or as soon as your Agenda permits.

At this time, we would also like to highlight concerns we have regarding Qualified or "Q" Condition 4 which requires the Applicant to make a "good faith effort" to explore the construction of "restroom and shower facilities within the ground floor of one of the proposed buildings which would be available to the public". As outlined below, we are concerned that this request will generate opposition from the surrounding community, will increase the costs of the affordable housing development become financially infeasible for the Project to maintain. In addition, these services would be duplicative of existing City services within one block of the site. We are therefore requesting that this "Q" Condition 4 be removed.

Community Input:

Weingart Center Association conducted extensive community outreach and has gained support from numerous downtown stakeholder groups and individuals. One of the things WCA consistently heard from stakeholders was their desire to not have "street level" services provided at this development. Stakeholders expressed concern about additional queuing on the street for services in an area where this is already prevalent and is combined with the challenge of many people living on the street. WCA never intended to provide "street level" services at this location, which could exacerbate the existing issues of congregating in the streets and sidewalks in the vicinity of the site, and communicated that to stakeholders during community outreach. WCA, with community support, intended for the ground floor to function as traditional office space and for the retail space to provide traditional retail uses in order to provide a greater diversity of uses in the Skid Row neighborhood. By converting significant ground floor space to public restroom and shower facilities, it would detract from the project's ability to use this space for this traditional retail/office and would subvert one of the principal concerns of neighborhood stakeholders.

Cost:

The cost to construct public restroom and shower facilities is prohibitive, especially at a time when the City and the affordable housing community are working to try and reduce the cost of affordable and permanent supportive housing. The cost of operating these facilities would be even more prohibitive considering they would require 24/7/365 security, constant maintenance and cleaning, significant on-going repairs and would change the overall insurance/risk profile of the development.

Duplicative of Existing Facilities:

The City operates the Skid Row Refresh Spot, currently located across the street from this site, to be relocated about a block away, which already provides public restrooms, showers, and laundry facilities for people experiencing homelessness in the neighborhood. In addition, WCA operates a 623-bed transitional/shelter housing facility across the street from the site that provides transitional housing and shelter combined with supportive services open to anyone experiencing homelessness. For these reasons, the addition of new bathroom and shower facilities would be duplicative of existing services in the immediate vicinity of the site.

For the reasons explained above, we request that you please consider deleting this condition from the approval.

Sincerely,



Jim Ries
Senior Vice President
Craig Lawson & Co., LLC

cc: Councilmember Jose Huizar
City of Los Angeles City Council, Planning, Land Use, and Management Committee
Shawn Kuk, Planning Director, Councilmember Huizar's Office
Kevin Murray, President and CEO, Weingart Center Association
Amy Freilich, Esq., Armbruster Goldsmith & Delvac LLP