

Communication from Public

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Council File No: 26-0975-S1

Comments for Public Posting: Re: Council File 26-0975-S1 / Case No.

ZA-2023-7218-ZV-CDP-MEL-HCA I am a direct neighbor of 700 W. Paseo del Mar and am writing to express serious concerns about the proposed development behind Walker's Cafe. My first and most urgent concern is the decision to bypass a full environmental impact review. The Planning Department determined this project qualifies for a CEQA exemption under Class 1, Class 3, and Class 31. I strongly disagree. This parcel sits in the Coastal Zone, directly adjacent to the unstable and ecologically sensitive terrain of Sunken City — an area defined by active coastal erosion, landslide-prone soils, and significant wildlife habitat along the bluff edge. It also borders Point Fermin Park and the Marine Life Refuge. A project of this scale and density, in this specific location, warrants a full environmental accounting. Granting an exemption without addressing these site-specific hazards is unacceptable and potentially dangerous. I also have serious concerns about the scale of the proposed development. Developer Vartan Achabashian of Prospect Group Real Estate Investments is proposing a two-story, 21-foot-high, 2,453 sq ft primary residence with an attached 1,070 sq ft ADU, a two-car garage, and a carport — all on a lot of approximately 6,138 sq ft that already contains the landmarked 736 sq ft Walker's Cafe. The total proposed construction comes to 3,523 sq ft of new residential space, leaving virtually no functional room for the café to operate as a viable business. This contradicts the stated purpose of the entitlements, which is to preserve and rehabilitate a historic landmark. As a neighbor who lives directly behind this property, I can tell you that the two-story structure with roof deck and balconies shown in Exhibit A will peer directly down into our yards and gardens. It will cast shadows across our outdoor spaces and eliminate the privacy we currently enjoy. My neighbors and I are not opposed to a modest, single-story home adjacent to Walker's Cafe. What we object to is an oversized two-story development built by an outside investor who, by their own admission, plans to sell the house after construction — while Walker's Cafe sits shuttered with no committed operator, no timeline, and no roadmap to reopen. I respectfully ask the City Council to: 1. Require a full environmental impact review before any permits are issued, given

this property's location in the Coastal Zone adjacent to Sunken City's slide-prone terrain, wildlife habitat, and the Point Fermin Marine Life Refuge. 2. Substantially reduce the footprint and massing of the proposed residence to preserve adequate operational space for the café. 3. Require a binding condition that Walker's Cafe must be restored and operational before any building permit for the residential structure is granted. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.