



**16th Street Plaza
Belongs to the
Community**

Plaza 16 Coalition :: 275 Dolores Street :: San Francisco, CA 94103 :: Plaza16.org

September 2, 2014

Planning Commissioners
San Francisco Planning Department
1650 Mission Street, Suite 400
San Francisco, CA 94103

RE: Request to Reject 490 South Van Ness Large Project Authorization Case Number 2010.0043X

Dear San Francisco Planning Commissioners:

The Plaza 16 Coalition is a rapidly growing group of over 600 residents and over 50 businesses and community organizations from the 16th and Mission neighborhood and throughout the Mission District. We believe in equitable development that creates healthy, vibrant communities. We believe this type of planning and development requires thoughtful, intentional, and community-based strategies to ensure that low-income and working class communities and communities of color guide and benefit from the decisions that shape our neighborhoods and our city's transit-oriented development.

We are writing to urge you to reject the Large Project Authorization for J.C.N. Developers' proposed 490 South Van Ness project of 72 condominiums scheduled for a vote at your September 4th meeting for the following reasons.

First, the Mission District is still a predominately working class neighborhood, one of whose greatest needs is housing affordable to current residents including those people without any homes. The development of large market rate luxury projects like 490 South Van Ness leads to increased residential and commercial rents, evictions, and the displacement of current residents and the businesses that serve us. Within the last year or so, two large luxury housing developments have opened in the immediate area—VARA at 15th Street and Mission and 1515 South Van Ness at the corner of 15th and South Van Ness. Accordingly, eviction rates and economic dislocation are intensifying in this part of the neighborhood. The approval and construction of another large luxury development at 490 South Van Ness will exacerbate these negative forces.

To amplify, the Plaza 16 Coalition includes many of the same organizations that brought out the community for the Eastern Neighborhoods Plan. While the 490 South Van Ness development may largely meet the parameters of the Eastern Neighborhoods Plan, we are seeing a huge imbalance between what was projected in the Eastern Neighborhoods Plan for market rate housing versus affordable housing in our neighborhood. We urge the Planning Commission to review the affordability and the community impact of the proposed building against the unanticipated imbalance of market rate housing to affordable housing. Therefore, the Plaza 16 Coalition calls for the rejection of all market rate development until the city meets the housing needs of its poor and working class residents.

Second, you must reject the Large Project Authorization because the developer and the Planning Department failed to adequately notify community members or to consider our needs and desires. The only community meeting indicated in the supporting information for this case occurred on April 23, 2014 attended by a mere 20 people, many of whom have business relationships with the developer (page 80 of 215; Exhibit B of Project Sponsor's Submittal).

In contrast, the Plaza 16 Coalition has undertaken a broad-based, grassroots oriented community process to address development and other issues in our neighborhood. We hosted a February community rally and June festival at the 16th Street BART Plaza each attended by hundreds of our neighbors. Similarly, we held a community forum at the standing room only, approximately 300 person capacity, Victoria Theatre in May and community meetings in July and August at the St. John's Church, again attended by hundreds of people. This inclusionary approach is the best way to address the economic development and housing needs in our neighborhood and should be the model to fix a broken city planning process going forward. Open, democratic processes, not unpublicized, perfunctory developer sponsored meetings with handpicked attendees.

Third, you must reject the 490 South Van Ness project because the developer failed to honor the commitment he made at the August 14th Planning Commission hearing to meet with the Marshall School PTA. Parents who are members of the Plaza 16 Coalition report that such a meeting with the full PTA has not occurred. At best, the developer reached out to the Marshall Parent community through the "Wednesday Folders" given to students to share with their parents, a process fraught with obvious logistical deficiencies. In other words, not good enough.

Finally, you must reject this Large Project Authorization because of specific design issues, especially the insistence on underground parking access from narrow, one way Adair Street, which will endanger the pedestrian safety of both residents and schoolchildren. Also, the 68 foot height of the proposed development is out of scale and character to the Mission District. Deceptively, the developer's rendition of the proposed development shows it at the almost exact height of the adjacent 45 foot Redstone Building, whose eastward looking windows the condominium tower will block. How can a 23 foot taller building appear to almost the same height as an existing building in an accurate depiction?

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

Plaza 16 Coalition

Cc: John Rahaim, Director, SF Planning Department
Supervisor David Campos