Berkeley Design Advocates

11 December 2015

Chair Pinto
Zoning Adjustments Board
City of Berkeley
2180 Milvia Street
Berkeley, California 94704

Dear Chair Pinto:

RE: 1900 Fourth Street

Berkeley Design Advocates (BDA) is a membership organization of Berkeley design professionals. We support sound urban design and environmental planning, and encourage positive change in the built environment to help achieve society's social and economic objectives. Our membership adopts positions on issues of importance to the design community.

This letter is in support of the application for 1900 Fourth, a mixed use development that will provide retail space and 135 residential units, as well as a pedestrian retail paseo, outdoor dining and gathering places, publicly accessible parking, and streetscape enhancements. BDA members have reviewed the proposed project and were pleased with the proposed development.

Key points of our support for this project include the following:

- The project as proposed overall serves as an appropriate and respectful transition between the higher density residential mixed use projects south of University Avenue and the smaller scale retail character on Fourth Street north of Hearst Avenue.

- Development of this site would replace the existing unsightly and underutilized surface parking lot that does not contribute to a pleasant urban environment. In contrast, the proposed development will enhance the character of Fourth Street as a destination for shopping, dining, and strolling, and will provide spaces for community gatherings and performances. An open air paseo will provide pleasant, usable passageways through the retail buildings at the northeast portion of the site.

- The proposed residential component is well situated and integrated into the retail experience and public spaces, supporting the activation of Fourth Street beyond key retail times.

- The site's massing and design in general fulfills the goals of the University Avenue Strategic Plan's design guidelines by providing an architectural gateway to
Berkeley. The project as proposed is still subject to Design Review, which will consider the project's transitioning scale, placement of massing at the "edges" of the University Avenue overpass and the railroad, and final design of the several buildings and ground plane.

- The project's basic configuration successfully transitions the urban fabric of both sides of University Avenue; and those transitions will be enhanced and successful through appropriate landscaping and high quality materials and surfaces.

BDA notes the significant investigative effort and resources expended to contribute to the body of knowledge regarding the West Berkeley Shellmound. Findings have concluded that there is no evidence that this particular land parcel is located on an historic or archeologically significant site.

BDA endorses the density and massing of 1900 Fourth as proposed, and we urge the Design Review Committee, the Landmarks Preservation Commission, and the Zoning Adjustments Boards to work collaboratively and diligently with the sponsor during design review, with the goal of thorough, appropriate but timely review and approval of the project.

Sincerely,

Anthony Bruzzone
President

*The BDA Membership considered and approved these positions in December 2015.*

cc: City Clerk