

December 3, 2008

Secretary
Zoning Adjustments Board
City of Berkeley
2120 Milvia Street
Berkeley, CA 94704

To: Members of the Zoning Adjustments Board

Re: 1200 Ashby

Berkeley Design Advocates is dedicated to improving the built environment and has worked for good planning and design in Berkeley for more than fifteen years. The organization is especially concerned with projects that, due to their location and prominence, set a template for all later development in the area.

On ZAB's December 11th 2008 calendar, the Board will consider the application of Memar Properties/Rawson, Blum & Leon to build 98 residential units on a 34,000 square foot parcel at the corner of Ashby and San Pablo (1200 Ashby).

It is the position of Berkeley Design Advocates to support this project. We urge ZAB to approve the permit applications.

Since February 2008, an ad-hoc BDA committee has been working with the developers of Ashby Arts-1200 Ashby to cooperatively and collaboratively exchange ideas on design, bulk and mass. We very much wanted to support a new infill project at an important location in the city. Our discussions with the developers have been cooperative, respectful and productive.

We recognize that this site is the an important southwest "Gateway" to the City of Berkeley; we find that the building's massing and design reflect this notion.

We also note the design has evolved nicely and been improved from its initial concepts through an iterative process to a more refined and ordered aesthetic, in materials palette, rhythm and color. The vertical building elements emphasize and strengthen the corner at San Pablo Avenue and Ashby. The scale is appropriate for the location; the reduction in density from previous schemes is an improvement

From a policy perspective, we agree with the developers that this project is what southwest Berkeley needs: 98 new dwelling units and 7,770 square feet of neighborhood retail with a total development envelope of 112,636 square foot. We believe that the development is a marked improvement to the former gas station site, and at 60' high (65' at the Ashby/San Pablo corner) it creates a sense of place and permanence in the community.

Letter to ZAB
Re: 1200 Ashby
December 3, 2008

We also note that the existing residential neighborhood is respected with a transitioning down to 36' in height at the residential zone interface on Carrison Street.

In addition, the development includes many "green" features including good transit access, green building standards, and provisions for bicycle parking.

Again, we urge ZAB to approve 1200 Ashby.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anthony Bruzzone', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Anthony Bruzzone
President

This position was approved by the BDA membership on December 3, 2008.

December 2, 2008

Mr. Aaran Sage, Senior Planner
City of Berkeley
Planning and Development Department
Land Use Planning Division
2120 Milvia Street, 2nd floor
Berkeley, CA 94704

RE: 1200 Ashby Avenue

Dear Zoning Adjustments Board

As a professional urban designer at Calthorpe Associates and as a local resident (2909 Dohr Street, Berkeley), I am writing in strong support of the above project.

I met with Mr. Kashani and Mr. Rhoades last Fall and gave them many suggestions on the initial designs of their project. I am pleased to see that many of my ideas were incorporated and approved by the Design Review Board.

This project embodies a rich array of our community goals including Climate Action Plan, housing for low and very low income families, market-rate housing, community re-investment, LEED Certification and appropriate retail with adequate parking.

The developers have shown flexibility with the feedback they received from their immediate neighbors and have provided more than required set backs on the East side of the property. Additionally, recognizing the dismal traffic conditions at the intersection of Ashby and San Pablo, they have agreed to dedicate a slice of their land to the City in order for the City to create a dedicated Left-Turn Lane at Ashby and San Pablo.

Finally, since the City has designated this corner as a “node”, the developers have designed a project that clearly makes a positive statement as the gateway to our City. I am pleased with the changes that Design Review Board made to the original design and created a true architectural statement at this important corner.

I encourage you to support and approve this project at your earliest possible opportunity.

Thank you,

Luiz Barata
510-506-4690; luiz@calthorpe.com

Schlepp, Victoria

Subject: FW: 1200 Ashby

December 2, 2008

City of Berkeley

Zoning Adjustments Board

c/o Aaron Sage, Senior Planner (asage@ci.berkeley.ca.us)

Planning and Development Department

Land Use Planning Division

2120 Milvia Street

Berkeley, CA 94704

RE: Letter of Support for Ashby Arts Project at 1200 Ashby Avenue

Dear Members of the Zoning Adjustments Board:

I live at **3018 San Pablo Avenue, Berkeley**, across the street from the proposed development at 1200 Ashby Avenue. I have been in contact with Mr. Kashani and Mr. Rhoades since the beginning of their design work on developing this vacant and blighting site in our neighborhood. I am writing in strong support of this development.

Even though we will lose our views of the beautiful Berkeley-Oakland hills, we believe the size and mass of the proposed project is appropriate for our major transit corridor, San Pablo Avenue. The project includes 98 new residential units including 15 affordable units to low and very low income families. It includes ground-floor retail, a nice open plaza and adequate parking and useable open space for its residents. Most importantly, this project is dedicating five feet of land along Ashby to help the City create a Left-Turn Lane for Westbound traffic on Ashby Avenue.

This project is a true Gateway to our city and would make a great statement for the part of the City that has been neglected by community investment for decades. As a LEED certified project, Ashby Arts helps the City meet its regional housing obligations and progress toward its Green House Gas reductions as envisioned in Measure G.

Finally, the developers have taken a great deal of care to work with the neighbors and have created appropriate set-backs and step downs to mitigate the impacts on the immediate neighbors.

I strongly support your approval of their application and appreciate for considering my comments. Please complete your necessary process and approve this project so that our neighborhood can receive the long-overdue investments it deserves.

Sincerely,

Andy Frasheski

510-644-3711; afrasheski@frasheski.com

12/5/2008