

January 22, 2018

President Rich Hillis
San Francisco Planning Commission
1650 Mission Street, Suite 400
San Francisco, CA 94103

cc: Commissioners Dennis Richards, Rodney Fong, Christine Johnson, Joel Koppel, Myrna Melgar, Kathrin Moore; Jonas Ionin - Commission Secretary, Scott Sanchez - Zoning Director, Mark Luellenn - Quadrant 3 Team Leader, Nicholas Foster - Quadrant 3 Project Planner

Re: Case Number 2016-012089DRPVAR / Block 0100 / Lot 021B
Discretionary Review Hearing for 33 – 35 Aladdin Terrace

Dear President Hillis and Commissioners:

I am writing in support of the DR application for the subject project. Residents of Aladdin Terrace and the surrounding community have significant concerns regarding the proposed project. These neighbors would not object to a reasonable development. However, the project as proposed appears to have been formulated with little concern for the long-term negative impacts the project will have on the surrounding context.

It is important to recognize the existing built environment of Aladdin Terrace. Development on the mid-block alley is very dense, due to intense re-building after the 1906 earthquake and fire, and the additional circumstance that the overall block is sub-divided by two cul-de-sac alleyways, Kent Street to the east and Aladdin to the west. Open space within the confines of the block is severely compressed and substandard as compared to current code requirements. The result is a tightly packed, fine-grained residential neighborhood. With placement of informal seating and plants in containers embracing the mid-point of the alley, Aladdin Terrace has functioned as a supplemental form of mid-block open space, a shared community resource with informal gatherings for residents, neighbors and visitors for decades.

The Residential Design Team and a Notice of Planning Dept. Requirements directed the Sponsors to make changes to the design of a proposed roof-deck. However, these changes are not sufficient with respect to balancing (a) the opportunity for extensively enlarging and reconfiguring a two-unit building to address the Owners' present-day desires with (b) resulting long-term negative impacts to an established and dense neighborhood.

Existing garage spaces located at the eastern and western ends of Aladdin were permitted in 2005 and 2009; they should be seen as examples of recent, unfortunate, and negative precedents, not as justification for further automotive intrusion. The introduction of these eight parking spaces constitutes a level of automobile traffic that has reached the saturation point for this narrow residential alley. The addition of 2 new off-street parking spaces at 33-35 Aladdin would increase private garages spaces on Aladdin by another 25%, exacerbating an already difficult situation. Meanwhile, there are seven bus lines and two cable car lines within a three-block radius.

Approval of the project as currently designed will (a) intensify negative impacts resulting from the insertion of private garages and automobile traffic in a severely constrained residential alley; and (b) undermine professional consideration and sound reasoning forming the basis of planning regulations and guidelines intended to ensure the qualities that make San Francisco unique are preserved and enhanced. Please do not reinforce expectations that adding another garage and additional automobile traffic in fine-grained residential districts can proceed with disregard for established neighborhood character.

We respectfully request the Planning Commission and the Zoning Director to require modifications that will bring the project into greater conformance with the General Plan, in particular the Elements addressing Urban Design, Housing and Transportation. These strategic and long-term guidelines are intended to ensure the preservation and enhancement of those qualities of urban experience that are so distinct to San Francisco. In light of the many options for alternative forms of transportation that are readily available in the immediate neighborhood such proposals are neither necessary nor desirable. Thank you for your consideration of this matter.



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