

February 22, 2016

Rodney Fong, Commission President
Dennis Richards, Commission Vice President
Michael J. Antonini, Commissioner
Rich Hillis, Commissioner
Christine D. Johnson, Commissioner
Kathrin Moore, Commissioner,
Cindy Wu, Commissioner

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

Re: 88 Arkansas
(Submitted by email and for inclusion in the 3/3/16 Planning Commission packet)

Dear Planning Commissioners:

We are writing to express our shared concerns over the development at 88 Arkansas, specifically the inclusion of “nested bedrooms” in unit mix calculations and the need for rigorous management of hazardous materials during remediation.

Because of its location, directly across the street from Jackson Park and in close proximity to several neighborhood schools, 88 Arkansas provides a unique opportunity to respond to the need for family-friendly housing. This is supported by the Showplace/Potrero Area Plan which promotes projects that include multi bedroom housing near parks, schools and other amenities.

OBJECTIVE 2.3 REQUIRE THAT A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF UNITS IN NEW DEVELOPMENTS HAVE TWO OR MORE BEDROOMS EXCEPT SENIOR HOUSING AND SRO DEVELOPMENTS UNLESS ALL BELOW MARKET RATE UNITS ARE TWO OR MORE BEDROOM UNITS

POLICY 2.3.1 *Target the provision of affordable units for families.*

POLICY 2.3.2 *Prioritize the development of affordable family housing, both rental and ownership, particularly along transit corridors and adjacent to community amenities.*

POLICY 2.3.3 *Require that a significant number of units in new developments have two or more bedrooms, except Senior Housing and SRO developments.*

To meet this objective, UMU zoning for this site requires that 40% of the units consist of units with two or more bedrooms. Despite this requirement, the project sponsor seeks an exception so that they can count nested bedrooms (sleeping rooms without exterior windows) to meet this requirement. This would result in 114 units containing just a single bedroom with an exterior window, and 13 units containing two bedrooms with exterior windows. As a result, only 10% of the 127 units would meet planning code

requirements. For good reason, the Zoning Administrator interpretation does not allow bedrooms using shared light to be included for the purpose of calculating unit mixes. Building codes generally support the need for exterior windows in sleeping rooms, and genuine safety concerns arise with the lack of adequate egress in the proposed plan. Practically speaking, it is hard for us to imagine families using rooms that allow light to pass to and from living areas, with no ventilation or exposure from the outside, as bedrooms. It is likely that these rooms would instead serve as dens or offices.

We fear that referencing other Area Plans, while ignoring the explicit prioritization of family housing in the Eastern Neighborhoods Plan, sets a dangerous precedent for future development in our neighborhood. There is no justifiable reason to grant an exception for this project beyond the benefit it provides to the developer. We urge you to continue to support family-friendly housing and to deny the exception.

Regarding remediation and removal of hazardous materials, we believe that high levels of contamination and the project's proximity to Jackson Park, schools and nearby residences, demand a higher level of oversight than what DPH normally requires for a Maher site. Our concerns stem in part from our recent experience with the construction of the Onyx project and the release of dust, without containment, over a period of days. We also recognize that DPH, by their own admission, is currently understaffed, overwhelmed and unable to provide adequate oversight. The process relies instead on members of the public to report violations. Unfortunately few are adequately informed on the potential dangers and how to get a timely response to their complaints.

The 88 Arkansas site has 14 Underground Storage Tanks within 1000 feet, and is adjacent to a block where the former Richland Oil Facility was located. Construction will require the removal of approximately 16 feet of soil. Initial sampling indicates the presence of TPH (total petroleum hydrocarbons), arsenic and heavy metals. Additional characterization will be required, but not until after the project is entitled. Out of an abundance of caution for the health and safety of children and residents in the area, and on the advice of Stephanie Cushing at DPH, we ask that you include the following special conditions of approval to help ensure the safe removal of toxic materials:

1. Public hearing to inform community about process, with an overview of hazardous materials onsite, and the potential for release of materials during excavation and removal.
2. Scheduling remediation around park activities and school schedules.
3. Noticing of remediation activities to nearby schools, residents, and SFRPD managers and personnel.

We thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Alison Heath, Grow Potrero Responsibly
Virginia Paik, Head of School, Live Oak School
Rod Minott, Save the Hill
Jude Deckenbach, Friends of Jackson Park