

CORRESPONDENCE

June 16, 2010

To: Mayor Helene Schneider and Members of City Council

RE: The Developer's Appeal to City Council on the 517 Chapala Project denied by the HLC: No.MST2005-00088 (Hearing Date on June 21, 2010) No.

From: Caroline Vassallo (514 Brinkerhoff Avenue, S.B.)

The mixed-use project designed for 517 Chapala St. is too large in height, mass, bulk and scale. This is particularly true since it borders the Brinkerhoff Architectural Landmark District on its south and west sides.

Along with the existing Andalusia mixed-use project to its north, the proposed plan will dwarf and hide views from both south and west, as well as from the east side of Chapala Street to the west. The height planned will especially restrict views to and from the predominantly one story Victorian/Craftsman streetscape in the adjacent Brinkerhoff Avenue Historic surroundings. The public pedestrian views of all who use Brinkerhoff Avenue--including the tour busses--will be seriously impacted in loss of open sky due to the height of the proposed building.

In sum, the proposed project will create a canyon effect on Chapala St. and wall off the Brinkerhoff Architectural Landmark District with yet another large building that offers no little relief in terms of its massing on the site.. That there will be two very different architectural styles is a given but, that being said, there is no reason for the one style to offend the other and highlight the architectural discrepancy by over-building the site.

Streetscape relief is needed to provide a lower building profile and avoid the Chapala Street canyon effect. Lower height and building scale would allow for the much needed spatial perspective.

Prior to the June 21st hearing, I requested that story poles be set up so that City Council Members would be able to best assess the height, mass, bulk and scale of the proposed project and its effect upon the surrounding area.

The proposed roof top decks add an additional overuse of the site which will further impact surrounding one and two story buildings. The roofline of the building could be lower and more architecturally interesting if the roof decks were eliminated. The original plan called for a nine foot plate height in the first story garage in order to maintain more of a residential scale on the west elevation. If the plan is approved, this garage plate height should remain or be lowered further if possible. The Andalucía mixed-use building adjacent was approved with a condition that no off street parking permits would be permitted for occupants, employees or customers and that condition should be applied to the proposed building as well in the event of approval, because adequate on-site parking exists within the project design and off street parking is needed for all the older non-conforming buildings.

I continue to propose that story poles be erected on the proposed site, so City Council can get a better idea as to the scale of what is proposed and see it in relation to the recently completed Andalucía and historic adjacent properties.

Sincerely, Caroline Vassallo