



Public Comment Received for:
Item III: 425 Garden Street
(PLN2021-00523)

| Name of Sender | Distributed prior to hearing | Distributed after the hearing |
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| 1. Barry Winick | x | |
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Chair Gabriel Escabedo & Commissioners
Planning Commission -City of Santa Barbara
City Hall, 735 Anacapa Street, Santa Barbara 93111

C/O PC Secretary, Via email: PCSecretary@santabarbaraca.gov

Re: Agenda Item #III – 425 Garden Street, APN 031-272-006

September 14, 2022

Dear Chair Escabedo & Commissioners:

I am writing to share what I hope will be viewed as constructive comments to be considered in the Commission's Concept review of the proposed AUD Residential project at 425 Garden St.

I am writing in several capacities: as a neighbor, business owner and property owner at 404 Garden Street and as an architect in Santa Barbara, former AIA SB Chair and former HLC Commissioner.

I am sympathetic with the project aspirations to provide more affordable and moderately priced rental housing within the City Center. This project however falls far short of its stated goals and instead is as one ABR Board Member aptly observed is a perfect engineering exercise in maximizing the development area of the project from a developer investment point of view. It falls short in every other way especially as a living environment or a sensitive work of architecture befitting a gateway entrance to Santa Barbara.

My observation is that the project of four stories with little relief, squeezed to the street will be very imposing, oversee and out of scale and impacting skyline views.

Interestingly the earlier version of the project proposed 33 units with 63 bedrooms and has unfortunately been scaled up to 36 units with a whopping **85 bedrooms**. This will have a significant negative impact on parking and traffic on this city gateway street. The project proposes no on-site parking, meaning that this already impacted neighborhood with very limited on street parking, will be further impacted. Even if some of the complex's residents choose to forgo cars and travel by foot or bicycle, it is not only conceivable but guaranteed that with 85 bedrooms there will be a significant number of residents who will elect to have cars. The developer has disregarded the ABR input from the Pre-Project review which was recommending a sensitivity to the site with a reduction in density in order to better fit the project into its context.

The developer when asked during the ABR meeting if he has solutions for resident parking noted that he was sensitive to the impact that this had and perhaps it would be addressed in the rates. When asked to go further such as limiting the renter's ownership of cars, the developer demurred noting he would rather leave it up to the tenants to work out their solutions. This is a recipe for sure failure Garden Street is already traffic impacted. The tiny drop off area afforded for the project does not take into consideration the need for maintenance staff, and the routine comings and goings of the likely over 100 inhabitants.

Ironically, rather than allocating additional common space on site to afford more breathing room, the developer actually is requesting a Zoning Modification to reduce the code required open yard area by 380.25 SF. This modification should be disallowed and instead the developer should be encouraged to provide more open area to create an adequate pull off zone completely off of Garden Street and for giving more relief and open space around the building. The developer also if serious about alternative means of transportation should be required to provide much more scooter and bicycle storage space at the street level so that it will actually

be used and also accommodate the many residents of the building.

When the high density zoning was established for the city it did not undergo a granular study for each block with review of traffic flow and practical impacts. It is now apparent that with the engineered for maximum approach that the developer is proposing for this project a re-analysis needs to be taken for the zoning impact and to allow for discretionary approval based on the project size bulk and scale of the project as part of the review project.

The development relies on minimum unit requirements based on the lot size for meeting the AUD requirements. This project is pretty much the poster child example of the distortion that can happen when the development team is not at all sensitive to the community benefits that were intended when the AUD program was developed. This project is one in which what was intended as a community benefit has been coopted as a rationale for overdeveloping a site for maximizing development investment returns rather than balancing the benefits of sensitive development with the community needs for affordable housing balanced with traffic flow, open space and appropriateness of size bulk, scale and aesthetics.

And finally, this project is disappointing aesthetically especially when considering that Garden Street is a gateway entrance to the City. This proposed development does not raise to the level of architecture and would be disappointing even if it were not at a city center. It has no qualities reflected in either an authentic Spanish Colonial style nor in an attractive modern industrial vernacular of the nearby neighborhood.

My hope is that the development team will receive instructive comments from the Planning Commission that artfully helps to shape the project into one that is less dense, has a realistic parking and transportation component, more open space and is compatible in all ways with this significant entry point to the city.

With warm regards,



Barry Winick, AIA LEED AP,
Principal – Winick Architects,