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November 2, 2015 [2 of 2]

By personal delivery at Nov. 3, 2015, hearing to: Commission on Community Investment and Infrastructure Attn: Claudia Guerra, Commission Secretary Office of Community Investment and Infrastructure 1 South Van Ness Avenue, 5th Floor San Francisco, CA 94103 and email to: claudia.guerra@sfgov.org	By email to: *warriors@sfgov.org*: Ms Tiffany Bohee OCII Executive Director c/o Mr. Brett Bollinger San Francisco Planning Department 1650 Mission Street, Suite 400 San Francisco, CA 94103

Re: Warriors Arena Project: Violation of Variance Requirement.

Dear Ms Bohee and Mr. Bollinger:

This office represents the Mission Bay Alliance ("Alliance"), an organization dedicated to preserving the environment in the Mission Bay area of San Francisco, regarding the project known as the Event Center and Mixed Use Development at Mission Bay Blocks 29-32 ("Warriors Arena Project" or "Project"). The Mission Bay Alliance objects to approval of this Project and certification of the Project SEIR.

I write today regarding the OCII's failure to require a variance or "variation" for this Project under section 305 of the Mission Bay South Redevelopment Plan ("Plan"). The November 2, 2015, letter from Susan Brandt-Hawley, my co-counsel for the Alliance, demonstrates this Project is not an allowable secondary use under the Plan. Thus, a variance is not available because, as shown by Brandt-Hawley, the Project "will change the land uses on this Plan." (Plan, § 305.) However, in the alternative, if the Project is an allowable secondary use under the Plan, then the OCII must process this Project application as a variance and make the findings required by Plan section 305 before Project approval.

Both California and San Francisco planning law provide a process for landowners to obtain a "variance" from the "uniformity" of zoning limits that, while appropriate for the zone district in general, would impose undue hardship due to unique characteristics of a specific parcel. Government Code section 65906 governs the grant of zoning variances by municipalities and prohibits local agencies from granting "special privileges" to individual landowners. Similarly, San

Francisco Planning Code, section 305, subdivision (a), provides that a variance permit must be approved for any exception to the requirements of the Planning Code. Subdivision (c) thereof mirrors the requirements of state law, and requires a finding that "owing to such exceptional or extraordinary circumstances the literal enforcement of specified provisions of this Code would result in practical difficulty or unnecessary hardship ...."

Similarly, the Plan includes a variance provision that reflects the same substantive requirements as Government Code section 65906 and Planning Code section 305:

> The Agency may modify the land use controls in this Plan where, owing to unusual and special conditions, enforcement would result in undue hardships or would constitute an unreasonable limitation beyond the intent and purposes of these provisions. Upon written request for variation from the Plan's land use provisions from the owner of the property, which states fully the grounds of the application and the facts pertaining thereto, and upon its own further investigation, the Agency may, in its sole discretion, grant such variation from the requirements and limitations of this Plan. The Agency shall find and determine that the variation results in substantial compliance with the intent and purpose of this Plan, provided that in no instance will any variation be granted that will change the land uses on this Plan.

(Plan, § 305.)

Because the Plan's variance provision imposes virtually identical requirements as Planning Code section 305, both apply. (Plan, §'s 101 ["Regardless of any future action by the City or the Agency, whether by ordinance, resolution, initiative or otherwise, the rules, regulations, and official policies applicable to and governing the overall design, construction, fees, use or other aspect of development of the Plan Area shall be (i) this Plan and the other applicable Plan Documents, (ii) to the extent not inconsistent therewith or not superseded by this Plan, the Existing City Regulations and (iii) any new or changed City Regulations permitted under this Plan"]; 304.9.C.(iv)).

Here, the Project creates at least sixteen inconsistencies with the Design for Development (D4D). The OCII now proposes to amend the D4D, the Owner's Participation Agreement (OPA), and other Plan documents to resolve these inconsistencies by, including but not limited to, raising maximum height limits from 90 to 135 feet, allowing a second 160+ foot tower, increasing bulk limits to accomodate the arena, and changing arena setbacks, street wall heights, view corridors, public rights of way, and parking standards. (See e.g., Draft SEIR, pp. 4-7 - 4-9, § 4.2.4; Proposed Resolution 2015, exhibit A; Memorandum to the OCII from Executive Director Tiffany Bohee for Items 5(a), 5(b), 5(c), 5(d) & 5(e) the November 3, 2015, CCII meeting agenda, pp. 4, 22.)

Even if the Project's land uses are allowable secondary uses, these amendments "modify the land use controls in this Plan" as provided in Plan section 305. But the Project Sponsor has made

no showing that due to "unusual and special conditions, enforcement would result in undue hardships or would constitute an unreasonable limitation beyond the intent and purposes of these provisions." (Plan, § 305.)

"Variances are, in effect, constitutional safety valves to permit administrative adjustments when application of a general regulation would be confiscatory or produce unique injury." (Curtin's California Land Use and Planning Law, p. 55.) Variance requirements also implement the State Planning and Zoning Law's requirement of "uniformity" of zoning rules within zoning districts. (See Gov. Code, § 65852 ["All such [zoning] regulations shall be uniform for each class or kind of building or use of land throughout each zone, but the regulation in one type of zone may differ from those in other types of zones;" *Neighbors in Support of Appropriate Land Use v. Cnty. of Tuolumne* (2007) 157 Cal.App.4th 997, 1008 (*Neighbors*).) The State Planning and Zoning Law also requires vertical consistency between local agencies general plans, zoning ordinances, and land use permits. (Gov. Code, § 65860, subd. (c) ["County or city zoning ordinances shall be consistent with the general plan of the county or city... ."]; see *DeVita v. Cnty. of Napa* (1995) 9 Cal.4th 763, 772 ["A general plan is a 'constitution' for future development [citation omitted] located at the top of 'the hierarchy of local government law regulating land use'"].)

California courts have vigorously enforced the requirements for granting a variance, and have developed extensive jurisprudence to corral the many stratagems local agencies have used to avoid its requirements. (See e.g., *Topanga Association v. County of Los Angeles* (1974) 11 Cal.3d 506, 511-12 (*Topanga*); *Orinda Assn. v. Board of Supervisors* (1986) 182 Cal.App.3d 1145, 1166 (*Orinda Assn*) ["A zoning scheme, after all, is similar in some respects to a contract ... If the interest of these parties in preventing unjustified variance awards for neighboring land is not sufficiently protected, the consequence will be subversion of the critical reciprocity upon which zoning regulation rests..."].)

Variance findings must focus on a comparison of the subject property to other properties in the zone district with which the variance is intended to bring it into parity, and the benefits to the community or "public interest" associated with a zoning exception are irrelevant. (*Orinda Assn, supra*, at p. 1166.) By amending the Plan documents to accommodate this Project, the OCII would cast these requirements aside and grant a "special privilege" to this Project Sponsor.

In *Neighbors*, rather than adopt a rezone or grant a variance, the County created a special exception to the zoning ordinance for one landowner by including it in a development agreement adopted under the development agreement law. (*Neighbors, supra*, 157 Cal.App.4th at p. 1003.) In rejecting this stratagem, the Court in *Neighbors* noted that there are limits on the power to rezone: "'The foundations of zoning would be undermined, however, if local governments could grant favored treatment to some owners on a purely ad hoc basis ... [R]ezoning, even of the smallest parcels, still necessarily respects the principle of uniformity." (*Id*. at pp. 1009-10.)

A similar result occurred in *Trancas Prop. Owners Assn. v. City of Malibu* (2006) 138 Cal.App.4th 172 (*Trancas*). In *Trancas*, the court held an exemption from a city's zoning requirements accomplished by contract functionally resembled a variance, and held that "such departures from standard zoning by law require administrative proceedings, including public hearings ... followed by findings for which the instant [density] exemption might not qualify... Both the substantive qualifications and the procedural means for a variance discharge public interests. Circumvention of them by contract is impermissible." (Id. at p. 182.)

In sum, the OCII's proposed grant of zoning exceptions to this Project by way of amending the Plan documents rather than by variance violates the Plan, the variance requirements of the San Francisco Planning Code and state law, and the uniformity requirement of state law.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Very Truly Yours,

Tom Lippe

Thomas N. Lippe

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