



Friday, March 13, 2009

Mayor Peter Drekmeier
And City Councilmembers,
Planning Commissioners
250 Hamilton Avenue
Palo Alto, CA 94301

RE: 488 West Charleston Project - SUPPORT

Dear Mayor Drekmeier and Members of the City Council and Planning Commission:

For 50 years, Greenbelt Alliance has protected open spaces and promoted walkable, vibrant places around the nine-county Bay Area. Our Compact Development Team endorses and advocates for livable, transit-accessible communities with homes we can all afford. We write to you to share our recent endorsement of the development proposed for 488 West Charleston Road, the Tree House project. Tree House, proposed by Palo Alto Housing Corporation (PAHC), includes 35 homes for individuals of modest means, right near the vital, transit-rich El Camino corridor. Greenbelt Alliance applauds this project proposal because of its environmental sensibility and because it provides much-needed affordable places to live.

With Tree House, Palo Alto Housing Corporation manages to make the best of a small site of only 0.7 acres. On site will be 35 homes for Palo Alto residents earning 20 to 50 percent of area median income. The housing is compact and well designed. The project varies in height, from two to four stories, as a response to neighborhood concerns about the height and scale of the building. The developer also meticulously preserved 17 trees on-site, including 12 mature heritage trees, which will provide a calming respite from the busy city for future residents. PAHC has been able to preserve these trees because they have not overprovided parking in this project. Since this is an affordable development, the minimized parking makes sense here and enables other parts of the project, such as the open space, to be feasible. Providing a rational amount of parking also makes other project benefits, such as the green building practices, financially feasible. Bike lanes along West Charleston ensure good connections to the surrounding area for those who pursue cheaper transportation.

Greenbelt Alliance also applauds PAHC for providing affordable homes, at a time when record foreclosure rates around the region have shown us how many people desperately need affordable places to call home. In concert with the Palo Alto Family and Senior development proposed for Alma Street near Caltrain, this project will contribute to Palo Alto's diverse housing stock, and in turn, to its diverse workforce.

In closing, Greenbelt Alliance is proud to endorse the Tree House project proposed by Palo Alto Housing Corporation. While many cities turn their backs to affordable housing, we are encouraged to see that Palo Alto has taken a proactive approach to welcoming this kind of well-planned development. We encourage the Planning Commission and City Council's support of the 488 West Charleston development.

Regards,

Marla Wilson
Sustainable Development Associate

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