

Oakland Planning Commission  
[By Email]

Re: Adoption of Final City of Oakland Housing Element

January 10, 2023

Dear Planning Commissioners:

The Rockridge Community Planning Council (RCPC) is supportive of the latest draft of the City of Oakland Housing Element and urges the Planning Commission to recommend adoption of the Element to the City Council, with one recommended change and one noted concern as outlined below.

RCPC is appreciative of the addition of the Ridge site to the Element's inventory of housing sites. We are supportive of the upzoning of the College Avenue Transit Corridor to facilitate potential development of upper story housing there in the future. We are also supportive of higher heights proposed for the Rockridge BART station site, as BART, the City and neighborhood stakeholders begin the process of discussing a potential housing development project there.

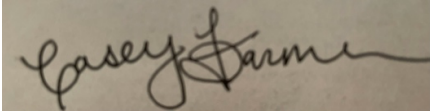
We note and are supportive of the proposal to increase the permitted density in most of Rockridge's residential areas to an RM-4 zone. However, we note that some areas of Rockridge are only proposed for RM-3 or less. We don't understand the reason for this discrepancy and would like the whole area to be moved to RM-4.

In addition, with respect to the Ridge site we call the Commission's attention to Action 3.4.10 on page 88 of the draft. This zoning implementation action would require sites included on the Housing Sites Inventory to be developed as majority-residential use. We very much appreciate this, as it would alleviate our worry that this critical site could be developed with an inappropriate non-residential use. However, the concern here is that it may take a number of months or even years for the Council to adopt this zoning change and in the meantime a currently code-compliant non-residential use could be proposed for the site. We urge the

Commission to recommend to the Council some means of protecting the Ridge site as a housing site in the short term.

We extend our thanks to the Planning Department staff for a difficult job well done!

Sincerely,



Casey Farmer  
Chair, RCPC Board of Directors

*Kenneth Rich*

Ken Rich  
Chair, RCPC Land Use Committee

## **RCPC Specific Comments and Questions on CCA Proposal 8-1-22**

### **Development and Amenities Program:**

1. Please specify the unit types, count and distribution of unit types by percentage. Also, it is unclear as to where the townhouses are located.
2. What are the anticipated commercial uses along Broadway within the building and in the courtyard entered via the Carriage Gate and/or the Clifton side of Building A?
3. What are the uses intended for Macky Hall and Carriage House? Will any of this space be made available to the community for scheduled activities?
4. What is envisioned for programmed activities within the meadow area and open space?
5. Will the program in the amenity wing of the upper building be accessible to the community?
6. Does this amenity program interact with the public space in ways other than visually?

### **Urban Form and Architectural Character:**

The CCA site sits at College Avenue's southern terminus, linking Rockridge to UC Berkeley, where each educational institution has contributed significantly to the American Arts and Craft Movement and the Northern California/Bay Regional Style with its multiple reinterpretations. As the guidelines indicate, these traditions are at the heart of Rockridge's character and quality as a place. In addition to the site's dramatic topography, it is located at the termination point of the Broadway commercial corridor, which then splits into two residential boulevards, where height limits drop significantly, as they do on College Avenue. Thus, the project must negotiate these architectural and urban form transitions with grace and respect, feeling new, yet fitting gracefully into the context.

This is not a generic housing site. As such, it calls for an urban form and architectural character that respects and responds to its presence and position in the urban fabric, the City's history, the architectural traditions of the region, and the sustainable environmental aspirations of the State. Hopefully, this project's response to context will serve as a model for other sites in and adjacent to our neighborhood.

We would like to continue working with you on the following aspects of the project's overall urban form:

- 1) Relationship of the project to adjacent existing buildings and potential future development sites such as the Ridge
- 2) Height and setback relationships between Building B and the adjacent apartment buildings

- 3) Relationship between the project and the existing developed portion of the Ridge Shopping Center and how they might be connected in the future, as the present design concept makes no connection.
- 4) Heights, setbacks and massing of the building along the Broadway frontage

### **Architectural Character**

We also have continuing concern and interest in the following issues of the project's architectural design. In general, the modulation of the buildings' facades has improved the overall aesthetics of the building to create a base-middle-top composition as articulated in the guidelines. This is further enhanced by changes in materials, though the precise nature and character of these materials is to be determined. Further development is needed to make these buildings worthy of their unique setting and consistent in character and quality with the architectural traditions of the region. We would like to continue a dialog with the project sponsor focusing on:

- 1) Ensuring that the building facades do not appear too industrial or "boxy"
- 2) Enriching the facades with some sort of three-dimensional window treatment and/or balconies
- 3) Adequately screening rooftop mechanical structures

### **Landscape and Streetscape:**

- 1) Can tall growing trees be planted between Macky Hall and the 90' tall façade that looms behind it to enhance its context as the focal point of the meadow?
- 2) Could benches be inset along the historic wall and the sidewalk be widened to accommodate the heavy pedestrian flows?
- 3) Could the wall be illuminated to enhance its landmark role and improve neighborhood safety?
- 4) How will streetscape and site lighting be handled?
  - a) This is important, as this section of Broadway can feel dark and unsafe in the evenings, particularly along the long concrete wall, where the few streetlights are buried in the trees.
  - b) Will the pathway and meadow area be publicly accessible and illuminated in the evenings?
  - c) Will Macky Hall and the Carriage House receive enhanced illumination?
- 5) How does this project truly connect to the history of the site? Other than preservation of a few artifacts from the CCA site, what other actions could be taken to tie this development back to the site's historic relevance to the Bay Area artworld?
  - a) Could there be sites for commissioned sculptures, or exhibits incorporated into the landscape?
  - b) Could some of the blank ground floor walls along Clifton become commissioned murals?

- c) Could the courtyards and walkways within the site also be opportunities to tell the story of the site or the arts community that arose here?

### **Sustainability and Resilience**

These characteristics of the project are not mentioned in either the site guidelines or the conceptual design presentation, yet we note that California energy codes are among the most advanced in the world, and we are amid a historic drought.

What are the sustainability and resiliency goals of this project and how will they be achieved?

- 1) Could and will this be a Zero Net Energy (ZNE) - Zero Carbon Building?
- 2) Will there be on-site grey water harvesting or storm water collection?
- 3) Will the project seek LEED or other environmental performance third-party certifications?
- 4) Could the Meadow and surrounding tree groves serve as stormwater retention areas?

### **Emergency Access:**

- 1) A full review by the Fire Marshal and Fire Department is warranted
- 2) How is fire access being managed to ensure that multiple emergency vehicles and fleeing residents can be accommodated via a single entrance and exit along the Paseo and Clifton?
- 3) Will fire-fighters be willing to enter the narrow passage between two buildings or scale up the slope from Broadway to reach the interior of the site?

### **Transit and Ride-Share Access:**

- 1) How do service and ride-share vehicles access, park and leave the site?
- 2) What are the intended intersection improvements at the intersection of Clifton and Broadway, as this area is already severely congested due to multiple signaled intersections?  
How will the bus stops be improved to provide seating and shelter at the base of the wall along an exceedingly narrow sidewalk for the current and anticipated pedestrian traffic load?

### **Errata:**

We would appreciate your correction of Rockridge's boundaries in the context diagram on Page 7.

