

# EAST BAY FOR EVERYONE

September 27, 2017

Members of the Oakland Planning Commission:

Before you is the decision to approve or deny the housing project at 1433 Webster St in Downtown. East Bay For Everyone finds it easy to support this project given the number of new homes, including deeply affordable ones, at stake. The issue of “view corridors” raised by project opponents warrants comment and context, however, as the potential treatment of the alleged corridors as valid in committee sets dangerous precedent.

The concept of downtown “view corridors” was considered and voted on by the Planning Commission in 2010; the result was the appropriate recommendation to City Council that no such views be protected. While this predates East Bay for Everyone, we applaud the decision: the need for new homes Downtown, close to transit and jobs, clearly outweighs the aesthetic desires of the already securely housed to preserve a few specific views of a few specific buildings. For whatever reason, the recommendation was never forwarded to the full Council for formal action. This failure to formally reject view corridors should have no bearing on the current project, as nothing has changed that would affect the Commission’s original decision. If anything, the need to prioritize homebuilding, especially affordable homebuilding, over preserving specific views has grown as Oakland’s affordability crisis has worsened.

Members of East Bay for Everyone have attended two design review committee meetings concerning 1433 Webster. At both meetings, despite the Commission’s prior decision, concerns about 1433 Webster blocking alleged view corridors were discussed at length. One such discussion led to a request to the architects/developers to return with alternatives preserving the alleged view corridors. Upon return, it was concluded that, for various reasons, all alternatives were not feasible. The only option that preserves the 179 potential homes is to disregard the alleged view corridors and approve the project as-is.

East Bay for Everyone supports the immediate approval of 1433 Webster. The project is compliant with the law in all ways. It leverages the state density bonus to include 8 units of housing affordable to the poorest of us in Downtown, which is one of the city’s most expensive and transit-accessible neighborhoods. Such housing is badly needed. It would be unconscionable to delay or deny approval of this housing on based ‘view corridors’ that the Commission has already considered and voted against. Doing so would do nothing to address the City’s housing crisis, while introducing more uncertainty into Oakland’s approval process.

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Rather than revisiting an already-rejected idea, we need nothing less than a guarantee that Oakland is on track to house its people.

Sincerely,

The 670 members, organizers, and volunteers of East Bay for Everyone including:

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Justin Horner, Rockridge

Ian Monroe, Temescal

Tommaso Sciortino, Oakland

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