



Mountain View Coalition for Sustainable Planning
c/o Aaron Grossman
817 Montgomery Street
Mountain View, CA 94041

April 12, 2022

City of Mountain View City Council
City Hall, 500 Castro Street
PO Box 7540
Mountain View, CA 94039-7540

Re: Commercial Development at 590 Castro Street

Dear Mayor Ramirez and City Council members:

The Mountain View Coalition for Sustainable Planning (MVCSP) appreciates the opportunity to provide input on Planned Community Permit and Development Review Permit to Construct a New Four-Story, 105,361 Square Foot Commercial Building with Two Levels of Underground Parking, at 590 Castro.

We are asking City Council to consider bringing back this project after the Downtown Precise Plan phase 2 is finalized next year. If that is not possible, or if the plan might be delayed, we ask the Council to ask for key considerations to make the best possible use of this remarkable opportunity. This property, located on an important, historical corner in the heart of downtown, and next to a major open space in our city, deserves this extra examination.

Our biggest concern is why this property is being developed for 500 new jobs, without a single unit of housing, in an area near transportation, existing places of employment, and walkability to services and recreation. It is a perfect spot for housing. With many companies creating hybrid or fully remote work environments, we question the need for speculative office space, but the demand for housing is real. To this point, we question if the housing impact fees are high enough. How do they compare to other projects, per square foot, and can they be raised?

Our second largest concern is why the entire ground floor is not dedicated to retail or other public use. Our downtown is struggling. We need to tie the 600 block of Castro together with the rest of downtown, and not create a dead zone separating Civic Center Plaza and the residential and commercial area toward El Camino. The maligned projects at 599 Castro, housing Wells Fargo, and particularly the project across Church from it, at 605 Castro, housing Quora, should remind us why ground floor Castro Street establishments need to be accessible,

attractive, and useful to the public. We recommend office entrances being moved to the back or side of the building, and all retail or other public spaces made to face Castro. A larger, contiguous retail space could also allow for more interesting uses, such as a food hall, like State Street in Los Altos, an art gallery with art visible from the sidewalk, an interactive art or science space, or flex space for pop ups for interesting rotating exhibits and businesses.

Other concerns include:

- The impact on historical Pioneer Memorial Park. This is a very important public park and historic resource, which still contains some graves and has oak trees that are likely 200+ years old. We are concerned that the building will block visual access and light from the park, essentially walling off the park on the Castro side. The removal of a heritage tree in the park, and more egregiously, the encroachment onto park land for car parking, must be reconsidered.
- The excess removal of heritage trees. Many of these trees make an excellent buffer between the park and the building, and should not be removed. We also feel that heritage trees should not be removed to make room for parking spots, as it is a huge loss of natural resources for very minimal public gain.
- The limited public parking. Why are only 91 spots, and not all, open to the public?
- The use of artificial grass. No landscape areas should have fake turf. Native plantings and natural materials should be used throughout the project.
- Dangerous public parking along the Castro Street frontage. We would like to see it removed for increased bike, pedestrian, and automobile safety, as well as to increase visibility of ground floor retail.
- The impact on the Chamber of Commerce. This organization's visibility and accessibility will be impacted. Perhaps the Chamber could be moved into the new building, and be a partner for creating unique, captivating ground floor retail and other public use.

In summary, we think the best decisions for this property can be made after the new Downtown Precise Plan phase 2 is created, but we believe that if our concerns are addressed, we can still create a project that will benefit our entire community, for a long time to come.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

IdaRose Sylvester

for the Mountain View Coalition for Sustainable Planning

cc:

Diana Pancholi, Senior Planner

Stephanie Williams, Planning Manager/Zoning Administrator

Aarti Shrivastava, Assistant City Manager/ Community Development Director

Kimbra McCarthy, City Manager

Heather Glaser, City Clerk



April 12, 2022

City of Mountain View City Council
City Hall, 500 Castro Street
PO Box 7540
Mountain View, CA 94039-7540

Re: 590 Castro Street project

Dear Mayor Ramirez and City Council members:

GreenSpacesMV appreciates the opportunity to respond to the 590 Castro Street project, which you will be considering at your meeting tonight. To learn more about our organization, see “About GreenSpacesMV” at the end of this letter.

The primary goals of our organization are to protect and enhance green spaces in Mountain View. This letter reflects those concerns. That said, many of our members also have an interest in our city addressing the severe jobs/housing imbalance. Accordingly, we are dismayed that the city will be seeing even more development bringing in additional jobs without the housing to meet the new demand. As we all know, Mountain View is suffering from a jobs/housing imbalance, which exacerbates problems related to affordability and availability.

We also believe it’s important to activate our streetways as much as possible in the interest of encouraging people to get out of vehicles and considering active transportation modes instead.

The site is unique in that it fronts both Castro Street and Pioneer Park. It also fronts the proposed paseo between Castro and Pioneer Park, which is a great addition to the circulation fabric of our Downtown. The proposed building has the opportunity to symbolically and physically link these two key areas within our Downtown. Lining the ground floor with multiple retail or public-serving opportunities along the paseo will help activate that area and create a space that doubles as a throughway *and* a “place to be”.

We note that sidewalk space on Castro is narrower than in other adjacent active areas, such as the ground floor of Park Place Apartment and Public Storage Offices. Accordingly, please ask the developer to extend the retail or public-serving services from the corner of Church and Castro, along Castro and the paseo to *at least* around the corner where the park and paseo meet.

The new paseo and Pioneer Park provide natural spaces for people to sit or meet in comfortably. As you know, there has been strong support for the street closure on Castro and what it did for the three blocks south of the Transit Center. Similar opportunities exist in this location as well, along with the grassy knoll, majestic trees, and benches/picnic tables in Pioneer Park.

For more on what might be done to activate the area through this project, please see the comment letter from Mountain View Coalition for Sustainable Planning (MVCSP), which makes a number of points we agree with.

Regarding landscaping and trees:

- We do not want to see encroachment on Pioneer Park, certainly not when it involves removing any trees.
- We would rather not see any trees removed on the project site, even with replanting as part of the plans. New trees take some time to mature, and, meanwhile, we lose much of the advantages that existing trees provide.
- Healthy redwoods exist today on the property, and beyond the central part of the site. They should be kept in place. Even though they are considered non-native, they serve as excellent air cleaners, an essential aspect of what they can provide for us. More severe fire seasons are ahead of us, and our air quality could be seriously affected, even at some distance from anticipated fire areas.
- Regarding the landscaping, please do what you can to ensure that native, drought-tolerant, and pollinator-friendly landscaping is emphasized, that migration paths are protected, and that cone-dropping or low-hanging trees adjacent to sidewalks and bikeways are not allowed. Likewise, please ensure no trees attractive to aphids, such as tulip trees, which can result in sticky droppings on sidewalks, are included in the plans.

Regarding parking concerns:

- We would like to see parking deemphasized as much as possible with this project. Absolutely, we do not want to see any trees removed to accommodate parking spaces.
- Where parking is available onsite, we would like to see assurance that tenants, employees, and others working in or doing business in the building will park *only* in the underground spaces and not on the street.
- We favor seeing all parking along the Castro Street frontage removed as part of the project development.
- We support the developer's intention to make on-site parking available to the public as much as possible.

Finally, if possible, we would like the City or developer to underground the utility cabling along the project perimeter on Church Street.

We hope you incorporate our recommendations into the project specifications and design prior to approval of the project. Thank you again for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Bruce England for GreenSpacesMV

Cc:

Diana Pancholi, Senior Planner

Stephanie Williams, Planning Manager / Zoning Administrator

Aarti Shrivastava, Assistant City Manager / Community Development Director

Kimbra McCarthy, City Manager

Heather Glaser, City Clerk

About GreenSpacesMV

Our focus is on biodiversity, native, drought-tolerant, and pollinator-friendly landscaping, complete green streets, parks and other open spaces, including Privately owned, publicly accessible (or POPA) park spaces, and so on.

For more information, see <https://www.facebook.com/GreenSpacesMV>.

To contact us, send email to GreenSpacesMV.info@gmail.com.

From: [Carles Pi-Sunyer](#)
To: [City Council](#); [Pancholi, Diana](#)
Cc: [Catherine Tornabene](#)
Subject: Construction at 590 Church Street
Date: Monday, May 16, 2022 1:34:09 PM

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Hi,

I am writing in response to a notice I received concerning the construction at 590 Church St to replace the old Wells Fargo location.

As a resident of Church Street, I am concerned about the use of Church Street for parking and staging by construction trucks. During construction of the building on the other corner, we had problems where trucks would park on Church Street and idle their engines for extended periods of time. A specific example was during the concrete pouring, we had a long line of concrete mixers stopped on the street with their engines running.

I would like clear rules prohibiting this use of Church Street and a contact person on site I can reach if needed.

Thank You,
Carles Pi-Sunyer

 Mountain View, CA 94041

Pancholi, Diana

Subject: FW: 590 Castro--please require retail on ground floor and all 312 parking spaces

From: Laura Blakely [REDACTED]

Sent: Tuesday, April 12, 2022 3:28 PM

To: City Council FORWARD <City.Council@mountainview.gov>

Subject: 590 Castro--please require retail on ground floor and all 312 parking spaces

CAUTION: EXTERNAL EMAIL - Ensure you trust this email before clicking on any links or attachments.

Dear Council Members--

I realize I am writing you at the 11th hour, but I missed this item when I reviewed the agenda late last week. I believe only 4 or 5 of you can vote on this item. My family lives near the intersection of Church and View Streets, so we go through the Church/Castro intersection multiple times per day. There are already two office buildings on that corner, and one of these has no ground floor retail. We need more ground floor retail at this end of Castro Street! Please require that there be no ground floor office. With so much office going in downtown, we need more restaurants and small retail businesses to support the people who will work in the office buildings, especially at this end of Castro Street.

We also need to ensure that the office building has sufficient parking for the workers in the building. Pre-covid, parking in our neighborhood was quite difficult during the weekdays. Even though the building where the current Wells Fargo branch is has sufficient parking, many people chose not to use it, and instead parked up and down View Street, Hope Street, Church Street and neighboring streets so that parking was almost impossible to find from 8:30-6 or so on weekdays. Please require 312 parking spaces, and require the landlords to insist that their employees use the parking. It is needed.

I am fairly certain that two or three of you cannot vote on this item because of conflicts restraints related to the proximity of your residences to this intersection. I'm hoping the rest of you will not abandon our neighborhood and at a minimum will require retail on the ground floor and sufficient parking. What about, instead of requiring public art, there was studio space for artists on the ground floor? Our community needs diversity, not more office-only!

Thanks for your consideration,

Laura Blakely
[REDACTED]

Pancholi, Diana

Subject: FW: Commercial Development at 590 Castro Street

From: Gwen Smith <[REDACTED]>

Sent: Tuesday, April 12, 2022 11:23 AM

To: Ramirez, Lucas <Lucas.Ramirez@mountainview.gov>; Hicks, Alison <Alison.Hicks@mountainview.gov>; Kamei, Ellen <Ellen.Kamei@mountainview.gov>; Matichak, Lisa <Lisa.Matichak@mountainview.gov>; Abe-Koga, Margaret <Margaret.abe-koga@mountainview.gov>; Showalter, Pat <Pat.Showalter@mountainview.gov>; Lieber, Sally <Sally.Lieber@mountainview.gov>

Cc: City Council FORWARD <City.Council@mountainview.gov>

Subject: Commercial Development at 590 Castro Street

CAUTION: EXTERNAL EMAIL - Ensure you trust this email before clicking on any links or attachments.

Dear Mayor Ramirez, Vice-Major Hicks, and City Council Members,

My name is Gwendolyn Smith and I am a resident of Mountain View. I am writing to express my concern about the planned commercial development proposal at 590 Castro Street - in particular the removal of heritage trees. The project proposes to remove 19 trees, 9 of which are heritage trees. Why is it that the standard response of development companies is to remove established trees when it should be in their best interest and that of a city to encourage the preservation of existing trees - enhancing the image and appeal of such projects as well as reputation and profits? Why didn't the architect and development company design something creative that incorporated existing heritage trees? The small grove of three redwoods or as they are referred to in the proposal, "parking lot" trees, are beautiful and majestic - characteristics that cannot be said of yet another generic office building in Mountain View.

The proposal states that 54 new trees would be planted on-site and 75% native planting. What is meant by "native planting"? What kinds of "new trees" are being proposed? While a higher tree count might sound good it often means that the developer rips out healthy mature trees only to replace them with saplings, bushes, and grasses for ornamental landscapes. In the renderings I see what look like jacaranda trees and typical curbside trees. Not all trees are equal. From an environmental and conservation perspective, trees such as pines and redwoods should not be replaced with jacaranda, myrtles, and ornamental bushes and grasses. Church Street between Castro and Franklin is lined with redwoods that enhance its nature and attractiveness. Pioneer Park has some lovely large trees. Any development on this site should preserve and extend that environmental context. A few oaks, pines and redwoods are worth more than a myriad of ornamental trees.

I urge you to veto or at least minimize the removal of heritage trees on this property and to preserve and extend the planting of redwoods, oaks, and pines instead of ornamental trees and plants.

Sincerely – Gwen Smith

Pancholi, Diana

Subject: FW: Item 8.2 comments

From: Ronit Bryant <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Tuesday, April 12, 2022 8:38 AM
To: City Council FORWARD <City.Council@mountainview.gov>
Subject: Item 8.2 comments

CAUTION: EXTERNAL EMAIL - Ensure you trust this email before clicking on any links or attachments.

Dear Councilmembers,

I join my voice with those of many residents asking you to look again at the commercial development at 590 Castro. Some key points:

- The public has had very little opportunity to comment on the basic nature of this development. Five neighbors with no concerns at an October public meeting? That sounds like a meeting that was not sufficiently publicized.
- This project offers our city no benefits: more office space worsening our jobs-housing imbalance. Why do that?
- The corner of Castro and Church will become 100% office and Pioneer Park will be pretty much closed off from Castro - not a way to bring life to the upper part of Castro.
- Have you noticed that the offered "Pedestrian landscaped connection between Castro Street and Pioneer Park" is 2 inches wider than the minimum required by development standards?

At the very least, please offer this project no exceptions: if the project cannot proceed without them, so be it. Housing would be a much better fit for that location, with significant benefits to the city.

sincerely,
ronit bryant

Pancholi, Diana

Subject: FW: Comments on 590 Castro Development

From: Hala Alshahwany <[REDACTED]>

Sent: Monday, April 11, 2022 10:24 PM

To: City Council FORWARD <City.Council@mountainview.gov>

Cc: , City Manager <city.mgr@mountainview.gov>; Lee, Danielle <Danielle.Lee@mountainview.gov>; , Planning Division <Planning.Division@mountainview.gov>

Subject: Comments on 590 Castro Development

CAUTION: EXTERNAL EMAIL - Ensure you trust this email before clicking on any links or attachments.

Hello Council Members and City Staff,

As I started to write my input for council regarding 590 Castro St proposal, I found this email that I had sent to the DRC members last year when design aspects were being discussed. Unfortunately the pleas made by the public and even the DRC architects (read message below) to save our heritage trees, have been ignored by the developer and project planer.

It is vital to retain the Redwood heritage trees due to their proximity to Pioneer Park and their importance in keeping our downtown beautiful and healthy. These trees are our greatest asset against climate extremes. Please protect them.

Hala Alshahwany

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Hala Alshahwany <[REDACTED]>

Date: Thu, Oct 21, 2021 at 2:48 PM

Subject: Further Comments on 590 Castro Development

To: planning.division@mountainview.gov <planning.division@mountainview.gov>, rebecca.shapiro@mountainview.gov <rebecca.shapiro@mountainview.gov>

CC: city.mgr@mountainview.gov <city.mgr@mountainview.gov>

Hello DRC Members, Shapiro, Poncini & Sherman,

Thank you all for your support on pushing for sustainable designs and practices in reviewing 590 Castro St., and other developments coming through steady fast in our city.

One of the great accomplishments of MV ESTF-2 (Environmental Sustainability Task Force 2017-18), was working with council to pass updated Reach Code requiring all new buildings, commercial & residential, to be 100% electric using clean sourced energy (through SVCE).

Now in 2021, in light of climate challenges and extremes, we have to go further.

As I mentioned in yesterday's meeting, saving mature heritage trees, at minimum the native ones is crucial to the health and beauty of our community and environment. The suggestion made by Ms Poncini to relocate the 3

native redwood trees to adjacent Pioneer park is an excellent way to accommodate the developer and preserve these trees. The developer's cost in maintaining and relocating heritage trees is justified to support long term sustainability goals.

Likewise, using green roof tops and permeable walkways should be encouraged and sought by reviewers and builders. These small changes combined with big ones will enable us as to have a better future for all.

Best,
Hala Alshahwany
Member of ESTF-2 & MV Resident

From: Lenny's Sonic <[REDACTED]>

Sent: Monday, April 11, 2022 12:04 PM

To: Ramirez, Lucas <Lucas.Ramirez@mountainview.gov>; Hicks, Alison <Alison.Hicks@mountainview.gov>; Showalter, Pat <Pat.Showalter@mountainview.gov>; Kamei, Ellen <Ellen.Kamei@mountainview.gov>; Lieber, Sally <Sally.Lieber@mountainview.gov>; Abe-Koga, Margaret <Margaret.abe-koga@mountainview.gov>; Matichak, Lisa <Lisa.Matichak@mountainview.gov>

Cc: City Council FORWARD <City.Council@mountainview.gov>

Subject: Please do not approve this downtown office building.

CAUTION: EXTERNAL EMAIL - Ensure you trust this email before clicking on any links or attachments.

The proposal by the Sobrato Organization to redevelop 590 Castro Street (the former Wells Fargo building) with a four-story, 102,442 square foot commercial building should not move forward without a challenge. Not only does Mountain View not need more downtown jobs. By adding about 500 more jobs and no new housing, it will exacerbate our housing shortage and throw more commuters onto our regional roadways.

The staff report for this proposal states, "The applicant held a community meeting on October 12, 2021 to introduce the project, seek feedback on the design, listen to concerns, and provide updates on the project status and development schedule. Approximately five people attended, and no comments or concerns were conveyed. Meeting attendees provided their support for the project and the proposed building design." Yet no one that I've asked – people who follow such proposals – was aware of that meeting, unlike public meetings Sobrato has convened for other projects. At the very least, approval of this project should be delayed until there is genuine public outreach and feedback.

This project will increase our need to build more housing and to fund more affordable housing while forcing more low-income, particularly Latinx residents, out of town. The staff report states, "the applicant will pay \$2,575,463 in Housing Impact fees, which are used to construct affordable housing." That's enough to build no more than three subsidized apartments, hardly a match for the

housing shortfall created by the addition of hundreds of employees.

By causing more people to commute great distances, it will further congest traffic and boost greenhouse gas emissions. Yet for some strange reason the developer is not required to conduct Vehicle Miles Traveled analysis.

Unlike the Sobrato office development on the St. Josephs site across Castro Street, this proposal is asking the Council to vote exceptions: A reduction in required parking and allowance of nearly 14,000 feet of ground floor office space. Sobrato is also requesting permission to remove nine Heritage trees, including three redwood trees. And it is asking for a determination that the project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act.

I've got nothing against the Sobrato organization. In 2015, when it became clear that they would have difficulty putting offices on all their North Bayshore parking lots, I suggested that they build housing there. And that's what they're doing.

Mountain View should move more quickly to update our Downtown Precise Plan to acknowledge that we have too many jobs here for our housing and services. Let's start by sending this project back to the drawing board.

Lenny Siegel

—

Lenny Siegel

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

Author: *DISTURBING THE WAR: The Inside Story of the Movement to Get Stanford University out of Southeast Asia - 1965–1975* (See <http://a3mreunion.org>)