

Gutierrez, Jeannette

Subject: RE: MVCSP comments on 590 Castro project to City of Mountain View City Council

From: Mountain View MVCSP <mvcsp.info@gmail.com>

Sent: Tuesday, April 12, 2022 1:28 PM

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

Cc: Mountain View MVCSP <mvcsp.info@gmail.com>; Pancholi, Diana <Diana.Pancholi@mountainview.gov>; Williams, Stephanie <Stephanie.Williams@mountainview.gov>; Shrivastava, Aarti <Aarti.Shrivastava@mountainview.gov>; McCarthy, Kimbra <Kimbra.McCarthy@mountainview.gov>; Glaser, Heather <Heather.Glaser@mountainview.gov>

Subject: MVCSP comments on 590 Castro project to City of Mountain View City Council

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(formal letter attached)

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

About Mountain View Coalition for Sustainable Planning

The Mountain View Coalition for Sustainable Planning is a local volunteer-based organization dedicated to making Mountain View as beautiful, economically healthy, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian accessible, and affordable as possible. MVCSP member interest and expertise covers areas such as housing, transportation, the environment, the economy, and beyond!

For more information, see <http://www.mvcsp.org>.

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

From: [Laura Blakely](#)
To: [City Council FORWARD](#)
Subject: 590 Castro--please require retail on ground floor and all 312 parking spaces
Date: Tuesday, April 12, 2022 3:28:29 PM

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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



From: [Isaac Stone](#)
To: [City Council FORWARD](#)
Subject: Item 8.2 - 590 Castro
Date: Tuesday, April 12, 2022 2:32:44 PM

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Lots of people seem to be against this project.

It's fine.

Yeah, housing would be better, but we shouldn't let the perfect be the enemy of the good. The new building is a big improvement on the old one.

thanks,

isaac

Gutierrez, Jeannette

To: Glaser, Heather
Subject: RE: Minor correction Re: GreenSpacesMV comments on 590 Castro project to City of Mountain View City Council

From: Bruce England <greenspacesmv.info@gmail.com>

Sent: Tuesday, April 12, 2022 2:34 PM

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

Cc: Pancholi, Diana <Diana.Pancholi@mountainview.gov>; Williams, Stephanie <Stephanie.Williams@mountainview.gov>; Shrivastava, Aarti <Aarti.Shrivastava@mountainview.gov>; McCarthy, Kimbra <Kimbra.McCarthy@mountainview.gov>; Glaser, Heather <Heather.Glaser@mountainview.gov>

Subject: Minor correction Re: GreenSpacesMV comments on 590 Castro project to City of Mountain View City Council

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Sorry folks. The first line wasn't correct for this agenda item. I've now corrected it as noted below.

Thanks!

Bruce

(formal letter attached)

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
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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.

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