

**Acosta, Rosa**

**From:** John C. Baker <jcb10@humboldt.edu>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, November 12, 2019 10:57 PM  
**To:** Matsumoto, Karyl; Garbarino, Rich; Addiego, Mark; Nagales, Mark; Nicolas, Flor  
**Cc:** Futrell, Mike; Acosta, Rosa  
**Subject:** Support letter for PUC site housing

Dear Madame Mayor and Councilmembers,

I don't envy you the cacophony you will probably hear on Wednesday night (and later on from whichever the opposite side of your collective vote is). I'd like to thank you ahead of time for hearing everyone out and I hope you will come out of the experience knowing that your efforts are appreciated — even if you don't vote the way I'd like! ;-)

Because there are likely to be many, many speakers and it is possible (likely) that time will be cut short, I've included the written version of my comments below, before I hack and slash to whatever length we are ultimately allowed to speak. There are nuances that I may not be able to get across in a short speech that I hope you consider.

Again, thank you for your service to our community.

John

Madame Mayor, Councilmembers: good evening.

My name is John Baker. I'm a South City resident starting his third decade in town, and am not speaking on behalf of any organization except my family (and I explicitly got permission from my wife to say that).

And I mentioned my family because that's important to my following statement: We've made our home here, sent our kids to schools here, and worked hard for the residents of this city — my wife as an advocate for senior citizens via non-profit legal organizations, and myself as a library and housing commissioner before starting work with the schools. We're a part of this community and this community is part of us, even though we rent because we can't afford to buy. These homes will help us *stay*.

(And that *is* what's being built here: homes. Others may try to desensitize you by referring to a "project," or a "development," but it's important to remember *we are talking about homes*.)

So, it's also important to consider what will happen if they aren't built: those 800-plus potential residents will instead be competing with those *already* here for scarce available housing, further driving up rents and exacerbating an already-dire displacement crisis.

And that's a really important issue: those opposing these homes are not just saying they don't want *new* neighbors. There are often saying, consciously or not, they don't care what happens to the neighbors *that they already have*.

I believe that's a morally problematic attitude, conscious or not. I also think that:

- It's not moral to reject housing because of height or any other aesthetic reason.
- It's not morally defensible, *in the midst of a climate emergency*, to refuse the environmentally beneficial choice before you: homes *in town* that would reduce vehicle miles traveled in the region.
- Finally, I don't think it's moral during a housing crisis to make self-serving, codeword-laden arguments about preserving "community character" when this community's character has constantly been in flux since the 1800s — through slaughterhouses, shipyards, and the sprawl of single-family homes over bare hillsides. I would rather our community be known for having an open-armed, welcoming character.

There is *one* thing I absolutely hate about this housing proposal: it has WAY too much parking for a facility literally next door to BART. As I told the Council prior to the car wash vote, you're encouraging driving by allowing so much parking. But a key tenant of ethical decision-making is: "the morally right action is the one with the best overall consequences."

This plan to build homes is not perfect, but it will have far more good impacts than bad. Building 160-ish below market units and 600-plus other homes next to a transit hub *is* a good thing, and therefore is the morally correct thing to do. Please support these homes.

Thank you.