

Save CCSF Coalition

www.saveccsf.org



November 8, 2017

An open letter to the CCSF Board of Trustees and Chancellor Rocha:

San Francisco and the City College community must resist the proposal to privatize public land and build mostly luxury housing in the lower City College parking lot (Balboa Reservoir). Instead we should focus on rebuilding our common treasure, City College.

Ignoring community input and the needs of CCSF, Mayor Lee and developers have been ramming through plans for an enormous housing project of 1100 mostly luxury units on the lower Balboa Reservoir, used for parking at CCSF for over four decades. *Please do not let this development go forward, as it would privatize an irreplaceable parcel of public land.*

Additionally, it would:

- Pose a major obstacle to rebuilding City College enrollment, just as Free City is gaining momentum.
- Take a giant step toward the gentrification of the last affordable neighborhoods on the south side of town, pushing out yet more African Americans, Pacific Islanders, Latinos, new immigrants and working class people in general.
- Create a new barrier to the completion of the Performing Arts Education Center, mandated by two citywide elections in 2001 and 2005, but stalled during the state takeover of City College;
- Add traffic congestion to an already badly impacted neighborhood in San Francisco;
- Remove access to education for thousands of people who depend on parking to fit City College into their hectic lives.

AvalonBay is the lead developer selected by the Public Utilities Commission (PUC), which owns the land. This is the national real estate development corporation that built the unaffordable housing at 1200 Ocean, right over Whole Foods. You might remember that during construction, the Greenlining Institute ran picket lines at the construction site, protesting lack of local hiring. Market rate rents will bring in a lot of revenue (\$3000 – \$7000 a month per unit) as the corporation brags on its website, talking about delivering “outsized returns to investors.” AvalonBay also delivers outsized returns to corporate executives. The company’s CEO, Timothy Naughton, makes just shy of \$7 million a year. The other executives make about \$2.5 million a year.

This development is not intended for long-time community residents, or for students, staff or faculty of CCSF. Like the existing AvalonBay building at 1200 Ocean, it is intended for Silicon Valley employees, and will deepen the ethnic cleansing of San Francisco. We all are deeply impacted by the affordable housing crisis in SF and the Bay. But no matter how many times the lie is repeated, building more unaffordable housing does exactly nothing to solve this problem. Luxury housing simply feeds a dynamic that forces more of us out of SF every day.

How many of the Avalon units would be affordable by ordinary mortals? This is extremely unclear and subject to spin. Which definition of “affordable” do we use, the federal definition? Or the City Planning Department definition, which keeps moving higher and higher into the stratosphere? (The City just moved the definition up to \$105,000 for renters and \$121,000 a year for homebuyers.) Or do we use the definition put forward by the six Excelsior-based community organizations, the Communities United for Health and Justice: affordable to people who make up to \$60,000 a year. Suddenly the number of “affordable” units drops down to 198, with 902 unaffordable units. Worse yet, some of the Avalon proposals are aspirational with no guarantees, for example “up to 17% additional affordable and moderate units.” Is this another bait and switch, like the City and the PUC discussing 500 units in the development for month after month, and then—surprise! —suddenly switching it up to 1100 units? Since the definition of “affordable” is so subject to spin, we need to insist that the developers provide *actual costs*: for example, what would the various categories of rental units cost per month?

We are told that the only way to get some crumbs of affordable housing is to build more luxury housing. But as the article “Chasing Unicorns” states (link below), this gets things exactly reversed—in fact the proposal is for the public to subsidize luxury housing. It is delusional to take our irreplaceable public asset of land, turn it over to developers for their private profit, and call that a solution to the affordable housing crisis. Luxury housing is being built all over town, with construction cranes everywhere, and tent cities in their shadows. But now to take our PUBLIC land and feed this dynamic is unacceptable.

We urge the entire community, the administration and the Board of Trustees to vigorously advocate that ownership of the lower parking lot—in use by City College continuously for nearly a half century—should be transferred from the PUC to CCSF for \$1, to serve the compelling public purpose of rebuilding and developing City College—our common treasure—and public education. Adding a limited amount of 100% affordable housing for educators and some students could be discussed later, in a truly democratic manner.

This development is NOT a done deal, unless we give up and look the other way, going along with the real estate lobbyists and the machine that serves them. Public land is our common heritage; it belongs to future generations, and must not be privatized. Board of Trustees and Chancellor Rocha, we need elected officials who can see what’s right, resist political pressure, and speak up for justice.

*Submitted by Allan Fisher
on behalf of the Save CCSF Coalition*

Links to relevant articles:

Chasing Unicorns- 5 Reasons Why SF is Delusional Giving Up Public Land for Market Rate Development

<http://peoplepowermedia.net/housing/chasing-unicorns-5-reasons-why-sf-is-delusional-giving-up-public-land-for-market-rate>

July 2007 article on Performing Arts Education Center

<http://www.sfgate.com/realestate/article/ARTS-CENTER-TO-RISE-AT-CCSF-3-building-venue-2553258.php>