

Mr. Mark Dixon
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Steven Olivas, Jason Lyon, David Coher, Julianna Delgado, Lambert Giessinger, Mic Hanson, Carol Hunt Hernandez, Andrea Rawlings, & Tim Wendler
Members, Planning Commission, City of Pasadena

Mr. David Reyes
Director, Planning & Community Development Department

Dear members of the Committee & Mr. Reyes,

It is with great pleasure that HMRI is submitting comment for the South Fair Oaks Specific Plan. Since its foundation, HMRI has invested significant resources in securing and developing property in the South Fair Oaks (SFO) district. The recent development of our main campus at 686 South Fair Oaks Ave. demonstrates HMRI's commitment to the area and our support in advancing the city's promotion of H.E.A.R.T. based developments in the SFO district. As an organization we anticipate continued expansion and development of our main campus over the next several years to fulfill our mission. We are eager to continue the growth of our organization while helping to reimagine the function and accessibility of the SFO district. By embracing the city's vision to foster a pedestrian friendly neighborhood of medical research, commercial and residential developments, HMRI hopes to support the economic growth of the district as one of its key institutional entities. Overall, the SFOSP is detailed, well thought out, and offers an opportunity for new economic development not seen previously in this district. However, after reading through the plan we have concerns that we hope can be addressed before the SFOSP is finalized.

Our initial concern centers around publicly accessible open space and the calculations used to determine the requirements which we feel are too aggressive for larger sized development projects. Corner lots seem to be substantially affected by the setback and open space requirements. The use of building gross floor area to calculate the open space requirements disincentivizes larger developments that aim to combine lots together. The FAR multipliers used to calculate these requirements in the SFOSP are not consistent with public accessible open space requirements proposed in other district plans (East Pasadena Specific Plan). Use of the full FAR multiplier should be reconsidered. A cap of 1.5 – 2.0 total FAR to calculate the publicly accessible open space might be a reasonable solution to create the open space without disincentivizing larger development projects. As an independent, non-profit organization, HMRI's primary function is research and development in pursuit of medical discoveries and therapeutic breakthroughs. It is our intention to develop a campus that will allow our researchers access to laboratory space, clinical areas, and office space. An exemption for R&D use, like one described in the EPSP (table 4.2-1, note 4) would benefit our vision to develop a biomedical research campus on our property and minimize the impact of publicly accessible open space on a large-scale campus development project. Another solution to minimize the impact of the publicly accessible space requirements would be to overlap them with the common open space requirements. Meaning, that the

space designated for either common open space or publicly accessible could satisfy the requirements for both combined.

Another point for HMRI regarding public and openly accessible space centers around the proposed locations and specifications of the east/west connections referred to as Paseos. The need to create better connection between South Fair Oaks and Raymond Ave. is apparent. The large block between Filmore and Glenarm offers no pedestrian accessibility, and currently creates connection challenges on the south end of the district. For this block the addition of the paseos makes a lot of sense and would surely be welcome by all pedestrians currently accessing this corridor. However, the SFOSP is also calling for the installation of an additional paseo to extend access from Congress directly through HMRI's property creating several concerns and issues as we consider developing our campus in the future. First, the location of this paseo seems redundant given the existing east/west connections at both Pico St. and Filmore. The distance from Congress Street to Pico St. is less than 250 feet and would offer pedestrians easy access to Raymond Ave. without encroaching on our property. Pedestrian traffic can still access the crosswalk at Congress to cross over S. Fair Oaks and access the east/west connection at Pico St. with only a short walk. This would keep the pedestrian traffic on public space while still maintaining the access that the SFOSP is aiming to achieve. Safety and liability are another concern for HMRI with a proposed public paseo dissecting our property. For several years HMRI has had to deal with the unfortunate consequences of the district's large homeless population. Incidences of homeless individuals harassing employees and visitors, defecating on our property, vandalizing our buildings (including multiple broken windows, and glass doors), and sleeping in our open outdoor spaces happen daily. To protect our interests HMRI hires private security, at a substantial cost, to help manage these issues. The addition of a designated public space will only complicate this issue and create a greater expense for our organization while potentially putting our employees and visitors at higher risk for these types of encounters. The additional liability this puts on our organization will not come without cost. Another issue with the paseos is the proposed width of 25 feet. This width vastly encroaches on any future design options for our campus and greatly reduces the potential of our real-estate by eliminating approximately 13,000 square feet of ground level space that could have been used in building design. The potential loss of building space restricts our ability to create the campus structure we desire, and potentially reduces our ability to work with developers for additional research space.

The final concern is regarding ground floor use and proposed building setbacks with sidewalk widths, as well as downzoning building envelope standards. The current proposal calls for sidewalk widths of 15 feet along Fair Oaks and Raymond. These widths in addition to the proposed building setback distances will inhibit our future development of property in this district and greatly limits our potential first floor square footage for building design. HMRI supports the city's objective to create a pedestrian friendly district, however the proposed widths are too aggressive and do not take into consideration the impact of property utilization. The current plan does not consider the unique sizes of several of the lots and parcels located in this district. Without enough flexibility for landowners and developers, the zoning restrictions potentially create unforeseen economic and design barriers by reducing each parcel's potential building footprint. HMRI cares about creating safe pedestrian spaces but feels zoning should balance the need for wider sidewalks and building setbacks with reasonable flexibility to allow developers and property owners the ability to maximize the potential of their land. The downzoning of the districts building envelope standards also creates challenges when compounded with the restrictions of setbacks and open space and accessible space requirements. Commercial development for R&D and other non-residential use should be allowed to use the existing standards which uses the building envelope to dictate new development requirements. This potentially allows for additional

vertical space on buildings that would make up for ground space lost to setbacks and open space requirements.

Overall HMRI feels that the SFOSP has opportunity to bring positive change to the district. We are encouraged by the grand vision for the district and support the idea of a pedestrian friendly environment that can become an economic driver of medical research and diverse commercial district for many years to come. As an organization we are incredibly excited to be planning our future in this district but hope that the city's Planning and Community Development group will consider our concerns and work with us to find the compromise needed to successfully build the foundation for HMRI to continue its organizational growth through the future development of our campus and remain a key institutional entity for many years to come.

Respectfully,

Mark Dixon

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