

Tracking 19th Ave. developments

Proposed legislation requires 'cumulative impacts' study

by Supervisor Sean Elsbernd

Development proposals have been popping up all along the southern 19th Avenue corridor. From the much discussed Arden Wood project to a renewed effort for increased commercial space at Stonestown to the largest of them all, Parkmerced, many of you have understandably raised this issue of concern with me.

To that end, I have spent the last six months meeting with and listening to residents all along the southern 19th Avenue corridor to hear their concerns and determine, with them, the best way to meet the challenges that lay ahead with these developers and, importantly, with our Planning Department.

As a result of these discussions, I have introduced two pieces of legislation which will be considered by the rest of the Board of Supervisors and the Mayor in September.

The first piece deals with the California Environmental Quality Act, the state law that requires different levels of environmental review for different kinds of projects.

One of the biggest concerns I have heard from all of you is that if the Planning Department reviews the various projects in individual vacuums (i.e. with horse blinders on), without consideration for all the other proposed projects along the corridor, the overall cumulative impacts on our neighborhoods of the various projects will be missed.

I could not agree more. Therefore, the legislation I have introduced mandates that the Planning Department conduct a "cumulative impacts study" of all of these projects, as if they were all going forward, before they move forward with the individual review of each separate project.

The following levels of cumulative impacts will be studied: (1) future cumulative impacts with no land use changes within the study area and no infrastructure improvements; (2) future cumulative impacts with reasonably foreseeable land use changes in the study area and no infrastructure improvements; (3) future cumulative impacts with reasonably foreseeable land use changes in the study area and only planned publicly funded improvements; (4) future cumulative impacts with reasonably foreseeable land use changes in the study area and planned publicly funded improvements and reasonably foreseeable privately funded improvements; and, (5) future cumulative impacts with reasonably foreseeable land use changes in the study area, planned publicly funded improve-



Photo by Glenn Guillmes

Supervisor Sean Elsbernd makes a point during a candidates forum held Aug. 11 as District 7 challenger Julian Lagos looks on.

ments, reasonably foreseeable privately funded improvements, and prospective, but un-funded, public and privately funded improvements.

Upon completion of these studies, we will be well prepared to tackle head on each of these various proposals.

The second piece of legislation I have introduced is an amendment to our Planning Code imposing interim planning controls along the southern 19th Avenue corridor.

For any project in excess of 20 residential units or 50,000 square feet in commercial space along this corridor, under the interim controls, the Planning Department must grant a conditional use permit to move forward.

Among the conditions that must be met before such a permit could be granted is an analysis of the completed "cumulative impact study."

In other words, the aforementioned study must be completed before any of these projects can go forward.

The second benefit of a mandated conditional use permit is that you, your neighbors, and I will be further empowered, down the line if all these projects go forward, to impose conditions of approval on the projects.

I very much believe that these two pieces of legislation are necessary tools for residents of our West of Twin Peaks neighborhoods to grapple with all of these projects.

I am extremely grateful to representatives of the West of Twin Peaks Central Council for all of their input and advice, as well as all of the neighborhood organizations along the southern 19th Avenue corridor for their suggestions.

At press time, both Board President Aaron Peskin and Land Use Committee Chairwoman Sophie Maxwell have joined me as sponsors of these items.

I am very optimistic that the rest of my colleagues and the Mayor will support this legislative package in September.

As always, if you have any questions about the above or anything else or if you have any suggestions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me at 554-6516 or by email at sean.elsbernd@sfgov.org.