



Santa Monica Coalition for a Livable City

STEERING  
COMMITTEE  
& ADVISORS

January 27, 2014

Re: Opposition to Hines' Bergamot Transit Village Project and to Silvern Memo

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Dear Santa Monica City Council,

The Santa Monica Coalition for a Livable City ("SMCLC") writes to express our strong opposition to the current massive Hines' project. This proposed project has received overwhelming condemnation within Santa Monica and the region. The City Council should vote "No," and reject the current proposal.

The fundamental reason for this widespread disapproval is that the Hines project will substantially worsen the severe traffic gridlock already existing in this area and throughout Santa Monica. Set in that perfect storm of 26<sup>th</sup> Street and Olympic Boulevard, this huge, clunky project will further clog those streets and the I-10 freeway, leaving many intersections in the surrounding area with acute, unmitigatable congestion and further back up traffic into the rest of Santa Monica.

Time and again, residents have responded that Santa Monica's terrible traffic is the City's number one problem. It is critical that the City Council not make our awful traffic situation even graver, degrading the quality of life in our City and robbing residents of their time, forcing them to limit their movements.

The scant mitigation measures fall far short and will not alleviate this unbearable congestion. The community benefits offered are grossly inadequate for a project of this size, and do not justify the severe traffic aggravation the project will directly cause.

Moreover, the just presented Silvern Memo unconvincingly advocates that Santa Monica should be happy with this massive project, not require a smaller project, and be grateful to Hines for being willing to build a project that the Memo claims is not economically feasible, and "not capable of being accomplished in a successful manner." Hines is one of the most sophisticated builders in the country and has, of course, completed detailed high-level internal analyses that show otherwise. Its own consultants, CBRE, wrote last year that for Hines to go forward with the project it "must be able to demonstrate substantial profit margins." Since then, rents have only gone up.

Hines is strongly urging this project's passage. Hiring expensive lawyers and lobbyists. Injecting a great deal of money into our elections. It obviously wants

this project. For the Memo to suggest that it is not economical and incapable of being successful financially is not credible (for this project or reduced ones). Indeed, because Hines states it wants to sell some or all of the 5 building sites to third parties, it obviously believes that there are other sophisticated developers out there who also do not share the Memo's view that its project is economically unfeasible.

The neutrality of this analysis is further tested, when without much of an explanation, the Memo switches at the eleventh hour from a "value enhancement" analysis used by both CBRE and by Silvern all the way through the Planning Commission, to a "financial feasibility" analysis. And, the Memo now also piles on Hines' land costs for the property, something that is its issue, not the City's.

Lastly, the Memo marvels that Hines would even consider doing this project, stating that "it is conceivable that Hines" would consider doing this project. Why are we here then? Because Hines very much WANTS this project.

It is Santa Monica that cannot afford this project's horrendous impacts. It is a privilege, not a right, to build in excess of zoning. Building in Santa Monica, and especially across from the Expo Line, is going to be a bonanza. That's why developers are lining up at the Clerk's office. Santa Monica must choose very carefully which projects to approve. The City needs to listen to its residents who bear the brunt of disastrous overbuilding.

Again, we urge the Council to reject this current project from which we would all suffer for decades to come.

Sincerely yours,

Diana Gordon, Co-Chair

Cc: Rod Gould  
David Martin  
Marsha Moutrie  
Planning Commissioners  
Neighborhood Leaders