

Date: October 1, 2024

Land Use and Housing Committee
Councilmember Dr. Jennifer Campbell
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Subject: Peninsula Community Planning Board Request for Additional Traffic Improvements to Mitigate Traffic impacts From the Midway Rising Project

The multi-billion dollar project will transform the Midway District with a new 16,000 entertainment center, 130,000 square feet of commercial space, and 4,250 housing units. The Midway Rising project, as evaluated in the Draft SEIR poses serious environmental and community challenges that are not adequately resolved. The SEIR identifies at least four impact areas as significant and unmitigated, land use, transportation, historic resources, and noise. This means that even after all proposed mitigations, the project will cause lasting harm to the community in those areas. The Peninsula Community Planning Board is most concerned that the large volume of additional traffic created by the Project will remain unmitigated and add to the already congested roadways and lead to continuous gridlock.

Traffic and Transportation Infrastructure Impacts

The new entertainment center will increase attendance from the current capacity of 10,500 spectators to 16,000. Special events will accommodate 20,000 attendees combined with the outdoor space. The Traffic Analysis estimates an increase of 839,145 Vehicle Miles Traveled per year for entertainment. Proposed Commercial Development of 130,000 SF will generate over 94,084,949 VMT. These figures – hundreds of thousands of additional vehicle miles traveled– are staggering. The Sports Arena Blvd/Rosecrans corridor is already one of the most congested areas in the city, often gridlocked during peak hours or entertainment events. During normal PM peak hours, the intersections and major Roadway segments operate at Level of Service E and F. The Future Estimated Utilization of the entertainment center assumes 158 events a year which translates to over 40 % of the year of traffic congestion impacting the local community. .

Adding this volume of traffic will exacerbate congestion, leading to longer idling times (hence more air pollution) and creating frustrating delays for residents, commuters and visitors. The EIR acknowledges a significant impact on transportation that cannot be fully mitigated, effectively asking the public to bear increased traffic and degraded circulation.

The proposed traffic mitigation for entertainment and commercial use does not adequately address the traffic impacts. The SEIR identifies mitigation measures such as a shuttle between the site and the Old Town Transit Center, and transit subsidies for arena employees. These measures are worthwhile (and should be required), but even according to the SEIR they do not reduce the impact to below significance in all cases. There is no evidence or documentation that supports these measures will be utilized as proposed and reduce traffic as projected. The shuttle may encourage transit but would not fully mitigate the commercial trip impact. The employee transit subsidy assumes that 50 percent of the

entertainment center employees will use public transportation to work but there is no evidence or assurance that will occur.

The current residents and commuters in this area will bear the brunt of increased traffic congestion. The Council should insist on alternative and additional mitigation that would typically be expected from a multi-billion-dollar project for example;

- Additional shuttles in addition to the one committed. Extending the hours of operation beyond 10PM.
- A pedestrian/bike overpass bridge across Camino Del Rio West that could provide a safe and efficient link between old town and Midway Rising.
- Additional traffic signal upgrades.
- The extension of Greenwood Street as identified in the Community Plan from Sports Arena Blvd to Midway Dr.
- The continuous extension of Sports Arena Blvd to Pacific Hwy,
- Binding commitments to stagger arena event schedules to avoid peak traffic if possible.

Without additional mitigation measures, the Midway Rising project will irreversibly choke an already overburdened road network.

Enhanced Infrastructure Financing District

The Peninsula Community Planning Board supports the creation of an Enhanced Infrastructure Financing District (EIFD) which has been proposed for the Midway Rising Development Project to provide for needed Traffic improvements to reduce congestion in the Midway District. Improvements include the on-off ramps identified in the 2018 Midway Community Plan, extension to the Trolley or People Mover into the Midway District, and other infrastructure improvements identified above.

In closing, we want to emphasize that we are not opposed to redeveloping the Midway area or to adding housing – indeed, we support smart growth and revitalization when done responsibly. However, Midway Rising as proposed and stated in the SEIR fails to adequately address traffic impacts and places an undue burden on the community and City. Growth must be managed, not done at any cost. San Diego has a chance to get this right by insisting on a project that truly integrates into the community and mitigates its impacts. The Peninsula Community Planning Board strongly urges the City Council to use its authority to require Midway Rising to take additional steps to mitigate traffic. If not now under this multi-billion dollar project, then when?

Sincerely,

Javier Saunders, PE
LRPC Co-Chair