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April 30, 2012
Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors
105 East Anapamu St.
Santa Barbara, CA 93101-2058

Dear Supervisors,

I would like to express my very strong support for the Santa Barbara Student Housing Cooperative's Merton project at 777 Camino Pescadero. I am writing as trustee for the vacant lot at 765 Camino Pescadero (owned by my father, William McLennan), which is accessed by the same private road as the Merton site. My family also owns the three buildings comprising Berkshire Terrace Apartments, which are immediately west of the vacant lot. I spoke in support of the Merton project at the December Planning Commission meeting.

The property at 777 Camino Pescadero had been underutilized by its prior owners and had fallen into some disrepair. I am pleased that the Housing Cooperative has acquired the property, and I enthusiastically support their plans for renovation of the building and installation of new hardscaping and landscaping. I anticipate that it will result in significant improvements which can only benefit all of the nearby properties. Given the constraints of the existing building, limited parking, and small lot size, the lot would seem unusable for almost any other purpose. We are fortunate that the Housing Cooperative is willing to take on this project.

After much discussion with the Housing Cooperative, I have no concerns with the parking variance requested. Parking is certainly a huge issue in the neighborhood, as in the rest of Isla Vista. However, given the unique attributes of the Housing Cooperative, it would seem appropriate to grant them some leeway. As a result of their members' commitment to cooperative living and other shared values, they have voluntarily placed limits on the number of Merton residents who may own cars. This in itself is a benefit to the surrounding properties, as the residents of the proposed Merton house will surely be less of a contributor to local traffic and parking woes than the residents of any other surrounding property. Additionally, having some of their parking spots off-site will minimize traffic on our shared access road. Most importantly, I am convinced that their agreement with UCSB for parking in the lots across El Colegio will be more than adequate for their needs. If anyone in Isla Vista merits serious consideration for a parking variance, surely it would be this group.

The Housing Cooperative is noteworthy for its commitment to fostering community. It has already had a positive effect on our neighborhood by organizing and hosting meetings to plan for much-needed improvement and maintenance of the shared access road. I cannot imagine any group of people who would make better neighbors.

As a community member, I have no concerns with any of the issues raised in the appeal. I hope you will vote to approve the Merton House project.

Sincerely,

Devon B. McLennan