



March 17, 2016

Re: West Half Street Project - Narrative related to LEED and Sustainability

Dear Members of the Zoning Commission,

The purpose of this narrative is to address the sustainability for the West Half Street Project that was presented to the Zoning Commission on February 25, 2106.

The project is currently achieving a LEED Silver scorecard of 56 points, which we have worked to increase from the original submission of 51 points by utilizing water efficient landscaping, exploring using a cistern to re-use water, employing enhanced commissioning for the project.

LEED is a measurement tool and not a design tool. We believe that by creating an iconic building that embodies the ideas of modern design and sustainability, that our design surpasses the expectation of the LEED Gold standard. The purpose of this letter is to demonstrate that the unique design of the West Half Street project provides sustainable qualities that are not fully credited in the current LEED system.

The project will create a dynamic presence within the transforming neighborhood of the Navy Yards. The design intent is to activate the site and street life by connecting with the surrounding urban context and community. The unique, three dimensional design of the building allows for the maximum use of light, shade, view, wind, air, and landscaping to promote better living and well-being for the building inhabitants and neighbors.

The sloped shape of the building provides for a maximum number of outdoor terraces to maximize the amount of light and views for the residents. This also allows for more natural light to reach the public domain of West Half street with better view corridors.

The stepped terraces with the built-in landscaping provides better air quality and wellness, while reducing the impact of heat island effect. The stepping also increases shading on the façade that aides in the reduction of direct solar heat gain.

The impact of wind upon a building can have positive or negative impacts depending on the design of the building. The three dimensional shape of the



building with the ins and outs in the walls create better comfort levels for the building dwellers. In separate studies, we have learned that thru wind tunnel testing that there are positive effects related to the air flow when the facades have a variety of shapes and sizes vs big flat, boxy facades.

The design of the building with the stepped terracing and high performance exterior skin is also more challenging for energy efficiency, which inhibits earning certain LEED credits such as EAc1 Energy Performance. In order to elevate the energy efficiency of the design, we are using a more efficient and costly VRF system, which is not a standard mechanical system typically employed by multi-family residential building in the District.

If the building design were more boxy, conventional, and closed off to the adjacent neighborhood, and thus more inherently energy efficient - we could potentially earn at least 2 more points in this category. However this would be a considerable detriment to the design of the building and create an unwelcoming presence in the community.

Some of the limitations of LEED are that while we are not projecting earning enough points under the current LEED standard to be certified for Gold, the project should be given credit for sustainable design features that LEED is not yet robust enough to recognize:

- LEED does not provide credit for the significantly higher-than-typical number of units with private terraces and access to fresh air (which is correspondingly hurting our energy efficiency). Additionally, these terraces and balconies will have private landscaping for every unit, which also does not earn us any points.
- LEED limits the number of credits a project can claim for Innovation & Design points, but West Half would naturally qualify for potentially up to 3-4 additional Innovation & Design credits if LEED itself were more robust. These achievable points include the Walkable Project Site, Design for Active Occupants, and Integrative Process credits.
- The LEED-NC rating system was initially written to support commercial office buildings. Over the years, the rating system has been expanded to accommodate other building types; however many credits more clearly align with the unique characteristics of commercial office buildings. For example, one credit (Indoor Chemical & Pollutant Source Control) requires 10' long mats at all building entrances. For typical offices buildings, there is only one entrance, and therefore only one mat is required. The West Half project



includes many connections to the exterior, several adjoining relatively narrow rooms, making it impractical to accommodate 10' long mats.

In conclusion, we are actively engaged with the LEED community to further the sustainable narrative to have some of the points illustrated above to be incorporated as additional credits and encourage better design. We believe that by creating an iconic building that embodies the ideas of modern design and sustainability, that our design surpasses the expectation of the LEED Gold standard.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eran Chen', with a long, sweeping underline.

Eran Chen AIA
Founder and Executive Director