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May 7, 2017

Oakland Landmarks Preservation Board
Matt Weintraub, Case Planner
Oakland City Hall
One Frank H. Ogawa Plaza
City Hall Chamber, 3rd Floor
Oakland, California 94612

Via Electronic Mail: mweintraub@oaklandnet.com

Re: May 8, 2017 Public Hearing - Item 6.4, 41 Tunnel Road (Claremont Hotel Property)
Case No. PLN16053 – Public Comment Submittal

Dear Oakland Landmarks Preservation Board and Mr. Weintraub:

I am writing to express my objection to Signature Development's proposal to further develop, expand and alter the historic Claremont Hotel 22-acre property. I live approximately one mile above the hotel and either walk or drive by the Claremont several times a day. While the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board has a seemingly narrow focus of reviewing the impact of the proposed development on the historic significance of a building designated of the *Highest Importance*, in fact, its charge in upholding Oakland Ordinance 12438 requires consideration of any building or open space alterations on the surrounding environment. I urge the Advisory Board to comply with Ordinance 12438 and reject the proposed development. The project undermines the City's ordinance and the current proposal before the Advisory Board may fail to fully disclose all aspects of the development.

While an owner certainly has a right to develop its real property for financial gain, municipalities have recognized and imposed development restrictions for the public welfare, primarily to protect the natural environment and preserve surrounding neighborhoods. As you know, these considerations frequently require a balancing of interests; in this instance, preservation of the historic Claremont property and protection of the surrounding neighborhood far outweighs a high end development for private financial gain.

Today, what is before the City's Advisory Board is an attempt by the hotel owners and the developer to circumvent Ordinance 12438. The ordinance design review standard requires development that **“. . . will be of a quality and character that harmonizes with, and serves to protect the value of private and public investments in the area, including the historic landmarked building.”** (Ordinance, Section 7). Additionally, sight lines must be maintained and “an appropriate sense of open space around the hotel building.” (Ordinance, Section 7 _8). The project proposal undermines the integrity of the Claremont Hotel and its lands, squeezing in a condominium complex and expanding hotel facilities. Open space is substantially reduced on the 22-acre parcel. Despite the developer's design revisions, the proposed expansion conflicts with the stately historic hotel structure and it fails to recognize the immediate surrounding neighborhood. For years, the hotel has operated without regard to the neighborhood, increasing traffic congestion, particularly on Ashby and Claremont Avenues and adding to an already dense community. For example, commercial trucks entering the delivery parking lot routinely block Claremont Avenue creating dangerous driving conditions in both directions. Given the already congested area, it is difficult to imagine the proposed project making it through the CEQA process. Furthermore, it is not clear that the developers have set forth all project details making it difficult for the Advisory Board at this time to have the necessary full understanding of development consequences. The proposed project cannot meet the Ordinance 12438 design criteria, design development may not be fully disclosed and, therefore, it should be rejected by this Preservation Board.

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Since at least 2002, it has been apparent that the best financial interests of the developer have been front and center. The developer's fight to avoid historic designation of the Claremont Hotel was motivated by an interest in having total freedom to alter the property without regard to the historic beauty of the premises and surrounding gardens as well as the immediate neighborhood. Looking forward, however, the City must keep its promise set forth in Ordinance 12438 to protect both the historic landmark Claremont Hotel and the integrity of the immediate surrounding neighborhood. I urge the Advisory Board to reject the expansion project.

Sincerely,

Kim Savage

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