



# SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

## Certificate of Determination Exemption from Environmental Review

Case No.: 2013.1383ENV  
 Project Title: 3516 and 3526 Folsom Street  
 Zoning: RH-1 (Residential – House, One Family) Use District  
 40-X Height and Bulk District  
 Block/Lot: 5626/013 and 5626/014  
 Lot Size: 1,750 square feet (each lot)  
 Project Sponsor: Fabien Lannoye, Bluorange designs  
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 Fabien@novadesignsbuilds.com  
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### PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The project site is located on the block bounded by Bernal Heights Boulevard to the north, Gates Street to the west, Powhattan Avenue to the south and Folsom Street to the east. The project site is located along the west side of an approximately 145 foot long unimproved segment of Folsom Street, north of Chapman Street, that ends at the Bernal Heights Community Garden. This unimproved right-of-way is known as a “paper street.” Undeveloped land along this unimproved segment of Folsom Street has been subdivided into six lots, three on each side of Folsom Street. PG&E Natural Gas Transmission Pipeline 109 runs along Folsom Street under the project site. The project site is at a slope of 28%.

The proposed project involves the construction of two single-family residences on two of the vacant lots along the west side of the unimproved portion of Folsom Street, and the construction of the connecting segment of Folsom Street to provide vehicle and pedestrian access to the project site. Both single-family homes would be 27 feet tall, two-story-over-basement buildings and would each include two off-street vehicle parking spaces accessed from a twelve-foot-wide garage door.

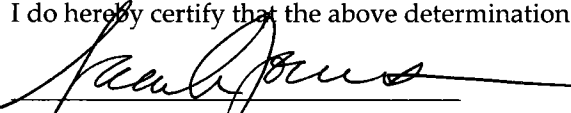
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### EXEMPT STATUS:

Categorical Exemption, Class 3 (California Environmental Quality Act [CEQA] Guidelines Section 15301).  
 See page 2.

### DETERMINATION:

I do hereby certify that the above determination has been made pursuant to State and local requirements.

  
 Sarah B. Jones  
 Environmental Review Officer

July 8, 2016  
 Date

cc: Fabien Lannoye, Project Sponsor  
 Richard Sucre, Current Planner

Virna Byrd, M.D.F.  
 Supervisor Campos, District 9, (via Clerk of the Board)

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION (continued):**

The 3516 Folsom Street building would be approximately 2,230 square feet in size with a side yard along its north property line. The 3526 Folsom Street building would be approximately 2,210 square feet in size with a side yard along its south property line. The proposed buildings would include roof decks and a full fire protection sprinkler system. The project sponsor proposes to create a mural on the south façade of the 3526 Folsom Street building. The proposed buildings would be supported by a shallow building foundation using a mat slab with spread footings.

The proposed Folsom Street extension improvements would include an approximately 20-foot-wide road with an approximately 10-foot-wide sidewalk on the west side of the street, adjacent to the proposed residences. The proposed sidewalk would be stepped, would incorporate landscaping that would perform storm water retention, and would provide public access to Bernal Heights Boulevard/Bernal Heights Park (along the west side of the Bernal Heights Community Garden). The proposed project would not create direct vehicular access to Bernal Heights Boulevard as the Folsom Street extension would terminate at the Bernal Heights Community Garden. Construction of the street extension would require the removal of the existing landscaped area within the public right-of-way where Folsom Street meets Chapman Street. An existing driveway utilized by both the 3574 Folsom Street and 3577 Folsom Street buildings would also be removed; however, the extension would provide access to the two existing residences.

The proposed project would include the installation of new street trees (subject to approval from PG&E) and street lighting on the west side of the street. No on-street parking would be provided along the Folsom Street extension. In addition to providing utilities for the proposed residences, the project sponsor would install utilities for the four vacant lots located on the "paper street" segment of Folsom Street (one on the west side and three on the east side). No residences are proposed at this time on those lots; the proposed connections would be provided to minimize disruption in the case of future development. Construction would continue for approximately 12 months and would require excavation of up to approximately 10 feet below the existing ground surface.

**Project Approvals**

**Approval Action:** If discretionary review before the Planning Commission is requested, the discretionary review hearing is the Approval Action for the project. If no discretionary review is requested, the issuance of a building permit by the Department of Building Inspection (DBI) is the Approval Action. The Approval Action date establishes the start of the 30-day appeal period for this CEQA exemption determination pursuant to Section 31.04(h) of the San Francisco Administrative Code.

**EXEMPT STATUS (continued):**

CEQA Guidelines Section 15303, or Class 3, provides an exemption from environmental review for construction of new, small facilities or structures. Section 15303(a) specifically exempts up to three single-family homes in urbanized areas, and Section 15303(d) specifically exempts utility extensions and street improvements to service such construction.

The proposed project would construct two-single family homes on two lots, with utility extensions and street improvements to service the two structures. Therefore, the proposed project qualifies for an exemption from CEQA under CEQA Guidelines Sections 15303(a) and (d).

#### **DISCUSSION OF ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES:**

CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 establishes exceptions to the application of a categorical exemption for a project. As discussed in this certificate of exemption, none of the established exceptions apply to the proposed project.

CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2, subdivision (a), provides that a Class 3 categorical exemption cannot be used where the project may negatively impact an environmental resource of critical or hazardous concern which is "designated, precisely mapped, and officially adopted pursuant to law by federal, state, or local agencies." For the reasons discussed below under "Resources of Hazardous or Critical Concern," there is no possibility that the proposed project would have a significant effect on the environment related to this circumstance.

CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2, subdivision (b), provides that a categorical exemption is inapplicable when the cumulative impact of successive projects of the same type in the same place, are significant. For the reasons discussed below under "Cumulative Impacts," there is no possibility that the proposed project would have a significant effect on the environment related to this circumstance.

CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2, subdivision (c), provides that a categorical exemption shall not be used where there is a reasonable possibility that the activity will have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances. For the reasons discussed in this certificate of exemption, there is no possibility that the proposed project would have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.

CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2, subdivision (d), provides that a categorical exemption shall not be used for a project that would result in damage to a scenic resource within a highway officially designated as a state scenic highway. Neither Bernal Heights Boulevard nor any other nearby street is a designated state scenic highway. Therefore, there is no possibility that the proposed project would have a significant effect on the environment related to this circumstance.

CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2, subdivision (f), provides that a categorical exemption shall not be used for a project that may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource. For the reasons discussed below under "Historic Resources," there is no possibility that the proposed project would have a significant effect on a historic resource.

**Resources of Hazardous or Critical Concern.** According to the CEQA Guidelines, Categorical Exemptions may be used for Class 3-eligible projects except in cases where the project may negatively impact an environmental resource of critical or hazardous concern which is "designated, precisely mapped, and officially adopted pursuant to law by federal, state, or local agencies."

The project site is mapped in an area subject to the Slope Protection Act, adopted by the Board of Supervisors (BOS) in 2008. This ordinance created procedures for additional review of slope stability by

DBI for properties within certain mapped areas and established a Structural Advisory Committee for review of permit applications within this area. The BOS found that the public health, safety, and welfare would be best protected if the Building Official requires permits for new construction in these areas to undergo additional review for structural integrity and potential effects on slope stability, including submission to the Structural Advisory Commission for consideration. If the Structural Advisory Commission finds that a project would result in unsafe conditions that cannot be addressed to the satisfaction of the Committee, the Building Official must deny the permit. Thus, the existing regulatory program and requirements are sufficient to ensure that the proposed project would not result in a significant impact related to slope stability. Adherence to this ordinance has been found to adequately protect the public health, safety, and welfare.

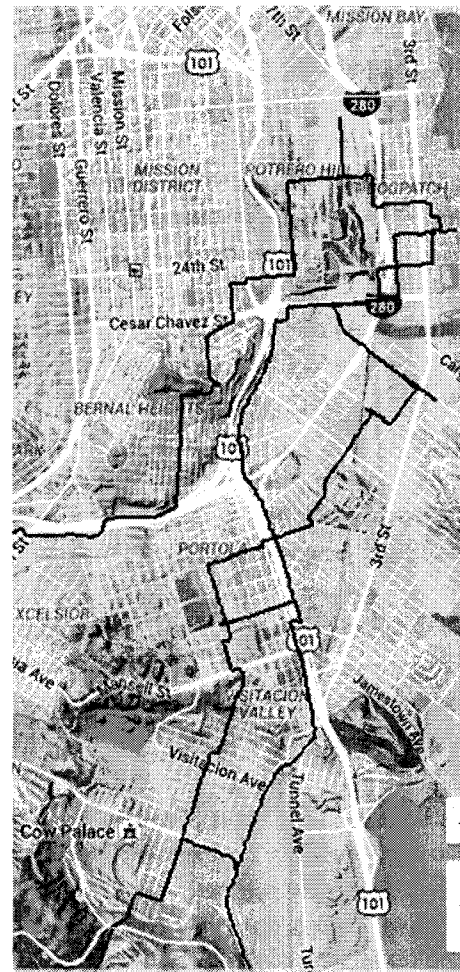
The project site contains no other environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern that has been designated or precisely mapped. Therefore, the proposed project would not have a significant impact on environmental resources of hazardous or critical concern and this exception to the Categorical Exemption does not apply.

**Utilities.** PG&E Transmission Pipeline 109 runs under Folsom Street from the 280 freeway to Bernal Heights Boulevard, including under the project site, after which it circles Bernal Heights Park's eastern edge before continuing onto Alabama Street, Cesar Chavez Street and neighborhoods along Potrero Hill, Dogpatch and the Central Waterfront. The Pipeline's alignment takes it through a variety of residential neighborhoods in the southeast area of the City, and other similar pipelines run beneath streets in other areas of the city (see Figure 1). The presence of a gas transmission pipeline beneath areas adjacent to residential development is not unusual in San Francisco or throughout the state because residential homes are commonly served by gas lines.

According to PG&E, Pipeline 109 was installed in 1981 and was successfully strength tested at the time of installation. It has a maximum allowable operating pressure of 150 pound per square inch gage which is 19.8% of the pipe's specified minimum yield strength. It is patrolled at least quarterly, and is surveyed for leaks at least annually. The system PG&E uses to combat pipeline erosion is inspected every two months. PG&E also performs External Corrosion Direct Assessments, which involve excavation and physical inspection of the pipeline.

PG&E has stated that the construction of the two homes will present no particular issues with respect to patrolling and maintaining the pipeline, as the proposed home sites are no closer to the pipeline than existing residential properties on Folsom Street and other areas of San Francisco.

Figure 1. Pipeline Transmission Network



PG&E natural gas lines run under a number of small and large streets in San Francisco that have experienced, and will continue to experience, maintenance that includes earth movement, excavation and related work in proximity to a natural gas transmission line.

Section 4216.2(a)(1) of the California Government Code requires that any contractor or resident that excavates on private property must call 811 (Underground Service Alert (USA) North) at least two business days before excavation. USA will inform PG&E of the request to excavate and, in the case of work done in proximity to a pipeline such as that proposed by the Project Sponsor, require that a PG&E standby employee be contacted. PG&E staff must physically observe a safe excavation and must be present for any excavation within ten feet of their transmission lines, and will instruct and guide the excavating party, on-site, to avoid damage to the pipeline. These practices apply in the case of both housing construction and road improvements anywhere in San Francisco adjacent to a gas transmission pipeline. These practices, as required by law, are in place to ensure construction activities do not substantially affect underground services, including natural gas pipelines. Furthermore, PG&E regulations require review of proposed plans for any work within 10 feet of their facilities. Therefore, these regulations would ensure that no significant environmental effect would occur from construction in proximity to PG&E's natural gas pipeline.

In light of the above, there is no possibility that the proposed project would have a significant effect on the environment related to unusual circumstances with regards to the presence of the PG&E natural gas pipeline.

**Emergency Access.** While the width and grade of the proposed street improvement preclude the San Francisco Fire Department (SFFD) apparatus from traversing the proposed street, the proposed project would be required to conform to Fire Code Section 503.1.1, which mandates all portions of the exterior walls of the first story of any constructed building to be within 150 feet of an approved fire apparatus access road. Both Folsom Street and Bernal Heights Boulevard are accessible to SFFD apparatus and are within 150 feet of all portions of the exterior walls of the first floor of both proposed homes. Furthermore, the proposed homes include automatic sprinkler systems. As the proposed houses are within 150 feet of approved fire access roads and include automatic sprinkler systems, the proposed project conforms with the Fire Code and the project therefore does not present a hazardous condition with respect to public safety related to emergency access.

**Aesthetics.** The project site is located downhill from Bernal Heights Park and Bernal Heights Boulevard. The Urban Design Element of the General Plan includes three maps relevant to the proposed project: 1) Street Areas Important to Urban Design and Views, 2) Quality of Street Views, and 3) Plan to Strengthen City Pattern through Visually Prominent Landscaping. Neither Bernal Heights Boulevard nor Folsom Street is included on the map "Street Areas Important to Urban Design and Views". Bernal Heights Boulevard, Folsom Street and Chapman Street in the area of the proposed project are designated as having average views on the "Quality of Street Views map". Bernal Hill is identified as an important vista point to be protected on the "Plan to Strengthen City Pattern Through Visually Prominent Landscaping map".

The proposed project (two buildings reaching a height of 30 feet) would not obstruct views from Bernal Heights Park. The Bernal Heights East Slope Design Guidelines include roof treatment guidelines to minimize or avoid obscuring views, and the north elevation of the proposed project would comply with

the Bernal Heights East Slope Design Guidelines. Furthermore, the proposed roofs of the two buildings would sit below the elevation of Bernal Heights Boulevard.

Therefore, the two proposed 30 foot. tall buildings would not result in a substantial demonstrable adverse effect to any scenic views or resources.

**Historic Resources.** The project site is currently vacant, undeveloped land, and does not include any historic resources. Neither the project site nor the immediately surrounding neighborhood is within a historic district designated under federal, state or local regulations.

As the proposed project requires excavation up to a depth of 40 feet, it was subject to a Preliminary Archeological Review (PAR) by a Planning Department Archeologist. The PAR determined that the proposed project would result in no effect on archeological resources.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, the proposed project would not result in an adverse impact to a historic resource.

**Geotechnical.** The dimensions of each lot are 25 feet wide by 70 feet deep. Both lots have an approximately 32 percent slope from the north to south side of the lot. Each residence would be constructed on a flat building pad with concrete retaining walls used in the front and rear yard areas to provide access to the garage and create usable outdoor living areas. The buildings would be constructed using a spread footing and/or mat foundation, requiring excavation several feet in depth.

A geotechnical report was prepared for each of the two proposed residences (3516 and 3526 Folsom Street) and includes information gathered from a site reconnaissance by the geotechnical engineer and two soil borings, one on each lot.<sup>2</sup> Both borings encountered 3 to 4 feet of stiff clay and sandy soil over chert bedrock. No groundwater was encountered, though based on the hillside location and soil and bedrock morphology it is possible that groundwater seepage from offsite irrigation could be encountered during excavation on the project site.

The geotechnical reports include the same evaluation and recommendations given the adjacency of the two lots and similar geotechnical/geological site conditions. The project site was evaluated for potential liquefaction, landslides, surface rupture, lateral spreading, and densification and was found to have a low risk. The geotechnical reports indicate the project site is not within an identified landslide or liquefaction zone as mapped by the California Divisions of Mines and Geology.<sup>3</sup> The project site is in an area that would be exposed to strong earthquake shaking. However, the 2013 San Francisco Building Code (Building Code) requires the Site Classification and Values of Site Coefficients be used in the design of new structures to minimize earthquake damage. The geotechnical reports include seismic design

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<sup>1</sup> Preliminary Archeological Review Log, September 26, 2013. A copy of this document, and all documents cited below, are available for public review at the San Francisco Planning Department, 1650 Mission Street, Suite 400, as part of Case file No. 2013.1383E.

<sup>2</sup> H. Allen Gruen, *Report Geotechnical Investigation Planned Residence at 3516 Folsom Street*, and *Report Geotechnical Investigation Planned Residence at 3526 Folsom Street*, August 3, 2013. Copies of these documents are available for public review at the San Francisco Planning Department, 1650 Mission Street, Suite 400, as part of Case File No. 2013.1383E.

<sup>3</sup> California Department of Conservation, *Seismic Hazard Zones, City and County of San Francisco*, November 17, 2000. Available online at [http://gwmv.consrv.ca.gov/shmp/download/quad/SAN\\_FRANCISCO\\_NORTH/maps/ozn\\_sf.pdf](http://gwmv.consrv.ca.gov/shmp/download/quad/SAN_FRANCISCO_NORTH/maps/ozn_sf.pdf). Accessed July 8, 2016.

parameters for use in the project design by the structural engineer, in compliance with the Building Code, during the building permit plan check process.

Both geotechnical reports conclude that the proposed improvements could be safely supported using a spread footing and/or mat building foundation, provided adherence to the site preparation and foundation design recommendations included in the reports. The San Francisco Building Code ensures the safety of all new construction in the City. Decisions about appropriate foundation and structural design are considered as part of DBI's permit review process. Prior to issuing a building permit for the proposed project, DBI would review the geotechnical report to ensure that the proposed project complies with building safety and seismic design standards, as well as compliance with the requirements of the Slope Protection Act. Therefore, potential damage to structures from geologic hazards on the project site would be addressed through compliance with the San Francisco Building Code. Thus, the proposed project would have no significant geotechnical impacts.

**Shadow.** The project site is located to the southwest of the Bernal Heights Community Garden. Therefore, a shadow analysis was prepared by the Project Sponsor/Architect. The shadow analysis provides simulations that show that the proposed project would cast new shadow on the Bernal Heights Community Garden, but that shadow would be limited to only certain periods in the winter and summer and the new shadow would only fall on a portion of the southwestern corner of the community garden mainly in the evening after 5:30 pm. In most cases throughout the year, the shadow cast by the proposed project either does not fall on the community garden or is contained within shadow already cast by existing structures on Gates Street.

While the proposed project would cast new shadow on the community garden, it is not expected to substantially affect the use or enjoyment of the Bernal Heights Community Garden such that a significant environmental effect would occur.

**Transportation.** Using the Planning Department's 2002 Transportation Impact Analysis Guidelines for Environmental Review (October 2002), the proposed project is estimated to generate approximately nine daily automobile trips. The change in traffic in the project area as a result of the proposed project would be indiscernible to most drivers. The proposed project would add a negligible increment of vehicle traffic to the cumulative long-term traffic increase on the neighborhood's roadway network. Thus, the project would not substantially affect the neighborhood's existing or cumulative traffic conditions.

Planning Code Section 242 requires, generally, two functional off-street parking spaces per residential unit in the Bernal Heights Special Use District. The proposed project includes two parking spaces per residential unit (four, in total). Guests and visitors arriving by car would be able to utilize nearby on-street parking. According to the Department's transportation impact analysis guidelines, the parking demand for the proposed project is three spaces. As the proposed project includes four spaces, there would be no parking shortfall.

San Francisco does not consider parking supply as part of the permanent physical environment and therefore, does not consider changes in parking conditions to be environmental impacts as defined by CEQA. Parking conditions are not static, as parking supply and demand varies from day to day, from day to night, from month to month, etc. Hence, the availability of parking spaces (or lack thereof) is not a permanent physical condition, but changes over time as people change their modes and patterns of

travel. The small number of projected vehicle trips generated by the proposed project, approximately nine per day (which includes vehicle trips by the residents who would utilize the project's off-street parking), would not result in a parking deficit and therefore any secondary impacts from a parking shortfall on the environment would not ensue, including increased traffic congestion, emissions, safety or noise.

In light of the above, the proposed project would not result in any significant transportation impacts.

**Biological Resources.** Nearby Bernal Hill is a natural area that has been evaluated for the presence of birds and bird habitat. According to San Francisco Recreation and Parks' Significant Natural Resources Areas Management Plan (SNRAMP), two sensitive bird species have been observed at Bernal Hill: Say's phoebe (*Sayornis saya*) and Wilson's warbler (*Wilsonia pusilla*). There is also a single area of important bird habitat, which includes the entire grasslands area of Bernal Hill.

The project site contains trees and vegetation not unlike those found on Bernal Hill. The Project Sponsor would be required to comply with the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) as well as California Department of Fish and Game Code 3513 regarding the protection of nesting birds during construction. California Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) biologists have broadly defined the nesting season as February 1st through August 15th (although there are more specific dates for certain species of birds). If timing restrictions make it impossible to avoid the nesting season, the construction areas should be surveyed for nesting birds and active nests should be avoided. A biologist should inspect the construction areas for active nests. If adult birds are observed flying to and from a nest, or sitting on a nest, it can be assumed that the nest is active. Construction activity within 300 feet of an active nest should be delayed until the nest is no longer active. The active nest should be watched, and when the chicks have left the nest and activity is no longer observed around the nest, it is safe to continue construction activity in the nest area.

As the proposed project would be required to comply with the MBTA and DFW regulations, and as there is abundant substantially similar, and protected, habitat available nearby on Bernal Hill, project construction would not have a significant effect on any bird species or their habitat and the development of these two lots, adjacent to other similar development, would not result in a significant impact on bird species or habitat.

**Water Quality.** The proposed project would not generate wastewater or stormwater discharges that have the potential to degrade water quality or contaminate a public water supply. Project-related wastewater and stormwater would flow to the City's combined stormwater/sewer system and would be treated to standards contained in the City's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit for the Southeast Treatment Plant prior to discharge into San Francisco Bay. Additionally, the proposed project is required to comply with the Stormwater Management Ordinance, which require the project to maintain or reduce the existing volume and rate of stormwater runoff at the site by retaining runoff onsite, promoting stormwater reuse, and limiting site discharges before entering the combined sewer collection system.

The proposed project would also be required to comply with requirements of the Construction Site Runoff Ordinance, which regulates the discharge of sediment or other pollutants from construction sites and prevents erosion and sedimentation due to construction activities. Furthermore, before the street



improvement permit can be finalized, SFPUC must review and approve the proposed plans. Therefore, the proposed project would not have significant environmental impacts related to water quality.

**Cumulative Impacts.** CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2, subdivision (b), provides that a categorical exemption is inapplicable when the cumulative impact of successive projects of the same type in the same place, are significant. For the reasons discussed below there is no possibility that the proposed project in combination with reasonably foreseeable cumulative projects would have a significant effect on the environment.

The project as proposed in the Environmental Evaluation application is for the construction of two single-family residences on two vacant lots located on the "paper street" segment of Folsom Street as well as utility extensions and street improvements that would serve the two homes and four undeveloped lots along this segment of Folsom Street. The four adjacent lots are all under different ownership than the project lots and no Environmental Evaluation applications are on file with the Planning Department for development of those lots. Any future development proposals on the adjacent lots would require further environmental review and City approval.

Since the 3516 and 3526 Folsom Street project is the first proposed development on the "paper street" segment of Folsom Street, the project sponsor would be required to construct pedestrian and vehicular access to this segment of Folsom Street. The project sponsor has also agreed to construct utilities to service the remaining four undeveloped lots so as to avoid any need to excavate the improved section of Folsom Street in the event homes are proposed for the four remaining vacant lots in the future. At this time, it is unknown whether utilities would come from Bernal Heights Boulevard to the north or from Chapman Street to the south. This would be determined by PG&E and the SFPUC once the project is entitled. It is anticipated that utility lines would run under the entire length of the street extension, which would reduce or avoid the need for future utility-related construction activities should development occur on the adjacent lots.

Pursuant to CEQA, cumulative impacts refer to two or more individual effects which, when considered together, are considerable or which compound or increase other physical environmental impacts. The proposed project would construct two single-family homes, improve a segment of Folsom Street, and provide utilities for the two proposed homes and four adjacent lots. While there are no Environmental Evaluation applications on file with the Planning Department for the four adjacent lots, the improvements proposed by the project would facilitate future development of those lots. The cumulative effects of the proposed project in addition to development of the four adjacent lots are addressed below.

*Shadow.* The vacant lots to the east of the project site would have the potential to shade the Bernal Heights Community Garden. If those lots are developed, they would be required to undergo environmental review in accordance with CEQA and would require a shadow analysis. As discussed above, the proposed project would shade a portion of the southwestern corner of the community garden mainly in the evening after 5:30 pm. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in a considerable contribution to any cumulative shadow impact that could result from development of the adjacent lots.

*Transportation.* The addition of two single-family residences would generate an estimated 9 daily vehicle trips. Should development occur on the four adjacent lots, which are each permitted to construct one

single-family residence, it is estimated that an additional 18 daily vehicle trips would be generated. The addition of 18 daily vehicle trips in combination with the proposed project's 9 daily vehicle trips would be dispersed through-out the day and would not be considered a substantial number of trips that could adversely affect the local transportation system.

In addition, any subsequent development would be required to comply with the same regulations as the proposed project including, but not limited to, compliance with the San Francisco Building and Fire Codes, Slope Protection Act, PG&E regulations for work in proximity to their pipeline, the SFPUC's Stormwater Management Ordinance and Construction Site Runoff Ordinance, the MBTA and DFW regulations protecting nesting birds and the Bernal Heights East Slope Design Guidelines. These regulations would ensure that development of the adjacent lots, would not result in significant effects to geology/soils, emergency access, water quality, utilities, biological resources, and aesthetics.

Thus, the proposed project would not result in a considerable contribution to any cumulative environmental impacts.

**Conclusion.** The proposed project satisfies the criteria for exemption under the above-cited classification(s). In addition, none of the CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 exceptions to the use of a categorical exemption applies to the proposed project. For the above reasons, the proposed project is appropriately exempt from environmental review.