

# Residents, students, et al.

## scorch Hastings' plan for 8-story garage

*"It's a textbook case of how not to write an EIR"*

Jeremy Graham, 1st-year law student

### AIRING OUT THE EIR

Marjorie Beggs

Hastings CFO David Seward genially opened the March 6 hearing into the law college's proposed 80-foot-tall, 885-space parking garage at Golden Gate and Larkin. The hearing, he said, was being held to receive public comments on the "adequacy and completeness of the draft EIR."

It was not about "the general desirability of the project or the decision [to pursue it]." But he got plenty of those comments anyway.

State Building Room 9 was packed. The hearing, originally scheduled for mid-February, got postponed after Hastings presented the plan at the Tenderloin Futures Collaborative's December meeting and drew community consternation (see *Extra* No. 10). A committee drew up a counterproposal calling for mostly housing with only a quarter of the proposed car slots.

Of the 100-plus people who filled the seats and stood along the wall, 37 signed up to speak. In their allotted five minutes, each poured out frustration, anger and dismay — residents, service providers, Hastings students and alumni, citywide advocates for walking, bicycling and clean air, and reps of civic organizations.

Seated in front of a microphone, facing Seward and Hastings general counsel and board Secretary Susan Thomas, they spoke calmly, but their messages at times bordered on the virulent. The litany went on for 2 1/2 hours.

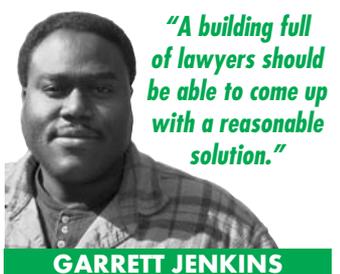
### Critics practically dismantle the EIR

An eight-story garage with landscaping would be "out of control, regardless of how many trees you put around it," insisted Jonathan Dearborn, a tenant rep from the Vincent Hotel on Turk.

Sam Dodge of the SRO Collaborative, alluding to the ever-present pedestrian dangers in the TL, called the project "criminal" and a "monstrosity." "There's next to no support for the project — it's driven by forces outside students' needs and the neighborhood's needs," he said.

Howard Strassner, Sierra Club transportation committee chair, claimed the EIR's projected garage occupancy rate of 72% is faulty. Ergo, the projected environmental impact is incorrect. "You certainly didn't build a garage to be only 72% full. You should have done it for 95%, because that's what's going to happen. A law school should work at being logical.

"There is no need for more parking," Strassner said.



*"A building full of lawyers should be able to come up with a reasonable solution."*

**GARRETT JENKINS**

Joshua Switzky, a city planner and chair of the Bicycle Coalition's Market Street Committee, called the EIR's assumptions about "the offset of parking from existing garages" "laughable." He described the project as "heinous."

"The EIR is further inadequate in the way it evaluates San Francisco's general plan policies and its transit-first policies," Switzky said.

"This garage does NOT need to exist," added Susan Vaughn of Walk S.F.

### Community cries for housing

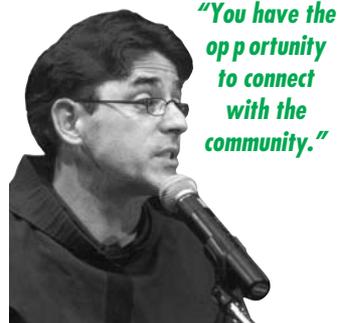
The Collaborative committee that drew up the alternative plan for the site recommended 229 parking slots and 185 units of housing. Many speakers supported that idea at the hearing, and nearly two dozen people wore buttons that read, "Homes for people, not for cars."

Resident Bruce Windrem said Hastings owes the neighborhood housing because in 1989 it razed two SROs with 85 units — the Philadelphia and the Eureka — to create the existing surface parking lot. "[Hastings] says it only gets involved with housing for its students, but it took away OUR housing. . . . Hastings values cars above people."

Randy Shaw, Tenderloin Housing Clinic executive director, said it's not too late to make amends. "We urge you [to accept our alternative with housing] and erase the stain of the last 30 years." Shaw called the plan as it stands, "a declaration of war" against the neighborhood.

"A building full of lawyers should be able to come up with a reasonable solution," said Garrett Jenkins, former NOMPC president. "I read the EIR several times and found many con-

traditions. . . . It ignores the fact that there is NO need for parking. . . . It's not congruent with neighborhood development. . . . It's just a way to gain more revenue for Hastings."



*"You have the opportunity to connect with the community."*

**BROTHER KELLY CULLEN**

Kelly Cullen, TNDC executive director and St. Boniface Franciscan friar, came in his habit "because most of all I'm your neighbor. I'm not coming as a moral thing or any kind of imperative spirituality to do the right thing."

Cullen said he wasn't there "to bash Hastings," but the plan brings "a dead zone" at night, which will increase crime and eventually reduce any revenue that the project could generate. He called Hastings on its tendency to disassociate itself from its location: "Okay, fine, be delusional, but you ARE in the Tenderloin. . . . You have the opportunity to connect with the community" if the plans are changed to include housing.

Barry Hermanson, a member of both the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce and the San Francisco Housing Action Coalition, told Hastings he found it "hard to believe you wouldn't consider housing in your project. . . . This makes a mockery of the EIR process. . . . I try not to be a conspiracy theorist, but this makes me wonder if someone already has the inside track on the contract to build this garage."

### Students and alums join the fray

Hastings students and alumni were among the most outspoken critics. Many complained that they found out about this EIR shockingly late, just days before this hearing. "After all," said student Nasha Vida, "it's our neighborhood, too."

"The planning process for this garage was arrogant in its exclusivity," said another student, Kevin Aaron. "The faculty won't speak out, but many of them also are opposed. . . . Faculty were not consulted [about the project] and, in fact, there is a gag order that has pervaded the last few months. . . . The faculty are fearful. . . . I'm outraged by the school's conduct. Is it incompetence or ignorance or both?"

Student Lilian Mina Maher almost gasped at flaws in the EIR — "no air quality issues with an 885-car garage?"

Jeremy Graham, former social worker in the Tenderloin and first-year law student, was in good academic form, citing a 1984 case in which a San Francisco EIR was thrown out as inadequate.

"This EIR makes statements with no backup," Graham said. "It says, 'We assume a 1% growth rate.' I can't find the justification for that assumption. . . . Over and over it says the analysis of the individual project has no impact so there is no cumulative impact. . . . It's a textbook case of how not to write an EIR."

And student Kirsten Andelman said, "Your only support seems to come from the school administration and students from Los Angeles who haven't figured out that they don't need a car in San Francisco."

Nina Rowland, who's studying the EIR process in a Hastings class, decided to review the

garage EIR to see how it stacked up: "Everything that I learned that was supposed to be in an EIR wasn't in this one," she said. "[The EIR] is insulting to Hastings students. . . . I'm ashamed to see this be a product of the Hastings community."

Riva Enteen, an alumna from the early 1980s, told Seward, "You're developing a legacy as the law school that ate the Tenderloin. . . . This EIR is a mockery of the process, and it also makes a mockery of any belief in public transportation." And, she warned: "You should not underestimate the power of your opposition."

Martha Bridegain, Hastings alumna and member of General Assistance Advocacy Project, echoed that sentiment: "Hastings owes the Tenderloin 85 units. . . . Folks here do have long memories."

### EIR process opens some old wounds

Two of the angriest speakers said they'd had run-ins with Hastings that fueled their antagonism.

Bill Jones, who owns the apartment building at 324 Larkin, next to the proposed garage, said he is probably the person "most affected by this project" — reduced sun, exhaust from cars, building size. "I'm cynical about this meeting. . . . I bought my building from Hastings. . . and had terrible problems with Hastings. Seward lied to me." When the two SROs were torn down, he said Hastings "damaged two walls that they wouldn't fix. . . . We're dealing with some pretty bad people here."

Hastings alumnus Gary Coutin said he was displaced when the two SROs were razed. Hastings, he contended, has "no real affiliation with U.C. — that's a sham. . . . What we have here is a private trust masquerading as a public institution, using public money for private purposes. . . . It acquired property by citing eminent domain. . . . It was illegal from the beginning."

*"This project lacks vision. This is a good fight."*



**ERIC ROBERTSON**

The ultimate question, Coutin said, is who will judge Hastings. "Hastings doesn't have to prepare . . . an adequate EIR because it knows that the alumni are going to be the judges of the case. If the purpose of this hearing is make Hastings follow the law, this is an act of futility," Coutin said.

On a lighter level, TL resident and writer Eric Robertson began by singing his com-

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