

From: RJ Kamprath [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, February 1, 2022 9:47 AM
To: Planning <planning@cityofsanmateo.org>
Subject: Mitigation of impact on residents from 5 story B Street new construction

As a resident of The Stratford at 601 Laurel Avenue, overlooking this new building we'd hope there is still time to consider lessening the building height, or as a last resort, providing a roof garden and other greenery and landscaping, to screen and diminish the impact on those overlooking or surrounding this new large building in our midst.

Thank you
RJand Don Kamprath

Sent from my iPad

Somer Smith

From: Rendell Bustos
Sent: Tuesday, May 23, 2023 3:50 PM
To: Julia Klein; Somer Smith; Linda Ly
Cc: Manira Sandhir
Subject: FW: Construction in Downtown San Mateo

Julia, Somer, and Linda,

Please see the public comment below addressed to Downtown projects. Please include a copy of this letter in your respective Downtown project files.

-Rendell



Rendell Bustos

Senior Planner | Community Development Department
330 W. 20th Ave., San Mateo, CA 94403
650-522-7211 | rbustos@cityofsanmateo.org



From: Erin White [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, May 22, 2023 6:54 PM
To: City Council (San Mateo) <CityCouncil@cityofsanmateo.org>; Rendell Bustos <rbustos@cityofsanmateo.org>; Patrice Olds <polds@cityofsanmateo.org>
Subject: Construction in Downtown San Mateo

Dear City Council, Mr. Bustos, and Ms. Olds,

San Mateo used to be a wonderful, family-friendly place to live with amenities nearby. We had all the elements: a quaint downtown, amazing views of the hills and bay, a smaller more connected community, beautiful old architecture, etc. This should be the perfect time and opportunity to keep and enhance what makes San Mateo a truly special and unique place to live. However, I am exceedingly frustrated and saddened by what has been happening over the past several years. The City of San Mateo is being destroyed faster than I ever imagined was possible.

Against the residents wishes and concerns, the City Council keeps approving and shoving more huge developments down the pipeline. Our precious city is being overrun by greedy developers building the most ugly, generic, blocky, cheap looking, monstrosities which go right up to the sidewalk with no greenery. The downtown area is getting crowded, claustrophobic, looks unattractive, and gets worse with each new development. The once beautiful views are starting to get blocked off by tall buildings. Don't make it worse by repealing Measure Y. Residents need to be able to stay connected to the nature around them. It's an important part of why people live here. It is beneficial and necessary for our health and well-being.

It is clear that the city does not need any more office space, as there are lots of vacancies. I don't understand why the city is tearing down block after block, and jamming in more and more people, when our infrastructure is failing and can't even support the current community. The roads and sidewalks are in complete disrepair; it's honestly an

embarrassment. Traffic has gotten so bad that it's near impossible to get across town, especially during commute hours. That will only continue to get worse with all the new construction going on and potential future projects.

The city needs to stop construction projects like Block 20 and 21 so these issues can be addressed and fixed. Demolition permits should be tied directly to building permits, so we don't end up with an eyesore of empty lots with dirt mounds and tree stumps for years to come. The city should be focusing on quality of life issues and environmental stewardship. Buildings should be built farther back from the sidewalk to allow for landscaping and mature trees to provide shade for pedestrians. We should incorporate new green methods, taking advantage of vertical space to have living walls, have underground parking garages with a park on top, etc.

The City Council needs to push back against the developers, construction companies, and the state to take our city back. Don't let them cheat us out of the future of our home. They need to be respectful and responsive to residents and contribute to our community. If there are delays, they should make that up to the residents by investing in our downtown. Listen to the residents who voted you in and follow their lead. We need to support small businesses, have a wide variety of services, and more green space. We are calling for action. Please restore the heart and soul of San Mateo.

Sincerely,

Erin White
San Mateo Resident

Somer Smith

From: Manira Sandhir
Sent: Friday, May 26, 2023 9:27 AM
To: Marsha Heimbecker
Subject: RE: Stop building highrises in San Mateo

Dear Ms. Heimbecker -

Thank you for your comments and my apologies on missing your email last week. Since you covered a broad range of topics in your comments, I have forwarded your email to the City Clerk to distribute to City Councilmembers and to project teams reviewing projects in the Downtown and Hillsdale Mall, including the General Plan and Housing Element teams, so it can be considered as part of the project reviews.

If you have comments or would like to provide input on a specific project, I included a link below to the City's what's happening page that has detailed information about the status of each project.

<https://www.cityofsanmateo.org/1176/Whats-Happening-in-Development>

Best regards,

Manira

Manira Sandhir, AICP
Planning Manager and Zoning Administrator
650-522-7203 (o) | 650-242-6126 (c)
msandhir@cityofsanmateo.org

-----Original Message-----

From: Marsha Heimbecker [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, May 18, 2023 11:23 AM
To: Manira Sandhir <msandhir@cityofsanmateo.org>
Subject: Stop building highrises in San Mateo

Dear Councilman,

You are ruining San Mateo.

These high rises are terrible! Downtown San Mateo and the Hillsdale mall will be awful. It is already gridlock. Have you tried to go to Foster City or 101 anytime between 3-7pm?

It took me 45 minutes to get to Edgewater!

You are destroying the mental health of San Mateo citizens. Overcrowding leads to more crime, violence, and drugs. Go research JAMA.

You are adding 1200 units to Hillsdale. How are 1200 cars going to fit on our roads. It is more likely 2400 cars, because only households with two workers will be able to afford this area.

Please stop building. Please stop making high rises in the middle of residential areas.

Your responsibility is not to money grubbing greedy developers, you gave an oath to the city of San Mateo and its citizens.

Responsibility and honor begins at home.

Marsha Heimbecker
Sent from my iPhone

Sent from my iPhone

Sent from my iPhone



SAN MATEO HERITAGE ALLIANCE

June 6, 2023

TO: Manira Sandhir, Planning Manager and Zoning Administrator

CC: Christina Horrisberger, Community Development Director
Zachary Dahl, Deputy Community Development Director
Drew Corbett, City Manager
Kathy Kleinbaum, Assistant City Manager
Prasanna Rasiah, City Attorney

FROM: San Mateo Heritage Alliance

SUBJECT: New development projects in and around Downtown

Dear Ms. Sandhir,

San Mateo Heritage Alliance would like to schedule a meeting with Planning and Community Development to discuss the following concerns regarding development projects in Downtown:

1. We have noticed that most projects proposed in and around Downtown appear to share similar design characteristics that diverge from established building patterns.
2. We have noticed that developers appear confused and conflicted by the design guidance and their muddled design proposals reflect that confusion and conflict.
3. We are concerned that the truly important issues of contextual responsibility and urban continuity are not being addressed.
4. We are concerned that absent traditional characteristics and consistent patterns that define urban commercial architecture, the intended compatibility with the historic Downtown core will not be achieved.
5. We ask that development projects proposed for the greater Downtown area be reviewed by qualified historic preservation architects for design compatibility and contextual continuity.
6. We ask that qualified historic preservation architects experienced in writing design guidelines for Downtowns and historic districts, be engaged to prepare new design guidelines for Downtown San Mateo.
7. We ask that planning staff consult Redwood City's 2011 Downtown Plan which provides a good model for appropriate architectural character types and styles.
8. We are concerned that if the current process continues without intervention, the result will be - as the city's Alternative Analysis warned - "development incompatible with the existing historic fabric surrounding the Downtown Historic District." It is an outcome no one wants.



SAN MATEO HERITAGE ALLIANCE

June 6, 2023

Downtown possesses a diversity of building types and architectural styles spanning over a hundred years. Yet the myriad of buildings proposed for Downtown lack the necessary style references to the rich architectural context of the Downtown environment. All share a disconcertingly similar appearance that challenges the very meaning of compatibility with the established Downtown character, predominant building typology, and architectural pattern of development.

San Mateo Heritage Alliance remains committed to working with the City of San Mateo to ensure and encourage new development that is compatible and complimentary to the Downtown Historic District.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet soon, perhaps in the next couple of weeks, to discuss our concerns and offer our input and assistance in helping to craft regulations that meet contemporary needs while strengthening Downtown's historic sense of place.

We will call you in a few days to set a meeting date. Thank you.

Sincerely,

San Mateo Heritage Alliance

Keith Weber, Aragon
Dianne Whitaker, North Central
Laurie Watanuki, Central
Mike Nash, Baywood

Attachments:

Appendix A: Issues of Concern

Appendix B: Proposed New Construction in a Historic Context

Designing in context means providing enough visual linkages between existing buildings and a proposed project so as to create a cohesive overall effect. The new building should strengthen and enhance the characteristics of its setting.

**- Richard Hedman,
*Fundamentals of Urban
Design***



Appendix A Issues of Concern

Compatibility and Typology

Downtown San Mateo has a wide variety of architectural styles and building typologies that provide the setting and establish the context for new development. The Downtown Specific Plan and Downtown Design Guidelines direct new development to be “compatible” with the existing building fabric.

Main Streets and commercial Downtowns nationwide are all recognizable and familiar to us because they share a set of common typological characteristics and compositional vocabulary. They are formally consistent, stylistically diverse, and able to accommodate functional change. In his seminal book, *The Buildings of Main Street: A Guide to American Commercial Architecture*, noted architectural historian Richard Longstreth traces the evolution of the compositional vocabulary used in every American Main Street over the past two centuries and presents a method of identifying building characteristics commonly found in central commercial districts up to the mid-20th century. In so doing, Longstreth helps us understand how to make planning decisions shaped by historical perspective rather than current aesthetic preference.

Architectural Style and Unified Design

Successful and enduring buildings generally have one unified architectural style that integrates the entire building in one harmonious composition. The proposed projects, however, disregard this practice, giving the upper floors a completely different design appearance than the lower floors. The effect is one of confused discord rather than unity and harmony.

Redwood City has addressed the issue of creating architectural character in new projects compatible with the established architectural patterns in their Downtown by creating architectural “Character Zones.” Within these zones, different “Character Types” - Neoclassical, Victorian, Craftsman, Mediterranean, Art Deco, and Contemporary are permitted.

These Architectural Character Types are intended to reinforce both the predominant eclectic nature of building fabric in the Downtown area, and the strong preferences for an appropriate aesthetic for all new buildings and development. SMHeritage believes this type of approach is appropriate and would like to encourage its use in Downtown San Mateo to help ensure that new development is compatible and complementary to the historic resources.

Massing

Massing, more than any architectural detail, has the most impact on the eye. Consequently it is one of the most important design considerations. The multiple masses and volumes of most of the proposed projects, however, read like an assortment of different size shipping boxes rather than unified architectural compositions.



Building Corners

Generally, buildings in an urban context should maintain a consistent street wall along their street frontages. Corner towers and recessed corner entries are widely used to emphasize the corner of a building at specific intersections and to capture pedestrian traffic. But to eliminate the corner altogether, or replace it with a multi-story glass box as some of the projects do, does more to diminish the streetscape and urban experience than to enhance it.

Daylight Plane

Building heights in Downtown San Mateo vary from one story to twelve, and in the Historic District from one to nine stories. Street wall frontages for virtually all existing buildings rise up to full height without setbacks. Yet, the daylight plane requirement for the entire retail core limits the height of the street frontage to one half the street width - generally two to three stories - regardless of the prevailing street wall pattern and varied building height allowance of 55 to 75 feet. This seems to be a one-size-fits-all requirement that could be adjustable and tailored to differing established building patterns in different parts of Downtown.

One successful infill project within the Historic District is 101 Ellsworth, rising six stories without an upper level setback, suggesting that upper floor setbacks may not be the only solution for new construction in and around the Historic District.



101 Ellsworth

Examples of Compatible Downtown Infill Projects

Four examples of compatible new infill construction are recognizable in Downtown: Century Movie Theater, the Transit Center, the Main Street Parking Garage and 101 Ellsworth. They achieve their compatibility primarily because they conform to established commercial building typologies and draw on recognizable architectural styles. Inspiration for the new work came from Mediterranean Revival and Art Deco styles popular during the 1890-1950 Historic District period of significance, yet the design of each building was interpreted in a contemporary way and meets contemporary needs.



Transit Center/Train Station



Century Movie Theater



Main Street Parking Garage



**Appendix B
Proposed New Construction in a Historic Context**

What is the inspiration behind some of the new infill projects proposed for Downtown? Do they conform to familiar commercial building typologies? Do they reflect historical precedents and patterns of development? Do they draw on known architectural styles familiar to and popular with the public? Are they respectful to the surrounding community? Are they worthy of being landmarks themselves in 50-100 years? Although there are at least a dozen or more projects that cause us concern, we think the eight examples discussed below are sufficient to convey our point.

* * *

Paste-on Parody

Located just east of the railroad in the Downtown support area, Block 21 and 3rd & Claremont seem to find inspiration in a controversial preservation technique known as facadism. Facadism is sometimes used to construct a new building behind a historic facade. In successful examples, the new building is completely hidden behind the old facade. That is not the case here.

Neither design acknowledges the established pattern of providing changes to the street fronting facade every 25 to 50 feet as advised in the Downtown Design Guidelines. Neither reflects the essential typological or stylistic patterns prevalent in the greater Downtown. The question is where did the developer get the idea these designs would be acceptable or welcomed by the surrounding community.



3rd & Claremont



Block 21



Facadism



Facadism



SAN MATEO HERITAGE ALLIANCE

June 6, 2023

Cornerless Brick Warehouses

Three projects - 31-57 S. B St. (abutting the Historic District), 405 E. 4th Ave., and 222 E 4th Ave - seem to draw their inspiration from brick warehouses and factories that proliferated during the mid-19th century at the height of the industrial revolution. Popular in the mid to late 1800s, they were generally constructed in the industrial areas of cities, not the Downtown commercial core of urban centers which featured retail shops, mercantile and business offices.

Although sometimes brick cladding may be the appropriate material, and a few of the oldest Downtown buildings are brick, the use of brick does not necessarily equate to compatibility with the Historic District where concrete, stucco, wood and terra cotta were often used. There are some pleasing aspects to all three projects, but because most of the buildings in the Historic District were built after 1900, and the majority of those in the 1920s-30s, the appropriateness of this mid-nineteenth century industrial building type for Downtown is subject to debate. Notably, all three projects have discarded their building corners, something any respectable warehouse would never do.

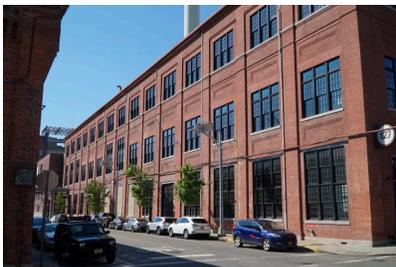


31-57 S. B Street

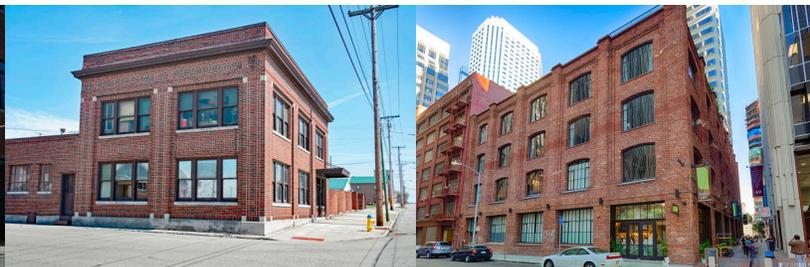
405 E. 4th Ave.



222 E. 4th Ave.



Brooklyn Navy Yard,



Brick Warehouses c 1860 - 1890s



SAN MATEO HERITAGE ALLIANCE

June 6, 2023

Muddlement

Bespoke in the Downtown retail core, and Block 20 in the Downtown support/Gateway area, are both head scratchers. Block 20 has an intriguing upper level, but it has no design connection to the lower floors. Why the upper level design doesn't continue all the way to the street is vexing. The 3-story glass corner interrupts the continuity of the street wall, eliminating what would normally be a prominent visual anchor for the building. Firehouse Square in Belmont is a good example of what this project should be.

Located one block from the Historic District, Bespoke appears to be a bundled collage of shapes, forms, wild ideas and conflicted energy. One section resembles an open parking garage, another looks like an elongated version of Philip Johnson's glass house perched atop two brick warehouses separated by a 3-story glass divider. Both proposals are so muddled it is impossible to guess what they are trying to do.



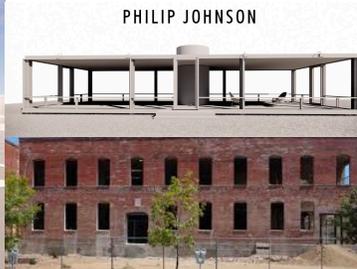
Block 20



Firehouse Square, Belmont



Bespoke





Missed Opportunity

The only project within the Historic District, 180 E. Third Ave. makes a good faith effort to find compatibility. It appears to be inspired by, and tries with insufficient guidance or direction, to follow the lead of the National Bank of San Mateo, a 1925 Greek Revival design by W. H. Weeks. The new building, currently under construction, has pilasters, a classical entablature and some nice brick detailing. But this is where the compatibility appears to end. The familiar symmetrical tripartite facade composition and prominent central entry that define this building type and style has been lost, and much of the compatibility along with it.



180 E. Third Ave.



National Bank of San

Like all the other buildings proposed for Downtown, it is not one building but two - one anchored to the ground and the other, a different design and composition, setting awkwardly on top. One wonders why this project did not draw its inspiration from the 5-story National Register eligible 1929 E.L. Norberg Medical Arts building diagonally across the street. A missed opportunity, this project could have and should have been better.



Once the unity of an area is damaged by an ill-considered project, decades may pass before the error can be redressed. Once compromised, the area's ability to fend off subsequent attacks upon its design integrity is weakened.

**- Richard Hedman,
*Fundamentals of Urban Design***

Somer Smith

From: martha moore [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, November 13, 2023 3:25 PM
To: Somer Smith
Subject: regarding waivers applied for for nazareth vista project

Mr. Smith,

Once again I feel it is necessary to remind the city the importance of the trees, especially Heritage Trees, to the quality of life and appearance of our city.

Allowing this project to remove 6 existing trees is UNACCEPTABLE. Given the environmental impact of the increase in housing and office density in the downtown area we must keep existing landscape whenever possible and demand additional open space whenever feasible in order to allow these projects to be built.

I would point out to you the new developments on both 4th and 5th streets where the city approved construction right to the sidewalks thereby eliminating any space for shade trees to line the streets and mitigate the heat sink created by the pavement and buildings.

Please work harder to increase the amount of greenspace and landscaping in these developments. Our lungs, our health overall and the appearance of our city will benefit from a thoughtful approach and insistence on the part of the city to improving landscape not removing it.

Thank you,
Martha Moore

Somer Smith

From: Eddy Lazzarin [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, November 18, 2023 2:25 PM
To: Somer Smith
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: PA-2022-037 / 616 S. B Street Comments

Hello Somer,

I received the Notice of Planning Commission Public Hearing. I'd like to formally indicate my belief that:

- The developers and property owners should have the flexibility to make the building radically larger. 84k sqft is not large enough. They should be able to add more floors, etc.
- The affordable housing density should be able to be set to 0%, or whatever proportion the developers and property owners deem suitable.
- There should be looser requirements on parking space density. The developers and property owners should be able to add an extremely high density of parking spaces if they prefer.

The City of San Mateo should support the developers and property owners in maximizing the quantity and value of residential units being developed.

Thanks, and please let me know if there is anything I can help with informally.

—

Eddy Lazzarin
CTO, [a16z Crypto](#)

[REDACTED]

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
PLANNING DIVISION



330 West 20th Avenue
San Mateo, CA 94403-
www.cityofsanmateo.org

Supplemental Additional Public Comment

Somer Smith

From: Josetta Pai [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, March 2, 2022 6:46 PM
To: Somer Smith
Subject: PA-2021-036 Nazareth Vista

Dear Planning Commissioners,

I have lived in San Mateo for 24 years. I am very happy to see the new changes around the area, and have to say "thank you" for your thoughtful and hard work on planning a comfortable city for us.

After the meeting on 2/8, I hope you will consider my concerns as a residence next door.

S B St is a commercial street. 6th Ave is a very nice short street for all the residences. The project should not use ALL the exceptions, both commercial and residential, to achieve their own maximum benefits while neglecting the living standard of the neighborhood.

1. Buildings on the S B St (7th to 9th Ave) all are C1-3/R5 zoning. They all are 4-story buildings. I believe one of the reasons to require 4 stories was in consideration of sun exposure to adjacent neighbors (existing and future). For the consistent profile, this project should be equal height and no taller than the other buildings. I am so surprised to hear the commission offering concessions to the applicant. I do not understand why we "have to give" them a concession so they can get over the building height regulation and can get the maximum units. Please visualize this: Stradbally Court would be in between 2 large and higher buildings. We will have no sunshine through our windows either side and may even have impacted the airflow! It would definitely damage our quality of life. The project should be a maximum of 4 stories, the same as the other buildings on S B st.

2. We all know that a single car household is far from the reality. Actually they only have 55 spaces for residents (65 minus 10 for visitors), therefore potentially there will be more cars looking for street parking. You must know that 6th Ave street parking not only serves the visitors and staff of these buildings, but also serves Central Park visitors and visitors to downtown (they do not use the city's under-the-tennis court parking). In addition, there are noises and traffic from loading/refuse access twice a week, and the double-parking trucks for delivery/services etc. There's a lot of activity on this short block. I urge commissioners to consider relocating their garage entrance to not on 6th Ave. 6th Ave is an established area for residents. It should be quiet and safe, NOT a backside of the commercial services site.

3. In consideration of the city and it's appear, the view of the street and the safety of the residents, the street side setback 20' requirement should be respected and enforced. In consideration of the basic element of a healthy life, air and sun is necessary and very important, the building for 4-story height and 15' setback between two buildings should be enforced. And, those 5 maple trees must be preserved as they have served an environmental and beautification purpose in the past and that's even more critical in light of the future congestion brought on by such a large project.

I understand the city needs more housing, but please do consider that quality of life goes hand-in-hand with the concept of housing.

Thank you for understanding and appreciate your kind consideration.

Sincerely,
Josetta Pai
Stradbally Court

Somer Smith

From: Barbara Cohen [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 20, 2022 1:09 PM
To: Somer Smith
Subject: Nazareth Vista

Hello Mr. Smith, My wife and I reside at the Grammercy at [REDACTED] in San Mateo. We have just become more aware of the plans for the Nazareth Vista project on B Street between and incorporating 6th and 7th Avenues. We feel the new building will definitely be an upgrade to the prior existing commercial businesses and will enhance the entire neighborhood. So, we look forward to this development. However, we do have a few misgivings about the apparent plans thus far:

1. We do not feel an easement (to extend much closer to the street) is a good idea at all, for reasons that were apparently discussed at an open session in January.

2. We also do not feel the plan gives proper consideration to the much denser residential presence on 6th compared to both B St. and 7th, as there are probably at least 75 condominiums fronting 6th, which is far more than the more sparsely populated 7th. Consequently, we believe efforts should be made to negatively impact the fewest # of existing residents as possible.

a. It appears trash collection will be on 6th St. rather than 7th.

b. More importantly, it appears to us that the street level parking garage for the commercial entities has the entrance and exit on 6th Ave. This will likely bring a very significant increased level of traffic to densely residential 6th Ave., which we consider unacceptable. We also don't know which entities will occupy the commercial space, but their deliveries could easily become an additional problem.

It would seem to make more sense to adjust the plans to allow that garage access to be via B St. if at all possible. Failing that, simply flipping plans to instead allow a 7th Ave. access for commercial parking seems advantageous--both because of far fewer residents nearby and also the fact that a large surface parking lot already exists on 7th and B, and the neighbors have for years already been used to commercial parking there.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Yours truly,
Barbara and Norman Cohen [REDACTED]