

From: [Ashley Snodgrass](#)
To: [Elaine Ling](#)
Subject: FW: Heritage Alliance comments on Block 20
Date: Tuesday, June 25, 2024 10:15:01 AM
Attachments: [Heritage Alliance Comments to PC on Block 20.pdf](#)

Hi Elaine,

Please see the public comment for Block 20 below.

Ashley

From: Laurie Hietter <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Tuesday, June 25, 2024 10:05 AM
To: Planning Commission <PlanningCommission@cityofsanmateo.org>
Subject: Heritage Alliance comments on Block 20

Dear Planning Commissioners:

Please consider the attached comments on the Block 20 project. Key points include:

- The scale is not consistent with the neighborhood
- The architecture is not consistent with the Objective Design Standards
- There needs to be a buffer to the National Register-eligible historic buildings; how will the buildings be protected?
- The City should consider preserving the pre-1888 building at 411 S. Claremont
- The impact analysis should consider the construction effects on the eligible buildings and the Yoshiko Yamanouchi National Register site

Please also consider whether this project should advance given the lack of progress on Block 21 and its blight on San Mateo's gateway.

Thank you,

Laurie Hietter



SAN MATEO HERITAGE ALLIANCE

June 25, 2024

Planning Commission
City of San Mateo
330 W. 20th Avenue
San Mateo, CA 94403

SUBJECT: Block 20 Study Session

Dear Planning Commissioners:

Please consider these comments from the San Mateo Heritage Alliance regarding the proposed Windy Hill Block 20 project.

General Comments

The Heritage Alliance is pleased that Windy Hill has removed demolition of the Japanese-American Cultural Center/Rodolari home at 415 S. Claremont Street and the San Mateo Gardeners Association/Rodolari Market building at 503 E. 5th Avenue. Both buildings are important in the history of San Mateo and represent the contributions of marginalized communities.

Architecture

The architecture of the new project does not appear to comply with the new Objective Design Standards requiring Spanish Colonial Revival architecture. The plans do not appear comply with these requirements:

(a) (1) The structures, site plan, and landscaping are in scale and harmonious with the character of the neighborhood;

B. Additional Architectural Elements: Structures shall also include a minimum of seven (7) of the following elements, as illustrated above in Section 7.1 - Downtown Retail Core and Historic District.

The project is out of scale with the single-story historic buildings adjacent to the site and the homes on 5th Avenue.

The arched windows and two-floor sections adjacent to the streets in the previous design are much more pedestrian friendly than the soaring walls of glass in the new design. Please do not use fake stacked stone because it is not consistent with the required Spanish Colonial Revival architecture.

415 S. Claremont Street

The southwestern portion of the building with the ramp to parking is too close to the circa 1865 Japanese-American Cultural Center/Rodolari home at 415 S. Claremont Street.

Recommendations:

1. Update the Historic Resource Evaluation Report to evaluate the impact of the revised project construction on the fragile historic structures.
2. Identify the measures that will be implemented to protect the historic buildings from damage from vibration and site stability during excavation and construction.
3. Provide a buffer between the project and the historic properties.

411 S. Claremont Street

411 S. Claremont is a pre-1888 residence in San Mateo that seems to have had minimal modifications, other than windows. The architecture evaluation does not ascribe any significance to the architecture or owners. However, it is one of the few pre-1888 buildings remaining in San Mateo.

Recommendation:

1. Consider the local importance of the two pre-1888 homes on S. Claremont and whether the property at 411 S. Claremont should be preserved as a local historic resource due to its age and proximity to the 415 S. Claremont building.

Update the Historic Resource Evaluation to address Yoshiko Yamanouchi House Historic District

The Historic Resources Evaluation report for the proposed Block 20 project does not address the effects on the proposed project on the Yoshiko Yamanouchi House Historic District, which was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in December 2023. On February 6, 2023, Watanuki, property owner, submitted to Rendell Bustos of the San Mateo Community Development Department the *Updated Historic Resources Evaluation Report for 1007 East 5th Avenue San Mateo, CA*, (Bradley and Hill 2022) and comments regarding the deficiencies in the Historic Resources Evaluation for Block 20. Ms. Watanuki requested the property at 1007 East 5th Avenue be included and addressed in the Block 20 EIR and General Plan EIR because of the potential effects of construction truck traffic on the property.

Recommendation:

1. The Yoshiko Yamanouchi House Historic District National Register of Historic Places nomination report provides further information related to the Japanese-American influence in development of San Mateo from the early 1900s; this information should be incorporated into the revised and updated Historic Resource Evaluation report.

Sincerely,



Laurie Hietter
President
San Mateo Heritage Alliance

From: Lisa Vande Voorde [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, June 25, 2024 3:47 PM
To: Planning <planning@cityofsanmateo.org>
Subject: Block 20: Public Comment for 6/25/24 Planning Commission Meeting

Dear Planning Commission:

I would like to comment on the architectural design, massing, transition, and setbacks of the Block 20 development relative to the adjacent historic buildings, as well as ensure adequate protection of these historic buildings both during and after construction. While I'm pleased that both historic properties have now been carved out of the project, I believe that more steps need to be taken to preserve them in their new context.

First of all, please require better setback and massing so that the seven-story building does not tower over, crowd, and dwarf the two historic buildings so much that it looks like a scene out of the movie "Up". The design on this So. Claremont side should be revised so that it better blends and complements the adjacent older, and much smaller, historic buildings.

Please ask for an exterior rendering of the project elevation at the rear of the proposed development along E. 5th Ave. so we get a more realistic view of how the rear of the building relates to the rear of the historic buildings. Does it complement, or crowd? How is that area to be used? If it is a location for trash and utilities for the new building, then any adverse impacts on the historic properties needs to be considered. I would also like clarification as to whether this area remains a parking lot,

as it appears in the project plans, or will it be a driveway to access the development? Also please ensure that the windows on this side of the development are arranged such that there are no privacy concerns impacting the Safari Kids Preschool.

Finally, steps must be taken to ensure that construction of both the building and the underground parking lot do not compromise the stability of the two historic resources to be retained. Not only should both buildings be protected from damage during construction, but the design of the development should be scrutinized to ensure there is no damage to the foundations now or in the future. One of these buildings, the Japanese American Community Center, was built in 1865, and is one of the oldest, if not *the* oldest, structures still standing in San Mateo. Please take measures to ensure that both properties stand solid and strong for future generations.

Thank you for considering my comments during your study session tonight.

Sincerely yours,

Lisa Vande Voorde
San Mateo Resident

From: Dianne Whitaker [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, June 25, 2024 3:13 PM
To: Planning <planning@cityofsanmateo.org>
Subject: Item 2: Sturdy Session Re: Block 20 Office/Residential Mixed Use Project

Planning Commission -

Please find attached my written comments for tonight's Planning Commission meeting.
Thank you.

-Dianne

Dianne R. Whitaker, AIA
Dianne Whitaker Architect

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

June 25, 2024

TO: San Mateo Planning Commission

**RE: Study Session - Item 2:
500 E. 4th Avenue (Block 20) – Revised Seven-Story Office/Residential
Mixed-Use Building
June 25, 2024 San Mateo Planning Commission Meeting**

1. Architectural design, massing and transition with the adjacent historic buildings and surroundings in the downtown context.

This proposed development is subject to San Mateo's General Plan 2030, since it was submitted prior to the adoption of the new General Plan. Therefore the 2030 Land Use Map designates this site as Mixed Use Commercial-Residential, which *"is meant to provide uses at intensities that complement both the downtown core and the adjacent residential neighborhoods."*

The immediate adjacent neighbors are three one-story buildings - two historic structures and one preschool with an outdoor play yard - located on the same city block as the proposed seven story structure. The existing residential neighborhood is composed predominantly of single-family homes.

A seven-story building is too tall and too massive and hence not a good fit for this location, especially given the parcel is only 29,000 square feet in size.

2. Other project and design aspects that should be considered.

Per State Density Bonus Law, this proposed project is eligible for three concessions and additional waivers. A total of *eight* waivers have been requested; four of which include:

- a. A 55% increase in the maximum height (from 55 feet to 85 feet)
- b. A 68% increase in the maximum FAR (from 3.0 to 5.03)
- c. A 33% increase in the maximum bulk length (from 150 feet to 200 feet)
- d. A 47% increase in the maximum diagonal length (from 170 feet to 250 feet)

The result of this high number of waiver and concession requests results in a proposed project that overwhelms the adjacent predominantly residential neighborhood and the immediately adjacent historic structures and the preschool.

As your meeting tonight is a Study Session, please request that the applicant go back to the drawing board and make substantive changes to their proposed project so that it is a better fit for the adjacent neighbors, the neighborhood and the City of San Mateo.

Thank You,
Dianne Whitaker
San Mateo

