

ARCHITECTURE

PLANNING

URBAN DESIGN

April 5, 2019

Mr. Rendell Bustos  
Department of Community Development  
City of San Mateo  
330 West 20th Avenue  
San Mateo, CA 94403-1388

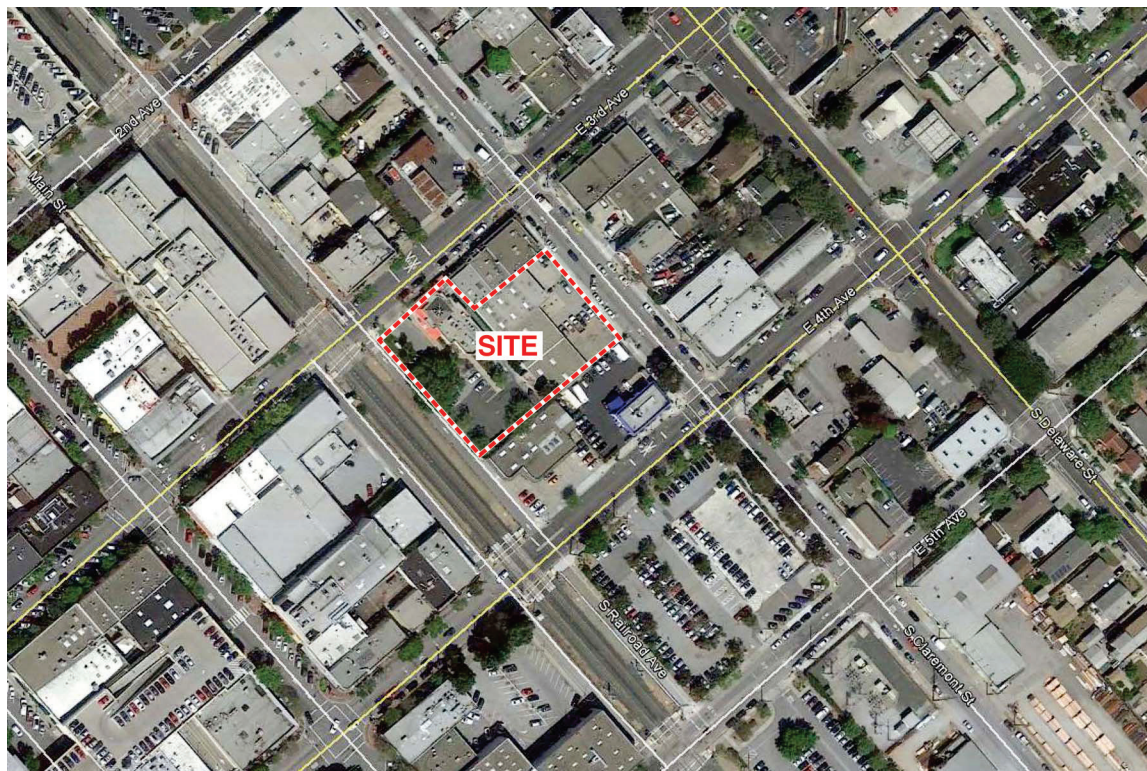
**RE: 406 East Third Avenue**

Dear Rendell:

I reviewed the drawings, visited the site, and viewed the video of the July Planning Commission Study Session. Following the formal submittal, I prepared review letters on October 1, 2018 and January 4, 2019. Subsequently, I have reviewed the applicant responses to the recommendations included in the review letters. My comments on the current plans and elevations for this project are as follows:

#### **SITE CONTEXT**

The site is located in downtown San Mateo in a transition area between the retail core and the residential and smaller retail neighborhood to the east. The site is immediately adjacent to the railroad corridor and a four story similar mixed use project immediately adjacent to the south (currently under construction). Photographs of the site and surroundings are shown on the following page.



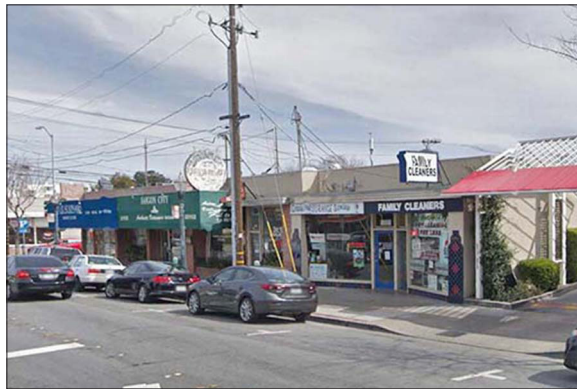




*The Site from South Claremont Street*



*The Site from Third Avenue and South Railroad Ave.*



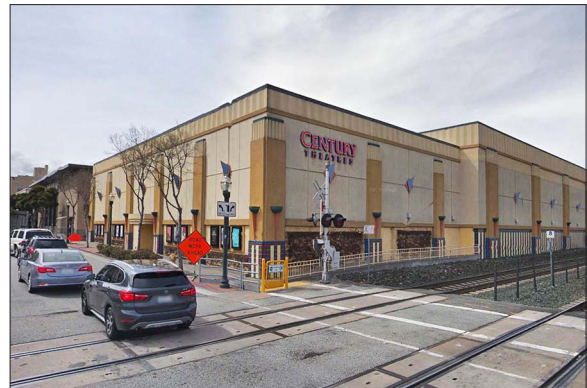
*Adjacent retail to remain on Third Avenue*



*Adjacent retail west on Third Avenue*



*Adjacent retail east on Third Avenue*



*Nearby cinema in the downtown retail core*



*Nearby two-story structure across Third Avenue*



*Adjacent retail structures in the downtown retail core*

## **PLANNING COMMISSION CONCERNS AND COMMENTS**

In the Planning Commission Study Session on July 10, individual commissioners expressed the following concerns and comments:

- Generally liked the proposed Contemporary Style of the building (multiple commissioners).
- The building design is too similar to the adjacent 405 East Fourth Avenue project (multiple commissioners).
- Would like to see more residential units (multiple commissioners).
- Would like to see more retail use (multiple commissioners).
- Concern with the parking ingress/egress location on Third Avenue.
- Concern with the location of the building entry and open space near the railroad corridor.
- Would like to see more open space.
- Concern with the use and internal access to the open space pocket on Claremont Street.
- Concern with the tall three-story white wall behind the existing retail shops on Third Avenue | Doesn't blend in with the rest of the design or the retail frontages (multiple commissioners).
- Concern with the amount of glass | Would like to see softer appearance and more relationship to the downtown buildings to the west (multiple commissioners).
- Concern with the amount of glass seen from the Third Avenue/Railroad Avenue intersection | Doesn't relate well to the adjacent downtown.
- Would like to see more architectural detail.

**Planning Commission expressed concern about this wall as seeming very different from other facades**



**Planning Commission expressed concern about the amount of glass and the relationship of the northwest corner facades to the adjacent Downtown**

## **ISSUES RAISED IN THE PREVIOUS REVIEW LETTERS**

There were three primary issues raised regarding concerns that the commissioners raised in their study session that staff has worked with the applicant to resolve:

- The treatment of the three-story facade facing East Third Avenue
- The large amount of glass facade at the East Third Avenue and Railroad Street corner.
- The location and sound buffering of the proposed open space at the East Third Avenue and Railroad Street intersection.

Other issues were minor and related to the proposed mural and the clarification of some interior functional questions.



## APPLICANT'S CHANGES FOLLOWING THE STUDY SESSION AND REVIEW LETTERS

**See comparison of Study Session and currently proposed designs below and on the following pages.**

- Two-bay wide three-story tall glass walls immediately adjacent to the 405 East Fourth Avenue building were changed to brick on both Claremont Street and Railroad Avenue.
- The three-story stucco wall facing Third Avenue behind the retail shops to remain was change from stucco to brick and the bird mural elements were refined in their composition.
- Brick facing on the fourth floor residential units was changed to composite aluminum panels with some wood infill walls.
- Windows on the three-story wall behind the retail shops to remain were increased in height with additional detailing added (see enlarged sketch below).
- The one-story brick and two-story tall stucco framed bays on the Railroad Avenue facade have been moved to the north to reduce the amount of three-story tall glass wall at the corner.
- The metal canopy at the Third Avenue Plaza was increased in depth.
- The fourth floor office space facade facing Railroad Avenue has been modified slightly.
- The fourth floor residential plan layout and office exiting pattern have been changed.
- Two additional studio apartments has increased the number of residential units from 23 to 25.
- Some additional refinements were made to the Railroad Avenue edge of the Third Avenue Plaza.



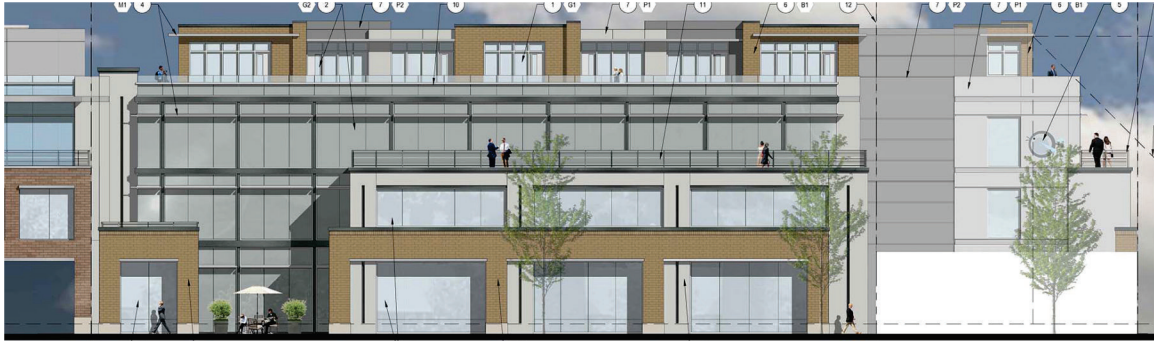
**Third Avenue Elevation: Study Session**



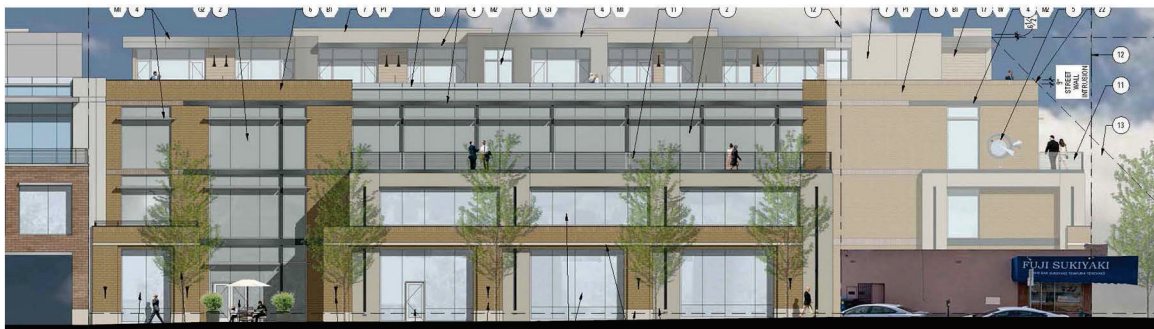
**Third Avenue Elevation: Current Design (April 2019)**







**Claremont Street Elevation: Study Session**



**Claremont Street Elevation: Current Design (April 2019)**



**Railroad Avenue Elevation: Study Session**



**Railroad Avenue Elevation: Current Design (April 2019)**





**Claremont Street Condition: Study Session**



**Claremont Street Condition: Current Design (April 2019)**





**Railroad Avenue Corner Condition: Study Session**



**Railroad Avenue Corner Condition: Current Design (April 2019)**

### **OVERALL PROJECT EVALUATION**

Overall, the design is well done. In the July study session, some commissioners were concerned that the design was too similar to the adjacent 405 East Fourth Avenue structure. That will still be an issue for individual commissioners to decide. My initial reaction when I first saw the study session plans was the same. However as I reviewed the current project plans, I have much less concern regarding that issue. The 405 East Fourth Avenue building is much more formal in its massing and use of materials and colors. This current project relates the overall massing of elements to the adjacent 405 East Fourth Avenue structure, but there is a well thought out variety introduced into the design massing, materials and colors to break up the larger building to better relate to the other nearby downtown building frontages.”

### **REMAINING ISSUES AND CONCERNS**

Staff has worked with the applicant to address the planning commissioners’ concerns and refine the design. Alternatives studies were prepared for the Third Avenue/Railroad Avenue building corner and discussed with the applicant. The applicant provided some additional alternatives to allow staff options for changes to the corner.

I have no further recommendations for changes.

Rendell, please let me know if you have any questions, or if there are specific issues of concern that I did not address.

Sincerely,

CANNON DESIGN GROUP

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Larry L. Cannon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Larry" and last name "Cannon" clearly distinguishable.

Larry L. Cannon