

December 7, 2020

Wendy Lao  
Associate Planner,  
City of San Mateo, Planning Division

Dear Wendy:

I wanted to share my strong support for Draper University as they contemplate various construction projects to renew their facilities. I wanted to offer my perspective as a citizen of San Mateo since 1994 and a homeowner since 1999.

When I first moved to San Mateo as a renter, I was struck by the how little there was to do. My wife and I would travel elsewhere for dinner and an evening out. With the opening of Draeger's and the creation of the theater district, suddenly San Mateo was a place to visit, to dine and to work. In my view, an equally an important component of the revitalization has been the intellectual and entrepreneurial vibrance Draper University has fostered.

In my time in San Mateo, I have admired the work Tim Draper and his team have done from afar. Not only has Draper University breathed life into the historic Ben Franklin Hotel, but their initiatives attract a global network of entrepreneurs seeking insights into how to sustain businesses. As Draper University adapts to changing conditions, it is important they have some flexibility to meet their commitment to the next generation of entrepreneurs and innovators: to create the very best facility to educate, incubate and fund startups. In the last three years, I have had first-hand experience with Draper University staff, first as a consultant and as of last month, as a board member. I know that Tim and his team will respect the historic nature of the building while also ensuring those entrepreneurs from around the globe will have a world-class experience.

As many employers depart the Bay Area for cheaper destinations, I sincerely hope San Mateo City Planning can demonstrate flexibility to Draper University as it renews its facilities. Draper University is an employer committing to the long term with many of their improvements, which will enhance the functionality of these historic facilities. As a former Stanford University employee, I applaud Draper for contributing a new model of education, one that helps people create business and jobs, many of whom will likely stay connected to the Bay Area and to San Mateo. Perhaps more important, Draper University will be attracting entrepreneurs from around the globe, making San Mateo a destination city in the heart of Silicon Valley. Tim and his team have my wholehearted support in their efforts!



Paul Marca



I remember the old Benjamin Franklin hotel not as an iconic and historical structure but as a dilapidated building that cast a shadow of blight across downtown. The building had been unused for years and the entrance smelled of urine. The adjacent alley was so intimidating that, at night, my wife and I would walk around the block rather than risk an encounter. As a resident of Foster City, I wondered how such a grand building fell into disrepair.

My first encounter with Draper University was in 2012 during the initial planning commission meeting. I attended the meeting to learn more about Tim Draper and the University. I did not quite understand the University's entrepreneurial purpose and connection to superheroes. The people who attended the meeting will remember the bitterness displayed by a few residents towards the renovation. It seemed they were more comfortable with an empty decaying building than developing a vibrant downtown that would provide jobs for community members and new opportunities for our youth.

Luckily, Mr. Draper prevailed. Anyone who compares pictures of the old Benjamin Franklin Hotel with Draper University will easily see the life that he breathed into the building and into our downtown. In addition to the hotel, Mr. Draper transformed the building across the street from a consignment store to an open-air workspace where dozens of people work and hundreds gather for events. This building served as the beginning of an ecosystem which eventually attracted many smaller ventures and led to our new vibrant downtown.

You need only to walk around the block to witness the growth and prosperity that Mr. Draper has indirectly brought over the last eight years. The El Camino and 3<sup>rd</sup> Street intersection was completely rebuilt and fitness, technology and healthy food alternatives filled the new buildings with jobs and revenue for the city. Across downtown and along B Street, vacant storefronts opened up with dynamic new businesses.

In the mornings you now smell a wonderful aroma of baking muffins and see a line of socially distanced people waiting to purchase a new baker's goods. This baker's shop is directly adjacent to Draper University and the University students were among the first enthusiastic customers.

There is certainly much about Draper University that we might not completely understand; however, I think that we can all agree that Mr. Draper has brought something special to our downtown. Notably, he has become not only our biggest landowner but one of the more responsible ones.

I have had the opportunity to review Mr. Draper's new plans from the meeting last month. As with my initial encounter with Draper University eight years ago, I might not understand everything. However, I did notice that the plan was well thought out and most of the construction was behind the building. I am certain that Mr. Draper will work with the community to find agreeable solutions to minor issues that might arise. So far, his vision has worked well for our community and I look forward to seeing how the new construction benefits our downtown in ways I can't imagine.

Troy Ryder

**From:** [Keith Weber](#)  
**To:** [Ellen Mallory](#); [John Ebnetter Planning Commissioner](#); [Margaret Williams](#); [Mike Etheridge](#); [Ramiro Maldonado Jr.](#); [Christina Horrisberger](#); [Sailesh Mehra](#); [Wendy Lao](#); [Naomi Miroglu](#)  
**Subject:** Draper University Pre-App (PA-2018-054)  
**Date:** Monday, December 7, 2020 4:29:41 PM

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Ellen Mallory, Chair, and members of the Planning Commission:

I have read both ARG reports included in the meeting materials regarding the negative impacts on the historic integrity of this subject property. Two historic reports established the building's historic, architectural integrity and this project entails an "irreversible loss" of the "distinctive features" that give the building its integrity.

Because this is such an important historic building, the proposed project must be in conformance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards in order to move ahead. Clearly, the irreversible loss of distinctive character defining features is not in keeping with the intent of the Secretary's Standards, which emphasize retention, repair, and preservation of these features, not their removal. The suggestion that the cast plaster ornamentation could be carefully removed without breakage or damage, and stored indefinitely, would make this "irreversible loss" somehow acceptable, is *at best a stretch*.

The inescapable fact that the proposed project will cause an "irreversible loss" and impair the "essential form and integrity" of the building as long as the addition remains in place is reason enough to decline the project. The question the Planning Commission must ask is what is the benefit to the City if it accepts an "irreversible loss" of significant distinctive ornamentation on one of the City's most iconic and beloved buildings in exchange for 9 open office spaces and a roof deck for private use? How can this be justified?

The proposed new elevator and stair tower are only needed as handicap access to the penthouse and a roof deck. The existing elevators already service the seventh and eighth floors. My view is that the trade-off is large and the community benefits nil. I urge the Planning Commission to graciously decline the project as currently proposed and any future proposals that do not preserve and protect the important character defining features of this wonderful building. The City deserves better than this project promises.

Thank you for your consideration.  
Keith Weber  
San Mateo

**From:** [Maxine Turner](#)  
**To:** [Ellen Mallory](#); [John Ebner](#); [Margaret Williams](#); [Mike Etheridge](#); [Ramiro Maldonado Jr.](#)  
**Cc:** [Wendy Lao](#); [Planning](#); [Sailesh Mehra](#)  
**Subject:** Study Session Item #3, Draper University  
**Date:** Monday, December 7, 2020 5:53:27 PM

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**Members of the Planning Commission:**

I have followed the Draper University project since its inception and have particularly advocated for the enhancement of the public walkway between 3rd and 4th Avenues. This is a well-used public alley with the potential to be an inviting and pleasant space, similar to alleys in Carmel. The Conditions of Approval for the original project walkway specifically identified a living wall to screen the restaurant trash area as a required element of the project. FYI, the living wall was identified on the project plans by their own landscape architect, not imposed by the city.

Sadly, this condition of approval has been neglected since the day it was put in and today the living wall is more dead than alive. More importantly for your discussion tonight is the fact that the existing trash area is necessary for the functioning of the restaurant which I was assured would continue as a use. At the neighborhood meeting I raised questions about how restaurant trash removal would be handled since the proposed elevator will be located over the existing trash holding area. I was told by Martin Kent, the Draper facilities director, that trash was held in an area in the basement and brought to the surface in an existing service elevator. I know this is not true. Furthermore, even the current plans do not identify any basement trash area.

Even if it were true, the proposed elevator to the penthouse will be built on top of the existing service elevator from the basement to the ground level. So how will trash from the restaurant get to the street for Recology pick-up? It was clear from the neighborhood meeting discussion that neither the architect nor applicant had thought about or addressed this trash issue. This is not just an aesthetic issue related to public use and enjoyment of the public alleyway. IMHO, this is a fatal design flaw and as the Planning Commission knows, "the devil's in the details."

Frankly, nothing about this proposed project makes sense, especially since adding open office space can easily be accommodated within the existing structure without the damage and cost of the proposed elevator and stairs. Because of the inability to address trash removal occurring on a public walkway and the negative impacts to the historic value of this iconic downtown landmark, this project should not be approved.

Thank you for considering and addressing my concerns.  
Maxine



