

December 14, 2020

Ms. Somer Smith
Department of Community Development
City of San Mateo
330 West 20th Avenue
San Mateo, CA 94403-1388

RE: 1919 O'Farrell Street

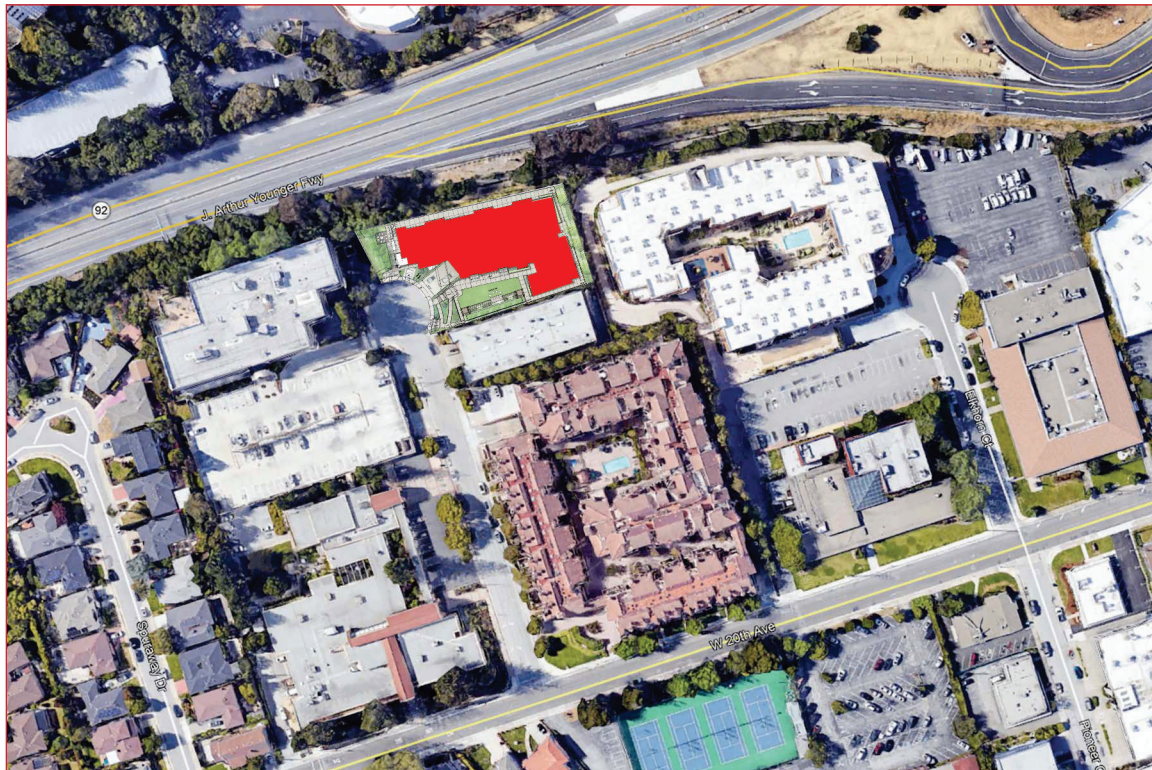
Dear Somer:

I reviewed a previous design for this site one year ago. In reviewing the current drawings and the site context, I have the following comments.

NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT

The site is located at the end of a short cul-de-sac which also contains the City Hall, a one-story office building over underground parking, a four-story office structure, a two-story parking structure serving City Hall and the larger office building, and a multifamily residential complex over below grade parking. Also adjacent immediately to the east of the site is a recently constructed multifamily residential project over underground parking. Photographs of the site and surrounding context are shown below and on the following page.





Air Photo with Proposed Site Plan



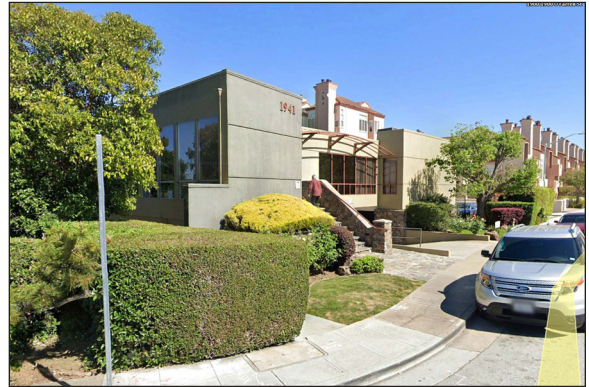
The Site



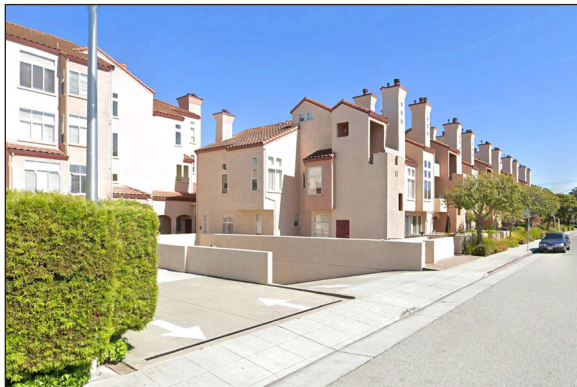
View to site looking down O'Farrell Street



Office building and parking structure to the immediate left



Office building to the immediate right on O'Farrell Street



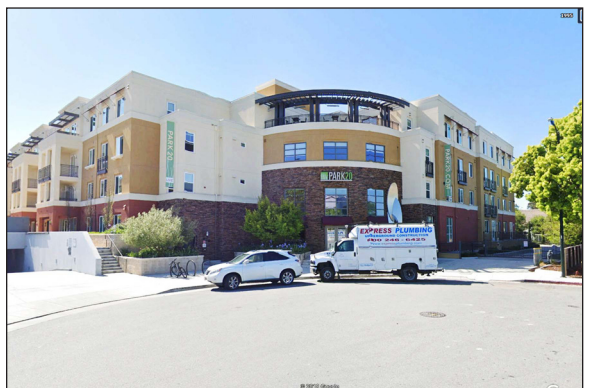
Nearby multifamily residential on O'Farrell Street



Nearby multifamily residential on O'Farrell Street



Nearby City Hall on O'Farrell Street

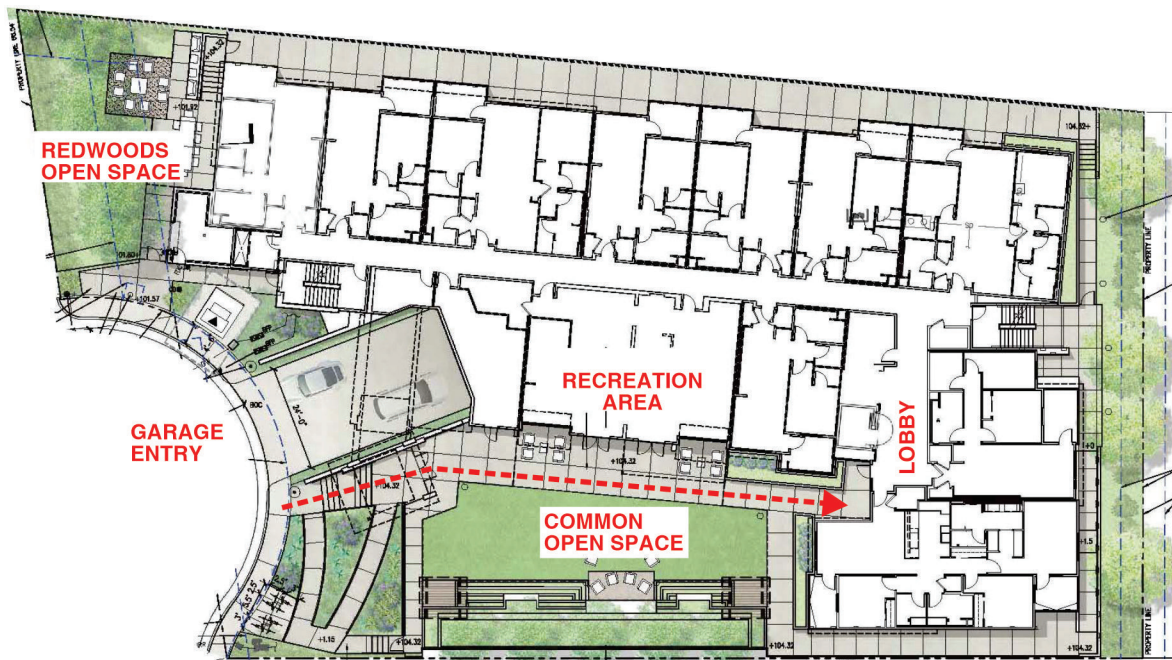


Immediately adjacent multifamily complex to the east

DESIGN OVERVIEW

Major features along with plan and facade examples.

- Four stories of multifamily residential development.
- One level of below grade parking.
- Two Common Open Space Areas.
- Exterior gated entry.
- Contemporary design with substantial facade variety.



O'Farrell View Looking N.E.



Courtyard View Looking N.W.

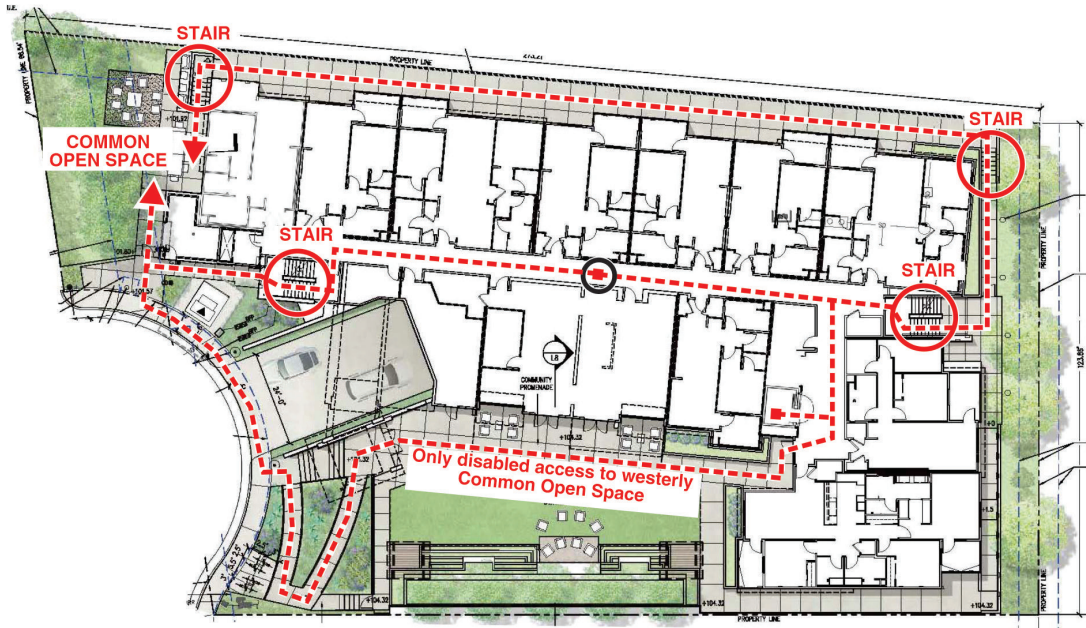


Highway 92 View Looking S.E.



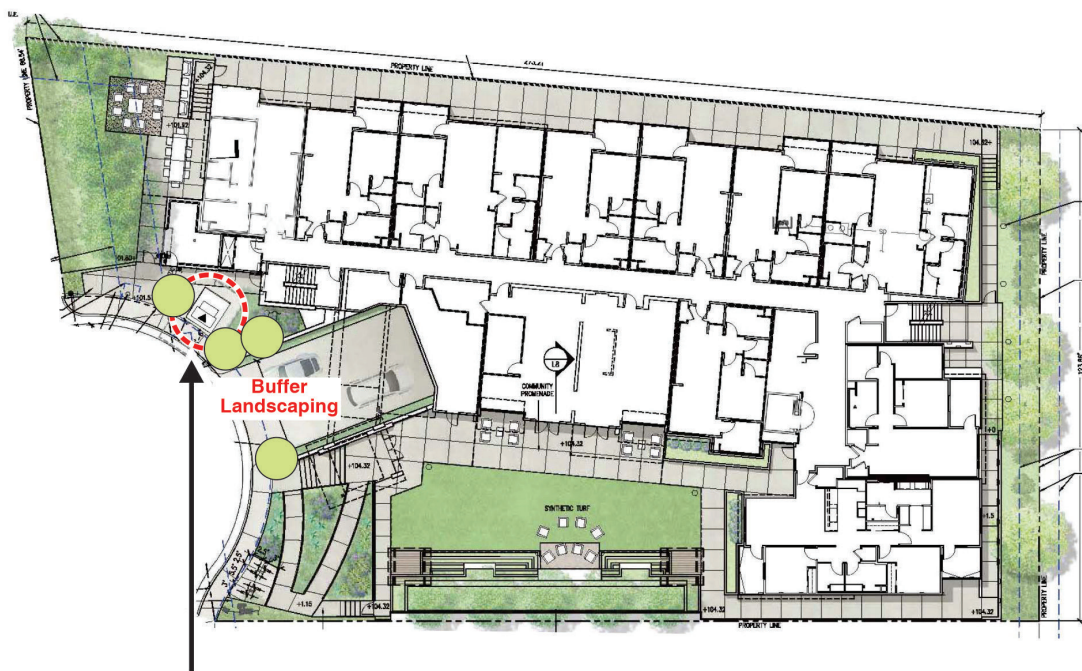
Courtyard View Looking S.E.

4. The retention of the cluster of redwood trees at the westerly edge of the property is very good both in terms of the streetscape terminus of the cul-de-sac and the provision of a high quality open space amenity for the residents and their guests. Access to this common open space amenity, however, is not very good, and would be highly inconvenient for any disabled residents or guests. Access routes are long with many stairs along the way - not ideal for the open space's intended use as an outdoor barbecue and dining area.



Recommendation: Explore more direct access route and floor-height-to-open space transitions.

5. The cul-de-sac terminus bulb forces the resident and guest entry, garage entry ramp, trash pick up and utility connections into a limited frontage area. The operational features are not the best neighbors for the pedestrian entry experience.



Unclear if transformer is visually buffered
Consider enclosure and landscaping

Recommendation: Enclose the ground-mounted transformer. One example can be found at the San Mateo Metropolitan Apartments on the Fifth Avenue frontage - see photo below.

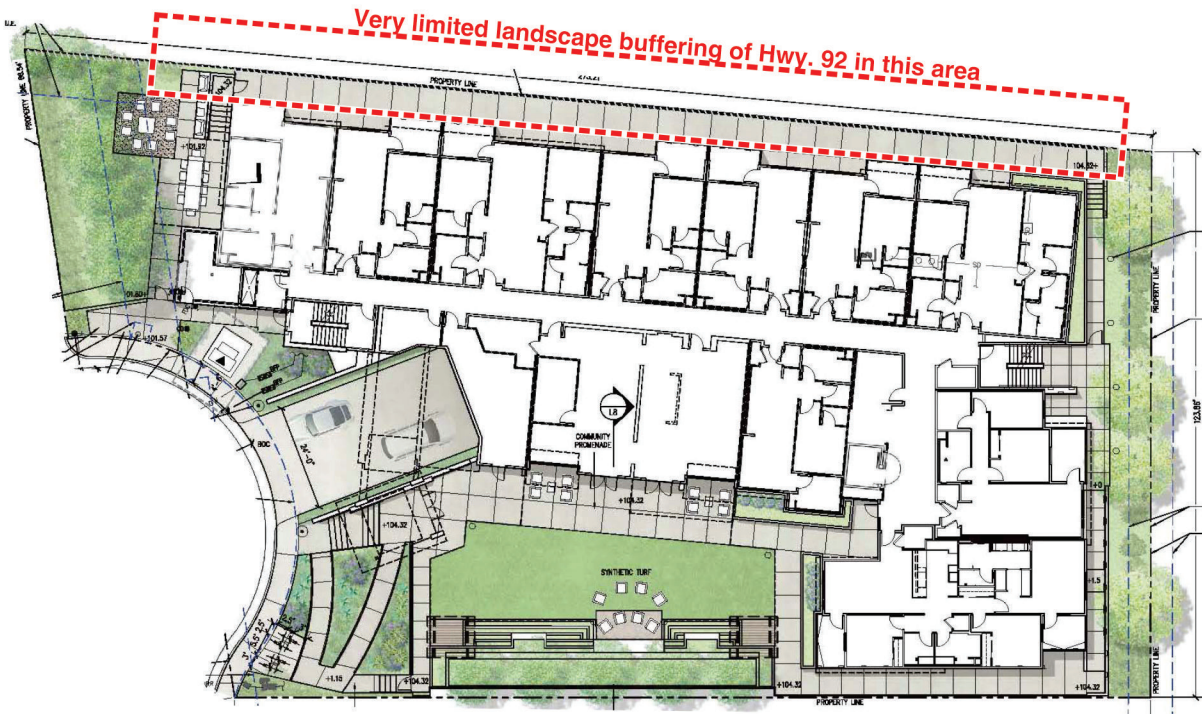


TRANSFORMER ENCLOSURE EXAMPLE
(San Mateo Metropolitan Apartments)

Additional landscaping would be desirable to soften the appearance of this small area and to visually separate the pedestrian entry from the garage ramps and transformer - see plan on page 6 and sketch illustration below.



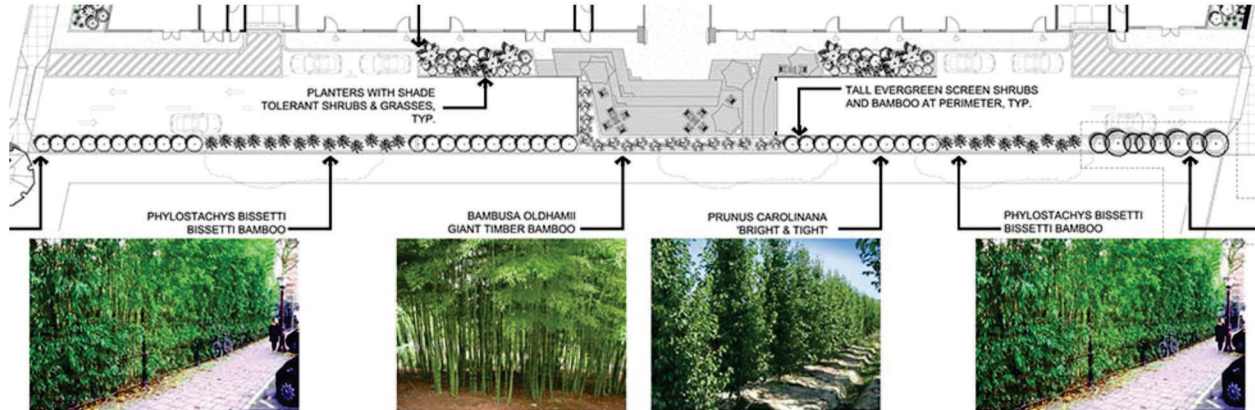
6. The project garage and hardscape is constructed up or very close to the northerly property line, leaving little area for adequate landscape buffering along the edge of the CalTrans Highway 92 right-of-way. While that would not be a problem along many portions of the Highway 92 frontage, it is an issue adjacent to this site since there is very limited tree landscaping in this portion of the frontage - see photos below.



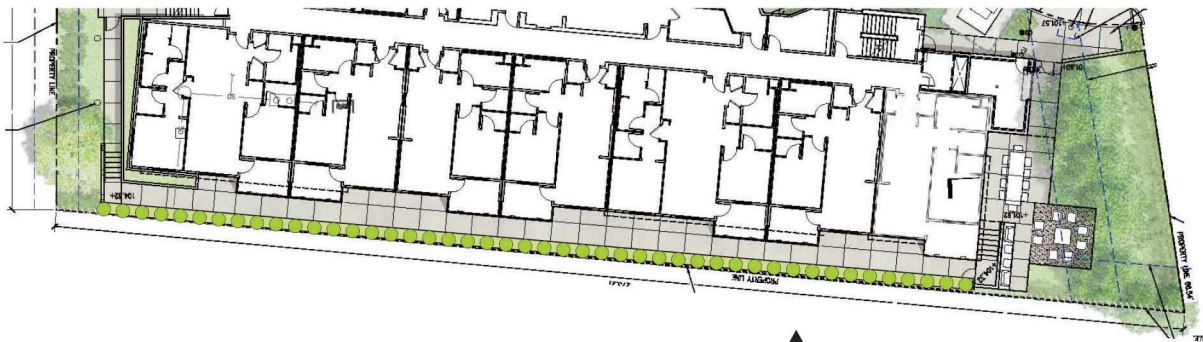
Lack of highway 92 buffer landscaping would reduce livability of adjacent units



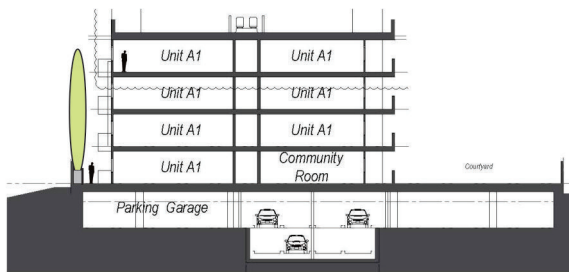
Recommendation: Explore ways to add buffer landscaping along the north property line. One avenue to explore would be the potential of adding tall, shallow-rooted plantings. One example approved by the San Mateo Planning Commission is the Hillsdale Terrace mixed use project on El Camino Real at 28th Avenue. Faced with the need to buffer views of the structure from existing neighbors and planting areas limited by the size of the below grade parking structure, the applicant explored and proposed tall bamboo buffer landscaping. Bamboo is a form of grass that is rapid growing and needs limited soil width and depth - see illustration below.



PROPOSED SAN MATEO HILLSIDE TERRACE EDGE LANDSCAPING



**Explore adding tall shallow-rooted buffer planting
such as bamboo along this frontage**
See San Mateo example images above



Somer, please let me know if you have any questions, or if there are any other important issues that I did not address.

Sincerely,
CANNON DESIGN GROUP


Larry L. Cannon