



CITY OF SAN MATEO

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Agenda Report

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TO: Planning Commission
FROM: Zachary Dahl, Interim Director
PREPARED BY: Community Development Department
MEETING DATE: October 05, 2023

SUBJECT:

Scoping Meeting for the Environmental Impact Report associated with the Block 20 Mixed-Use Project at 500 E. 4th Avenue (PA-2023-003)

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive an informational presentation from staff, accept public comments, and provide comments on the scope of issues and topics that will be evaluated in the Environmental Impact Report for the Block 20 Mixed-Use Project.

BACKGROUND:

Project Description

The proposed Block 20 Mixed-Use Project is a six-story office and residential mixed-use building with a combined floor area of approximately 216,000 square feet. The building consists of approximately 142,000 square feet of office uses occupying primarily the first through third floors, with some additional office areas on the fourth and fifth floors. A total of 86 residential units are proposed on the fourth through sixth floors. The proposed unit mix includes 41 studio units, 35 one-bedroom units, and 10 two-bedroom units, all of which would be rental apartments. Of the 86 units, nine units (15% of the base density) are proposed to be designated as below market rate (BMR) at the Very Low-income category pursuant to the City's inclusionary requirements.

Project Site

The project site consists of five contiguous parcels, which would be merged into one parcel occupying the full block bounded by E. 4th Avenue, S. Delaware Street, E. 5th Avenue, and S. Claremont Street. The combined parcel area is approximately 1.16 acres, or 50,499 square feet. The site is designated Downtown Retail Core Support in the City's General Plan Land Use Plan and is zoned CBD/S (Central Business District Support).

The existing on-site uses include a fast-food restaurant (Taco Bell), preschool (Safari Kid), a single-family residential dwelling and a vacant lot formerly occupied by a gasoline station. In addition, the San Mateo Japanese-American Community Center is located at 415 S. Claremont Street across two buildings, both of which qualify as a historical resource (Individually Eligible for the National Register). The City's historic review consultant is currently preparing a historical resources report that evaluates the entire block.

Adjacent uses include a variety of commercial and residential uses as follows:

- North: Block 21 Mixed Use Project, which is approved for office and residential uses. The site is currently vacant.
- South: Lumberyard (San Mateo Lumber Company), and residential uses zoned R4
- East: Auto-repair facility (Jiffy Lube), and a multi-family residential building zoned R3
- West: 5th Avenue City Parking Garage (under construction with opening anticipated by the end of 2023)

Lastly, the Downtown Caltrain Station is located approximately one-quarter of a mile north of the project site. A location map showing the project site in its vicinity and adjacent zoning designations is included as [Attachment 1](#).

DISCUSSION:

As the lead agency, the City determined that the proposed development does not qualify for any exemptions from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). An Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is required if there is substantial evidence in the record that the project may have a significant impact on the environment. If a potentially significant environmental impact is identified during the preliminary review, the preparation of an Initial Study (IS) is not required, and the lead agency may begin the EIR process. Per CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5(b), “A project with an effect that may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an historical resource is a project that may have a significant effect on the environment.”

This study session will serve as the public scoping meeting to share information about the project and provide an opportunity for interested parties to comment on the scope and content of the environmental document. Input from this meeting will assist with identifying the range of actions, alternatives, mitigation measures, and significant effects to be analyzed in depth in the EIR, while also identifying which issues do not require detailed study.

The proposed project includes the demolition of two historic resources located at 415 S. Claremont Street and 503 E. 5th Avenue, resulting in a potential significant effect on the environment. Staff has engaged a historic preservation consultant to conduct an analysis to explain and analyze various alternatives to demolishing the buildings in conformance with the Secretary of Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation and CEQA impact thresholds. Alternatives to demolition could include the whole or partial preservation of these two structures by relocating the buildings on the site and adaptively reusing them or relocating them to an acceptable receiver site and finding compatible uses.

Accordingly, a Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the EIR was issued on September 13, 2023 (see [Attachment 2](#)), and submitted to the State Clearinghouse, responsible and trustee agencies and interested parties and groups (see [Attachment 3](#)), to announce the initiation of the EIR process and to solicit comments regarding the scope of issues to be addressed and alternatives that should be considered in the EIR. Comments must be received no later than October 18, 2023, except for those agencies that received the NOP via certified mail, in which case the deadline for submitting comments is 30 days from date of receipt.

In addition to impacts to cultural resources, including historic resources, which have already been identified, the EIR for the proposed project will address the range of impacts that could result from implementation of the proposed project, including, but not limited to:

- Aesthetics
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Energy
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Transportation
- Tribal Cultural Resources
- Utilities and System Services
- Wildfire
- Alternatives

- Significant Unavoidable Impacts
- Cumulative Impacts
- Other Required Sections (i.e., growth inducing impacts, significant irreversible environmental changes, references and organizations/persons consulted, and EIR authors)

During this scoping meeting, the Planning Commission will not be taking any actions relating to project entitlements or approvals, nor will it make any formal decisions related to the project.

NEXT STEPS:

Preparation of the EIR, including technical analysis, will commence at the conclusion of the scoping period. Upon completion of the Draft EIR, there will be a 45-day mandatory comment period during which the public or any other interested party may provide comments or questions to the City. During the public comment period on the Draft EIR, the City will hold a public meeting to review the contents of the environmental document and receive public comments. After responding to public comments, the City will prepare a Final EIR with responses to comments and hold a public hearing to certify the document and take action on the proposed project.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

To date, staff has received one comment on the NOP for the EIR (see [Attachment 4](#)). Any additional public comments received after publication of this report will be forwarded to the Planning Commission for consideration at the meeting and posted to this item on the [City's Agendas & Minutes Public Meeting Portal](#) as "Post Packet Public Comments."

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION:

Consistent with Section 21083.9 of the CEQA Statutes and Section 15082 of the CEQA Guidelines, a public scoping meeting will be held to solicit comments regarding the scope and analysis of the EIR. The scoping meeting itself is not a project under CEQA (Section 15378(b)(5)) and is therefore not subject to environmental review.

NOTICE PROVIDED:

In addition to the CEQA noticing identified above, and in accordance with the City's Municipal Code public noticing requirements, this Scoping Meeting was noticed to the following parties at least ten (10) days in advance of the Planning Commission study session:

- Property owners, residential tenants and business tenants within 1,000 feet of the project site;
- The City's "900 List" which contains nearly 100 Homeowner Associations, Neighborhood Associations, local utilities, media, and other organizations interested in citywide planning projects;
- The City's Planning "Notify Me" email list; and,
- The interested parties list which includes interested individuals who contacted the City and requested to be added to the project notification list.

ATTACHMENTS

Att 1 – Location Map

Att 2 – Notice of Preparation

Att 3 – Notice of Preparation Reviewing Agencies List

Att 4 – Public Comment

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