

June 11, 2012

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

RE: 2009 S. Delaware Apartments

Dear Lisa:

I reviewed the revised design drawings, and have worked with you and the applicant over the past several weeks in resolving the limited number of concerns that were identified. The site is a large parcel at the corner of South Delaware and Pacific Boulevard, now occupied by a vacant light industrial facility. The site's most immediate neighbor is a two-story condominium complex to the north. A public storage facility sits to the south, a single family neighborhood along Delaware to the east, and the Caltrain rail corridor to the west. Photographs of the site and surrounding area are shown below and on the following page.





The Site



Public storage use across Pacific Blvd.



SFD neighborhood to the east



Railroad corridor to the west



Adjacent condominium complex



Adjacent condominium complex



Adjacent condominium complex



Adjacent condominium complex

Review Comments

The project is well designed, and following our meeting with the applicant and architect on March 28 of this year, there remained only a few items for further discussion and refinement. The issues at that point are shown in the attachment to this letter which was circulated to the applicant and architect following the meeting. Since that time, I have had further conversations with the architect, and have reviewed additional drawings and examples materials which they have provided.

I believe that I understand the reasons for most off the responses to the constraints which the applicant is facing here, and understand that they are trying very hard to be a sympathetic to the adjacent condominium owners as possible. While I am not totally comfortable with all of the design decisions that have been made, I do respect the architectural firm for this project, and believe that they are perhaps in the best position to make the detail decisions that will unify the design into a complete project.

I am not providing recommendations for design changes in this letter, as I often do. However, I do feel that a very limited number of issues should be identified to allow the independent judgement of the staff and Planning Commission. Also, the architect provided some example photos of conditions similar to what they are proposing that I did not see in the final submittal package. I have included a few of them since they help to better visualize the proposed final design.

1. While the project has been reduced from four to three-stories in height, the actual building height is not really a story lower since the garage, which was at grade level in the previous design proposal of 2006, is now elevated above grade level to create a podium. The diagram below provides a rough approximation of the current and previous sections though the project between Pacific Blvd. and the adjacent condominium project. Note that Building A has been pulled back further from the northerly property line.

2. The proposed elevations are well organized, and while not as traditional in appearance as the previous proposal, are in keeping with the scale and style of the adjacent condominium project and the proposed nearby multifamily complex at 2000 South Delaware, designed by this same architectural firm. The proposed south and east elevations are shown below.



Issues earlier identified with the design of major building entries and corners of the building have been addressed very well. I still, however, have some lingering concerns with the entry stoops at the ground level. The porches are relatively shallow, although the plans have been modified to provide a minimum depth of five feet. The architect is constrained by the limited site width, and the placement of the structures close to Pacific Blvd. to provide as much separation as possible on the north condominium interface side. One other approach that I have seen to address this type of constraint is shown in the example at the Irvine Communities project in San Jose to the right. In this example, the entry steps reach the porch by means of the space between the entries, and the porches project out to engage the entry stair. This arrangement allows for much deeper, more usable porches, and might be worth considering.



Another element of the porches, entry stairs, and balconies on upper levels that I just have no idea how it will look over the years. That is the combination metal and Hardiplank railings. They are shown on the sketch and on the photo examples provided by the architect. A similar arrangement is proposed for the edge of the podium wall at the entry adjacent to the Leasing Office. I defer to the architects' judgement on this, but don't feel that I can hardly endorse it.



3. The last issue which we discussed related to the windows which are set at the exterior surface of the wall. In our discussion in March with the applicant and the architect, we asked if the window could be recessed from the face of the exterior wall since that was the Planning Commission's request and the solution agreed to by the developer on the recent 888 North San Mateo Drive apartment project. The architect and applicant explored that, but feel more comfortable with the originally proposed detail. However, they have proposed adding projecting trim around all windows that are located in stucco walls. The photo example to the right shows how the flush windows would look in the upper Hardiplank wall surface. My view is that, given the architectural style, this would be an acceptable solution. However, given the Planning Commission's requests in the past for recessed window, it may be an item that needs some further discussion.



Lisa, please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

CANNON DESIGN GROUP

Larry L. Cannon AICP

President