

Christine "Christy" Usher

From: Jack Wang [jack@kzsu.stanford.edu]
Sent: Wednesday, February 27, 2013 12:30 AM
To: Christine "Christy" Usher
Subject: Cal Water Service planning

Hi Christy:

I just thought I'd email you as I am a neighbor of the Cal Water Service property on 341/345 Delaware. I would like to be involved in voicing my support for the Cal Water Service project. I have met with Cal Water Service and I am aware of their plans. So far, all of their ideas would be very positive enhancements for my property.

I want to make sure that I don't miss any opportunity to throw my support behind their plans.

Can you please send me any information about any meetings and plans where my input would be heard?

Thank you!

best,

Jack

Comments on the Cal Water Office plans

March 3, 2013

The new Cal Water building will be an eyesore for the next 50 years if the current design is not revised. It doesn't have to be. For the same cost, Cal Water could build an equally functional building with a facade that fits with the neighborhood rather than clashes with it.

There are four problems with the proposed building:

1) The design uses materials that are not in harmony with the neighborhood

The design uses a variety of materials for the outside of the building. Some of the materials, such as brick, are traditional, but others are contemporary urban materials that stand out like a sore thumb in this residential neighborhood, including the black spandrel glass, metal siding panels, gray precast concrete, and glass "window wall systems". The neighborhood includes a variety of architecture styles, but it doesn't include anything at all like this, and these materials don't belong here.

Solution: Use glass only for windows, not walls. Replace the glass walls with conventional walls. Replace the metal and concrete wall sections with plaster or brick wall sections.

2) The new design uses too many materials

The new design uses a palette of seven visually distinct materials on the outside of the building, in contrast to the more traditional neighborhood buildings that typically each use only three primary materials. (The Cal Water design uses: yellow brick, red brick, yellow cement plaster, gray precast concrete, metal siding panels, glass windows and window wall systems, and black spandrel glass.)

Solution: Settle on three materials, and replace each of the other four with one of the selected three. Three good choices would be red brick, yellow cement plaster, and glass windows. On page 4 I've included as examples some photos of buildings that are similar in size to the Cal Water building but which each use a palette of only a few materials.

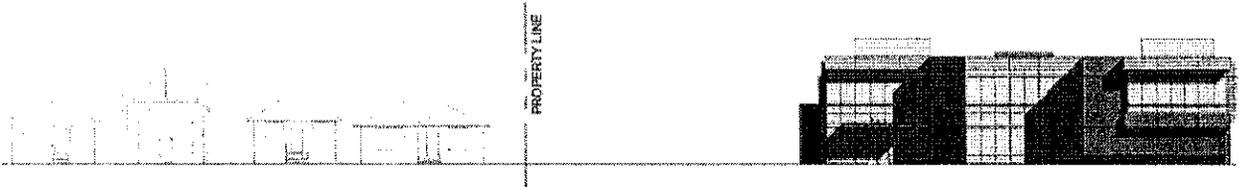
3) The new building has design elements that are out of harmony with the neighborhood

The new design has a number of features that would look fine in a modern office park but which don't belong in a residential neighborhood. The most obvious example is the floating glass "sky bridge" at the back or the courtyard. Another example is the set of vertical sunshade slats on the upstairs side windows.

Solution: One solution, which would reduce the cost of the building, would be to simply eliminate the vertical sunshades and the glass sky bridge. Alternatively, if eliminating the sky bridge is out of the question, the design could include a set of arches below the sky bridge so that it is not floating in midair, or the fully enclosed glass sky bridge could be replaced with an open air sky bridge with plaster siding instead of glass.

4) The building is "out of scale with the residential neighborhood"

As currently planned, the new building would be 34' - 9" tall – about twice as tall as the three existing Cal Water buildings. The neighboring houses on Delaware are typically 20' tall or less. Even the neighboring apartment buildings are typically 20' tall or less, with even the tallest being less than 30' high.



Cannon Design Group has advised the city that the building is "out of scale with the residential neighborhood", which it is, and the latest version of the design has not fixed that problem.

Solution A: As Cannon Design Group has stated, "the solution most compatible with the surrounding neighborhood would be to minimize the building by keeping it to a one-story structure." The property is certainly large enough to accommodate a single-story building (or a set of single-story buildings) that would provide the 18,000 sq ft that Cal Water needs, and that would certainly be the best solution. However, perhaps cost constraints may make that impossible.

Solution B: If Cal Water does build a two story building, it would be good to make every effort to reduce the overall height, by some combination of reducing the space between the floors, or reducing the ceiling heights, or reducing the height of the mechanical screens (and the machinery they screen), or having the first floor of the building be set a few feet below ground level.

Solution C: Even if there is absolutely nothing that can be done to reduce the height of the building, there are still design alternatives that have not been explored that would help mitigate the "out of scale" design. One measure that would help soften the impact would be to add a sloped roof just at the edge of the building, similar to the sloped roof facade at the front of the Stanbridge Academy across the street from Cal Water.



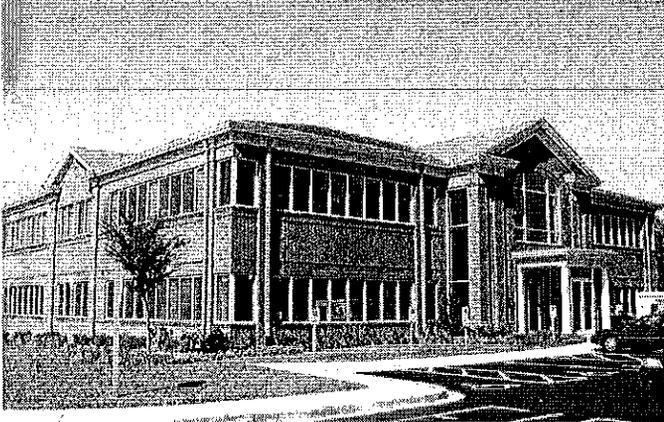
Another measure would be to simply remove the glass hallway at the front of the building that connects the two halves of the building, or to remove the upstairs glass hallway and leave only the downstairs hallway. That would help make the building look more like two separate smaller-scale buildings, and it would also reduce the construction costs.



I appreciate all the work that has gone in to designing this building, and all the time and effort that city staff and the planning commission have invested in this project. The latest version of the plans is a clear improvement over the previous version, and all of the new landscaping and fencing looks fantastic. I hope that with continued effort the design can be further improved, with the goal of arriving at a building that is a real asset to neighborhood aesthetics rather than a building that we strive to hide from view behind layers of trees.

Sincerely,
Brian Skinner
353 N Claremont Street

Examples of buildings which use smaller palettes of materials



Christine "Christy" Usher

From: Patricia McDaniel [pmcd56@hotmail.com]
Sent: Saturday, March 02, 2013 8:40 PM
To: Christine "Christy" Usher
Subject: Comments for Cal Water building

Dear Ms. Usher,

I am writing to comment on the proposed design for the new Cal Water building. Planning Commission staff have concluded in their evaluation of environmental impacts that the "project will not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site or its surroundings" (p. 6). I disagree. The modern design is not compatible with the visual character of the surrounding traditional style buildings: Victorian homes, the Spanish-style Stanbridge Academy, and the Tudor-style San Mateo High School. Although these architectural styles represent something of a mix, they are consistent in that they are decidedly not modern.

The building is also too big in comparison to the residential buildings surrounding it. The Cannon Design Group's September 2012 report makes the same point, with Larry Cannon noting that he has "concerns about the visual scale of the structures as related to the smaller scale of the nearby residences" (p. 4). The architecture firm that designed the building apparently explained that they were "drawing their contextual inspiration from several paired apartment buildings near the site" (p. 4). Delaware Street does have several small-scale apartment buildings across the street from Cal Water, but it also has single-family homes and duplexes. It is not appropriate to have the Cal Water building draw its design inspiration from only a portion of the neighboring buildings, and it is not an appropriate design to have the new building be so much larger than any of the neighboring buildings. The Cannon Group stated that the solution most compatible with the surrounding neighborhood "would be to minimize the building by keeping it to a one-story structure" (p. 4). I agree, as I don't think the modifications made to reduce the visual heaviness of the building adequately address the problem. The modified building is still too large for the surrounding neighborhood.

It's going to be like having this weird Frank Gehry building in the middle of our sleepy residential neighborhood.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Patricia McDaniel
353 N Claremont Street
pmcd56@hotmail.com

Christine "Christy" Usher

From: Brian Douglas Skinner [brian.skinner@skinnerhome.org]
Sent: Monday, March 04, 2013 3:41 PM
To: Planning Commission
Cc: Christine "Christy" Usher; berthasanchez1@aol.com; Karen Jensen; Joshua Hugg
Subject: Fwd: Cal Water's proposed office building

Hi,

Joshua Hugg asked that we forward to the Planning Commission this e-mail discussion about the Cal Water project. The e-mail thread is included below, with comments and questions from Bertha Sanchez and Karen Jensen:

----- Forwarded message -----

From: bsanchez398
Date: Fri, Feb 8, 2013 at 2:19 PM
Subject: Re: Cal Water's proposed office building
To: karenj245
Cc: brian.skinner, toraraion, ben.toy, christinealford, drwarch, eed007, emanuelhuff, j_bennett_17, janehw, joshua.s.hugg, Mikaggiano, SMUHA, sybilb2000, takobayashi, groves_david, yassuzuki, wtrnr, drarch, bloomings, smcgehee, berthasanchez1, toptool

I had understood that the bus stop was being moved further south, away from the corner of Poplar and Delaware which in my opinion is a good thing as traffic is very congested at that intersection and turning south unto Delaware from Poplar could be "dicey" at times. This is a good time to attend the Planning Commission meeting to give input. Tweaking will be done by Planning Commissioners. The Cal Water Co. listened to the concerns of the neighbors the first time round back in 2010-2011 so unless a suggestion is cost prohibitive am sure they would be open to ideas. Bertha

-----Original Message-----

From: Karen Jensen
To: bsanchez398
Cc: brian.skinner; toraraion; ben.toy; christinealford; drwarch; eed007; emanuelhuff; j_bennett_17; janehw; joshua.s.hugg; Mikaggiano; SMUHA; sybilb2000; takobayashi; groves_david; yassuzuki; wtrnr; drarch; bloomings; smcgehee; berthasanchez1; toptool
Sent: Fri, Feb 8, 2013 1:39 pm
Subject: Re: Cal Water's proposed office building

Hi, Everyone,

I was looking at this yesterday. The project has changed substantially since it was presented at that meeting at the Cal Water Offices. The building is now shown sited at more or less the same location as the current building, and has been substantially redesigned, in (roughly) a two-story u-shape with the long axis of the building running east-west. They've got, imho, a nice design for fencing, lighting, and plantings around the site, much improved since last go 'round. One big change is that the plans show the visitor parking and public access no longer going through from Delaware to Claremont. The Cal Water yard will be accessed from mid block at Delaware and at teh current public parking exit at Claremont, and visitor parking with go in/out at the current Delaware entrance. [You can see the whole set of plans here.](#)

One thing I don't like about the plans:

They don't address the bus stop & corner at Delaware & Poplar in positive way. The plans show that corner as being fenced, and well lit, which is an improvement over the dark and fenced corner that it now is. But I see this redesign as a chance for the City and Cal Water to really improve that corner, which might then become a neighborhood amenity rather than a blight. Maybe take out a few of the trees to get some afternoon light there, pave some of the corner & put in a covered bus shelter, with solar panels on the roof to provide for nighttime lighting.

That's just my first thought, what do you all think?

Karen Jensen

On Fri, Feb 8, 2013 at 1:04 PM, <bsanchez398@aol.com> wrote:

Hi Brian. This should be the same project that was presented in January 2012 at our General HANCSM MEETING held at the Cal Water Co. site. I think you were there. At that time the general comments were favorable with perhaps some "tweaking" about the layout/landscaping, etc. Most of the HANCSM Board were in favor of upgrade of the CAL Water site/building. The buildings are old and many of them are left over from the old Turnbull School (which I attended many, many years ago). We like the idea that the new building site would enable the water company to better serve its customers during unexpected emergencies (earthquakes for one)/disasters. The site could house emergency trailers which San Mateo City has. It would spruce up the site and hopefully decrease the amount of dumping that some folks have been doing on the Claremont Street side. Am pretty sure the dumping comes from apartment buildings and other places with rotating renters. On a personal note, I would prefer that the water company stay there and upgrade the site rather than having more housing which could cause more traffic problems on Poplar especially at Delaware. I have not yet personally looked at the Administrative report on this proposed project. By the way, thank you for being a concerned neighbor and attending some of the meetings. Bertha Sanchez

-----Original Message-----

From: Brian Douglas Skinner

To: Wes; ben.toy; bsanchez398; christinealford; drwarch; eed007; emanuelhuff; j_bennett_17; janehw; joshua.s.hugg; karenj245; Mikaggiano; SMUHA; sybilb2000; takobayashi; groves_david; yassuzuki; wtrnr; drarch; bloomings; smcgehee; berthasanchez1; toptool

Sent: Fri, Feb 8, 2013 12:52 pm

Subject: Cal Water's proposed office building

Hi,

I'm a neighbor of yours in San Mateo, near the California Water Service Company lot.

I'm writing to see if you have had a chance to look at the plans for the new Cal Water building. I'm trying to get a sense of how many of the neighbors have heard about the project and have looked at the plans, and to see what your thoughts about it are.

If you're interested, here's a web page with more info about the project:

<https://sites.google.com/site/calwater2013/>

Best,

Brian Skinner

353 N Claremont St, San Mateo, CA 94401

brian.skinner@skinnerhome.org

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Karen Jensen

Christine "Christy" Usher

From: Kelly Moran [moran@sonic.net]
Sent: Sunday, February 24, 2013 11:11 AM
To: Christine "Christy" Usher
Cc: Ronald "Ron" MuneKawa
Subject: Cal Water Neg Dec

Hi Christy,

Thanks for the nice job on this negative declaration. It was full of useful information, particularly the site history. I'd always wondered why the buildings had a style that seemed rather incongruous with their current function.

While reviewing the Neg Dec, I found two things that I'd like to check in with you about:

(1) On page 28, Section XVII (Utilities), some of the lines in the summary do not have any box checked (these are c, d, and g). I'm assuming that all of these are "less than significant" or "no impact".

(2) The greenhouse gas emissions section appears to provide estimates of the total emissions associated with the operations of the site under future conditions, is that correct? I couldn't find the change in emissions as compared to today. Would the change be an increase or a decrease? Since all of the operations and people already exist at the site, it seems that the only change would be from the energy associated with operating the buildings. Because the new building would be a green building, it might use less energy than the current buildings.

Thank you!

Kelly Moran