



View to site from El Camino Real looking north



Immediately adjacent retail buildings on Third Ave.



Immediately adjacent parking and service area to the south



Immediately adjacent retail buildings on Third Ave.



Bank of America structure across El Camino Real



Retail frontage across Third Avenue



Nearby multifamily residential building



Nearby San Mateo Public Library

OVERVIEW

The site is relatively small at 0.20 acres, but occupies a prominent site at a main entry to Downtown San Mateo. A similar, but slightly larger mixed use structure will be developed soon immediately across East Third Avenue from this site at 221 El Camino Real, and another mixed use structure is currently being design on the intersection's diagonal corner.

The proposed design is similar in form to the proposed project at 221 El Camino Real, but simpler in detail. A comparison of the two buildings' elevations is shown later in this letter.

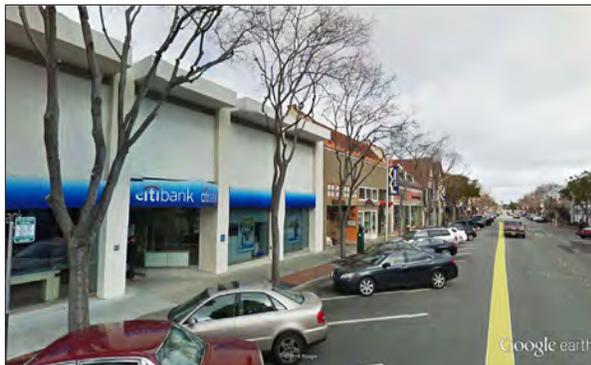
Downtown Retail and Downtown Historic District Design Guidelines Context

The proposed building is immediately adjacent to the Downtown Historic District. While not strictly subject to the guidelines, the building will be viewed in the context of the adjacent structures which are within the district. The structures along this block face to the east and the block face on the north side of East Third Avenue are quite mixed in size, scale and design character. Some are more historic in character and detail than others, but mostly they are distinguished by a sense of individuality of either the overall buildings or of individual storefronts within a building.

The Downtown Retail and Downtown Historic District Design Guidelines are similar in approach, and focus strongly on the following building features and elements:

- Respecting the scale of traditional downtown lot widths.
- Recognizing architectural elements that are common to most buildings.
- Attention to building detailing.
- Traditional recessed entries.
- Building levels defined by windows.
- Sensitivity to the alignment of architectural elements on adjacent buildings.
- Sensitivity to storefront treatments and window patterns on nearby buildings.
- Utilization of materials common to the buildings within the downtown area.

Nearby buildings are shown in the photos below.



Nearby buildings on the north side of East Third Avenue



Nearby buildings on the south side of East Third Avenue

The approach to addressing the Downtown Retail and Downtown Historic District Design Guidelines for both the proposed building on this site and the one across the street at 221 El Camino Real are similar.

- The third floor is set back to allow the lower portion of the building to relate to the height of the adjacent buildings. The use of brick on the third floor further reinforces the base of the buildings.
- Molding elements at the top of the second floor mass relate to the variety of cornice treatments on nearby downtown buildings.
- Window patterns and recessed storefronts and entry doors on the ground floor relate to the other nearby buildings.
- Window patterns on the second and third floors are sensitive to the size and scale of those on other downtown buildings.

- Projecting canopies over ground floor storefronts relate to the variety of awnings and canopies in the downtown.
- Entries to upper floor uses are clearly identified.
- Other architectural details are provided to add visual interest and shadow lines on the street facades.

Of the two new proposed buildings, the one at 221 El Camino Real is more overtly designed to relate to the historic elements of the downtown. Molding at the top of the second floor is larger to relate to some of the downtown cornices, separations between second floor windows are more clearly designed as traditional pilasters, and the use of stone cladding on the ground floor columns is a more traditional downtown approach, although it is not the most common ground floor material in the adjacent downtown area.

The proposed building design at 2 East Third Street appears to be a more contemporary approach. It is similar in many aspect to the proposed building at 221 El Camino Real. While many of the same major features of the two projects are the same, the applicant for the 2 East Third Avenue project has taken a less detailed approach to the treatment of the base portion of the building which is in keeping with the overall proposed contemporary design style.

ORIGINAL ISSUES AND CONCERNS

The elevations originally proposed in the application submitted earlier this year are shown in the El Camino Real and East Third Avenue elevations below.



*El Camino Real Elevation
Reviewed in March 2015*

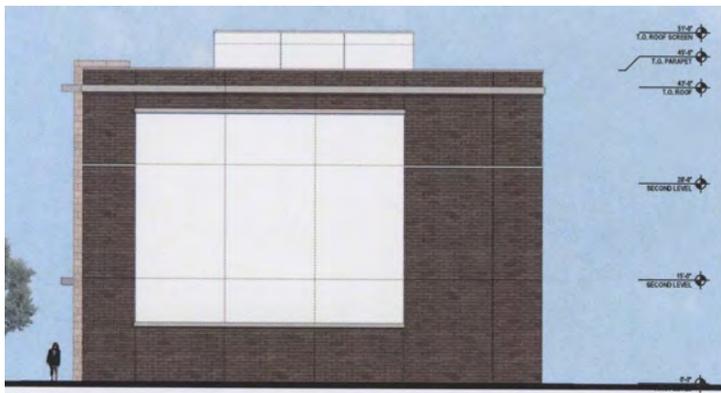


*East Third Avenue Elevation
Reviewed in March 2015*

My concerns with the design outlined in the March review letter were as follows:

1. The design was fragmented. While a recent trend has been to break up larger buildings to resemble a collection of smaller buildings, this building is rather small for that approach. This is an “anchor” building at a major entrance to Downtown San Mateo, and needs to have a more significant and more visually unified presence than was initially proposed. On the positive side, the emphasis on the first two stories of the structure was sensitive to the adjacent smaller retail structures on East Third Avenue, and similar to that proposed for the new mixed use building across East Third Avenue.
2. The two-story emphasis seemed weak on the East Third Avenue facade where it stopped short of the adjacent existing two-story buildings and placed a three-story brick wall as a buffer between the two. This tall brick facade element would be emphasized by the fact that the adjacent building is white.
3. The south elevation faces a small alley-like parking lot and service area, and will be easily seen from El Camino Real.

The original south elevation, as shown below, was proposed as a largely brick facing to match the upper floor of the structure. A large panel of light colored stucco was shown off-center on the wall. I assumed that was a place marker for a possible mural which was one possible treatment mentioned at the Planning Commission Study Session on the conceptual design.



South Elevation
Reviewed in March 2015

My concern was that this facade would, while being clearly viewed in the context of the El Camino Real facade, not relate very well to the main El Camino Real facade.

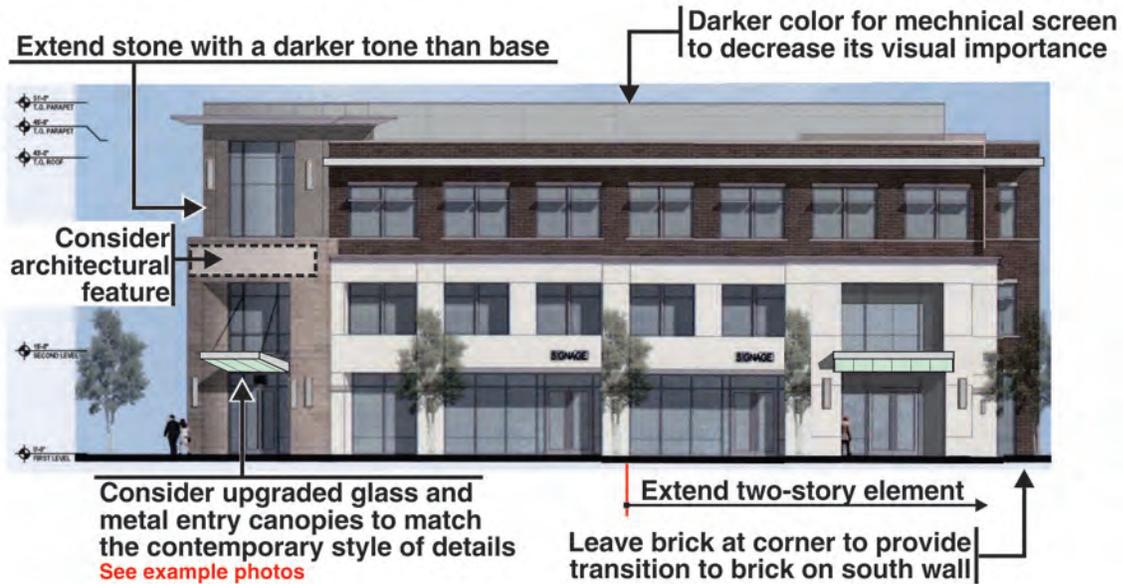
MARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

The March review letter contained a number of recommendations whose goal was to enhance the design as an anchor building for this major entrance to downtown by simplifying and unifying the street facades. My recommendations included the following:

1. Extend the two-story light colored stucco base on both facades to further emphasize its relationship and transition to the adjacent smaller retail buildings on East Third Avenue.
2. Utilize stone on the third floor of the tower to better unify it with the tower element below and with the third floor brick facades.
3. Use a darker color on the roof top mechanical screen to decrease its visual importance, and use a screen material with a finished look equal to the other materials on the facades below.
4. Consider adding an architectural feature or applied art work on the tower over the entry.
5. Consider a more upgraded and contemporary treatment of the three entry canopies. The minimalist detailing of the building would perhaps lend itself to well-designed and unique metal and glass canopies.
6. Treat the south wall simply. An approach with a simple brick wall with recessed areas to reflect the window patterns on the El Camino Real facade was suggested. Other alternative examples of varied brick patterns and colors were also suggested as possible approaches.
7. Finally, there was the issue of whether the amount and type of detail was sufficient in linking the building to the surrounding downtown and Downtown Historic District. My reaction was that since this building is so similar in form and general facade treatment to the proposed building at 221 El Camino Real, it would be desirable to have some differences in the materials and detailing. However, I noted that if staff and the Planning Commission felt that more was needed, my recommendations would include the following:
 - Enhance cornice molding at the top of both the two-story base and the third floor wall.
 - Add larger kick plates at the base of the storefronts.
 - Add head and sill moldings at the second floor window openings.
 - Add projecting stone molding at the top of round corner base and the opening above the entry canopy.
 - Reduce the amount of recess from the face of the wall for second floor windows.
 - Enhance the base treatment on the first floor columns (e.g., Stone to match the entry tower).

The changes recommended in the March review letter are shown in the illustrations on the following page.

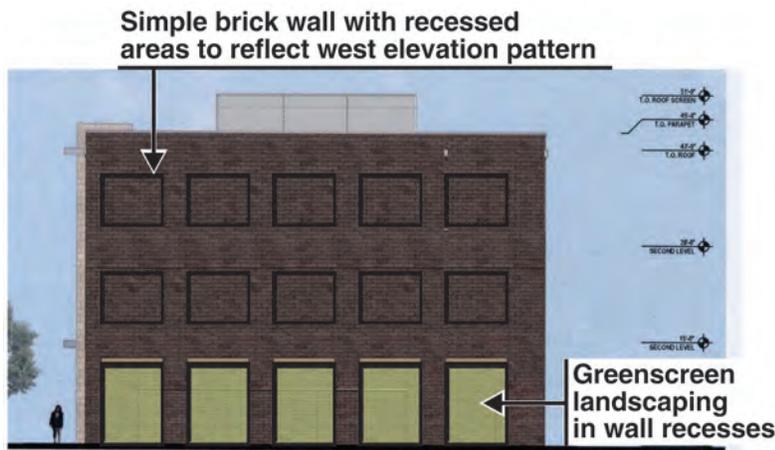
MARCH 2015 RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY



*El Camino Real Elevation
 March Recommendations*



*East Third Avenue Elevation
 March Recommendations*



*South Elevation
 March Recommendations*

CURRENT DESIGN

I met with staff and the applicant to discuss the issues and recommendations contained in the March letter. All concerns were discussed, and the applicant adopted a number of the recommended changes, and emphasized the need to provide some special treatment for the entry to the office portion of the project fronting on El Camino Real. Staff has continued to work with the applicant over the intervening weeks to refine the design in line with the design recommendations and the applicant's needs. While there are a few minor issues (outlined at the end of this letter), I am comfortable that the majority of the concerns raised in the March review letter have been adequately addressed. Specifically, the applicant has made the following changes:

1. The two-story building base has been extended along both street facades to better relate the structure to the adjacent downtown development, and provide a more unified design.
2. The El Camino Real entry to the office portion of the project has been given an emphasis to enhance its importance without competing with the major tower element at the corner.
3. The corner tower element has been enhanced with stone facing for its entire height.
4. The south wall of the structure has been simplified, and visual interest has been added through a variation in brick texture and color.

The currently proposed El Camino Real and East Third Avenue elevations are shown below.



*El Camino Real Elevation
Current Proposal*



*East Third Avenue Elevation
Current Proposal*

FINAL SUGGESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. Corner Tower Enhancement

In the Planning Commission study session, several commissioners expressed interest in an enhancement of the corner tower. The ideas expressed were to provide some feature that would be a reflection of the clock tower feature proposed on the new building immediately across East Third Avenue from this site. Alternatives for this enhancement were discussed in the staff meeting with the applicant following the March review letter, but none have been shown on these final application drawings.

Suggestion: If the Planning Commission desired, this could be a later exploration and refinement involving either applied architectural detail or artwork at the corner tower.

2. Mechanical Screen Color

In my earlier review letter, I recommended that the color of the roof mechanical screen be changed from the stark white shown to a color that was more similar in color and tone to the adjacent stone on the corner tower since it physically adjoins the corner tower, and would be seen by any taller buildings in the area.

Suggestion: Select a mechanical screen color closer in hue and tone to the corner stone.

3. Upper Floor Canopy

There is a projecting canopy at the upper floor windows on the El Camino Real facade, but that has not been utilized on the East Third Avenue facade. The projecting canopy adds depth, visual interest and a strong top to the building.

Suggestion: Consider repeating the top canopy on the East Third Avenue facade.

4. Additional Stone Detail

The top of stone elements and window openings at the corner tower and at the entry to the offices on the El Camino Real facade are treated without trim or molding. I accept that an argument could be made that this is consistent with the modern contemporary treatment of the other first and second level window openings. However, the enhancement of the stone detailing would gently reference the proposed new building across East Third Avenue, and the historic qualities of nearby downtown buildings.

Suggestion: Consider adding some additional stone trim.

These suggestions are shown overlaid on the El Camino Real elevation below.



I have no further recommendations for changes. The proposed design has been refined to provide a strong anchor building to Downtown San Mateo, and to relate well to the proposed building across East Third Avenue while providing its own unique style. A comparison of the El Camino Real facades for both proposed new buildings is shown in the illustration below.



221 El Camino Real



2 East Third Avenue

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

Sincerely,
CANNON DESIGN GROUP

Larry L. Cannon