

March 6, 2015

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

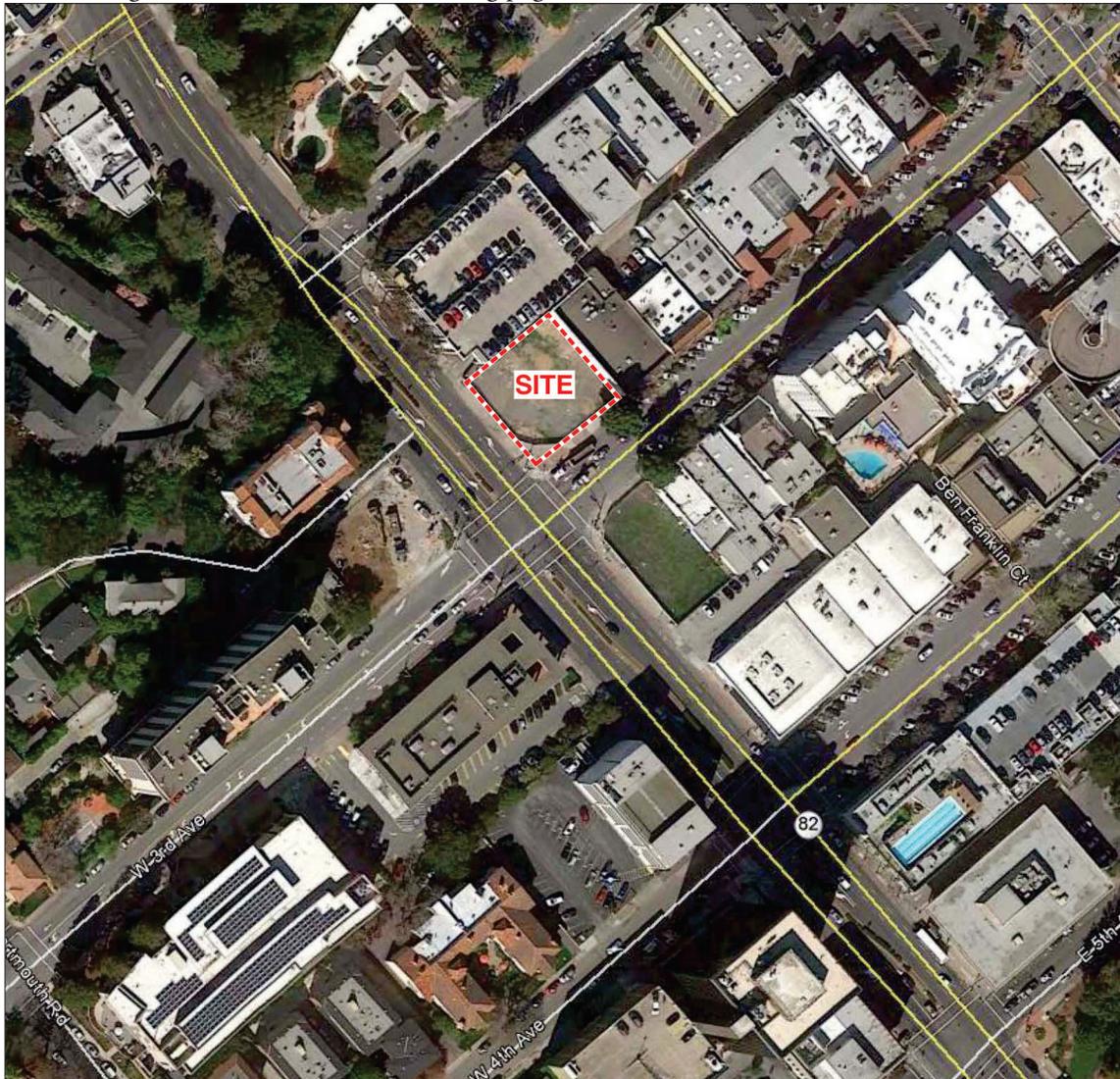
RE: 221 South El Camino Real

Dear Simon:

I reviewed the drawings, and visited the site. My comments and recommendations are summarized below.

Neighborhood Context

The site is currently a vacant site at a primary entrance to Downtown San Mateo from El Camino Real. Two additional corners of the intersection are expected to development with new buildings in the near future. Photos of the site and surrounding area are shown on the following page.





View to site from El Camino Real



Immediately adjacent retail shops on East Third Ave.



Retail shops across Third Ave.



Bank of America structure across El Camino Real



Nearby traditional style multifamily residential



Nearby modern multifamily residential building



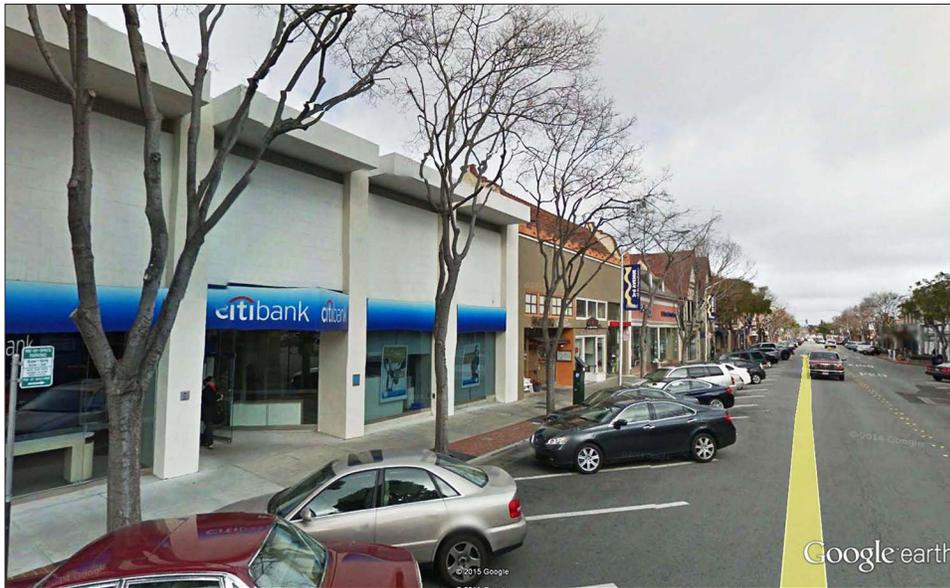
Nearby San Mateo Public Library

Overview

The site occupies a prominent site at a main entry to Downtown San Mateo. A similar but slightly smaller mixed use structure has been proposed immediately across East Third Avenue from this site at 221 El Camino Real. A comparison of the two building elevations is shown later in this letter.

Downtown Retail and Downtown Historic District Design Guidelines Context

The proposed building is separated from the Downtown Historic District by one structure housing Citibank. The Citibank structure, shown in the photo below, incorporated a few elements of the Downtown Design Guidelines (e.g., height related to the adjacent building to the east, recessed storefront windows, entry vestibule, and a cornice-like element), but it is strongly contemporary in design and detail, and does not contain elements suggested in the Downtown Historic District Design Guidelines.



While the project at 221 El Camino Real is not strictly subject to the Downtown Historic District Design Guidelines, the building will be viewed in the context of the nearby downtown structures which are within the historic district. The structures along this block face to the east and the block face on the south 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.
- Inclusion of pedestrian area enhancements.

Nearby buildings east of this site are shown in the photos below.



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 2 East Third Avenue 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.

In addition to the above design elements, this project also provides additional ground floor setback along the East Third Avenue facade to allow outdoor seating to enhance the pedestrian experience.

The proposed building has been designed to relate to the historic elements of the downtown. Molding at the top of the second floor is large to relate to some of the downtown cornices, separations between second floor windows are clearly designed as traditional pilasters, and the use of stone cladding on the ground floor columns is a very traditional approach.

Issues and Concerns

The proposed building is very well designed with quality materials and consistent detailing, as shown in the two street elevations below.



Proposed El Camino Real Elevation



Proposed East Third Avenue Elevation

The design should work well as an entry structure at this important entry to Downtown San Mateo from El Camino Real, and would be a suitable partner to the proposed new mixed use structure immediately across East Third Avenue, as shown on the combined elevations below (*Note: The proposed building at 3 East Third Street is shown with the recommended increase in length to the two-story light-colored base element recently provided to staff.*)



221 El Camino Real



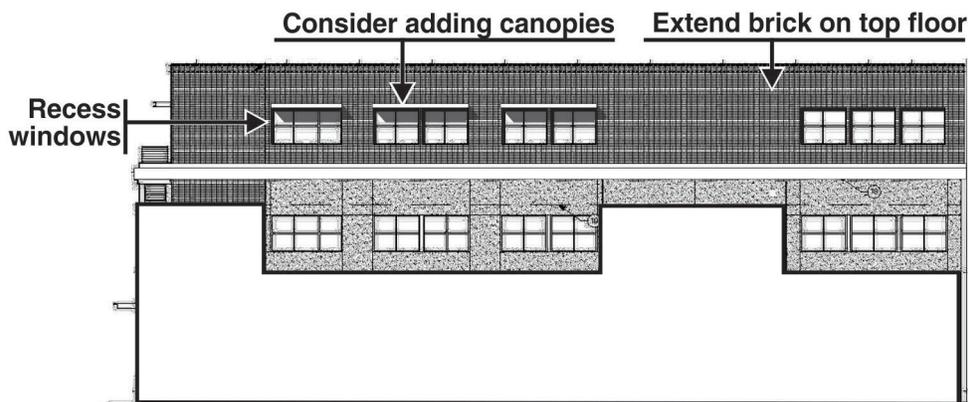
2 East Third Avenue

The only concern that I have relates to the treatment of the east facade. Although the limited return of the East Third Avenue facade materials onto the east elevation might be sufficient to provide an illusion of a complete facade from street level, views from any taller vantage point would be less convincing. Given the 55 foot height limit within the downtown core area, it seems that one should anticipate some taller buildings in the future with windows that would have a fuller view of the east facade. The treatment of visible side walls on taller structures in the downtown is variable. Two successful ones are shown in the photos below. They both have somewhat simplified side wall treatments, but they are successful in relating the side wall materials, detailing and texture to the front facades.



Recommendations

1. Carry the molding detail and brick wall material the full length of the top floor on the east facade.
2. Recess the windows from the face of the wall a minimum of two inches.
3. Consider adding canopies to match those on south and west facades over the windows on the east facade.



Recommended East Elevation Changes

I have no other recommendations for changes.

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