

Project team responses to the DRC comments are shown below in blue.

2136 SAN PABLO AVENUE [between Allston and Addison] (DRCP2021-0002): Preview to (1) demolish an existing two-story non-residential structure and (2) to construct a six-story mixed-use building with 123 residential units (five residential stories above a podium), three live-work units at the ground level, and 50 off-street parking spaces in a mechanical lift system.

Advisory Comments:

Neighborhood Context

- Consider relocating the driveway to the south end of that parcel so that it is farther from the pedestrian crosswalk and the adjacent driveway to the north.
 - The location of the driveway, as shown, is in the best possible location. Since drivers can turn right only from the garage, there is no conflict with the pedestrian crosswalk. Moving the driveway south would cut off internal circulation between the three live-work units and the lobby and community spaces.
- Consider ground floor shifts, especially with commercial space and driveway entrances, so that there is a better connection to the park.
 - We considered making a pedestrian path along the north side of our building but are concerned that it is too narrow to feel safe. Our building is already set back 8' from the property line but the new building to the north is zero lot line.
 - We have shifted elements of the ground floor in response to this suggestion. We have moved the MEP room and exit corridor to be adjacent to the driveway. This allows the three live-work units to be contiguous.
 - We have created a stronger connection between the park and the proposed building by lowering the west side of the ground floor and showing a 42" open steel guardrail at the park property line instead of the solid 6' tall fence, which serves to cut the building off from any meaningful connection to the park. We have added gates that allow residents to access the park directly from the community room and the private decks. We believe that the park will be improved with more "eyes on the park".
- Look carefully at the building scale on the San Pablo elevation and add more detail to fit this project into the San Pablo Commercial neighborhood.
 - While the proposed building does not preserve the existing structure or recreate historical detailing, we believe that the proposed project is richly detailed and provides a good amount of delight for the eye.
- The DRC would like to see a San Pablo façade that is inspired by the existing façade, with a design and details that honor the existing building.
 - The project team has studied the existing façade but found little that would inform a new building with a completely different program of use on the ground floor. The existing structure was designed as a simple mercantile building comprised of eight equal, fully glazed storefronts. The ground floor of the proposed project consists not of mercantile uses but a large residential lobby, three live-work units, MEP spaces, and a large parking garage.

Building Design

- Recommend retaining existing commercial building (city landmark) for live/work units and adding compatible residential floors above.
 - See the response above.
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- Consider a step back on the San Pablo façade on the top floors to help break up the large mass.
 - The project team explored this option but decided against it for a variety of reasons:
 - Because the apartment units stack, anything in excess of 2” of plane change would compromise the livability of the top floor units.
 - The language of the building is borrowed from vernacular warehouse typologies – simple, durable buildings with large windows for lots of light. The building is a frank expression of its program of use. The new senior housing building to the north of the proposed building has the kind of step back that the DRC seems to be suggesting, and we don’t think it delivers much value.
- Recommend more emphasis on the lobby entrance. Consider a larger-scaled entrance feature.
 - The project team has redesigned the entry and made it a stronger feature of the façade.
- Recommend more flexibility in the ground floor storefront design to allow for retail in the future.
 - Shifting the location of the MEP room and the exit path allowed us to make all three live/work units contiguous if retail is viable in this location at some point in the future.
- Existing building has a lot of smaller-scaled detail. Consider additional detail in the new project that will help to recall this.
 - We feel that the proposed design provides much small-scale detail and visual interest.
- There was a request for two design alternatives: the current design; and a design that preserves or reconstructs the front façade of the existing commercial structure.
 - The project team has explored a “facadomy” approach and, for both economic and aesthetic reasons, chooses not to preserve or reconstruct the front façade of the existing commercial structure.
- There was some question as to whether some of the existing façade could be retained.
 - See the response above.

Colors and Materials

- Color palette as shown appears to be too cold.
 - The project team will explore alternative color and material options as the design continues to develop.

Streetscape / Landscape Plan

- Strongly recommend maintaining existing street trees.
 - The project team will work with the city arborist during the building permit phase to maintain street trees as possible.
- Recommend 4 – 5 larger oak trees in the park adjacent to the new development will make a better screen in the park than many smaller trees.
 - Developments on park land is beyond the scope of the project team; this comment would need to be addressed by the city as it is city-owned land.