



D E S I G N R E V I E W C O M M I T T E E

S T A F F R E P O R T

For Majority Recommendations
MARCH 21, 2019

2198 San Pablo Avenue Preliminary Design Review

Design Review #DRCP2018-0003 for a project that would demolish an existing single-story commercial building and construct a new 6-story, mixed-use development with 3 live/work units and 57 dwelling units, including 5 available to very low income households. The project would include stacked parking for 20 vehicles and 44 secure bicycle spaces.

I. Introduction

This project is located on the northwest corner of San Pablo Avenue and Allston Way. This parcel is located within the C-W, West Berkeley zoning district.

The demolition required for the project came before the Landmark Preservation Commission (LPC) on September 6, 2018, where no action was taken. The project was reviewed by the Zoning Adjustments Board (ZAB) on January 10, 2019 as a Preview where the discussion ranged from the massing and shadow impacts to traffic safety for the adjacent neighborhood.

This project was before the Design Review Committee (DRC) two month ago in January as a Preview where advisory comments were given. A summary from that meeting is including further on in this report for your reference.

II. Background

The proposed project would demolish the existing building on the project site and construct a new mixed-use building with the following primary components:

- 57 dwelling units (30 studios, 22 one-bedroom units, and 5 two-bedroom units), including 3 loft units on the ground floor;
- 3 live/work units on the ground floor fronting San Pablo Avenue;
- A 20-space parking garage on the ground floor, accessed from Allston Way, with 19 parking spaces in three-level stackers—including 2 electronic vehicle (EV) charging ready spaces—and 1 ADA van space;
- A bicycle storage room and a bike repair station;
- Residential lobby with access to San Pablo Avenue;
- Useable open space consisting of common deck areas on the fifth and sixth floors. Additionally, private patios are provided for eleven residential units located on the

ground and second floors. Passive landscaped area is located on the podium (second floor) level in both the southwest and northwest corners of the site.

III. Project Setting

A. Neighborhood/Area Description: To the north and south of the project site along San Pablo Avenue are single-story commercial uses, including food service establishments, retail sales, and automobile repair uses. A branch of the U.S. Post Office at 2111 San Pablo Avenue provides an additional dimension of convenience to the neighborhood. At the far northern end of the block, at the southwest corner of San Pablo Avenue and Addison Street, is the project site for 2100 San Pablo Avenue—a recently approved four-story mixed-use project with ground floor commercial uses which is not yet under construction. Immediately adjacent land uses are described in more detail in Table 1.

Many of the buildings are flush with the property line and edge of sidewalk and provide pedestrian interest at the street level. Other uses are automobile-oriented and feature generous setbacks for parking and drive-through aisles. The two blocks of San Pablo Avenue between Addison Street and Hearst Avenue are designated as a commercial node. The University Avenue to Addison Street block of San Pablo Avenue is the heart of the neighborhood-serving business district and attracts the most pedestrian traffic.¹

Residential properties are to the west of the parcels fronting on San Pablo Avenue. The building immediately west is a two-story four-plex and the rest of the properties on the block are single-story single-family residences.

B. Site Conditions: The 9,800 square-foot (0.22-acre) project site is an almost square corner lot with 100' of frontage on San Pablo Avenue and 98' of frontage on Allston Way. The entirety of the site is paved except for a small planter strip along Allston Way. The site contains a single-story, approximately 1,500 square-foot retail building occupied by St. Helena Wine Company, a drive-up liquor store. The building is set back from the San Pablo Avenue sidewalk by a two-way driveway. A small customer parking lot occupies the rear portion of the lot and is accessible from San Pablo Avenue via a wide curb cut. A fence runs north-south down the center of the site. The western portion of the site is used for storage and beekeeping.

¹ City of Berkeley, 1993. The West Berkeley Plan. Chapter 4, Physical Form.

Figure 1: Vicinity Map



Figure 2: Zoning Map



Table 1: Land Use Information

Location		Existing Use	Zoning District	General Plan Designation
Subject Property		Retail (St. Helena Wine and Liquors)	C-W	Avenue Commercial
Surrounding Properties	North	Exercise Studio (West Wing Kung-Fu Karate and Boxing)		
	South	Full Service Restaurant (Gallego's Mexican Food)		
	East	Quick Serve Restaurant (Jack-in-the-Box)		
West		Residential	R-1A	Low Medium Density Residential

Table 4: Development Standards

Standard BMC Sections 23E.64.070-080		Existing	Proposed	Permitted/ Required
Lot Area (sq. ft.)		9,800	No change	N/A
Gross Floor Area (sq. ft.)		1,500	36,816 ²	29,400 max.
Floor Area Ratio		N/A	3.76 ²	3.0 max.
Dwelling Units	Total	0	57	N/A
	Affordable (VLI)	0	5	5 ³
Live/Work Units	Total	0	3	N/A
Building Height	Maximum	15'	67'9" ²	50'
	Stories	1	6 ²	4
Building Setbacks ⁴	Front (Allston Way)	N/A	0'	0'
	Rear (north)	N/A	0'	0'
	Interior Side (west)	N/A	5'8"-10'	5' ⁵
	Street Side (San Pablo Ave.)	N/A	0'	0'
Lot Coverage (%)		N/A	90	N/A
Usable Open Space (sq. ft.)		N/A	3,420	2,400 (40 per dwelling or live/work unit)
Parking	Automobile	8	20	60 ⁶ (1 per dwelling or live/work unit)
	Bicycle	N/A	44	1 ⁷

Notes:

¹ Based on a 35% increase in gross floor area and Floor Area Ratio over the base project.

² Requested waiver under Density Bonus Law.

³ Very Low Income units are required to qualify for the maximum 35% density bonus per Government Code section 65915.

⁴ Proposed setbacks are indicated for the ground floor only; upper floors have greater setbacks. See discussion under the Issues Analysis below.

⁵ Any structure located in a non-residential district that abuts a lot in a residential district shall have a minimum side yard of 5' per BMC 23E.04.050.B.

⁶ Density Bonus regulations limit the amount of automobile parking spaces the City can require to 0.5 spaces per bedroom if a project meets certain criteria. See discussion under the Issues Analysis below.

⁷ One bicycle parking space is required for every 2,000 square feet of non-residential area per BMC 23E.64.080.F.

IV. Project Description

A. Requested Use Permits

- Use Permit, under BMC Section 23C.08.050.A, to demolish an existing non-residential building;
- Use Permit, under BMC Section 23E.64.030.A, to construct a mixed-use development with more than 20,000 square feet of gross floor area;
- Use Permit, under BMC Section 23E.64.030.A, to establish dwelling units
- Administrative Use Permit, under BMC Section 23E.64.030.A, to establish less than 9 live/work units;
- Use Permit, under BMC Section 23E.64.050.B, to construct more than 5,000 square feet of gross floor area; and
- Administrative Use Permit, under BMC Section 23E.04.020.C, to allow architectural features to exceed the height limit.

B. Waivers/Modifications under Government Code Section 65915-65918:

- Waiver from BMC 23E.64.070.B to increase the maximum height from 50' and 4 stories to 67'9" and 6 stories.
- Waiver from BMC 23E.64.070.A to increase the maximum Floor Area Ratio (FAR) from 3 to 3.76.
- Waiver from BMC 23E.64.080 to decrease the required off-street parking from 34 spaces to 20 spaces.

C. CEQA Determination: Categorical Exemption under Section 15332 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines ("In-Fill Development Projects").

V. DRC Summary – January 17, 2019

Advisory Comments:

Neighborhood Context

- *Consider massing alternates that have less impact on the adjacent neighbors to the west.*
- *Look at ways to reduce the impact of the massing.*
- *Look more carefully at the massing and try to strike a balance between the park and the adjacent residential neighbor.*
- *Consider stepping the two bays on Allston back further.*
- *Provide at least one alternate design that steps the western portion back.*
- *Consider a terrace on a corner at an upper level to help reduce the visual mass.*

General Building Design

- *Building appears to be right on the property line on San Pablo and Allston both – it's too tight.*
- *Better identify main residential entrance.*
- *Recommend a stronger horizontal break at podium. As designed, it's too flush. It should be more articulated.*
- *Garage door looks large.*

- *Provide more detail on the garage door. Consider night view, and noise factor.*
- *Recommend acoustic treatment in the garage. Provide more information on the proposed parking lifts regarding acoustics.*
- *Make sure the elevations and plans are coordinated.*

Building Parapet / Roof Form

- *Building is too severe as it meets the sky.*
- *Some thought the horizontal band on top was enough delineation at the roof.*
- *There should be a more resolved top. Top windows could differ from the others below.*

Landscape Plan / Open Space Design

- *Landscape area on podium level at the northwest corner should be quieter. Consider making this a C-3 area for visual relief only.*
- *Recommend large trees in podium landscaped space.*
- *Planters in front of live-work units should be varied.*
- *Confirm that vine pockets have enough soil.*
- *Clarify landscape in area adjacent to the western property line. Both bamboo and trees are illustrated.*
- *Open space should have permanent shade / rain protection.*
- *Consistent street trees on the perimeter of the site are important. Staff will confirm any issues with the existing street trees with the City Forester.*

Ground Floor Design

- *Look at ways to enliven the ground floor design.*
- *Live-work units are too close to the property line. Provide more depth in the façade.*
- *Live-work units should have a more residential feel, not just commercial storefront.*
- *Consider shadow box features in live-work storefront design.*
- *One live-work unit could front Allston.*
- *On live-work units, make sure the door is large enough.*

Colors and Materials

- *There was some concern that the Corten material is dark and just absorbs light. Some thought that it didn't wear well over time and recommend an alternate material.*
- *East façade with only one narrow window in the Corten section is harsh.*
- *Recommend warmer tile.*

Interior Plan / Management Issues

- *Provide maintenance closets.*
- *Corridor should not be carpeted.*
- *Provide management office on-site.*

VI. Design Review Guidelines

The City's Design Guidelines are applicable for this project. Excerpts from the City-wide Design Review Guidelines are included below for your reference:

- **Setbacks:** The street façade of commercial streets should be respected, in order to create or maintain the sense of urban space.
- **Parking and Driveways:** Conflict with pedestrian circulation should be prevented by the proper location and design of auto entrances.
- **Harmony with Surroundings:** The proposed design should be in harmony with its surroundings through the coordination of such design elements as cornice lines, eaves, and setbacks with those of existing neighborhood buildings.
- **Articulation:** Street facades in general and the ground floor level in particular should include elements of pedestrian scale and three-dimensional interest.
- **Lighting:** Lighting for circulation, security, building/sign identification should be non-obtrusive, except for lighting fixtures which are themselves decorative additions to the streetscape.
- **Walls and Fences:** Large, unarticulated expanses of any particular wall material that deaden the pedestrian environment should be avoided. The use of clear windows for ground floor retail projects is encouraged. Walls designed to allow sitting areas for pedestrian or space for landscaping and artwork are encouraged, especially in areas of heavy pedestrian use. Landscaping and/or art work should be maximized if large expanses of wall must be left devoid of openings.
- **Landscape and Open Space:** Sidewalk areas should include landscaping that is coordinated with the neighborhood design.
- **Building Entrances:** Entrance points should be clearly defined and easily identifiable by pedestrians by appropriate locations and by elements such as awnings, signage, artwork or changes in paving material to define the entry point.

VII. Issues and Analysis

A. Design Changes in this Submittal

Setbacks – While the wall adjacent to the parking is still located 5’8” from the western property line, the residential units in the northwest corner of the site have been re-oriented to allow a greater setback.

Massing – In response to concerns raised at both ZAB and DRC in January, the massing on the west half of the parcel has been relocated further back from the Addison frontage to allow more light into the adjacent residential structures to the west.

Parking Area / Podium Wall – Parking lifts are still proposed for this project and are accessed from the Allston street frontage. The upper edge of the podium facing west has been notched to reduce the massing on that western edge as much as possible. More detailed information has been included for garage door proposed.

Building Design – A variety of materials and colors are still proposed to help break down the scale and mass of the project, but in an alternate massing design. The addition of a horizontal band between the concrete base and the building floors above help to further articulate the building.

The southeast corner bay facing east is now well-articulated with residential windows, but the north elevation did lose several window bays that were very close to the north property line. If the property to the north is developed, this north façade will not be visible when traveling south on San Pablo. Staff would like to Committee to discuss this north elevation and if they have any recommendations for any wall treatment or details which may be visible on that north elevation.

Roof Line – Horizontal roof element has been added to finish the parapet edge and create a stronger top to the building.

Ground Floor Lobby and Live/Work Design – Residential lobby still has a generous recessed storefront entry on San Pablo. Live/work commercial entrances have been recessed and now show a special display window and metal awning for each live/work suite. While the canopy does encroach across the property line by 6", it is still located over the proposed sidewalk planting areas. The applicant will be applying to Caltrans for an encroachment permit for this work, as well as for the proposed streetscape improvements.

Open Space – Common open space is not located on the podium level in the northwest corner in an effort to allow more quiet passive landscape areas nearer to the residential neighborhood to the west. Private open space is located on the ground floor in the northwest corner as well as around the two passive landscape areas on the podium level. Common deck areas are still proposed on the 5th and 6th levels facing west, but do have a generous planter perimeter to preserve the privacy of adjacent neighbors.

Landscape Plan - Landscape buffer is still proposed along the western property edge and does show bamboo along the entire edge in the landscape plans. The architectural plans show bamboo adjacent to the podium wall, but trees further north in the private open space areas. The applicant will clarify this at the meeting.

B. Issues for Discussion

- Massing
- Building Design
- Colors and Materials
- Building Entrances / Live/Work Design
- Landscape Plan / Open Space Design

VIII. Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Committee discuss the issues outlined above and forward a favorable recommendation to ZAB with any conditions as necessary and specific direction for Final Design Review.

Attachments:

1. Project Plans, dated March 11, 2019
2. Applicant Response, received March 11, 2019

Staff Planner: Anne Burns, aburns@ci.berkeley.ca.us, (510) 981-7410