

May 5, 2016

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

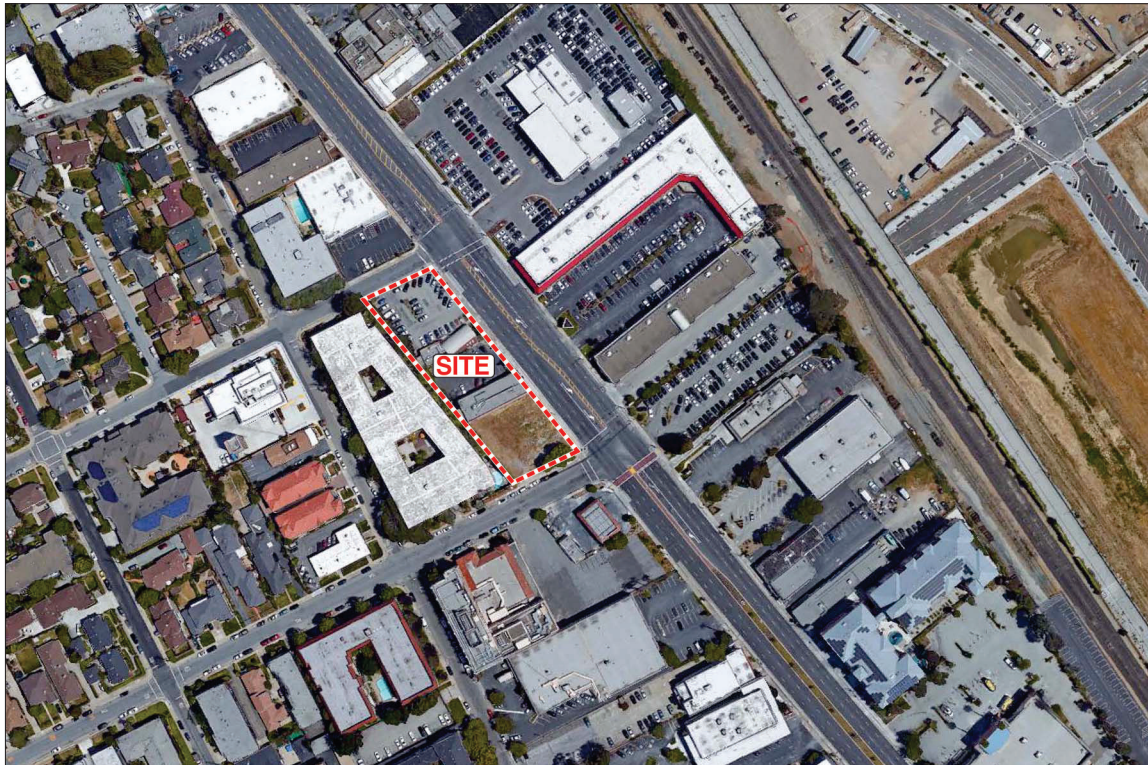
RE: Hillsdale Terrace

Dear Tricia:

I first reviewed this project two and a half years ago when staff met with the applicant to discuss the initial design approach, and suggested some potential improvements. In February of this year, I reviewed a complete application and prepared a review letter with recommendations. Since then staff has worked with the applicant to address the issues that were raised. I have now finished a thorough review of the new application drawings. I am familiar with the site through past visits. My comments and suggestions to staff are as follows:

NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT

The site is one half block in size spanning along El Camino Real from 27th to 28th Avenue. It is bordered at its rear by a large multifamily residential complex. Commercial uses in the area are characterized by one story structures with substantial surface parking. An air photo of the site is shown below. Additional photos of the site and nearby buildings are shown on the following page.





The site from 27th Avenue



Development immediately across El Camino Real



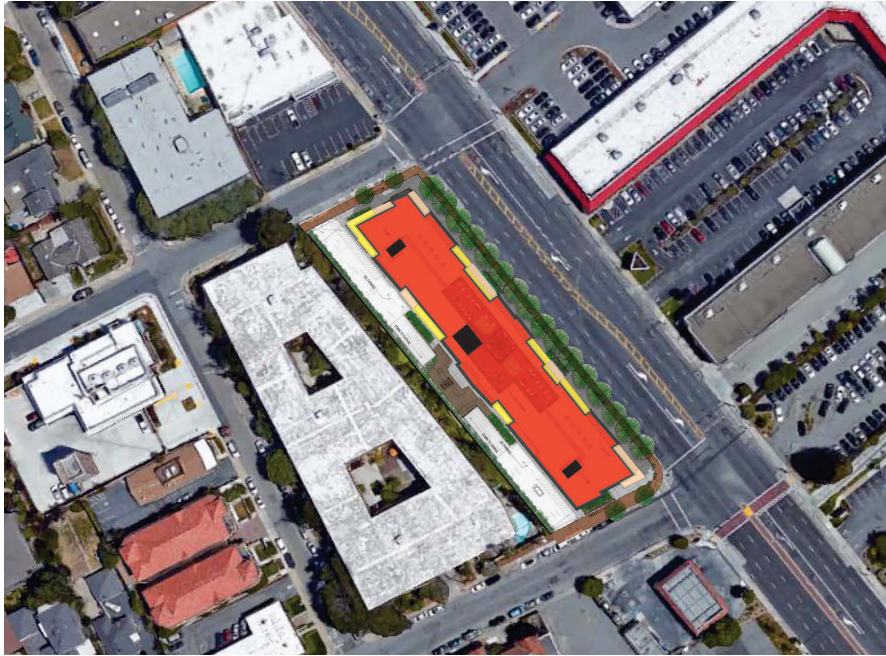
Adjacent multifamily development



Nearby recent multifamily development

Concerns and Recommendations

The proposed project is contained within a single structure that spans the full block frontage from 27th to 28th Avenue, as shown in the air photo context illustration below.



The project's design has evolved a great deal from the original drawings that I saw over two years ago. While the initial approach was of concern to the Planning Commission because they felt that it seemed rigid and repetitive along its full length, the full submission in February had much more visual variety, and the current submittal has further refined the design. Major refinements have focused on the El Camino Real ground floor frontage and the design of the 28th Avenue building corner. Overall, the design should provide a distinctive addition to El Camino Real.

The illustrations below and on the following page show the previous El Camino Real frontage treatment and the currently proposed design.



**Building corner
lacked focus**

**Commercial frontage were flatter with
less articulation and visual interest**

**Top articulation of the ground floor storefronts
was not well related to pedestrian scale**

Previous El Camino Real frontage



Building corner has a more focused treatment

Commercial frontage has more articulation and visual interest

Stronger top articulation of the ground floor storefronts

Currently proposed El Camino Real frontage



Previous El Camino Real frontage

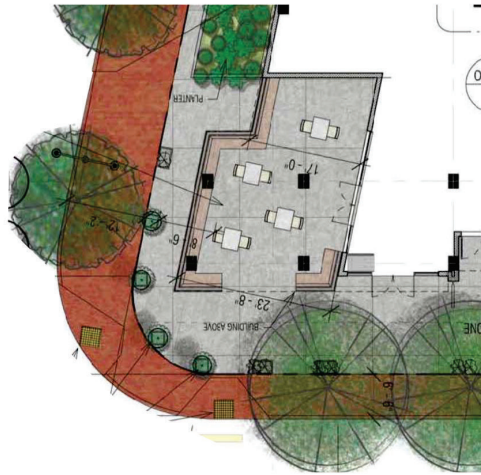


Currently proposed El Camino Real frontage

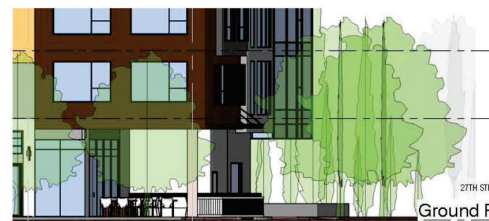
In my current review, I identified only a few issues that staff and the Planning Commission may wish to discuss further with the applicant.

1. Corner Plazas

The corner at El Camino Real and 28th Avenue will be a strong focal point by virtue of the future extension of 28th Avenue to Bay Meadows II. Yet, the Public Corner Space as currently shown appears to accommodate very few tables if it were to be used as an outdoor dining terrace. And the walls and planters at the edges of the space does not give the area an open and inviting public appearance - see the illustrations below.



28th Avenue Corner



27th Avenue Corner



28th Avenue corner plaza
 accommodate few tables
 and does not have a very
 open and inviting look

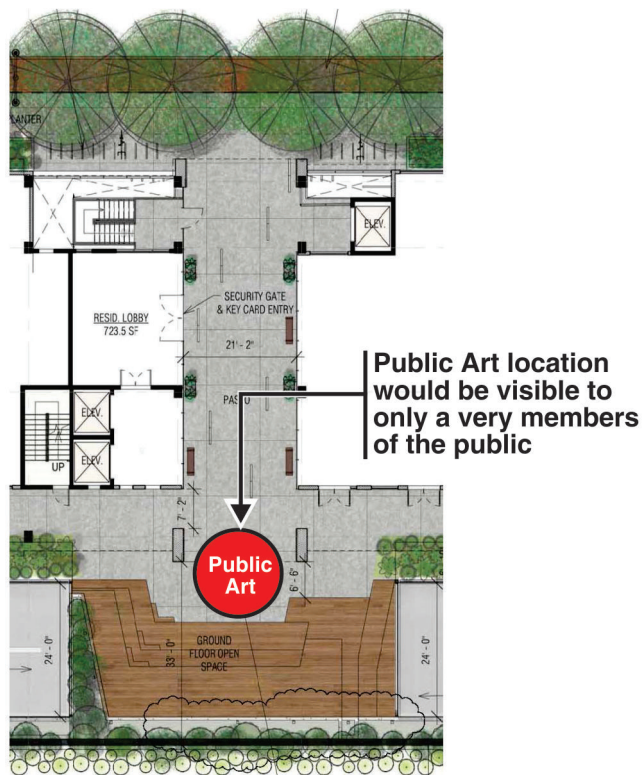
Recommendation: Modify the edge design of both the 28th and 27th Avenue Public Open Spaces to provide a more open and inviting feeling- see example photos below.



Corner Plaza example: Santa Monica

2. Public Art

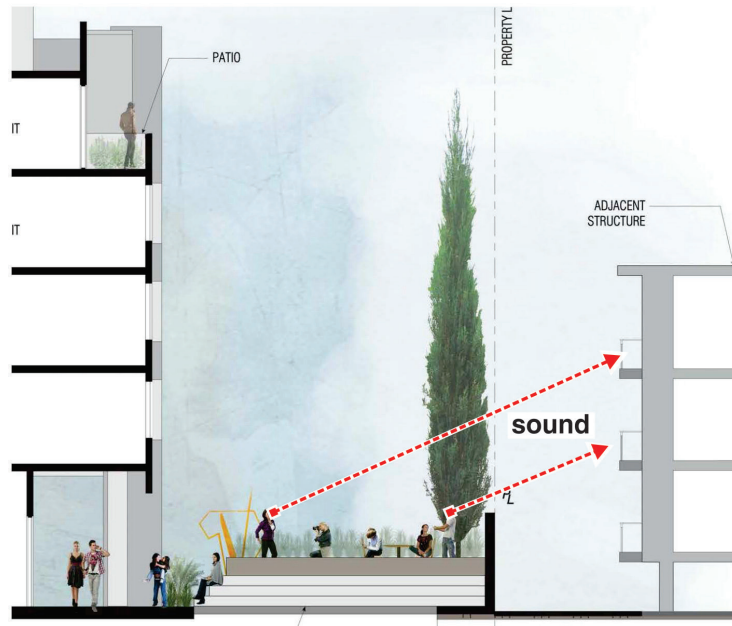
A public art piece is shown located at the rear of the property adjacent to the proposed ground floor open space. In that location, it would be seen by only a small number of the public.



Recommendation: Consider moving the public art piece to a more publicly visible location.

3. Potential Sound Impact

There is a ground floor open space proposed at the rear of the site. The design, as currently shown, would construct an elevated platform with stepped seating to accommodate several tables and chairs as a significant gathering space. It is unknown how much use this space might be used in the evening since residents of the building also have access to a rooftop deck. However, any substantial activity here could have an impact on the residential units in the adjacent apartment building with frontage on this site.



Recommendation: Staff should discuss the use and design of this open space to minimize any potential sound impacts.

STRUCTURE HEIGHT AND DESIGN ARTICULATION

The proposed building would be located adjacent to El Camino Real in a zone designated by the City's General Plan policies for a maximum building height of 40-55 feet. A building height in excess of 40 feet and up to 55 feet is allowed only for lots over 100 feet in depth. For lots more than 100 feet deep, heights up to 55 feet are permitted for projects which meet the following criteria and are approved by the City Council:

- a. The project provides amenities such as landscaped plazas, covered parking, setbacks from the street, setbacks of upper stories, and public improvements substantially in excess of City requirements;*
- b. The building has high design quality which is enhanced by additional building height;*
- c. Increased building heights are visually related to surrounding building heights and promote the creation of a coherent City image;*
- d. Increased building heights are compatible with surrounding land uses and will not create adverse shadow or visual impacts on surrounding residential uses; and*
- e. The City's infrastructure is adequate to accommodate the proposed development.*

Since the building is currently proposed with a height greater than 40 feet, affirmative findings would be required for the five criteria above.

The City's recently adopted *Mid and South El Camino Real 40-55 Foot Building Height Design Criteria* provides examples and details to promote consistency in the project review and approval process for applicable projects seeking building heights along El Camino Real greater than 40 feet and up to 55 feet.

Features of the this project which seem to meet the criteria include:

- The ground floor use and design along with well integrated landscaping will contribute positively to the pedestrian environment on el Camino Real.
- The planning of the project will replace surface parking along the El Camino Real frontage with commercial and public open space uses.
- Parking will be located below grade.
- The structure is designed with a great deal of facade variety with regard to horizontal and vertical articulation and colors.
- The El Camino Real facade steps down at both corners to provide a transition to smaller scale development on adjacent blocks.
- The structure has a fully developed design on all facades.
- The corners at both the 28th and 27th Avenue intersections with El Camino Real have been designed with public open spaces capable of featuring restaurants with outdoor seating.
- Public art is provided to enrich the pedestrian experience.

With the changes that have been made, I believe that this project is consistent with the *Mid and South El Camino Real 40-55 Foot Building Height Design Criteria*.

Tricia, please let me know if you have any questions, or if there are specific issues of concern that I did not address.

Sincerely,

CANNON DESIGN GROUP



Larry Cannon