



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 Committee Discussion/
Majority Recommendation**
JANUARY 20, 2022

1201-1205 SAN PABLO AVENUE

PRELIMINARY DESIGN REVIEW

Design Review #DRCP2021-0007 to construct a six-story, mixed-use building on a vacant lot, with 66 units (including five Very Low Income units), 1,720 square feet of commercial space, 2,514 square feet of usable open space, and 17 to 28 ground-level parking spaces.

I. Introduction

This six-story mixed-use project is located in the C-W Commercial District on the Southeast corner of San Pablo Avenue and Harrison Street.

This project is applying under the Housing Crisis Act, SB 330, which seeks to boost homebuilding throughout the State with a focus on urbanized zones by expediting the approval process for and suspending or eliminating restrictions on housing development. Housing development is defined as a project that is: all residential; a mixed-use project with at least two-thirds of the square-footage residential; or for transitional or supportive housing.

It went before the Zoning Adjustment Board (ZAB) on December 9, 2021 for a Preview where they gave recommendations for the applicant to look closely at the project's interface with the adjacent residential neighborhood to the east as well as the detailed building design to better distinguish the step downs where possible.

This is before the Design Review Committee this month for Preliminary Design Review.

II. Background

The proposed project would involve the merging of two lots into one, and the construction of a mixed-use building with the following main components:

- Six stories, 68 feet, 3 inches in height
- 66 dwelling units – 22 studios, 34 one-bedroom, and 10 two-bedroom
- 76 bedrooms total

- Five Very Low Income (VLI) units
- 1,720 square feet of ground-floor commercial space
- 2,514 square feet of usable open space – second-floor podium courtyard, private patios, and sixth-floor roof deck
- 17 to 28 vehicle parking spaces in ground-level garage¹
- 64-space bike room

III. Project Setting

A. Neighborhood/Area Description:

The project site is located on the southeast corner of the intersection of San Pablo Avenue and Harrison Street, along the San Pablo Commercial Corridor, within the Gilman and San Pablo Node of the West Berkeley Area Plan. Adjacent parcels to the east are occupied by single- and multi-family residential developments in the R-2, Restricted Two-Family Residential District. Further north and south along San Pablo Avenue, in the C-W, West Berkeley Commercial District are mostly one-story commercial buildings, excepting the two parcels just south of the project site, which are occupied by a two-story apartment building and a one-story, single-family dwelling, respectively. Parcels directly west of the site, across San Pablo Avenue, are currently occupied by one-story commercial buildings. Entitlements for a six-story, 104-unit, mixed-use building were obtained for these three parcels in November, 2020 (ZP2019-0192). San Pablo Avenue is served by multiple bus lines (local, rapid, and Transbay). The site is approximately 1.3 miles from the North Berkeley BART Station (to the northeast). (See Figure 1: Zoning Map.)

B. Site Conditions:

The project site is composed of two rectangular parcels – 1200/1209, and 1205 San Pablo Avenue – which have a combined total area of 13,000 square feet, a combined frontage along San Pablo Avenue measuring 130', and a combined frontage along Harrison Street measuring 100'. The parcel is vacant. Entitlements were obtained for the project site in 2006 to construct a five-story, 27-unit, mixed-use building, and an application for a building permit (B2019-05125) to construct the approved project was submitted in 2019, but never issued.

¹ The applicant would determine the final amount of parking spaces/parking lifts prior to the application for building permits, based upon financial considerations.

Figure 1: Vicinity Map

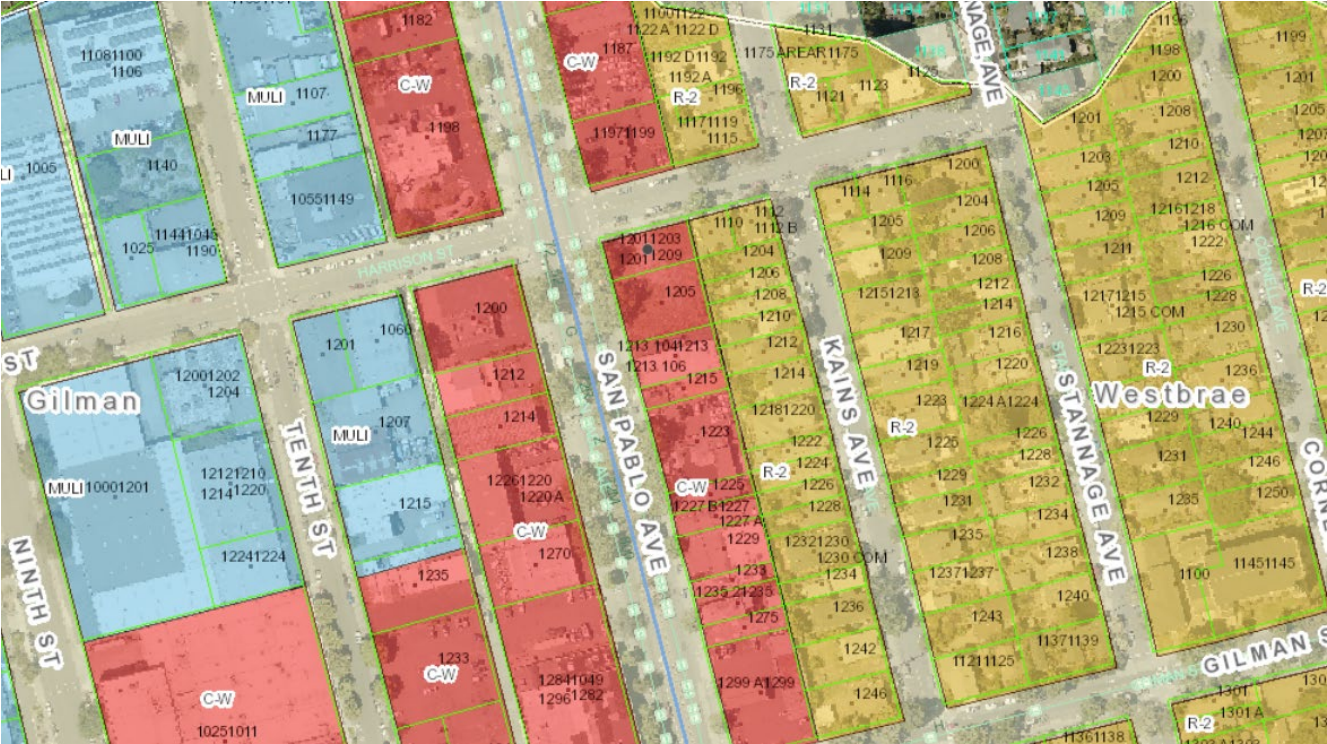


Table 1: Land Use Information

Location		Existing Use	Zoning District	General Plan Designation
Subject Property		Vacant Land	C-W	AC
Surrounding Adjacent Properties	North	Auto Repair Shop		
	East	Single-Family Residential	R-2	
	South	Multi-family Residential	C-W	
	West	Tattoo Parlor/Art Gallery/ Fast Food Restaurant (vacated) – ZP2019-0192 approved for 104-unit mixed-use building, November, 2020		

Table 2: Development Standards

C-W Standards, BMC §23E.64.070-080		Existing	Proposed	Permitted/Required
Lot Area (sq. ft.)		5,500 +7,500	13,000	n/a
Gross Floor Area (sq. ft.)		n/a	47,036	39,000
Commercial Floor Area (sq. ft.)		n/a	1,720	n/a
FAR		n/a	3.6	3
Dwelling Units		n/a	66	n/a
Building Height	Average	n/a	68'-3"	50' max./ 25' min. (in node)
	Maximum	n/a	68'-3"	n/a
	Stories	n/a	6	4 max. 2 min. (in node)
Building Setbacks	Front (Harrison)	n/a	0'-0" (1'-6" overhang into ROW)	0' min.
	Rear	n/a	0'-0"	0' min.
	Left Side	n/a	5'-0"	5' min.
	Right Side (San Pablo)	n/a	0'-0" (1'-6" overhang into ROW)	0' min.
Lot Coverage (%)		n/a	93	n/a
Usable Open Space (sq. ft.)		n/a	2,514	2,640 min. (40 s.f./d.u.)
Parking	Commercial (1,720 sq. ft.)	n/a	4	4 min. (2 spaces/1,000 sq.ft.)
	Residential	n/a	13 to 24 ¹	0 min./33 max. (0.5 spaces/du max.)
	Total	n/a	17 to 28	4 min./33 max.
Bicycle Parking	Commercial - Short Term (1,720 sq. ft.)	n/a	2	2 (1 space/2,000 s.f. commercial)
	Residential - Long Term	n/a	64	26 (1 space/3 bedrooms)
	Residential - Short Term	n/a	6	2 (1 space/40 bedrooms, or 2)
	Total	n/a	64/8 (long term/short term)	26/4 (long term/short term)
<p>■ = Waiver or Concession requested to modify the district standard.</p> <p>¹ The applicant would determine the final amount of parking spaces/parking lifts prior to the application for building permits, based upon financial considerations. The amount proposed falls within the range of minimum and maximum parking requirements.</p>				

IV. Project Description

A. Requested Use Permits

- Administrative Use Permit under Berkeley Municipal Code (BMC) §23D.04.020.C to construct rooftop projections, such as mechanical appurtenances or architectural elements which exceed the maximum average height limit for the district;
- Use Permit under BMC §23E.64.030.A to construct a mixed-use development with floor area of more than 9,000 square feet;
- Use Permit under BMC §23E.64.030.A to construct new dwelling units; and
- Use Permit under BMC §23E.64.050.B, to create new gross floor area of 5,000 square feet or more.

B. CEQA Determination

It is staff's recommendation to ZAB that the project is categorically exempt pursuant to §15332 ("In-Fill Development Projects") of the CEQA Guidelines.

C. Density Bonus Information

- Waiver of BMC §23E.64.070.A to increase maximum FAR to 3.6 where 3.0 is the limit;
- Waiver of BMC §23E.64.070.B to increase maximum average building height to be 68'-3", where 50' is the limit for a mixed-use building;
- Waiver of BMC §23E.64.070.B to increase maximum number of stories to be 6 stories, where 4 stories is the limit for a mixed-use building; and
- Concession to reduce the Usable Open Space requirement from 2,640 to 2,514 square feet.

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V. 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.

VI. Issues and Analysis

A. Design Review Issues:

Neighborhood Context This mixed-use project is located in the C-W district, but adjacent to an R-2 residential district to the east and smaller residential structures. The applicant has updated the renderings of the project from both San Pablo and Harrison for more accurate images of the existing tree locations and canopy sizes.

Massing/Building Design This 6-story structure steps down at the 5th and 6th floors to the East to respond to the adjacent residential district. The east facing podium level courtyard further reduces the scale of the project with a majority of the massing located along San Pablo and Harrison.

Setbacks The building meets the property line at the North, West, and South sides. There is a 5' setback at the East side where the project abuts the R-2 residential district.

Ground Floor Design The ground floor features a residential lobby and corner commercial unit, as well as vehicular and bike parking. The lobby opens onto San Pablo and includes a mail area, seating area, office space, and restroom. Bike storage room is directly adjacent to the lobby and can be accessed from the parking garage. Trash room is located behind the lobby and opens out to the parking garage. Vehicular access to the project is located on Harrison. A 25' loading zone is proposed on San Pablo.

Landscape/ Open Space Design The project provides common open space in a podium level garden space that faces east and a roof deck at the Northeast corner of the project overlooking Harrison Street. Private patios are proposed along the South side of the project at the second floor. The project would add two new street trees, one at the Southwest end of the project on San Pablo and one at the

Northeast on Harrison. The applicant will present more information on proposed vines on the ground floor podium walls. A 6' fence runs the length of the East side of the property at the edge of the adjacent Residential district.

B. Issues for Discussion:

- Neighborhood Context
- Massing
- Façade Design
- Landscape/ Open Space Design
- Colors and Materials

VII. Recommendation

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

Attachments:

1. Project Plans, received January 11, 2022
2. Applicant Statement, received May 6, 2021

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