



September 10, 2017

By Electronic Transmission

City of Alameda
Planning Board

Dear Boardmembers:

Subject: 1435 Webster Street (Item 6-A on Planning Board's 9-11-17 Agenda)

The West Alameda Business Association (WABA) is very pleased that this important project is continuing to move forward. Here are our comments on the latest design submittal:

1. The height of the corner bay has increased over that shown in the previously approved plans. This is neither necessary nor desirable. It results in excessive undifferentiated wall surfaces between the third-floor windows and the entablature above and awkward proportions.
2. Similarly, the height of the top floor corner bay windows has been increased, contributing to the top heavy look of the corner bay. These windows are also taller than the other third-floor windows, disrupting the overall composition between the corner bay and the rest of the building.
3. The previous design's continuous horizontal band along the top of the third-floor windows should be retained, which added cohesion to the overall composition.
4. Although the corner bay retains the entablature's strut brackets used in the previously approved design, the strut brackets have been replaced by what appear to be simplified Italianate style brackets on the remaining entablatures. These brackets look kitschy and should be replaced with the strut brackets used in the previously approved design. The strut brackets appropriately recall the treatment used on the Victorian building across the street at the southwest corner of Taylor Avenue and Webster Street.
5. The latest submittal is relatively generalized and needs to be expanded to reflect the items set forth below. We have been requesting most of these items since February, 2016.
 - a. **Much of the storefront treatment is unclear.** For example, the transom band above the storefront windows and below the transom windows appears taller in the storefronts without entry doors, but perhaps this apparent increased height is actually an awning. Vertical sections through the storefronts are needed to clarify this and other ambiguities.

- b. **Upper floor windows**
 - i. Window casings need to be 1x6 to be in keeping with older buildings.
 - ii. The window bottom rails need to be 3 -3 ½” in height as this is typical on standard wood windows.
 - iii. Windows should be wood or vinyl clad wood and should reflect the dimensions shown on Sheet A-7 of the previously approved plans.
- c. **Composite siding.** Ensure that the siding is not embossed grain. The Webster Street Design Manual calls for smooth siding only.
- d. Like the upper floor windows, **the balcony aluminum doors should have a wood-like quality with dimensions similar to the windows**, especially for the muntins.
- e. **Use slim profile storefront windows as per Section 6.10 of the Design Review Manual or, alternatively, butted glass.** The previously approved design proposed a standard Kawneer storefront system. See Manual illustration for Section 6.15 showing a butted glass storefront without a bulkhead.
- f. Provide **special paving at storefront vestibules** as per Manual Section 6.4(b).
- g. **Fully dimensioned section details through important elements**, such as the main entablature, moldings, balcony railings, balcony doors, etc. are needed in order to fully evaluate the proposed design.

The "window section" on Sheet A7 of the previously approved design helped address some of the above items, but this section drawing is not included in the current submittal. Does this section drawing still apply? However, the drawing was still generalized and lacked dimensions except for the upper floor windows.

In a 4-27-17 meeting with WABA, the applicant agreed to Items a, b, c, f and g, but these are not reflected in the latest plans. The applicant also agreed to investigate Items d and e, but we have not been informed of the results of this investigation.

The Webster Street Design Manual, initially adopted by the Planning Board in 2001, is part of the Citywide Design Review Manual and is attached for your reference.

Please contact Christopher Buckley at 510-523-0411 or cbuckleyaicp@att.net if you would like to discuss these comments.

Very truly yours,

Linda Asbury, Executive Director
West Alameda Business Association

Attachment: Webster Street Design Manual

cc: Mayor and City Council
Andrew Thomas
Andrew Goldberg
WABA Board and Design Committee