



October 4, 2023

(By electronic transmission)
Historical Advisory Board
City of Alameda
2263 Santa Clara Avenue
Alameda, CA 94501

Subject: PLN 23–121 – Proposed demolition of existing Historic Building Study List structure at 1251 Park St. and replacement with a new building – Item 4-A on Historical Advisory Board’s (HAB) October 5, 2023 agenda.

Dear HAB Members:

The Alameda Architectural Preservation Society (AAPS) does not oppose the subject demolition and would like to thank the applicant for developing a design for the new building that, if well executed, will have a good relationship with the neighboring historic buildings.

However, several elements of the new design need to be clarified or modified to help ensure that the design achieves its full potential. **Note: all of the following comments apply only to the front elevation.**

1. **Provide the design treatment behind the awning.** The treatment appears to include transom windows set within stucco wall surfaces over the storefront and undifferentiated stucco wall surfaces above the upper floor entry and will presumably be similar to the configuration on the south elevation. But the front elevation needs to be revised to not include the awning to confirm this. This is important, since the awning could be removed or modified in the future, exposing the upper storefront surfaces. Although the Citywide Design Review Manual encourages awnings, it states that they should not obstruct transom windows.
2. If our understanding of the treatment behind the awning is correct, **a transom window should be provided above the upper floor entry** to maintain a consistent ground-floor storefront composition. The transom window will also provide more natural light to the entry interior. If privacy or security is a concern, the window could be obscured glass.
3. **Identify the awning material.** The proposed supplier, Superior Awning, provides both canvas and aluminum awnings. The material should be fabric rather than metal or plastic to maintain consistency with traditional storefront treatments and with the Citywide

Design Review Manual, which states that awnings “be designed to complement architectural style”. **A sample of the actual awning material and color should be provided.**

4. **Arrange the bulkhead brick tiles in an interlocking (running bond) rather than the proposed vertical stacked pattern**, which is a modernistic treatment that is not consistent with the proposed building’s otherwise traditional architecture and the predominantly traditional architecture on Park Street. The color should be slightly variegated rather than uniform for consistency with the proposed traditional architecture and to provide a more naturalistic appearance. It appears that the proposed Aubrey Brick Meridian Brick will do this. **Samples of the actual brick should be provided.**
5. **Provide a vertical section detail through the storefronts** to allow assessment of the projecting and recessed elements.
6. **Confirm that a 2 x 4 vertical trim will be provided for the windows on both floors.** Detail 7 on Sheet D1 implies this will be the case, but more clarity is needed.
7. **For the upper floor entry door, consider a glazed panel to maintain the storefront look, rather than the proposed solid wood.** If security or privacy is a concern, obscure glass could be used.
8. **Indicate the material and color of the storefront entry door.** This information is not included in the door schedule. In addition, the design shown on the front elevation should be confirmed, such as by providing the manufacturer and model.

The existing wood storefront door consists of a large glass panel above a molded wood panel and has significant design interest. It appears to date from the original 1921 construction and possibly earlier. **The existing storefront door’s incorporation into the new design should be considered.**

9. The Citywide Design Review Manual states that recessed storefront entries should be paved “with high-quality materials distinguished from the sidewalk”, but the plans do not indicate this.
10. Similarly, the existing recessed entry has a wood paneled ceiling that provides pedestrian interest. Can a similar treatment be provided for the proposed recessed entry?
11. **The upper floor windows should be wood or other material in a configuration that visually matches the traditional wood windows used on buildings of the proposed type/style historically and elsewhere on Park Street.** To do this, the window dimensions should conform with those on the typical wood window diagrams in the Citywide Design Review Manual, including:

- a. Sash that is at least 1 3/8” thick;

- b. Stiles and rails recessed at least 1 3/8" (applicable to the upper sash on the single-hung windows) from the surface of the surrounding trim.
- c. Glazing recessed ca. 3/8" from the surface of the stiles and rails; and
- d. For the paired upper floor windows, a wood-surfaced vertical division between each window about 6" wide.

The proposed Milgard Tuscany extruded vinyl windows do not conform with these dimensions, but other low-maintenance comparably priced windows, such as several fiberglass products, do and should be considered. The proposed bronze color is good.

12. **For the two side upper floor windows, provide a horizontal muntin or similar horizontal element that aligns with the meeting rails of the paired center single-hung windows.** The two side windows have a blank look that creates a discontinuity with the single-hung windows.
13. **The proposed Hardiplank fiber cement siding should be smooth surface with no imitation raised wood grain,** which looks synthetic and has an overly rustic appearance that is inconsistent with a refined urbanized environment like Park Street.
14. **Indicate how the horizontal siding will be treated at the building corners.** Both the elevation and rendering show no trim boards, suggesting that the corners will be mitered. This is good, but should be specified. If corner boards are used, they should be at least 1x4, with 1x6 preferred.
15. **Clarify the proposed colors.** The colors shown on the rendering (Sheet A1-1) are inconsistent with those shown on the front elevation (Sheet A-4). For example, the rendering shows the belt cornice separating the first and second floors as white, but almost black on the elevation. **Which color scheme is actually proposed?** The rendering's color scheme is attractive, but it is difficult to evaluate the elevation's color scheme due to lack of a rendering and ambiguity regarding the color of some trim elements.

If the HAB agrees with any of the above comments, we request that the HAB recommend them to the Planning Board for the Planning Board's consideration of the design review application.

Note that the existing building's surfaces shown in the 1979 photograph and possibly dating from the 1941 alterations have been covered by vinyl siding, but are very likely extant underneath the siding. Although we do not oppose demolition of the existing building, the existing storefront does have some design interest and if the vinyl siding and incompatible metal awning were removed, the building would relate well with the neighboring historic buildings. **We therefore recommend that as an alternative to complete demolition a new second story be constructed on top of at least a portion of the existing building that preserves as much of the existing façade with reconfiguration and/or partial demolition of the rear portion of the existing building as needed to accommodate the proposed floor plans.** This alternative would also promote the resource conservation provisions in the Alameda General Plan.

Attached is a higher resolution version of the 1979 photograph that is attached to the staff report.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. Please contact me at (510) 523-0411 or cbuckleyAICP@att.net if you would like to discuss these comments.

Sincerely,

Christopher Buckley, Chair
Preservation Action Committee
Alameda Architectural Preservation Society

Attachment: High resolution 1979 photo

cc: Allen Tai, Steven Buckley, David Sablan and Deidre McCartney (by electronic transmission)
Planning Board (by electronic transmission)
AAPS Board and Preservation Action Committee (by electronic transmission)

