

CITY OF ALAMEDA

Memorandum

To: Honorable President and
Members of the Planning Board

From: Deborah Diamond
Planner

Date: January 11, 2016

Re: **PLN15-0468 – 523 South Shore Center – Bank of Marin Workshop – Applicant: Lev Weisbach on behalf of Jamestown L.P.** A request for a study session to consider the design for a new building to be constructed for the Bank of Marin at the South Shore Center access road, with associated pedestrian improvements. This project is covered under the Environmental Impact Report for the expansion of the Alameda Towne Centre, certified by the City on August 11, 2008.

BACKGROUND

Jamestown L.P., the owner of the South Shore Center, proposes to build a new building for its current tenant, the Bank of Marin, on a 5,000 sq. ft. site near the southwest corner of the Center. Jamestown has been working with Weisbach Architecture to design a building that both serves the needs of the tenant and furthers the overall goal of enlivening the Center and creating a more dynamic experience for visitors. The applicant is requesting a study session with the Planning Board to discuss and resolve design issues prior to returning to the Board for a decision at the February 8, 2016 meeting. The study session will also facilitate early public discussion of the proposal.

New construction at the South Shore Center is subject to a Planned Development Amendment (PDA) and Major Design Review (DR) approved for the Alameda Towne Centre by the Planning Board on April 7, 2009. The PDA enables the continued phased redevelopment of the Center, including up to 657,000 sq. ft. of floor area, and pedestrian, bicycle and transit improvements. The proposed use is consistent with the PDA. Under the PDA all future building improvements consistent with the approved PDA plans require Design Review approval. The phasing of development and mobility improvements are subject to the Alameda Towne Center masterplan, developed by Field Paoli, dated April 13, 2009. The proposed project is identified as a part of Phase 2 of the masterplan which triggers a pedestrian improvement in the form of a five-foot wide raised sidewalk on the east side of South Shore Center (access road), from Franciscan Way to Shoreline Drive. The scope of the proposed project includes the construction of this sidewalk.

DISCUSSION

The visual character of South Shore Center has evolved over the past 30+ years. Older concrete tilt up buildings were gradually replaced by craftsman-like structures with wood siding and trellised walkways. The Center is now deviating from its strongly uniform design by incorporating more varied colors and materials. Architectural design guidelines were adopted for the Center in 2013 to encourage and enable more vibrancy and creative tenant expression. However, these guidelines apply specifically to the interior zones of the shopping center. The proposed project, being located on an exterior site, is guided by the Citywide Design Review Manual.

Project Description:

Jamestown proposes to build a 3,000 sq. ft., single-story building to be occupied by the Bank of Marin as a branch bank. The project site is a 5,000 sq. ft. vacant pad located at a prominent corner entry to the shopping center. The site is diagonally across from the Willows residential complex. Surface parking lots are across the streets on both south and west sides. As illustrated by the site elevations included in the plans, the building would be constructed at the west end of the center's south wall (T.J.Maxx), and at the south end of the west wall (Carter's and Kohl's), thereby completing the block's southwest corner and extending the south facing street wall. The adjacent buildings exhibit the predominantly horizontal massing of the Center in general, broken up by entry bays and trellises.

Pedestrian upgrades include construction of a new five-foot wide raised sidewalk, with a two-foot wide planting strip separating it from the street. Curb cuts, with truncated domes, and pedestrian striping would be provided at the intersections. The South Shore Center access road is under ownership of the shopping center and therefore these improvements will occur on private property. The applicant is currently working with the Public Works Department to improve connection to an existing crosswalk on Shoreline Drive at South Shore Center. Additionally, stenciling for a Class III bikeway is proposed on South Shore Center.

Landscaping at the front, side and back of the building, and improvements to the existing raised planter behind the building, are included within the project scope.

Architecture:

A modern architectural style is proposed, diverging from the established craftsman-like style that dominates the Center. The basic design concept consists of an elevated box, afloat over glass storefronts that wrap the corner. The roofline on the west elevation is angled, creating more height at the front. Secondary architectural elements are two darker and smaller masses that flank the main structure, one to house an ATM, and the other a conferencing area. A corner entry is proposed, with an entry lobby that is open above, with clerestory windows facing north. The remainder of the interior would have a ceiling at the height of the storefront. Exterior materials are stucco, glass and horizontal siding.

The proposed architecture does not seek to mimic adjacent building forms, but rather to create visual interest by contrasting with its setting. Not all traditional design guidelines can be applied to this project. The juxtaposition of modern and traditional styles is an appealing way to finish and celebrate this corner. The scale of the building fits the context and the primary exterior materials are suitable for the proposed structure. The mass of the box appears dominant over the glass base but staff suspects that the color illustrations show the glass walls to appear darker than the actual materials and that the end result will be more balanced. The angled roofline on west elevation contrasts well with the strongly horizontal setting. The resulting elevated height at the front of the building punctuates the corner as an interesting alternative the more typical tower solution.

Within the framework of the basic building design, three alternative concepts, A, B and C, are provided by the applicant to illustrate six design configurations that may be mixed and matched for incorporation into the final proposal. These alternatives, located in the Appendix of the plan set, are intended as a discussion tool.

Concept A shows a patterned stucco box that is canted on the west side up to a maximum height of 29 feet at the building's front. The secondary elements are of horizontal siding in a darker color and have a lower parapet than the existing adjacent building. The ATM wall is flush with the adjacent building. The storefront is 12 feet tall. Concept A has a green color scheme.



Concept B is largely the same as Concept A except the box is canted on both front and side, and it has a grey color scheme.



In **Concept C** the differences are a taller box height of 15 feet, taller



storefront height of 14 feet, the parapet for the secondary elements is higher and flush with that of the adjacent building, and the ATM wall is recessed. In this example the box is clad in horizontal siding and the secondary elements are of stucco.

Comparison Table

Design Factors	A	B	C
Overall Height	29'	29'	29'
Box Height	17'	17'	15'
Storefront Height	12'	12'	14'
Parapet Height	19'	19'	22'
ATM Wall	Flush	Flush	Recessed
Color Scheme	Green	Grey	Grey
South Form	Straight	Canted	Straight
Primary Material	Stucco	Stucco	Siding
Secondary Material	Siding	Siding	Stucco

Bold-faced type indicates components that differ from the other two concepts

Considerations for Discussion:

The following questions are provided to guide a discussion on the proposal:

1. Is there support for the overall design approach?
 - 29-foot tall modern building
 - elevated box over glass storefront
 - canted roof line with height at the front, no tower element
 - secondary architectural elements of darker and smaller masses flanking the main structure
 - exterior finishes consisting of stucco, glass and horizontal siding
 - corner entry
2. Of the choices illustrated in A, B and C, what are the preferred components?
 - For the ATM wall should the parapet height be the same or lower than the adjacent building?
 - Should the ATM wall be recessed?
 - What is the preferred color scheme, greens or greys?

- Should the south elevation be canted?
 - What are the preferred primary and secondary materials, stucco or horizontal siding?
3. Are there comments on the other elements of the project including landscaping, and pedestrian improvements?

PUBLIC NOTICE AND COMMENTS

Property owners and residents within 300 feet of the project's boundaries were notified of the public hearing and given the opportunity to review and comment on the proposal. As of the writing of this report, staff has received no communications.

November 11, 2015 the applicant met with the Willows property manager and two of the residents. They introduced preliminary plans for the project, overall building design and the sidewalk project. There were positive comments about the modern building and had no issues with the design. There were questions regarding possible shading of Willows open space areas and the applicant was able to show that the project would result in no shading on the Willows property throughout the year. The project was later written up in an article in the Willows quarterly newsletter, as follows:

"Construction Plans. Our attractive South Shore Shopping Center is planning grand improvements—a sidewalk and bicycle path that will lead from the shopping center, passed Kohl and Carter's, along Post Office Street, directly to the Shoreline beach. They plan to put a small, sleek and modern two-story building where you presently see reddish woodchips (next to Kohl's). It should give the shopping area a more symmetric and finished look. The interior of this grey stone and glass building will be spacious and open, with beautiful, grand chandeliers, ideal for a bank. Their construction manager, Matthew Anderson, has offered to provide us with a photo and map that we'll post on our Bulletin board."

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

This project is covered under the Environmental Impact Report for the expansion of the Alameda Towne Centre, certified by the City on October 7, 2008, and none of the circumstances necessitating preparation of additional environmental review as specified in CEQA, including without limitation Public Resources Code Section 21166 and CEQA Guidelines Section 15162, are present in that there are no substantial changes proposed in the project or the circumstances under which the project is undertaken that would require major revisions of the previous EIR due to the involvement of new environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects; and there is no new information of substantial importance as described in CEQA Guidelines Section 15162(a)(3). All relevant mitigation measures will be incorporated into the project.

RECOMMENDATION

Hold a public hearing and provide comments to the applicant and staff on the proposed project.

Respectfully submitted,
Deborah Diamond

Attachments:

1. Plan Set