



December 4, 2017

(By electronic transmission)

Mr. Maurice Brenyah-Addow
City of Oakland
Bureau of Planning/Zoning Division
250 Frank H. Ogawa Plaza, 2nd Floor
Oakland, California 94612

Subject: PLN14220 - -Proposed building at 2201 Brush Street

Dear Mr. Brenyah-Addow,

We apologize for not submitting comments by the November 29, 2017 deadline. As previously explained, we emailed a request for the plans to you on Tuesday, November 21, but unfortunately used your old email address. Since there was no bounce back to our email, we did not immediately realize that we used an incorrect email address. We only discovered this mistake on November 29, when we resubmitted our plan request. Thank you for arranging forwarding of the plans from the applicant, which we received the evening of November 29. Because of our delayed receipt of the plans, these comments are also somewhat delayed.

This much-needed affordable housing project is located immediately northeast of an ASI, consisting predominately of one and two-story Victorian and Edwardian houses. Although it is very good that the project is being proposed and is at a well-suited central location convenient to transit, its design needs to be adjusted to conform with the Commercial Corridor Design Guidelines (CCGL) and relate better to the neighboring ASI. Among other issues, the west elevation is an overpoweringly massive wall that presents a highly intrusive, forbidding-looking backdrop to the ASI.

The following modifications should be considered:

1. **Reconfigure the proposed “C”-shaped upper floor plan (the side of the C being the problematic west elevation) into an “H” shape, to allow the especially tall center section of the west elevation to be set back about 30–35 feet from the remainder of the west elevation.** This will break up the west elevation mass into three smaller components that are more in scale with neighboring buildings and reposition the tallest portion of the west elevation further away from the ASI, reducing its visual impact. This will also help implement CCGL 5.1.2’s bulk mitigations.
2. **Provide a higher proportion of glazing on all elevations.** Most of the elevations have an excessive proportion of solid blank wall surfaces vs. windows and other openings, which intensifies the visual mass of the structure. Increasing the proportion of voids vs. solid surfaces will give a greater sense of transparency and diminish the solid wall effect. This treatment will enhance the building interiors by providing more natural light

and allowing the upper floor facing north, south and west take advantage of the significant views available from these orientations.

3. **Provide different architectural styles for each building volume so they look like separate buildings in order to minimize bulk.** See CCGL 5.1.2., especially the illustration on page 65.
4. **Provide a more symmetrical pattern of upper floor openings with more consistent facade rhythm.** The irregular composition and relatively random rhythm of the openings promotes an unnecessarily busy effect, which contributes to the perceived bulk and is intensified by the sunshades. More symmetrical composition with more regular rhythm to the opening pattern will give more focus to the façades and create more distinct facade modules, thereby diminishing the visual bulk.
5. **Differentiate the top floor from the other floors above the podium.** This will further reduce the visual bulk and give further focus to the façade compositions. Differentiation can be accomplished by a horizontal articulation at the base of the top floor combined with a change of material or at least color.

A strong horizontal articulation, such as a cornice-like element, is especially recommended, since this will cause the top floor to read as an attic story, further diminishing its visual prominence. See also CCGL 5.1 discussion of horizontal belt cornices and cornice lines on page 64 to mitigate bulk.

Differentiation of materials will also provide visual interest as set forth in CCGL 6.3.1.

These top floor treatments should apply to each of the building mass components above the podium, regardless of their height.

6. **Provide additional articulation of the roof lines to present a clear vertical terminus to each building mass.** See CCGL 5.4.2. Such articulation is also characteristic of the ASI's contributing buildings.
7. **Adjust the design vocabulary to be more consistent with that of the ASI.** See CCGL 7.2.2. The ASI design vocabulary includes features such as: horizontal wood siding (rather than the proposed stucco); hip and gable roofs (rather than the proposed flat roof); symmetrical composition within individual façade modules such as bay windows, other façade sections and porches (rather than the proposed often asymmetrical composition within these modules); and tall double hung windows with meeting rails at or above the windows' horizontal centerlines (rather than the proposed, often asymmetrically configured, windows with implied meeting rails below the horizontal centerline). The project should incorporate these features into the design, at least on the west and south elevations which are oriented to the ASI. As presented, the building's design vocabulary relative to the ASI is very similar to the "Not This" example on Page 67 of the CCGL
8. **Provide a more gradual height transition to the one and two-story houses within the ASI along 22nd Street.** See CCGL 7.2.2, especially the illustrations, as well as 5.5.1 and 5.5.2. The height transitions should step down toward the 22nd Street houses at a roughly 45° angle. Although some stepping is proposed, it is too abrupt and does not achieve the intent of these guidelines.

Please email us the decision letter on this application. Please let us know if you need a stamped, self-addressed envelope to provide us a copy of the decision letter.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. Please contact Christopher Buckley at (510) 523-0411 or cbuckleyaicp@att.net or Naomi Schiff at (510) 835-1819 or Naomi@17th.com if you would like to discuss these comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alison Finlay". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Alison Finlay
President

By electronic transmission:

cc: William Gilchrist, Darin Ranelletti, Robert Merkamp, Heather Klein, Neil Gray, Matt Weintraub and Betty Marvin, Bureau of Planning/Zoning
Jared Wright, EBALDC