



January 8, 2019

San Jose City Council
City of San Jose
200 E Santa Clara St, 3rd Floor
San Jose, CA 95113

RE: *H18-038 Almaden Corner Hotel Project - Public Comment responses*

To the attention of the San Jose City Council,

As the Architect for Almaden Corner Hotel Project, we would like to take this opportunity to provide additional commentary on the architectural design for this project that may not be expressed in the EIR or staff report.

The development of the design is a synthesis of site restrictions and opportunities, surrounding context, building program, city guidelines and community input. As this is a prominent site, there is also the opportunity for creating an architecturally significant building.

The site location and characteristics are optimal for a proposed hotel use. The number of floors that can be planned under the FAA flight path restrictions yields a target number of guest rooms that can attract a select service hotel operator to this site. The accessibility and visibility of the site also promotes the viability of the hotel. It is immediately accessible by vehicle from the freeway and by foot to the Diridon Station, SAP Center and downtown San Jose. The views from the top of the building are ideal for creating a destination rooftop bar and terrace for guests and the public. The ground floor lobby bar / lounge, can be a street level activator for this part of San Jose. This is also a prominent site that requires an iconic design that acts as a welcoming point to the city, and not a design for a "background" building. The hotel amenities also allow it to be useable by the public, versus a private office or residential building.

One of the site challenges is that it is in an area predominantly sited with high-rise office buildings and a residential tower. It is also next to the Hotel De Anza, which is a smaller mid-rise, historic hotel. Given the height difference between the adjacent properties and the Hotel De Anza, we realize we need to design for both contexts and with transitional elements.

Using our site analysis, our approach was to create a hotel tower with the following criteria:

- The design should be sculptural and dynamic and accentuates the city entry point and adds to the Almaden Boulevard vista.
 - A cut back is created in the massing to visually emphasize the main entry to the hotel on the Santa Clara Street / Almaden Boulevard corner. The entry becomes easily recognizable from the highway off-ramp and pedestrian traffic from the Diridon station and SAP Center.

- A cut back is created in the massing to pull the building away from the Hotel De Anza to give it more prominence in the overall street elevation and Almaden Boulevard vista and act as a transition element.
 - The exterior skin is two systems of glass and spandrel panels to give the building movement through its reflectivity and sculpted shape.
 - The canopy acts as a “crown” to the tower and highlights the rooftop terrace.
- The design should be relatable but have contrasting elements to the Hotel De Anza. The intent is for the viewer to see two separate buildings, built at different times, but with shared datums and elements, to create a cohesive composition of the primary street elevation. This is an accepted design approach for new buildings designed next to historic buildings. If a design borrows too much from a historic structure it become difficult to identify the historic from the new and diminishes the integrity of both buildings.
 - The proposed hotel would be a lighter and more vertical design than the heavy Egyptian Art Deco style of the Hotel De Anza, providing contrast and allowing the historic hotel to remain identifiable in its own right. The proposed design also acts as a transitional element to the high-rise towers adjacent to the site.
 - The proposed design uses modern materials of metal and glass, with minor references to the solid and heavy plaster exterior of the Hotel De Anza. This provides additional contrast, lightness and reflectivity to the tower, and again a transitional element to neighboring properties.
 - Two exterior “skin types” are used to make the proposed hotel appear as two slimmer towers. This provides an opportunity to visually transition the building from the Hotel De Anza and around the corner to the taller office buildings and Axis residential tower.
 - The vertical window modules and vertical lines of the Hotel De Anza art deco style inspired the detailing/ spacing of the mullions on the exterior skin of the proposed hotel. This is evident in the transitional “skin” directly adjacent to the historic hotel. The mullions step and stop with relation to the parapet of the Hotel De Anza. The mullion spacing itself is reminiscent of the window openings and vertical detailing of the windows of the Hotel De Anza.
 - The proposed hotel uses the major vertical datums of the Hotel De Anza to define the base of the structure and create a continuous pedestrian level design. The cutback of the upper stories references the parapet of the Hotel De Anza.
- The design should have elements that draw out of town visitors for the hotel use, but also public elements for downtown San Jose residents and businesses.
 - The design has a unique rooftop terrace for guests and public use.
 - The design has a ground floor bar and lounge for guest and public use.
 - The design uses a predominantly glass storefront providing visual activity at the pedestrian level along the Santa Clara corridor.

We also would like to acknowledge that the refinement of the design was done with feedback provided from peer reviews, public hearings and staff comments. The evolution of the cutbacks of the massing, the development of the street level program and design, and the design of the building skin were done in conjunction with these discussions. We have incorporated comments as the design has evolved, while respecting the programmatic requirements for the project and initial concept for the design.

We hope this letter provides additional insight into the process and thought behind the project. We are excited to be a part of the opportunity to create this vision for the site. We believe this hotel will be a beneficial and attracting element that adds to the evolving architectural fabric and experiences of downtown San Jose.

Sincerely,

C2K Architecture, Inc.



Kevin Sauser, AIA, NCARB, Principal
C2K Architecture, Inc.
California Architectural License #C-31859

Cc: Sam Liccardo, Mayor
Chappie Jones, Vice Mayor, District 1
Sergio Jimenez, District 2
Raul Peralez, District 3
Lan Diep, District 4
Magdalena Carrasco, District 5
Dev Davis, District 6
Maya Esparza, District 7
Sylvia Arenas, District 8
Pam Foley, District 9
Johnny Khamis, District 10



January 10, 2020

Thai-Chau Le, Environmental Program Manager
Planning, Building and Code Enforcement
City of San Jose
200 E. Santa Clara St.
San José, CA 95113

Patrick Kelly, Supervising Planner
Planning Division
City of San Jose
200 E. Santa Clara St.
San José, CA 95113

Dear Ms. Le and Mr. Kelly:

Re: File No. H18-038
Almaden Corner Hotel Project (Project)

This letter serves as our written comments to the First Amendment for the Almaden Corner Hotel SEIR (First Amendment) and Resolution Approving the Site Development Permit (Resolution).

Public Garage Used for a Private Purpose

We see from the First Amendment that the Project is still intending to use the public San Pedro Square Parking Garage for a private purpose. We object to the private use of a public facility. The people that patronize our downtown restaurants and other small businesses as well as those who come to our Sharks games, deserve to be able to use a public facility. We as taxpayers, paid for that garage. We paid for it to be an amenity for the public not a benefit for a private entity. It is improper to misappropriate a public resource for such a purpose. We know the city would like to discourage vehicle use but as long as provisions are present for parking, a public garage should be for the benefit of the public.

Professionally Managed by Action Property Management
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408-279-8781 (phone)/408-947-1589 (fax)
axishoa.org

**Resolution Approving the Site Development Permit
Historic Landmarks Commission Review Section**

We believe there is a substantive error in the Resolution Approving the Site Development Permit (Resolution).

The Historic Landmarks Commission (HLC) submitted a letter dated October 3, 2019 giving its comments to the Project. It is unclear why the Resolution did not reference this letter but instead referenced the HLC's April 3, 2019 comments to the prior design. In the Resolution the last sentence of the first paragraph in the Historic Landmarks Commission Review Section at Page 9 states: "The HLC provided the following comments based on the prior design:" We believe the analysis of the Project given in the Resolution should be based on the current design discussed in the HLC's October 3, 2019 letter.

The HLC's October letter is very critical of the project and it itemizes numerous concerns regarding the incompatibility of the proposed design with the Art Deco Hotel De Anza. Among the numerous comments were the following:

The HLC has "...concerns regarding the incompatibility of the proposed design with the Art Deco Hotel De Anza ... including, but not limited to, the disproportionate scale, choice of materials, and nominal attempt to acknowledge the massing of the historic structure."

They go on to say:

"...the proposed 19-story structure has dwarfed the 10-story stepped massing of the De Anza Hotel, with little to no attempt at mitigating this sizable, undeniable impact."

"...no attempt has been made to address the sheer 9-story disparity between the two projects. This is a direct, unmitigated impact..."

"Per the EIR, 'the detailing meets the intent, but not the letter, of the guideline that a new building be 'broken down' in scale to be compatible with nearby historic resources.' ... We cannot agree with the EIR's assessment. The intent of the guideline is that the building be broken down in scale; not that detailing be arbitrarily applied to try and mitigate the otherwise unresponsive massing of the proposal..."

The HLC states: "The materials in the Almaden Corner Hotel are clearly not compatible."

They further say:

“The original environmental document for the adjacent Axis Tower project, the 47 Notre Dame Supplemental EIR (Axis SEIR), identified the Almaden Corner Hotel project site as ‘Phase II’, a 6-story residential and retail building. This reduced height proposal would be more in keeping with the adjacent De Anza Hotel, and should be specifically enumerated as a previously submitted alternate for the project site.”

In addition, they say:

“The historic resource analysis consistently uses the phrase “generally compatible...The analysis downplays the more substantive negative impacts the proposal has upon the De Anza Hotel, and the myriad ways in which the choice of materials, massing, and detailing consciously ignores the adjacent historic precedent.”

The HLC concludes by saying:

“The City has, in the past, required other projects constructed near historic resources to comply with both the Secretary of Interior Standards and the City’s Historic Preservation Ordinance. The proposed hotel tower, as submitted, fails in both regards. A project on this iconic of a corner, immediately adjacent to one of San Jose’s highest profile historic landmark structures, should be held to the highest standard. At present, the design proposal and historic resource analysis instead seek out the lowest common denominator, indicating the least amount of effort possible to nominally relate to the iconic De Anza Hotel.”

It is unclear why the City has, in the past, required other projects to comply with the Secretary of Interior Standards and the City’s Historic Preservation Ordinance but is not requiring this project to comply.

Resolution Approving the Site Development Permit Parking Valet Operations

There is an indeterminate condition in the Resolution Approving the Site Development Permit (Resolution).

One of the conditions in the Resolution at Page 19, No. 9, regarding Parking Valet Operations states:

“Valet service shall be provided for automobiles accessing the hotel. A minimum of ten (10) valet staff shall be provided at maximum hotel occupancy during the AM and PM weekday peak traffic hours (7:00 AM – 9 AM and 4:00 PM – 6:00 PM, respectively).”

It is unclear what the term “maximum hotel occupancy” means. Occupancy of 272 rooms is literally the maximum occupancy and 10 valets would be required, but if 271 rooms are occupied, are 10 valets not needed? Should the number of valets be determined on a prorated basis? So if 136 rooms were occupied, 5 valets would be required? Also, the analysis states “Since the project is not proposing any on-site parking, the hotel valet service will need to be in operation 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.” So, if the condition of approval is intended to follow the analysis, a statement should be added regarding the need to operate the valet service, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Respectfully submitted,



Eugenia M. Verbeckmoes
Chair, Land Development Committee
Axis Homeowners Association

Cc: Mayor Sam Liccardo
Councilmember Raul Peralez
Councilmember Charles Jones
Councilmember Sergio Jimenez,
Councilmember Lan Diep
Councilmember and Vice Mayor Magdalena Carrasco
Councilmember Devora Davis
Councilmember Tam Nguyen
Councilmember Sylvia Arenas
Councilmember Donald Rocha
Councilmember Johnny Khamis
David Tran, Senior Council Assistant, District 3
Yves Hansel, General Manager, Hotel De Anza
Steven Cos, San Jose Downtown Association
Scott Knies, San Jose Downtown Association
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Mike Sodergren, Preservation Action Council of San Jose

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John Mitchell, Preservation Action Council of San Jose
Bill Souders, San Jose Downtown Residents Association
Sblend Sblendorio, Hoge Fenton
Josué García, Director, Silicon Valley MEPS

From: [Jonathan Gordon](#)
To: [Le, Thai-Chau](#)
Subject: Approve ALMADEN CORNER HOTEL PROJECT FILE NO. H18-038
Date: Monday, January 13, 2020 11:58:18 AM

[External Email]

I am voicing my support of this project. It will be great for the vibrancy of downtown.

I want to speak against the preservation movement which is trying to stop this project.

— Jonathan

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On Jan 13, 2020, at 3:41 PM, Jon D'Agostino wrote:

Hi Raul!

Not sure if you remember me... you presented at Johanson & Yau to share your thoughts about leadership and your transition from police to city council. Thanks again...!

I'm contacting you regarding the vote tomorrow on the hotel proposal for the site next to the De Anza. I'm shocked that so many of my neighbors at Axis plan to fight this project. As an Axis resident whose apartment faces the site, I want to express my support of this project – 100%!

While I get the historical value of the De Anza, there isn't any rationale that the two hotels would not be able to exist in tandem. For one thing, a neglected vacant lot at such a prominent intersection in the city center is kind of ridiculous, no? It's an eye sore that doesn't make any sense in the heart of Silicon Valley, even more so, considering our need for hotel rooms. As for the De Anza, I know the ownership and branding has changed a few times recently, but it appears to be in decline. Despite fairly recent renovations, the restaurant is no longer open, although I understand that they serve some food in the bar. It looks neglected to me. There are loud parties that last until late hours. I know the police and city have been notified about this. So for all the adoration of the De Anza, it needs its own attention independent of any neighboring development project.

I'm from Philadelphia. There's a historical building on nearly every block. But one of the things I appreciate most is the city's willingness to blend new and old designs. It's what makes a city vibrant; not some misplaced attention on preserving a mediocre hotel next to a vacant lot. For example, I have attached a photo of Philly's new W Hotel, a very modern glass tower (50+ stories) that is directly adjacent to one of the most architecturally significant historic banks in the city. They figured it out.

Let's focus on evolving into the most vibrant city. Cities have tall buildings. People know this when they choose to live in a dense urban environment.

We need both hotels, not one old hotel and a vacant lot.

I hope that you vote in support of this project.

Thanks for reading!

JON A. D'AGOSTINO, SHRM-CP/PHR
Director of Human Resources & Administration

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