

From: [Jon Baer](#)
To: [Guido Persicone](#)
Subject: 355 First Street comments
Date: Monday, January 11, 2021 8:23:27 PM

Guido-my comments, consistent with what I said during the community meeting are below:

The project appears to be adequately parked, which is a real plus. However I think it is critical, for this project as well as the others under development on this block, that the alley be widened along the full length, not just the properties that are currently being developed. That would allow traffic to use both Whitney and Lyell for entrance and egress onto San Antonio Road. Otherwise there may be conflicts as cars try to navigate what is a very narrow alley and create traffic conflicts at one or both of the intersections.

This project is not like others that have or are being constructed in Los Altos-it is the largest, densest project in our downtown and as presented does not work in that the mass and bulk are not visually managed in a good manner. A great example of what not to do is 396 First Street-basically a cube with limited landscape and no richness of design (windows not recessed, etc). The east side of First Street is severely compromised by three story/4story #396 which was a poorly designed building representing excessive development. We want orderly development in this zone. While this design might marginally work along El Camino (and definitely would work in Miami) it does not fit with the village look or feel and does nothing to bring human scale to the building. Compare this building to what was done at 100 First Street!

As previously mentioned, I believe that 371 and/or 373 First are historic structures over 50 years old that will need to be evaluated prior to any demolition and perhaps even before certifying that this project can be fast tracked under SB330

This project will need redesign to reduce the mass and bulk so as to minimize abrupt changes along the street; the building needs to be designed to respect the massing of adjacent buildings. So using objective standards the question is what makes this particular building design need improvement?

1. The volume of this four story cube is insufficiently architecturally relieved: the front elevation has recessed windows, with few, as well as smaller, vertical planes, but not enough breaking up of the cube. Furthermore the fourth story is not set back and has a roof overhang that adds to the appearance of mass and bulk.

Suggestion: use an enhanced version of the front elevation as a model for how to use deep recesses to break the cube massing on all other sides.

2. There is no communal open space for the use of the occupants. 42 units have at least 2 bedrooms. That implies children with no on-site play space.

Suggestion: Enlarge court significantly, and open "court" for general view and access (by most if not all the units, thru the lobby and perhaps even visually to the street). Open more windows on it to illuminate corridors. This is a missed opportunity.

3. There is minimal public landscaping. This very urban expression needs "generous landscaping", a town value to fit the "village".

Suggestion: Pull footprint back from First Street to provide landscape buffer space. See 467 First Street example. Even 396 First has trees and planter.

4. The Whitney/First corner is a full cubic volume, with no recognition of 349 (across Whitney) property.

Suggestion: Carve away cubic volume to reduce "big shoulder" impact. Add landscape elements to soften

5. The "Court" is a not a court. It's a light shaft, as presented almost entirely 40ft high solid walls. It does not provide an amenity to the building nor a true emergency egress for the bedrooms above ground level opening on it.

Suggestion: See item 2

6. Recognize the impact on the street and town of the 11 foot height concession and adjust design

Suggestion: Pull the fourth story back on both First and Whitney Streets. And consider changing roof overhang element to minimize visual impact of the roof.