

# High praise for post office redevelopment in Burlingame

Officials admire plans to rebuild old mail facility into commercial project

By Austin Walsh Daily Journal staff

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The proposed redevelopment of the historic former Burlingame post office into a new downtown commercial building received rave reviews from planning officials.

The Burlingame Planning Commission universally praised the six-story office and retail project proposed to replace the old mail facility at 220 Park Road during a meeting Monday, July 13.

While no decision was made during the meeting, officials were impressed by the design of the tower expected to be the tallest in Burlingame planned over a restaurant and retail hub which will open into an adjacent public plaza.

“I think it is going to be a great addition to our city and a great centerpiece to our city,” said Commissioner Richard Sargent.

Commission Chair Audrey Tse shared a similar opinion of the building comprised of 139,887 square feet of office space and 12,402 square feet of retail space over two underground stories of parking providing 283 spaces.

“I too really appreciate this design. I think it has come such a long way. It is so beautiful and I’m proud of it and want to see it built quickly hopefully,” she said.

In all, the building would be 178,187 square feet, including plans to retain about 4,800 square feet of the historic post office for conversion into a restaurant or retail center, alongside an additional about 7,500 square feet of retail space along Lorton Avenue.

The post office building has been eligible to be listed on a state or national historic register and the city agreed to oversee a preservation covenant to ensure character-defining elements of the building are maintained.

Abutting the development will be a public plaza, designed by a separate firm, at the city’s parking lot E. The two projects together are imagined in a fashion similar to Redwood City’s Courthouse Square.

The post office redevelopment was initially proposed as a mixed-use proposal featuring residential units, but the previous developer could not get it off the ground. Development firm Sares Regis stepped in last year to take over and shifted the direction to an entirely commercial proposal.

“We feel this is a legacy project, we are proud of how it has evolved,” said Andrew Turco, assistant vice president with Sares Regis Group of Northern California.

Burlingame officials met previously with the development firm to discuss initial designs and offered feedback, which was integrated into the most recent iteration of plans.

And while officials appreciated the amended look of the project, they suggested some additional refinements could be possible — such as improvements to the side and edges of the building or emphasis on the central tower.

“The devil will be in the details,” said Commission Vice Chair Richard Terrones.

But referring to the way plans have evolved, commissioners lauded the overall proposal.

“I really like the direction the project is going. I think it’s taking its urban design job very, very seriously and I think that is the single most important thing this project can do,” said Commissioner Will Loftis.

Commissioner John Schmid also offered compliments, calling the proposal handsomely designed.

“Very nice job, I really like the project,” he said.

Tse agreed too.

“I’m very, very happy with this design,” she said.