

# CITY OF MOUNTAIN VIEW

## ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING COMMISSION

### STAFF REPORT

WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 16, 2019

#### 5. STUDY SESSION

##### 5.1 Study Session to Discuss Proposed General Plan and Zoning Map Amendments, Transfer of Development Rights from the Los Altos School District Site, and Planned Community Permit, Development Review Permit, and Heritage Tree Removal Permit to Construct a New 382-Unit Residential Development to Replace One Existing Office Building at 400 Logue Avenue

#### RECOMMENDATION

That the Environmental Planning Commission provide input on the proposed residential project.

#### PUBLIC NOTIFICATION

The Commission's agenda is advertised on Channel 26, and the agenda and this report appear on the City's Internet website. All property owners and tenants within a 750' radius and other interested stakeholders were notified of this meeting.

#### BACKGROUND

##### Project Site and Location

The project is located on the west side of Logue Avenue, between Maude Avenue and the Bayshore Freeway, in the future East Whisman Precise Plan (EWPP) Area.

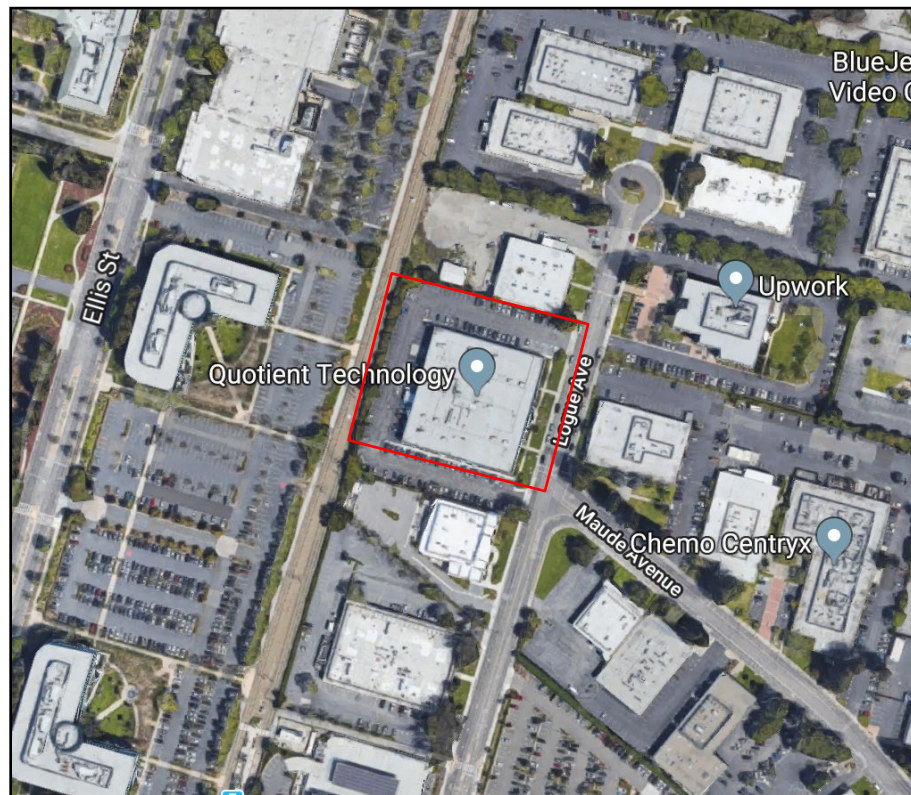
The approximately 2.54-acre project site is currently developed with one 42,000 square foot single-story office building, which would be demolished for this project.

Immediately surrounding development includes:

- VTA light rail tracks (west);

- Single-story office/industrial building (east, across Logue Avenue);
- Single-story office/industrial building (south); and
- Single-story office buildings (north).

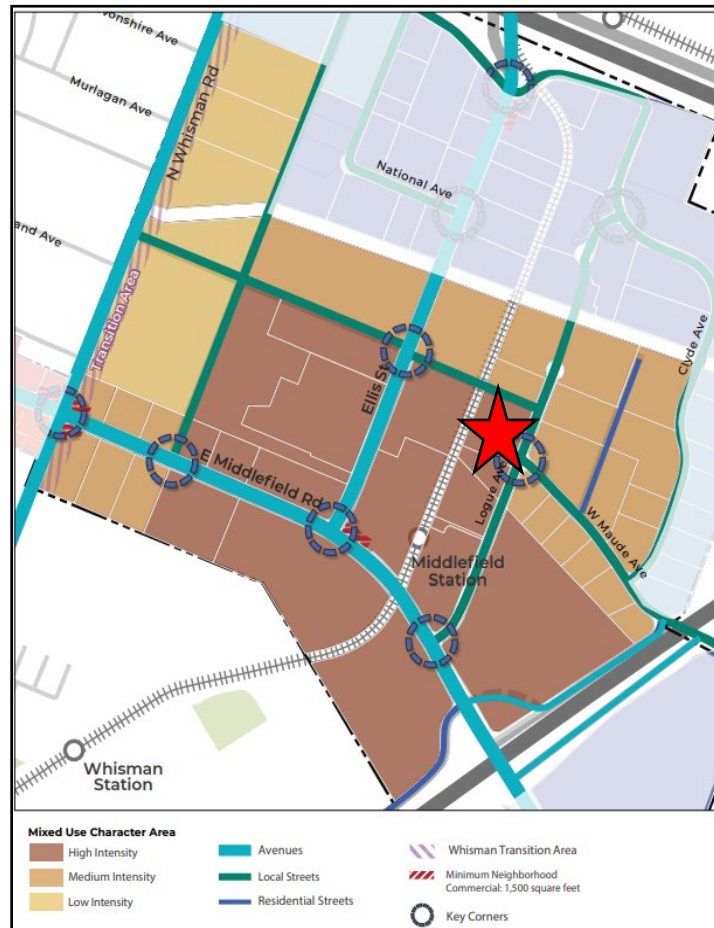
**Figure 1: Location Map**



### **East Whisman Change Area**

In 2012, the City adopted a new General Plan to guide land use and growth through 2030. One of the areas identified for growth is the East Whisman Change Area. The General Plan vision for the area is as a transit-oriented employment center with high-intensity office development, a greater diversity of land uses, an improved multi-modal transportation network with safe pedestrian and bicycle connections, and expanded retail and services to support residents and workers in the area. The General Plan also identified the need to update the area's zoning and development standards through a precise plan process, which is expected to be completed soon and incorporates updated City Council direction for residential land uses in the area.

**Figure 2: East Whisman Precise Plan Land Use**



### **Draft East Whisman Precise Plan**

The project site is located in the central portion of the EWPP area in the High-Intensity portion of the Mixed-Use Character Area, which allows buildings up to a 1.0 floor area ratio (FAR) and heights up to 95' or eight stories.

Once adopted, the EWPP will guide the transition of the East Whisman Change Area to a mixed-use district with new residential neighborhoods, open spaces, and mobility options. The Precise Plan will also amend the General Plan to allow new residential uses and further support goals and policies to reduce the City's jobs/housing imbalance, encourage shorter commutes, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Since its public release in April 2019 and subsequent revisions, the

draft EWPP has served as a basis for staff's review of the project, as discussed in this report.

### **General Plan and Zoning Designations**

The current General Plan Land Use Designation for the site is High-Intensity Office, which would be amended as part of the EWPP process to East Whisman Mixed-Use. The project site is currently in the ML (Limited Industrial) Zoning District and would be rezoned to the EWPP once it is adopted.

### **Prior Meetings and Hearings**

#### *TDR Program and Gatekeeper Authorization*

The Los Altos School District (LASD) transfer of development rights (TDR) program stems from years of coordination between the City and LASD on opportunities to support a new school site in the San Antonio Precise Plan (SAPP) area, including adopted policies in the SAPP for measures like the TDR program.

On January 16, 2018, the City Council authorized the City Manager to execute a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the City and LASD establishing the framework for the TDR Program comprised of up to 610,000 square feet of transferable development rights. At the same meeting, Council also authorized City staff to begin review of six Gatekeeper requests for development projects proposing to utilize available TDR square footage.

This residential development at 400 Logue Avenue received Gatekeeper authorization in May 2018, encumbering the remaining 72,000 square feet of available TDR square footage (see Exhibit 1). As part of the Gatekeeper application review, staff was supportive of the request since the City Council had endorsed 5,000 residential units in the proposed EWPP area, and this project would help implement that vision as one of the first residential development proposals in the EWPP area.

The Gatekeeper authorization allowed the applicant to submit for development review prior to final consideration of the EWPP. At the hearing, staff noted that they would coordinate with the TDR purchasers to design their projects to be as consistent with the EWPP as possible.

*Development Review Committee*

On June 14, 2019, the Development Review Committee (DRC) provided initial, informal direction on the site plan and architectural design. Site plan comments focused on addressing important EWPP open space objectives, improving the key corner, and creating a high-quality pedestrian environment for on-site service streets and paseos. The DRC specifically noted the key corner at the intersection of Logue Avenue and Maude Avenue should be activated with interesting streetscape design and a mix of engaging interior spaces and exterior building features. The DRC suggested shifting the main entrance lobby to the key corner.

Overall, the DRC commented on how the two buildings need to relate to each other but have distinct presence. As shown in the drawings, the DRC noted the buildings have too much of a sense of sameness in materiality and detailing.

For Building A (11-story condominium building), the DRC stated there should be a well-defined base, middle, and top, but noted the building base appears pinched by the overhanging upper floors. The DRC discussed how the design included substantial massing breaks, but they could be used more effectively to break down the scale of the building so it feels less massive and to create visual interest. The DRC stated this was most important on the longer sides of the building. The DRC recommended more variation in materials be studied to distinguish ground and upper floors.

For Building B (eight-story apartment building), the DRC noted the building middle provides a relatively strong residential rhythm, but the top feels clunky and incongruous with the rest of the building. The DRC stated the top should have a lighter presence, with stronger setbacks or emphasis of provided setbacks. The DRC recommended the applicant study options for a more glassy, open appearance. The DRC also indicated the window design needs work to feel less commercial.



**Figure 3: View from Logue Avenue**



## ANALYSIS

Staff has worked closely with the applicant to achieve EWPP compliance, but there are still inconsistencies with some requirements of the Draft EWPP. Because this project review is concurrent with the drafting of the Draft EWPP, and this could be one of the first residential developments developed under the EWPP, staff's intent is for the project to set an example for future residential projects in the area in terms of building design, open space, and site layout. Key areas of inconsistency with the EWPP and project design are discussed in detail in the following sections.

### Project Overview

The proposed project includes two new residential buildings with a total of 382 units: Building A is an 11-story building with 138 ownership units, and Building B is an eight-story building with 244 rental units (see Exhibit 2). The two buildings will be constructed over a single, shared, two-level subterranean parking structure containing 400 parking spaces. Vehicular access is currently provided via an internal street from Logue Avenue, which also serves as an emergency vehicle

access (EVA), and the ramp to the underground parking is located in the northwest corner of Building B.

**Figure 4: Project Site Plan**



The buildings are designed to allow for landscape opportunities throughout the site, as well as a courtyard in Building B. Where ground-level units occur, the buildings are elevated to allow for stoops and private patios with direct access to adjacent paths and open spaces. The architectural design of both buildings is modern in appearance.

**Figure 5: View from Logue Avenue**



The massing of the buildings, which includes a step-down along Logue Avenue, is treated with smaller-scale, vertically oriented elements which emphasize the pedestrian-scaled elements and features. The buildings are designed with a variety of details and materials to try to create distinctive architecture, including changes in height, angled building shapes to create articulation, high-quality materials, color contrast, and visible entry locations.

#### Building A (11-Story Condominium Building)

The ground floor on Logue Avenue is activated by the building lobby and mail/lounge area defined by spandrel glass and vertical wood siding. The upper floors project out beyond the ground floor. Defining the vehicular entrance is a tower element with manufactured wood panel materials that could provide opportunities for public art with a roof terrace. The elevations are articulated with proportioned windows and projecting balconies. The materials include spandrel glass, vision glass, copper anodized panel, fiber cement panel and wood panels, and glass railing.



**Figure 6: Building A – South Elevation**



### Building B (Eight-Story Apartment Building)

The massing in Building B to the south is stepped down at the north edge to provide for light and air between Buildings A and B. The key corner (Maude Avenue and Logue Avenue) is activated with ground-floor tenant uses. The corner is defined by a tower element with weathered steel material with warm brick and accent tile as the base. The top level steps back from the street plane wall. The elevation with similar materials as Building A provides for building articulation with projecting balconies and pop-outs. The materials include zinc (standing seam), manufactured wood panels, fiber cement board, weathered steel, stucco glass rails, and brick.

**Figure 7: Buildings A and B East Elevation**



TDR Proposal and EWPP Exceptions

The project proposes to utilize 72,000 square feet of TDR as part of the City’s LASD TDR Program. Since the initial Gatekeeper application in 2018, the original proposal was 412 residential units, and the refined project design has led to 382 units. The architect has indicated that certain exceptions may be needed to fully utilize the TDR square footage. The table below identifies project compliance and inconsistencies with EWPP draft standards. Deviations from EWPP standards are generally due to the additional TDR square footage incorporated into the project.

**Table 1: Mixed-Use Character Area Standards Compliance**

<b>Standard</b>	<b>EWPP Requirement</b>	<b>Proposed</b>	<b>Staff Analysis</b>
Height/Stories	95' or 8 stories	Building A: 121' and 11 stories Building B: 84'9", 8 stories	Does not comply*  Complies
FAR (Max.)	Base: 1.0 FAR Bonus: 3.5 FAR	4.15 FAR	Does not comply*
Average Street Wall Height	75'	Building A – 75' Building B – 75'	Complies
<b>Setbacks (Min.)</b>			
Public Street	10'	12'	Complies
Side and Rear where no street exists	15'	25' / 40'	Complies
Alleys and Paseos	5'	Building A – 5' Building B – 5'	Complies **
<b>Open Space</b>			
Private Open Area (Min.)	0-40 sq.ft./unit (Total: 15,280 sq.ft.)	Building A – 5,250 sq.ft. Building B – 6,400 sq.ft.	Does not meet standard – deficient 3,630 sq.ft.
Common Useable Open Area (Min.)	80-120 sq.ft./unit (Total: 30,560 sq.ft.)	11,580 sq.ft.	Does not meet standard – deficient 18,980 sq. ft.
Total Open Area	45,840 sq.ft.	23,230 sq.ft.	Does not meet standard – deficient 22,610 sq.ft.

\* The EWPP specifically acknowledges additional height and FAR that may result from TDR use.

\*\* The applicant will work with staff to comply with the setbacks.

The Draft EWPP describes the allowance for exceptions to development standards if the project: (a) meets the intent and purpose of the Precise Plan; and (b) results in a superior project design or outcome for the community that justifies the

exception request. While elements of the proposed project design are consistent with the Draft EWPP, there are elements that are inconsistent with the Draft EWPP, or otherwise need to be refined to better address EWPP design objectives, such as key corner, open space, and enhanced architectural features. Staff has highlighted these topics for EPC input.

For each of the discussion topics in this report, the EPC may provide input on the suitability and extent of the exception(s) requested. Ultimately, findings will need to be made to allow any exceptions to the development standards as part of staff's project review and will be considered by the EPC and City Council at the final public hearings. At this stage, the EPC's input on these topics will help staff determine the policy priorities and design direction for the project.

#### *Height and FAR*

The EWPP acknowledges that additional FAR and height could be needed for TDR projects, and the proposed project will require FAR and height exceptions. While the additional height and FAR can be permitted under the EWPP, the project will still need to demonstrate compliance with height limitations under the Moffett Field Comprehensive Land Use Plan. The applicant must also demonstrate the requested exceptions meet the intent of the TDR Program allowances and/or EWPP exception process.

#### *Private and Common Usable Open Area*

As noted in the above table, the EWPP requires a minimum of 120 square feet per unit of common usable open area and provides flexibility for inclusion of up to 40 square feet per unit of private open area within the total open area requirement (e.g., if 40 square feet per unit of private open area are provided, then at least 80 square feet per unit of common usable open area would be required). Under the Draft EWPP, common usable open areas must have a minimum dimension of 25' and cannot include public parks or EWPP-required public circulation.

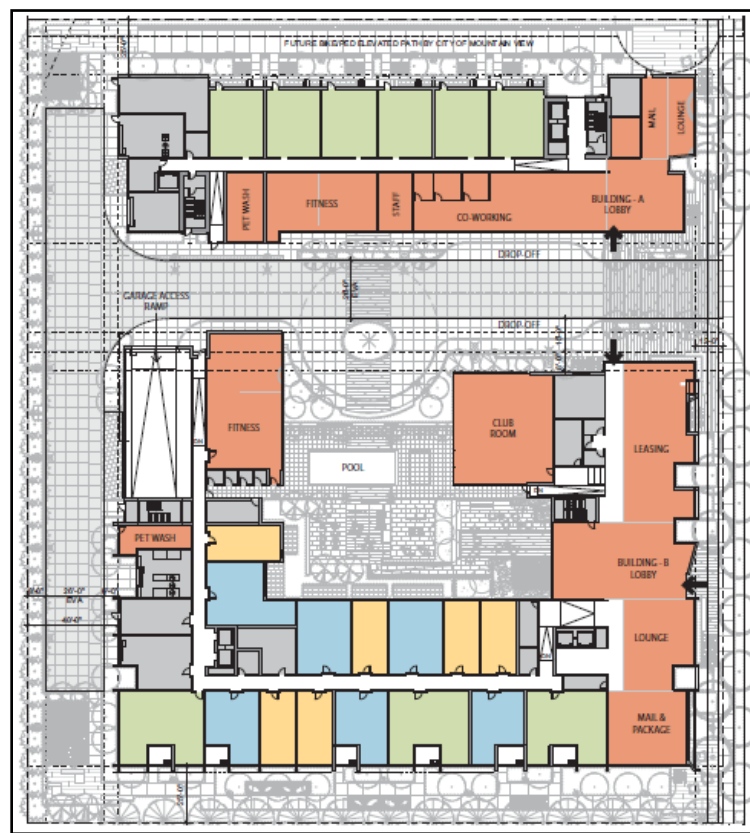
The proposed project currently includes common usable open areas in a few locations, including: a rooftop pool decks Building A and a central courtyard and pool at ground-level of Building B. The project plans indicate these areas result in 11,580 square feet of common usable open area (approximately 30 square feet per unit) in addition to 11,650 square feet of private decks, balconies, and patios (approximately 30 square feet per unit). As currently designed, the total combined open area of 23,230 square feet (or 61 square feet per unit) results in a project



deficit of 22,610 square feet as compared to the 45,840 square feet required by the EWPP.

The southern and northern edges of the subject property are designed as greenway or paseo/multi-use path locations in the Draft EWPP. The minimum width of a paseo is 20', including buffer landscaping on both sides, with residential buildings required to provide an additional 5' setback from the paseo. The minimum width for multi-use paths is 30' minimum, including 10' to 16' of landscaping on both sides and a 5' building setback. The project proposes a 25' multi-use path, where 30' would be required per the EWPP; however, the applicant would not need to accommodate the entire path on the subject property. Staff will continue to work with the applicant on the design of the path. The EWPP states these connections "shall provide the minimum area necessary for a functional connection, including, if necessary, a landscape buffer between the hardscape and property line," allowing flexibility on a project-by-project basis to determine the minimum dimensions of setbacks, buffers, and paths.

**Figure 8: Proposed Open Space**



**Figure 9: Highest Occupiable Level**

The applicant has been working with staff to evaluate options to achieve a more compliant open space plan. Staff recommends studying additional rooftop open space locations. Staff also recommends relocating the existing trash collection, loading, and/or parking garage access, which are currently located toward the rear of the site and cause all associated vehicles to traverse the entire length of the on-site service road/EVA. Moving these facilities closer to or along Logue Avenue could allow a significant portion of the on-site roadway to be designed and programmed instead as a joint EVA/open space, similar to the recently approved Prometheus Real Estate Group residential project at 525, 555, and 769 East Evelyn Avenue. While this would place these facilities in more visible locations, staff would work with the applicant on design solutions, and these changes could help the project achieve compliance with the EWPP open-area standards and improve the pedestrian experience throughout the site.

***EPC Question No. 1: Does the EPC support staff recommendations to increase open space area by relocating other project components such as parking garage access, loading, and solid waste facilities?***

### **Project Design and Architecture**

Discussed below are some key design topics from the EWPP and DRC feedback, on which staff is requesting EPC consideration and input. Topics include key corner elements and building components. The applicant has made some incremental adjustments since the DRC meeting and will continue to work with staff to address DRC and EWPP direction, incorporating any additional design input provided by the EPC. The staff recommendations provided below generally mirror earlier feedback from the DRC.

### **Architectural Style and Differentiation**

Both buildings employ a contemporary architectural style. Staff and the DRC believe the style will be compatible with the evolving East Whisman mixed-use area but that refinement is needed so the two buildings relate to each other but have distinct presence. Currently, the drawings provide too much of a sense of sameness in materiality and detailing between the building. Staff anticipates continuing to work with the applicant to address this through the development review process.

### **Building Massing**

Buildings in the EWPP area should be designed with a defined base, middle, and top. Ground floors should provide a solid base and strong frontage design and have a minimum 15' plate height. Massing needs to be broken up into regular increments through smaller massing breaks and, per the EWPP, the major massing break needs to occur roughly every 25' across approximately every 200' of block face and should be at least 15' behind the front facade. Based on DRC and staff review, the following issues should be addressed to improve the massing of each proposed building:

- *Building A (11-story condominium building):* As discussed earlier in this report, the base looks pinched below the overhanging upper floors, and while the building has a fairly narrow frontage on Logue Avenue, it is over 250' long with highly visible side elevations that look massive. In addition, the top level is stepped back from Logue Avenue, but there is no distinct building top. The current design provides some substantial wall movement and

recess. However, while this could be partly due to the drawing quality, the angled frames around large building areas and balcony screens on the side elevations seem to diminish the rhythm of glazing and balcony recesses.

The applicant should continue to work with staff to create an interesting building termination as well as to make massing adjustments and use materials/detailing to create a stronger building base, distinguished from the upper floors. As noted by the DRC, the side elevations need to feel more open and airy to give a stronger sense of splitting the larger building mass into smaller segments with well-proportioned windows, balconies, and other elements to provide the desired residential rhythm. Additional refinement of residential detailing is also needed, including a glazing design that has a less office-like appearance.

- *Building B (eight-story apartment building)*: Similar to the condominium building, the apartment building base needs strong materiality and interest, particularly along Logue Avenue and where residential units interface with publicly accessible pathways. Although the window design needs work, the building middle provides a relatively strong residential rhythm. However, the top level(s) should have a lighter and/or more glassy appearance, with stronger setbacks or emphasis of provided setbacks. Staff also recommends continued work on overall materiality to ensure the building has a warm and welcoming residential character.

### Key Corner

The EWPP identifies a required “key corner” on the project site, where Maude Avenue terminates and provides views of the project. Per the EWPP, projects should design key corners with enhanced landscape design and/or enhanced architectural features such as emphasized entries, distinctive corner articulation, visually interesting materials, etc. Corners should be made special by varying the material, adding prominent trees, public art, etc. Blank walls should be avoided.

Based on DRC input, the applicant has made some initial revisions to move the leasing office, lobby, and other more active amenity areas to locations where they better activate the frontage at the EWPP key corner and where the apartment interfaces with the main vehicle entry and condominium building. While further refinement is needed, these changes are beneficial.

While staff appreciates the incremental changes made since the DRC, continued refinement is needed for this key corner location to ensure a stronger entry



emphasis is provided through a distinctive architectural expression coordinated with frontage improvements, providing an enhanced pedestrian feel and visual interest. Options could include continued study of distinctive building corner treatments; vertical streetscape elements, such as sculptures and specimen tree plantings; and other strong pedestrian features along the Maude Avenue and Logue Avenue intersection. While not identified as an EWPP key corner, staff also anticipates working with the applicant to minimize pedestrian impacts, enhance nonvehicle conditions, and create more visual interest in the main site entry between the two buildings. These changes would also help address EWPP direction for strong, direct pedestrian access to building entrances and provide a sense of place.

*EPC Question No. 2: Does the EPC support staff design recommendations on the building massing, key corner features, and other building components?*

*EPC Question No. 3: Does the EPC have any additional site or building design input for the applicant to work on with staff and the DRC?*

## **NEXT STEPS**

Following feedback from the EPC at this Study Session, the applicant will revise the project plans and continue through the development and environmental review processes.

## **CONCLUSION**

This Study Session gives the EPC the opportunity to provide input on key project topics to guide the applicant and staff in refining the project design through the remainder of the development review process. Staff requests EPC feedback on the following questions and any other project related comments:

1. Does the EPC support staff recommendations to increase open space area by relocating other project components such as parking garage access, loading, and solid waste facilities?
2. Does the EPC support staff design recommendations on the building massing, key corner features, and other building components?
3. Does the EPC have any additional site or building design input for the applicant to work on with staff and the DRC?

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- Exhibits:
1. [May 22, 2018 City Council Report](#)
  2. Project Plans