



D E S I G N
R E V I E W
C O M M I T T E E
S T A F F R E P O R T

For Advisory Comments
FEBRUARY 17, 2022

747 (787) Bancroft Way PREVIEW

Design Review #DRCP2021-0012 to demolish six existing buildings and construct a 162,375 square-foot, three-story building containing 133,028 square feet of research and development space and 29,347 square feet of light manufacturing space, and a surface parking lot containing 75 off-street parking spaces and five loading spaces.

I. Introduction

This project is located on the Northwest corner of Bancroft and Fifth in the MU-LI district of West Berkeley. The project site would merge four parcels for the construction of a three-story research and development building.

The demolition of six vacant one-story non-residential structures is being scheduled on an upcoming LPC Meeting for their review. This project is also scheduled for a future ZAB hearing pending the conclusion of any Use Permit and CEQA review.

The project is before the Design Review Committee this month as a Preview.

II. Background

This project proposes a 159,143 square-foot, three-story research and development building and a surface parking lot containing 75 parking spaces, referred to as the West Block (Phase III). The project includes:

- An approximately 6,000 square-foot outdoor plaza at northeast portion of the property.
- Six-foot tall security fence and retaining walls at the northeast, south and west portions of the property.
- Four terraces totaling 2,592 square feet on the second and third floors facing Fourth Street and Bancroft Way.

- Vehicular access through two aisles on Bancroft Way: one for access to two loading spaces and one for access to a surface parking lot with capacity for 75 parking spaces and five loading spaces.
- A total of 88 bicycle parking spaces would be provided: 20 short-term spaces would be located on Fourth Street and 68 long-term spaces would be located in a bicycle room on the first floor, with controlled access from the surface parking lot at the rear of the building.
- 61 new trees would be planted (52 trees in the parking lot and nine in the plaza), as well as 11 street trees: 8 along Fourth Street and 3 along Bancroft.

III. Project Setting

A. Neighborhood/Area Description:

The 3.02-acre project site for all project phases is located in West Berkeley directly east of the City of Berkeley Aquatic Park across the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) tracks. Specifically, the site is bisected by Fourth Street and generally bordered by Allston Way to the north, Fifth Street to the east, Bancroft Way to the south, and the UPRR corridor to the west. Land uses in West Berkeley include manufacturing, wholesale, and industrial along with commercial and residential uses. The Project site is located south of the Fourth Street commercial and is surrounded by various industrial and commercial uses. Building heights in West Berkeley consist of one- and two-story residential uses, generally east of Fifth Street, and up to six-story mixed-use residential buildings adjacent to the University Avenue overpass.

B. Site Conditions:

The project site comprises seven parcels and nine existing buildings across two contiguous blocks, referred to as the “East Block” and the “West Block”. The project in this application is located in the “West Block” and consists of four parcels containing six existing vacant one-story buildings totaling 80,234 square feet with addresses at 701, 703, 705, 705A, and 747 Bancroft Way (light manufacturing, warehouse, warehouse-based non-store retail) and 2220 Fourth Street (warehouse-based non-store retail), as well as a surface parking lot containing 26 spaces.

Figure 1: Vicinity Map



Table 1: Land Use Information

Location		Existing Use	Zoning District	General Plan Designation
Subject Property		Warehouse-based non-store retail (vacant), warehouse and light manufacturing (vacant)	MU-LI	M – Manufacturing
Surrounding Properties	North	Light manufacturing (vacant)		
	South	Light manufacturing		
	East			
West	Research and Development (600 Addison campus, recently approved)			

Table 2: Development Standards

		Existing	Proposed Total	Permitted/ Required
Phase III (West Block): 747 (787) Bancroft Way				
BMC Sections 23E.80.070-080				
Number of Parcels		4	1	N/A
Lot Area (sq. ft.)		96,966	No change	N/A
Gross Floor Area (sq. ft.)		80,234	159,143	193,932 max
Floor Area Ratio (FAR)		0.83	1.64	2 max
Building Height	Average	Varies – 16' - 32'	45'	45' max
	Maximum	Varies – 16' - 35'	45'	N/A
	Stories	1	3	3 max
Building Setbacks	Front (Fourth)	0'	No change	N/A
	Rear	0'	33'-8"	N/A
	Left Side (Bancroft)	0'	0'	N/A
	Right Side	0'	21'-10"	N/A
Parking	Automobile	26	294 ²	274 min ³
	Bicycle	0	68/20 (long-term/short-term)	80 min (1:2,000 square feet)
	Loading	0	7	7 min (1:10,000 initial square feet and 1:25,000 square feet for additional)

Notes:

1 See Table 6, Summary of Proposed and Required Parking Spaces, by Phase

2 See Table 6. 75 spaces provided on-site in surface parking lot, 219 spaces provided off-site at 2213 Fourth garage.

3 Required Parking (R&D) = 2 spaces/1,000 sq.ft.; 125,796 sq.ft./500 sq.ft = 252 spaces required.

Required Parking (Light Manufacturing) = 2 spaces/1,500 sq.ft.; 33,347 sq.ft./1,500 sq.ft. = 22 spaces required. Total required spaces: 252 + 22 = 274.

IV. Project Description

A. Requested Use Permits

- Variance pursuant to BMC Section 23B.44.010 to allow replacement of protected floor area to be made available after the demolition or change of use of the space.
- Use Permit pursuant to BMC Section 23C.08.050.A to demolish main buildings used for non-residential purposes.
- Use Permit pursuant to BMC Section 23E.80.045.B, to change more than 25 percent of manufacturing and warehouse uses to research and development uses.
- Use Permit pursuant to BMC Section 23E.80.050.C to construct between 20,000 and 30,000 square feet of new floor area as Manufacturing and Wholesale Trade.
- Administrative Use Permit pursuant to BMC Section 23E.80.030 to establish more than 30,000 square feet of research and development use.
- Administrative Use Permit pursuant to BMC Section 23E.04.020.C to allow architectural elements to exceed the height limit in a non-residential district.

B. CEQA Determination

An Initial Study (IS) is being prepared to evaluate any environmental impacts of the proposed project, pursuant to CEQA.

V. Design Review Guidelines

The City's Design Guidelines are applicable for this project. Excerpts from the City-wide Design Review Guidelines are included below for your reference.

- **Setbacks:** The street façade of commercial streets should be respected, in order to create or maintain the sense of urban space.
- **Parking and Driveways:** Conflict with pedestrian circulation should be prevented by the proper location and design of auto entrances; whenever possible, parking should be behind buildings, underground, or in a central court. Shading of at least fifty percent (50%) of the surface area (as measured at 12 noon on June 21) is encouraged to reduce heat buildup and to improve visual appearance.

- **Harmony with Surroundings:** The proposed design should be in harmony with its surroundings through the coordination of such design elements as cornice lines, eaves, and setbacks with those of existing neighborhood buildings.
- **Articulation:** Street facades in general and the ground floor level in particular should include elements of pedestrian scale and three-dimensional interest.
- **Lighting:** Lighting for circulation, security, building/sign identification should be non-obtrusive, except for lighting fixtures which are themselves decorative additions to the streetscape.
- **Walls and Fences:** Large, unarticulated expanses of any particular wall material that deaden the pedestrian environment should be avoided. The use of clear windows for ground floor retail projects is encouraged. Walls designed to allow sitting areas for pedestrian or space for landscaping and artwork are encouraged, especially in areas of heavy pedestrian use. Landscaping and/or art work should be maximized if large expanses of wall must be left devoid of openings.
- **Landscape and Open Space:** Sidewalk areas should include landscaping that is coordinated with the neighborhood design.
- **Public Open Space Areas:** the inclusion of public open spaces is encouraged as a means of providing places for people to come together for community interaction and enlivening the pedestrian environment.
- **Pedestrian Paths:** Pedestrian paths and arcades interior to the block which joins different parts of buildings as well as different streets are encouraged.
- **Building Entrances:** Entrance points should be clearly defined and easily identifiable by pedestrians by appropriate locations and by elements such as awnings, signage, artwork or changes in paving material to define the entry point.

The West Berkeley Plan is also applicable to this project. Below are several relevant goals from that plan:

- Physical Form Goal 5: Development on major sites of 1 acre or more should be both internally cohesive and sensitively designed on the site's publicly used edges.
- Open Space Goal 9: Provide an accessible, aesthetically-pleasing network of green spaces and corridors - that is functional for varied types of users--to visually and physically link parks, creeks, and shoreline to residential and commercial, and light industrial areas.

The West Berkeley Plan can be found on the City's website at the link below:

[https://www.cityofberkeley.info/Planning_and_Development/Redevelopment_Agency/West_Berkeley_Plan_\(The\).aspx](https://www.cityofberkeley.info/Planning_and_Development/Redevelopment_Agency/West_Berkeley_Plan_(The).aspx)

VI. Issues and Analysis

A. Design Review Issues:

Neighborhood Context The project site is located in West Berkeley and is surrounded by the UPRR tracks to the west, Fourth Street to the east, and Bancroft Way to the south. The 96,966-sq. ft. parcel is designated as Manufacturing (M) in the General Plan and Mixed Use Light Industrial (MU-LI) in the Zoning Ordinance and the West Berkeley Area Plan. The site is surrounded by manufacturing and warehouse uses.

Massing/ Building Design This three-story structure is proposed in an L-shaped configuration with frontage on both Fourth Street and Bancroft Way. A surface parking lot is proposed adjacent to the Union Pacific Railroad. The façade design features concrete columns emphasized by deep recessed windows along the East and South facades. The massing steps back at the Southwest and Northeast corners, as well as at the entrance to the main lobby. The project proposes public open space to the north of the building and public improvements along Fourth Street.

Ground Floor Design The ground floor is recessed and increases the sidewalk width for pedestrian movement and additional planting and seating. The main entry is located near the midpoint of the Fourth Street façade and opens into a lobby space that extends the depth of the building to connect to the parking lot at the interior of the lot and common open space already permitted in Phase I. Workspaces are arranged along Fourth Street with the loading dock and mechanical spaces located midblock on the Bancroft side of the project.

Setbacks The building is set back approximately 33' 8" from the rear (west) property line and approximately 21' 10" from the right (north) property line. The project meets the property line at the East and South sides.

Landscape/ Open Space A public plaza along the North edge of the property serves as open space for the project. A parklet is proposed along the Fourth Street frontage, featuring concrete benches, planting strips, and flow through planters that wrap the corner at Bancroft. Eight new street trees are proposed on Fourth street with three new street trees to be planted on Bancroft. Outdoor terraces are proposed at Northeast and Southwest corners at the second and third floor floors.

Parking Vehicular access to the surface parking lot at the interior of the site is provided at the Southwest corner of the Bancroft frontage. This lot provides 75 vehicular space. New trees are also proposed in the surface lot for tree canopy coverage, consistent with our city-wide design guideline.

Colors and Materials The project would consist of an exposed concrete structure, dark metal mullions and metal trim, and stone or precast paving.

B. Issues for Discussion:

- Neighborhood Context
- Façade Design
- Building Design/ Massing
- Open Space/ Streetscape
- Colors and Materials

VII. Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Committee discuss the issues outlined above and provide advisory comments regarding the proposed building design, its relationship with its neighborhood, and any other design-related issues for the next review.

Attachments:

1. Project Plans, received February 7, 2022
2. Applicant Statement, received December 22, 2021
3. Design Narrative, received February 7, 2022

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