



# SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

**MEMO**

**DATE:** December 17, 2013

**TO:** Rick Millitello, Project Sponsor

**CC:** Historic Preservation Commission  
Jeanie Poling, Environmental Planner  
Elizabeth Watty, Current Planner

**FROM:** Pilar LaValley, Preservation Technical Specialist  
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**REVIEWED BY:** Architectural Review Committee of the  
Historic Preservation Commission

**RE:** **Meeting Notes from Review and Comment at the  
December 4, 2013 ARC-HPC Hearing for 345 Stockton Street**

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At the request of the Planning Department, the proposed removal of the existing Levi's Store building, construction of a new retail building, and reconfiguration and renovation of the Grand Hyatt Hotel plaza at 345 Stockton Street were brought before the Architectural Review Committee (ARC) for review and comment.

At the ARC meeting, the Planning Department requested review and comment regarding conformance of the proposed design with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards* and with Article 11, Appendix E, Section 7 (Additional Standards and Guidelines for Review of New Construction and Certain Alterations). Specifically, the Planning Department sought comments on the composition and massing, scale, materials and colors, design and ornamentation of the proposed new construction, and on reconfiguration and rehabilitation of the plaza and Ruth Asawa fountain.

Planning Department Preservation Staff has prepared a summary of the ARC comments from that meeting.

## ARC COMMENTS

- 1. Plaza and fountain.** All three of the Commissioners expressed their support for the proposed reconfiguration and rehabilitation of the plaza. They all indicated that the proposed design, materials, and features would be a big improvement over the current plaza plan and would be compatible with the character of the surrounding District. Further, they found that the proposed treatment of the fountain during construction, and relocation within the reconfigured plaza, was appropriate.
- 2. New Building.** All three Commissioners were complimentary of the proposed design but were concerned about its compatibility with the District. The Commissioners also stated that the compatibility analysis provided by the Project Sponsor did not appropriately address features of the District. Commissioners Hyland and Pearlman stated that they did not believe that the proposed design was compatible with the District. Commissioner Hyland questioned that since the design is not compatible with the district why not make the argument that it doesn't need to

be compatible. Commissioner Wolfram stated that the current proposal did not appear compatible with the District, but with issues of scale addressed it could be.

3. **Composition and Massing.**

- **Composition.** All three Commissioners indicated that the proposal did not adequately address the two- or three-part composition that was characteristic of buildings within the District. The emphasis on base, interior mezzanine, and roofline was not an effective means of breaking up the composition into a two- or three-part composition consistent with the District. Commissioner Hyland noted that due to the expanse of glass and the focus on transparency, the building “dissolves” so that there can be no real multi-part composition.
- **Massing.** Commissioners Wolfram and Hyland stated that the proposed rectilinear plan of the new building addresses the corner in a more resolved manner than the existing triangular building, but still not as well as it could. Commissioner Wolfram noted that if pedestrian experience is the focus of the new building, then the massing is appropriate. Commissioner Hyland expressed concern that height at corner was too low given other more massive corner buildings in the vicinity and that the proposed massing had no relationship to other corner buildings on Union Square. Commissioner Pearlman noted that he did not believe that the proposed design holds the corner at all.

4. **Scale.** All three Commissioners expressed concerns about the scale of the building and its features. Commissioner Wolfram noted that he would like the building to have more of sense of scale/texture and was concerned that the glass fins would not be visible (and would not break up the scale of the façade as proposed) due to glare/reflection from the glazing. Commissioner Wolfram also stated that the building lacks any sense of scale. Commissioner Pearlman stated that the breakdown of the glass façade with the glass fins would only work when viewed head on.

Commissioner Hyland noted that the addition of the glazed bay on Stockton was an improvement to the design but that he still finds this wall too blank and lacking in scale. Commissioner Pearlman agreed that there was a lack of pedestrian interest along the long blank stretch of the Stockton façade. Commissioner Pearlman also expressed concern about the solidity of the Stockton façade at the corner. Commissioner Pearlman said something additional is needed at the Stockton façade, possibly slot windows and a break at the corner. Overall, the Commissioners indicated that they did not believe that the scale of the proposed building was compatible with the District and that they would like to see a greater sense of scale and texture to the building. Commissioner Wolfram noted that perhaps there could be buildings considered “jewel boxes” within district but that these are often midblock and to be considered in this vein the proposed building still needs more scale.

5. **Materials and Colors.** Commissioner Wolfram stated that the proposed materials and color palette were appropriate. Commissioner Pearlman noted that he had seen examples of masonry utilized in a very crisp and precise manner and suggested that such an approach would be more appropriate for this project.

6. **Detailing and Ornamentation.** Commissioner Wolfram stated that the simple modern detailing and ornamentation of the proposed new construction appeared appropriate. Commissioners Hyland and Pearlman did not make specific comments regarding this issue.