

Districtwide Student Housing at College of San Mateo Project

Frequently Asked Questions:

How did the District review the overall location and shape of the buildings?

We've approached the site, building, and landscape design with the goal to mitigate concerns from the local residential communities and to ensure this new residence hall is a good neighbor. The shape and location of the building elements, the types of programming spaces, and the arrangement of landscape buffers have all been designed to provide the highest degree of privacy and sensitivity to the local residents. The building layout has been designed to focus student activity towards the campus core while shielding it from the local residential community. Landscape buffers along the west and north mitigate site-line visibility while blocking sound.

The majority of the building form has been clustered towards the Southeast as far away from existing homes as possible and is at a minimum of over 240 feet from any residential structures and typically much further from the rest of the surrounding community. The site approach places the campus shuttle and main entry directly across the street from the District Office and closest to the campus core which mitigates student pedestrian circulation on the site and focuses entry and exit activity away from the residential communities.

How has the District addressed noise mitigation?

The overall site approach has created the most sensitive approach that mitigates noise out towards the local residential community. The layout only has one leg of the building near the closest homes and no windows face out towards those homes. This configuration also creates two separate outdoor spaces. The more "active" courtyard is adjacent and opens towards the campus and entry. A second, landscaped courtyard is only for passive/quieter uses in that it is heavily landscaped and helps separate student activity from the residential community. The existing parking lot that this development is replacing currently has a motorcycle training course and weekly food distribution program so those noises will no longer exist.

Does the design offer privacy to the neighbors?

The building height is limited to three stories, which helps to prevent visual site lines between the housing and the local community. Student windows look north and south instead of towards the nearest residential community west of the development. Landscape buffers with evergreen trees and other year-round plantings will also help to create separation.

Are there any additional parking needed for the new student housing?

No new parking is added to the site – students with cars will utilize the existing parking on campus, but housing developments tend to reduce parking demand and traffic on campuses.

Has the District reviewed pedestrian/vehicular traffic?

The new housing will reduce vehicular use of the site. Student entry and shuttle stop are shielded from the community through the building form. The new landscape uses focus student activity toward the campus core and away from the community. Currently no vehicular access (other than code mandated fire-truck access) is envisioned through the site.

What was the vision on the building aesthetics?

The three-story building is envisioned to connect to the District Campus aesthetic while maintaining a residential scale. Our experience tells us that buildings that are visually connected to the core campus context promote a greater sense of connection to the College and therefore elevates the student behavior accordingly as opposed to merchant-built off-campus housing. The design will likely utilize a degree of modern and traditional design and composition strategies dependent on budget limitations. But in all instances, the goal is to utilize warm, quality materials on the facades and to break down the massing of the overall residence hall to create an elegant composition that exhibits a residential feel.

How will the District manage student resident conduct?

There will be an on-site Resident Director that lives on the property 24/7. This director will also be in charge of Resident Assistants that live on each floor. These on-site staff are augmented by a professional management and custodial staff that work together to monitor and oversee student conduct and address any concerns immediately. The District Public Safety Department will be regularly monitoring the residence hall.

Has the District reviewed security?

The building will have a main entrance across the street from the District office and a secondary entrance off the main student courtyard that faces towards the campus core. The courtyards will be secured with decorative fencing and planting, limiting use to student residents. The building and site will have appropriate lighting to ensure proper light levels in the evening hours. These entrances will be monitored by the District Public Safety Department and with card-key access only.

Are there any on-site student services in the residence hall?

Student services are limited to services that fulfill the needs of campus residents such as mail and packages, study and tutoring support, community kitchen pantry. The outside spaces will be limited to studying, social and recreational use of the courtyards with occasional programming of the active courtyard for community related activities.

Where are the solar panels going to be located?

Once the designers finalize the overall aesthetics of the buildings the solar panel (PV- photovoltaic) location will be explored.