SAN RAFAEL
THE CITY WITH A MISSION

Community Development Department – Planning Division

Meeting Date:	February 08, 2021
Case Numbers:	PLAN21-071, CDR21-003
Project Planner:	Steve Stafford – (415) 458-5048
Agenda Item:	3

REPORT TO DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

SUBJECT: 300 Smith Ranch Rd. (Las Gallinas Valley Sanitation District) – Conceptual Design Review of a proposal to construct a new three-story, approx. 15,000 sq. ft. Operations Control Center (OCC) for Las Gallinas Valley Sanitation District (LGVSD) including operations control for the wastewater treatment plant, a laboratory, administrative offices, conference rooms, and multi-function classrooms for public use. The proposal also includes the creation of a new Corporation Yard with the construction of a new one-story, 3,000 sq. ft., carport maintenance building providing a secured surface parking lot for LGVSD vehicles. The new OCC would replace an existing Administration Building and the new Corporation Yard would replace an existing carport structure; APNS: 155-121-20, -27 & -29; Public/Quasi-Public (P/QP) District Zone; Michael P. Cortez, Applicant; Las Gallinas Valley Sanitation District, Owner

PROPERTY FACTS

	General Plan Designation	Zoning Designation	Existing Land-Use
Project Site:	**P/QP**	**P/QP**	**LGVSD Facilities**
North:	Unincorporated Marin County	A2	Silveira Ranch
South:	Parks, Rec. & Open Space	POS-WO	Open Space/McInnis Park
East:	Parks, Rec. & Open Space	POS-WO	Open Space
West:	Parks, Rec. & Open Space	POS-WO	Open Space/McInnis Park

Landscaping (Min.)
Required: 10% (38,608.4 sq. ft.)
Proposed: Unknown

Floor Area Ratio (Max.)
Allowed: 1.0 FAR (386,083.6 sq. ft.)
Proposed: Unknown

Height *
Allowed: 36’
Proposed: 39’ (Proposed OCC Building)

Parking
Required: Parking Study Required
Proposed: 29 Spaces (Existing)

* Building height is measured from an established exterior finished grade elevation to top of roof deck of a flat roof building.

SUMMARY

The project is being referred to the Design Review Board (Board) for conceptual design review of a submittal proposing to construct a new, three-story, approx. 15,000 sq. ft. Operations Control Center (OCC) for Las Gallinas Valley Sanitation District (LGVSD) which includes an operations control area for the treatment plant, a laboratory area, administrative offices, conference rooms, and multi-function classrooms for public use. The new OCC would replace an existing 3,600 sq. ft. two-story Administration Building. Landscape improvements are proposed between the surface parking area and Smith Ranch Rd. and around the new OCC. The proposal also includes the creation of a new Corporation Yard with the removal of an existing 2,160 sq. ft. Laboratory Building and the construction of a new one-story, 3,000 sq. ft., Carport/Maintenance Building; however, the conceptual review

provides no specific details on this portion of the project and the Board's review is limited to the proposed new OCC Building.

When the project is submitted as a formal application, it will require the following approvals by the Planning Commission, with the recommendation(s) of the Design Review Board (Board):

- An Environmental and Design Review Permit, for the new OCC Building

Staff is seeking the Board's input on the proposed OCC Building and associated landscape improvements only. While the conceptual project also proposes to replace an existing 2,160 sq. ft., single-story Laboratory Building with a new 3,000 sq. ft. Carport/Maintenance Building, the submittal provides no specific details other than the location (see Sh. A0.0 Site Plan and Sh. L1.0 Planting Plan).

Staff requests that the Board provide recommendation(s) on the following specific concerns:

Architecture

- Whether the proposed contemporary architecture, with its predominant design features of primarily glass exteriors, is appropriate given its potential reflective properties.

- Whether the proposed four-story scale of the project appropriately relates to the current one-and two-story scale of existing development on the project site.

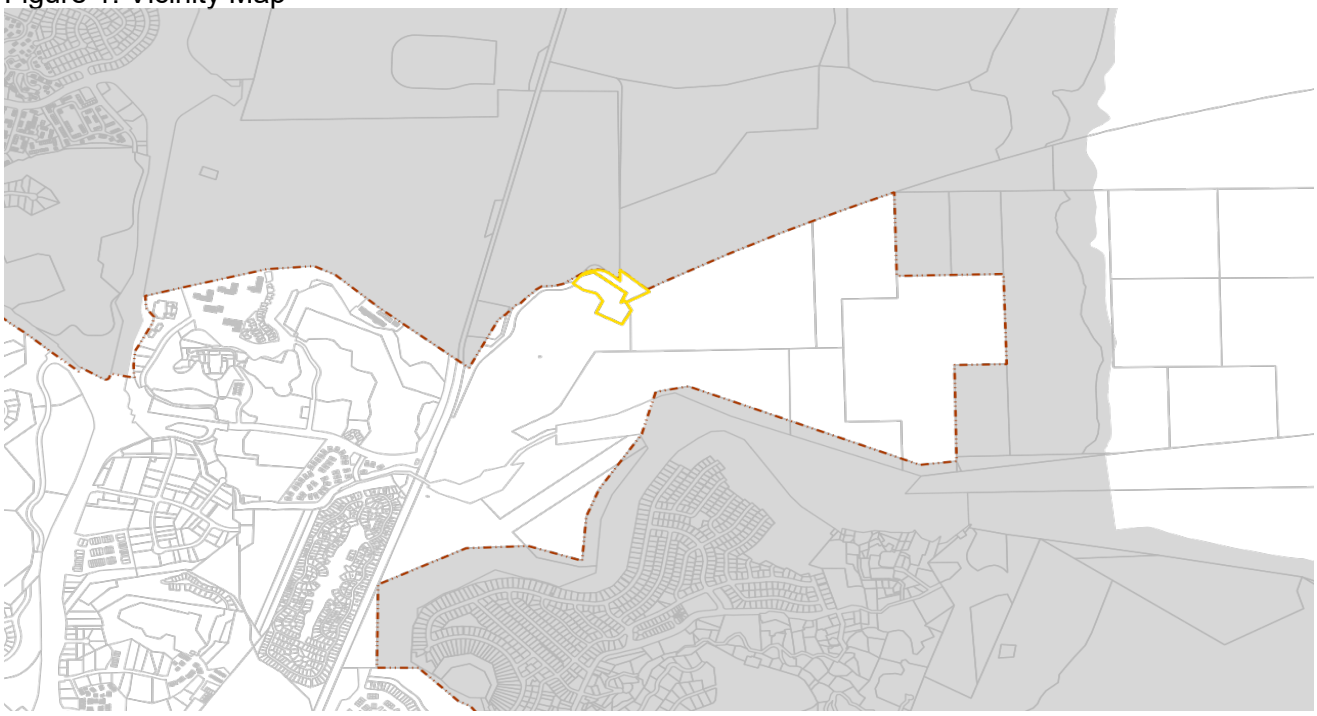
- Whether the proposed contemporary architecture, characterized by glass exterior elevations and butterfly roof forms, adequately relates to the more utility design of the existing corrugated metal and stucco plaster structures and buildings on the project site.

BACKGROUND

Site Description & Setting:
The LGVSD facility is comprised of seven (7) separate parcels, most (five parcels) of which are located within unincorporated County of Marin. The project site is proposed on both parcels located within the City of San Rafael. These two parcels are approximately 386,084 sq. ft. in combined area and are located at the end of Smith Ranch Road. The project site has a slight grade change (3-5% average cross-slope; northwest-to-southeast trending) and is currently developed with a few relatively small (up to 3,600 sq. ft.) single-story facilities buildings scattered among the wastewater treatment plant.

Silveira Ranch is located immediately north of the project site, while Marin County open space is located immediately east, west and south of the project site.

Figure 1: Vicinity Map



PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Use:
The project proposes to replace an existing, two-story 3,600 sq. ft., single-story Administration Building with a new 15,000 sq. ft., four-story OCC Building. The project also proposes to replace an existing 2,160 sq. ft., single-story Laboratory Building with a new 3,000 sq. ft. Carport/Maintenance Building. The project further proposes to remove an existing 3,000 sq. ft. carport structure over the existing surface parking lot.

Site Plan:
Proposed changes to the existing site plan for the LGVSD facility are currently limited to providing a new fire access gate and 'hammerhead' turnaround.

Architecture:
The project proposes a new four-story OCC Building of contemporary architecture with predominant design features including a glass exterior elevations and butterfly roof forms.

Floor Plans:
The project floor plans propose operations control, laboratory, conference room, individual offices, restrooms and lockers, board room, education center and classroom areas.

Parking:
The project proposes to convert a portion of covered parking to uncovered parking in the surface parking lot by removing an existing 3,000 sq. ft. carport structure. The number of parking spaces (29) would remain unchanged.

Landscaping:
The project generally proposes landscape improvements between the surface parking area and Smith Ranch Road, and around the new OCC Building. The conceptual project submittal provides few specific

details other than “landscape planting, inspired by local native landscape of oak trees, grasses and native low-maintenance plantings; display for recycled water and drought-resistant plantings”.

Grading:
The conceptual submittal does not provide preliminary grading calculations or civil drawings.

ANALYSIS

Conceptual project review focuses on conceptual design approach and gives the Board and the applicant an opportunity to work collectively to achieve a quality design. Staff requests the Board provide broad comments on the general design approach presented for the new OCC Building and associated planting improvements, and the specific concerns listed below**.**

General Plan 2040 Consistency:
The General Plan land use designation for the project site is Public/Quasi Public (P/QP). The P/QP land use designation applies to public schools, libraries, post offices, churches, public hospitals, and institutional facilities such as Dominican University and Marin Academy. It also is applied to major utility properties and public facilities.

The project would be consistent with the following more general design-related General Plan Policies:

- **Land Use Element Policy LU-1.10** (Intensity of Non-Residential Development). The maximum allowable FAR on the project site is 1.0 FAR or approx. 386,083.6 sq. ft. Both the existing FAR on the site and the proposed project would comply with the FAR limits.

- **Community Design and Preservation Element Policy CDP-1.2** (Natural Features). The new OCC Building is proposed to be built into the existing hillside topography, preserving more of the natural features on the project site.

- **CDP-1.5** (Views). Similar to CDP-1.2, the proposed location of the new OCC Building would preserve existing public views, since it would be built into the existing hillside topography and the proposed height of the OCC Building would not exceed that of the background hillside.

- **CDP-4.2** (Public Involvement in Design Review). Public involvement in the design review process includes this conceptual project review by the Board, which complies with all noticing requirements of SRMC Chapter 29.

- **CDP-4.3** (Creative Architecture and Design). The proposed design of the new OCC Building is contemporary architecture with predominant design features that include glass exterior elevations and butterfly roof forms.

The conceptual project submittal would not be consistent with the following General Plan Policies:

- **LU-1.17** (Building Height). The proposed building height of the new OCC Building appears to be 39’ while the maximum allowable building height is 36’. Upon formal project submittal, the project will be required to meet the maximum building height limits.

The conceptual project submittal does not provide adequate details to determine consistency with the following General Plan Policies:

- **CDP-4.10** (Landscaping). While the conceptual project submittal proposes landscape improvements between the surface parking area and Smith Ranch Rd., and around the new OCC Building, detailed landscape plans will be required at formal project submittal.

- **CDP-4.11** (Lighting). While exterior site and building lighting currently exists throughout the project site, comprehensive lighting plans with photometric study will be required to demonstrate compliance with the City's adopted lighting levels for building entrances/exits, pathways, parking areas and property lines.

Zoning Ordinance Consistency:

Chapter 9 – Public/Quasi-Public (P/QP) District
The project site is located within the Public/Quasi-Public (P/QP) District. The proposed project will require consistency with the applicable property development standards for the P/QP District, including maximum building height (36') and minimum landscaping (10%).

As conceptually designed, the project would not be consistent with the maximum building height; it appears the proposed building height is 39' where a maximum of 36' is allowed. No landscape details are provided other than showing landscape improvements proposed between the surface parking area and Smith Ranch Rd., and around the new OCC Building with a note that landscape plantings will be "inspired by local native landscape of oak trees, grasses and native low-maintenance plantings; display for recycled water and drought-resistant plantings". The formal project application submittal will be required to update the landscape plans to provide details on the total square footage of landscaping required for the site, the total square footage of landscaping proposed and specific planting details (i.e., plant species, and number, container size and location of each new planting).

Chapter 16 – Site and Use Regulations

Light and Glare
Section 14.16.227 (*Light and Glare*) requires all building colors and materials and building and site lighting to be designed to avoid creating undue off-site light and glare impacts. Glossy finishes and reflective glass are discouraged; site and building lighting shall be shielded to conceal light sources from view off-site and avoid spillover onto adjacent properties. Lighting levels, generally, should meet the following minimum amount necessary to provide a sense of security:

- One (1) foot candle at ground level overlap should be provided in all exterior doorways and in all vehicle parking areas;
- Minimum one-half (1/2) foot candle at ground level overlap should be provided along all outdoor pedestrian walkways; and
- Less than one (1) foot candle at ground level overlap should be provided at all property lines.

The conceptual project proposes a new four-story OCC Building of contemporary architecture with predominant design features of primarily glass exterior elevations and butterfly roof forms. No details are provided in the conceptual submittal on the reflectivity of the proposed glass exterior.

Staff requests the Board's comments on the following:

- Whether the proposed contemporary architecture, with its predominant design features of primarily glass exteriors, is appropriate given its potential reflective properties.

As a condition of formal project approval, a photometric study shall be submitted for the project indicating that the project will comply with the lighting levels prescribed by the Zoning Ordinance.

Water-Efficient Landscape
Section 14.16.370 (*Water-Efficient Landscaping*) requires all new landscape and irrigation improvements to comply with Marin Municipal Water District's (MMWD) most recent water-efficient landscape requirements. As a condition of formal project approval, landscape, irrigation and grading

plans shall be submitted to MMWD for review and approval prior to Building Permit or Grading Permit issuance.

Chapter 25 – Environmental and Design Review Permit

Pursuant to Section 14.25.040 (A) (1) (e) (*Improvements Subject to Review*) of the Zoning Ordinance, the project will require Environmental and Design Review Permit approval by the Planning Commission with the recommendation of the Board, in that; it proposes to construct a new public/quasi-public structure. The pertinent review criteria for Environmental and Design Review Permits, pursuant to Section 14.25.050 (*Review Criteria; Environmental and Design Review Permits*), are as follows:

- *Site Design. Proposed structures and site development should relate to the existing development in the vicinity. The development should have good vehicular and pedestrian circulation and access. Safe and convenient parking areas should be designed to provide easy access to building entrances. The traffic capacity of adjoining streets must be considered. Major views of the San Pablo Bay, wetlands, bay frontage, the Canal, Mt. Tamalpais and the hills should be preserved and enhanced from public streets and public vantage points. In addition, respect views of St. Raphael's Church up "A" Street.*

- *Architecture. The project architecture should be harmoniously integrated in relation to the architecture in the vicinity in terms of colors and materials, scale and building design. The design should be sensitive to and compatible with historic and architecturally significant buildings in the vicinity. Design elements and approaches which are encouraged include: a) creation of interest in the building elevation; b) pedestrian-oriented design in appropriate locations; c) energy-efficient design; d) provision of a sense of entry; e) variation in building placement and height; and f) equal attention to design given to all facades in sensitive location*.

- *Materials and colors. Exterior finishes should be consistent with the context of the surrounding area. Color selection shall coordinate with the predominant colors and values of the surrounding landscape and architecture. High-quality building materials are required. Natural materials and colors in the earth tone and wood tone range are generally preferred. Concrete surfaces should be colored, textured, sculptured, and/or patterned to serve design as well as a structural function.*

- *Walls, Fences and Screening. Walls, fences and screening shall be used to screen parking and loading areas, refuse collection areas and mechanical equipment from view. Screening of mechanical equipment shall be designed as an integrated architectural component of the building and the landscape. Utility meters and transformers shall be incorporated into the overall project design.*

- *Landscape Design. Landscaping shall be designed as an integral enhancement of the site and existing tree shall be preserved as much as possible. Water-conserving landscape design shall be required. A landscaped berm around the perimeter of parking areas is encouraged. Smaller scale, seasonal color street trees should be proposed along pedestrian-oriented streets while high-canopy, traffic-tolerant trees should be proposed for primary vehicular circulation streets.*

The review criteria for Environmental and Design Review Permits require that the proposed site and building design of all new development 'relate' to the predominant design or 'character-defining' design elements existing in the vicinity of the project.

Site Design

The LGVSD facility is located at the end of Smith Ranch Rd. and is surrounded by unimproved agricultural land (Silveira Ranch) to the north and west and primarily unimproved Marin County parks/open space to the south and east. The existing site design is primarily the wastewater treatment

infrastructure: covered digester and uncovered clarifier tanks, piping and a small network of private access roadways. The conceptual submittal proposes to construct the new OCC Building at the entrance to the project site, into the existing hillside topography, preserving more of the site for wastewater treatment infrastructure. No grading calculations are provided by the conceptual submittal though the height of the new OCC Building would not exceed that of the hillside backdrop. Staff supports the proposed site design of the project as it takes advantage of the natural features while preserving them; the project tucks the new OCC Building into the hillside while preserving it.

Architecture
The predominant design of the existing few structures and buildings on the project site is corrugated metal and stucco plaster with red tile roof trim. The project proposes a new four-story OCC Building of contemporary architecture with predominant design features including a glass exterior elevations and butterfly roof forms. The project proposes 'standalone' architecture intended to create a visual landmark on the LGVSD site where existing development design focuses more on utility than aesthetics. Staff finds the proposed architecture of the OCC Building meets all of the design elements and approaches which are encouraged, including: a) Creating interest in the building elevation; b) Being pedestrian-oriented design; c) Being an energy-efficient design; d) Providing a sense of entry; e) Providing variation in building placement and height; and f) Providing equal attention to design from all facades.

Staff requests the Board's comments on the following:

- Whether the proposed 4-story scale of the project is appropriate, given the current 1-and 2-story scale of existing development on the project site.

- Whether the proposed contemporary architecture, characterized by glass exterior elevations and butterfly roof forms, adequately relates to the more utility design of the existing corrugated metal and stucco plaster structures and buildings on the project site.

Colors and Materials
The conceptual plans do not include a Colors and Materials sheet. As stated previously, staff finds the proposed glass exterior elevations provided by the triangular-shaped, new OCC Building would not be consistent with the context of the existing structures and buildings on the project site, which is corrugated metal and stucco plaster with red tile roof trim. However, staff also finds the project proposes 'standalone' architecture on the LGVSD site where existing development design focuses more on utility than aesthetics.

Landscape Design
The project generally proposes landscape improvements between the surface parking area and Smith Ranch Rd., and around the new OCC Building. The conceptual project submittal does not provide specific details; however, the development standards for the site include a 10% landscape requirement or 38,608.4 sq. ft. of landscaping, based on approx. 386,083.6 sq. ft. in combined area within the project site.

NEIGHBORHOOD CORRESPONDENCE

Notice of hearing for the proposed project has been conducted in accordance with noticing requirements contained in Chapter 29 of the Zoning Ordinance. A Notice of Public Hearing was mailed to all property owners and occupants within a 300-foot radius of the project site and the project architect a minimum of 15 calendar days prior to the date of this Board meeting. Additionally, notice was posted on the project site, at the end of Smith Ranch Rd., a minimum of 15 calendar days prior to the date of the Board meeting. No public comments have been received on the proposed project.

CONCLUSION

This review is for a conceptual project with much of the details not provided. At the time of formal project submittal, staff will require the plans include the appropriate level of details to allow staff, the Board and the Planning Commission to adequately review the proposed project. Staff requests the Board provide direction on the proposed four-story scale of the OCC Building and the proposed contemporary architecture, which is characterized by glass exterior elevations and butterfly roof forms. Staff also requests the Board provide direction on additional plans, details and materials that the Board would like to see when the proposed project returns for formal review.

EXHIBITS

1. Conceptual Plans (https://documentcloud.adobe.com/link/review?uri=urn:aaid:scds:US:5e19f6b3-db56-4c94-8ffc-1b5af147aa5b)

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