



Bernal Heights

East Slope Design Review Board

Terry Milne, external secretary • 321 Rutledge • San Francisco 94110 • [285•8978]

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Eric Staten
DOES Architecture
22 Montezuma Street
San Francisco CA 94110
eric@doesarchitecture.com

RE: 315 + 317 Rutledge Street
Block/Lot #5541/043+026
CC: Kimberly Durandet, SF Planning
kimberly.durandet@sfgov.org

Dear Eric,

The Bernal Heights East Slope Design Review Board held a neighborhood meeting on September 24, 2020 to review drawings dated August 12, 2020 for the proposed design of a new home at 315 Rutledge (on a currently undeveloped lot) and the remodel and addition to an existing home at 317 Rutledge. The meeting was held over Zoom and attended by a group of 12-14 neighbors.

The Board believes that the projects are in general conformance with the Bernal Heights East Slope Building Guidelines. Supplemental information provided after the meeting appears to demonstrate that the projects comply with Planning Code requirements for mass reduction and allowable building height, though these should be confirmed by the Planning Department. In the meeting, you indicated that no variances will be required or requested.

Many neighbors shared strong reactions to the scale and the contemporary design of the projects, and we encourage you and the project sponsor to consider some refinements that may ameliorate some of the concerns. We invite you back for a follow up presentation to the Board and neighbors where you could clarify some aspects of the design and share any refinements, particularly of the following aspects:

1. Building Height:

- *Comments:* Multiple neighbors expressed concern about the height and number of stories, noting that 315, in particular, felt out of scale with the neighborhood. The Board notes that a number of buildings on the south side of Rutledge, both newer and older, share a similar scale; and that buildings on the north side of Rutledge appear as 1-2 stories at the street, but have more stories on the back due to the steeply sloping hill. Similar conditions can be found on Ripley and other streets throughout the neighborhood.
- *Suggestions:* The discussion of building height during the meeting was confusing; drawings provided to the Board afterward appear to demonstrate compliance with allowable heights, and could be reviewed with neighbors. In addition, building and site sections showing relationships between the proposed projects and neighboring houses uphill and downhill could help neighbors better understand relative heights. A Ripley Street neighbor requested story poles.

2. Fenestration and Privacy:

- *Comments:* Multiple neighbors expressed concern about the amount of glass and the “habitable facade” created by the bay windows, which protrude from the facade at various angles to frame views. They felt this would lead to a loss of privacy among neighbors and were concerned about some bays that seemed to be directed right toward areas of their homes. The Board appreciates the

use of the bays to animate the facade, but wonders if the strategy might be more effective if it was applied more selectively and sensitively, and if the design was somewhat simplified and less busy.

- *Suggestions:* In the meeting, you described applied decorative screens/grillework that would reduce the apparent size and transparency of the windows; it would be helpful to understand more about the design and materials of these screens, and to see them more clearly represented in the drawings. It might also be worth exploring a different balance between solid and void that would allow more privacy both for residents and neighbors. Finally, reducing and/or redirecting some of the bay windows might decrease a sense of being surveilled by the building and its occupants.

3. Architectural Language:

- *Comments:* Multiple neighbors expressed opinions about the contemporary architectural language of the projects and their observation that they do not “fit in with the neighborhood.” The Board notes that there are existing buildings along Rutledge that provide precedent for both historic and contemporary architectural languages. The BHESDRB Guidelines do not prescribe an architectural style, but rather outline a set of qualities that contribute to the neighborhood’s unique character.

The Board thanks you for presenting the plans to the neighborhood and invites you to schedule another meeting to review refinements in response to the points enumerated here. Please email us at bhesdrb@gmail.com to schedule.

Since the Board is not a City agency, it does not have the power to either approve or disapprove the permit application.

Cordially,



Wendy Cowles, Chair
On Behalf of the Bernal Heights ESDRB