

October 20, 2011

Mr. Kevin Kellogg
Kellogg and Associates
311 Murphy Avenue
Sebastopol, CA 95472

Re: CVS/Chase Planning and DRB Process

Mr. Kellogg,

In response to your email, my criticism of your work to date on the CVS/Chase project is not intended to insult you, but rather to highlight to you how far off base the proposed buildings are relative to what is appropriate and desired at that location in our downtown core. The need to do this is surprising, as you live in this environment and do not appear to be visually impaired. Why the need to craft a design that compliments and integrates with the existing downtown structures remains unclear to Armstrong Development Properties/CVS/Chase and to you is an enigma to me. This, along with some objectionable site plan aspects, constitutes the basis for most of the resistance to this project in our community. My criticisms are borne from the frustrations created by a process characterized by your client's (possibly intentional) failure to listen and embrace what is being asked of them. I have been unable to determine if your failure to move away from what has been clearly rejected to a more appropriate design is the result of your emotional investment in your existing designs or a very short leash held tightly by your client. It may be the case that this is not an appropriate project for your firm.

This project was reviewed and denied by the Planning Commission and came quite close to being denied by the Design Review Board yesterday. It would seem that these "two points determine a line". In fact, the project is still viable only through the actions of our City Council, whose friendship may be seen by your client as a suitable substitute for timeless design and inviting, pedestrian-friendly urban planning.

After having been originally presented with the generic "Viva Las Vegas" design model by Armstrong Development Properties/CVS/Chase, in an attempt to determine how gullible Sebastopol was (and how cheaply they could locate here), any design would appear to be a step in a positive direction. Your slide show of old buildings and architectural features found around Sebastopol appeared to hold great promise. Upon seeing the new designs, however, there was a sense of "bait and switch"- where was the essence of those great old buildings that you claimed were your inspiration? Honestly, I really don't have major issues with your designs for either building. But it is as Vice Chair Deedler commented about the bank design- "Nice building, but wrong town and wrong era." In another location, these structures may well be quite successful. Perhaps CVS can recycle these designs in another, more contemporary setting, thereby recouping their investment in them. In the context of downtown Sebastopol, however, they look like a prefab building out of Dwell Magazine or a "building in a box" from IKEA. No other vintage building in our downtown core shares the overall "look" of your proposed designs. This should be a major clue as to why they are being seen as not site appropriate.

Using an automotive analogy, this is the existing environment:



Prior to your involvement in this project, Armstrong Development Properties/CVS/Chase came to Sebastopol and said, "We would like to park one of our vehicles in amongst yours." to which we responded, "That would be great- let us see what you want to park."

This is what they drove up in:



We responded with, "We would rather you park something like this:"



Armstrong Development Properties/CVS/Chase then said, "We hear you- we will hire a local designer, who knows exactly what you want, and we will work with him to design a custom vehicle specifically to blend in with yours."

This is what they/you then drove up in:



We responded with, "That won't work- you need to change it to make it more compatible. Let us clarify this for you once again- we would rather you park something like this:"



After agreeing to make changes, this is what they/you then drove up in, saying, "We made all of your requested changes and, by the way, we're parking this here whether you like it or not."



I hope that this illustrates how frustrating this entire process has been to date, likely for you as well.

We *really* would prefer to be welcoming you with a trophy, rather than telling you and your client to go park elsewhere.



Acceptable: The elephant pharmacy building in Berkeley (possibly sans roof tiles).





Note the tasteful, discreet signage. With the demise of the elephant pharmacy chain, this simple, honest and elegant building is now slated to become a Walgreen's Pharmacy- what a score for them.

Sadly, it looks as if the collision between design, planning and financial patience is about to occur between your client and Sebastopol, based upon the actions of your client at the conclusion of yesterday's Design Review Board meeting. It will be unfortunate if all of our collective efforts to date are swept aside in the name of fiscal efficiency.

Best regards,

