

Project: 1430 Chapin

Address: 1430 Chapin Ave Burlingame CA 94010

March 27, 2025 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes Comments & Responses

1.0 Massing and scale.

Comment:

Address the massing and scale. Okay with the taller height on Chapin Avenue but building needs more architectural detailing to break up the massing.

Response:

Variable massing is a core principle of this design. From the outset, the building was purposefully conceived to break down its scale and avoid the “square box” appearance that often results from maximizing every allowable setback.

A series of setbacks, atriums, and articulations create architectural relief, reduce perceived height, and add visual variety. Portions of the project are experienced at 0’, 20’, 35’, 55’, and 75’ heights, producing a dynamic, layered profile that softens its overall scale.

At the pedestrian level, the Chapin Avenue frontage is tiered to read as a two- to three-story building, while the upper floors are stepped back to minimize their visibility from the street. Large internal atriums bring light and air deep into the building, functioning as park-like environments within the workspace.

Together, these design strategies create a building that feels natural, biophilic, and filled with light. Enhancing both the experience of those who work inside and the character of the surrounding neighborhood, while still meeting the project’s development goals.

Reference: *See Slide 13-18 (of 2025.10.15 - Chapin PC Comments & Response Presentation.pdf)*

2.0 Maximum Allowable Height Limit

Comment:

Come closer to the area's maximum allowable height limits and keep the same general proposed design.

Response:

The project cannot move forward at a 35' or 55' height limit and still achieve an economically viable and well-designed building. However, the proposed height has been carefully balanced to meet both the City's urban planning objectives and the realities of delivering a high-quality, mass-timber structure.

As noted previously, the design incorporates setbacks, atriums, and architectural articulation that significantly reduce the building's perceived height and scale. From most viewpoints, the project reads at a much more pedestrian and context-appropriate scale than its maximum height might suggest.

Reference: See Slide 13-18 (of 2025.10.15 - Chapin PC Comments & Response Presentation.pdf)

3.0 Tiered Design:

Comment:

Consider a more tiered design approach on the sides to respect the neighbors.

Response:

The design team has incorporated the Commission's feedback by introducing additional tiering, cut-outs, and balcony elements along the side elevations to create visual interest and massing relief for the east and west neighbors.

The rear façade is stepped back to preserve a generous light and air corridor, enhancing privacy and openness for adjacent properties. At multiple levels, the building tiers in and out, integrating outdoor decks and landscaped areas that soften the overall form and bring greenery and natural light deeper into the project.

The building's top floor is stepped back even further to reduce the perceived height and visual impact of the building on all sides, utilizing setbacks that exceed current zoning requirements.

Reference: See Slides 19-24 (of 2025.10.15 - Chapin PC Comments & Response Presentation.pdf)

4.0 Ground Level Interaction:

Comment:

Have more ground-level interaction.

Response:

See response to Comment 5.0 Public Benefit

Reference: See Slides 25-43 (of 2025.10.15 - Chapin PC Comments & Response Presentation.pdf)

5.0 Public Benefit

Comment:

Provide some pedestrian and public benefit.

Response:

In direct response to feedback from this comment and from key stakeholders, the project now includes two public plazas: one fronting the site and another adjacent to City Hall. These plazas are envisioned as pocket parks that create an engaging, human-scaled ground-floor experience and invite the community to use them as open gathering spaces.

The landscaping approach blurs the line between the built and natural environment. Using both horizontal and vertical planes, the design integrates natural landscaping seamlessly with the building's architecture. The plazas will feature native, wild-like plantings and small groves of trees along the building's edge, with pathways and connected spaces designed for gathering, respite, and exploration.

The goal is to transform Chapin Avenue with an unexpected natural park setting that draws pedestrians, activates the street, and provides a lasting public benefit well beyond the office and retail uses of the project itself.

Reference: See Slides 25-43 (of 2025.10.15 - Chapin PC Comments & Response Presentation.pdf)

6.0 Chapin Ave Medians

Comment:

Consider having medians at Chapin Avenue.

Response:

The design of the new plaza and frontage along Chapin Avenue will thoughtfully address the proximity to vehicular traffic. The streetscape will incorporate a combination of landscape buffers, bollards, and other design elements to ensure pedestrian safety while maintaining an open and visually appealing edge.

While formal medians are not proposed, the intent is to achieve the same effect through careful integration of planting, paving, and street-edge design that naturally calms traffic and enhances the pedestrian experience.

Reference: See Slides 36 (of 2025.10.15 - Chapin PC Comments & Response Presentation.pdf)

7.0 Window Coverings:

Comment:

Address how window coverings are considered and the sun shaded in some logical way that it does not detract from the timber.

Response:

In addition to the built-in shading strategies incorporated into the façade, the building will utilize roll-down shades to enhance energy efficiency and manage light spill. These shades will be deployed in a way that does not obstruct the visibility of the mass timber. A core design intent is for the timber structure to remain visible from both the streetscape and the interior, ensuring the building feels organic and provides an experience unlike traditional construction.

Reference: See Slides 44-45 (of 2025.10.15 - Chapin PC Comments & Response Presentation.pdf)

8.0 Visual Obstruction

Comment:

Consider the visual obstruction created by the fins on the left side of the garage.

Response:

The garage entry has been designed to prioritize both safety and visibility. The drive aisle will be clearly delineated with contrasting paving materials, and protective bollards will separate pedestrian and vehicular zones.

To further enhance safety, a silent alert system will notify both drivers and pedestrians of approaching vehicles. In addition, the design of the of any areas that are being used to protect pedestrians from vehicular traffic will be designed to maintain visual transparency and minimize obstruction, ensuring clear sightlines between the sidewalk and the driveway.

Reference: See Slides 34 (of 2015.10.15 - PC Study Session Comments & Responses.pdf)

9.0 Shadow Study

Comment:

Provide a more detailed shadow study to show existing conditions.

Response:

A detailed shadow study was prepared to illustrate the impacts of the proposed development on adjacent properties throughout the year. The analysis demonstrates that the project creates minimal shading effects on surrounding buildings and open spaces.

At all times and seasons, 1430 Chapin does not shade the neighboring building at 1440 Chapin or its rooftop solar panels. At certain times of the year and days, 1440 Chapin casts shadows onto the 1430 Chapin site.

From January through September, the proposed building does not materially shade the residential properties to the north along Ralston Avenue. During the winter months (as modeled in December, when daylight is shortest), the adjacent residences experience partial shading between approximately 9:00 a.m. and noon, with sunlight returning to the properties by mid-afternoon.

Similarly, the building to the east at 1424 Chapin Avenue experiences shadowing primarily during the fall and winter months between noon and sunset; shadow impacts are minimal during the summer season.

When comparing a 4-story, 55-foot-tall structure to the proposed 5-story, 75-foot-tall design, the taller building produces somewhat longer shadows, but the overall patterns and areas of impact remain consistent across seasons and times of day.

Overall, the building's design, massing, and implemented setbacks are effective at reducing the impact the building has on its neighbors.

Reference: See Slides 46-52 (of 2025.10.15 - Chapin PC Comments & Response Presentation.pdf)

10.0 Photo Montage

Comment:

Provide a photo montage to show how the building is set with the neighboring structures and Chapin Avenue.

Response:

Neighboring buildings shown in renderings of new proposed building.

Reference: See Slides 7, 8, 54, 55, and 60 (of 2025.10.15 - Chapin PC Comments & Response Presentation.pdf)

11.0 Variable Massing

Comment:

Consider variable massing to come to an average building height.

Response:

Variable massing is a core principle of this design. From the outset, the building was purposefully conceived to break down its scale and avoid the “square box” appearance that often results from maximizing every allowable setback.

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Reference: See Slide 13-18 (of 2025.10.15 - Chapin PC Comments & Response Presentation.pdf)

12.0 Nighttime Lighting

Comment:

Address the lighting issues at nighttime given the amount of glass proposed.

Response:

As an office building in California, the project will also comply with Title 24 requirements, which mandate light pollution control. Office lighting is required to shut off when not in use, and fixtures must be energy-efficient and directed downward to minimize nighttime light spill. Together, these measures ensure that the building meets code and reduces any potential light pollution impacts

13.0 Street level Landscaping

Comment:

Want to see more landscaping at the street level.

Response:

In response to feedback requesting more landscaping and public benefit at the street level, the entire Chapin Avenue frontage has been reimaged through the introduction of two public plazas in front of 1430 and 1440 Chapin.

A key guiding principle of the project is to implement strong biophilic design: bringing greenery from the ground up through the building and onto the roof. The goal is to blur the line between the built and natural environments, creating a more inviting and human-scaled streetscape.

Significant new plantings, trees, and native landscaping have been added at the street level within the public plazas and open areas, providing shade, texture, and visual interest for pedestrians. Together, these enhancements strengthen the project's connection to nature and greatly improve the public realm along Chapin Avenue.

Reference: See Slides 25-43 (of 2025.10.15 - Chapin PC Comments & Response Presentation.pdf)