

SAN RAFAEL TRANSIT CENTER COMMUNITY DESIGN ADVISORY GROUP

MEETING #4
WHAT WE HEARD REPORT

OCTOBER 2023



Prepared by
DIALOG

Introduction and Purpose of CDAG

The Community Design Advisory Group (CDAG) is a collaborative group of selected stakeholders with a mandate to provide input into the architecture, design, and amenities of the new transit center. As an advisory group, CDAG provides valuable expertise and perspectives, but is not a decision making body. The group is consensus-based, with a facilitator providing support to the process, and seeks to bring diverse and broad input to the design. The formation of the CDAG was a collaborative effort between the City of San Rafael (the City) and the Golden Gate Bridge, Highway and Transportation District (GGBHTD).

CDAG met four times over a six month period during concept design; see timeline below. The fourth and final meeting was held in October 2023, and was an opportunity to expand on the conversations during the prior three meetings as well as review preliminary design concepts.

Part of the intent of the CDAG was to bring diverse voices to a single table, including those who may not typically be involved in the design process. Given this, discussions and communication outside of the formal CDAG meetings are not typically considered to be part of the CDAG process.

CDAG Meeting #4

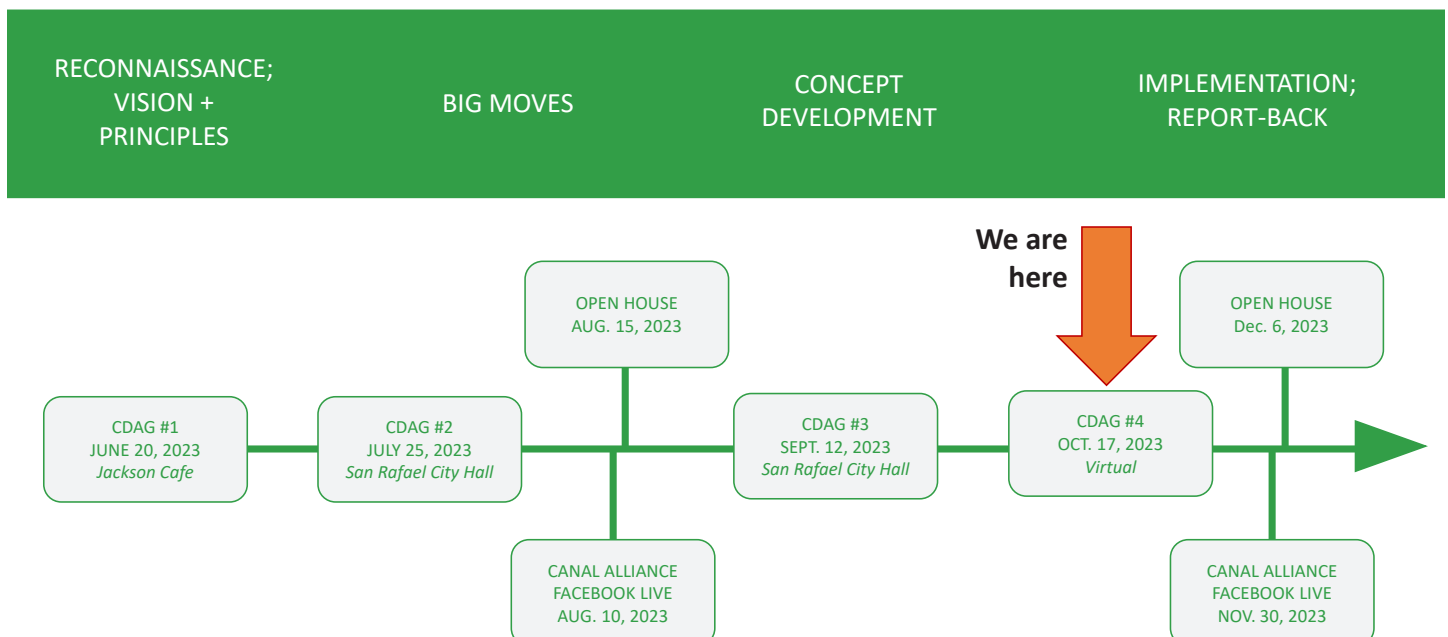
The CDAG Meeting #4 was held on October 17, 2023 virtually via Zoom from 5:30-7:30 pm. Participants reviewed highlights from the CDAG Meeting #3. DIALOG used Miro, an online whiteboard tool, to track comments. The group discussed various design aspects of the partial relocation of the former Northwestern Pacific Railroad Depot Building (“the Depot”), also known as the Whistlestop Building. The group also discussed the design of the plaza surrounding the Depot as well as bus shelters east of the SMART tracks.

This is a “participatory design” process, which is an iterative process of seeing and hearing comments from the CDAG then filtering back understandings to the group for confirmation.

Outcomes of the meeting help to guide design decisions. The CDAG process will be shared back to the community at a Canal Alliance Facebook Live event on November 30, 2023 and a public Open House on December 6, 2023.

The following content reflects comments made during the CDAG meeting #4. Comments are presented without edits except where useful for clarity or context.

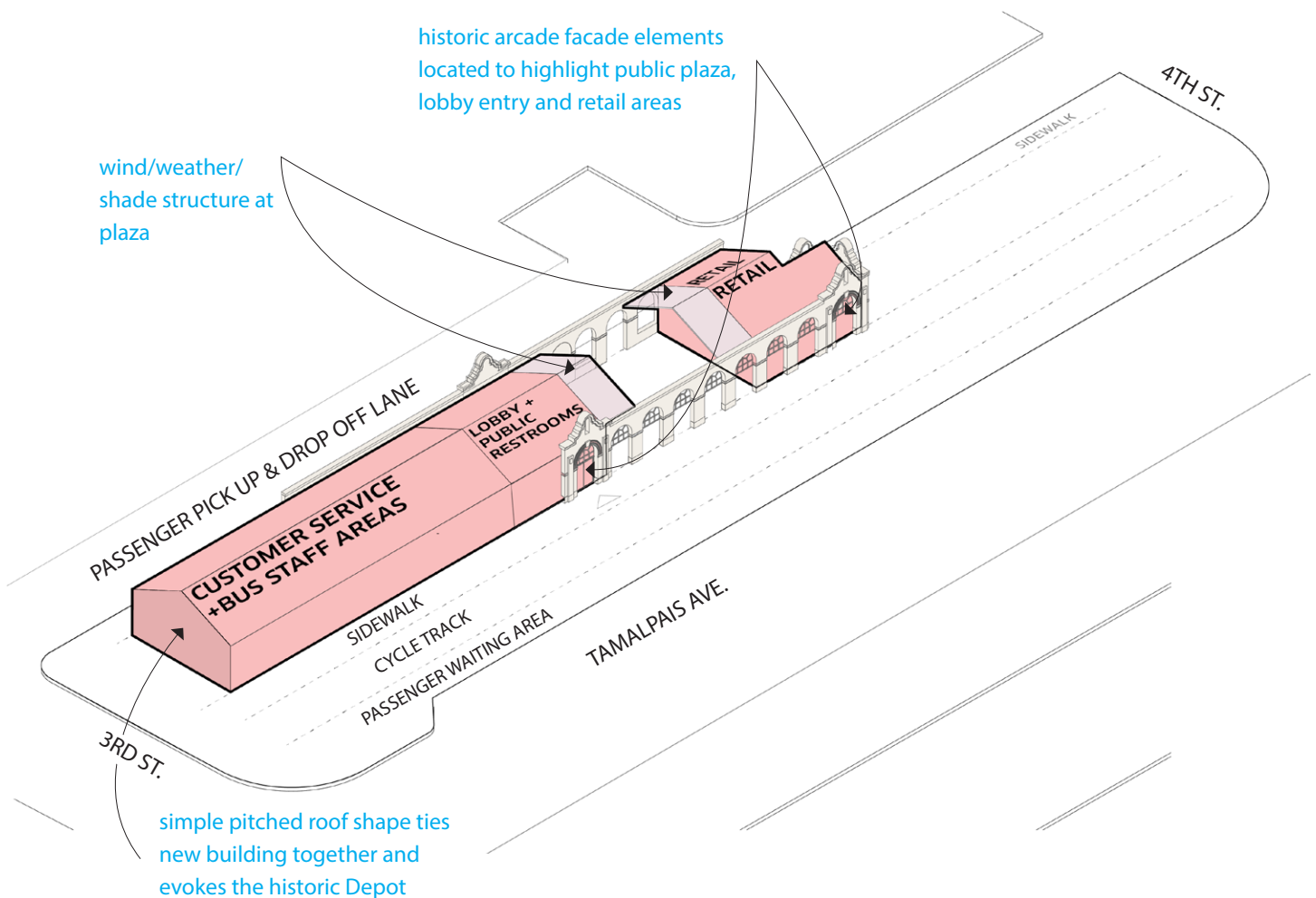
Timeline



Relocated Depot Building Concept Update

At the CDAG meeting #3, members were consistently supportive of the option that included a central courtyard between the lobby and retail/cafe spaces. At the fourth CDAG meeting, the project team showed an updated version of this option, incorporating :

- Historic arcade elements aligned with program (e.g. Mission parapets are positioned at public entrances).
- The new parts of the building quietly echo the historic building elements with a pitched roof and window shape/spacing.
- Most of the historic facade surrounds public facing parts of the building.
- Shade is provided over the parts of the courtyard directly adjacent to the lobby and retail.



The CDAG made the following comments about the building concept, specifically related to the arcade and courtyard function:

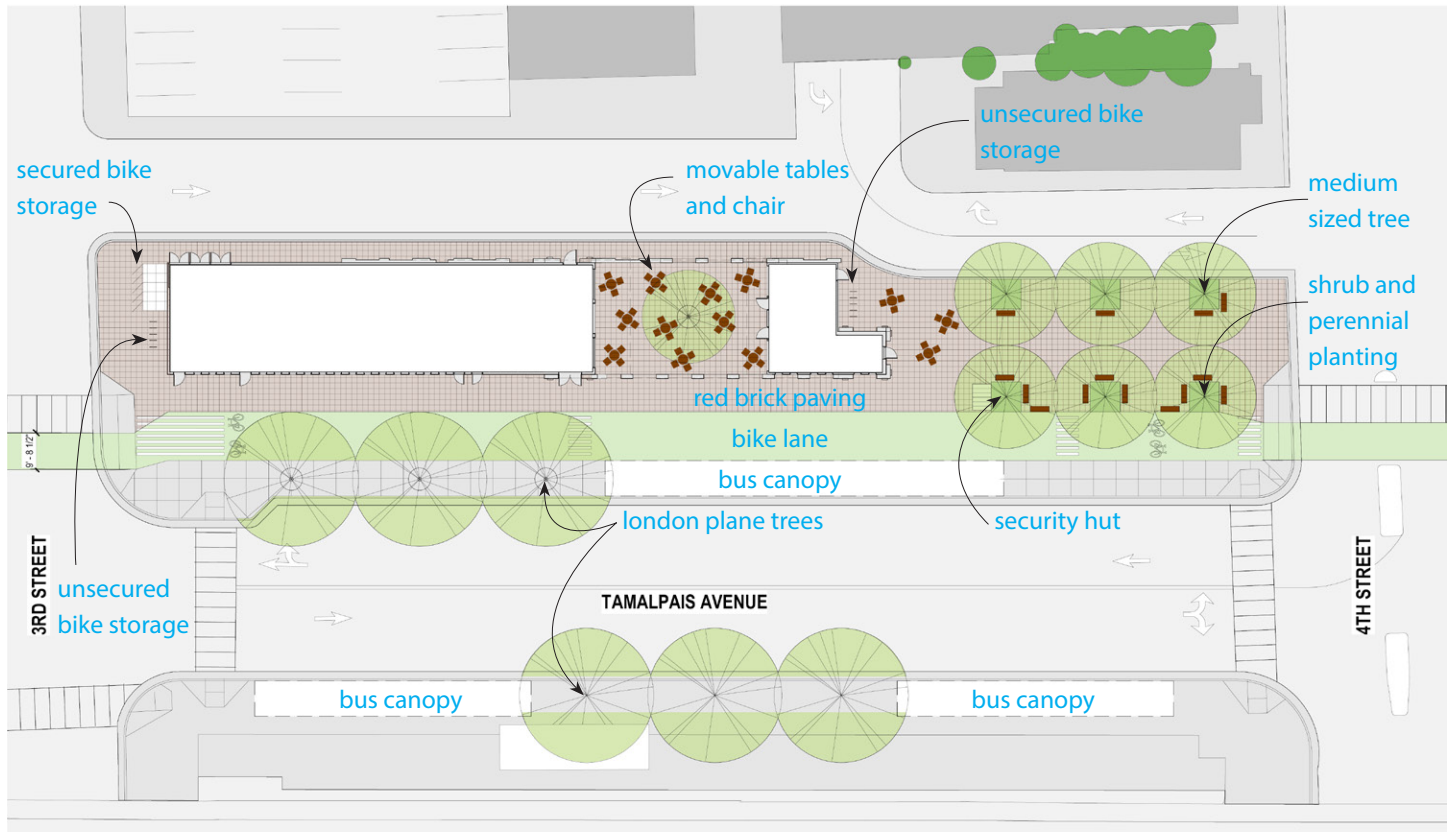
- *Is there opportunity for landscaping? Can we green this area up?*
- *Curious about comparison of proposed building to the original Depot.*
- *How does the open arcade get closed?*
Design Team: This will be detailed during the Final Design phase.
- *Is it necessary that the arcade space be programmed?*
Design Team: Not necessarily, but it is an opportunity for seating and other uses.
- *Consideration for covering the arcade courtyard with the original Depot roof line.*
- *Keep the back side of the arcade closed (close off the east side doors).*
- *Should the arcade courtyard be covered? Something like glass? Make the interior space usable in inclement weather.*
- *A large opening from Depot into the plaza is a great idea, but maybe the garage door is too industrial or not as functional. A French door might be better.*
- *Rise up doors - not practical for when big storms come up.*
- *Does the arcade courtyard seating take away from the north plaza?*
- *The north frontage of retail - there needs to be a cafe, and it needs to serve outdoor seating in the plaza.*

View from the Courtyard Looking East

This preliminary rendering shows the experience of being in the courtyard, looking out to the east to buses on Tamalpais Ave.



Whistlestop/Depot Building Plaza/Landscape - Plan



The CDAG made the following comments about the bike facility (bike lane):

- Can the separated bike facility be eliminated?*
 Design Team: This will need to be coordinated with the City, as a bike facility to connect the existing bike facilities to the north and south of this area has been desired.
- Combining the bike lane with the plaza would allow for additional space [to the east, where the bike lane sits] that could benefit the building width.*
 Design Team: Even if the bike lane and sidewalk were combined, there would not be an additional six feet to go back into the building. Space would still be needed for both cyclists and pedestrians.
- The bike coalition wants to acknowledge that it is a key bike route, needs to be clear and seamless for through riders.*
- The key thing is to provide for enough width for bikes, and clear delineation of bike routes.*
- The texture and signage convey it is a shared zone [for bikes / pedestrians] so [bikes] slow down.*
- The north south greenway is a multi-use path; this space should be similar.*
- Are bollards necessary to demarcate the bike facility?*
 Design Team: Not necessarily.
- Extend brick paving from face of building to the curb, covering all three zones [sidewalk, bike lane, passenger waiting zone]*
- Echo the dislike for the bike facility.*

View of the Plaza from 4th St.



View of the Relocated Arcade and Plaza from Tamalpais Ave. Near 4th St.



Plaza/Landscape - Materials



The design team described materials, benches and types of bike parking. Bike parking includes a combination of short term (bike racks) and long term (bike lockers or similar). The CDAG made the following comments about bike parking:

- *Long term bike parking makes sense on the south side. Is long term possible on the north side?*
- *Not sure short term bike parking [bike racks] makes sense on north side of the building near the retail.*
- *Need to keep an eye on bikes while having a cup of coffee.*
- *Bike parking along 4th makes sense.*
- *Secure parking on the south - is there possibility to integrate into the building?*

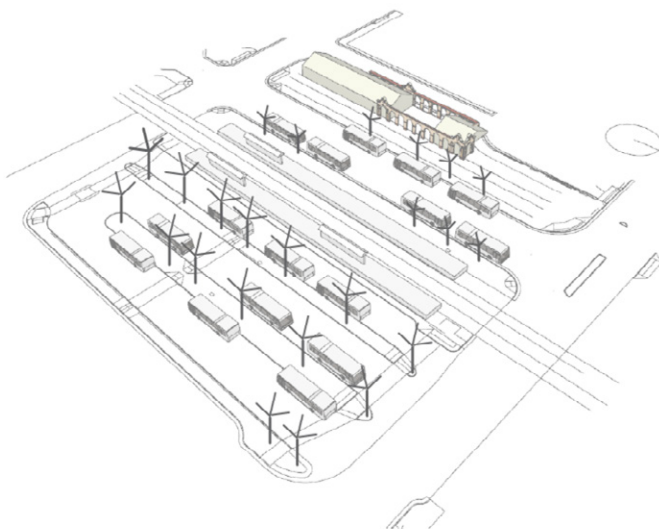
Bus Shelter Concept Update

At the CDAG meeting #4, the design team presented updated concepts that aim to integrate suggestions from CDAG meeting #3, where members expressed the bus shelter east of the SMART tracks, along Hetherton St., be a front door to the community -- a striking design -- more than just a bus shelter. Members expressed an interest in a balance of shelter and vegetation, with seating and protection from the elements. CDAG members gravitated towards flowing and organic forms made of mass timber.

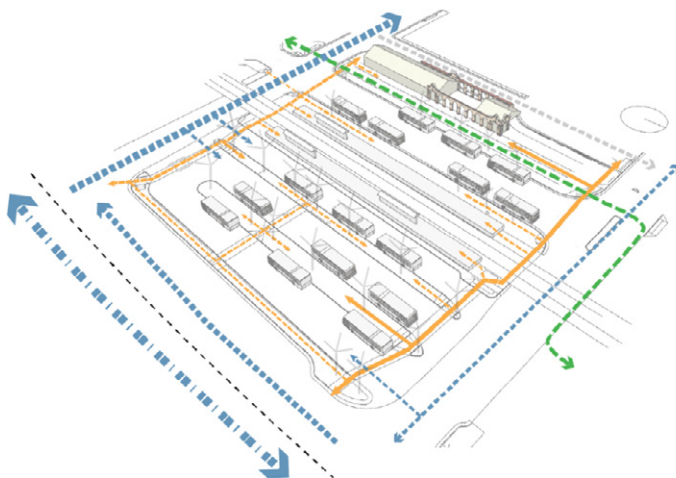
The design team built upon these CDAG comments with additional site analysis as a means of transitioning from abstract ideas to a concrete design concept. The following areas were explored as potential inspiration:

- Agrarian history of site, including pear orchards previously found in San Rafael
- Pedestrian and vehicular movement patterns
- Climatic forces -- sun, rain, noise, and wind
- Forms and patterns from nearby natural elements

The following diagrams represent these areas of exploration:



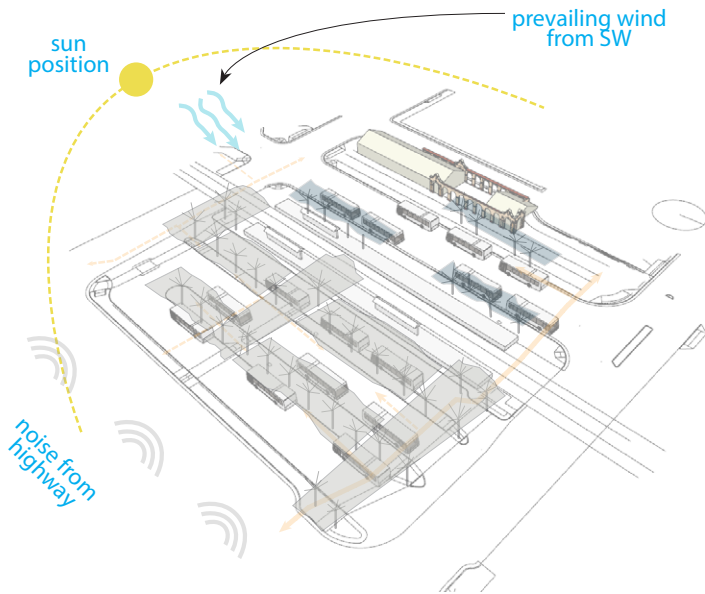
Pear orchards can inspire abstracted tree-like supports



Pedestrian and vehicle flows on the site inform shelter position

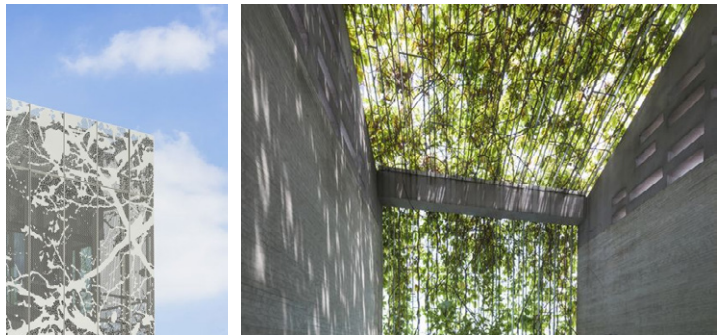
LEGEND

- pedestrian
- - - cyclists
- · · vehicular
- - - service vehicles
- ■ ■ highway



Natural forces help to define shelter position, though noise from the highway and wind may be hard to fully protect from. Sun protection is most important in the afternoons in spring through fall.

Translucent or transparent elements can potentially bring a richness of sun and shadow into the shelters. (This concept was not explored in the indicative rendering, but will be as the design progresses.)



Undulating forms of nearby ridge lines and ocean waves inspire a curvilinear shelter roof.

Indicative Transit Shelter View - Hetherton and 4th



The design team shared a bus shelter rendering, noting that this represents an indicative level of design; it will evolve through the Preliminary and Final Design phases. The CDAG made the following comments:

- *I really like the image. How does it protect for rain and weather? Are the canopies too high?*
- *For bikes - I like both ideas.*
- *Consider a white surface on underside of roof - this seems dark.*
- *Renderings were helpful - they put a picture to what we have been talking about. My mom would approve!*
- *I love the undulating bus shelter roof. I hope any roof is tested for the amount of shade it throws. shade is important*
Design Team: More detailed sun studies will be done.
- *Roof needs to protect from rain and sun.*
- *Bus shelter should not upstage the Depot Building.*
- *This looks great. I like the rendering. Function in terms of shade is important*
- *Seriously look at south side of 3rd Street to add large street trees. Complete the frame of trees.*
- *Work with City on north side of 4th to create a frame of trees.*
- *The shelter direction is a great one.*
- *Can the elements be considered in terms of one large covered space?*
- *General comfort with a contemporary statement here that is reflective of architecture of San Rafael.*
- *A quasi historic shelter? What really matters is performance and not upstaging the Depot.*
- *You should pull over on the 101 to see what the view actually looks like from the highway. This is a placemaking exercise; this is important.*
- *I like the feel of this image. I like the wood character.*
- *There appears to be a sidewalk on east side of SMART station. Does it serve a function? Can that dimension be transferred to the Hetherton side? Increasing sidewalk width at Hetherton would allow for large trees like London Plane. Framing with large trees is important.*
Design Team: The ends of that sidewalk, where it meets the roads, are required. However the rest of the sidewalk could be re-purposed for landscape. Unfortunately that width can't be transferred elsewhere.
- *There is an opportunity to work with city to connect the Hetherton bikeway - coordination is needed.*
- *The Hetherton mid-block pedestrian connection may not be needed.*
Design Team: Yes, this can be moved to 3rd St.

Summary of What We Heard

Several CDAG members expressed a strong desire for an alternative configuration for the bike facility between 3rd and 4th. They felt that a facility designated exclusively to bikes would result in bikes traveling quickly, hindering the main plaza area of the site, and/or would serve as a barrier for connections to transit.

Relatedly, some members of the CDAG continued to express the desire that the full dimension of the 1929 building be provided. When it was explained that there was insufficient space, one member suggested that elimination of the exclusive bicycle facility would allow for that dimension.

Interest in weather protection at the courtyard.

General agreement with the range of bike parking options available, noting the interest for additional bike racks closer to 4th St and avoiding blockage of access to the retail space.

Broad interest in and consensus around the bus shelter design for the area east of the SMART tracks. Several comments suggested adjustments to pedestrian connections and streetscape at the surrounding streets. Several comments also expressed interest in further evaluation of sun and rain protection.

Several CDAG members concluded their comments with appreciation for the opportunity to be involved in the CDAG process. They expressed a positive perspective on both the CDAG process itself and the design advancement that occurred through the process.

In conclusion, the CDAG process and project design concepts were generally met with enthusiasm and support by the CDAG participants.

