

**From:** [Joerg Rathenberg](#)  
**To:** [BOS Legislation \(BOS\)](#); [Sue Hestor](#); [James Hill](#); [Wong Jocelyn \(BOS\)](#)  
**Subject:** 617 Sanchez CATEX Appeal date of hearing August 18, 2020 - James Hill, Architect Additional Submission  
**Date:** Wednesday, August 12, 2020 3:26:35 PM  
**Attachments:** [B120 Letter re 617 and Sec 241 20 08 11 pdf](#)  
[617 PROPOSED EXCAVATION pdf](#)

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Good afternoon Supervisor Norman Yee, President, Board of Supervisors,

Please find attached a letter and illustrations for submission by our architect James Hill to be included for CATEX Appeal scheduled for hearing on August 18, 2020.

Thank you for your consideration.

Best regards,

Joerg Rathenberg  
619 Sanchez Street  
San Francisco CA 94114



**600 BLOCK SANCHEZ- EAST SIDE**

August 12, 2020

**RE: the 617 Sanchez Proposal for the Demolition of an Existing Dwelling and the Construction of a New as Relates to the Requirements of San Francisco Planning Code Section 241 Dolores Heights Special Use District:**

The proposal for 617 Sanchez ignores the intent and goals of the San Francisco Planning Code as outlined in Section 241 Dolores Heights Special Use District. These goals, the Owners of 619 Sanchez in 2005 respected when they expanded their home while preserving both existing public views from across Sanchez Street and the private lateral views of adjacent neighbors. As a result of these thoughtful decisions, 619 is now put at an unfair disadvantage.

The proposal for 617 Sanchez ignores the Planning Codes requirements for Dolores Heights

- "to preserve and provide for an established area with a unique character and balance of built and natural environment"
- "to preserve and provide ... public and private view corridors and panoramas"
- "to conserve existing buildings"
- "to conserve ... plant materials and planted spaces,
- "to prevent unreasonable obstruction of view and light by buildings"
- "to encourage development in context and scale with established character and landscape"

In ignoring the intent, 617's proposal ignores the Code section entirely.

There has been a shift in direction at the Planning Commission and Planning Department over the past 15 years. At that time, adjacent neighbors' opinion and the existing historical conditions had significant influence over Planning Department decisions leading to significant compromises in scale. The difference in the more respectful goals and expectations for Planning and Neighbor approval for 619 Sanchez in 2005 versus the current direction of the Planning Department and the personal interests evidenced in the proposal for 617 Sanchez in 2019 puts the Owners of 619 Sanchez at a serious and unfair disadvantage, penalizing them for respecting the codes intent and their neighbors' wishes.

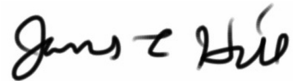
617 now joins 615 Sanchez in obliterating both the public views from the street and the private views of neighbors, radically transforming "the unique character and balance of the built and natural environment" of Dolores Heights. If Section 241 of the code is to be ignored for this project, one would expect the proposal for 617 would require a variance identifying a hardship that wasn't self-created in meeting the requirements.

In 2005 we were involved in redesigning 619 Sanchez for its current Owners. Neighborhood outreach was significant. The neighbors to either side at 617 and 621 Sanchez were both engaged and the design modified to reflect their requests. Out of deference to neighborhood character and public views, the historical facade and the 2-story height limit were maintained. Out of deference to the adjacent neighbors, our proposal of 2005 adapted to existing conditions, building low to preserve the cross-lot view from the property line window of 621, and terracing towards the rear to preserve the impact on light and air of the historical cottage at the rear of 617. Our expectation was that the views of 621 and the open space and history of the unique cottage at 617 had value worth respecting—and that these features precisely represented the "unique character and balance of built and natural environment" identified in Section 241.

Had we known what is currently promoted for 617 Sanchez, the design would have reflected a radically different context and attitude, one ignoring historical structures and imagining a new character for Dolores Heights represented by the multi-story view blocking constructions of 615. At that time we saw 615 and as an outlier and very bad example that put the personal above the community.

In retrospect, it is unfair that one standard be applied in 2005 and another in 2020. While the standard for 2020 does allow greater freedom for investors, it comes at a loss to the unique character and community of Dolores Heights.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James Hill". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

James Hill, AIA  
james hill architect  
836 Haight Street  
San Francisco, CA 94117

617 FRONT PROPERTY LINE

617 REAR PROPERTY LINE

47'-3"  
45% REAR YARD SETBACK  
(DOLORES HEIGHTS SPECIAL USE DISTRICT) 241 (a)

617 REAR YARD SETBACK

OUTLINE OF PROPOSED 617 SANCHEZ ST

617 SANCHEZ ST WINDOWS

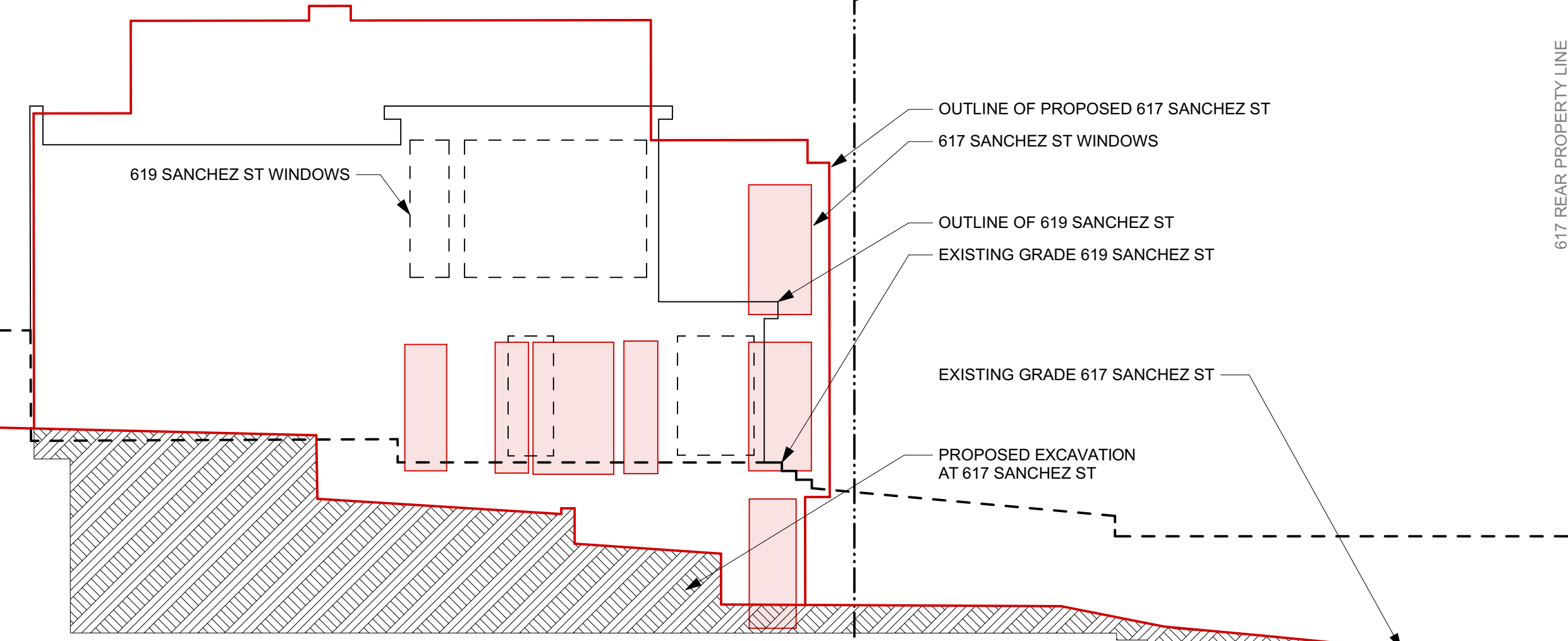
619 SANCHEZ ST WINDOWS

OUTLINE OF 619 SANCHEZ ST

EXISTING GRADE 619 SANCHEZ ST

EXISTING GRADE 617 SANCHEZ ST

PROPOSED EXCAVATION  
AT 617 SANCHEZ ST



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# 617 PROPOSED EXCAVATION

SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"

**james hill architect**

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617-619 Sanchez Street Studies  
San Francisco, CA 94114

PROJECT ID: B120

**617 PROPOSED EXCAVATION**

FULL SIZE SHT: 11" X 17"  
PLOT DATE: 8/12/2020  
FILE NAME: B120 MF  
PDF NAME: 617 PROPOSED EXCAVATION