

Beautiful Bentley Building

By Cathy Tyson

At a recent Design Review meeting in Lafayette, Commission members were quite impressed with the proposed Bentley School Classroom building for the Lafayette campus of this two-campus school. Also on the drawing board is a 77-space landscaped parking lot. "The architecture is just stunning," said Commission Member Bob Cleaver. Commission Member Bill Marquand added, "We're very fond of the building and all of its thoughtfulness and style."

Kava Massih of Kava Massih Architects gave a presentation on the 22,187 square foot, three story, boomerang shaped structure. Fitting snugly in a corner of the site, the building will house a number of classrooms, a library/media center, administrative offices, and an auditorium, as well as art and music classrooms on the ground floor. Because of the slope of the site, only the top story will be visible from nearby Highway 24. The Kava Massih firm also designed the gymnasium, student

center and a classroom building on campus. The new proposed building will have design elements similar to the existing campus buildings: clean lines, exterior walkways open to the plaza below and a sweeping roof.

According to Mark Schlientz, an Associate at Kava Massih, orienting the building with its back toward the freeway serves two purposes, blocking out freeway noise and opening up a plaza area for students to enjoy.

He also commented that there have been some changes along the way. The massive three-story stairway was adjusted to include student-friendly spaces with lots of planters and seating areas. Some sections of the roof will be changed to be more green, and help the project with its LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification. The interior walls facing the plaza will be all glass, letting in a significant amount of natural

light, while giving teachers three other classroom walls for whiteboards, maps, and student projects.

The proposed building is for students in grades six through eight, who are currently at the Hiller Campus in Oakland.

"At this point we're in the middle of a capital campaign which is going very well," said Melissa Rosengard, who is President of the Bentley School Board of Trustees. "We've had lots of support from the community," she added. If fundraising falls short, the school can borrow money, "that continues to be an option."

If all goes well, Rosengard anticipates construction starting in 2009, with completion approximately a year later in 2010.



Design by Kava Massih Architects, watercolor rendering by Robert Becker