



Architectural Review Board

Staff Report (ID # 14250)

Report Type: Action Items **Meeting Date:** 4/7/2022

Summary Title: 250 Sherman Ave: PSB Sign Exception

Title: Request for Major Architectural Review for Sign Exception for the installation of one illuminated free-standing sign that exceeds the allowed sign area. The sign is proposed to be 60"H x 138"L with an area 40.25 square feet where only 24 square feet is allowed. Environmental Assessment: Exempt From CEQA in Accordance With Guideline Section 15311 (Accessory Structures). Zoning District: PF (Public Facility).

From: Jonathan Lait

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Architectural Review Board (ARB) take the following action(s):

1. Recommend approval of the proposed project to the Director of Planning and Development Services based on findings and subject to conditions of approval.

Report Summary

As part of the Public Safety Building (PSB) project, Public Works staff requests a Sign Exception for one free standing sign that exceeds the allowed sign area. This proposal includes two additional signs that conform to Sign Code requirements.

Background

Project Information

Owner:	City of Palo Alto
Designer:	Square Peg Design
Representative:	Colette Chew – City of Palo Alto Public Works Dept.
Legal Counsel:	City Attorney

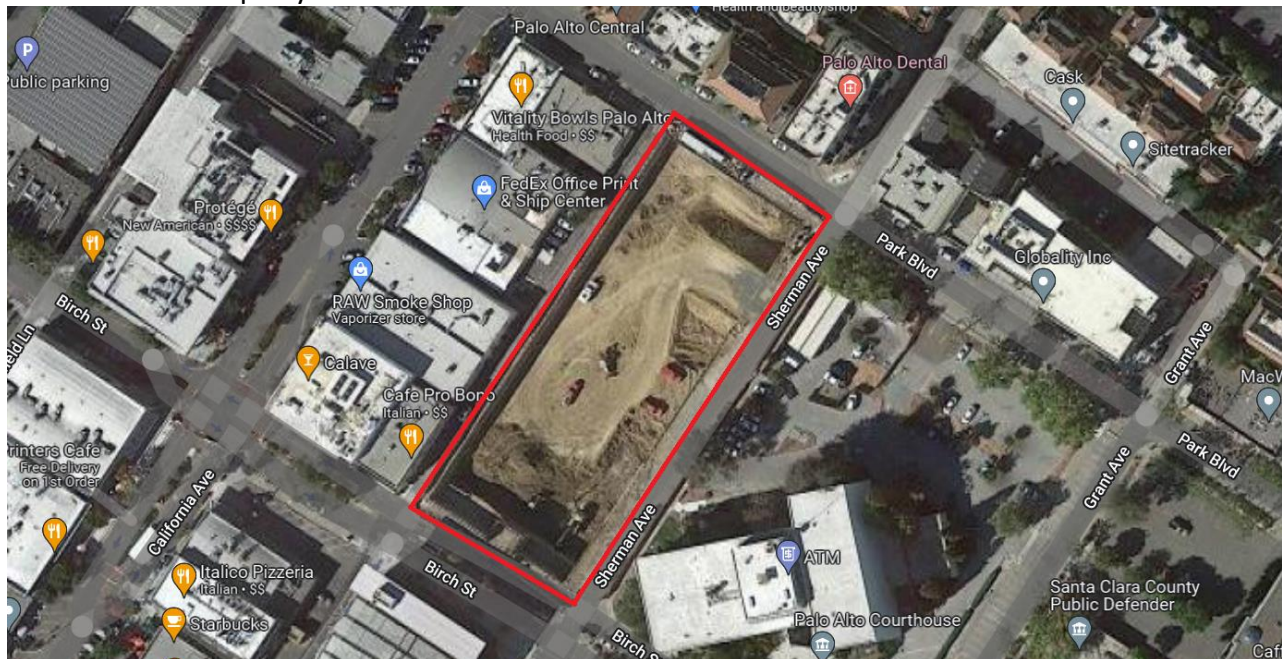
Property Information

Address:	250 Sherman Avenue
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City of Palo Alto
 Planning & Development Services
 250 Hamilton Avenue
 Palo Alto, CA 94301
 (650) 329-2442

Neighborhood:	California Avenue Business District
Lot Dimensions & Area:	161' x 372'
Housing Inventory Site:	No
Located w/in a Plume:	Yes, California-Olive-Emerson (COE) Area (from 640 Page Mille Road)
Protected/Heritage Trees:	Yes
Historic Resource(s):	No
Existing Improvement(s):	136,873 sf building; two-levels below grade & three-levels above grade; 49' in height; under construction
Existing Land Use(s):	The building under construction includes Offices, Detention Facilities, Emergency Dispatch and Emergency Operations Center
Adjacent Land Uses & Zoning:	Northwest: CC(2)(R)(P) Zoning (commercial land uses) Southwest: CC(2) Zoning (commercial land uses) Northeast: CC(2)(R) Zoning (commercial land uses) Southeast: PF and RM-40 Zoning (public facilities, and multiple family residential land uses)

Aerial View of Property:



Source: Google

Land Use Designation & Applicable Plans

Zoning Designation:	Public Facility (PF)
Comp. Plan Designation:	Major Institutional Special Facility (MISP)

Context-Based

Design Criteria: Not Applicable

Downtown Urban

Design Guide: Not Applicable

South of Forest Avenue

Coordinated Area Plan: Not Applicable

Baylands Master Plan: Not Applicable

El Camino Real Design

Guidelines (1976 / 2002): Not Applicable

Uses or Districts (150'): Yes, within 150' of multifamily residential land use

(Located within AIA

(Airport Influence Area): Not Applicable

Prior City Reviews & Action

City Council: None

PTC: None

HRB: None

ARB: None

Project Description

This Architectural Review application includes a sign exception for one free standing sign, and two additional Code compliant signs. The project is for the purpose of improving wayfinding in and around the Public Safety Building (PDS) while maintaining the City of Palo Alto logos, colors, and general design guidelines. The components of the design include:

Proposed Sign / Type	PAMC 16.24 Compliance	Allowed Dimensions	Proposed Dimensions
Building Monument ID / Free Standing Sign to 5'	Sign Exception Requested from PAMC 16.20.120	24 sf	3' 6" (H) X 11' 6" (L) Area = 40.25 sf
Department ID / Awning Sign	Complies with PAMC 16.20.150	125 sf	1' 6" (H) X 17' (L) Area = 25.5 sf

Department Listing ID / Directory Sign	Complies with PAMC 16.20.160	75 sf	3' 9" (H) x 4' 9" (L) Area = 17.8 sf
Address	Not Regulated by PAMC 16.20	Not Regulated by PAMC 16.20	5" (H) x 4' 9" (L) Area = 1.9' sf

The Building Monument ID will be located at the corner of Birch Street and Sherman Avenue at the perimeter of the public plaza and PSB main entry off Birch Street. The Architectural Review Board processed a similar sign exception [14PLN-00053] for freestanding monument signs located at City Hall in 2014¹.

Requested Entitlements, Findings and Purview:

The following discretionary applications are being requested:

- Architectural Review – Major (AR): The process for evaluating this type of application is set forth in PAMC 18.77.070. AR applications are reviewed by the ARB and recommendations are forwarded to the Planning & Development Services Director for action within five business days of the Board's recommendation. Action by the Director is appealable to the City Council if filed within 14 days of the decision. AR projects are evaluated against specific findings. All findings must be made in the affirmative to approve the project. Failure to make any one finding requires project redesign or denial. The findings to approve an AR application are provided in Attachment B.
- Architectural Review – Sign Exception: In accordance with PAMC section 16.20.040 "Sign Exception" means an application made in conjunction with an architectural review which requests a deviation from what is allowed in the Sign code. In order for the application to gain approval it must meet the following criteria: 1) there are exceptional or extraordinary circumstances or conditions applicable to the property involved that do not apply generally to property in the same district; 2) the granting of the application is necessary for the preservation and enjoyment of a substantial property right of the applicant and to prevent unreasonable property loss or unnecessary hardships; 3) the granting of the application will not be detrimental to the public health, safety, general welfare or convenience. The process for evaluating this type of application is set forth in PAMC 18.77.070 referenced above.

Analysis²

¹ 250 Hamilton [14PLN-00053] – Staff Report: <https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/files/assets/public/agendas-minutes-reports/agendas-minutes/architectural-review-board/archive-table-layout-2011-and-newer/2014/id-4862.pdf>

² The information provided in this section is based on analysis prepared by the report author prior to the public hearing. The Architectural Review Board in its review of the administrative record and based on public testimony

Neighborhood Setting and Character

The project site is within an active commercial district and is located across from public facilities (the courthouse) and a high-density residential structure on the opposite street corner, across Sherman Avenue. The new Public Safety Building (PSB) will house a multi-purpose training room and meeting space, the Police Department, 911 Emergency Dispatch Center, the Emergency Operations Center, the Office of Emergency Services, and the administration needs of the Fire Department.

Zoning Compliance³

A detailed review of the proposed project's consistency with applicable zoning standards has been performed. A summary table is provided in Attachment C. The proposed project complies with all applicable sign codes of PAMC 16.20 — except regarding allowed sign area for one proposed freestanding sign. The freestanding monument sign complies with the allowed height standard per the site's zoning—which allows for free standing signs up to five feet tall. The site is in the Public Facilities (PF) zoning district. The PF district is designed to accommodate governmental, public utility, educational, and community service or recreational facilities. The proposed signs provide visibility to this government facility, making it easily identifiable to pedestrians and motorists.

Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan, Area Plans and Guidelines⁴

The project design and intent are in general conformance with the Comprehensive Plan as supported by Policy L-6.10, which encourages high quality signage that is attractive, appropriate for the location and balances visibility needs with aesthetic needs. Comprehensive Plan Policy L-48 notes the support for high quality design and site planning, compatible with surrounding development and public spaces.

Consistency with Application Findings

Staff believes the sign exception findings can be made to support the freestanding sign due to the site's distinction as the Public Safety Building, which is a unique use that is not typical of other sites in the downtown or the City. Attachment B provides draft sign exception findings that may be modified by the ARB.

Environmental Review

The subject project has been assessed in accordance with the authority and criteria contained in the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the State CEQA Guidelines, and the environmental regulations of the City. Specifically, the project is exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) in accordance with Section 15311.

may reach a different conclusion from that presented in this report and may choose to make alternative findings. A change to the findings may result in a final action that is different from the staff recommended action in this report.

³ The Palo Alto Zoning Code is available online: http://www.amlegal.com/codes/client/palo-alto_ca

⁴ The Palo Alto Comprehensive Plan is available online: <http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/gov/topics/projects/landuse/compplan.asp>

Public Notification, Outreach & Comments

The Palo Alto Municipal Code requires notice of this public hearing be published in a local paper and mailed to owners and occupants of property within 600 feet of the subject property at least ten days in advance. Notice of a public hearing for this project was published in the *Daily Post* on March 28, 2022, which is 10 days in advance of the meeting. Postcard mailing occurred on March 22, 2022, which is 16 in advance of the meeting.

Public Comments

As of the writing of this report, no project-related, public comments were received.

Alternative Actions

In addition to the recommended action, the Architectural Review Board may:

1. Approve the project with modified findings or conditions.

Report Author & Contact Information

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(650) 329-2242

Danielle.Condit@cityofpaloalto.org

ARB⁵ Liaison & Contact Information

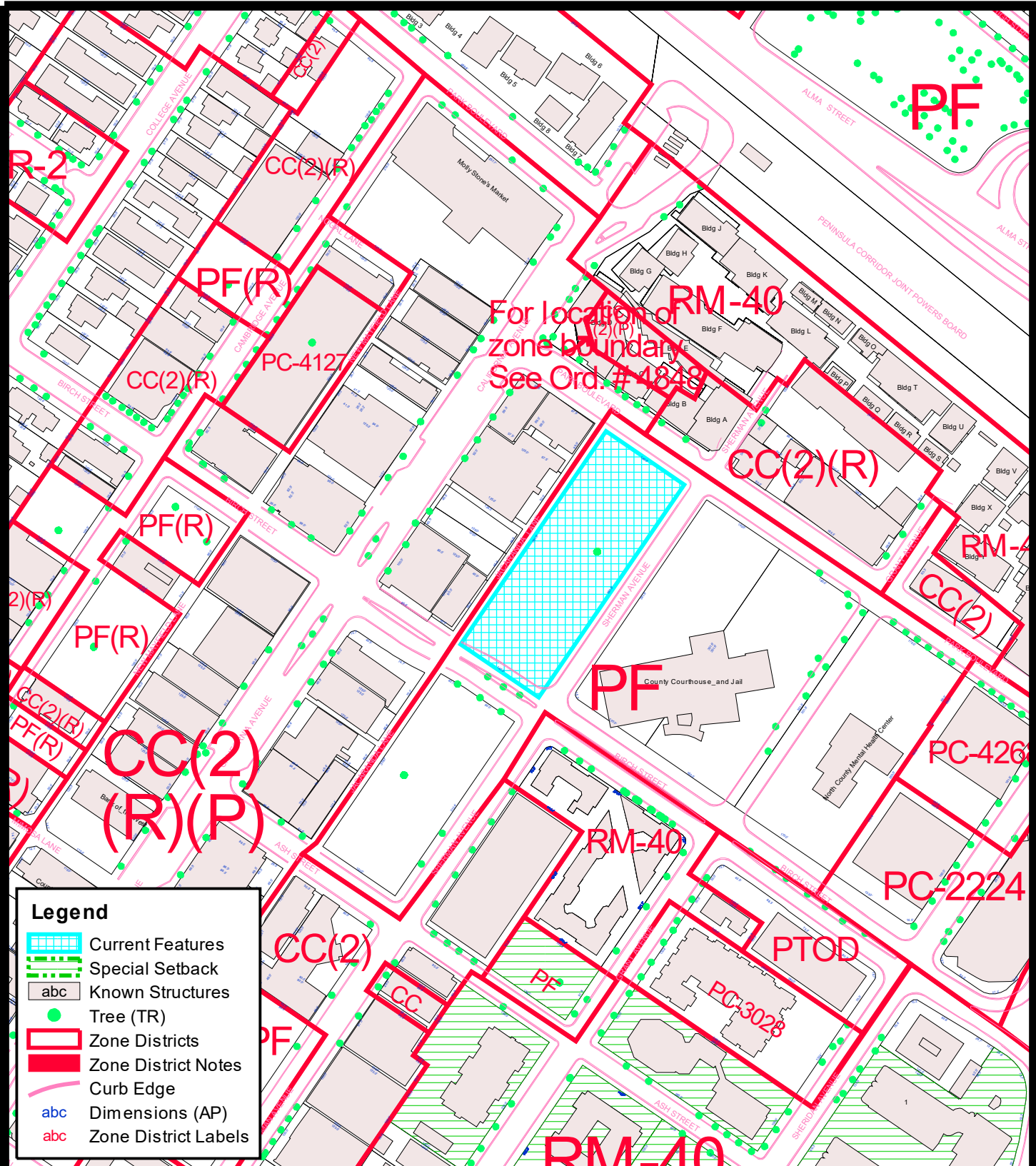
Jodie Gerhardt, AICP, Planning Manager
(650) 329-2575

jodie.gerhardt@cityofpaloalto.org

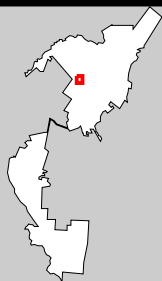
Attachments:

- Attachment A: Location Map (PDF)
- Attachment B: Draft ARB & Sign Exception Findings (DOCX)
- Attachment C: Zoning Comparison Table (DOCX)
- Attachment E: Project Plans (DOCX)
- Attachment D: Draft Conditions of Approval (DOCX)

⁵ Emails may be sent directly to the ARB using the following address: arb@cityofpaloalto.org



The City of
Palo Alto



Location Map:
250 Sherman Ave.

This map is a product of the
City of Palo Alto GIS



ATTACHMENT A
ARB FINDINGS FOR APPROVAL & SIGN EXCEPTION
 250 Sherman/19PLN-00258

The design and architecture of the proposed project, as conditioned, complies with the Findings for Architectural Review as required in PAMC Chapter 18.76.

Finding 1: The design is consistent with applicable provisions of the Palo Alto Comprehensive Plan, Zoning Code, coordinated area plans (including compatibility requirements), and any relevant design guides.

The project is consistent with Finding #1 because:

The design is consistent and compatible with the applicable elements of the City's Comprehensive Plan in that the proposed project is consistent with policy L-6.10: Encourage high quality signage that is attractive, energy-efficient, and appropriate for the location, and balances visibility needs with aesthetic needs. The proposed signage was designed to be compatible with the new Public Safety Building (PSB). The free-standing monument sign will have a rectangular sign face which shares the same predominant shape of the building. The white acrylic push-thru lettering will be similar in color palette to the white porcelain tile veneer. The grey aluminum sign face will be a nice contrast to the CIP decorative concrete wall—including a Palo Alto green accent at the bottom of the sign face reflective of the City's signature color.

Finding 2: The project has a unified and coherent design, that:

- (a) Creates an internal sense of order and desirable environment for occupants, visitors, and the general community,
- (b) Preserves, respects and integrates existing natural features that contribute positively to the site and the historic character including historic resources of the area when relevant,
- (c) Is consistent with the context-based design criteria of the applicable zone district,
- (d) Provides harmonious transitions in scale, mass and character to adjacent land uses and land use designations,
- (e) Enhances living conditions on the site (if it includes residential uses) and in adjacent residential areas.

The project is consistent with Finding #2 because:

This finding can be made in the affirmative in that the proposed design of the signage is appropriate for the commercial district setting. The proposed signage uses consistent materials and colors that is unified and coherent with the site, as further described in Finding #3.

Finding 3: The design is of high aesthetic quality, using high quality, integrated materials and appropriate construction techniques, and incorporating textures, colors, and other details that are compatible with and enhance the surrounding area.

The project is consistent with Finding #3 because:

The sign is fabricated of aluminum and acrylic—both materials are durable to the outside elements. The primary color palette of gray, green and white have been selected to compliment the new PSB building.

Finding 4: The design is functional, allowing for ease and safety of pedestrian and bicycle traffic and providing for elements that support the building's necessary operations (e.g. convenient vehicle access to property and utilities, appropriate arrangement and amount of open space and integrated signage, if applicable, etc.).

The project is consistent with Finding #4 because:

The sign has been placed to assist in wayfinding for pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists entering the building and site—and is visible from both Sherman Avenue and Birch Street. The black background of the aluminum sign panel paired with the push-thru white acrylic lettering provides a nice contrast and texture that is easily visible.

Finding 5: The landscape design complements and enhances the building design and its surroundings, is appropriate to the site's functions, and utilizes to the extent practical, regional indigenous drought resistant plant material capable of providing desirable habitat that can be appropriately maintained.

The project is consistent with Finding #5 because:

Finding #5 is not applicable for this project. The existing landscaping will not be impacted by the proposed signage.

Finding 6: The project incorporates design principles that achieve sustainability in areas related to energy efficiency, water conservation, building materials, landscaping, and site planning.

The project is consistent with Finding #6 because:

The proposed sign is LED illuminated and made of durable long-lasting materials.

Sign Exception

The following findings have been made to support the sign exception request, as modified by the ARB approval conditions. The specific exception that has been requested is for the following standard:

- **Building Monument ID (Free Standing Sign to 5') – exceeds allowed sign area by approximately 16 square feet.**

1. *There are exceptional or extraordinary circumstances or conditions applicable to the property involved that do not apply generally to property in the same district;*

The project site is the Public Safety Building, and due to its civic nature and unique and specific function, Public Safety Building would be considered an exceptional use that is not found at other sites within the immediate vicinity or at any other site within the City.

2. *The granting of the application is necessary for the preservation and enjoyment of a substantial property right of the applicant and to prevent unreasonable property loss or unnecessary hardships;*


Civic engagement is an integral part of the functions of the City of Palo Alto Public Safety Building. The proposed sign promotes wayfinding, which is a priority for users in need of government services.

3. *The granting of the application will not be detrimental or injurious to property or improvements in the vicinity and will not be detrimental to the public health, safety, general welfare or convenience.*

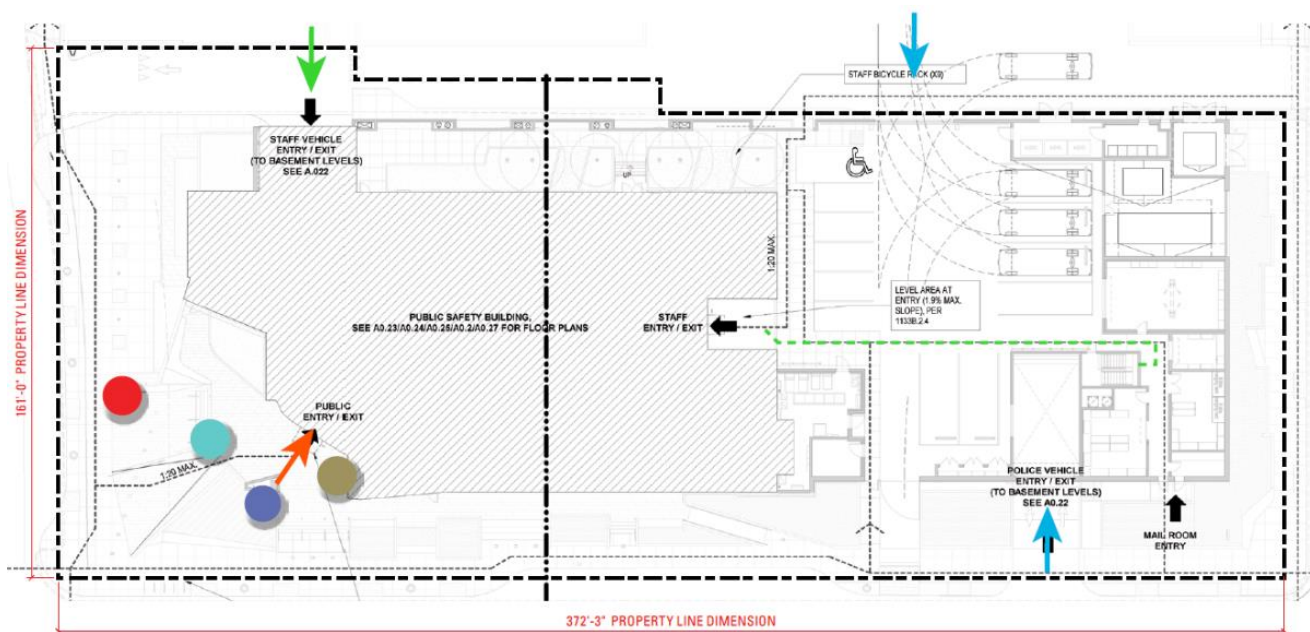
The project will be constructed in accordance with all building code requirements of the City of Palo Alto and will be neither detrimental nor injurious to surrounding properties, public health, safety, general welfare, or convenience. The proposed sign will enhance wayfinding for the Public Safety Building and will have minimal impacts to the site as perceived by the neighboring properties.

Attachment C

Zoning Comparison Table

Proposed Sign / Type	Site Plan ID	PAMC 16.24 Compliance	Allowed Dimensions	Proposed Dimensions
Building Monument ID / Free Standing Sign to 5'		Sign Exception Requested	24 sf	3' 6" X 11' 6" Area = 40.25 sf
Department ID / Awning Sign		No, Sign Exception Requested	125 sf	1' 6" X 17' Area = 25.5 sf
Department Listing ID / Directory Sign		No, Sign Exception Requested	75 sf	3' 9" x 4' 9" Area = 17.8 sf
Address		Not Regulated by PAMC 16.20	Not Regulated by PAMC 16.20	5" x 4' 9" Area = 1.9' sf

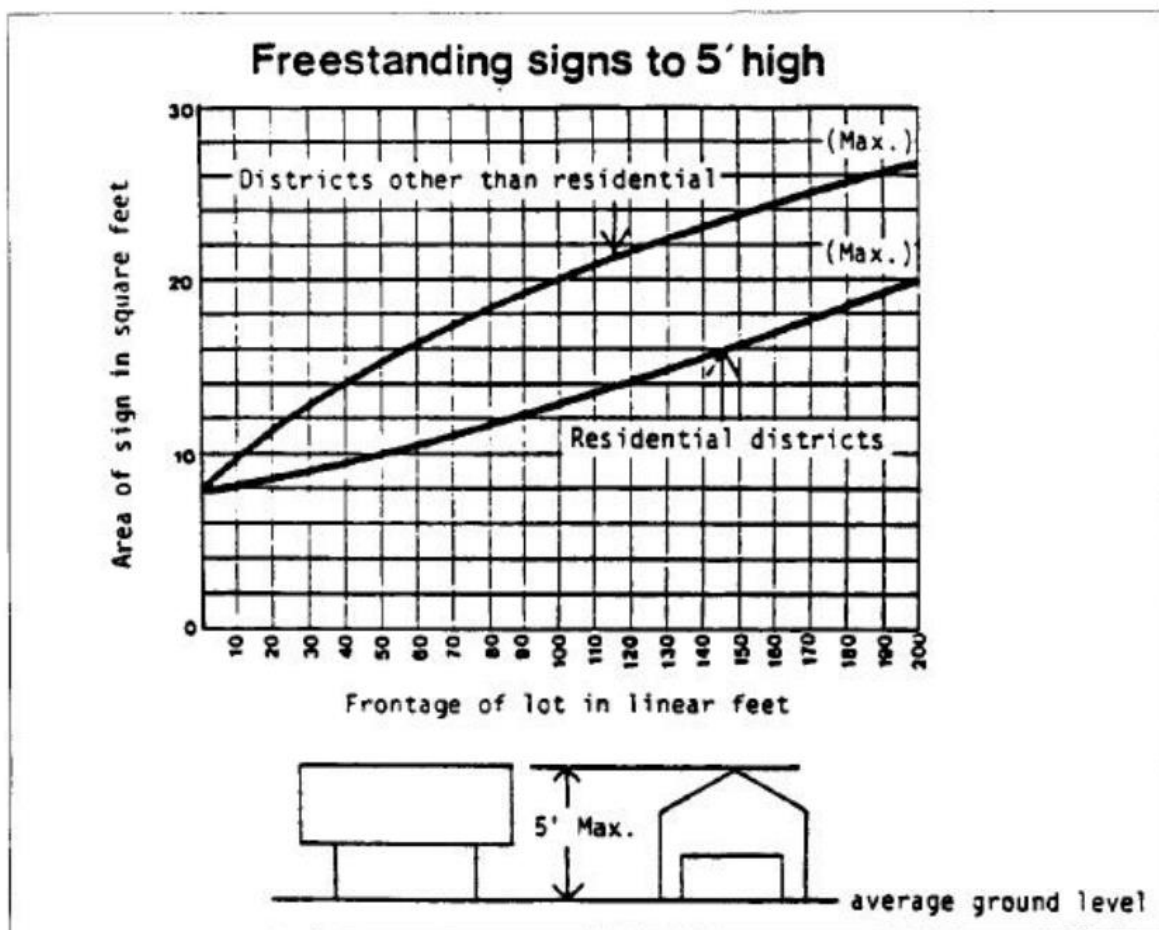
NOTE: PAMC sign code maximum signage area for free standing at 5' or less with a frontage of 161' is between 24 sf and 25 sf per Table 1 below.



Chapter 16.20 — Table 1

Allowable Sign Area for Freestanding Signs up to Five Feet High

NOTE: THESE ARE MAXIMUM DESIGN DIMENSIONS, AND MAY BE REDUCED IN THE DESIGN REVIEW PROCESS PURSUANT TO CHAPTER 16.48 18.77.070



- This table is to be used in all Zoning Districts except for the GM zones, the Hospital District, and for El Camino frontages of CN and CS zoned properties.

16.20.010

(15) "Sign area" means and is determined as follows:

(A) Where the lettered or illustrated material of a sign is placed upon a sign board or other sign structure having a continuous or essentially continuous surface or face (whether plane, curved, angulated or otherwise), the exposed surface or face area of such sign board or sign structure shall be the sign area.

Attachment E

Project Plans

Project plans are available online.

Directions to review Project plans online:

1. Go to: bit.ly/PApendingprojects
2. Scroll down to find “250 Sherman Avenue” and click the address link
3. On this project specific webpage you will find a link to the project plans and other important information

Direct Link to Project Webpage:

<https://bit.ly/3HSZahC>

Materials Boards:

The color and material boards will be available to view in the display case outside of City Hall, on the exterior elevator near the corner of Hamilton Ave. and Bryant St.

ATTACHMENT D
CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL

250 Sherman Avenue
19PLN-00258

PLANNING DIVISION

1. CONFORMANCE WITH PLANS. Construction and development shall conform to the approved plans entitled, "Palo Alto Public Safety Building," stamped as received by the City on November 09, 2021 on file with the Planning Department, 250 Hamilton Avenue, Palo Alto, California except as modified by these conditions of approval.
2. BUILDING PERMIT. Apply for a building permit and meet any and all conditions of the Planning, Fire, Public Works, and Building Departments.
3. BUILDING PERMIT PLAN SET. The ARB approval letter including all Department conditions of approval for the project shall be printed on the plans submitted for building permit.
4. PROJECT MODIFICATIONS: All modifications to the approved project shall be submitted for review and approval prior to construction. If during the Building Permit review and construction phase, the project is modified by the applicant, it is the responsibility of the applicant to contact the Planning Division/project planner directly to obtain approval of the project modification. It is the applicant's responsibility to highlight any proposed changes to the project and to bring it to the project planner's attention.
5. INDEMNITY: To the extent permitted by law, the Applicant shall indemnify and hold harmless the City, its City Council, its officers, employees and agents (the "indemnified parties") from and against any claim, action, or proceeding brought by a third party against the indemnified parties and the applicant to attack, set aside or void, any permit or approval authorized hereby for the Project, including (without limitation) reimbursing the City for its actual attorneys' fees and costs incurred in defense of the litigation. The City may, in its sole discretion, elect to defend any such action with attorneys of its own choice.
6. FINAL INSPECTION: A Planning Division Final inspection will be required to determine substantial compliance with the approved plans prior to the scheduling of a Building Division final. Any revisions during the building process must be approved by Planning,

including but not limited to; materials, landscaping and hard surface locations. Contact your Project Planner, Danielle Condit at danielle.condit@cityofpaloalto.org to schedule this inspection.

BUILDING DIVISION

At time of building permit submittal provide the following information:

7. Wall Mounted Sign:
 - a. Weight of each sign to be shown as part of plans.
 - b. Sign attachment to building must include the building elements (i.e., concrete wall, metal studs, wood studs, etc.) with the correct mechanical anchorage type (i.e., Hilti TZ bolt for concrete, sheet metal screw #12 for sheet metal stud, lag screw for woods, etc.) with length and embedment length and listing (i.e., ICC ESR report), & quantities for each sign as minimum. If the sign is heavy enough (typically over 100 lbs. or more), structural calculation may be required.
 - c. If the sign is illuminated, include complete T24 sign form and electrical disconnect and panel information/schedule.
 - d. Accessibility - please make sure the sign does not protrude into the required walkway and sidewalk (width and head height) meeting the current accessible code.
8. Monument Sign:
 - a. Site plan and location of the monument sign.
 - b. Size of sign.
 - c. Structural calculation for seismic anchorage and stability check. Monument sign supported on a structural slab/floor framing shall include structural calculation/design to ensure the structural supporting system is adequate due to applicable load combinations.
 - d. Sign framing and connections to the existing concrete foundation with the correct mechanical anchorage type (i.e., Hilti TZ bolt for concrete, etc.) with total length and embedment length and listing (i.e., ICC ESR report), & quantities for each sign as minimum.
 - e. If the sign is illuminated, include complete T24 sign form and electrical disconnect and panel information/schedule. Show location of the electrical panel supply power to the sign.