



ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD
DRAFT MINUTES: June 2, 2016
City Hall/City Council Chambers
250 Hamilton Avenue
8:30 AM

Call to Order

Roll Call

Present: Vice Chair Alexander Lew, Board Members Peter Baltay, Wynne Furth, Kyu Kim

Absent: Chair Robert Gooyer

Oral Communications

None.

Agenda Changes, Additions and Deletions

None.

City Official Reports

1. **Meeting Schedule and Assignments**
2. **List of Staff Approved (Minor) Architectural Reviews**

Jodie Gerhardt indicated the July 7th meeting would be canceled unless an emergency occurred.

Action Items

3. **799 Embarcadero Road [16PLN-00123]:** Request for Preliminary Architectural Review of concept plans for a two-story, 6,500 square foot replacement fire station building proposed at Palo Alto Fire Station #3, located on the northwest corner of Embarcadero Road and Newell Road at the southeasterly edge of Rinconada Park on an 18.27 acre, city-owned property zoned Public Facility (PF). For more information contact Amy French at amy.french@cityofpaloalto.org.

Amy French reviewed the site and site plan for the proposed project. The site contained special setbacks of 24 feet. The applicant proposed ingress only from Newell and egress only to Embarcadero.

Alan Kawasaki, Shah Kawasaki Architects, reported the fire station needed upgrades to comply with seismic and ADA requirements and to accommodate larger apparatus. The site was located in a park and near residences. Trees on the site needed to remain. He reviewed details of the proposed building and materials.

Vice Chair Lew requested the applicant explain the rationale for the three options. Mr. Kawasaki explained that he noted sloped roofs and materials of the neighborhood for context of the proposed building. Option 1 had the terra cotta and gray metal panels of the neighborhood. The flat roof tended to be more civic. The materials were interchangeable among the options. Option 2 reflected a residential expression of arts and craft and mid-century modern. Option 3 had a fun curved roof.

Board Member Furth inquired whether the site was subject to the Park Dedication Ordinance. Ms. French did not know; she had not seen the limits of the park. Matt Raschke, Public Works, advised the fire station was excluded from the park dedication area.

Board Member Baltay felt the building was built to a property line; however, the report indicated it was not. He asked how staff justified the building being placed at a property line. Ms. French reported there was no property line adjacent to the fire station as the parcel contained more than 18 acres. The City owned the entire parcel. Board Member Baltay inquired whether a setback would be required if a private party proposed a project at the site. Ms. French advised a private party would not be allowed to propose a project at the site. Mr. Raschke clarified that what looked like a property line was the Park Dedication Ordinance line. Board Member Baltay inquired whether the Planning Department would support building to this kind of boundary line without a setback or daylight plane requirement. Ms. French responded yes. A setback was not required from a park boundary line.

Board Member Kim inquired about the stealth flag pole. Ms. French explained that a wireless communication facility was stored inside the flag pole. Mr. Raschke advised that the company that owned the facility was considering whether to renew the lease on the facility. The City was awaiting their decision. Mr. Kawasaki had reserved a space for the facility if the company chose to renew the lease. Board Member Kim inquired about the location for the flag pole. Mr. Kawasaki indicated it would be placed near the front entry.

Vice Chair Lew noticed overhead lines on aerial views and inquired about easements for those. Mr. Kawasaki had not seen any lines over the property line, except for the lines along Newell. Apparatus had sufficient clearance for those lines. He was more concerned if a line crossed an egress point.

Board Member Kim inquired about a possible location for the temporary fire station. He expressed concern about safety of bicycle and pedestrian traffic during construction. There appeared to be room for the 55-foot ingress without crossing into parking. He noted a right-turn arrow from Newell into the egress and thought there should also be a left-turn arrow from Newell. He asked if the bay could be wider to allow a double-wide door. A lot of thought had been put into the character of the bay entry and exit; more thought could be put into the pedestrian entry and exit. Perhaps the pedestrian entry was not meant to be highly visible. He preferred the cedar siding with a single sloping roof rather than a gabled roof. He was not opposed to the arched roof, but he wondered whether residences in the neighborhood had an arched roof. If the unit dimensions of the terra cotta could be changed, he might prefer it. The dimensions of the cedar paneling were the most aesthetically pleasing. When the project returned as a formal review, he requested more neighborhood characteristic elevations and site sections, perhaps the full Embarcadero elevation, and site sections cut through Embarcadero.

Board Member Furth noted the neighborhood was Palo Alto's post-war civic center. The context for the site was a civic center, mid-century, heavily wooded, and residential. She preferred the building look as though it was designed and built now by people who appreciated the context. She was interested in signage on Newell as that was the pedestrian center. The proposal lacked sufficient bike parking, benches, and other amenities to support passersby. The pitched roof did not work atop that set of structures. She liked the two cube approach that emphasized the building as a garage with a house attached. She preferred Option 1 in terms of silhouette. Materials needed to be high quality and demonstrate an interest in civic investment. She tended not to like the concrete panels. The curved roof might work. Literal quotes of nearby buildings tended not to work, and that seemed to be the problem with the pitched roof. The site was good, and the site layout was good.

Board Member Baltay believed the trees were a powerful feature of the site. He liked the parking lot tucked in the back corner and separated from the park by a large hedge. He was concerned with the massing of the building against the park. The proposed building would cast quite a shadow on an important piece of the park. A 25-foot tall wall at a property line ignored daylight planes and setbacks required for other projects. The building should be modulated at the left side to respect daylight and

views from the park. Gates across the frontage were not welcoming. He preferred Option 1, but the two-story piece next to the park affected the massing of the building. The forms were the same height, and he felt they should vary. Perhaps the piece on the left could step down. The overall composition was not quite right. The building needed some form of roof or a cap. Modulation of forms tended to make the building fit into a residential area. The fire station was a civic building and should not look like a house. The other options were too similar to houses. Wood siding was inappropriate for a fire station. Wood siding required constant, intense maintenance contrary to Comprehensive Plan C-24 requirements. He liked terra cotta very much. The terra cotta was a nod to the traditional brick firehouse. He was unsure whether the majority of residents favored contemporary architecture, and a public building should be designed with respect to public opinion. The proposed building seemed to be missing an interesting quality, a jewel box character.

Vice Chair Lew agreed with most comments. The project could be a fire station in the park or a fire station by the park. It could be more people friendly. The existing lawn in front of the fire station was an opportunity to do something different, something drought tolerant. A two-story building on the boundary line was forcing the applicant to make an architectural statement. Fences could be part of the architecture. The library and Art Center, both one-story buildings with hipped roofs and cedar shake roofing, blended with the neighborhood. That would be the best route for this project. The two colors in Option 1 could look forced if viewed from a distance. The mass should be broken up a little bit to create a more interesting cube. He liked terra cotta with a variegated color and with darker-colored windows. Option 1 would help hide photovoltaics and mechanical equipment on the roof. He questioned whether the roof in Option 2 could be well done. It seemed a little forced. There could be fewer material options for the curved roof in Option 3. The curve could be cluttered with the many projections through the roof. Cement board needed more to look substantial. He liked the terra cotta and was flexible on the roof shape.

Mr. Kawasaki advised he preferred Option 1. Fire departments typically liked brick, and terra cotta was the modern expression of brick.

Vice Chair Lew suggested a feature such as a trellis at the entry as a way to welcome the public and make the entrance prominent.

Board Member Baltay reiterated a request for renderings from Embarcadero, the park and Newell.

Board Member Kim noted the unit dimensions of the terra cotta was the same as the cedar. If the terra cotta color could vary, that would be good. Many people did queue at the corner; perhaps something could be added to tidy the corner.

Board Member Furth was interested in a daylight plane study and shade impacts on the park. She concurred with making the corner more useful. She would be pleased if the building could be designed to be welcoming and a part of the community.

Vice Chair Lew advised that the draft Comprehensive Plan Update mentioned a shadow ordinance on public parks. While the Comprehensive Plan Update was not approved, shadows were a community concern.

4. Comprehensive Plan Update: Request for approval of Architectural Review Board Subcommittee comments as formal ARB comments for the Comp Plan Update Draft EIR. For more information, contact Elena Lee at elena.lee@cityofpaloalto.org.

Vice Chair Lew reported he and Board Member Furth met to discuss the Comprehensive Plan Update

Board Member Furth advised that the subcommittee focused on comments related to issues in the ARB's purview, *i.e.*, comments related to site-specific or site-adjacent aspects of development that could be cumulatively significant and how they might be addressed. The ARB reviewed quite a few projects of site

redevelopment, and the ARB did not have adequate tools to evaluate that, particularly environmental aspects. Cumulatively, site redevelopment could lead to a loss of street character. She suggested thinking about a block-by-block or frontage-by-frontage analysis. Reduction of landscaping occurred with the intensification of development. The increased use of glass walls could create problems of glare, excessive illumination and heat gain. A finding required the ARB to evaluate landscaping in terms of its impact on heat island effects, but it was addressed specifically to landscaping and did not contain metrics. She suggested adoption of metrics to improve the heat island effects of new construction. Construction was occurring in areas where the ambient noise level was above the City's acceptable noise contours. Outdoor spaces could be too noisy to be usable. She suggested development of better standards for that. The City did not have a standard for making a block or a frontage work for multimodal use of sidewalks. She suggested revising standards for onsite bicycle parking to accommodate existing demand and encourage additional demand. A matrix that identified all applicable standards for each parcel in the City would be helpful for applicants, staff and the ARB.

Vice Chair Lew understood Board Member Furth was asserting there were deficiencies. They should be more clear on exactly where deficiencies were as they were not universal throughout Palo Alto. He understood from staff that CEQA did not extend to review of parking and asked if that would extend to bike parking. Board Member Furth clarified that the Comprehensive Plan was the City's document. CEQA did not require it, but the City could elect to do it. Vice Chair Lew did not believe the ARB had been reviewing parking. The Planning Commission had been working with the Update for a long time; therefore, some of these issues had been discussed. Perhaps the subcommittee could discuss the Comprehensive Plan Update with the PTC subcommittee. Regarding sidewalks and standards for bicycle parking, he would want feedback from the bicycle committee. The City had reduced parking ratios Downtown and California Avenue which translated to bike parking. He did not understand the rationale for that. Ms. Gerhardt reported a new Initial Study template for formal projects contained the parking capacity question. That was something Palo Alto had chosen to maintain as part of CEQA.

Board Member Baltay wished to issue a statement of the Board's position in the current meeting. He suggested the first bullet point be titled "Reuse First." He did not believe aesthetic loss of street character could be placed in a Comprehensive Plan. It was an issue, but how could it be phrased. The third bullet point was a very serious issue of parking versus plantings. The emphasis should be shifted back to landscaping. The issue of glass walls was better dealt with on a case-by-case basis. That did not belong in the Comprehensive Plan; it was contained in the Building Code. He did not support inclusion in the Comprehensive Plan. Heat island effects were an issue. The Comprehensive Plan could say consider heat island effects. The same thing with ambient noise levels. The Comprehensive Plan could say consider noise levels for outdoor spaces. New development should consider noise levels at outdoor spaces. Multimodal uses of sidewalks and standards for bicycle parking were important issues; but he was unsure whether they were more appropriate for the Comprehensive Plan or the Code. A comprehensive matrix was a great idea, but he could not support that for inclusion in the Comprehensive Plan as a practical measure.

Board Member Kim agreed with most items. He agreed with Board Member Baltay regarding glass walls. He too did not know how the Comprehensive Plan could address that. LEED should cover heat island effects. Perhaps the Board could bring that up in future project reviews.

Board Member Furth explained that the comments were a place to raise issues and ask for analysis. It was intended to direct results or to identify Comprehensive Plan policies. She disagreed about the ability of the Comprehensive Plan to address issues such as street rhythms or aesthetics. It was useful to raise issues about environmental impacts, which included aesthetics, of the continuing development and redevelopment of the City. One of the striking features of the series of analyses was that it showed deteriorating mobility. Mitigation measures were intended to encourage alternate modes of travel, but it acknowledged that none of them were adequate to prevent an unavoidable impact. It did not seem to reflect the fact that accommodation and support of alternate means of transportation happened on individual sites as well as on the public right-of-way. Tying those together could make those mitigations more effective.

Board Member Baltay would support the comments if the issue of glass walls was removed.

Vice Chair Lew did not believe glass walls were a problem at the current time. The ARB had been able to change projects to make it better. The Draft EIR stated that the City Code would solve any glare issues; however, the language of the Code and Design Guidelines was uneven and not robust. The issue was glare from reflective surfaces rather than the use of glass walls. Other cities were doing more than the City of Palo Alto. Board Member Baltay requested a rephrasing of the issue. He supported Vice Chair Lew's comments. He was concerned that the current wording was creating a stylistic or architectural limitation. Vice Chair Lew advised that the Draft EIR stated avoid the use of reflective surfaces that could create glare; however, the Codes were uneven about that. He suggested the Comprehensive Plan state consider updating Codes to this point, so that it would not be an EIR issue.

Elena Lee indicated staff could do that. The intent for the EIR was to provide possibilities. The CAC was working to include language for the issue of landscaping versus parking. They could do the same with glare and other aesthetic items.

Board Member Baltay suggested changing glass walls to highly reflective walls.

Vice Chair Lew requested Board Member Furth comment on the noise issue. He asked if she was referring to construction noise. Board Member Furth replied no. She explained that ambient noise in some areas of the City was higher than considered appropriate for residential uses. At the same time, the City required usable outdoor space for residential units. Few applicants considered noise in their presentations to the ARB. The City would be better with a stronger policy. Ms. Gerhardt clarified that some projects had been commercial plazas for which there was not always a standard. Board Member Furth's point was valid for residential uses. Board Member Furth felt noise should be analyzed for commercial plazas as well. Vice Chair Lew felt the Zoning Ordinance was set up to protect residential uses from commercial uses. He concurred with the point generally about noise.

Vice Chair Lew agreed that aesthetic loss of street character was a concern. Board Member Furth remarked that a comment noted a concern, and the drafters of the Comprehensive Plan Update figured out how to address the concern. She suggested language of consider measures regarding loss of views of sky and hills. Impacts were occurring along El Camino, San Antonio and Downtown. Those were all serious issues in terms of what people perceived as loss as the City changed. She was trying to figure out how to accommodate change in a way that people felt gain rather than loss. The overall issue of the mix of lower and higher buildings should be addressed in the Comprehensive Plan as a desirable goal. Board Member Baltay questioned how much of the issue should be considered by the Architectural Review Board. Board Member Furth agreed to removing the item from comments if there were adequate standards to address the issue. Regarding view corridors, Vice Chair Lew noted the Draft EIR had a diagram that specifically excluded El Camino and San Antonio. The ARB could ask that it be studied. The mix of high and low buildings was important, and the ARB should raise the question. Board Member Furth requested language for view corridors. Vice Chair Lew suggested address view corridors for San Antonio and El Camino. Board Member Furth reiterated to treat San Antonio and El Camino Real as important view corridors. Ms. Gerhardt asked if they were deleting the aspect of rhythm. Board Member Furth wanted to delete it. Board Member Baltay deferred to the subcommittee. Vice Chair Lew believed the Code addressed it in Context Based Criteria, but Context Based Criteria did not apply to every zone.

Board Member Furth suggested inserting "possible" in the penultimate bullet. She felt having them consider a matrix as a mitigation measure would be worthwhile. Board Member Baltay concurred.

MOTION:

Board Member Baltay moved, seconded by Board Member Kim, to request Board Member Furth revise the document as discussed and send it to the Director of Planning and Community Environment as comments from the Architectural Review Board as a whole.

MOTION PASSED: 4-0

Study Session

None.

Approval of Minutes

5. May 19, 2016

Board Member Baltay asked which Board Member moved approval of the minutes. Board Member Kim indicated he did.

Vice Chair Lew understood Chair Gooyer appreciated the quality of the drawings rather than renderings as reflected on page 3, in the second paragraph. In the next sentence, Chair Gooyer referred to a previously approved five or six-story hotel for the site. The approved project was 48 feet high to the top of the parapet and contained four stories.

MOTION:

Vice Chair Lew moved, seconded by Board Member Furth, to approve the minutes for the May 19, 2016 meeting as amended.

MOTION PASSED: 4-0

Subcommittee Items

None.

Board Member Questions, Comments, Announcements

None.

Adjournment