



Architectural Review Board

Staff Report (ID # 9181)

Report Type: Subcommittee Items **Meeting Date:** 5/3/2018

Summary Title: 620 Emerson Street: Subcommittee Review of Landscaping

Title: 620 Emerson Street (17PLN-00331): Subcommittee Review of a Previously Approved Project That was Conditioned to Return With Project Changes Related to Landscaping on the Roof. Environmental Assessment: Exempt from the Provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) per Guideline Section 15303 (New Construction). Zoning District: CD-C(GF)(P) (Downtown Commercial). For More Information Contact the Project Planner Samuel Gutierrez at samuel.gutierrez@cityofpaloalto.org.

From: Hillary Gitelman

Recommendation

Staff recommends the Architectural Review Board (ARB) take the following action(s):

1. Discuss and provide direction or approve project revisions.

Background

On April 18, 2018, the Director of Planning and Community Environment approved the subject project. At the Board's recommendation, a condition was imposed that required certain project elements return to the ARB subcommittee. Below are the items that were requested to return to the subcommittee and the applicant's response to the ARB's comments:

Architecture Review Condition:

- ARB SUBCOMMITTEE: Prior to the issuance of building permits, the applicant shall return to the ARB subcommittee for approval of the following items, to the satisfaction of the Director of Planning and Community Environment:
 - a. Review of the landscaping design of the green roof area to ensure conformance with Finding #5.

Applicant's Response:

City of Palo Alto
 Planning & Community Environment
 250 Hamilton Avenue
 Palo Alto, CA 94301
 (650) 329-2442

- The applicant has provided a landscape plan for the ARB Subcommittee to review. This plan includes alternative plants that are local native plants.

A video recording of the Board's last meeting on this project is available online: <http://midpenmedia.org/architectural-review-board-74-2-3/>

The Board is encouraged to provide direction to staff and the applicant as to whether the proposed changes are sufficient or requires further refinement.

Report Author & Contact Information

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ARB¹ Liaison & Contact Information

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Attachments:

- Attachment A: Applicant Response Letter (PDF)
- Attachment B: Project Plans (DOCX)

¹ Emails may be sent directly to the ARB using the following address: arb@cityofpaloalto.org

MONTALBA ARCHITECTS *INC*

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MEMORANDUM

DATE April 17th, 2018

TO City of Palo Alto – Architectural Review Board Sub Committee

FROM Montalba Architects, Inc.

PROJECT NOBU PA 620 RESTAURANT, 620 EMERSON ST., PALO ALTO, CA 94301

RE **CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL, SUBCOMMITTEE**

NOTE Hello,
 Please see the attached notes referencing items required for subcommittee review as discussed during the ARB Hearing for the new Nobu restaurant at 620 Emerson St. (Minor Architectural Review 17PLN-00331) on Thursday April 5, 2018. Discussed items are noted in *italic* below with our corresponding responses below that.

ARB Comments: The selection of plant species at the green roof was discussed by board members and requested to be followed up with and reviewed at the subcommittee level. In particular, board members had conflicting comments regarding whether or not the green roof planting needed to be more drought-resistant and native to the region. On one hand, it was discussed that this should be required, and on the other, it was noted that this green roof is an architectural design feature, NOT landscaping, and therefore exempt from any related requirements.

Montalba Architects Response: The attached green roof visual garden has been designed to be indicative of a Japanese-influenced aesthetic that exhibits the characteristics of an architectural design feature more than a landscaped surface. Separated from the adjacent Hotel property, the green roof is meant to be a space of serenity and calm to amplify the Hotel guest's experience from the Hotel second floor and improve viewing from the hotel rooms above (which overlook the roof) and the 620 Emerson St restaurant dining space below (through a large skylight in the ceiling). In an effort to thoughtfully address the Board's comments and simultaneously maintain our design aesthetic, we have introduced (2) new Japanese-inspired plant species that are sensitive to the local climate and native to the region. Deer Grass (*muhlenbergia rigens*) replaced the previous Mondo Grass, and Common juniper (*juniperus communis* var. *depressa*) replaced the Dwarf Japanese Garden Juniper. We have also added a new species, Mugo Pine (*pinus mugo*), which shares a relationship to the ground floor planter species at the adjacent Epiphany Hotel approved landscape design.

Due to the architectural design intent of the green roof and private location on the second floor, we feel the remainder of the planting should stay as previously designed and be considered free from the typical restrictions of landscaping at the public-pedestrian level (Additionally, all plant selection was made with water use and local climate in mind). We would be happy to discuss additional solutions if the current design is of any continued concern.

Attachment A

620 Emerson Project Plans

Links to previous hearing and actions are posted on the City website. These are available to the public online and by visiting the Planning and Community Environmental Department on the 5th floor of City Hall at 250 Hamilton Avenue.

Directions to review Project plans online:

1. Go to: <https://palalto.buildingeye.com/planning>
2. Search for “**620 Emerson**” and open record by clicking on the green dot
3. Review the record details for **Application Number: 17PLN-00331** and open the “more details” option
4. Use the “Records Info” drop down menu and select “Attachments”
5. Open the attachment named “**2018.04.17 NOBU PA 620 ARB subcommittee green roof**” and dated April 17, 2018