



ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD
MINUTES: August 1, 2019
City Hall/City Council Chambers
250 Hamilton Avenue
8:30 AM

Call to Order/Roll Call

Present: Chair Peter Baltay, Vice Chair Osma Thompson, Board Members Alexander Lew and David Hirsch.

Absent: None

Chair Baltay: 2019 meeting of the Palo Alto Architectural Review Board. Could we have a roll call, please?

[Roll Call]

Oral Communications

Chair Baltay: The first item on our agenda is oral communications. If we have any information from the public? I don't see any speaker cards, so we'll move on.

Agenda Changes, Additions and Deletions

Chair Baltay: Next item is agenda changes, additions or deletions. Where do we stand with that, Jodie?

Jodie Gerhardt, Current Planning Manager: [No audible response.]

Chair Baltay: Okay, there are no changes or anything like that.

City Official Reports

1. Transmittal of 1) the ARB Meeting Schedule and Attendance Record, and 2) Tentative Future Agenda items.

Chair Baltay: Our next item is City official reports. Can you bring us through the schedule, Jodie?

Ms. Gerhardt: Yes. The next hearing, we're actually just going to have two items at this point, the 788 San Antonio Road, which is a large mixed-use, but more housing, project will be on the agenda. And then, the 180 El Camino Real, the L'Occitane façade, will be on the agenda. Just two items there.

Chair Baltay: Can you enlighten us, what this is, the Crown Castle/Verizon cluster? That's a cell phone item. Is that really going to be back on our agenda?

Ms. Gerhardt: I don't know at this point. Some of those will come to the ARB and some of them will not. I don't know the particulars of this exact project.

Chair Baltay: Okay. And then, we're going to add on this item, final review of the draft letter to Council?

Ms. Gerhardt: Yes, thank you. We will add that report. I do have draft documents that I can hand out to the Board so that you can be ready for that discussion.

Chair Baltay: Okay. I'd also like to be clear; I'd like to try to set the subcommittee appointments in advance enough that we can get it written into this schedule. For next meeting, for example. If you could be sure to communicate with me in advance enough that we can make sure that's clear to the public, who's going to be the subcommittee.

Ms. Gerhardt: We don't have any subcommittees for the next hearing, but I think if we did, then maybe right now would be the time to make those assignments.

Chair Baltay: That would be great. I think it would be really beneficial to the public to know who the members are who are doing that.

Ms. Gerhardt: Okay.

Chair Baltay: Okay.

Action Items

2. PUBLIC HEARING / QUASI JUDICIAL. 702 Clara Drive [18PLN00068]: Recommendation on Applicant's Request for Approval of a Major Architectural Review to Allow the Demolition of an Existing 3,560 Square Foot, Four-Unit Apartment Building and Construction of Three Detached Single-Family Homes Totaling 5,000 Square Feet. Environmental Assessment: Exempt From the Provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) in Accordance With Guideline Section 15332 (In-Fill Development Projects). Zoning District: RM-15 (Residential Multi-Family). For More Information Contact the Project Planner Sheldon S. Ah Sing at sahsing@m-group.us
Chair Baltay: I believe that takes us to our first action item, which is a public hearing. It's quasi-judicial. It concerns 565 Hamilton Avenue. It's a recommendation on the applicant's request for approval of a major architectural review to allow the demolition of existing structures and construction of a mixed-use building with 19 rental apartments, and up to 7,500 square feet of office space. Three existing parcels would be merged. A variance is requested to allow protrusion of the roof eaves, a fin wall, and a first-floor canopy into the Hamilton Avenue special setback. There's been an environmental assessment, finding that this

Chair Baltay: Then we come to our first order of business, which is Action Item #2, a public hearing regarding 702 Clara Drive. It's a recommendation on applicant's request for approval of a major architectural review to allow the demolition of an existing 3,560 square foot, four-unit apartment building, and construction of three detached single-family homes totaling 5,000 square feet. Staff, do you have a report for us?

Sheldon Ah Sing, Consultant Planner: Yes, thank you, Chair. Sheldon Ah Sing, Contract Planner, and I have a presentation for you. The applicant is also here with their presentation. The site is located at the intersection of Sutter Avenue and Clara Drive. The site is zoned RM-20. The topography in the area is flat and there are a mix of single-family and multi-family residential in the area. This is actually at the edge of the multi-family zoning district where it transitions into single-family across the street. With the exception of this property behind, the adjacent properties are single-family residential. There is an existing four-unit apartment building on the site there that would be demolished. That was constructed in 1954. It's not deemed to be historic. And as mentioned, the proposal is to construct three detached units. It will just maintain the one parcel. They're not splitting the parcel out, but I think the intention is to have a condominium placed on the property in the future. The project was before the Board this past February. There were a number of items that the Board wanted to see looked at and revised, and those had to do with the floor to ceiling on the second floor is too tall; I think the preference was to have an eight-foot height. Also, to provide good quality rendering from the street corner. That homes should be custom fit

to the lot with high quality design and materials. At the previous meeting, there was just one floor plan for each, the same floor plan used throughout the project, maybe one was reversed, with different architectural styles. There was a common open space along Sutter, and the revision proposed was to reduce that fence. The Board thought that the porches were too shallow as proposed. Also, to take advantage of some of these open space areas more, so that would change the site plan around a little bit. Provide a better relationship with that street scape. The site has street scape along Sutter and Clara. Also, the property does have a utility easement on the rear of the property, opposite of Sutter, so there are some constraints there. The Board also thought that the trash receptacles on the side yards were not really working very well, in part because there were fences that were in between the buildings. And that Home B didn't really have much exterior space for the occupants compared to the other units. In summary, the project is one lot for future condominium subdivision, three two-story detached dwellings, in total 5,000 square feet, which pretty much maxes out the floor-area ratio. There are three different floor plans this time around, with similar types of architectural styles. The materials board is on the dais there, near Board Member Hirsch. The private open space areas are in the rear of the buildings. There is a common area that's along Sutter. The project is retaining the street trees, the mature redwood trees, as well as the maple trees along Clara. In response to those revisions that I mentioned in the previous slide, the second-floor ceiling height is now at eight feet. The front porch dimension on two of the units has increased by a foot. One of them still remains at four feet. The fences in between of the units were removed. However, that now created another privacy type of issue. The applicant, they do have an alternative they want to present. What we would recommend is putting those fences back, moving the condenser units that are in that area on the side yard to the rear, as well as the trash and eight bicycle lockers. There was a balcony that was added to the rear of Home C, which actually provides some variety, as well as a good amenity, but there's another privacy issue there, so we recommended that they add another tree. The applicant has responded and will have an alternative plan to show you. The other issue is that there are windows that are adjacent to stairwells. They're actually kind of big, and maybe we're just looking to see if there are any comments on privacy issues from the Board on that. Regarding the zoning, there is a reduction of one dwelling unit overall, so that is kind of a concern, but there is not something in the code that would preclude them from doing that. The project is otherwise considered a multi-family unit project based on the amount of units. Three is the threshold. The project is consistent with development standards. They would have to pay an impact fee of \$64,000. We would have to amend our condition of approval to include that in there, so make that part of the motion when you're recommending. Otherwise, the project, we believe, is consistent with the findings. This is the site plan showing the layout, very similar to last time. The open spaces are more evenly distributed. Still Home B as probably a slightly smaller dimension there. There's still that shared driveway. We believe that that helps with any type of conflict with pedestrians or cyclists. There is potential to separate those two. Maybe one of the street trees would have to be removed or relocated or replanted. These are the renderings. The one on the left is the older rendering from February, and the one on the right is the newer one. You can see some subtle differences there. The applicant will describe more of those. Again, here are some other elevations from the current. It shows no landscaping, then with landscaping. And then, some other comparisons from the past and the present here. The applicant will go more through these, but we believe this is an improvement from what was done in the past. And then, you can see here, on the right, those large windows on the second floor. Those are the ones that are next to the stairwell that we want some direction on. Regarding environmental determination, the project is considered infill development surrounded by urban uses, and the project does not create any significant impacts pursuant to CEQA, so we believe this category to be exempt. In conclusion, the project is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, the zoning ordinance with suggested modifications, and we recommend approval of the project to the Director, based on the findings and subject to the conditions, and also modifying the one condition regarding the affordable housing fee. That concludes my presentation. Be happy to answer any questions you may have. Thank you.

Chair Baltay: Thank you, Sheldon. We'll have questions in a second. I'd like to first ask my colleagues if we have any disclosures to make. I should have done that at the beginning. Rather than ask specifically if any of us have been to the site, I'll just remind everyone that a site visit is something we need to disclose. Alex, any disclosures?

Board Member Lew: I visited the site this morning.

Chair Baltay: Osma?

Vice Chair Thompson: Nothing to disclose.

Chair Baltay: David?

Board Member Hirsch: Previous time only.

Chair Baltay: Okay. I'd like to disclose I visited the site on Saturday, and I spent quite a bit of time talking with two of the tenants upstairs, a neighbor across the street, and one other neighbor walking around. I didn't learn anything that's not already in the staff report. Okay, questions of staff, anybody? Sheldon, could you explain for us the impact fee, what that's for?

Mr. Sing: That is for the, when you're going down in the units, there's a certain percentage that then gets equated into a formula. The formula has to do with average size of the units, and a certain dollar amount that gets plugged in, and therefore, you get that number.

Chair Baltay: It's a fee that the applicant pays to the City for the privilege of reducing the number of housing units.

Ms. Gerhardt: It's based upon the housing elements. Program H1.2.1, talks about when a loss of rental housing occurs due to subdivision or condominium conversion, the project shall require 25 percent BMR units. After running that calculation, as Sheldon said, we come up with, I think it's .75 of a unit. And fractions of units, you're able to pay in lieu for.

Chair Baltay: And that impact goes into the affordable housing fund?

Ms. Gerhardt: Correct.

Chair Baltay: Thank you. Any other questions? David, go ahead.

Board Member Hirsch: Sheldon, on a zoning like this where you have these tight areas between buildings, and as you're suggesting that there should be some kind of fence separating them, is there any kind of a home ownership maintenance issue here that is possible? Or do they have an agreement between owners? Obviously, an area like that will either be cleaned or not be cleaned, you know, part of someone's responsibility, or not part of it. But if it were kept open in some way and there were homeownership relationships, maybe that would be a method of not having a fence between them and constricting it for mechanical uses, or garbage, or whatever. As long as there was a maintenance agreement. Is there such a thing?

Mr. Sing: Yeah, specifically with a condominium project, you would have the covenants and restrictions that gets built in, if that's what you're talking, regarding maintenance. That's a requirement of having a condominium project.

Board Member Hirsch: So, it would be a possibility for them to create a homeownership. Or could they be required to provide a home ownership maintenance agreement?

Mr. Sing: The maintenance would be required as part of the condominium map process.

Chair Baltay: Okay. Applicant, do you have a presentation for us? You'll have 10 minutes to speak and 10 minutes to rebut any public testimony. Please tell us when you're ready.

Gilbert Fernandez: Good morning, Board.

Chair Baltay: If I could ask you to please state and spell your name for the record.

Mr. Fernandez: My name is Gilbert Fernandez. [spells name]

Chair Baltay: Thank you very much. Go ahead.

Mr. Fernandez: I'm here with my partner, Tony, and our land architect [sic], Dakotah. Just a little information about me. I am diagnosed with epilepsy, so, in case one occurs during my presentation, I'll have Tony come up and take over for me. Here is the title page, taking a look at the rendering, just as Sheldon has already described, and who is involved in our work. This is the site plan. We did take into consideration the comments from before as far as, if I go into parking first, we did have it horizontal in the beginning. We did reduce them back as far as the garage to Home B and C, having the garage, the covered parking space, and also the uncovered parking space right in front, as tandem. We did use the easement, which was also a comment that was stated in the previous, to kind of utilize it. We did utilize it as far as for another parking space for Home A. Another thing we did, there was a comment as far as not having the floor plan be the same on all three, so we did change the floor plan for all homes, including Home B and C as far as they may look the same at first glance, but they are different. Other than that, we do have some pavers showing in the front, as well as the side facing Sutter. I think our landscape architect can go more into that. The pavers on the right side, which are close to the, that are within the drip line of the redwoods, they are going to be supervised by our arborist so they may not interfere with any roots that are more than four inch in diameter, to keep the redwoods there. We do have other trees, as well, and plants. Again, he can go more in depth in that if required. The issue with having before a fence in between each home was that there wasn't enough space to walk through. We removed the fences, and we utilized that area for the trash, bicycle area, AC unit for each home. Currently, you do have enough space to walk through, and any maintenance that's required for the machines, the AC units, again, as far as going into what Sheldon said, will be an agreement as far as the maintenance of those area. Other than that, we did keep the two curb cuts. There was a question as far as doing three separate ones. The comment was pretty much not having three, as far as there would be too many on that street, so we did keep it at two in this design. There was a comment also on moving, keeping two curb cuts – and when I say "curb cuts," as far as driveways – doing none of the curb cut and driveway on Sutter. There would be little too much work to do on Sutter, and we believe it would impact the redwoods there as far as damaging any roots that would potentially harm them. Our concern is to keep them alive. Other than that, I can move forward to the next slide. In this area, on the area facing Sutter, is a common, it was common area for all homes. We have... The color is black. In the front we have red, which is facing Clara, and that area is more of an open area used for all three homes. They kind of have their own spaces in front. And then, on the rear, if you see the dash, which is in blue, those are all considered private. As you can see here, we do have the existing, which is now the apartment complex and what we would be proposing, which is reducing units. As we have a four-unit complex, we would be reducing it to three. That would be one point, as well. Again, this is just kind of going over, again, what we had before, and what we're proposing now. One of the comments was that the designs of the previous homes were a little bit too, they were a little bit too... How would you say that? They're too busy for the neighborhood, so we were asked to simplify them. We looked around the neighborhood, see what is existing, and we added to some of the homes. For example, the bay windows, we did see some of the homes had that. We did stick with stucco. As in the previous designs, we had some shingles, a lot of brick tile, so we just simplified it and went back to the stucco. Not back to stucco; we propose that all three homes stay stucco. We removed the brick tile, the columns, as well as we kept all proposed shingles, and we changed all the colors so that they look different, as well as the floor plan that we're proposing. As well as the colors, we kind of kept them pretty simple. Another comment was that the roof planes were way too busy in the previous design, so we did simplify them as much as we could to accommodate the new floor plans. This is just a quick look at the surrounding neighborhood. You do have them in your packets, A-2 and A-3. Again, we just went around the neighborhood, just kind of took what we saw and simplified them to our proposed. As far as privacy for the second floor, we did reduce them to eight feet, as well as the first floor, which is eight. Previously, we did have nine on the second floor, so just also to reduce the height of the overall homes so that they're not kind of sticking out from the neighborhood. We do have, for the window design, we have high sills, that's mostly on the second

floor, as to not look into the neighbors or Homes A, B and C, to look into each other's areas. We do have those windows as obscure glass. The landscape also has additional trees while keeping the existing trees, to kind of block the view from the areas that Homes A, B and C would be otherwise looking to, had there not be any of those. This is more of, from the second floor, where you'd be seeing from A, B and C if there had been no additional trees and trees that we're proposing. That's also in your packet, as well. This is just more of the simple materials that we're proposing now. Again, stucco shingles, simple color on the windows and the doors, as well. Just kind of picking neutral colors, just kind of like what we saw in the neighborhood. Again, these are the elevations for that same home, Home A. As you can see on the sides, we do have the high sill on the second-floor windows. Those will be obscured. And we are considering the stairwell window being obscured as well, or possibly even reduce if it helps with the proposed overall design. Actually, let me go back to that. If you can see on the bottom, we do have some high sills as well in some areas. The dark area is just a double door for furnaces. This is Home B, again, just to kind of show what kind of colors and materials we're going to have on Home B. Again, Home B, you can kind of see, we're trying to keep the privacy and colors pretty neutral with shingles as well. Taking the divided light that we did see in one of the homes in the area. Again, Home C, kind of, again, showing the colors, keeping the shingles. And Home C, we did do a balcony on the rear. There was a concern, again, about the balcony, but there's a slide talking about that. You can see the bay windows, as well, which, again, we did see in the neighborhood.

Chair Baltay: Excuse me, you're about a minute over your limit. Could you finish it up, please?

Mr. Fernandez: Yeah. This is some of the planning comments that were given to us about, as far as putting a fence in the center, and having an issue with the balcony in the rear for Home C. This is just an alternate plan to place the fences back in and moving some of the AC units and the trash area items and the bicycle areas. This is just another option, if it works. This is just a rendering just to show the balcony is being blocked by an additional tree. That's all I have for you. Thank you.

Chair Baltay: Thank you very much. Any questions of the applicant? Osma?

Vice Chair Thompson: Yeah, I had a couple questions. In your material boards, you have light fixtures associated with each of the buildings. However, in the elevations, it's not really clear how many, or where they are. Could you clarify where these light fixtures occur?

Mr. Fernandez: Oh, the light fixtures? The light fixtures would be, I don't have them in the renderings, but they are going to be, in the rear sliding door, there will be one and one, on each side. The garage will have one and one photo... I forget the word. They turn off by light in the evening. And then, some on the columns in the front.

Vice Chair Thompson: They will be visible from Clara and from Sutter?

Mr. Fernandez: Yeah.

Vice Chair Thompson: And it's still kind of unclear how many you're using, or have you already placed all of those?

Mr. Fernandez: No, we already placed them. Yes. They should be in the electrical plan in your packet, as well. The location of these.

Vice Chair Thompson: And then, of the windows that we've been seeing in these elevations, are they all operable? Can they all open? Or are they fixed?

Mr. Fernandez: Let me verify that. I believe the ones on the sides, the smaller ones are fixed, and the operable ones are towards the rear.

Vice Chair Thompson: The small square ones are all fixed?

Mr. Fernandez: Yes.

Vice Chair Thompson: Yeah. I see there are a few that you can kind of open. Are the big picture windows also fixed, or do they slide?

Mr. Fernandez: The ones for the stairwells?

Vice Chair Thompson: I'm looking at Home C, front elevation, where the two chairs would be. There's a window that's kind of a big window behind that.

Mr. Fernandez: In the front? We're referring to the front elevation of Home C?

Vice Chair Thompson: Yeah.

Mr. Fernandez: The one on the left of the front door will be a sliding window.

Vice Chair Thompson: A sliding window?

Mr. Fernandez: Yes.

Vice Chair Thompson: Okay. That's all my questions.

Chair Baltay: Anyone else? David? Alex?

Board Member Lew: I have a quick question. For water heaters, are you using tankless water heaters that are facing outside, or inside?

Mr. Fernandez: They will be facing outside.

Board Member Lew: Okay, and are those on the plans?

Mr. Fernandez: They should be in the electrical.

Board Member Lew: I didn't see them, but that doesn't mean... I could have missed it. I'll take a look.

Chair Baltay: David, go ahead.

Board Member Hirsch: Are you making some changes to the location of the AC units? Is that part of the discussion as we go forward here?

Mr. Fernandez: From the previous design? Yes.

Board Member Hirsch: From what we're looking at here.

Mr. Fernandez: I'm sorry, say that again?

Board Member Hirsch: Between A and B, for example, there's four units. Two of them are in a recess and two of them are against the building. Aren't you moving either one of those?

Mr. Fernandez: As far as moving them from the planning comments? This one here. Yeah, so, the only one would be Home A, is the one that would be moved to the rear, left.

Board Member Hirsch: To the rear left. Those two that are on the face of the wall would be moved to the...

Mr. Fernandez: Right.

Board Member Hirsch: ... left side of Building A.

Mr. Fernandez: Yeah. If we were to put a fence in the center, those AC units would...

Board Member Hirsch: Have to move.

Mr. Fernandez: Yeah, they would move to the rear left of Home A.

Board Member Hirsch: Okay. Are there any changes to the garbage locations that you have?

Mr. Fernandez: Yes, those would be moved as well. They will be moved to the back corner of each area, each private area of each home.

Board Member Hirsch: Okay, so then, between A and B, where's the location for the trash for Building B?

Mr. Fernandez: Home B is on the top left of its own area.

Board Member Hirsch: In the area between the buildings? Between A and B? Trash stays there?

Mr. Fernandez: Not in between. It would be in the top-left corner of where the fencing would be. For Home B and C.

Chair Baltay: At the very rear of the property? Is that what that little space says?

Mr. Fernandez: Yes, that would be the area there.

Board Member Hirsch: Can you point at it?

Mr. Fernandez: For Home C, it would be moved to here.

Board Member Hirsch: To the rear of the property.

Mr. Fernandez: Yeah. And then, for Home B, it would be here. And then, for Home A, it would not be moved because it's within the easement area.

Board Member Hirsch: You're moving it to a location which is pretty far from the garbage truck. All the way in the back.

Mr. Fernandez: Yes. We pretty much didn't really have too many options as far as where to locate it. If we were to put the fences in the center. If we did move them to the front, they would interfere with the gas and electric.

Chair Baltay: I'd like to come back to that in a second, but if we could, I'd like to have your landscape architect take two or three minutes to walk us through the proposed landscaping. If that's okay with the landscape architect and the applicant. I think the landscaping is important and we haven't discussed it at all. And Dakotah, if you could state and spell your name for the record, please.

Dakotah Bertsch, Landscape Architect: My name is Dakotah Bertsch [spells name].

Chair Baltay: Thank you.

Mr. Bertsch: The primary changes to the landscape from the previous plan, as you recall, previously, the main common use area was underneath the redwood trees along Sutter, and it was a mulched area. In

this iteration, we've provided paver patios, with larger ones along Clara. One larger one shared between A and B, and another one at the corner of Home C. Those would be the primary functional outdoor spaces for grilling or what-not. And then, additional areas underneath the redwoods that would be possibly used for one or two benches for a, sort of private sitting area. There's screening from the street all along Sutter and Clara where there's no driveway or existing street tree, provided by native shrubs, the Manzanitas. The landscape is still predominantly native and drought-tolerant, with a variety of shrubs and grasses and sub-shrubs such as irises and California fuchsia. Additionally, there's screening along the fences on the left side, and along the rear of the properties, with larger hedging shrubs. And, each unit has small no-mow lawn area in the back yard. And then, along the driveways and entrances, there are... Well, first I should say, there are six new trees shown, one at the front of each house, a smaller redbud tree. And in the rear, arbutus trees, one for each unit, and more ornamental perennial plantings underneath them.

Chair Baltay: Thank you. Let me follow up on the landscaping question. I'm looking at a rendering from the corner of Clara and Sutter. I'd like to know if that landscaping is accurate to what you've designed.

Mr. Bertsch: I would say, in terms of the placement of plants, it's fairly accurate, but visually, not very accurate. I think the shrubs shown there look columnar, whereas my intention with the manzanitas would be that they would be more naturalistic and hedge-like.

Chair Baltay: Okay, thank you. Any other questions for landscaping? At this point, we'll open the meeting to public testimony. Any members of the public have anything to say? Do we have any speaker cards?

Mimi Wolf: I don't have a card, I'm sorry.

Chair Baltay: Jodie, do we need a card for her?

Ms. Gerhardt: We'll get it out to her.

Chair Baltay: Okay, if you could state and spell your name for the record.

Ms. Wolf: Mimi Wolf [spells name]. Just like the animal that howls.

Chair Baltay: Okay. You'll have three minutes. Thank you.

Ms. Wolf: I live on San Carlos Court, behind Safeway, the next street over, and I walk along Sutter, Clara, almost every day. There are, as you noted, apartments going from Clara to Middlefield, all along that right. And so, with all the multi-family units, this means there's many cars that, during the day, those people go to work, but at the commute time, there are people cutting, not only from Sutter and Clara, but I assume from Ross as well, to avoid lights and such, and to get to Middlefield, and then to Oregon. During the commute time, people come around the corner at, from Middlefield to Sutter, at rapid speeds. And I've seen many close calls. My concern is that this may increase more, provide more cars and increase the traffic at Sutter. One concern is how you can go from four units to three, but my main concern is traffic. I'm wondering why the City is not addressing the traffic around this area. I know we have speed bumps on Ross. We've done a lot to improve Ross to slow traffic, but I'm thinking that this is causing Sutter and Clara to have more traffic to cut off from the, from between Sutter and Oregon. People are going down Sutter to get to Middlefield more quickly. Yes. I'm just concerned about the increase in drivers and traffic, and we're not doing much to help with alternative transportation that should be more addressed. Thank you.

Chair Baltay: Thank you very much. Any other public comments? With that, we'll close public testimony and bring it back to the Board. Before we start a discussion, I wonder if we could get a clear explanation of the two alternatives regarding the fence between the buildings. Sheldon, are you able to walk us through that? Or the applicant?

Mr. Sing: I think I just briefly, when I met with the applicant yesterday...

Chair Baltay: Excuse me one second. I've been reminded that the applicant has an opportunity to rebut the public testimony. You may speak to her comments if you wish.

Mr. Fernandez: Okay. If I understand, it's mostly about traffic. Just as she also mentioned, we're going from four to three units. If we were to talk about a unit, it would typically hold a husband, wife, both having their own car. I think that's one point that I can make, that we would be reducing from, let's say eight cars to six. Just a quick second point. The apartment complex now has four, but only has a three-car, three covered car, carport in the rear. You would see, whoever who is in the fourth unit would be pretty much parking on the street. Other than that, that would be my only...

Chair Baltay: Thank you very much.

Mr. Fernandez: Thank you.

Chair Baltay: Okay. I still would like to get an understanding of the options with or without the fence between units A and B and B and C, vise-a-vie the negative changes to privacy and functionality of trash/AC condensers. Sheldon, is that best for you to address, or the applicant?

Mr. Sing: Let me just start off, at least with the context, and I think the details can be followed up with Mr. Fernandez. The issue is that the homes, they have the minimum amount of required space between them for building and fire access and egress, and having... If you don't have a fence there, then the issue is having the window placement, and people kind of being able to look into each other. Or if you're in that area and you're walking through, you maybe be able to see into the different units. That space in between is really not considered open space. It's really a utility area to walk through for maintenance purposes. In this case, they wanted to put some AC condensers there. On a couple of the units, the AC condensers are actually tucked under the building a little bit, and one of the placements would have them place it between the buildings. The trash, as you know, trash bins have a certain dimension to them. And then, the bike lockers as well. Having all that in that area with the fences, it just doesn't work. Our suggestion is to move some of those items out of that area into the rear. That's where I think maybe we could have some discussion about. But it does appear in the plan that there is pavement areas, pavers that would make it easier for the movement of those bins, as well as bicycles. That does help a bit. With that, I'll leave it to the applicant to describe further.

Chair Baltay: To the applicant, then. Do you have a preference or a feeling? Can you guide us through this, whether you prefer to have a fence, or deal with privacy impacts differently?

Mr. Fernandez: Just as a, kind of I mentioned before, most of the areas in, if you can see in the elevations here, most of the windows are high. The ones that are lower in that area, those square ones, it's a garage, so I don't think that's a privacy concern. We did some in the living room and the dining area. You can also see those transom-looking windows. Those are more on the high side, high sill, and the bottom ones, the larger ones are living room. I know there's a common area where most families would be. We are considering making those obscure glass. As far as [inaudible] back to the site. Having them centered is, as we mentioned, more maintenance. It was also a concern in the last ARB, that it's way too tight for someone to walk through. That's why we removed them. Once we removed them, we did feel like it was a larger space for the homes to kind of be separated, and almost feel like they kind of have their own privacy, instead of just having a fence in the center. Other than that, yes, they are currently proposed without fencing, I believe we would prefer.

Chair Baltay: I'm unclear what your preference is. These are fences between your clients or tenants, and it's their utility. Would you prefer to have the fences, or not have the fences?

Mr. Fernandez: Not have the fences.

Chair Baltay: Okay, thank you. Okay, any other questions?

Vice Chair Thompson: Yeah. The plan that we're looking at on the screen is not the same plan in our drawings, right?

Mr. Fernandez: Right.

Vice Chair Thompson: Are we...? I just want to clarify what we're talking about here because in our plan I see something older. Are we talking about a fence that's kind of going all the way through between each building, that that is the proposal right now? Or is the proposal not to have the fence? And just have a change in paving between...?

Mr. Sing: I'll take a swing at it. Actually, in your packet, there are conditions of approval that would require them to put the fences in. This is in response to that, or kind of getting you some early views of what that would look like.

Vice Chair Thompson: Sorry, can you repeat that?

Mr. Sing: In the packet, we have conditions of approval to address these issues that we brought up today regarding the privacy, to include the fence down the middle of these units. A lot of times, you wouldn't be able to see a drawing of that at the meeting, but they took the time to do that, to show you that today.

Vice Chair Thompson: All right, so, the plan that we're looking at is showing the fence going all the way. And the plan that we have in our packet is showing that open space in between. And the fence is really just from the back of the building to the property line behind it.

Mr. Sing: Right.

Vice Chair Thompson: Okay. Thank you.

Board Member Lew: Okay, which condition of approval was it?

Mr. Sing: Number 8.

Chair Baltay: Are you okay with that, Alex?

Board Member Lew: No, but we can talk about that.

Chair Baltay: Okay. David, why don't you start us off with your feelings about the project?

Board Member Hirsch: In the first place, I think it's a big improvement over the last submission. I like the fact that the houses kind of open onto the street, that they move back towards the corner, kind of an inviting gesture towards the street, and that the masses pull forward as you move into the street. I like the fact that you've changed the style of the houses to be different, each one of them. I think they're not exciting, so exciting as pieces of architecture, but they're fairly consistent in the way you've approached them. It's an improvement. My major concern here is the site planning and this area that's between the buildings. I'm not quite sure where we end up with zoning that allows for that kind of 7 ½ foot distance between buildings and creates problems with windows having to be obscured, etc. It just doesn't seem all that logical to me when other zones have six-foot side yards, minimum, you know, so that there's a bigger space definitely between houses. Even there, there are always questions about privacy and windows that face each other. But I think the issues that need to be addressed here are the ones we've pretty much raised already, about the air conditioning, which maybe you have solved, and the maintenance of those machines. But the garbage locations and the bicycle locations somehow really, ought to be very convenient to the people who are using those houses, and to be able to be taken to the

street quite easily. Locating them in the back yard doesn't seem sensible to me at all. How to treat that area between buildings. You've been showing it as a paved path, kind of down the middle. I don't know why it couldn't be a paved area between buildings so that it would handle issues like garbage. It needs to be cleaned, and areas that are going to get dirty, so that the whole front is a recess up to a point where then it becomes maybe private. That it's a more public open, but not necessarily unfenced. Still, it could be fenced and not be garbage cans in the front yard but would allow you to locate the garbage between the buildings. That doesn't apply so much in A, but definitely between B and C. The same thing is true of the bicycles, why they should be remote in the back of the house. If you have enough of a recess there, you could locate them. Admittedly, I'd rather see a greater distance between the buildings so that each one of those could feel private. And then, you still have issues of maintenance. Now, that's something I think you should work out with the owners in the future and write it into their lease in some way. Or however your arrangement is going to be. But I think there needs to be some official arrangement that takes care of those particular issues between owners when they're so close to each other. Everybody else who has a private house on a larger piece of land takes care of their own and is responsible for it. But, there's a little overlap here if you have a single door and you need access to that area all the way through. Those are simple, could be sort of a simple answer physically to get them in that location. I'm kind of at a loss with how this landscaping is really working. We have an outside-the-fence area that's all paved and facing the street, and I'm not sure who that belongs to. Is it a community gesture? Could you get to it from the community? Is it a private gesture? How do you use it? What's the function of all of the paved areas along Sutter? Will anybody in this group decide to use it, or are they going to use their back yards? Why would they ever use it? It seems to me there's an opportunity there to make a, sort of a public gesture, with something very public. And it's behind, beyond a fence line, you know? And maybe that would be a very nice thing for the whole cul-de-sac there, to come out and participate in. I'm not sure if that could work. And then, who is responsible for it? Who cleans up for that? That has to be something discussed with the whole street? I don't know how that would be done, but it is kind of semi-private, semi-public, open trees, etc., inviting people to come, step over the landscape and walk in there, and become a part of it. It's confusing to me how it is possible to use that. Other issues. Let me look for a moment. Well, of course, the deck on Unit B is still too small. I mean, you enlarged, I think, deck C, so that it's a five-foot dimension. Is that correct? In front? The deck on Building C?

Mr. Fernandez: The porch on the first floor, is what you're referring to?

Board Member Hirsch: The deck in the front. The depth of the deck in the front of Building C.

Mr. Fernandez: Yes. Where the one entrance is.

Board Member Hirsch: What about the deck on B?

Mr. Sing: Are you referring to the porch on the front?

Board Member Hirsch: There's a front deck, and furniture on it, right?

Mr. Sing: Yeah, that is the one that remains at four feet.

Board Member Hirsch: It's four feet?

Mr. Sing: Yeah.

Board Member Hirsch: But that's pretty much what it was. So, it hasn't been increased any.

Mr. Fernandez: Before, I believe we had it at three.

Board Member Hirsch: I'm just saying that two decks should be made useful. It's kind of a thing, a Palo Alto item. Everybody has decks, or most everybody seems to have, of houses of a certain era. If that's what you're saying there, that that's kind of a socializing thing, and people are out there. Then, if you

think about that, those are decks that are kind of open to the neighborhood, and usually they are, but the landscaping here is unbelievably dense and private. I don't think that's a nice thing in a neighborhood, socially, to make a landscaping so dense that you sort of cut out the entire neighborhood. It's just ringed with trees, front and back. I can understand maybe with an apartment house behind, how you want to sort of block off some of that, but this is a neighborhood, and it ought to feel like a neighborhood, and I don't think it does with the landscaping at all. Those are my major concerns. I will leave it up to you to answer how you could address some of those issues.

Chair Baltay: Thank you, David. Alex?

Board Member Lew: Great. Thank you for your revisions. I think they generally look good. I do have several concerns, although generally I'm supportive of the project. Okay, so, with regard to the site planning and the issue that staff has brought up about the side yard fences, I think I prefer what you have in your drawings, and I don't support the staff alternative. You know, I think in Palo Alto, we're used to six-foot side yard setbacks for private houses, but if you go to other parts of the country, say if you go to, like, Newport Beach, or even... I lived in St. Louis for a while. In Newport Beach, it's just a three-foot side yard, and what you get with a three-foot side yard is nothing. You have a fence, and there's no room for any landscaping at all. It's just nothing. It's just a fence, and it's really not very attractive. In some parts of St. Louis, in the better, nicer neighborhoods, they actually don't allow any fences at all in the side yards, but generally they have larger lots. It actually looks better. Also, I would say, in new developments here and around the Bay area, I think we're pretty used to narrow side yards with zero lot lines, and generally it's like a condominium, so one neighbor gets to landscape the side yard. Which is what I think they're trying to do here, and I think is actually better. They're not showing any landscaping currently in the side yards, but they could. If you have six or seven feet, or eight feet, you can get the path in from landscaping in there. I think it's actually better. And then, the privacy issues can be mitigated with clerestory windows and clear glass and window shading. On the architecture... Let me just stay with landscaping for a minute. I do have a concern about the staff recommendation about adding one more tree in the back yard, like, the madrone trees. They're showing them at, maybe like a 10-year growth. They're really, ultimately, they would be twice the size that's shown on the plan. My general thought is that three is enough if they're actually at a mature size. I drew them out at full size on my set of plans, and I think that's enough. I do understand balcony issues with regard to privacy and apartment buildings, and I did look at the site again today, and I did see that the apartment building has no landscaping whatsoever. Also, on landscaping, I am concerned about Unit A, the front yard, that it really has too much paving between the driveway and the paver area. It may be just too much, so I'd maybe ask for reconsideration of the paved patio area in the front yard of Unit A. On the architecture, I have three concerns. Four concerns. One is you're not showing any roof ventilation for the hip roofs, and it's really hard to get all the ventilation to work on a hip roof unless you add, like, dormer vents. I think maybe it would be, ideally it would be great if something is shown. It doesn't have to come from me. It could be to a subcommittee. Also, you're not showing any downspouts. Any time you break a roof, you're adding a downspout, and we've typically required that on other comparable projects. Again, that could go to the subcommittee. Unit B, the front porch, which has not changed, the depth has not changed. I have a scaling at less than four feet. Like maybe, like, three-foot-nine, or something. And I think that's actually too narrow. I'm willing to accept a narrower porch if you can access it directly, like, front on. You're showing it only coming in through the side, and you've got landscaping in front of it. I don't think that that works. Again, I think that's a revision that could go to the subcommittee. Also, in Unit B, you have, like, the laundry room is cantilevered over the front of the house. I'm thinking that's going to look like a mistake. I'll let my other Board members weigh in on that. I have some concerns about that. And staff asked for comments on the stair, the large picture windows at the staircases, about privacy with regards to those. I think in previous comparable projects, we've required either obscure glazing, or have a windowsill that's high enough that you can't really look down into the neighbor's property. And I think that that's an issue for me on Unit A. I'm not so worried about it on the other units. That is all of my comments, and I will let you follow up.

Chair Baltay: Thank you, Alex. Osma?

Vice Chair Thompson: Thank you. Thank you for your updated revisions, and thank you to my fellow Board members for their insightful insight. I do agree with the comments about the roof that Board Member Lew made, about the vents and the downspouts. Also, looking at the material board, I'm concerned that the roof for House A is too dark. Probably make the house pretty hot, unless there's something about the solar reflective index in there that I can't see. That information is not available to me, so, at the moment, roof A's roof is just way too dark, and that's a problem. The other two seem like they should be okay in terms of reflections, but that information would be really helpful. If we do go to subcommittee, I'd like to see that. With the site plan and the fencing, I think it would have been really helpful to see what we have on our screen kind of bigger. There was a lot of stuff that I was looking for; it's a little hard to find at that scale. Initially, before I was hearing my Board members' feedback, I actually was preferring this option with the fence all the way down, and the bike sort of tucked away. I've had my bike stolen twice out of my back yard, so it's kind of nice that that bike storage is tucked away. I understand that there's no landscaping in between because I presume it's not really going to live because of the amount of shading. I kind of thought the fence was a nice way to break that up, given that landscaping. And we have a chance between there. But I always see the other side, that having more space can potentially have more opportunities for other things. I could go either way on the fence in between. Landscaping notes, I agree with Board Member Lew about the paving in front of Home A. Home A does seem a bit deprived. It's a little upsetting that the rendering is not really true to what the landscaping design intent is. I kind of agree that when I looked at the rendering, it seemed that none of this looked native, and it looked a bit... I don't know. Excessive. But if there was a better chance to get a better understanding of what that is. In general, I'm a big fan of densely landscaped areas. I think the world needs more plants in this world, so, not to totally contradict what Board Member Hirsch said, but I do like that there is a lot of landscaping on this site. I wish I just had a better idea of what that really would be, in real life. I also had another note, that for the elevations... Oh, sorry. In the electrical plan, it sort of contradicts what's in the material board, showing that House B has the light that would be on House C in the material board. I'll just say that I prefer what's in the material board, for House B to have the cylindrical light, and for House C to have this other light that is a bit more decorative. The material board makes more sense in that way. Other than that, I can support this project. There's obviously a lot of stuff that would have to go to subcommittee that we would have to keep track of. I wonder if it's enough to come back; maybe it's not. We'll kind of see what the Board thinks. That's all I have. Thank you.

Chair Baltay: Thank you, Osma. Well, I'd like to chime in as well, and I'm, I think, less sanguine about the project. I really have an issue with the way you're treating the corner of Clara and Sutter, and the way you've taken the 16-foot zone where the redwoods are and essentially completely divorced that, both from the people living in House C. There's just a wood fence three feet from the house, and there's really no visual or physical connection to that space. And then, as I look at the landscaping plan, you've divorced that space from the public, too. You've done everything you can to landscape that away from the public. And what I think I see you trying to do is meet an open space requirement by putting public spaces there, or spaces tenants of the buildings are going to use. But, as one member of the public said to me, that space will be nothing but a place for dogs to defecate. And I think that's true. I don't think that's a good use of that space either. Do as David suggested and make it genuinely public. I think you had started that way, and we had an issue with that as far as it just being not the houses. Or, reshape House C. Put a French door. Use that as their garden. It's a lovely space, and with land being at the premium it is in Palo Alto, it's really a shame not to take advantage of that. It's a significant amount of space, and I can see, there's no restriction from you landscaping that to be an open side yard for the tenants, the occupants of House C, or somehow configuring it to be partially that and partially open space. I just find it very bothersome that I see these corner renderings, and the building is not designed to be on a corner. It's still facing one street. The Sutter Street side is entirely just the yard of a house. It could be flipped around and not have any change. As I walk up and down Sutter, there's a myriad of lovely homes with real front yards facing that street. The next building up, the apartment building, has done a nice job landscaping their front yard as a public, beautiful space. It's full of grass and palms and it creates a nice vista. And what you've done will just be sort of a forest, and I very much doubt anybody will go in there for a picnic or a barbecue. I don't believe the tenants of these buildings would go in there either. I really have an issue with that space planning. I think it takes a pretty good-sized change on the

design of the buildings and the use of the property to really make sense out of that. I'm sorry, but I have a significant concern about the use of that space. Regarding the space between Buildings A and B and B and C, I do agree with Alex Lew ultimately, that a three-foot side yard is just a waste. It can't be landscaped; it can't be used in any way. It can't even be used functionally. If you put an air conditioning unit there or a trash bin there, then you can't get through. It doesn't work. It becomes a hazard in the event of an emergency. And yet, that's exactly where the garbage can is going to be placed, where the bicycle will be stored. What we've done is let this, the way our zoning code is playing out, create a really negative space. I think, maybe it was David, alluded to a different idea of, perhaps create half of the space as a six-foot-wide useful space for one of the houses or the other. Address the privacy issues with the windows, as Alex was mentioning, with obscured glass or placement of the windows. And then, on the back half of it, you could do the opposite for the other family, or maybe put a fence in part of it. But, essentially, be a little more creative. It's not all or nothing. You don't have to have either a fence down the middle, or no fence. I think both of those options aren't really good enough. I don't support what staff is recommending, but I'd like to see more detail as to how you would address the privacy issue, which staff rightly brings to our attention. They are significant and real. How will they be addressed? I just think that needs more work as well. I would also like to just step through quickly. Staff very nicely provides us a list of our previous comments. Usually, I read through the list, and it's a series of checks. Aside from lowering the plate height, though, I just have a bunch of "no's" here. I don't think the rendering from the street is a good-quality rendering. In fact, as your landscape architect pointed out, it's not accurate to the plants. That's the whole point of seeing that, and I'm afraid it's important to make the effort to get it right. Like I just mentioned earlier, I don't think the homes are custom fit to the lots. What we're really asking for is not to just change the floor plan for the sake of changing the floor plan, but rather to address the varying conditions. I just think we recall saying, a corner lot is different than a mid-lot. And the case where you have a corner lot, I don't see an architectural response to the building being on a corner, both functionally related to that open space on the side, and visually – What does it look like from the corner? I think you need to modify your landscape so it sets off the building on the corner. You need to design the building to have, for example, the front porch could wrap around the corner. That's a beautiful effect of making it integrate to the corner, making it attractive to the public and the front street. The lower fence along Sutter Avenue, you've done the opposite with the landscaping. You've blocked it off. The front porch on Unit B is still the same. We didn't get any change on that. Taking advantage of the open space areas. I see you putting the air conditioner unit back in the open space on Unit C. I don't see much with Unit B. I don't want to keep going through it, but I think it still needs more work. I'm of the opinion that this needs to come back to us, at best. Those are my opinions about it. I've heard David and Alex both say they're thinking the building is going in the right direction. I don't know if we're...

Board Member Lew: I think, yeah, I think I'm in agreement with David. It's not great architecture. I guess I was thinking that it meets, like, the minimum standards. But I would support, if you want this to come back another time, I would actually support that. And I think the idea of, like, a corner porch, and improving the corner, I think is very important. And that's something that I've done on all my other projects. I think that's a critical thing, and I think that's something that we've always tried to do on other projects, to try to enforce that. I don't think that's really... I think that's acceptable. The only thing I would push back on is trying to make the landscaping along Sutter public. I think that's just way out of bounds. I don't recall any other project where we have property to be taken for public use. I think that that's... Yeah, I think that's just way out there. But I do, I don't disagree with you guys about the design of it, so if that needs to come back, then that's fine.

Chair Baltay: Any comments on that, David, or thoughts about...?

Board Member Hirsch: I accept both points of view. I think Alex has some good comments there. But I also accept your idea that you could wrap the back yard around for Unit C and make it private. I really like the idea of wrapping a porch around. That's an incredibly good idea here, if it's possible. It may change the shape of the building a little bit, too, but make it a corner building. I definitely agree it's a special building and needs to be addressed differently. I think the setback porch on the top floor helps a lot with that, but not enough yet. You need to do some more. And I'm still ambivalent about how you use the public areas, but maybe somehow paving from the sidewalk to it a little bit more, or relating it

somehow to the sidewalk, would kind of make it work better than to simply wall it off. I think the project could come back to committee, that there's a number of things that have been done that do improve it, but I think it's pretty clear that the areas between the buildings aren't working the way they are. I don't know if I agree with Alex, that there's much to landscape there once you've built your buildings and you don't have much sunlight, and it's really just a few windows that are going to face each other. I think it's a zoning issue, really, not your issue, and if you've used all the zoning and it's acceptable to Planning, then make it work functionally. Access to it for the fire department obviously has got to be pretty important. And moving the air conditioning I think is a significant improvement for that purpose, as well. Maybe paving the whole things. I don't see it as a useful space that really can be landscaped. But I do accept Peter's comments about the corner, absolutely. I think you need to create a better rendition of the landscaping, with an idea to opening it up to the street the way I suggested. It shouldn't be a wall in the front of that building but should relate to the neighborhood. And one other issue that was mentioned a lot earlier but wasn't brought up again is the operable windows. You can't get by today without having a lot of operable windows, and this is a great climate for opening windows and not using your air conditioning. I think you better take a very serious look at your kind of windows that you're providing here. And I feel that's really something Palo Alto-wise. Because I'm new here, and I love the air, and I feel that it should be respected. And it's part of our observation of our energy requirements here as well. I think with those comments, I would say it could come back to committee.

Chair Baltay: If we could follow through on that Sutter Street 16-foot landscaping buffer. I think, David, when you said "public," you weren't meaning they should make it, like, a public park. Rather, it should be visually more open to the public. Osma, I heard you say the opposite, that it should be landscaped. Can you address that?

Vice Chair Thompson: Yeah. I guess... And maybe it's just because of the way that this is laid out, there's an air handling unit that's facing Sutter Avenue. It seemed like if they were going to leave it there, you wouldn't want to advertise that to the whole street. In general, I think, like, a wall of green is really nice to look at, if it's a nice wall of green. I have no opposition with a densely landscaped area if it's still useable. I don't think that's a detriment to the area. In fact, I think it's a really nice thing.

Chair Baltay: If I recall, just across Sutter Street is a home with a dense green hedge up at the street. It also has wonderful arched opening through it, and another break that you can see through. It does, I would say, meet both requirements, in the sense that it is densely private landscaped space. But there's something about the opening through it that you see through, a pedestrian realizes that's somebody's front yard, and it's an attractive space. I'll maintain that that's the case because the home opens to that yard, so they maintain and use that space. And I think that would meet what David and what Osma are saying. Unfortunately, I don't think that's in the design in front of us right now. Not saying to do that, but that's an example of where I think we're asking you to go with it. Do Board members agree with that comment?

Vice Chair Thompson: Yeah.

Board Member Lew: I had actually put in my notes, put a gate on the side yard, but I didn't say it because I thought that was being too nitpicky, but I actually have it down here, so I think I agree with you.

Chair Baltay: Okay, well, I think at least three of us are looking to see this come back to us. Are you clear, Mr. Fernandez, as to what we're talking about here? Should we try to summarize some of our points?

Mr. Fernandez: I wanted to ask about the fencing. Are you all in favor of fencing in the center? Is that what I'm understanding?

Chair Baltay: I think we're in favor of neither, and we're asking you to get a better solution. I think we believe that you will be able to design something that clearly meets the privacy issues and allows for a wider side yard. My colleagues agree with that?

Vice Chair Thompson: It sounded like we were not in favor of the fencing in front of us, in this image.

Ms. Gerhardt: Yeah, I think from a staff perspective, we understand that the three-foot side yard is not what we're looking for. We can do six foot side yards, either splitting it down the middle the opposite direction, or not having a fence at all and only having that side yard for one house. If we do the side yard for one house, we would just have to frost the windows or do high sill windows, something of that degree. I think we have enough direction. From a staff perspective, we have enough direction on the side yard. I do think we should summarize any other comments.

Chair Baltay: Along that line, the way you would accomplish that is by providing a detailed window schedule. That would explain Board Member Thompson's concerns about operable windows, and frosting, and things like that. I'm afraid the drawings are just a little bit unclear on some of those details, and they are important.

MOTION

Chair Baltay: Does anybody want to try a motion?

Vice Chair Thompson: I'll give it a go.

Chair Baltay: Okay, Osma. See what you can do. Maybe just make a list for us, and then we can...

Vice Chair Thompson: I saw Alex write a list over there. I'll give it go, anyway. I'll move that we continue this project to a date uncertain, addressing the concerns that we've discussed, which I'll try to summarize here. That the roof material for House A come back with a different material that has a higher solar reflective index. That the roof in the elevations show vents and downspouts, and that the elevations show materiality and lighting. That the landscape be better communicated in a better rendering, so that we have a better understanding of how the landscape works. That the side yard on Sutter Avenue have a level of privacy that is also pleasing to see from the outside, based off of what we discussed earlier. That the side yards between the houses be revised...? I need some help here.

Chair Baltay: The side yards need to both meet privacy concerns and functionality of trash and bicycle and AC locations.

Vice Chair Thompson: Right. What Board Member Baltay said. I'll stop there.

Ms. Gerhardt: The less paving in front of Unit A?

Vice Chair Thompson: Yes, that there be more landscaping in front of Unit A.

Chair Baltay: Do you want to talk about the corner?

Vice Chair Thompson: That House B be sufficiently redesigned to address a corner unit layout, so that it addresses both corners on Clara and Sutter.

Chair Baltay: [off-microphone] There's a tree in the backyard there...

Vice Chair Thompson: [Laughs] I don't remember the tree in the back yard.

Chair Baltay: If you don't say these things in detail, it doesn't happen.

Vice Chair Thompson: I'll take a friendly amendment if someone wants to take over.

Chair Baltay: Before you do that, if that's the motion, we need it seconded, and then we can put amendments to it.

Board Member Lew: I think with the tree, the tree is not in the plans, right? And staff is recommending to add a tree. I'm not opposed to adding a tree, but I think as it is, it's not in there. Or is there a condition of approval to add a tree?

Mr. Sing: Right, that was just something we had in our presentation.

Board Member Lew: Okay.

Vice Chair Thompson: Oh, and that the applicant include the impact fee for affordable housing. Is there a second?

Chair Baltay: Do we have a second for that motion?

Board Member Lew: I will second the motion.

Chair Baltay: Okay, the motion is seconded. Any amendments or changes? Okay.

Board Member Lew: I just wanted to weigh in on item number 7, which is the corner of House C. Board Member Baltay, you were recommending a corner porch, and I think that's a good idea. And then, I think I just want to comment that there is a redwood tree and tree production zone, so there could be an issue. But they also have some flexibility on the placement of the house. The previous design had that house moved towards Clara, and in that case, there would be more room to put a corner porch on there without impacting the redwood tree. I think that's potentially a major... I think as you mentioned, that's a major design change. I think in that kind of situation, it should come back to the Board. And then, on the motion, yeah, I think the motion is for it to come back to the Board, right? Okay. Then I think it's fine as it stands.

Chair Baltay: Okay, so, the motion is made and seconded. All those in favor? Opposed? Okay, the motion passes 4-0.

MOTION TO CONTINUE PASSES 4-0.

Chair Baltay: We'll take a five-minute break for Sheldon to set up for the next item. Thank you.

Mr. Fernandez: Thank you.

[The Board took a short break.]

3. 486 Hamilton Avenue [19PLN-00115]: Request for Preliminary Architectural Review of a new Four Story Mixed use Project Including 2,457 Square Feet of Retail Space, 2,049 Square Feet of Office Space, and Four (4) Residential Units. Environmental Assessment: Not a Project. Zoning District: CD-C(P) (Downtown Commercial). For More Information Contact the Project Planner Sheldon S. Ah Sing at sahsing@mgroup.us.

Chair Baltay: Number 3, 486 Hamilton Avenue, request for a preliminary architectural review of a new four-story mixed-use project, including 2,457 square feet of retail space, 2,049 square feet of office space, and four residential units. Any disclosures on this project?

Board Member Lew: I visited the site yesterday, and I also researched the historic status of the building next door. It is not... I researched it on the Palo Alto Stanford Heritage website, and it's listed as potentially eligible, but is not on the state register. But it's not historic.

Chair Baltay: So, the brass plaque in front is not making it actually historic?

Board Member Lew: I think it's, as I recall, on the list, it's on a centennial house list, but that doesn't necessarily mean it's on the register. Or, the website could be out of date. It was a few years old. The information on the website is a few years old.

Chair Baltay: Other disclosures? Osma?

Vice Chair Thompson: I have nothing to disclose.

Chair Baltay: David.

Board Member Hirsch: Yes, I visited the site, and looked around the corner, and tried to determine about the historic nature of the neighboring building, and noted the fact that there are no windows on the property line side, and that there's an area way on the property line side. And it's unfortunate, my cleaners are in the building that will be demolished.

Chair Baltay: Okay. I also visited the site and was wondering about the historic building as well. Okay, then. Staff?

Sheldon Ah Sing, Contract Planner: Thank you. Sheldon Ah Sing, Contract Planner. I have a presentation. The applicant is here as well with their presentation. This is a preliminary review, and we're seeking some input from the Board regarding their concept. We have noted a couple things that are not compliant with the code, so we're just seeking some feedback on how the project can be consistent with the required findings, and provide any input regarding certain areas that I will bring up in the report. The area is a 0.12 acre site, very small, in a very urbanized area, and area that I think is probably in transition. You have buildings that are single-story, two-story, three-story, four-story; there's a kind of high-rise building that's on Cowper, mid-block. There are a lot of different things that are going on. I think a couple meetings ago, at least, there was another project down on Hamilton that recently, is recommended for approval from this Board, so there's a lot that's happening along and in this area. The site is just over 5,000 square feet. It's zoned CDC with a pedestrian overlay. It does include a one-story commercial building. There are three tenants in it currently, so there is some consideration for preserving the retail space, and the amount of square of footage that's there, that's what's included in their project. The proposal is to construct a four-story, nearly 12,000 square foot building. That's just over the FAR, so we recognize that that has to be actually reconciled. The project also proposes what is a 57-foot-tall building. We know 50 feet is the height limit. The issue is with the stairwell access, and there are some options that they could do that, creating a roof hatch, or the code does allow for, like, a rooftop garden, that it does allow for some exceptions to the height to have access there. Those have been communicated to the applicant for their consideration. The exterior of the building is more of a contemporary designed type of building. The corner really is that retail piece on the first floor, as well as on the second floor. There's some office that's included in the building on the upper stories, and then the residential as well on the upper stories. There's some opportunities there with some balconies. In the renderings, they do show some landscaping, though officially in the plans, the landscaping is only considered deer grass, so we aren't looking to seek more types of actual vertical landscaping for the project. There's a lot of windows and fenestration along at least a couple of elevations. Of course, the south side, as mentioned, is pretty much blank. On the first floor, you do include those bi-folding walls, and that's something that the applicant is really keen on having, that very open type of retail environment. Since that first floor is set back a bit, it does include more of a, kind of open outdoor space for perhaps gathering, or putting outdoor furniture there. There is a mesh kind of railing system that's used throughout the project, as well as the gate for the entry into the garage. The project does include a puzzle lift system that is partially below ground and partially above ground. You would enter the garage, and then, you have some

surfaces spaces on the left side. They include accessible spaces and charging spaces. And then, you turn to the right, and that's where your machine is. You would go in there and the machine would take you, once you get out of the car, take you either below ground or above ground. There's a cross-section that shows that on the slide here. The project will need to address height, it will need to address the open space arrangement, as I mentioned. With respect to the parking, the number of parking spaces is accurate. However, retail spaces can't use the puzzle lift without the Director of Planning taking into the consideration this could be a valet parking operation, or that the applicant could request a reduction in the amount of parking spaces through a Transportation Demand Management Program, which is a requirement anyway. There are a couple options that they could do to address that. And as I mentioned, the floor area is over. The interesting thing about this zoning district, covered parking for non-residential is actually included in FAR. In other parts of the city it's not, but in this district, it is, so that was kind of a penalty here for them, and they have to address that. We are seeking some comments from the Board regarding the scale and mass. This project would be probably one of the larger ones that is there now, and before I started my presentation, they mentioned that there is that kind of older building that is adjacent to the project. So, is there justification to have a 50-foot building right next to that? And then, segue into the design and neighborhood context, is this appropriately designed. It's kind of a mixture of traditional architecture, some newer buildings along Cowper. It's a four-story building, but that one has a lot more variety and setback, but it's also not next to kind of a shorter building. There are other areas of interest by the Board that may come up regarding their proposal. I recommend that the Board review and provide comments. No formal action is requested at this time. That concludes my presentation. Thank you.

Chair Baltay: Thank you, Sheldon. Any questions of staff? David?

Board Member Hirsch: Yes. Sheldon, you mentioned the parking issue. I'm not quite clear why we would go that route rather than suggest that they take care of all the parking in a cellar area, which is not recommended here. Could you explain?

Mr. Sing: That is also an option. I did speak with the applicant. They would be exploring to add a basement. The issue here is not a whole lot of space to have, like, a ramp, so they probably would have to inquire about doing an elevator to get down a level. That's an option for them to look at.

Board Member Hirsch: You're saying it couldn't be ramped?

Mr. Sing: I think there could be a challenge in doing that given the dimensions and size of the property.

Board Member Hirsch: Did they ever create a scheme, showing you it's not possible?

Mr. Sing: Not at this time, but we would recommend that they do that.

Board Member Hirsch: Okay.

Mr. Sing: We should explore that, absolutely.

Board Member Hirsch: Okay.

Chair Baltay: Sheldon, could you address the question of the retail preservation ordinance and how it affects this property?

Mr. Sing: Whatever retail or retail-like square footage is on the property now, they need to replace that in kind. That's part of the challenge for this site, is they're doing that in two levels. I think some opinion would be, well, the first level is great, that has a lot of openness, and it makes sense, and there's a lot of pedestrian activity. How does that work on a second floor? That's something we have to address.

Chair Baltay: Does the code offer a definition of retail space?

Mr. Sing: It does, yes. It's pretty clear.

Chair Baltay: And that definition is...?

Mr. Sing: I'll have to look that up.

Chair Baltay: We'll come back to you on that. I think that affects how the second-floor space is considered in affecting the design. Okay, with that, the applicant, would you care to address your project to us? You'll have 10 minutes to speak. If you could state and spell your name for the record, we'd appreciate that.

Khoi Le, Architect: Good morning, Board members. My name is Khoi Le [spells name]. I'm actually an architect. The applicant has been traveling, so I'm here in his place here. I just want to thank you for having us here, and I just want to briefly go over this project here. Just to give you some context. On the upper right-hand corner, that's Cowper there, and then, the street that is coming down this way, that's Hamilton there. And then, on the existing property, there's actually four retail spaces. One I believe is vacant, one is a restaurant, one is your cleaner. And then, the other one, I think they sell plants, or something like that. I think the total square footage of that is roughly about 2,400 square feet. And then, the remaining part of the property is probably eight on-grade parking stalls, completely open. There's no existing trees on the site. There are five beautiful street trees that we'd love to save and keep. I love trees. In terms of the setbacks and whatnot, there's actually no commercial setbacks, front, side or rear, but there is a setback for the residential. Opposite of Cowper, I think there's a 10-foot setback. That's why you'll see some of our plans stepping back here. I think Sheldon went over the stats of this. The property, as you know, is 5,375 square feet. Total FAR could be 10, 750 square feet. I think we provided 22 parking stalls, and as Sheldon reminded, we're slightly over the FAR. I'll discuss the parking shortly. This slide here shows you the basement of the parking lift system that we're trying to put in here. We do need a basement here so that two cars can go down. The system that we're trying to put in here is three up and two down. If we go through the floor plans, right here on the right-hand side of the page, that's where the retail is, and fronting the retail, we have this large landscape area. This is where Sheldon was talking about having open spaces. See, these are Nana doors, from here to here, so what we intended was that... This is the pedestrian area. A lot of people will be walking back and forth here. We just want to make this space a lot more inviting than anything else, so we want to create a huge, wide opening, have Nana doors that are completely opened here. We're envisioning some sort of retail, like an art gallery or something like that, so that... As you mentioned before, the weather here is super nice. I mean, there's probably two days out of the year where you need AC. The rest of the days you can just leave it completely open and people can meander from the street, through the landscaped areas, and into the retail space. What we had envisioned for this landscape area was pavers, and maybe grass in between, so it's a lot more inviting. But we'll work with the landscape architect to maybe have a little bit more, maybe... I don't know. Lavender, or something like that. I love the idea of lavender, so that when you walk by the lavender, it brushes up against you, and the smell of the lavender just wafts into your nose, and what-not. Going on to the left-hand side of the page, you see the entrance right there, the elevator and the stairs. We do have some electrical rooms. We worked with the building department to place these fire control rooms and the electrical rooms, and also the trash enclosures off to this side here. This is commercial trash enclosures for the retail and the office space there. And then, this area is, where the parking is, this is the Parks Plus lift system. As I mentioned before, it's two down and three up, the drive aisle, and then, we have two non-mechanical parking spaces that are required for this property here. And then, two ADA stalls. If we go to the... Just walking through this next level. This is Level 2. We do have retail up on this level. Our initial plan was that the two levels would be one occupant, and they would have some sort of stairs connecting these two. We're hoping that someone would just come in and just lease out the whole two levels, and I think that would be very beneficial for the project if they do that there. And then, off to the other side we have one residential unit. This space here is the lift system for the three cars to go up there. And then, we do have some trash enclosures for the residential only near the elevator there, so, the residents would come down, drop off their trash there. And then, I believe the applicant will have a management company take the trash down to the street. And we talked to the building department about that and they are okay with that. Up on the third level, we have the

office space here, and also some residential off to the left-hand side there. That residential is going to be great because they have this huge balcony here, with a nice planter here. I think it's going to be a pretty decent unit there. And these units, they're not big. They're three bedrooms, two baths. They're roughly about 1,000 square feet. Usually other units that we design are a lot bigger, but this is great. They're small, compact. And up on the fourth level, we have two other units up here. Here's one unit with a nice balcony here, and here's another unit to the right-hand side with its own dedicated balcony here. And if you notice, these things do step back from the street. As Sheldon mentioned earlier, the retail on the first level steps back quite a bit, probably 10 to 15 feet from the street frontage, give it a little bit more inviting feeling. You'll see it more clearly when we show the rendering here. And then, it does step back up again at this level, too, so it's not right up against the street. On this level, the third level, there's a balcony, and then the building is stepped back. And then, we step it back again so that it's not just a wall of windows on the street there. And then, up on the rooftop, we have to check with the building codes. We may be able to eliminate that stair so that we don't violate the 50-foot height restriction. We put all the AC units, the mechanical units up here. When we read the building codes, I think you're supposed to provide a stairs, but we're going to see if can get away with a ships ladder, something like that. And then, the AC units, what we're trying to do is to shield that visually and, you know, from noise and what-not, from all the neighbors. We're going to put some screens, you know, maybe a six-foot screen, or something like that. I think it would be beneficial for the community if we do that. There's other buildings around there that maybe are a little bit taller, they can look down, and we don't want them to see all the AC equipment there. This slide just shows you the context of the neighborhood. This next slide also shows you the before and after. Here's the before here, and this is the after, here. One of the design inspirations that we had is, for this property is, if you look at the Wells Fargo building, it's not clearly shown on here, but they have a lot of horizontals coming on, so we wanted to pick that up. We didn't want the design to be so foreign to the neighborhood. We wanted to pick up some cues from the neighborhood. We wanted to extend some of those horizontals onto our building. Initially, we wanted the building to be more of a gray tone, the applicant wanted the color to be more of a gray tone, but when we worked with staff and Sheldon, they said no, it's too dark. So, we changed it to a more neutral color that is much better suited to the neighborhood. Here's another shot of, I think this is from Cowper looking north there. It is quite... The stairwell is quite dominant on that. We will try to address some of the blankness of that south wall there. And one of the things we did have in mind was that, it's pretty difficult because on the south wall, it's right on the property line, and it needs to be a two-hour wall, so we'll talk to our code consultant to see if we can put any fenestrations, or anything, wire glass – I don't know if that's possible, but we'll explore that option there. Or maybe put a mural up on there, just to make it look a lot better from the Cowper perspective. This is the site context with the building there. And this is, I believe, from Cowper. And this shows you how the building steps back incrementally from the street. This is the lift system that we're proposing, two down, three up. And here, you can see how it steps back from the street here, especially the corner here, how open it feels, and what-not. It steps back, it gives a little bit of shade, a little bit more inviting, and then, you can see the horizontals almost extending towards the Wells Fargo building, and what-not. This is looking east here. This is the parking entrance here, and that's the retail. That's some more retail, and some office up there. And then, you can see wedding cakes down here. We left the wedding cake, even more we're looking at that. This concludes my presentation.

Chair Baltay: Thank you very much.

Mr. Le: Thank you.

Chair Baltay: Any questions for the applicant? Staff, do we have a definition of "retail?" We asked for that a second ago.

Mr. Sing: Yeah, so, in terms of retail, there are very general type of retail, and then you have your personal services as well, like your salons, your studios, martial arts studios, things like that. The preservation ordinance is for ground floor, so the project does have all its current retail on the ground floor, so that needs to be replaced. And what the project is doing is, they are proposing part of that to be on the ground floor, and then, part of it to be on the second floor.

Chair Baltay: Is it staff's opinion that second-floor retail meets the requirements of the retail preservation ordinance?

Ms. Gerhardt: That subject is still under discussion.

Chair Baltay: Thank you, Jodie. Okay. Any other questions? Okay. The applicant can have a seat. Alex, why don't you start the discussion.

Board Member Lew: Great. Thank you for your presentation, and thanks for doing a preliminary hearing on this one. I do want to acknowledge the challenges of having a small site. You only have 43 feet. Typically, lots downtown were on 25-foot modules, so there would be, like, 50 feet, but then we did the street widening, so that took out seven feet. That leaves you with 43 feet, which is not a lot to work with for a mixed-use building. I do want to acknowledge the challenges of that. Generally, I'm supportive of the design that you've done. I think you've done some pretty ingenious things in trying to maximize the amount of useable square footage, and minimize, like, the number of stairs to the residential units. I think that's all good. And I do appreciate, like, the open corner retail, and then the setback on the first two floors for the retail. I think that that's a good idea. And I also do support, you're trying to break the massing from the lower two floors versus the wedding cake-tiered third and fourth floor, so I do support all of that. I am sort of mindful, though, of, like, 429 University, which is a recently approved project that took many, many years. It had issues with modern design in proximity to, like the old Victorian houses on Kipling Street, so I think that could be an issue on this project as well. My suggestion, or for consideration, would be to consider 610 Cowper, which is across the street from your project. It was designed by Hayes Group, and it's a modern mixed-use building. But the materials, they've got, I think, three or four different materials on there. They've got terra cotta, pigmented reinforced concrete, and also aluminum metal panels. And again, like your project, they broke the mass between the bottom two floors and the upper floors. And I think my recommendation would be to try to do more differentiation between your upper and lower levels. That way, the lower two floors can be related to the context. There's a Mediterranean style building across the street, and it can have some sort of strong linkage there, and the upper floor is more differentiated from the bottom floors. Also, too, I think consideration of, like, sun shading on the upper floors, I think is important. Or, if you're going to do it without sun shading and just relying on glass, I do want to see the glass, like, a dark or reflective glass, to minimize the solar heat gain. I would like to see what you're thinking about on that. I have some reservations on the garbage location on Hamilton Avenue being at grade. Potentially, yeah, I'm not crazy about that, although I do realize that you don't have a lot of space. And then, also, when I look at your parking situation, the parking garage area, when I see similar buildings in San Francisco, I'm a little worried about all of the, if I'm just walking by and it's some sort of relatively open mesh that I'm going to see all of the, if there's like spray foam insulation on the ceiling, and exposed plumbing, and all the lights... And usually all of that stuff is very unattractive, and sometimes they are visible from the point of view of a passerby or a pedestrian. Some of the better buildings have a ceiling, or drop ceiling, or some sort of soffit, or that the driveway gate and any openings are more solid. You know, more like a perforated metal, you know, more opaque, that provides more screening into the garage. And then, I'm undecided on this, is the relationship of this project to 610 Cowper, which is a sort of Victorian building next door. The way I look at it now, that landscaping is nice, and it provides a linkage between the two buildings. I'm thinking that something, in some way, that that should continue. And it provides a transition between Hamilton, which is more commercial, and Cowper, which is more of a mixed transitional kind of street. The existing landscape character there is actually quite nice. And I do appreciate what you're trying to do with setting back the staircase there. I think I get your intent, and I'm thinking I just want to see more detail on how that works. I think that's where I am on your building. I'm curious to see what the other Board members think about this project.

Chair Baltay: Before we continue, I realized that I neglected to open the meeting to public comment. I'd like to do so now. Is there any member of the public who would like to comment on this project? Seeing and hearing no one, we'll continue our comments. Osma?

Mr. Sing: Sorry, just clarification from Board Member Lew. You mentioned early on about the example building on Cowper, and I think you meant, maybe 619? There's a range of addresses, but it's that recognizable building; I think we know what you're talking about. Not 610, though.

Board Member Lew: I looked it up last night. I think it was 611.

Mr. Sing: Yeah, okay, that will work.

Board Member Lew: Six-eleven. Six-ten is the one next door. Yeah. Thank you for that.

Chair Baltay: Okay, Osma.

Vice Chair Thompson: Yeah. Thank you for your presentation. Where do I begin? I do appreciate what you were saying about having an open corner at the retail level, and I think that is really well done here. I would like to see that openness translated more through the building. I don't know how much you were here for the previous hearing, and I'm trying to remember if I added operable windows as one of the conditions for the last one. Darn it, I didn't. Darn it. Well, hopefully they still do it. But, you know, for residential, residential, operable windows are really, really, really important. And even for office space, I believe they're very important and I know that the aesthetic of an operable window is not this sort of glossy, flat surface that it looks like you're trying to go for in your rendering. But, that's also one of my other concerns about this design, is that it has... The massing the articulation is not enough. It feels very blank, and flat, and there isn't enough relief in the elevation or façade. Just going through your elevations, I can understand the modern look, but there are ways to that and provide more relief and more character to the building. At the moment, it's true, it's kind of reminding me about 429 University, which I think actually had a bit more relief than this does, at this moment. I would encourage you to use things like operable windows, but even adding shading and things that will give you a bit more play in the façade. The other buildings in the context have a lot of character, and they have a lot of relief in the façade. Definitely not saying, you know, match that architecture style to the T, but having detail, something smaller scale in the façade and the elevations, is going to enrich your project. Even if the style is not the same, it will still feel like it belongs in Palo Alto. I know you mentioned, it seems like you're already aware of the blank walls around. You've got one on this rendering that we're looking at right here; there's one on the other side. There's a lot of opportunity there to do something really interesting, so definitely don't ignore the blank walls. It's a huge problem, and it's a big part of your project. People are going to see it from far away. I do like how you've landscaped a lot of the tiers. I think that's really important, even if it's not... Go ahead and reflect that in your landscaping plan. That's really important, that this is a part of your project. Where the car stacker is, I have a huge concern of the street frontage there. I'm trying to think of how to address it. Obviously, we can't treat it like retail, we can't make it shiny and glossy, but maybe there's... And I kind of want to talk, or maybe have some back and forth with Board Member Lew later, and all my other board members, but if your car stacker is going to be there, right now you're covering it all up. Maybe it would be great to showcase and let people on the street see exactly what this crazy, cool contraption is. And then, that will make that façade a little less dull, and a little bit more pedestrian-friendly. Just a note on the renderings. The railings that you have shown right here don't seem to be very high quality, so I would encourage you to use something a bit more higher quality for that. I do like your parti diagram, about the horizontals, grabbing from the neighbor. I would encourage you to keep exploring that. There's ways to do that and, you know, kind of, maybe you have a bit more overhang on one side, maybe you have, sort of these plates that float, and everything else is sort of inset and inside it. At the moment, it is reading a bit more flatter than it is, like striated. I would encourage you to keep pursuing that. Operable window shade. Okay. I'm good. That's all I have to say. Thanks.

Chair Baltay: You want operable windows, Osma?

Vice Chair Thompson: And shading.

Chair Baltay: Okay, David.

Board Member Hirsch: Thank you for the project. It gives us a lot of thinking to do here. I guess my first concern, which I mentioned to Sheldon, is that I'm bothered by the parking end of the building. It is abrupt on the street and isn't a really great façade to pass by while you're walking along that street. So, in juxtaposition to the wonderful openness at the other end, it's not a very friendly façade on the ground floor. And I can't help but think that the problem really is the parking itself, and that somehow if there were another way to do it below grade, you could do a tremendous improvement for the project as well. I hope you and City planning will explore that possibility and come back to us with a scheme that really works, and a better way, both for the street environment and for the parking scheme. I hope it isn't a situation where this is the only way you can do it. You'll have to work on that one. The openness of the corner is quite something. It also forces you to then put the elevator entry quite deep into the building. That's sort of also problematic for me because the entry isn't all that great to the upstairs areas. And I'm wondering why, if there's a retail on the ground floor and the second floor and they're connected, why they couldn't also have an elevator connection, and therefore, you'd have a more private elevator for all of the residences. That seems to me to make a lot of sense. Then, I wouldn't mind, I think, going to the back of the building. You could make it personal for those people who enter, and maybe their lobby would be a little sooner, and the mailboxes, etc. All of those things that relate to the residential upstairs could be part of a personal lobby for those people who come into the building. I want to emphasize what Alex said about the building around the corner. I think it's a very well-designed building. I'm very impressed with it, in fact, and go back and look at the materials, and how they detailed it. But I'm not sure it applies equally here because your reaction to your neighboring building on Hamilton is probably more appropriate in some way. I wouldn't suggest that you necessarily change materials in that manner. Your kind of format of forms is, to me, could be successful next time around. I don't see why it's necessary to make such a drastic change in color. I mean, it's sort of a dominant building, the bank building next door, in color, and really establishes a feeling to that block. So, some kind of a precast rather than brick, of course, you know, that would match in color tone to some of that building, I think would be a much more successful kind of repetition on that block and unify it in some way. Because you really are kind of repeating the stepping qualities of that building. It doesn't have to look exactly like it, but some similarities in color I think would be a pleasant thing for the whole town here. You know, the garbage right on the street isn't great, so if you solve the parking problem in some way, maybe you could get that out of, off of the street. And then, which means you might not have to have such severe, kind of metal grills facing onto the street directly. And perhaps even some landscaping at the beginning of the block, as well. You know, some possibility of that. And I also don't like the garbage on that upper floor. I hate to tell you, but garbage smells, and come out to a lobby in which you have a residential unit and other people's garbage, isn't a great idea. So, if you solve the garbage down below, maybe they'd have to walk it over there to the... It's not a long walk, you know, to some other area where you could keep it away from both the street and from the residences. I'm confused about the zoning here, Sheldon. I'm concerned about, you know, the fact that we have just a few units and buildings, major buildings like this. I just don't understand why the City really allows that sort of thing here. It seems to me it's a commercial building, a good location for a commercial building, and I don't understand, is this a SOFA, and that's the way it's laid out? SOFA? No?

Mr. Sing: No, I mean, this is just the applicant's proposal.

Board Member Hirsch: Uh-huh, just his proposal. Well, okay. Maybe it's acceptable...

Board Member Lew: David, could you clarify what about the zoning that you don't...? What do you not like about the zoning? Is it the mixed-use?

Board Member Hirsch: Yeah, I don't like, I mean, I just don't see a mixed-use with just a few units of housing. It bothers me.

Board Member Lew: Historically, downtown residential is not allowed, for many years. And then, in one of the updates – I forgot exactly when, in the 2000's – the mixed-use provision was added in. And then, staff, maybe can correct me. It's a one... I'm mixing up some... Is it 1.0 floor area for commercial and a 1.0 for residential? Yeah. So, there was a zoning change. Previously, if you wanted to do mixed-use, it

was very difficult, so we've opened the door to allow it. And then, some cases, we were just getting the penthouses, the luxury, you know, the 5,000 square foot penthouses, so we've been tinkering with it. If you have a recommendation, I think everybody is open to suggestions. But it's something that's been in the works for a while, and we're still modifying it as we go along.

Board Member Hirsch: Well, I think when you're building a new building like this, you know, and the kind of expensive kind of construction that it takes for a commercial building like this, you can't help but inflate the price you charge for all the residential. So, here we are, making a class distinction downtown of the people who are going to be able to afford to live in this building. And that's all I'm going to say about that at the moment. On the other hand, if you're going to do it, I think the comments that have been made here are very good ones. That the scale ought to change from a commercial-looking building into a residential/commercial combination. And there are a number of ways you should be doing that, and one of them is screening, which is a different kind of... Another one might be changing the window bays and the format for where it turns residential, so it really begins to look more like a resident. But I want to also say that it's Palo Alto, and the air is great, and why not have windows that open? And there's another way to change a façade, you know? That a commercial maybe ought to have, I think. Even retail ought to have some operable windows. That's my opinion, just an opinion. But certainly, residential has to have it. You really need to create another format for looking at the residential portion of this building. Scale, change of the windows, floor to ceiling, in some way, you know, reflect the functions inside a little differently on the outside. I don't see that that seems to be happening here yet. On the other hand, I like the massing, so, how to create the residential feel with the massing kind of staying the same way. Somewhat the same. Whatever you need to do. I sort of see this as a preliminary, as a presentation to us, and therefore, you've got a lot of fun ahead of you to develop. I want to say one other thing. Don't give up on using your nice renderings on the cover of a drawing sheet like this. Don't leave them in the back of the book. It's nice to look at a... Like the drawings, when you see, "Oh, there's the building." Okay, now we can cut it to pieces. But at least we have this pretty picture to look at on the front. Okay. Thank you very much.

Chair Baltay: Okay. Thanks, David, Osma and Alex. I think you've done some fine architecture here, and parts of this building are really exciting. The two-story open corner on Cowper and Hamilton is really neat. That said, however, I see two really significant concerns I have, and they're really not even... I don't know what you can do about them as an architect. One is the parking. I just think that the stacking lift you have has too great an impact on both the façade on Hamilton and on your floor plan layout. You really can't use the second floor as well because you've got these parking lifts here. And you're really in a bind. I'm scratching my head about this project because I'm not sure it's viable the way you have it. I think you need below-grade parking. I don't think you can fit a ramp on the site. And I don't know how to reconcile those differing facts. The other day I was thinking maybe you could get some kind of elevator lift that just takes cars down. I believe that would even solve your ADA requirement. As long as you have an elevator, cars can be below it, and then maybe you could make the whole thing work with a fraction of the amount of space on Hamilton, just to get into that elevator lift and get down. You could have enough parking on one or two floors below. I think then the whole thing would shake free. But the way it is now, with the parking alone, I could not support this project, and I don't see how you could change it with the parking requirements you have. You have almost 60 percent – 61 percent by my calculation – of the façade along Hamilton is dedicated to a parking garage, basically. And right now, what we have is an open parking lot, but four shops that are known and loved and used. And the idea is to make it better, not worse. I just don't see that happening. I don't see it happening because of the parking. The retail you can do, you do wonderfully. My second concern – and to this, I'll address to my colleagues – is that the building is too tall. At four stories, 50 feet, every bit of 50 feet, plus mechanical and elevator and stuff, adjacent to a two-story historic building that's not going to go away, I just don't see that working. I think that it just doesn't fit the massing of the area. All of the renderings I look at, even against the Wells Fargo building, which is massive, but somehow doesn't look as tall. I remind my colleagues of 203 Forest Avenue. It's a building we looked at a number of years ago with a very similar third and fourth floor, with ribbons of glazing like this. That project was ultimately denied and went back on appeal and was still denied. It did not succeed. And it was in a similar type of neighborhood. A different zoning district, perhaps, but I think the same arguments apply. And you will not have my

support on a building of this size. I want to be very clear about that to you. Hopefully, you could reconfigure the parking, gain more massing of the building on three floors, and make it work. What I find, looking at this image on the screen, for example, is that the bottom two floors are quite handsome. They'll fit in very well. If you had a third-floor residential on top of that, that would really work. That would fit in well. But those are big changes, big things on planning, so I just want to be very clear how I feel about it. We'll poll the rest of my colleagues regarding the height because it's a very important issue in town. I share the other comments my colleagues made. Alex's reference to the Ken Hayes Design building across the street is wonderful, not for the massing, perhaps, or the cleverness of the design, but just the way they used a terra cotta cladding to connect the building to the other somewhat terra cotta-flavored buildings on the corners, I find tremendously successful. It's very sophisticated and cleverly done. It's still a very contemporary building, but something about it just fits. I compare that to the building at 626 Waverly, which is a concrete box, which just doesn't fit. The material alone is what really doesn't work. Alex is very carefully pointing that out to you. I think that's really mindful, worth being mindful of. Osma was talking about the windows of ribbons up on the third and fourth floors, and I think she's dead-on that those, they don't really... They're just too much. It's too massive, too commercial-looking. Maybe what David was mentioning, which is that you have residences up there, so maybe design them differently. Make it look residential. It's just not. Right now, it's too, sort of San Francisco commercial, to use a pejorative term. It just needs more variation, deviation. I agree that the horizontal lines are attractive, and appropriate, but maybe just too much so with the windows. And I agree with many of the smaller comments, about the trash can locations, the idea of getting the landscaping together, but maybe not to beat that to death too much. I think the biggest issue here is the height of the building, and the way you're dealing with the parking. Let me throw out the last thing. For me, at least, to have a two-story retail space, I would reference back other retail spaces in downtown that do that successfully. The Restoration Hardware, I think, a new one, which is a lower-level retail space, and it works because integrated within the storefront is that staircase and elevator to get up and down. We remember the old Z Gallery, where the Apple store is now. That had a big staircase sort of in the middle, at the back. It was a grand internal staircase going up. The same with the old Toy and Sport Warehouse. In both cases, the staircase was an integral part of the store, and therefore, you could easily say that the second level was retail combining with it. I think you need to do something like that to make it function, but also, to convince us that you're replacing retail. Right now, what you've created is another office space, and in spite of what any of us say or do, that's how it will end up being used, I believe. I'd like to see you put in a circular element right in the middle. Some grand staircase, inside or outside. But some effort to integrate the spaces in order to show to us that it's a better retail presence that what you have now. To my colleagues. I'd like to hear us address the question of the height of the building. Who wants to take a look at that?

Board Member Lew: Peter, I just wanted to make one correction. You mentioned Restoration Hardware, but I think you meant Design Within Reach.

Chair Baltay: Absolutely. You're right. I mix the two up constantly. Restoration Hardware is going... They couldn't be more different, yes. Design Within Reach on University Avenue. The height of the building. Any other opinions?

Board Member Lew: Well, for me, it's a design issue. The zoning is 50 feet maximum, and if you can design it really well, then it's potentially approvable, right? It hinges on the design. From your perspective about cutting of a floor, I do see that when I look at one of the renderings along Hamilton. I think there... Let me reference the sheet.

Chair Baltay: To the applicant, are you able to pull up – or Sheldon – some of the images showing the building in context?

[Looking for slide.]

Board Member Lew: For me, on Sheet A-104...

Chair Baltay: Let's get that image up, Alex.

[Loading image.]

Board Member Lew: The image on the bottom...

Chair Baltay: That's it, yes.

Board Member Lew: ... to me, is an issue. But, when I look at the upper images, to me, that's just a design issue. The fourth floor does not bother me in the upper two images.

Chair Baltay: How about the upper left? Isn't that the view coming along...?

Board Member Lew: Cowper.

Chair Baltay: Yeah, right there on the left.

[crosstalk]

Board Member Lew: In that case, I think the issue is the stair tower, and the blank stair tower issue came up on 429 University several times, and several different options were presented for the stair tower. It changed several times. I think that the alternatives were better. I don't recall, at the end of the day, if we actually ended up with the best version of it, but it seems to me there's lots of room for improvement on that corner.

Chair Baltay: Your thoughts, Osma?

Vice Chair Thompson: I'm okay with the height, actually. I, in general, you know, the zoning code allows it. I don't see a problem with it in context. It's true the adjacent buildings are lower, but we have a few situations in Palo Alto where we have tall buildings in a sea of low buildings. I think Board Member Lew is correct, that it is certainly a design issue, that it looks this massive and it feels this daunting, but if there's a way to use easy design techniques to sort of mitigate that height, I would be fine with the height.

Chair Baltay: Any thoughts, David?

Board Member Hirsch: Well, I think we should leave it, in this case, with the architects to work out something that's appropriate for the top of the building. The top two floors. I think if zoning allows it, I would accept it, but it really does require a redesign and a different scale on the top of the building. And I think it could be successfully done, but I don't think it could be done in the same idiom as the rest of the building. The ground two floors of the building are pretty strong architecturally, and I think the top of it could be made to work. Might be different materials, might be different... It would be different, kind of window bays, and window layout. Even recesses and some balconies on the front on well. But a redesign, I think where it fills up the mass in a different way and divides it up in a different way could be successful. I would say... I would allow it to go forward with a design of the top of the building different than what it is and let us take a look at that. And the bottom of the building with the parking. Those are the two areas I'd be concerned about.

Chair Baltay: Thank you. Allow me to temper my comments, then, that I would be open to a fourth-floor building if the design really worked. I don't want to categorically rule it out. That would be inappropriate. But I remain very concerned about how that's possible. Any other comments from us? Or to the applicant, do you have any questions? How well do you understand what you're saying? Please come to the microphone.

Mr. Le: I just want to clarify a few things. Thank you for the comments, first of all.

Chair Baltay: Speak into the microphone so we can hear.

Mr. Le: Thanks for the comments. Greatly appreciate those comments. They were very constructive. In terms of, if we take just the bottom two floors and just make all them commercial, move the office down to the second floor, and then, put all the residential on the third and fourth floor, would that work out? The reason why the building is so tall is because of the lift system. We have an option – we just talked about it yesterday – taking the lift system and putting it underground, which will help everyone here. And then, we can fill in that space and make all the floor-to-floors on the commercial level a little bit lower, and then, we can bring the whole massing down. I totally agree with you on all the massing. The massing has dictated the car lift system. That's the reason. I think we have another solution to bring it down.

Chair Baltay: I don't think any of us want to answer that question...

[Laughter]

Vice Chair Thompson: I was going to say, it depends on how you design it.

Chair Baltay: But I do want to say to you that taking the puzzle lift strictly underground does affect the massing; it doesn't help your street frontage issue. You still need the ADA spaces at service level. A chunk of the concern we have is not solved by that. Be mindful of that, please. Any other issues you want to ask questions...?

Mr. Le: No.

Chair Baltay: Anything else from Board members? Alex.

Board Member Lew: Peter, you talked about, like, an elevator lift for the cars, for underground car parking. I just wanted to point out to the applicant that we do have one project, mixed-use project downtown that uses an elevator. It's University Circle. But it doesn't have retail. It's just office and residential above. I just throw that out there. I'm not as opposed to the parking as I think you are, but there are other options.

Chair Baltay: I don't want to sound categorical. If you design it right, it's possible you could pull off having 60 percent of the frontage facing with the parking lot. What I do want to do, though, is try to not keep earning us this position of being seen as difficult. I want to really be sure you understand that's a significant design concern. If I were the architect, I would be going back to my client, saying, "I don't think this is going to work. Maybe. Give us a hundred hours, maybe we'll spin something out. Maybe these guys will be convinced. But it's not likely." You're taking a very difficult design challenge. I just really want to be sure you hear that clearly from the Board. That's why I'm polling everybody back and forth on it, because so many times, we don't give you really clear feedback.

Mr. Le: Understood.

Chair Baltay: I think you need to hear that very clearly. You might consider going back to the City and saying, "Look, I can deal with the residential parking just fine. This business of retail parking is too hard to work, so, either I'm going to lose more retail frontage, or I can't have retail parking." And let that go up to City Council as a zoning change of some kind. Play the political game and push for what you think is really the best building. It may be a little bit harder, but a little bit, you're caught in the crosshairs of conflicting zoning requirements. As are we, as is staff. All of us can imagine a better way to do it, so, you're the applicant; make it happen. That's my advice to you on a personal level.

Mr. Le: Thank you.

Chair Baltay: Any other comments from us? From staff? Anybody? Okay. Thank you for that item. We'll move right along then.

Study Session

Chair Baltay: Study session. I don't think we have anything to go over.

Approval of Minutes

Chair Baltay: Approval of minutes. What minutes do we have, staff?

Ms. Gerhardt: We didn't have a July 4th meeting, so, no minutes.

Chair Baltay: No minutes, thank you very much. Before we get to the subcommittee, do we have that letter, the draft letter to pass out? To my colleagues, we have a letter we'd like to send off to City Council. It's our annual report. We've all collaborated on it. Jodie will be handing out a paper copy of where it stands now. We're going to put this on the agenda for the next hearing and formally go through any changes, and hopefully vote on it and get it out of our, off our docket. This is just a paper copy of that. It's not part of our agenda. We're not going to discuss it today, but just so everybody has a copy of it. With that, our meeting is adjourned, and we'll go to the subcommittee.

Subcommittee Items

4. 3265 El Camino Real [15PLN-00312]: Subcommittee Review of a Previously Approved Project That was Conditioned to Return With Project Changes Related to Louvre Window and Stair Well Trellis Mesh. Environmental Assessment: Use of Mitigated Negative Declaration Prepared for 15PLN-00312. Zoning District: CS (Commercial Service). For More Information Contact the Project Planner Adam Petersen at apetersen@m-group.us

Vice Chair Thompson: Who's on subcommittee?

Chair Baltay: Alex and myself will be on the subcommittee.

Vice Chair Thompson: Okay.

Chair Baltay: Thank you.

Adjournment



Architectural Review Board Subcommittee Review

TO: Bob Iwerson, 444 Spear St # 105, San Francisco, CA 94105
SUBJECT: 3265 El Camino Real [15PLN-00312]
DATE: August 1, 2019
FROM: Adam Petersen, Consultant Planner

PLANNER'S SIGNATURE:

The application, and plans dated July 23, 2019, was reviewed by the ARB Subcommittee on August 1, 2019 in accordance with condition of approval 2, as stated below.

- The louvre window screen on the elevation fronting El Camino Real shall be designed to have a better opening and filtered light consistent with the El Camino Real Design Guideline Goals.
- Rework the mesh around the stairs to make it less oppressive.

At the meeting, the Subcommittee agreed with the proposed five window configuration provided that the control joint aligned with the central window, and with the proposed curved shroud at a shorter depth than the proposed two-and-a-half feet (2.5 ft).

However, the Subcommittee requested that the applicant return with a 3D color rendering of the proposed stair enclosure, construction details, and material sample of the proposed metal bars around the enclosure.

The ARB Subcommittee requested that the mesh stair enclosure return prior to issuance of building permit.