



ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD
MINUTES: November 7, 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, David Hirsch and Grace Lee.

Absent: None.

Chair Baltay: ... November 7, 2019, meeting of the Palo Alto Architectural Review Board. Could we have a roll call, please?

[Roll Call]

Jodie Gerhardt, Manager of Current Planning: Thank you. All present.

Chair Baltay: Thank you.

Oral Communications

Chair Baltay: First order of business is oral communications, if there's any member of the public who wishes to speak to an item not on our agenda. Seeing and hearing no one, we'll go on.

Agenda Changes, Additions and Deletions

Chair Baltay: Are there any changes to the agenda, deletions? Jodie? No, no changes.

City Official Reports

1. Transmittal of 1) the ARB Meeting Schedule and Attendance Record, and 2) Tentative Future Agenda items and 3) Recent Project Decisions

Chair Baltay: City Official Reports.

Ms. Gerhardt: Yes. For the next hearing, November 21st, we actually do not have any items, so we're recommending cancelling that meeting. We do have items that are in the queue for both of the December hearings, December 5th and December 19th. I do want to make sure that everyone is going to be available on those dates.

Board Member Hirsch: December 19th...?

Ms. Gerhardt: The 5th and the 19th, yes.

Chair Baltay: I think so. I will.

Board Member Lee: I will not be here on the 19th.

Chair Baltay: Anyone else? Okay, thank you.

Action Items

2. PUBLIC HEARING/QUASI-JUDICIAL. 180 El Camino Real [19PLN00110]: Continuation of the October 3, 2019 Hearing for Consideration of a Major Architectural Review to Allow the Demolition of the Existing 94,300 Square Foot Macy's Men's Building Located in the Stanford Shopping Center and the Construction of (1) a Retail Building, Approximately 43,500 sf, (2) two Retail Buildings, Approximately 3,500 sf each, and (3) a Retail Building, Approximately 28,000 sf (78,500 sf in total). Environmental Assessment: Exempt From the Provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) in Accordance With Guideline Section 15302 (Replacement or Reconstruction). Zoning District: CC (Community Commercial). For More Information Contact the Project Planner Samuel Gutierrez at Samuel.Gutierrez@cityofpaloalto.org. Chair Baltay: We'll move on to our first action item, which is

Chair Baltay: We'll move on to our first action item, which is a public hearing for 180 El Camino Real. Continuation of the October 3, 2019 hearing for consideration of a major architectural review to allow the demolition of the existing 94,300 square foot Macy's Men's building located in the Stanford Shopping Center, and the construction of (1) a retail building, approximately 43,500 square feet, (2) two retail buildings, approximately 3,500 square feet each, and (3) a retail building, approximately 28,000 square feet. I understand that this is going to be continued to the next, or to some unknown date in the future. Is that right?

Ms. Gerhardt: Correct. Staff is asking to continue this to a date uncertain. We hope to bring it back fairly quickly. We just don't know exactly what date that will be.

Chair Baltay: Do you know what the status is, or what they're going to be bringing back? Are they making the changes we worked out in our last meeting on that project?

Ms. Gerhardt: I think we agreed that the speed table was the preferred option for that one drive aisle. Related to the Wilkes Bashford building, they are potentially bringing back a project that just shows a pad building, not a building, a pad, for the Wilkes Bashford, so that you could just look at both the Restoration Hardware, the two other retail establishments, and just the parking lot area for Wilkes Bashford. They are working on a second option that would have the entire Wilkes Bashford building included with some updated architecture. We just weren't sure if we could... We weren't going to meet this timeframe, so maybe at a later date, they will have all of it together.

Chair Baltay: Okay, great, thank you.

MOTION

Chair Baltay: You're asking us to just continue this project, so I'll look for a motion to continue.

Vice Chair Thompson: I move that we continue this to a date uncertain.

Board Member Hirsch: I'll second that.

Chair Baltay: Okay, moved and seconded. All those in favor?

Board Member Lew: Aye.

Vice Chair Thompson: Aye.

Board Member Hirsch: Aye.

Chair Baltay: Aye.

Board Member Lee: Sorry, I will recuse myself from this item, so I'm not sure if I should...?

Chair Baltay: Motion carries 4 ayes, no opposed, one recusal.

MOTION PASSES 4-0.

3. Discussion of Potential Topics for Joint Study Session with City Council.

Chair Baltay: Okay, moving on to the next item, number 2 [sic]. This is a discussion of potential topics for the joint study with City Council. We are going to be having a joint meeting with City Council to go over items of interest to them, and us, potentially. The purpose of the discussion today is to try to outline what we hope to talk about and accomplish at that meeting. Later on today, myself and Vice Chair Thompson are going to be meeting with the Mayor and Vice Mayor to try to firm up an agenda for that meeting, as well. What I'd like to put to my colleagues now is, I've never participated, and when I watch these types of meetings in the past, they have the potential to become a, sort of a rambling series of people speaking at almost cross-purposes. It's really in our interest if we can try to focus ourselves collectively to a series of ideas and issues that we feel are important and can all support together, and then, make a little bit of effort to be cogent, succinct, prepared, and then, present something to the Council so they can get their teeth around it. We're fortunate to get a chunk of their time collectively, and we should respect that. With that, I think the way to start is to ask Amy French and Alex, who have both some institutional memory of what past meetings like this have been about, and maybe we could ask them to just bring us up to speed, what we might expect. And then, I'd like to go through as a group and see if we can identify some topics and issues that we all feel are important, and ideally, even break it out so one of us each might be in charge of presenting to the Council, one idea. With that, Amy, why don't you tell us what you know. Thank you.

Amy French, Chief Planning Official: Good morning. You mentioned each board member having a role in the joint meeting, and I think that seems to have been a formula that was helpful. Alex may want to weigh in on that, but I thought it was a great way for presentation, perhaps a PowerPoint, where each board member has a role in presenting a piece of that presentation, a topic of interest to the entire Board, and of interest to the Council. Yes, in the past, staff has attended, and they will again this year. Jodie, I believe, is attending today's meeting with the Mayor and Vice Mayor and Chair and Vice Chair, to get a feel for what Council – the Mayor and Vice Mayor – have as well, to request of the ARB to come and talk about. That would be informative. And then, this year, it looks nice, there's an annual report that was delivered to the City Council in their packet a couple weeks ago, maybe two meetings ago, three meetings ago, perhaps, to the City Council. They received that in their packet. Whether they looked at it...? It's an opportunity to chat about that. It's an opportunity to chat about the Architectural Review Board awards that are coming up in 2020, just so they're aware of that. It's an opportunity for other potential big projects, housing projects to be highlighted. And whatever else the Board is thinking they would like to discuss with the Council, if there's direction requested, purpose. That's all I have to say about that.

Chair Baltay: Thanks, Amy. Alex, you've been through these. Actually, before you start, Grace, have you, in the past, been through one? Maybe both of you could just tell us what you saw and heard, and what advice you might give us before we get started.

Board Member Lew: Sure. I would say that I think I agree with you about the joint meetings. It's actually very hard to have a discussion with the two boards, or a board and City Council, just because there's so many people involved. I would say one of the more, in my opinion, one of the more successful joint meetings that we've had with the Council is, one year there was a PowerPoint presentation, and the Board had discussed which topic each board member would discuss. The PowerPoint did try to address maybe key projects, certain aspects of key projects. Like, at one point, Council was really concerned about, say, the entrances, like, the lack of permanent entrances for buildings on El Camino, so we did use one of those projects as an example. We also used a project downtown on University Avenue as an example of how a project changed during the ARB process for the better, and how it was more contextual. I think that's a good approach. And then, I would think, too, is that, since this is supposed to be annual, I know we haven't had it for a while, but I think we should look back at last year's projects. And I might suggest looking at

the controversial ones, if there was something the Board was unresolved. You know, say it's 429 University, or maybe it's the Mercedes-Benz dealer on Embarcadero Road. If there's one where we really struggled, then let's just take it up and just discuss what we think did well, what we think may need to be changed or modified to make it better in the future.

Chair Baltay: Thank you, Alex. Grace, what can you add?

Board Member Lee: It was one a few years back, and it was a different council. I do recall that there was a lack of structure, no PowerPoint, and we didn't have significant discussion about what we were going to talk about as a group. I would say that it actually contrasted greatly from what Alex presented, and I think it was before, Alex, you joined the board. I did want to note that, you know, I appreciate this effort in terms of a PowerPoint and each with a topic, and assessing ARB process and last year's projects. I do caution against opening up a large discussion on a project with minutia detail. I think that a summary in terms of something that has been discussed and has moved forward, whatever the outcome is, is best to treat as a summary. The other piece that I just want to mention, in thinking back on how the other joint meeting went, the other piece that I hope that we can talk about today is just how our board speaks to planning issues where there's another entity – a planning commission, as well as staff – to speak on those planning issues. I did want to talk about our mission and our purview as Architectural Review Board members. If you're comfortable, maybe we could move to that later in our discussion.

Chair Baltay: That would be great, thank you. That's a good idea. Okay. You asked if the rest of us have comments. Of course. What I'm trying to do is structured, and right now, gather as much information as we can from how past meetings have gone. If you've been to a past Architectural Review Board/City Council meeting...

Board Member Hirsch: No.

Chair Baltay: ... I'd love to hear your opinion.

Board Member Hirsch: No.

Chair Baltay: If not, then what I'd like to do, before we start discussing more, taking this letter to Council we wrote as a starting point, I'm going to just list a series of the topics, and I'm hoping we can all try to focus in on a couple of these that we feel are important, with the understanding that our objective is to find items that we think we've observed, things through the ARB review process that the Council might be interested in. It's not stuff that we're personally feeling important about, but we're trying to convey to Council information that Council should know. That's the objective. Grace, I don't know if you were part of this letter we wrote, but over the summer, we put this together, and more or less came to agreement on all of these things. At the end, we finally just said we have to get it out. The first item was trees. We were pointing out that some construction projects with underground garages limit the size of trees, and our request was that, we said these issues can be addressed in part through design review, but more explicit landscaping standards would be beneficial. I think we all agreed that is a little bit vague sometimes.

The second item we called curb management. It has to do with the increase in use of ride shares, and also deliveries for businesses in town, and not having... What we said is: Updated standards for commercial delivery areas and more explicit standards for ride share pickup and drop-off zones would be beneficial. Again, when we're reviewing projects, it's often an issue that comes up, and there's really a lack of guidelines for applicants, what to do.

The third item was one that we see over and over again. It's displacement of small businesses. That's, I think, a planning type issue, Grace, you were just alluding to. Over and over again, we see larger developments kicking out small businesses, which form the backbone of this community of ours. I don't think we had a recommendation or anything necessarily to do about it, but we're just pointing it out. I think we had in here; Alex had brought up some examples of what's being done in San Francisco.

The fourth item we put out here was parking issues at the Stanford Shopping Center. I think we're all pretty familiar with that. Another item is pedestrian mobility. This is related to the width of sidewalks and outdoor seating areas in front of various businesses. This is something I know Wynne Furth was passionate about. We've had benches in front of a lot of projects that have been reviewed recently. Another item was El Camino Real: Revised parking standards for developments along El Camino Real would promote the development of neighborhood retail and restaurant businesses. The last item was just the Architectural Review Board findings, and sort of the Architectural Review Board process. With that, there's eight items on this list, so why don't we each talk about a couple of these that we think are important. I think we need to pare it down. That's too many. What's important out of all of this? What do we still feel? This is now a few months after we talked about it. David, do you want to start? Or whomever. We don't need this to be that formal.

Board Member Hirsch: Yeah. I think, in general, what I kind of see is that we've had some significant comments to make about landscaping. I'm concerned that, in some sense, we don't have on the Board enough capability to review landscaping issues. I would suggest that we ask that when there's a possibility of a new member on the board, that we ask the Council to consider having a person of landscape ability greater than what we have on the board right now, to help us in regard to review of these projects that involve landscaping. I usually turn to Alex and ask him. He has quite a lot of knowledge about it, but I think we could use even more, in some way, on the board. That was kind of a general comment I have about that. I think there are other areas of interest that are beyond what are mentioned here. San Antonio Road now has become kind of a new area for us, and it seems to me, having looked at the hotel, this monster item coming up on San Antonio Road, that now we're dealing with other sites on San Antonio, and we should be questioning how that zoning will affect the look of San Antonio Road. I have a few others. Those are two of the major. I'd like to come back maybe and continue...

Chair Baltay: That's fine. Who else wants to chime in? Grace?

Board Member Lee: Osma, would you like to go? Because you haven't spoken.

Vice Chair Thompson: Sure, why not?

Board Member Lee: I'd be happy to...

Vice Chair Thompson: The items that stand out to me as important. The trees are a really big one. I think we should definitely talk about the urban canopy and how... We have a lot of projects that come in front of us that make some minor apologies for, "Sorry, we had to get rid of this tree," kind of thing. And having a bit more stronger attitude about what's important for our ecosystem I think is important to stress. And then, even on that vein, I think that's kind of hand in hand with a stronger attitude towards sustainability in projects. I think California is pretty good about sustainability, but making that more of our, something that's part of our mission, something that when we're looking at a project, we should really look at that lens a bit more closely. I think that kind of goes hand in hand with the trees. That was kind of the major thing that started in front of me. I think when we were drafting this letter, kind of very late in the game, I had a few things to add that never got in there, so I don't know if this is the right time to talk about it.

Chair Baltay: This is the right time to talk about it.

Vice Chair Thompson: Okay. Then the other item that's not on this list but I think might be worth broaching, and I'd be curious to hear my board members' opinion, is the general aesthetics of things that we're looking at, and then, kind of an evaluation of, maybe even last year's projects. The similarities of things that we're seeing, and kind of how that is going to change the face of the city, and also having an attitude about the scale of things that come to us, and the types of materials that come to us. And then, forming an opinion on if, if we feel like that's good for Palo Alto in the future.

Chair Baltay: Those are such generalized... Osma, can you give me some examples of good and bad general aesthetics?

Vice Chair Thompson: Yeah. I would say, in general, the scale of items that we're seeing, that a lot of the times when we first see a project but usually don't approve, it's because the scale of the design is so broad brush and large that it doesn't have a smaller human pedestrian scale. I feel like a lot of the projects that we have been able to approve through this process have been a result of pushing them to go to a smaller scale. I think we can push even more than we have already. I think there are projects that have gone through that I think could have even benefitted more from pushing down even more. So, I think scale is a big item.

Chair Baltay: That's a great observation. I agree.

Board Member Hirsch: Just a couple of comments. If I can remember what I was just thinking. I thought about how to make a presentation, you know, PowerPoint, would be to start with a project that comes in, you know, what it brought to us first, and then, show how we've managed to modify it with some of our comments, you know? Would be an absolutely great way to do it. And the reason I'm suggesting that is, you know, I think that we look at things visually, make our comments based on our experience that way, and I don't think the Council really are those kind of people. They need to be brought up to speed on how we are thinking about projects, and this would be a good way to do it. That's one. Amy, one thought is, I have some concern about how cell towers were presented, but I don't know if want to get in the middle of that one. It's into the weeds. But it's been in our craw in a way for a while. Yours, too, I have a feeling, and it's been tough. You want to stay away from that one, right?

Ms. French: Yes, I would suggest that they're such... Since I'm jumping in, one thing that will be coming to the ARB, we are, because of state legislation that is advocating affordable housing projects and looking at objective standards, we're looking at objective standards for cell towers, but not as interested in that as I am in the housing objective standards because we are going to be looking at our ARB findings, the context base findings, and seeing if there are ways to have more objective standards for affordable housing projects. This is, if you're thinking about projects to talk about and how your influence, you know, improved the projects, we might want to think the project that includes multi-family housing, and start thinking about how our aesthetics are quantified somehow in the findings, or the context-based design criteria. That's going to be a big topic coming up, is how we can more objective.

Board Member Hirsch: Another one, as part of that, would be... What is it called? The small dwellings?

Chair Baltay: ADUs.

Board Member Hirsch: ADUs. To actually see a sample of how an ADU has actually worked in this community here. I'm just curious because it's so talked about in the entire state now, you know? What have we done?

Ms. French: It's a little off-topic just because ARB doesn't look at the ADUs, and they are administrative, so we don't have a discretionary review aspect of those at all.

Board Member Hirsch: Yeah, that's true.

Ms. French: I would just say that's a topic for another day that we could talk about, but probably not good for this meeting with the joint council, just because there's so much else that the ARB is involved in reviewing.

Chair Baltay: I want to remind us all that our goal is to find things that we think the Council needs to hear from us.

Board Member Hirsch: Why wouldn't something like the impact of an ADU on a residential area be important?

Chair Baltay: Well, we don't have any explicit experience with the ARB doing that. None whatsoever. That's where I think we want to be careful. It's not my opinion as a practicing architect. I've designed many ADUs

and I have strong opinions about it, but I want to be careful that we're here as a board, taking City Council's time as a council to communicate to them things that we, I think, really have observed and can make strong statements about. I think the cell tower ship has sailed, David, unfortunately. Council has heard everybody's opinion in multitudes on that. Alex, what are you thinking?

Board Member Lew: Okay, so, I think I do... I do think the tree issue is important, and I think I would enlarge that topic to encompass.... I might incorporate that into, like, we have, like, a parking issue. I might sort of enlarge it so it's not just about trees, because it's related to...

Chair Baltay: It's all related, yeah.

Board Member Lew: Yeah, they're all tied together. It's not just the trees, the issue of bigger scale urban buildings, and how does the city grow to the next larger scale but still keep true to its roots. I think I support David's comment about San Antonio Road and development happening there, although I'm thinking that maybe we push that back a year, until maybe after the hotel is finished, so there is something to react against. I think it's important because San Antonio Road has the CS zoning, but we don't have any El Camino Design Guidelines for that street. And there's no, based on the site facing on Mountain View, there's no, they typically don't have residential behind there, so there potentially can be very large buildings on one side of the street on San Antonio Road. I think that is a concern. Another comment on the pedestrian mobility is that I think that we should mention, I think we should incorporate in there the percentage of population that's going to be over 65, is going to grow by 40 percent. It's basically the Baby Boomers are going to be retiring, and I think that's a huge issue. I think that was part of Wynne's thinking in adding this. I think I might enlarge it. More of, like, aging in place, and how does the city adapt to that. It's not just about benches. I find that with my own parents. They're used to living in the town, and now they're realizing that they have to sort of change their lifestyle for their age, and they're not finding that the city is working that well for them. I think that's an interesting topic. If we bring that up at the Council, I don't know what comes of it, but I think that's sort of on the radar. If you think about the road diet that we did on Charleston and Arastradero. That was sort of with an eye towards that, with all of the build-out and crosswalks. And then, I had a comment on the... On the El Camino issue. I think you say in there, the last line is, "Revised parking standards for development on El Camino would promote development of neighborhood retail and restaurant businesses." And I do support that, and I think staff has tried to address that. We do have a new exclusion, either the first 1,500 square feet of ground floor retail doesn't have to be parked. That's new. I think maybe we could highlight that that's in there. We don't really have any projects that have used it yet. I think the one on San Antonio Road is going to try to use it, even though they're on San Antonio Road. They're not on El Camino. I think, in that one, we could probably mention that. Many of the restaurants that people frequent don't have enough parking. They're grandfathered in. There's no incentive to improve your property if you're already deficient on... You're grandfathered in, right? Don't touch the parking lot because then you'd have to bring it up to code. It's a really difficult situation, where we've got things that don't look good.

Chair Baltay: Well, we kind of have 1950's suburban parking requirements for a growing city.

Board Member Lew: Yep.

Chair Baltay: Sooner or later, that conflicts.

Board Member Lew: Yep.

Chair Baltay: What we observe, you're right, is when a restaurant comes in, or a building with a restaurant on the ground floor. Parking drives everything. They can't actually meet the parking to make the restaurant fit. Costs go sky high to make it work with subterranean elevator parking spots, and it's not really in the city's best interest. That's precisely, I think, the kind of thing Council should be hearing from us, is the nuts and bolts of why and how that code requirement impacts the inability to create things that we all want to see in the town. That's a good point, Alex.

Board Member Lew: Yeah. And if we say that we really want to hold on to parking standards, you sort of have to accept that it might be, we have to allow other uses – whatever it is, exercise place, other things – because retail is sort of declining. I think there's a huge demand for exercise places. It's a tricky one. And I think the difference is, like on El Camino, that the parking standards are specific to the use, whereas downtown or the shopping center is all blended. I think that that one is more complicated. That one is, like, really complicated. I think it's kind of hard to have a discussion on that. As you guys know, the zoning on El Camino is very site-specific.

Chair Baltay: Is there any support on the Board for the concept that parking standards as a whole are driving a lot of development in the town, and perhaps really need all to be revised?

Board Member Lee: May I just make a few comments that relate to...?

Chair Baltay: Please do.

Board Member Lee: And I'm sorry, I feel like I'm the new person, and I am the new person, but I'm also an old person. I did want to make some comments that might not sit well, and it's because I'm joining the Board so late, and I haven't been a part of your process in the past year. I want to thank you so much for all of the work that has been completed, and I'm not knowledgeable on the projects, all the details. That's why I have some hesitation in being a part of going through specific projects. I think there is a challenge in that for myself, and I'm happy to kind of sit back if you all would like to do that. I see the ARB as really, I feel more comfortable talking about all of these things. When we begin to structure in terms of our role in, you know, context-based and contextual design, high-quality materials that age properly and, you know, sit well in that context. Scale, and the need for recognition of landscape as something that often speaks to scale. Looking at different cities in terms of learning from those precedents and examples of what may occur in a similar sized growing place. I feel less comfortable in terms of talking because there may be disagreement in terms of aesthetics on our board. Color is very subjective; aesthetics is very subjective. I also think about these applications that come in as individual applications, and I'm wary of the Board pushing an applicant to a certain spot. I'm also not comfortable with critiquing... I mean, parking standards are totally, completely involved in design, but I'm wary of being a planner. I have a planning background, I have worked on other design projects in my professional life, and I see the connection. But we have a Planning Commission, we have City Council, we have an excellent staff, and I feel like our purview is to review applications that come in, each separately. So, when we make these larger comments about displacement of small businesses, even the comments regarding zoning, land use planning and designations of zoning on El Camino Real. These TDMs are really important; I feel like that's, again, not our purview, still. I feel like that's a staff, that they work with the applicant in that way. And maybe I've just not been on the Board for the last 10 years, but I'm wary of me, as an applicant, as an architectural designer, going to a city where there are large changes that are occurring and being suggested that are not architectural design based. That has occurred. I've been on the other side, and it does create discomfort. And I'm not sure that's our purview.

Chair Baltay: I agree with you, Grace. I think all of us feel that we want to be very careful not to try to become planners or staff reviewing projects, and we don't want to be, for example, requiring more parking than the code requires, or saying you can't exceed or go to an FAR standard [crosstalk].

Board Member Lee: And I'm sure this Board is not doing that. My feeling is... And, sorry, not to jump in, Peter, but I feel most comfortable with G, in terms of the findings that I saw that you have revised since 2017. I feel very comfortable with A, B and E as it relates to the public realm in terms of evaluating applications. Not as comfortable with C, D and F as they are written. However, I believe, you know, there should be a general discussion with Council on all of the issues that come up through these projects, and if it works best, perhaps I can listen in terms of how the Board is presenting on work that they have reviewed that, you know, I did not weigh in on.

Chair Baltay: Let me try to sway your thinking a little bit, because we've evolved, I think, since I've been on the Board, at least, to I think realizing that there are trends that seem to be showing up over and over again in projects, meeting current codes and planning conditions. What I think we've come to think is that

we're the ones, so to speak, in the trenches, observing the reality of what happens when a building is designed to meet these standards. And my understanding, talking to architects, citizens, applicants and council members, is that they don't really see the ramification of some of these things. What I think we're advocating for is not how to change the code, but rather to say that some of these things are issues. We've observed a clear one, is when you have underground parking, which we all think is good, the code encourages it, it makes it very difficult to have above ground large trees on the perimeter of a property. You have this big concrete vault underneath. And that's a conflict we're seeing that hasn't been really well thought through. I think if I were a policymaker, I would appreciate getting that feedback. That's what I think we're trying to do here, is be specific in the feedback we give, ideally relative to projects that have gone through our process. But I think we are trying to say that there are policy issues, code issues, that can be addressed. We've observed that. A lot of these projects chase out small businesses, and I don't know that... I guess that one is seen by everybody in the political process, when there's a string of small businesses upset about something. But to see it the way we do, the way the design chases it out, when they're forced to build, when the story height of a building are lower, it makes the spaces a little bit less attractive to large commercial clients and more to small businesses, still. That's a subtle nuance design thing that Council may want to hear.

Board Member Lee: I agree. I think, you know, perhaps the way to frame it is that there are challenges that, you know, there's interlinking parts, and here's some challenges. I go to what Amy suggested, in terms of talking about objective standards in projects that involve multi-family housing or larger-scale developments, and for those specific uses, I struggle, because there are issues in terms of land use, and planning, and small businesses, for example, and small-scale buildings within a context, and development that's going to occur later. It opens a can of worms for me when we do this, and maybe the way to frame it is just as you're saying, that here's some trends and challenges that we've seen this last year.

Chair Baltay: We want to put the worms in the can so they're not all over the place. But I think they're there, and we have to face up to that, using that metaphor. Anybody else have other thoughts? We're trying to narrow down a list of things that we can discuss. After that, I want to see if we can get individuals to agree to be behind one or two of these. One of these, hopefully.

Vice Chair Thompson: Yeah. I want to respond to your comment about aesthetics being subjective. I feel like maybe there might be a way to reframe what I mean when I'm wanting to talk about this issue, because it's true, it's kind of dangerous to talk about taste. We're not really talking about architecture taste at all because you're right, that is subjective. But I think there are some basic... And maybe "aesthetic" is the wrong word for this, so I'd be curious to see if you could help me try to drive at what I'm trying to get at. But oftentimes, we'll see, like, the first iteration of a project we'll see will be very blocky and boxy, and I have no other way to describe that that is just aesthetically unattractive and not what we want the future of Palo Alto to be. Something that has no scale, that feels very massive and overbearing in the city. If "aesthetic" is not the right word, I'm not sure what is. I do think we need to talk about scale and architecture as it relates to improving the environment, because I think those projects that do come in front of us that don't have a regard, at least the initial stages don't have a regard for that scale, there has to be something where we where we can say this is not acceptable for Palo Alto. And context alone, I don't know if it's enough.

Board Member Lee: I totally appreciate it, thank you. I think scale and massing and context are interlinked, and aesthetics, if Board feels is important to retain, is a little more of a subjective term in my mind, but I completely understand what you're discussing.

Chair Baltay: Let's take that topic, Osma. How do we phrase that to the Council? What are we actually trying to tell them they should be aware of? Scale and design aesthetics are important? I'm having a tough time understanding what we're actually trying to say as an example. You want to take a particular building and...? As David mentioned, we can show how a design evolves. Generally, as you're saying, it breaks down in finer, higher-quality design details and scale and massing and stuff. But I guess what I'm concerned about is that's kind of telling them something they already know, in a way, that we work hard to get buildings better. What's the takeaway from them as far as what they should do, how they should react to it?

Vice Chair Thompson: There are projects that have passed our review, and I don't, honestly, I don't know the whole history of them. But there are projects that, you know, when they can't get through us, they go to Council, because they can't get through us because aesthetically, we can't approve them. And then, Council goes ahead and approves them. That's partially why I bring this up. And it's not entirely why. Like, there's also just a good discussion to have about what the future face of Palo Alto is going to look at. Should we bring up individual projects that we're thinking of talking about?

Chair Baltay: Absolutely. I think the more we can be concrete and visual, the stronger our presentations will be.

Vice Chair Thompson: There is an affordable housing project that came in front of us; I'm forgetting the name, actually. It was...

Board Member Lew: Wilton Court.

Vice Chair Thompson: It came twice, right? They had a prelim where we were just giving feedback, and then they had a first quasi that we passed on, that we approved them. And I think their improvement, from what they showed us in the prelim to what we ended up approving, is a good example of something that had some aesthetic flaws, let's say, or some things that could be improved on, that they took our feedback, and what we ended up improving was better.

Chair Baltay: You're talking about, I think it's Wilton Court. It was down in south Palo Alto on El Camino?

Vice Chair Thompson: Sure, yes.

Chair Baltay: A really large, boxy building, and they made substantial improvements on the design.

Vice Chair Thompson: Yeah, I think we've only had two affordable housing projects.

Ms. Gerhardt: Yeah, the only other one would be the VTA property that was workforce housing.

Chair Baltay: Take that project as an example. The Council was overly enthusiastic...well, not overly, but highly enthusiastic to get that approved and pushed through. It was a great project for many reasons, above and beyond the architecture. We felt the architecture was good, as well. What's the takeaway from Council? What are we trying to tell them about that project? That we made it better?

Vice Chair Thompson: Just that it's coming ahead of time, just coming before the quasi-judicial, I think help it pass, a lot. Because if it had come in the state that it was when we saw it in prelim, if that had been the quasi-judicial hearing, I don't know that all of us would have been as enthusiastic.

Chair Baltay: The informal process was invaluable.

Vice Chair Thompson: I think so.

Chair Baltay: I think we can all get behind that.

Board Member Lew: We're looking at maybe not being able to have discretionary review for affordable housing projects. I think that we should really look at, yeah, what the Board did, what the findings, what were the findings. And I think maybe we should make a recommendation or a suggestion that, you know, if we don't have discretionary review for these projects, what should be added in our findings, or codes or findings, or design guidelines?

Chair Baltay: I think that's great, Alex.

Board Member Lew: Yeah, because the reality is that, even if we don't have discretionary review for affordable housing projects, they still may have to follow a guideline, or try to follow a guideline. I think it

should be something, if there's something missing in the El Camino Design Guidelines, or whatever guideline, Downtown Guidelines, that we think it should be in there in the event that the Board isn't reviewing those projects in the future, that the City is comfortable with doing that.

Chair Baltay: A takeaway to the Council may be then – along the lines of what you were saying, Osma – in the event that we're talking about affordable housing projects, where our discretionary review may not exist in the future, demonstrating to them the benefit that our discretionary review offers, maybe they need to be cognizant of that when crafting objective standards in the future, is really important. We could demonstrate to them that this review process made a huge difference, and that they really need to have something in place. I think we want to keep that standard up.

Board Member Lee: I'm so sorry. Isn't there already something in place, though?

Ms. French: Yes, so, we will be visiting with the ARB soon. Staff is in, you know, weekly meetings, basically. We have a consultant... Sorry? December 5th, we're going to be talking about this topic. It's just going to be after the joint meeting with the Council. Your awareness that this is a topic is a good one to acknowledge in your meeting with the Council, that you're looking forward to being part of that process.

Chair Baltay: By bringing it up, we're just asking the Council for further support behind this process. We maybe even should say that the ARB should be appointing a subcommittee to be integrating with staff as you guys are starting to develop these policies, and two of us could be at the table with you, doing that. It's independent of what we're here for directly, but I think Osma is bringing up some good points about scale and the detail of design that we want to... Do we all agree that it doesn't hurt to bring it to Council's attention?

Vice Chair Thompson: Yeah.

Chair Baltay: You do, Osma. What do we all think about that? If we say that's one of our topics, is this affordable housing design standards?

Board Member Lee: May I understand a little bit better in terms of what process there is in terms of design review? Currently?

Ms. French: All projects are subject to architectural review, discretionary review, over a certain number of 5,000 square feet, but then there's also the units. There's a site and design review process that's been on the books, and that's over nine units now, something...? We've increased the numbers for site and design. Three units comes to ARB. Site and design, which then involves the Planning Commission and Council, is when it's over nine units. For affordable housing, I think that's going to be changing as well. Yeah, we have a lot of affordable housing projects in the wings. Actually, very recently, there's been an influx of money from private companies and all of this, so it's kind of exciting. I got lost in answering your question, but basically, we do have requirements for design review over three units that goes to the ARB, currently.

Board Member Lee: I'm just confused. Are we...? Since there already is design review in place for these projects, and preliminary is often encouraged, what exactly are we...?

Chair Baltay: Our concern is that design review may be going away. State laws are now coming out where we don't have the option of getting discretionary design review on projects.

Board Member Lee: It's basically for discussion on December 5th how the City might address this.

Ms. French: Yes, so that will be the first opportunity for the ARB to be involved in those conversations, and there's probably an opportunity – I think it's a good idea, always – to have a subcommittee of members.

Ms. French: Now I understand. Thanks.

Chair Baltay: I think, provided we keep this focused on the subject of affordable housing, we can make a very strong statement about design review being important, and if there is no discretionary design review, the City should be sure to supply something else, which would be some set of standards. And getting Council aware of that is a good thing, and the kind of thing they wouldn't ordinarily know about directly. They're not experienced in this. Does that sync with you, Grace? I can't tell what you're...

Board Member Lee: I'm just thinking about it, and I'm wondering if there's a, you know, the subcommittee might be the way to accomplish that kind of design review.

Chair Baltay: I think that's right, it would be a subcommittee. It would be great interfacing with staff as they develop these standards. But do you think it's a good thing to bring to the attention of the Council?

Board Member Hirsch: Well, I think you're right in pointing out that it's a trend that the state regulations now are sort of over our heads, looking like they're pushing so hard that they're pushing us right out. I feel that pretty strongly as well. It also involves kind of general planning. Where's all this housing going to really happen in the city? And it seems to me that there should be some similar thought coming from Planning and Transportation about where all this will be happening. In some way, I think we ought to be coordinating with Planning and Transportation because our aesthetic is important to these aspects of change.

Chair Baltay: Absolutely. To Grace's point, however, we want to not be the Planning Commission here, so we just focus on the aesthetic issues that Osma is pointing out. That's what we're observing, and there is a strong need to have some standards for how these buildings are being built. I think that's a legitimate point to make to Council, but I'm asking if everybody else here shares that opinion. Is this a good thing to bring to the Council's attention? Deafening silence here.

Vice Chair Thompson: Are you looking for a vote?

Chair Baltay: No, I'm not looking for a vote. It's just a, do we all agree? What I don't want to do is get front of Council, and then, have two of us speak up, saying the opposite, and then they get nothing. Better to all agree now, what we do agree on, and strongly say something. If we don't have a majority in favor of that idea, we should put it off the table. But as I understand it, the idea is that we want to bring to them, one topic would be affordable housing design standards and the importance of having something be objective or subjective. Can we all get behind that idea?

Board Member Lew: Yes.

Vice Chair Thompson: Yes.

Board Member Hirsch: Yes.

Board Member Lee: I would agree. The reason why I'm cautious is because, having worked on affordable housing, there's significant hoops for those groups in terms of how they receive review. I just don't want to give the impression that we are going to add a hefty review process in addition to all of those hoops. Perhaps we could talk about some type of liaison with staff to be a part of that process.

Chair Baltay: Absolutely. Those are very strongly taken points. Okay. Let's try to pick another one that's easy here. We have the issue of the trees. I think I hear a consensus that, just continuing protection of trees, and perhaps more explicit design standards regarding trees and parking, and perhaps... I don't know how you would do this, David, but clearly the Board benefits from having an experienced landscape architect or capable person up here. I'm not sure that we can say much about that, except just to point out the importance of it. Is there any consensus behind that vague set of ideas? Alex, can you maybe phrase that better? What would our topic really be?

Board Member Lew: Just to follow up on David's point. I don't think we've ever had a landscape architect apply to the Board. I've debated about that several times when we've had recruitment projects, or recruitments. And then, I think the other thing, too, is that we have a whole urban forestry division, we

have Peter Jensen, we have resources. You don't have to rely fully on your knowledge, or lack of. I really don't have that much knowledge about landscape. You know, I think the issue with the trees and stuff, I think is really very difficult to grasp unless you're really looking at a plan or example. I think it's very specific. I think it, it may be difficult to talk about it generally. I could say, like, I know when the basements are extending under all the buildings when I see a tree in a pot, and I start looking around and realize, like, oh, like, this entire thing that I'm walking on is all concrete. So, I know. I hear comments from people in the public saying, "I don't like that project," but they can't really explain it. But then, when I go digging around, I sort of figure out why they don't like it. But I think this is something really difficult to discuss unless we have an example, or examples, or photos of that. That's, like, our new reality. We've got these new hotels. They really only have shrubs around their perimeter. There's no trees. I think we're going to face that pretty soon, when those buildings are built.

Chair Baltay: Same question to Osma. What's the Council's takeaway from those comments that trees are impacted by underground parking?

Board Member Lew: So, [crosstalk]...

Vice Chair Thompson: That's not okay.

Board Member Lew: Well, so, this came up with houses, and we don't allow basements to extend beyond the footprint of the house above ground. There are some exceptions, but...

Chair Baltay: Even under a front porch, they won't let us do that now.

Board Member Lew: Yeah. Yeah, so, I don't know. It seems to me an issue, I think it's kind of difficult... It's a tricky one to discuss with the Council, I would think.

Chair Baltay: Okay, so, I agree, it's a difficult issue. It's tricky to explain. I think that could be done. I think Osma's jumping to say that it's really important, which I think we all agree as well. David and Grace, what's your opinion about this tree question?

Board Member Hirsch: You know, the word "trees," it seems that landscape is much grander than just trees. Osma, you're doing some landscaping kinds of things when you do urban improvements to transportation. These things happen. Streets and trees are all kind of interconnected. There are trees and streets, you know? I just think the topic of trees by itself is too amendable a description. It's really, the landscaping involves so many other aspects. Having kind of worked on urban street improvements, that has to do with trees, as well.

Board Member Lew: For me, it's not about streets. This is really about having a 50-foot building maybe only, like 10 feet from the property line. Right? It's very close to neighbors, and there's no trees. That's what we have now in our current projects. We don't have any landscape... Like, we have, if you put a parking lot in, you have to put in perimeter landscaping. But if you have a basement that goes to the property line or, say, like, five feet to the property line, you don't have to do anything. There really isn't a standard in any of our zones because, especially in the CS zone, because we have zero setback. I think that's the issue. You mentioned the San Antonio hotel project, so that's one of them. There are no trees on the sides of the property. We just have shrubs and things in pots.

Chair Baltay: That's because that basement goes right to the property line.

Board Member Lew: The garage extends...

Chair Baltay: Maybe three feet or something. [crosstalk]

Board Member Lew: Maybe it's, like, five feet. And then, this parking, because they're trying to fit in all the parking so that they can maximize the floor area, as they are allowed to. They did come in with a parking

reduction later. So, it's not about trees; it's about trees and parking, and underground parking, and floor area. And it's really just how, how does the city grow?

Chair Baltay: Okay, trees and parking. Grace, what's your opinion.

Board Member Lee: I do think trees are important, I think landscape is important. I read here these issues, "More explicit landscaping standards would be beneficial." Is that something that we are requesting, that there would be more explicit landscaping standards that the City would [crosstalk]?

Chair Baltay: I think Alex has phrased it a lot better than that.

Board Member Lee: Because I think that...

Chair Baltay: That statement seems a little vague.

Board Member Lee: Yes, and I'm not sure that's what we're requesting as a group. The ARB may weigh in on requests for more landscaping, right? That's something that we can weigh in on. And I wonder if, you know, if you did want to highlight some of the terrific examples where you did weigh in and there was a positive outcome. I think the joint meeting is a terrific opportunity to showcase a few projects where there are challenges the city is facing, and here is some examples where the project that was approved was improved for the benefit of all regarding to scale, context and massing. I understand that approach might be helpful for Council to see, and maybe bring up those challenges.

Chair Baltay: You're absolutely right. I think some of us are feeling that it hasn't always been successful, and we've had our hands tied by code and applicants who insist on the parking up to the parking line, and then, we're forced to accept less landscaping and trees at the perimeter than we know are necessary, but we have...

Board Member Lee: Absolutely. I guess my feeling is, you know, sometimes a reduction of surface parking is a positive change, and sometimes a parking garage where non-mature trees need to go away is, that has to be weighed by the applicant and the City and ourselves. I guess I caution against these sentences that sound like the Council might take away as, "Well, we just need to keep more surface parking with this kind of tree request." And since it's such a short period of time, I wonder if we could provide examples of projects where there was a positive recommendation and it worked out well.

Chair Baltay: Osma, what do you think?

Vice Chair Thompson: Oh, I have too many strong opinions.

Chair Baltay: That's good, no, we want... This is the time to have them.

Vice Chair Thompson: So, it's true. Obviously, it depends on the project, it depends on the trees. The tree is unwell? Of course. It totally makes sense not to fight for something that's already on its way out, say, for example. But we have a lot of... I feel like we have projects that have very healthy trees, and it's just inconvenient. It seems like applicants, you know, the property line is like their hard, you know, we obviously can't go past the property line. But these beautiful trees that are extremely robust and healthy, we can get rid of them because they're not as important as that property line. I think that attitude is a problem. Because I think our urban canopy should be a priority, and I think there should be something to say to the City Council that it should be their priority, as well. Because it's true, our hands are tied in a lot of ways. We have applicants that are like, we want all these things, and the sacrifice is trees, and we have nothing in our wheelhouse to say that's... I mean, we've tried. I think with our last review, where we were saying...

Chair Baltay: [inaudible]

Vice Chair Thompson: Okay. Well, never mind. But, you know, there's still... I don't know. This is about priorities. We have a list of findings that explain our priorities, and at the moment, our priorities are summarized in landscaping. Right?

Board Member Lew: I'm sorry, when we revise findings, I make sure that we kept a provision in there about existing, I think, like, existing resources, like an existing tree. It's in the findings, so we can use it. I'm just saying we have to use the findings when we don't have an explicit landscape standard. It sort of begs the question then, like.... It goes back to this, why don't we have a landscape...? You know, what is our landscape standard, and where is it deficient?

Vice Chair Thompson: And to be fair, you're right, we have an urban forestry division. You know, I think maybe the goal is really just to explain to the Council that these are trends that we are seeing, and so, not necessarily that we have to reinvent anything. It's just alerting them to, this is what's coming up, our way.

Chair Baltay: Is it fair, Grace, to paraphrase what you're saying by saying that the standards already exist; our job is to enforce them, and we've been doing that, and we don't need to change the standards as much as we need to be firm in enforcement? And as projects go through, if we want to save these trees, we have the authority to do that, we should be doing it?

Board Member Lee: I'm sorry. I guess I go back to what Alex said in terms of the findings, which we have improved, is the direction that we go in terms of making those findings, and we have able-bodied staff who... specialists who guide us. So, in my mind, it would be good to point out the trends and point out some successful projects. Maybe that would illustrate that the trees and the public realm, the curb management as it relates to parking, is very important to us, and we see this in many projects that come our way.

Board Member Lew: Also, I think, Osma, it seems to me when we look at projects in our project packets, that sometimes applications will review the tree removal in the arborist's report, and sometimes they don't. It may be that we ask staff to include that in every project. We have a member of the public who is also interested in the tree issue, so, if we could make that recommendation, as well. If you want more discussion and review of the tree removal.

Board Member Hirsch: I want to point out that on the Wilkes Bashford, you know, we...

Chair Baltay: David, please don't discuss projects currently being reviewed.

Board Member Hirsch: Okay. On a recent project, we had that issue, and decided that actually, even though it was a recommendation that we consider a tree removal, that we ourselves decided it would be better to try to retain the tree. So, I think if there is a significant project issue, that we address it in that manner when it is part of our standards to do so, even if the staff recommendation is different.

Ms. French: Can we jump in for just a second? I just want to make sure that we remember what we're aiming towards, is an hour-long meeting with Council, with seven council members and five of you. There's going to be a desire for feel-good moments with, you know, pictures and, you know, what's working well will be part of that. I think we'll want to feel that connection over with the Council. To go down a road of, you know, touching base with them and asking them to weigh in and confirm concerns, you know, that should have, you know, Council direct staff, I mean, we definitely won't have the kind of time during that hour to have that happen. I'm just kind of calling that out. I wouldn't expect this to result in Council directs staff to go work on X, do code change, or whatever. Just wanted to bring that up. Make sure we're not thinking that's going to be part of that meeting.

Chair Baltay: Well, I'm hearing that the issue of trees and parking is complex, and perhaps we already have what we need from Council on those issues. We need to focus on it a little bit harder, maybe, if it's something we're concerned about. I see Grace nodding her head with that statement. Does everybody else...? That's sort of taking it off the table. Are we resigned to that? Amy's point is well taken. We spend 20 minutes discussing trees like we just did, and we've gotten nowhere.

Board Member Hirsch: I like the way Grace put it before, that we could address through an example rather quickly and save a lot of time on it.

Chair Baltay: Let's jump then to something else. We were talking about design standards on San Antonio Road, or the need thereof, and perhaps relating that even to design standards along El Camino. Is there any way we can give them a clear sense of something about that? I know we feel that way. Building on San Antonio, there's a contextual requirement, and we can't figure out what the context is. I think we could use some guidance on that myself. Who else wants to say something?

Board Member Lew: Maybe that's not appropriate for the Council at this time. Maybe we should discuss that at a retreat, and then, let staff discuss it, and then, maybe bring it to the Council next time. I'm not sure it's ready for primetime. I think we should discuss it internally, and then, bring it to the Council.

Vice Chair Thompson: I would be fine with that.

Board Member Hirsch: Yes, but you could bring it up to the joint meeting as an issue that we are concerned about.

Board Member Lew: I think I would maybe put it in the letter as an issue, but not necessarily for the actual meeting.

Chair Baltay: Are we agreed, then? Perhaps hold off on...?

Board Member Lee: I was just going to suggest that it would be terrific to see it written, that they could read. Is there a way to talk about, not in terms of published design standards or a process, but we see projects that benefit from some kind of collective thinking from a diverse group of stakeholders? The City is growing, there are significant challenges ahead in many different areas in terms of uses along San Antonio and El Camino Real. We would support working with Council on how to joint collaborate on this effort in terms of some kind of guidelines that might benefit the City. I mean, is that general enough? I feel like a lot of what's written in your letter here, all these things relate to San Antonio and El Camino Real. I know in my interview with the Council, I brought up our main boulevards and growth of the city, and I feel like that's a lot of what we're going to be reviewing in the future. So, I don't know. I feel like maybe that is something to say.

Chair Baltay: The question, I think, is whether we do it now, or we wait until that hotel is finished. And then, it will be glaringly obvious, I think.

Board Member Lee: Okay, yes, if you have a project in process that you're weighing in on, I understand why you might want to wait.

Chair Baltay: Yeah, I think I agree with Alex's concept, that maybe this needs a little more time to gestate.

Vice Chair Thompson: I just had a thought of, so, in terms of the plan of how we're going to formulate this PowerPoint, assuming that's going to be what we do this time, presumably there will be slides that don't require much dwelling on. It could just be like, "Hey, we talked about this," but obviously we're not going to go in depth. Maybe we could have some of these smaller... I say "smaller;" I just mean, you know, other topics that potentially aren't ready for primetime. That could just be kind of in one of those, like, these are observations, we're seeing this, we're seeing this, and then... Sorry. Just going back to the structure of the PowerPoint, that we could be like, you know, "Here's an example of a project that went through," and that could give us, allow us to end on something that shows them our value, and also talk about the things that we've seen that are trends, that we don't necessarily need to fix right now, but just that we're seeing them, and we can look forward to seeing them later, as well. Since we're obviously not trying to fix them right now.

Chair Baltay: We could just point this out as an upcoming trend. I think we all agree this is an upcoming thing. Maybe not get into the depths of it.

Vice Chair Thompson: It's similar with the trees issue.

Chair Baltay: Let's try to go through a few more of these. What I'd like to do, actually, big picture, is to see if we can identify no more than five topics. Then I'd like to take a break, both... Take a break. Also, if we can adjust the agenda, let these folks have their subcommittee hearing so they don't have to spend all morning here. Then we can reconvene and finish who is going to tackle what, and how we're going to do it. Are we all agreed on that?

Vice Chair Thompson: Yeah, that's fine.

Chair Baltay: The next item I think we should discuss is this concept of curb management. It's something I feel strongly about, that I think it would be really great to have more explicit standards. Over and over again, we see projects that don't address these issues, and as they are built, you can see it's not functioning very well. Take the Epiphany Hotel downtown. It's a constant block up in front of... Hamilton Avenue at certain hours is just not passable. There's too many people stopping there, and it's because we don't have a standard of how that works. Really, again, it's parking. We have parking all along the curbside, and we shouldn't have that. But I think Council really needs to hear from us. We're the ones who observe it as they go through the design process. Do I have any other ideas on that?

Board Member Lee: I thought it was encouraging to see this example of, you know, example in other cities that we may point to as kind of a learning opportunity.

Chair Baltay: Anybody else have a...? Can we put that one on our list of things? What do we think about it? Alex?

Board Member Lew: Well, it seems to me this is one of those really... Transportation Division and PTC. And I think we put it on here because it's an issue, right? It's not necessarily our issue.

Chair Baltay: Well, we need to be careful not to suggest a solution, but we're pointing out a problem.

Board Member Lew: Right. I'm fine with pointing something out. And just leave it at that.

Chair Baltay: Absolutely, I agree. We're not out to tell how to do something. We just see an issue. Does everybody else agree that this is an issue, and this is warranted to bring to the attention of Council? David?

Board Member Hirsch: Just the way it's stated, commercial delivery, more explicit standards for ride share pickup and drop-off zone. Yes, I agree.

Chair Baltay: Do you recollect that building down on Cambridge Avenue, down in the California Avenue district? A fairly large commercial building. And the code required them to have something of a 40-foot drop-off space, which just wasn't physically feasible on the building. The result is they had nothing, and we really didn't have any way to get them to make a smaller-scale drop-off that really would serve that building. If I remember right, it was just a...

Board Member Lew: You know, the planning code has changed with regard to the loading zone, so I think we've fixed that.

Chair Baltay: Okay, so maybe it's been fixed for loading, but I still think it's an important think that we can point out examples to and put out there. Let's see. I think I see two more topics here that we haven't, that we might be able to agree on. One of them, which is dear to my heart, again, is the parking situation at the Stanford Shopping Center. I will acknowledge that that very strongly veers away from the Architectural Review Board provenance, but I would point out that what we're observing is many restaurants going in there that are using a higher parking count, and therefore, the parking demands aren't being met, and other restaurants in town have a different parking standard, and it just creates an inequity that's bothersome, at least to me. But I agree that perhaps this is not an ARB issue, but I want to hear what everybody else thinks.

Board Member Lew: To me, it's a thorny issue, because there's a cap, and they've been juggling around square footage, square footages, and decreasing parking. It's a tricky one, but they're still within their cap, and they're within the zoning code. It seems to me we've had projects, there have been proposals in the past where we're proposing a change to the cap. You know, there was one at one point where they were proposing a hotel on the site. It seems to me, I guess the way I'm thinking about it is that you modify the parking the next time you try to do a big project. Because right now, they're sort of working within the existing restrictions, and it seems to me that they are allowed to do that, just under, you know, if you're reading a narrow interpretation of the code, they're allowed to do it.

Chair Baltay: Let me try to make the same argument Grace is making with the trees, then, that it comes down to an issue of us enforcing strongly what we see. They are within the count at the shopping center. However, it's really not functional. There's just way too many dead-end parking aisles, there's way too much demand on one end of the parking center, and much of that count is a quarter-mile away on the second floor of the garage on the other side of the shopping center. I've been making the argument that it's not a functional requirement, which is Finding #4. I think if we don't want to endorse it strongly through our findings in our hearing, then it's legitimate to tell the Council that we need a stronger change in the code. What I'm arguing is that we should at least point out to Council that this issue exists. I don't think they or anybody in the public sees it. All everyone sees is that it's hard to find a parking space at the shopping center on Saturday. Why is that? It's because there's an influx of personal use-type businesses, restaurants, which have higher demands, and a decrease in parking.

Board Member Lee: I'll just say that, you know, Peter, we saw this in Town & Country when Trader Joe's came in. This does come up to the Board, and then, at the same time, I'm comfortable recusing myself from talking about Stanford as an employer. But I think if all of you feel as strongly as Peter does, I understand that it's a trend that you're seeing. I don't know.

Chair Baltay: I think I might be the only one who feels strongly about it.

Board Member Lee: Okay.

Chair Baltay: I keep bringing this up.

Board Member Lew: Peter, I think the trouble I have with making a big issue is, like, I think most people understand that if you try to go to any shopping center on a Saturday afternoon, it's going to be crazy. It's crazy at Santana Row, or Valley Fair, or wherever; it's like that. And personally, I don't go on those days, or, if I do go to the shopping center on a Saturday afternoon, I know exactly where I'm going to park. I know exactly where in the garage I'm going to park, and I have no issues finding a space, because I know where the spaces are. And I don't try to go to spots where you're trying to go, right next to the restaurants. The issue is peak. You're trying to argue for, like, peak parking, as I understand it. Am I not? You're trying to have a convenient spot right next to the restaurant at the peak time, and I don't think that... It seems like everything that I read in planning is not to do that. That's actually the wrong, that's the wrong approach to parking.

Chair Baltay: I guess what really gets my goat on this all is that it just seems to really go against building other downtowns in the area, because we're giving the shopping center this big incentive to put restaurants in the shopping center, and then, restaurants [crosstalk]....

Board Member Lew: It's the same issue with downtown. We have a blend of parking downtown as well.

Chair Baltay: But the parking ratios are such that it's easier for it to fit in than at Stanford Shopping Center. That's why you see so many restaurants going in there, in part. It's very hard to put a new restaurant anywhere else because of the parking requirement. That's where parking is required. Think of Protégé restaurant on California Avenue and the trouble they had to go through to create parking, just to be allowed to open up. Because it was a new building, they had to meet parking requirements, and they have these elevator lifts in the back. The owner was telling me, you know, there's hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of car lifts that nobody uses, to meet the code. If they put that restaurant in a shopping center, they

would have no issue. Money would be saved. That's what I'm really driving towards, and that's what's not really an architectural board issue, but it's something I feel [crosstalk].

Board Member Lee: I just want to mention that whenever you add parking to an agenda to an hour-long meeting with 12 people, it will dominate, so maybe we could just be very strategic in how we talk about parking, or introduce that subject.

Vice Chair Thompson: I would say my two cents. I sort of feel closer to how Board Member Lew feels about this parking issue. I'm definitely not... I don't feel as strongly about the issue at Stanford Shopping Center also, mainly because I also don't go there on peak hours, and I usually bike there. But it's kind of, it's definitely not in our purview. I would be open to mentioning it briefly, but I wouldn't want to make that a focal part of our conversation.

Board Member Hirsch: Yeah, pretty much the same feeling about it. It's true of all shopping centers, that they're very crowded at certain times. It's kind of nice, the fact that Stanford Shopping Center has restaurants in it, and they can last after hours when parking is less common there. It's not a bad location to have some major restaurants, the way it seems to be working. And there are ways to solve the parking that Stanford could utilize, you know, to increase the size of the garages. And they're also implementing present programs to get staff and people who work there to park in the garages. So, while I agree it's an issue – it's a significant issue – we shouldn't emphasize it too much in this discussion with the Council.

Chair Baltay: Okay. I think that's all fair, that we should just take parking out of the subject for now. It's correct that it will dominate the entire meeting if we bring it up. It's in our letter; we'll leave it at that. The last thing that I think we do have to discuss, if only quickly, is item G, basically the process, the architectural review process. I think the Council is entitled to feedback from us. They changed these findings two years ago. How has it been working? I think we all feel it's been relatively positive, but just to put that out there to them is a good thing. Is there anything else on the process of architectural review that the Council should hear from us? For example, we mentioned that the informal review process was useful. I don't know if that's Council or staff, but is there anything that Council would want to hear about the ARB process? For example, several times they've, say 429 University and the Mercedes building, they, I wouldn't say overruled us, but they tie our hands by approving half the building, and then say to us, "fix it." Do we want to give them feedback on that?

Board Member Lew: And we shouldn't discuss Mercedes because it's still out there. It's not approved yet.

Chair Baltay: Does anybody else have any...? The concept of the review process, I think, needs to be in our meeting, even if only quickly. Is there anything else we can add to that, aside from findings?

Board Member Hirsch: Yes. You know, I'm a first-year member here, the only first-year member, and as a first-year member, I want to say that I thought the process has been working so damn well in certain areas here that we've discussed. I can't name the project, I guess.

Chair Baltay: I agree [crosstalk].

Board Member Hirsch: Okay, Peter will stop me right away. I just think, when I feel comfortable in going back home and saying, after a day of spending long, early hours here, that we've done very well in certain areas. Maybe not on every project, of course. I don't feel that way. But I feel the consensus idea here, the way it happens with a group like this is quite incredible, and I'm happy to be a part of it, and feel it's quite successful. And that ought to be expressed in some way here, about how these findings are important to us, and when we all look at them, we try to make a project work better, and we think we've been successful. That should be a bit of an introduction to the Council meeting.

Chair Baltay: Are we all in agreement that the reduced changed findings have been a beneficial thing to us?

Vice Chair Thompson: Yeah.

Chair Baltay: I don't know if you remember. There was about 20 of them before, David, and it was pretty tough to keep track of for anybody. Yes?

Board Member Lee: This is only my second meeting back, but I think my sixth or seventh year, and I do want to acknowledge that less is more, and the staff has been instrumental. I think we should acknowledge that definitely when we talk about the process.

Chair Baltay: Is there anything else about the review process we want to bring to Council's attention?

Vice Chair Thompson: I don't think I have anything.

Chair Baltay: Okay. What I've heard is that we'd like to discuss affordable housing design standards; perhaps trees and... I can't use the word "parking," maybe, but... San Antonio design standards; curb management; and the ARB process.

Board Member Hirsch: I want to ask a question, though, at this point. Where is there a commercial building that we have been working on that is part of this?

Chair Baltay: I'm sorry...?

Board Member Hirsch: Is there any specifically...? About commercial buildings that we have been dealing with at all?

Chair Baltay: Relating to the five topics that I just mentioned?

Board Member Hirsch: Yes. When we're talking about housing as a topic, why are we not talking about commercial buildings?

Chair Baltay: What about commercial buildings?

Board Member Hirsch: [inaudible] and very successfully reviewed in part of the main piece of our work.

Chair Baltay: I'm sorry, David, I'm not understanding what you're driving towards now. We want to discuss with Council commercial buildings, in what regard?

Board Member Hirsch: Is there a mention of housing? Once again, we had housing that, you were bringing up an issue of housing, specifically?

Chair Baltay: Yes, so, we'd like to discuss the potential need for some design standards for affordable housing, and demonstrate how our review of other projects, with a discretionary review, has made a benefit. That's something...

Ms. Gerhardt: If I may, to Grace's point, do we want to focus on affordable, or just housing in general? I mean, I think the City as a whole is trying to encourage housing in general.

Vice Chair Thompson: I would say housing in general.

Chair Baltay: Housing in general, all right. What I'd like to do then is take a break, quickly, change our agenda to let the subcommittee do its work; come back, and the objective will be to pick a member to help with each one of these, to see if we can collectively come up with some examples of design standards. And then, sort of set how we're going to go about getting this all together. If everybody is agreed with that. Can you wait a second, afterwards?

?: Yeah.

Chair Baltay: Okay, so, let's adjourn for a minute and let the subcommittee do their work. We'll take 10 minutes.

[The Board took break and moved to subcommittee discussion off line.]

Subcommittee Items

6. 565 Hamilton Avenue [18PLN-00313]: Subcommittee Review of a Previously Approved Project That was Conditioned to Return With Project Changes Related to Colors/Materials, Height and Trim Band. Environmental Assessment: Categorically Exempt from the Provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) per Guideline Section 15332. Zoning District: CD-C(P) and RM-40 (Downtown Commercial & Residential Multi-Family). For More Information Contact the Project Planner Sheldon S. Ah Sing at sahsing@mgroup.us

[Board Member Lee left the meeting at 10:03 a.m.]

Chair Baltay: We're going to pick up on agenda item number 3. We were just discussing our list of topics, and I'd like to review that list once more and see if we are feeling good about it. As we had the break, I've been thinking, we still have too many things here not...

Board Member Lew: And the Council may want to add to that.

Chair Baltay: Yes. And it is worth thinking that we are now going to be presenting this informally to Council in advance. What do they want to see? And the Planning Director, too, perhaps. With that in mind, I think that the concept of some sort of housing design standards, as Osma had been discussing, is important. I think that the curb management issue is something we can specifically address that might work. And maybe, Alex, you can make an argument about the way trees impact underground parking. I insist that we put the ARB process out there as a very quick statement of how it's working. The design standards for San Antonio, probably just more than we can fit in an hour. Any sense on that?

Vice Chair Thompson: I just wonder how, on the PowerPoint, it's going to get presented. I think we can touch on even more than these things if it's, like, a quick, "this is one of our observations; this is another one of our observations; this is a third observation," and then, we conclude. We can kind of, for example, San Antonio design guidelines, or if we don't, you know, we don't have a solution for that at all yet, but we can just mention that San Antonio is changing, and we might want to talk about what we want that to look like.

Chair Baltay: Just a quick mention of it then. I'm just more and more leery that we have an hour with seven council members who all like to speak. We can get lost really quickly. Or, we can really concretely focus on something, get good examples of it.

Board Member Hirsch: I agree with Osma's point of view. If you can weave the design, the ARB...

Chair Baltay: The ARB process.

Board Member Hirsch: ... process in with specific projects somehow, you know, make that the beginning. I'd rather put that first than any of the other topics that you're discussing here. It's the most important one, in my mind, to really show how the process is working, how we work as a team, you know? And I think it's a highlight, and it will be very positive.

Chair Baltay: Yeah, that will be the feel-good moment, when we explain what we do. We all sort of enjoy it, and we have made a difference. It's quite concrete, and we can show that. This is our chance, though, to tell them about things that need to be fixed as well. I think the more we can be concrete about that.

Vice Chair Thompson: [inaudible]

Chair Baltay: Oh, yes, I'm sorry about that. Can we open the meeting to testimony from a member of the public, if you'd like to say something?

?: [inaudible]

Chair Baltay: Oh, we didn't see that. I tried.

?: [inaudible] much later, probably half an hour [inaudible].

Chair Baltay: So, for whoever is watching, we have a request from Mary Sylvester, and we'd love to hear what you have to say. I'm sorry to be so formal, but you will have three minutes. If you could state and spell your name for the record, please.

Mary Sylvester: Thank you, Chair and commissioners. My name is Mary Sylvester [spells name]. I'm a 41-year resident of Palo Alto. I just have a few general comments to make about the study session topics. My first comment, though, is to thank you all for your service, and to do this publicly, this thinking through process of what you're going to discuss with Council, I think it's vitally important. And I want to thank staff as well, to Ms. Gerhardt and Ms. French. They're doing a lot of the hard work behind the scenes, and they get a lot of grief from the public, myself being one at different times. So, thank you. I also think it's important to keep the study session in mind as to its goals. It's to educate the Council, I believe, but also the public. I've been to four study sessions over the last three years, and I have found them fascinating, both for the degree of dedication that the commissioners show, but again, how they conceive of their mission, and then, the interplay between the commissioners and the council. And sometimes topics have gotten heated, particularly with the PTC and the Council. I was at one meeting where Asher Waldfogel – and I'm sure he wouldn't mind; he handled it beautifully – and Greg Sharp [phonetic] got into a rather heated discussion, but, again, it gave the public a sense of their thinking. Okay. And I want to comment. I want to thank Ms. French for her framing. One hour is not long, and I think it's very important that you both have the feel-good moments, as well as the challenges facing the community, and your recommendations. Ms. Lee's comment about coordination and how you work with the PTC, for instance, the public wants that transparency. How does coordination go on between urban forestry, PTC, ARB, HRB? And that's a process issue, but it also goes to a larger mission, I believe, of the City. That was a vital part of the planning meeting for the new Council this year, where they were talking about transparency being integrated into every goal they adopt for this new year. And one of the key goals was sustainability and climate change, so Commissioner Thompson's comments about trees, scales, materials, fit in beautifully to the sustainability and green goals the Council adopted in 2019 for the next year. Along with that scale, materials. Aesthetics, maybe it went off to the side, but I think that's where your refined eye comes in. I caution you about endorsing underground garages. And I'm prejudice. I'm a neighbor of Castilleja school that has one planned, but we know the Council this year rejected the downtown underground garage, for a number of reasons. But there is an impact on groundwater, there's foundational impacts on neighbors. Commissioner Lew, I loved your comment on mobility. We have huge demographic changes. I'm turning 65 within a month. I feel the changes in the walkability and livability of this city. And lastly, the idea of a case study that integrates your thinking and that feel-good movement, such as Wilton Court. It's interesting for the public to hear not only your thinking, your goals, but how the project was improved. Because many of us, if you're not involved with the actual project, you don't know a lot about affordable housing and the ARB process. I think it's an interesting movement to integrate both affordable housing, housing issues generally – and again, you have just a few minutes, but make mention of it – and then, how the ARB process has made for a better project for the community. Thank you very much. It's been a fascinating opportunity to observe your thinking.

Chair Baltay: Thank you very much for your comments. Those are well thought through. Okay, gang, affordable housing design standards. Seems to me the Wilton Court project is the posterchild you want to talk about. Osma, you've been vocal about it. Do you want to take on...? You'll have to work with staff to collect images to do a before and after and show the effect of design review.

Vice Chair Thompson: Sure.

Chair Baltay: Does that sound...? Are we in support of that idea? Alex, what do you think?

Board Member Lew: I wouldn't limit it to Wilton Court.

Chair Baltay: Let's think of some other projects, then. What other...?

Board Member Lew: There are a couple issues I think we want to just touch on. One is, so, with affordable housing projects, it's likely that we're not going to get ground floor retail on them. Like, on Wilton Court, we have, there are ground floor communal uses, right? But say, like on 801 Alma, it's ground floor residential, which is [inaudible]. At least in my mind, it's not desirable to have, like, your bedroom window on the sidewalk. I just want to bring up issues, just general issues like that, where the Board has struggled in the past. Like 801 Alma, the children's playground was put on the shady side of the building. You know, there was a reason for that, but, you know, it's not desirable, generally. You normally would put that in the sun.

Chair Baltay: That's something Osma might have been involved in. How about the one on the corner of Page Mill and El Camino? There's a large housing building.

Board Member Lew: I want to say workforce housing is a little different, it's a different overlay. That's, like, a public facility with workforce housing overlay, so that's a little different than affordable. But we can put them together. I just want to make sure we understand there's [crosstalk].

Chair Baltay: Well, just to give Osma some direction as to which projects we think you might want to be looking at.

Vice Chair Thompson: Maybe I can work with Alex on this. We can kind of... Is it possible for us to tag team?

Chair Baltay: Whatever you folks want to do. If the two of you want to tackle this together. I'm thinking that we have too much stuff here. I want to get us to focus.

Board Member Lew: I agree.

Chair Baltay: The more we can just say, let's just look at this housing issue and not try to stretch our boundaries. So, if Alex and Osma together want to come up... What I envision is that each part of the Board will work on part of this, and perhaps present a series of PowerPoint slides, or some other structure, that we can then integrate into one thing that staff can help us be ready to present at the meeting. And then, each Board member will speak regarding this topic that they've prepared.

Board Member Lew: I'm happy to help as much as I can. In the next, for that week in December, we have the ARB, and I also have Ventura that same week, and our joint Council meeting. So, I may not be able to help that much, but I will do as much as I can.

Chair Baltay: You should explain that to your partner, not to me. I'm going to expect the two of you to come through on what was agreed.

Board Member Lew: Yes.

Vice Chair Thompson: I was going to suggest that we also loop in the trees thing because it's sort of related.

Board Member Lew: Umm....

Chair Baltay: Focus, focus, focus, Osma. It's really important. You have seven council members in one room; it's just very hard to get things done.

Board Member Lew: I think the affordable housing issue is sort of... I'm thinking that it's on their mind, and I think it's on the community's mind, and I think the tree thing could be pushed back to another meeting.

Vice Chair Thompson: You don't think it could just be like guidelines, or just like, "Hey, by the way."

Board Member Lew: I think it's fine to highlight it as an issue, but I wouldn't... I'm thinking, like, not dwelling on it.

Vice Chair Thompson: Yeah, no, not dwelling on it.

Board Member Lew: If you really want to discuss something, then I think it should be the housing.

Board Member Hirsch: Yeah, there could be mentions of topics, issues coming up, or something like that. For consideration. One sentence long kind of comment about some other pieces that we're concerned about, without making it a topic.

Chair Baltay: Well, I would like to, myself, just bring to Council's attention the ARB process. Make the statement that I think the findings are working. I'd like to make a statement that the ARB awards are coming up, and it's been positively received in the past, and we'd still like to do that. It doesn't have to be a lot. In that same statement, I could also make a statement about the San Antonio design standards; there's going to be a need for that in the future. Not do any more than that. No discussion whatsoever, if we feel that we want to have it mentioned someplace. But I don't want that to become a big show. Alternatively, we could make the ARB process about demonstrating our process and show one or two design projects, with a couple of slides showing the improvement. That's a feel-good kind of thing; everybody likes to see it. If there's a sense that we should be doing that, that's the place to do it.

Board Member Lew: On San Antonio, I think maybe, I think there are a couple things that we should... I think we should maybe consider enlarging...

Chair Baltay: Okay.

Board Member Lew: ...that, mostly because we have, the Council's sort of gone back and forth over the years. For a while, they didn't want the housing there, and then, they decided that they do want to put housing there. It's commercially zoned. The condominium neighbors want, you know, they have their own opinion about wanting residential. So, I think maybe we just, it's not just design, but I think it's actually planning. It seems to me it's a planning issue. And then, we have projects that, like the Affordable Housing Project, is trying to fit in pedestrian-friendly things, but it's actually auto, you know, the zoning is automobile based. I think I would just mention that and not make it a huge discussion point. Just say it's out there. There are big issues.

Chair Baltay: The more I think about it, the less I think there's a value in just saying it's out there. I mean, it just dilutes the message. If we want to deal with this affordable housing design stuff, that's a real, legitimate, strong thing that we can make a good case for, and we can really get behind it. And we could easily spend an hour talking about that. I think we should focus as much as we can on what we think is really important. San Antonio is an enormous planning issue, something the City has been wrestling with, and I don't know that there's too many design issues. I mean, that hotel is going to be a shining design example of what happens with a 2.0 FAR hotel on that street. We could go through the design cases and show how we stepped it back and we made it better. I'm not sure it's good enough, and I'm not sure how the policymakers in the City want to later reflect on San Antonio Road. But is now when we really want to be bringing that up?

Board Member Lew: We can [inaudible], because we have one... Well, there is one affordable housing project on San Antonio Road, right? And we shouldn't discuss it because it's out there. But we could just include that in the affordable housing... I would just maybe put it in there, saying that in addition to, like, the affordable housing on El Camino, that we have one on San Antonio Road as well.

Chair Baltay: Absolutely.

Board Member Lew: And just fold it in, that San Antonio is part of our El Camino, that we lumped it in together with El Camino and affordable housing, and not have it as a separate topic.

Chair Baltay: I think if you could fold that in with any discussion of the housing design standards, that would be successful. I'm becoming of the opinion that the subject of trees and parking and how they're related is just not going to work, and the San Antonio design standards on its own is just too much. But I'd still like to see David give us some examples of where better curbside management and design can make a difference. I think that's a shortcoming that a lot of projects have that's very solvable, and it's very current. Is there consensus on that? Let that be the second subject?

Vice Chair Thompson: I don't know how much there is to talk about that.

Board Member Lew: I'm thinking that the, so, in addition to the transportation networking companies, that we have had issues with the buses and the hotel projects. There are community concerns about the bus, like...

Chair Baltay: Maybe we're just adding our voice to something everybody is starting to see. That that's appropriate.

Board Member Lew: Right.

Chair Baltay: It seems to me it's something we can concretely point out that we've observed.

Board Member Lew: I think we can point it out. I think the Council understands that there's a transportation, sort of revolution coming. I think they understand that. I think we could point out that it's impacting architectural projects.

Chair Baltay: You think it's superfluous? Should we just not spend ...

[crosstalk]

Board Member Lew: ...I think you can mention it.

Vice Chair Thompson: It's fine to mention.

Chair Baltay: David, are you okay taking that on, to find some examples? Give some advice on where to go with it, then?

Board Member Hirsch: We discussed Cambridge Avenue, which was one of those areas where Peter in particular was concerned about the issue of deliveries and curbside. And yes, I see the problem kind of citywide, with the trucks that pull up, and delivery trucks, UPS kind of trucks. And even in the neighborhoods, how mail delivery works with parking issues. In particular, I think that there are a number of narrow streets that have problems that way, so I think a transportation study is important.

Chair Baltay: Can we suggest some projects that...? I think it was 400 Cambridge. Do I remember the number right?

Board Member Hirsch: Cambridge, definitely.

Chair Baltay: It was a large office building.

Board Member Hirsch: Yeah.

Chair Baltay: Steve Pierce designed it.

Board Member Hirsch: You know, to add to this, maybe the Council isn't that aware of some of these issues, and pointing it out is important.

Chair Baltay: That's the purpose of this, as I see it, is to point out [crosstalk].

Board Member Hirsch: Yeah, I mean, I just think that they're not aware.

Chair Baltay: What other projects?

Board Member Lew: Well, it's come up a lot on quite a number of projects, but I'd mention, the zoning code has been... It's already been updated. And then, I think maybe on curbside management, I think you do want to highlight is changing, and changing rapidly. As an example, we have, like, Amazon, and then also, the post office is delivering Amazon packages, and they do it seven days a week, all hours of the day.

Chair Baltay: And [inaudible] control it. How about the Hotel Parmani? Didn't they actually have a fairly successful way to direct traffic visitors, guests, off the street? If I remember right, we worked with them to get around, off Hansen Avenue, they had a pretty good-sized turnaround area that I thought worked pretty well. But that was through our encouragement, not through the code. Am I remembering that correct?

Board Member Lew: They have a porte-cochere, and I think there's a way of... People are saying that you can have a designated, you can designate a drop-off point for those companies.

Chair Baltay: Well, they're even doing that down in Los Angeles now, at the airport. I've seen... Jodie and Amy, do you have any ideas of what we might do if this topic is to go through?

Ms. Gerhardt: I think Hotel Parmani is a good one. That one has been already through the process. We have another hotel that we're working on, but that one is still pending, on El Camino. Yeah, others aren't coming to mind, but I can certainly look further into this. And also, too, don't hesitate to ask us. We should have the initial plan sets and the final plan sets for all of these projects, so just let us know what addresses you're looking at.

Vice Chair Thompson: How about, just because I want to move this along a little bit, maybe we just take a stab at the slides that we're kind of getting assigned, and then, I know we're not meeting on the 21st, but maybe we can... I don't know. Are we allowed to share that by email to each other? Like, how can we coordinate? What's the protocol here?

Board Member Lew: It's not a project. You know? That's the issue. You don't want to have, like, a private meeting about it, you know, deciding on a project, but this is not... This is just...

Vice Chair Thompson: We're making a PowerPoint.

Board Member Lew: Yeah.

Vice Chair Thompson: Should we all send our slides to Amy, or something? Or should we all send our slides to one of us? Jodie? And then she'll compile, kind of thing?

Board Member Lew: I think we still want to do it through staff because that way there is a record of it, so if some member of the public wants to see it, that there is a way for staff to share it. If we send it privately, there's no way for the public to see it.

Vice Chair Thompson: Okay, so, how about we just all send our slides to Jodie, and then, maybe we get a chance to review it? I don't know if we can set up some kind of profile where we can mark up ideas, and then, have, like an incorporation, having a...

Chair Baltay: Let me come back to that in one second, Osma, because I'm trying to list projects first. I want to do one more thing, and then we can get into the process. I'll be very quick; I promise you.

Vice Chair Thompson: Okay.

Chair Baltay: But if we wanted to look at the ARB process itself and pick one or two projects where we reviewed and made changes, felt it was suggested, what would we recommend? Which projects do we think that we can feel good about the change in the design, and that we have good imagery?

Board Member Hirsch: Cambridge, for one. Cambridge Avenue.

Chair Baltay: Four Hundred Cambridge is one?

Board Member Hirsch: Hmm-hmm.

Chair Baltay: I don't know that they have any changes though, David, from that design.

Vice Chair Thompson: No, they did.

Board Member Hirsch: You did.

Chair Baltay: They did?

Vice Chair Thompson: Yeah, they had...

[crosstalk]

Board Member Hirsch: And certainly curb management...

Chair Baltay: Give me two others so we have something to choose from.

Vice Chair Thompson: Well, I think the affordable housing one that we talked about, Wilton Court...

Chair Baltay: Wilton Court was a good one, okay.

Vice Chair Thompson: ...is a good example. Shall we just pick one more?

Board Member Hirsch: Alex, you have to come up with one now.

Board Member Lew: I made a list of projects, but I don't have it in front of me at the moment.

Ms. Gerhardt: I can send you... Would it help to get a list of past projects? And how far back?

Chair Baltay: The best way to do this would be to not have a separate discussion of the ARB process, but to have that be integrated into the discussion about the things we're really trying to say. On Wilton Court, we can use that as an example of not just the ARB process, but where we think design standards are important. And 400 Cambridge, we can, again, use it as an example of the design process, but also this need for curb management. If we can do it that way, that's even better. If we're all agreed that those two projects are ones that we want to focus on, I'm happy we're focused.

Board Member Hirsch: This is an hour, right? We have an hour, and we're going to make a presentation first, and then there's going to be discussion, and Council...

[crosstalk]

Chair Baltay: I think we have, like, five minutes of presentation.

Vice Chair Thompson: I think we're probably good then.

Chair Baltay: Let me suggest that, one person needs to be the point person on the ARB to assemble – the way we did the letter, sort of – to assemble everything into one presentation, and then, we could all collectively keep reviewing it. Alex's point about going through staff by email was important, and I think if we just copy staff and ourselves, we can get that together. And then, Jodie can formally say, "Here's the draft," so it's going through the staff again. Does that make sense?

Vice Chair Thompson: Okay, so, just to clarify. We would work on our individual slides, and then, send that to one person and cc Jodie?

Chair Baltay: Yes.

Vice Chair Thompson: And then, give ourselves a few days to review it and incorporate any changes, and then, when we feel comfortable, we can publish that for public review?

Chair Baltay: I don't think we need to publish for review. It will go on the agenda for the meeting, whenever that's noticed. The agenda packet will have the presentation in it, probably.

Vice Chair Thompson: Jodie, when do we have to be done with that?

Board Member Lew: Yeah, because the Council has a two week... Is it a two week lead time for Council meeting packets? Yeah. It's not far off.

Vice Chair Thompson: It's, like, end of next week.

Ms. Gerhardt: Sorry, I'm looking that up. Just a second. This is for December 2nd, presentations, when staff is doing presentations, they're due 11/28. Because those are reviewed by the Director. I don't know that... But if we can do 11/28, that would be great.

Chair Baltay: Today is the 7th, so, in three weeks' time, we have to have this completed. Why don't we say in one week's time, Osma and Alex will put together 10 slides, and whatever verbiage supports...? About three minutes of presentation? Does that seem about right? It's not a lot, but you want to really focus and narrow it down. Staff can help you dig up records. I have a pile of... I'm sure I have those drawings, but that's available for you, readily. And we've agreed that Wilton Court is the example we're focusing on, unless you come up with something better. David, same thing to you regarding 400 Cambridge and curb management. Grace had to leave, but she offered to help wherever we thought best. Would you like her to partner with you on that, or is that just more trouble than it's worth? In one week's time, you can barely get anything together.

Board Member Hirsch: Yeah, if... Yeah, I think Grace has limited time, frankly. She's pretty busy.

Chair Baltay: Maybe we should switch it around then. Ask Grace to just address the issue of how our findings have been successful. She's one of us with experience with past findings; I'm sure she can, with some legitimacy, just... I guess that's not true, though, because she hasn't worked with the ones we have now.

Vice Chair Thompson: Maybe you can work with her on that.

Board Member Hirsch: You know, what impressed me today, first time I've heard Grace talk, is her generality. She's looking at things in a very broad picture, and her language is very, very good for that. I would love to have her sum up in some way.

Chair Baltay: Okay, let's get her to do that. Okay. David, you're going to prepare another, a maximize of 10 slides and three minutes' worth of verbiage for the issue of curb management and [crosstalk]...

Board Member Hirsch: Yeah, I could weave it in, as I think Osma suggested, weave it in to Cambridge, you know? And just say that curb management, and this is a specific problem that we see more generally in the city.

Chair Baltay: And maybe we say that on these two project examples. We're also, as you're discussing it, you mention the process of architectural review and how the changes occur in the project that you're presenting. We don't do that separately.

Board Member Hirsch: Hmm-hmm.

Chair Baltay: Are we supportive of that?

Vice Chair Thompson: Yeah.

Chair Baltay: Okay, so, one week from now, what I suggest is that you email to me and to Jodie. What I'll do is try to put it all together, or give feedback. The idea would be, after a week, we can prepare a preliminary draft of the whole thing, and everybody can comment on it once more. Additionally, we may have additional feedback from the Council this afternoon, so we'll keep everybody abreast.

Vice Chair Thompson: Are we all comfortable using PowerPoint? Or should we use, like, PDF's, send PDF's, or Word files? I'm just wanting to clarify the medium.

Board Member Lew: I've had problems in the past using different versions of PowerPoint with the City, like, doing my own computer, and then, coming to the City's, and it wasn't 100 percent compatible. I don't know what the problem is, but there were different versions.

Chair Baltay: Hopefully, the last week is to...

Board Member Lew: Yeah. But the other option is just collecting images and letting... No? Staff? You guys don't have the manpower. Shall we make everything, make the entire presentation, like, graphics, on top of the photos?

Ms. Gerhardt: Yeah, I mean, I've got Office 365. That's the version of PowerPoint that I have, so if that's what others have. Or, usually if you have a little bit older than that, it should be okay. I think PowerPoint would be fine, and even if you gave me PDF's, I can move it to PowerPoint.

Chair Baltay: Let me suggest that, send in PDF's, image files of any kind, text of any kind; I'll put together the PowerPoint slides for the start, so we have a consistent format and graphics. And then we can all comment and change it as we like. The initial feedback within a week is just the data, the content. After that, it will be a PowerPoint file that we're circulating, and we edit that directly. Do we all agree with that?

Vice Chair Thompson: But if we wanted to send you a PowerPoint, we could.

[crosstalk]

Chair Baltay: Whatever is easiest for you.

Vice Chair Thompson: All right.

Chair Baltay: We're focusing on content the first week. The second week is editing and review. Third week will be just to make sure we have it all together. Any other comments, Jodie? Have we covered this to death?

Ms. Gerhardt: There was the parking and the trees. Is that just going to be, maybe wove them into the housing discussion?

Chair Baltay: I think we're going try not to discuss it.

Vice Chair Thompson: And I think we're going [inaudible].

Chair Baltay: Affordable housing.

Vice Chair Thompson: Yeah. Touch on it briefly.

Chair Baltay: Touch on it briefly.

Ms. Gerhardt: And then, so, did you have a time limit for your ARB process, sort of discussion you were going to have? I have three minutes for housing, three minutes for curb management.

Chair Baltay: I'm envisioning the ARB making a presentation of less than 10 minutes total time with us talking. After that, it's up to the Council on how they want to run this. We might find more this afternoon. I'd like us to be succinct, focused, prepared.

Board Member Hirsch: Do I assume, Peter, you're going to do an intro to the whole thing to begin with? How is that going to work?

Chair Baltay: I imagine so, but we'll find out today how the mayor wants to run the meeting. It's their call.

Vice Chair Thompson: The first week of December, we have two meetings. We have the one on the second, and one on the fifth.

Board Member Hirsch: I would think you should start off, then, with how we use the findings, you know? Some description of that. [inaudible] they understand exactly how we proceed with our meetings.

Chair Baltay: I was thinking to wrap up with that instead.

Board Member Hirsch: Oh, yeah? I think it's better to start with it?

Chair Baltay: Better to start with that?

Board Member Hirsch: Yeah.

Vice Chair Thompson: Once you get all the content...

Chair Baltay: As we put it together, we'll realize when we all edit it together. It's really important that it's something we can all support, that we're not feeling compelled to say things outside of our presentation when we're talking to them. With that, agenda item number 3 is finished.

Approval of Minutes

4. Draft Architectural Review Board Meeting Minutes for October 3, 2019.

Chair Baltay: We now have to move on to minutes of October 3, 2019.

Ms. Gerhardt: And I did just want to note for the record that Board Member Lee was excused at 10:03 this morning.

Chair Baltay: That's correct, thank you. Assuming everybody has reviewed and agreed with these minutes, I'll be looking for a motion to approve.

Board Member Lew: I just have one correction. It's on packet page 20. I was speaking, and there's just one word in the minutes, which is "rigorous," and I said "vigorous." That's what I intended to say. I would make a motion that we approve the minutes as corrected, if there aren't any other corrections.

Chair Baltay: Well, if you're into that level of detail, Alex, on page...

Board Member Hirsch: Now that you're mentioning words, Alex, I have to go back into our...

[crosstalk]

Chair Baltay: ... on page 34, Alex, the landscape architect, is bringing up, I think a "corsis" as an oak tree, not a "cersis." It's halfway down. The transcriber just didn't understand what you're referring to on two trees.

Ms. Gerhardt: Where is that?

Chair Baltay: Page 34, in the middle of the paragraph where Alex is talking about trees. It says, "I think there are two T-1 trees. One is a cercis and one is a sultus."

Board Member Lew: You know, I think that is...

Chair Baltay: Can you enlighten us what you really were referring to?

Ms. Gerhardt: Oh, there is a phonetic spelling there.

Board Member Hirsch: Okay, if you're going to be that...

Ms. Gerhardt: What are the tree names?

Board Member Hirsch: ... I want to go back to packet page 13...

Ms. Gerhardt: Just a second, David.

Board Member Hirsch: On page 13, if you look down, there's a word, "TDM require regular and complaint-based monitoring," rather than "compliant."

Chair Baltay: That's not in the minutes, David.

Board Member Hirsch: I know it's not, but [laughing].

Chair Baltay: David, please hold on, hold on, hold on.

Board Member Lew: Okay, you're correct. The "cercis" is correct, and the "sultus" is, I think probably... I'll double check. It's probably c-e-l-t-u-s...? Or celtus...? I'd have to look tree name. But, yeah, the phonetic one is not correct. It was saying there's an oak tree, a [inaudible].

Chair Baltay: That's what I assumed, yeah.

[crosstalk]

Board Member Lew: The oak tree comment I had was about the existing tree, and that was different than the tree T-1 on the...

Chair Baltay: Okay, so, with those two...

Board Member Lew: ... landscaping plan.

Chair Baltay: ... corrections from Board Member Lew, and a motion from Board Member Lew to approve, do we have a second for that motion?

Vice Chair Thompson: I'll second.

Chair Baltay: Okay. It's moved and seconded. All those in favor? Opposed? Motion carries 4 to 0.

MOTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY 4-0.

Chair Baltay: That's the end of that item. Now, Board Member Hirsch, you were pointing out a typographic or spelling mistake on a previous agenda item?

Board Member Hirsch: Yeah, on packet page 13, I think that...

Chair Baltay: That's on the item we just finished, right?

Board Member Hirsch: [inaudible]

Chair Baltay: Let's take that off line...

Board Member Hirsch: Okay, if you'd like.

Chair Baltay: ... between you and staff. I don't think there's any point to going back to that.

Board Member Hirsch: Okay, that's fine.

Chair Baltay: I think, then, we finished the subcommittee, so we are adjourned. Thank you, everybody.

Board Member Lew: Uh, North Ventura [inaudible]?

Chair Baltay: I am sorry. We are not adjourned. We are not adjourned. So sorry; I apologize, Alex.

Board Member Questions, Comments or Announcements

5. North of Ventura Coordinated Area Plan (NVCAP)

Chair Baltay: A report from the Ventura...

Board Member Lew: Yes, so, there was a meeting on October 29th. The consultants are not back on the project yet, but we did have a meeting, and we did hear from a new consultant on the scope of work they're going to do for naturalizing the creek in the area. And then, the committee did work on developing three alternative schemes that will be developed later. The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for December 5th.

Chair Baltay: Are those schemes available to the public yet, or...?

Board Member Lew: No. The consultant's not started working on the alternates. They're just starting to develop, you know, they haven't been working on the project, but they are going to start developing three alternatives.

Board Member Hirsch: Well, Alex and I have something to discuss, some thoughts that I had going forward on the planning. If I come up with thoughts, I think it's important that Alex take a look at it. He's our representative on this project, so, I'm not intending to interfere with the formal way in which we're presenting ideas, except that through Alex's help, I sent him a number of ideas that I'm working on.

Chair Baltay: Well, I would think what's appropriate is that Alex is the representative of the ARB on this committee, so his title then should be listening to comments the ARB has to make, and from that, form an opinion of how he represents what we're thinking. So, if you have comments to make, it would be wise of you to...

Board Member Hirsch: Share them?

Chair Baltay: ... share them with Alex, either now, or if it's complex or detailed, somehow in advance of a meeting, so we can all see it in writing.

Board Member Hirsch: Are you saying...? Are you saying I should share them with the other board members here first?

Chair Baltay: Not necessarily first, but you should make known what you'd like the Board to be represented with Alex, and I think the other board members would like to know what it is, because we want ultimately Alex to be representing a majority of the opinion of the Board.

Board Member Hirsch: Excellent. Okay.

Chair Baltay: Is that correct?

Board Member Lew: Yeah, and then, I think my understanding is with the City Planning staff, is that the North Ventura Plan will come to the Board for some comment, you know, on certain scope of the project, but maybe not the entire scope. It would be the parts of the project that the Board would have purview over. So, the Board will have an opportunity to comment on it.

Chair Baltay: Do you think it's appropriate or useful, Alex, for David, for example, to offer suggestions or comments regarding the way the process is going or what the content is now? Or is it best to give that to you in writing, separately? What do you think is useful?

Board Member Lew: Okay, well, I think he already has, and that's fine. I think a little bit of it is outside of the scope of the planning process that is, that the Council has given us. But that's fine.

Chair Baltay: David, you have offered suggestions to Alex and those have been offline of the Board, just between the two of you?

Board Member Hirsch: Just between the two of us. I suppose I'd be prepared to share it with everybody if Alex thinks it's reasonable.

Board Member Lew: Yeah, so, David, I mean, it's just, as an example, like, you're proposing, like, bicycle routes between Ventura and Barron Park, and that's outside of the scope of the project boundaries that the Council has given us. So, I think it's important, but it's not like we have any, we don't necessarily have any say over that. Unless it's within the project boundaries.

Board Member Hirsch: In fact, the entire comments were probably outside the scope because I'm saying influences that are outside the scope are influential on a particular project that's been bounded and presented to the group to study. And if you don't look at the elements that affect it from the perimeter, the fact that, you know, that Stanford Park is there, and all of the office development around it is impacting this area, as well, and in fact, is kind of invading it in some ways right at this moment. The park housing was a mix of retail, of offices and residential. Seems to me to be an influence of what is affecting the project. Alex, if you agree that it's okay to do so, I'd like to share it with the rest of the Board, these thoughts, and let us as a group discuss it separately.

Chair Baltay: What I'd like to do is leave Board Member Lew in charge of how we discuss this topic, in the sense that over the course of this committee being formed and functioning, we should be giving Board Member Lew our comments and thoughts as we see appropriate. Each time we discuss this as a meeting,

when it's been agendized like this, it's up to Alex to decide which things he thinks he should formalize within the whole board. For example, Board Member Hirsch brought up this issue, "which I think is important, I'd like to make you aware of what I'm thinking." If he doesn't feel it's germane or relative to his issue, I would rather not have us second guess that judgment right now, but rather leave it to Board Member Lew to spearhead our representation on this other committee. And then, I don't know. I think that's just the most practical way to bring that up. Alex, obviously David has some opinions you should be sharing with us, but I'll leave that to your judgment.

Board Member Lew: Yeah, I think it's a tricky one, because I think the things that David brings up are important. They are planning issues. But again, it goes back to the ARB's purview and our scope, and that we actually have a planning commission and city council that do address issues that he's brought up. It's not necessarily our place. We can acknowledge them. I think we just... Just generally, I think I understand that the City loves, the City and [inaudible] really love to study and plan everything, and we have huge, enormous planning documents for some of the areas in Palo Alto, and I think really on the Ventura, it really needs to, we really just need to focus on the task that the Council has given us. It's difficult enough just to address the issues that the Council wants us to do, which is housing, and a connected street grid, and historic preservation. And to go beyond the scope of that in Ventura to, like, the relationship with the Research Park and Barron Park and stuff, just seems to me like you're... You're just going really too far out there.

Chair Baltay: Okay, Alex, if you could be sure, as a courtesy to members of the Board, to bring forth to everybody opinions like what David is doing, even if you feel that that's not appropriate to discuss, which is what you've just explained right now, as we go forward. David, it's important that you're listened to, and Alex is thinking about what you have. It's important that we as a Board respect Alex's judgment of what... He's the one at the meeting. He knows what that meeting is trying to accomplish. We don't want to tie his hands or second-guess what's going on. Alex, if you could just acknowledge these things to the Board when we discuss them, so that David feels he's being heard on this issue. And then, also, if other members of the Board feel that what David is saying is something we should discuss more carefully, we can bring it up at that time. Is that something we can all work with?

Board Member Hirsch: I can work with it. I'm wondering, does that...? Are you saying that Alex should share my, what I sent to him, to...?

Chair Baltay: Yes. Basically, Alex is the one who will bring back comments...

Board Member Hirsch: That's fine.

Chair Baltay: ... from everybody at these presentations every meeting.

Board Member Hirsch: Okay.

Chair Baltay: We should make whatever comments we have to Alex...

Board Member Hirsch: Which I did.

Chair Baltay: ... which you did, and Alex will bring up as he sees fit, however it goes, what they are, and what his reaction is, or how it's relating to is work [crosstalk].

Board Member Hirsch: Yeah, no, I think it would be a good idea if Alex could make his comments on top of it and present it to the rest of you.

Chair Baltay: Yeah. I think we're all in agreement on that. Great. With that, we have finished agenda number 5. Number 6, we already did. Now, are we adjourned? Alex, yes? Okay, we are adjourned. Thank you everybody, very much.

Adjournment



Architectural Review Board Subcommittee Review

TO: Brandy Bridges, Four Embarcadero Center Ste. 3330, San Francisco, CA 94111
SUBJECT: 565 Hamilton Avenue [18PLN-00313]
DATE: November 7, 2019
FROM: Sheldon S. Ah Sing, AICP, Consultant Planner

PLANNER'S SIGNATURE

The application, and plans dated October 14, 2019, was reviewed by the ARB Subcommittee on November 7, 2019 in accordance with condition of approval 5, as stated below.

ARB SUBCOMMITTEE: Prior to the issuance of building permits, the applicant shall return to the ARB subcommittee for approval of the following items, to the satisfaction of the Director of Planning and Development Services:

- a) Colors/Materials – Make the project look more like the renderings, cool tone base (board form concrete) with warm tone upper levels (fiber cement siding)
- b) Height – Reduce the project by a minimum of two feet with the elevator that extends above.
- c) Trim band – The project's trim band shall better align with the adjacent 530 Webster building

At the meeting, the Subcommittee (Board members Lew and Thompson) agreed with the revisions presented.

The applicant shall ensure these changes are incorporated into the design and this Subcommittee Review letter shall be printed on the plans submitted for building permit(s).

Copies sent to:
Project File