



# Architectural Review Board

## Staff Report (ID # 10685)

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**Report Type:** Approval of Minutes **Meeting Date:** 10/3/2019

**Summary Title:** Minutes of August 15, 2019

**Title:** Draft Architectural Review Board Meeting Minutes for August 15, 2019.

**From:** Jonathan Lait

### Recommendation

Staff recommends the Architectural Review Board (ARB) adopt the attached meeting minutes.

### Background

Draft minutes from the August 15, 2019 Architectural Review Board (ARB) are available in Attachment A.

Draft and Approved Minutes are made available on the ARB webpage at [bit.ly/paloaltoARB](http://bit.ly/paloaltoARB)

A hard copy of the minutes of the above referenced meeting will be made available at the ARB hearing in the Council Chambers at 8:30 am.

### Attachments:

- Attachment A: August 15, 2019 Draft Minutes (DOCX)



**ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD**  
**DRAFT MINUTES: August 15, 2019**  
 City Hall/City Council Chambers  
 250 Hamilton Avenue  
 8:30 AM

**Call to Order/Roll Call**

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

Absent: None

Chair Baltay: Good morning. Welcome to the August 15 meeting of the Palo Alto Architectural Review Board. Could we have a roll call, please?

[Roll Call]

**Oral Communications**

Chair Baltay: Next item on the agenda is oral communications, if any member of the public wishes to speak to any item not on our agenda. Seeing no one.

**Agenda Changes, Additions and Deletions**

Chair Baltay: Next item is agenda changes, additions or deletions. Staff, do we have anything to say? Nothing? Okay.

**City Official Reports**

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

Chair Baltay: City official reports. Can we go over coming up projects to review, please?

Jodie Gerhardt, Current Planning Manager: Yes. For the next hearing being September 5<sup>th</sup>, right now, we just have one project. That will be at the shopping center, and it will be the Market area near Sigona. It's the Market area itself; it's also a few facades around there.

Chair Baltay: Okay, thank you. Do we have any upcoming subcommittee items?

Ms. Gerhardt: Not that I'm aware of.

Chair Baltay: Okay, thank you.

**Action Items**

2. PUBLIC HEARING / QUASI-JUDICIAL. 788 San Antonio Avenue [19PLN-00079]: Consideration of a Major Architectural Review to Allow the Demolition of Existing 12,000 Square Feet of Commercial Space and the Construction of a Four-Story Mixed Use Building that Includes 102 Residential Units

and 1,780 Square Feet of Commercial Space. Sixteen of the Residential Units Would be Below Market Rate. The Project Also Requires a Zoning Amendment to Apply the Housing Incentive Program at this Location. Environmental Assessment: An Environmental Impact Report is Being Prepared in Accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Zoning District: CS (Service Commercial). For More Information Contact the Project Planner Sheldon S. Ah Sing at sahsing@m-group.us.

Chair Baltay: Then we're going to move on to our first action item. That's item number 2. It's a public hearing for 788 San Antonio Avenue. Consideration of a major architectural review to allow the demolition of existing 12,000 square feet of commercial space and the construction of a four-story mixed-use building that includes 102 residential units and 1,780 square feet of commercial space. Sixteen of the residential units would be below market. The project also requires a zoning amendment to apply the housing incentive program at this location. Before we get started, I'd like to ask if anyone has any disclosures to make, starting with Alex.

Board Member Lew: Yes, I visited the site on Tuesday, and I've done additional research on four items. One is, I looked into the zoning for the property next door in Mountain View, which is MM General Industrial with zero setbacks required. Also researched the new trees on San Antonio Road that were installed by the City in 2012. I looked into the vacant building next door on Leghorn, which seems to be vacant since about 2014. And then, the last item is I did look at a project called the Parker and Berkeley [phonetic], which has, like a lounge looking bicycle room, similar to what the applicant is proposing today. I was looking to see how well it was actually functioning.

Chair Baltay: Perhaps during your comments you can bring us more information about that.

Board Member Lew: Yeah.

Chair Baltay: Osma?

Vice Chair Thompson: I visited the site.

Chair Baltay: David?

Board Member Hirsch: I visited the site. Walked the neighborhood. Yes, visited the site.

Chair Baltay: I, too, visited the site. Nothing else. Thank you. Okay, staff, do we have a report?

Sheldon Ah Sing, Consultant Planner: Yes, we do. Good morning. I'm Sheldon Ah Sing, Project Planner. The applicant is also here with their presentation, as well. I'll give an overview about the project and why we're here. A little bit of context as well because there is a zoning amendment that is going on at the same time. This is a formal review of a development for a four-story mixed-use building with about 1,800 square feet of commercial space at the corner, the building at Leghorn and San Antonio. They are proposing 102 dwelling units on a one-acre site. The request does include, in addition to the major architectural review, which is under the purview of the Board, there is a zoning amendment. I'll go through that in more detail. There's also a parking reduction request and a partial waiver of retail space. The City does have retail preservation, a certain amount of retail and retail-like space that needs to go back onto the site after it's demolished. The project is proposing something that is less than that. Since this project is really at the beginning, we need a lot of other components to come together. It also includes an environmental impact report. We're seeking no recommendation at this time, just to get some feedback on some items. We'll get into that. A little bit of background. The existing zoning and comp plan designation for the site is Service Commercial, and that's consistent with the majority of properties along this corridor. As mentioned, this site is just under an acre. The uses on the site would be some, prior uses would be retail, wholesale, auto services. There's a martial arts studio there now, as well as a contractor's office. Existing buildings are about 18,000 square feet, and they were built in the 50's and 60's. Just a little bit of context here. This project is at the intersection of San Antonio and Leghorn. It's right on the border between Palo Alto and

Mountain View. The rear of the property serves as that border. And as mentioned by Board Member Lew, yes, the adjacent properties in Mountain View are industrial. You do have some single-story, some two-story buildings in the area. You have the Greenhouse Community residential multi-family neighborhood that's across the street from the project. And then, at Charleston and San Antonio, there is the kind of larger senior community building there, a complex. And then, also along San Antonio, you have the hotels that are under construction right now that this Board has just seen a couple years ago. It is an area that is in transition. Looking at the zoning map here, again, this is the zoning area. It's mostly CS. You do have some, the residential neighborhood is a PC designation. I put two X's on the map. One is the project location, as well as the hotel site that's under construction now, just for a little bit of context of larger buildings in the area. The hotel building has a 2.0 FAR [Floor Area Ratio] also. An overview about the project. Presently, it's 102 units, a residential mixed-use project for ownership units. The applicant can go into whether that's going to be the case in the future, of ownership. It might be rental. There's a lot of studio, one-bedroom types of units. There's really a handful of two-bedroom and three-bedroom types of units, so it might lend itself more likely to be a rental project. The project does include an underground garage containing the parking. There's 93 spaces that are provided; 110 are required for the site. Forty-two of those are with mechanical lifts, and the others are on the surface without any lifts. As mentioned, it's about 1,800 square feet of ground floor commercial space at the corner. As presently proposed, the project doesn't meet the zoning. They have to go through a zoning amendment process, and the idea is to extend the housing incentive program to this area. That is something that was recently implemented as part of the zoning amendments to El Camino Real and the Downtown area. The project site is actually identified in the housing element as a housing opportunity site. There is a comprehensive plan policy to eliminate these housing opportunity sites along San Antonio and focus and concentrate on sites within the Downtown El Camino Real. This would be a little bit different, but we do have a willing applicant to come forward with housing that has a really good amount of density to help out with the City's issue with residential. The idea would be with this zoning amendment to include this housing incentive program, not only for the site, but on the corridor for CS properties between Charleston and Middlefield. It would allow higher FAR for projects. Right now, the FAR is up to 1.5, but it we're looking at up to 2.0 for this project. As part of this housing incentive, it does eliminate the maximum density and creates a waiver for lot coverage. It also would allow for any types of rooftop gardens. None is proposed in this project, I believe. There's a little bit of covered rooftop garden. It also excludes 1,500 square feet of retail/retail-like floor area from parking requirements, so it helps out a little bit with the parking there. And as I mentioned, the highlighted green area there on the map would be the areas we would be considering including in this housing incentive program. Comparison of what's existing now and how it's proposed. This matrix here, you see some of the things that we'd have to change with the zoning. The maximum combined FAR, maximum is 1.5; this project is looking at about 2.0, so we'd be looking at something a little more intense. We did run this by the Council in the pre-screening process last May and they seemed receptive to the project going forward, with the request. Maximum density under CS zoning district is 30 units per acre; this project is just over 102. The retail preservation, there's a partial replacement. There is already an existing exemption and waiver in the code. This would seek a modification of that. And then, looking at the parking, the project would require an exemption because there is a reduction in the amount of parking spaces. This is actually the elevation of the under-construction hotel project, just to give a little bit of context there on what this Board did there. There is a special setback along San Antonio, the same special setback that's in front of the subject property. For this project, the Board did want to see a step-back at the upper levels, and some terraces there with some landscaping. That was important for the Board. This is the proposed San Antonio elevation for the project. I will let the applicant kind of describe, sort of their design intent of what they're trying to do here, but I just wanted to provide this image for you early on. You do have that covered roof deck with palm trees up there. This is more of the Leghorn Street elevation. You can see the entrance to the parking garage, as well as the retail space there at the corner, to the left. This is the rear elevation, looking from the Mountain View properties. A lot up there is with the brick and stucco façade. Again, that corner elevation looking more at the retail plaza area and how that works with the pedestrian streetscape. I think we're going to ask the applicant to provide a better interior courtyard elevation, just so we get an idea of what and how that open space works. I think we can do a better job there, but that's what was in the planning packet. We have the covered roof deck image there, and that shows what that experience would look like from that level. Just to touch upon some of the affordability requirements. As presently proposed, if the project goes forward with ownership, then 15 percent of the

amount that they're proposing is 16 affordable units. If they decide to change the project to rental, then they would be subject to a payment of a fee. With respect to the California Environmental Quality Act, the building at 788 San Antonio is eligible for listing on the California Registry that deems it to be historic. Therefore, demolition of the structure constitutes a significant and unavoidable impact under CEQA. That requires an Environmental Impact Report. That effort is ongoing right now, and we're trying to do some traffic counts. We're going to the Planning Commission with a scoping meeting. It's a Notice of Preparation. Thank you. There're so many acronyms these days. Those preparations do start that process. In conclusion, we do have a series of questions because we're not expecting to have a recommendation of approval today. We're pretty early on now. But just some observations that we made. There's a large expanse of curtain walls, glass and glazing on the project. Does the project provide sufficient visual articulation along the street elevations? Is the retail space designed in a manner that will be successful? Are the open space areas designed to maximize their potential use? Are the floor to ceiling heights appropriate? Are the windows sufficiently set back to provide relief? Is there sufficient connection with the streets? And there may be some other issues that the Board recognized in their evaluation of the materials. In the next steps, we're at Step 1 here, with the ARB meeting, number 1. We are going to the Planning Commission on September 11<sup>th</sup>. That will also serve as the environmental scoping meeting. We'll discuss the zoning amendment concepts with them there. They're not going to have purview over design of the building but will at least explain to them what happened here at this meeting. And then, we're anticipating a couple more ARB meetings. That's the maximum anyway that we could have. There will be a second Planning Commission meeting, and then, the public draft of the Environmental Impact Report will be circulated for comment. Finally, this will all culminate in everybody making recommendation to the City Council. With that, we're asking the Board to consider the proposed project and provide feedback on the project design to the staff and the applicant, and continue the item to a date uncertain. That completes my presentation. I'd be happy to answer any questions. Thank you.

Chair Baltay: Sheldon, if you could, I think all of us might have some questions, but I believe this went to a preliminary hearing before the City Council. Could you summarize how that went, please?

Mr. Sing: Yes. We did go to the Council. We had a smaller project. We had a project that had 64 dwelling units. We proposed the idea of a larger project, more dwelling units, bringing the housing incentive program to that site. Some of the waiver of the retail space. There is sort of a dichotomy between retail and housing, as you would expect, but in the end, there was support to move the concept forward through the process including the housing incentive program there, having a project come back with a larger FAR, having more housing, but do include the retail.

Chair Baltay: I want to be clear that it's your opinion that City Council is in support of this type of large difference in zoning. It's a much bigger building than would normally be allowed. I'm not saying to you to tell me what they would say, but we're being asked to judge this based on a hypothetical zoning standard. I'd like to think that that's reasonably supported by the rest of the City.

Mr. Sing: That's right.

Chair Baltay: Thank you. Any other questions?

Board Member Hirsch: Yes, I do.

Chair Baltay: Go ahead, David.

Board Member Hirsch: Sheldon, why are we seeing this prior to the PTC? There seems to be a million different things that are questionable concerning the zoning. Wouldn't the City normally have gone to the PTC first, and then come to us? Why is this on our agenda?

Mr. Sing: We've been to the City Council on a couple of occasions for the prescreening. They seem to be, as I mentioned, supportive of the concept, as well as there's not an order in the zoning code that would

say you have to go to the Planning Commission first. We're just thinking in terms of this is an opportunity for the Board to provide some feedback on this design of the project.

Board Member Hirsch: We're not looking at the zoning issues then here in particular? We're just looking at the architectural issues. Is that the point?

Ms. Gerhardt: Correct. The zoning is not in the purview of the ARB. And that's why we're asking you to... We believe the Council to be supportive of this concept, so we're asking you to look at it from that perspective.

Board Member Hirsch: I have to say it seems to me that the process is upside down.

Chair Baltay: These are questions, David.

Board Member Hirsch: Yes. A question. I'm just making a statement regarding that. Because I think it would be nice to have a more generalized, if you will, zoning first.

Chair Baltay: Any other questions from my colleagues? Okay. Do we have a presentation from our applicant? You will have 10 minutes to speak. If you could state and spell your name for the record, please.

Ted O'Hanlon, Project Manager: Good morning, Board. My name is Ted O'Hanlon [spells name]. I'm a project manager. I work closely with the owners. I'm going to do a very brief introduction, then let our architect speak to the things you guys are most considerate of. We acquired this property about 14 months ago. When we first saw it, it's availability, we remarked its location on a principal arterial, being San Antonio Road. We thought that was particularly interesting. We liked its proximity to Highway 101, but we also liked the fact that even though it is one mile, it still is a direct shot to the San Antonio Caltrain station. WE started to imagine it as a very interesting opportunity to build more residential units than perhaps a CS zoning might allow. We had a City Council prescreening in October of last year as well, where we had proposed 48 units with a zone change to RM-40. This preceded the housing incentive program, which was formalized in January. As we were continuing to work on our 48-home design, we started to look more closely at the housing incentive program, which would have us not do a zone change, but utilize that City Council-approved method to incentivize more housing units. As we've gone along, one thing that we've done that has made a larger unit count is to reduce the impact of two-bedroom units. In October, we had 27 in a 48-unit plan. In May, we had 18 two-bedroom units. Now, we have seven two-bedroom units. We also incorporated 32 studio units. That's what's caused a lot of the unit inflation as we've gone along, but we also think it's better for the ultimate users of this type of property for where they might want to be and where they want to get to. And a type of housing stock that we don't really see too much of coming online in the Palo Alto area. Another thing I just wanted to point out as a part of this is, our initial application included a transportation demand management write-up. This will be incorporated into the environmental review. One of the primary recommendations that they have with this is to unbundle parking spaces from units, meaning if you rent or own a unit, you do not automatically get a parking space. You would have to pay a premium for that. What these TDM studies have determined is that creates less of a demand for parking when you have to pay on top of your housing for it. What that does is it allows us to still operate an efficient building and still sufficiently meet the demand of the users because there's alternative transportation measures provided to them, whether that's bicycle, bus, rail, or other means, like carpools. Eugene is the leader of Studio S Squared. We have his whole team here. I'm going to hand you off to him, and I thank you guys very much for your consideration, going out to the site and thinking about this project.

Chair Baltay: To the architect, if you could, again, state and spell your name, please.

Eugene Sakai, Studio S Squared Architecture: Sure thing. I'm Eugene Sakai [spells name], Studio S Squared Architecture. Is there a timer here? I want to respect the time limit.

Chair Baltay: You have a green light in front of you. You have six minutes and 18 seconds left. It will turn yellow when you have one minute remaining.

Mr. Sakai: Perfect, thank you. Thank you to Ted, and thank you also, ARB members, for your service to Palo Alto and to this project. We look forward to working with you in the weeks and months to come. Questions of whether this site is appropriate for housing, the density, the parking ratios and FAR, of set housing, are really above my pay grade, and better left to elected officials, professional planners, and the collective wisdom of folks like yourselves. As a residential architect, however, I do see the incredible potential that this site has for pointing the way to a very different vision of San Antonio Road than what we see now. Driving up and down San Antonio Road now, between Middlefield and 101 is not a very pleasant visual experience, as I'm sure you well know. Especially...

Female??: [off-microphone, inaudible]

Chair Baltay: Ma'am, if we could please let him finish. You will have your chance to speak. Please.

Mr. Sakai: Especially on our side of the street, it's mostly an unrelenting procession of parking lots, gas stations, and similar auto-oriented uses. Almost all buildings, even newer ones such as the JCC campus, feature unwelcoming blank or nearly blank walls facing San Antonio, making the streetscape even more inhospitable. The interesting thing about this stretch of San Antonio, especially on our side of the street, is the number of relatively large quarter to one-half acre lots with low utilization rates. And therein lies the potential. With carefully curated land uses and street facing design such as ours and the Marriott Hotel a few doors down now under construction, it's not hard to envision how this stretch of six to seven traffic lanes connecting the thriving employment centers along 101 to the Caltrain station at San Antonio and Alma Street could transform parcel by parcel over time into an environment much more attractive than what we see today. Our project sits nicely amongst a rich established network of bike lanes that connects our site to major employment centers, retail and community amenities, all within easy biking distance. We believe that over time, dependence on the automobile will wane as bike and e-transport is promoted by forward looking projects like ours, and the promise of self-driving vehicles gradually becomes a reality. For all these reasons, we designed a building that facilitates the bike and other alternative modes of transportation, limiting the footprint and visual impact of the car, with a rich materials palette that proudly fronts on and engages with San Antonio Road. With transparency deep into the landscaped courtyard heart of the building through a double height lobby, and 170 feet of continuous ground floor glazing facing San Antonio to help enliven the street scape. Instead of consigning the bicycle parking into an underground storage room, we've chosen to elevate it above grade and celebrate it, placing bike storage right off the main lobby and adjacent to a communal bike repair room and the community mail room. Visible through that expansive glazing and clear to all passers-by that this is a bike-friendly building. Our landscape design reinforces the centrality of our entry with a grand double stair for pedestrians and a pair of gradual ramps for bikes, taking visitors and residents from sidewalk level up to the residential lobby in an elegant and welcoming way. Our corner retail space continues the glazing motif with an at-grade entry and a distinctive overhang that provides both a signage opportunity and creates an interesting shadow line at the gracious corner plaza designed by our landscape architect. Auto access is relegated to Leghorn Avenue, as far away from the intersection as site geometry will allow. This frontage also offers a generous duck-out for carshare pickup and package delivery. Along San Antonio, we've broken down the mass of our building by stepping down from four stories at the corners to three stories in the middle, leaving room under the height limit for parapets, which will screen the rooftop solar panels and the mechanical equipment. Special two-bedroom corner units will provide secondary focal points with our curtain wall design, and further promote the idea of transparency. In typical housing projects, community open spaces are often inwardly focused spaces hidden deep within the building. In contrast, our public gathering space for the residents will be a grand rooftop terrace, looking out over San Antonio Road. Having learned our lessons from rooftop gardens we've done in San Jose – and lived in, in San Jose – we are here proposing a visually striking and highly functional shade structure, with a gentle curve and five apertures to let palm trees grow up and sunlight filter down. The arced canopy here recalls the shape of the entry walkways, and besides offering daytime shade, also provides opportunities for evening gatherings, with downlighting, speaker arrays featuring soft music, and strategically placed heat lamps. We've even created an opportunity for a connection with one of the past historic uses of the site with chrysanthemums and steel planters fronting the storefront glass along San Antonio. Thank you very much for your attention. We look forward to hearing your input on how we can improve our project for the site.

Chair Baltay: Thank you very much. Very impressive timing. You had one second left. With that, we have two speaker cards. If anyone else, any member of the public would like to speak, please give us a card. If not, we have a Joan Larrabee, followed by Warren Storkman. You will each have three minutes to speak, and if you could state and spell your name for the record, we would appreciate it, please. Welcome.

Joan Larrabee: Good morning. I'm Joan Larrabee, I live at 777 San Antonio Road, which is the Palo Alto Greenhouse, which is very beautiful and attractive, with lots of green trees and grass and a swimming pool.

Chair Baltay: Could I please interrupt you to spell your last name?

Ms. Larrabee: [spells name].

Chair Baltay: Thank you very much. Please continue.

Ms. Larrabee: Well, this has twice the number of units that it had in May, so we're trying to hit a moving target here. The first thing is that the architect needs to learn how to count, which is something we learn in Kindergarten. San Antonio Road from the railroad tracks to 101 only has four lanes of traffic. It does not have six or seven. It only has four. The City needs to realize that San Antonio Road, with only four lanes wide, is not built to accommodate the four-, five- and six-story buildings and all of their activities that the City is trying to thrust into that corridor. Mountain View west of the train tracks and west of Alma Street over to El Camino does have six lanes of traffic. In other words, it has a 50 percent higher capacity than we do where we live. It is already coming to a standstill. There have been times when I've had to go wait for the traffic signal through three cycles. And the hotel is not even open yet. The hotel is going to have 300 rooms. The City has not allowed the infrastructure to accommodate all of the activities they're trying to push into this. We need a comprehensive traffic plan. We do not have one. Secondly, if you start putting in mechanical lifts, and now, they're talking about rental units, of which there will be turnover. I mean, I've been in my condo in Palo Alto with a garage for 35 years. I know how to open and close a garage door. But if you start having rentals where people come in and out, this year, six-month rental... How long are the rentals going to be? Six months? A year? You're going to change things. Again, we would like the project to be successful. We would welcome residents into the area. Primary land use along San Antonio is residential, but this is too many units with too many people coming and going. And the infrastructure does not support all of this activity and all of this construction. And it's only four lanes wide. Thank you.

Chair Baltay: Thank you very much. Warren Storkman, please.

Warren Storkman: Pardon me. The name is Warren Storkman. I've been residing at 4180 McKay Drive for 64 years.

Chair Baltay: Could I trouble you to spell your last name, please?

Mr. Storkman: [Spells last name].

Chair Baltay: Thank you very much.

Mr. Storkman: I've been living at this residence for 64 years. I remember watching Eichler pushing the cows out of the way to build his homes coming toward San Antonio 64 years ago. And now, we're just bulging at the seams, and it seems to me, what my major concern is – and hopefully you'll give it some consideration – is that San Antonio Road is now becoming overused. We soon will have gridlock if we continue letting things like this develop. We won't have enough room for the cars. It's already bad because San Antonio, I live close to, and I think that you gentlemen and ladies should give some consideration of, thinking about approving this project. It's just too many people and too many cars on that, well, around Leghorn, is where it is. That's about all I can say. Please give it real consideration because we don't need this problem anymore. It's going to close San Antonio Road down now. It's very serious. It's very serious. Your traffic will just be unbearable. Or, I should say, contribute it to being unbearable. Thank you.



Chair Baltay: Thank you very much. To the applicant, you have a chance to respond to or rebut any of the comments that have been made, if you wish to speak.

Mr. Sakai: No, thank you.

Chair Baltay: Okay, no, thank you. Any questions from any of the Board members, for anyone? Then, I would like to remind my colleagues, I think it's important for us to remember that this is an architecture review board, and with the zoning especially uncertain or unclear here, I'd really like to see us try to make positive comments towards the building and design of the building. As much as there's a lot of questions arising about the zoning and the land use and the parking, our purview really about what the building will look like. I think that's how we can be most constructive. Before we start, I'd like to ask Ms. Larrabee, I know you've been very concerned about this project and the hotel next door, and I'd like to offer you a chance to address any comments you may have towards the design of the building. Do you have anything to say to us regarding how the building looks, it's mass, it's size? Because that's what we're here to look at. I want to be sure that you've had a chance to say what you really think about that. I know on the hotel, you had some concerns, and we listened to me. If my colleagues will humor me.

Ms. Larrabee: If you could put the front elevation up, the San Antonio Road elevation up, please. I don't understand what the white thing is in the middle.

Chair Baltay: Okay, I don't want to guide you what to say. I'm just giving you a chance to give us feedback along the lines of what we're here to review.

Ms. Larrabee: I'm a little concerned about it. It looks like it's going to take off like a 747, but I don't understand what the white thing is. I know he's trying. You know, you've got to go the in-and-out and in-and-out business and change the colors and everything. I'm not real excited about it. But as far as the architecture, the parking and having underground parking is part of the architecture.

Chair Baltay: Of course.

Ms. Larrabee: And there's no parking for visitors or anything like that. I prefer buildings either to be all glass or all brick, but that's just me. I know he's trying, but I don't know what that white thing is there. It looks a little odd. Thank you.

Chair Baltay: Okay, well, thank you very much for your comments. Okay, then, bringing it back to the Board, Alex, could you start us off on this one, please?

Board Member Lew: Okay. I have comments on zoning, but if we're going to bypass all that, I will.... In my mind, I think it's worth the Board discussing it at some level because it's new for us, right? The housing incentive program is new. We haven't reviewed it before. There are issues here, like retail parking exemptions that are in our letter, in our letter to the Council. You put things like that. And it's sort of been addressed in the housing incentive program, to a certain degree. I think it's worth discussing it at some point. Maybe not on this particular project, but...

Chair Baltay: Why don't we then separate our discussions? I think it's true that zoning is an important element. Why don't you address comments regarding the zoning change, and we'll go around and everybody can say their piece on that.

Board Member Lew: Sure.

Chair Baltay: And then we can come back to the architecture itself. I want to be clear to the architect, that they get real guidance from us on the design of the building.

Board Member Lew: Yeah, I mean, that's what our role is, and we have PTC and Council as well.

Chair Baltay: Why don't we first say, what do you think about this housing incentive program change? Anything about the zoning, and then we'll come back to the rest of the design.

Board Member Lew: It seems to me that the housing incentive program is intended for downtown and El Camino, as I understand it. And then, so, we have the CS zone on El Camino, and we have the CS zone on San Antonio. What is the difference? I just want to say, in my mind, the difference is the transportation. If you look at the, say, the bus lines and community shuttles that serve San Antonio Road, it's pretty marginal. I'm looking at, it's like a mile walk to get to the Mountain View shuttle on Rengstorff. It's three-quarters of a mile to get to the Palo Alto shuttle on Charleston. Caltrain is over a mile away, like a 23-minute walk. But you can walk to Google, you can walk to Costco, which is a half mile, so those are a 10-minute walk. But to me, it's not the same as being on El Camino, which has pretty fast express buses. It's not really close enough to Caltrain. To me, that's a major difference. The bus lines that are there, like the VTA bus lines, you can get to the Research Park, or to east San Jose, or maybe Gunn High School, or the VA. I'm finding it kind of lacking in there, but I would support it in concept just because of the large number of employees at Google. It's really relatively close by, and in theory it can be done quickly by bicycle. On the retail, so, we have, with the housing incentive program, I think there's a parking... Actually, in the parking ordinance, there's a new provision that, there's a 1,500 square foot exemption for parking for the retail, which I think is desirable from our point of view because we've seen projects not, housing projects without any retail on the ground floor, so I think I'm willing to support that. The downside I see is that if it doesn't have any parking, people are either walking or they're parking on the street. But anybody who knows San Antonio Road, just circling around the block in that area at rush hour, that's not possible. You're waiting through two or three light cycles, and you just wouldn't do that. You would just bypass the store. And we have businesses on El Camino like Starbucks, and they say half their business is just drive-by customers. They see it and it's like, "Oh, I'll stop here because I can get in and out quickly." That's a major concern I have for the retail. I do support in concept having a corner retail. I would say cities like Emeryville and their big housing projects, they're always incorporating sandwich shops and coffee places on their big housing projects, even when they're not in the major downtown destination. And I think it does make a positive difference. I think I'll leave it at that for the zoning.

Chair Baltay: Okay, why don't we work our way through? David, you also had some concerns, or questions at least. What do you think about the zoning change?

Board Member Hirsch: Well, I agree 100 percent with what Alex has said, and he's done an excellent analysis of the distances, environmental issues, and transportation issues. I have nothing to add to any of that. But it's an unfriendly corridor as it is now, although the majority of uses is residential on the opposite side of the street. That's certainly not true on this side of the street. I would have thought that the City would, rather than run after housing so quickly in this area, done a more comprehensive plan for the whole block, all the way from the Mountain View end all the way down. And it would have been a planning study of some greater depth. Unfortunately, we don't have that. We have a new building being placed here. I'd reserve more of my comments to the building itself, but agreeing with Alex entirely about the planning issues.

Chair Baltay: Wonderful, thank you. Osma?

Vice Chair Thompson: Hi. Yeah, I think in terms of zoning, so, I live on San Antonio, a little bit further away from this, so I pass this corridor pretty frequently. I have been passing pretty frequently for most of my life. It's true, it's going through some changes right now. You know, we're all talking about retail being important, and I will concur. Not just retail, but the martial arts studio that's there, there's sort of other, not just coffee and sandwich shops, but community focused, ground-level activities along that corridor that have some pretty strong communities that go there and come together, and I think that's really important to maintain. If this corridor, you know, biking is becoming really big. This is a transit-oriented development. I've biked on San Antonio. It's not the most pleasant bicycling experience, so, I definitely think the corridor itself could use some work. I know there's a lot of construction happening there right now. It's true, if the street can be more amenable to the new modes of transit that are going to serve it, I think that would be a huge uplift. I mean, the Baylands is just down the street, and then, a lot of people, you know, I've often

thought of biking down there, but a lot of the time, I don't, just because it's really dangerous. But it would be great, you know, this future vision of having bicycles be a part of the corridor language, so, I'm all in favor of that. I think there's the possibility for something really great in the future.

Chair Baltay: Okay. I'm agreement with what everybody else said. I have nothing further to add. Alex, why don't you start us off on the building design now.

Board Member Lew: Okay. Thank you for the presentation and the package. It looks very good for being such a, at the beginning stages of the review process. I think my main concern is that the height of the retail space is, I think nine-foot ceilings, which is relatively low for retail. Normally, I would look for something higher if it's for that kind of space. This is only, like, that size square footage, possibly lower is fine. I think that there is, I think you've got two glass corners, and I think the one on the left side, I think is not really working. But when I look at the neighbor and maybe what could happen next door, I'm not sure the left one makes sense. Also, the left side ground floor unit with a lot of glass right up against the street, that doesn't really make sense to me. I think you're also showing... Oh, and I want to thank you for trying to do a prominent two-story entrance on San Antonio Road. That's something we asked for on El Camino as part of our El Camino guidelines and we rarely get it. We don't require it here, but you're doing it, so I definitely wanted to acknowledge that. I would actually probably try to encourage you to add more detail to the secondary entrance. I think there's a stair entrance on Leghorn. I was sort of trying to pretend, if I were living here, my hunch is that I would use that entrance on Leghorn. That would be my preferred way of getting in and out of the building. It seems to me that that could be a really nice entrance. I'm supportive of brick. I think it does add a lot of texture. It seems to me it's not really compatible with the neighborhood, but if you look at the new Amazon building in East Palo Alto, the brick actually adds a lot of character to fairly boxy buildings. On the canopy, on the fourth-floor canopy with the Chinese windmill palms, I'm not sure I really understand what's going on. I don't really get the big idea, so maybe the architect can explain it. It might help. I appreciate trying to do something different, and I want to encourage you to think out of the box. I live on a street with two blocks of Chinese windmill palms, and I really love them, and they really look great against, as a silhouette against the sky. Right now, we have a full moon, and a full moon with the palm trees is really stunning. But I don't get that at all when you mix it in with the canopy, so I'm not really quite sure how that all works together. Also, with regard to the roof garden, if you look at our zoning code for roof gardens, I think we've added a new section for that, and it does require a minimum amount of landscaping, and I don't think you're meeting it at this point. On the bicycle room, I did have two comments. One, previous councils have asked for that on housing projects, like here in the downtown area. They really wanted the easy access to the bicycles because the theory is it would enhance the usage of bicycles. If you have to go down to a locked room in the basement, I think the tendency is you would just leave it down in the basement. I do want to acknowledge that, and I think that that does make things better. In the research I've done on some projects in Berkeley, I've read online comments that when they're in the lobby and they're just locked to a rack, that things get stolen off of the bikes. You know, it's not in a designated room that's locked, like a locked room in a locked building. I think I just have that kind of concern. I generally like the idea of having open lounges and bike rooms sort of mixed in together. A project in Berkeley called the Parker, it's like having a garage in your apartment building. Like having a single-family garage in your apartment building. It's actually kind of nice. I have friends who lived in condominiums here in downtown and they actually sold them and moved to houses because there was.... If you're mountain biking, you've got a dirty bike and you just want to hose it off, if you're in a fancy condo, there's actually nowhere to do it. They're missing all that kind of space and they just find them unlivable. They look nice in marketing photos and stuff, and you're actually trying to live there and do things; they're actually not very useable. So, I do like those kinds of spaces. I do want to go back to one thing, too. Also, on the roof gardens and all the open spaces, I do want to encourage you to look at our revised open space definition, that we're really trying to get them to be useable. Useable for kids, as well as adults. And not just lounge seating. It can be, like, the fire pits. If you look at the Jewish Community Center, it's like senior housing, but the play area is used until like nine o'clock every night by the neighboring kids. And at least in my neighborhood, those little one-bedroom apartments are now occupied by families. That's sort of where we are today with the prices in the neighborhood. I think that might be all I have. Oh, one last thing on landscape. I think at this point, I could not support the landscape planting palette. I don't think it meets our native plant requirement yet, or the finding, which requires the

greatest [inaudible] feasible that can be maintained. I think it's not there yet. Particularly with the shrubs. It's missing all four of our major native plant shrub categories, like manzanitas, ceanothus [phonetic], areogonys [phonetic] and sages. That's all that I have at the moment. I'm curious to see what my other Board members think.

Mr. Sing: Sorry, to the Chair, just a response to Board Member Lew's comment about the retail height. On Sheet A5.0A, there's a cross section. It's a little more height than nine feet. I mean, not much more. It's, like, an additional 1 ½ feet, it's kind of sunken down into the garage space.

Board Member Lew: I saw some dash lines, and I think I did notice that. Thank you for that, though.

Chair Baltay: Does that change your thought, Alex, if it's 10 ½ feet high compared to nine?

Board Member Lew: I think I said that nine is okay in my mind. I think my point is higher is better. Say there's a new mixed-use building near me, near my house, and it has a Pete's on the corner, the glass corner. And I haven't measured it but I was looking at photos and I think it's 12 or 13 feet high, and it looks really nice. This nice open, spacious, and light, and people hang out there. To me, we should try to get that, ideally.

Chair Baltay: Thank you for bringing that to our attention, Sheldon. David?

Board Member Hirsch: First, a question of Sheldon and staff. How is the commercial going to be used? What is it planned for? Nobody has spoken to that.

Mr. Sing: I think I'll defer to the applicant on that.

Board Member Hirsch: Okay. I understood...

[crosstalk]

Mr. Sing: ...retail, retail-like...

Board Member Hirsch: Is it going to be just general retail, or is it physical [crosstalk] for tenants?

Mr. Sing: We'll let the applicant respond to that.

Chair Baltay: David, could we put that off and just get our comments out first?

Board Member Hirsch: All right. Well, that's very important, I think, at this point, to determine that.

Chair Baltay: Would you prefer the applicant answer that question now then?

Board Member Hirsch: I'll weave that into what I'm going to say. In looking at this building from a planning point of view, I noticed that, you know, four-story building, a lot of tenants in it at upper levels. There's a single elevator, and it's on the Leghorn corner of the building, and there's a refuse room on the opposite corner, not near any stair whatsoever. I'm looking at this... And Alex referred to this in a more minor way, but for me, it's the most major issue here in the way this building is organized. Because, in fact, the traffic and closeness of the street here is really not a nice environment to be adjacent to or walking to. The building will be accessed I think from the Leghorn corner, and the Leghorn corner is kind of given over to this retail usage. Whereas, if that retail usage were something like a health club, or whatever, for the building itself, it could be put on an upper level, and you could have a major entry at that corner of Leghorn. And it seems to me that would make so much more sense for the way in which this kind of a building, which is really longer along San Antonio than it is width wide, going deep into the site. If you entered where the elevator was, you'd certainly be better capable of getting access to your apartment. Something illogical about having an entry in the middle of the building, and a symmetrical building of this nature, on the street,

which forces people to walk to the middle of the building, and then, where are they? They're in a lobby, but they're not anywhere near the elevator. To me, that's not a logical arrangement. I would recommend that you reconsider the major location of the entry into this building on Leghorn, which the setback from San Antonio Road is a nice feature because it allows you to give some more privacy to the ground floor usages, which could then be more residential usage on that façade. And they would then have kind of a setback relationship with the building that would give them some privacy, so that they wouldn't be on view from the street. Of course, the other aspect is then the service portion of the building, where garbage would be collected, could be more on the area closer to where the elevator or service is, on that end of the building, the Leghorn end of the building. And then, you would have the garbage getting out to the street somehow, because where else are you going to take the garbage to? It goes to a garbage room in the cellar at present, and that room is at the other end of the building as well. This is sort of obvious planning, and I think it hasn't been logically arranged here. It does set up an aesthetic for the building itself. Then you have a major entry on San Antonio Road, in the middle of the building, which is kind of a... Well, it's a kind of a symmetrical quality to this building that doesn't really make sense. It doesn't make sense in terms of people entering the building. There's no reason why two paths would be used in this way in that front, to go through the landscape to the central entry at that location. These are practical planning thoughts. I think this would have the possibility of a much better building if it weren't a prisoner to its symmetry. The symmetry carries through to the roof of the building as well, to what is really a kind of, it reminds me of a Miami Beach kind of idea of putting trees on the rooftop like this. We've been looking at other buildings in which the socializing space is in an open area at an upper level, and they are quite successful if they're more designed to the use of the kind of a tenant that's in the building. And I think there are reasons why people get together and have parties, etc., on a rooftop like that. But this is arranged to create a false sense of open space up there. It isn't a real useful space. It isn't planned for furnishing to be useful on there. It's just kind of a physical presentation for show and tell, not for a use function. I'm not understanding what the vertical strips are on this building. I don't really see it detailed here, but in the earlier drawings that we had, there are vertical strips, kind of decorative elements, on the front. They've been removed, I can't really tell if they've been removed or not in this iteration. What I'm looking at here on the screen doesn't seem to show that anymore. And if they're not there, I appreciate that it would be a simpler scheme that way, and the ins and outs of the building are what determine the façade of the building. I would urge you to look at this design differently. If you're going to make the corner at Leghorn – and you ought to do so – into the major entry, a major lobby where you have that glass corner, and then, as you move down the block, through the middle of the building, the volumes could relate more so that it isn't symmetrical, so that you really don't have that opposite end looking like the entry to the building. I note that the entire relationship of the glass mullions is very casual. There's no order to it. I think if you're going to create a glass feature, you really ought to use it as an emphasis, and it ought to be designed entirely from ground to top, and it ought to be the major expression of this building. That's pretty much what I have to say.

Chair Baltay: Thank you, David. Osma?

Vice Chair Thompson: Hi, there. I just wanted to thank my fellow Board members for their comments. I thank the applicant for their presentation; thank the members of the public for speaking, especially Mr. Storkman, who gave us the visual of Eichler chasing the cows away. That was a highlight. I'm just going to focus on the aesthetics of the architecture. I did want to make a note to the applicant for next time we see this. It's really important for us when we're reviewing this to really understand your design intent, and part of that is being very clear about your observations of the site that are not only functional observations, but environmental, aesthetic, and ambient impressions of the site. And relate that to how your project is responding to that. For example, if you find that Palo Alto, this street in particular, has a really strong landscape, you know, we have a lot of trees, the adjacent properties have a lot of trees, then make a story of how your project really brings that in and makes greenery an integral part of the design. Obviously, that's not the story you told today, but I'm giving you an example of something where you can show how this building is really important. It's specific to this site; it's not just any building that could be anywhere in Palo Alto, or even in the United States, or even anywhere in the world. But why this is important for this particular site. Because this site is unique, and this building is going to be really important because it's going to be up and coming, and it's going to be something that future buildings are going to be next to, and we're going to... This is going to be part of the future context. I think it's really important that this

relationship to the city street, to the people that use this site, the cars, is part of the architecture. It's not just the planning, and zoning, and the first-floor plan. It's about the façade. It's about how people are going to actually feel when they're walking down this street. And at the moment, they're going to feel a big wall of glass. And even the relationship that the residential units have to the street, these windows don't look operable. There's no connection right now between this building and the street, especially on the corners. There's a bit more connection where you've got the screen in the middle, and I think out of this whole façade that we're looking at, that middle part where you have the screen is probably the most dynamic and interesting architectural element that we've encountered, and everything else kind of feels a step away from that. The façade is sort of in danger of being a little too flat everywhere else, and it's missing a lot of character as a result. The glassy corners of the building feel a little more office than they do residential, and I know a lot of newer multifamily housing is using a glassy character, but is that right for Palo Alto? Maybe it's right for over there, but I feel like there's a lot of conceptual development that I think would really strengthen this design. In terms of the rooftop, the curved canopy is a bold choice. It's sort of in that place where I could see a potential for it to get more interesting, but at the moment, where it is, it has no relationship to anything else in the building, so it really doesn't feel justified in that way. But I think if it did, if there was more of a story of why it was like that, I think I would be on board a little bit more. So, yeah, the design is sort of under-articulated, and that rendering of the courtyard should not have been in the packet, honestly. In terms of the material, you have a lot of material expressions throughout your façade. The most simplest one is from the back, where we're just looking at brick and one other material – I can't remember right now. On the front, we're sort of looking at a glass expression, a stucco expression, a brick expression, and a metal panel expression. That's quite a lot. It seems like a little bit too much. I understand you're trying to break up a big façade. I don't know if using four different types of expressions is the right way to do that. I think there are other things you could do in terms of adding relief. There's a question about, do the windows add relief? Where the screen is there, I think that's a little more successful, but everywhere else, I think that plus the extra materials is a bit too jarring on the eyes. Materially speaking, though, I don't mind the brick. I agree that it adds a lot of character in an otherwise blank façade. I think it sort of makes blank facades really interesting. And there are very few other materials that do that, unfortunately, unless you go through the actual trouble of articulating your stucco façade. I'd support raising the retail floor so that that bottom floor is a little bit taller. I could support changing the entry to the corner as well. And I understand right now, the entry is sort of breaking up the façade, but if the middle were that community space, the martial arts studio, ballroom dance studio, or whatever it may be, that could also break up the façade as well. It doesn't necessarily have to be the entry. So, yes, a lot of work to do on this design. It's got a little ways to go. I'm just going to reiterate that design intent is really important, so whatever your design intent... I heard the applicant say transparency. I think that on its own isn't enough. There needs to be more about the site and why the design is the way it is. Thank you.

Chair Baltay: Okay, thank you. I find myself in agreement with my colleagues, and find their comments insightful and appropriate. In no particular order, but to reiterate what Osma was saying, the applicant made a number of statements, painting a picture of San Antonio, which were not entirely positive, yet we have a building with enormous walls of glass, looking at this avenue. If it's not that positive of a street, why is the building doing what it's doing? And I'm not saying it should be one way or the other, but she's bringing up a very valid point about trying to take your design to a level where you really do make sure it fits into this location, and this community, and these needs. My feeling is that it really just needs a little bit more thought. And I can understand where, as an applicant, you've got so many balls in the air, so many agencies and boards and laws to meet that it's complicated. Let me bring that around then because David's comment about organization of the building at a fundamental level, I think is very insightful. If you were to put the primary entrance on the corner, it would make more sense organizing the building. It would let you then respond to Alex's comment about the two glass elements, the symmetrical organization not making sense. The one on the left doesn't relate as well. You only have one corner really on the building. It would let you then perhaps question the use of the retail. "Retail" is a funny term to use here. This is a destination type space, like the karate studio. Somebody has an appointment; they go there at a certain time. They don't need to drive by it. It doesn't need a corner presence. It's not like it's on El Camino. It could easily be a second- and third-floor studio in the middle of that corner tower, with the fourth floor being your open area, which would then enjoy a much nicer view. You then wouldn't have residential units

on the west facing façade, where right now, it would be really tough to, on a day like today, in that glass room, I would never want to be there, even with shades and air conditioning. That kind of, just react to the site a little bit more. But it might be worth questioning what that retail really is going to be. I know you have to have it, and it's a struggle for you from a design point of view, but maybe come up with a more creative idea. Or, you could put it someplace else along the ground floor that doesn't need as much visibility, because it doesn't. The other element of the building planning that I question, and I would like to get my colleagues to respond to, is the overall massing. This is a four-story tall building, and it goes pretty much straight up to four stories. We are tasked with finding it to be contextually compatible, and I know on the hotel project up the road, we struggled mightily with that, and forced a series of step-backs and quite a bit of landscaping on the terraces of the building. It seems to me we haven't addressed whether we think that's appropriate here. I think it is, and I think a design with more of a central tower perhaps on the corner, some larger element there, but with the building stepping down, away from that, would be more appropriate. I would like to see the applicant provide us with renderings of what this looks like as you come up San Antonio from, say, the corner of Charleston, working your way out. Similar to what we had done for the hotel project, again. Because this really is visible against the skyline of the hills for people going up and down San Antonio Road, and it's one of the first things you see coming into the town. Right now, I fear that, it's 50 feet tall, straight up, and it will form quite a boxy presence, so I'm concerned about that massing. I found that the parking layout downstairs didn't quite work. Some of those spaces were just a little bit too tight to get in and out of. I'd like to see you think it through a little bit more. I know it's schematic, but stacker units with only 20 feet or so of backup space in front and the corner sites really were tough. I'd also like to see you think through a little bit more the street drop-offs. This site will make extensive use of things like Uber's and ride-sharing services. San Antonio especially is a very busy road. I think it's imperative that you have ample places to pull over and make a delivery, pick someone up. And I see only one small space on Leghorn. It's very unlikely somebody wants to turn into Leghorn because then they have to wait for the signal and the traffic delay, so I think you really need to think through how that's going to work. The transportation is critical in this project, and that's a key element of it for most buildings in this area today. I find the courtyard, the way you've designed it, to be just too tight. I think it will be dark and unused. Again, four-story walls surrounding a space of that scale, I'm afraid I don't think it will work. In any case, you should satisfy yourself that it will, then present us with images and renderings to back that up. Because right now, what we see is horrific, and we'd like to really believe that that space will be useful. As Osma mentioned, I think you have so many architectural styles and vocabularies at play here. I think the brick is a fine choice. It seems to feel residential, although maybe it's new for the area. But certainly, you could get with that. But then, to be pairing that with all these other elements – the glass curtain walls, these massive cantered, beveled elements, the white things around the entrance, and then, the curve on the roof – there's just so much going on, to maybe tone down your design hand a little bit and think of one way to go. I think that you do need to have more indigenous plants in the landscaping, just to meet our code. I question whether the palm trees on the roof are practical. This is a wood-frame structure and palm trees are large and heavy and need a real substantial planter to thrive. You don't have room to drop them into the structure with the apartments below. I just wonder how that's really going to work. I do agree that a shaded outdoor roof terrace is a wonderful potential space. You might want to think through whether the trees and the shade canopy work together, and what's a way to really accomplish that. It's critically important that that space be well landscaped and well thought through so it's very functional. With that, I'd like to get my colleagues to respond to David's idea on a corner entrance. Alex, you didn't see anything about that. And then, the massing and stepping of it. Just so we're giving them clear direction as a Board. Alex?

Board Member Lew: I'd support corner retail. I don't think I support a corner residential entrance. Retail really needs visibility. And I think you guys had comments about putting things up on the upper floors, and I don't really understand that. It seems to me that raises all sorts of other issues. I think I understand the idea, though, of trying to reorganize the building, so I don't want to discourage other ideas from occurring.

Chair Baltay: That's a big change for the applicant. I want to be sure they're hearing clearly what we're saying.

Board Member Lew: Yeah. The retail should be on the corner.

Chair Baltay: You think retail should be on the corner. Okay.

Board Member Lew: And we don't really know what it could be, and it could be many different things over the lifetime of the building, so it should be flexible.

Chair Baltay: About the stepping of the building as it goes up? Do you have any response to that?

Board Member Lew: Yeah, you know, I'm undecided. I stood over by the Greenhouse and spent a lot of time looking at it the other day. I think you're characterizing it as this 50-foot wall, but I don't really quite see it like that because the middle is different. It's only three stories. It depends how you read that roof canopy. Yeah, I think the hard thing here is that we have a context finding, but in this case, there's really not a lot of context to work with. We've got, like, abandoned buildings in Mountain View, and one-story mid-century buildings to the left of the site, so I think it's very hard to get this to work. Ideally, you know, it would be breaking up the materials, perhaps even more than what's shown, and maybe not trying to make it a symmetrical composition, but actually just trying to make clear differences in the façade. Like Santana Row. It's actually, like, some artificial break in the facades to make them seemingly smaller. A lot of times architects, they draw the facades in isolation, and I'm thinking this is longer than the neighboring buildings. If we looked at a street scape over the rest of the block, try to bring in that rhythm of the street, of those street facades into the building. And they're trying to do that, they're starting to do it, and I think I would just encourage to do that even more. And then, with your comment about the massing, to me, that's a floor area issue, right? I think the Board has always struggled with 2.0 floor area, on every project that I've seen. Generally, like on the big hotel projects, usually when it goes down to, like, 1.75, you get more stepping, and usually people are happier with that. I will just leave it at that.

Chair Baltay: I'm trying mostly to get us to be consistent. We pushed the hotel project very hard to step, and they have, and I think it makes a difference, looking up against the skyline. Do we want the same thing here? And they need to hear that from us right now.

Board Member Lew: And we did that. The Board pushed really hard on the Hilton Garden Inn, to push the floor area down from 2 to 1.75, and it steps on the El Camino frontage. And I think it's effective.

Chair Baltay: Any thoughts, Osma?

Vice Chair Thompson: Yeah. I think I'm going to revise what I said in terms of the entrance. I do agree with Board Member Lew, that the retail should be on the corner because of visibility, and also longevity. I feel like Board Member Hirsch's comment was mainly about the functionality of the inside, so that could be revised to make the entrance make more sense. But I do agree that the retail corner is the right way to go. In terms of the massing, I do think that if this architecture, if the façade had more relief, and if it had more character, and if the design intent, whatever it is, whether it's, like, a screening intent, or if there's a strong landscaping element, was threaded through this façade more thoughtfully, I think this could work. The stepping back may not be needed because of the relief. If we had a deep enough relief at the front, it would be potentially more palatable without needing to step back. That might be an outlier. I think the 2.0 FAR could work, but it just requires way more thoughtful architecture to make it work. And I'm also going to slightly disagree with Board Member Lew on the context. I do think there is a lot to respond to in the context. It's not really a one-for-one thing. This is, like, its own thing in this area, but there is... I feel like you don't need necessarily another building to want to be like, but I think it's more about the feeling of the street that you can translate into your architecture. So, in terms of context, and also, across the street, there's just a lot to respond to in terms of architectural concepts that this thing could work on. I think there's a lot of opportunity.

Board Member Lew: My comment about the context is just really the literal wording of our ordinance, which is, like, window patterns, colors and materials. I don't disagree with anything that you're saying, I'm just... I was just reading our context criteria, which were really meant for urban, really urban areas. They weren't really written for more suburban areas with setbacks and parking in front of the buildings.



Vice Chair Thompson: Sure. That's fair. That's fair.

Chair Baltay: The context is predominantly one-story commercial buildings, and this is a 50-foot-tall four-story building. David, do you have any thoughts to add, especially at the corner, and the massing? We'll wrap it up, then.

Board Member Hirsch: Well, yes, that's my biggest concern. I think it creates a different kind of a building if you start with a premise that you're going to enter from Leghorn. I disagree with my fellow board members here, that the commercial has to be on the ground floor, because I don't think it's really that kind of commercial. Or, in fact, if it is some kind of commercial that's really used exclusively by this building, then they too could access it from a second floor. And if it's something like an athletic facility or exercise facility for the building, definitely doesn't need to be on the first floor. So, defining what that retail really is, is very, very significant for this building, especially if you consider just functionality, that the right place for the entry is going to be the corner. I think that really sets the character of the rest of the building, too, with the massing happening at the corner. More or less what you were saying, Peter, before, that that would be the defining element of the building. You'd want to enter there, you'd want to have access to bicycles there, you'd want to make that the major activity corner of the building. It's on the street, it has access from the street, it has access from the side street. Because we all agree, it's a four-lane street. It can't really accept much happening off of San Antonio Road. It's a very, very busy road. You really want to get off of it in order to use the building. The character of the building ought to be something where it's focused at the corner, and then, it's a repetitive series of elements that move down the block. It is not, after all, a building that fills a block front from one street to the next. The end of the building further down is only partway to the next intersection. There's going to be another building there at some point, likely. So, there's no reason to feature it exclusively as a symmetrical building the way it's been described. I think the setback allows for the front to have different uses on the ground floor. I mean, instead of just being an entryway, if the entry is moved, it can accommodate more of the residential with the private areas on the outside still relieved from the street by the distance the building is set back. I want to point out that I don't think any of the rear of the building... And our fellow board members ought to consider the tightness of this building around the perimeter. Because there's residences immediately close to adjacent walls of commercial right now. There ought to be some exterior private garden usages on the outside of the building at the rear and at the far side. As to the open space, I don't know why it couldn't be part of, say, the upper floor of the building. You know, the exciting thing about the valley and the context of the whole valley is that one direction you look across the bay, you see mountains on the other side, and up the hill, you're looking at the foothills and the foothill mountains that are up there, so the views from so many areas, including the senior center, are really up or down the hill. Knowing the context, not just of this street, but of the whole valley, is I think very significant for the way buildings are designed here in Palo Alto. I've been super impressed by those areas where you have views of the mountains, that create this valley. I think that there's a lot of work to be done on this. In terms of some of the detail, yeah, there's a repetition of the same kind of window again and again here, slight variations. But if you're having decks and interior divisions of the spaces on the outside, you can try a window that isn't just in the center of a box. There's a lot of other varieties of window forms that have not been explored in this design. I'm talking more of the physical design. The context down the street, of the street, on this side of the street, wouldn't it be nice if it, in some way, answered issues of a bicycle path that began somewhere here, or began up the hill further, and allowed you to get down to the Baylands. The front of the building really ought to be a continuing bicycle path that leads to the Baylands, for example. Which, the comment was made, it's impossible to get there. I agree. It's not a friendly environment. But, if the buildings are in the setback, the possibility of the front of the building as a landscaped continuum that takes you down to the Baylands would be a generous offer from this project. Plantings that would be accommodating to that sort of setback would be a major improvement, an urban improvement to the street.

Chair Baltay: Thanks, David. I just wanted to make sure we had clear guidance to the applicant regarding the corner retail and the massing of the building. What I've heard is that, I think a majority of us would like to see... At least half of us would like to see the actual retail activity on the ground floor at the corner. And I think nobody is opposed to finding a way to make the building entrance on or near the corner either. Just to be clear. I haven't heard any consensus beyond that, so I think we should leave it at that. Does the

applicant have any questions or thoughts before we close up? I'll be looking to my colleagues for a motion and a second. We're trying to keep this informal. We really want to be sure you understand and have a sense of where to go.

Mr. O'Hanlon: Board Member Hirsch, we haven't gone that deep on what ultimately the retail usage would be. I think that the most obvious opportunity would be a café of some sort. I think it would get a high amount of usage from this building. We've stayed away from the exercise facility idea, both for the amenities of these ultimate tenants, because the Oshman JCC is right up the street, and it provides a lot of different opportunities for exercise, and classes, and it's a wonderful community service that's right up the street.

Chair Baltay: Okay, thank you. With that, do we have a motion?

Mr. Sakai: I just want to clarify...

Chair Baltay: Oh, please, go ahead. I'm sorry.

Mr. Sakai: ... a couple of things. There was a fair amount of discussion about the ceiling height at the retail. The typical floor to floor height at the residential is nine, so the podium is actually set at 30 inches above grade. If you step back down a grade at the corner retail, you add 30 inches to the typical nine-foot ceiling, so the corner retail ceiling height is actually 11 foot 6 inches. I actually feel pretty strongly about keeping the retail on the corner. The retail tenants on this stretch of San Antonio, there's a lot of vacancy there. Retail tenants seem to be struggling, actually. Before I became a residential architect, I was a retail architect, doing shopping centers all over the Bay Area. The corner spaces are always the most desirable for tenants. They capture higher rents per square foot, they're more visible, they're more desirable, they're more accessible, so I really don't support the idea of moving a retail use up into the upper floors of the building. I think it creates a lot of issues with access. Right now, there's a clear division between public access at the ground floor at the corner, and to sort of move that retail component with – hopefully – a fair amount of traffic, up into the bowels of the building, to me, it just... It sort of goes against what good retail design has proven to be over the years. We actually at one time had a corner lobby entrance, right at the intersection of San Antonio and Leghorn. It was closer to the elevator. One of the big downsides that we saw in that previous design – which we took all the way to City Council – was it really offered no transparency between the lobby and the inner landscaped courtyard. Right now, we have that. We have a glass curtain wall, add a two-story lobby, with a similar glass curtain wall at the interior of the courtyard, which will offer really, I think, unusual and very nice view of greenery through that glass on both sides.

Chair Baltay: Excuse me, Eugene. If we could, we're looking for you to respond to our comments, not continue to sell the building to us. Because we really want to wrap up.

Mr. Sakai: Okay. With regard to context, I do agree with Commissioner Lew, in that there isn't really a lot to respond to in terms of architectural form. I think the nicest thing about this stretch of San Antonio, as one of the members of the audience pointed out, is actually the landscaping right across the street for the Greenhouse Apartments. Really, that's what we were trying to open up onto. All of your comments are well taken, well appreciated. There's quite a diversity of thought here, so I'm not quite sure actually if we have a direction that I can walk away with and sort of noodle on with my staff here. But, perhaps in the remaining minutes that we have, you can come to some clear direction for us. That would be much appreciated.

Chair Baltay: Okay, thank you. I'm looking for a motion from someone to continue this. I just don't know if we have any more clear guidance than what we've already put out in the record.

## **MOTION**

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

Board Member Lew: I will second that.

Chair Baltay: Okay, moved and seconded. All those in favor, aye. Opposed. Okay, the motion carries 4-0.

**MOTION TO CONTINUE PASSES 4-0.**

Chair Baltay: We're going to move right along to this next item. Staff, are we ready for the next item?

3. PUBLIC HEARING / QUASI-JUDICIAL. 180 El Camino Real [19PLN-00114]: Request for Architectural Review to Allow for Exterior Façade Improvements to an Existing Tenant Space for O'Occitane in Building C at the Stanford Shopping Center. Environmental Assessment: Categorically Exempt from the Provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) per Guideline Section 15301. Zoning District: CC (Community Commercial District). For More Information Contact the Project Planner Samuel Gutierrez at Samuel.Gutierrez@cityofpaloalto.org.

Chair Baltay: Item number 3 is a public hearing regarding 180 El Camino Real. It's a request for architectural review to allow for exterior façade improvements to an existing tenant space for L'Occitane in Building C at the Stanford Shopping Center. Do we have any disclosures, please?

Board Member Lew: I visited the site last night.

Chair Baltay: Anybody else?

Vice Chair Thompson: I visited the site.

Board Member Hirsch: I visited the site.

Chair Baltay: I've also visited the site, and I'm fairly familiar with the shopping center. Okay, Sam, a staff report, please.

Samuel Gutierrez, Project Planner: Good morning, Board members. Samuel Gutierrez, Project Planner for this project and the shopping center. Just one quick correction. On the title for this on the agenda, there is a typo. It says "O'Occitane" instead of "L'Occitane." The "L" is mistyped.

Chair Baltay: Thank you, Sam.

Mr. Gutierrez: I wanted to state that for the record. Moving on to the presentation, this is located at the Stanford Shopping Center, 180 El Camino, and it's located within Building C. This project here involves the tenant that's currently existing at one of the main entryways of the shopping center, L'Occitane, and a façade improvement which involves changing out the existing façade for a new modern, minimalist-looking façade, along with new planters, green roof, public seating, and new signage. This application does not involve any change of tenant. Again, L'Occitane is going to stay, it's just changing their façade design. There is no changes to any of the development standards of the site overall with this application, such as FAR coverage, parking, circulation, anything of that nature. Here you can see the existing conditions of the L'Occitane tenant space within Building C of the shopping center. Just to give you a little bit of bearings, this is across the drive aisle from the Fleming's restaurant. Adjacent to the tenant space along the El Camino frontage is a Papyrus, the retailer. And then, across the shopping center entryway, it's a Vineyard Vines. Again, it's one of the primary entrances to the shopping center. You can see here the existing tenant space does not extend to the full parapet height, which is the current mall standard. This was done prior to that standard being established. You can see the design has a kind of plexi, kind of glass design mixed in, with multiple mullions that kind of break it up into different little sections here. The proposal here shown is showing the new façade meeting the current mall standards, which is the façade would extend all the way up to the parapet top, and it would actually complete this kind of row of tenant spaces along El Camino being updated to the current standards. You were just provided a materials sample board for these proposed materials, along with an updated sheet for... That's in the submitted plans, but this sheet actually correlates the materials to the renderings so you can more easily see what materials are proposed where. Here you can see, again, the simple, modern, kind of minimalistic design. Simple lines, with a backsplash

of yellow on the top. It's recessed a bit from the rest of the storefront. There is some LED lighting proposed around the ring there. That's that kind of halo effect that this rendering is showing. And then, there's new signage. It's, again, the L'Occitane En Provence copy, which is the brand, and a blade side proposed, along with this upper trellis kind of feature that is adjacent to the proposed green roof. The column... This is a storefront that is cut out, and there is actually a path through there. It doesn't extend to the full, I guess, building section. They are proposing a smooth column with a small planter and a circular seating bench, along with two new planters for the storefront entrance. Just going back to the previous storefront, you can see that the fenestration, the glass openness, is a bit reduced here compared to the proposal, which opens up the storefront a lot more to pedestrians. The window surface area increases. Here, we have a little site plan of this tenant space and some of the improvements; in particular, some of the landscaping. Again, there is a green roof proposed, and then the two planter boxes and the circular planter there. None of these plants are actually native plants per the requirements that we have for the ARB findings. They're not native to California, or regional indigenous, but they are low water uses to medium water use, and they do tie in the raw materials that are utilized for the products that are sold inside of L'Occitane. It kind of pulls that connection in from the interior to the exterior. With that, that's something that we would welcome a discussion from the ARB on because, again, there is no native California plants at all on this proposal. Here you can see one of the proposed signage for the new tenant storefront. Again, it's L'Occitane En Provence. It has a wall side on the upper façade, and then there is a small blade sign. I do want to note that the rendering here shows a larger blade sign. That's a rendering error. It's actually proposed to be that smaller blade sign that's shown there on that elevation view. That would meet the mall standards. Some key considerations for the Board to look at here: The applicability of the Master Tenant Façade and Sign Program for the shopping center; the architectural theme, design, cohesiveness, and quality of the materials, and its relation to the shopping center in general; and then, of course, a discussion of the ARB findings in relation to the landscaping. Again, there are no native plants suggested here, or proposed. Staff recommends that the Board recommend approval of the proposed project to the Director of Planning and Community Development, based on the findings and subject to conditions of approval. Thank you.

Chair Baltay: Thank you, Sam. Any members of the public wish to address this project? Seeing no one, questions for staff from Board members?

Vice Chair Thompson: Yeah. The actual letters are illuminated, correct?

Mr. Gutierrez: Yes.

Vice Chair Thompson: The letters are illuminated, and the border is illuminated. Correct?

Mr. Gutierrez: Yes, that's the current proposal.

Vice Chair Thompson: Okay, thank you.

Chair Baltay: Anyone else? Okay, to the applicant, you have 10 minutes, if you wish to present your project. You will have 10 minutes to speak. If you could state and spell your name for the record, please, we'd appreciate it.

Jason Smith, Land Shark Development: Chair Baltay, Board members. A pleasure to be back in front of you once again with the project over at Stanford Shopping Center. We are here to present...

Chair Baltay: State and spell your name for the record, please.

Mr. Smith: Excuse me. Jason Smith [spells name], Land Shark Development. We have here with us today, we have Paul Blackburn with L'Occitane. I was mispronouncing it as well. He will give a brief presentation on the project, concept of intent, and then we'll be glad to answer any questions you may have. Paul?

Paul Blackburn, L'Occitane: Good morning. My name is Paul Blackburn [spells name]. I'm with L'Occitane, so, yes, that's how it's pronounced. I was actually here seven, nearly eight years ago, for the previous

build-out of this store. Thank you once again for giving us some consideration. I think to give some context to what we're doing here with this remodel, obviously, when we built the previous store out, we also had the roof across the atrium space in the middle of the shopping center. All the facades on the main stretch have now gone up. We're looking to upgrade and modernize the store, obviously, to tie in with what's been going on recently in the center, and also to give us a better brand representation today. The previous buildout was inspired by our branding concept at the time, which was based on the greenhouse, which is where all that fenestration and articulation of the façade came from. We wanted to kind of allude to natural ingredients, which is where the landscape lavender mosaic came from, as well. Today, we're really trying to embrace the authenticity of our brand, but also, alluding to the modernity of our brand, too, which is why we've removed the visual of that landscape and replaced it with genuine nature. We think the addition of, you know, the nuance of this particular location and that small, flat roof gives us an opportunity to create a green roof, which is something we actually don't have anywhere else in North America, and we think would be a really beautiful addition, not only to our brand, but to this shopping center. To speak a little bit to the non-native ingredients, it's really important for us, again, with regard to the authenticity of us, to have something that represents what we are selling. We're very proud that all of our ingredients are sourced from the Mediterranean region, all the ingredients that we use in our products, and we want to make sure that if we're showing nature, that it's something that is part of our brand. We couldn't show, or it would be a stretch to show something that was native to California, or if it's not something that we use in any of our products. That's the reason. It's recognizing your typical requirements, but that's our exception, if you like, that we're asking for your consideration. The yellow is a beautiful textured venetian plaster, which in its mass looks very simplistic, but in execution is a beautiful finish material. The white is, again, a natural limestone Travertine, which we think would be a beautiful addition to the façade. On the whole, we're very grateful for the largely supportive comments from the staff review, and I'm here to answer any questions you may have. Thank you.

Chair Baltay: Okay, Osma, go at it.

Vice Chair Thompson: Where does the blue happen on your façade?

Mr. Blackburn: The blue?

Vice Chair Thompson: There's a...

Mr. Blackburn: It's just on the edge of the sign. That's all.

Vice Chair Thompson: Ah, it's on the edge of the words.

Mr. Blackburn: Yes.

Vice Chair Thompson: What is the finish of your mullions on your storefront?

Mr. Blackburn: They are a simple dark bronze metal finish.

Vice Chair Thompson: Dark bronze. Okay. And just to clarify, the yellow, you said it's...?

Mr. Blackburn: It's a venetian plaster. It's an exterior grade venetian plaster.

Chair Baltay: But the sample board says it's a powder coated finish with a yellow specified here. Is that right?

Mr. Smith: That's on the signage as well. Both of those two samples are representative of the sign itself.

Vice Chair Thompson: Oh, the little flag signs, not the façade...?

Mr. Smith: The venetian plaster should be off to the right on your sample board. If you look at the back of your packet as well.

Chair Baltay: But do you have a physical sample of it?

Mr. Smith: We do not have a physical sample of the plaster.

Chair Baltay: Okay. Any other questions?

Board Member Lew: I have one quick question. Is there a finish on the oak?

Mr. Smith: Excuse me?

Board Member Lew: Is there a finish on the oak? Like a clear coat or oil?

Mr. Smith: An applied oil will be on the oak.

Chair Baltay: Osma, why don't you start us off? What do you think?

Vice Chair Thompson: Sorry, I'm a little blindsided. I thought we had everything. Well, I will say, I do appreciate your vision. Your design intent is really clear. I like that you're using the landscape. I don't have a problem with non-native choices because it has a strong design relationship to your brand. I'm fine with that. I was actually all thumbs up until I didn't know what this yellow thing is. That's a problem. I'm sure it's a great material. Maybe it could come back to subcommittee, just so we could look at it. But in terms of the design itself, I don't have any problems with it. I do have a note. The location of the camera, where you have it right now at the top, I'd want to explore if you could put that underneath, underneath the lowest part, just because it sort of interrupts the facade in a way that we wouldn't prefer. It depends on your field of view, of course.

Mr. Blackburn: I would love that to happen. It's actually a shopping center camera, not ours, so we have no control over it.

Vice Chair Thompson: But you're already moving it, right?

Mr. Blackburn: I don't think we are. I think it's staying where it is at the moment.

Vice Chair Thompson: No, you're moving it.

Mr. Smith: [off microphone] The shopping center is moving it up higher. Lower, they wouldn't get the view, so they [inaudible] higher than [inaudible] design would be better.

Vice Chair Thompson: And there was no negotiation with the shopping center about the field of view? Like, are they saying...? Can they confirm that if they make it lower, the field of view doesn't work?

Mr. Smith: We can confirm that with them.

Vice Chair Thompson: That would be good. It's interrupting it. If that could be... It sounds like a 10-minute conversation with their camera guys. That's all my notes.

Chair Baltay: David?

Board Member Hirsch: Well, it's quite an improvement, I think. The color is so incredibly intense there on the corner. Such a prominent corner. I think you're going to attract a lot more people to that corner now because of that. I really like it a lot. I think simplification of every aspect of it is an improvement here. In fact, I would hope that everybody else gets the idea that they should do something with the ugly facades

up on the top all along the way so that it... What is there now. And if you spend a few minutes and kind of look around instead of just running down the pathway there, you'd be aware that this has been a mistake for years up above. You managed to make it, well, it was before, more interesting, but now, it's even a more improved look and simplification to the top of the building. I don't find anything wrong with this at all.

Chair Baltay: Thank you, David. Alex?

Board Member Lew: Yes. Thank you for your presentation. I can recommend approval of the project. I do have one major issue, which is the planter at the corner, at the column, with three-inch plants and no drainage, and hand watering. That seems to be a maintenance issue. A three-inch plant in a planter like that, they need to be watered every day. Really, there isn't enough root structure to... And also, because in planters there's, typically you use lightweight soil that doesn't retain water. They do that so that the plants don't get root compaction. That's a major issue for me. I don't know what we do about that. It seems to me it's a tricky detail to do because of the structural column. On the native plant finding, I think I would just add that, for staff, that the rosemary is also, maybe kind of one of our indestructible plants. I mean, it's capable of very tough conditions. It's also beneficial to hummingbirds. So, I think the plants are fine just based on maintenance. That's where I am. I don't know what to do about the planter. It seems to me that that's really difficult. I mean, would you have the...? Would the shopping center be taking care of the planter? Or is it, the store would be taking care of the planter?

Mr. Smith: No, the store would be maintaining the planter.

Board Member Lew: You're going to have, like, the manager water the plants every day?

Mr. Smith: That is correct.

Board Member Lew: Okay. Anyway, it seems to me very problematic, but I'm willing to approve the project.

Chair Baltay: Thanks, Alex. I share everybody's comments. I think we'll be able to get this through, maybe to the subcommittee. I have two concerns. I want to be sure staff has that, the bright yellow signage up on top is great, but I don't want to see that lit all night long. I hope we have a condition in here that the lighting is only on when the store is open, or something like that. Secondly, I want to be clear with my colleagues that we're happy with the findings regarding the landscaping. We're approving plants that are not native. We're feeling it's okay. Is the language in the finding we have to everybody's satisfaction? Have we all read that?

Board Member Lew: The finding allows for maintenance, conditions, the requirement for the maximum, you know, to the greatest extent feasible, to use native plants that can be maintained. And you have a rooftop planter. Usually very harsh conditions. It's a very tough environment for plants because of the large amount of sun and wind and very little soil volume. That's really a pretty difficult condition for most plants. I think there are unusual circumstances in this case. Also, all of the plants are, as I read the plants list, I mean, they are wildlife beneficial. The ones that they've got. I think it's approvable.

Chair Baltay: Okay. I'm fine with the paragraph in Finding #5, but I wanted to be sure everybody else has read that. We're setting a precedent of sorts. And I read it several times, and then concluded I think it does hit all the points we need to hit.

## **MOTION**

Chair Baltay: Okay, with that, I'm going to make a motion that we approve this project subject to three items coming back to subcommittee. One, seeing a final plaster sample of the yellow; secondly, that the applicant looks into relocating the motion camera up on the façade; and thirdly, that the corner planter be redesigned to somehow make more viable planting capacity. I'll look for a second on that.

Board Member Hirsch: I'll second that.

Vice Chair Thompson: Can I make a friendly amendment?

Chair Baltay: Of course.

Vice Chair Thompson: Could we also ask for the storefront middle material sample?

Chair Baltay: Storefront windows, you mean?

Vice Chair Thompson: Yeah, the mullion color. They mentioned it was a bronze.

Chair Baltay: Okay, absolutely. Are you implying that you want to see a different color, or you just want to see what the material is?

Vice Chair Thompson: Just want to see the material.

Chair Baltay: No problem. Add that to the motion. Any second on that?

Board Member Hirsch: I'll second that, too.

Chair Baltay: Okay. Are you in favor of the friendly amendment?

Board Member Hirsch: Yes.

Chair Baltay: All those in favor; all those opposed. Motion carries 4-0.

#### **MOTION PASSES 4-0.**

Chair Baltay: Thank you very much.

Mr. Smith: Thank you. Would we like to set a date certain for...?

Chair Baltay: That's an administrative thing you'll work with the staff on.

Mr. Smith: Okay. Thank you so much.

Chair Baltay: We're happy to help you whenever you're ready.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Board.

#### **Study Session**

Chair Baltay: Moving right along, next item, study session. Do we have a study session? I don't believe so.

#### **Approval of Minutes**

4. Draft Architectural Review Board Meeting Minutes for July 18, 2019.

Chair Baltay: Did we receive minutes for this?

Board Member Lew: The minutes are in the packet now. They're not coming by email.

Chair Baltay: Okay. Any comments? Or a motion on the minutes?

Vice Chair Thompson: I move that we approve the minutes of July 18, 2019.



Board Member Lew: I have some comments on the minutes.

Chair Baltay: Okay, why don't we hold off. If we can hold off, Osma, is that okay? For a second?

Vice Chair Thompson: Should I retract my motion?

Chair Baltay: Yes.

Board Member Lew: No, just...

Chair Baltay: Whatever. What do you think, Alex?

Board Member Lew: On the subcommittee item, there are two subcommittee items. Item number 6. That was me and Peter on that subcommittee item, and we approved the brick for the 250 Sherman Avenue. Like a dark-colored custom, a custom-made dark-colored brick. And we did not approve the pole-mounted plaza lighting. That still has to come back to the subcommittee. Item number 7, which is 3000 El Camino, I think it was me and Osma, and we did approve the sign. It was just a pedestrian wayfinding sign, a very small pedestrian wayfinding sign. Or series of signs. That was approved.

Ms. Gerhardt: For the 3000 El Camino, the very last page of the minutes is the approval memo for the subcommittee, so any comments on that?

Board Member Lew: I didn't see that. Thank you for that.

Vice Chair Thompson: Yeah, that looks accurate.

Board Member Lew: Yes, that looks good. Thank you.

Chair Baltay: Jodie, on item 6 on the subcommittee, this says that the bollard lighting was approved. And Alex is correct, I think, that we did not approve that.

Board Member Lew: What are you...?

Vice Chair Thompson: Item 6.

Chair Baltay: The Public Safety Building.

Board Member Lew: Right, but where are you reading?

Ms. Gerhardt: Yeah, I don't think the minutes say. It just has the...

Chair Baltay: Oh, it just says what we did.

Ms. Gerhardt: ... item description.

Chair Baltay: Oh, that's right. There's no answer here. Okay.

Ms. Gerhardt: And we didn't have an approval memo. I mean, I suppose we could have had a, sort of interim memo. But I think Board Member Lew explained what happened, so that will go in the minutes.

Chair Baltay: Does that not typically go in the minutes, what the decision was on subcommittee stuff? We've been talking about this before.

Ms. Gerhardt: The subcommittee are not recorded, so, that's why we have at the very end here, for the 3000 El Camino, where we did make a decision in subcommittee, we have this decision memo.

Chair Baltay: Okay. Any further comments about these minutes?

Board Member Lew: I have one comment, which is on... This is just a general comment. I think there was a dissenting vote from Board Member Hirsch from one of the projects in there, and I think normally we

allowed the dissenting vote to comment on the reason why they voted against it. I didn't see that we actually allowed that to happen. I think we normally try to do that, so, let's just try to do that, to make it... I think we normally just try to do that. And the Council does that as well, so, let's try to do that.

Chair Baltay: Point well made.

Board Member Lew: I will move that we...

Chair Baltay: Well, Osma was about to...

Board Member Lew: Oh, yeah. I will second it, then.

Chair Baltay: Osma? Does your motion still stand?

Vice Chair Thompson: Sorry, Lew, did you second?

Board Member Lew: I will second.

Chair Baltay: Okay. Moved and seconded. All those in favor? Opposed? None. Seeing that, the motion carries 4-0.

### **MOTION PASSES 4-0.**

#### **Board Member Questions, Comments or Announcements**

Chair Baltay: I believe the final item is board member questions, comments or announcements.

5. North of Ventura Coordinate Area Plan (NVCAP) Board member Lew.

Chair Baltay: Alex, do you have anything for us?

Board Member Lew: No. It's been on hold all summer. The next meeting will be next Wednesday, here at City Hall, in the lobby conference room. And it's going to City Council on Monday for additional services review.

Chair Baltay: Thank you.

6. Architectural Review Board Annual Report to Council: Review of Letter.

Chair Baltay: We've all worked on that draft. Do we have a motion to approve that? I will make that motion then, that we accept the Architectural Review Board Annual Report as drafted.

Board Member Lew: I have a couple comments on the letter. I know we've done that before.

Chair Baltay: Okay. Are we going to be able to get those incorporated into this letter, do you think? Is it...?

Board Member Lew: I'm not trying to do anything very difficult. I just... Under parking for the Stanford Shopping Center, I think it would make sense to mention that there is an existing cap at the shopping center. There is a floor area cap, but the footprint, the lot coverage, is increasing, and the parking surplus is decreasing down to the minimum amount required. I think that's worth mentioning. Otherwise, it doesn't... I think you have to understand that to make sense of the issue that you're raising here. Because it's partly the uses are changing, but I think it's also that the parking is decreasing.

Chair Baltay: True. Fair enough. What else?

Board Member Lew: Under pedestrian mobility, the first sentence is, [reading] *For people to move freely in our commercial districts and along El Camino, we need more seating available to pedestrians.* And I don't really quite understand the connection of pedestrians and benches. Unless you explain that we have an aging population that would appreciate the benches, or, you just think that having, like, benches and planters makes it more attractive. It just makes it a more desirable environment.

Ms. Gerhardt: I believe the idea is to encourage pedestrians, to encourage more walking trips.

Board Member Lew: And then, I think my last comment is under item F, for El Camino. The first sentence says, [reading] *There is a continuing loss of places to go along El Camino*. At least for me, I don't use El Camino, I don't use many of the businesses along El Camino, and I'm not sure what "loss" is being referred to. It seems like most of the hotels replaced other hotels, or, like, car rental agencies. Really, the only thing that I can think of that has been lost is the, like, the bowling alley, so, I don't quite get that. I do agree that there are, that some of the new mixed-use buildings don't include restaurant use because the parking requirement is too high. But in this paragraph, I think you're only talking about the hotels. And I think it's also a mixed-use issue. And then, I'm not an expert on hotels, but my very limited understanding is that for hotels, the restaurants are money-losers. Only the high-end hotels include restaurants because they have enough profit margin to add a restaurant use for the convenience of their guests. But typically they don't do it because it's too expensive for them to do it. So, whether we include that or not, I don't care. I just wanted to throw that out there.

Chair Baltay: Okay. I'll confess frustration, Alex. We've been circulating this thing for a month and a half, and now you're coming up with... We thought we had the final draft, everybody's commented, and you're bringing up, potentially legitimate points, but we really need to get something out. How strongly do you feel that these affect this report as compared to the next one we write in a year? Obviously, I want this to be unanimous. It has to be.

Board Member Lew: Yes, I don't quite understand the rush, but if there's a rush, that's fine.

Chair Baltay: Anybody else have anything to add, or thoughts about this whole thing?

Vice Chair Thompson: Yes.

Chair Baltay: There's no particular rush, I suppose. I just want to get things done.

Vice Chair Thompson: I'm actually somewhat glad that Alex brought something up, because I also thought I had missed the boat on adding stuff to this letter. It sort of occurred to me, I think this last project – 788 San Antonio – having it come in front of us, we don't... In the letter, we don't really talk about how the architectural character of Palo Alto has evolved because of the projects that we've been reviewing. I think it might be important to address that in some way, just because a lot of stuff that's coming up in front of us... I don't mean to sound like a downer, but a lot of it is not very well thought out. I think we're put in a tough position because there's a great desire to bring housing into Palo Alto, and there's a great desire to approve these projects just politically because of the function. But aesthetically, I'm worried Palo Alto is suffering because of the lack of architectural excellence that I think we ought to be enforcing. I don't know if my Board members agree with that, but it's something I've been struggling with.

Board Member Hirsch: I'd like to speak to that, too, and wholeheartedly agree with you on that. I found it ought to be the emphasis of the lead-in paragraph somehow, on what we do, and it was not a part of this particular letter. In deference to the fact that it was kind of thrown together at the very end of this last period, I think it's lacking. But I would like to see us move on, and next year's letter be better. I think that we should keep track of how we're progressing with just exactly those attitudes of improving the quality of architecture in this city. We somehow seem to get bound up in a lot of detail all the time and not to have the overview that we ought to be having on some of these projects relative to the aesthetics.

Chair Baltay: Okay, looks like we're going to do some more writing. Alex, can you respond to the question? I wrote down, "Lack of architectural excellence." I think, Osma, you're right, that many applications we receive are not as good as we want them to be, but I think also that we have to be practical with what we're doing here. We're not designing these buildings; we're reviewing them for compliance. And we're not hiring the architects, and we're not the clients. But, Alex, you've been through this for the longest. What do you think?

Board Member Lew: I've been on the Board too long. Can I say...? The last time I looked at a list of the projects that the Board has reviewed, I think I counted, like, 15 architectural awards. The time that I, say, like, two times ago, there were only two. So, in my mind, the Board has been doing a good job. I think the developers understand that the City wants better projects, that Council has asked for it, and they put in the "beauty pageant" provision. The developers didn't want to participate in the "beauty pageant," but they did make the buildings better. We do have, generally, overall, I think we do have a better quality of architecture firms working on projects. I'll leave it at that. I think we're better. There's still room for improvement. The way I look at it, it's, like, far better off than we were 10 years ago. So, if you're still not happy, I think that's fine. I'm thinking that it's an internal thing that we need to do. I'm not sure that it's something that needs to go to the Council. Say we bring it up to the Council. What do you want? Do we want more urban designer, an urban designer to critique the projects? Do we want a seven-person board? Where are you going with the issue?

Vice Chair Thompson: May I respond?

Chair Baltay: Sure, Osma, what do you think?

Vice Chair Thompson: I think it's really more, like an attitude and a stance. And I think you're right, that it is getting better, for sure. Sometimes the first iterations versus the last iterations show great improvement. And I think the Council is all about having a good stance, but I think a lot of the stance, at the moment, is sort of piecemeal. Like, we end up focusing a lot on the landscape because we want the landscape to be great, and there's kind of no stance about, like, having a strong... Of course, like, high-finish materials, those things that are in our findings are all true, and we should keep those. But I guess I'm kind of looking for the Council to make a stance, like, we don't just want a building that could be anywhere; we want a building that's really specific to Palo Alto, that actually has a high level of architectural excellence. Because in the future, all these things are going to change. I think, also, like, taking a trip across the pond, where these buildings have been around forever, but they're sort of... The way that they're constructed has this really strong relationship to the street, and they have a really important relationship with texture, character, the human relationship to the wall, is really well thought out. And over here, I'm seeing a lot of trends with the stuff that we've been seeing, and it's less about the pedestrian experience, and it's less about the detail and the articulation of the façade. It's more about FAR, and it's more about these numbers that don't actually mean... They don't actually mean anything about my relationship to the building when I'm standing in front of it. I don't know. I think I'd just like the Council to have a really strong stance, that we're not just looking for anything; we're looking for something really, really special everywhere. I don't know that our applicants have sort of come to us with that attitude.

Board Member Lew: I think I would argue that our findings and the comp plan speak to your issue about design excellence, and then, it's just on the Board to enforce it. I guess my point is, say you want to throw this to the Council, and they say, "Here are the findings." Do you want us to change the findings, or the code? Or are we just saying we need to enforce, the ARB needs to enforce what's already in our comp plan or code?

Vice Chair Thompson: Yeah, it's a report, right? It's like, this is what we've seen, and what we've noticed is that, you know, this is something that we struggle with.

Board Member Lew: I would support that.

Chair Baltay: Osma, maybe use a bit of history behind this, but they changed these findings just, maybe four years ago now? Three years ago? Went from 15 of them down to six. And there was quite a bit of debate about exactly what you're bringing up. And I think the findings have been an improvement. They've allowed us to focus more on what you're talking about. They were, I think, a clear expression by the Council. Things like high-quality design and materials. It's a fairly strong statement, to give us that much latitude. What Alex is saying I believe is correct, that the Council has put it on us to make that happen. They want it to happen. And I think putting it in a letter to Council, then, saying that we need to get better

quality architects and design is sort of, they're going to look back to us and say, "Yeah, that's right. Do it." What I think this letter needs to be is something a little more focused on, "Here's a couple things that we've noticed as trends through all these projects we've looked at that you may want to consider." And I think the more that we can keep it focused and crystal-clear, down to one or two pages, a series of bullet points, the bigger chance we have of them paying attention to it. As much as I agree I'd love to get higher quality architecture here, I don't see how they can really do anything on that, except tell us they already did something about it.

Vice Chair Thompson: But do you agree that we should have a paragraph just explaining, in the last year, this is sort of the kind of aesthetics we've been encountering?

Board Member Hirsch: I'd like to speak a little bit to this. You know, Cambridge Street project, you know, I thought went through transitions, design transitions that were excellent. I wasn't around at the beginning, but in the end, we approved that commercial project, and it's a terrific, simple street front, the materials were well thought out. I mean, I think something like that should be explained somehow in this letter, "This is what we do. This is what we want to do." And we were successful in doing it in that particular instance. So, crow a little bit about what we are, rather than complain.

Chair Baltay: Yes, so, as I'm trying to avoid making this a selling point for us either way, I thought there's plenty of opportunities and things we should be doing to explain to the Council and the community what the Architectural Review Board does. I don't think that's the place for an annual report to the Council.

Board Member Hirsch: But it's not in that letter. This is what our purpose is, and this is what we should say is our purpose, in the first paragraph, somehow. Look, I think we could approve the letter and move on to next year.

Vice Chair Thompson: Yeah [crosstalk].

Chair Baltay: Well, Alex brought it up. I mean, my opinion is his comment about the surface parking at the shopping center is quite legitimate and could be easily fit in. I think the comment Jodie brought up, about clarifying why pedestrian mobility is enhanced by having benches, could be rephrased. I frankly disagree; El Camino has suffered a loss of places to go. Almost every project removes an Olive Garden restaurant, or a sandwich shop above the buildings, or a sneakers store. I mean, it goes on and on. Each one of these removes some local retail institution. But we can go on and on about that. It's kind of vague. I'd love to see us pass this and go on to next year, but if we want to redo it, we should do that, too. I heard you say, David, you're okay passing it?

Board Member Hirsch: I'm okay passing it.

Chair Baltay: Alex?

Board Member Lew: Yes, I'm okay with it.

Chair Baltay: Osma?

Vice Chair Thompson: Sure.

Board Member Lew: [inaudible] excited about the letter.

Chair Baltay: My hope is that each outgoing chairperson will take the effort to make sure we get a report out to Council. I've asked staff to make it so I or one member of our Board can present this to the Council in public, read it out to them, and then we just go on with it from there. And I'd like to be clear, again, this is not an opportunity, I think, for us to crow, or say what we do, good or bad, but rather, this is what we have noticed on projects that are trends, that are emerging patterns, that are things we think you should be aware of. And this is required by statute, that we report back to them. In any case, thank you all.

Board Member Lew: [inaudible] bylaws.

Chair Baltay: You're right. It's just in our bylaws.

Ms. Gerhardt: We have a motion. Do we have a second?

Vice Chair Thompson: I thought I saw Board Member Hirsch second. Did you not second?

Board Member Hirsch: I'll second.

Chair Baltay: Okay, moved and seconded. All those in favor? Opposed. Okay. That motion passes 4-0.

**MOTION PASSES 4-0.**

Chair Baltay: With that, we are adjourned. Thank you.

**Adjournment**