



Architectural Review Board

Staff Report (ID # 13711)

Report Type: Approval of Minutes **Meeting Date:** 11/18/2021

Summary Title: Minutes of October 21, 2021

Title: Draft Architectural Review Board Meeting Minutes for October 21, 2021

From: Jonathan Lait

Recommendation

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

Background

Draft minutes from the October 21, 2021 Architectural Review Board (ARB) are available in Attachment A.

Draft and Approved Minutes are made available on the ARB webpage at bit.ly/paloaltoARB

Attachments:

- Attachment A: October 21, 2021 Draft Minutes (DOCX)



ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD
 DRAFT MINUTES: October 21, 2021
 Virtual Meeting
 8:30 AM

Call to Order / Roll Call

The Architectural Review Board (ARB) of the City of Palo Alto met on this date in virtual teleconference at 8:30 a.m.

Participating Remotely: Chair Osma Thompson, Vice Chair Grace Lee, Boardmember Peter Baltay, Boardmember David Hirsch, Boardmember Alex Lew

Absent:

Oral Communications

None.

Agenda Changes, Additions and Deletions

Jodie Gerhardt, Manager of Current Planning, clarified that Item 2 is a Study Session and that staff was not looking for a recommendation.

City Official Reports

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

Jodie Gerhardt, Manager of Current Planning, reported the Architectural Review Board (ARB) would conduct virtual meetings through the end of the year. The November 4, 2021, meeting is cancelled. The November 18th meeting includes a preliminary review of 739 Sutter and the Castilleja project.

Action Items

2. PUBLIC HEARING / QUASI-JUDICIAL. 2609 Alma [21PLN-00176]: Consideration of a Major Architectural Review to Allow the Demolition of Four Existing Residential Rental Units at 2606, 2609, 2611, and 2615 Alma Street and Construction of Four New Three-Story Rental Townhomes. Environmental Assessment: Project is Currently Being Evaluated to Verify Eligibility for an Exemption in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Sections 15302 (Replacement or Reconstruction) and 15303 (Small Projects). Zoning District: RM_30 (Multi-Family Residential). For More Information Contact the Project Planner Claire Raybould at Claire.Raybould@cityofpaloalto.org

Chair Thompson called for the staff report.

Claire Raybould, Senior Planner, explained that 2609 Alma is in midtown along Alma Street in the RM-30 Zone. She showed a map of the project area and the surrounding zoning. The project includes demolition of 2 existing single-story duplexes on a single lot and redevelopment of 4 three-story residential rental units in a townhome configuration. The applicant filed a complete preapplication which means the project is subject to streamlining. The City can hold up to five hearings. The site is about 8,000 sf. This project falls under the Housing Accountability Act and the City cannot deny the project based on subjective standards. The ARB is encouraged to comment on the project as usual, but if the City chooses to deny the project that must occur under objective standards and cannot reduce the density or make it unfeasible. The ARBs thoughts on objective standards are particularly useful. The project is not subject to any requirements for renter protection because it has been unoccupied for over five years. Staff recommends the ARB review and provide comments. No formal action is requested. The applicant may choose to revise the plans accordingly. Staff will complete the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review and return to the ARB for formal recommendation.

Chair Thompson noted for the record that Boardmember Hirsch joined the meeting.

Jodie Gerhardt, Manager of Current Planning, stated that Boardmember Hirsch arrived prior to Ms. Raybould's presentation.

Chair Thompson called for the applicant's presentation.

Khoan Duong, John Lum Architecture, introduced the project applicant, Gemini Palo Alto, the landscape architect, and the project architect from his firm to the ARB. The project is in midtown, which consists of mostly single-family homes. The R-1 District abuts the rear of the project property. He showed aerial photographs of the project area for context. He also showed pictures of the existing property, which has been vacant for over five years. The current units are approximately 1,000 sf. Pictures of the adjacent properties show tree overgrowth from the project property which will be removed with the consent of the neighbors. Additional pictures of buildings on Alma were shown for context. Gemini Palo Alto wants the property redeveloped to its full potential with rental units for families in a modern style with sensible materials. He provided a street view and street context of the proposed building. The existing and proposed site plans were shown side by side for comparison. There are constraints on the property related to daylight planes and eight parking spaces. Placing the parking in the center of the property helps to create a more friendly residential feel from the street. Landscaping will be used as a buffer between the project and Alma Steet. The utility easement is in the rear setback. Existing trees in the neighboring yards are included to show additional privacy screening. The proposed landscape plans show the removal of several trees as well as the bicycle storage and trash enclosures. He then showed the floorplans for the units. The front units are mirror images as are the rear units. Each unit gets its own private yard. The buildings step back on the second level. The top floor again steps back and contains the master bedroom and an outdoor space. The front elevation includes information related to the daylight plane. The rear elevation was also shown, and he quickly mentioned the planned exterior materials. They understand that the project is one of the few three-story buildings in the area, so they wish to be sensitive to the privacy of the neighbors and respect the established daylight plane. The outdoor terraces for the bedroom levels have a built-in planter on the outer edge which provides additional privacy screening. The front units have wood slatted screens to enhance privacy screening for the side properties. There is also a trellis that covers the outdoor space.

Chair Thompson stated that Mr. Duong's time was up, but that she would grant him a few more minutes to wrap up.

Mr. Duong showed several more elevations and renderings demonstrating the stepping of the buildings. They have reduced the number of windows on the side of the buildings and are utilizing obscure glazing for further privacy. He also showed views from the neighbor's perspective, from the parking court, and from Alma Street. He thanked the ARB for its time and welcomed feedback.

Chair Thompson called for the public comment.

Anita [no last name given] appreciated the plan for new housing especially since the lot has been unused for five years. She hoped there were Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) considerations in the building of the project, but it is missing screening on either side. She understood the ingress/egress needs but felt that it was probable that other properties would be redeveloped to three-stories on either side of the project shortly. For the sake of the tenants comfort they should consider planting more trees for privacy. The project seemed tall for the existing situation, but she again recognized that would change. She urged the project to include affordable housing.

Chair Thompson asked if the applicant wished to respond to the public comment.

Mr. Duong said that he would consider the suggestion of adding further screening to the sides of the property.

Chair Thompson called for ARB disclosures.

Vice Chair Lee disclosed she visited the site and the materials board.

Boardmember Hirsch disclosed he viewed the materials board.

Boardmember Lew disclosed that he visited the site and the materials board and that he was on the ARB for the previous approval of the project. The project was approved, the permit expired, and the same design has now been resubmitted for approval.

Boardmember Baltay disclosed that he visited the site, the materials board, and that he was also on the ARB for the previous approval.

Chair Thompson said she had nothing to disclose. She called for questions of the applicant or staff.

Boardmember Baltay understood that when a residential project abutted an R-1 Zone the Individual Review (IR) guidelines applied to the project. He asked if that was correct.

Ms. Gerhardt explained that the IR guidelines apply when the proposed project is single-family or two-family. This project is multi-family so IR does not apply. There are additional daylight planes when a project is adjacent to R-1.

Boardmember Baltay asked if there were any privacy guidelines which applied to the back of the project other than the 45-degree daylight plane.

Ms. Raybould said the Context Based Design Criteria speaks to the best attempt at privacy in general.

Boardmember Baltay confirmed that was a subjective standard.

Ms. Raybould agreed. The staff commented on privacy and the applicant revised the balconies to make them slightly smaller and added planters at the rear to provide screening. If there are further concerns they could potentially add conditions of approval to the project, but the project cannot be denied based on privacy.

Vice Chair Lee inquired about the first ARB review of the project as mentioned by Boardmembers Lew and Baltay.

Ms. Raybould stated it was a different project with a different design and designer. It was not the same applicant. The project was filed in 2015 and approved in 2016 but did not move forward.

Boardmember Lew had questions about the pavers in the Alma Street right of way along the curb. Visiting the site he saw that was fairly common with other properties and noted that trash was usually placed there on garbage day. He asked if that was the City's requirement for the street to function.

Ms. Raybould asked him to be more specific about the location of the pavers.

Boardmember Lew explained they were between the curb and the sidewalk. There is not a lot of planting along Alma, and it is different than the rest of the City.

Ms. Raybould explained that along Alma Street most of the trash pickup occurred on the street.

Ms. Gerhardt said there was no specific requirement for pavers versus landscaping. She assumed that people use pavers because they are lower maintenance, but they are in what is supposed to be a planting strip.

Boardmember Baltay asked about the landscaping restrictions in the five-foot public utility easement at the back of the property.

Ms. Raybould explained that because of the utility easement there could not be any large trees in the easement. The applicant had proposed trees on the corners of the site outside of the easement which are allowed.

Boardmember Baltay asked Boardmember Lew if he recalled the ARBs previous requirements for landscaping on the site in the easement. He thought that the ARB got the applicant to put landscaping there.

Boardmember Lew said that he believed the matter went to subcommittee and the applicant showed the subcommittee what was possible, and it was not desirable. There was a hedge outside the easement, but it ruined the functionality of the backyard.

Chair Thompson asked the landscape architect for an explanation of the proposed removal of trees.

Pam Jones, Koch & Associates, Inc., explained that the trees along the driveway edges had to be removed because they caused the driveway to be too narrow for emergency vehicles or even cars. The trees are also not in great condition, and many were not salvageable.

Chair Thompson asked for additional information on the functionality of the turf in the backyard.

Ms. Jones explained that it was artificial turf and that it percolates. There are several types of turf being considered, but they all percolate.

Chair Thompson closed the public hearing and called for ARB discussion.

Boardmember Baltay found the basic site planning was successful. He appreciated that the cars are away from Alma Street. The basic design of the building allows it to step back from both Alma and the single family residential at the back. Similarly, the 10 feet on each side of the building is helpful to the neighbors. He found the overall design exciting and thought it would be a positive addition to Alma Street. He believed most new buildings would be about the size of the project. He requested the architect review two things related to the neighbors. First, there are privacy issues. He asked for confirmation on the glazing of the side windows. If the windows are small and frosted it does mitigate impacts to the side. In the rear he was concerned that the terraces allowed for clear views of the neighboring yards. He requested the architect consider a more substantial landscape barrier at the terrace level or investigate additional landscaping, perhaps even on the neighbor's property. Second, the bright white color might be problematic for the neighbors on the sides. He was concerned about the reflection of the sun and asked the architect to consider other options.

Boardmember Hirsch stated he was concerned about the project for several reasons. He appreciated projects where the ingress/egress is on one side and the parking is divided by unit. That allows for more landscape at the front and rear of the project and perhaps in the middle. This project has a large space that is hardscaped, and he thought it was divorced from landscaping aside from the front and rear yards. He suggested dividing the site into a central drive to accommodate the cars to the left and right at both the front and rear of the project. He thought the project was creative, but he was bothered by the hardscape at the center and the very narrow and tall connection between the front and back. The proposed project needed a bigger site. This smaller site requires more of a connection to nature. The project stands out too much and is too aggressive. It needs to address scale and landscaping differently and feel more comfortable related to the future development of Alma Street.

Vice Chair Lee thanked the applicant, the public commenter, and staff. She appreciated the Study Session and thought that the project was needed. Alma Street is a special throughfare that is important to the City. The City needs housing and Alma Street seems to be the place to put it. She thanked the applicant for bringing a project with multiple units. She agreed with many of the comments already made, but thought it was important to view this project on its own. She viewed the site two or three times and thought the applicant should consider the materials, privacy landscaping, and user comfort. The site diagrams are very smart, and it is compelling that the buildings step back. She noted that the 3rd floor of the front buildings are set back 41 feet and the rear buildings are set back 32 feet. She was concerned about the privacy issues on the side of the buildings despite the 10-foot setbacks. The parking works well and is a shared area for the neighbors. She thought the integrated privacy planters took away from the tenant's useable space. There is a great potential to use more screens for privacy. The materials are very simple and could use more warm colors. She thought the landscape could provide more screening. Overall, she felt positive about the project and wanted more variation and transparency. The crystal white color has a high potential for glare. The high contrast contributes to the boldness of the proposal, so she suggested reconsidering the crystal white and bringing in something warmer. On the landscape they should look to find something vertical that creates a sense of buffer on all sides.

Boardmember Lew stated his comments were like Boardmember Baltay's. he acknowledged that the ARB received emails from the public, specifically neighbors who were opposed to any three-story projects in the neighborhood. There are zoning rules and daylight planes which allow three-story buildings. There are also context-based criteria for the zone. He generally supported the project but asked if the 4-foot gap between the buildings was desirable with the front doors facing each other. He thought that would be uncomfortable and suggested attaching the buildings together to provide more space on the side yards. A 10-foot driveway is minimal, a 12-foot driveway would allow for some landscaping. He agreed that the white would be an issue on the southeast facing side yard. That issue needs to be addressed, especially if the side yard trees are removed. He asked staff to discuss the potential noise from Alma in the open space and to look at adding landscaping rather than pavers along the curb. The side yards have dramatic elevation and need something to provide scale. He stated that he was generally in support of the project, but that he did not know what to do with the back of the property and the public utility easement.

Chair Thompson thanked the ARB for its comments and the applicant for the presentation. She said that she was aligned with Vice Chair Lee, Boardmember Baltay, and Boardmember Lew on the site planning. She liked Boardmember Lew's idea of pushing the buildings together to allow for more room in the side yards. That would allow for more of a landscaping screen. The scale of the buildings from front elevation with the reveal in the middle is nice and she suggested retaining that if the buildings were combined. She liked how the buildings were terraced back. For the zoning the applicant is being sensitive to the scale while maximizing what they can. With the materials she liked how they are applied but was concerned that the white was too white. She understood Boardmember Hirsch's thoughts on the hardscape in the middle of the project and encouraged the use of drivable permeable pavers. The project already feels connected to nature. She understood Vice Chair Lee's note on the planters and thought there might be a way to integrate landscape on the balconies without taking up too much space.

Boardmember Baltay said that regarding the balconies a privacy screen is five feet off the floor. That's the standard the ARB has accepted throughout the City on other residential projects. It does not have to be a landscape barrier, but there needs to be something that prevents causal viewing opportunities of the neighboring properties. He hoped staff could take that as an objective standard.

Chair Thompson was not sure that was in the objective standards.

Ms. Gerhardt said that she thought it was fine because they're implementing the privacy guidelines. The City cannot reduce density or make a project unfeasible.

Chair Thompson strongly agreed with Boardmember Lew's comment about adding scale to the side elevations. In response to staff, she clarified that she meant the outside elevation along the driveway. She asked if the applicant had questions of the ARB.

Mr. Duong requested clarification around reducing the planters on the back roof terraces. He explained that they were respecting the daylight plane by bringing the solid railing around the terraces to the plane. If they could pierce the plane they could make the railings taller, but he understood the height was limited.

Boardmember Baltay said that was Mr. Duong's challenge as the architect to comply with both the daylight plane standards and privacy requirements. He agreed with Vice Chair Lee that the terraces should not be any smaller than necessary.

Chair Thompson noted that the depth of the planters made people stand further back from the railing.

Boardmember Baltay agreed but noted the ARB has held to the standard of a five-foot barrier to prevent casual observation and the City Council has upheld it.

Vice Chair Lee said that the architect could solve the problem, she was just pointing out that useable terrace space was important to tenants.

Chair Thompson said that other projects used six feet for balconies.

Ms. Raybould said there was a lot of terrace area being provided. The planters do take away from the space, but the applicant is substantially exceeding the private open space requirement. The landscape planning was an attempt to provide screening without adding to the massing of the project while respecting the daylight plane. Staff can explore the ARB's thoughts and other options.

Chair Thompson said that she thought the deeper planter was a better aesthetic choice than a taller fence in those locations. She asked for other Boardmember thoughts.

Boardmember Hirsch said he was not in favor of the project because the structure stood out on Alma Street and was not appropriate. He acknowledged the area would change and contain more housing. He could see the project on a larger site but had a problem with it as a unique structure. There are many examples of buildings in Palo Alto that do not stand out as aggressively as this one would. He also thought the parking lot was not a friendly space between the buildings. There are other ways to deal with the cars that could be explored. He hoped that there would not be such aggressive ideas expressed on each site on Alma because the lots are not big enough. The idea of the project is great but requires a larger site.

Chair Thompson told Boardmember Hirsch she meant to ask his opinion on the screening element.

Boardmember Hirsch said that was detail that was not critical now.

Chair Thompson asked for Boardmember Lew's thoughts.

Boardmember Lew understood Vice Chair Lee's comments about the depth of the terraces and generally agreed. In this case as the units have their own yards he was less concerned about the terrace depth. The proposed design meets the daylight plane and is probably the right solution. With respect to Boardmember Hirsch's comments there are several nice three-unit projects in town. This site is only 134 feet deep and the other projects that the ARB saw were typically 150 feet deep with some being 200 feet deep and they typically have three units. This project may be more aggressive, but it provides an additional unit. He thought that Boardmember Hirsch was asking for the project to be reduced in scope and he could not support that.

Boardmember Hirsch responded that due to the size of the lot it might be better if the project were three units instead of four. The fourth unit does not fit.

Ms. Gerhardt said that given the Housing Accountability Act the City cannot reduce the projects density and they cannot make the project infeasible. They can reduce massing and create privacy.

Ms. Raybould added that under Senate Bill 330 the applicant is not allowed to propose less than four units because it would reduce the number of units on the site.

Boardmember Hirsch said that the applicant could make smaller units that fit the site better.

Vice Chair Lee thanked Boardmember Lew and apologized for her comment about the planters. She intended to talk about the dimensions of the terrace and usability. She agreed with Boardmember Lew that there is private open space in the yards.

Chair Thompson agreed with Boardmember Lew and Vice Chair Lee. She asked if staff had anything further, but they did not. As no formal action was requested she thanked the applicant and closed the item.

Mr. Duong thanked the ARB for its feedback.

3. PUBLIC HEARING / QUASI-JUDICIAL. 160 Waverley Street [20PLN-00301]: Recommendation on Applicant's Request for Approval of a Major Architectural Review to Allow the Demolition of the Existing Residential Structures (3 units total) and for the Construction of two new Structures Containing Three Apartment Flats and Six Tuck Under Parking Stalls at Grade. Environmental Assessment: Exempt from CEQA in Accordance With Guideline Section 15303 (New Construction). Zoning District: RM-20. For More Information Contact the Project Planner Samuel Gutierrez at samuel.gutierrez@cityofpaloalto.org.

Chair Thompson introduced the Public Hearing on 160 Waverley Street. She called for ARB disclosures.

Boardmember Baltay disclosed that he visited the site several times and the materials board at City Hall. He has also discussed the project with the architect prior to the previous ARB meeting about it.

Boardmember Hirsch disclosed that he viewed the materials board and had visited the site the first time it was discussed by the ARB.

Boardmember Lew disclosed that he visited the site and the materials board.

Vice Chair Lee disclosed she visited the site and the materials board. She also had a phone conversation with the applicant. She was not present at the previous ARB meeting, and she heard a recap of what was presented.

Chair Thompson had no disclosures. She called for the staff report.

Samuel Gutierrez, Project Planner, shared his screen with the ARB and reported on the new triplex on 160 Waverley Street which will replace an existing triplex. The project is on an RM-20 zoned site of 12,500 sf. It currently contains three detached housing units and a common carport with three covered spaces and one uncovered space. The application is for Major Architectural Review and will demolish the existing development and develop two new buildings consisting of 3 dwelling units and a garage with six parking spaces. The ARB reviewed the project on June 17, 2021, and provided feedback which has been addressed by the applicant. He reviewed the previous ARB feedback and showed the previously proposed street elevation. He then showed the new proposed design which has adjusted side gates, new brick material and stucco-cladding, a home office in place of the previously proposed refuse room, second floor revisions including large central doors, a refined parapet including brick cornice, new off-white brick material, and a height reduction to 27'2". The new height is zoning compliant. Additional landscape planter boxes, trees, and window planter boxes were also added. He showed an aerial view of the existing conditions

and the proposed changes to the roof terrace for privacy. The solar panels and additional landscaping serve as privacy buffers in the rear of the buildings. Other privacy improvements were made such as flipping the stairway locations, adding screening trees along the sides of the property, and the previously mentioned roof terrace and balcony planter boxes. Staff performed a historic resource evaluation and confirmed that the property is not a historical resource. Staff then found the project exempt from CEQA. Public comments and concerns centered on the roof terraces and the impact on noise and privacy, the overall design of the project not being connected to the street or consistent with the neighborhood, the front doors not being welcoming enough, loss of sunlight and views of the sky, and street parking. He noted that the project complies with the daylight plane requirements and is fully parked per code. The key considerations for the ARB are the changes to the project design, materials, elevation, landscaping, and privacy treatments. Staff recommends that the ARB recommend approval of the project to the Director of Planning & Development Services based on the findings and subject to conditions of approval.

Chair Thompson called for the applicant's presentation.

Heather Young, Heather Young Architects, shared her screen with the ARB. She said that Mr. Gutierrez already covered most of her points so she would be brief. She showed slides showing the site zoning and context as well as the character of the street. She provided the elevation in context with the daylight plane and noted the project was fully compliant. She then showed a series of before and after renderings of the project noting the changes made to address the previous ARB comments. They increased the height of the fence on the property line from 6 to 7 feet. She explained that the relocation of the stairways removed the chance for casual viewing opportunities of neighboring properties. The size of the windows has mostly been reduced, except where they could not be for egress reasons. The roof planters are 3' high and the plantings would add an additional 2'6" high, which is greater than the 5' privacy standard. The solar panels have been repositioned to increase privacy and the number of trees has increased. She thanked the ARB for their design suggestions, specifically the one about removing the trash at the front of the site. The waste enclosures have been moved behind the front building and created a new home office for the use of the front building tenant. Additionally, they moved towards greater symmetry in the building façade and revised the façade to be more inviting. They also added additional windows, relocated and added lighting, awnings, and relocated and redesigned the side entrances. The building height was also reduced. The ARB had commented that the proposed stone tile was too commercial, so the material was replaced by off-white buff brick.

Chair Thompson advised Ms. Young her 10 minutes was up and advised her she could take a few minutes to wrap up the presentation.

Ms. Young thanked her and showed the final slides detailing the architectural details. The ARB requested enhanced pedestrian paths and they added awnings, planter boxes, and trees. She thanked the ARB for its time.

Chair Thompson thanked her and called for the public comment.

Lorna [no last name given] stated she was the co-owner of 150 Waverley and that she was speaking on behalf of herself and the other owner, her mother. They have no objection to building affordable housing in a neighborly fashion with a more residential feel and a sensitivity to privacy. They are concerned that their privacy is at risk and no matter how many planters are added they could not mitigate the roof terrace

and the noise. They use their patio space daily and are concerned for their privacy. The roof terrace will increase noise levels and enforcing noise ordinances is difficult. Once the building is built they plan to keep their blinds closed to preserve privacy. She requested they eliminate the rooftop deck. Second, they are concerned that the project does not fit in the neighborhood or in Palo Alto's "Cool Block" concept. There is no front door or porch to the project, only an office. The ground level is a place to mingle, but that is not included in the discussion. The current occupants of the project site are a family that enliven the neighborhood.

Andrew [Burgham?] introduced himself as the owner of 134 Waverley. His property is zoned R-1. He expressed gratitude for the improvements on the original plan and for Ms. Young visiting his yard. They are not opposed to new construction, but still have areas they are concerned about. He estimated the roof decks at 1,800 sf which exceeds the size of any roof deck or patio in the area, maybe even the City. He was also concerned about the rear balcony which overlooks the patios and primary outdoor dining spaces for 134 and 150 Waverley. The planters are helpful, but they only move people back a short distance. He requested planters that would keep people at least 4' from the back of the building. He appreciated the reduction in height, but 4" is not significant. With respect to neighborhood character, he mentioned that the project had no front door and did not feel welcoming. Neighborly things are front porches, angled awnings, accessible front doors. He asked where children would knock for trick-or-treating. He thanked the ARB and City staff and extended an invitation for the ARB and applicant to come and view the project from his property.

Anita [Lesfrank?] stated that her mother lived down the street from the project. She appreciated the revisions made and said she wanted her neighborhood to be cohesive, supportive, and green. She liked that there are multiple units on the property because that is necessary for the future. 61% of the project will be covered by building or hardscape, which is concerning. The white brick is also concerning, not only for the color, but also for earthquakes. The roof top terrace has benefited from the addition of the planters, and she was pleased with the change from refuse room to office. She was concerned that the estimated rent of \$7,500 per month made the building for the elite, and that is short sited for the community. She thanked the ARB.

Chair Thompson asked if the applicant wanted to respond to the public comments.

Ms. Young explained that if the bricks were traditional bricks on loadbearing walls they would not be earthquake safe. The particular brick proposed is thin set and chemically adhered as a tile, so it does not have earthquake safety concerns.

Chair Thompson called for ARB questions of the applicant or staff.

Boardmember Baltay asked about the floor to ceiling height in the living units.

Ms. Young explained that it was reduced to less than 10'. She did not have the exact information, but thought they were 9'11".

Boardmember Baltay asked if it was 12' floor to floor.

Ms. Young said that was correct and explained the structural system which had a total assembly of just under 2'.

Boardmember Baltay asked staff about the native planting requirement as the project only contained 1/3 native plantings.

Mr. Gutierrez explained that there are other considerations about plantings such as being drought tolerant and suitable habitat for wildlife. The direction prior to the beginning of the pandemic was to look and see if the project met the intent of the finding, so not only the native landscaping, but also the low water use, drought tolerant, suitable habitat, and is compatible with the overall design. The proposed landscape plan overall met the finding sufficiently.

Boardmember Baltay confirmed that staff felt that 1/3 of the plants being native was sufficient.

Mr. Gutierrez said they believed that on balance with everything else.

Vice Chair Lee requested clarification on the color of the awnings.

Ms. Young explained the goal was to match the awnings to the dark bronze hardware used on the building, but noted they were open to ARB direction on the color.

Vice Chair Lee stated that the awnings were black in some of the images.

Ms. Young said they are black/dark bronze.

Vice Chair Lee stated in the presentation they were shown as dark tan.

Ms. Young apologized for that.

Chair Thompson requested that Ms. Young display the image.

Ms. Young showed the images and apologized that in the rendering the metals came out a little light. The awning, trim, and railings should all be darker.

Boardmember Hirsch asked if there were two brick colors.

Ms. Young said there are two different bricks. The upper floor is more of a mottled brown and the base is a slightly mottled cream color.

Chair Thompson apologized for not viewing the materials board and inquired about the color of the stucco.

Ms. Young explained the stucco was a lighter white. There is a graphic edge between the materials. The plane of the entry gate is the same plane as the beginning of the stucco.

Chair Thompson asked if it was a warmer white.

Ms. Young said the brick was a warmer white. The stucco is lighter. It's an off-white versus the brick being a cream. In general, they wanted a warmer palette.

Chair Thompson asked about the roof deck material.

Ms. Young explained the walking surface was a stone paver on a raised pedestal system. The interior face of the walls is stucco, the stairwell is brick, and the top of the parapet is a brick detail. The pavers are in a cool roof color that is just dark enough not to create glare.

Chair Thompson called for ARB comment.

Ms. Gerhardt directed the ARB to Finding #2 for helpful information.

Vice Chair Lee thanked staff and the applicant. She found it very helpful to see the before and after drawings of the revisions and thanked neighbors for their engagement and comments. She thanked the applicant for bringing needed housing units to Palo Alto. The neighborhood is a very interesting mix and highly eclectic in terms of architectural expression. The ARB comments during the previous hearing on the project were very helpful and moved the project in a positive direction. She spoke of thresholds and appreciated the desire for a front door and porch but noted many properties in Palo Alto do not have front porches or doors. She appreciated the change to a brick cornice, the recessed openings, and the change in color choice to a less stark white. Those changes all responded to prior ARB comments. The current project is a definite improvement and works well in the eclectic neighborhood. It does not read as a commercial building. She thought the awnings could be changed to a dark tan like in the presentation so there was less contrast with the black metal frames. She asked to see the privacy slide again. The slide convinces her that the project has improved in terms of privacy. Another thing that could be done to protect privacy is to increase the dimension of the planters, but the plan probably is sufficient as presented. She appreciated the flipping of the walkways and thought that greatly improved the privacy. Per the zoning the roof terraces provide a needed amenity to the users.

Chair Thompson said that she could recommend approval of the project. She agreed that the rendering that showed the canopy in a tan color looks nicer than the dark images in the packet. However, she noted that might only work because the other metals appeared lighter in the rendering. She was open to changes in that area. She agreed that the smaller brick was better and that the palette generally looked nice. The changes made to address the neighbors' concerns were appreciated. In general, she felt the project was looking good and approved of the changes made.

Boardmember Hirsch saw major improvements in the project and a good attempt to address the privacy issues. The solutions are coming from the problem rather than naturally from a way of thinking about the privacy. He understood the neighbors concerns if there would be parties and large gatherings on the roof. That is not commonly found in Palo Alto. He did not know how to deal with the issue, but the problem exists therefore the solution was created to solve it. He thought the applicant did the best they could. With respect to the front door some people do not want to be publicly available. He also noted that many people in Palo Alto have front porches and do not sit on them. In terms of privacy the rear unit will be very private. It is reasonable to have a side entry for the front building as well for privacy purposes. He found the idea of putting the office up front strange. The garbage is well handled right now, but the office seems to be an arbitrary decision. He accepted it but would have preferred deck access for above. The material changes are significant and an improvement from the previous materials. The front and rear elevations are nice with major improvements to the detailing over the last hearing. The sides of the buildings are very ordinary with windows placed to satisfy interior needs, but the entry to the building could be emphasized more and more inviting. That's a designer and owner decision. He was concerned

about the rooting capability of the side yard trees but would take it on faith that it was feasible. The trees improve the privacy issues. Privacy is a major issue in Palo Alto. He hoped that neighbors will act neighborly and accommodate each other. The applicant has done a good job of addressing the privacy issues. He did not wish to require a front door, he liked the improvements in the front, moving the garbage was a major improvement, putting an office in was arbitrary, and the entry to the front building could be improved. Overall, he felt the project could move forward.

Boardmember Lew thanked the applicant for the well-considered revisions and the members of the public who commented. Front doors and porches used to be in the Comprehensive Plan and that has changed, and now individual entrances are not required to face the street. The building must address the street. The project complies with the new requirement, especially with the 2nd floor deck and the street-facing office. Secondly, he wished to address the idea that the project was out of character with the neighborhood. During his visit he saw more brick in the neighborhood so he thought in terms of materials the project would fit in. The biggest difference is that this project has a flat roof. That helps with the screening of the solar panels, and he hoped that there would be more solar panels than they show in the plans. He had hoped the height of the building would have been reduced by about 2' instead of 4" which could have been accomplished with 9' interior ceilings. The addition of the cornice helps the building look shorter. Related to parking the State has new mandates and cities had to revise their requirements. The City is no longer allowed to require visitor spaces. The parking on the project is less than what Palo Alto used to require, but it is compliant with State regulations. Roof terraces have come before the ARB before and people are worried about noise and privacy, but the screening will help, and large roof parties are not usually a problem. Palo Altoans are generally accommodating to their neighbors. With the comments on sunlight and the sky he explained that Palo Alto relies on the daylight plane for all buildings and the project complies with the daylight plane. He thought he could recommend approval of the project, but suggested staff clean up the findings and pointed out specific issues. With the native plantings they should attempt to find a native plant that meets the project's need and if that's not possible then they should find something wildlife friendly. He felt the project did that and therefore he could support the proposed landscaping.

Boardmember Baltay stated he was impressed with Ms. Young and her firm, but he was unable to support the project. He was concerned the massing was still too bulky and large and he especially took issue with the height of the side walls. He was also very concerned about the privacy concerns from the roof deck. In general, the rest of the privacy issues are masterfully managed, but two 1,800 sf rooftop decks is inappropriate for the neighborhood. The solution to both issues is to remove the rooftop deck and reduce the buildings by the height of the parapet. He was also unhappy with the circulation patterns of the buildings and thought the entrances should be more obvious. He noted that the office raised a question of if it was commercial or residential use. The project has no clear entrance and is not residential friendly. Lastly, he was concerned about landscaping. He agreed with Boardmember Lew's explanation of the process but was not convinced that 2/3rds of the plants could not be native. There are numerous places where they could use native plants. He could not support the project although the material changes and the window treatments were masterful. Unless the rooftop decks are removed and the building is lowered he would not recommend approval.

Chair Thompson asked if the planters on the roof decks were increased in size if that would change Boardmember Baltay's opinion.

Boardmember Baltay said that if it were a planter built into a side parapet and the solar panels were more substantial it would make a difference. He stated he was most concerned about the precedent the ARB would set by allowing the roof deck. An 1,800 sf outdoor space in a dense eclectic residential area did not make sense. The planters do not work as an effective privacy shield. He noted that the City had issues agreeing about rooftop decks in the Downtown on commercial buildings, but now they will allow them on Waverley.

Vice Chair Lee appreciated the ARB comments and wished to clarify her thoughts. She stated that the set was well done in terms of its completeness and understanding of the project. She stated she could make the findings on the project and move the project forward. Open space in a residential setting is an interesting discussion, especially with this roof space. In residential settings the users deserve open space. Roof spaces work quite well around the world and the United States. They are a wonderful amenity to provide in housing. Human behavior might be beyond the ARBs purview, but it is in the findings to understand the context. In this context the roof space is an amenity, and the proposal will improve the neighborhood and the City.

Boardmember Hirsch appreciated Vice Chair Lee's comments and asked if this aspect of the project could return to committee with additional design work to make the space smaller with more plantings and separation. He thought that was a reasonable request to address privacy. He agreed with Vice Chair Lee that rooftop decks are a great amenity. Pushing the trash enclosure to the middle of the property did remove space from what would have been the back yard. The staircase in the rear mentioned by Boardmember Baltay is very remote. He further hoped that an intercom could be added to the doors. Privacy is the biggest issue related to the rooftop and needs additional design work.

Vice Chair Lee clarified that she did not request a redesign of the roof space.

Boardmember Lew suggested Boardmember Hirsch make a Motion.

Chair Thompson appreciated Vice Chair Lee's note on the rooftop deck. If it was up to her all roofs would be living roofs. She called for a Motion.

MOTION: Boardmember Hirsch moved, seconded by Boardmember Lew to accept the project as designed with the rooftop decks returning to committee with the intent to create greater privacy and perhaps limit the amount of space allowed.

FRIENDLY AMENDMENT: Chair Thompson offered a Friendly Amendment to also review the material of the canopy and metal items in subcommittee.

Boardmember Hirsch accepted the Friendly Amendment.

Boardmember Lew accepted the Friendly Amendment.

Chair Thompson asked if anyone wished to speak to the Motion but hearing none she called the vote.

AMENDED MOTION PASSED: 4-1

Chair Thompson asked if Boardmember Baltay would like to speak to his nay vote.

Boardmember Baltay said he had already voiced his thoughts.

Chair Thompson thanked the applicant and said they would speak again in committee. She then announced that the ARB would take a short break.

The ARB took a brief break

4. ARB Awards: Consider the List of Eligible Projects and Associated Photographs Taken by Board Members, and Develop a List of Award Categories

Chair Thompson introduced the item and explained that they would also discuss award categories.

Ms. Gerhardt said that staff had the materials ready including the updated eligibility list and a presentation of the ARB's pictures. The ARB needs to think of categories for the awards, so she had the 2015 categories for the ARB's information. Amy French, Chief Planning Official, was also present and experienced in the ARB Awards.

Chair Thompson noted for the record that Boardmember Baltay rejoined the meeting prior to Ms. Gerhardt speaking.

Amy French, Chief Planning Official, noted that Boardmember Lew and Vice Chair Lee have both participated in the ARB Awards in the past.

Chair Thompson said there were 73 slides and asked if the ARB wanted to run through them or if they wanted to speak on the projects they investigated.

Boardmember Baltay asked a housekeeping question. One of the eligible projects was designed by his firm so he thought either the project should be withdrawn or he should withdraw from the deliberations.

Ms. French said she thought they had never encountered that situation before.

Chair Thompson asked Boardmember Baltay if he preferred to withdraw the entry or recuse himself.

Boardmember Baltay said that he had not thought about it much as he had just realized it was an issue when reviewing the materials.

Ms. Gerhardt asked Ms. French if Boardmember Baltay needed to recuse himself from the whole process or just the deliberations on the project.

Ms. French thought the awards were different than a Boardmember having a conflict on a project. She thought the decision was best left to Boardmember Baltay. There are only five or so projects that would win an award.

Chair Thompson acknowledged Boardmember Lew.

Boardmember Lew recalled the last time the ARB held the awards discussion they went through the list, shared information about the project, and then if any Boardmember thought the project should be

considered in the next round it was flagged. That would narrow the list down and could be done multiple times until they reach consensus.

Chair Thompson liked the idea and suggested that Boardmember Baltay participate though the first round.

Boardmember Baltay said he wished to withdraw the project. He thought that was the only way for him to participate.

Chair Thompson stated that she would leave the decision to Boardmember Baltay.

Boardmember Baltay explained that simply by being on the ARB he did not think it would be appropriate to have a project in contention.

Chair Thompson agreed.

Vice Chair Lee suggested that as the ARB was reviewing the projects if anyone had an idea for a category it should be noted for later discussion.

Chair Thompson asked Ms. Gerhardt to read the last ARB Award categories.

Ms. Gerhardt displayed a document showing the 2015 ARB Award winners and categories. There were awards for preservation, addition and site design, remodeling, renovation, innovation, and sustainability.

Chair Thompson asked if there were any categories Boardmembers would suggest.

Boardmember Lew said they usually determine the categories after reviewing the projects. He suggested that the overarching theme should be for sustainable design with categories under it.

Vice Chair Lee liked Boardmember Lew's suggestion and noted she had considered awards for site planning and typology.

Chair Thompson suggested awards for the best relationship to nature and best design parti realized.

Ms. Gerhardt showed a project at 1545 Alma Street.

Boardmember Baltay stated that was his project and it was withdrawn from contention.

Ms. Gerhardt said she would remove it from the list. She asked Boardmembers to speak up when she showed a project they were interested in and said she would remove items that no Boardmembers spoke to.

Boardmember Baltay voted for 689-693 Arastradero Road.

Boardmember Baltay voted for 260 California Avenue.

Vice Chair Lee disclosed that she works for Stanford but nominated 1451 California Avenue.

Boardmember Hirsch requested more information on the project.

Vice Chair Lee explained that the project included a recreation center with a community center and pool. The edges of the project makes an effort to blend into the College Terrace neighborhood. There are open spaces including a playground and plaza. As you move into the project the architecture becomes taller, denser, and more contemporary. It's a multi-layered project worth discussion.

Boardmember Hirsch and Chair Thompson stated they voted for the project.

Boardmember Lew reminded the ARB that they had little say in the project. They were only allowed to comment on the houses right on California Avenue. However, it is an important project.

Boardmember Hirsch suggested that 1451 California Avenue needed to attach a site plan so they could see it.

Vice Chair Lee said that she was not on the ARB at the time, but that she would like to nominate the project for a site planning award for its context with the neighborhood.

Boardmember Hirsch voted for 400 Channing.

Ms. Gerhardt stated she would reserve 702 Clara Drive for the next ARB Awards since the project was just approved in 2019 and may not have been built yet.

Boardmember Baltay and Boardmember Hirsch voted for 611 Cowper Street.

Chair Thompson voted for 405 Curtner.

Chair Thompson voted for 180 El Camino, Shopping Center Phase III.

Boardmember Hirsch voted for 180 El Camino, Vineyard Vines.

Chair Thompson and Boardmember Hirsch voted for 180 El Camino, Shake Shack.

Ms. Gerhardt stated that the Town and Country project was only a sign exception.

Boardmember Baltay confirmed it was not the TI improvement work.

Ms. Gerhardt told Boardmember Baltay that she received his email related to 2209 El Camino Real.

Boardmember Baltay and Chair Thompson voted for 2585 El Camino Real.

Chair Thompson asked if 2755 El Camino was complete.

Ms. Gerhardt said it was nearly complete so it could be considered.

Boardmember Baltay and Boardmember Hirsch voted for Fire Station #3, 799 Embarcadero Road.

Boardmember Hirsch said that there should be additional pictures of the Fire Station.

Ms. Gerhardt assured the ARB that there would be more pictures in future rounds.

Chair Thompson explained she did not know where to go to take the pictures of the sludge facility at 2501 Embarcadero Road. She said that she was curious to know if there was a sustainability story with the facility.

Ms. Gerhardt said they would retain 2501 Embarcadero Road.

Boardmember Hirsch and Chair Thompson voted for 2775 Embarcadero Road.

Boardmember Baltay and Boardmember Hirsch voted for 620 Emerson or 180 Hamilton.

Boardmember Baltay voted for 135 Hamilton Avenue.

Ms. French explained that 261 Hamilton Avenue was a rehabilitation and a request to upgrade the building to a Category 3, but Council took no action.

Boardmember Hirsch and Boardmember Lew voted to keep 261 Hamilton Avenue.

Chair Thompson, Boardmember Hirsch, and Vice Chair Lee voted for 3223 Hanover.

Chair Thompson voted for 3406 Hillview.

Boardmember Baltay voted for 480 Lytton Avenue.

Boardmember Lew clarified that 656 Lytton Avenue should picture the Lytton Gardens housing project.

Boardmember Hirsch apologized for his mistake. He noted the project was not started yet.

Ms. Gerhardt said that would be eligible for the next round of ARB Awards.

Boardmember Baltay and Chair Thompson voted for Kol Emeth, 4175 Manuela Avenue.

Chair Thompson and Boardmember Hirsch voted for the 16 family residential units on Maybell.

Boardmember Hirsch voted for 636 Middlefield Road.

Boardmember Hirsch voted for 1451 Middlefield Road.

Vice Chair Lee voted for 2555 Park Boulevard.

Vice Chair Lee voted for 3045 Park Boulevard.

Chair Thompson voted for 3181 Porter.

Boardmember Lew voted for 1400 Page Mill because it was a net zero electric building.

Chair Thompson voted for 1050 Page Mill.

Boardmember Baltay and Boardmember Hirsch voted for 355 University Avenue.

Boardmember Baltay and Boardmember Hirsch voted for 375 University Avenue.

Boardmember Baltay voted for 500 University Avenue.

Boardmember Lew voted for 636 Waverley because it is a net zero electric building.

Boardmember Hirsch voted for 70 Welch and noted that the picture of the building was poor.

Chair Thompson explained that it was difficult to get a picture of the building at 1875 Embarcadero Road because of the landscaping.

Boardmember Lew noted that the creek was widened for flood protection which caused a reconfiguration of the golf course. He thought the club house and other buildings were to come later and did not recall any changes to the buildings coming before the ARB.

Chair Thompson said the ARB should skip the project.

Ms. Gerhardt stated that was the end of the presentation.

Vice Chair Lee thanked Ms. Gerhardt and Chair Thompson for their work on the ARB Awards.

Chair Thompson explained they needed to take more photos of several of the projects and suggested the ARB discuss categories for the awards.

Vice Chair Lee suggested they make general comments. She has taken notes and plans to visit some buildings. She has thoughts for award categories, but she was unsure yet.

Chair Thompson asked the ARB to make their general comments.

Vice Chair Lee said she did not know that 636 Waverley was net 0. With respect to storefronts and TI's she asked if they wanted a category for "street experience" or something similar. She also thought some of the projects featured interesting site planning and campus considerations. She wished there were more housing examples on their list and was hopeful to see more in the next round. She wanted to elevate a historic preservation project if there was one.

Boardmember Hirsch thought the next step would be for the ARB to try to view the projects on the short list.

Ms. Gerhardt stated that the short list was 35 projects.

Chair Thompson said that for Kol Emeth it might be better to organize a group outing because she had to reserve time just to take the pictures.

Ms. Gerhardt stressed that the ARB had to be careful of a quorum.

Chair Thompson said that she could organize multiple visits.

Vice Chair Lee found it useful to take notes and she asked for the other ARB members to note why they thought projects should be on the short list. That could increase the productivity before the next meeting.

Chair Thompson agreed.

Boardmember Hirsch was concerned about predetermining the categories because they might not have a top project in a category. The notes would be useful in that regard.

Ms. French said it was important for each project to be clearly labeled so the ARB understands what it is considering.

Ms. Gerhardt said that they might have to look at approved plan sets for that information.

Chair Thompson asked if it was too much to get a scope description on the 35 projects.

Ms. French said they could get a paragraph description out of the staff report if not the plans themselves. The links to some of the plans are probably still on the website.

Chair Thompson observed that many of the buildings they passed over had similar qualities, which she found interesting.

Ms. Gerhardt asked if they wanted to review the 35 projects again in list form.

Ms. French said it would be helpful to identify the projects that needed additional photography.

Chair Thompson suggested that the ARB do more homework since the meeting was running long. She asked if the ARB Awards could be agendized for another meeting since the November 4th meeting was cancelled.

Ms. Gerhardt said that she would create the short list with pictures and email it to the ARB. Then Boardmembers can take additional pictures and discuss the matter again. She will work on the plan sets and descriptions.

Ms. French said that the November 18th agenda was deep, so she suggested December 2nd for the Awards discussion.

Ms. Gerhardt said there were two projects on November 18th. They could hold a short conversation on the Awards and then continue the discussion to December 2nd.

Chair Thompson said December 2nd made sense.

Ms. Gerhardt said that gave staff more time to work on the site plans and descriptions.

Vice Chair Lee said that if the plans were still on the website all they needed was the link.

Ms. Gerhardt said that some of the links might not exist, but that she would set up a website with links to the plans as that was probably the easiest way to view it.

Chair Thompson closed the item.

Board Member Questions, Comments or Announcements

North of Ventura Coordinated Area Plan (NVCAP) Working Group Updates – Boardmember Lew

Boardmember Lew stated he had no update on the North of Ventura Coordinated Area Plan (NVCAP). The group is not necessarily meeting again although the project planners might reconvene if they need more feedback.

Ms. Gerhardt explained that the deadline for the ARB applications was extended to October 26th. There is currently only one application in and there are three seats to fill. The Clerk's office will be advertising, but current ARB members should recruit as well.

Chair Thompson noted she posted the openings on her LinkedIn. She announced that she met with the Mayor and Vice Mayor and other Board and Commission Chairs. They want an understanding of California Avenue and possible project pitches. She suggested the item be agendized for December 2nd.

Adjournment

Chair Thompson adjourned the meeting at approximately 12:15 p.m.