



# Architectural Review Board

## Staff Report (ID # 14097)

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<b>Report Type:</b>	Study Session	<b>Meeting Date:</b> 3/3/2022
<b>Summary Title:</b>	901 South California Avenue: Replacement Office/R&D Building	
<b>Title:</b>	901 South California Avenue [21PLN-00274]: Request for Preliminary Architectural Review to allow the demolition of an existing building and construction of an approximately 55,583 square foot Office/R&D Building. Environmental Assessment: Not a Project. The Formal Application Will be Subject to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Review. Zoning District: RP(L)(Research Park). For More Information Contact the Project Planner Garrett Sauls at <a href="mailto:Garrett.Sauls@CityofPaloAlto.org">Garrett.Sauls@CityofPaloAlto.org</a> .	
<b>From:</b>	Jonathan Lait	

### Recommendation

It is recommended that the Architectural Review Board (ARB) take the following action(s):

1. Review and provide informal comments. No formal action is requested.

### Report Summary

The subject application is a request for preliminary review. No formal direction is provided to the applicant and Board members should refrain from forming and expressing opinions either in support or against the project.

For preliminary review applications, the Planning and Community Environment department only performs a cursory review of the project for compliance with the zoning code. A comprehensive review of a future project for compliance with applicable codes would follow the submittal of a formal application. Accordingly, there may be aspects of this preliminary review application that do not comply with municipal regulations or require additional discretionary applications beyond architectural review.

Similarly, there has been no comprehensive review of the project to the Comprehensive Plan or other policy documents. Such review will occur upon the filing of a formal application.

The purpose of this meeting is to provide an applicant an opportunity to present a conceptual project to the Board and receive initial comments. Board members may identify aspects of the project that are appropriate given the neighborhood context and consistent with city policies or areas of concern that the applicant may want to reconsider in a formal submittal. Community members are also encouraged to provide early input to the project.

## Background

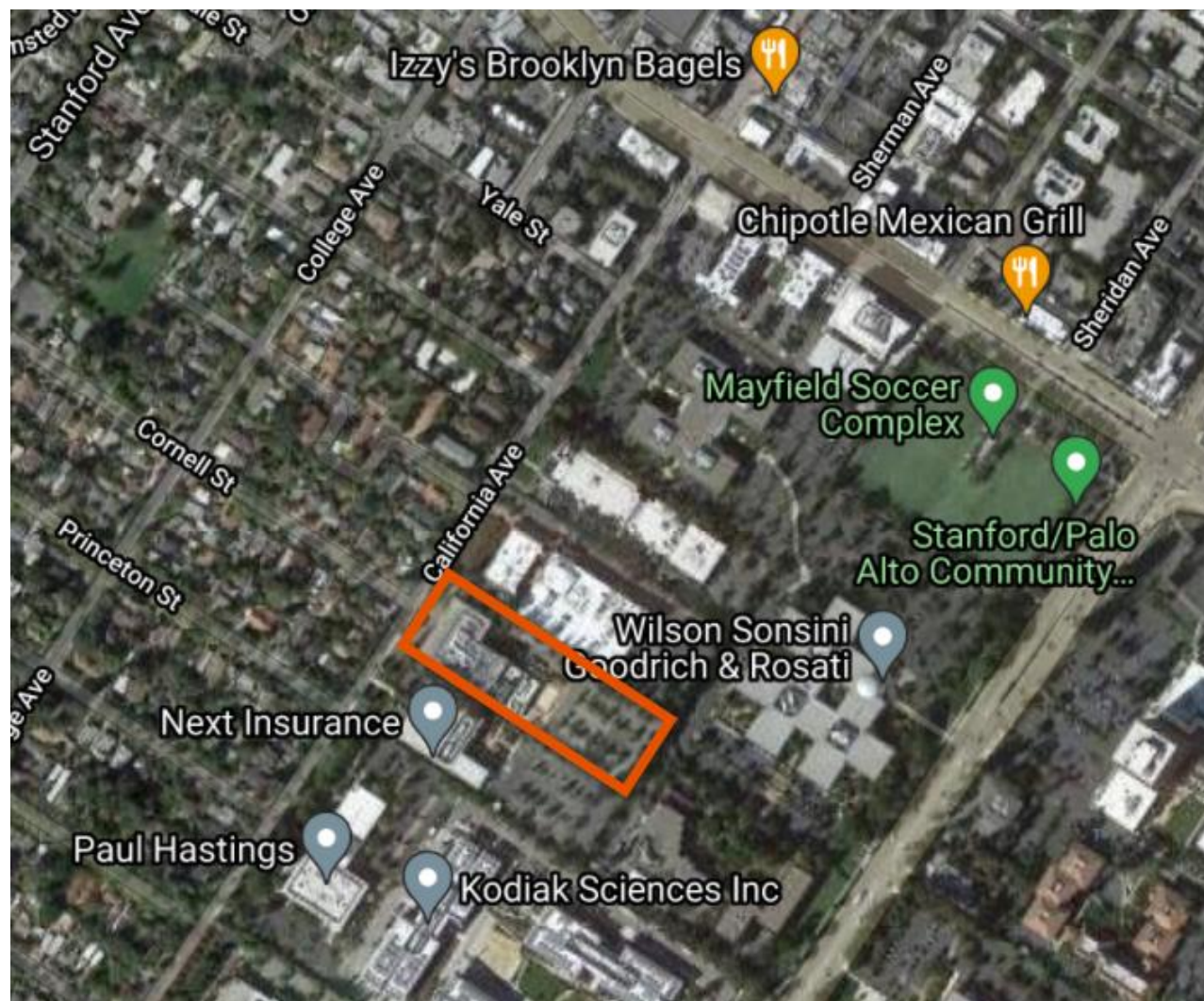
### Project Information

Owner:	Board of Trustees of the Leland Stanford Junior University
Architect:	RMW Architecture & Interiors
Representative:	Stan Lew; Radika Bunton
Legal Counsel:	N/A

### Property Information

Address:	901 South California Avenue
Neighborhood:	College Terrace
Lot Dimensions & Area:	662 feet wide x 210 feet long
Housing Inventory Site:	Not applicable
Located w/in a Plume:	Not applicable
Protected/Heritage Trees:	None
Historic Resource(s):	None
Existing Improvement(s):	[54,930 square foot two-story office building; 35 feet tall; built in 1984]
Existing Land Use(s):	Research and Development
Adjacent Land Uses & Zoning:	North: R-1 (Single-Family) West: RP (Office/R&D) East: RP (Office/R&D) South: RP (Office/R&D)

Aerial View of Property:



Source:

Land Use Designation & Applicable Plans

Zoning Designation:	RP; RP(L)
Comp. Plan Designation:	Research/Office Park
Context-Based Design Criteria:	Not applicable
Downtown Urban Design Guide:	Not applicable
South of Forest Avenue Coordinated Area Plan:	Not applicable
Baylands Master Plan:	Not applicable
El Camino Real Design Guidelines (1976 / 2002):	Not applicable
Proximity to Residential Uses or Districts (150'):	Yes
Located w/in the Airport	Not applicable

Influence Area: \_\_\_\_\_

**Recent Prior City Reviews & Action**

City Council: None \_\_\_\_\_

PTC: None \_\_\_\_\_

HRB: None \_\_\_\_\_

ARB: None \_\_\_\_\_

**Project Description**

The applicant proposes to demolish the existing building and surface parking lot then construct a new 58,059 sf two-story, office/R&D building with a surface parking lot located at the rear of the building. The new building square footage includes 55,583 sf that counts toward FAR and 2,476 sf of amenity space. The site is zoned RP; RP(L) and is surrounded by similar office/R&D uses with single family homes across the street. The vicinity includes buildings that are single-story and two-stories in height.

The site will be modified to add a driveway along the western property line to support circulation through the site. The first floor of the building will include a subtle pedestrian entry along the eastern property line and will primarily consist of office space. The second floor of the building will include a fitness center, office space, as well as a recessed second floor balcony which faces the eastern interior side property line. The applicant is also proposing a two-story tower element that will utilize wood slats on the interior glass to limit light spill out. All required parking spaces are proposed to be provided at the rear of the site.

The exterior of the proposed building would have a modern style consistent with other projects in the Stanford Research Park. The building will utilize red and grey terracotta, manufactured recycled wood, metal panels, and glass elements. A metal and glass overhead sectional door is proposed for the entry to the garage. The side elevations include extensive amounts of windows to capture the East-West sunlight. The street elevations offer fewer openings with more solid terracotta surfaces to prevent spill over light towards the residential properties. All materials are identified on pages 28 – 32 of the plan set.

**Analysis<sup>1</sup>**

Preliminary review applications receive a cursory review for compliance with zoning regulations and consistency with the comprehensive plan or other applicable policy documents. A more comprehensive review will occur upon formal submittal, which may reveal other code or policy concerns.

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<sup>1</sup> The information provided in this section is based on analysis prepared by the report author prior to the public hearing. The Architectural Review Board in its review of the administrative record and based on public testimony may reach a different conclusion from that presented in this report and may choose to make alternative findings. A change to the findings may result in a final action that is different from the staff recommended action in this report.

At this point in project development, the ARB is encouraged to provide feedback to the applicant on the preliminary drawings. In addition to any comments the Board members may provide, the applicant has asked the ARB to comment on the following items:

1. Site circulation: Cars, pedestrians, service
2. Architecture: Look and feel, materiality, massing
3. Side entrance/entry sequence from California Street
4. Project FAR size, parking, concept for added amenities
5. Landscape concepts for California frontage and East terrace amenity

### Neighborhood Setting and Character

The subject site is surrounded by office / R&D buildings to the East, West, and South with single-family homes facing the property to the North. The site has a Landscape (L) overlay along the California Avenue frontage which matches the 50-foot special setback. There are three mature street trees along the frontage of the site which will be retained in the proposed application.

The placement and massing of the building is representative for the Research Park context. The building follows a rectangular shaped plan, with the longest façade facing the eastern and western property lines. Exterior materials would consist of painted metal panels, wood soffit paneling, substantial glass, and a red and grey terracotta cladding. The mixture of materials presents a distinctive style that appears appropriate for the setting and vicinity. While the selection of architectural materials distinguishes the proposed building from the varying styles of the surrounding buildings, the proposed building would appear to be compatible with its surroundings. Staff would like to receive input on potential light impacts on the neighboring single-family homes and surrounding properties as well as the applicant's proposed 15-foot tall mechanical screen.

### Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan, Area Plans and Guidelines<sup>2</sup>

There are no Area Plans or Guidelines which direct how development should be considered in the Stanford Research Park other than the Comprehensive Plan and its adopted Goals, Policies, and Programs. The Comprehensive Plan provides the basis for the City's development regulations and is used by City staff to regulate building and development and make recommendations on projects. Upon submittal of a formal application, staff will evaluate the project's consistency with the relevant policies.

### Zoning Compliance<sup>3</sup>

A preliminary review of the proposed project's consistency with applicable zoning standards has been performed. A summary table is provided in Attachment C. The proposed project appears to comply with all applicable codes.

<sup>2</sup> The Palo Alto Comprehensive Plan is available online: <http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/gov/topics/projects/landuse/compplan.asp>

<sup>3</sup> The Palo Alto Zoning Code is available online: [http://www.amlegal.com/codes/client/palo-alto\\_ca](http://www.amlegal.com/codes/client/palo-alto_ca)

The City's Annual Office Limit does not apply to the Stanford Research Park Area.

### Consistency with Application Findings

Once the project is submitted with a formal application it will need to meet the City's findings for approval under PAMC 18.76. The findings have been included for reference in Attachment B.

### **Environmental Review**

The subject review involves no discretionary action and is therefore not a project and not subject to review pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). If a formal application is filed, an analysis of the project's conformance with CEQA will be performed.

### **Public Notification, Outreach & Comments**

The Palo Alto Municipal Code requires notice of this public hearing be published in a local paper. Notice of a public hearing for this project was published in the *Daily Post* on February 18, which is 13 days in advance of the meeting. Postcard mailing occurred on February 16, which is 15 days in advance of the meeting.

### Public Comments

As of the writing of this report, no project-related, public comments were received.

#### **Report Author & Contact Information**

Garrett Sauls, Associate Planner  
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[Garrett.Sauls@CityofPaloAlto.org](mailto:Garrett.Sauls@CityofPaloAlto.org)

#### **ARB<sup>4</sup> Liaison & Contact Information**

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#### **Attachments:**

- Attachment A: Location Map (PDF)
- Attachment B: Applicant's Project Description (PDF)
- Attachment C: ARB Findings (DOCX)
- Attachment E: Conflict of Interest Map (PDF)
- Attachment D: Zoning Comparison Table (DOCX)
- Attachment F: Project Plans (DOCX)

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<sup>4</sup> Emails may be sent directly to the ARB using the following address: [arb@cityofpaloalto.org](mailto:arb@cityofpaloalto.org)



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## MEMORANDUM

<b>Project No.</b>	17027.01	<b>Date</b>	February 14, 2022
<b>Project</b>	901 S California Avenue Palo Alto, CA	<b>To</b>	Garrett Sauls Associate Planner Planning and Development Services Department Palo Alto, CA
<b>Issued By</b>	Stan Lew	<b>CC</b>	R. Bunton/ARE, S Worthington/RMW
<b>Subject</b>	901 S California Project Description		

901 S California Avenue is located on the western edge of Stanford Research Park within Palo Alto. Adjacent and nearby buildings include single family homes along the western edge of the site, and commercial buildings line the eastern edge of the site.

The project includes the removal of an existing 2-story structure, and replacement with a similar 2-story building that is sited to correct existing non-conforming property-line setbacks and provision of required parking stalls. Existing neighboring commercial buildings vary greatly with respect to materials and scale; however, all maintain a significant landscaped setback from the primary frontage. The replacement building provides a 50' landscaped setback.

The proposed replacement building is 58,059 square feet with a building height of 50' to the top of the mechanical equipment screen. Proposed building materials are terra cotta, manufactured recycled wood and clear vision glass. The architectural scale, warm materiality and shadowed rhythms are crafted to be a comfortable addition to the residential neighborhood.

Landscape and site elements include a welcoming entry sequence beginning at the sidewalk featuring three clusters of public seating that lead to a tenant front door and arcade walkway along the building's northern edge. Accessible, clean-air vehicle, electric vehicle and carpool/vanpool parking stalls are provided with standard parking stalls. All vehicular parking is located at the back (east) of the site.

END OF MEMORANDUM



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**ATTACHMENT C  
ARB FINDINGS FOR APPROVAL**

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In order for the ARB to make a future recommendation of approval, the project must comply with the following Findings for Architectural Review as required in Chapter 18.76.020 of the PAMC.

**Finding #1: The design is consistent with applicable provisions of the Palo Alto Comprehensive Plan, Zoning Code, coordinated area plans (including compatibility requirements), and any relevant design guides.**

**Finding #2: The project has a unified and coherent design, that:**

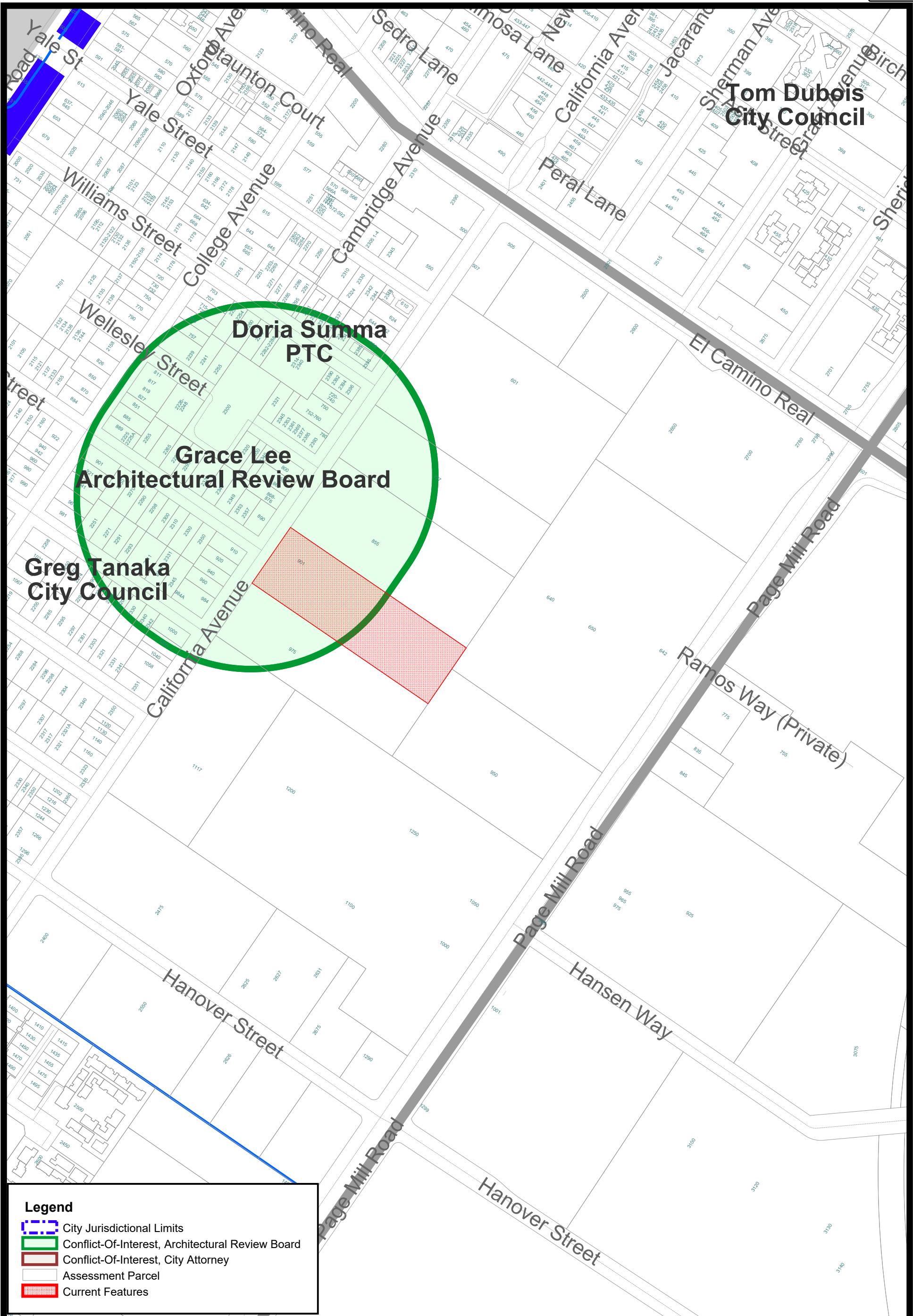
- a. creates an internal sense of order and desirable environment for occupants, visitors, and the general community,
- b. preserves, respects and integrates existing natural features that contribute positively to the site and the historic character including historic resources of the area when relevant,
- c. is consistent with the context-based design criteria of the applicable zone district,
- d. provides harmonious transitions in scale, mass and character to adjacent land uses and land use designations,
- e. enhances living conditions on the site (if it includes residential uses) and in adjacent residential areas.

**Finding #3: The design is of high aesthetic quality, using high quality, integrated materials and appropriate construction techniques, and incorporating textures, colors, and other details that are compatible with and enhance the surrounding area.**

**Finding #4: The design is functional, allowing for ease and safety of pedestrian and bicycle traffic and providing for elements that support the building's necessary operations (e.g. convenient vehicle access to property and utilities, appropriate arrangement and amount of open space and integrated signage, if applicable, etc.).**

**Finding #5: The landscape design complements and enhances the building design and its surroundings, is appropriate to the site's functions, and utilizes to the extent practical, regional indigenous drought resistant plant material capable of providing desirable habitat that can be appropriately maintained.**

**Finding #6: The project incorporates design principles that achieve sustainability in areas related to energy efficiency, water conservation, building materials, landscaping, and site planning.**



Tom Dubois  
City Council

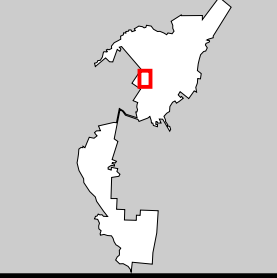
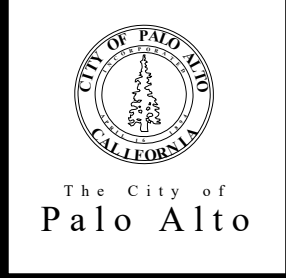
Doria Summa  
PTC

Grace Lee  
Architectural Review Board

Greg Tanaka  
City Council

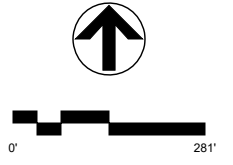
**Legend**

- City Jurisdictional Limits
- Conflict-Of-Interest, Architectural Review Board
- Conflict-Of-Interest, City Attorney
- Assessment Parcel
- Current Features



### Conflict of Interest Map

This map is a product of the City of Palo Alto GIS



**ATTACHMENT D**  
**ZONING COMPARISON TABLE**  
 901 S California Avenue, 21PLN-00274

**Table 1: COMPARISON WITH CHAPTER 18.20 (RP DISTRICT)**

Regulation	Required	Existing	Proposed
Minimum Site Area, width and depth	1 acre, 100 feet, and 150 feet	3.189 acres	3.189 acres
Minimum Front Yard	20 feet	67'6" feet	50 feet
Rear Yard	20 feet	308 feet	328 feet
Interior Side Yard	20 feet	16'; 20' feet	38+ feet
Special Setback	50 feet – see Chapter 20.08 & zoning maps	67'6" feet	50 feet
Max. Site Coverage	30% (41,687 sf)	27% (38,091 sf)	24% (33,347 sf)
Max. Total Floor Area Ratio	40% (55,583 sf)	39.5% (54,930 sf)	40% (55,583 sf + 2,476 sf amenity space not included in FAR; 58,059 sf)
Max. Building Height	35 ft or 25 ft when located within 40 ft of residentially zoned property <sup>(4,5)</sup>	35 ft	35 ft (50 ft measured to rooftop mechanical enclosure per PAMC 18.20.040(e)(2))
Daylight Plane	N/A	N/A	N/A
Employee Showers	4 required for new square footage greater than 50,000 sf	2	4 showers

(4) See subsection 18.20.040(e) below for exceptions to height and floor area limitations in the ROLM and RP zoning districts.

(5) Residential zones include R-1, R-2, RE, RMD, RM-15, RM-30, RM-40 and residential Planned Community (PC) zones.

**Table 2: CONFORMANCE WITH CHAPTER 18.52 (Off-Street Parking and Loading)  
for Profession/General Office Uses\***

Type	Required	Existing	Proposed
Vehicle Parking	1/300 sf of gross floor area for a total of 185 parking spaces	174	185
Bicycle Parking	1/3,000 sf (80% long term and 20% short term) equals 19 spaces	18	20 (10 long term, 10 short term)
Loading Space	1 loading spaces for 10,000 – 99,999 sf	1	1

\* On-site employee amenity space is exempted from the parking requirements

## Attachment E

### **Project Plans**

During Shelter-in-Place, project plans are only available to the public online. Hardcopies of the plans have been provided to Board members.

#### **Directions to review Project plans online:**

1. Go to: [bit.ly/PAwaitingprojects](http://bit.ly/PAwaitingprojects)
2. Scroll down to find "901 S. California Avenue" and click the address link
3. On this project specific webpage you will find a link to the project plans and other important information