



Architectural Review Board

Staff Report (ID # 14350)

Report Type: Subcommittee Items **Meeting Date:** 5/19/2022

Summary Title: 2609 Alma: Four Units (Ad Hoc Memo)

Title: 2609 Alma Street [21PLN-00176]: Ad Hoc Committee Review of a Project that was Conditioned to Return with Project Changes Related to Second and Third Floor Deck Privacy, and Massing as Seen From Alma Street. Environmental Assessment: Exempt From CEQA in Accordance with Guideline 15404 (New Construction). Zoning District: RM-30 (Multi-Family Residential). For More Information Contact the Project Planner Emily Foley at Emily.Foley@cityofpaloalto.org.

From: Jonathan Lait

Recommendation

Staff recommends the Architectural Review Board (ARB) take the following action(s):

1. Discuss and provide direction or approve project revisions.

Background

The application for four new residential units in the RM-30 zoning district was reviewed by the Architectural Review Board (ARB) at their regular meeting on March 17, 2022. The ARB recommended the project to the Ad Hoc Committee, to incorporate additional changes needed to fully meet the ARB Findings, as described below. An Ad Hoc Committee recommendation is required prior to the final decision by the Director of Planning and Development Services.

The applicant is returning to the ARB Ad Hoc Committee for approval of the following items:

1. **The rear facing balconies shall be at least 75% transparent up to a height of 5ft measured from the finished floor, in a manner consistent with the Design Enhancement Exception (DEE) Findings, PAMC 18.76.050(c).**

Applicant's Response:

- An open shou sugi ban privacy railing has been added to the second and third floor

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decks, as well as the front third floor deck. This railing, alongside the previously proposed landscaping, will create a privacy barrier at least 5 feet in height.

- The DEE Findings for the protrusion into the rear daylight plane can be found in Attachment B.

2. Modify the side-facing elevations to modulate the brightness of the building, particularly as seen from Alma St. Consider color, plants, and/or depth and shadow lines.

Applicant's Response:

- The architect determined the most impactful improvement could be made to the massing by replicating the rear-facing deck style, with shou sugi ban siding, on the third floor front deck. The second floor deck remains the same, to provide additional shade, visual interest, and opportunity for plants to grow on the vertical railing. The stucco is the same color as previously shown.

A video recording of the Board's last meeting on this project is available online: <https://bit.ly/3KHnkWP>. The Board is encouraged to provide direction to staff and the applicant as to whether the proposed changes are sufficient or requires further refinement.

Report Author & Contact Information

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Attachments:

- Attachment A: March 17, 2022 Excerpt ARB Minutes (DOCX)
- Attachment B: DEE Findings (DOCX)
- Attachment C: Applicant's Response Letter (PDF)
- Attachment D: Project Plans (DOCX)

¹ Emails may be sent directly to the ARB using the following address: arb@cityofpaloalto.org



ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD
EXCERPT DRAFT MINUTES: March 17, 2022
Council Chamber & 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 Council Chamber and virtual teleconference at 8:30 a.m.

Present: Chair Osma Thompson, Vice Chair David Hirsch, Boardmember Peter Baltay, Boardmember Rosenberg, Boardmember Chen (attended virtually)

Absent: None.

Chair Thompson welcomed the two new members of the ARB.

Oral Communications

None.

Agenda Changes, Additions and Deletions

Jodie Gerhardt, Manager of Current Planning, stated she thought they would continue the California Avenue item to the next hearing for time.

Chair Thompson suggested they make the decision later.

City Official Reports

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

Ms. Gerhardt welcomed the new Boardmembers to the ARB. Boardmember Chen will be on vacation for the next hearing. She shared the ARB 2022 Meeting Schedule and noted that all future meetings are currently scheduled to be held in hybrid format. The next hearing is scheduled for April 7, 2022 and has 250 Sherman Avenue, 3300 El Camino Real, and 2850 W. Bayshore on the Agenda.

Action Items

2. PUBLIC HEARING / QUASI-JUDICIAL. 2609 Alma Street [21PLN-00176]: Recommendation on Applicant's Request for Approval 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: Exempt 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 Emily Foley at Emily.foley@cityofpaloalto.org

Chair Thompson introduced the project and called for ARB disclosures.

Boardmember Baltay disclosed that he visited the site including the back of the property where he encountered a neighbor. He learned there was no privacy.

Vice Chair Hirsch disclosed he also visited the site and noticed how busy Alma Street is and that it was difficult to get to the project property.

Boardmembers Rosenberg and Chen had no disclosures.

Chair Thompson noted that she had previously visited the site in the past. She called for the staff report.

Emily Foley, Associate Planner, shared her screen and gave a PowerPoint presentation on 2609 through 2617 Alma Street. The project will demolish two existing single-story duplexes and redevelop the site to four three-story residential units in a townhome configuration. Under SB330 they met the requirements to freeze the development standards on the date they applied. The ARB cannot reduce the number of units on site or reduce the Floor Area Ratio (FAR) or density. The project is also limited to only five public hearings with this being the second ARB hearing. She displayed the current Google Street View of the property and the proposed project. The project location is on Alma and in RM-30 zoning that abuts R-1 properties and is across the street from Caltrain tracks. The site is 8,070 square feet (sf). She displayed the site plan and noted the central parking court, building spacing, landscaped private open spaces for each unit, and the two driveways. Compared to the initial submittal the project now includes turf strips, 11 total trees, and additional landscaping. The rear utility easement constrains the ability to add landscaping in that area however there are two large trees on the adjacent property which overhang the site. [video/audio blank at 14:40ish] For privacy a new fence is proposed along the sides and rear of the property. She displayed the front and rear elevations of the project plans. The original white stucco has been changed to a more off white color reflecting prior ARB comment. The height of the landscaping on the rear facing balconies has also been increased. On the sides of the building obscured glazing has been added for privacy and is shown in the side elevations. Staff recommends a motion to approve the project keeping in mind the SB330 restrictions and the overall number of allowable hearings.

Chair Thompson called for the applicant's presentation and provided them 10 minutes.

Khoan Duong appeared on behalf of the client, Gemini Palo Alto, who were unable to attend the hearing. Pam Jones, the landscape architect, and Ryan [Mitchka – guessing on the spelling] from Ms. Duong's office were also available for questions and comments. When Gemini Palo Alto purchased the property it was in two separate lots which have now been merged. The goal was to develop to the maximum unit number possible for the property which is 4. She provided images of the existing property, Alma Street, and existing buildings along Alma. Ms. Foley outlined the comments they received in the study session and pointed out the changes. Gemini Palo Alto wants to provide equitably sized housing for families and have proposed 1,200 sf units in three-story buildings. There is room on the roof for solar panels. Overhangs have been added in response to fire requirements for roof access. Additional slides showing the renderings of the project were shown prior to the conclusion the presentation.

Chair Thompson called for the public comment, but there was none. She called for questions of the applicant.

Boardmember Baltay clarified that the ARB had the updated material samples.

Ms. Foley indicated that his understanding of the materials was correct.

Vice Chair Hirsch inquired about the purpose of the fire department regulations.

Ms. Duong explained that the building is 30 feet high and that in order for the Fire Department to access the roof a platform at 27 feet is required. The platforms which connect the buildings is also for the Fire Department.

Chair Thompson requested that they display the drawing as it was not in the packet.

Ms. Foley displayed the plans and pointed out the overhangs.

Chair Thompson for requested additional information about the overhangs.

Ms. Doung explained that they were solid steel framed overhangs consisting of roofing material on the top and tongue and groove wood in under.

Chair Thompson thanked her for the clarification and stated that the drawings showed it as sort of see through.

Ms. Doung stated that another reason for the connections between the two buildings was to allow for two means of egress.

Vice Chair Hirsch requested to see a rendering the passageway and perimeter walls.

Ms. Doung said that there were no windows in the internal access space.

Vice Chair Hirsch inquired about a lighting diagram for the area or a picture of the fixtures.

Ms. Doung said there was an exterior lighting plan in the submittal set.

Vice Chair Hirsch clarified that he was concerned with the passageway between the buildings.

Ms. Doung showed an image of an exterior sconce and an older plan that displayed the locations of the light fixtures.

Vice Chair Hirsch asked if they were up or down lights.

Ms. Doung stated they were direct and indirect.

Chair Thompson confirmed that she was looking at the right plan page.

Boardmember Baltay asked if there was another way to meet the fire requirements.

Ms. Doung explained they had proposed an exterior mounted ladder but that was found not to be a good solution as it is quicker for the fire department to use their own ladders. The only other solution would be

to lower the height of the building by three feet which would decrease the ceiling height and not allow for three stories. After numerous discussions with the Fire Marshal this was the compromise option.

Boardmember Baltay asked if staff had discussed the matter with the Fire Department.

Ms. Foley indicated she had encountered this situation on another project.

Boardmember Chen inquired about any privacy guidelines the ARB had to follow in a multifamily project. She was specifically concerned about the bedroom windows which face each other.

Ms. Foley confirmed she was speaking about the interior of the project then explained that the city does not specify privacy requirements between the residents of a multifamily project. There is at least a 20 foot distance between the windows.

Boardmember Rosenberg asked about the planned ceiling heights for each story.

Ms. Doung stated the top level was 8.5 feet, the middle level is 8 feet, and the ground level is 9.5 feet.

Vice Chair Hirsch confirmed that the two windows closest to one another on the interior of the project were from the stairwells.

Ms. Doung stated that was correct except the middle level windows were bedrooms facing the parking court. She displayed a plan including the dimensions.

Chair Thompson called for further questions, but there were none. She called for ARB comment.

Boardmember Baltay thanked the applicant and stated he had two concerns. The first was the privacy impact and potential mitigations to buildings at the rear and sides of the project. The balcony landscaping notwithstanding there is insufficient protection for the privacy of the neighbors considering the R-1 zone in the back. A 7 foot fence is not adequate to ensure privacy. In order to mitigate privacy concerns they need to do something significant with the balconies and five foot landscaping does not seem sufficient. He also thought the ARB should request robust landscaping in the planting strips due to the lower adjacent buildings. Further he thought the new sample provided for the white was very similar in tone to the last one and would be very visible and too reflective. [break in audio/video at 37:00ish]

Vice Chair Hirsch stated that with privacy they should take into account that the back of the building steps back so that the upstairs bedroom balconies are further from the property line which helps provide privacy. So long as the appropriate plants are selected he felt that the privacy issues were addressed. The area between the buildings is very tall and very narrow and he was concerned with how it would feel to walk through it at night. He suggested adding overhead lighting or considering additional windows to make the space more comfortable. The platforms that were added for fire safety could play some role in the new lighting. Overall he thought the site plan worked and he appreciated the applicant taking the ARBs previous comments into consideration. Noise and the traffic pattern from Alma cannot be ignored, but the planting outside of the first wall could include taller privacy plantings to make it feel less a part of the street. He made it clear that he was not suggesting a structure, but more of a medium scale planting wall. He did not notice a closet in the first unit and noted it would be important to allow residents use of areas under the stairs for storage. The applicant should also consider expanding the living room size for resident's comfort. He further noted the lack of pantry and no cellar access for storage. He thought

Boardmember Baltay's comment was the most significant. He realized that he did not know where the air conditioning unit was located and that he should have asked that question of the applicant. He thought it might be in the rear near the parking and indicated that he noted nonverbal agreement with that.

Boardmember Rosenberg echoed Boardmembers Baltay and Hirsch. The white is quite bright coming down Alma but thought it could be maintained on the front/rear and internal courtyard facades but did some color shift, blocking, or other treatment on the Alma faces. She agreed that there were multiple options that could be employed to bring more light into the corridor as discussed by Vice Chair Hirsch.

Boardmember Chen thought the site planning was very smart and solved the parking issues. She had concerns regarding privacy but noted there was little they could do on the sides as it was very narrow and there were existing trees. Although she enjoyed the windows she was concerned about privacy considering how large the windows are in the bedrooms and how that might feel to residents.

Chair Thompson echoed that they may be able to offset the windows by mirroring the floor plans. That would provide a greater amount of privacy for the residents. The crystal white was too white, but the light grey was growing on her. She held the samples at angles to look for glare and noted that it wasn't a very bright day. Overall she thought she was okay with the approach and that white was acceptable while noting that she might be the only Boardmember with that opinion. If the tone goes too dark the contrast between the wood and the white might be muddied and she did not want to compromise that. The project is handsome and would be a nice addition to Alma. She wanted to keep the integrity of the design intent. The rear planter balconies are a nice depth, but the landscaping plan does not indicate the planting that will occur there. She encouraged screening planting in those planters for privacy. In the past the ARB has received planting plans for upper levels. She agreed with Boardmember Rosenberg about keeping it light between the buildings. The renderings show the fire shelves as see through, but they are not, and the plans should reflect that. If they were clear it would add light but would also add a maintenance consideration for bird poop and dust. The area between the buildings will be most successful if it's as bright as possible. Generally the massing was acceptable, and she appreciated how it was set back from Alma. Overall she could vote to approve the project as it meets the findings. She called for further ARB comment about whether the project could be approved or if it needed to return to subcommittee. She noted that she had heard conflicting opinions on material choice and ideas about privacy.

Boardmember Baltay was concerned about the privacy of the rear neighbors from the balconies at the back and was not satisfied with the current solution.

Chair Thompson noted that there were two privacy concerns, the windows and then the rear balconies.

Vice Chair Hirsch thought the solidness of the ledge between the buildings was unfortunate and suggested some grating to allow the weather and light through.

Chair Thompson suggested they continue talking about the lighting and noted the suggestion for grating and Boardmember Rosenberg's suggestion to use acrylic.

Boardmember Rosenberg said that she suggested a type of Cal Wall system or skylight or series of skylights within the solid structure to draw more light down.

Ms. Doung clarified that the overhangs between the buildings are made of a walkable glass. She appreciated the metal grating suggestion as it allowed for both Fire Department access and light.

Chair Thompson said that it had not been clear to the ARB that it was a walkable glass. She had understood it to be a solid material with a wood soffit.

Ms. Doung explained that was the case for the overhang at the parking court.

Chair Thompson restated that on the parking court they were solid but between the buildings was a walkable glass.

Ms. Doung confirmed that was correct.

Chair Thompson thanked her for the clarification and stated that she had no issues with the walkable glass.

Boardmember Rosenberg asked if the glass was proposed to be clear or obscured somehow.

Ms. Doung said it would be a laminated obscure glass.

Vice Chair Hirsch thought the bird poop would show.

Chair Thompson noted that it would rain.

Vice Chair Hirsch still preferred grating to glass. He recommended clearing the glass with the Fire Department as he was concerned it might be slippery.

Chair Thompson said she wanted to discuss Boardmember Baltay's concern about the rear decks.

Boardmember Baltay stated that as it was adjacent to an R1 property and if it were a single family home going through an Individual Review (IR) process the balcony would not be approved. The planting does not seem sufficient for privacy and even if it was initially he did not believe it would last over time. There have been increasing concerns in the city about privacy and they must consider protecting the privacy of people in R1. It is a mistake to accept anything less than what they would require for a single family home in the same location just because it was planned as an apartment building. He suggested a standard of anything below 5 feet being required to have an opacity or translucence of 75 to 85% in addition to the planter as designed. He personally viewed the dramatic and real privacy impact to the neighbor when he visited the project site. The preferred landscaping is against the fence and that is not possible with this project so they must do something else on the balconies to protect privacy.

Boardmember Rosenberg inquired if there was planting allowed at the back of the site.

Ms. Foley stated that the Utilities Department prohibits any landscaping that when mature would interfere with the utility lines.

Vice Chair Hirsch asked staff about the placement of the utility lines.

Ms. Foley explained there was a public utility easement, but she had not verified whether it was for above ground or underground reasons. Either case constrains screening landscaping.

Vice Chair Hirsch requested that staff clarify what was possible back there. He liked the balconies and if there were some ways to create privacy through planting he would support it. [break in audio/visual 59:15]

Ms. Foley stated that the survey confirmed there were overhead lines. There is a 5 foot utility easement and then an additional 5 feet until the lower floor starts. the upper balconies are about 15 feet from the property line and the third floor is set back further.

Chair Thompson noted that Sheet A1.02 showed 23 feet from the face of the glazing to the property line. The balcony is 6 feet plus a 1 foot 10 inch deep planter. There is a barrier of almost two feet between the edge and that sort of complies with the site plane. She pointed out things on the plans and explained them for Vice Chair Hirsch off microphone.

Ms. Gerhardt requested the sheet number.

Chair Thompson said it was Sheet A1.02.

Ms. Doung shared her screen and explained the distances of various points from the lot line. For privacy if they shrunk the balconies they could create a 5 foot high solid barrier. Boardmember Baltay had previously stated that would be an adequate height to prevent privacy issues. They could do the same thing with the third floor.

Vice Chair Hirsch asked if lightweight screening counted in the daylight plane.

Chair Thompson asked if he meant a trellis.

Vice Chair Hirsch stated he did.

Ms. Gerhardt explained that trellises and fences both needed to be outside of the daylight plane. Only landscaping can penetrate the daylight plane.

Vice Chair Hirsch thought it was a shame that a lightweight structure for growing landscaping was not allowed.

Chair Thompson noted that the section was also in A3.05 of the drawing set. It also includes planting suggestions.

Ms. Gerhardt suggested that if the ARB could make the findings for a Design Enhancement Exception (DEE), but the item would have to be an architectural feature.

Boardmember Baltay was opposed to making the balconies any smaller. He was interested in providing privacy however that was possible. He could support a lightweight lattice structure projecting beyond the daylight plane a small amount.

Vice Chair Hirsch agreed with the concept if the Building Department would approve it.

Boardmember Baltay said that if the planter was shifted back any further then they may as well not have the balcony.

Chair Thompson stated that she could also support the idea of a lattice.

Boardmember Rosenberg agreed that some lattice to support planting would help privacy concerns.

Boardmember Chen also supported the idea of the lattice.

Vice Chair Hirsch agreed.

Chair Thompson said the second privacy issue was raised by herself and Boardmember Chen about the windows on the second story. She directed the ARB to A1.02. She asked if Boardmember Chen had further ideas about offsetting the windows.

Boardmember Chen stated that it was up to the applicant to present more creative ideas, but it would be possible to offset the windows.

Ms. Doung suggested that they obscure the glazing on the lower portion of the window and keep the top portion clear. The view to the parking lot is not very strong, so providing some obscurity would help with privacy concerns.

Chair Thompson was not a big fan of obscuring windows and thought there was an alternative solution. She called for further ARB thoughts.

Boardmember Baltay did not think they would be able to offset the windows in an effective fashion. The angles are such that no matter how the windows are shifted the privacy impacts would be about the same. He asked if the windows were glazed floor to ceiling.

Chair Thompson asked the applicant to address the question.

Ms. Doung stated they were not glazed floor to ceiling and that there was a raised sill at 30 inches.

Boardmember Baltay thought it was awfully tight to get a high privacy standard between units with the parti. That is for the applicant to determine, and he did not feel comfortable regulating obscure glazing, which is a significant impact to the occupants. Further the rooms in question are bedrooms and will have some type of curtaining or shading. There is a real privacy impact, but he felt it should be left to the applicant to handle. He was most concerned about the privacy impact to the neighbors on adjoining properties.

Chair Thompson agreed and said she was prepared to let the issue go.

Vice Chair Hirsch agreed that residents would have many choices on how to screen their privacy from the interior of the unit.

Chair Thompson indicated she wanted to hear thoughts about the updated stucco color. Several ARB members took a moment to take the material sample to the window.

Boardmember Baltay said the material was not very reflective, but it was white.

Chair Thompson said it was not reflective and did not hear. She suggested the other Boardmembers take the material to the window.

Boardmember Chen stated she would attend the next meeting in person.

Chair Thompson said that the brightness did not bother her, and she had no issue with the material.

Boardmember Baltay thought that the applicant should tone down the side of the building so it would not be a 30 foot tall white wall on Alma.

Chair Thompson asked Boardmember Rosenberg to repeat her suggestion.

Boardmember Rosenberg explained that the colors could be left at the front, rear, and interior of the project with some toning down of the large side walls visible when driving down Alma. When the street is redeveloped there will be more tall buildings and this issue may not be viewed the same way. Currently it is an issue as it is the only tall building in the area and would therefore stand out. She loved the way the building looked from the front and would not ask for that to be changed.

Vice Chair Hirsch said there was a purity of the building and he agreed with Chair Thompson that the contrast was part of the purity. The building is a prototype of what they are likely to see in other areas along Alma. It may be nice to put more warmth into the stucco, but it would lessen the contrast. Therefore, he was okay with the stucco as shown.

Chair Thompson asked for Boardmember Chen's opinion on the side wall.

Boardmember Chen stated that it was hard to give an opinion without seeing the material board but tended to agree with Boardmember Rosenberg and suggested some plantings.

Chair Thompson I thought that the issue might be more about the massing on the side of the building and not the material. On Sheet A3.02 there are wood trellises that sort of break up the massing. She suggested this issue might require more thought and could be handled in subcommittee.

Vice Chair Hirsch was not interested in bringing the topic to subcommittee and thought the side of elevations were acceptable. The details on the side elevations work well with the overall structure.

Chair Thompson called for a Motion.

Boardmember Baltay asked staff if a DEE could be overseen through the subcommittee process.

Ms. Gerhardt stated that it could. Staff would draft the Findings and the Boardmembers would just need to agree that the enhancement was minor and that the Findings could be made.

Boardmember Baltay suggested they approve the project with a subcommittee to review the balcony. He further noted that he wanted to be on the subcommittee.

Chair Thompson asked him to make the Motion.

MOTION: Boardmember Baltay moved, seconded by Boardmember Rosenberg, to recommend approval of the project with the following two items remanded to subcommittee: 1) trellis or other device on the balconies that prevents more than 75% visible transmission to the height of 5 feet and would require a DEE, 2) modifications to the outside side edges of the building that are visible from Alma to modulate the overall brightness.

Chair Thompson called for any Amendments.

AMENDMENT #1: Vice Chair Hirsch stated he wanted to see a limit to the change in the perimeter of the building and suggested stucco patterning instead of planting.

Boardmember Baltay accepted the amendment.

Boardmember Rosenberg also accepted the amendment. She understood that the intent of the subcommittee was to allow the designer the opportunity to explore solutions and not that the ARB was trying to impose a solution.

Boardmember Baltay stated that the designer was asked to do something.

Boardmember Rosenberg agreed with that intent.

AMENDMENT #1 ACCEPTED

Chair Thompson called for the vote.

VOTE: 5-0

Boardmember Baltay requested Chair Thompson appoint the subcommittee.

Chair Thompson asked who else would like to be on the subcommittee.

Boardmember Rosenberg stated her interest.

Chair Thompson named Boardmembers Baltay and Rosenberg to the subcommittee. She thanked the applicant and concluded the item.

ATTACHMENT B
2609 ALMA
DEE FINDINGS

In order for the ARB to make a recommendation of approval for a design enhancement exception, the project must comply with the following Findings for a Design Enhancement Exception as required in Chapter 18.76.050 of the PAMC.

Finding #1: There are exceptional or extraordinary circumstances or conditions applicable to the property or site improvements involved that do not apply generally to property in the same zone district;

This property is located in the RM-30 district, but is adjacent to single-family homes. It is more typical for RM-30 zoned properties to be adjacent to other high-density residential, mixed use, or commercial zoning districts. Therefore, there is an increased need for privacy towards the single-family houses. Furthermore, there is a public utility easement across the rear of the property which prohibits planning tall screening landscaping.

Finding #2: The granting of the application will enhance the appearance of the site or structure, or improve the neighborhood character of the project and preserve an existing or proposed architectural style, in a manner which would not otherwise be accomplished through strict application of the minimum requirements of this title (Zoning) and the architectural review findings set forth in Section [18.76.020\(d\)](#); and

The DEE is to allow a minor (1'6") encroachment into the rear daylight plane, for a 5' tall privacy screen on the second and third floor rear facing decks. Allowing the encroachment will enhance the appearance by providing structure for the proposed landscaping to grow on, and provide additional privacy while the landscaping is maturing. A strict application of the zoning code would require the decks to be made smaller in size, which would decrease their usability to the residents. The proposed shou sugi ban siding is consistent with the materials used on other parts of the building.

Finding #3: The exception is related to a minor architectural feature or site improvement that will not be detrimental or injurious to property or improvements in the vicinity and will not be detrimental to the public health, safety, general welfare or convenience.

The exception is related to only the rear facing decks for the purpose of providing privacy screening. It will not be detrimental or injurious to property or improvements in the vicinity and will not be detrimental to the public health, safety, general welfare or convenience. It will improve general welfare and convenience by providing additional useable outdoor space to the residents without impinging on the reasonable privacy of the neighbors.



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April 19, 2022

Attn: Emily Foley
Planning and Development Services Department
250 Hamilton Ave. Palo Alto, CA 94301

PLAN CHECK RESPONSE LETTER

Re: 2609 Alma St. Palo Alto, CA 94303 – PLN-00176

With reference to ARB Hearing comments dated 10.14.2021, please find our written responses. Revisions to drawings have been clouded and marked with delta '3'. Each response is listed following corresponding comment:

Comment 1: The rear facing balconies shall be at least 75% transparent up to a height of 5ft measured from the finished floor, in a manner consistent with the Design Enhancement Exception (DEE) Findings, PAMC 18.76.050(c).

Response: Rear balconies have been revised with wood screen extending from to a height of 5'-0". Screen has been designed to be consistent with architectural language, using 2x2 shou-sugi-ban wood to match the wood siding throughout the design. The screen would allow vines or other planting to grow up and over, providing added privacy and greenery on the facade.

Comment 2: Modify the side-facing elevations to modulate the brightness of the building, particularly as seen from Alma St. Consider color, plants, and/or depth and shadow lines.

Response: The top floor balconies have been revised to mirror the design of the rear building by removing the large trellis overhang and replacing it with a low wood wall and screen. This change dramatically reduces the appearance of the massing at the front and side elevations without sacrificing square footage or privacy. The introduction of wood and additional planting also provides added visual interest.

We hope that these notes and attached drawings satisfy the requested recommendations, please let us know if there are any further queries.

Regards,
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415.558.9550 x10023
henry@johnlumarchitecture.com

Attachment D

Project Plans

During Shelter-in-Place, project plans are only available online. Hardcopies of the project plans have been provided to boardmembers upon their request.

Directions to review Project plans online:

1. Go to: bit.ly/PAPendingprojects
2. Scroll down to find “2609 Alma Street” and click the address link
3. On this project specific webpage you will find a link to the project plans and other important information

Direct Link to Project Webpage:

<https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/News-Articles/Planning-and-Development-Services/2609-Alma-Street>

Materials Boards:

During Shelter-in-Place, color and material boards will be available to view in the display case outside of City Hall, on the exterior elevator near the corner of Hamilton Ave. and Bryant St.