



CITY OF
**PALO
ALTO**

Architectural Review Board

Staff Report

Agenda Date: December 19, 2013

To: Architectural Review Board

From: Clare Campbell, Planner **Department:** Planning and
Community Environment

Subject: 636 Middlefield Road [13PLN-00410]: Request by Steve Smith for Preliminary Architectural Review for the construction of three detached residential units, demolishing the existing two units, and retaining the existing legal non-conforming office use in an existing structure, in conjunction with a lot merger in the RM-15 zone district.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Architectural Review Board (ARB) conduct a Preliminary Review of the conceptual plans for the project and provide comments on the design to staff and the applicant. No formal action may be taken at a Preliminary Review and comments made are not binding on the City or the applicant. Staff has summarized key issues to provide a framework for comments.

BACKGROUND

Site Information

The project site is currently comprised of two separate 7,500 sq. ft. interior lots, 640 and 636 Middlefield Road. On 636 Middlefield, there are two existing structures; the 1,476 sq. ft. front structure was constructed as a single-family residence and later converted to office use (legal non-conforming use) and the rear 300 sq. ft. structure is a small residential unit. On 640 Middlefield, there is an existing 2,431 sq. ft. single-family home and that is used as such. Within the 636 site, there are three protected Coast Live Oaks, and within the 640 site, there is one protected Coast Live Oak and one mature Canary Island Date Palm that is to be preserved. The subject property and surrounding properties on the same side of Middlefield Road are zoned RM-15, Low Density Multi-Family Residential, and directly across the street the parcels are zoned R-1, Single Family Residential. The project site is surrounded primarily by low density residential uses with an office use to the left at 660 Middlefield Road.

The applicant has submitted for a Certificate of Compliance to merge the two RM-15 lots to make one 15,000 sq. ft. parcel, which is under review by the City.

Project Description

The proposed project concept would include three new detached residential units and the retention of the legal non-conforming office use in the primary structure on 636 Middlefield. The preliminary concept plan includes the demolition of the existing single-family home on 640 Middlefield and demolition of the residential unit at the rear of 636 Middlefield. The existing structure at the front of 636 Middlefield that is used for office would be maintained for continued office use. The concept plans also show the new landscaping designs for the project site.

The concept plan shows two proposed units (A and B) with a shared 491 sq. ft. detached garage on the 640 site. Unit A, facing the street, is 2,227 sq. ft. with two bedrooms; unit B, at the rear, is 1,736 sq. ft. with three bedrooms. On the 636 site, the new residential unit (C), is 1,902 sq. ft. with a 273 sq. ft. attached garage. The office, unit D, will remain as 1,476 sq. ft.

Please refer to the applicant's project description and plans for additional clarification (Attachments A and C).

DISCUSSION

Zoning Compliance

A summary indicating the project's conformance with the Development Standards of the RM-15 Low Density Multiple-Family zone district is provided as Attachment B.

Floor Area: The project appears to be in general conformance with the allowable floor area ratio (FAR) for this site. For the RM-15 zone, a FAR credit is given for up to 230 sq. ft. for each covered parking space; any area above this 230 sq. ft. would count towards the total FAR for the site.

Lot Coverage: All structures on the site, including the garage and carport, count towards the lot coverage; the project appears to exceed the allowable coverage.

Daylight Plane: Unit A appears to encroach into the side daylight plane.

Parking: Each residential unit requires two parking spaces, one of which must be covered. The project provides the required parking with garages and open spaces. The retained legal non-conforming office use requires six parking spaces (one space/250 sq. ft.). The proposed plan shows one accessible parking space located within the front setback, four spaces within a carport structure (that uses two parking lifts) and possible two uncovered spaces behind the carport. Transportation will need to review and approve the parking, with special approval needed for the two uncovered spaces behind the carport. The existing site conditions provide for 6-8 parking spaces at the rear of the site, based on aerial images.

Setback Encroachment: The front setback is a Special Setback of 24' and the project has specified one accessible parking space and a loading zone to be located within this area; parking in the front setback of residential zones is not permitted.

Accessory Structures: The two detached covered parking structures must comply with the accessory structure development standards; not enough information has been provided to fully evaluate compliance.

Grandfathered Use: In the RM-15 zone district, professional and medical office uses existing on July 20, 1978 and which, prior to that date, were lawful conforming permitted uses or conditional uses operating subject to a conditional use permit may remain as grandfathered uses. Based on the information that has been provided, the existing office is allowed to continue. Staff will continue to analyze this further when the formal application is submitted.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

For a Preliminary Review, where no action is taken on a project, no environmental review is required under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) as it is not considered a project. When the formal application is submitted for action by the City, an environmental analysis will be completed at that time.


ATTACHMENTS


Attachment A: Project Description*
Attachment B: Zoning Compliance Table
Attachment C: Development Plans (Board Members Only)*

* Prepared by Applicant; all other attachments prepared by Staff

COURTESY COPIES

Steve Smith, sdedk@aol.com

Prepared By: Clare Campbell, Planner 

Manager Review: Amy French, Chief Planning Official 

ATTACHMENT A

636 + 638 + 640

MIDDLEFIELD ROAD

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There are currently 3 structures, at the 3 addresses noted above. They sit on 2 parcels, each rectangular in shape and equally sized, 150' deep by 50' wide (7,500 sq. ft. each = 15,000 sq. ft. total).

There is a single family home at 640 in which the current owners have lived for 22 years. The structure at 636 is currently grandfathered commercial and was utilized by Robert Trent Jones (golf course architect) until about 12 years ago when it was bought and occupied by Rick Stern Mortgage until May of this year. It currently houses the psychotherapy office for Steve Smith, PhD, MFT. 638 Middlefield has a 300 sq. ft. structure that had been utilized as commercial space as well.

SCOPE OF PROJECT

The scope of this project includes eliminating the house at 640 Middlefield and the rear structure at 638 Middlefield and replacing them with 3 homes at the appropriate FAR. The structure at 636 remains unchanged. The current structures will be dismantled as "green" as we can and includes recycling as much as possible in partnership with Whole House Supply in Burlingame (formerly of East Palo Alto).

EXISTING AND PROPOSED USE

The existing use is residential at 640 and grandfathered commercial at 636 and 638. There will be a net positive of 2 new homes and 1 less commercial building. The new homes will clearly be residential and 636 remains unchanged ("legal non-conforming office use").

DESIGN

Think ZEN. Or at least we do. Three family Oasis's. Accentuating side and rear yard spaces away from Middlefield Road. A stone's throw and a short stroll to downtown Palo Alto.

We live in an Ecoregion that, although Mediterranean, borders on more desert from Monterrey Bay and South according to the World Wide Fund for Nature and the Environmental Protection Agency.

The three new structures will be have stucco exteriors finished in complimentary earth tones with window, entry way, patio door, and overhang features that add aesthetic color.

The roofs will be flat in appearance and would allow for unseen solar panels.

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There will be no natural lawn or other landscaping that requires excessive watering. With the exception of minimal granite/stone covered walkways and rock patio slabs of autumn slate, the entire project will consist of permeable ground surfaces utilizing the current natural beauty of the site. Present trees will be complemented with Japanese maples of various colors, types, and sizes. Landscaping will be water friendly. Each home will include self-contained water fountains, raised urban bed-gardens for growing herbs and produce, and each unit will have a Zen raking garden. A common driveway of crushed rock will appropriately protect tree roots and maximize the overall beauty of the property while increasing permeable surface drainage efficiency. Interlocking pavers will characterize the area outside of each garage and make up the area provided for sufficient vehicle parking.

RELATIONSHIP TO EXISTING SITE CONDITIONS

The current home at 640 will be replaced and the second and third homes will be at the rear. The third home will sit behind the current structure at 636 Middlefield.

MATERIALS COLORS AND CONSTRUCTION METHODS

As noted above. Slab foundations. Stucco exteriors. The color of 636 Middlefield remains unchanged and is called Mississippi Mud. Butternut Wood, Harvest Brown, and Chocolate Cupcake are the colors for each of the other homes. All are earth tone, brownish in various hues. Grounds will be mixed landscaping, rock, pebble, crushed rock, interlocking pavers.

The street-facing chimney at 640 will be constructed of a rock veneer called "Ranchers". The roof will be made of foam (Armstrong) or the like and will be capped with a simple aluminum flashing. Entry doors will be wood and glass. Garage doors will be automatic opening wood carriage or wood over head doors. Patio doors and windows are intended to be duo-pane and energy efficient Jen-Weld aluminum clad (exterior) wood (interior).

The construction method is wood 2x6 exterior walls and 2x4 wood interior walls covered in sheetrock.

Thank you,
Sincerely,

Steve & Debra Smith

ZONING COMPLIANCE TABLE

Study Session

636 Middlefield Road / File No. 13PLN-00410

RM-15 ZONE

DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS	STANDARD	PROPOSED PROJECT	CONFORMS
Lot Size		17,000 sf	
Minimum Building Setback			
Front (Middlefield Rd)	Special Setback: 24'	22'-8"	Yes, existing grandfathered building encroaches
Rear	10'	10'-6"	Yes
Interior Side	10'	Varied	Yes*
Maximum Site Coverage (building footprint)	5,250 sf (35%)	≈ 5,467 sf	No
Floor Area Ratio (FAR)	7,500 sf (0.5:1)	≈ 7,418 sf	Yes
Maximum Height	30'	22'-6"	Yes
Daylight Plane	10' up @ PL/ 45°		No
Site Open Space	5,250 sf (35%)		Yes
Usable Open Space	200 sf/unit		Yes
Common Open Space (100 sf/unit)	300 sf		Not well defined
Private Open Space	50 sf/unit		Yes
Parking Requirement (within the Downtown Parking Assessment District)	12 spaces 1 space/250 sf commercial area 2 spaces/2+bdm unit	6 res. spaces 5-7 comm. spaces	Needs further study
Bicycle Parking	1 space 1 space/commercial 2,500 sf	Short Term: 4	Yes

*Interior Setback: The existing grandfathered building encroaches into the right side yard +/- 4' - 6" and the new units' setback range from the 10' - 12' - 6". The detached garage encroaches into the left side yard 8', which is permitted for accessory structures.

Open Space Defined:

- (1) Required Minimum Site Open Space. Each site shall, at a minimum, have a portion of the site, developed into permanently maintained open space Site open space includes all

ATTACHMENT B

usable open space plus landscape or other uncovered areas not used for driveways, parking, or walkways.

- (2) Usable Open Space (Private and Common). Each project shall, at a minimum, have a portion of the site, developed into permanently maintained usable open space, including private and common usable open space areas. Usable open space shall be located protected from the activities of commercial areas and adjacent public streets and shall provide noise buffering from surrounding uses where feasible. Parking, driveways and required parking lot landscaping shall not be counted as usable open space.

(A) Private Usable Open Space. Each dwelling unit shall have at least one private usable open space area contiguous to the unit that allows the occupants of the unit the personal use of the outdoor space. The minimum size of such areas shall be as follows:

- (i) Balconies (above ground level): 50 square feet, the least dimension of which shall be 6 feet.
- (ii) Patios or yards in the RM-15 and RM-30 districts: 100 square feet, the least dimension of which is 8 feet for at least 75% of the area.
- (iii) Patios or yards in the RM-40 district: 80 square feet, the least dimension of which is 6 feet for at least 75% of the area.

(B) Common Usable Open Space. The minimum designated common open space area on the site shall be 10 feet wide and each such designated area shall comprise a minimum of 200 square feet. In the RM-30 and RM-40 districts, part or all of the required private usable open space areas may be added to the required common usable open space in a development, for purposes of improved design, privacy, protection and increased play area for children, upon a recommendation of the Architectural Review Board and approval of the Director.