



Architectural Review Board

Staff Report

Agenda Date: October 17, 2013

To: Architectural Review Board

From: Russ Reich, Senior Planner **Department: Planning and Community Environment**

Subject: 3225 El Camino Real 13PLN-00344: Request by The Hayes Group, on behalf of Presidio Development Partners, LLC, for Preliminary Architectural Review of a new mixed use project consisting of one four-story retail/residential building and one two-story retail/office building totaling approximately 28,000 sq. ft. in the Service Commercial (CS) Zone District.

RECOMMENDATION

The Architectural Review Board (ARB) is requested to conduct a Preliminary Review of the project concept. No formal action may be taken at a preliminary review; comments made at a preliminary review are not binding on the City nor the applicant.

BACKGROUND

The applicant has provided a letter describing the existing site conditions, context and the design intent for the proposed project. (Attachment A).

Site Information

The project site located at the south east corner of the intersection of El Camino Real and Portage Avenue. The lot area is approximately 29,828 square feet (s.f.) and is located within the Service Commercial Zone District (CS). The site is currently occupied by an approximately 7,000 s.f. one story retail building, built in 1959, and is currently occupied by Foot Locker. To the north west of the property across Portage Avenue is the We Fix Macs store and the parking structure for Equinox Gym where a new four story mixed use project has been proposed. To the south east is a three-story mixed use building. To the north east of the site is a single story office building and across El Camino Real to the south west is a motel.

Project Description

The project concept is the redevelopment of the Foot Locker site and includes the demolition of the existing single story retail building and the construction of two new buildings over one level

of below grade parking. One of the buildings would be four stories with 7,364 sq. ft. of retail use at the ground floor and eight residential units on the three upper floors consisting of 16,229 sq. ft. Four, two bedroom units would occupy the second floor while four additional four bedroom units, that are each two levels, would occupy the third and fourth floors of the building. The second building would be two-stories and have 1,997 sq. ft. of retail or office uses on the ground floor and 1,997 sq. ft. of office uses on the second floor. The two buildings would be separated by a pedestrian entry court that would connect the at grade parking at the rear of the property to the El Camino Real frontage. A second floor bridge would provide an internal connection between the two buildings.

The project would provide a total of 77 vehicle parking spaces in a combination of at grade and below grade spaces. Vehicular access to the site is proposed via three separate curb cuts, one on El Camino Real and two along Portage Avenue. The parking entrance for the below grade garage would be a separate entry point from the street than the surface level parking. Bicycle parking would be provided both at grade level in front of the building and in the below grade garage.

DISCUSSION

Mixed Use

Policy L-31 of the Palo Alto Comprehensive Plan calls for the Cal-Ventura Area to be developed with a mixture of diverse land uses. With a mixture of uses including retail, office, and residential, the project is consistent with this policy. The site is located within an area that continues to redevelop with office, commercial recreation, retail and residential uses. There is a redevelopment proposal for the property across Portage Avenue as well as other redevelopment opportunities nearby. The proposed mix of uses is appropriate for this El Camino Real location.

Curb Cuts

The proposal includes three curb cuts for vehicular access to the property. Staff believes that the project does not require multiple vehicular access points. This number should be reduced. The elimination of curb cuts improves pedestrian safety, reduces traffic backups, and increases the number of on street parking spaces. The proposed driveway cut on El Camino Real is in conflict with an existing crosswalk and must be relocated or eliminated. Staff believes there are opportunities to have the below grade parking spaces accessed from the surface parking lot to avoid the additional curb cut caused by separating them. Staff believes that the vehicular access needs of the project can be served with a single curb cut and encourage the applicant to further explore this option.

Site Planning

Staff is concerned with the site planning and building massing approach for this project. There are a multitude of Context Based Design Considerations and Findings as well as City Guidelines that are not met in this current design proposal. Too much of the building mass has been concentrated in one of the two buildings, resulting in a building height and massing that is not necessary given the opportunity to spread the massing over more of the site. The height and massing of building #1 is inconsistent with that of building #2 as well as the height and massing of adjacent buildings on the block. Much of the parcel has is underutilized. This could serve to reduce the height of building #1. Building #2 is much shorter and is set back further from El Camino Real where the Guidelines call for the building mass to provide a continuous edge, except for pedestrian amenities. Parking spaces have been proposed adjacent to the street where the

Guidelines call for pedestrian amenity space or building mass. The spaces could be readily relocated to the rear of the building.

The following is a list of the Context Based Design Considerations and Findings that staff has determined the project is in conflict with: (they are numbered as they appear in Section 18.16.090 of the Palo Alto Municipal code)

(2) Street Building Facades

Street facades shall be designed to provide a strong relationship with the sidewalk and the street(s), to create an environment that supports and encourages pedestrian activity through design elements such as:

B. Facades that include projecting eaves and overhangs, porches, and other architectural elements that provide human scale and help break up the building mass.

The building massing has ample articulation but the issue related to this finding is the human scale component. The features of this building accentuate the verticality and height of the building much more than the pedestrian street level elements.

C. Entries that are clearly defined features of the front facades, and that have a scale that is in proportion to the size and type of the building and number of units being accessed; larger buildings should have a more prominent building entrance, while maintaining a pedestrian scale.

The building's main entries are perpendicular to the street and are not prominent features on the front facades.

G. Reinforcing the definition and importance of the street with building mass.

The massing of the building/s does not reinforce the street. The height and setback of building #2 are too short and too far back in comparison with building #1.

H. Upper floors set back to fit with the context of the neighborhood.

The proposal emphasizes the height of the building where the finding calls for the upper floors to be set back in relation to the context. The El Camino Real context is extremely varied but tall four story buildings are not typical. The mixed use project proposed along El Camino Real across the street on Portage Avenue would also be four stories but the upper floors of that project are set back to reduce the perceived height and massing of the building.

(3) Massing and Setbacks

Building shall be designed to minimize massing and conform to proper setbacks through elements such as:

B. Design with articulation, setbacks, and materials that minimize massing, break down the scale of buildings, and provide visual interest.

The design of building #1 concentrates the height and mass of the building in one location rather

than breaking it down. There are opportunities to use the site much more affectively to reduce the height and massing of the building rather than accentuating it.

F. A majority of the building frontage located at the setback line.

While the proposed building width of 71 feet nearly meets the requirement for half the building to be built to the setback line, the proposal does not meet with the intent of maintaining a continuous street façade along the street frontage. Openings, gaps, and recesses are all encouraged for pedestrian amenities but the second building does not hold the street nor is it setback to create a pedestrian amenity space.

(6) Parking Design

Parking needs shall be accommodated but shall not be allowed to overwhelm the character of the project or detract from the pedestrian environment, such that:

A. Parking is located behind buildings, below grade, or, where these options are not feasible, screened by landscaping, low walls, etc.

The location of the two parking spaces proposed at the front of the project should be reevaluated. They push the building away from the sidewalk and limit opportunities for pedestrian amenities.

I. Parking is accessed from side streets or alleys when possible.

The curb cut on El Camino Real should be eliminated such that the project is only accessed from the side street. This will improve pedestrian safety and provide greater opportunity for the building mass to be spread across the property frontage.

South El Camino Real Design Guidelines

The project site is located within the Cal Ventura Corridor area identified in the South El Camino Real Design Guidelines. These Guidelines are intended to provide design principles for new development on El Camino Real. Staff has identified the following list of Guideline elements where opportunities for compliance remain unfulfilled:

1.4 Guiding Principles

The South El Camino Real Guidelines provide direction for enhancing the quality of El Camino Real. While the guidelines address issues and details ranging from lot coverage and site planning to the treatment of parking lots and façade details, there are several overriding design principles which provide framework for new projects:

3. Bring Buildings up to the sidewalk to reinforce the definition and importance of the street

The current proposal for building #2 to be setback behind parking spaces does not follow this guiding principle. The parking should be relocated and the building should come forward to reinforce the street.

4. Public amenities such as wider sidewalks, outdoor seating or outdoor dining are encouraged where appropriate.

The proposal meets the code requirement for the 12 foot wide sidewalk but the guiding principles encourages that more be done to activate the street and provide a pedestrian friendly experience.

6. *All buildings should be oriented toward the street with entries facing El Camino Real.*

The entries in the current proposal are oriented perpendicular to the street. There are no dominant entry elements oriented to the street as is specified in the guiding principles.

7. *Corners should be addressed with special features such as prominent entries, massing, and architectural elements.*

The simple placement of the building at the corner does not meet this guiding principle. The guideline encourages that the corner of the building be treated differently than the rest of the building.

10. *Frontages along El Camino Real should have a scale and presence proportional to the scale and importance of the thoroughfare.*

Building #1 appears to be over scaled for the street while building #2 is under scaled. The two buildings do not appear to relate well to the street or to each other.

3.1 Street Frontage

3.1.3 Build-To Lines

Buildings should be built up to the sidewalk to reinforce the definition and importance of the street. It is recommended that buildings be designed with "built-to" lines, where the building mass/façade is built up to the setback line continuously, except for articulation such as doorways, recessed window bays, small plazas, driveways, and small parking areas to the sides of buildings. Where the façade is setback from the built-to line, low walls and hedges are encouraged to maintain the continuity of the streetscape.

The guideline encourages the buildings to be built up to the sidewalk, except for pedestrian amenity space. Building #1 is a stark contrast to building #2 in how they respond to this guideline. Building #1 tightly holds the built-to line with little pedestrian articulation while building #2 is set back too far from the sidewalk, behind parking spaces, not engaging the street at all.

3.1.6 Entries

All buildings should have entries facing El Camino Real. Recessed entries that provide seating and gathering spaces are encouraged.

The entries for this project do not face the street as encouraged by the guideline.

3.1.7 Increased Setback

Increased setbacks are permitted only if the additional setback provides a public amenity such

4.1.7 Corners

Corners should be addressed with special features such as prominent entries, massing and architectural elements.

Building #1 is placed at the corner of the property but the corner of the building has not been designed in conformance with the guideline. There is no prominent entry, massing or architectural elements at the corner of the building that set the corner of the building apart from the rest of it.

4.2 Entrance Design

4.2.2 Architectural Expression of the Building

Entries should be marked by architectural features that emphasize their importance. Features such as tall building features, projecting overhangs, special lighting, awnings and signage can signify the location and importance of the entry.

While it is understood that this is a preliminary review and a high level of detail is not expected at this point in the process, but it does not appear that entries facing El Camino Real would be well defined or have prominence as encouraged by the guideline.

4.3 Façade Design

4.3.10 Street Frontage Character

The street frontage should have continuous ground floor commercial uses characterized by display windows, recessed entries, and amenities such as arcades, awnings and seating areas. Grade-level and subgrade parking should be fronted with habitable building space such as storefront and building lobbies.

A greater amount of ground floor articulation and pedestrian features are encouraged.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

No environmental review is required for a Preliminary Review as it is not considered a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment A: Applicant's Project Description*
- Attachment B: Site Location Map
- Attachment C: Zoning Compliance Table
- Attachment D: Development Plans (Board Members Only)*

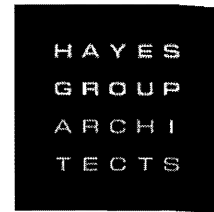
* Prepared by Applicant; all other attachments prepared by Staff

COURTESY COPIES

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De Anza Properties, 960 N. San Antonio road, Suite 114, Los Altos, CA 94022

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Reviewed By: Amy French, AICP, Chief Planning Official



October 2, 2013

City of Palo Alto
Department of Planning & Community Environment
250 Hamilton Avenue, 5th floor
Palo Alto, CA 94303

Re: 3225 El Camino Real ARB Preliminary Review Project Description

To Planning Staff and ARB Members:

Attached is Hayes Group Architect's submittal package for 3225 El Camino for ARB preliminary review. The project applicant is Hayes Group Architects on behalf of our client, De Anza Properties. This package includes eight sets of half size drawings and eight full size drawings, including the site survey, contextual photos, the proposed site plan, floor plans, elevations, sections, and perspectives.

1. EXISTING CONDITIONS

The site is located at the southeast corner of El Camino Real and Portage Avenue. To the south is a small hotel, to the east is a warehouse-like commercial building. A new mixed-use development is proposed across the street on the opposite corner of Portage Avenue. Currently, there is a commercial retail building, Footlocker, consisting of approximately 7,000 SF of commercial floor area. The remainder of the site is an asphalt parking lot. The site area is 29,962 SF and it is zoned CS.

2. PROPOSED PROJECT

We propose to demolish the existing commercial building and construct a new four-story, mixed-use building with commercial condominium office uses on first and second floors, and residential condominium use on the second, third and fourth floors. Gross floor area of the building is 28,021 SF not including the underground parking garage.

There will be eight residential condominiums. Four units will have two bedrooms and four will be four bedroom. The total residential floor area is 16,229 SF where 17,977 is permitted. The total commercial floor area is 11,793 SF where 11,985 SF is permitted.

The front setback from face of curb is 12 feet along the El Camino Real frontage and there is a five-foot setback from the property line for mixed-use projects along Portage Avenue frontage. The building is fifty feet tall.

The site plan concept divides the program into two buildings. A two-story, commercial building provides a transition to the small hotel to the south and a terminus of the Hansen Way intersection across El Camino Real. An entry court is created in front of the commercial building, extending between the two buildings,

connecting the rear parking area to the main entry court and providing visual access into the retail building.

A four-story, mixed-use building reinforces the corner with the increased height, nearly equal to the height of the proposed building across Portage Way, and setbacks on the 50% build-to line along El Camino Real and the setback along Portage. While the general mass of the building reinforces the corner, the building itself is broken down by large cut-outs and recesses that define the individual residential units. A courtyard at the second floor extending to the sky separates the units and creates exterior circulation, enhancing the residents experience and connection to the outdoors. A sloping canopy with photovoltaic panels caps the building's courtyard. Mechanical equipment will be in the underground garage, leaving most of the roof-scape open.

Sun-shading devices, similar in appearance to the building to the north provide the necessary shading for these south-facing units. The units on the second floor are flats while the upper units are two-story townhouses. The ground floor replaces the existing retail of the Footlocker store.

Materials include cement plaster walls, metal panels and sunshades. Clear dual-glazed anodized aluminum windows fill the openings. Frameless glass is used to enclose the ground floor spaces.

3. PARKING & BICYCLE SPACES

Parking for the mixed-use project makes no request for parking concessions and is fully parked in accordance with PAMC 18.52. Please refer to page A1.3 for the parking calculation summary at the bottom of the page.

Fifteen spaces are provided at grade for convenience to the commercial retail space while the remaining spaces are in a new underground garage accessed from Portage Avenue. Seventy-seven spaces are provided and only seventy-five spaces are required by the calculation indicated.

Bicycle parking will be provided in front of the building at the courtyard area and long term parking will be provided in the garage.

4. TRASH/RECYCLING

A new covered trash and recycling facility is proposed in a new covered facility at the rear of the site.

5. GREEN BUILDING STANDARD

In accordance with the city's Green Building Ordinance, the building will satisfy requirements for Cal Green Tier II. The residential portion shall comply with Build-it-Green requirements.

We look forward to a staff review and scheduling of an ARB hearing so that we can proceed with the development of this project.

HAYES
GROUP
ARCHI
TECTS

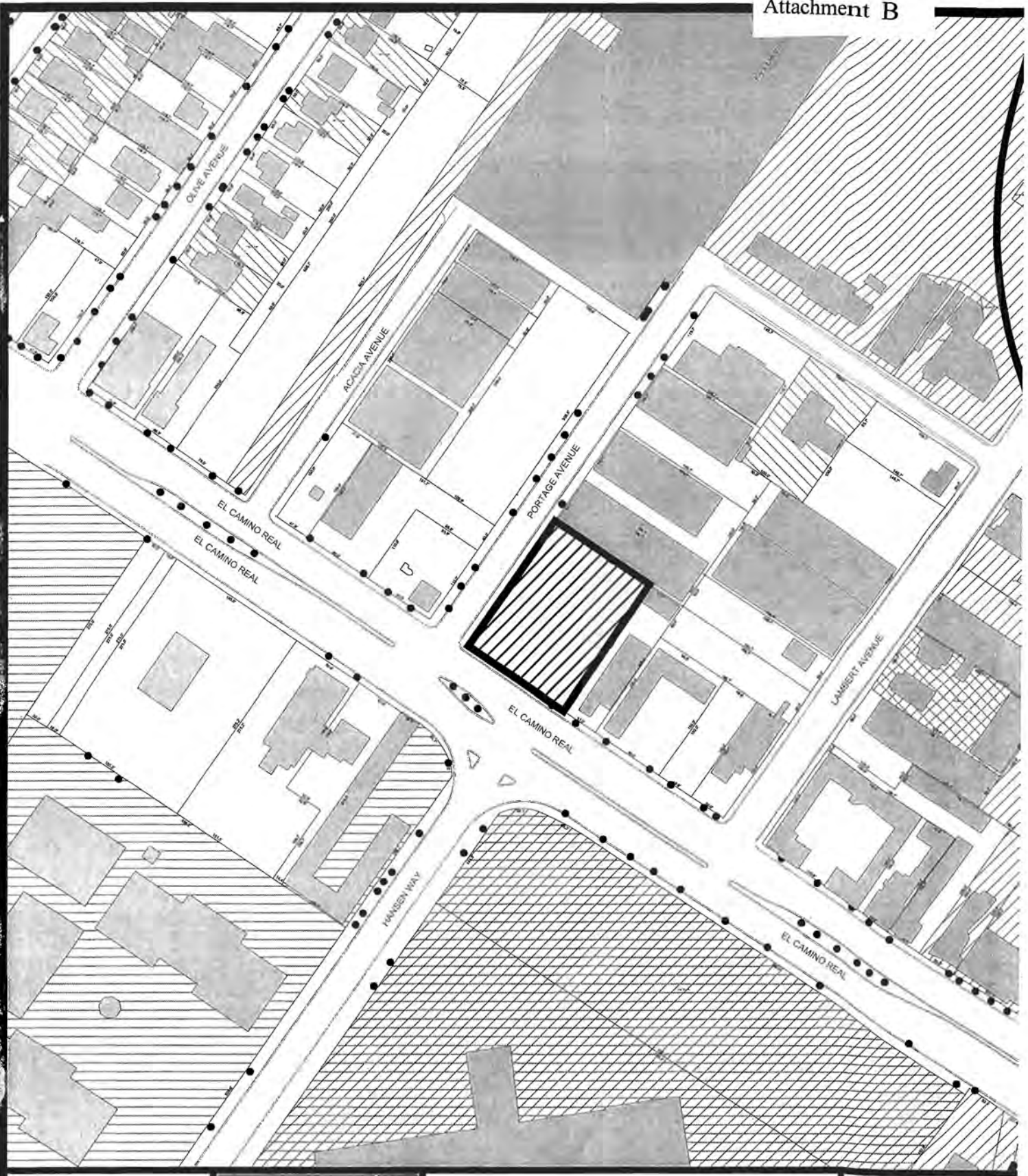
Please call me at (650)365-0600x15 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Ken Hayes, AIA
Principal

cc: Kathy Smyrniotis, De Anza Properties



The City of
Palo Alto



3225 El Camino Real

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



Attachment C
Zoning Compliance Table
3225 El Camino Real
13PLN-00344

	CS	Proposed	Compliance
Minimum setbacks			
Front yard (ft.)	0'-10' to create an effective 8'-12' effective sidewalk width	? feet (provides 12 wide effective sidewalk)	conforms
Rear yard (ft.)	10' for residential 0' for commercial portion	83 feet	conforms
Street side yard (left, Portage)	5 feet	5 feet	conforms
Side yard (right)	none	25'-6"	conforms
Build to Lines (required % of wall to be built up to the required setback line)	50% of frontage built to setback =74.5' minimum 33% of side street built to setback =66' minimum	44% at El Camino Real 65' - 4" 56% at Portage Ave. 113'	Does not comply conforms
Permitted setback encroachments	6 feet for balconies	No encroachments	conforms
Maximum Site Coverage	50% = 14,914 s.f.	33% = 9,887 s.f.	conforms
Minimum Landscape Open Space	30% = 8,948 s.f.	? s.f.	?
Usable Open Space	150 s.f. per unit	? s.f. private ? s.f. common	conforms
Residential Density	30 dwelling units per acre = 20.5 units	8 units	conforms
Maximum Height	50 feet	50 feet	conforms
Floor Area			
Maximum Residential	0.6:1 = 17,897 s.f.	16,229 s.f.	conforms

Attachment C
Zoning Compliance Table
3225 El Camino Real
13PLN-00344

			31 spaces less than PAMC conforms
Bicycle Parking			
Commercial Recreation	1 space /16 occupants 20% LT 80%ST 44/4=11 2 LT + 9 ST spaces	11 spaces	
Restaurant (Public Service Area)	1 space/600 gross s.f. 40%LT, 60%ST 2,483/600 =4 2 LT + 2ST	4 spaces	
Restaurant (back of house areas)	1 space/2000 gross s.f. 40%LT, 60%ST 2,017/2000 = 1 ST	1 space	
Retail	1 space/2000 gross s.f. 20%LT, 80%ST 1,000/2,000 = 1 ST	1 space	
Office	1 space/2,500 gross s.f. 80%LT, 20%ST 16,1189/2500 =6 5LT + 1ST	6 spaces	
Residential	1 space/unit LT = 48LT	48 spaces	
Total Bike Spaces	57 Long term (LT) and 14 short term (ST)	61 LT and 30 ST	conforms