



# Architectural Review Board

## Staff Report

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**Agenda Date:** October 17, 2013

**To:** Architectural Review Board

**From:** Amy French                      **Department: Planning and  
Community Environment**

**Subject:** 1700 Embarcadero Road [09PLN-00175]: Revisions to approved Site and Design Review plans for Staybridge Suites Hotel on Mings Site. The Site and Design Review application was approved by Council by Record of Land Use Action, with a condition to return to the ARB subcommittee.

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### RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Architectural Review Board (ARB) review the submittal and decide whether the revisions meet the intent of the approval condition contained in the Record of Land Use Action, or whether additional subcommittee review is needed. The revisions are described in the applicant's letter (Attachment C) and plans (Attachment D, ARB members only).

### BACKGROUND

On November 12, 2010, City Council approved the Site and Design Review and Variance applications submitted July 29, 2009. A request for extension was filed January 14, 2013, to extend the Site and Design Review Approval for an additional, final year, in accordance with Ordinance 5061. The Request for Extension of the Variance to "build-to" requirements was granted in accordance with Ordinance 5061. The Council extended the Site and Design Review approval on April 8, 2013.

On February 4, 2010 the ARB had recommended approval of the project (4-0-1-0) with a condition to return to the ARB Subcommittee to review revised plans. Attachment A provides the February 4, 2010 ARB minutes reflecting the items that were to come back to ARB subcommittee.

Upon receiving the plans, a member of the ARB subcommittee requested that staff provide plan sets (Attachment D) to the full board for review, due to the extent of the minor revisions. In order to allow the applicant to present the revisions to the board, staff placed the item on the agenda as a minor public hearing item. Should the ARB be in support of the revisions, the approval condition will be deemed to have been satisfied with the submittal. The ARB may delegate followup items to the subcommittee to finalize the approval.

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The approved project is a four-story hotel and restaurant with one level of underground parking and

associated surface parking and landscaping, replacing the existing Ming's restaurant building at 1700 Embarcadero Road. Attachment B provides a site location map. Revisions to the project plans are described in the applicant's letter (Attachment C) and shown on the plans (Attachment D).

## **DISCUSSION**

### Site and Design Approval Findings

The following Site and Design Approval Findings were adopted by Council for the prior and extended approval of this project:

1. To ensure construction and operation of the use in a manner that will be orderly, harmonious, and compatible with existing or potential uses of adjoining or nearby sites.

The project is designed for a hotel and related uses and incorporates a site layout that is comparable to the existing building and compatible with surrounding uses. Specifically, the hotel would be located on Embarcadero Road, adjacent to office and automobile sales facilities and the proposed building is situated on the site in a similar manner. City standards and regulations will help to ensure that the use, or operation, of the site would be conducted in a manner that is compatible with the existing uses located in the immediate area. During construction, it is expected that there would be temporary impacts to the area in terms of construction-related noise, dust/debris and traffic. These impacts would be addressed by applicable City construction standards, such as restrictions on hours of construction, the City's noise ordinance, and the mitigation measures found in the draft Negative Declaration.

2. To ensure the desirability of investment, or the conduct of business, research, or educational activities, or other authorized occupations, in the same or adjacent areas.

This site is designated for Service Commercial land use in the Comprehensive Plan, and is proposed to be rezoned to the Service Commercial zone district. It is surrounded by one and two-story office buildings. The replacement of an existing single story restaurant building with a new four story hotel and restaurant should not reduce the overall functionality of the immediate area. Hotel and restaurant uses are expressly permitted in the Palo Alto Municipal Code and are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan land use designation and help to support employment uses and revenue generation in the City. The proposed hotel location also provides easy access from State Highway 101.

3. To ensure that sound principles of environmental design and ecological balance shall be observed.

The project would replace a disturbed area on the site, which is currently developed with a restaurant and surface parking lot areas. The project would increase the number of trees on the site and provide for enhanced landscaping and open space and comply with the requirements in the Baylands Master Plan for compatibility with the Palo Alto Baylands. Green building features would be incorporated to achieve LEED Silver compliance. This application was subject to an environmental impact assessment (EIA), and it was determined that, as detailed in the Negative Declaration, there will be no significant environmental impacts associated with the proposed development.

4. To ensure that the use will be in accord with the Palo Alto Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan designation is Service Commercial per the Palo Alto 1998 - 2010 Comprehensive Plan. The proposed project for rezoning from Planned Community to Service Commercial, and construction of a new hotel and restaurant is consistent with the land use designation. The project is also consistent with The Palo Alto Comprehensive Plan policies related to business and economics. The Comprehensive Plan encourages owners to upgrade or replace existing commercial properties so that these commercial areas are more competitive and better serve the community. The commercial properties could be redesigned to be more attractive and inviting for pedestrians. The applicable Comprehensive Plan policies are incorporated into the Draft Record of Land Use Action.

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

The project was subject to environmental review under provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). An Initial Study was completed, a Draft Negative Declaration was prepared and circulated for this project in accordance with the CEQA requirements, and a Notice of Determination was filed at the County of Santa Clara following Council action on the project applications. Topics discussed in the review included aesthetics, air quality, noise, and traffic, and expected impacts were noted as less than significant with implementation of standard conditions of approval and state and local requirements.

#### **ATTACHMENTS**

- A. February 4, 2010 ARB Minutes
- B. Site Location Map
- C. Applicant letter September 19, 2013
- D. Project Plans (Board members only)

#### **COURTESY COPIES**

Viking Sign Installations  
Simon Property Group

**Prepared by:** Amy French, AICP, Chief Planning Official





# ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD MINUTES

Attachment A

MEETINGS ARE CABLECAST LIVE ON GOVERNMENT ACCESS CHANNEL 26

*Thursday February 4, 2010*  
**REGULAR MEETING - 8:30 AM**  
City Council Chambers, Civic Center, 1st Floor  
250 Hamilton Avenue  
Palo Alto, CA 94301

**ROLL CALL:**

**Board members:**

Alexander Lew (Chair)  
Clare Malone Prichard (Vice Chair)  
Grace Lee  
Judith Wasserman  
Heather Young

**Staff Liaison:**

Russ Reich, Senior Planner

**Staff:**

Amy French, Planning Manager  
Elena Lee, Senior Planner  
Jennifer Cutler, Planner  
Steven Turner, Senior Planner  
Shahla Yazdy, transportation Engineer

**PROCEDURES FOR PUBLIC HEARINGS**

*Please be advised the normal order of public hearings of agenda items is as follows:*

- *Announce agenda item*
- *Open public hearing*
- *Staff recommendation*
- *Applicant presentation – Ten (10) minutes limitation or at the discretion of the Board.*
- *Public comment – Five (5) minutes limitation per speaker or limitation to three (3) minutes depending on large number of speakers per item.*
- *Architectural Review Board questions of the applicant/staff, and comments*
- *Applicant closing comments - Three (3) minutes*
- *Close public hearing*
- *Motions/recommendations by the Board*
- *Final vote*

**ORAL COMMUNICATIONS.** Members of the public may speak to any item not on the agenda with a limitation of three (3) minutes per speaker. Those who desire to speak must complete a speaker request card available from the secretary of the Board. The Architectural Review Board reserves the right to limit the oral communications period to 15 minutes.

***APPROVAL OF MINUTES.***

Minutes of January 7, 2010 and September 3, 2009 were approved.

***AGENDA CHANGES, ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS.*** The agenda may have additional items added to it up until 72 hours prior to meeting time.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

1. **1700 Embarcadero Road [09PLN-00175]:** Request by Stoecker & Northway Architects, Inc., on behalf of Wu-chung Hsiang & Vicky Ching, for rezoning to Service Commercial with a Site and Design Review Combining District (CS(D)), approval of a variance, and approval of site and design review for demolition of an existing restaurant, and construction of a four-story hotel and restaurant. Environmental Assessment: An Initial Study/Negative Declaration has been prepared in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirements.

**Staff Recommendation:**

Staff recommends that the Architectural Review Board (ARB) recommend the City Council adopt the Negative Declaration and approve the proposed project, based upon the draft conditions of approval in the Record of Land Use Action (Attachment A) and the draft ARB findings in Attachment B.

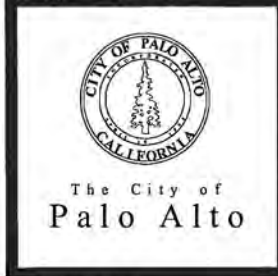
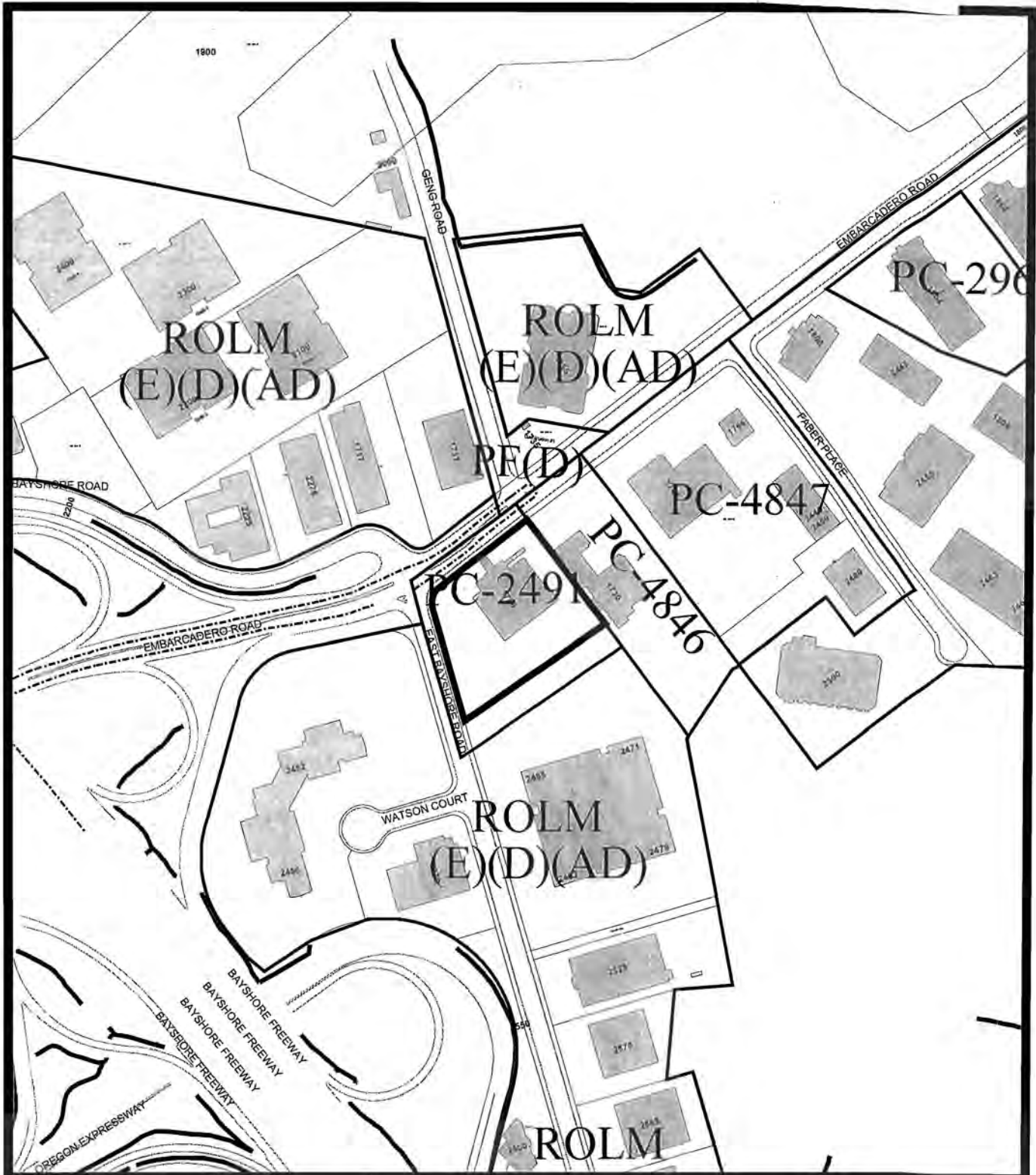
**Public Testimony:**

Dick Perry, Palo Alto: Stated his was the owner of a neighboring property and had concerns regarding the noise, traffic, and parking.

**Architectural Review Board Action:**

The Board recommended approval of the project, (4-0-1-0, Board member Wasserman moved, seconded by Board member Lee, Board member Malone Prichard absent due to conflict of interest) with an additional condition to return to the ARB Subcommittee to review revised plans addressing the following:

- A. Colors shall be refined to address grayness, and lack of contrast;
- B. Consider a modest increase in emphasis at the main entry to the hotel;
- C. Review design integrity of the signage such that the new signs will better integrate with the building and each other;
- D. Provide some modulation of the east elevation of the building;
- E. Refine how trash and service entrance will be dealt with; and
- F. Move bike lockers away from the front entry.



1700 Embarcadero Rd

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





**Staybridge Suites hotel – 1700 Embarcadero Road**  
September 19, 2013

List of Design Changes from Planning Approved Design, revised 9/26/13

The applicant initially retained RYS Architects, at the suggestion of the hotel brand, to assist the design architect, Stoecker & Northway, in completing the programming and space layout of the hotel interiors. Early in the planning review process, RYS' involvement ceased, short of providing a more thorough coordination of the interior to the exterior design. No official hotel brand design review was made during that time for adherence to the brand standards and for any adjustments that would typically be requested of the applicant. Upon planning approval of the project, RYS was retained by the applicant as Architect of Record for the duration of the project. The items listed below are primarily the result of more recent design refinement as requested by the hotel brand, as required by the building code and as good design practice to accommodate the various building systems required of a hotel building.

1. Windows: Some window stacks were moved a few inches to allow for required furniture placement or to correct their locations due to several wall adjustments. Where moving the window stacks was not possible, the window width was reduced. The window proportions were also modified to comply with the minimum building code requirements for openings in a residential type occupancy. Since the original design called for a relatively consistent window dimensions, window changes in a few rooms suggested changing all the windows within the stack, and where appropriate, at all similar bays in the same elevation.

*Revision: Additional openings on the north elevation show mechanical louvers & flues.*

2. Floor-to-floor heights: The original design showed equal floor heights – approximately 10'-8" – at all stories. Generally, hotels require a higher floor height at the ground floor to accommodate larger public spaces, ducted mechanical systems and deeper structural beams. The proposed change sets the second floor height at 11'-6" and then 10'-3" thereafter. This generally yields a 9'-0" guestroom ceiling height and complies with the brand requirements for public space ceiling heights. The total overall building height did not change.
3. Exterior guestroom walls, upper story: There are several bays of guestroom exterior walls on the third and fourth floor where, due to brand minimum room sizes and structural efficiency, the exterior wall moved outwards about 12 inches. These "pop-outs" are indicated by the "Parex Limestone" material. Several rooms on these floors are not able to fit two beds without moving these walls. An added benefit is the alignment of upper story walls with the lower floor structural wall (the lower two floor exterior walls has an outer "skin" & a structural inner wall). Originally, there is a 1'-9" step just above the third floor; we are proposing to reduce this step to about 9". The "heaviness" of the stone veneer wall as suggested by this step is still perceptible.
4. Hotel entrance canopy, façade & door: The extended-stay hotel segment generally follows the idea of attracting customers by its home-like environment. Staybridge Suites does this by welcoming their customer with a more human scaled canopy rather than a much larger

ROBERT Y. SAUVAGEAU, AIA, PRESIDENT, RYS ARCHITECTS, INC.

porte-cochere (usually 14 feet high) – it does not cantilever over the driveway. The brand identity is further enhanced by its signature stylized, truss-like gable that is usually supported by well-proportioned columns. The limited sidewalk dictates a modest 7-foot deep cantilevered canopy from the door and is 9 feet above the grade.

To bring some color and lightness, we are proposing to extend the storefront beyond the immediate boundary of the door into the whole recessed façade that encompasses the entire arrival frontage. A Mondrian-like composition of the same glass types at the southwest corner of the building is used here. We are exploring the use of back-lighting to enhance the customer arrival experience at night. This will move the hotel signage farther out onto the adjacent stone veneer portion of the wall. The permanent planters will be eliminated by this change – occasional multi-sized pots may be used.

The hotel brand also requires an automatic sliding door entrance to accommodate peak hour foot traffic and ease of use by customers with disabilities and luggage-carrying customers.

5. Roof cornice overhang: We believe that the design architect underestimated the structural requirement of this massively scaled element. Enormous amount of wind pressure creates large overturning moments about the roof edge that would require far more roof thickness and more robust structural supports that would be hard to achieve in the approved building height. The original design required over 14 feet of cantilever with the front fascia being 7'-8" beyond the upper exterior walls. We propose a modest reduction of this by placing the fascia at 4' from the exterior wall and reducing the cantilever to about 9'. The grandness of the cantilever is not lost as shown in the attached renderings.
6. Curtain walls at Restaurant & Great Room: The original design drawings show conflicts between the west & south faces of the restaurant (elevations & rendering). The enormous area of glass necessitates additional canopies to help reduce heat gain. It may also require some of the intermediate height glass panels be spandrel type to help the building's thermal performance.

At the great room, there are conflicts where glass and solid walls are located between the elevation & the floor plan. We believe the proposed elevation provides the best combination of composition and structural rationale.

7. Location of northeast stair tower: The original design showed the stair tower exiting towards the interior courtyard, creating both a potential life safety issue for the customers and less choice for emergency personnel to enter the building should fire occur in the courtyard. By eliminating the courtyard exit path from the stairs, the restaurant gains flexibility in opening up the south side to outdoor dining. Relocating the stair tower exit towards the exterior northeast corner is desirable for emergency personnel & achieves flexibility in the courtyard.
8. Planter & signage at southwest corner: This corner is structurally complicated due to the proximity of the garage entrance on the south side and the skewing of two walls at the west side. The modest revision reduces the amount of structural steel in this corner by more than half & simplifies the foundation. This modification moves the planter slightly north and shortens it a bit.
9. Seismic joint at north elevation: Differences in floor level configuration and ground floor treatment of post-tension slab at the restaurant space & courtyard entrances required that a



seismic joint be placed where the restaurant meets the hotel space. The joint cover can be seen on the north elevation and the south elevation of the restaurant facing the courtyard. It will be painted to match the stone & plaster as closely as possible.

10. Exterior shower at pool: Code required accessible shower stall is added.
11. Service entrance/exit at restaurant: Hotel brand does not allow a connection between the hotel and the restaurant tenant. The separate service entrance on the east side will double as an alternate emergency exit for the restaurant.

Revision: Landscape drawing sheet 4 added Baylands bird signage images. While not shown previously, this feature was always intended to remain in the design.

**RYS Architects**



Jim Rato, Project Architect