



City of Palo Alto

Architectural Review Board ARB Staff Report

Item #2

(ID # 6165)

Report Type: New Business

Meeting Date: 10/1/2015

Summary Title: 180 El Camino Real - Perimeter

Title: 180 El Camino Real [15PLN-00085]: Request by Eric Allen of SPG Center, LLC, on behalf of the Board of Trustees to the Leland Stanford Junior University, for Major Architectural Review of site improvements, tenant facade improvements, and new freestanding and directional signage visible from the public right of way for the Stanford Shopping Center. Zoning District: Community Commercial (CC). Environmental Assessment: Categorically Exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) per CEQA guideline Section 15301 and Section 15304.

From: Jonathan Lait

Lead Department: Architectural Review Board

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Architectural Review Board (ARB) review the proposed project and continue it to a date certain.

BACKGROUND

The proposed project is located at Stanford Shopping Center (**Attachment A**), which is experiencing a large scale renovation. Recently completed activity at Stanford Shopping Center includes the construction of the new Flemings restaurant building, and a new Bloomingdales retail building. Ongoing activity includes the current construction of four new retail buildings and the renovation of the interior of the shopping center consisting of updates to paving, courtyards, and building facades that are not visible from surrounding public right-of-ways. Many forthcoming tenants have applied for architectural review of facades and signage, including Anthropologie, Vineyard Vines, True Food Kitchen, Victoria's Secret/PINK, and The North Face. These tenants are tentatively scheduled for review by the Architectural Review Board in October and November 2015.

Project Site Information

As shown on Sheet G.2 in the project plans, the proposed project involves the renovation of portions of the exterior of Stanford Shopping Center along the perimeter of some of the existing stores and along the perimeter of the property. All of the involved locations are visible

from surrounding public right-of-ways – Sand Hill Road, El Camino Real, Arboretum Road, and Quarry Road.

Previous Project Discussion

The Architectural Review Board held a study session regarding the proposed project on June 18, 2015 in order to learn background information and discuss opportunities and constraints for the project. The brief June 18, 2015 ARB staff report can be found here: <https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/civicax/filebank/documents/47822>. The applicant has modified the project plans since the study session. Staff has not received any public comment on the project since its original submittal in March 2015.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed project includes the following components at Stanford Shopping Center:

- Arcade and building façade changes at the existing Building M that faces Sand Hill Road,
- Updated paving, landscaping, and street furniture at the perimeter of the shopping center stores that face Arboretum Road and Sand Hill Road,
- Updated light poles, illuminated bollards, and accent lighting at select walkway locations,
- New vehicular directional and pedestrian directory signage at the perimeter of the shopping center stores,
- New freestanding signage at shopping center entrance locations, which is accompanied by some tree and hedge removal, and
- Tree thinning/removal at select locations along Sand Hill Road.

The applicant's overall project description is included within the project plans on Sheet G.1 (**Attachment B**). The project descriptions for the proposed signage and tree thinning/removal are on Sheet SG.1 and Sheet L8.1, respectively. Sheet G.2 indicates the areas involved in the proposed project scope of work and is accompanied by Sheet 2.0 that provides a corresponding aerial perspective. Sheet 1.0 provides a key plan to some of the areas, referred to as zones, where portions of the project scope of work are further clarified within Sheets 1.1 through 1.6. Sheet L8.2 shows the proposed tree thinning/removal.

The project plans do not contain any changes in existing gross floor area or net/leasable floor area at Stanford Shopping Center. The plans do not show any removal of existing parking spaces or adjustments to existing loading zones.

Arcade and Building Façade Changes

As shown on Sheet 3.1, the applicant proposes to remove the architectural features of an existing arcade/trellis in order to implement a new design aesthetic for the arcade/trellis at the existing Building M. Existing tenant facades would be patched and painted. Existing light fixtures would be replaced with downlights and wall-mounted fixtures, as shown on Sheet EL4.21 and Sheet EL4.33.2. These are the only architectural changes to existing buildings that are included in the proposed project.

Paving

The applicant is upgrading some portions of the existing paving within the interior areas at Stanford Shopping Center as a major theme to its renovation. Similarly, the applicant also proposes to upgrade the existing paving at select exterior locations along the perimeter of some existing stores. Sheets 1.1 through 1.6 indicate the proposed paving upgrade locations and images of proposed materials are on Sheet 1.3. Staff has requested that the applicant describe the paving aspect of the project in more detail at the ARB meeting. Some portions of perimeter walkways would not receive an upgrade and would remain with their existing condition, such as at El Camino Walk by Building C and J, by Building V, by Building E, along Building M, around Neiman Marcus, and along Orchard Lane/Shopping Center Way below Macy's and Building L.

There are existing crosswalks at Stanford Shopping Center, some of which already have or will have the color and stamping treatment that matches the crosswalk implemented near the new Bloomingdales. The crosswalks at Neiman Marcus, Sand Hill Walk, Building V, and Macy's are currently shown on Sheet 1.1 to remain as is, although the applicant mentioned that they were considering designing all crosswalks to match.

Landscaping and Street Furniture

The proposed site work includes some new landscaping in the form of enlarged planting areas at Neiman Marcus and the use of new square and quartz planting containers, as shown on Sheet 1.1 through 1.5. Existing trees would remain and new trees would be added surrounding Neiman Marcus and at Azmoor Place (near Yucca De Lac), as shown on Sheet L-2.3.

The proposed project would remove existing street furniture, such as bicycle racks and benches, and would replace them in the locations shown on Sheet 1.1 through 1.5. Bicycle racks and lockers are shown for reference only, as they were previously reviewed by the ARB as part of the Phase III Redevelopment project and will all be upgraded to compliant facilities. With the exception of the Marketplace area, south of Bloomingdales, and those tables provided by tenants for their customers, the project plans do not currently propose benches or planter seating areas within the perimeter walkway areas. Trash, recycling, and compost receptacles are not currently shown.

Lighting

New illuminated bollards are proposed for pedestrian crossing areas at El Camino Way, the Marketplace area, two locations near Neiman Marcus, Azmoor Place, and Sand Hill Walk. The proposed site work includes extensive replacement of existing light poles with new 12-foot high anthracite grey 3000K light poles, as shown on Sheet EL4.33.1 and Sheets EL 4.20 through Sheet 4.33. Both the light pole and the illuminated bollards match those proposed for use in the Phase III Redevelopment area. Since the ARB study session in June, the applicant added more light poles to the replacement scope for the purposes of compatibility and consistency. New

pendant lighting is proposed for the Azmoor Place walkway, as shown on Sheet EL4.33.2 and Sheet EL4.22.

Signage

A description for the proposed signage is on Sheet SG.1. Sheet SG.3 Sign Location Plan, Sheet SG.8 Existing Signs Photo Reference, Sheet SG.9 Sign Type Matrix, and Sheet G.2 most directly portray the character of existing versus proposed signage, the new and replacement signage locations, as well as signage types and sizes. The aerial perspective on Sheet 2.0 assists with visualizing the installation context for the proposed signs. The proposed signage consists of a cohesive design aesthetic across all sign types. Signs utilize a light stone base, black sign faces, and white illuminated copy. Since the ARB study session in June, the applicant added a new sign type B550.

There are eight (8) existing static pedestrian directory signs and two (2) interactive directory signs at Stanford Shopping Center that are located at the perimeter walkways and in interior areas. It is currently unclear to staff how many of the existing pedestrian directory signs would remain or would be removed with the proposed project. The project proposes a total of twelve (12) new internally illuminated pedestrian oriented signs:

- Seven (7) pedestrian directional totem signs that are four-sided, 13-feet high, and 19.50 square feet (**Sign Type B100**).
- Five (5) pedestrian directory signs are 8-feet high that are double-sided and 35.33 square feet (**Sign Type C100**).

The proposed height and size of the directional totem signs B100 would require approval of sign exceptions to PAMC Section 16.20.160(a)(3), which are discussed below. The pedestrian directory signs C100 do not require approval of sign exception(s).

There are eight (8) existing freestanding signs at Stanford Shopping Center that are proposed for removal. The project proposes the installation of seventeen (17) internally illuminated freestanding signs:

- Eleven (11) freestanding site identity signs that are 5-feet 5-inches in height and 61.39 square feet (**Sign Type A120**),
- Three (3) freestanding vehicular directional signs that are 7-feet 7-inches in height and 45.92 square feet (**Sign Type B500**), and
- Three (3) freestanding vehicular directional signs that are 10-feet 8-inches in height and 96 square feet (**Sign Type B550**).

Sheet SG.9 indicates which of the signs are single versus double-sided. All of the proposed freestanding signs are larger than the existing freestanding signs. The proposed height, size, and/or placement of these freestanding signs would require approval of sign exceptions, which are discussed below.

Tree Removal and Hedge Removal for Signs and Tree Thinning

The applicant proposes the removal of one lemon tree and three oak trees in order to promote the visibility of new freestanding signage. As shown on Sheet L2.1 and Sheet L2.2, the tree

removal for signs occurs at Pear Lane/Quarry Road, Plum Lane/Sand Hill Road, and London Plane Way/Sand Hill Road. Some portions of existing hedges would also be removed and these areas would then be either mulched or replanted. Sheet L8.1 Note 5 contains replanting details, but does not seem to correspond directly with Sheet L2.1 and Sheet L2.2.

Tree thinning locations are shown on Sheet L1.1 and Sheet L8.2. The intent is to thin the existing number of trees so that the health of the remaining trees would improve from growing in a less competitive environment. Specific tree thinning along Sand Hill Road near the intersection with El Camino Real is not controversial with Urban Forestry and staff is awaiting Urban Forestry confirmation that the trees selected on the project plans are those that were identified in the field on both the property and within an adjacent Sand Hill Road median. Staff is also awaiting Urban Forestry confirmation that parking lot shading requirements would still be achieved with the proposed thinning near parking spaces.

DISCUSSION

An analysis of the proposed project regarding relevant Comprehensive Plan policies, the El Camino Design Guidelines, and the Municipal Code follows below. At this time, staff is requesting ARB and public feedback on the proposed project and is recommending continuance of the project to a date certain.

Comprehensive Plan Policies

Stanford Shopping Center has a Comprehensive Plan land use designation of Regional/Community Commercial. The Community Commercial land use designation allows for larger shopping centers and districts that have wider variety goods and services than the neighborhood shopping areas. The proposed project is consistent with this designation. The project promotes the continued use of and investment in the property as a shopping center in a manner consistent with Comprehensive Plan Policy L-18, Policy L-20, Policy L-26, Policy T-1, Policy T-23, and Policy B-22.

El Camino Real Design Guidelines

The project site is subject to the El Camino Real Design Guidelines (1979). These Guidelines encourage limiting the size of freestanding signs along El Camino Real to between 1/2 to 2/3 the maximum sign area allowed by the sign ordinance, which is between 25 and 33 square feet. In contrast, the proposed project requests a sign exception to exceed the maximum size as discussed below. The existing freestanding signs on El Camino Real are 25 and 37 square feet in sign area. The Guidelines encourage external illumination of signs and the use of timers so that signs are illuminated during business hours. The proposed project meets the 10-foot height limit for freestanding signs on El Camino Real, but proposes some hedge removal near signs whereas the Guidelines encourage screening landscaping in order to screen vehicles and reduce the expansive appearance of large parking lots. The Guidelines mention that screening should be a minimum of 3-feet 6-inches high. Staff would appreciate ARB discussion of the project's conformance with the Guidelines as it relates to sign size and the screening of parking lots. The proposed project is otherwise consistent with the 1979 Guidelines.

Municipal Code

Land Uses, Development Standards, and Performance Standards

The Community Commercial (CC) zoning district allows major commercial centers accommodating a broad range of office, retail sales and other commercial activities. The proposed project is consistent with supporting commercial land uses at the shopping center and does not conflict with overall development standards (PAMC Section 18.16.060) or performance standards (PAMC Chapter 18.23) for the zoning district.

Architectural Review Findings and Context Based Design Criteria

In order to make the architectural review findings (2), (3), (4), (6), and (9) regarding design compatibility, unified character, harmonious transitions, and sufficient ancillary functions, and meet the context-based design finding (1) pedestrian and bicycle environment, staff suggests the following:

- Inclusion of Building M repainting to extend the repainting to the east to encompass the Marketplace facing-façade and to the west to the edge of the building in order to ensure color consistency and cover over building cracks/previous patchwork.
- Slight adjustments in light pole placements at perimeter walkways near Azmoor Place and Portico Way/Shopping Center Way in order to have more regularized placement near curb lines.
- Inclusion of the following in the site furnishings plan:
 - Specifications for an additional bench with armrests and a back for use at select perimeter area locations (e.g. near loading zones, near crosswalks and/or near pedestrian directory signage),
 - Specifications for trash, recycling, and compost collection,
 - Removal of planting pots that do not match the quartz or square landscape container series, with the exception of the retention of the two existing large planting pots adjacent to Building V.
 - Confirmation that street furniture and light pole placement complies with ADA access/clearance requirements.

In order to make the architectural review findings (11), (12), (13), and (14) regarding natural features, plant material, and landscape design, as well as context-based design finding (6) parking design, staff suggests the following:

- Replenishment of landscaping where perimeter planting areas have bare patches.
- Landscaping maintenance at the existing outdoor trash enclosure area along Arboretum Road.
- Replacement of any trees within parking lot areas that would not achieve parking lot shading requirements within 5 years of planting.
- Requirement for landscaping adjacent to parking space to be a minimum height of 3-feet 6-inches for consistency with the El Camino Design Guidelines.

Sign Ordinance

The proposed project requests approval of multiple sign exceptions in accordance with PAMC Section 16.20.040 Exception Procedure.

Architectural Review Board could recommend approval of exceptions to the Director of Planning if the following findings could be made:

- (1) There are exceptional or extraordinary circumstances or conditions applicable to the property involved that do not apply generally to property in the same district;
- (2) The granting of the application is necessary for the preservation and enjoyment of a substantial property right of the applicant and to prevent unreasonable property loss or unnecessary hardships;
- (3) The granting of the application 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.

Staff would appreciate ARB feedback regarding the presence or absence of any exceptional or extraordinary circumstances or conditions applicable to the property that might warrant approval of sign exceptions. Some possible circumstances and conditions could include the overall size and scale of the Stanford Shopping Center property, the presence of multiple anchor stores dispersed throughout, the presence of dense street trees that influences destination visibility, the distance between the right-of-way and buildings that influences destination visibility, the concentration of stores at the center of an otherwise large property, and the open-air and somewhat grid-like character of the shopping center. The ARB could consider these size and layout conditions as creating greater than average challenges to vehicular and pedestrian navigation, which in turn could increase the importance of freestanding and directional signage visibility and placement.

The proposed project requests the following sign exceptions:

- All seven (7) pedestrian directional totem signs (**Sign Type B100**):
 - exceedance of the 3-foot height limit by 10 feet exceedance of the sign area limit of 6 square feet by 29.33 square feet
 - (Refer to PAMC Section 16.20.160(a)(3))
- All eleven (11) freestanding identity signs (**Sign Type A120**):
 - exceedance of the over 5-foot tall freestanding sign size limit of 50 square feet by 11.39 square feet
 - (Refer to PAMC Section 16.20.120(a)(2) and Table 2).
- All three (3) 7-foot 7-inches freestanding vehicular directional signs (**Sign Type B500**):
 - exceedance of the 3-foot height limit by 4-feet 7-inches exceedance of the sign area limit of 6 square feet by 39.92 square feet
 - exceedance of required 20-foot placement distance from property line

- (Refer to PAMC Section 16.20.160(a)(3)).
- All three (3) 10-foot 8-inches freestanding vehicular directional signs (**Sign Type B550**):
 - exceedance of the 3-foot height limit by 7-feet 8-inches exceedance of the sign area limit of 6 square feet by 90 square feet
 - exceedance of required 20-foot placement distance from property line
 - (Refer to PAMC Section 16.20.160(a)(3)).
- **Sign B550-0203** and **Sign A120-02-03**, which are both at the intersection of Arboretum Road/Orchard Lane:
 - placement of sign that is over 3-feet in height in the restricted triangular area outlined for sight visibility
 - (Refer to PAMC Section 16.20.100(e)).

As mentioned earlier, sign exception(s) are not necessary for the pedestrian directory signs (**Sign Type C100**), as they comply with PAMC Section 16.20.160(a)(1). Sign exceptions are also not necessary for the number of proposed freestanding signs per property frontage.

Staff would appreciate ARB feedback regarding the design of the proposed signage relative to consistency with the El Camino Design Guidelines and relative to the sign ordinance.

Sheet L1.1 contains an example photo simulation of an installed freestanding site identity sign on Sand Hill Road. It would be helpful if additional photo simulations were included in the project plans in order to understand:

- if all signs are warranted,
- if the height would be reduced or increased depending on installation location and number of listed anchor stores, and
- if the color balance and visual character of the signs differ depending on the number of listed anchor stores,
- if the 10-foot 8-inch high vehicle directional signs would be visible behind existing perimeter trees.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice of this ARB review of this project was provided by publication of the agenda in a local newspaper of general circulation. Additionally, property owners and utility customers within 600 feet of the project site were mailed a notice card.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

This application is exempt from environmental review under provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), per CEQA Section 15301 and Section 15304.

COURTESY COPIES

Debra Lehone, BAR Architects

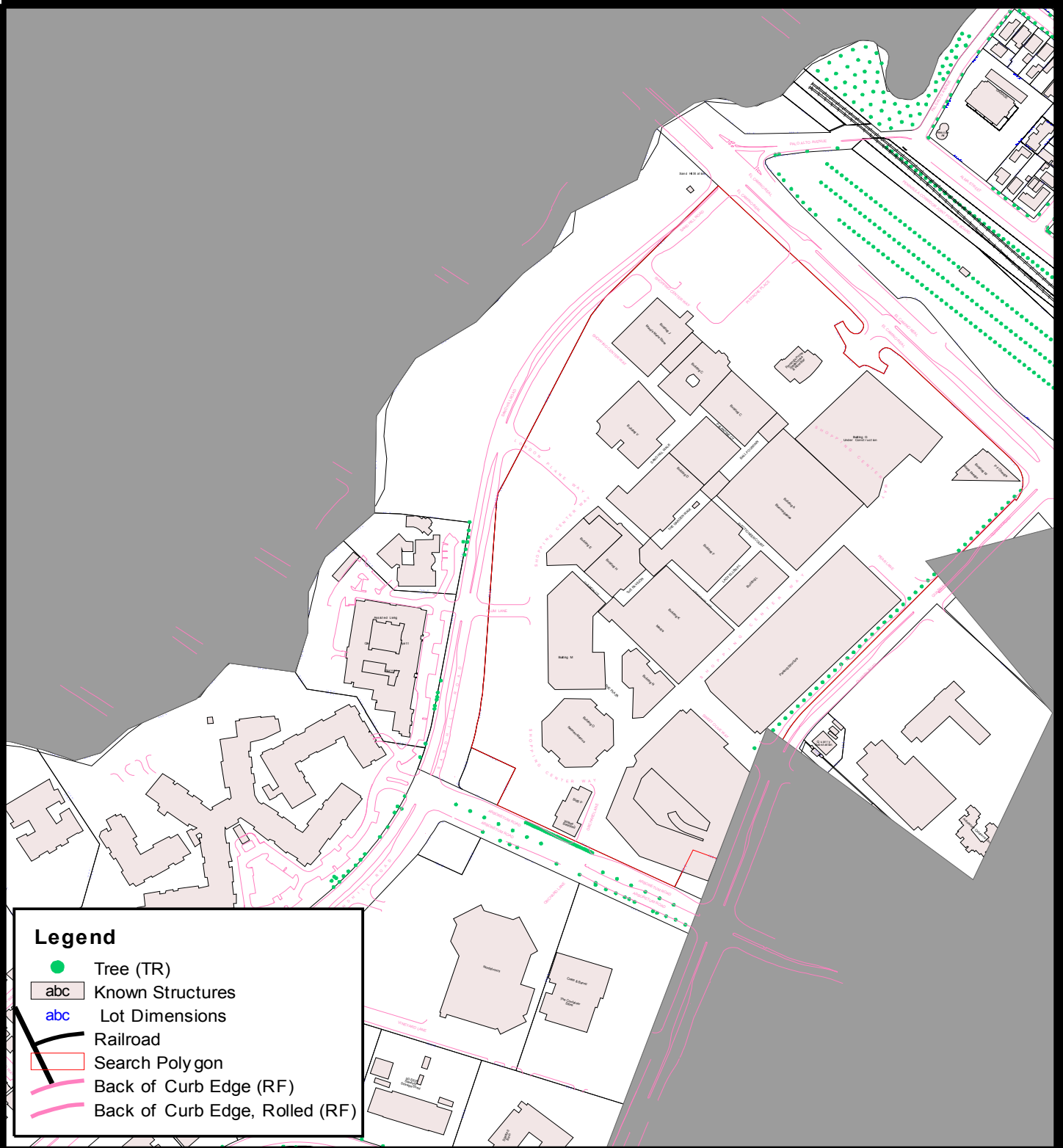
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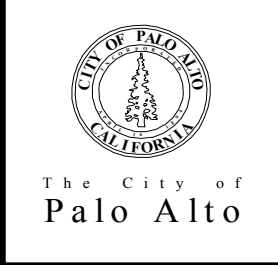
Attachments:

- Attachment A: Location Map (PDF)
- Attachment B: Project Plans (ARB Members Only) (DOCX)



Legend

- Tree (TR)
- abc Known Structures
- abc Lot Dimensions
- Railroad
- Search Polygon
- Back of Curb Edge (RF)
- Back of Curb Edge, Rolled (RF)



180 El Camino Real
Stanford Shopping Center

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

A north arrow pointing upwards and a scale bar below it, marked with '0'' and '448''.

Attachment B: Project Plans – delivered to ARB Board Members only

Also available online at: <http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/news/displaynews.asp?NewsID=3231>