



ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD DRAFT MINUTES: April 7, 2016

City Hall/City Council Chambers
250 Hamilton Avenue

Call to Order

Roll Call

Present: Chair Robert Gooyer; Vice Chair Alexander Lew, Board Members Peter Baltay, Wynne Furth, Kyu Kim

Absent:

Oral Communications

None.

Agenda Changes, Additions and Deletions

None.

City Official Reports

1. Meeting Schedule and Assignments

Jodie Gerhardt announced the next meetings would be April 21st, May 5th and May 19th. She listed the items agendaized for the April 21st meeting. Board Member Furth inquired as to the Board's role in discussing the Draft EIR for the Comprehensive Plan.

2. List of Staff Approved (Minor) Architectural Reviews

Ms. Gerhardt noted the packet contained a list of staff approvals.

[The Board moved to Item Number 4.]

Action Items

[The Board discussed this item following Item Number 4.]

3. 3251 Hanover Street [16PLN-00014]: Request by Form 4 Architecture on behalf of the Leland Stanford Jr. University Board of Trustees for Preliminary Review of a new 110,000 square foot research and development building and site improvements that would replace existing buildings with the same square footage. Environmental Assessment: Preliminary Projects are not a project subject to CEQA. Zoning District: Research Park with Landscape Combining District (RP (L)). Contact sheldon@mplanninggroup.com.

Sheldon Ah Sing provided an overview of the project. Staff requested the ARB evaluate the concept and provide feedback.

Board Member Furth asked if the division of the parcel created any nonconformities. Mr. Sing replied no.

Bob Giannini, Form 4 Architecture, shared details of the proposed project. He held two well-attended meetings with neighbors of the project. Neighbors' concerns were noise and light spillage. He would utilize earth berms and walls to control sound and landscaping to control light. An additional meeting with neighbors was scheduled for April 18. A surface parking area would be removed from the plans in favor of temporary landscaping. If a Phase 2 of the project occurred, then that area would return to surface parking. The applicant requested a DEE for the roof deck.

Board Member Kim requested the applicant clarify the location of the area noted as landscape reserve. Mr. Giannini indicated the parking reserve on the drawings. Board Member Kim asked if the landscaping would remain landscaping no matter what happened in the future. Mr. Giannini responded no. It would likely revert back to parking if Phase 2 occurred.

Vice Chair Lew noted an existing grade change between the parking lot and the bike path of roughly 5 feet. He inquired whether re-grading that whole area to reduce slope would carry through the whole lower level parking lot. He did not want to raise the grade along the edge of the bike path. Mr. Giannini indicated the area would remain at current grade. One end would have some berming that would remain in a future phase to help with screening. The whole area would stay at the same grade.

Michael Palmer, speaking for five people, reported the project was large scale and would impact the neighborhood. The total square footage for both phases would be approximately 180,000 square feet. The two-story project would be slightly taller than current buildings. Proposed tenants would work late hours and weekends which would not be compatible with the all-glass design. Neighbors wanted to reduce traffic noise from the driveway and light pollution from the all-glass design. Neighbors wrote a letter proposing alternate locations for the driveway. The proposed building would be level with second-story windows of homes, allowing light from buildings into homes. Neighbors preferred permanent structure changes such as an earthen berm, moving the ramp back and reducing the amount of glass on the facade. Neighbors requested a noise analysis of drive routes, a full design of the berm along the property line with Matadero, the reduction of glass or use of frosted glass, and line-of-sight sections. Neighbors need more information before forming an opinion regarding the requested exception for the roof deck.

Jeff Levinsky advised that the staff report was based on a 10.17-acre site, but no such parcel was listed in City records as of that morning. The staff report mentioned a subdivision, but he was not aware whether that would comply with the Code. In the last review, the site was a 22 2/3-acre parcel. It would be more transparent if the staff report showed the FAR, site coverage and setbacks for the 22 2/3-acre parcel as well as for each part that was split off. The project site did not qualify for an exception. It was unclear how the future 70,000-square-foot building would fit on the site. The plans actually proposed an additional 5,500 square feet of amenity space. He expressed concern about birds in relation to the glass facade.

Board Member Furth inquired about the easement shown on Attachment A. Mr. Sing reported the legend included easement lines for other properties in the vicinity such as electrical utility easements, the pathway and easements for water.

Board Member Baltay suggested the Board discuss site planning and building design separately. Chair Gooyer did not wish to segregate the two topics. Vice Chair Lew suggested two rounds of Board Member comments.

Board Member Furth walked the project site and noted wildlife and vegetation. Analyzing site design was difficult without some indication of the future phase. For environmental review purposes, the Board needed to look at both phases of the project and talk about the complete build-out of the project under existing zoning. The point of CEQA was to review the project as a whole even if it occurred in phases and even if the definition of a later phase was not precise. Neighbors' comments were well taken.

Headlights should not shine into neighboring residential properties. The City's planning for the coming period depended on a major shift from using cars to using bikes, shuttles, and walking. The ARB needed to see a design more obvious in the way it invited, encouraged and facilitated access by shuttle, pedestrian and bicycle traffic. She was looking forward to seeing landscaping for the project. The neighborhood had a tremendous amount of carbon sequestering activity, a lot of landscape. The Code required the ARB to find that a new project did not create or exacerbate heat island situations. She hoped to see a site plan that made it clear that the building greatly improved the present situation in that regard. She shared the neighborhood concern about the radical difference between use of existing buildings and the likely use of future buildings. Currently one issue was buildings would likely be occupied for longer hours each day, and the design allowed light to escape. It would be helpful to have confirming analysis of how setbacks worked after the lot split. She had not heard anything that would enable her to make the required findings for a DEE. There was no basis for making the finding.

Board Member Baltay found the building design was moving in the right direction. If the applicant was serious about building green, then he would not tear down the existing building. Architects could find a way to reuse the existing 100,000-square-foot building. However, the ARB could not require the applicant to do that. The flat plateau was not a naturally occurring feature. The applicant could try to restore it closer to the original landscaping, which was a gently rolling hillside. He did not see that any thought was put into that kind of approach on the landscaping. The applicant seemed to have taken the flat plateau as a wonderful place to construct a building. It could be sculpted more. However, the ARB could not require that. He expressed concern that the oak tree was too close to the parking garage; however, the drawings did not contain sufficient detail regarding the exact location of the tree. Saving the tree involved early site planning to ensure the parking garage was not within the drip line of the tree or even close. He applauded the applicant for wanting to save the tree and for turning the building around it. He needed to understand the location of the tree on the drawings. Perhaps staff could clarify the neighbors' concerns about property area, setbacks. He shared Board Member Furth's regarding a CEQA analysis for the entire site. If there would be another large building on the property, the Board ought to think about where it would be located and how it would be parked. He was concerned about building a two-story parking garage and then covering a third of the lot with a surface parking lot. There was a great opportunity to remove a lot of surface parking. Perhaps the applicant could make the garage three stories and incorporate parking for the entire site. He did not see large-scale site planning. He wished to have a better sense of the future building and parking for it. The City was trying to gear more towards a pedestrian and bicycle-friendly community. He saw no effort whatsoever in the design planning to try to integrate the bike path. There was no allusion to it, connection from the building, or change of the grade to parking. It seemed an afterthought. In reality more people would likely use that path to reach the site.

Board Member Kim felt the building design was great and carried out the design concept. The use of materials was contemporary. He was concerned that each elevation looked very similar. There was a lot of southern and western exposure along the building. He wondered whether there were ways to shield the sun differently, rather than simply using fritted glass. Maybe shading mechanisms could also shield light from residential neighborhoods. The ARB had precedents to include some conditions for use of lights in the building at certain hours of the day, so that there was less or no light pollution to neighboring properties. There would be a photovoltaic study of impacts of light from the building and a noise study as the project progressed. He too was concerned about future expansion. The project should be reviewed as a whole project even if a second phase had not been designed. It was a shame to turn an existing parking lot into landscape only to convert it back to a parking lot. That seemed like extra energy and effort and materials to make something feel more beautiful for a short time. He was curious to see a landscape plan and development of gathering areas and outdoor areas. He would like to continue to study that. Pedestrian paths, bike paths, and bike parking felt like afterthoughts. He hope they could be incorporated into the project early on. The overall entry to the project seemed odd. Maybe more thought could placed on how a pedestrian accessed the building if he was not dropped off at the parking level. He wanted to see things such as the driving and bicycle experience to the surface parking lot; the bicycle experience if the majority of the long-term bicycle parking was underground; whether the bike route was the same as the automobile route; treatment of the heritage oak as a

gathering space; and seating areas around the oak. A couple of sheets in the packet had the same page numbers which was the reason the ARB encouraged a sheet index. The sun angle on Sheet 3.1 with the perspective was not realistic. Overall, the project was exciting, and he looked forward to seeing its progress. The community's concerns were to be taken seriously.

Vice Chair Lew suggested the applicant list the 50-foot landscape buffer as a separate item; zoom out the Master Plan diagram; and include different modes of transportation such as buses, Marguerite shuttles and the bike path. The circulation for the site seemed complicated. The diagram did not note the bus stop located across the street from the project. His main concern regarding the concept was the drop-off location. It was not clear where a visitor would go upon entering the property. It seemed counterintuitive to go back and then up. Placing the drop-off closer to the front would be better. The oak tree could force the applicant to do this other configuration. The applicant should indicate if he studied placing the drop-off at the flat point near the heritage tree and whether it did or did not fit there. He liked the applicant showing the butterfly roof for the garage entry point. The garage entry was a key piece of the design. He encouraged the applicant to get some natural light into the garage. He inquired whether the bike path was an easement or dedicated land. Mr. Sing reported the bike path was located on adjacent property. Board Member Furth advised that it was an easement if the path was located on Stanford land. Vice Chair Lew suggested the ARB considering asking the Pedestrian Bicycle Committee to provide comment regarding the bike path. He suggested removing the chain-link fence covered with ivy as it did not feel welcoming or safe. A park-like space for employees in the landscape area would have a transformative effect on the bike path. He understood the applicant angled the building to minimize the impact on the neighbors, but he questioned the type of activity that would occur in that corner. Mr. Giannini indicated tech users preferred contemplative spaces. Because of the location on the site, the plan was not to put anything active there; it would remain quiet. Active uses would be located around the oak tree in front. Vice Chair Lew asked if the applicant had considered a cafeteria area or coffee cart. Mr. Giannini stated all of that would happen in the courtyard. The 70,000-square-foot building would create a courtyard between buildings. He angled the building for two reasons: a mitigation to the neighborhood and to create a courtyard. The thought was to put all the noisy, active stuff against the street and quiet stuff in back. Vice Chair Lew inquired about the possibility of pathways around the site for people to walk. That could be challenging given the grading. Mr. Giannini had not taken the landscape plans that far. The landscape architect could talk more about his thinking going forward. Vice Chair Lew noted the building had characteristics of the architect's other buildings. Balconies and deep overhangs were very important. Staff had been very good about incorporating the Audubon Society's requirements into conditions of approval. He challenged the applicant to make the project work without a DEE. The applicant was allowed to measure to the average midpoint on a shed roof. Mr. Giannini reported the rooftop deck was not an essential part of the function of the design, but it did add to the lyrical quality of the design. Nothing could replace that. He would study it. If the deck had to be removed from the design, then it would be a missed opportunity for the lyrical aspect of the project. Vice Chair Lew was not opposed to the lyrical aspect of the project. He agreed that Hanover was not an architecturally significant street. He liked the simulated wood soffits and all the textures.

Chair Gooyer was impressed with the large landscape area until he noticed it was for a future development. He agreed tearing out a parking lot only to replace it with another lot was a waste. With the high likelihood of future development on the site, it was common sense to place the infrastructure now rather than later. He would prefer construction of a three-story parking garage now over converting landscape back to parking later. That needed to be addressed. He liked the concept of the roadway. He agreed with the applicant in the sense that it was better for the neighbors to have a truck rumble by in third gear rather than in first gear, even though they might see part of the truck. It was easier to hide the sight of the truck than the sound of the truck. If the applicant did a third story for the parking garage, he could still do the same concept of the tiering for the drive in. He did not believe the DEE was necessary for the small area on the rooftop in a park setting. Rooftop gardens were basically for a building in Downtown Palo Alto that had no amenities as far as the outside. He did not find a driving need to grant the exception. He liked the concept of the design, but it contained too much glass. He liked the concept of a louver system, which could work for solar and light spillage. Because of the glass facade, storage boxes and wiring inside offices could be visible to the outside.

Board Member Baltay could not make the design review exception, Finding Number 1, for reasons offered by Chair Gooyer. He was excited about the butterfly roof; it was appropriate and beautiful. He liked the various articulations of the building and terraces. He suggested the applicant consider putting some solid, vertical pieces underneath those. They could help reduce and articulate the glazing itself. The building did have too much glass which could make it difficult to meet the various energy efficiency requirements. The elevation on Hanover Street, Sheet A3.3, did not have the DEE. It really was not in keeping with the butterfly concept or the rest of the building. He encouraged the applicant to take that out even further so that drivers passing the site could see and get that.

Board Member Furth stated the lyricism had to take place under 35 feet in this location. She was interested in comments about the quality of Barron Park. The Bol Park bike path was a real opportunity. She was interested in what the neighborhood wanted there. The chain-link fence covered with ivy was not a good thing. That was a great opportunity to open it up. The south part of the 3251 Hanover parcel seemed to be planted with an oak woodland. She was interested in the design picking up on what was happening along the Barron Park and Santa Cruz side of the parcel. Opening up that pathway to the border of the parcel would be an important improvement to the whole area.

Study Session

None.

Approval of Minutes

[The Board discussed this item following Item Number 2.]

4. March 17, 2016

Vice Chair Lew noted staff provided the list of staff approvals, Item 2, during the meeting.

Board Member Baltay inquired about information for the 901 High Street project which was not contained in the minutes. Ms. Gerhardt indicated the project was a part of the ARB/HRB joint meeting, which could have separate minutes. She would provide further information.

MOTION: Vice Chair Lew moved, seconded by Chair Gooyer, to approve the March 17, 2016 minutes as amended.

MOTION PASSED: 4-0 Board Member Baltay abstaining

Subcommittee Items

5. 2209-2215 El Camino Real

6. 575 High Street

Board Member Questions, Comments, Announcements

None.

Adjournment