



Architectural Review Board

Staff Report (ID # 6868)

Report Type: Study Session **Meeting Date:** 6/2/2016

Summary Title: Preliminary Review Fire Station 3

Title: 799 Embarcadero Road (file PLN16-00123): Request for Preliminary Architectural Review of concept plans for a two-story, 6,500 square foot replacement fire station building proposed at Palo Alto Fire Station #3, located on the northwest corner of Embarcadero Road and Newell Road at the southeasterly edge of Rinconada Park on an 18.27 acre, city-owned property zoned Public Facility (PF).

From: Jonathan Lait

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Architectural Review Board (ARB) take the following action(s):
Review and provide comments.

Report Summary

The subject application is a request for preliminary review. No formal direction is provided to the applicant and Boardmembers should refrain from forming and expressing opinions either in support or against the project.

As a preliminary review application, the Planning and Community Environment department has only performed a cursory review of the project for compliance with the zoning code. A comprehensive review of a future project to applicable codes, including context-based design criteria and other standards, would follow the submittal of a formal application. Accordingly, there may be aspects of this preliminary review application that do not comply with municipal regulations or require additional discretionary applications beyond architectural review.

Similarly, there has been no comprehensive review of the project to the comprehensive plan or other policy documents. Such review will occur upon the filing of a formal application.

The purpose of this meeting is to provide an applicant an opportunity to present a conceptual project to the Board and receive initial comments. Boardmembers may identify aspects of the

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project that are appropriate given the neighborhood context and consistent with city policies or areas of concern that the applicant may want to reconsider in a formal submittal. Community members are also encouraged to provide early input to the project.

Background

Project Information

Owner:	City of Palo Alto
Architect:	Alan Kawasaki
Representative:	Public Works, Matt Raschke and PWE Team
Legal Counsel:	City Attorney

Property Information

Address:	799 Embarcadero Road (see location map report Attachment A)
Neighborhood:	Community Center, Southeasterly edge of Rinconada Park
Lot Dimensions & Area:	18.27 acres (450' of frontage on Newell)
Housing Inventory Site:	No
Located w/in a Plume:	No
Protected/Heritage Trees:	Yes
Historic Resource(s):	Fire Station is not listed on City or State Historic Inventory
Special Setback:	<u>24 foot setbacks on Newell and Embarcadero Roads</u>
Existing Improvement(s):	One-story fire station built in 1948 (per applicant description)
Existing Land Use(s):	Public facilities (Fire Station and Wireless Communication Facility)
Adjacent Land Uses & Zoning:	North: Public Facilities (electric substation; tennis courts across the street (Hopkins Avenue) at 1280 Newell Road) West: Public Facilities (Rinconada Park, Walter Hays School) East: Public Facilities (Art Center, 1313 Newell Road) South: R-1 (Single Family Residential) homes (one- and two-story), lots are 80 feet from the front of the fire station site
Aerial View of Property:	



Land Use Designation & Applicable Plans

Zoning Designation:	Public Facilities
Comp. Plan Designation:	Public Facilities
Context-Based Design Criteria:	Not applicable
Downtown Urban Design Guide:	Not applicable
South of Forest Avenue Coordinated Area Plan:	Not applicable
Baylands Master Plan:	Not applicable
El Camino Real Design Guidelines (1976 / 2002):	Not applicable
Proximity to Residential Uses or Districts (150'):	Across Embarcadero, approximately 81 feet
Located w/in Airport Influence Area:	Not applicable

Prior City Reviews & Action

City Council:	See Below.
PTC:	None.
HRB:	None.
ARB:	None.

Council Authorization for Project

In 2002, the City's consultant (Biggs Cardosa Associates) found that the No. 3 and No. 4 fire stations have "significant seismic deficiencies and potential for instability of soils due to liquefaction." These two facilities are among the city's top infrastructure priorities, according to the Council Infrastructure Committee's plan. In December 2015, on consent calendar, Council awarded a contract to Shah Kawasaki Architects Inc. The Council report enabling this action is found at the following URL: <http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/civicaX/filebank/documents/50127>.

Project Description

The project is the demolition of the 4,300 square foot (sf) one-story Palo Alto Fire Station #3 building, located on the northwest corner of the intersection of Embarcadero and Newell Roads, and the construction of a two-story, 6,500 sf fire station building and site improvements. Preliminary plans can be found on the City's development project webpages. The applicant's project description is provided as Attachment B to this report.

Site and Context

The 18.27 acre parcel includes Rinconada Park (777 Embarcadero Road) with its extensive lawn area, tennis courts and playgrounds, and public swimming pools and swim center building (777 Embarcadero Road, 100 feet from the existing fire station building). North of the pools is the Magic Forest, a stand of redwood trees. Also on the property is the Rinconada Well, located at 1340 Hopkins (between the pool and Hopkins Avenue) and the Hopkins Electric Substation located at 1350 Newell Road (180 feet from the existing fire station building). Farther west (1,150-1,180 feet) on the parcel, is the Junior Museum and Zoo (at 1451 Middlefield) and the Girl Scout House (at 1120 Hopkins Avenue).



Beyond the Girl Scout House and also on the subject property are the Lucie Stern Center (1305 Middlefield, listed on City's Historic Inventory as Historic Category 1 Resource) and Children's Library (1276 Harriett Street, included in the Category 1 resource designation). Rinconada Park abuts Walter Hays Elementary School at 1525 Middlefield Road (at bottom of the above image). There are numerous, mature trees in Rinconada Park between the fire station and Walter Hays School, including heritage oaks shown in the below image. Among these oaks is Palo Alto's "heritage tree #2", which is over 200 years old.

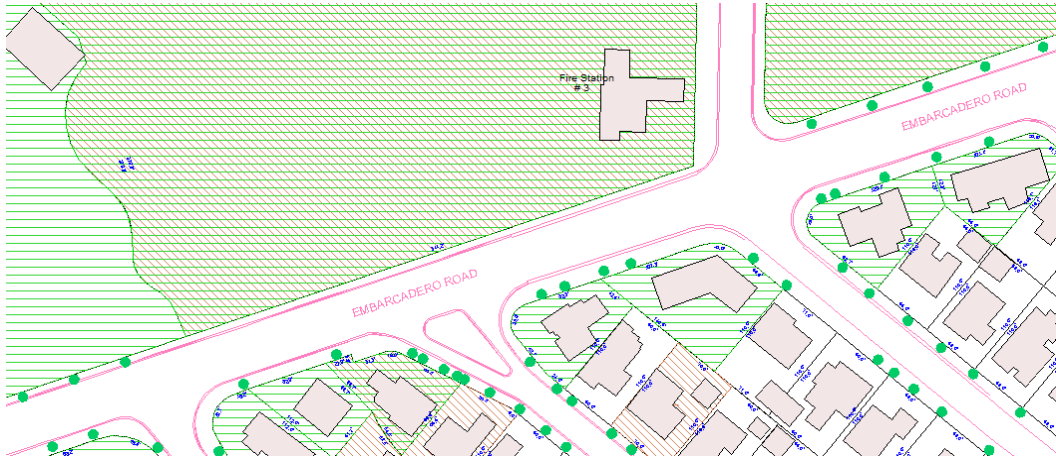


Long Range Plan for Rinconada Park and Nearby Mature Vegetation

Palo Alto is preparing a parks master plan (Plan), which includes concepts for phased improvements to Rinconada Park, to be completed by 2035. The City’s website displays plans for this park, at the following URL: <http://www.paloaltoparksplan.org/>. The Plan notes the magical forest (redwood grove) would be retained; therefore, it can be expected to continue to serve as a significant screen to obscure the fire station site from Hopkins Avenue homes. The above image from the Plan shows the location of the heritage oaks. The below image, from a recent arborist report, shows nearby trees considered to have “low suitability for preservation” (trees #79-90 located along Newell Road, adjacent to the substation, trees #182 and 184, located just south of the swim center, and a dead cedar (#358).



The below image shows existing street trees located along Embarcadero and Newell Roads.



Site Planning and Building Design

The existing apparatus bay, which is not deep enough to park today's engines, has two wings (northern and eastern); firefighters park their vehicles in the parking lot accessed via the Newell Road driveway, and drive the fire trucks onto the site via the Embarcadero Road driveway. The proposed station will utilize both driveways for fire apparatus, such that ingress will be from Newell Road and egress will be onto Embarcadero Road.



Embarcadero Road

The proposed plan set (provided to the ARB and libraries, and available on the City's webpages at:

http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/gov/depts/pln/new_projects/commercial_and_mixed_use_projects.asp

indicates:

the location of the 24' special setbacks on both streets, a building footprint of 3,388 square feet (sf), total floor area of 6,580 sf, regardless of the architectural design option, design options indicate a central apparatus bay, with two wings, one extending to the west and one extending to the east of the apparatus bay, with a second story atop the first floor plan, three design options all in a contemporary architectural style; options #2 and #3 indicate pitched roofs, whereas option #1 shows a flat, no-pitch roof design, pedestrian sidewalk from Newell, retention of three protected trees on the site, provision of eight standard vehicle parking spaces within a gated parking lot, and one accessible space in front of the gate within the special setback on Newell Road, widening of the existing driveway cut on Newell by approximately six feet, and wider and taller apparatus bay doors to accommodate fire engines.

The below images show the three different options:



Option 1 Rendering



Option 2 Rendering



Option 3 Rendering

Anticipated Entitlements/Review Process

The following discretionary applications are anticipated:

Architectural Review – Major (AR) – for fire station and for new ‘stealth’ wcf Conditional Use Permit (CUP) – to:

(1) modify existing CUP for ‘stealth’ wcf/flagpole to relocate the pole to a new location on the site, if relocation is pursued, and

(2) request consideration of a temporary fire station within a residential neighborhood during construction of the replacement station #3 – in conjunction with a separate AR.

The formal AR application for station #3 would be reviewed by the ARB prior to decision by the Director of Planning and Community Environment on the application and environmental review document, and reviewed and acted on by Council only upon an appeal of the Director's decision or environmental review document.

The AR application would not require review by the Planning and Transportation Commission (PTC), because fire station use is a permitted use. A CUP (for a replacement wireless communication facility) would be subject to PTC hearing by request only. Parks and Recreation Commission review is not required because the building would not encroach into the parkland.

Because the building is reportedly 68 years old, and a historic resource evaluation is required for review of the formal application in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the Historic Resources Board (HRB) will be requested to review the Historic Resources Evaluation the applicant is preparing to submit in conjunction with the formal Architectural Review application, and the HRB will have the opportunity to comment on the CEQA review document.

Discussion

Preliminary review applications receive a cursory review for compliance with zoning regulations and consistency with the comprehensive plan or other applicable policy documents. This information was previously transmitted to the applicant. A more comprehensive review will occur upon formal submittal, which may reveal other code or policy concerns.

At this point in project development, the ARB is encouraged to provide objective feedback to the applicant on the preliminary drawings, including architectural concepts shown in options 1-3. It should be noted that the building is close to the swim center, which is targeted for expansion in the long range Rinconada plan, so any approved design for the fire station will become context for the swim center expansion.

The ARB may want to consider comments that relate to:

Scale and mass (the building height is limited to 35 feet within 150 feet of a residential zone district – elevations were not provided in the plan set to determine height)

Relationship to the neighborhood setting (mature vegetation) and architectural context (park/swim center, art center, homes across the street)

Pedestrian-orientation and design

Access to the site

Architectural design, theme, cohesiveness, and quality of materials

Staff Review

City staff provided comments to the project team regarding on-site public art, tree protection, compliance measures for storm-water and wastewater management, bicycle parking, fire and building codes.

Next Steps

There is no further action required by the ARB after its discussion. The applicant is planning to file a formal application.

Environmental Review

The subject review involves no discretionary action and is therefore not a project and not subject to review pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). When the formal application is filed, staff will perform an analysis of the project in accordance with CEQA.

Report Author & Contact Information

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ARB¹ Liaison & Contact Information

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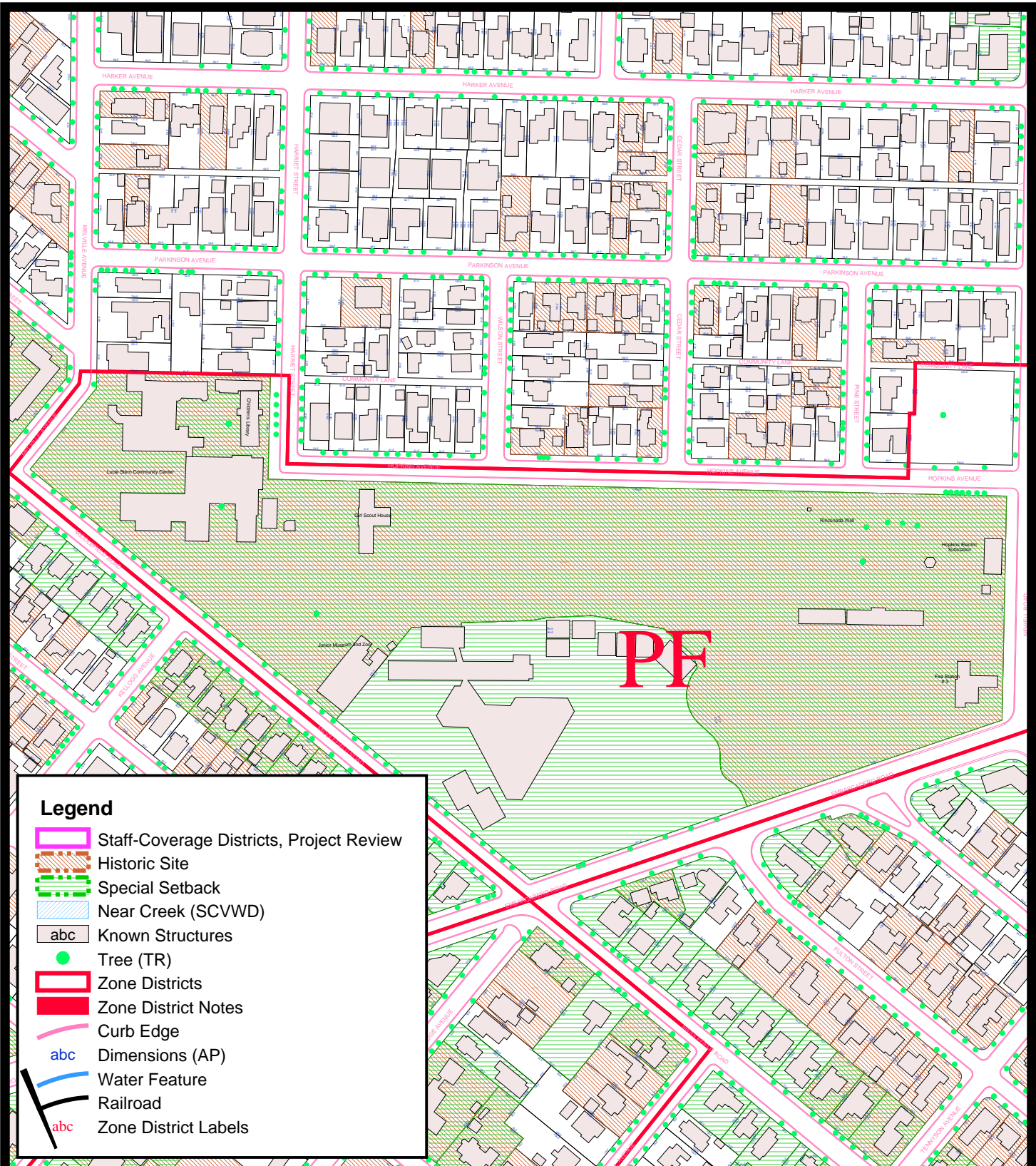
jodie.gerhardt@cityofpaloalto.org

Attachments:














- Attachment A: fire station 3 parcel report (PDF)
- Attachment B: Applicant Project Description(PDF)

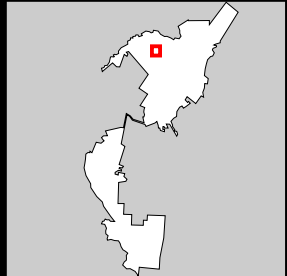
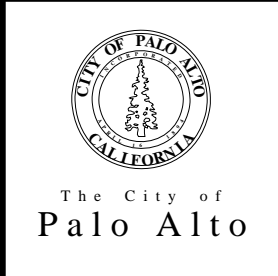
¹ Emails may be sent directly to the ARB using the following address: arb@cityofpaloalto.org

Attachment A

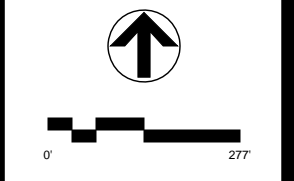


Legend

-  Staff-Coverage Districts, Project Review
-  Historic Site
-  Special Setback
-  Near Creek (SCVWD)
-  Known Structures
-  Tree (TR)
-  Zone Districts
-  Zone District Notes
-  Curb Edge
-  Dimensions (AP)
-  Water Feature
-  Railroad
-  Zone District Labels



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



S H A H
KAWASAKI

ARCHITECTS

PALO ALTO FIRE STATION NO. 3 | 799 EMBARCADERO ROAD, PALO ALTO, CA 94303
ARB Submittal for Preliminary Review, April 5, 2016

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

799 Embarcadero Road in Palo Alto, at the intersection of Embarcadero Road and Newell Road, is currently occupied by Fire Station No. 3. The scope of this project is to demolish the existing 1948 wood-framed structure and replace it with a modern, code-compliant fire station. The site itself is in the southeast corner of the larger Rinconada Park site, and neighboring structures include the Palo Alto Art Center, Rinconada Library, Rinconada Pool, and The Walter Hays Elementary School. Located to the south of the site are the mostly-residential neighborhoods of Old Palo Alto and Triple El. The proposal, as designed, will comply with all of the height, setback, FAR, and lot coverage requirements of the underlying Public Facilities (PF) District. Our design concept for the new Fire Station No. 3 is to relate harmoniously to all of these varied contexts, while still clearly identifying itself as a new civic structure for the City of Palo Alto.