



Architectural Review Board Staff Report

From: Planning and Development Services Director
Lead Department: Planning and Development Services

Meeting Date: December 7, 2023
Report #: 2310-2172

TITLE

70 Encina Avenue [23PLN -00291]: Request for Preliminary Architectural Review of a Proposed Project Consisting of 10 new Condominium Townhouse Units in a new 3-Story, 22,230 SF Building (1.84 FAR), and Site Improvements to Replace the Existing Surface Parking Area. The Formal Application Will Include a Rezoning to Planned Home Zoning. Environmental Assessment: Not a Project. The Formal Application Will be Subject to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Review. Zoning District: CC (Community Commercial). For More Information Contact the Project Planner Emily Kallas at Emily.Kallas@CityofPaloAlto.org.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Architectural Review Board (ARB):

1. Review and provide informal comments. No formal action is requested.

REPORT SUMMARY

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

As a preliminary review application, the Planning and Development Services Department has performed minimal review of the project for compliance with the Comprehensive Plan and 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.

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

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Request for Preliminary Review of an anticipated Planned Home Zoning project to allow construction of 10 condominium townhouse units in a new three-story 22,230 square foot building arranged around a central driveway/courtyard, replacing the existing parking area near the Town and County Shopping Center.

Anticipated Entitlements

The following discretionary application is anticipated:

- Planned Community (PC/PHZ): The process for evaluating this type of application is set forth in PAMC 18.38. Planned Community is intended to accommodate all types of developments, including combinations of uses appropriately requiring flexibility under controlled conditions not otherwise attainable under other districts. The planned community district is particularly intended for unified, comprehensively planned developments that are of substantial public benefit and which conform with and enhance the policies and programs of the Palo Alto Comprehensive Plan. The application requires initial review by the Planning and Transportation Commission (PTC), followed by ARB review. Upon recommendation from the ARB, the draft ordinance for the project is presented along with the development plan to the PTC for recommendation to the City Council for final action.

BACKGROUND

Project Information

Owner:	Ed Storm
Architect:	Jeff Galbraith, Hayes Group
Applicant:	Jeff Galbraith, Hayes Group

Property Information

Address:	No address formally assigned, referred to as 70 Encina APN 120-34-006 and 120-34-007
Housing Inventory Site:	APN 120-34-006 has a total capacity of 4 units.
Located w/in a Plume:	No
Protected/Heritage Trees:	Yes, six street trees proposed for removal. The survey indicated there were no trees greater than 15 inches in diameter. The formal application will be required to verify this with an arborist report.
Historic Resource(s):	No

Land Use Designation & Applicable Plans

Comp. Plan Designation:	Community Commercial (CC)
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Zoning Designation: Community Commercial (CC)

	Yes		Yes		Yes
Baylands Master Plan/Guidelines (2008/2005)	☐	El Camino Real Guidelines (1976)	☐	Housing Development Project	☒
Downtown Urban Design Guidelines (1993)	☐	South El Camino Real Guidelines (2002)	☐	Utilizes Chapter 18.24 - Objective Standards	☐
Individual Review Guidelines (2005)	☐	Within 150 feet of Residential Use or District	☐	Context-Based Design Criteria applicable	☒
SOFA Phase 1 (2000)	☐	Within Airport Influence Area	☐		☐
SOFA Phase 2 (2003)	☐		☐		☐

Prior City Reviews & Action

On September 12, 2022 Council held a prescreening for a proposed 20-unit development in a five- story building at this site. The staff report¹ and a video² of the hearing are available online.

City Councilmembers generally commented that this area is good for multi-family housing as it is near shopping and transit. However, Councilmembers noted that the project didn't overpower the adjacent low rise Town and Country Village. They asked the applicant to work with Town & Country to receive their support of the project, and stated that consideration should be paid to how this development may affect the vitality of Town & Country. Council also wanted any project at 70 Encina to provide a better visual connection with Town & Country, such as through the use of materials.

The applicant has worked with Town & Country to revise their design, as noted in the Project Description Letter (Attachment B). However as of the publishing of this report, the City has not received any formal comments from Town & Country.

¹ A link to the September 12, 2022 City Council staff report for a previously proposed project at 70 Encina is available online at:
<https://cityofpaloalto.primegov.com/Public/CompiledDocument?meetingTemplateId=9048&compileOutputType=1>

² A video of the September 12, 2022 City Council hearing is available online at:
<https://youtube.com/watch?v=f4exm9ytxJs&t=17842s>

DISCUSSION

Preliminary review applications are sent directly to hearing with minimal review for compliance with zoning regulations and consistency with the Comprehensive Plan or other applicable policy documents. These applications are also routed to various departments of the City for initial input on the conceptual design. At the end of the preliminary review process, the project planner will compile the ARB and department comments for the applicant. A more comprehensive review will occur upon formal submittal of a more complete application, which may reveal other code or policy concerns.

At this point in project development, the ARB is encouraged to provide feedback to the applicant on the preliminary drawings. The Board may want to consider comments that relate to:

- Proposed setbacks, transitions, and buffers between the proposed units and the existing Town and Country parking lot, particularly the main drive aisle directly to the west of the property
 - How will the development look both from outside and inside the proposed project as it relates to this unique setting?
 - Relationship to the street
 - The Site Plan indicates a wood perimeter fence, which is not shown in the elevations and would substantially impact the appearance and feel of the space
 - The site is directly abutting, and in some cases cutting into existing parking lot landscape islands.
- Access to and within the site via the central courtyard
 - The entrance gate is not wide enough to accommodate two-way traffic.
 - Pedestrian access to the site is provided through the main driveway. A series of gates is provided along the side yards but requires residents toward the rear to walk through other resident's private open space.
- Usability of ground-level open space, balconies, and overall site landscaping
 - Site plan contains gates between/into each unit's space, requiring residents to walk through other private open space to access their front door/private open space. It does not appear to provide sufficient fire access to the buildings on the east and west side.
 - The elevations show second floor planters in inaccessible locations, not shown on the floor plans.
 - Availability of light and soil for the proposed trees within the courtyard
 - Availability of light for the terraces due to the size of the courtyard/height of the building
- Consideration of the Context-Based Design Criteria and Objective Design Standards
 - As a PHZ project, it is not required to meet the City's Commercial Context-Based Design Criteria (18.16.090) or Objective Design Standards (18.24); however, the ARB may provide feedback on the project's consistency with these design criteria and the ARB findings for approval, as they represent the City's vision for the built environment.
- Architectural design, theme, cohesiveness, and quality of materials

- Proposed materials are primarily dark gray board-and-batten siding, with a matching standing seam metal roof. The ground level is primarily light beige brick veneer, with orange metal doors and planters, and glass block accent areas facing the street and outer sides.

NEXT STEPS

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

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The Palo Alto Municipal Code requires notice of this public hearing be published in a local paper and mailed to owners and occupants of property within 600 feet of the subject property at least ten days in advance. Notice of a public hearing for this project was published in the *Daily Post* on November 24, 2023, which is 12 days in advance of the meeting. Postcard mailing occurred on November 21, 2023, which is 15 days in advance of the meeting.

Public Comments

As of the writing of this report, no project-related, public comments were received for this application. The prescreening application received one letter from Ellis Partners, owner of Town & Country, expressing that they did not support the prior design.

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). If a formal application is filed, an analysis of the project to CEQA will be performed.

ATTACHMENTS

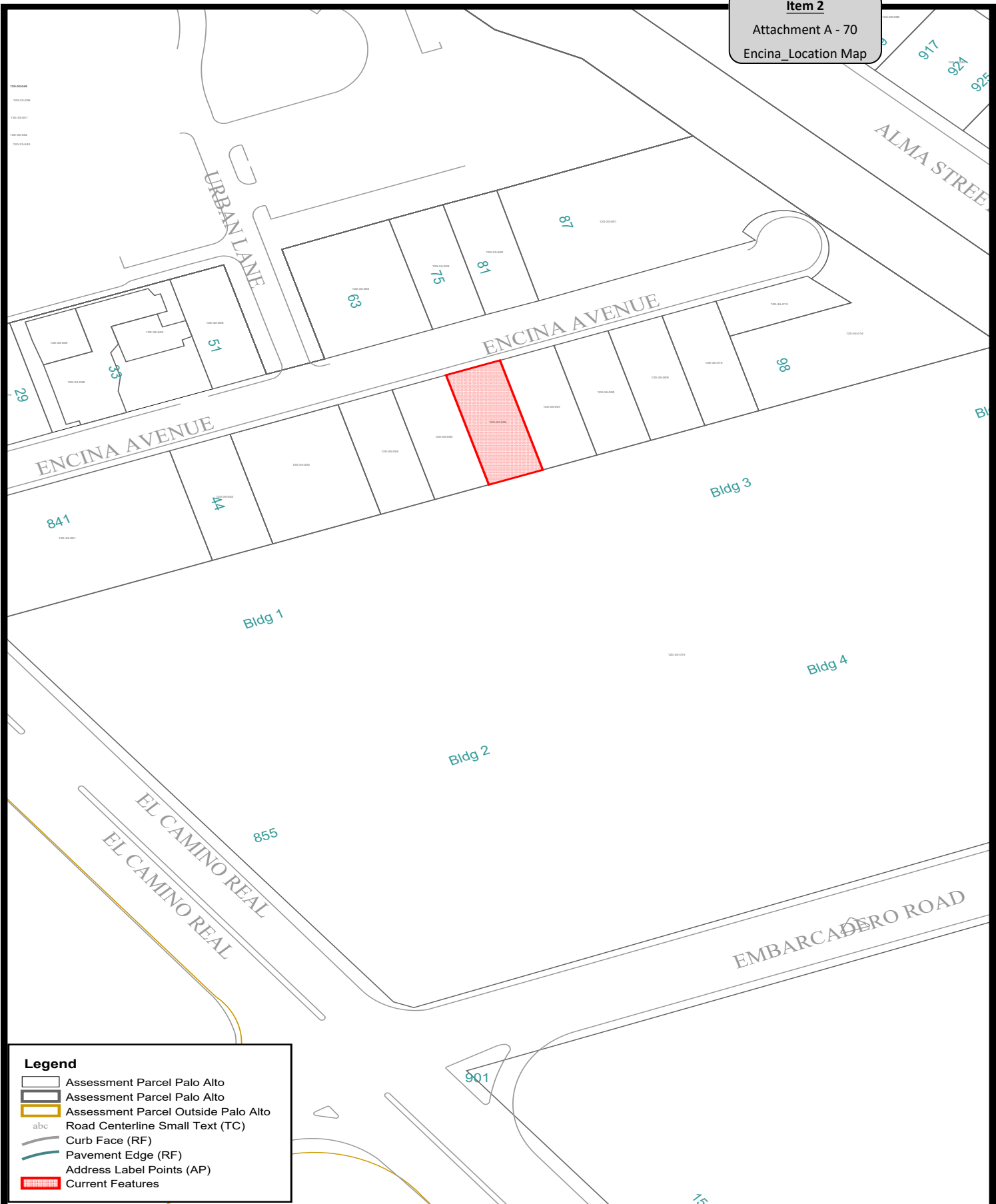
Attachment A: Location Map

Attachment B: Applicant's Project Description

Attachment C: Project Plans

AUTHOR/TITLE:

Emily Kallas, AICP, Planner



Legend

- Assessment Parcel Palo Alto
- Assessment Parcel Palo Alto
- Assessment Parcel Outside Palo Alto
- Road Centerline Small Text (TC)
- abc
- Curb Face (RF)
- Pavement Edge (RF)
- Address Label Points (AP)
- Current Features



Attachment A
70 Encina
Location Map

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

A north arrow pointing upwards and a scale bar showing 0' and 87'.

ATTACHMENT B
ZONING COMPARISON TABLE
70 Encina, 23PLN-00291

Table 1: COMPARISON WITH CHAPTER 18.16 (CC DISTRICT)
Mixed Use and Residential Development Standards

As this is a Preliminary Review, all measurements are approximate.

Regulation	Required	Existing	Proposed
Minimum Site Area, width and depth	No Requirement	100 feet x 121 feet 12,100 sf	100 feet x 121 feet 12,100 sf
Minimum Front Yard	No Requirement	N/A	3 feet
Rear Yard	10 feet	N/A	Varies, 0 feet – 5 feet
Interior Side Yards	No Requirement	N/A	Varies, 0 feet – 7.5 feet
Build-to-lines	50% of frontage built to setback	N/A	0% of frontage built to setback
Max. Site Coverage	6,050 sf 50%	N/A	6,950 sf 57.4%
Min. Landscape/Open Space	3,630 sf 30%		1,375 sf yard spaces 234 sf front yard 165 sf tree wells/other 1,774 sf total, 14.7%
Min. Useable Open Space	150 sf per unit Sf total	N/A	Most have 270 sf per unit, some have 150 sf
Max. Building Height	50 feet	N/A	38 feet 2 inches
Residential Density	Not specified?	N/A	10 units 28 du/acre
Max. Floor Area Ratio (FAR)	Currently: .15:1 residential use .35:1 maximum total floor area Potentially 1.25:1 after proposed Housing Element-related upzoning is adopted	N/A	22,230 sf 1.84:1
Anticipated FAR	1.25 Residential use 1.25 total	N/A	22,230 sf 1.84:1
Daylight Plane	None	N/A	N/A

Table 2: CONFORMANCE WITH CHAPTER 18.52 (Off-Street Parking and Loading)
for Office*

Item 2

Attachment B - CC Zoning

Comparison Table

Type	Required	Existing	
Vehicle Parking	No parking required per AB 2097	Approximately 36 uncovered spaces	18 spaces
Bicycle Parking	1 LT space per unit	None	None shown, however garages appear to have sufficient space.

Attachment C

Project Plans

In order to reduce paper consumption, a limited number of hard copy project plans are provided to Council members for their review. The same plans are available to the public, at all hours of the day, via the following online resources.

Directions to review Project plans online:

1. Go to: bit.ly/PApendingprojects
2. Scroll down to find “70 Encina Avenue” and click the address link
3. On this project specific webpage you will find a link to the project plans and other important information

Direct Link to Project Webpage:

<https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/Departments/Planning-Development-Services/Current-Planning/Projects/70-Encina-Ave>