



CITY OF  
**PALO  
ALTO**

## Palo Alto Staff Report to Public Art Commission

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**September 21, 2023**

**RE: Item 1 – Public Art in Private Development** – Initial Review of Public Art in Private Development associated with the 660 University Avenue development project.

### **DISCUSSION**

The project at 660 University Avenue at the corner of Middlefield Road is subject to the [Public Art for Private Development Ordinance](#). The public art application submitted in August indicates an estimated art budget of \$200,000, and they have retained the services of art consultant Chandra Cerrito to manage their public art process. The applicant is coming to the Public Art Commission to seek feedback on the locations currently under consideration, as well as any feedback the Public Art Commission may have as the team begins their artist selection and initial design process.

**Attachment A: Project Submittal for PAC Initial Review for 660 University Ave**

Nadya Chuprina  
Palo Alto Public Art Program  
1313 Newell Rd.  
Palo Alto, CA 94303

September 11, 2023

Dear Nadya,

I am pleased to provide you and the Palo Alto Public Art Commission a summary of Smith Development's project at 660 University Avenue.

*Overview of the Development*

Located on a prominent site between Middlefield Road and Byron Street, 660 University is a four-story residential building with a lobby and office space on the ground floor, below-grade parking garage, and an outdoor roof deck. The building design is contemporary, with nicely articulated facades, including setbacks and projecting balconies. Inspired by a large oak tree on the adjacent parcel and grove of trees across the street, the design celebrates nature. Natural finishes on the exterior include clear glass, board-formed concrete, simulated wood panels, and horizontal siding. Extensive landscaping includes built-in planters along Middlefield Road, University Avenue, and Byron Street as well as a roof garden with plantings, trellises, and solar panel canopies.

*Art Locations*

The developer, architects, and I have identified two preferred locations for artwork on the exterior façade of the building facing University Avenue. The architects have thoughtfully designed places for art that will enhance, distinguish, and become integral features of the building. The first art area, approximately 10.5 feet high x 15 feet wide, is like a large canvas at ground level. It is at the center of the building and is flanked by two ramps leading to the residential and office lobbies. This location offers an intimate experience for pedestrians, while also being visible to bicyclists and vehicles passing by on University Avenue.

The second location is a tall vertical panel, approximately 30 feet high x 5 feet wide, on the elevator tower that extends from the ground floor to the roof. This banner-like feature will be highly visible at a distance from the surrounding neighborhood. These two locations will enable appreciation of the artwork from multiple vantage points. Artwork at these two areas will visually connect the building entry on the ground plane and the vertical shaft leading to the rooftop terrace. The artwork will significantly contribute to creating the building's unique identity and will call out this section of University Avenue as a gateway to downtown Palo Alto.

*Approximate Budget and Timeline*

Based on current estimated construction costs, the approximate public art budget is \$200,000.00. This project is currently under review by the Architectural Review Board. Its estimated completion

date is fall of 2025, with public art installed around September 2025. This schedule is subject to change.

*Art Selection Plan and Consultant*

As the public art consultant for 660 University, I will facilitate the process of commissioning public art, from developing an art plan and selecting an artist through art installation. The developer will select an artist with input from their design team. Boyd and Lund Smith, the principals of Smith Development, grew up in Palo Alto, attended high school and graduate school there, and have a very personal interest in contributing something special to the city. They would like artwork at 660 University that is particularly fitting for Palo Alto and that becomes a notable feature at this downtown entry point.

To select the most appropriate and compelling artist, we will review a diverse range of qualified artists and identify a short list of greatest interest. After interviewing finalists, the developer will select one artist, whom they will contract to develop a conceptual design. The artist will receive initial input and iterative feedback from the development and design team to guide their design process. Given the importance of the natural environment to the project team as well as to the Palo Alto community, the selected artist may choose to reference nature in the proposed artwork, but the specific subject will be determined by the artist after s/he has learned more about the building, site, and context. Following the Public Art Commission's approval of the artist's conceptual design, the developer will hire the artist to execute the proposed artwork.

While a variety of media are possible for the art locations identified, the project team is most excited about the idea of tile or mosaic artwork, which is highly durable outdoors and easily maintained, while also offering the opportunity for lasting color and a variety of imagery. This medium will be a nice complement to the building's natural finishes while bringing a "pop" of color. We were pleased to hear that work in this type of medium would be a first for Palo Alto's public art collection, strengthening the variety of art in the city.

After reading the Public Art Master Plan, I believe our proposed art locations and potential artwork will support the city's vision for public art. The artwork will be highly visible and accessible to a wide range of the public, including pedestrians and bicyclists. It will help create a unique sense of place at this gateway corner, at the start of the downtown area, and for the city overall. Tile or mosaic artwork will expand the diversity of the city's public art media. With the developer's deep connection to the city, any artwork our team considers will be well-suited for, and hopefully embraced by, Palo Alto's community. We look forward to working with you and the Public Art Commission to bring this new public artwork to fruition.

Thank you,

*Chandra Cerrito*

Chandra Cerrito

# Smith Development 660 University Avenue, Palo Alto

**PALO ALTO PUBLIC ART COMMISSION**  
**Initial Review**

September 21, 2023

Chandra Cerrito / Art Advisors

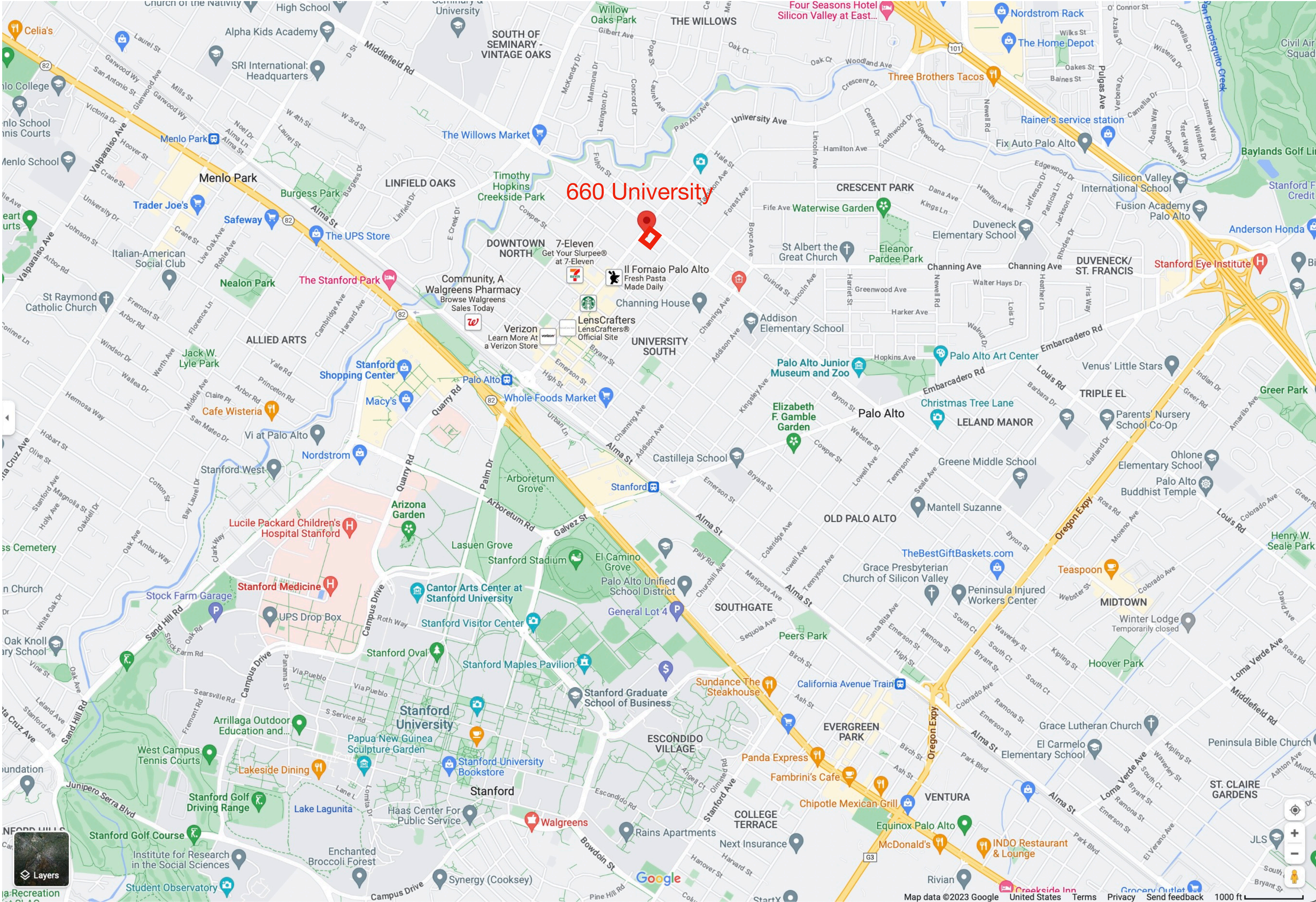


## Site and Building



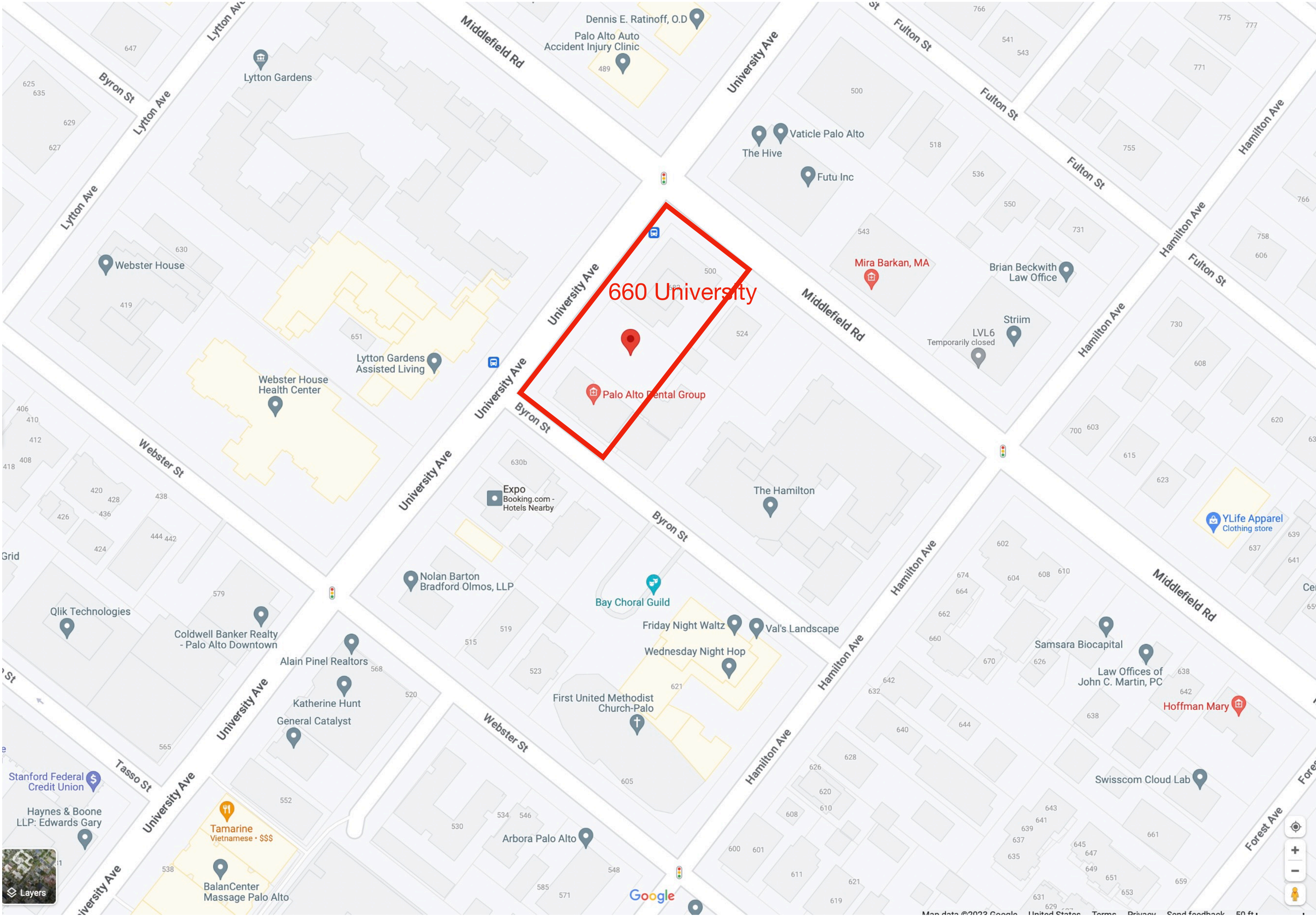
# 660 University

## SITE CONTEXT



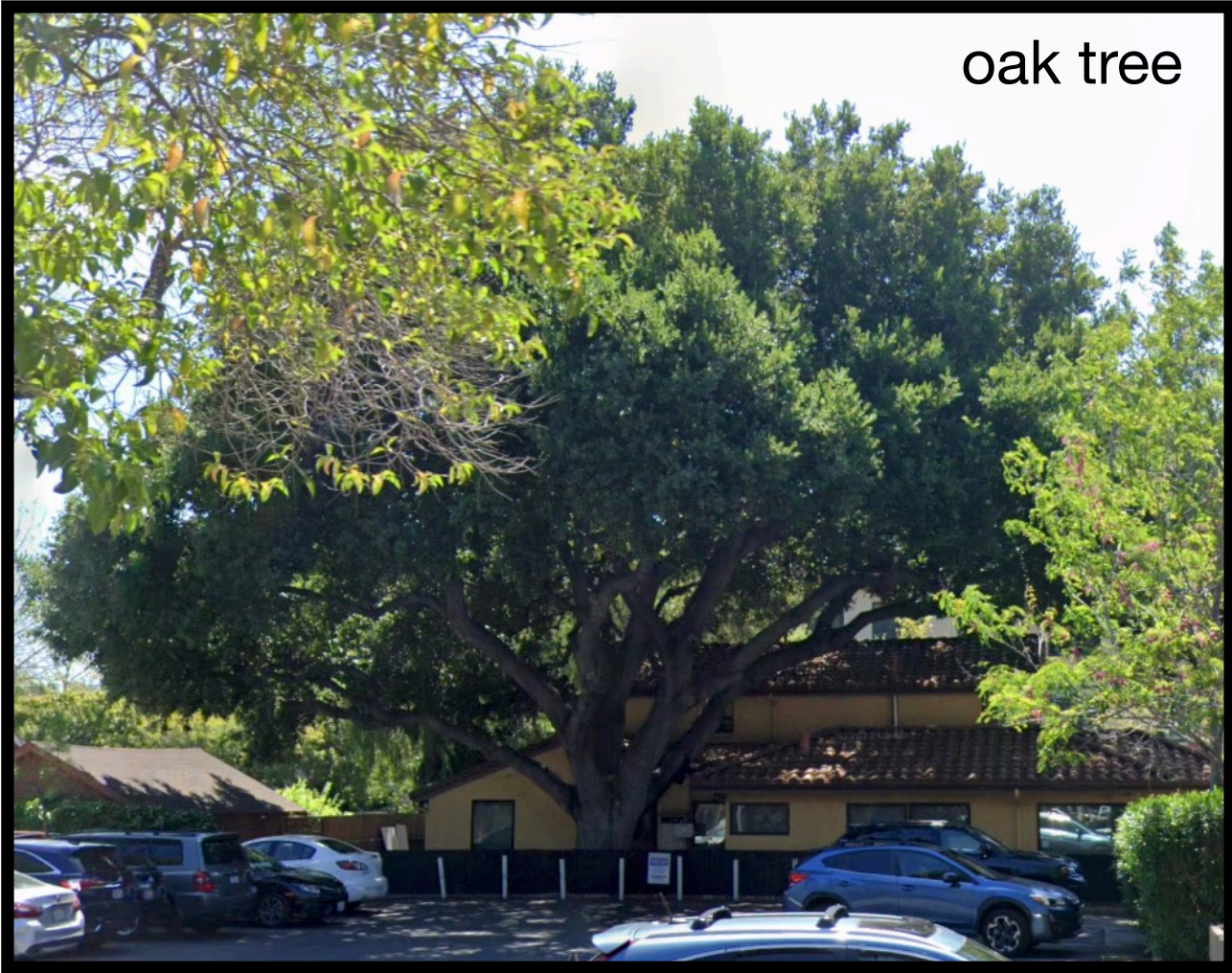
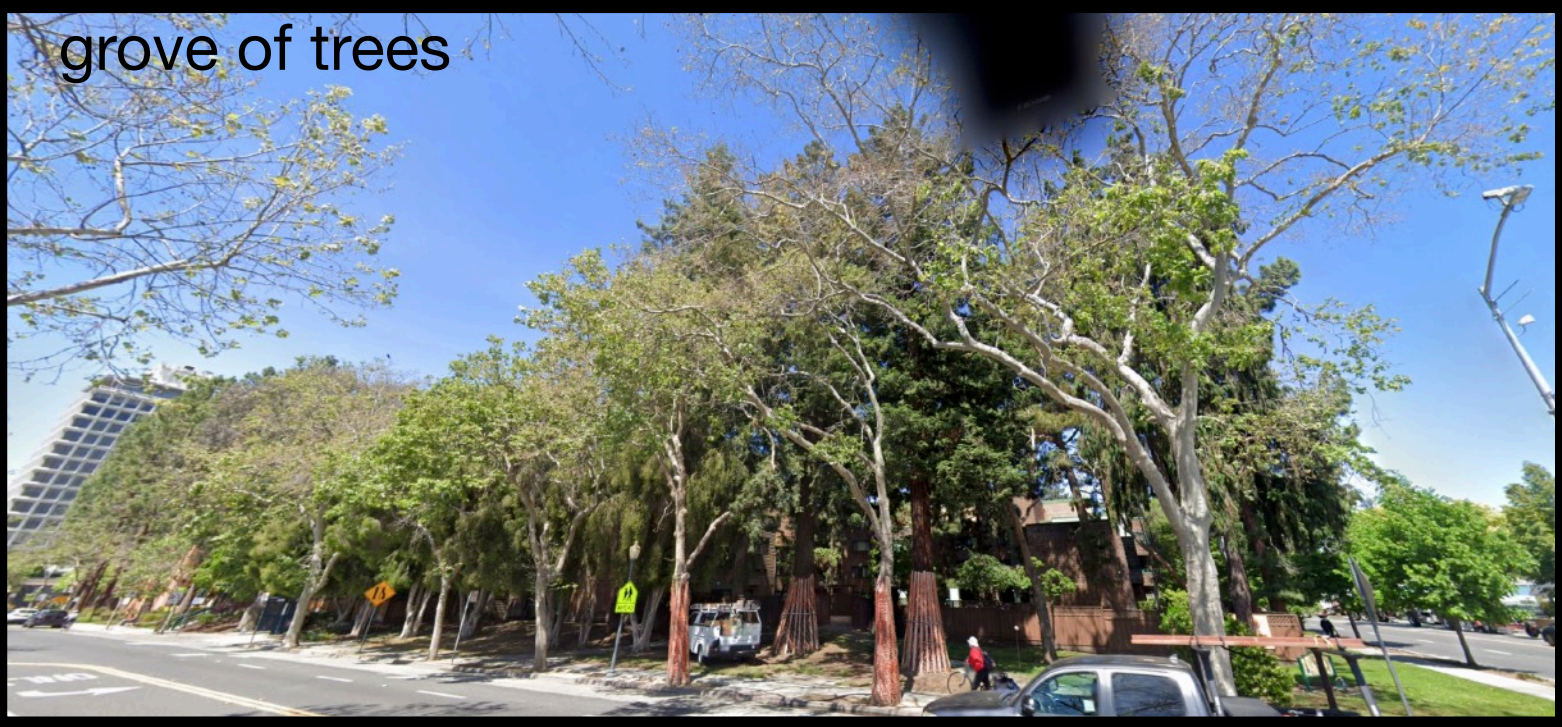


660 University  
SITE CONTEXT





660 University  
SITE CONTEXT





660 University  
RENDERING  
View from  
Middlefield & University





660 University  
RENDERING  
View from Middlefield





660 University  
RENDERING  
View from Byron





660 University  
ELEVATION  
Rear



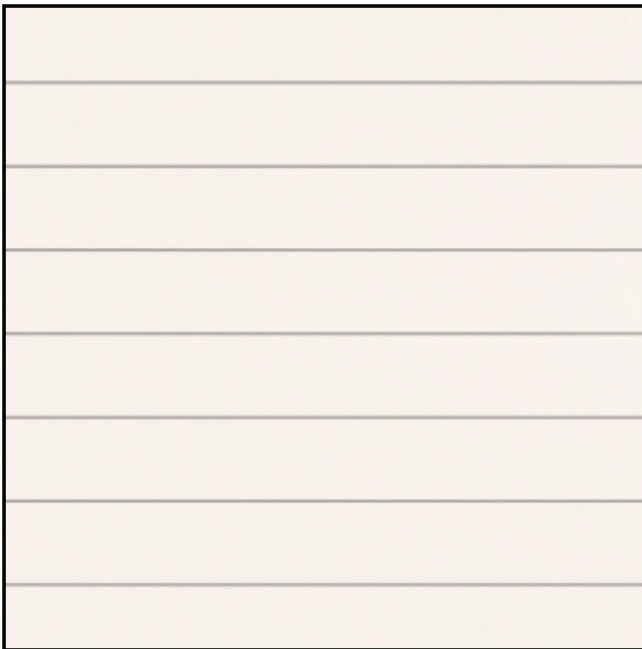
Oak Tree



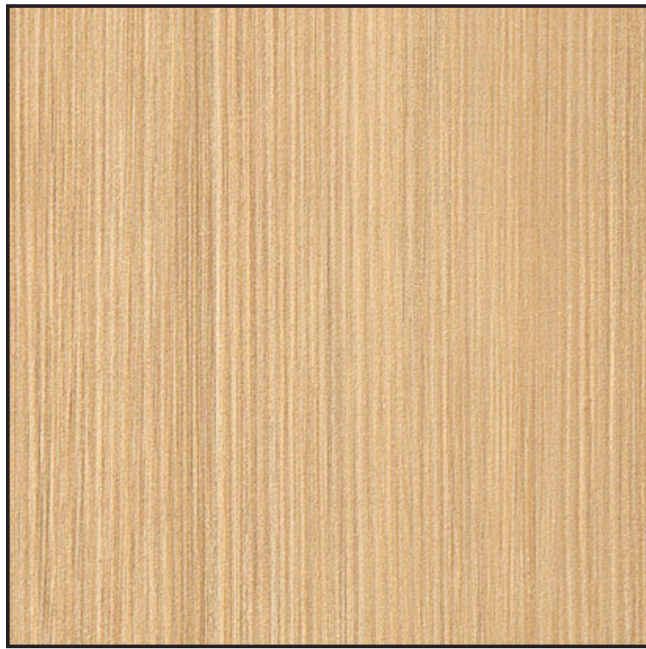
660 University  
PROPOSED MATERIAL BOARD



HORIZONTAL CONCRETE  
(POURED IN PLACE OR PANELS,  
GROUND FLOOR TYP.)



PAINTED HORIZONTAL SIDING PANEL  
(SECOND, THIRD, AND FOURTH  
FLOOR FACADES, TYP.)



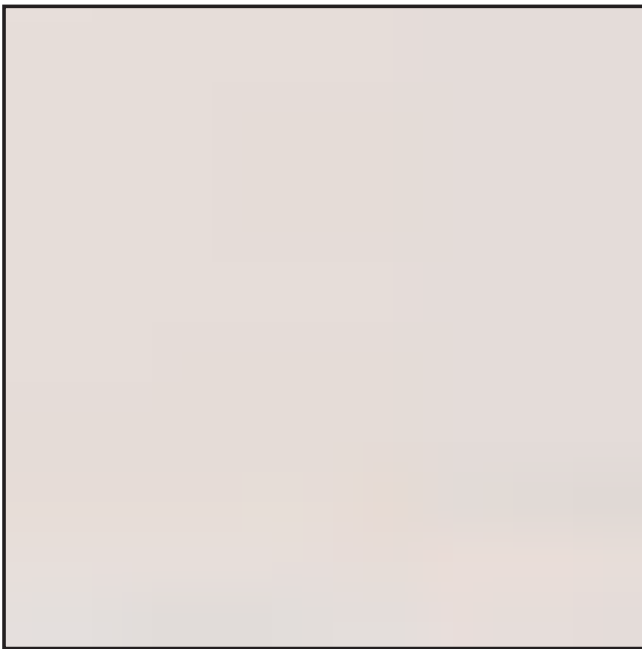
WOOD TEXTURE PANEL  
(SECOND, THIRD, AND FOURTH  
FLOOR FACADES, TYP.)



WOOD SLATS  
(ROOF MECHANICAL ENCLOSURE,  
TRELLIS SLATS)



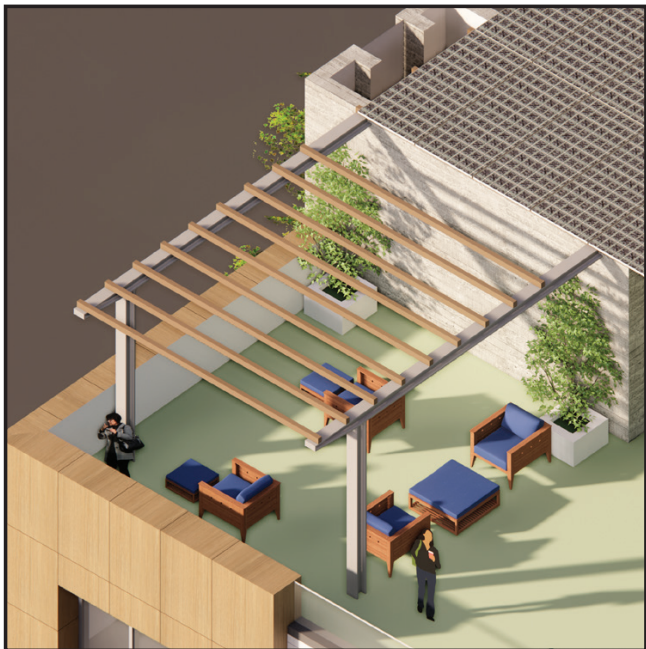
PAINTED METAL, MEDIUM GRAY  
(WINDOW MULLIONS, CANOPIES,  
METAL PANELS AT SECOND, THIRD,  
AND FOURTH FLOOR FACADES, TYP.)



PAINTED METAL, LIGHT GRAY  
(ROOF MECHANICAL ENCLOSURE,  
ROOF PARAPET, METAL PANELS AT  
THIRD AND FOURTH FLOOR FACADES,  
TYP.)



LOW-IRON VISION GLASS  
(WINDOWS & GLASS RAILINGS)



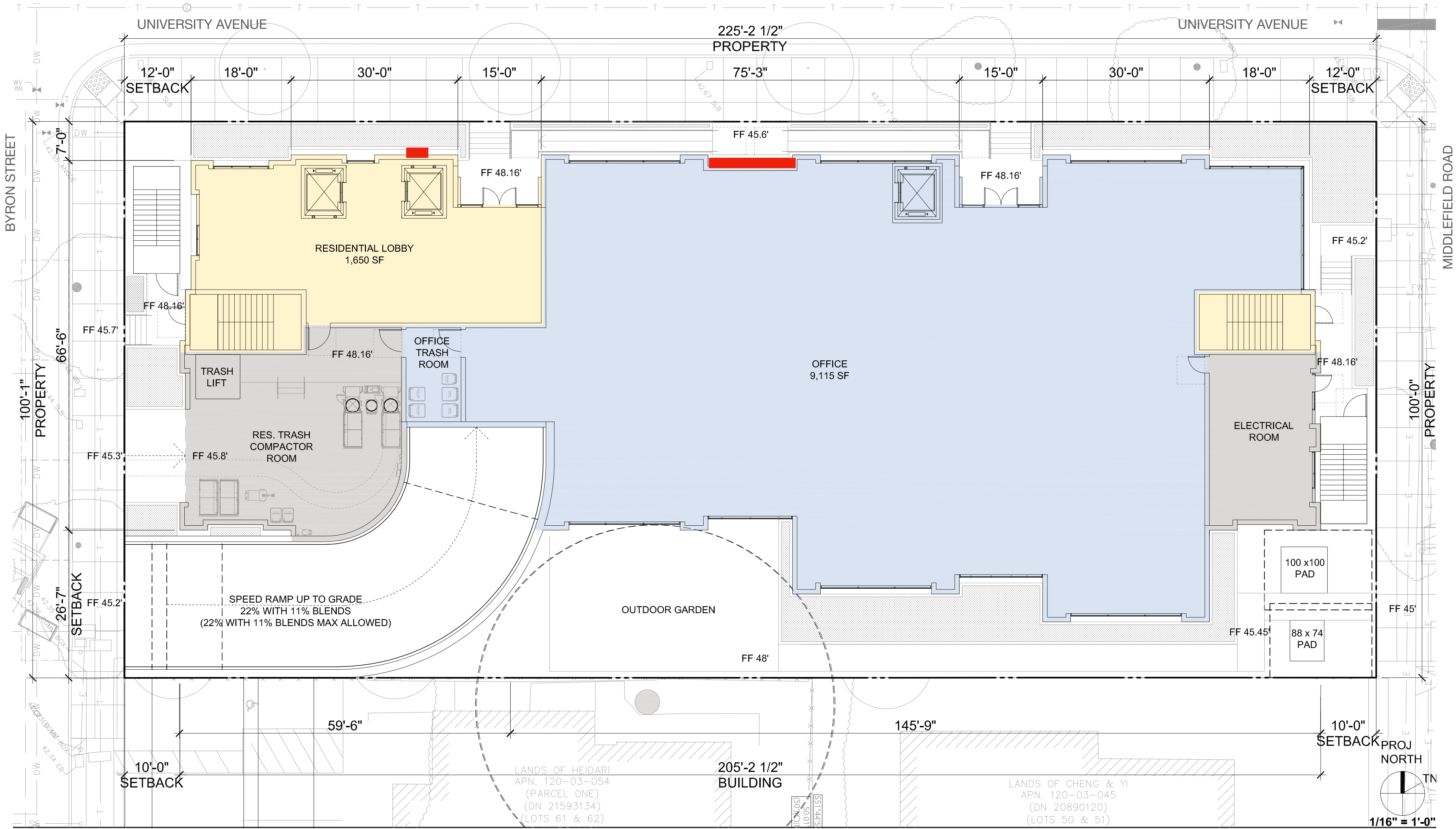
PAINTED STEEL TRELLIS FRAME  
WITH WOOD FINISH SLATS

## Possible Art Locations



660 University  
POSSIBLE  
ART LOCATIONS

Artwork





660 University  
POSSIBLE  
ART LOCATIONS



Ground level art area: 10'-6" high x 15' wide  
Elevator tower art area: 30' high x 5' wide



660 University  
RENDERING  
View from University & Byron





We welcome your input!

Thank you

Additional Building Images

660 University  
ELEVATION  
Middlefield





660 University  
ELEVATION  
Byron

