



Architectural Review Board

Staff Report

Agenda Date: July 18, 2013

To: Architectural Review Board

From: Jodie Gerhardt, Senior Planner **Department:** Planning and
Community Environment

Subject: 1730 Embarcadero Road [13PLN-00245]: Request by Alan Cross on behalf of Carrera PRB Company for Preliminary Architectural Review of additions to, and renovation of, the existing Audi car dealership, including a new 7,380 square foot (sf) showroom, 3,139 sf drop-off area, and a 1,036 sf addition to the service area, along with associated site improvements and landscaping changes. Zone District: Planned Community (PC-4846).

RECOMMENDATION

Staff requests the Architectural Review Board (ARB) conduct a preliminary review of the proposed project and provide comments on the conceptual site design and elevations to staff and the applicant. No formal action may be taken at a preliminary review; comments made at a preliminary review are not binding on the City or the applicant.

BACKGROUND

Site Information

The subject property is a 2.28 acre (99,507 sf) automobile dealership site, located on the northeastern portion of City on the eastern side on Highway 101. The dealership is bounded by Embarcadero Road to the north, an automobile dealership to the east (Anderson Honda at 1766 Embarcadero Road, is also zoned Planned Community (PC-4847)), the Baylands to the south, and Ming's restaurant (future site of an approved, four story hotel) to the west. Directly across Embarcadero Road from the subject property is Public Facilities zoned land, which is developed as a utility substation site at the frontage and, down Geng Road, as the Baylands Athletic Center (ball fields and supporting structures). Other sites opposite the subject site, across Embarcadero Road, are zoned ROLM (E)(D)(AD) and contain two-story office buildings. 'ROLM' is the acronym for Research, Office and Limited Manufacturing; D is for 'Site and Design' Combining District, and AD is for 'Automobile Dealership' Combining District.

The site is currently developed with an approximately 16,167 square foot automobile dealership with associated service areas, parking spaces, and landscaping. The plans note that the existing floor area on the site is 16,863 square feet, a Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 0.19:1. This area includes the 167 square foot office expansion that was approved in 2004.

The site has a Comprehensive Plan land use designation of Service Commercial. The Service Commercial land use designation allows facilities providing citywide and regional services and relying on customers arriving by car. Typical uses include auto services and dealerships, motels, lumberyards, appliance stores, and restaurants, and the designation allows for non-residential floor area ratios up to 0.4:1.

The subject property has a zoning designation of Planned Community (PC-4846), approved by City Council in October 2004. PC-4846 modified the original PC (PC-2554) that established auto dealership use of the site in 1970. The 2004 ordinance (Attachment C) allowed two, raised automobile display pads to be added within the setback area next to the street in the landscape areas, and the increase of the showroom space as long as the floor area ratio for showroom space does not exceed 0.2:1 FAR. Other provisions required designated customer parking and screening of exterior storage, but allowed for auto storage and display areas to not be striped, and to meet Title 18's minimum parking lot design standards only "with respect to paving, grading, drainage, safety and protective features, lighting, and screening." The ordinance did not require interior parking lot vegetation that is required of new parking lots for other commercial developments. Other than the 2004 office expansion (167 sf), the building has not been expanded to reach the 0.2:1 FAR showroom area that was anticipated in the approved ordinance. This FAR is still available by this ordinance to build on the site without further review or action by Council, only via the Architectural Review process.

History of Auto Dealerships

In 2004, many parcels of land northeast of Highway 101 along East Bayshore and Embarcadero Roads, were amended by Council to add the AD overlay, in order to encourage potential new automobile dealerships. At the time, there were eight new-car Automobile Dealerships in Palo Alto, three of which were PCs (the subject Audi dealership site, the adjacent Honda dealership site, and the Toyota dealership on San Antonio Road). The other existing dealerships were assigned a standard zone (Commercial Service (CS) or General Manufacturing (GM). The Automobile Dealership (AD) combining district have allowed for improvements to these existing dealerships (such as the Commercial Service zoned Fisker-McLaren dealership on El Camino Real) that incorporate additional features to attract customers, to encourage more successful dealerships.

Project Description

The proposed addition to the Audi dealership at 1730 Embarcadero Road involve both interior and exterior renovations, including a new 7,380 sf showroom at 27 feet tall, a 1,036 sf addition to the 22 feet tall existing service building, and a new 3,139 sf covered drop-off area (at 15'4") as well as associated parking and landscaping improvements. The area of work would be to the north and adjoining the existing building. There are no proposed changes to the location of the existing driveway entrance.

Given the building's location in Flood Zone AE, the new showroom building would be built as an independent structure separated from the existing facility by a five foot egress passageway. The new building would comply with FEMA requirements for elevated floor level while the existing building would maintain its current floor elevation. The total floor area of the building, upon completion of the project, would be 24,640 square feet (per the applicant's plan statement), which represents an increase of 7,777 square feet over the existing building floor area (as stated on plans).

The new building would be clad in a perforated, corrugated, aluminum mesh with an aluminum composite panel background. Glass would be high-performance, insulated, low-e glazing and existing exterior wall surfaces would be painted in muted, natural colors.

DISCUSSION

Comprehensive Plan

The Comprehensive Plan identifies the Embarcadero Corridor, in the Baylands, as the "East Bayshore Employment District".

- Goal B-6 cites the desire for, "Thriving Employment Districts at Stanford Research Park, Stanford Medical Center, East Bayshore/San Antonio Road Area and Bayshore Corridor that Complement the City's Business and Neighborhood Centers." The supportive text for Goal B-6 goes on to say, "These Districts are an essential part of the local economic base. They provide thousands of jobs, create a customer base for many Palo Alto businesses, and generate revenues to the City through property and sales taxes. Keeping these areas economically healthy and viable will require local policies that recognize market realities and respond to the needs of local businesses."
- Policy L-46 states, "Maintain the East Bayshore and San Antonio Road/Bayshore Corridor areas as diverse businesses and light industrial districts. And supportive text for Policy L-46 says, "These areas provide valuable space for small businesses and support services. The design of new or redeveloped buildings and landscaping, particularly northeast of the Bayshore Freeway, should reflect the area's location near the Baylands. Connections to the nearby Baylands should be strengthened by taking advantage of views and improving bicycle and pedestrian connections to the open space area."
- Map L-4 defines Embarcadero Road east of Highway 101 as a scenic corridor and identifies the intersection of Embarcadero Road and East Bayshore Road as a "gateway".
- Program T-57 calls for a planting strip and bicycle/pedestrian path adjacent to Embarcadero Road that is consistent with the open space character of the Baylands.

Baylands Master Plan

Today, stewardship of the Baylands is a high priority for Palo Alto's policy makers and decisions that affect the Baylands are given much attention. Also, the citizens are very engaged and show their support through volunteer efforts such as removing invasive plants and replacing them with native plants. The Master Plan has been updated several times, most recently in 2007, and has evolved to its current state. The Baylands Master Plan advocates a unification of the Baylands; in addition to the following policies there are general policies related to Privately Owned Lands that state that activities in this area must also comply with policies stated in the "Overall", "Flood

Control”, and “Access & Circulation” chapters as well. The italicized titles and content on this page of the ARB staff report relate to policies, guidelines and principles contained in the Baylands Master Plan document.

Private Lands Policies

1. Be sure any future development is consistent with the *Comprehensive Plan* and continues to receive extensive design review utilizing the Site and Design Review Process and the Site Assessment and Design Guidelines Palo Alto Nature Preserve.
2. Provide screen planting along the southerly urbanized edge of the private property facing the former ITT property.

Site and Design Guidelines

The *Site Assessment and Design Guidelines, Palo Alto Baylands Nature Preserve* developed in 2005 are intended to be used when designing or reviewing projects located in any part of the Baylands—including projects on privately-owned land. Conformance with these Guidelines will help to ensure compatibility with the special aesthetic qualities and environmental conditions unique to the Baylands.

General Design Principles

The following design principles are suggested to reflect and preserve the Baylands’ unique landscape character and will be used to review the formal application.

- Use only muted, natural colors. Choose materials and finishes that will weather without degrading: Avoid bright, reflective colors, including white. Allow wood to weather to gray, allow metals to rust to dark brown. Confine bright colors to small areas where necessary for safety. For example, it is preferred to use a small, low mounted “No Parking” sign rather than paint extensive red curbs. The landscape is exposed to constant salt-laden winds. Select materials that will weather well, last a long time, and require little to no maintenance. Cor-ten or mild steel which weathers to dark brown is preferable to galvanized steel which does not weather to a dark color.
- Preserve the horizon line with low and horizontal elements: The dominant landscape feature of the Baylands is the horizon line of the open, treeless landscape and the flat water of the bay. Vertical elements that puncture this line have a large impact on the view. Therefore, keep elements low and horizontal. Preserve an unobstructed view of the horizon line.
- Mount fences, enclosures, and identity signs low to the ground: Posts should not protrude above the sign panel or fence fabric, no finials or decorative post tops should puncture the horizon line.
- Reduce the size and mounting heights of regulatory signs: Urban standards for regulatory signs, such as stop signs (typically 7’ mounting height, 36” diameter sign), should be relaxed in recognition of the low traffic volumes and speeds in the Preserve.
- Design for practicality: Maintenance and improvement budgets are tight. Ensure that all improvements are practical, easily maintained and have low life-cycle costs.

Zoning Compliance

As noted, the subject site is zoned PC-4846. The Planned Community district is intended to accommodate a variety of development types, 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 which are of substantial public benefit, and which conform with and enhance the policies and programs of the Palo Alto Comprehensive Plan.

Given the 2004 Council approval allowing for showroom expansion up to an FAR of 0.2:1, and due to the project's anticipated minimal impacts on the Baylands to the rear of the site and no request for a change of use, the formal application would be an Architectural Review application. Requests for architectural and landscape changes to a Planned Community may be approved via Architectural Review and Director's Approval. The project does not represent a change of use.

The PC zoning district has no requirement for front, rear, side yard setbacks, or build-to-line, but has a height limit of 50 feet and requires a 12 foot wide sidewalk along the El Camino Real frontage.

Building Design

The project would involve an increase in the floor area ratio, to 0.30:1, and two design approaches: the existing facade facing the wetlands area would be muted, neutral and deferential in nature, while the facade facing Embarcadero would be a largely glass showroom with modern finishes. The materials are intended to provide for long term durability and require minimal maintenance. The ARB is requested to comment on the proposed materials.

Signage

All proposed signage would be subject to the City's Sign Ordinance and the Baylands Site and Design Guidelines. While the project is still in the conceptual stage, three ring logos are shown on three of the showroom facades, as well as an "Audi" wall sign on the front facade. Staff seeks ARB members' feedback on the conceptual signage, given its visibility along Embarcadero Road.

Parking

Per the Palo Alto Municipal Code, automobile dealerships must provide one parking space per 400 square feet of sales, service and office area, and one parking space per 500 square feet of exterior sales display area (excluding automobile storage). Such uses are also required to provide one bicycle parking space per ten employees. The proposed project would provide the 67 required parking spaces plus an additional ten parking spaces for employees, 15 parking spaces for display of automobiles and 70 parking spaces for automobile storage, in conformance with the Zoning Code. The formal application for this project will be reviewed to ensure conformance with the City's parking design standards.

Landscaping

A full landscaping plan has not been provided at this time, but will be required and evaluated as a part of the formal architectural review. The concept is to remove the trees in front of the existing building, as these trees are reaching the end of their lifespan. These would be replaced with more sustainable, drought tolerant, native trees and shrubs, while several of the healthier specimens will be protected and relocated to other areas of the site to provide a greater visual screen to the adjacent wetlands area. As shown on Sheet A.102, it appears the applicant is proposing to plant three street trees as none currently exist along this street frontage. Also shown on Sheet A.102 is

the approved hotel development at 1700 Embarcadero. It should be noted that the forward most tree adjacent to the Audi dealership may not be planted due to conflicts with existing utilities.

In accordance with the Baylands Master Plan and Site & Design Guidelines, the project will be required to plant native trees, shrubs and groundcover at the southern end of the property, to screen the property from the natural Baylands.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

No environmental review is required for this Preliminary Review application, as it is not considered a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Upon submittal of the formal application, the project will be reviewed for conformance with the Baylands Master Plan Overall Environmental Quality section, and the land use restrictions within the Airport Influence Area of the Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP) adopted by the County's Airport Land Use Commission (ALUC).

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment A: Project Location Map
- Attachment B: Applicant's Project Description
- Attachment C: Planned Community PC-4846
- Attachment D: Preliminary Development Plans (Board Members Only)

COURTESY COPIES

Alan Cross, Architect, Pronto Inc.

Prepared By: Jodie Gerhardt, Senior Planner

Manager Review: Amy French, Chief Planning Official 

Parcel Report for APN: **008-03-066**

Net Lot Size: **2.28 acres**
 Zone: **PC-4846**
 Zone %: **100**

Land Use Designation: **CS**
 Land Use Designation %: **100**

Flood Zone: **AE10.5**
 LOMA: **no**
 Parking District: **none**
 Airport Influence Area: **Yes, see PAO CLUP. ALUC review may be required.**
 Historic Status: **none**

Homer/Emerson
 Corridor Frontage: **no**

Easements: **Yes, see Public Works for possible requirements.**

Underlying
 Lot Lines: **no**

Near Creek
 Feature: **no**

Distance between sidewalk and pl.
 (as measured on map)

Substandard: **Cannot assess for this zone.**

Flag Lot: **no**

Cottage: **Cannot assess for this zone.**

Max Floor Area : **Cannot assess for this zone.**

Max Lot
 Coverage : **Cannot assess for this zone.**

Max Height
 to Ridge: **Cannot assess for this zone.**

Special
 Setbacks: **Cannot assess for this zone.**

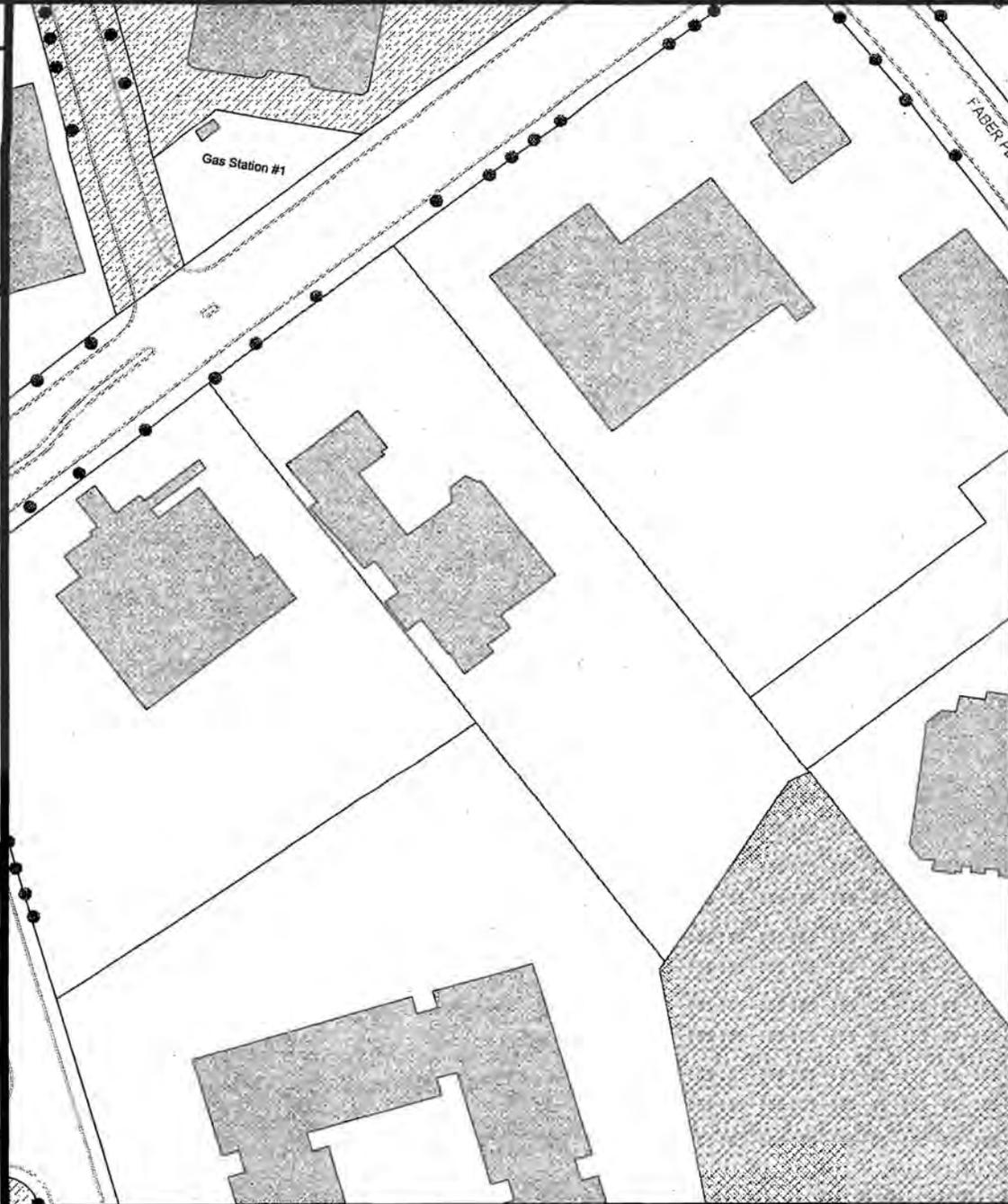
Minimum Setbacks:

Front: **Cannot assess for this zone.**

Rear: **Cannot assess for this zone.**

Interior Side(s): **Cannot assess for this zone.**

Street Side: **Cannot assess for this zone.**



The City of
Palo Alto



1730 Embarcadero Rd

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



PROTOinc

566 Folsom Street
San Francisco CA 94105
415.992.6899

Project Description

Carlsen Audi, 1730 Embarcadero Road

June 4, 2013

This project at 1730 Embarcadero Road consists of the interior and exterior renovation of portions of the existing automobile dealership, including a new 7380 sf showroom, a 1036 sf addition to the service area, a new 3139 sf covered drop-off area as well as associated sitework improvements. Given the building's location in Flood Zone AE, the new showroom building will be built as an independent structure separated from the existing facility by a 5 foot egress passageway. The new building will comply with FEMA requirements for elevated floor level while the existing building will maintain its current floor elevation.

As a valued franchise for Audi's presence in the Bay Area, the dealership must reconcile their corporate aspirations for brand consistency and visibility with the specific context of the Palo Alto Baylands special environmental district. To this end, the project has two 'faces': the existing face towards the wetlands area is muted, neutral and deferential in nature, while the face towards Embarcadero has pavilion-like finishes and a scale appropriate to an automobile dealership on a largely commercial street, affording visibility and enticement to new and existing customers.

Sustainable building and site development practices are used throughout the project. The project uses materials that embrace long term durability and require minimal maintenance. The new building will be clad in a perforated, corrugated, aluminum mesh with an aluminum composite panel backup skin. The large expanses of glass provide ample daylight and reduce the need for artificial lighting. Glass will be high-performance, insulated, low-e glazing and existing exterior wall surfaces will be painted in muted, natural colors that minimize heat gain. A number of the existing trees in decline will be replaced with more sustainable, drought tolerant, native plantings while several of the healthier specimens will be protected and relocated to other areas of the site to provide a greater visual screen to the adjacent wetlands area. The project will allow for a substantial amount of new plantings, improving the visual quality of the site and making the site more usable and accessible. The selection of new native plantings will be more consistent with local riparian species, further connecting the site to the greater context of the larger Baylands area as well as reducing the overall water usage for irrigation.



ORDINANCE NO. 4846

ORDINANCE OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PALO ALTO RENUMBERING AND AMENDING PLANNED COMMUNITY DISTRICT PC-2554 (1730 EMBARCADERO ROAD) TO PERMIT CERTAIN AUTOMOBILE DEALERSHIP DESIGN FEATURES

The Council of the City of Palo Alto does ORDAIN as follows:

SECTION 1. Findings and Declarations. The City Council finds and declares as follows:

(a) On April 30, 1970, the City Council adopted Ordinance 2554 establishing a PC District permitting an auto dealership on the property located at 1730 Embarcadero Road.

(b) This ordinance is intended to renumber and amend Planned Community (PC) district 2554 to permit certain automobile dealership design standards. The design standards are substantially similar to those allowed under the City's Automobile Dealership overlay district.

SECTION 2. A new section 5 is hereby added to Planned Community district ordinance 2554 to read as follows:

Section 5. The following changes to the development plan may be made, subject to Architectural Review approval, as set forth in Title 18 of the Palo Alto Municipal Code:

(a) Automobile display pads may be added in the required setback area adjacent to a public right-of-way, including in landscaped areas. Provided no more than two such pads shall be added, no automobile display pad shall be higher than eight feet, as measured to the highest point of the automobile on the display pad, and the surface area of each display pad shall be no more than 175 square feet.

(b) Parking area modifications may be made, provided such modifications shall comply with the following provisions:

(1) the number of parking spaces provided must be at least 1 per 400 square feet of sales and

office administration area, and 1 per 500 square feet of exterior sales or display area, excluding automobile storage; and

(2) Areas for customer parking shall be designated; and

(3) Areas for outdoor sales and display of motor vehicles, other than automobile display pads, shall meet the minimum design standards applicable to off-street parking facilities under Title 18 of the Palo Alto Municipal Code with respect to paving, grading, drainage, safety and protective features, lighting, and screening. Auto storage and display areas are not required to be striped for parking stall and aisle width; and

(4) Exterior storage shall be screened by a solid wall or fence of between five (5) and eight (8) feet in height.

(c) Automobile showroom space may be increased, provided the total automobile showroom space on the site may not exceed a floor area ratio of 0.2:1. "Automobile showroom space" is that area for the display of new automobiles, located only on the first floor and excluding all other uses associated with the automobile dealership including sales office and sale of related merchandise. The Director of Planning and Community Environment is authorized to determine whether floor area is automobile showroom space, as described above."

SECTION 3. Section 18.08.040 of the Palo Alto Municipal Code, the "Zoning Map", is hereby amended by changing the zone classification of property located at 1730 Embarcadero Road from "Planned Community District PC-2554" to "Planned Community District PC-4846", as shown in Exhibit "A", attached hereto and incorporated herein by reference.

SECTION 4. Except as amended above, Ordinance 2554 remains in full force and effect.

SECTION 5. The City Council finds that the changes effected by this ordinance are exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), per section 15061 of CEQA Guidelines, because it can be seen with certainty that

there is no possibility that the project will have a significant effect on the environment.

SECTION 6. This ordinance shall be effective 30 days after the date of its adoption.

INTRODUCED: September 20, 2004

PASSED: October 4, 2004

AYES: BEECHAM, BURCH, CORDELL, KLEINBERG, MORTON, MOSSAR

NOES: FREEMAN, KISHIMOTO

ABSENT:

ABSTENTIONS: OJAKIAN

NOT PARTICIPATING:

ATTEST:

Donna J. Rogers
City Clerk

Vice Mayor
Mayor

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

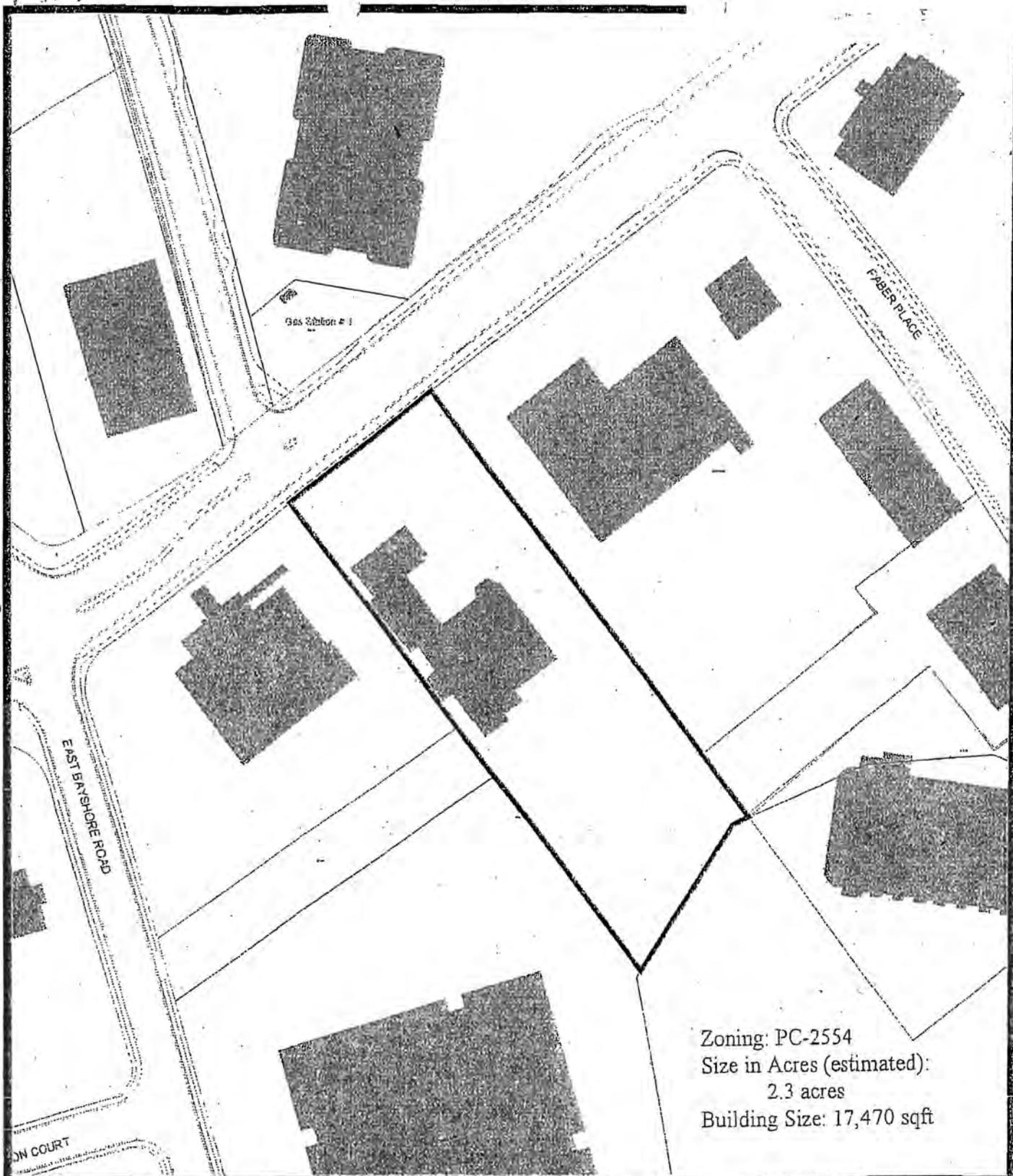
[Signature]
~~Senior Asst. City Attorney~~
Special Counsel

APPROVED:

[Signature]
City Manager

[Signature]
Director of Planning &
Community Environment

EXHIBIT "A"



Zoning: PC-2554
Size in Acres (estimated):
2.3 acres
Building Size: 17,470 sqft



The City of
Palo Alto



Carlson Motor Cars
(Audi),
1730 Embarcadero Road

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

