



# Architectural Review Board

## Staff Report (ID # 9262)

|                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                               |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>Report Type:</b>   | Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <b>Meeting Date:</b> 6/7/2018 |
| <b>Summary Title:</b> | 3945 El Camino: Comfort Inn Hotel Renovation (2nd Formal)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                               |
| <b>Title:</b>         | PUBLIC HEARING / QUASI-JUDICIAL. 3945 El Camino Real [16PLN-00374]: Request for Approval of a Major Architectural Review to Allow an Exterior Remodel of an Existing Two-Story Hotel Building at 3945 El Camino Real. Environmental Assessment: The Project is Exempt from CEQA per Guideline Section 15301 (Existing Facilities). Zoning District: Medium Density Multiple-Family Residence District (RM-30) and Service Commercial (CS). For more information, contact the project planner Phillip Brennan at <a href="mailto:phillip.brennan@cityofpaloalto.org">phillip.brennan@cityofpaloalto.org</a> |                               |
| <b>From:</b>          | Hillary Gitelman                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                               |

### Recommendation

Staff recommends the Architectural Review Board (ARB) take the following action(s):

1. Recommend approval of the proposed project to the Director of Planning and Community Environment based on findings and subject to conditions of approval.

### Report Summary

The subject project was previously reviewed by the ARB. An earlier staff report includes extensive background information, project analysis and evaluation to city codes and policies; that report is available online: <https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/civicax/filebank/documents/64583>. A copy of the report without prior attachments is available in Attachment E.

The purpose of this report is to restate the comments made by the Board and detail the applicant's response to those comments. The analysis section below builds upon the information contained in the earlier report and modified to reflect recent project changes.

### Background

City of Palo Alto  
Planning & Community Environment  
250 Hamilton Avenue  
Palo Alto, CA 94301  
(650) 329-2442

On April 19, 2018, the ARB reviewed the project. A video recording of the Board's meeting is available online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KHnsdYgg0Xs&feature=youtu.be>. The Board's comments and the applicant's response are summarized in the following table:

| ARB Comments/Direction                                                                                                                                                                                    | Applicant Response                                                                                                                         |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Reduce total number of materials and enhance street-facing materials.</i> A simplified palette of higher quality exterior materials should be utilized along the street-facing façade of the building. | The applicant has simplified the exterior material choices, incorporating higher grade finishes such as Trespa panels and Ipe wood siding. |
| <i>Increase Street Presence of Lobby.</i> The hotel lobby and main entrance should be better distinguished to announce its presence at street-level.                                                      | The applicant has proposed enlarged window glazing along the lobby's second-story and new front entry awning.                              |
| <i>Increase seating for pedestrians.</i>                                                                                                                                                                  | A new bench is provided in front of the lobby. (Sheet A02.00 and A09.12)                                                                   |
| <i>Dedicated Registration Parking Space(s).</i> Explore the feasibility of providing a dedicated registration space for guests.                                                                           | The applicant has provided two parking lot design alternatives that provide a dedicated registration space(s) for hotel guests.            |
| <i>Alternative Tree Species.</i> Explore alternatives to the proposed London plane and Oak tree for species that may be more appropriate for the site.                                                    | The applicant has proposed three new tree species to be located in the patio, stair tower planters, and parking islands.                   |

## Analysis<sup>1</sup>

The ARB provided specific project related guidance to the applicant during its initial formal review of the subject application (16PLN-00374). The ARB's primary comments and the applicant's response to the feedback are further detailed in the following sections.

### *Reduce total number of materials and enhance street-facing materials.*

The consensus expressed by the ARB regarding the design of the building's street-facing façade was that too many materials were being proposed and they were not of high-quality finish. In response, the applicant has proposed to utilize Ipe wood paneling on the new trash enclosure, and carry it along the first-floor level of the lobby and along the outdoor patio wall to create a unified and consistent look from El Camino Real. The originally proposed painted cement plaster on the second-story of the lobby has been replaced with painted (white) Trespa Meteon Panels that provides a more sophisticated and modern finish.

<sup>1</sup> The information provided in this section is based on analysis prepared by the report author prior to the public hearing. The Architectural Review Board in its review of the administrative record and based on public testimony may reach a different conclusion from that presented in this report and may choose to take an alternative action from the recommendation in this report.

### *Increase Street Presence of Lobby*

The ARB agreed strongly that the design of the hotel's lobby and main entry needed further attention to better signal its presence and location on the street for guests coming to the hotel, as well as pedestrian and vehicle traffic passing by. In response, the applicant is proposing to replace the proposed lobby windows with two levels of large frameless storefront glazing that extends from nearly floor to ceiling to increase visibility of the lobby area from the street. The powder-coated steel beam awning, featuring the hotel's name in raised stainless steel lettering, is proposed along the building frontage over the main entry and helps to provide a visual cue of the lobby entrance. Additionally, a custom bench in matching lpe wood is proposed under the entry overhang to provide guests a convenient location to wait for share ride or taxi service to pull-up at the designated white curb loading zone located in front of the hotel.

### *Dedicated Registration Parking Space(s)*

Some members of the Board asked the applicant to explore the inclusion of dedicated parking space(s) for the purpose of providing guests of the hotel a convenient location to temporarily park near the front lobby when registering. In response, the applicant has proposed two new parking layout designs featuring dedicated registration spaces:

Option 1 designates two of the proposed 57 guest spaces (shown as spaces #31-32 on Sheet A02.00 of the project plans) to be utilized as temporary parking spaces for guest registration located across the driveway from the patio entry. A comparative parking analysis performed at the subject site and comparable hotels along the Peninsula determined the Comfort Inn's proposed 57 off-street guest parking spaces would sufficiently accommodate the 67 guest room hotel even at 100 percent occupancy; only 45 parking spaces would be needed based on the average peak parking occupancy rate (0.66 occupied spaces per occupied room). As such, the resulting 55 spaces would provide adequate hotel guest parking even at full occupancy, while also providing temporary spaces for registration.

Option 2 removes the proposed planter along the outdoor patio wall and places two tandem registration parking spaces in that area to provide convenient access to the lobby entrance (Sheet A12.02). This design, while locating the registering guests closer to the lobby, creates clearance issues in the drive aisle. Per PAMC Section 18.54.070 – *Table 3* uni-class parking stalls (8.5 feet x 17.5 feet) oriented at a 90 degree angle require a 25 foot wide drive aisle. The proposed drive aisle in this location would only be 14 feet 10 inch. The Fire Department is not supportive of this arrangement as it would provide less than the required 20 foot width necessary for their fire engines to access and maneuver. If the ARB would like a temporary parking space in a similar location/configuration, the patio could be reduced in size and one parking space could be provided while providing the required 25 feet of back-out space for parked cars on the opposite side of the driveway.

### *Alternative*

### *Tree*

### *Species*

Members of the ARB suggested the applicant utilize different tree species than the proposed London Plane and Oak as primary trees in the interior landscape areas. In response, the

applicant has proposed new native California tree species; one (1) Pacific Madrone to serve as the featured outdoor patio tree; two (2) Catalina Ironwood trees for the large stair tower planters; and three (3) California Sycamore trees for each of the parking island planters. The California Sycamore is deciduous, while the Pacific Madrone and Catalina Ironwood are evergreen. All of the proposed trees will be 24 inch box size when planted. Photo examples of each tree species provided in Figure 1 below.

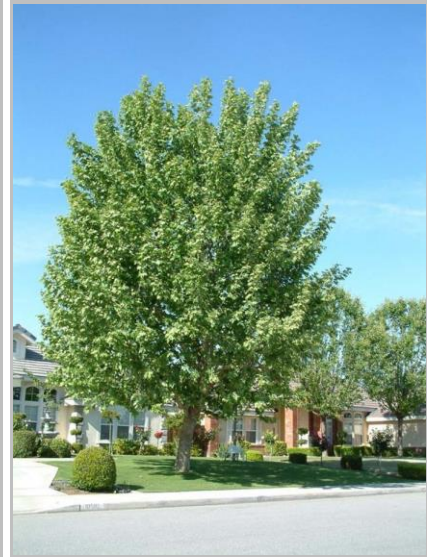
**Figure 1**



Pacific Madrone (*Arbutus menziesii*)



Catalina Ironwood  
(*Lyonothamnus floribundus* subsp.  
*Asplenifolius*)



California Sycamore (*Platanus  
racemose*)

## Environmental Review

The subject project has been assessed in accordance with the authority and criteria contained in the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the State CEQA Guidelines, and the environmental regulations of the City. Specifically, the project is exempt from the provisions of the CEQA in accordance with Guideline Section 15301 (Existing Facilities).

## Public Notification, Outreach & Comments

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 Palo Alto Weekly on [DATE], which is 12 days in advance of the meeting. Postcard mailing occurred on [DATE], which is [DAYS] in advance of the meeting.

### Public Comments

As of the writing of this report, no project-related, public comments were received.

## Alternative Actions

In addition to the recommended action, the Architectural Review Board may:

1. Approve the project with modified findings or conditions;
2. Continue the project to a date (un)certain; or
3. Recommend project denial based on revised findings.

**Report Author & Contact Information**

Phillip Brennan, Associate Planner  
(650) 329-2493

[phillip.brennan@cityofpaloalto.org](mailto:phillip.brennan@cityofpaloalto.org)

**ARB<sup>2</sup> Liaison & Contact Information**

Jodie Gerhardt, AICP, Planning Manager  
(650) 329-2575

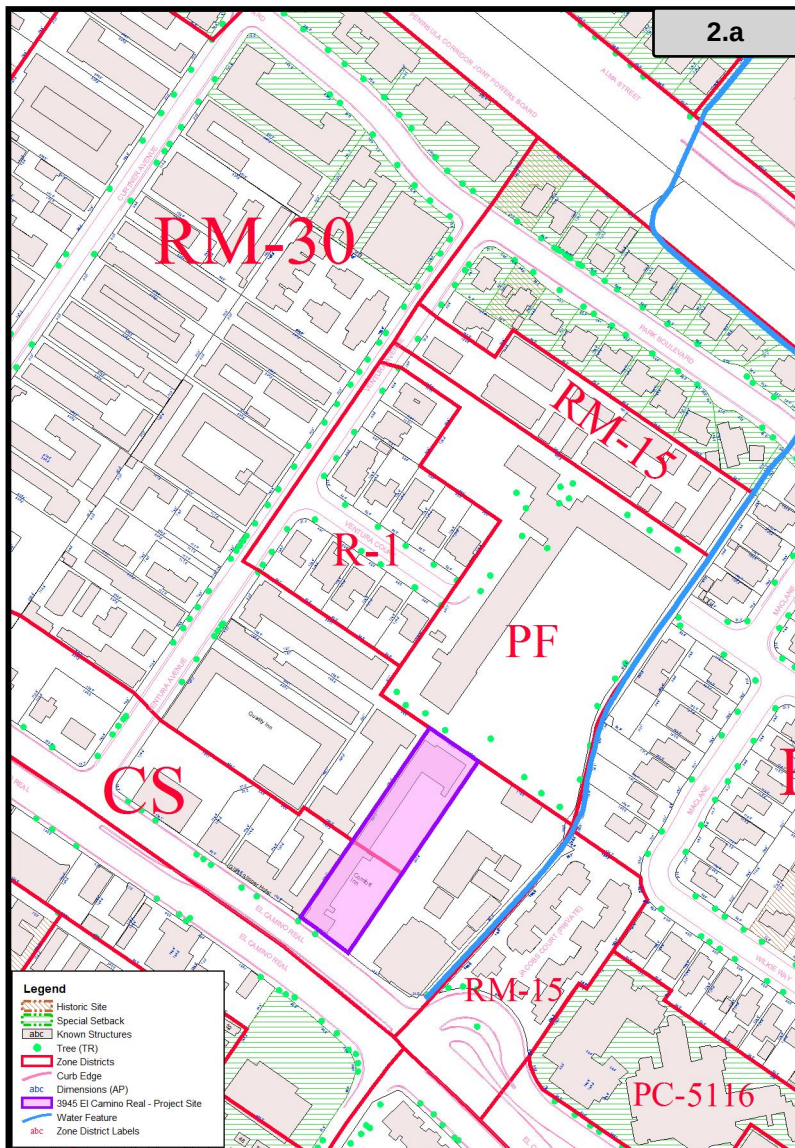
[jodie.gerhardt@cityofpaloalto.org](mailto:jodie.gerhardt@cityofpaloalto.org)

**Attachments:**

- Attachment A: Location Map (JPG)
- Attachment B: Draft Findings (DOCX)
- Attachment C: Draft Conditions of Approval (DOCX)
- Attachment D: Applicant's Response to ARB Comments (PDF)
- Attachment E: April 19, 2018 Staff Report (PDF)
- Attachment F: Project Plans (DOCX)

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<sup>2</sup> Emails may be sent directly to the ARB using the following address: [arb@cityofpaloalto.org](mailto:arb@cityofpaloalto.org)



The City of  
Palo Alto



3945 El Camino Real - Project Site

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



**Packet Pg. 13**

**ATTACHMENT B  
ARB FINDINGS FOR APPROVAL**

3945 El Camino Real  
16PLN-00374

The design and architecture of the proposed improvements, as conditioned, complies with the Findings for Architectural Review as required in Chapter 18.76 of the PAMC.

**Finding #1: The design is consistent with applicable provisions of the Palo Alto Comprehensive Plan, Zoning Code, coordinated area plans (including compatibility requirements), and any relevant design guides.**

*The project is consistent with Finding #1 because:*

In conformance with the following Comp Plan Goals and Policies, the project will include high quality design compatible with surrounding development.

| <b><i>Comp Plan Goals and Policies</i></b>                                                                                                                                               | <b><i>How project adheres or does not adhere to Comprehensive Plan</i></b>                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The Comprehensive Plan land use designation for the site is Multiple Family and Service Commercial.                                                                                      | The project continues the Service Commercial land use.                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b><i>Land Use and Community Design Element</i></b>                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Goal L-1:</b> A compact and resilient city providing residents and visitors with attractive neighborhoods, work places, shopping districts, public facilities and open spaces.        | The proposed remodel of the existing hotel either adheres to or increases compliance with the applicable design guidelines, development standards, and performance and context-based criteria established for development in the CS zoning district.            |
| Policy L-1.11: Hold new development to the highest development standards in order to maintain Palo Alto's livability and achieve the highest quality development with the least impacts. |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Goal L-2:</b> An enhanced sense of "community" with development designed to foster public life, meet citywide needs and embrace the principles of sustainability.                     | The project scope includes widening a section of sidewalk along the subject site's frontage bordering El Camino Real to 12 feet, which enhances the pedestrian environment and encourages active transportation options along this service commercial corridor. |
| Policy L-2.2: Enhance connections between commercial and mixed use centers and the                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| surrounding residential neighborhoods by promoting walkable and bikeable connections and a diverse range of retail and services that caters to the daily needs of residents.                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Policy L-2.11: Encourage new development and redevelopment to incorporate greenery and natural features such as green rooftops, pocket parks, plazas and rain gardens.                                  | The project increases the amount of landscaping on the site providing new greenery along the frontage and interior landscaping to include six new trees located in existing planter and parking islands.                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Goal L-6:</b> Well-designed buildings that create coherent development patterns and enhance city streets and public spaces.                                                                          | The proposed remodel replaces the existing roofline with a shed style roof that has its highest point away from the street, providing a more pedestrian-scaled frontage along El Camino Real. Additionally, the front-entry opens facing the sidewalk and is notched back to provide additional visual clearance for pedestrians and guests exiting the site’s parking lot. |
| Policy L-6.6: Design buildings to compliment streets and public spaces; to promote personal safety, public health and well-being; and to enhance a sense of community safety.                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Transportation Element</b>                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Goal T-3:</b> Facilities, services and programs that encourage and promote walking and bicycling.                                                                                                    | The project as proposed provides more (9 bike racks) bicycle parking than required (one short-term space per 10 guestrooms; 67 room = 7 bike racks) as required per municipal code. The provision of these facilities implicitly promotes active modes of transportation for hotel workers that may utilize bicycles to travel to work, shopping, or services.              |
| Policy T-1.16: Promote personal transportation vehicles an alternative to cars (e.g. bicycles, skateboards, roller blades) to get to work, school, shopping, recreational facilities and transit stops. |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Policy T-1.19: Provide facilities that encourage and support bicycling and walking.                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

**Finding #2: The project has a unified and coherent design, that:**

- a. creates an internal sense of order and desirable environment for occupants, visitors, and the general community,
- b. preserves, respects and integrates existing natural features that contribute positively to the site and the historic character including historic resources of the area when relevant,
- c. is consistent with the context-based design criteria of the applicable zone district,
- d. provides harmonious transitions in scale, mass and character to adjacent land uses and land use designations,
- e. enhances living conditions on the site (if it includes residential uses) and in adjacent residential areas.

*The project is consistent with Finding #2 because:*

The finding can be made in the affirmative in that the project forwards a coherent contemporary design that enhances the existing streetscape and includes amenities such as an outdoor seating area intended to serve as an inviting gathering area for hotel guests. The proposed shed style roof above the main lobby slopes upward from the street toward the lot's interior which serves to visually reduce the scale and mass of the remodeled hotel from El Camino Real. The proposed scope of work does not negatively impact adjacent residential areas.

**Finding #3: The design is of high aesthetic quality, using high quality, integrated materials and appropriate construction techniques, and incorporating textures, colors, and other details that are compatible with and enhance the surrounding area.**

*The project is consistent with Finding #3 because:*

The finding can be made in the affirmative in that the project proposes a compatible contemporary architectural design that utilizes clean and simple building lines and forms. The exterior material and color palette includes a mixture of modern and rustic materials such as standing metal seamed roofs, corrugated metal accents, Prodema cladding, painted wood rafter tails, aluminum louver treatments, and a combination of warm earth tone and neutral colors on painted cement plaster. Taken as a whole, the proposed remodel project will benefit the surrounding area aesthetic.

**Finding #4: The design is functional, allowing for ease and safety of pedestrian and bicycle traffic and providing for elements that support the building's necessary operations (e.g. convenient vehicle access to property and utilities, appropriate arrangement and amount of open space and integrated signage, if applicable, etc.).**

*The project is consistent with Finding #4 because:*

The finding can be made in the affirmative in that the project includes functional design aspects intended to enhance the pedestrian environment, increase safety, and allow convenient access to on-site facilities. The project provides a widened section of sidewalk to continue the existing 12 foot wide segment of sidewalk in front of Keys School, creating a friendly environment for those walking in the area. The proposed remodel includes a street facing lobby entrance that is jogged back to provide both a covered entry, as well as to increase visibility of pedestrians and sightlines for drivers exiting the hotel driveway. Short-term parking is provided near the front entrance to aid check-in of hotel patrons. The proposed new covered trash enclosure has been increased in size to accommodate the current level of service and allow easy access for waste recovery crews.

**Finding #5: The landscape design complements and enhances the building design and its surroundings, is appropriate to the site's functions, and utilizes to the extent practical, regional indigenous drought resistant plant material capable of providing desirable habitat that can be appropriately maintained.**

*The project is consistent with Finding #5 because:*

The finding can be made in the affirmative in that the proposed landscape design integrates into the building design and site's functions. Six new 24 inch box trees will be planted in new and existing planter areas on the site to break up sightlines and provide shading along the expanse of the parking lot. Smaller landscape improvements to include native and adapted drought tolerant species along the site's frontage, buffers between the ground floor guest rooms and parking area, and the courtyard. The extensive row of mature dense shrubs along the south side yard property line will be maintained to provide screening for hotel guests and students at the adjacent school.

**Finding #6: The project incorporates design principles that achieve sustainability in areas related to energy efficiency, water conservation, building materials, landscaping, and site planning.**

*The project is consistent with Finding #6 because:*

In accordance with the City's Green Building Regulations, the building will satisfy the requirements for CALGreen Mandatory + Tier 2. A summary of the project's compliance is on sheet GB-1 of the plans.

**ATTACHMENT C  
CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL**

3945 El Camino Real  
16PLN-00374

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**PLANNING DIVISION**

1. **CONFORMANCE WITH PLANS.** Construction and development shall conform to the approved plans entitled, "ASCEND PALO ALTO\_3945 El Camino Real," stamped as received by the City on January 18, 2018, on file with the Planning Department, 250 Hamilton Avenue, Palo Alto, California except as modified by these conditions of approval.
2. **BUILDING PERMIT.** Apply for a building permit and meet any and all conditions of the Planning, Fire, Public Works, and Building Departments.
3. **BUILDING PERMIT PLAN SET.** The ARB approval letter including all Department conditions of approval for the project shall be printed on the plans submitted for building permit.
4. **PROJECT MODIFICATIONS:** All modifications to the approved project shall be submitted for review and approval prior to construction. If during the Building Permit review and construction phase, the project is modified by the applicant, it is the responsibility of the applicant to contact the Planning Division/project planner directly to obtain approval of the project modification. It is the applicant's responsibility to highlight any proposed changes to the project and to bring it to the project planner's attention.
5. **PROJECT EXPIRATION.** The project approval shall be valid for a period of two years from the original date of approval. In the event a building permit(s), if applicable, is not secured for the project within the time limit specified above, the ARB approval shall expire and be of no further force or effect. Application for extension of this entitlement may be made prior to the one year expiration.
6. **INDEMNITY:** To the extent permitted by law, the Applicant shall indemnify and hold harmless the City, its City Council, its officers, employees and agents (the "indemnified parties") from and against any claim, action, or proceeding brought by a third party against the indemnified parties and the applicant to attack, set aside or void, any permit or approval authorized hereby for the Project, including (without limitation) reimbursing the City for its actual attorneys' fees and costs incurred in defense of the litigation. The City may, in its sole discretion, elect to defend any such action with attorneys of its own choice.
7. **FINAL INSPECTION:** A Planning Division Final inspection will be required to determine substantial compliance with the approved plans prior to the scheduling of a Building Division final. Any revisions during the building process must be approved by Planning, including but not limited to;

materials, landscaping and hard surface locations. Contact your Project Planner, Phillip Brennan at [phillip.brennan@cityofpaloalto.org](mailto:phillip.brennan@cityofpaloalto.org) to schedule this inspection.

### **TRANSPORTATION DIVISION**

In addition to the peak parking demand reduction strategies outlined in the approved Transportation Demand Management (TDM) plan dated October 12, 2017. The following standards and procedures apply:

8. Required measures identified in the TDM plan shall remain in full force for the life of the project unless altered by the Director of Planning and Community Environment.
9. Monitoring reports shall be submitted to the Director two years after building occupancy and again every year thereafter; see PAMC 18.52.050(d)(2). Prior to conducting required monitoring activities, the applicant shall engage a qualified third party professional and submit a draft scope of work to the Chief Transportation Official for approval. The draft report shall then be submitted to the Chief Transportation Official for review, and if necessary, revision.
10. If, based on the results of the ongoing monitoring program, peak parking demand exceeds 60 parking stalls, the Director of Planning and Community Environment may require implementation of the alternative parking plan described in the TDM plan, changes to the TDM program to meeting parking demand targets, or impose administrative penalties if identified deficiencies are not addressed within six months (PAMC 18.52.050 (d)(4)).

### **PUBLIC WORKS ENGINEERING**

11. EASEMENT: Indicate all existing easements on lot.
12. UTILITIES: Note that all above ground utilities, such as transformer, backflow preventer, gas meters, etc., shall be located within project site but accessible from the street. Any new or relocated utilities will correspond with approved locations from City Utilities Department.
13. WORK IN THE RIGHT-OF-WAY: The plans must clearly indicate any work that is proposed in the public right-of-way, such as sidewalk replacement, driveway approach, or utility laterals. The plans must include notes that the work must be done per City standards and that the contractor performing this work must first obtain a Street Work Permit from Public Works at the Development Center. If a new driveway is in a different location than the existing driveway, then the sidewalk associated with the new driveway must be replaced with a thickened (6" thick instead of the standard 4" thick) section. Additionally, curb cuts and driveway approaches for abandoned driveways must be replaced with new curb, gutter and planter strip.
14. Provide the following note on the Site Plan and adjacent to the work within the Public road right-of-way. "Any construction within the city's public road right-of-way shall have an approved Permit for Construction in the Public Street prior to commencement of this work. THE PERFORMANCE OF

THIS WORK IS NOT AUTHORIZED BY THE BUILDING PERMIT ISSUANCE BUT SHOWN ON THE BUILDING PERMIT FOR INFORMATION ONLY.”

15. Provide the following note on the Site Plan and/or Grading and Drainage Plan: “Contractor shall not stage, store, or stockpile any material or equipment within the public road right-of-way.” Construction phasing shall be coordinate to keep materials and equipment onsite.
16. STORM WATER POLLUTION PREVENTION: The City's full-sized "Pollution Prevention - It's Part of the Plan" sheet must be included in the plan set. Copies are available from Public Works on our website <http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/civicax/filebank/documents/2732>
17. CALTRANS: Caltrans review and approval of this project is required. Caltrans right-of-way across El Camino Real extends from back-of-walk to back-of walk. The City has a maintenance agreement with Caltrans that requires the City to maintain the sidewalk and to issue Street Work Permits for work done on the sidewalks by private contractors. Caltrans has retained the right to review and permit new ingress/egress driveways off El Camino Real as well as the installation of Traffic Control devices as part of this project.

#### **PUBLIC WORKS URBAN FORESTRY SECTION**

18. The applicant/property owner shall strictly comply with all recommendations contained in the tree protection report and shall ensure the protection of neighboring trees.
19. OBLIGATION TO MONITOR AND PROTECT NEIGHBORING TREES. Project site arborist will protect and monitor neighboring protected oak during construction and share information with the tree owner. All work shall be done in conformance with State regulations so as to ensure the long term health of the tree. Project site arborist will request access to the tree on the neighboring property as necessary to measure an exact diameter, assess condition, and/or perform treatment. If access is not granted, monitoring and any necessary treatment will be performed from the project site.
20. EXCAVATION RESTRICTIONS APPLY (TTM, Sec. 2.20 C & D). Any approved grading, digging or trenching beneath a tree canopy shall be performed using ‘air-spade’ method as a preference, with manual hand shovel as a backup. For utility trenching, including sewer line, roots exposed with diameter of 1.5 inches and greater shall remain intact and not be damaged. If directional boring method is used to tunnel beneath roots, then Table 2-1, Trenching and Tunneling Distance, shall be printed on the final plans to be implemented by Contractor.
21. TREE PROTECTION COMPLIANCE. The owner and contractor shall implement all protection and inspection schedule measures as a condition of the building permit, Sheet T-1, and is subject to code compliance action pursuant to PAMC 8.10.080. The required protective fencing shall remain in place until final landscaping and inspection of the project. The fencing shall contain required warning sign and remain in place until final inspection of the project. Tree fencing shall be adjusted after demolition if necessary to increase the tree protection zone as required by the project arborist.

22. TREE DAMAGE. Tree Damage, Injury Mitigation and Inspections apply to Contractor. Reporting, injury mitigation measures and arborist inspection schedule (1-5) apply pursuant to TTM, Section 2.20-2.30. Contractor shall be responsible for the repair or replacement of any publicly owned or protected trees that are damaged during the course of construction, pursuant to Title 8 of the Palo Alto Municipal Code, and city Tree Technical Manual, Section 2.25.
23. TREE PLANTING. The applicant shall notify the Urban Forestry Section (650.496.5953) 24-48 hours prior to installation of any new trees on site for the purpose of inspection and ensuring compliance with tree planting standard detail #604 or approved alternate.
24. GENERAL. The following general tree preservation measures apply to all trees to be retained: No storage of material, topsoil, vehicles or equipment shall be permitted within the tree enclosure area. The ground under and around the tree canopy area shall not be altered. Trees to be retained shall be irrigated, aerated and maintained as necessary to ensure survival.



## Transmittal

**Date:** May 02, 2018

**Re:** ARB Set Rev4

**To:** Phillip Brennan  
City of Palo Alto  
250 Hamilton Ave  
Palo Alto, CA 94301

**Project:** 3945 El Camino Real

**Via:** Email

**AXIS Project No.** 16.015

| <b>We are Transmitting:</b>                        | <b>For Your:</b>                          | <b>The Following:</b>                      | <b>Action:</b>                                    |
|----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Per your request          | <input type="checkbox"/> Approval         | <input type="checkbox"/> Prints            | <input type="checkbox"/> Please acknowledge       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Enclosed                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Review & Comment | <input type="checkbox"/> Transparencies    | <input type="checkbox"/> Please return enclosures |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Under separate cover via: | <input type="checkbox"/> Use              | <input type="checkbox"/> Specifications    | <input type="checkbox"/> Approved                 |
|                                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Distribution     | <input type="checkbox"/> Shop Drawings     | <input type="checkbox"/> Approved as noted        |
|                                                    |                                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Information/Files | <input type="checkbox"/> Other                    |

### Enclosed:

| Quantity | Description |
|----------|-------------|
|----------|-------------|

Description of ARB Set Revision 4 changes.

### Comments:

Hi Phillip,

Below are the changes to design per the comments from ARB hearing on 04/19/18.

1. The exterior finishes for the lobby building have been simplified and their quality upgraded. The new finishes are Trespa Panels and Ipe wood siding.  
Revised sheets: A00.07, A09.01, A09.02, A09.03, A12.00, A12.01.
2. The trash enclosure exterior and fence along the driveway finish Ipe wood is consistent with the lobby finish to create more harmonies, simplified and unifying look.  
Revised sheets: A00.07, A09.01, A09.02, A09.03, A12.00, A12.01.
3. In order to bring more visual attention to the hotel entry, new glazing at the upper part of double height lobby and new awning at the entry door was added.  
Revised Sheets: A00.07, A09.01, A09.02, A09.03.



4. The corrugated metal is replaced with Trespa panels on the upper part of the lobby building. The corrugated metal finish material is deleted from the existing stair towers. The corrugated metal guardrail finish panel at the second floor of the lobby building was replaced with white opaque glass.  
Revised Sheets: A00.07, A09.01, A09.02, A09.03.

5. The landscape plan was revised to show three different tree types:
  - Pacific madrone (patio)
  - Catalina Ironwood (by the stair towers)
  - California Sycamore (parking)

Revised Sheets: L-1.0.

6. Two registration parking stalls are dedicated across the patio entry. The location of the stalls are selected to allow the shortest distance to the registration desk.  
Revised Sheets: A02.00, A0.00A, A02.01, A09.12.

7. A new bench is introduced at the front of the lobby building along the sidewalk.  
Revised Sheets: A02.00, A0.00A, A02.01, A09.12.

8. Per the owner request, the existing guardrail on the second floor of the walkway along the guestrooms is to remain as is and to be painted.  
Revised Sheets: A09.01, A09.02, A09.03.

**Ania Klepacz** LEED AP  
Associate



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# Architectural Review Board

## Staff Report (ID # 8128)

**Report Type:** Action Items **Meeting Date:** 4/19/2018

**Summary Title:** 3945 El Camino: Comfort Inn Hotel Renovation (1st Formal)

**Title:** PUBLIC HEARING / QUASI-JUDICIAL. 3945 El Camino Real [16PLN-00374]: Request for Approval of a Major Architectural Review to Allow an Exterior Remodel of an Existing Two-Story Hotel Building at 3945 El Camino Real. Environmental Assessment: The Project is Exempt from CEQA per Guideline Section 15301 (Existing Facilities). Zoning District: RM-30/CS. For more information, contact the project planner Phillip Brennan at [phillip.brennan@cityofpaloalto.org](mailto:phillip.brennan@cityofpaloalto.org)

**From:** Hillary Gitelman

### Recommendation

Staff recommends the Architectural Review Board (ARB) take the following action(s):

1. Recommend approval of the proposed project to the Director of Planning and Community Environment based on findings and subject to conditions of approval.

### Report Summary

The application is a request for architectural review for a proposed exterior remodel of an existing two-story hotel building (currently the Comfort Inn) located on El Camino Real. The scope-of-work includes extensive changes to the appearance of the building including updated exterior material and finishes, building color scheme and structural changes to the lobby and stairway rooflines, and a reduction in parking along with a TDM program to ensure sufficient capacity remains on-site. The project is subject to architectural review findings, the Service Commercial District's (CS) context-based design criteria and compliance with the El Camino and South El Camino Design Guidelines. As proposed, the project meets the applicable zoning requirements; draft findings and conditions are included with this report. The Board is encouraged to review the project and provide comments as necessary to further refine the overall design.

### Background

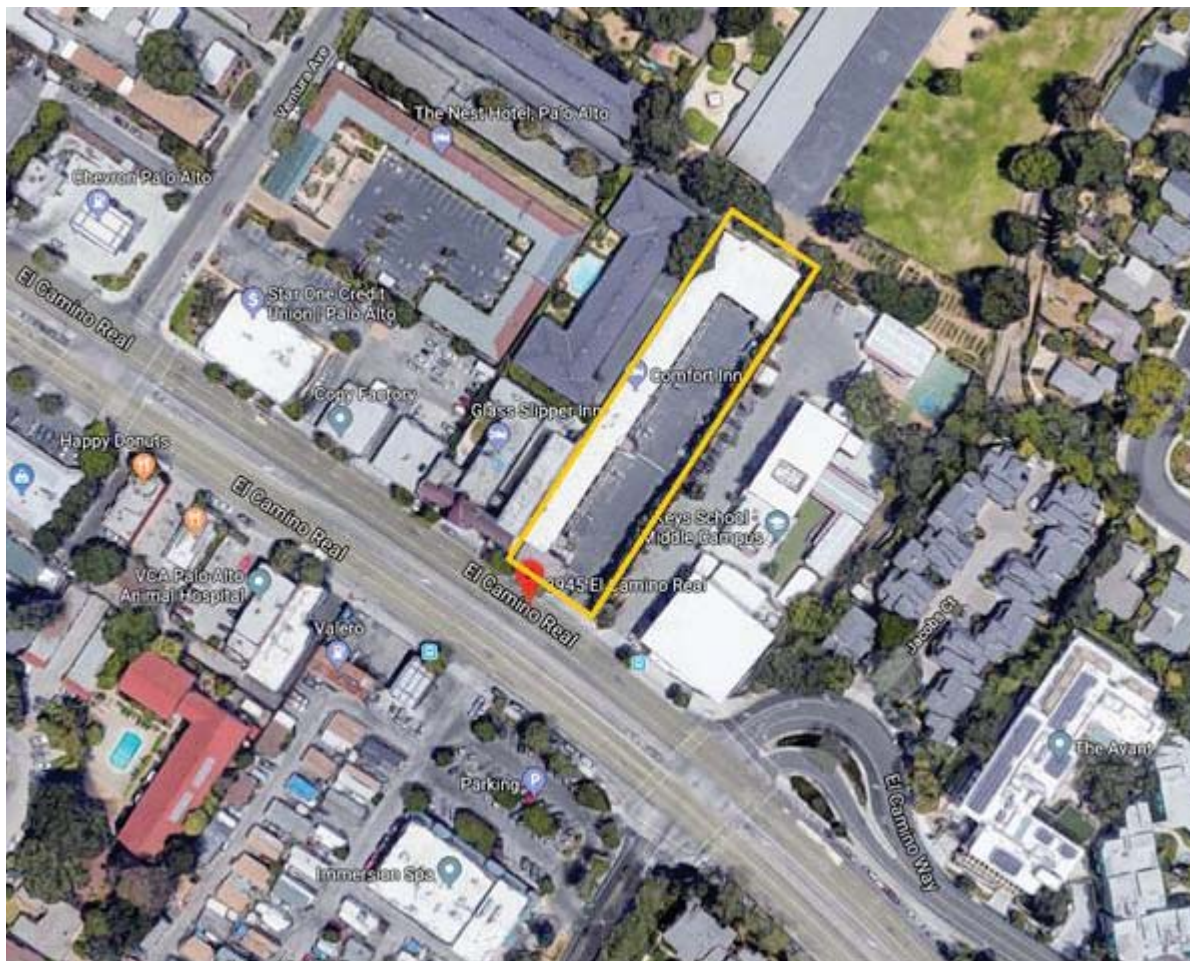
City of Palo Alto  
Planning & Community Environment  
250 Hamilton Avenue  
Palo Alto, CA 94301  
(650) 329-2442

### Project Information

|                 |                 |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| Owner:          | Rajen Shah      |
| Architect:      | Shawn Alexander |
| Representative: | N/A             |

### Property Information

|                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Address:                     | 3945 El Camino Real                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Neighborhood:                | Ventura                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Lot Dimensions & Area:       | Varied: (width) 99.88-100.64 feet; (length) 387.81 to 392.72 feet; 39,077 square feet                                                                                                                      |
| Housing Inventory Site:      | Yes; Realistic Capacity of 18 units                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Located w/in a Plume:        | No                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Protected/Heritage Trees:    | Yes; two (2) street trees located in public ROW and one (1) coast live oak along the shared north side yard property line                                                                                  |
| Historic Resource(s):        | No                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Existing Improvement(s):     | Two-story (23 feet 3 inches tall), 24,576 sf hotel building built in 1963                                                                                                                                  |
| Existing Land Use(s):        | Hotel                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Adjacent Land Uses & Zoning: | North: PF (Ventura Center)<br>West: CS and RM-30 (Glass Slipper Inn Hotel and Merrilee Terrace Apartments)<br>East: CS (Keys Middle School)<br>South: CN (commercial retail center and Valero gas station) |
| Aerial View of Property:     |                                                                                                                                                                                                            |



Source: Google Maps

#### Land Use Designation & Applicable Plans

|                                                    |                                                                                                  |
|----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Zoning Designation:                                | Medium Density Multi-Family (RM-30)/ Service Commercial (CS)                                     |
| Comp. Plan Designation:                            | Multi-Family and Commercial Service                                                              |
| Context-Based Design Criteria:                     | Yes                                                                                              |
| 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):    | Yes; South of El Camino Real and El Camino Real Design Guidelines                                |
| Proximity to Residential Uses or Districts (150'): | Site is dual zoned with the CS front portion of the lot abutting the RM-30 rear half of the lot. |

### Prior City Reviews & Action

|               |      |
|---------------|------|
| City Council: | None |
| PTC:          | None |
| HRB:          | None |
| ARB:          | None |

### **Project Description**

The project proposes an exterior remodel of an existing 24,972 square foot (sf), two-story hotel building built in 1963 and located on a 39,077 sf lot. The building was approved for its last significant exterior remodel in 1998 (present condition) and is not designated as a historic resource. The primary aspects of the project include a comprehensive exterior remodel of the hotel comprised of a redesigned roof that will maintain the existing roof's height of 23 feet 3 inches, replacement of one of three existing stair towers with a reconfigured stairway design, new landscaping, a new covered trash enclosure, repaving and restriping of the parking lot, and a new outdoor seating area intended to serve as an amenity for guests. The project also includes interior remodel work that will not increase the floor area total for the site.

The remodel is part of rebranding of the existing Comfort Inn hotel into a more refined higher-end lodging accommodation. The proposed design utilizes a contemporary aesthetic featuring varied material and exterior finishes such as painted cement plaster walls, corrugated metal panels, decorative screening and a stone mosaic wall feature. The proposal also includes a new metal standing-seam shed roof for the front lobby portion of the structure and stair towers.

### Requested Entitlements, Findings and Purview:

The following discretionary applications are being requested:

- Architectural Review – Major (AR): The process for evaluating this type of application is set forth in PAMC 18.77.070. AR applications are reviewed by the ARB and recommendations are forwarded to the Planning & Community Environment Director for action within five business days of the Board's recommendation. Action by the Director is appealable to the City Council if filed within 14 days of the decision. AR projects are evaluated against specific findings. All findings must be made in the affirmative to approve the project. Failure to make any one finding requires project redesign or denial. The findings to approve an AR application are provided in Attachment B.
- Parking Adjustment: In accordance with PAMC Section 18.52.050, automobile parking requirements may be adjusted by the Director of Planning and Community Environment in limited instances, when in his/her opinion such adjustment will be consistent with the purposes of the chapter, will not create undue impact on existing or potential uses adjoining the site or in the general vicinity, and will be commensurate with the reduced parking demand created by the development, including for visitors and accessory facilities where appropriate.

## Analysis<sup>1</sup>

### Neighborhood Setting and Character

The project site is located in an urbanized section of the Ventura neighborhood along the El Camino Real northbound corridor. It is bounded by the Glass Slipper Inn to its left and Keys School to the right.

The project has been reviewed for compliance with zoning regulations and consistency with the Comprehensive Plan and all applicable policy documents and design guidelines as described in the following sections.

### Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan, Area Plans and Guidelines<sup>2</sup>

The Comprehensive Plan includes Goals, Policies and Programs that guide the physical form of the City. The Comprehensive Plan provides the basis for the City's development regulations and is used by City staff to regulate building and development and make recommendations on projects. Further, ARB finding #1 requires that the design be consistent and compatible with applicable elements of the Palo Alto Comprehensive Plan.

The Comprehensive Plan land use designation for the project site is Service Commercial with Multi-Family towards the rear of the property. As stated in the Plan, the purpose of the commercial land use designation is for citywide and regional services and relying on customers arriving by car. These uses do not necessarily benefit from being in high volume pedestrian areas such as shopping centers or Downtown. Typical uses include auto services and dealerships, motels, lumberyards, appliance stores, and restaurants, including fast service types. In almost all cases, these uses require good automobile and service access so that customers can safely load and unload without impeding traffic. A review has been performed to ensure the project's consistency with the applicable goals and policies. That evaluation has been provided in Attachment B.

### *El Camino Design Guidelines*

The project is subject to the 1979 El Camino Design Guidelines (ECR) with respect to trees, signage, architecture and building colors. The ECR Guidelines were intended in part to encourage landscaping along the El Camino Real extending from Page Mill Road to the southern city limits. The proposed scope includes new landscaping comprised of both native and adaptable ornamental grass species of along the front property between the building structure and trash enclosure. There are two existing mature street trees (Red oak and London plane) located adjacent to the building frontage and large coast live oak located along the shared

<sup>1</sup> The information provided in this section is based on analysis prepared by the report author prior to the public hearing. The Architectural Review Board in its review of the administrative record and based on public testimony may reach a different conclusion from that presented in this report and may choose to make alternative findings. A change to the findings may result in a final action that is different from the staff recommended action in this report.

<sup>2</sup> The Palo Alto Comprehensive Plan is available online:  
<http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/gov/topics/projects/landuse/compplan.asp>

northern side yard that will be protected during the remodeling construction. A planter strip measuring six inches high and approximately 50 feet long by 3 feet wide will be constructed along the lobby and outdoor patio area and feature low-profile landscaping. The described landscaping and proposed narrowing of the driveway width will aid in screening the off-street parking area from street view as instructed by the ECR Guidelines.

#### *South El Camino Design Guidelines*

The project site is located in the Barron-Ventura area, which is characterized by moderately dense development, with a large portion of buildings situated near the street. The project design is consistent with the stated Barron-Ventura area district vision of maintaining the neighborhood servicing commercial node and proposed remodel work that enhances the overall visual appearance of the area with improved massing, façade transparency and materials. The main entry design features extensive floor to ceiling glass treatment that improves transparency and promotes visual interest at the pedestrian level. The proposed roofline maintains the overall maximum height of the existing structure (23 feet 3 inches). However, the leading roof edge is slopped downward toward El Camino Real and may increase perceived scale and height discrepancies between the proposed building and the immediately adjacent two-story structures from street level.

#### Zoning Compliance<sup>3</sup>

The subject lot is divided by two zoning districts near its mid-point with the front portion (42% fronting El Camino Real) zoned as Service Commercial District (CS) and rear portion (58%) zoned as Medium Density Multi-family Residence District (RM-30). Pursuant to Palo Alto Municipal Code (PAMC) Section 18.08.080, in instances where a lot is divided by differing zoning districts, the provisions of the zoning regulations applicable for each district shall apply to each respective lot sections accordingly.

A detailed review of the proposed project's consistency with applicable zoning standards has been performed. A summary table is provided in Attachment D.

#### *Project Uses*

Since the time of issuance of its original use permit (62-UP-2) in 1962, the subject site existed in two zoning districts; Service Commercial and Medium Density Multiple Family Residential (formerly called RM-4 and now RM-30). The division of the zoning districts occurs approximately 175 feet back from the front property line with the multi-family zoning district in the rear half of the lot. Motel or hotel use is not a permitted land use in the RM-30, but is covered by the "grandfather" clause provided by PAMC Section 18.13.070 (2)(C) in the zoning ordinance that allows for its continued use in this capacity indefinitely so long as the number of rooms or floor area of the building is not increased.

Part of the project scope includes the creation of a larger covered trash and recycling enclosure to replace the existing smaller and uncovered enclosure currently on site. The larger covered

<sup>3</sup> The Palo Alto Zoning Code is available online: [http://www.amlegal.com/codes/client/palo-alto\\_ca](http://www.amlegal.com/codes/client/palo-alto_ca)

enclosure would bring the site into compliance with Solid Waste Management and Stormwater Pollution Prevention requirements. By definition the new covered enclosure would count toward the site's gross floor area total (~216 sf), but is exempt per the provisions outlined in PAMC Section 18.04.030 (65)(B)(iv). As such, it is not increasing the project's degree of non-compliance and is not in conflict with the terms of the aforementioned original use permit.

Development in the CS zoning district requires that the City make the findings outlined in PAMC Section 18.16.090, *Context-Based Design Criteria*. The proposed project satisfies the stated context-based design considerations and findings such as the promotion of walkability by extending the 12-foot wide sidewalk segment along El Camino Real; providing bike rack amenity on-site which promotes active transportation options for hotel guests and staff; strongly connecting the street façade to the sidewalk through re-oriented main lobby access that provides access off the sidewalk; and retaining the street-facing balcony that helps indicate habitation and visibility from the street and sidewalk. A review of the projects consistency with the Context-Based Design Criteria is included in Attachment E.

#### *Performance Criteria*

The proposed project is located within a CS zoning district and would therefore be subject to the performance criteria outlined in PAMC Section 18.23. A review has been performed to ensure the project's general compliance with the applicable performance criteria. That evaluation has been provided in Attachment F.

#### *Parking Requirement*

The last approved project for this site (Building Permit #99-1590) on file with the City, dates back to October 1999. The data summary table of that plan indicates 67 guest units to 67 parking spaces, including four accessible stalls. Of the 63 standard spaces, 25 are indicated as "compact" stalls that measured 7 feet 6 inches in width as was permitted at that time. The existing parking lot currently does not provide the required 1:1 off-street parking space per guestroom parking ratio. The hotel currently has 69 guestrooms and provides 60 parking spaces, including 57 standard spaces and three accessible spaces. City records do not account for the existing discrepancy in guestroom to parking space ratio currently present on the lot.

The new project's scope-of-work includes interior remodeling that would decrease the total number of guestrooms to 67 and a reduction of three parking spaces to accommodate the proposed outdoor patio seating resulting in 57 total spaces (54 standard; 3 accessible). The applicant is proposing to use 8.5 foot by 17.5 foot "uni-class" sized stalls as prescribed for the parking stall angle (90 degree). In order to meet the required minimum aisle width between stall lines, the applicant is utilizing a provision in PAMC Section 18.54.040 (h) that allows for up to two feet of bumper overhang into the planter or landscape area.

#### *Parking Reduction*

Parking for this project is based on the 1:1 guest room to parking space ratio per PAMC Section 18.52.040. The project as proposed would provide fewer parking spaces (57 spaces) on-site

than required (67 spaces) per Municipal Code. As such, the applicant has requested a 15 percent parking reduction to reduce the required parking count by 10 spaces. PAMC Section 18.52.050 allows the Planning Director to approve a parking adjustment when effective transportation and parking alternatives are provided such as a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program or other innovative strategies intended to site specific reduce parking demand.

The applicant contracted the services of a transportation planning consultant to create a TDM plan to reduce and manage the number of single-occupant motor vehicle trips generated by the project. The consultant performed a peak parking demand analysis that looked at 13 lodging establishments along the Peninsula that catered to primarily business travelers similar to the Comfort Inn. The resulting analysis indicated the peak parking demand for the Comfort Inn was 0.62 occupied spaces per occupied room, which was slightly less than the average (0.66) demand. To ensure the proposed project's parking could adequately accommodate a higher parking demand, the higher average was utilized and 100 percent occupancy was assumed resulting in a projected peak parking demand of 45 vehicles after the remodel. As proposed, the project would provide 12 more parking spaces than the projected peak parking demand, and therefore the site's proposed 57 parking spaces would be expected to be more than sufficient.

Although, the analysis indicates the proposed 57 parking spaces would sufficiently accommodate peak parking demand, in accordance with PAMC Section 18.52.050 Table, the applicant has proposed additional TDM strategies to reduce parking demand on-site as summarized below:

- **Transit Subsidy.** The hotel will provide monthly bus passes to employees who wish to commute using public transportation. VTA bus stops are located immediately adjacent to the project site along El Camino, providing transit services via Local Route 22.
- **Taxi or Ride-Share Subsidy.** The hotel would provide guests with a \$20 subsidy for rides using a local taxi service or ride-share service (e.g. Uber or Lyft). The project already has a working relationship with a local taxi service that would aid in this implementation.
- **On-Site Bicycle Parking.** The project scope includes nine (9) short-term bicycle racks which will provide up to 18 bicycle spaces on site.

Further details related to the proposed TDM Plan and Parking Study can be found in Attachment H.

#### *Loading Space*

The originally approved project did not provide a dedicated loading space. Current municipal parking standards require one off-street loading space to be provided for a hotel of this size. As it exists, the hotel is legal noncomplying and would not be required to provide the off-street loading space so long as the proposed maintenance and repair (i.e. remodel) of the hotel does not increase the degree of noncompliance; see PAMC Section 18.70.090. Staff has concluded

requiring the hotel to comply with the current standard would not be appropriate based on the limited extent of the proposed remodel work, existing site limitations, and hotel use.

### Multi-Modal Access

The proposed project incorporates design aspects meant to enhance the pedestrian and bicycle environment. The project scope includes nine designated short-term bicycle parking racks located in the rear of the lot that supports multi-modal transportation options for hotel guests and staff. Additionally, a portion of the existing landscaped planter area along the southwest corner of the lot is proposed for partial removal and replacement with a widened concrete pathway to continue the 12-foot wide sidewalk network along this segment of El Camino Real. The sidewalk area adjacent to where the building fronts, narrows with the proposed landscaping acting as a buffer between the building and the public right-of-way. Egress sight-lines are increased by the proposed notched main lobby entry, which should result in better visual clearance for drivers exiting the driveway and improved pedestrian safety.

### Consistency with Application Findings

Overall, the design and architecture of the proposed improvements, as conditioned, complies with the required Findings for Architectural Review as required in Chapter 18.76 of the PAMC. Draft findings substantiating how the project satisfied each required finding is provided in Attachment B.

## **Environmental Review**

The subject project has been assessed in accordance with the authority and criteria contained in the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the State CEQA Guidelines, and the environmental regulations of the City. Specifically, the project is exempt from the provisions of the CEQA in accordance with Guideline Section 15301 (Existing Facilities).

## **Public Notification, Outreach & Comments**

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 *Palo Alto Weekly* on April 6, 2018, which is 14 days in advance of the meeting. Postcard mailing occurred on April 9, 2018, which is 11 days in advance of the meeting.

### Public Comments

As of the writing of this report, no project-related, public comments were received.

## **Alternative Actions**

In addition to the recommended action, the Architectural Review Board may:

1. Approve the project with modified findings or conditions;
2. Continue the project to a date (un)certain; or
3. Recommend project denial based on revised findings.

**Report Author & Contact Information**

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**ARB<sup>4</sup> Liaison & Contact Information**

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**Attachments:**

- Attachment A: Location Map (JPG)
- Attachment B: Draft ARB Findings (DOCX)
- Attachment C: Conditions of Approval (DOCX)
- Attachment D: Zoning Comparison Table (DOCX)
- Attachment E: Context-Based Design Criteria Compliance (DOCX)
- Attachment F: Performance Criteria (DOCX)
- Attachment G: Applicant's Project Description Letter (PDF)
- Attachment H: Parking Study and TDM Plan (PDF)
- Attachment I: Project Plans (DOCX)

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<sup>4</sup> Emails may be sent directly to the ARB using the following address: [arb@cityofpaloalto.org](mailto:arb@cityofpaloalto.org)

## ATTACHMENT F

### **Project Plans**

Hardcopies of project plans are provided to Board members. These plans are available to the public online and/or by visiting the Planning and Community Environmental Department on the 5th floor of City Hall at 250 Hamilton Avenue.

#### **Directions to review Project plans online:**

1. Go to: <http://bit.ly/PaloAltoPlanningProjects>
2. Scroll down the center of the page and click “View pending projects”
3. Scroll to find “**3945 El Camino Real**” and click the address link
4. 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/news/displaynews.asp?NewsID=4222>