



Architectural Review Board

Staff Report (ID # 11103)

Report Type:	Subcommittee Items	Meeting Date: 4/16/2020
Summary Title:	3705 El Camino Real: Subcommittee Review of Landscaping and Minor Facade Improvements	
Title:	3705 El Camino Real [18PLN-00136]: Subcommittee Review of a Previously Approved Project That was Conditioned to Return With Project Changes Related to Landscaping and Minor Facade Modifications. Environmental Assessment: Exempt From the Provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) in Accordance With Guidelines Section 15194 (Affordable Housing). Zoning District: CN(AH) (Neighborhood Commercial with Affordable Housing Combining District). For More Information Contact the Project Planner, Claire Raybould at Claire.Raybould@cityofpaloalto.org	
From:	Jonathan Lait	

Recommendation

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

1. Discuss and provide direction or approve the revisions to the previously approved Wilton Court housing project at 3705 El Camino Real [18PLN-00136].

Background

On January 14, 2019 Council approved the 59-unit, multi-family income-restricted residential project known as Wilton Court. At the ARB's recommendation, Council imposed a condition (condition #6 of the Record of Land Use Action) requiring review of certain project elements by an ARB subcommittee. Below are the Condition #6 items for subcommittee review, and the applicant's response to the ARB's comments. A link to the project plans showing the applicable revisions is included in Attachment B and photos of the material samples are included in Attachment C.

Architecture Review Condition #6a:

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

Update the landscaping plan to show, to the degree feasible, street trees along El Camino Real frontage, or other significant landscaping.

Applicant's Response:

- Please refer to the attached detailed applicant response memo in Attachment A. The landscaping plans have been revised; potted street trees are proposed along El Camino Real in addition to the existing trees, which would be retained. At grade street trees along this frontage are still not proposed due to conflicts with existing utilities.

Staff Analysis/Feedback:

- The entitled and revised landscape plans are provided in the attached plan set. Consistent with the original plans, the two existing London plane trees on El Camino Real and one London plane tree on Wilton Avenue would be preserved. A new cork-oak and two new Catalina Ironwood trees are proposed along Wilton Avenue. At the base of the existing street trees along El Camino Real, the planter strips will be extended further than originally proposed, providing additional planting area for perennials and groundcover. At the ARB's recommendation, the applicant explored whether additional street trees could be planted at grade along El Camino Real. The applicant and City staff found that planting new street trees along this frontage would conflict with existing electrical utilities below the sidewalk along El Camino Real (as shown on the provided landscaping plans). However, four additional street trees are still proposed to be planted in above grade planters, as proposed in the original approved plans. The applicant revised the species of these trees to be Catalina Ironwood, a native species. An additional flowering cherry tree was added to the podium courtyard landscaping and additional trees will be planted in the location where the stairs were originally proposed, providing more vegetation adjacent the alley. The stairs have been revised to connect to El Camino Real instead of the alley.

Architecture Review Condition #6b:

Enhance the corner of the building at the intersection of El Camino Real and Wilton Avenue to make it a more visible and distinctive part of the building.

Applicant's Response:

- Please refer to the attached detailed applicant response memo in Attachment A. The applicant raised the parapet at the corner, revised the windows and sunshades, and revised the entrance door at the corner of El Camino Real and Wilton Avenue.

Staff Analysis/Feedback:

- At the corner of El Camino Real and Wilton Avenue, the applicant raised the parapet another six inches, consistent with suggestions from members of the ARB. This solution helps offset the corner roofline from the rest of the building, while still meeting the required height limits for this zone district. Clerestory windows have been added above the fourth-floor windows to further define the "top" of the building. The sunshades

around corner windows have been modified to enhance their visual prominence. The applicant has also revised the entrances along El Camino Real to make each of them more prominent along the façade, especially the entrance door at the corner of El Camino Real and Wilton Court, which has been revised to match the colored metal spandrels on the unit windows above.

Architecture Review Condition #6c:

Modify the color and texture of the alley-facing elevation to better relate to the rest of the building.

Applicant's Response:

- Please refer to the attached detailed applicant response memo in Attachment A. The applicant is proposing revisions to the colors and has added more of the colored accent metal spandrel around the building at windows and doors. The applicant revised the open space area and has added more vegetation along the alley façade.

Staff Analysis/Feedback:

- The applicant made changes to brighten the exterior stucco colors since much of the stucco will be oriented toward the north and will be in shadow. For consistency across the entire building, revisions were made to the stucco color on all four facades. The same window patterning and spacing is provided on both facades and the same colored accent metal spandrel panels are proposed around the entire building at unit windows. The applicant explored revisions to textures, particularly on the alley facing façade. However, due to budget constraints, the applicant is not proposing any changes to the proposed textures. The applicant/architect also indicated that use of the terra cotta materials on the alley facing façade would not be consistent with their design intent, which includes use of a more vibrant material appropriate for a commercial district on the street facing facades, and more subdued colors and materials on the residential facing facades. In order to further improve the alley façade and its relationship to the adjacent buildings, the outdoor patio area was redesigned to move the BBQ area away from adjacent residential units and reconfigure the stairwell to lead out to El Camino Real instead of the alley. This allowed for further planting along the alley and along the edge of the patio area, which will help to soften views of the building as well as the wall facing the alley.

Other Project Changes

The revised project plans included other minor changes to the design that were unrelated to the proposed conditions of approval. Staff believes that these changes are in substantial conformance with the ARB's recommendation and anticipates further review of these revisions as part of the building permit process. However, because these revisions are documented on the proposed plans submitted for subcommittee, staff wanted to make the subcommittee members aware of these changes and the applicant's reasoning for these revisions.

Specifically, the applicant has proposed minor revisions to the windows on three of the facades. These revisions are proposed in order to accommodate modifications to the interior unit planning, allowing for a bed or couch wall, or otherwise limiting the size of the windows when placed in bathrooms to improve privacy while still providing natural light and ventilation. These windows are mostly secondary windows (a bathroom and just outside of a closet), with the primary orientation of the unit towards the courtyard, with two additional windows. The garage at the corner of Wilton Avenue and the alley has also been revised slightly to extend the garage wall and open area above, as shown on the alley facing elevation on the subcommittee project plans. Staff understands that this change was made for structural purposes as the applicant prepared the plans for building permit submittal.

A video recording of the Board's last meeting on this project is available online: <https://tinyurl.com/3705-ECR-ARB-Hearing-Video>. The Board is encouraged to provide direction to staff and the applicant as to whether the proposed changes are sufficient or requires further refinement.

Report Author & Contact Information

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ARB¹ Liaison & Contact Information

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Attachments:

- Attachment A: Applicant Response to Prior Board Comments (PDF)
- Attachment B: Project Plans (DOCX)
- Attachment C: Material Samples

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

**TRANSMITTAL**

DATE: 02/20/2020

TO: Claire Raybould, AICP, Senior Planner
250 Hamilton Avenue
Palo Alto, CA 94301

RE: Wilton Court

FROM: Rachael Davidoff

☐ Courier

☐ Hand Delivery

☐ Overnight

☒ Email

☐ Upload

☐ Regular Mail

☐ Fax #: Pages:

Condition #1: Update the landscaping plan to show, to the degree feasible, street trees along El Camino Real frontage, or other significant landscaping.

Response:

We explored the possibility of locating the street trees in-ground, but the existing utilities in the sidewalk along El Camino Real are located 3 feet from the edge of the curb and would conflict with proposed in-ground street trees. Furthermore, moving these existing utilities into El Camino Real would be an undue financial burden on the project. To ensure a high-quality streetscape, three street trees around the project will be preserved, including two London Plane trees on El Camino Real and one London Plan tree on Wilton Avenue. Where feasible, we have made other changes to improve landscaping on site. A new in-ground Cork Oak is proposed along Wilton Avenue, providing an evergreen species with good habitat qualities, along with two native in-ground Catalina Ironwood trees. At the base of the existing street trees along El Camino Real will be expanded planter strips, providing new space for perennials and groundcovers, as well as furnishings including two benches and four planter pots containing Catalina Ironwood trees. An additional Flowering Cherry tree on the podium courtyard further increases the overall tree canopy coverage onsite. The project will irrigate all off-site street trees.

Condition #2: Enhance the corner of the building at the intersection of El Camino Real and Wilton avenue to make more visible and distinctive part of the building.

Response:

Building corner has been enhanced in the following ways:

1. Parapet height at the corner has been raised from 49' to 49'-6".
2. Clerestory windows have been added above 4th-floor windows to make the top floor look more pronounced.

3. Sunshades around corner windows have been modified to enhance the visual prominence of the corner windows.
4. The building entry door has been changed to make it more prominent to pedestrians.

Condition #3: Modify the color and texture of the alley-facing elevation to better relate to the rest of the building.

Response:

We made changes to the color of the façade by brightening the stucco wall color facing the alley. While we explored changing the texture of this façade, the project budget could not support building materials other than stucco along this façade. The building elevations facing the alley relates to the rest of the building by including the same colored accent metal spandrel panels at unit windows that occur on the El Camino facade. In addition to the architectural modifications, the back facade of the building will be robustly landscaped with trees and other plantings, which will create a dynamic textural experience at the street level. In-ground trees and plantings have been added to the ground floor between the alley and building to screen the wall and soften the space. Flowering evergreen Trumpet vines will be planted to grow around the garage entrance. The stair access to the podium courtyard has been moved to El Camino Real, which will reduce pedestrian traffic in the alley and also allow for additional trees and plantings to be added to the podium across from the neighboring building. The main activity center on the podium courtyard has moved to the corner of the courtyard, further away from the nearby houses; this will reduce the impact of voices and overhead lighting relative to the neighbors. A new wooden good-neighbor fence is proposed between the residence and the alley to provide privacy to the apartments. All of these features will improve the overall alley character and relation to the existing neighborhood buildings.

Attachment B

Project Plans

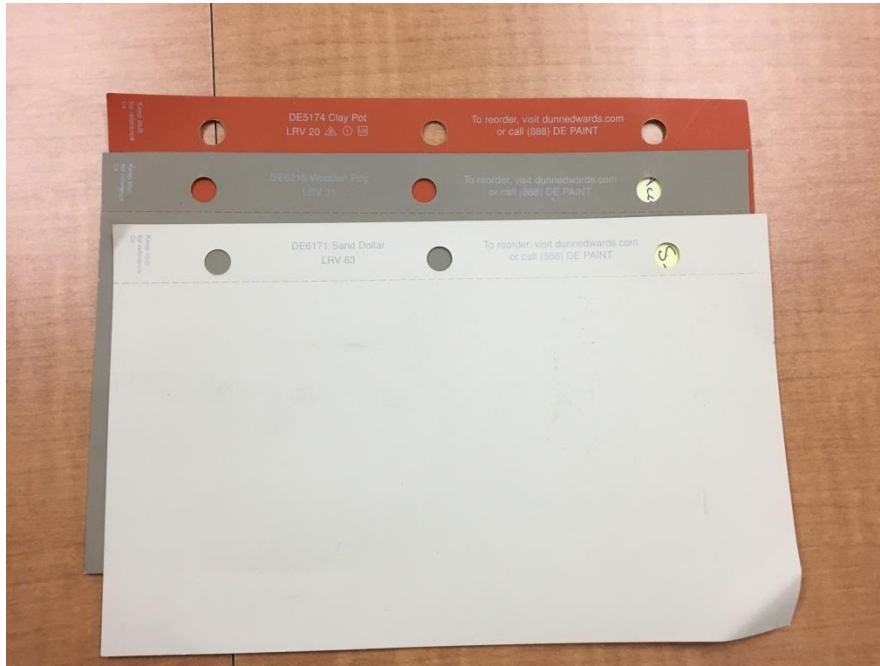
Directions to review Project plans online:

1. Go to: bit.ly/PApendingprojects
2. Scroll down to find “3705 El Camino Real” and click the address link
3. On this project specific webpage you will find a link to the project plans and other important information

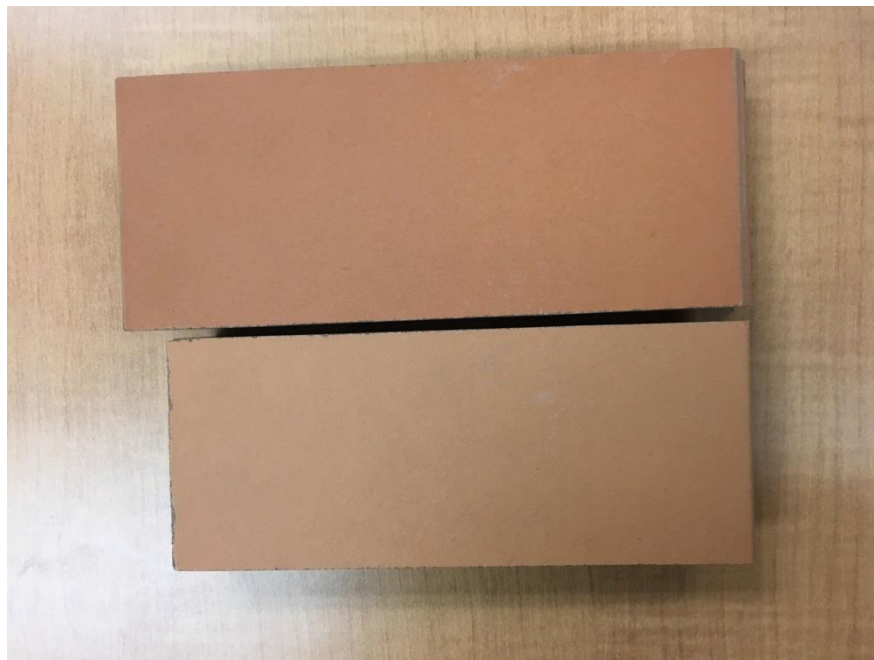
Direct Link to Project Webpage:

<https://tinyurl.com/3705-El-Camino-Real>

Attachment C
Photos of Proposed Materials



Photos of Paint Samples
(DE Paint: DE5174 Clay Pot; DE6215 Wooden Peg; DE6171 Sand Dollar)



Photos of terra cotta tiles (tiles would alternate with light and dark)



Photos of stucco material and metal spandrel material
(To be painted with colors above)