



CITY OF  
**PALO  
ALTO**

## **ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD**

### **Regular Meeting**

**Thursday, March 05, 2026**

**Council Chambers & Hybrid**

**8:30 AM**

Architectural Review Board meetings will be held as “hybrid” meetings with the option to attend by teleconference/video conference or in person. To maximize public safety while still maintaining transparency and public access, members of the public can choose to participate from home or attend in person. Information on how the public may observe and participate in the meeting is located at the end of the agenda. Masks are strongly encouraged if attending in person. The meeting will be broadcast on Cable TV Channel 26, live on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/c/cityofpaloalto>, and streamed to Midpen Media Center <https://midpenmedia.org>. Visit <https://bit.ly/PAPendingprojects> to view project plans and details. Board member names, biographies, and archived agendas and reports are available at <https://bit.ly/paloaltoARB>.

**VIRTUAL PARTICIPATION [CLICK HERE TO JOIN](https://cityofpaloalto.zoom.us/j/96561891491) (https://cityofpaloalto.zoom.us/j/96561891491)**  
**Meeting ID: 965 6189 1491 Phone: 1(669)900-6833**

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Public comments will be accepted both in person and via Zoom for up to three minutes or an amount of time determined by the Chair. All requests to speak will be taken until 5 minutes after the staff's presentation. Written public comments can be submitted in advance to [arb@PaloAlto.gov](mailto:arb@PaloAlto.gov) and will be provided to the Board and available for inspection on the City's website three days before the meeting. Please clearly indicate which agenda item you are referencing in your subject line.

Spokespersons that are representing a group of five or more people who are identified as present at the meeting at the time of the spokesperson's presentation will be allowed up to fifteen (15) minutes at the discretion of the Chair, provided that the non-speaking members agree not to speak individually. The Chair may limit Public Comments to thirty (30) minutes for all combined speakers. The Chair may reduce the allowed time to speak for Study Sessions and Action Items to two (2) minutes or less to accommodate a larger number of speakers.

PowerPoints, videos, or other media to be presented during public comment are accepted only by email to [arb@PaloAlto.gov](mailto:arb@PaloAlto.gov) at least 24 hours prior to the meeting. Once received, the Clerk will have them shared at public comment for the specified item. To uphold strong cybersecurity management practices, USB's or other physical electronic storage devices are not accepted.

Signs and symbolic materials less than 2 feet by 3 feet are permitted provided that: (1) sticks, posts, poles or similar/other type of handle objects are strictly prohibited; (2) the items do not create a facility, fire, or safety hazard; and (3) persons with such items remain seated when displaying them and must not raise the items above shoulder level, obstruct the view or passage of other attendees, or otherwise disturb the business of the meeting.

## CALL TO ORDER/ ROLL CALL

## AGENDA CHANGES, ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS

*The Chair or Board majority may modify the agenda order to improve meeting management.*

## PUBLIC COMMENT

*Members of the public may speak to any item NOT on the agenda. Three (3) minutes per speaker.*

## CITY OFFICIAL REPORTS

1. Director's Report, Meeting Schedule, and Upcoming Agenda Items

## STUDY SESSION

*Public Comment is Permitted. Three (3) minutes per speaker.*

2. QUASI-JUDICIAL. 4103 Old Trace Road [25PLN-00296]: Request for a Streamlined Housing Development Review to Construct 16 Dwelling Units on Eight Total Lots, Including Eight Single-Family Residences and Eight Junior Accessory Dwelling Units. One Single Family Home and JADU would be Provided at Below Market Rate. A Separate Vesting Tentative Map Application (25PLN-00298) Has Been Filed for the Proposed Subdivision. The Project Requests Concessions and Waivers Pursuant to State Density Bonus Law. A Compliant Senate Bill 330 Pre-Application Was Filed on October 1, 2025. CEQA Status: Exempt Pursuant to Assembly Bill 130 (Public Resources Code section 21080.66). Zone District: RE (Residential Estate).

## APPROVAL OF MINUTES

*Public Comment is Permitted. Three (3) minutes per speaker.*

3. Draft Architectural Review Board Meeting Minutes for December 4, 2025
4. Draft Architectural Review Board Meeting Minutes for January 15, 2026

## BOARD MEMBER QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, ANNOUNCEMENTS OR FUTURE MEETINGS AND AGENDAS

*Members of the public may not speak to the item(s).*

## ADJOURNMENT

## INFORMATIONAL REPORT

*The materials below are provided for informational purposes, not for action or discussion during this meeting's agenda. Written public comments may be submitted in advance and will be provided to the Commission and available for public inspection on the City's website three days before the meeting.*

### A. Public Comments

## OTHER INFORMATION

~~PUBLIC HEARING/QUASI JUDICIAL. 450 Lytton Avenue [26PLN 00016] Request for a Streamlined Housing Development Review to Demolish a Surface Parking Lot and Allow the Construction of a Six-Story, Approximately 76,500 Square Foot Multi-Family Project Consisting of 72 Residential Rental Units on an Approximately 0.43-acre (18,900 Square Feet) Parcel. The Project is 100% Affordable Housing and Proposes Concessions and Waivers Pursuant to State Density Bonus Law. CEQA Status: Eligibility Under AB 130 (Public Resources Code section 21080.66) is Being Evaluated. Zone District: PF (Public Facilities)~~ This item will not be heard at this meeting.

## PUBLIC COMMENT INSTRUCTIONS

Members of the Public may provide public comments to teleconference meetings via email, teleconference, or by phone.

1. **Written public comments** may be submitted by email to [arb@PaloAlto.gov](mailto:arb@PaloAlto.gov).
2. **Spoken public comments using a computer** will be accepted through the teleconference meeting. To address the Board, click on the link below to access a Zoom-based meeting. Please read the following instructions carefully.
  - You may download the Zoom client or connect to the meeting in- browser. If using your browser, make sure you are using a current, up-to-date browser: Chrome 30, Firefox 27, Microsoft Edge 12, Safari 7. Certain functionality may be disabled in older browsers including Internet Explorer.
  - You may be asked to enter an email address and name. We request that you identify yourself by name as this will be visible online and will be used to notify you that it is your turn to speak.
  - When you wish to speak on an Agenda Item, click on “raise hand.” The Clerk will activate and unmute speakers in turn. Speakers will be notified shortly before they are called to speak.
  - When called, please limit your remarks to the time limit allotted. A timer will be shown on the computer to help keep track of your comments.
3. **Spoken public comments using a smart phone** will be accepted through the teleconference meeting. To address the Board, download the Zoom application onto your phone from the Apple App Store or Google Play Store and enter the Meeting ID below. Please follow the instructions above.
4. **Spoken public comments using a phone** use the telephone number listed below. When you wish to speak on an agenda item hit \*9 on your phone so we know that you wish to speak. You will be asked to provide your first and last name before addressing the Board. You will be advised how long you have to speak. When called please limit your remarks to the agenda item and time limit allotted.

**[CLICK HERE TO JOIN](#) Meeting ID: 965 6189 1491 Phone: 1-669-900-6833**

**Americans with Disability Act (ADA)** It is the policy of the City of Palo Alto to offer its public programs, services and meetings in a manner that is readily accessible to all. Persons with disabilities who require materials in an appropriate alternative format or who require auxiliary aids to access City meetings, programs, or services may contact the City’s ADA Coordinator at (650) 329-2550 (voice) or by emailing [ada@PaloAlto.gov](mailto:ada@PaloAlto.gov). Requests for assistance or accommodations must be submitted at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting, program, or service.



## Architectural Review Board Staff Report

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

**Meeting Date: March 5, 2026**  
**Report #: 2602-6011**

### TITLE

Director's Report, Meeting Schedule, and Upcoming Agenda Items

### RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Architectural Review Board (ARB) review and comment as appropriate.

### BACKGROUND

This document includes the following items:

- ARB meeting schedule
- Upcoming ARB agenda items
- Recently submitted and pending projects subject to ARB review

Board members are encouraged to contact Samuel Tavera ([Samuel.Tavera@PaloAlto.gov](mailto:Samuel.Tavera@PaloAlto.gov)) to notify staff of any planned absences one month in advance, if possible, to ensure the availability of an ARB quorum.

Approved projects can be found on the City's Building Eye webpage at <https://palocalto.buildingeye.com/planning>. Any party, including the applicant, may request a hearing by the ARB on the proposed director's decision(s) within the 10-day or 14-day appeal period by filing a written request with the planning division. There shall be no fee required for requesting such a hearing. However, there is a fee for appeals.

Pursuant to 18.77.070(b)(5) any project relating to the installation of cabinets containing communications service equipment or facilities, pursuant to any service subject to Palo Alto Municipal Code Chapter 2.11, Chapter 12.04, Chapter 12.08, Chapter 12.09, Chapter 12.10, or Chapter 12.13 is not eligible for a request for hearing by any party, including the applicant.

No action is required by the ARB for this item.

**UPCOMING ARB AGENDA ITEMS**

The following items are tentative and subject to change:

Meeting Date	Topics
March 19, 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>San Antonio Road Area Plan Study Session</li></ul>

**RECENTLY SUBMITTED PROJECTS**

The following new ARB projects were submitted:

Address & Record #	Project Description
450 Lytton Ave 26PLN-00016	Streamlined Housing Development Project to Allow the redevelopment of surface parking facility known as Lot T with a publicly funded 72-unit affordable housing development totaling six stories in height (with a mix of one, two, and three-bedroom units) above one level of residential parking and support functions.

**ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A: 2026 Meeting Schedule & Assignments

**AUTHOR/TITLE:**

ARB Liaison<sup>1</sup> & Contact Information  
Steven Switzer, Senior Historic Planner  
(650) 329-2321  
[Steven.Switzer@PaloAlto.gov](mailto:Steven.Switzer@PaloAlto.gov)

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<sup>1</sup> Emails can be sent directly to the ARB at the following email: [ARB@PaloAlto.gov](mailto:ARB@PaloAlto.gov)



# Architectural Review Board 2026 Meeting Schedule & Assignments

## 2026 Meeting Schedule

Meeting Dates	Time	Location	Status	Planned Absences
1/1/2026	8:30 AM	Hybrid	Cancelled	
1/15/2026	8:30 AM	Hybrid	Regular	Adecock, Hirsch
2/5/2026	8:30 AM	Hybrid	Cancelled	
2/19/2026	8:30 AM	Hybrid	Cancelled	
3/5/2026	8:30 AM	Hybrid	Regular	
3/19/2026	8:30 AM	Hybrid	Regular	
4/2/2026	8:30 AM	Hybrid	Regular	Rosenberg
4/16/2026	8:30 AM	Hybrid	Regular	
5/7/2026	8:30 AM	Hybrid	Regular	
5/21/2026	8:30 AM	Hybrid	Regular	
6/4/2026	8:30 AM	Hybrid	Regular	
6/18/2026	8:30 AM	Hybrid	Regular	
7/2/2026	8:30 AM	Hybrid	Regular	
7/16/2026	8:30 AM	Hybrid	Regular	
8/6/2026	8:30 AM	Hybrid	Regular	
8/20/2026	8:30 AM	Hybrid	Regular	
9/3/2026	8:30 AM	Hybrid	Regular	
9/17/2026	8:30 AM	Hybrid	Regular	
10/1/2026	8:30 AM	Hybrid	Regular	
10/15/2026	8:30 AM	Hybrid	Regular	
11/5/2026	8:30 AM	Hybrid	Regular	
11/19/2026	8:30 AM	Hybrid	Regular	
12/3/2026	8:30 AM	Hybrid	Regular	
12/17/2026	8:30 AM	Hybrid	Regular	

## 2026 Ad Hoc Committee Assignments

Assignments will be made by the ARB Chair

<b>January</b>	<b>February</b>	<b>March</b>	<b>April</b>	<b>May</b>	<b>June</b>
<b>July</b>	<b>August</b>	<b>September</b>	<b>October</b>	<b>November</b>	<b>December</b>



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## Architectural Review Board Staff Report

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

**Meeting Date: March 5, 2026**  
Report #: 2512-5736

### TITLE

QUASI-JUDICIAL. 4103 Old Trace Road [25PLN-00296]: Request for a Streamlined Housing Development Review to Construct 16 Dwelling Units on Eight Total Lots, Including Eight Single-Family Residences and Eight Junior Accessory Dwelling Units. One Single Family Home and JADU would be Provided at Below Market Rate. A Separate Vesting Tentative Map Application (25PLN-00298) Has Been Filed for the Proposed Subdivision. The Project Requests Concessions and Waivers Pursuant to State Density Bonus Law. A Compliant Senate Bill 330 Pre-Application Was Filed on October 1, 2025. CEQA Status: Exempt Pursuant to Assembly Bill 130 (Public Resources Code section 21080.66). Zone District: RE (Residential Estate).

### RECOMMENDATION

Conduct a study session to provide feedback and discuss any adjustments to the application that would result in further consistency with the City’s objective standards, pursuant to streamlined review for housing development projects (Palo Alto Municipal Code (PAMC) Section 18.77.073).

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The proposed housing development project is located on a 1.02-acre parcel at 4103 Old Trace Road (Attachment A). The project includes eight for-sale primary dwelling units, including six detached single-family residential units and two attached single-family units. A junior accessory dwelling unit (JADU) is proposed in conjunction with each of the eight single-family units.

The applicant has filed a separate Vesting Tentative Map application with the City to subdivide the existing vacant parcel to create eight residential parcels. A private road would provide access to each of the parcels.

The project is a housing development project in accordance with the Housing Accountability Act and qualifies for a State Density Bonus based on the percentage and income level restrictions on the provided units. The applicant is proposing to deed-restrict one of the eight parcels (including one primary unit and one JADU) as affordable to moderate-income households earning no more than 100% of Area Median Income. The applicant also filed a complaint Senate Bill (SB) 330 pre-application on September 25, 2025. Therefore, the project analysis is based on

the development standards in effect at the time of the compliant SB 330 pre-application submittal.

The project is exempt from CEQA pursuant to Assembly Bill (AB) 130 for Qualifying Infill Housing Projects.

**BACKGROUND**

Project Information

Owner:	Steel Bridge Homes Palo Alto, LP
Architect:	Ponderosa Architecture
Representative:	Melanie Griswold
Legal Counsel:	HSW, LLP (Melanie Griswold)

Property Information

Address:	4103 Old Trace Road
Neighborhood:	Esther Clark Park
Lot Dimensions & Area:	Irregular; Approx. 172 feet x 224 feet; 44,449 square feet (1.02 acres)
Housing Inventory Site:	Not Applicable
Located w/in a Plume:	Not Applicable
Protected/Heritage Trees:	No heritage trees; protected trees on-site, on neighboring properties and in public right-of-way
Historic Resource(s):	Not Applicable
Existing Improvement(s):	Vacant
Existing Land Use(s):	Vacant
Adjacent Land Uses & Zoning:	North: Research Park (RP): Research Facility/Technology Office West: Residential Estate (RE): Single-family residence East: Residential Estate (RE): Single-family residence South: Residential Estate (RE): Single-family residence
Aerial View of Property:	



*Source: Google Maps*

**Land Use Designation & Applicable Plans**

Zoning Designation: Residential Estate (RE)  
 Comp. Plan Designation: Single Family Residential (SF)

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

**Prior City Reviews & Action**

City Council: None  
 PTC: None  
 HRB: None  
 ARB: None

Project Description

The proposed project is a request from Steel Bridge Homes Palo Alto to subdivide a vacant 1.02-acre lot to construct eight single-family homes, each with a JADU, for a total of 16 units.

A separate Vesting Tentative Map application (25PLN-00298) was filed on November 7, 2025, to subdivide the existing vacant parcel to create the eight for-sale residential lots. A private street is proposed for access to the easement.

One of the eight parcels, which includes one single-family main dwelling unit and an attached JADU, would be deed restricted and sold together at a rate affordable to moderate-income households earning no more than 100% of Area Median Income. ADU/JADUs cannot be sold separately pursuant to California Government Code Section 66314. The provision of the BMR parcel both complies with the City’s inclusionary housing ordinance and allows the applicant to access the benefits of State Density Bonus law. The application accordingly proposes to utilize waivers and concessions in accordance with State Density Bonus regulations. The proposed lot sizes and unit square footages are calculated on Sheets A7.1 through A7.7 in the project plans; the table provided on page 3 of the applicant’s project description in Attachment D is inaccurate.

Requested Entitlements, Findings, and Purview:

The following discretionary applications are being requested:

- *Streamlined Housing Development Review:* The process for evaluating this type of application is set forth in PAMC Section 18.77.073. Streamlined Housing Development Review applications require a study session with the ARB and recommendations are forwarded to the Planning & Development Services Director for action following the review. Action by the Director is appealable to the City Council if filed within 14 days of the decision. Streamlined Housing Development projects are evaluated against specific findings. Both of the findings must be made in the affirmative to approve the project. Failure to make any one finding requires project re-design or denial. The required findings that would need to be made for this type of application are included in Attachment B.

The following discretionary application is being requested and is not subject to the ARB’s purview:

- *Vesting Tentative Map and Final Map* for lot subdivision purposes: The process for evaluating this type of application is set forth in Title 21 of the PAMC and California Government Code 66474. The process for approval of a Vesting Tentative Map for a lot subdivision is outlined in PAMC Section 21.13.020. Tentative maps require Planning and Transportation Commission (PTC) review. The PTC reviews whether the proposed subdivision is consistent with the Subdivision Map Act (Government Code 66474), Title 21 of the PAMC, the Palo Alto Comprehensive Plan, and other applicable provisions of the PAMC and State law. The PTC’s recommendation is forwarded to the City Council for final approval.

The ARB’s purview of the formal application is limited by the following State laws:

- *Housing Accountability Act* (Government Code 65589.5): The project constitutes a “housing development project” under the Housing Accountability Act. The Housing Accountability Act Section 65589.5(j) requires that when a proposed housing development project complies with applicable, objective general plan and zoning standards, a local agency may only deny or reduce the density the project or reduce its density if the agency first finds that, (1) the development would have a specific adverse impact on public health or safety unless disapproved, or approved at a lower density; and (2) there is no feasible method to satisfactorily mitigate or avoid the specific adverse impact, other than the disapproval, or approval at a lower density. For purposes of the Housing Accountability Act, the receipt of a density bonus, incentive, concession, waiver, or reduction of development standards shall not constitute a valid basis on which to find a proposed housing development project is inconsistent with objective standards.
- *Senate Bill (SB) 330 (Government Code Section 65943)*: California SB 330 (Housing Crisis Act of 2019) allows applicants to freeze local standards at the time a compliant pre-application is submitted and limits the number of public hearings of housing projects to five hearings. SB 330 requires a formal submittal to be provided within 180 days of filing the pre-application.
- *State ADU Law (California Government Code Sections 66314-66331)*: This State code establishes a statewide baseline for how cities and counties in California may regulate ADUs by local ordinance and what ADUs/JADUs must be approved regardless of conflicting local regulations. It authorizes ADUs on lots zoned for single-family or multi-family residential use with an existing or proposed dwelling; permits separate rental while generally prohibiting separate sales of ADUs/JADUs except where ADU sales provisions apply; and sets size limits for detached and attached ADUs and JADUs. It also restricts conditioning approval on correction unrelated nonconformities, limits sprinkler triggers and requires rentals for a period greater than 30 days (i.e., restricts short-term rentals). State law requires that proposals to construct ADUs/JADUs be considered ministerially; even when an ADU/JADU is proposed as part of a larger project subject to discretionary review, the ADU/JADU must be considered separately and ministerially after the discretionary review is complete.

**ANALYSIS**

The project is still being reviewed by all City departments for consistency with applicable plans, the Municipal Code, State law, findings for approval and in accordance with CEQA. Therefore, revisions are anticipated prior to issuing a decision on the project. However, the purpose of this study session is to obtain feedback from the ARB and the public in order to allow time for the applicant to consider modifications to the design based on the ARB’s feedback.

Neighborhood Setting and Character

The project is located on Old Trace Road in the Esther Clark Park neighborhood and is surrounded on the east, west, and south by single-family residences within the RE zone district. To the north of the property is a research facility and office within the Research Park zone

district. Surrounding development is primarily two-story. The site is located near research facilities to the west and two public schools to the east.

Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan, Area Plans, and Guidelines

The Comprehensive Plan land use designation for the project site is Single Family Residential. The land use element describes this designation as primarily having detached single-family residential neighborhoods with net densities ranging from 1-7 units per acre and can increase up to 14 units per acre on parcels that include a second unit or a duplex. ADUs and JADUs are permitted but must meet size limits and other development standards.

At 1.02 gross acres, the maximum number of primary dwelling units (excluding ADU and JADUs) allowed on this site under the Comprehensive Plan land use designation is eight units.<sup>1</sup> ADUs and JADUs must also be allowed pursuant to State ADU law without regard to maximum density. Therefore, the project complies with the maximum/base density allowed for primary units under the comprehensive plan designation and the proposed JADUs are permitted in accordance with State law. Although the applicant proposes the project utilizing rights and benefits afforded by State Density Bonus law, no additional density is being requested.

Zoning Code Consistency

A table summarizing the proposed project’s consistency with applicable RE zoning standards is included in Attachment C. The proposed project complies with all applicable codes or is seeking, through the State Density Bonus provisions, permission to deviate from certain code standards in a manner that is consistent with the Zoning Ordinance and State Density Bonus law. The project includes single-family use of each resulting lot, which is a permitted allowed use within the RE zone district. As allowed pursuant to ADU law, a JADU is provided on each resulting lot as an accessory use to the main dwelling units. These units do not count toward maximum density and may be constructed in accordance with the provision allowed pursuant to Accessory Dwelling Unit law under California Government Code Sections 66314 through 66331.

*State Density Bonus Law*

The City must grant any number of development waivers needed to avoid standards that would physically preclude the project at the allowed density. Under State Density Bonus Law, the City may request reasonable documentation to confirm eligibility but may not require a new study or report. The City bears the burden of identifying a valid basis to deny a concession or waiver. For concessions, the City may request documentation showing that the requested concession results in a cost reduction. For waivers, the City may request documentation explaining how the standard would otherwise physically prevent construction at the proposed density. The project includes the following waiver requests:

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<sup>1</sup> The “base density” under state density bonus law is the greatest density stated in either the Comprehensive Plan or the zoning code; where a range of densities is provided, the highest figure is used. In this case, the Comprehensive Plan offers the highest density by stating a range of up to seven dwelling units per acre. 1.02 acres x 7 dwelling units per acre equals 7.16 units. In accordance with 18.15.030(e) and state density bonus law, the City must round up and allow up to 8 units in total (before accounting for ADUs and JADUs).

1. Reduce minimum lot size in RE zone as provided in PAMC Section 18.10.040(a) at Table 2 from one1 acre to allow for proposed lot sizes (with a minimum of 1,594 square feet).
2. Increase maximum allowable lot coverage as provided in PAMC Section 18.10.040(a) at Table 2 from 25% to allow for proposed lot coverage ratios (with a maximum of 68%).
3. Increase maximum floor area ratio from 45% of the first 5,000 square feet of lot area plus 30% of any portion of lot area in excess of 5,000 square feet as provided in PAMC section 18.10.040(a) at Table 2 to allow for the proposed gross floor area.
4. Decrease front setback from 30 feet provided in PAMC Section 18.10.040(a) at Table 2 to a minimum of 9 feet, 5 inches.
5. Allow front steps and uncovered porches to encroach into the front setback by an additional foot over the six-foot maximum allowed at PAMC Section 18.10.070(d).
6. Decrease interior side setbacks as provided in PAMC Section 18.10.040(a) at Table 2 from 15 feet to 5 feet.
7. Decrease street side setbacks as provided in PAMC Section 18.10.040(a) at Table 2 from 24 feet to 9 feet, 5 inches.
8. Reduce the requirement that no parking space shall be located in the first 10 feet adjoining the property line of a required street side yard per PAMC Section 18.12.060(c)(2) to match the required street side yard with the requested waivers herein.
9. Decrease rear setbacks as provided in PAMC Section 18.10.040(a) at Table 2 from 30 feet to 10 feet.
10. Eliminate the daylight plane requirements (front, rear, and side) required by PAMC Section 18.10.040(a) at Table 2.
11. Reduce the special setback on Arastradero on Lots 6 and Lot 7 from 53 feet to 19.5 feet and for Lot 5 from 53 feet to 8 feet.
12. Reduce the minimum width of the private street from 32 feet as required by PAMC Section 21.20.240(b)(4) to 20 feet.
13. Reduce minimum 20 feet distance between curb cuts on Lots 2 and 3 for the driveway.
14. Provide relief from the PAMC Section 18.10.130(e)(1) to allow utilities to be placed in required landscaped areas as needed.
15. Provide relief from any requirement that stormwater facilities cannot encroach into any easements for conduits as may be requested.
16. Reduce the requirement that no parking spaces are to be located in a required front yard per PAMC Section 18.12.060(c)(1) to match the required front yards with the requested waivers herein.
17. Relief from the requirement that garages cannot be located underground in single-family districts as set forth in PAMC Section 18.42.040 (Table 1).
18. Reduce minimum lot sizes and areas, depths, and frontages as required in PAMC Section 21.20.100 to match the proposed size, shape, and frontage of the residential lots.

Under State Density Bonus Law, the applicant may request any number of waivers and reductions needed to meet the project goals. The waivers identified above were requested in the applicant's project description letter. Staff is continuing to evaluate whether the requested

waivers are applicable and supported by the required density bonus requirements. Revisions to the waiver request may be warranted prior to a decision on the project.

The following concession is also requested:

1. Deviate from the requirement that the size of the affordable below-market rates is equivalent to the average size of the market rate unit in PAMC Section 16.65.075(a)(2); the size (including but not limited to bedroom count) of the proposed affordable unit on Lot 5b would be roughly equivalent to the base market rate model on Lot 5a.

This requested concession is discussed further below.

Citywide Affordable Housing Requirements Consistency

The project complies with the Citywide affordable housing requirement by providing 12.5% or one lot of the eight lots as below market rate and providing housing in-lieu fees for the remainder. Per the City’s standard conditions, a regulatory agreement must be recorded for the below market rate units to ensure compliance with the City’s citywide affordable housing requirements (PAMC Chapter 16.65) and the project description. This agreement must be executed and recorded prior to final map approval or building permit issuance, whichever occurs first.

The applicant is proposing to deed-restrict two of the units, a single-family and JADU located on Lot 5b, as affordable to moderate-income households earning no more than 100% of Area Median Income. The applicant will enter into the appropriate regulatory agreements with the City to enforce the requirements of Government Code Section 69515(c)(2) and to comply with the City’s Below Market Rate Housing Program for the length of time required by the program. The applicant will pay in-lieu fees for the remaining portion due under PAMC Section 16.65.030(c) to reach the equivalent of 15% of the units at BMR rates.

PAMC Section 16.65.065 requires that the size of affordable units “be comparable to the average number of bedrooms in the market-rate units” and that they be “reasonably dispersed within the residential project”. These standards are intended to ensure that required affordable units are integrated into the overall project and are not different in a manner that diminishes quality or livability.

The applicant is requesting a concession to deviate from the requirement that the size of the affordable below-market units be equivalent to the average size of the market rate units. The size, including but not limited to bedroom count, of the proposed affordable unit on Lot 5b is roughly equivalent to the base market rate model on Lot 5a, but smaller than the units on other lots. Additionally, under State Density Bonus Law, concessions can allow deviations from development standards when such standards would make development financially infeasible and justified through financial documentation, as noted in the applicant’s project description letter in Attachment D. The applicant cites that the size of the below market rate units as proposed would provide cost savings of approximately \$500 to \$550 per square-foot in construction and additional benefits in not having to reduce the size of other market rate units to create eight equally sized primary units, which would impact the ability of this project to meet the pro forma requirements needed to move this project forward.

Multi-Modal Access

The existing vacant parcel currently has no curb cuts. The project proposes a 20-foot-wide private street that connects between Old Trace Road and Arastradero Road for ingress to the parcels from either street. Staff is working with the Office of Transportation to confirm that the proposed width is sufficient for safety. While a single driveway connection from Old Trace Road would be preferable from a pedestrian and bicyclist’s perspective (i.e. eliminating the curb cut on Arastradero Road), the proposed configuration is intended to improve on-site circulation for emergency vehicles and trash service. Without the through-access, trash service would need to be staged along the Old Trace Road frontage rather than serviced in front of individual homes. The curb along the private access drive will be painted red to designate the fire lane and support fire apparatus access and staging.

In mid-December 2025, a resident of the Esther Clark Park neighborhood contacted City staff to raise concerns about pedestrian safety along Arastradero Road, noting an increasing number of school-aged children and older adults using the bicycle/pedestrian pathway on the north side of Arastradero Road. In response, the Transportation Department evaluated conditions at the Arastradero Road/Old Trace Road intersection and identified it as a high-volume location with growing traffic activity. To improve safety and connectivity, a new marked pedestrian crosswalk is proposed at the Arastradero Road/Old Trace Road intersection, crossing Arastradero Road to connect the existing bicycle/pedestrian pathway on the north side of Arastradero Road. The crossing would include a Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB) that can be activated by pedestrians and bicyclists. The Transportation Department considers this a highly desirable location and a much-needed safety enhancement along Arastradero Road.

The project also proposes new bicycle lane markings along the existing bikeway on Arastradero Road, including green pavement markings at the Arastradero Road driveway connection previously identified as a bicycle conflict zone by the Transportation Department. New four-foot sidewalks are proposed along the property edges and on the north side of the private road to improve pedestrian connectivity, accessibility, and safety. The Transportation Department is working with the applicant to incorporate sidewalks along Old Trace Road and the southern edge of the private road.

Landscaped medians of approximately nine feet, and five feet are proposed along Arastradero Road and Old Trace Road respectively. The applicant is continuing to refine the project’s landscape design to address stormwater requirements, consistent with staff comments.

Vehicular Parking

The Municipal Code requires two parking spaces per single-family unit, including at least one covered space and one uncovered space. The applicant proposes two covered parking spaces (garage spaces) for all lots, except Lots 5a and 5b, which are proposed with one-car garages; one uncovered parking space is proposed in tandem for both lots. Lots 1, 2, and 3 include below-grade two-car garages, which is inconsistent with PAMC Section 18.52.040 (Table 1), and the applicant therefore requests a waiver of this code regulation. Lots 4, 6, and 7 include at-

grade two-car garages with reduced front setbacks of approximately 10 to 15 feet, consistent with the project’s other requested waivers.

**FISCAL/RESOURCE IMPACT**

Processing of this application has no fiscal impact as applicants are responsible for staff and consultant costs through applicable fees as stated under the 2026 Municipal Fee Schedule<sup>3</sup>. The project would be required to pay Development Impact Fees which are currently estimated at \$836,936.18 plus the applicable public art fee. Additionally, a housing in-lieu fee currently estimated at \$588,316.67 will be required for the fractional affordable housing unit per PAMC Section 16.65.030(c).

**STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**

The Palo Alto Municipal Code requires notice of this public hearing be published in a local paper and mailed to owners and occupants of property within 600 feet of this subject property at least ten (10) days in advance. Notice of public hearing for this project was published in the Daily Post on February 20, 2026, which is 13 days in advance of the meeting. Postcard mailing occurred on February 19, 2026, which is 12 in advance of the meeting.

Public Comments

Prior to formal application submittal, the applicant conducted informal outreach in the Esther Clark Park neighborhood to obtain feedback on the proposed project. Neighbors expressed concerns about the scale of development and indicated they did not support a large-scale multifamily project or a higher percentage of on-site affordable units, citing potential impacts to property values. The applicant subsequently participated in a neighborhood meeting with approximately 50 to 75 attendees, during which the applicant discussed alternative concepts, including a smaller-scale approach with single-family residential lots rather than multi-family development. Ahead of a second meeting, the applicant also shared conceptual plans with the neighborhood attendees.

A second neighborhood meeting with approximately 30 attendees raised additional concerns, including traffic, privacy impacts from second-floor windows, and construction-related issues (i.e., whether workers will respect the neighborhood and comply with designated construction hours). Neighbors also referenced concerns from other nearby renovation projects, including reports of littering and haphazard parking by construction workers. The applicant has offered to hold a third community meeting to continue discussions; however, to date, the applicant has not been contacted by the neighborhood representatives who had been spearheading outreach.

Following the formal submittal in December 2025, staff emailed interested parties; no project-related comments were received as of the writing of this report.

**ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

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<sup>3</sup> Link to 2026 Municipal Fee Schedule: [Adopted Municipal Fee Schedule.book](#)

The subject project has been assessed in accordance with the authority and criteria contained in CEQA, the State CEQA Guidelines, and the environmental regulations of the City. On January 25, 2026, the applicant requested that the project be considered exempt under AB 130 (Public Resources Code section 21080.66). AB 130 exempts many infill housing projects from CEQA and additionally sets strict timelines for City review and decision. The City determined that the project is exempt under AB 130. Nevertheless, the City sent letters in accordance with AB 130 inviting tribes to participate in consultation on the project in accordance with state laws.

The City received one request for consultation and is in the process of consulting with Tamien Nation in accordance with tribal consultation periods provided under AB 130 Tribal consultation is expected to be completed by April 2026.

**ATTACHMENTS**

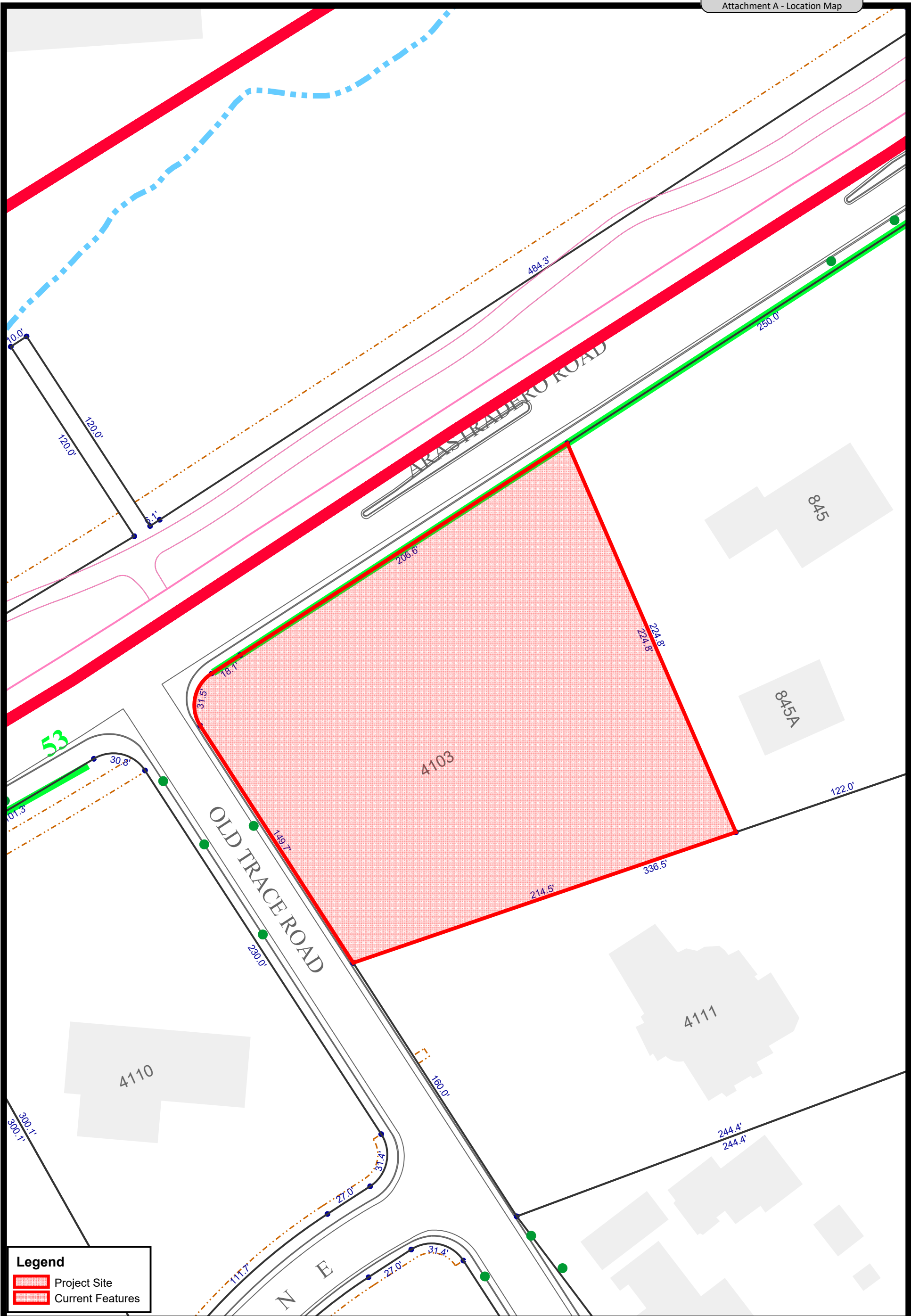
- Attachment A: Location Map
- Attachment B: Streamlined Housing Development Review Findings
- Attachment C: Zoning Consistency Analysis
- Attachment D: Applicant’s Project Description and Requested Waivers and Concessions
- Attachment E: Project Plans

**Report Author & Contact Information**  
Nishita Kandikuppa, Associate Planner  
(650) 838-2806  
[nishita.kandikuppa@paloalto.gov](mailto:nishita.kandikuppa@paloalto.gov)


**ARB<sup>5</sup> Liaison & Contact Information**  
Steven Switzer, Senior Historic Planner  
(650) 329-2321  
[steven.switzer@paloalto.gov](mailto:steven.switzer@paloalto.gov)

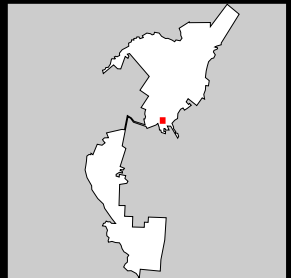
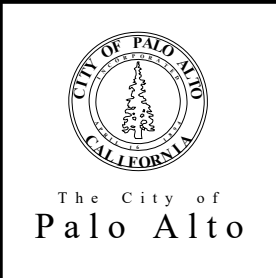
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<sup>5</sup> Emails may be sent directly to the ARB using the following address: [arb@paloalto.gov](mailto:arb@paloalto.gov)





**Legend**

-  Project Site
-  Current Features



Project Location Map:  
4103 Old Trace Road

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



48'

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**ATTACHMENT B**  
**ARB FINDINGS FOR APPROVAL**

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In order for the ARB to make a future recommendation of approval, the project must comply with the following Findings for Architectural Review as required in Chapter 18.76.020 of the PAMC.

**Finding #1:** *The application complies with all applicable and objective standards in the Comprehensive Plan, the Palo Alto Municipal Code, and other City plans or policies.*

**Finding #2:** *Approving the application will not result in a specific, adverse, impact upon the public health or safety, which cannot feasibly be mitigated or avoided in a satisfactory manner. As used in this Section, a "specific, adverse impact" means a significant, quantifiable, direct, and unavoidable impact, based on objective, identified written public health or safety standards, policies, or conditions as they existed on the date the application was deemed complete.*

**ATTACHMENT C**  
**ZONING CONSISTENCY ANALYSIS**  
4103 Old Trace Road, 25PLN-00296

**Table 1: COMPARISON WITH CHAPTER 18.10 (RE ZONE DISTRICT)<sup>1</sup>**

Regulation	Required	Proposed
Minimum Site Area, Width and Depth	1 acre, 100-foot width, 100-foot depth	<b>Multiple irregular shaped lots with a minimum site area of 1,594 square feet (Waiver Requested)</b>
Minimum Front Yard	30 feet	<b>Varies (minimum 9 feet 5 inches) (Waiver Requested)</b>
Rear Yard	30 feet	<b>10 feet (Waiver Requested)</b>
Street Side Yard	24 feet	<b>9 feet 5 inches (Waiver Requested)</b>
Interior Side Yard (for lots greater than 70 feet in width)	15 feet	<b>5 feet (Waiver Requested)</b>
Max. Building Height	30 feet	<b>38 feet (Waiver Requested)</b>
Side Yard Daylight Plane	10 feet at interior side lot line then 45-degree angle	<b>None (Waiver Requested)</b>
Front Daylight Plane	16 feet at the front setback line then 60-degree angle	<b>None (Waiver Requested)</b>
Rear Yard Daylight Plane	16 feet at rear setback line then 60-degree angle	<b>None (Waiver Requested)</b>
Max. Site Coverage	25% (11,112.25 square feet)	<b>Lot Coverage for each proposed lot exceeds requirements, up to a maximum of 68% (Waiver Requested)</b>
Max. Total Floor Area Ratio <sup>2</sup>	45% of the first 5,000 square feet, 30% of the square footage in excess of 5,000 square feet	<b>Allowable FAR on Lot 5a with smallest residence = 717.3 square feet (45%) Proposed FAR on Lot 5a = 1,308 square feet (82%) Allowable FAR on Lot 2 with largest residence = 2,417.4 square feet (43%) Proposed FAR on Lot 2 = 6,964 square feet (125%) (Waiver Requested)</b>

<sup>1</sup> Bold indicates an inconsistency with the requirement; however, where noted in the table the applicant is requesting a waiver to the development standards in accordance with allowances set forth under State Density Bonus Law.

<sup>2</sup> Proposed maximum floor area excludes Junior Accessory Dwelling Unit (JADU) square footage

Residential Density	1-2 units per acre per zoning. However, the Single-Family (SF) Residential Comprehensive Plan designation allows 1-7 dwelling units per acre	8 units (1.02 acres x 7 DU/acre = 7.16, rounded up to 8 units)
Maximum House Size	6,000 square feet	Varies (maximum 4,069 square feet)
Minimum Usable Open Space	Not applicable	None

**Table 2: CONFORMANCE WITH CHAPTER 18.52 (Off-Street Parking) for Single-Family Residential<sup>5</sup>**

Type	Required	Proposed
Vehicle Parking	2 spaces, of which at least one space must be covered. No parking is required for ADU/JADUs  2 per single-family home = 8 covered spaces + 8 uncovered spaces = 16 parking spaces	Lots 1,2, 3, 4, 6 and 7 = 2 covered spaces each = 12 covered parking spaces  Lots 5a and 5b = 1 covered, 1 uncovered parking space each = 4 parking spaces  Total parking = 16 parking spaces (complies)
Loading Spaces	None	None Proposed
Bicycle Parking	None	None Proposed

<sup>5</sup> The applicant requests the following waivers for vehicular parking design and layout:

- reduce the requirement that no parking space shall be located in the first 10 feet adjoining the property line of a required street side yard per PAMC Section 18.12.060(c)(2) to match the required street side yard setback reduction requested.
- Reduce the requirement that no parking spaces are to be located in a required front yard per PAMC Section 18.12.060(c)(1) to match the required front yard with the requested waivers.
- Relief from the requirement that garages cannot be located underground in single-family districts as set forth in PAMC Section 18.52.040 (Table 1).



**SUBMITTED VIA ONLINE PORTAL**

January 16, 2025

Claire Raybould, Acting Planning Manager  
City of Palo Alto Planning & Development  
Department Development Center  
285 Hamilton Avenue, Suite  
100 Palo Alto, CA 94301

**Re: Updated Project Letter for Formal Application a Proposed Residential Subdivision & Streamlined Housing “The Oaks” at 4103 Old Trace Road, Palo Alto, CA 94306 (APN 175-20-078)**

Dear Ms. Raybould and Planning Staff,

Enclosed you will find the resubmittal of a formal application for a “housing development project,” as defined in the Housing Accountability Act (“HAA”) (Gov. Code § 65589.5) on behalf of Steel Bridge Homes Palo Alto, LP (“Applicant”) for a proposed residential subdivision project known as “The Oaks” located at 4103 Old Trace Road, within the City of Palo Alto, County of Santa Clara. This application follows within 180 days of a SB 330 preliminary application that was filed pursuant to Government Code 65941.1(a) in September of 2025 and vested the development standards as they existed at that time. The specifics of the project, including the affordability levels and density bonus requests, are described in more detail in the Project Description found at **Section I** below.<sup>1</sup> The required statement of Design Conformance for a Major Subdivision is attached as **Exhibit A** to this letter.

As mentioned in our prior discussions with the City, this Project will utilize State Density Bonus Law and the Housing Accountability Act (“HAA”) to ensure that the Project is consistent with all applicable objective general plan and zoning standards once the benefits of

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<sup>1</sup> A housing development project “shall be deemed consistent, compliant, and in conformity with an applicable plan, program, policy, ordinance, standard, requirement, or other similar provision if there is substantial evidence that would allow a reasonable person to conclude that the housing development project is consistent, compliant, or in conformity.” (Gov. Code §§ 65589.5, subd. (f)(4); 65905.5 subd. (c)(1); see also *California Renters Legal Advocacy & Education Fund v. City of San Mateo*, 68 Cal.App.5th 820 (2021)). Receipt of a density bonus is disregarded when determining consistency. (Gov. Code §§ 65589.5, subd. (f)(1) and (j)(3); 65905.5, subd. (c)(1).)

SDBL (*i.e.*, density bonuses, waivers, reductions in development standards, incentives and concessions) are applied. This Project also intends to utilize AB 130's exemption from CEQA for qualifying in-fill projects as set forth in Public Resource Code Section 21080.66. Further details are provided in **Section II and Exhibit B**.

## **I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

### **A. Project Description**

The proposed project ("Project") is "mixed-income", all residential "housing development project" within the meaning of the HAA and SDBL consisting of an application for a vesting tentative map to subdivide one (1) vacant 1.02 acre lot located at 4103 Old Trace Road into seven (8) residential lots and one (1) common area lot a private road, access and utility easements, and associated landscape and other improvements and for a streamlined housing development project review for planning approval to construct six (6) standalone detached single-family homes with attached junior ADUs and two (2) attached single-family with attached junior ADUs for a total of sixteen (16) units. One of the attached single-family with junior ADU will be deed-restricted as affordable to moderate income households earning no more than 100% of AMI. The Project seeks density bonus benefits in the form of waivers, reductions in development standards, incentives, and concessions as set forth in more detail below.

### **B. Base Density & Density Bonus Request**

As set forth in previous correspondence with the City, the City's General Plan land use designation for 4103 Old Trace Road of "Single Family Residential, provides for a range of net density in single family areas "from 1 to 7 units per acre" (Chapter 2 – Land Use and Community Design of the General Plan at p. 36 [emphasis added].) At 1.02 gross acres, this yields a minimum base density for the Project of 8 single-family units (1.02 acres x 7 DUs/AC = 7.16 rounded up to 8 plus 8 ADUs for a total of 16 permissible "total units".<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> "For the purposes of the SDBL, the applicable base density for a project depends on the available density standards in the applicable zoning ordinance, specific plan, and general plan land use element and the corresponding zones in the General Plan land use designation." (See <https://www.hcd.ca.gov/sites/default/files/docs/planning-and-community/HAU/los-angeles-hau-1554-ta-072425.pdf>.) This allowable base density is known as the "Maximum Allowable Residential Density". (Gov. Code § 65915, subd. (o)(6).) ADUs are NOT factored into the initial calculation of the Maximum Allowable Residential Density. (See <https://www.hcd.ca.gov/sites/default/files/docs/planning-and-community/HAU/carlsbad-hau565-ta-02162024.pdf> at p.1 ["The calculation of a density bonus is based solely on a site's maximum allowable residential density which does not include ADUs."].) ADUs may, however, be counted towards the Total Unit count at the election of the developer. (See Antioch TA discussing the options and effect on density bonus if ADUs are included or not). If ADUs are deed-restricted to obtain a density bonus, the Antioch TA advises us that the ADUs MUST also be counted towards the Total Units.



1. Reduce minimum lot size in RE-1 zone as provided in PAMC section 18.10.040(a) at Table 2 from 1 acre to allow for proposed lot sizes (with a minimum of 1,594 SF).
2. Increase maximum allowable lot coverage as provided in PAMC section 18.10.040(a) at Table 2 from 25% to allow for proposed lot coverage ratios (with a maximum of 68%).
3. Increase maximum gross floor area from a maximum of 45% of the first 5,000 SF of lot area plus 30% of any portion of lot area in excess of 5,000 SF as provided in PAMC section 18.10.040(a) at Table 2 to allow for proposed gross floor area.
4. Decrease front setback from 30' provided in PAMC section 18.10.040(a) at Table 2 to a minimum of 9'5".
5. Allow front steps and uncovered porches to encroach into the front setback by an additional 1' over the 6' maximum provided at PAMC section 18.10.070(d).
6. Decrease interior side setbacks as provided in PAMC section 18.10.040(a) at Table 2 from 15' to 5'.
7. Decrease street side setbacks as provided in PAMC section 18.10.040(a) at Table 2 from 24' to 9'5".
8. Reduce the requirement that no parking space shall be located in the first 10' adjoining the property line of a required street side yard per PAMC section 18.12.060(c)(2) to match the required street side yard with the requested waivers herein.
9. Decrease rear setbacks as provided in PAMC section 18.10.040(a) at Table 2 from 30' to 10'.
10. Eliminate the daylight plane requirements (front, rear and side) required by PAMC section 18.10.040(a) at Table 2.
11. Reduce the special setback on Arastradero on Lots 6 and Lot 7 from 30' to 19.5' and for Lot 5 from 30' to 8'.
12. Reduce the minimum width of the private street from 32' as required by PAMC section 21.20.240(b)(4) to 20'.
13. Reduce minimum 20' distance between curb cuts on Lots 4 and 5 for the driveway.
14. Provide relief from the PAMC section 18.10.130(e)(1) to allow utilities to be placed in required landscaped areas as needed.
15. Provide relief from any requirement that stormwater facilities cannot encroach into any easements for conduits as may be requested.

16. Reduce the requirement that no parking spaces are to be located in a required front yard per PAMC section 18.12.060(c)(1) to match the required front yards with the requested waivers herein.
17. Relief from the requirement that garages cannot be located underground in single-family districts as set forth in Table 1 of Section 18.42.040 of the PAMC.
18. Reduce minimum lot sizes and areas, depths, and frontages as required in PAM section 21.20.100 to match the proposed size, shape and frontage of the residential lots.

Each of these reductions in development standards and waivers is required to provide the residential square footage and amenities of this project as designed. Further waivers are reserved pending comments and feedback on the proposed Project.

### **G. Incentives and Concessions**

Under Government Code section 69515(d)(2)(C), the Applicant is entitled to one (1) incentive by virtue of providing 12.5% of the units of the base units as affordable to moderate-income households. At this time, the Applicant requests an incentive to deviate from the requirement that the size of the affordable below-market rates is equivalent to the average size of the market rate units in PAMC Section 16.65.075(a)(2) so that the size (including but not limited to bedroom count) of the proposed affordable unit on Lot 5b is roughly equivalent to the base market rate model on Lot 5a. The exterior and interior finishes for the affordable and market rate base model on Lot 5a will be equivalent. This incentive will provide cost savings of approximately \$500-\$550 per square foot in construction and additional benefits in not having to reduce the size of other market rate units, which will impact the ability of this Project to meet the pro forma requirements need to move forward with the Project as a whole.

### **II. Eligibility for CEQA Exemption**

The Project has been designed to be exempt from CEQA review under Assembly Bill 130 (AB 130), which was recently enacted to address the cost and time delays to housing production from excessive and unnecessary review under California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). This statutory exemption, which is codified at Public Resources Code Section 21080.66, applies to qualifying urban infill housing projects that meet specific criteria, including location on previously developed sites, consistency with applicable general plan and zoning designations, and satisfaction of specified environmental and project design standards.

The rationale underlying this exemption recognizes that infill development on previously disturbed sites within existing urbanized areas promotes smart growth principles, reduces urban sprawl, minimizes impacts on undeveloped land and natural resources, and takes advantage of existing infrastructure and public services. By streamlining the environmental review process for projects that meet rigorous environmental and design standards, AB 130 encourages the construction of housing in locations that reduce vehicle miles traveled and advance the State's

climate goals while maintaining appropriate environmental protections through objective performance standards.

A checklist has been provided at **Exhibit B** to this letter in support of the Project's eligibility for an exemption under Public Resource Code section 21080.66. The Applicant requests that the City begin tribal notification at the earliest opportunity.

\*\*\*\*\*

We appreciate your guidance thus far and look forward to your guidance and input on this Project. If you have any further questions or need any additional information, I can be reached at 415-265-1086 or at [mg@hsw-legal.com](mailto:mg@hsw-legal.com).

Kind regards,



**MELANIE GRISWOLD, Partner**  
HSW, LLP

## Attachment E

### **Project Plans**

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

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

1. Go to: [bit.ly/PAwaitingprojects](http://bit.ly/PAwaitingprojects)
2. Scroll down to find "4103 Old Trace Road" 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**

[4103 Old Trace Road – City of Palo Alto, CA](#)



CITY OF  
**PALO  
ALTO**

## Architectural Review Board Staff Report

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

**Meeting Date: March 5, 2026**  
**Report #: 2602-5915**

### **TITLE**

Draft Architectural Review Board Meeting Minutes for December 4, 2025

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff Recommends the Architectural Review Board (ARB) adopt the meeting minutes.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A: Minutes of December 4, 2025

### **AUTHOR/TITLE:**

ARB Liaison<sup>1</sup> & Contact Information  
Steven Switzer, Senior Historic Planner  
(650) 329-2321  
[Steven.Switzer@PaloAlto.gov](mailto:Steven.Switzer@PaloAlto.gov)

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<sup>1</sup> Emails can be sent directly to the ARB at the following email: [ARB@PaloAlto.gov](mailto:ARB@PaloAlto.gov)



**ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD MEETING**  
**DRAFT MINUTES: December 4, 2025**  
Council Chamber & Zoom  
8:30 a.m.

**Call to Order / Roll Call**

Present: Chair Yingxi Chen, Vice Chair Mousam Adcock, Board Member David Hirsch, Board Member Kendra Rosenberg, Board Member Marton Jojarth

Absent: None.

Chair Chen called the meeting to order.

The clerk called roll and declared 5 were present.

**Agenda Changes, Additions and Deletions**

No changes were planned.

**Public Comment**

There were no public comments.

**City Official Reports**

1. Staff: Steven Switzer, Historic Preservation Planner

Historic Preservation Planner Steven Switzer anticipated not having a project ready for the December 18, 2025, meeting, so the meeting could be cancelled and a special meeting held in January 2026 instead. Since the last meeting, the 788 San Antonio project had been submitted. Attachment B to the Staff Report outlined the tentative 2026 meeting schedule. There would be no meeting on January 1 and there were 3 Thursdays in January in which that meeting could potentially be held. There could be a discussion at the January 15 meeting regarding scheduling a special meeting. The Chair would present the Work Plan to City Council on February 2.

Board Member Rosenberg asked what the special meeting would address.

Mr. Switzer answered that the special meeting would be to potentially make up for some projects. The project tentatively scheduled for December 18 could be heard at the special meeting.

Vice Chair Adcock inquired if consideration could be given to holding a meeting the Thursday before or after December 15.

Mr. Switzer would need to coordinate with the clerk on chamber availability in regard to holding a meeting the Thursday before or after December 15..

**Study Session**

2. Study Session Item #2: 375 Hamilton Avenue [25PLN-00277]: Request for Preliminary Architectural Review for the Construction of a New Six-Story Parking Garage with a Total of 266 Parking Spaces on the Existing Surface-Level Parking Lot D. Zoning District: Public Facilities (PF). CEQA Status: Not a Project. Zoning District: PF (Public Facilities).

Chair Chen announced that staff had requested that the ARB review and provide informal comments. No formal action was requested.

Associate Planner Kristina Dobkevicius noted that the project was for a parking garage. The site was zoned as a public facility and the parking garage and future affordable housing were permitted uses. The application was a request for a preliminary architectural review for a parking garage. Ms. Dobkevicius provided a history of the project. The project exceeded allowable height, floor area and setbacks but Council could modify the development standards and setbacks to achieve community goals. On April 14, Council chose Option 1a. Changes staff made to Option 1a were outlined. A materials board was provided to the Board. There was an intent to add permanent public art along the Hamilton Avenue façade frontage and temporary public art along the Waverley Street frontage. The artist was reapproved by the Public Art Commission to engage in a new design process and preliminary ideas were anticipated for early 2026. Until the development of future housing, the inclusion of a temporary public plaza east of the garage was proposed. Staff requested that the ARB provide objective and site-specific comments on the preliminary design to include massing scale, site planning, pedestrian orientation and material selection. The project had been reviewed only for general compliance with zoning regulations. A more comprehensive analysis would be done at the formal submittal.

Assistant Director of Public Works Holly Boyd represented the owner for the project.

Vice Chair Adcock asked if the proposal was for Option 1a but with the Option C elevation.

Ms. Dobkevicius replied that the proposal was not for Option 1a with the Option C elevation but the Board could comment on all 3 options.

Board Member Rosenberg clarified that Option 1a was the floor plan and layout of the parking structure and the ARB was considering options A, B and C.

Ms. Dobkevicius added that Option 1a was one of 3 options presented to Council. Option 1a had a 6-story garage with an affordable housing site. The intent was to further redevelop it to add an affordable housing element on the right-hand side where the plaza was. The applicant was proposing a preliminary design with 3 possible options for the elevations along Hamilton and Waverley Street.

Board Member Rosenberg inquired if the drawings showed only a placeholder for the affordable housing.

Ms. Dobkevicius confirmed that the drawings showed only a placeholder for the affordable housing.

Board Member Jojarth queried how likely it was and when affordable housing might be constructed.

Ms. Boyd had no information on the affordable housing. In April, Council voted to reserve the space for affordable housing. Ms. Boyd anticipated it would move forward similar to the Lot T Project.

Chief Assistant City Attorney Caio Arellano voiced there were no plans or a time frame for the affordable housing. Council had directed staff to choose a garage option that would allow for it in the future.

Chair Chen questioned if there was a base requirement for the number of parking stalls and units expected.

Ms. Boyd believed the preliminary sketches proposed 15 units and 25 parking spaces.

Board Member Hirsch asked if there had been a study to determine if housing would fit on the site.

Ms. Boyd responded that the plans had been reviewed and were determined to be feasible and were recommended. Watry Design and Hayes Group had put together sketches and reviewed sketches staff had assembled but they had not been studied in depth.

Board Member Hirsch mentioned that the parking garage itself might impact the corner and asked if there was a plan for the shape of the housing building.

Ms. Boyd answered that there was only a preliminary layout for the floor plan, which was assumed to be 6 stories.

Ms. Dobkevicius added that Attachment A of the Staff Report presented to Council in April 14 included the preliminary floor plans for the units.

Hayes Group Architects Ken Hayes provided site information. The proposal included a garage with 6 levels, open space for future low-income housing, bike parking, trash enclosure, future rooftop solar and public art. Mr. Hayes provided details concerning setbacks. Pedestrian zones would include amenities, such as benches, etc. There would be auto access off Hamilton and bike access off Hamilton and the paseo. Pedestrian circulation would be at the east and west ends and off the paseo. Mr. Hayes outlined the materials being considered. The building body had 3 alternatives (Options 1, 2 and 3) and 2 options for the temporary open space.

**Public Comment**

Herb B. noted that the project would provide replacement parking spaces for parking being removed from another location, so for environmental reasons there needed to be an evaluation together as a single project. Herb B. suggested there be public restrooms on the ground level.

Mr. Arellano responded that the City prepared and Council certified an EIR for the original Lot D garage in 2019. Part of the contract for design services with the Watry firm included preparation of an addendum to the EIR, so it was expected that all CEQA requirements would be met.

Board Member Hirsch inquired if this project was connected to the other project the Housing Authority was proposing.

Mr. Arellano replied that from the standpoint of environmental impacts this project was not connected to the other project the Housing Authority was proposing.

Board Member Rosenberg queried, related to the façade on Waverley (Option 3), if the perforation on the rightmost portion would be closed, if the copper perforation at the corner would remain or be adjusted, if the copper portion at the grand stairway would be eliminated and if a bathroom at the ground level had been considered.

Mr. Hayes answered that closing the perforation on Waverley would have to be addressed by the housing designer. The copper perforation at the corner would be eliminated and there would be a solid wall. The copper portion at the grand stairway would be eliminated as it returned. A bathroom at the ground level was not in the scope.

Vice Chair Adcock questioned if future housing would need a zero setback and rated construction along the edge and if the paseo would impact neighboring buildings as it related to fire separation.

Mr. Hayes replied that future housing would need a fire-rated solid wall between the applicant's building and the Waverley property. The paseo would not impact neighboring buildings as it related to fire separation.

Chair Chen asked what the pedestrian passage had access to.

Mr. Hayes explained what the pedestrian passage had access to.

Board Member Hirsch inquired if the Traffic Department had studied the garage entry/egress due to it being a very busy part of the avenue with limited visibility. Waverley would have been a more appropriate entry/egress.

Ms. Boyd responded that OOT had reviewed the garage entry/exit and found it to be appropriate. There were plans to remove the drive-through postal boxes on Hamilton, which would provide for better street function.

Mr. Hayes felt the entrance should be away from Waverley as Waverley could be a more pedestrian-focused street. It could also limit the housing project.

Board Member Hirsch remarked that removing the drive-through postal boxes would help with one direction of traffic movement but coming into town from Hamilton was the problem. That intersection should be studied before proceeding with the project as designed.

Mr. Hayes stated the EIR study addressed the traffic.

Ms. Boyd was sure a traffic study for the increased parking count would be visited as part of the addendum work.

Chair Chen inquired if the garage would be disconnected from the back of the building, if the trash room was for the adjacent property, if the bike room was for long-term storage and if the City required long-term bike storage when building parking garages.

Mr. Hayes explained why the garage would not be connected to the back of the building.

Ms. Boyd anticipated that the existing restaurant would use the trash enclosure and that an agreement would be established. The other 2 properties somewhat adjacent to the paseo stored trash receptacles within their property. Ms. Boyd explained how trash from those 2 properties would be collected.

Principal at Watry Design, Inc., Gordon Knowles responded that bike storage was shown as long-term storage. Bike storage was not required within the garage.

Vice Chair Adcock inquired if there was a possibility for another area to accommodate the trash for the other 2 properties so it would not be an eyesore.

Mr. Hayes answered that handling the trash for the other 2 properties would be a City decision. The trash room was not large enough to accommodate it.

Vice Chair Adcock mentioned that it was not the City's responsibility to accommodate adjacent properties but it might be more of an enforcement issue.

Ms. Boyd noted that Zero Waste would talk to the property owner. Receptacles were available but they were not being used.

Board Member Hirsch queried if the trash receptacles would be screened off.

Mr. Hayes responded that the trash receptacles could be screened off.

Board Member Rosenberg addressed the planter blocking the pathway and questioned why there was not an end-of-the-building ingress/egress.

Mr. Knowles discussed why the planter would block the pathway and why there was no end-of-the-building ingress/egress. Consideration could be given to a pedestrian route at the electrical room accessway.

Vice Chair Adcock asked Mr. Hayes which façade he preferred. Façade 2 appeared to be the most cohesive composition. Vice Chair Adcock inquired if all options included the concrete expressions and if the applicant had used the form liners in the past. Vice Chair Adcock urged testing out the form liners if they should be used.

Mr. Hayes discussed why he preferred Façade 2. All options included the board form, planters and exposed structure. A panel should be selected. More research would be done on form liners if they should be used.

Mr. Knowles responded that the most recent form liner was used for the Cal Ave parking structure. Mr. Knowles was comfortable suggesting some of the form liner approaches if using a good contractor who would focus on the concrete. Cast-in-place form liners would be used.

Chair Chen questioned what the metal vertical fin depth would be and if they would be applied only along Hamilton Avenue and if the other sides would have black louvers.

Mr. Hayes responded that the metal vertical fin depth would be 12 and would be applied only along Hamilton Avenue and the other sides would have black louvers.

Board Member Jojarth liked the 2018 façade design with the vertical columns and the open feel of the garage. The Waverley façade should be aesthetically pleasant because there was no timeline for the housing and the plaza. Board Member Jojarth supported 5 stories instead of 6. The plaza design was not pleasant and felt temporary. Option 2 was fine for Hamilton Avenue but Waverley could be improved. Board Member Jojarth preferred a more open design on Waverley and more trees in the ground, not in planters.

Mr. Knowles explained why the amount of shear wall was limited. Things could possibly be done to provide a little more articulation similar to what Board Member Jojarth voiced.

Board Member Jojarth suggested reducing the 2 walls to 1 and choosing a desired architectural design and then determining how to make it work structurally.

Mr. Knowles responded that the driver was less the structure and more the vehicular circulation with a limited floorplate. The structure could be considered again to see if anything could be addressed.

Board Member Hirsch explained that it would be better to have somewhat of a solid building end so that car traffic would not be seen. Circulation and the traffic study were major issues. With the possibility of something happening at the corner, a shorter building would be better. Board Member Hirsch liked the screen opening at the end, which would limit the housing, so it was hoped there would be no housing. Knowing what the corner would be like with housing was required to make a decision. There were other ways to deal with the wall in the corner and Board Member Hirsch suggested looking at the Mercedes-Benz wall. Board Member Hirsch asked why there would not be below-grade parking.

Ms. Boyd replied there would not be below-grade parking due to expense.

Mr. Knowles thought excavating would be up to 4 times the cost of above-grade stalls. There might also be an issue of needing cutoff walls and treatment of groundwater. The AT&T building foundation was also an issue.

Board Member Hirsch accepted Mr. Knowles' explanation. Board Member Hirsch recommended not using the Hamilton side corner as part of the garage but rather keeping it as open landscape. It was a ridiculous place for a small amount of housing.

Chair Chen asked if the different plaza designs were based on budget.

Mr. Hayes considered a popup design for the plaza, although he understood from the ARB that it might need to be more thoughtfully designed as it could be there for a very long time and that the side of the garage facing the parklet should be considered more in terms of long term versus how the housing would fit on it.

Vice Chair Adcock noted that the Park Option B was not in the packet. It seemed that some options increased the amount of work and cost. Vice Chair Adcock asked if there was a preference to be minimally expensive since it was not known if housing would be built in 3 to 5 years or 5 to 15 years or if it would be built at all.

Ms. Boyd answered that staff was trying to strike a balance because the timeline for the affordable housing project was not known. Staff wanted to provide different options. Staff did not want to install something permanent that would cause folks to be upset when removing it. Staff also wanted to provide flexibility in the use of the area. Cost had not been analyzed.

Vice Chair Adcock added that Option 3 was the most open on the elevations but it would not make sense to remove the expensive metal in 5 years but it would make sense if it was to be there for 15-20 years. It was difficult to comment without knowing that information.

Ms. Boyd voiced that the least amount of day-2 work would be better work-wise and capital cost-wise.

Vice Chair Adcock inquired if the applicant had considered removing more asphalt and having more planting so not as much hardscape would have to be demolished later.

Mr. Hayes responded that plantings could possibly be reused. The applicant was being cost conscious regarding the landscaping and trying to avoid costs that would be thrown away but the time frame was not known. Mr. Hayes was considering popup parks like Hayes Valley in San Francisco.

Board Member Hirsch noted that the popup parks in Hayes Valley were incredibly used. The corner should remain as it was an important part of the project. Board Member Hirsch was concerned with the height and heaviness of the edge of the top part and the sidewalk in the front of the building being minimized. Board Member Hirsch queried if the paseo had to be 10 feet.

Mr. Hayes was trying to maintain a 12-foot sidewalk.

Mr. Knowles answered that a 10-foot paseo was required for an open façade. If less than 10 feet, the façade would not be considered open and the 20-percent openness and the 40-percent perimeter requirements would not be met.

Board Member Hirsch referenced the back of the AT&T building not being on the property line and questioned if there could be more open space there.

Mr. Knowles answered that there needed to be 10 feet from the applicant's property line.

Board Member Rosenberg liked all the options but Option 3 the best, although Option 2 was very close to it. Option 2 was great on the Hamilton side. Option 3 was strongly preferred on the Waverley side. The Waverley side should be a beautiful façade because at least a 5-year timeline was assumed. Board Member Rosenberg liked the openness the corner provided. Board Member Rosenberg encouraged more planting and suggested there be ivy on the 2 solid panels, which would soften the façade and reinforce the landscape in the plaza. The entrance on Hamilton was appropriate because Waverley was too close to the intersection. Board Member Rosenberg's least favorite portion of the project was the landscape plaza and she requested it be flushed out a little more, although she liked the pattern. Wooden benches lasting 5 to 10 years was a concern, so maybe they should be a different material. Board Member Rosenberg liked the popup park concept. It made sense to have a public bathroom but it was not a make-or-break.

Vice Chair Adcock stated the extra horizontal on the Hamilton side seemed tacked on and not necessary for building scale. It was concerning that the triangle expression on the corner might need to be blocked off if there should be future housing and consideration should be given to the day-2 version of that. The Waverley side having the one elevation being more open would help with light and folks feeling secure, although it might need to be closed off for future housing. It would be nice to have housing in this location. The plaza needed more greenery and denser planting with a vine on the wall and on-grade planting of trees. What was presented for the plaza appeared sparse for a permanent state. Vice Chair Adcock urged that thought be given to a stand-alone wall or a fence with planting against the trash enclosure for the non-paseo/paseo side.

Chair Chen liked the beautiful and elegant garage design, the materials, the perforated metal panel wrapping around the corner and the flared stairs. The ground-level looked pedestrian-friendly. The current garage entrance/exit made sense but it was concerning that there was a traffic light nearby,

which could mean a long queue for cars in the garage. Chair Chen supported traffic studies to determine if the traffic light should be removed. Something could be done to make the ally toward CVS nicer, such as placing the planters along the restaurant side and having a buffer zone between the restaurant and the garage. Chair Chen liked Option 2 for the façade elevations and the openness of Option 3 for the Waverley side; however, it would depend on the timeline for the affordable housing. This was a perfect location for affordable housing; however, as it related to the size remaining, it would be sad to block the corner tower element. If it had to be removed in the future, the garage would look different. Chair Chen asked if it was possible to make the parking garage smaller to leave more open space for future housing with residential setting back and leaving the corner open.

Board Member Jojarth liked the project, the corner design and the materials. Board Member Jojarth did not have a preference for additional housing, although having more housing might be better but what the corner of the garage might look like was a concern. Board Member Jojarth did not know how to approve something without knowing how it would look in the future. The corner might be destroyed in the future. It would be good to have designs that include the exterior of the potential housing, anything they would not need to be detailed. The garage might not look good with future housing. The wall on Waverley should be designed with more permanence in mind. The public plaza should be more welcoming. Board Member Jojarth supported a restroom. About 103 net parking spaces would be created at an extremely high cost of over \$200K per space. Board Member Jojarth discussed the City being lenient on downtown parking requirements and explained that the City was subsidizing the cost of parking spaces instead of requiring that developers build required parking spaces.

Board Member Hirsch did not think the nearby traffic signal was needed and removing it would make the entry/exit acceptable. Board Member Hirsch loved the corner of the building and housing possibly eliminating that was concerning. There must be another more reasonable and not so costly area for housing. Board Member Hirsch found the design to be nice and was waiting for it to happen.

[The Board took an 8-minute break]

**Action Item**

3. PUBLIC HEARING / QUASI-JUDICIAL. 3606 El Camino Real [24PLN-00162]: Consideration of a Major Architectural Review Application to Demolish Multiple Commercial and Residential Buildings Located at 3508, 3516, 3626-3632 El Camino Real, and 524, 528, 530 Kendall Avenue, and Construction of a Seven-Story, Multi-Family Residential Housing Development Project with 321 Units, Thirteen Percent of Which Would be Provided at a Rate Affordable to Low Income. CEQA Status: Eligibility Under AB 130 (Public Resources Code section 21080.66) is Being Evaluated. Zoning District: CN, CS, RM-30, and RM-40.

Chair Chen asked for disclosures. Chair Chen, Vice Chair Adcock, and Board Members Rosenberg, Jojarth, and Hirsch visited the site.

Senior Historic Preservation Planner Steven Switzer said the project was located on El Camino Real between Kendall Avenue and Matadero Avenue. Adjacent land uses were commercial and residential. A slide showed an image of the zoning map.

On February 15, 2024, an SB 330 pre-application was submitted to the City. On June 10, 2025, a major ARB application was submitted. On September 22, 2025, the applicant requested consideration under AB 130. Following this meeting, the project will tentatively go to Council in early 2026.

The proposed project will demolish 12,572 square feet of commercial floor area across 7 parcels and 38 residential units. The project will build 321 residential units: 54 studio units, 109 1-bedroom units, 119 2-bedroom units, and 39 3-bedroom units. Of those, there will be 37 BMR units, which was greater than the 13 percent minimum requirement. The units were affordable to 50 to 80 percent of the area median income (AMI). There will be 391 parking spaces, of which 321 will be EV and 45 will be tandem. There will be 280 bike spaces, a vesting tentative map, and tree removals.

The project was a "Builder's Remedy" project, defined in AB 1893. The project could not be denied based on inconsistencies with the Zoning Ordinance or Comprehensive Plan land use. The City may only require compliance with objective standards that would apply to the project if it were proposed on a site that allowed the requested density. The project proposed a 3.49:1 overall FAR and 128 dwelling units per acre (du/ac) density, which was permitted within the El Camino Real Focus Area. Under the State Density Bonus Law, the applicant could request a waiver of applicable standards that would physically prevent the project from being built at the permitted density. AB 130 exempted infill housing projects from CEQA and set strict timelines for City review and decision.

A slide showed a photo of the existing conditions of the project site with a vacant lot in the center. Slides showed images of the proposed site plan. Floor 1 had an at-grade parking garage, leasing and amenity areas that fronted El Camino Real, and entrances at Matadero Avenue and Kendall Avenue. Floor 2 included the garage and 2-story spaces for the amenities below. Floor 3 had units, open space, and a pool. Floors 4, 5, and 6 included residential units. Floor 7 had units and an amenity space. The proposed project height was 84 feet, less than the 85-foot height limit for the El Camino Real Focus Area. Slides showed the elevations and renderings.

Provided in the staff report for informational purposes only was a detailed analysis of conformance with the El Camino Real Focus Area Development Standards, Objective Design Standards, and the El Camino Real Design Guidelines. The City was evaluating the project's eligibility for processing in accordance with AB 130. The City started the tribal consultation process and had received requests from the Tamien Nation and the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe of the San Francisco Bay Area. After the tribal consultations, the City will have 30 days to make a decision on the project.

Staff recommended the ARB review the project and provide initial comments.

Chair Chen asked for a clarification of the timeline.

Vice Chair Adcock clarified this will be the only time the ARB will see the project and that the ARB was not asked to vote, just provide comments.

Mr. Switzer explained there was a 14-day period once the applicant invoked AB 130 for the City to issue letters to applicable tribes. From that period, the tribes had 60 days to respond with a request to consult, which started the consultation period that can range from 60 days or more. Following the tribal consultations, the 30-day timeline for City review and decision will start. This will be the only meeting the project will be before the ARB due to the strict timeline. This item was scheduled as an action item on the agenda, so the ARB could make a recommendation.

Project Manager Marissa Reilly, from Sares Regis Group, explained that the project supported the City's RHNA goals, and the site was identified as a great place for housing in the Housing Element. The project will enhance the pedestrian experience along that section of El Camino Real and it conformed to many of the El Camino Real Focus Area Objective standards. The site was an underutilized lot in a transit-rich location. A slide showed images of the current site conditions.

Designer Nathan Simpson, from BDE Architecture, said the project used a lot of asymmetry while keeping traditional symmetrical windows. The building used the traditional design of base, middle, and top with strong trim lines and a heavily articulated base that used upgraded materials. The project will use a warm, neutral color palette, which included two tones of brick. The accent material was metal and will be on the fins, awnings, and at the garage screening that faced El Camino Real. The color of the metal was a weathered brass. Brown marble will be around the storefronts and at the main entry.

The project will activate the pedestrian experience on El Camino Real with storefront windows and active ground floor amenities; landscaped setbacks, seating, and pedestrian-scale lighting; a double-height lobby with visual street connection; and streetscape improvements to promote walkability.

There will be a bus stop in front of the building. The main lobby will have pickup and drop off zones. There will be an internalized garage for visitors. All garage access entries were along Kendall Avenue and Matadero Avenue, and trash was staged on Kendall Avenue. On the opposite corner of the main lobby, there will be a bike shop and bike lobby. There will be a centralized elevator. There will be a mass break at the center front of the building along El Camino Real. Around the building, there will be 10 foot or greater setbacks with neighborhood fences and trees.

It will be an all-electric building with no natural gas. It will have a solar-equipped roof, EV charging infrastructure for all units, and enhanced energy and water efficiencies. It will use native and drought-tolerant plants. The project will have 100 percent stormwater treatment. The bike parking with repair station and ECR Bus Line will encourage alternative modes of transit. It was a 100 percent housing project and below the FAR limit. The building scale and density were in alignment with Focus Area goals. It exceeded the parking requirements, provided affordable housing, shielded visibility of parking from El Camino Real, enhanced the ground floor experience, and included façade variation.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

1. Chris J., who lived in the Barron Park neighborhood, acknowledged the need for housing developments, especially BMR housing. However, Chris J. was concerned that the large size of the building would negatively impact the residential neighborhood.
2. Star T. suggested the ARB require a transportation analysis and evaluate the areas which did not meet the El Camino Focus Area standards. Star T. thought the scale and mass of the building were too large for the site, especially without underground parking. There had been no public communication about the traffic impacts. Star T. was worried that the noise from trash compacting would negatively impact the residents on Kendall Avenue. Star T. will send the ARB notes.
3. John K., the president of the Barron Park Association, noted there were concerns in the neighborhood about the project. One concern was regarding the potential traffic impacts caused by the project, especially when combined with the adjacent Creekside Inn project. John

K. wanted a traffic study to be done, noting that the project is along a Safe Routes to School boulevard. John K. mentioned that the size of the project was very large. The neighborhood wanted community engagement if possible within the project's allotted timeframe.

4. Penny B. lived in the Ventura neighborhood across from the proposed building site. Penny B. was opposed to the project. A high-density, 7-story building at that location would be at odds with the appearance and character of the Barron Park and Ventura neighborhoods. Penny B. was concerned that the proposed project, if constructed, would replace the view from her kitchen window with concrete siding and glass windows. Penny B. estimated the increase in population would be between 600 to 1,300 people with 300 to 600 new cars. There was not enough street parking to accommodate that increase. Penny B. emailed more comments to the ARB.
5. Rob N. supported the project because it was consistent with the City's housing plans and goals. All 4 parcels on El Camino Real were selected by the Working Group and staff as appropriate parcels for new housing. Rob N. felt the project location was good due to the bus stop and new bicycle route. The schools in the area had declining enrollment. Rob N. thought that having more family-oriented apartments would help solve that problem.
6. Sridhar K. lived on 531 Kendall Avenue, across the street from the proposed project. Sridhar K. wanted more mixed usage on El Camino Real, so residents could get basic necessities nearby.
7. Mircea V. wanted a study to be done regarding the increase in cars on the side streets, especially when considering the Creekside Inn. Mircea V. opined the project was poorly designed and was too large. There was a similar project in Maybell years ago that was overturned by neighbors after it was approved by City Council.

Ms. Reilly said the ground floor was redesigned to put trash inside building. There will not be compactors on site and trash will only be pulled out on trash day. There was a step-back above the third floor, a major façade break around the fitness room, and a lot of articulation along El Camino Real. The goal was to provide as much housing as possible while respecting the design vision for Palo Alto.

Vice Chair Adcock asked if the architects had considered the south part of the building being less than 7 stories and felt a roof garden would be nice on the south side. Vice Chair Adcock queried where deliveries, such as those for pool chemicals, would happen and noted concerns about the traffic on Matadero Avenue. There was an opening on the third floor and the fourth floor had a bridge connector with the fifth, sixth, and seventh floor units above that. Vice Chair Adcock wondered what the experience would be like and thought it could create a canyon between the courtyards. Vice Chair Adcock was worried about the interior landscaping not having enough light to grow. Vice Chair Adcock asked if the 10-foot step-back on the third floor was for a balcony. An image of the third floor design was pulled up. Vice Chair Adcock questioned what the pebble hatched area was and clarified that the trees in the image were on the roof. Vice Chair Adcock asked about a small interior courtyard on the third floor plans and asked if that was for residents to use or only for maintenance. Vice Chair Adcock confirmed the small interior courtyard was not included in the open space calculations and asked why it was not available for public use. Vice Chair Adcock felt it was a lost opportunity due to the lack of outdoor space. Vice Chair Adcock queried how the raised nature of the smaller courtyard differed from the other, larger courtyards.

Vice Chair Adcock referenced the third floor plan image and asked why some balconies had a green coloring while others did not. Vice Chair Adcock questioned what tree species will be planted along the southern extension of the building. Vice Chair Adcock queried what type of trees will be planted on the third floor and confirmed those trees would start above the tops of the ground-level trees. Vice Chair Adcock mentioned the fins on Matadero Avenue were centered while the lobby was on the corner. Vice Chair Adcock said the fins added interest and suggested putting them on the front façade, especially at the mass break.

Board Member Hirsch asked how people got to the pool. Board Member Hirsch questioned why there was no entry located in the middle of the building on El Camino Real. Board Member Hirsch wondered what the safety concern was for pedestrians walking along El Camino Real given the large sidewalk. Board Member Hirsch asked about the bike lane that would go along the front of the building.

Chair Chen asked if Kendall Avenue and Matadero Avenue were part of the Safe Routes to School. Chair Chen queried how often the trash would be collected and how the trash room would work. Chair Chen wondered if the tenant parking spaces were designated to the units and if tandem parking would go to the larger units. Chair Chen questioned whether the streetfront spaces were for tenants only or open to the public. Chair Chen wanted clarification on the materials, especially where the marble would be. Chair Chen asked for clarification on the differing window heights shown on AP 3.00 on the sheet.

Board Member Rosenberg asked if the property fed into Barron Park Elementary or Juana Briones Elementary. Board Member Rosenberg wondered what prompted the design decision to angle the interior corners of the courtyards and if the builders had previous success with angled units. On floor plans J1.1 and J1.0, there were bedrooms not on an exterior wall. Board Member Rosenberg asked about light and air getting to those rooms and if the rooms complied with egress. Board Member Rosenberg queried why there were no fins on Kendall Avenue and if the builders considered adding fins or something similar on the façade along El Camino Real. Board Member Rosenberg felt the mass break was deemphasized and wondered why the builders did not do anything visually with that part of the façade. Board Member Rosenberg questioned if the builders would emphasize the existing bus stop. Board Member Rosenberg asked about the pet area on the ground floor and why there were no pet areas on the third floor. Board Member Rosenberg queried how to enforce pets not utilizing the courtyards on the third floor.

Board Member Jojarth asked if the builders had considered changing the address to Matadero Avenue. Board Member Jojarth wondered if the builders felt constrained by the diagrams presented in the code and if the builders could vary the building height. Board Member Jojarth questioned what the builders thought about adding amenities like a coffee shop or convenience store.

Ms. Reilly explained that having fewer stories on the part of the building furthest from El Camino Real had not been considered due to the goal of providing as much housing as possible. The Focus Area required a 14-foot height on the ground floor. Having double-height features further activated the pedestrian experience along El Camino Real and shielded the parking. There was a public art requirement for the project. The mass break was considered as a potential place for a public art feature.

Mr. Simpson said the project will have an internal pool and spa maintenance room on site. Deliveries would be at street level. The third floor opening and bridge connector created integrated spaces. That space was meant to be used as covered open space that created visual connection and enlarged the

overall open space. Courtyards had a southern orientation to ensure they get sunlight. The back of the building had open courtyards facing the neighbors with the intent to help with massing breakdowns. The back of the building had a 10-foot step-back on all units at the third floor. The step-backs on the third floor were for private patios for the residents of those units. The smaller courtyard was not open to use for residents because of its size and being farther away from amenities. Raised planters would be for stormwater treatment. The entrance was not on El Camino Real due to the heavy traffic. Garage access would not be realistic on El Camino Real given the bus and bike lanes. Most people who visit the site will access the building via the garage entry. The bike lane on El Camino Real was already installed. Mr. Simpson did not know which elementary schools the property would feed into. Trash would be collected 2 to 3 times a week. There will be 2 trash chutes in the building, which will be upsized. There will be 2 trash rooms to ensure that one still works if the other is down. Building maintenance and managers will stage trash into the Kendall Avenue trash room on the day of trash pickup. Parking was unbundled but will be assigned. Tandem parking would generally go to larger units. The garage had visitor parking off of Matadero Avenue, which was about 6 stalls. Everything else was gated. All the amenities were for residents only. There were internal discussions about changing the address to Matadero Avenue. There were a lot of features added to reduce the overall scale of the building. The design aesthetic was intentional. It would be cost prohibitive to add more floors to the front and fewer on the back, which could necessitate switching to Type 1 construction. Amenities like coffee shops were common but would still be for residents only.

The storefront configuration along El Camino Real utilized a dark brick with a marble inlay. The marble was along El Camino Real and stretched to Kendall Avenue. The blue frontage shown on the second floor plan image stretched from Matadero Avenue to the mass break. That double-height space was used to conceal the garage and create taller amenities. On the plans for the third floor, the green color identified private decks versus the open space on the podium, however there was a graphic issue on the plans where some of the coloring was missing. Angling the corners of the courtyards enabled the builders to achieve greater densities. The angled units tended to rent successfully. Floor plans J1.0 and J1.1 would have borrowed light bedrooms. The wall would be a glazed, frosted glass. Those units would have barn doors or large sliding doors on the side. The fins were meant to help with wayfinding. There were no fins on Kendall Avenue because it was a secondary frontage. Fins had not been considered elsewhere. There was no existing tree in the mass break on El Camino Real. The project originally did not have a mass break, so one was added intentionally. The building stepped back at the corner by the bus stop.

Principal Morgan Burke, from the Guzzardo Partnership, said shade-tolerant species would be planted in the open spaces. The height of the space would allow enough light penetration for the plants. The pebble-hatched area was non-occupiable space over the garage, which will be crushed rock or decorative stone to cover up the waterproofing. The trees in the image were on top of the garage. There was a 4-foot-wide service path along the parapet, which was how planting would be serviced. The interior vegetation in the small courtyard was only for maintenance. It provided a visual break for the building. The small courtyard was raised a minimum of 26 inches above finished grade, which was not different than other courtyards. The trees along the southern extension will be Catalina Ironwood, which grow to about 25 to 30 feet tall and will provide adequate screening along those frontages. The trees on third floor would be smaller due to the limited volume of soil but would be 10 to 12 feet tall. The pet area was on the ground floor, which was fenced in and had trees. PG&E had transformers

nearby, which required vehicular access. There was no pet area on the third floor because it posed a sound and maintenance issue. Property management would enforce people not utilizing the third floor courtyards for pets.

Mr. Switzer said the open space calculation was garnered from the patio areas provided for most units as well as the other courtyards and breezeway. Caltrans placed class 3 and class 4 bike lanes along El Camino Real. Kendall Avenue and Matadero Avenue were Safe Routes to School.

Assistant Director Jennifer Armer suggested limiting the first round of commentary to 3 minutes each due to the time.

Board Member Hirsch proposed having an entrance on the center of the building along El Camino Real. Board Member Hirsch felt the building was over-decorated with the amount of different materials and wanted to see less materials used better. Board Member Hirsch opined the base, middle, top feature did not work with the 400-foot-long building. Board Member Hirsch thought the top of the building should be broken up more. The third floor scheme was good. Board Member Hirsch suggested focusing things, such as an elevator and mail drop off, near the center of the building. Board Member Hirsch believed the break in the front façade should be a front entry door and a major piece of architecture, maybe with the fins.

Board Member Jojarth wanted the façade along El Camino Real to be broken up more, potentially by height or style. Board Member Jojarth liked the Matadero Avenue side but the front was busy with a lot of materials.

Chair Chen worried that having the garage access, trash pickup, etc., on the small side streets would put a lot of pressure on the existing neighborhood and suggested adding something on El Camino Real to help relieve some of that pressure. If that was not possible, Chair Chen suggested increasing the setbacks on the side streets to give more room for loading zones, etc. There were a lot of tenants but not enough tenant parking. Chair Chen liked the amenities but felt the pool was small for the number of residents. Chair Chen agreed the front elevation should be broken up more and liked the fin elements.

Vice Chair Adcock did not like having 7 stories along the south side of the building due to the proximity to 2-story, single-family residences. Vice Chair Adcock thought the current façade breaks were not impactful enough and urged the builders to use fins or something similar to break up the El Camino Real façade. Vice Chair Adcock felt the small, angled apartments with only one window seemed like an unpleasant experience. Vice Chair Adcock believed there were not enough amenities for the amount of residents and was shocked that the smaller courtyard on the third floor was not available for public use. Vice Chair Adcock suggested letting some units have larger balconies.

Board Member Rosenberg agreed with Vice Chair Adcock's statements. Board Member Rosenberg suggested the building step down toward the back and create a rooftop garden. Board Member Rosenberg thought making the secondary courtyard on the third floor accessible would be beneficial. Board Member Rosenberg felt the façade on El Camino Real was too long and repetitive and agreed it should be broken up more. Board Member Rosenberg proposed emphasizing the mass break more by creating a mini lobby to make it more functional and enhance the façade. Board Member Rosenberg wanted to expand the balconies wherever possible. Board Member Rosenberg liked the pet area but

suggested a dog walking path along the trees that surrounded the building. The internal circulation with elevator placement was appropriate. The builders did a successful job hiding the parking structure.

Mr. Switzer mentioned the existing infrastructure on El Camino Real and said that recommending a vehicular entrance on El Camino Real would be in conflict with some standards.

**NO ACTION TAKEN**

**Approval Of Minutes**

4. Approval of Draft Architectural Review Board Meeting Minutes for September 18, 2025
5. Approval of Draft Architectural Review Board Meeting Minutes for October 2, 2025
6. Approval of Draft Architectural Review Board Meeting Minutes for October 16, 2025

Chair Chen said, for the meeting minutes from October 16, 2025, the date on the first paragraph on packet page 134 should be October 16, not January.

**MOTION:** Chair Chen moved, seconded by Vice Chair Adcock, to approve all 3 meeting minutes as written with the change stated.

**VOTE:** Motion carried 5-0 for the September 18, 2025, and October 16, 2025, meeting minutes.

**VOTE:** Motion carried 4-0-1 for the October 2, 2025, meeting minutes. Rosenberg abstained.

**Board Member Questions, Comments, Announcements Or Future Meetings And Agendas**

Board Member Rosenberg asked if the board members will get new parking tags.

It was confirmed there will be new parking tags.

**Adjournment**

Chair Chen adjourned the meeting at 12:14 p.m.



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## Architectural Review Board Staff Report

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

**Meeting Date: March 5, 2026**  
**Report #: 2602-5916**

### **TITLE**

Draft Architectural Review Board Meeting Minutes for January 15, 2026

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff Recommends the Architectural Review Board (ARB) adopt the meeting minutes.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A: Minutes of January 15, 2026

### **AUTHOR/TITLE:**

ARB Liaison<sup>1</sup> & Contact Information  
Steven Switzer, Senior Historic Planner  
(650) 329-2321  
[Steven.Switzer@PaloAlto.gov](mailto:Steven.Switzer@PaloAlto.gov)

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<sup>1</sup> Emails can be sent directly to the ARB at the following email: [ARB@PaloAlto.gov](mailto:ARB@PaloAlto.gov)



**ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD MEETING**  
**DRAFT MINUTES: January 15, 2026**  
Council Chamber & Zoom  
8:30 a.m.

**CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL**

Present: Chair Yingxi Chen, Board Member Marton Jojarth, Board Member Kendra Rosenberg

Absent: Vice Chair Mousam Adcock, Board Member David Hirsch

Chair Chen called the meeting to order.

Administrative Associate Samuel Tavera called roll and declared a quorum.

**AGENDA CHANGES, ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS**

None.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

None.

**CITY OFFICIAL REPORTS**

1. Director's Report, Meeting Schedule, and Upcoming Agenda Items

Historic Preservation Planner Steven Switzer reported that there are no planned items for the February meeting, though a potential joint study session with the Planning and Transportation Commission (PTC) and the ARB regarding the Cubberley project may be scheduled. The 2026 meeting calendar was included in the packet and showed the planned absences of Vice Chair Adcock and Board Member Hirsch. Mr. Switzer requested that any additional absences be communicated to staff.

Board Member Rosenberg and Chair Chen advised that they would be absent from the June 18, 2026, meeting. Mr. Switzer confirmed these absences would be noted and stated that staff would reevaluate quorum availability as the meeting date approaches.

Chair Chen asked when the Board would receive notice regarding the potential joint meeting. Assistant Director Jennifer Armer responded that staff is reviewing potential dates to avoid conflicts with other City-sponsored activities and will distribute a scheduling survey within the next week to the PTC and ARB to assess availability. Staff is considering Wednesday evenings on dates that do not coincide with regular PTC meetings.

**ACTION ITEMS**

2. PUBLIC HEARING/QUASI-JUDICIAL. 2100-2400 Geng Road [24PLN-00356]: Recommendation on Site and Design to Demolish Four Existing Commercial Buildings and Construct 65 Three-Story

Buildings Containing 145 For Sale Townhome Units. Thirteen Percent (19) of the Units Would Be Deed Restricted to Low Income Households. The Project Also Includes a Conditional Use Permit for the Residential Use and a Vesting Tentative Map to Merge Two Parcels and Re-Subdivide For Condominium Purposes Which Council will Consider In Conjunction with the Site and Design Application. The Project is Proposed in Accordance with Builder's Remedy (California Government Code Section 65589.5(d)(5)). A Senate Bill 330 Pre-Application was Filed on July 8, 2024. CEQA Status: Exempt from CEQA in Accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15183 (Comprehensive Plan Consistency). Zoning District: ROLM (E)(D)(AD) -Research, Office and Limited Manufacturing (Embarcadero) with Site and Design and Automobile Dealership Combining Districts.

Chair Chen asked whether there were any disclosures for this item. Board Member Rosenberg disclosed that she had visited the site. Chair Chen and Board Member Jojarth stated they had no disclosures.

Mr. Switzer provided an overview of the project site, noting that it is located east of Highway 101 off East Bayshore Road and is zoned for research, office, and limited manufacturing combining districts. Adjacent uses were described as the Baylands Athletic Center, a post office, and nearby office parks. The project is undergoing the Site and Design review process and includes an SB 330 application submitted on July 8, 2024, with the formal application filed on December 18, 2024. The project was reviewed by the ARB at a meeting on October 16, 2025, and by the PTC on December 10, 2025, where the PTC recommended City Council approval with conditions. The Parks and Recreation Commission reviewed the Parkland Improvement Ordinance on December 16 and recommended approval related to tree impacts along the northern property line adjacent to the athletic center. Mr. Switzer stated this item is before the ARB now for a recommendation to City Council and that Council consideration is tentatively anticipated in March for the final decision. Mr. Switzer explained that the project qualifies as a Builder's Remedy project under Assembly Bill 1893 and therefore cannot be denied based on inconsistencies with the zoning ordinance or the Comprehensive Plan land use designation. The City may only require compliance with applicable objective standards as if the project were proposed on a site that allows the requested density. The proposed floor area ratio of 0.97:1 and density of 13.2 would be permitted in the RM-20 zoning district. It was noted that residential uses in the ROLM(E) district reference RM-20 standards.

Mr. Switzer added that the project meets the minimum density requirements and that, under the State Density Bonus Law, the applicant may request waivers from standards that would physically preclude development at the permitted density. Mr. Switzer reviewed feedback from the October 16 ARB meeting, noting that the Board discussed 5 key items: housing typologies, material palette, lighting concerns, grade changes and retaining walls, and rooftop decks. Mr. Switzer noted that the applicant has made efforts to address each item. The housing typologies now include a duplex fronting the common open space in addition to front-loaded, alley-loaded, and row townhomes. The material palette has shifted from high-contrast black-and-white tones to a more subdued color scheme, with paint samples displayed on the dais for Board review. Regarding lighting, Mr. Switzer referenced plan set pages L5.1 and L5.2, which include photometric analysis and proposed fixtures, and noted an added condition requiring compliance with the Dark Sky Lighting Ordinance as detailed in Attachment B. Mr. Switzer discussed grade changes and retaining walls, explaining that flood insurance requirements necessitate raising portions of the site by approximately 2 to 6 feet, with emphasis on the site entrance and placemaking elements, as illustrated on plan set pages L1.4 through L1.6, and described a stepped element along Geng Road in lieu of a 6-foot retaining wall. Finally, Mr. Switzer noted that rooftop decks

are detailed on plan set page A.60 and will feature parapet walls rather than railings, with lighting limited to entrance and exit areas.

Mr. Switzer stated that Attachment B in the staff report documents the project's consistency with the required findings for the Site and Design application and with the City's housing goals and policies. Attachment B also includes the accompanying Conditional Use Permit and Vesting Tentative Map, which are not within the ARB's purview. Mr. Switzer reiterated that while the project does not fully comply with all provisions of the Comprehensive Plan and Municipal Code, the deviations are permitted under State law. The project's CEQA review includes a completed Section 15183 Initial Study Checklist, which determined the project is consistent with the Certified Environmental Impact Report for the 2023 Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Switzer outlined staff's recommendation to the ARB, noting that it consists of 2 parts: 1) to find the project exempt from CEQA pursuant to Section 15183 based on consistency with the Comprehensive Plan; and 2) to recommend City Council approval of the Site and Design application based on the required findings and subject to the conditions of approval contained in the Draft Record of Land Use Action in Attachment B.

Michael Cohen, Founding Partner at Strada Investment Group, stated that the project proposes to redevelop an existing 11-acre, 4-building office park into 145 townhomes targeted to first-time homebuyers and families. It was noted that the site is zoned for residential use and that the proposed densities and heights are consistent with the City's Housing Element. Mr. Cohen explained that the project includes 3- and 4-bedroom units, all with 2-car garages and roof decks, with 4 housing types ranging from approximately 1,600 to 3,000 square feet to provide a range of livability options. The site design emphasizes community-building through shared open spaces, pedestrian connections, and a landscape program that increases tree canopy, native species, and understory planting. Mr. Cohen stated that the applicant has worked collaboratively with the City for approximately 1.5 years, that the project received unanimous recommendations from the Planning and the Parks and Recreation Commissions, and that prior ARB feedback helped improve the project.

Darian Wagner, Senior Architect at DAHLIN Group, thanked the Board for feedback from the October study session and stated that the project was refined to better serve the community and future homebuyers. Ms. Wagner highlighted key architectural changes, including the addition of a duplex typology, a tot-lot playground, a community garden, and refinements to retaining walls. It was explained that the duplexes provide a transition in density and massing between detached homes and townhomes and are centrally located to balance internal and external site relationships. Ms. Wagner noted that the material palette was softened by reducing stark black-and-white contrasts and carrying cohesive colors across all housing types. Detailing was refined through constructability review, including window trim, roof overhangs at entries, and consistent control joints. Side-yard usability was improved through shared side-use easements for detached townhomes and 10-foot side yards for each duplex, creating 20 feet of separation between duplex buildings. Ms. Wagner stated that rooftop lighting will be limited to a single downlit fixture at each roof deck entry.

Daniel Raymond, Landscape Architect at The Guzzardo Partnership, described landscape and site design refinements made in response to prior ARB feedback, focusing on enhancements to the central green as the primary open space. Additional programming was added to improve functionality and variety, including a tot-lot, 2 playground areas which could serve different age groups, and a community garden, supplementing existing amenities such as a games area, picnic space with a stage, and a large lawn for

informal and larger gatherings. Mr. Raymond also discussed revisions along the Geng Road frontage, noting that grading studies allowed the previously proposed single retaining wall to be replaced with 2 terraced walls, softening the edge through additional planting and extending the landscape character into the entry drive.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Herb Borock questioned whether a quorum was present, stating that only 3 Board members appeared to be participating, and that the agenda and public notice did not indicate teleconference participation. Chair Chen clarified that the Board consists of 5 members and that a quorum was present. Ms. Armer explained that 3 of the 5 members were participating in chambers and that a 4th member had joined via Zoom but was listening only because teleconference participation had not been properly noticed. Ms. Armer also stated that a quorum was achieved with the 3 members present in chambers. Mr. Borock expressed disagreement with that determination and also questioned the project's consistency with CEQA Section 15183, asserting that project-specific impacts warrant further evaluation. Mr. Borock raised concerns related to the Airport Influence Area, stating that clearer Comprehensive Plan language should be incorporated to ensure future homeowners are informed of airport noise impacts and related deed restrictions. Mr. Borock also cited the need for additional analysis of earthquake and liquefaction risks, building height limitations accounting for floodplain elevation, potential noise mitigation standards, and sea level rise.

Star T. (Zoom) stated that while she had not examined the project in detail, she found the presentation impressive and believed the project would be highly desirable. This commenter expressed support for Mr. Borock, noting his value as a community resource in identifying detailed issues, and encouraged the Board and applicant to consider and address his comments.

Mr. Cohen responded that airport proximity impacts were analyzed under CEQA and that the applicant worked closely with City staff, including the City Attorney's Office. Mr. Cohen stated that the aviation easement is a County-drafted form that the applicant accepted as written and added that, although not legally required, the applicant met with the Airport Board to review the project and easement language. Mr. Cohen further stated that the project complies with applicable building code requirements related to airport adjacency.

Board Member Hirsch unmuted his microphone virtually.

Ms. Armer stated that because notice of Board Member Hirsch's remote participation and location was not received in time to comply with State law, he would not be able to participate in the meeting and could only listen in with his microphone muted.

Board Member Rosenberg asked whether staff had any response to the concerns raised by Mr. Borock.

Mr. Switzer responded that the applicant addressed the Airport Influence Area through inclusion of the aviation easement. The project was analyzed for airport-related impacts and, with standard construction techniques, airport noise mitigation measures are expected to result in acceptable sound levels for future residents.

Board Member Rosenberg asked whether, based on the comments raised and responses provided, the City was comfortable with the project proceeding as proposed. Mr. Switzer responded in the affirmative.

Board Member Rosenberg asked the applicant whether the existing connection shown on Sheet A.6 between East Bayshore Road and the southern portion of the site would be maintained to provide multiple points of ingress and egress, or whether that connection would be abandoned. Board Member Rosenberg stated that while the connection may not be entirely within the applicant's control, maintaining it would be beneficial. Mr. Cohen responded that the intent is to maintain the existing connection.

Board Member Rosenberg asked whether a purchaser could buy 2 adjacent duplex units and internally connect them, or whether provisions would prevent that. Mr. Cohen responded that combining duplex units had not been considered and was unsure whether such a modification would be permitted, noting that the units are intentionally designed as individual homes. Mr. Cohen added that, if necessary, a deed restriction could be imposed to prohibit internal connections in order to preserve the unit count. Ms. Wagner added that, from a building code perspective, the duplexes are classified as 2-family dwellings and that any internal connection between units would require a permit to convert the structure to a single-family residence.

Board Member Rosenberg asked about Unit 21 shown on Sheet A.43, noting that the ground-floor bathroom is depicted as a future option, and questioned how that approach aligns with age-in-place requirements, including whether the unit would be required to include the bathroom to meet accessibility standards. Board Member Rosenberg noted that age-in-place standards were not a firm requirement at the time of application submittal. Mr. Cohen responded that, to his understanding, the requirement is for adaptable bathroom facilities and deferred to staff for confirmation. Ms. Wagner stated that the requirement is governed by the building code and clarified that the units must be adaptable rather than fully age-in-place compliant. Board Member Rosenberg questioned whether adaptability would require a ground-floor bathroom with a shower and bedroom space. Ms. Wagner responded that adaptability requirements apply only to the ground-floor bathrooms in the 10 percent of townhouse units designated as adaptable, noting that the dashed-in bathroom on the plans reflects required clearances for those units. Ms. Wagner further clarified that adaptable units are distinct from age-in-place requirements.

Board Member Rosenberg asked whether any noise mitigation measures related to airport proximity are proposed, including triple-pane windows, sound-attenuation walls, or other construction features. Mr. Cohen responded that the project complies with applicable building code requirements for sound mitigation and that CEQA analysis actually identified freeway traffic as the primary noise source, not the airport. Mr. Cohen added that triple-pane windows are not proposed.

Board Member Rosenberg asked whether the duplex units would be separated by a full party wall with enhanced sound mitigation, and Mr. Cohen confirmed that they would.

Board Member Jojarth referenced a prior discussion regarding housing typologies, specifically the possibility of providing condominium units on the site, including Units 50 through 53, and asked whether the applicant had further considered that option. Mr. Cohen responded that the applicant considered alternative housing typologies but concluded that a for-rent multifamily building would not be feasible for the site due to layered constraints, including soil conditions, parking limitations, and financial viability. Mr. Cohen explained that surface parking would significantly reduce unit count, while subterranean parking would be cost-prohibitive, and noted that the project has been intentionally pursued as a for-sale community for first-time homebuyers. Mr. Cohen added that introducing a

multifamily building would fundamentally alter the project, require restarting the approval process, and would not be compatible with the site.

Board Member Jojarth questioned whether any permitting tradeoffs, such as flexibility related to parking, fill requirements, building height, or other waivers, could make an alternative housing typology financially feasible for the project. Mr. Cohen responded that no permitting tradeoffs would make an alternative typology feasible, stating that they had evaluated those options prior to and throughout the process. Mr. Cohen explained that the project was intentionally designed to align with zoning and design standards, remain within mid-range density limits, and respond to site constraints, including proximity to the Baylands. Mr. Cohen added that he believes the proposed project represents the appropriate balance of tradeoffs to deliver housing at this site.

Chair Chen asked about the inclusion of shallow sloped roof areas shown on Sheet A.9, noting that they appear on some detached homes and duplexes, and inquired whether those elements were intentional in contrast to the predominantly flat roofs and parapet walls. Ms. Wagner explained that the roofs shown with a slight slope are not truly flat and include a minimum slope of approximately  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch per foot to allow for drainage, as required by building code. Ms. Wagner further clarified that the slope may be perceptible on certain elevations but that most roof areas are designed with parapet walls or flat roof conditions and that drainage would occur via a drip edge. Ms. Wagner added that while the slope may be visible on drawings, it would likely not be noticeable when experienced in person.

Chair Chen asked about the varying parapet wall heights shown on the townhouses on Sheet A.22 and how transitions at corners would be detailed. Ms. Wagner explained that the changes in parapet height are intentional to allow parapet walls to transition and terminate more naturally, with continuous coping used to maintain consistent detailing, and to avoid a flat roofline by adding visual interest and variation. Ms. Wagner clarified that parapet heights vary both for visual interest and, at roof deck areas, to meet guard height requirements, while other areas accommodate functions such as open space and solar panels.

Board Member Rosenberg expressed overall support for the project, stating that it achieves a thoughtful mix of housing typologies and is well designed to function as a family-oriented community with a range of unit sizes and price points. While she reiterated interest in apartment-style housing for larger sites, Board Member Rosenberg found the applicant's explanation regarding feasibility and unit sizing persuasive and stated that she was comfortable with the proposed approach. Board Member Rosenberg commented that, although the exterior architecture felt somewhat subdued, she appreciated the strong floor plans, inclusion of ground-floor bedrooms and bathrooms in most units, and the project's emphasis on livability. Board Member Rosenberg noted a remaining concern regarding the lack of a ground-floor bathroom in Unit 21 for age-in-place considerations but acknowledged compliance with applicable code requirements, and she emphasized the importance of maintaining multiple access points for emergency egress. Board Member Rosenberg expressed appreciation for the applicant's responsiveness to Board comments and recognized the challenges of the process.

Board Member Jojarth expressed appreciation for the applicant's responsiveness to prior ARB feedback, particularly the improvements to grading, retaining walls, and the refined color palette. However, concern was raised that, given the large scale of the site, the project does not provide sufficient variation in housing typologies and architectural expression, stating that the overall site plan appears monotonous. Board Member Jojarth commented that while different typologies are included, they feel

like variations of the same form and do not achieve the level of diversity he would expect for a development of this size. Board Member Jojarth stated that although it is a Builder's Remedy project and has received favorable review from the PTC, he found it difficult to fully support the project from an ARB perspective.

Chair Chen expressed general support for the project, stating that the applicant did a strong job with the site plan, circulation, parking, building design, and material selection. It was noted that the project successfully provides family-oriented units without pushing to an extreme despite its Builder's Remedy status. Chair Chen appreciated the applicant's responsiveness to prior ARB feedback and highlighted the stepped retaining walls as improving the street frontage and creating a more welcoming public presence. She commended the enhanced open space amenities, including play areas and community gardens, as contributing to a cohesive and inviting community. Chair Chen felt the project would be a positive addition to the City, particularly on the east side of Highway 101.

**MOTION:** Board Member Rosenberg moved, seconded by Chair Chen, to recommend approval of the Site and Design application to the City Council based on findings and subject to conditions of approval in the Draft Record of Land Use Action (RLUA) in Attachment B.

**VOTE:** Motion carried 3-0. Vice Chair Adcock and Board Member Hirsch absent.

[The Board took a 9-minute break]

3. PUBLIC HEARING/QUASI-JUDICIAL. 3781 El Camino Real [24PLN-00161]: Recommendation on a Major Architectural Review Application to Demolish Commercial and Residential Buildings Located at 3727-3737 & 3773-3783 El Camino Real, 378-400 Madeline Court, and 388 Curtner Avenue, and to Construct a Seven-Story, Multi-Family Residential Housing Development Project with 183 Units, 13 Percent of Which Would be Provided at a Rate Affordable to Low Income. The Project is Proposed in Accordance with Builder's Remedy (California Government Code Section 65589.5(d)(5)). A Senate Bill 330 Pre-Application was Filed on February 15, 2024. CEQA Status: Exempt Under AB 130 (Public Resources Code section 21080.66). Zoning Districts: CN (Commercial Neighborhood) and RM-30 (Multi-Family Residential).

Chair Chen asked whether there were any disclosures. Board Member Rosenberg, Chair Chen, and Board Member Jojarth disclosed they had visited the site.

Mr. Switzer stated that, for purposes of the staff report and presentation, the project address is identified as 3781 El Camino Real. The site is located at the corner of Curtner Avenue and El Camino Real, consisting of 4 assessor parcels within 2 zoning districts, Commercial Neighborhood (CN) and Multi-Family Residential (RM-30). Surrounding land uses include a mix of commercial and residential development, with residential uses to the north, including a recently constructed project that received a 2025 ARB design award, and additional residential buildings at the rear of the site. Mr. Switzer outlined the project review history, stating that an SB 330 application was submitted in February 2024, followed by a Major ARB application on June 10, 2025. On September 22, 2025, the applicant requested consideration under AB 130, which staff evaluated and found to be consistent with applicable requirements. The project is before the ARB at this meeting for a recommendation, and City Council consideration is tentatively anticipated in March. Mr. Switzer provided a project overview, noting that

the proposal includes demolition of approximately 10,100 square feet of commercial floor area on 2 front parcels, while the 2 rear parcels contain 14 existing residential units on Madeline Court. The project would consist of a 7-story building with a height of approximately 83 feet and a total of 183 units, including 23 below-market-rate units meeting the 13 percent Builder's Remedy affordability requirement. The project would provide 215 parking spaces, including EV and tandem spaces, as well as 183 long-term and 18 short-term bicycle parking spaces. Mr. Switzer also noted that the project includes tree removals and a Certificate of Compliance for the merger of the 4 parcels.

Mr. Switzer framed the discussion by explaining that the project qualifies as a Builder's Remedy project under AB 1893 and therefore may not be denied based on inconsistencies with the zoning code or Comprehensive Plan, with the City limited to applying objective standards applicable to the requested density. The project complies with those requirements and may utilize waivers and concessions under the State Density Bonus Law. Mr. Switzer reviewed the site plan, noting vehicular access from Curtner Avenue, and described the building organization, including coworking space and a pet spa on Floor 1, residential amenities along El Camino Real, and parking located toward the rear of the site. Floor 2 includes a 2-story residential amenity space and additional parking, while Floor 3 incorporates podium-level open space with stepbacks of approximately 5 to 10 feet along the northern edge to respond to adjacent residential uses. Floors 4 through 7 contain residential units and open space at the Curtner Avenue/El Camino Real intersection. Mr. Switzer reviewed the roof plan, elevations, and renderings, highlighting material transitions between garage and residential levels, stepbacks, retained street trees along El Camino Real, and the primary building entrances and amenity areas.

Mr. Switzer reiterated that the project qualifies as a Builder's Remedy project and therefore may not be denied based on inconsistencies with the Zoning Ordinance or Comprehensive Plan, noting that those inconsistencies are identified in Attachments D and F. The project is afforded applicable waivers and concessions. The City evaluated the project under AB 130 and found it to be eligible. Mr. Switzer explained that AB 130 exempts qualifying housing infill projects and establishes strict timelines following completion of tribal consultation. Mr. Switzer noted that draft conditions of approval included in the packet reflect standard language and may be modified prior to City Council consideration to address potential archaeological or tribal cultural resource impacts. The tribal consultation is expected to conclude this month, with final conditions incorporated before Council action. Mr. Switzer stated that staff recommends the ARB forward a recommendation to City Council to approve the project based on the findings in Attachment B and the conditions of approval in Attachment C, noting that conditions related to cultural and tribal resources would be updated with language agreed upon through tribal consultation prior to Council consideration.

Board Member Rosenberg asked why tribal consultation was being discussed for this project. Mr. Switzer explained that AB 130 establishes mandatory timelines and requires tribal notification following invocation of the statute, allowing tribes the opportunity to comment on potential cultural or archaeological impacts and informing any modifications to standard conditions of approval. Current Planning Manager Claire Raybould added that the presence of existing development does not preclude tribal cultural resources, explaining that notification is required for projects subject to CEQA review, including those supported by an MND, for Comprehensive Plan amendments under SB 18 and under AB 130, noting that while tribes do not always request consultation, some recent projects have generated concerns.

Chair Chen asked staff to confirm whether the project would return to the ARB for further review. Ms. Raybould responded that, due to the strict timelines imposed under AB 130, the project is not expected to return to the ARB and that the item was noticed as a recommendation accordingly. Chair Chen asked for clarification regarding project setbacks, noting that the plan set appears to show the lots combined while the staff report references them separately. Mr. Switzer responded that the 4 parcels would be merged and explained that setback ranges are measured from adjacent properties, as outlined in Attachment D comparing zoning consistency. In some locations, setbacks are noted as not applicable where the condition reflects an internal connection within the merged site. Chair Chen asked for clarification regarding daylight plane requirements, particularly within the El Camino Real Focus Area and where the project abuts residential zoning. Mr. Switzer responded that a daylight plane is not required for the front parcels because they abut another CN district and is also not applicable to the rear parcels due to their RM-30 zoning. While residential uses are located to the rear of the site, the project complies with applicable code requirements and housing incentives associated with the El Camino Real Focus Area.

Board Member Rosenberg inquired what the final zoning designation would be once the parcels are combined. Mr. Switzer explained that the site would retain split zoning, noting that the applicant is not requesting a zone change and that parcel merger does not require rezoning for the proposed development.

Marissa Reilly, Senior Project Manager at Sares Regis Group, introduced the project at 3781 El Camino Real and stated that, despite the expedited entitlement process, the applicant sought to deliver a thoughtfully designed and contextually sensitive project consistent with the City's vision for the El Camino Real Focus Area. The project team includes BDE Architecture, The Guzzardo Partnership, and Kier & Wright, and the property is owned by the Giovannotto Family, longtime Palo Alto residents. Ms. Reilly highlighted community benefits of the proposal, including 183 residential units with 23 affordable units supporting the City's RHNA obligations, a range of unit types from studios to 3-bedroom units, proximity to transit, and adjacency to both affordable multifamily and single-family neighborhoods.

Nathan Simpson, Architect at BDE Architecture, presented updated renderings and described the project's contemporary design with timeless elements, including brick and plaster façades, traditional window proportions, and selective corner window accents to reduce visual repetition. Wood soffit accents at amenity areas, including the fitness center and rooftop canopy, would soften the building's pedestrian-scale appearance, while setbacks and stepbacks, including a 10-foot setback on Floors 1 and 2, additional 3rd-floor stepbacks, and wider setbacks along Curtner Avenue, help screen service functions and reduce massing. Mr. Simpson highlighted amenities such as a south-facing courtyard with spas, a double-height fitness center at the Curtner/El Camino corner, and extensive glazing that improves street-level experience while concealing parking. The project emphasizes pedestrian experience through a recessed entry, landscaped and gated perimeter walkways, a dog run, and planted buffers that also accommodate fire and life safety access. Mr. Simpson also described sustainability features, including an all-electric design, rooftop solar, EV charging, appliances with enhanced water and energy efficiency, stormwater treatment, bicycle parking, and transit access, adding that avoiding subterranean parking reduces the project's carbon footprint. Mr. Simpson concluded that the project is fully residential, below the FAR limit, consistent with El Camino Real Focus Area standards, exceeds parking requirements, provides affordable housing, and incorporates facade variation and active ground-floor frontages.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:** Charles Santori, a resident of Curtner Avenue, raised concerns regarding parking availability, stating that many current residents have 2 vehicles, and questioned whether overflow parking would impact Curtner Avenue. The commenter also expressed concern about potential traffic congestion at the Curtner Avenue and El Camino Real intersection, particularly related to ingress and egress from the parking structure during peak hours. Mr. Santori further asked whether the project would eliminate existing commercial uses, including a popular restaurant on the corner, without providing replacement commercial space.

Ms. Reilly responded by explaining that the project provides a parking ratio slightly above 1:1, exceeding the El Camino Real Focus Area standard, and acknowledged existing parking constraints along Curtner Avenue. Ms. Reilly stated that traffic impacts are expected to be mitigated by changing work patterns and the project’s emphasis on multimodal access, including transit and bicycling, rather than reliance on single-occupancy vehicles. Ms. Reilly confirmed that the project does not include retail uses and is proposed as a 100 percent residential development.

Board Member Rosenberg raised concern about the absence of an elevator in the northeast portion of the building extending toward the adjacent residential area, noting that only a stairwell is provided and that residents parking in that area would need to travel a longer distance to access an elevator. Board Member Rosenberg asked whether a curb cut and off-street loading area could be provided to accommodate move-in trucks, noting concerns about potential disruption along Curtner Avenue and questioning whether the proposed move-in lobby could be adapted to allow loading to occur off the street. Mr. Simpson responded that the building is programmed with an appropriate number of elevators relative to unit count and that accessibility concerns are mitigated through assigned parking closer to elevators. Regarding the move-in area, Mr. Simpson explained that curbside loading is proposed and that accommodating move-in trucks within the building or on site is not feasible due to clearance requirements, utility constraints, and the resulting loss of parking and building area, noting that oversized or improperly sized trucks could also pose a risk to the structure. Board Member Rosenberg asked whether the circulation space near the move-in lobby and elevator could be widened to better accommodate large furniture and requested clarification on the existing dimensions. Mr. Simpson responded that the design team could explore adjustments as plans continue to be refined, noting that the ground-floor condition functions as an intentional pinch point to prevent damage to narrower upper-floor corridors and units.

Chair Chen requested clarification regarding the location and quantity of short-term bicycle parking. Mr. Simpson clarified that 18 short-term bicycle spaces are provided near the main lobby entrance, adjacent to the front door. Chair Chen asked whether an 8-foot clearance is required outside the lobby to maintain an unobstructed pedestrian walkway, noting potential conflicts with the door swing. Ms. Raybould explained that 8 feet is the objective standard, while a minimum of 4 feet is required for ADA and health and safety compliance, and that under the Builder’s Remedy the clearance may be reduced below 8 feet, though 8 feet is preferred. Chair Chen asked for clarification on circulation from the long-term bicycle parking to residential units, including whether residents would pass through first-floor amenity spaces and use the main lobby elevators, requiring longer internal travel. Mr. Simpson confirmed that the circulation described was generally accurate and explained that while some amenity areas would be separated as needed, many first-floor spaces such as mail, parcel, co-working, and leasing areas are designed to be open and integrated, minimizing the number of doors and corridor transitions along the route. Chair Chen asked whether an additional door connecting the bicycle parking

area directly to the garage had been considered to improve internal circulation. Mr. Simpson responded that access control and security considerations guided the design, explaining that limiting the number of doors helps reduce vandalism and theft in bicycle rooms.

Board Member Rosenberg suggested evaluating whether circulation between the bicycle parking and garage could be improved by reconfiguring doors, noting that direct access would better accommodate residents loading bicycles into vehicles and reduce travel through amenity spaces. Mr. Simpson acknowledged the suggestion and stated that the design team would review the option.

Chair Chen asked about circulation distances to the upper-floor clubhouse, noting that residents on the opposite side of the building may need to walk a considerable distance, and also raised privacy concerns for units located adjacent to elevator and stairwells. Mr. Simpson responded that the building is more compact than comparable projects, with maximum walking distances of approximately 150 feet, and noted that such adjacency conditions are typical, though potential screening could be explored. Chair Chen also requested clarification on courtyard elevation changes, and Mr. Simpson explained that the courtyard is generally flat, with raised spas required for transfer stations and raised planters forming a buffer around residential units. Chair Chen inquired about the height of raised areas needed to accommodate tree planting in the courtyard. Mr. Raymond explained that planter heights vary depending on function, ranging from approximately 20 inches to 42 inches for stormwater planters, with additional soil mounding used to provide adequate root depth for trees. Mr. Raymond clarified that the elements function as raised planters rather than retaining walls, noting that planter heights are generally consistent on both sides, with soil mounded toward the center where needed.

Chair Chen asked about the elevation change shown at the building corner, noting that the upper floors appear to project outward, and inquired whether similar conditions occur elsewhere in the project. Mr. Simpson responded that the condition is limited to that location, explaining that the amenity space is intentionally highlighted and includes a setback of approximately 3 to 5 feet, which can be accommodated structurally without added cost. Other portions of the building do not include similar projections and are residential in character. Chair Chen wanted to know about the roof material on the corner of the building above the front lobby, noting that it appears different from other portions of the building. Mr. Simpson explained that while elevations may suggest a different condition, the roof is intended to read as flat from the public perspective, with a shallow gabled structure used to conceal truss work.

Board Member Jojarth questioned whether the proposed balconies are driven by code requirements or resident demand, expressing concern that they could contribute to visual clutter and detract from the building's aesthetics, and suggested eliminating balconies or improving railing quality to achieve a cleaner design. Mr. Simpson responded that residents value private outdoor space and that balconies support market demand, while Ms. Reilly added that balconies also satisfy the City's requirement for 100 square feet of private open space per unit. Board Member Jojarth noted that waivers could be considered under the Builder's Remedy and emphasized the importance of architectural quality. Board Member Jojarth also raised concerns that the projection of the 1st and 2nd floors beyond the upper stories creates a visually busy and misaligned appearance, and suggested aligning building lines or adjusting setbacks to achieve a more cohesive form. Mr. Simpson responded that such changes would be significant but could be reviewed.

Board Member Rosenberg questioned the depiction of “required setbacks” on the plan set and requested clarification given the project’s Builder’s Remedy status. Ms. Reilly explained that the notation reflects standard application materials rather than a binding design constraint, which Mr. Switzer confirmed. Mr. Switzer added that while zoning includes setback standards, the Builder’s Remedy allows deviations consistent with State law, and directed the Board to Attachment D for a detailed comparison of compliance and deviations.

Board Member Jojarth raised several design concerns, stating that the strong brick articulation and bold horizontal lines at the 1st and 2nd floors create a visually heavy and monotonous appearance, and suggested finding a way to soften the building’s scale. Board Member Jojarth also expressed concern that the Curtner Avenue facade and garage openings appear oversized for the surrounding residential context and suggested exploring finer elements, enhanced landscaping, or alternative screening materials such as wood, architectural metal, or a live wall. Ms. Reilly acknowledged the comments and stated that the design team would revisit these elements. Board Member Jojarth further questioned the high-contrast color palette, and Mr. Simpson responded that the cooler gray tones were intentionally selected to distinguish the project from a nearby development with a warmer palette.

Board Member Rosenberg asked whether a materials board was available as the Board had not seen it yet. Board Member Rosenberg reiterated her concern from past meetings regarding interior bedrooms without windows and questioned whether columns shown in the bicycle room encroach into the path of travel. Mr. Simpson responded that the design is at a planning level and that columns will not be located within walkways as the plans are refined.

Chair Chen asked for clarification on how the “upper floor” is defined for stepback requirements, noting that stepbacks begin at the 3rd floor rather than the top floor. Mr. Switzer explained that stepbacks apply above approximately 24 feet, or around the 3rd floor, where the podium and open space are located, and noted that stepbacks are provided along El Camino Real and the rear property lines adjacent to residential uses. Chair Chen asked whether the 30-foot window-to-window separation standard applies to a 2-story townhome shown on Sheet AP3.20, noting that the distance appears to be closer to 20 feet. Mr. Switzer responded that staff could confirm the measurement and noted that, as a Builder’s Remedy project, the applicant may request a waiver from that standard. Chair Chen asked whether a smaller area of noncompliant private open space along El Camino Real on the 3rd-floor plan could be extended to the parapet wall, similar to the larger private open space provided at the rear of the building, in order to meet open space requirements. Mr. Simpson responded that the area is located on a podium lid and could be amenitized and assigned to the unit. Mr. Simpson added that planting is proposed along that edge, noting that the design includes a 5-foot setback near the fitness center to accommodate landscaping and ongoing maintenance.

Board Member Rosenberg requested that the materials board be shown on camera for the record and noted that the primary stucco color is not true white but a light gray identified as Benjamin Moore Gray Cloud. Mr. Simpson explained that true white is avoided due to maintenance concerns. Board Member Rosenberg expressed her appreciation for the lighter gray tone.

Board Member Jojarth expressed concern that the project appears to remain a work in progress and questioned whether it is ready to advance to City Council, citing unresolved issues related to massing, balconies, facade articulation at the 1st and 2nd floors, entrance scale, color contrast, landscaping along El Camino Real, and screening impacts on adjacent residential properties. Board Member Jojarth

remarked that the building reads as overly massive and visually inconsistent with its surroundings, particularly when compared to a nearby award-winning project, and suggested that the design could be significantly refined without affecting density or Builder's Remedy provisions. Board Member Jojarth concluded that, in his view, the project is not yet at a stage appropriate for final consideration despite the anticipated Council timeline.

Board Member Rosenberg stated that while she initially shared some concerns raised by other Board members, she found the project increasingly compelling upon further review, particularly praising the concealment of parking along El Camino Real, the south-facing courtyard, and the overall site organization. Board Member Rosenberg expressed concern, however, about the treatment of the parking structure along Curtner Avenue and adjacent residential properties, noting that exposed grates and double-height garage facades feel visually heavy and warrant additional refinement through design or landscaping. Further attention to screening and facade articulation in these areas was encouraged, while noting that the large garage opening felt proportionate to the adjacent glazing. Board Member Rosenberg also suggested expanding balcony areas where feasible on the 3rd floor, including for the below-market-rate units, strongly encouraged consideration of a third elevator to improve daily usability for residents in the rear portion of the building, and reiterated concerns regarding bicycle room circulation and move-in logistics, particularly the impact of moving trucks on Curtner Avenue. Board Member Rosenberg expressed appreciation for the courtyard, fitness amenities, trash layout, balconies, material palette, and use of wood accents. While noting disappointment at the absence of ground-floor commercial space, she acknowledged the constraints. Board Member Rosenberg concluded by stating that she was generally satisfied with the project and believed it would benefit significantly from the proposed landscaping strategy.

Chair Chen thanked the applicant for their presentation and expressed support for the provision of housing, noting that the project includes several positive features and presents attractively from the street through vertical articulation, upper-story projections, and a stepped-back clubhouse. Chair Chen raised concern, however, that the 7-story height is out of scale with the surrounding 1- and 2-story developments, particularly when compared to the adjacent Wilton Court project, and stated that a reduced height would be more compatible with the site's context. While acknowledging the project's Builder's Remedy status and the limited discretion available, Chair Chen expressed difficulty making the required ARB Finding #2e related to enhancing living conditions on adjacent residential properties, citing impacts to light and views for nearby neighbors. Staff was asked to clarify whether, given these constraints, the Board's options are limited to recommending approval or issuing a denial without specific findings. Ms. Raybould clarified that the ARB is providing a recommendation rather than a final decision on the project and may make any recommendation it deems appropriate. The Board was encouraged, regardless of its recommendation, to clearly identify any suggested conditions or project modifications, noting that some issues raised may not be applicable given the project's status under State law.

The Board discussed the motion and, based on comments made during the meeting, added conditions of approval.

Board Member Jojarth proposed adding a condition to increase parking to approximately 250 spaces, citing unit mix and anticipated vehicle ownership, and suggested reducing common amenity space to accommodate additional parking. Board Member Rosenberg and Chair Chen responded that the project

meets and exceeds applicable parking requirements and that the Board lacks authority to require additional parking under the Builder's Remedy, despite acknowledging neighborhood parking concerns. Mr. Switzer confirmed that the project exceeds the El Camino Real Focus Area parking standard of 1 space per unit, and Ms. Raybould explained that residential parking permit programs require a separate neighborhood-initiated process. Following discussion, Board Member Rosenberg recommended leaving parking off the list of proposed conditions, and Ms. Raybould recommended that the Board first identify the conditions proposed by the maker of the motion, obtain a second to the motion, and then discuss any friendly or non-friendly amendments.

Chair Chen seconded the motion with a proposed friendly amendment requesting increased setbacks of approximately 30 feet from adjacent residential buildings, citing objective standards and potential benefits related to off-street parking and move-in access.

Board Member Rosenberg cautioned that such a condition could exceed the Board's authority under the Builder's Remedy, noting that required design changes could impact unit count or courtyard configuration and may not be feasible.

Mr. Switzer clarified the location of the referenced setback.

Chair Chen further addressed massing, parking functionality, and potential transformer noise.

Board Member Rosenberg initially declined to accept the proposed friendly amendment, stating a preference to avoid recommending conditions beyond what the applicant is required or likely able to implement.

During discussion of the motion, Board Member Rosenberg asked whether Chair Chen wished to maintain her second following earlier debate on potential conditions. Chair Chen acknowledged ongoing concerns regarding building massing but recognized the limitations imposed by the project's Builder's Remedy status.

Board Member Jojarth suggested adding a recommendation addressing the building's perceived mass, distinguishing between reducing unit count and making architectural adjustments to lessen visual bulk.

After confirming with staff that the Board may include such recommendations, Board Member Rosenberg agreed to add a friendly amendment requesting further exploration of architectural strategies to reduce the appearance of massing. Additional friendly amendments were discussed, including a request for building sections illustrating courtyard conditions, spa placement, and planting, and a recommendation to explore additional upper-level setbacks along El Camino Real to improve compatibility with adjacent development. While acknowledging feasibility concerns, Board Member Rosenberg agreed to include these items as recommendations for Council consideration and confirmed that both her motion and Chair Chen's second remained in place.

**MOTION:** Board Member Rosenberg moved, seconded by Chair Chen, to recommend that City Council approve the project based on the findings set forth in Attachment B with the following conditions of approval:

- Add third elevator to the northeast wing of the structure.
- Clear path of travel within bike room with the addition of a door to the parking garage.
- Add an off-street loading space.

- Improve the parking garage screening to neighbors.
- Recess the entrance along El Camino Real to ensure an 8-foot clearance when doors are open.
- Expand 3rd-floor balconies, where possible.
- Streamline balconies along El Camino Real with different materials to reduce transparency.
- Reduce the visual massing of the structure through architectural expertise with refined facade detailing, and upper story setbacks, potentially moving the top floor back by 4 feet.
- Provide detailed courtyard sections explaining the spa and plantings.

**VOTE:** Motion carried 3-0. Vice Chair Adcock and Board Member Hirsch absent.

**BOARD MEMBER QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, ANNOUNCEMENTS OR FUTURE MEETINGS AND**

**AGENDAS**

None.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Chen adjourned the meeting at 11:30 a.m.