

**From:** [Neil Murphy](#)  
**To:** [Architectural Review Board](#)  
**Cc:** [Sharlene Carlson](#)  
**Subject:** 4260 El Camino Real - Bright Red Color  
**Date:** Saturday, June 8, 2024 6:20:26 PM

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Hi all,

Hope this finds you well. I'm writing regarding 4260 el Camino Real. It looks like the ARB had a review for a facade update on 2020-07-02 [0]. Your recommendation to approve was based in part on this section:

The applicant proposes to completely cover the building exterior in metal panels. The panels are smaller and darker on the front façade and tower element, and larger and lighter on the sides and rear. There is also corrugated metal siding to accent the front and rear gables. The metal panels fit at the corners with a flat outside corner trim. Adjacent panels sit flush with little relief between panels.

The proposed color scheme is shades of gray, with red accents for the roof and gables, and black for the windows and other architectural elements.

What was actually done however, was the entire building was painted a bright barn red.

As a result, the walls inside my home are red from the reflected light in every room, whether I want them to be or not. Photos attached.

When I look out of my living room window, there is a bright red building. This is my view now. Have you ever seen the Seinfeld episode where a fried chicken restaurant with a huge red neon sign opens across the street from Kramer? It's a bit like that.

I notice that the ARB's primary responsibilities [1] include:

- Enhance the desirability of residence or investment in the City
- Enhance the desirability of living conditions upon the immediate site or in adjacent areas
- Promote visual environments which are of high aesthetic quality and variety and which, at the same time, are considerate of each other.

Obviously, painting a build this large in that color challenges all three of these responsibilities. It looks like your 2020 recommendation was based on a completely different design: "shades of gray, with red accents for the roof..." That's what the ARB approved, but that's not at all what they actually did.

I was just surprised to find that the ARB's approval was for something completely divorced from the actual result. Mine is one of 27 units that now look out at the same bright red view.

Is there any recourse, or can developers promise anything in an ARB review and then go on to do whatever they please?

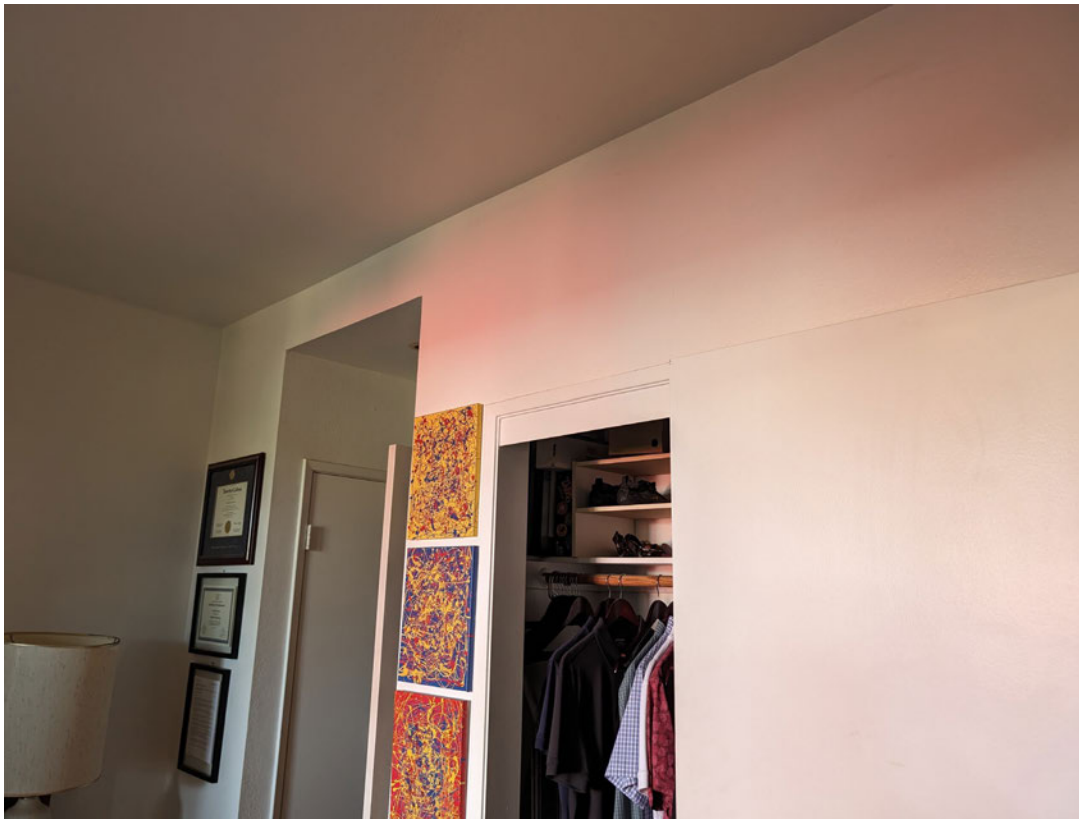
Thanks in advance,

-Neil Murphy

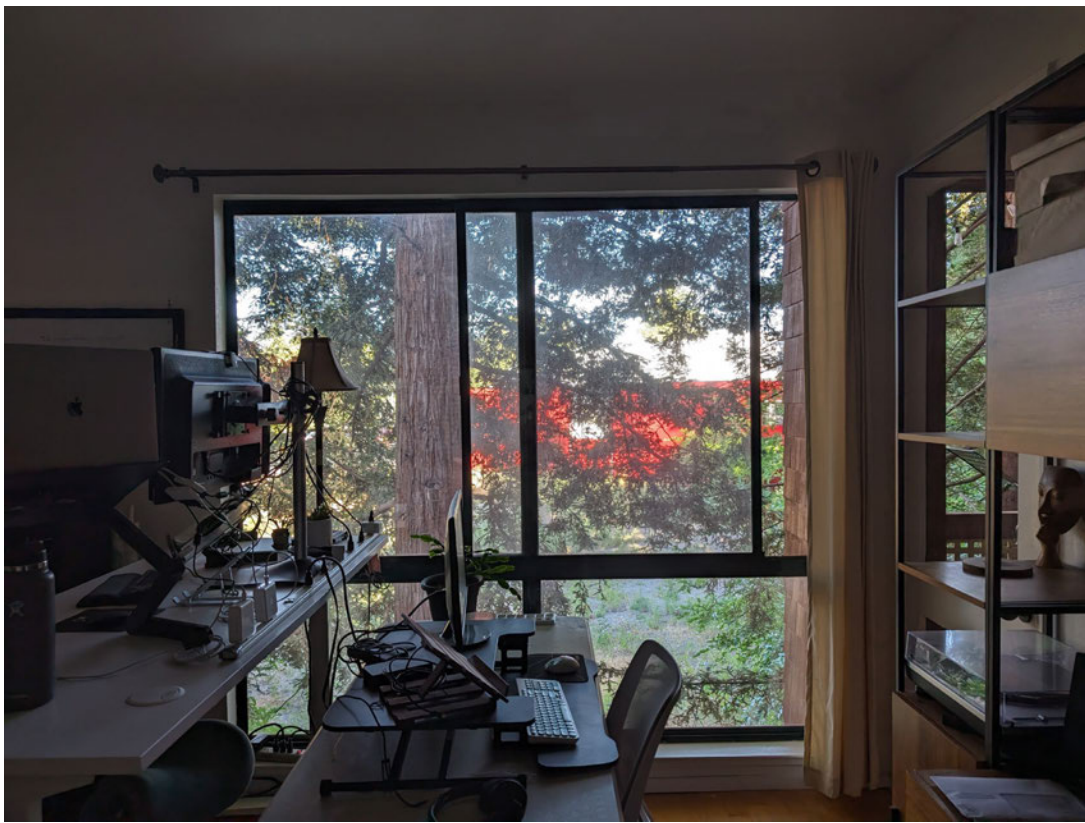


References:

- [0] <https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/files/assets/public/agendas-minutes-reports/agendas-minutes/architectural-review-board/2020/arb-7.2-4260-ecr.pdf>
- [1] <https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/Departments/Planning-Development-Services/Architectural-Review-Board-ARB>









**From:** [Flora Moreno de Thompson](#)  
**To:** [Architectural Review Board](#)  
**Subject:** Please support new homes at 660 University Ave without delay!  
**Date:** Tuesday, June 11, 2024 5:02:40 PM

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Palo Alto Palo Alto Commissioners,

I am writing to express my wholehearted support for the proposed 63-unit housing project at 660 University Ave. As a resident of this vibrant community, I am thrilled about the prospect of welcoming such a valuable addition to our city.

The proposed housing project offers an incredible opportunity to enhance our downtown area. One of the most exciting aspects of this project is its proximity to downtown amenities and the Caltrain station. Having housing within walking distance of these essential resources not only promotes a more sustainable and eco-friendly lifestyle but also fosters a stronger sense of community among residents.

Furthermore, as a resident who cherishes the unique character of Palo Alto, I believe that the addition of more housing options will only enrich our city. Palo Alto is in dire need of housing, and this project presents a timely solution to address this pressing issue. The project has been in the pipeline for over 3 years which is a testament to the developer's patience and commitment to providing more housing to the downtown area. They have also included more lower-tiered-income housing than what is required by the city. Access to low-income housing is vital to make the downtown area accessible to more people, ensuring that individuals from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds can partake in and contribute to our community.

In conclusion, I urge you to support this housing project for the betterment of our community without further delay! By embracing initiatives that promote sustainability, inclusivity, and affordability, we can ensure that Palo Alto continues to thrive as a dynamic and welcoming place to live.

Thank you!

Flora Moreno de Thompson

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

San Jose, California 95112



**From:** [Dylan O'Connell](#)  
**To:** [Architectural Review Board](#)  
**Subject:** Please support new homes at 660 University Ave without delay!  
**Date:** Wednesday, June 12, 2024 10:17:34 AM

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Palo Alto Palo Alto Commissioners,

I am writing in support of the proposed housing project at 660 University Ave. As a nearby resident, I am excited about the positive impact this development will have on my community.

Its location is ideal, and this is a small but critical step towards the city's sustainability goals. I am troubled by how long this project has been in the pipeline, and I do not want it to be stuck a day longer than it needs to—we badly need more housing, and we need it fast.

I strongly urge you to support this project. Thank you!

-Dylan O'Connell

Dylan O'Connell

[REDACTED]

Mountain View, California 94040





**From:** [Heather Stewart](#)  
**To:** [Architectural Review Board](#)  
**Subject:** Support new homes at 660 University Ave!  
**Date:** Thursday, June 13, 2024 3:12:45 PM

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Palo Alto Palo Alto Commissioners,

I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for the proposed housing project at 660 University Ave in downtown Palo Alto. This project will be a tremendous asset to the community and the region as a whole.

I am a homeowner and live less than a mile from this proposed project. I strongly support more housing density in Palo Alto. I would like to see our political leaders take action to make Palo Alto more sustainable and inclusive with more housing stock, improve housing choice for residents and newcomers, and bring more vibrancy to downtown. Not building more housing (multimillion dollar single family homes don't count) is not an option.

The addition of 63 units to the area is a beacon of hope in addressing Palo Alto's pressing housing shortage. The project's proximity to downtown amenities, including Caltrain station and ample bike parking, makes the project an attractive place to live, while promoting environmental sustainability.

Moreover, I am particularly impressed by the project's commitment to inclusivity. Setting aside 20 percent of the units for lower-tiered affordable housing showcases a dedication to providing opportunities for individuals from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds to thrive in the community. By prioritizing affordable housing and urban development, we can create more sustainable and inclusive communities for everyone. It is necessary for Palo Alto to expand housing options and accommodate the needs of a growing population and I urge you to take action by supporting this project with no further delay.

I look forward to witnessing the short term and long term positive impacts that this project will have on Palo Alto and the surrounding community. Thank you.

Heather Stewart  


Palo Alto, California 94301



**From:** [Amie Ashton](#)  
**To:** [Council, City; Planning Commission; Architectural Review Board; Human Relations Commission; PABAC](#)  
**Subject:** Foundations of Affordable Housing  
**Date:** Thursday, June 27, 2024 12:28:34 PM  
**Attachments:** [Palo Alto Foundations of Affordable Housing \(1\).png](#)  
[Social Media Square Image.png](#)

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Honorable Council, Commission, and Board Members,

You are invited to join members of the community on **Thursday, July 18 at 6:00 p.m. at Avenidas** (or online via Zoom) for an evening dedicated to discussing facts, myths, and concerns related to affordable housing in our community.

**Foundations of Affordable Housing** (presented by [SV@Home](#)) will help eliminate confusion about what affordable housing really is, how it meets community needs, and how it is financed and constructed. Attendees will be better equipped to speak about and advocate for affordable housing (and all housing).

**RSVP for the in-person event at Avenidas**

**here:** <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/928289548027?aff=oddtcreator>

**RSVP for the Zoom event here:** <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/928296117677?aff=oddtcreator>

Amie Ashton

# Foundations of Affordable Housing

with **sv@home**

Are you concerned about  
homelessness and housing  
affordability, but not sure what the  
solutions may be?

Do you want to be part of making  
your community healthier and more  
vibrant?

Join us for this hybrid  
workshop to learn more about  
Affordable Housing!

Register today!

Open to all,  
free of charge



**Thursday July 18th**



**6:00 pm**



**Zoom, or Avenidas  
450 Bryant Street, Palo Alto**

Register for in-person at  
[bit.ly/PA\\_Foundations](https://bit.ly/PA_Foundations)

Register for virtual at  
[bit.ly/PAFoundationsZoom](https://bit.ly/PAFoundationsZoom)

In  
person >



Virtual >



**From:** [Kallas, Emily](#)  
**To:** [Architectural Review Board](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Objection to Palo Alto Commons Extension Plan by 4075 El Camino Way (23PLN-00202) Palo Alto Commons - Architectural Review Board Meeting July 18th  
**Date:** Friday, July 12, 2024 9:36:23 AM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)  
[image002.png](#)

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**From:** Shashank Divekar [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Friday, July 12, 2024 7:09 AM  
**To:** Kallas, Emily <Emily.Kallas@cityofpaloalto.org>  
**Cc:** Jayashree Divekar [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Objection to Palo Alto Commons Extension Plan by 4075 El Camino Way (23PLN-00202) Palo Alto Commons - Architectural Review Board Meeting July 18th

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Hello Emily,

With reference to the attached notice of the City of Palo Alto Architectural Review Board Meeting on July 18, Jayashree and I would like to provide our input to it as residents of 4054 Wilkie Way, Palo Alto, which is our property directly behind and sharing the fence with 4075 El Camino Way-Palo Alto Commons.

We continue to voice our strongest opposition to the planned expansion of 16-18 Assisted Living Units by Palo Alto Commons.

We cite the following reasons for our opposition to the planned expansion:

1. Loss of our house property value
2. Loss of our privacy due to expansion right upto our fence line and overlooking our yard
3. Violation of daylight plane
4. Increase of traffic in our neighborhood.
5. Adverse impact to our standard of living in Palo Alto which is a very treasured and respected community in the Bay Area.
6. Giving the high annual charges to residents of Assisted Living at Palo Alto Commons, they are only acting in their own interests to increase their profits enormously at the cost of the Palo Alto residents on Wilkie Way.

We have expressed our opposition to the Palo Alto Commons expansion at various meetings and forums over the past months as seen by this chain of emails. We therefore don't see the value and purpose of continuing to having more meetings with them as the one planned on July 18th. The adverse impacts to us cited above will not change by holding more and more meetings.

We are very hopeful that the City of Palo Alto will STOP this extremely undesired expansion by Palo Alto Commons and the corporate greed that is demonstrated by it and act in the interest of residents of Palo Alto once and for all.

Sincerely,

Jayashree Divekar  
[REDACTED]

On Monday, June 10, 2024 at 09:15:57 AM PDT, Shashank Divekar <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Hello Emily,

As our input to the City of Palo Alto - Planning and Transportation Commission Meeting and Public Hearing of June 12, 2024, as owners of 4054 Wilkie Way, Palo Alto 94306, we continue to voice our strong opposition to the addition of 18 Assisted Living Units on 4075 El Camino Way aka 23PLN-00202 Palo Alto Commons. The decrease of our property value, because of addition of 18 units so close to our property fence, resulting in loss of Privacy and and adverse impact on our Standard & quality of life and increase of traffic are the important reasons for our strong opposition to this expansion.

We are very hopeful that the City of Palo Alto will STOP this extremely

undesired expansion once and for all.

Sincerely,

Jayashree Divekar

idents of , Palo Alto, CA 94306)

On Wednesday, December 6, 2023 at 04:03:08 PM PST, Kallas, Emily <[emily.kallas@cityofpaloalto.org](mailto:emily.kallas@cityofpaloalto.org)> wrote:

Hi Shashank and Jayashree,

Thank you for your email. It will be included in future staff reports as this project continues to be reviewed.

The story poles or “sticks” are not required by the City, I will see what their expected timeline for removing them will be.

Additionally, the plans were resubmitted yesterday and are available for download here: <https://aca-prod.accela.com/paloalto/Cap/CapDetail.aspx?Module=Planning&TabName=Planning&capID1=23PLN&capID2=00000&capID3=00202&agencyCode=PALOALTO&IsToShowInspection=no>. The main change is that the protrusions into the daylight plane have been substantially removed. In the original plans, the projections was approximately 8ft, now it is less than 2ft. This means the height closest to your property line has been reduced, though it remains 3 stories overall.

Thanks,

Emily



**Emily Kallas, AICP**

Planner

Planning and Development Services Department

(650) 617-3125 | [emily.kallas@cityofpaloalto.org](mailto:emily.kallas@cityofpaloalto.org)

[www.cityofpaloalto.org](http://www.cityofpaloalto.org)

Provide feedback on Planning Development and Administration services

[Parcel Report](#) | [Palo Alto Zoning Code](#) | [Online Permitting System](#) | [Planning Forms & Applications](#) | [Planning Applications Mapped](#)

City Hall and the Development Center will be closed from December 22, 2023 to January 2, 2024 in observance of the winter holidays. Applications will not be accepted or processed during this time and reviews during this period may be delayed.

Our Online Permitting System (OPS) will reopen on Tuesday, January 2, 2024 at 8:00 a.m. Thank you for your patience. We hope you have a wonderful holiday.



From: Shashank Divekar <[REDACTED]>  
Sent: Wednesday, December 6, 2023 11:26 AM  
To: Kallas, Emily <[Emily.Kallas@cityofpaloalto.org](mailto:Emily.Kallas@cityofpaloalto.org)>  
Cc: Jayashree Divekar <[REDACTED]>  
Subject: Objection to Palo Alto Commons Extension Plan

You don't often get email from [shashankdivekar@yahoo.com](mailto:shashankdivekar@yahoo.com). [Learn why this is important](#)

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Hello Emily,

This is regarding the extension plan of Palo Alto Commons to add more stories with the addition of 14 rooms.

We live in a single family home on 4054 Wilkie Way, right behind the Commons. We hereby would like to voice our strong opposition to the plan as it significantly affects the value of the property and our privacy. Adding these 14 rooms would create a tall high rise wall with overlooking balconies right behind our backyard fence. Palo Alto has valued schools, unique and prized houses and a great sense of community. We do not want this to be disrupted. The current existing structures at Palo Alto Commons are already a compromise when they were first constructed. There can be no further compromises.

At the Community outreach meeting, we understood that Charlene Kussner from the Commons would model a two-story addition, and we have heard nothing about that. Her offer seems disingenuous and misleading at this point.

We are also writing to ask about the 2 x 4 wooden structures or "sticks" as Charlene referred to them. If the plans are not approved why are they adding the sticks/wood structure? See attached photos. When can they be taken down? They are oppressive and depressing for us and the noise from the ongoing construction is bothersome. If they are not approved, they are also illegal. We are no longer able to use the backyard to relax anymore or for any other family activities that require privacy. As you can see from the photos, the structures already tower over our backyard.

We understood Councilman Lauing to have said at the study session that the rooms and services at the Commons cost \$225,000.00 per year. That is over \$3,000,000 revenue increase for the Commons with the addition of 14 rooms. Though the city will collect more tax revenue, it does not have to be at the expense of the residents along Wilkie Way and W. Meadow. We are also concerned about increase in visitor traffic on our street due to increased residents in those 14 rooms. It is unfair to us to have our lives and quality of life forever altered because of this extension.

**PLEASE HELP STOP THIS EXTENSION PLAN OF PALO ALTO COMMONS !!**

Sincerely,

Shashank Divekar [REDACTED]

Jayashree Divekar [REDACTED]

**From:** [SYLVIA WILDMANN](#)  
**To:** [Architectural Review Board](#)  
**Subject:** ARB meeting Thursday, July 18 at 8:30am  
**Date:** Tuesday, July 16, 2024 4:01:52 PM

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Dear Board Members,

As a resident of Palo Alto Commons for over five years I would like to participate in the above meeting by zoom. Could you please forward the full zoom link to me by email.

Thank you.

Sylvia Wildmann

PAC #327

[REDACTED]

Palo Alto

[REDACTED]

From: [SYLVIA WILDMANN](#)  
To: [Architectural Review Board](#)  
Subject: Re: Architectural Review Board Automated Response  
Date: Tuesday, July 16, 2024 10:43:40 PM

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Thank you for your prompt reply. I was under the false impression that I could participate at your Thursday's morning zoom meeting.

As a five- year long resident at PAC I would like to make the following remarks about their request of a variance even though I never saw a detailed blueprint, especially of the new project under consideration: Obviously the original building plans almost fifty years ago were approved for a good reason to accommodate a definite number of units to shelter a definite number of residents.

Last year we suffered through eleven months of inconvenience during the demolition and the construction project which added two two bedroom units and lots of height to our "living room" without really adding substantial space. I would like to make it clear that practically no footage was added to our public spaces like our dining room while the number of residents increased by four. Fourteen additional units will add a minimum of 14 and let's say maximum of 20 residents all needing to go to the public places at the same time on the two available elevators. Imagine the chaos when new residents move in with their belongings on the elevators. During construction this past year we were reduced sometimes to the use of only one elevator.

This leads to the main worry: what if the buildings have to be evacuated in an emergency?

Thank you for your kind review.

Sincerely,

Sylvia Wildmann



On 07/16/2024 4:01 PM PDT Architectural Review Board  
<arb@cityofpaloalto.org> wrote:

Thank you for your comments to the Architectural Review Board. Your e-mail will be

forwarded to all Board Members and a printout of your correspondence will also be included in the next available packet.

If your letter mentions a specific complaint or a request for service, we'll either reply with an explanation or else send it on to the appropriate department for clarification.

We appreciate hearing from you.

**From:** [James Porter](#)  
**To:** [Architectural Review Board](#)  
**Subject:** Resident comments on PA Commons Expansion  
**Date:** Tuesday, July 16, 2024 11:41:04 PM

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Dear Architectural Review Board Members,

My name is James Porter. I have lived on Wilkie Way for over 20 years. I am unable to make the meeting in person so I am sending in writing my concerns about the 4075 El Camino Way Palo Alto Commons expansion proposal.

I am supportive of the 7 interior units that might be added, as more housing for seniors is definitely needed. I have repeatedly suggested to Palo Alto Commons that they consider adding more units to the commercial side of the building, which faces El Camino Way. The response was that costs would be higher, as more structural work would need to be done. Unfortunately, the majority of the proposed units are 2 story additions to the back of the facility, which already sits within 10 feet of our back fence.

I am opposed to these back units due to the elimination of stepback caused by adding higher units closer to the lot line. Right now, the mass of the building is staggered so the higher portions of the building are further from us. The proposed project would move the mass of the building forward toward houses on Wilkie by building upward less than 20 feet from the back fence and further erode our sense of space and separation.

The increased mass would reduce our direct and indirect light. It's not just shading impact. We will see less blue sky due to the project. Our kids enjoy our backyard but we fear will spend less time there as the view of the sky is blocked out.

I am also concerned about decreased privacy of adding so many units 20 to 30 feet off the ground facing our yard. My teenage daughter is also very worried.

In addition, I appreciate the valuable and thorough research that our neighbor Kevin Ji has done on many potential inconsistencies of the expansion plans with the City's Municipal Code. He will present them on behalf of many neighbors at the 7/18 ARB meeting. I have talked with him about his concerns, and I agree with them.

I urge the ARB to consider asking Palo Alto Commons to focus more effort on increasing the number of internal additional rooms and units facing El Camino Way instead of units protruding out the back. For proposed units facing the residents on Wilkie Way, I conclude by reiterating my opposition.

Sincerely,  
James Porter





**From:** [Lily Lee](#)  
**To:** [Architectural Review Board](#); [Kallas, Emily](#)  
**Subject:** 7/18 ARB Meeting - comments on Action item 2: 4075 El Camino Way  
**Date:** Wednesday, July 17, 2024 1:19:51 AM

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Dear Architectural Review Board members and Planner Emily Kallas,

Thank you for sending us information about the ARB meeting Thursday, July 18.

I have lived at 4080 Wilkie Way since 2003 and raised my children here. I submitted comments already before the June 12, 2024, Planning and Transportation Commission (PTC) meeting. I believe you already have those, so I will not repeat those concerns. However, I would like to add a few more thoughts.

I very much support more senior assisted living facilities. Our seniors are precious and deserve to have the opportunity for services that support their well-being. Therefore, I support construction of 7 additional interior units. Furthermore, I would also support adding units on the El Camino Way side of the building. I know that these units would likely lead to more traffic and parking impacts, but I can accept those negative impacts as a trade-off for the benefit of the seniors who could find homes.

However, I ask the ARB to contribute your expert knowledge to help the applicant achieve benefits to seniors without harming the Wilkie Way neighbors. I appreciate the valuable and thorough research that our neighbor Kevin Ji has done on many potential inconsistencies of the expansion plans with the City's Municipal Code. He will present them on behalf of many neighbors at the July 18 ARB meeting. I have talked with him about his concerns, and I agree with them. Even though our community could benefit from increased senior housing, the new development should honor the existing municipal code that requires "Low-Density Residential Transitions" (18.16.090 (b)(4), and [18.13.060 \(b\)\(2\)](#) respectively), which states,

*Where new projects are built abutting existing lower-scale residential development, care shall be taken to respect the scale and privacy of neighboring properties through:*

*<!--[if !supportLists]--> <!--[endif]-->Massing and orientation of buildings that respect and mirror the massing of neighboring structures by stepping back upper stories to transition to smaller scale buildings, including setbacks and daylight planes that match abutting R-1 and R-2 zone requirements*

*<!--[if !supportLists]--> <!--[endif]-->Respecting privacy of neighboring structures and minimizing sight lines into and from neighboring properties*

*<!--[if !supportLists]--> <!--[endif]-->Limiting sun and shade impacts on abutting properties*

Below are more thoughts about my concerns, beyond what I previously wrote:

**<!--[if !supportLists]-->• <!--[endif]-->Privacy** – At the June 12 PTC meeting, I heard Commissioners ask that the ARB recommend designs that do not compromise privacy. I believe the best way would be designs that would not increase the windows that would enable more eyes on our backyard, especially since I have children.

**<!--[if !supportLists]-->• <!--[endif]-->Shade** – Since 2003 when I moved in, I have attempted to grow many plants in the backyard, but they mostly die due to the heavy shade. My next door neighbors have the same concerns and have planted elaborate front yard gardens that provide flowers and food.

**<!--[if !supportLists]-->• <!--[endif]-->Visual impact** – I find the current building unattractive, and it visually dominates the view out of our backyard. Any additional units in the back would make that worse. Screening vegetation could help, balanced against additional shade impacts.

Your architectural expertise can help the applicant expand these senior services in a manner that complies with City requirements and minimizes these and other harmful effects on neighbors. I recommend that the ARB request that the applicant return with a revised design that reduces impacts on neighbors through these means:

<!--[if !supportLists]-->• <!--[endif]-->I asked the applicant if they could build additional units on the front of the building. The applicant responded that doing so would be costly and might require waiving some requirements, but it is technically possible. Additional proposed units should be either interior or on the front instead of the back of the building.

<!--[if !supportLists]-->• <!--[endif]-->No new windows should look down on the existing neighbors, whose privacy is already compromised.

<!--[if !supportLists]-->• <!--[endif]-->Setbacks are already less than 20 feet. I am not asking the applicant to destroy existing structures, but for any new construction, setbacks should be 20 ft.

<!--[if !supportLists]-->• <!--[endif]-->Daylight plane should be 3/6, not 45 degrees.

<!--[if !supportLists]-->• <!--[endif]-->Landscape improvements that increase screening while minimizing incremental shade

Thank you very much for considering these comments.

Sincerely,

Lily Lee

**From:** [Natalie C](#)  
**To:** [Architectural Review Board](#); [Kallas, Emily](#)  
**Subject:** 7/18 ARB Meeting - neighborhood comments on Action item 2: 4075 El Camino Way  
**Date:** Wednesday, July 17, 2024 4:03:53 PM

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Dear Architectural Review Board members and Emily Kallas,

We are James and Natalie Cham, residents of 4076 Wilkie Way in Palo Alto for almost 15 years. We've raised our children in this neighborhood, and we're writing to oppose the current project at 4075 El Camino Way, known as the Palo Alto Commons.

While we understand the importance of assisted living facilities in our community, we believe that the proposed expansion could be implemented in a way that is more considerate of the surrounding neighborhood. We would like to encourage Palo Alto Commons to be a "Good Neighbor" and minimize the impact on Wilkie Way residents by building towards El Camino Way instead of placing the majority of their proposed units towards Wilkie Way.

Our primary concerns about the proposed expansion are:

1. **Reduced Privacy and Sunlight:** A three-story building with only a 10 ft setback as proposed would tower over our small single-family home, infringing on our privacy and significantly reducing the natural sunlight in our backyard. The current design violates the 3/6 required daylight plane and has significant daylight impacts. In fact, the building as is already casts quite a lot of shade. Based on the staff report, every unit along the Wilkie Way property line has at least one window facing our houses. In addition, the current proposed units are closer to us than either commercial or residential zoning would normally allow.
2. **Parking and Traffic:** Palo Alto Commons says that they will add 12-18 units without an increase in parking because "it is not needed as their residents don't drive". This seems disingenuous. Visitors and private aides still attend patients, and parking on our street is very crowded on a daily basis. Over the years, we've observed an increasing lack of parking, with numerous nursing aides and others parking and walking over to Palo Alto Commons. Sometimes people nap or hang out in their cars during the day while waiting for their shifts to start. Adding more units would exacerbate this.
3. **Lower Property Values:** As a large commercial building which looms over the backyard, the expansion would negatively impact our property value.
4. **Violation of Law:** This project violates various city municipal code sections, but is asking for exceptions.
5. **Unfair Neighborhood Burden:** They could choose to build with less impact on Wilkie Way by adding units that face El Camino Way. Our neighborhood has historically been more diverse and lower income than the rest of Palo Alto, with small, low houses, some of which were former agricultural workers' quarters, along Wilkie Way itself. Palo Alto Commons is run by a for-profit corporation from Utah, with little stake in the character of our local community, or the relationships between neighbors. Despite being asked numerous times, they have not provided visibility into their economics, or the cost/profit of their choosing to build where it would most

negatively impact long-term local residents.

We acknowledge the need for assisted living facilities, but we believe there are alternative solutions that could meet this need while respecting the historically diverse character of our neighborhood. We encourage Palo Alto Commons to consider expanding towards El Camino Way instead of Wilkie Way, which they could easily do.

We hope that a compromise can be reached that addresses the needs of Palo Alto Commons while preserving the quality of life for Wilkie Way residents, since the current proposed plan actually makes living on Wilkie Way less desirable.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration of our perspective on this matter.

Sincerely, James and Natalie Cham

**From:** [jenny.chen](#)  
**To:** [Architectural Review Board](#)  
**Subject:** Opposition to the proposed expansion project at 4075 El Camino Way  
**Date:** Wednesday, July 17, 2024 9:21:19 PM

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Dear Architectural Review Board Members,

My name is Jenny Chen, a resident of Wilkie Way. I am writing to strongly oppose the proposed expansion project at 4075 El Camino Way in its current form.

I echo my neighbors' concerns regarding violations of the "Low-Density Residential Transitions" guidelines, including significant daylight impacts and privacy issues that this project would introduce.

Additionally, I would like to highlight the issue of Floor Area Ratio (FAR). The proposed expansion exacerbates the existing problem of FAR excess. Currently, the property has an FAR of 1.18:1, which already exceeds the CN FAR standard of 0.9:1. The proposed increase in density will further worsen parking and traffic congestion in our neighborhood. With the addition of 6,895 square feet, the FAR would escalate to 1.25:1, resulting in detrimental consequences for our community's quality of life and property values.

While this for-profit, Utah-based company stands to make significant revenue, the residents of Wilkie Way and the Ventura district will face lowered home values and a diminished quality of life.

I also support my neighbors' proposed alternatives (Good Neighbor Option and El Camino Alternative) to the current plan.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Jenny Chen

**From:** [Kevin Ji](#)  
**To:** [Architectural Review Board](#)  
**Cc:** [Kallas, Emily](#)  
**Subject:** 7/18 ARB Meeting Comments on 4075 El Camino Way  
**Date:** Wednesday, July 17, 2024 11:42:34 PM

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**CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Be cautious of opening attachments and clicking on links.**

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Hello ARB commissioners,

My name is Kevin Ji. I'm a lifelong resident of 4072 Wilkie Way, having gone to Fairmeadow, Terman, Gunn, and Stanford. I'm here speaking on behalf of my neighbors and other community members in opposition to the 4075 El Camino Way project in its current form.

#### Purpose of the ARB

As defined in Palo Alto Municipal code 18.76.020 (a), part of the purpose of the Architectural review is to "Enhance the desirability of residence or investment in the city" and "Enhance the desirability of living conditions upon the immediate site or in adjacent areas". My neighbors and I are of the opinion that this project does neither. Rather, it significantly reduces the desirability of living as adjacent to this project.

#### Daylight Plane

First, I want to set some background. As defined by both state and local code and cited in the staff report, this project's senior assisted living facilities are considered commercial use. Specifically, they do NOT qualify as housing under RHNA standards. As such, they should be following the rules of commercial development. Palo Alto Municipal code 18.38.150 clearly determines the correct daylight plane angle as a 3/6 angle with a 10ft setback for commercial builds. We strongly disagree with staff's assertion that the 45° angle should be used.

In addition, staff is suggesting that part of the rationale for this is based on an old PC from 1987. What is the point of defining new more accurate standards if we are just going to ignore them. In addition, I want to add that even if this project were to be considered housing (which I will reiterate that I disagree with), the setback should be 20ft, while the current applicants' design shows only a 10ft setback. It is wholly unfair to just cherry pick the rules that benefit you the most (which in this case, is the 10ft setback for commercial buildings and 45° angle for residential buildings). The result is that the proposed units are closer to us than any commercial or residential unit would normally!



## ARB Required Review by PAMC

Now, I want to discuss how this project violates the findings section as defined in Palo Alto municipal code 18.76.020 (d), which states: “Neither the director, nor the city council on appeal, shall grant architectural review approval, unless it is found that each of the following applicable findings is met:”

I will go through several criteria I believe this project violates.

First, I would like to call your attention 2(c), which is this project must be “consistent with the context-based design criteria of the applicable zone district,” and 2(d), which is this project must “Provides harmonious transitions in scale, mass and character to adjacent land uses and land use designations,” .

Regardless of whether these are considered as commercial buildings or multi-family residential units, the municipal code requires “Low-Density Residential Transitions” (18.16.090 (b)(4), and [18.13.060 \(b\)\(2\)](#) respectively). It is explicitly stated that:

Where new projects are built abutting existing lower-scale residential development, care shall be taken to respect the scale and privacy of neighboring properties through:

1.  
Massing and orientation of buildings that respect and mirror the massing of neighboring structures by stepping back upper stories to transition to smaller scale buildings, including setbacks and daylight planes that match abutting R-1 and R-2 zone requirements
2.  
Respecting privacy of neighboring structures and minimizing sight lines into and from neighboring properties
3.  
Limiting sun and shade impacts on abutting properties

I will discuss these each individually. The first point discusses stepping back upper stories and transitioning to smaller scale buildings. Currently, the building is stepped back towards Wilkie Way. Every single unit that is proposed to be built along the Wilkie Way property is an infill and will be in violation of these step backs. There would no longer be any transition between a towering 3 story building and our 1 story single family homes.

Next, I will discuss the privacy and sight lines. “Based on the staff report, every unit along the Wilkie Way property line has at least one window facing towards our houses. In addition, the current proposed units are closer to us than either commercial or residential zoning would normally allow. At three stories and so close, it feels as though they are

constantly watching us from above.

Finally, I will discuss the sun and shade impacts. The current design violates the 3/6 required daylight plane and has significant daylight impacts. In fact, the building as is already causes a decent amount of shade impacts. PTC chairwoman Bryna Chang commented that it is unusual to see so many front yard gardens on Wilkie way. The reason for this is that the backyard is already often covered by the immense shade that the existing Palo Alto Commons building causes. I used to garden with my grandparents in my backyard, and with the current building, it was already relatively difficult. With this new proposed construction, I believe I will not be able to in the future.

Having discussed sections 2(C) and 2(D) of the findings, I want to wrap up with 2(E) which says this project should “Enhances living conditions on the site (if it includes residential uses) and in adjacent residential areas.”.

Based on the significant daylight and privacy impacts mentioned previously, I can confidently say that every single neighbor would say that this project does not enhance our residential area. It causes significant detriment.

Collectively, all of these sections of the municipal code are in severe violation with this project. The law is here to protect the residents and we should not move forward with this project that both violates the law and reduces our quality of life.

## Palo Alto Comprehensive Plan

Next, I would like to call your attention to the specific Palo Alto Comprehensive Plan Policies that this project violates:

Policy L1.7: “address connectivity to and compatibility with adjacent residential areas; and include broad community involvement in the planning process”. The Wilkie Way community has been involved and against the project design, as it is not compatible with our single family adjacent residential area.

Policy L3.1: “Ensure that new or remodeled structures are compatible with the neighborhood and adjacent structures.”. And

Policy L6.1: “Promote high-quality design and site planning that is compatible with surrounding development and public spaces.

Again, this project isn't compatible.

Policy 6.7: “avoid abrupt changes in scale and density between residential and non-residential areas and between residential areas of different densities.” This is why the step

backs are in place, as to avoid such abrupt changes in scale and density.

Policy L6.8 “ Support existing regulations that preserve exposure to natural light for single-family residences”. This one seems clear as day, pun intended. This project is violating the very code that serves to protect natural sunlight for residents.

#### Counterpoint Acknowledgement

Having said this, I want to acknowledge the importance of senior assisted living to a community. However, this does not justify a for-profit Utah-based company to reduce our quality of life by building in violation of our town’s municipal code.

We have tried to discuss potential alternatives that both minimize disruption to residents and follow the current municipal code. One such option, called the “Good Neighbor Option”, involves building just the 7 units that do not face the Wilkie Way property line. This would not disrupt the current step-back formation and have no shade impact. This would also not violate the current municipal code guidance on daylight planes, which the current plans do.

Another option we have suggested in the “El Camino Alternative”. This would involve building additional units facing El Camino Way and away from the Wilkie Way property line. So far, the Palo Alto Commons have been wary about this for two reasons.

First, they said they would need certain exemptions to build on that side. As of right now, they need exemptions already for their current plan, such as floor-area ratio, so this reason doesn’t seem to have merit.

The second reason is that it would be costly. The cost of living in one of these units can be up to \$300K per year! With this kind of revenue, I imagine the net cost of building on the El Camino side is negligible. However, the Palo Alto Commons has not been transparent on the cost difference, as well as with any designs for this potential option.

Like the “Good Neighbor Option”, the El Camino Alternative would not disrupt the current step-back formation. However, I cannot comment on the shade and daylight plane impacts, as I have been unable to see any designs with this alternative.

This option is also in alignment with the aesthetic of the El Camino corridor. This project is a commercial project, and with additional development on El Camino, such as the North Venture Coordinated Area Plan, having additional units on the El Camino side seems reasonable.

The Palo Alto Commons has not been receptive to either of these two compromise options.

#### Conclusion

As I wrap up, I want to focus back on the purpose of architectural review: to make sure that each project makes its immediate surroundings and Palo Alto at large a desirable place to live. I can confidently tell you that this project, with its daylight impacts, privacy concerns, and inharmonious density transitions, not to mention municipal code and comprehensive plan violations, make Wilkie Way and Palo Alto a worse place to live. While we are sympathetic to the need for additional senior housing, we have proposed two different alternatives to the current plan that we believe should be considered that follow good design principles. The profit of this Utah-based for-profit company should not be earned on the backs of the Wilkie Way residents. Thank you for your time.