
ATTACHMENT B
ARB FINDINGS FOR APPROVAL & SIGN EXCEPTION

525 University Avenue/23PLN-00308
530 Lytton Avenue/23PLN-00311

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

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

The project is consistent with Finding #1 because:

The design is consistent and compatible with the applicable elements of the city's Comprehensive Plan in that the proposed project is consistent with policy L-6.10: Encourage high quality signage that is attractive, energy-efficient, and appropriate for the location, and balances visibility needs with aesthetic needs. The design of the signs, materials, and colors are attractive and appropriate for the building and the surrounding area.

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

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

The project is consistent with Finding #2 because:

This finding can be made in the affirmative in that the proposed design of the signage is appropriate for the downtown office tower setting. The proposed signage uses consistent materials and colors that is unified and coherent between the two sites.

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

The project is consistent with Finding #3 because:

The project incorporates high quality materials, and replaces existing mis-matched signage with a cohesive set. The proposed materials include perforated and solid aluminum, with push-through acrylic

lettering. The colors are black, gray, and white, which is appropriate to the modern architecture of the buildings and appropriately blend in with the surrounding area.

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

The project is consistent with Finding #4 because:

The intent of the design is to provide functional directional assistance throughout the building and to assist with pedestrian safety. The two directory signs allow people to know what businesses are in the buildings. The parking signs at each of the two garage entrances include “car coming” warning systems to help protect pedestrians and bicyclists crossing in front of the garage entries. The two monument signs provide pedestrian-scale identifying address markers.

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

The project is consistent with Finding #5 because:

Finding #5 is not applicable for this project. There is no landscaping that would be impacted by the proposed signage. Landscaping was previously reviewed by Staff under 21PLN-00209.

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

The project is consistent with Finding #6 because:

The proposed sign is made of durable long-lasting materials. Although the signs are illuminated, lighting is the minimum necessary to provide for wayfinding after dark and is either limited to the lettering itself, partially shielded by the materials, or provided as small lights directed on the sign itself to avoid light spillover.

Sign Exception

The proposed signs that exceed code requirements comply with the Findings for Sign Exception as required in PAMC Chapter 16.20.040 .

The specific exceptions are requested for the following standards:

525 University

- Freestanding Directory Sign – exceeds allowed sign area for non-business name portions of a directory sign (6sf where 4 sf are allowed) in order to provide the site address
- Wall Property ID Sign (address sign)-Exceeds the height of the wall on which it is located upon
- Parking ID Sign – exceeds allowed sign area and height of a directional sign
- Parking Directional Sign – 7.63 sf where 3 sf is allowed

530 Lytton

- Freestanding Directory Sign – exceeds allowed sign area for non-business name portions of a directory sign
- Building Projecting Parking Sign (Blade Sign) – exceeds allowed sign area and height of a blade sign, in a location where they are not normally permitted
- Parking ID Sign (directional wall sign) – 69.8 sf where 6 sf is allowed

1. There are exceptional or extraordinary circumstances or conditions applicable to the property involved that do not apply generally to property in the same district;

The existing buildings are in the commercial downtown area, the building at 525 University is California Register of Historic Resources eligible, but not currently listed. The two buildings create an office campus environment that is unique to the downtown area and that encompasses the entire block between Cowper Street and Tasso Street, and University Avenue and Lytton Avenue. Therefore, the building façades are significantly larger than most other buildings within the downtown area. They also have unique mid-block entrances to the below grade parking garage, with tall retaining walls even when the ramp reaches grade. The size of the two parking signs are appropriate for wayfinding based on the size of the driveways and the need for the signs to be visible for both drivers, bikers, and pedestrians.

The two directory signs function as both monument signs with the building addresses, and directory signs listing the businesses within the buildings. If the directory signs were reduced, monument signs would still be desired, leading to additional signs being added. The scale of the directory signs are appropriate to the scale of the building.

2. The granting of the application is necessary for the preservation and enjoyment of a substantial property right of the applicant and to prevent unreasonable property loss or unnecessary hardships;

The granting of this application is necessary for the preservation and enjoyment of a substantial property right of the tenant to have appropriately scaled signage for safety in the parking entrances, and to provide site identification signage that is appropriate based on the size of the building and that does not detract from the potential historic nature of the property.

3. The granting of the application will not be detrimental or injurious to property or improvements in the vicinity and will not be detrimental to the public health, safety, general welfare or convenience.

The project will be constructed in accordance with all building code requirements of the City of Palo Alto and will be neither detrimental nor injurious to surrounding properties, public health, safety, general welfare, or convenience. The signage reduces the overall number of signs at the site and unifies the signage across two adjacent properties.