



## Architectural Review Board Staff Report

**From: Jonathan Lait, Planning and Development Services Director**  
**Lead Department: Planning and Development Services**

**Meeting Date: December 21, 2023**  
**Report #: 2311-2196**

### TITLE

PUBLIC HEARING / QUASI-JUDICIAL. **824 San Antonio Road [23PLN-00181]**: Consideration of a Major Architectural Review to Allow the Construction of a New four-story mixed-use building with 28 dwelling units and 2,694 sf of retail space. Fifteen units will be independent senior living, twelve will be assisted senior living, and one owner's unit. On site amenities include two common outdoor open spaces, a dining facility, and common indoor space. Environmental Assessment: The Project is Being Evaluated for Consistency with the Previously Certified Housing Incentive Program Expansion and 788 San Antonio Mixed Use Project Environmental Impact Report (SCH # 2019090070). Zoning District: CS (Commercial Services). For More Information Contact the Project Planner Emily Kallas at [Emily.Kallas@Cityofpaloalto.org](mailto:Emily.Kallas@Cityofpaloalto.org).

### RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Architectural Review Board (ARB) take the following action(s):

1. Provide feedback on the proposed project and continue to a date uncertain.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The proposed Housing Incentive Program (HIP) project includes a new four-story mixed-use building with 28 dwelling units. Fifteen of the units will be independent senior living, and 12 will be assisted senior living, plus one owner's unit. On site amenities include two common outdoor open spaces, a dining facility, and indoor common space. The ground floor also has two retail spaces and a café space, for a total of 2,922 sf of retail. Twenty-nine (29) parking spaces would be provided in a below-grade garage.

The purpose of this hearing is to obtain early feedback from board members on the proposed design, as several departments have comments that have not yet been addressed. Staff is also in the process of evaluating the project to confirm that it is consistent with the previously certified EIR for projects in the Housing Incentive Program area along San Antonio.

The project does not currently meet all of the City’s Objective Design Standards, but should it be revised to meet these, the project could then use the City’s streamlined housing development review process set forth in PAMC 18.77.073.

**BACKGROUND**

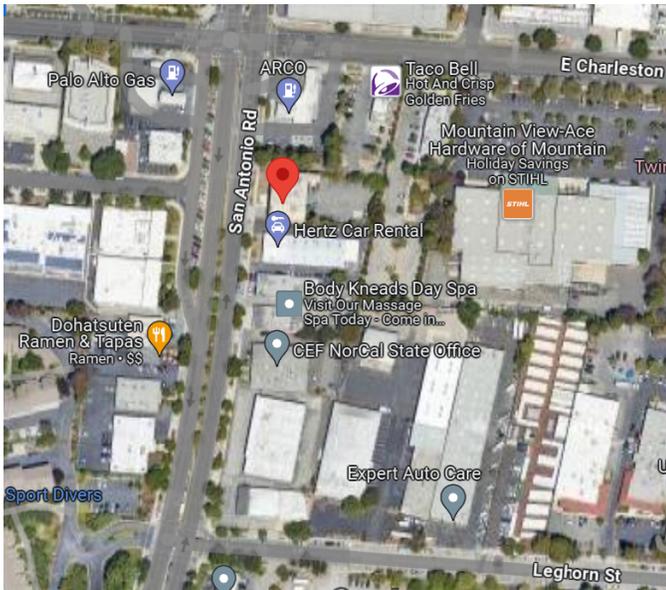
Project Information

Owner:	Rachelle Cagampan, LLC
Architect:	Athena Carter, Architects Fora
Representative:	N/A
Legal Counsel:	N/A

Property Information

Address:	824 San Antonio Road
Neighborhood:	South side of San Antonio Road; The Greenhouse residential neighborhood is on the north side of San Antonio Road
Lot Dimensions & Area:	Trapezoid shape, approximately 89 feet by 239-249 feet. 21,780 sf lot area
Housing Inventory Site:	No
Located w/in a Plume:	No
Protected/Heritage Trees:	Yes, 7 protected redwood trees
Historic Resource(s):	None
Existing Improvement(s):	8,692 sf; 2 stories; 33 ft tall; 1986
Existing Land Use(s):	Commercial Services (Boxing Gym)
Adjacent Land Uses & Zoning:	North: CS (gas station) West: City of Mountain View (restaurant, parking lot) East: GM (offices) South: CS (car rental)

Aerial View of Property:



Source: Google

**Land Use Designation & Applicable Plans**

Zoning Designation:	Commercial Service
Comp. Plan Designation:	Service Commercial
Context-Based Design Criteria:	Yes
Downtown Urban Design Guide:	N/A
South of Forest Avenue Coordinated Area Plan:	N/A
Baylands Master Plan:	N/A
El Camino Real Design Guidelines (1976 / 2002):	N/A
Proximity to Residential Uses or Districts (150'):	No
Located w/in the Airport Influence Area:	N/A

**Prior City Reviews & Action**

City Council:	None
PTC:	None
HRB:	None

ARB: Preliminary ARB reviewed on 9/15/22.<sup>1</sup> Minutes from the hearing are available online<sup>2</sup>

The following table summarizes the key feedback from board members during the preliminary review study session and the modifications that were incorporated into the current plan set based on that feedback.

Key Comments	Modifications to the Current Plans
The Colors/materials are too dark	Compared to the preliminary review, the masonry material has been removed, and white fiber cement board is proposed instead of dark gray stucco. The metal shade screens have also been changed to white. Additional wood siding has been added to the ground floor. However, the green/planted screen element has been removed from the front façade
The rear yard needs further design and usability consideration	Programming of this space has been clarified, it includes hardscape with furniture, a bocce ball court, perimeter trees, and a bioswale
The balconies are very close to the setbacks and side setbacks should be at least 5 ft	Balconies have been recessed into the building to maintain setbacks and to increase privacy. This slightly reduced the unit sizes.
There was an expressed desire for increased landscaping, while also considering good access to daylight	A roof deck amenity has been added to the rear half of the roof, with a large trellis, planters, and patio furniture
Board members acknowledged that a build-to line may not be appropriate here	The build-to line requirement is being met on the upper floors, with additional space for circulation on the ground level

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The proposed project includes demolition of an existing two-story building, and construction of a new four-story mixed-use building with 28 dwelling units. Fifteen (15) will be independent senior living, 12 will be assisted senior living, and one will be an owner’s unit. All units will meet the definition of a housing unit for Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) purposes. On site amenities include two common outdoor open spaces, a dining facility, and common indoor space.

<sup>1</sup> The Staff Report for the 824 San Antonio Preliminary Review is available online at: <https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/files/assets/public/v/1/agendas-minutes-reports/agendas-minutes/architectural-review-board/2022/arb-09.15.2022-public-agenda.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Meeting Minutes from the September 15, 2022 ARB hearing are available online at: <https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/files/assets/public/v/1/agendas-minutes-reports/agendas-minutes/architectural-review-board/2022/arb-10.20.2022-minutes-09.15.22.pdf>

The ground floor also has two retail spaces and a café space, for a total of 2,694 sf of retail. Twenty-nine (29) parking spaces are provided in the below-grade garage.

This applicant has indicated that the project is intended to be fully code compliant, including meeting the Objective Design Standards. However, at the time of writing this report, there are several objective standards that have not been met and there are modifications required to meet various department comments. The project may be redesigned to comply with the objective standards or, In lieu of meeting the Objective Design Standards, the project may be evaluated against the Context-Based Design Criteria.

Requested Entitlements, Findings and Purview:

The following discretionary applications are being requested:

- Architectural Review – Major (AR): The process for evaluating this type of application is set forth in PAMC 18.77.070. AR applications are reviewed by the ARB and recommendations are forwarded to the Planning & Community Environment Director for action within five business days of the Board’s recommendation. Action by the Director is appealable to the City Council if filed within 14 days of the decision. AR projects are evaluated against specific findings. All findings must be made in the affirmative to approve the project. Failure to make any one finding requires project redesign or denial. The findings to approve an AR application are provided in Attachment C.

In the event the project is revised to meet all Objective Design Standards in PAMC Chapter 18.24, the streamlined housing development review process set forth in PAMC 18.77.073 would apply instead of PAMC 18.77.070.

**ANALYSIS**

Neighborhood Setting and Character

This project is located on San Antonio Road, near the proposed 800-814 San Antonio project and at the opposite end of the block from the approved 788 San Antonio project (see existing and proposed streetscape diagrams on plan sheet PA4.1). As a result, the neighborhood character is rapidly changing as projects take advantage of the Housing Incentive Program (HIP) and the Planned Home Zoning (PHZ) process. The existing single-story car rental building to the south and the gas station to the north are both single story commercial uses that are not current proposed to be redeveloped.

Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan, Area Plans and Guidelines<sup>3</sup>

The Comprehensive Plan includes Goals, Policies, and Programs that guide the physical form of the City. The Comprehensive Plan provides the basis for the City’s development regulations and is used by City staff to regulate building and development and make recommendations on

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<sup>3</sup> The Palo Alto Comprehensive Plan is available online:  
<http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/gov/topics/projects/landuse/compplan.asp>

projects. Further, ARB Finding #1 requires that the design be consistent and compatible with applicable elements of the Palo Alto Comprehensive Plan.

The Comprehensive Plan land use designation for the project site is Service Commercial. This includes “Facilities providing citywide and regional services and relying on customers arriving by car. Typical uses include auto services and dealerships, motels, lumberyards, appliance stores and restaurants, including fast service types. In some locations, residential and mixed-use projects may be appropriate in this land use category. Examples of Service Commercial areas include San Antonio Road, El Camino Real and Embarcadero Road northeast of the Bayshore Freeway. Non-residential FARs will range up to 0.4. Consistent with the Comprehensive Plan’s encouragement of housing near transit centers, higher density multi-family housing may be allowed in specific locations.”

This project is located on San Antonio Road where mixed-use projects are anticipated. There is 2,922 sf of commercial space, or 0.15 FAR, which is consistent with the allowable FAR under this land use designation. The project is consistent with the policies in the Comprehensive Plan and therefore fulfills the goals of the Plan as well. In particular, the Land Use Element and Housing Element include policy L-2.3 which encourages diverse housing types, including senior housing, as well as Policy 5.1, which encourages the creation of housing, especially for specific uses such as for seniors.

Zoning Compliance<sup>4</sup>

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

*Outdoor Space*

Primary outdoor space for the units is provided in the rear yard open space (approximately 1,800 sf), second floor redwood reflection garden courtyard (1,268 sf) and the rooftop garden (1,450 sf). This exceeds the minimum requirements for 150 sf of useable open space per unit, as the CS district does not require separate private or common open spaces. However, most of the independent units also have private balconies. These balconies are only 5’4” in depth and therefore cannot be counted towards provided open space. ARB may consider if this area is functional for residents, or if it should be increased to 6 feet.

*Compliance with Objective Design Standards*

The applicant has provided information on how the project complies with the Objective Design Standards on page PA11.8 of the plan set. However, staff notes that the following Objective Design Standards (PAMC 18.24) do not appear to have been met:

- The plans show no street trees. One street tree must be provided for every 30 linear feet of street frontage (i.e. three (3) street trees)
- Screening of the loading space needs clarification

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<sup>4</sup> The Palo Alto Zoning Code is available online: [http://www.amlegal.com/codes/client/palo-alto\\_ca](http://www.amlegal.com/codes/client/palo-alto_ca)

- The project does not meet the setbacks or daylight plane for buildings which are 20 feet taller than adjacent buildings
- Glazing within 40 feet of adjacent buildings has not been analyzed. Objective Design Standards state that no more than 15% of the facing façade area shall be windows or other glazing.

### *Materials*

The proposed materials include vertical tongue-in-groove wood paneling at the ground floor and under the soffits and balconies. The primary upper façade material is cream colored Equitone panels. The front and right-side façade have a wood screen element framed in anodized bronze metal. The windows are also a dark bronze aluminum system. The trim separating the floors and the balcony railings are not labeled, but appear to match the metal material. The roofing material is TPO single ply. All of these materials meet the Objective Design Standards. A materials board will be provided at the hearing. A picture of the board is included in Attachment E.

### Multi-Modal Access & Parking

Pedestrian and multi-modal safety has been a point of discussion for other recent projects along San Antonio Road. There is opportunity to utilize some portion of the Special Setback for multi-modal improvements in the future.

On-site parking is provided at a ratio that is slightly less than required. Twenty-nine (29) parking spaces are provided, with 21 for the residences and 8 for the commercial use. However, with 2,922 sf of commercial use, at least 15 parking spaces are required for the commercial space, and more to accommodate eating and drinking uses. Adequate long-term bicycle parking is located in the below grade garage, and short-term bike parking is at street level near the building entrance. Thirty-six (36) bike spaces are required and 52 are being provided.

### Consistency with Application Findings

Staff is seeking feedback from the ARB on the project's overall consistency with the ARB Findings, provided for reference in Attachment C, and where modifications could be made to improve consistency with these findings and/or the Objective Design Standards.

Staff is also interested in the ARB's feedback on the commercial spaces. The square footage of the commercial spaces is less than 3,000 sf and is proposed to be split into three separate spaces. It's unclear whether the shared bathroom area would be sufficient, dependent on the potential uses of the space, which could reduce the useable retail area even further. The ARB's feedback on the design of the space is encouraged.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

The subject project is currently being evaluated in accordance with the authority and criteria contained in the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the State CEQA Guidelines, and the environmental regulations of the City. Staff is reviewing the project for consistency with the previously certified Housing Incentive Program Expansion and 788 San Antonio Mixed-Use

Project EIR (SCH #2019090070). The project would be subject to all relevant mitigation measures required for projects streamlining in accordance with the adopted Environmental Impact Report.

**PUBLIC NOTIFICATION, OUTREACH & COMMENTS**

The Palo Alto Municipal Code requires notice of this public hearing be published in a local paper and mailed to owners and occupants of property within 600 feet of the subject property at least ten days in advance. Notice of a public hearing for this project was published in the *Daily Post* on December 8, 2023, which is 12 days in advance of the meeting. Postcard mailing occurred on December 6, 2023, which is 14 days in advance of the meeting.

Public Comments

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

**ATTACHMENTS**

- Attachment A: Location Map
- Attachment B: Zoning Compliance
- Attachment C: ARB Findings for Approval
- Attachment D: Project Plans
- Attachment E: Materials Board

**AUTHOR/TITLE:**

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