



CITY OF  
**PALO  
ALTO**

## Architectural Review Board Staff Report

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

**Meeting Date: January 16, 2025**  
Report #: 2412-3941

### **TITLE**

Discussion on Criteria for Architectural Review Board Design Awards: Recognizing Built Projects (2020-2024)

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends the Architectural Review Board (ARB):

1. Review the attached list of 64 projects reviewed by the ARB since 2020.
2. Discuss the ARB Design Awards, including: timeline; awards categories; and evaluation criteria and process.

### **BACKGROUND**

Since the last meeting, the list of potential projects has been reduced to 64 locations (Attachment A). The project list was grouped into five different areas of the City to allow the current board members to conduct site or “drive by” visits of properties prior to this discussion. The goal of this meeting is to narrow the list of projects down and decide on winning projects. Each board member should come ready to the hearing with information about a handful of projects they would like to nominate.

As noted at the December 19, 2024, ARB meeting, any incomplete construction addresses will be moved to a list of projects eligible for the ARB Design Awards in 2030, as was done in 2022 with the 2020 awards.

#### Comprehensive Plan Program L6.1.1

The ARB Design Awards program implements the 2030 Palo Alto Comprehensive Plan Program L6.1.1, which states, "Promote awards programs and other forms of public recognition for projects of architectural merit that contribute positively to the community."

#### ARB Bylaws

The ARB Bylaws were amended in 2005 to add that the Design Awards program would occur every five years. The ARB Bylaws Article 8, Design Awards, sets forth the following:

- Design Awards for outstanding built projects may be awarded every five years beginning in 2005. Award-winning projects shall be selected from those reviewed by the ARB and completed since the last awards were made.
- Criteria and number of awards shall be determined by the awarding board.
- Winning projects may be displayed in the City Hall lobby for one month following the presentation of awards. The ARB shall request that the Mayor of the City of Palo Alto issue an appropriate proclamation.

### Purpose

The ARB Design Awards were established to express appreciation for architects' efforts to help create and maintain Palo Alto's unique visual character through their creative and responsive designs of public and private spaces, which contribute to the well-being and healthy environment of our city.

### Previous ARB Awards

- 1998: five awards went to five projects built prior to mid-1997. • 2005: five awards went to five projects constructed between mid-1997 and mid-2004. The eligible projects list was comprised of 70 major projects constructed prior to 2005; with criteria as follows: (1) Innovative, creative, and authentic; (2) Enriches the quality of the built environment in Palo Alto; (3) Respectful of its context and the environment; (4) Well-built, well-detailed, and durable.
- 2010: ten awards went to ten projects from an eligible list of over 100 projects constructed prior to 2010. The ARB determined the number of awards could be increased to ten, to include 'honorable mention' awards for a variety of projects.
- 2015: five awards went to five projects from an eligible list of over 34 projects constructed prior to 2015. The awards were presented in November 2015 and followed the same criteria set in 2005. The five main projects included the Hoover Pavilion on Quarry Road, Rinconada Library, Apple Store on University Ave, and Magical Bridge Playground; the Mitchell Park Library also received a special sustainability award, and Paris Baguette Remodel on University received a small project category award.
- 2020 (2022): Eight awards went to eight projects from an eligible list of 100 projects constructed prior 2020. The eight projects included the Junior Museum and Zoo on Middlefield (Public Project), Fire Station #3 replacement project (Public Project), 3223 Hanover Street (Office/R&D), 4175 Manuela Avenue (Religious Assembly), 375 University Avenue (Retail Façade Renovation), 611 Cowper Street (New Construction), Children's Hospital at 701 Welch Road (Honorable Mention), Residence at 430 Forest Ave – (Honorable Mention)

## **DISCUSSION**

### Evaluation Criteria and Process

Feedback from the December 19<sup>th</sup> ARB meeting revealed that a majority of the ARB supported awarding five awards. No award categories were selected during the previous meeting. Instead, through the process of narrowing down the list of projects, five awards will be chosen. The goal of this meeting will be to further narrow down the list of projects to see which five projects should be awarded.

### Timing of the awards

As mentioned at the last meeting, the American Institute of Architects (AIA) celebrates National Architecture Week during the week of Thomas Jefferson's birthday, April 13th. The ARB Design Awards were previously presented in April or May in 2000, 2005, and 2010. The 2015 ARB Design Awards were presented in October. Given the shelter in place orders related to the COVID-19 pandemic, staff postponed the 2020 ARB Design Awards to 2021, with the awards ultimately presented in September 2022.

Given the length of the evaluation process, the ARB may prefer to select the award date after the five projects have been chosen. Alternatively, setting an award date in advance and working backward could help better organize staff and board efforts.

### **NEXT STEPS**

The ARB members may be ready to decide on award categories and/or winners, or another round of review may be needed. To effectively evaluate potential projects, the board should establish a clear process, including, but not limited to:

1. Narrow the Project List: Each board member should select the projects they feel deserve an award from their assigned list.
2. Select Five Projects: From the narrowed list, choose the five projects to be awarded.
3. Select Date of the Awards: The ARB may prefer to set the award date after selecting the five projects, or alternatively, establish a date upfront to better organize staff and board efforts.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A: List of ARB-Reviewed Projects

#### **ARB<sup>1</sup> Liaison & Contact Information**

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Emails may be sent directly to the ARB using the following address: [arb@cityofpaloalto.org](mailto:arb@cityofpaloalto.org)