



## Architectural Review Board 2024-2025 Workplan

**Staff Liaison:** Claire Raybould, AICP, Principal Planner  
**Lead Department:** Current Planning, Planning and Development Services Division

### About the Board

The Architectural Review Board is composed of five members, at least three of whom are architects, landscape architects, building designers or other design professionals. Terms are for three years. See Palo Alto Municipal Code (PAMC) Chapter 2.21. Residency is not required. For the ARB webpage go to [bit.ly/paloaltoARB](https://bit.ly/paloaltoARB).

### Boardmembers

- Peter Baltay (Chair)
- Kendra Rosenberg (Vice Chair)
- Mousam Adcock
- Yingxi Chen
- David Hirsch

### Mission Statement

The Architectural Review Board reviews and makes recommendations to the Planning Director on the building design, site planning, landscape planning, massing and facades, material selection, lighting, signage and other related issues for most major new construction including additions and renovations that alter the exterior building face. The type of buildings reviewed include commercial, industrial, and multiple-family residential. In addition, the ARB is a resource as knowledgeable observers of many varied urban environments, to assist Palo Alto as it develops area plans to accommodate additional housing.

The ARB Scope of Review is fully noted in Title 18 of the Municipal Code, Chapter 18.76 under Section 18.76.020 as well as in Chapter 18.77 under Section 18.77.073.

### Prior Year Accomplishments

- See attached Summary

<b>PROJECT/GOAL 1:</b>	Review Planning applications for conformance with ARB Findings and Objective Standards			
<b>BENEFICIAL IMPACTS</b>	<b>TIMELINE</b>	<b>RESOURCES NEEDED</b>	<b>MEASURE OF SUCCESS</b>	<b>STATE MANDATED / LOCAL LAW / COUNCIL-APPROVED</b>
This is the Board's main mission and serves to ensure the City develops high quality projects	On-Going	Planning staff prepare staff reports, packets and presentations. They ensure paper plan sets and material boards are ready for ARB review. Other departments, such as, City Attorney, Urban Forestry, Transportation, etc., may be required from time to time. Consultants, including CEQA consultants, may also be required.	Issuance of recommendations on projects and high-quality architecture throughout the City.	Yes
<b>HIGH PRIORITY</b>		<b>LOWER PRIORITY</b>		<b>COUNCIL-DIRECTED POLICY UPDATE</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Projects that include new housing units that will help with City reach its regional housing needs allocation (RHNA)</li> </ul>				N/A

<b>PROJECT/GOAL 2:</b>	Assist the City as it considers modifications to Objective Standards; Provide feedback based on research from projects as they go through the objective standards ministerial processes. Suggest ways to better address different housing typology.			
<b>BENEFICIAL IMPACTS</b>	<b>TIMELINE</b>	<b>RESOURCES NEEDED</b>	<b>MEASURE OF SUCCESS</b>	<b>STATE MANDATED / LOCAL LAW / COUNCIL-APPROVED</b>
Streamline the objective standard review process and ensure that projects using the streamlined review process/objective standards conform to the City's Comprehensive Plan, Goals and Policies, including its high-quality design standards	Provide high level modifications to objective standards to Council by the end of 2024; If directed by Council, work with staff to propose specific code language for Council adopted by the end of FY 2025	Additional staff at Planning so that the quality and completeness of the work is maintained.	Council Approval	No
<b>HIGH PRIORITY</b>		<b>LOWER PRIORITY</b>		<b>COUNCIL-DIRECTED POLICY UPDATE</b>
In order of priority: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Modifications to address objective standards (18.24) based on review of several projects using the standards</li> <li>Modifications to address townhome projects based on the feedback from the ARB Ad Hoc Committee on townhomes</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Modifications to SB 9 objective standards</li> </ul>		No

<b>PROJECT/GOAL 3:</b>	Discuss specific Coordinated Area Plans that the ARB would recommend exploring/implement; If the City Council directs the preparation of those plans to staff, provide comments on those Coordinated Area Plans			
<b>BENEFICIAL IMPACTS</b>	<b>TIMELINE</b>	<b>RESOURCES NEEDED</b>	<b>MEASURE OF SUCCESS</b>	<b>STATE MANDATED / LOCAL LAW / COUNCIL-APPROVED</b>
This project would enhance implementation of the City's Comprehensive Plan	On-going	Planning staff to help research policies and programs; coordination with long range planning section staff.	Increased adherence to Comprehensive Plan policies	Yes
<b>HIGH PRIORITY</b>		<b>LOWER PRIORITY</b>		<b>COUNCIL-DIRECTED POLICY UPDATE</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordinated Area Plan for San Antonio area</li> <li>Downtown Housing Plan</li> <li>California Avenue</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encina Avenue</li> </ul>		No

<b>PROJECT/GOAL 4:</b>	Provide feedback to staff and Council on the creation of new guidelines, ordinances, and/or streetscape, including but not limited to upcoming roof terraces, bird safe glazing and dark sky lighting regulations, parklets design, and streetscape designs.			
<b>BENEFICIAL IMPACTS</b>	<b>TIMELINE</b>	<b>RESOURCES NEEDED</b>	<b>MEASURE OF SUCCESS</b>	<b>STATE MANDATED / LOCAL LAW / COUNCIL-APPROVED</b>
The ARB has unique feedback to provide as a stakeholder as they have interest in approving the aesthetic environment of the City while also understanding constraints that architects/developers may come across when implementing standards being considered	Anticipated to return to the Board in spring/summer 2024	Staff time	Council Approval	Yes
<b>HIGH PRIORITY</b>		<b>LOWER PRIORITY</b>		<b>COUNCIL-DIRECTED POLICY UPDATE</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Roof Terraces</li> <li>Bird safe glazing / dark skys</li> <li>Riparian setbacks</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor parklet and streetscape design</li> </ul>		No

<b>PROJECT/GOAL 5:</b>	Improve Coordination between the Architectural Review Board and other boards, commissions and Council.			
<b>BENEFICIAL IMPACTS</b>	<b>TIMELINE</b>	<b>RESOURCES NEEDED</b>	<b>MEASURE OF SUCCESS</b>	<b>STATE MANDATED / LOCAL LAW / COUNCIL-APPROVED</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved coordination between boards/commissions and council to get feedback from colleagues on other board</li> <li>More coordinated feedback from the City for developers</li> </ul>	On-going	Staff time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff provide summary reports from PTC, ARB, and HRB meetings promptly following each meeting</li> <li>Take direct feedback from the ARB on reviewed projects up for Council approval. The ARB can appoint a member to represent the board directly to the Council</li> </ul>	No
<b>HIGH PRIORITY</b>		<b>LOWER PRIORITY</b>		<b>COUNCIL-DIRECTED POLICY UPDATE</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create liaisons between boards/commissions</li> </ul>				No

**Architectural Review Board of the City of Palo Alto  
Annual Report of Prior Year Accomplishments and ARB Recommendations for Fiscal Year 2025**

Following is a review of the ARB’s accomplishments over the past year and the Board’s recommendations to Council regarding areas of work that should be prioritized in next fiscal year and opportunities for better coordination.

1. **Application Review.** The ARB takes prides in its collaborative process of review, where members meld their individual opinions and experience into one democratic summary that improves proposed projects and therefore the quality of the Palo Alto built environment. This past year, the ARB reviewed approximately 20 projects including two major public projects, multi-family housing projects with inclusionary below market rate units, and commercial projects as well as larger retail modifications in Stanford Shopping Center, meeting Goal 1 of the 2024 annual work plan. Our review and oversight of the following projects has made a real and significant difference. Below are renderings of some of these projects showing the initial proposal and final design.

<u>Address/project</u>	<u>Building type</u>
3001 El Camino Real	Affordable Housing
3200 Park Boulevard	Development Agreement
420 Acacia Ave	Housing (with inclusionary units)
739 Sutter Avenue	Housing (with inclusionary units)
3600 Middlefield Road	Fire Station
180 El Camino Real	Arhaus Facade
180 El Camino Real	Sushi Roku Facade
180 El Camino Real	Restoration Hardware Facade
123 Sherman Avenue	Office
2501 Embarcadero	Advanced Water Purification System
800 San Antonio Road	Mixed Use (Office and retail with inclusionary units)
SB 9 Objective Standards Review	Ordinance/Plan

In addition, a number of projects came in as a preliminary review to obtain early feedback from the ARB. The ARB’s early review of these projects and boardmember feedback prior to formal application will help to incorporate key programming modifications and design changes in the early stage of development, helping to streamline the formal application. These included 640 Waverley Street, 616 Ramona Street, 1066 East Meadow Drive, and 70 Encina Avenue.

- The ARB provided valuable feedback to assist Council with respect to updating SB 9 standards. They also provided a comprehensive review and made recommendations on updates to the objective standards to better address townhome style designs. This work was consistent with Goal 2 of the fiscal year 2024 work plan.
- The ARB provided valuable feedback to assist Council with respect to Preapproved Parklets Design. Although not explicitly identified in the work plan, this work was consistent with Goal 2 of the fiscal year 2024 work plan.
- The ARB provided valuable feedback to assist Council with respect to the Dark Skies and Bird Safe Glazing Ordinance as well as the North Ventura Coordinated Area Plan consistent with Goal 3 of the fiscal year 2024 work plan. Additional work on this effort is expected in the next few months to further assist with these efforts prior to a final Council decision.

## Recommendations

PAMC Section 2.21.030 directs the Architectural Review Board to report annually our “concerns... with respect to the city’s plans, policies, ordinances and procedures as these affect the projects which the board reviews.” Our reviews are site specific – we look at individual development proposals, not broad policies. At the same time, we are directed to look at each project in both its physical and regulatory context – how it will enhance its neighborhood (or not) and how it will implement the City’s polices, from the Comprehensive Plan to the various design guidelines the City uses. Because we look at many projects each year, and because many board members have years of experience in Palo Alto, patterns emerge and specific areas of concern have been identified. Our comments this year are centered around the increasing importance of housing projects to the city.

- 2. Objective Design Standard Refinements.** In our continuing response to recently enacted state legislation, Palo Alto previously adopted objective design review standards for housing projects, effectively eliminating architectural review on residential and mixed-use projects where objective standards can be met in order to streamline review of those applications.

Several residential projects over the past year were townhouse type developments (3200 Park Boulevard, 739 Sutter Avenue, 420 Acacia). In our review, it was noted that some of the current standards focused more on larger multi-family buildings. Therefore, some aspects of townhouse style design were not fully addressed/accommodated for in the standards. Through an Ad Hoc committee we studied many local townhouse developments and have provided the planning department with recommendations to modify the Objective Design Standards to address townhome designs as well as larger multi-family designs.

The ARB recommends that refinements be made to the objective standards based on implementation of the standards for a series of projects as well as with the recommendations from the ARB regarding modifications for townhome designs.

- 3. Coordinated Area Plans to encourage housing development and better planning**

- San Antonio Avenue area. The San Antonio Avenue area is experiencing increasing residential development but our zoning regulations for the area are outdated and focused on commercial development, resulting in applicant uncertainty and long entitlement processes. The existing one-story light industrial and commercial buildings will be substantially replaced in the coming decade. A coordinated area plan will allow us to consider larger issues such as transportation, neighborhood parks, city services, pedestrian/bicycle pathways, and integration with nearby developments in Mountain View as this area transforms.
- Downtown. To increase housing, the downtown area needs revised standards to accommodate redevelopment of parking lots as to encourage housing additions while maintaining the vibrancy of the downtown area and its pedestrian friendly streetscape.
- California Avenue area. With State requirements as outlined in AB 2097 and Builder’s Remedy, the California Avenue area will experience more development than in the past. This area should have a coordinated area plan to better scope future development.
- Encina Avenue area. The Encina Avenue area, between El Camino and the railroad is an excellent location for higher density housing. However, the adjacent Town and County shopping center, a low lying and historically significant facility, must be protected. Parking considerations are also paramount in this area. A coordinated area plan offers an efficient path towards increased density while protecting a much loved shopping area.

- 4. Bird safe glazing and dark sky regulations.** The ARB should provide feedback to the planning staff, PTC and Council regarding upcoming bird safe glazing and dark sky lighting regulations. The ARB has observed an increased use of roof terraces to meet open space requirements in multi-family projects. These roof terraces can be limited by height requirements and privacy concerns.

- 5. City Council/Planning Commission communication.** The Architecture Review Board has very little formal interaction with the City Council, the Planning Commission and the Historic Resources Board. Board members are forced to act on individual initiative to gain input from council members and other commissioners. Joint meetings with full boards are rarely productive; yet uncoordinated serial meetings leave commissioners unaware of feedback from colleagues on other boards. Applicants often feel that they are ‘running a gauntlet’ of approvals rather than facing a coordinated review.
- Request staff to provide summary reports from PTC, ARB and HRB meetings promptly following each meeting.
  - Take direct feedback from the ARB on reviewed projects up for council approval where Council approval is required. The ARB can appoint a member to represent the board directly to the council.
  - Request staff to schedule joint preliminary discussions between the ARB, PTC and HRB chairs/vice-chairs on projects of common interest. These ‘preliminary meetings’ would not be to review specifics of a project; rather they would serve to coordinate the review process between boards and planning staff.
  - Appoint HRB, PTC and Council liaisons to the ARB to facilitate open communication between boards and commissions and city council. ARB liaisons will provide a clear channel for passing information between reviewing bodies, enabling all board and commission and council members, as well as the general public, direct access to relevant information on a project-by-project basis.

**Below are Renderings of approved projects from Initial proposal to Final Design from the list of reviewed projects. A summary of key modifications that were made to the design based on ARB feedback is also included:**



**739 Sutter Avenue - Initial Proposal**



**739 Sutter - Final Design**

- Private outdoor balconies for residents were increased to two levels on Sutter side but removed the roof deck
- Balconies facing single family residences were improved to maintain privacy for single family residences
- Massing around building corners were greatly improved



**3001 Camino Real - Initial Proposal**



**3001 El Camino Real - Final Design**

- Improved the central building circulation to make the site more useable and to facilitate the applicant's building code compliance.
- Recommended modification to the El Camino Real façade articulation to create greater visibility onto the street from the El Camino Real facing uses.
- Recommended design modifications that allowed for more visibility into the community room from Acacia to provide a more pedestrian-friendly façade along that street frontage.



**123 Sherman Avenue - Initial Proposal**



**123 Sherman Avenue - Final Design**

- The ARB focused on improving the entrance to and design of the first-floor commercial space at the corner to ensure the viability of a future tenant and to create interest at the corner
- A focus on the detail and use of the full height decorative panels on portions of the perimeter of the upper floor office levels.
- Increased vegetation planting
- Revisions to the plans to ensure privacy of nearby residential uses and reduce light intrusion from this building into their units.



**3200 Park Boulevard- Initial Proposal**



**3200 Park Boulevard - Final Design**

- Increased the widths of the pedestrian paseos to increase usability and reduce privacy impacts both through building setbacks and landscaping
- recommended modifications to design, materials and color to increase the variability across different buildings, provide variation in height across the longer facades, and to provide interest on the end units
- Simplified the forms along the southern façade of the cannery building, reducing design changes that detracted from the historic character of the building, particularly with respect to the windows below the monitor roof
- Refined the color variations for the parking garage to help further break down the scale of the garage and brought down the height of the garage to reduce impacts on neighboring single-family residents and maintain the stepped height of the cannery, which relates back to its historic use with loading docks at the rear of the building



**180 El Camino Arhaus- Initial Proposal**



**180 El Camino Real Arhaus - Final Design**

-The initial design was well received; however, the applicant returned later to propose modifications based on tenant preferences. The ARB's initial recommendations, which were also incorporated into the final design, included minor revisions to the materials, to emphasize the entrance design, and to request additional details regarding the bicycle parking as it relates to this site and the overall facility



**180 El Camino Restoration Hardware- Initial Proposal**



**180 El Camino Real Restoration Hardware- Final Design**

-Although the initial design was generally well received as a clean, light design, the ARB recommended minor modifications to make the white less glaring and more toned down. In particular, the ARB requested that metal accents to be a deeper hue to create more interest, depth, and warmth, recommended keeping green walls that were planned to be removed, and provided input to refine small details such as the lighting



**180 El Camino Sushi Roku- Initial Proposal**



**180 El Camino Real Sushi Roku - Final Design**

-Sushi Roku came to the ARB with a comprehensive design, steeped in the culture and rich in texture. The ARB had some questions regarding maintenance and detailing of exterior materials, but generally approved the design as proposed



**800 San Antonio Road- Initial Proposal**

- Building above grades were redesigned to avoid encroaching into setbacks
- Main entrance volume expressed appropriately on the street with material and form
- Improved trash pick-up logistics
- Improved courtyard function and circulation
- Improved internal circulation with widening hallways at back elevator
- Provided planting soil depth above top of basement for ground floor softscape at base of building
- (second ad hoc committee meeting pending)



**800 San Antonio Road - Final Design**



**2501 Embarcadero Road- Initial Proposal**



**2501 Embarcadero Road - Final Design**

- Colors muted to align with Baylands guidelines
- Light pollution shielded from all sides using perforated metal below the roof
- Color temperature of the lighting lowered, while maintaining high light levels for worker safety
- Section of chain-link fence removed and replaced with board formed concrete to screen tank better from the street



**420 Acacia Avenue- Initial Proposal**



**420 Acacia Avenue- Final Design**

- Overall, the project was well received as proposed. The ARB recommended minor improvements to provide better pedestrian circulation, clarify details of the rooftop open space, and ensure privacy between those spaces as well as for adjacent uses.
- Refined the details of how the private street relates to the neighboring parking facility.