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## Architectural Review Board Staff Report

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

**Meeting Date: September 5, 2024**  
**Report #: 2408-3356**

### TITLE

PUBLIC HEARING / QUASI-JUDICIAL. 180 El Camino Real [23PLN-00323]: Recommendation on Applicant's Request for Approval of a Major Architectural Review of exterior storefront revisions and improvements including a redesigned outdoor dining area, façade revisions, new signage and updated lighting for an existing restaurant tenant, The Melt (Space #705A, Building E), at the Stanford Shopping Center. Environmental Assessment: Exempt from CEQA per Section 15301 (Existing Facilities). Zoning District: CC (Community Commercial).

### RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Architectural Review Board (ARB) take the following action(s):

- Recommend approval of the proposed project to the Director of Planning and Development Services based on findings and subject to conditions of approval.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The proposed project includes modifications to an existing tenant space for, The Melt, at the Stanford Shopping Center. The Master Tenant Façade and Sign Program (MTFSP) for the Stanford Shopping Center requires an Architectural Review of exterior changes to tenant spaces more than 35 feet in width and facing a public right-of-way.

### BACKGROUND

#### Project Information

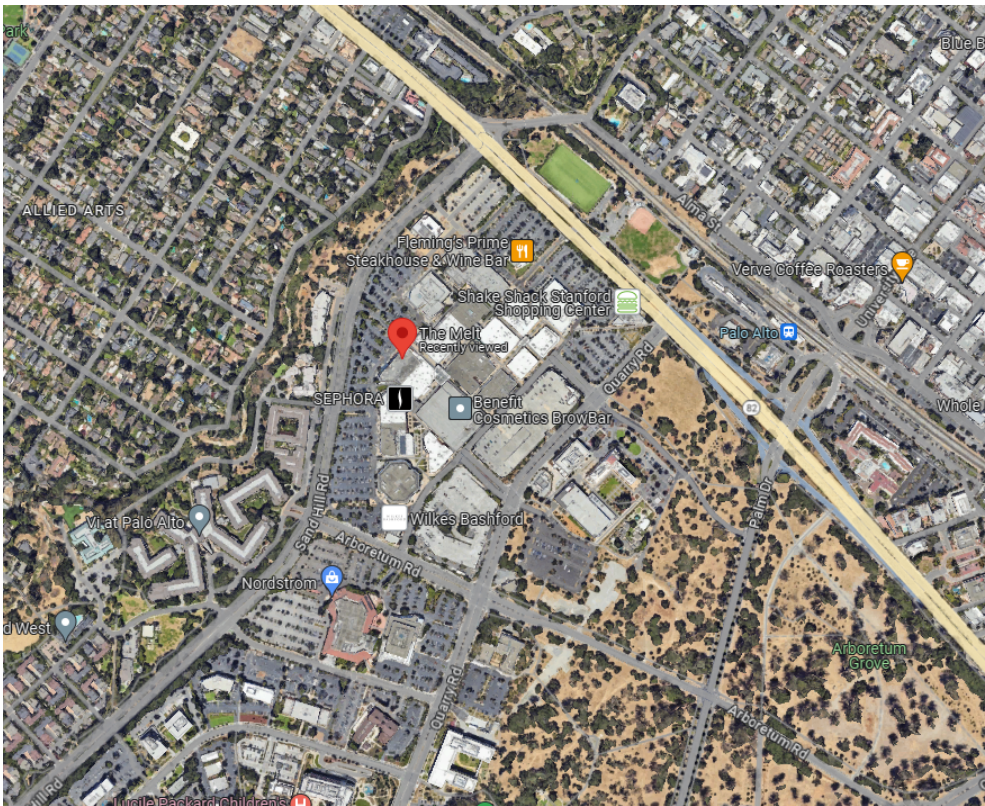
Owner:	The Board of Trustees of Leland Stanford Junior University
Architect:	Globeatelie Architects
Representative:	Jason Smith – Land Shark Development
Legal Counsel:	Not Applicable

#### Property Information

Address:	180 El Camino Real (Space #705A, Building E)
Neighborhood:	Stanford Shopping Center
Lot Dimensions & Area:	Various; 52.8 Acres

Housing Inventory Site:	Not Applicable
Located w/in a Plume:	Not Applicable
Protected/Heritage Trees:	Various throughout the site, none will be removed with this project
Historic Resource(s):	Not Applicable
Existing Improvement(s):	1,361,751 sf; 1 to 3 stories; 37' height max.
Existing Land Use(s):	Retail, Personal Service, General/Professional Offices, and Commercial Recreation
Adjacent Land Uses & Zoning:	North: North: (Caltrain and parkland) PF West: (Multi-Family Housing) CC(L)/PF(D) East: (Medical Offices and Supportive Services) HD South: (Retail) CC

**Aerial View of Property:**



Source: Google Satellite Maps

**Land Use Designation & Applicable Plans**

Comp. Plan Designation:	Community Commercial (CC)
Zoning Designation:	Regional/Community Commercial

	Yes		Yes		Yes
Baylands Master Plan/Guidelines (2008/2005)	<input type="checkbox"/>	El Camino Real Guidelines (1976)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Housing Development Project	<input type="checkbox"/>

Downtown Urban Design Guidelines (1993)	<input type="checkbox"/>	South El Camino Real Guidelines (2002)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Utilizes Chapter 18.24 - Objective Standards	<input type="checkbox"/>
Individual Review Guidelines (2005)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Within 150 feet of Residential Use or District	<input type="checkbox"/>	Context-Based Design Criteria applicable	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
SOFA Phase 1 (2000)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Within Airport Influence Area	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
SOFA Phase 2 (2003)	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>

#### Prior City Reviews & Action

City Council: None

PTC: None

HRB: None

ARB: None

#### **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The applicant requests approval of a Major Architectural Review application to allow for exterior tenant improvements, including updates to the existing storefront façade and glazing, new signage, updated lighting and outdoor dining layout for “The Melt” (Space #705A, Building E), an existing restaurant tenant at the Stanford Shopping Center.

##### *Façade and Outdoor Dining Changes*

The subject tenant space is located near the northeastern corner of Building E, with façades facing the parking lot off Sand Hill Road. The existing façade consists of high-gloss white tile, bold orange graphics, original arched louvers and canopies (left in place from earlier tenant fit outs), and patio area with tables and orange umbrellas. The new storefront design features a warm classic design inclusive of wooden finish plank exterior fencing in Spanish Walnut, decorative peppermill-thin brick flats, accents in black and warm gray tones, and an opaque, all season window film, in Matte Black. The building façade itself has been upgraded with a new color palette, glazing to replace metal louvers, and solid panels at all three arches. A new garage door unites the indoor/outdoor spaces providing more light and air into the space. The project includes new planter boxes with boxwood hedge, which are primarily placed along the perimeter of dining area that faces the existing parking lot.

##### *Signage*

The proposed signage includes new primary and secondary signs, a new blade sign, and a circle logo vinyl sign. The primary and blade signs will read “Melt”, the secondary sign will read “World’s Meltiest Burger”, and the circle logo vinyl sign will read “the Melt”. The primary sign will consist of five-inch deep open face channel lighters with orange minleon LED G30 bulbs.

The secondary sign will feature three-inch deep white front-lit channel letters for the “World’s/Burger” text, and 3” deep open face channel letters painted orange with amber LED illumination bulbs for the “Meltiest” text. The blade sign will feature illuminated letters. The circle logo vinyl sign will feature HP white and kumquat orange vinyl.

#### Requested Entitlements, Findings and Purview

The following discretionary application is 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 & Development Services Director for action within five business days of the Board’s recommendation. Action by the Director is appealable to the City Council if the appeal is 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 single finding requires project redesign or denial. The findings to approve an AR application are provided in Attachment B.

#### **ANALYSIS**

Staff has analyzed the proposed project for consistency with relevant plans, policies and regulations as well as the Architectural Review findings for approval. Overall, staff finds the project to be consistent with all relevant plans, policies, regulations and findings, as discussed herein, and recommends that the ARB recommend approval of the proposed project.

#### Neighborhood Setting and Character

The project is located within the Stanford Shopping Center on the western portion of the site, near the London Plane entrance off of Sand Hill Road. The Shopping Center is defined within the Municipal Code as all properties zoned CC and bounded by El Camino Real, Sand Hill Road, Quarry Road, and Vineyard Lane. The site is surrounded by a hospital, retail, and multi-family uses. Stanford Shopping Center has an open-air pedestrian environment defined by a mixture of retail, dining, professional and general business offices, and personal service uses.

The project is located within an exterior facing tenant space within Building E of the Stanford Shopping Center. The proposed project involves a façade over 35 ft in length and faces Sand Hill Road, therefore, requiring Board Level Architectural Review.

#### Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan, Area Plans and Guidelines:

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 used by City staff to regulate building and development and make recommendations on 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 identifies the Stanford Shopping Center as a regional center with a land use designation of Community Commercial. On balance, the project is consistent with the

policies in the Comprehensive Plan and therefore fulfills the goals of the Plan. Attachment B provides a detailed review of the project's consistency with the Comprehensive Plan.

### Zoning Compliance

Palo Alto Municipal Code Section 18.16.060(e)(3) states that the maximum floor area for the Stanford Shopping Center is limited to 1,412,362 square feet. The proposed project would not cause the square footage of the overall center to increase beyond what is allowed by the underlying zoning. A spreadsheet of all Shopping Center building areas has been provided on Sheet G00.20 as shown in Attachment E. No site plan changes will occur for the Shopping Center. Attachment D provides a summary of the project's consistency with the zoning ordinance.

### *Master Tenant Façade and Sign Program*

The Master Tenant Façade and Sign Program (MTFSP 15PLN-00040) provides a master plan for all facades and signage at the Stanford Shopping Center. Projects that are consistent with the Master Sign Program are seen as consistent with other relevant guidelines, including the El Camino Real Design Guidelines and the Context-based design criteria.

### *Façade and Outdoor Dining Changes*

The façade updates will utilize a sophisticated color palette that enhances the existing façade and outdoor seating area. The proposed façade design will extend the full height of the building, maintaining consistency with the MTFSP design standards.

Exterior dining areas total 743 square feet and will offer a variety of different seating options. 408 square feet of the exterior dining area will be permanently covered and therefore count towards gross floor area, where the remaining 335 square feet will be uncovered. Additionally, multiple three-dimensional elements have been added to the patio, including Tucci cabanas and cantilever umbrellas with built-in heaters. These improvements are meant to increase the quality of the exterior dining experience to align with other nearby tenants. The project's design and materials appear cohesive and consistent with those found within the Shopping Center. Staff would appreciate the ARB's comments on the façade and outdoor dining revisions.

### *Signage*

The MTFSP details the sign limitations for the Shopping Center. As shown in Attachment E, the primary wall sign would be limited to 36-inch maximum heights, which the current design meets. Additionally, the proposed blade sign meets the maximum dimension for blades at 15 x 24-inches. A 9-foot clearance from the bottom of the blade to the sidewalk has been provided, consistent with the MTFSP.

### Multi-Modal Access & Parking

The project site has multi-modal access and parking for pedestrians, bicyclists, private automobiles, and public transit (VTA, Caltrain, and SAMTRANS). The existing buildings within the site are surrounded by surface level parking lots with two multi-level parking structures

located at the southern portion of the site along Quarry Road. The center currently has 64 excess vehicle parking spaces. Throughout the site there are pedestrian amenities such as outdoor seating areas, planters, fountains, interactive maps, pedestrian level lighting, and public art.

Per previous ARB project approvals at the Stanford Shopping Center, the Landlord shall install an additional 24 bike parking spaces (20 short term and 4 long term spaces) in accordance with previous project conditions of approval. However, bike parking remains insufficient at the center due to a shortage of 143 bike parking spaces (36 short term and 107 long term). This project would add one additional short term bike parking space; thereby, reducing the shortage of short term bike parking spaces to 35. The landlord is in the process of working with the City's Planning and Transportation Departments in order to develop a bike program for the center.

#### Consistency with Application Findings

The project is consistent with the required findings for Architectural Review as shown in Attachment B. The project will renovate an existing tenant space that will strengthen the Stanford Shopping Center position as a premier regional shopping center with distinctive businesses and an open, appealing pedestrian environment. The improvements contribute to the exclusive retail, dining, and personal service experience of the Stanford Shopping Center.

#### **STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**

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 August 23, 2024, which is 12 days in advance of the meeting. Postcard mailing occurred on August 21, 2024, which is 16 days in advance of the meeting.

#### Public Comments

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

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

The subject project has been assessed 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. Specifically, the project is categorically exempt from the provision of CEQA in accordance with the Class 1 (Existing Facilities) exemption (Guidelines Section 15301) because the scope of work that is limited to exterior alterations to the façade of an existing building.

#### **ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS**

In addition to the recommended action, the Architectural Review Board may:

1. Approve the project with modified findings or conditions;

2. Continue the project to a date (un)certain; or
3. Recommend project denial based on revised findings.

**ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A: Location Map

Attachment B: Draft Findings for Approval

Attachment C: Draft Conditions of Approval

Attachment D: Zoning Comparison Table

Attachment E: Project Plans

**Report Author & Contact Information**

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