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Architectural Review Board Staff Report

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

Meeting Date: October 5, 2023
Report #: 2309-2000

TITLE

PUBLIC HEARING / QUASI-JUDICIAL. 180 El Camino Real [23PLN-00155]: Recommendation on Applicant's Request for Approval of a Minor Architectural Review Board Application to Allow Exterior Modifications, Including a Newly Designed Façade for the Previously Approved Three-Story, Stand Alone Building, "Restoration Hardware" at the Stanford Shopping Center. No Modifications are Proposed to any Site Design Details and There is no Change of use. Zoning District: CC. Environmental Assessment: Exempt from CEQA per Section 15302 (Replacement or Reconstruction). Zoning District: CC (Community Commercial).

RECOMMENDATION

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

1. Consider the proposed façade modifications and recommend that the ARB continue the proposed project or recommend approval to the Director of Planning and Development Services

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The proposed project is a request for approval of a Minor Architectural Review application to allow for modifications to the previously approved façade of the three-story, standalone building for "Restoration Hardware", a new retail tenant at the Stanford Shopping Center.

The ARB recommended approval of the previous façade design and site plan for the Restoration Hardware building (19PLN-00110) on December 5, 2019, following multiple hearings which was then approved by the Director. The applicant is now proposing to revise the previously approved exterior façade of the Restoration Hardware building in an effort to achieve a more modern design. No changes are being proposed to the previously approved site design details.

The project is subject to requirements outlined the Master Tenant Façade and Sign Program (MTFSP, 23PLN-00009). The MTFSP for the Stanford Shopping requires a Planning entitlement if any standalone building or tenant space that faces a public right-of-way proposes exterior changes. Major Architectural review is typically required for tenant spaces with outward facing

façades greater than 35 ft long. The proposed façade meets both thresholds. The original application was processed as a Major Architectural Review application. The proposed modifications to the previously approved design are being processed as a Minor Board level Architectural Review.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed project is a Minor Architectural Review application to allow for exterior modifications, which includes a newly designed façade, for the previously approved “Restoration Hardware”, a new retail tenant at the Stanford Shopping Center.

Requested Entitlements, Findings and Purview:

The following discretionary application(s) 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 single finding requires project redesign or denial. The findings to approve an AR application are provided in Attachment B.

BACKGROUND

Project Information

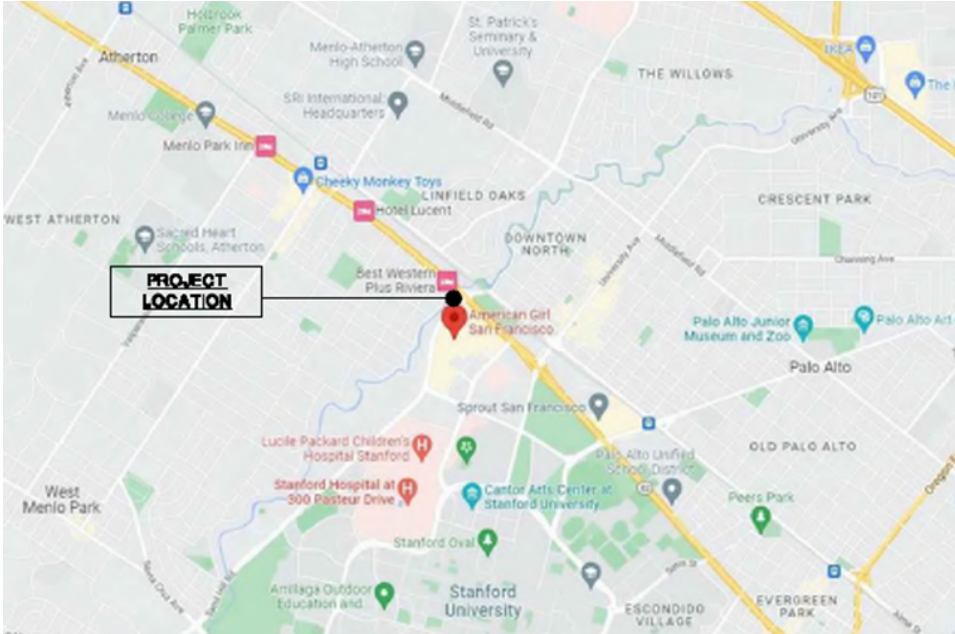
Owner:	The Board of Trustees of Leland Stanford Junior University
Architect:	RH Architecture and Design
Representative:	Matthew Morgan – Kimley Horn and Associates
Legal Counsel:	N/A

Property Information

Address:	180 El Camino Real
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; 50” height max.

Existing Land Use(s):	Retail, Personal Service, General/Professional Offices, and Commercial Recreation
Adjacent Land Uses & Zoning:	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 Maps

Land Use Designation & Applicable Plans

Zoning Designation:	Community Commercial (CC)
Comp. Plan Designation:	Regional/Community Commercial
Context-Based Design Criteria:	Yes, applicable
Downtown Urban Design Guide:	Not Applicable
South of Forest Avenue Coordinated Area Plan:	Not Applicable
Baylands Master Plan:	Not Applicable
El Camino Real Design Guidelines (1976 / 2002):	Yes, 1976 Guidelines

Proximity to Residential Uses or Districts (150'):	Not Applicable
Located w/in the Airport Influence Area:	Not Applicable

Prior City Reviews & Action

City Council:	None
PTC:	None
HRB:	None
ARB:	None

ANALYSIS

Following is staff’s analysis of the proposed project’s consistency with relevant plans, regulations and the findings for approval.

Neighborhood Setting and Character

The project is located within the Stanford Shopping Center in the northwestern portion of the site, just off Sand Hill Road and Shopping Center Way. 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 Restoration Hardware building is currently under construction at the center and is located at an exterior facing location of the Stanford Shopping Center. The proposed project involves a façade over 35 ft in length and faces Sand Hill Road, and is therefore subject to a Minor 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. The project includes a retail use within the shopping center, consistent with this land use designation. The project is also consistent with relevant policies in the Comprehensive Plan and, therefore, fulfills the goals of the Plan. The finding in Attachment B include a detailed review of the project’s consistency with the Comprehensive Plan.

Zoning Compliance¹

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. Staff performed a review of the proposed project's consistency with applicable zoning standards. The project does not propose any change to the building envelope and does not add any outdoor uses. A draft spreadsheet of all Shopping Center building areas is currently undergoing review. As mentioned, no site plan changes are proposed to the shopping center, including any changes to access, circulation, and parking. Attachment B shows that the project is consistency with the zoning ordinance.

Master Façade and Sign Program Compliance

The project proposes materials consisting of plaster, metals and glass skylight, and glazing. While the proposed exterior façade materials are consistent with the "Acceptable Finishes" identified by the Master Tenant Façade and Sign Program for the center, the previously approved exterior façade materials consisting of smooth stucco, metals, glass skylight, glazing and green walls are more in line with the quality of architectural design expected at the Stanford center. The master program requires unique and distinctive contemporary designs with high quality materials and creative lighting. The proposed revisions to the building have removed a number of architectural details, including lighting sconces and green features from the building resulting in a more simplified design. Given the location of the building at a prominent intersection at the center, staff believes that the previously approved design is more consistent with the type of high quality expected at the Stanford Shopping Center and requests that the ARB provide input on the proposed revised materials. Staff also requests that the ARB provide input as to whether or not the building will still meet the requirements of the master program and the ARB findings, and whether the new design would be acceptable in place of the previously approved design.

No signage is proposed under this project.

Multi-Modal Access & Parking

The project site has multi-modal access and parking which 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. Vehicle and bike parking requirements for Restoration Hardware were reviewed under the approved Macy's Men's Redevelopment Project (19PLN-00110). The current application does not propose to adjust the floor area of the building; therefore, the previously approved vehicle and bike parking counts are valid. Throughout the site there are pedestrian amenities such as outdoor seating areas, planters, fountains, interactive maps, pedestrian level lighting, and public art.

Consistency with Application Findings

The project is consistent with most of the required findings as shown in Attachment B. However, staff believe the project may be inconsistent with finding 3, as the new design removes architectural details from the originally approved design. As stated above, staff find the originally

¹ The Palo Alto Zoning Code is available online: bit.ly/PAZoningCode

approved design and materials to be more in line with the quality of architectural design expected at the Stanford center. The previously approved plans are available on the project website, a link to which is provided in Attachment C. While the proposed materials are consistent with the master program for the center, the project's architectural design and new materials will need to be discussed so the ARB can determine whether or not they are acceptable. The improvements contribute to the exclusive retail, dining, and personal service experience of the Stanford Shopping Center.

If the ARB determines that the proposed revisions are acceptable and decide to recommend approval to the Director of Planning and Development Services, staff has attached the previously adopted findings conditions of approval for the project in Attachment A, which would still be applicable to the project. However, Condition of Approval No. 1, *Conformance with Plans*, would be revised to update the date of the revised plan submittal as follows:

CONFORMANCE WITH PLANS. Construction and development shall conform to the approved plans entitled, "Architectural Review Board Plans for Stanford Shopping Center," uploaded to the Palo Alto Online Permitting Services Citizen Portal on September 25, 2023, on file with the Planning & Development Services Department, 250 Hamilton Avenue, Palo Alto, California except as modified by these conditions of approval.

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 September 22, 2023, which is 12 days in advance of the meeting. Postcard mailing occurred on September 20, 2023, which is 13 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 2 (Replacement or Reconstruction) exemption (CEQA Guidelines Section 15302) because the scope of work that is limited to exterior alterations to the façade of an existing building.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS

The Architectural Review Board may:

2. Approve the project based on the previous conditions of approval or with modified findings or conditions; or
3. Continue the project to a date (un)certain; or

4. Deny the project with modified findings

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Previous Approval with Previously Adopted Findings and Conditions of Approval

Attachment B: Zoning Comparison Table

Attachment C: Project Plans

AUTHOR/TITLE:

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