



CITY OF PALO ALTO
Architectural Review Board
Thursday, May 15, 2025
8:30 AM

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| Agenda Item |
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5. Draft Architectural Review Board Meeting Minutes for April 17, 2025



ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD MEETING

DRAFT MINUTES: April 17, 2025

Council Chamber & Zoom

8:00 AM

Call to Order / Roll Call

The Architectural Review Board (ARB) of the City of Palo Alto met on April 17, 2025 in Council Chambers and virtual teleconference at 8:34 a.m.

Present: Chair Kendra Rosenberg, Vice Chair Yingxi Chen, Board member Mousam Adcock, Board member Peter Baltay, Board member David Hirsch

Absent: None.

Oral Communications

None.

Agenda Changes, Additions and Deletions

None.

Chair Rosenberg had a planned absence for June 5.

City Official Reports

1. Director's Report, Meeting Schedule, and Upcoming Agenda Items

Steven Switzer, Historic Preservation Planner/ARB Liaison, provided a slide presentation including upcoming and recently submitted items, 2025 meeting schedules and updates.

Chair Rosenberg queried if there was a comment that people that had applied needed to reapply since there was an extension on the recruitment process.

Mr. Switzer replied applications previously received were not carried over so it would be a new recruitment and any one that would like to be considered would need to reapply.

Study Session

2. 540 University Avenue [25PLN-00030]: Request for Preliminary Architectural Review for the Demolition of Two Existing Buildings at 530 and 540 University Avenue and the Construction of a New, Approximately 30,375 Square Foot, Three-Story, Commercial Building with Ground Floor Retail-Like Uses and Office, Second and Third Level Office Spaces, and a Private Roof Top Terrace

for Office Users. CEQA Status: Not a Project. The Formal Application will be Subject to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Review. Zoning District: CD-C (GF)(P)(Commercial Downtown-Community with Ground Floor and Pedestrian Combining Districts). For More Information Contact the Project Planner Kristina Dobkevicius at Kristina.Dobkevicius@PaloAlto.gov.

Boardmember Adcock disclosed she visited the site.

Vice Chair Chen had no disclosure.

Chair Rosenberg visited the site and had no disclosures.

Boardmember Baltay visited the site and had nothing else to disclose.

Boardmember Hirsch had visited the site.

Kristina Dobkevicius, Associate Planner, provided a slide presentation about the project proposal including project location, project overview, noncomplying facility, key considerations and recommendations.

Boardmember Baltay asked for an explanation about the relocated use of space from the third floor to the ground floor on the noncomplying facility slide. He wanted to know if it was related to the use of floor area whether it was retail or commercial.

Ms. Dobkevicius explained on the slide how the second floor area was relocated to the ground floor. She stated there was an existing basement for the existing structure. The space on the second floor was existing nonconforming floor area.

Claire Raybould, Manager of Current Planning, added the pink and green on the right side was the floor area of the project. The green would be the allowable floor area. They were keeping their legal noncomplying floor area over the allowable floor area and modifying it in a way that would include increases in height to the building where they had the shrink wrap rule for the downtown that says the floor area can be moved as long as the envelope of the building did not change. With the non-TDR floor area, the envelop of the building was changing. The area in the beige was the allowable floor area that could exceed the height and envelope but the green and pink would have to remain within the red line if they wanted to keep it as noncomplying floor area. She confirmed it was a separate issue of the uses of the building and the diagram was regarding the structure, not the use of the structure.

Boardmember Adcock did not understand the hatched pink on the left. She asked if she was correct that it was being removed and translated to some of the green. She asked what the applicant would have to do for the zoning text amendment and if that was applicable just to this project.

Ms. Raybould explained the applicant was making the case that they were building legal floor area in the green and the additional floor area they were keeping was within the allowable but that was not how Staff saw it or their understanding of what Council saw as staying within the envelope. If all the green exceeding the red was being done with TDRs, that could be done without a code amendment but they were trying to limit how much was being done through TDRs. She commented the text amendment had just been filed. It was filed separate from this project. There had been a number of projects generally in

the downtown area that were interested in potentially changing this section of the code. It would be an amendment to 18.18.120 to allow for floor area to be moved around in a different way as long as it remained under the height of the zoning district. It would give more flexibility on exceeding the envelope and moving things around. There were other projects that had come forward even to Council through prescreenings that were interested in just increasing the height of the building for ground floor retail. Even that was not within the bounds of what 18.18.120 would allow. It would start with a prescreening in front of Council as the first step. If an ordinance passes, they would be able to do the project as proposed.

Boardmember Baltay wanted to know if the text amendment would be specific to this project or an amendment to the entire code.

Ms. Raybould clarified it would be an amendment to the entire downtown code.

Vice Chair Chen asked what the difference of the two scenarios. She asked about the firewall requirement. She remarked when looking at the floor plans, there were no dimensions but it seemed like the glazing was close to the property line on sheet A2.3.

Ms. Dobkevicius explained both options would require a lot merger application, go through Architectural Review Board and need the CUP for the conditional use permit for the rooftop. The only difference was the top image was in case they decide to only merge 530 and 540. The western wall between building 500 and 540 was blank so if they merged the three properties they could resolve the architectural elements of that wall and make it more pedestrian friendly. It would have more glad and visual interest.

Ms. Raybould added the type of mapping process would be the same no matter what. Everything would be based on the larger parcel. The data provided as part of the application was based on just 530 and 540. They would have to update that zoning code. She stated 500 University was a fairly recent project so presumably if that was code compliant and these were code compliant that should not be an issue. They had not fully done that analysis in that scenario yet. She said the firewall requirement would be three feet set back from the property line to be able to have windows. She commented there can be fire rated glass that does not open on the property line. She stated the fire rated wall was required to be three feet from the property line if there would be openings.

Boardmember Hirsch wanted to know if the exterior elements seen on University would be changed or was it presented as part of the picture. He asked if the connection to the garage was a required city connection.

Ms. Dobkevicius explained those two images were between 500 and 530 University where they were proposing a pedestrian access to the garage space at the back. They were not facing University and were interior elevations. There would be no physical connection. The properties would be joined together to form a larger parcel. The space between 500 University and 540 University combined together would be addressed in terms of adding additional landscaping and glass making it more pedestrian friendly.

Ms. Raybould added there was a pedestrian path going down the alley going toward the parking garage. This would open up to that pedestrian access area. She remarked the connection to the garage was private property. Ms. Dobkevicius added the connection would be there but the elevations would look different depending on which option they went for.

Boardmember Baltay wanted to discuss more of the pedestrian alley and to understand what the restrictions would be for residential uses on this property.

James Tefend, applicant, provided a slide presentation about the 540 University Ave. project proposal including a background of the project, views of the intended design elements, street view, site location, floor plans, proposed enhancements to the existing breezeway connection from University Avenue to the public parking garage, proposed building height, roof deck, building canopies, view looking east, view from the back looking at breezeway and entrance into rear office, the main façade, view looking toward the building entrance located on the corner, the western façade shown blank with the intention to remove the property line between the 500 University site and combine a new project line to avoid a fire rated façade and proposed materials.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Faith Brigel queried if a garage basement was going to be built and what would accommodate the extra demand for parking.

Jack Norman wondered how City Council predicted this project would affect Palo Alto and their housing.

Mr. Tefend stated they were not proposing an underground parking garage since the site was within half mile to Caltrain. They looked at residential for the site but it was not economically viable so there was interest for an additional office building for the site.

Boardmember Adcock commented about the exit onto the adjacent property and questioned if they were reviewing this project as if it was all combined. She asked if the south side toward the garage noted as public way was truly a public way people in all the buildings could exit out to. She asked if they had analyzed where the imaginary property line was and how much opening they were going to have.

Ms. Raybould explained because it was the same property owner, they could put some sort of easement if they wanted to on that area that would allow them to exit out but otherwise would not be allowed to have any sort of door to exit out. When they looked at it, they were provided the data and information for 530 and 540 University alone but they did have the 500 University option of potentially combining it. They were trying to look at both options. Because it was a preliminary review, they did not dig into all of the details of those components. She confirmed the south side noted as a public way was truly a public way.

Mr. Tefend remarked they had analyzed where the imaginary property line was and how much opening they were going to have. He said when they come back for the full application, they would show all the diagrams and calculations. Once the property line was removed, they would show that they could build both buildings on the same lot and meet the building code requirement for maximum building area and setbacks. Regarding the south property line side to the garage, they did the calculations and positioned the building wall in order to meet the maximum amount of openings unprotected.

Boardmember Hirsch queried if they had explored the possibility of sprinklers as a means of fireproofing the openings they had in the alleyway wall.

Mr. Tefend answered they had not explored the possibility of sprinklers as a means of fireproofing the openings they had in the alleyway wall since their intent was to remove the property line. They showed the blank wall intentionally as just a step. The intention was to remove the property line and develop

the facade in the presentation allowing for unprotected openings because they were combining the lots and show the distance separation required by code. The intention was when they go for the formal application, if the new façade is approved as a condition of approval they would do that façade and go into the Planning and Building Department permit process with that intended façade.

Boardmember Baltay asked if there was an easement on the property to allow pedestrian alley or if there was intent to place one for future use.

Mr. Tefend replied there was not an easement or intent to put one. It was intended to give the City access to the parking garage.

Boardmember Adcock wanted to know the process for allowing the building height to reach 57 feet.

Ms. Dobkevicius commented if they wanted to do the rooftop, they could go over the 50-foot height limit for all the elements like the staircase and elevator to exceed the height but not for the canopies because they have to comply with the 45 degree angle measured from the building wall at the deck height so those canopies encroached into the daylight plane.

Ms. Raybould clarified they can have canopies that exceed the height. It was a conditional use permit. Anything that exceeds the height would have to be set back from the property line and meet a 45 degree angle from the deck. The intent of that code when it was written was that Council wanted to allow for larger buildings in the City to still be able to have these roof decks but did not want to add to massing of existing buildings so they wanted things to be set back if they were going to be added. This was not meeting those requirements in this scenario. They wanted to highlight that in the staff report because it was a critical piece of the architectural design of the building. There was no path to allowing it except they could explore a design enhancement exception but she thought it would be difficult because making the findings for the design enhancement exception, it would have to be consistent with the intent of the code and the specific intent of that code when it was written because it was written to ensure that it was not adding to massing. She thought it was a potential option that could be explored.

Chair Rosenberg referenced the canopies at the front façade of the building on sheet A2.4 and wanted to know if there was ever consideration to pull those back instead of being between grid lines A and B to be between grid lines B and C.

Mr. Tefend stated they did look at that but felt it was a more interesting and dynamic façade when it was front and center and felt that was needed in the façade.

Boardmember Hirsch queried if the canopies on the existing building were fitting into the 45 degree angle to the rooftop elements on 500 University. He asked if they would use a DEE procedure on the newer canopies if it were to be considered.

Ms. Raybould explained 500 University was not using that code section. She stated it was through a DEE process that they did it on 500 University but it was separate from the conditional use permit, conditions under 18.18.060e, which was what they were proposing under this.

Mr. Tefend said the trellises were set back but they did have a large stone armature that went from the front into the back that extended the height limit, as well.

Ms. Dobkevicius said they possibly would use a DEE procedure if it were to be considered but it was unclear if they had findings to approve it.

Mr. Switzer believed it was stated already that the DEEs was for the intent of the code and this would be hard pressed to meet the intent of exceeding that.

Boardmember Adcock commented it also looked like the 500 one was below the 50 feet but she did not see anything with dimensions that would confirm that.

Mr. Tefend pointed out the armature could be seen on the axon of 500 University rising up and going back across the roof deck and the trellises were set in. They respected the 45 degree angle.

Ms. Raybould clarified that was done separately before the 18.18.060e code was written. She thought there might be some code provisions they could explore for architectural features or similar they could look into as potential options. It would be dependent on how they proposed to do those features. The stairwells, trellises and elevator all exceeded the height limit.

Vice Chair Chen wanted to know if there was any code restriction for the ground floor canopy that projected 11 feet over the property line.

Ms. Raybould explained canopies could not extend over the property line unless Public Works allowed for that and there was a permanent easement for it. A number of buildings have that existing but they generally were not supportive of new encroachments. It would be a determination from Public Works on whether they would allow for that.

Boardmember Hirsch asked if there was some fire department regulation about that and if they had explored that.

Ms. Raybould replied they had not explored that and it would be something they had to consider as part of the formal application.

Boardmember Adcock observed the front entry canopy on the first floor exceeded the property line but the tree canopies on the rooftop also projected past the property line and was also the case for 500 University and asked if she was correct.

Mr. Tefend confirmed that to be correct.

Boardmember Baltay wanted to hear Architect Hayes' discussion of the FAR exemptions requested. He provided an explanation of code section 18.18.120. He asked if they were proposing the text amendment for the uses or the facility part of this and asked if they would support it if it was only for the facility or if there was some parallel clause requiring or addressing the residential question. He opined they would have to give a little bit to get this through and suggested they consider finding way to work housing into part of it. He asked if it would be financially feasible if they were allowed to go above 50 feet.

Ken Hayes, applicant, stated they came before the ARB a few months prior with an application for a building on Ramona Street. That was the owner they made the application for the text amendment with. The text amendment was not specific to this project. They prepared this FAR Tetris diagram to try to figure out a creative way of working with the shrink wrap rule that says for the purposes of this section, building envelope shall be the physical three-dimensional volume of the existing building. He

did not think the change that took place in 2015 was good for the future of Downtown Palo Alto. He had been trying to work with Staff on ways to work with it, work around it or get rid of it. This was one way they thought made sense to work with it. They would not do the text amendment. They would look at every single project. He referenced the diagram showing the floor area can be replaced provided replacement doesn't exceed the height, extend the footprint, shift the building footprint or violate the building envelope of the existing building. He mentioned the building owners were most likely all paying into the downtown parking assessment district for much of their floor area so they would they lose their floor area. They could keep the parking but would no longer need it if they got rid of that floor area yet would still be assessed for it in the assessment district. This was a way of working with the existing buildings individually by figuring out a way to always move existing floor area down so as not to exceed the height and the building footprint. The diagrams were showing how they would do this. In this particular building, they were out of floor area. They took existing down, used the one-to-one to fill in the rest. To do the third floor, they had to use TDR and would be limited by the 50-foot height limit in the district. It was too complicated so they decided to submit a text amendment that would eliminate that section and go back to how it was before 2015. He stated they were proposing the text amendment for the uses and the facility. They would support it if it was only for the facility. They would not support it if there was some parallel clause requiring or addressing the residential question. He did not believe it would be financially feasible if they were allowed to go above 50 feet.

Boardmember Hirsch asked Boardmember Baltay why he would suggest that housing was required there who thought housing was required almost everywhere in Palo Alto and he did not see why housing would not be encouraged on high levels along University Avenue. Boardmember Hirsch did not think it seemed reasonable to just insert a few housing units into a much larger commercial structure.

Chair Rosenberg asked if they could have an entire floor level free instead of having to pay \$400 square foot for the TDRs if that would potentially balance out better for the applicant. She asked about the purpose of the side trellis. She wanted to ensure there were no safety concerns with the railings.

Mr. Tefend replied that needed to be studied. If they were to add in residential they would need a separate lobby and elevator. It would take a bite out of the usable floor space. He commented they felt the side trellis enhanced the experience of the breezeway. He confirmed the railings were all designed in the code.

Boardmember Hirsch added there would be extensive mechanical issues needed for an apartment that would be difficult to put into a commercial building. He asked if it was conceivable that all these ideas could be done.

Ms. Raybould answered that Staff was not endorsing or supporting anything at this point. They had filed a text amendment separate from this project to bring forward for Council's consideration as a study session to get initial feedback. The pre-screening with Council would be to gauge their interest in whether they want to make modifications to this section of the code to provide more flexibility. At this time, Staff would bring forward what the applicant was presenting to consider if Council had any interest in changing the code and if so what some considerations were to think about in how they would write that code section.

Boardmember Adcock asked what a typical timeline would be for that kind of code amendment approval.

Ms. Raybould explained it would require a pre-screening with Council. It would not be able to go before Council until after their July break. Once they did the pre-screening application, they could file a formal application. It would go to the Planning Commission and then to Council. She thought it would be about six months depending on the CEQA. Staff would have to take some time to analyze how it would affect all properties in commercial downtown.

Mr. Hayes commented as part of the project across the street on Ramona in 2022, they had a pre-screening to talk specifically about this for that project. When Council added language to 18.18.120 in late 2015/early 2016, there was no analysis, study or comprehensive impact that CEQA would be concerned about. It just happened at a Council meeting, they had a second reading then it was over. He did not know why it could not go back without having to go through this lengthy process.

Chair Rosenberg thought this was an opportunity for making adjustments to code if they needed to be made. She asked questions about combining the lots or keeping the buildings separate.

Mr. Tefend replied the client would like the option to have the buildings separate. They did not know if it would different tenants and the proposal was no parking garage and fully separate.

Boardmember Hirsch inquired if there were any reservations about the fact they were making a major aesthetic change with the canopies on the building.

Mr. Tefend expressed they believed this building should be a cousin to the first building. They needed to relate to each other but not be the same. They wanted a strong façade with these canopies because they felt it was a more exciting building and added to the street presence. He thought the extended height limit was needed.

Chair Rosenberg found this to be an interesting building. She felt there was a lot of glass on the front façade and would like to see more introduction of the stone on the front façade. She thought the canopies were bold. She had a hard time understanding why they could not be pushed back and suggested that might be an analysis they could provide at the next round. She thought the interior layout looked great and their intent for the alleyway was special. She was glad to know the glazing and combining all three properties was the intent.

Boardmember Baltay thought this was very good site planning. The preserved and enhanced pedestrian alley was a great opportunity to have retail established along the entire length of the alley. He also liked that they set back from the parking garage. He felt it would be a great place for a residential entrance. He thought they needed to reconfigure the floor plan to allow deep retail spaces off University rather than closing it off. His biggest issue was regarding the building massing. He wanted to see some additional horizontal element that would relate to the strong horizontal cap on 500 University. He thought it was too tall because the plate heights were too tall and because of the large parapet at the top. All those things ran against the intent of the roof deck code. He thought they needed to get a horizontal element that would relate to 500 University at closer to that elevation. He remarked it would help if they showed the plants and detail on top of 500 University more accurately on the renderings. He applauded the roof terrace as a concept. He stated the blank wall at the alley was unacceptable and even if they kept the separate parcels they needed to do something to make it look like a nice design. He thought the elevations on the two buildings were too similar. He felt the vertical parts of the building were interesting but disjointed. He encouraged them to go through more design iterations in order to

express the building and refine the detail. He expressed the shade elements on the roof were too tall, large and dramatic and would not stand the test of time well. He advised keeping a clean parapet lining up with the rest of the buildings on the avenue and set back the upper level a little bit. He could not support the trellises the way they were shown.

Boardmember Adcock agreed the trellis seemed too large and on the edge for the building. She thought the column design was interesting but the scale seemed too large. She thought the heroic gesture on the alley side was unnecessary. She thought the large rectangular vertical expression on the University Avenue side was interesting but needed a little bit of editing down to be compelling. She thought the site plan was good. She was glad to hear there would be egress onto the adjacent property with some easements. She agreed with Boardmember Baltay that the retail would need to have a little more of a presence on the street.

Vice Chair Chen remarked the site plan was well thought out and the ground level was a very pedestrian friendly design. She said the landscape and seating areas along the alley were nice. She thought having the retail street front recessed back helped to provide more buffer zone from the sidewalk from the building. She wanted to ensure the ground floor retail canopy would be resolved in the future. She thought the scale of the building was appropriate and compatible with the neighboring buildings. She liked the materials. She agreed that the upper level canopy was heavy and too bold and suggested lowering it a couple of feet.

Boardmember Hirsch felt the original building was exciting and this one extended too far, especially in the canopies above. He observed some of the elements of the original building could be adapted to this building. He would like to see more similarities in the buildings. He thought the alley was nice and thought they could extend the windows to the front of the building. He opined the entry to the building at the back end alleviated the fact that it was quite far back to the elevator so people would be inclined to go in the side door more often than just in the front door. He advised not pushing the building height so high above the standard and making the top of the building work closer to the original idea repeating some of the masonry in most of the façade.

Boardmember Baltay found himself persuaded by Mr. Hayes' arguments regarding the shrink wrap rule for the structure of the building but not for the use. He thought it was reasonable and important for the City to stand behind when a building was dramatically changed, the uses needed to be in conformance with the current code. They wanted retail on the ground floor along University Avenue so he did not understand why they would allow them to continue the nonconforming use. He indicated Mr. Hayes' argument about the economic justification for someone rebuilding their building being able to keep the square footage they have made sense and they should facilitate that and relaxing the shrink wrap rule was one way to do that and the ARB should chime in loudly on that. He would like to see them use this as a point to tell City Council to allow residential use above 50 feet high perhaps following the same rule about setting it back from the parapet.

Boardmember Hirsch explained why he did not think that what was gained with residential was worth that kind of change of use. He wanted to focus on the housing element.

Boardmember Baltay countered it was not just about affordable housing counts. He said the downtown area lacked vitality and allowing housing of any kind would fight that. He advised letting the market

decide what housing they need and support it through government and private efforts to do affordable housing.

Boardmember Hirsch argued they would be forcing something on a project that was not in the character of the building.

Boardmember Baltay advised leaving that to the building owners to decide and make it possible they could.

Boardmember Hirsch stated it was important to have housing and commercial together where there was ground floor commercial to keep the street alive. He did not think this was the best place to put housing. He advised letting them try to solve the shrink wrap and aesthetic problems. He did not think it was important to put another element in the project that would make it difficult.

Boardmember Adcock supported the changing of the shrink wrap rule including the use and square footage. She thought they should support that. She felt whether ground floor retail must be required to meet current code and allowing building height be taller if it was residential were separate issues. She thought they should support allowing the height to be taller to allow residential and whether this project took that on or not was up to the applicant. She thought financial feasibility was a concern for every project and there needed to be a certain amount of benefit to take that on. She agreed any type of residential was great for vitality of downtown.

Vice Chair Chen thought opening up the opportunities to have extra height allowed for residential use was interesting and she supported it. She observed the town had changed a lot in the last couple years and it was time to revisit some of the regulations and make some changes to encourage housing opportunities.

Chair Rosenberg opined that while this item was not the discussion at hand, it should be kept at the forefront for City Council conversations and Staff to be aware that as far as the ARB is concerned, housing was something they would support in terms of height extensions. She would like to be informed if something came up with City Council where this would be pertinent.

Ms. Raybould added they were in the process of doing a downtown housing plan specifically looking at how regulations may need to be changed or what they would want to do to increase housing in the downtown.

Action Item

3. Architectural Review Board's (ARB) Draft Annual Report and Work Plan

Mr. Switzer provided a slide presentation of the ARB FY 25/26 work plan and the next steps.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no requests to speak.

Chair Rosenberg observed the mission statement was the same as the last two years.

Mr. Switzer commented project goal number one was carried over from previous work plans so would be an ongoing effort of the Architectural Review Board reviewing applications for conformance with ARB findings and objective standards. The language was the same as previous years' work plans.

Boardmember Baltay queried why they said that high priority was new housing projects.

Mr. Switzer replied this was carried over from the previous work plan. Based on the prior year's discussion, this was determined to be high priority. The Board could choose to either remove that or friendly amendments or additions.

Chair Rosenberg recalled that was because they had such a high focus on the housing elements from the prior year and were trying to push for more housing. She did not have an opposition to keeping that there because they were still hyper-focused on housing at the state and the city level but would understand there being a friendly amendment to potentially remove that if it were precluding something else.

Boardmember Baltay observed the project goal one was to review planning applications and he did not think they set priority which applications they review but reviewed them equally to which Chair Rosenberg agreed.

Mr. Switzer said there was expedited review for housing projects or streamlined review. There as not a priority on processing of the applications.

Boardmember Baltay thought high priority would be the timely and efficient review of all projects to which Chair Rosenberg agreed and she was okay with scratching that from high priority and leaving it blank and everything would be equal.

Boardmember Hirsch objected stating he thought the highest priority for the City was development of housing. He indicated the contextual section of the code designated if a project was more than one acre, it should have mixed usage. When it was three acres or more, it changed again. He thought that led to site planning and density issues. The way it was written said there should be at least two prototypes which meant there could be single-family houses, town homes and multiple dwellings.

Chair Rosenberg supported Boardmember Hirsch's comments but inquired how that related to project goal number on. She added based on this conversation, they might want to add a project goal number six more specifically related to housing but the question at hand was if it was appropriate to prioritize housing above everything else. She did not think the ARB should treat housing projects as higher priority than a storefront. She agreed that this was inappropriate for project goal number one but thought it was a reasonable suggestion to add a full project goal related to their thoughts on housing. She asked Boardmember Hirsch if he was comfortable deleting this and then discussing adding in another project goal specifically related to housing.

Boardmember Hirsch countered that the intent of the section was about quality and it should be more than quality and should maybe be impact on the City's needs. Chair Rosenberg added there was beneficial impacts and measure of success.

Boardmember Adcock interjected this was relating to their mission which was to treat all projects that come before them equally. She agreed with Chair Rosenberg that housing would be a different project goal but would not change their main mission.

Chair Rosenberg had no objection to how goal one was written as the Board's main mission was to ensure the City developed high quality projects. She wanted to circle back to housing and review the list and add to it if needed. She read project goal number two and invited discussion.

Mr. Switzer explained this was a carryover from the previous work plan. There was some language, particularly in the high and lower priority sections that was changed to align with the recently adopted Council priorities.

Boardmember Baltay queried if this was in the agenda for the coming year and if they had objective standards they would be reviewing.

Jennifer Armer, Assistant Director, explained making the SOFA area design standards into objective design standards was one item in both the housing element and one of the priorities. She was not sure of the exact timing of that. They hoped to start that effort in the next few months. One of the Council priorities was that effort.

Chair Rosenberg opined the first line that stated assist the City as it considers modifications to objective standards was the key so they would be there as the City wanted their input.

Boardmember Baltay agreed but stated it was not modifications, it was the creation of an objective standard.

Chair Rosenberg confirmed for SOFA specifically but if the main objective standards came up they would handle that, as well.

Vice Chair Chen queried if they were seeing any new applications in that specific area or if it would effect any pending projects.

Mr. Switzer was unaware of any recent projects in SOFA in particular.

Boardmember Hirsch asked why it became such a priority if there was no application and guessed they would have to interpret what the Council was saying.

Mr. Switzer explained the high priority listed would be converting the subjective development standards listed in SOFA into objective standards consistent with the housing element program 3.7 so consistency across those documents and moving away from subjective and getting into some objective standards. The line item from the Council priorities was short and just converting those subjective to objective.

Assistant Director Armer added there were timelines in the housing element in regards to this item. The goal was to make sure it got started soon enough so they could meet the deadlines as well as getting objective standards in place before they got development applications.

Chair Rosenberg read the third goal and invited discussion.

Boardmember Baltay asked if there was anything in the works to do that this year and if they were going to look at the coordinated plans.

Mr. Switzer answered the high priority list was pulled from the Council priorities list. They were detailed for the San Antonio Road Area Plan, Downtown Housing Plan, the California Avenue Streetscape improvements and some University Avenue Streetscape improvements. Those items were on Council's

priority list to review within the next fiscal year and the intent was to align the ARB's work plan with those priorities.

Boardmember Hirsch had questions about the San Antonio Road Area Plan.

Assistant Director Armer replied it was a defined area. They had a consultant onboard and they were starting their work on that effort. It was not yet set in stone when it would come to the ARB. They were working to compile the different steps of outreach for that process. They wanted to make it clear that the ARB would be available when their advice and guidance was needed for that process.

Vice Chair Chen said she had received emails from the City about the Cubberley redevelopment in the last few weeks and asked if that would be part of the ARB's job to review that plan.

Assistant Director Armer would check in with them as to whether that would be a helpful part of it. Their work was targeting an item to go to the voters in a year and a half.

Boardmember Hirsch stated he attended the first meeting and it was undefined, no programmatic study yet. They were having another meeting possibly in June. It was his opinion the meeting was not very informative.

Chair Rosenberg questioned if that should be added to the list or if they should wait until they had more guidance and timeline.

Mr. Switzer felt sure Staff would try to align the ARB with any ongoing City projects and future work plans. Considering it would be more than likely processed outside this fiscal year, he thought it would be good direction to capture it captured by this work plan.

Assistant Director Armer added they would bring it to the Board whether it was on the work plan or not. This showed that the ARB would be available to support the different area plan and other efforts related to their expertise.

Boardmember Hirsch asked if they should be seeing some things out of the El Camino Real zoning changes and if the zoning was a complete piece now for that area.

Assistant Director Armer remarked with the thoughts and input received late last year for that area plan, they brought a proposal to Planning and Transportation Commission for their recommendation to Council. It was scheduled to go to Council for consideration next month. It seemed to support the different changes to the regulations. They needed to focus in the area of expansion, primarily to the tier 1, because if they went beyond that, there would be additional CEQA review required because it was going beyond the 500 units estimated in the housing element. They confirmed that PTC recommended going forward to meet this housing element requirement deadline for the first piece and then discuss further expansion in the future. The new regulations would go into effect by the summer and hopefully could help some of the projects currently proposed or proposed in the future in that area.

Chair Rosenberg wanted to know if they could expect that to come back to ARB in any capacity.

Assistant Director Armer stated it would not be on their work plan for the future.

Boardmember Hirsch recalled Boardmember Baltay brought up that he would like to see this expanded area and he agreed that it should be expanded all the way from Page Mill toward south.

Assistant Director Armer replied that was understood. The recommendation going to Council was an expansion of the existing focus area but was focused primarily on the tier one sites, not expanding into the tier two, three, four as the recommendation of the ARB. There seemed to be a full support for further expansion because that would have delayed the process by at least another four months and they had a June deadline.

Boardmember Hirsch commented the whole of El Camino met up against residential neighborhoods all the way along. He wanted to know if an analysis of those issues would be included.

Assistant Director Armer explained one of the benefits of keeping this expansion a little more focused was that it did not have as many of those areas abutting immediately against the low density residential. By keeping it focused, a larger effort could proceed in the future that would look into the nuance of the interactions where they had parcels that were not as deep or immediately adjacent to low density residential and what would be appropriate in those locations. It was not yet clear whether that would be a subsequent area plan.

Vice Chair Chen asked if they saw any possibilities that they would bring back the Encina Street Area Plan based on the last City Council meeting.

Assistant Director Armer said the 70 Encina application that went to Council on Monday was approved and they would have the second reading of that planned community zone then that would go into effect. There did appear to be discussions among the property owners and lessees of those adjacent parcels so they would be talking with them and available when they were ready to come forward with a proposal for a larger development if it did proceed. That would come to ARB for review.

Chair Rosenberg did not believe it would fall under the coordinated area plan because it was all one owner and lessee.

Assistant Director Armer stated it would be a larger development project application rather than an area plan.

Boardmember Hirsch asked if they were saying there was one owner for all the property.

Chair Rosenberg replied it was one owner surrounding 70 Encina. The property owner was Town & Country. Boardmember Hirsch countered Town & Country was leasing.

Assistant Director Armer stated it was more complex than a single owner but they were looking to the possibility of a redevelopment of that and it would be processed as a redevelopment.

Chair Rosenberg read project goal number four and invited discussion. She asked why the two were lumped together.

Mr. Switzer recalled the presentation of the last fiscal year work plan that Council had added the addition of project goal number six. The intent was to provide a catch all for the items coming forward. The Innovative Housing Structure was also listed on the Council priorities for the coming fiscal year. That would not be limited to micro units or intergenerational housing, aging adults, students, lower income units. Those items were listed on the Council's priority list to be further investigated and would fall under the purview of the Architectural Review Board to further investigate.

Chair Rosenberg proposed changing project number five to six and splitting four into four and five. She thought wireless was its own item and they needed a goal more focused on housing and the micro housing and more interesting units should go into that one. She wanted to prioritize that as goal number four pushing wireless to goal number five and then the coordination would become goal number six.

Boardmember Baltay did not care about whether they were split but he thought they needed to be directed by Council on both items. He observed wireless was under consideration by Council but it had not been agreed on yet. He thought it should at the minimum say as directed by Council under the project goal. Chair Rosenberg agreed that was fair. Boardmember Baltay added these were all things they could not do without Council direction.

Assistant Director Armer stated that was common with these work plans. They could include telecom on here because they knew they would be discussing whether that would return to ARB or not for those projects for review that at some point this year. It could be listed as an example of a potential item the ARB might consider in terms of supporting the City on new guidelines, ordinances, etc. They provided an interim urgency ordinance for Council to consider at the end of last year and it got pulled from the consent calendar. It had been tentative agenda for a Council meeting several times. The difficulties with scheduling and prioritizing other items meant it had not yet been discussed by them but they were still working to be prepared from the Staff side to have that discussion with them. They did not have an indication as to the reason it was pulled or what the current Council members' opinions were on whether to change the existing process or not. She said they had published a staff report based on what they had found as of December and she would likely pull together a supplemental report before it got published for the next Council review.

Boardmember Baltay suggested project goal number four strike the reference to the wireless communications and just say provide feedback to Staff and Council on creation of new guidelines, ordinances and streetscapes, as directed by Council. He would like to see them put housing as a high priority. He thought they would address wireless communication at Council request.

Mr. Switzer clarified it was added as work plan goal number six for the last fiscal year of a new project or goal to specifically address the wireless communication facility regulations. It was directed that there would be an interim ordinance and then following that would be a more permanent ordinance that would be reviewing those items upon which the ARB would provide feedback on. That was the intent of that added goal.

Assistant Director Armer added that was what would have been approved through the consent calendar in December and was pulled. They were waiting at that point to get the actual direction from them as to whether this work would move forward or they would be retaining the existing process and objective standards.

Chair Rosenberg then agreed it would be inappropriate to separate that out as a separate goal at that time. She asked if they should move the wireless commentary to lower priority and add the words as directed by City Council.

Boardmember Baltay suggested just striking the wireless communication thing. He stated their priority was the housing question and should be the important part of priority four.

Chair Rosenberg was comfortable keeping it as a much broader overreaching overall project goal and keeping innovative housing structures, micro units, intergenerational housing in the high priority. She wanted to add in commentary that they would like to identify and focus on potential ways of getting more housing in the City. She asked how they could get that concept at part of this goal.

Assistant Director Armer recommended that stay general. She stated there were a few different possibilities of things that could fall into that category that were moving forward. Tying into the downtown housing plan was on of them. There was also interest from Council in potentially doing some interim work for the California Avenue area or some other things like that.

Chair Rosenberg stated the high priority would be change to housing generation and feasibility, bullet point number two would be innovative housing structures, micro units, intergenerational housing, aging adults, students and lower income users, consistent with housing element program 6.5.

Boardmember Baltay asked if that could be pushed to project goal number two.

Chair Rosenberg agreed with pushing that to project goal number two and dropping the rest down.

Boardmember Baltay remarked that they had been advocating for item number five and nothing had ever come of it.

Chair Rosenberg argued she was included on many more of City Council emails. They always informed her when something more important came up. She appreciated having the opportunity to sit in on some of the City Council meetings she might not have been privy to otherwise. She felt it could be expanded further but felt like she had been kept in the loop when something pretty important came across their desk.

Boardmember Baltay pointed out it was talking about liaisons between other boards. He advised scratching project goal number five.

Chair Rosenberg had no objection to scratching it.

Assistant Director Armer stated the efforts they had been making to try and make sure the Chair was aware when something that had come to ARB was going to PTC or Council was something they would continue to work on and seemed like it was providing a good link.

Boardmember Adcock indicated it would be helpful if they could all be included in that.

Assistant Director Armer recommended upcoming items going to PTC or Council that had gone to ARB may become part of the standard staff presentation.

Boardmember Hirsch encouraged adding that to the standard staff presentation.

Mr. Switzer noted the pending projects list on attachment B of the director's report detailed updates in the column for notes for any of the projects going in their tentative scheduled dates with Council and PTC as well as any subsequent hearings that it might be going before. He thought they could improve the coordination of that and have that included in the presentation.

Boardmember Baltay suggested changing the high priority to no longer being create liaisons between boards and commissions but rather maintain and improve the ongoing list of projects coming up and maybe even circulate that more widely.

Assistant Director Armer pointed out they did have some of these details in the measure of success, having staff continue to provide updates on pending projects. If they chose to keep project goal number five as an ongoing effort they could or they could remove it but she was hearing there was support for removing the high priority detail.

Chair Rosenberg agreed with removing the high priority but the measure of success clearly stated have Staff continue to provide updates in the pending projects attachment on development proposals and then the ARB could appoint a representative to attend Council meetings to provide feedback on reviewed projects.

Boardmember Adcock suggested when they got future meeting dates for ARB and the projects coming in front, even an abbreviated list of what was going in front of PTC and Council of stuff they had reviewed would be helpful.

Chair Rosenberg queried if there was anything in status notes that said when it was going to PTC or anything like that.

Assistant Director Armer said it could be that the second bullet point under measure of success might should be PTC and Council. She recommended to align with the presentation that she, as liaison, present to PTC that that be the time to share the upcoming meetings with the ARB as part of that presentation.

Chair Rosenberg was comfortable with that being an amendment to the measure of success.

Vice Chair Chen asked if five of them attend a PTC or City Council meeting, did that mean they represent themselves as individuals or as ARB.

Mr. Switzer stated as listed it would singular. Getting into the area of having more than one would edge toward a quorum.

Assistant Director Armer added they were all welcome to join and provide comments as individuals but they do recommend a single person represent the ARB so they should make it clear they were not speaking on behalf of the ARB. There was also the option to watch the meeting on YouTube and then there would be no concern. She supported the addition of PTC to this list.

Chair Rosenberg remarked project goal number five would remain with the amendments as noted. She asked if they should add El Camino to the list.

Mr. Switzer replied that was on bullet number four. He noted bullet number four was a lot of work condensed in one.

Boardmember Adcock wanted to make a correction on bullet number one. She did not think there were 100 eligible projects because by the time they got to the eligible projects there were around 20.

Mr. Switzer advised removing the word eligible.

Chair Rosenberg suggested adding the word potentially before eligible.

Boardmember Baltay suggested striking everything after the first sentence and say they reviewed these projects and awarded them because of their contribution to Palo Alto.

Boardmember Hirsch thought it would be good to get some Council members to the ARB Awards.

Chair Rosenberg said they would circle back to that.

Mr. Switzer stated there were ongoing efforts with Staff on the coordination of that award ceremony.

Chair Rosenberg said the application review was a nice list and wanted to know what the TBD was at the bottom of the highlight.

Mr. Switzer explained that was included because they were in the month of April and were not fully closed out for this fiscal year. There were some projects that may be coming forward that would be representative of the work that was reviewed by the ARB within this fiscal year.

Chair Rosenberg wanted to know how much of the words after the word recommendation was rolled over.

Mr. Switzer answered that the majority of this was carried over from the previous work plan. Staff was open to any additions or suggestions for changing the language.

Chair Rosenberg asked for clarification of the word recommendations listed under the recommendations section.

Mr. Switzer clarified the recommendations section was carried over for any items that wanted to be highlighted to Council noting efforts that were partially satisfied within the fiscal year.

Boardmember Baltay suggested item three about the wireless communications should be struck from the recommendations list. Chair Rosenberg agreed. Boardmember Baltay went on to say in the past and in practice, the Chair had written the recommendations. He thought the Chair should be doing this. Chair Rosenberg noted that.

Boardmember Adcock wanted to clarify the recommendation section was their recommendation to the Council and asked if that was how it should be titled and thought they should elaborate that.

Mr. Switzer replied in previous years that was the intent of that section of the report.

Boardmember Hirsch wanted some language added saying something about how they expedite projects.

Mr. Switzer asked if there was any suggested language to be added.

Boardmember Baltay thought they should review the recommendations more specifically themselves.

Mr. Switzer further noted in alignment with work plan goal number five, he thought having this scheduled at a subsequent hearing to review these items would be warranted on this particular section of the report.

Chair Rosenberg noted they would pause this section and move on to the renderings and she would circle back to that at a later meeting. She invited discussion on the renderings.

Boardmember Hirsch had a problem with The Melt.

Chair Rosenberg agreed and suggested striking it from the series as it did not reflect the ARB's best work.

Boardmember Adcock mentioned the comparison of 3265 El Camino just showed they made the building taller which was not based on their recommendation. She preferred a different view of it.

Mr. Switzer agreed that could be achieved. He showed a slide of all the projects that were reviewed within this year barring the projects that had yet come before the Board. Any of the other items could be considered or highlighted since they removed The Melt façade and asked for suggestions.

Boardmember Adcock asked if they wanted to note their lengthy conversation about their recommendation regarding the art at 824 San Antonio or at least note that the ARB supported the façade design as shown.

Chair Rosenberg pointed out they were not trying to justify what they did. It was a bigger comment of whether public art was part of the façade or not.

Boardmember Hirsch noted these were things the Council looked at quickly and they would not get into depth with them. The idea of before and after was good, specifically on 824. On 3265, he felt it missed the fact that an extra floor was added.

Chair Rosenberg thought on 3265 it should note support and increase in housing.

Boardmember Baltay felt they were missing the purpose of this at a higher level. He stated they were trying to show Council and the City why they exist and what they do. He did not think the images conveyed what they had done. He thought they should take the list of projects and define what they were trying to say.

Chair Rosenberg argued there was a limitation to how well they could explain what they do. It was not always big, flashy and contentious but sometimes quiet, smaller, more subtle things that kept the streetscape important. She agreed this section was worth going back and having each person take a project to review the bullet points individually and note if the images were the appropriate images for that project.

Mr. Switzer noted they were not limited to just one before and one after. There could be multiple renderings and columns for one project. There was discussion about which projects should be included in the renderings. He suggested continuing this discussion to another meeting and assigning some projects listed in the packet and having some work done with the Board in the meantime.

Chair Rosenberg went over the list of addresses and descriptions then assigned them as follows: 4075 El Camino, 3000 El Camino and 4335 El Camino to Boardmember Adcock; 3150 El Camino and 70 Encina to Boardmember Baltay; 3265 El Camino and 824 San Antonio to Vice Chair Chen; 3950 Fabian and 660 University to herself along with the Architectural Review Awards; and 640 Waverly, 164 Hamilton and 180 El Camino to Boardmember Hirsch.

MOTION: Chair Rosenberg moved that with the following homework for the ARB members and including the adjustments made they defer the item to a later date uncertain seconded by Vice Chair Chen.

VOTE: Motion carried 5-0

Approval of Minutes

4. Draft Architectural Review Board Meeting Minutes for March 6, 2025

MOTION: Chair Rosenberg moved to approve the minutes as written seconded by Boardmember Adcock.

VOTE: Motion carried 5-0

5. Draft Architectural Review Board Meeting Minutes for March 20, 2025

MOTION: Chair Rosenberg moved to approve the minutes as written seconded by Vice Chair Chen.

VOTE: Motion carried 5-0

Board Member Questions, Comments, Announcements Or Future Meetings And Agendas

Chair Rosenberg discussed the City Council meeting she sat in on where they discussed 70 Encina. She described it as a very lively discussion. The summary was that the City Council approved Encina unanimously and that project would be moving forward. They received an email from a member of the public who spoke at that hearing who made an accusation that the Board had violated the Brown Act since they had met with representatives from both sides of the aisle. She stated that was factually inaccurate as they had met individually. It had been reviewed by the lawyer and no violation occurred.

Boardmember Baltay said he met with the applicant but did not meet with, speak with or discuss this project in any way with other members of the Board.

Chair Rosenberg said all five members of the Board could make that statement.

Boardmember Adcock agreed they never discussed the items or any of the conversations they had with either the applicant or Town & Country with each other.

Adjournment

Chair Rosenberg adjourned the meeting at 11:57 am