



Architectural Review Board 2023-2024 Workplan

Staff Liaison: Claire Raybould, AICP, Senior 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.

Current Boardmembers

- Peter Baltay (Chair)
- Kendra Rosenberg (Vice Chair)
- Osma Thompson
- 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

Prior Year Accomplishments

- 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 over 20 projects including 10 major multi-family housing and commercial projects as well as larger retail modifications in Stanford Shopping Center, meeting Goal 1 of the annual work plan for 2022-2023.
- The ARB provided valuable feedback to assist Council with respect to the permanent parklet program as well as updates to the city's tree protection ordinance. The feedback assisted Council in adopting permanent parklet standards related to a new ordinance related to a permanent parklet program. This work was consistent with Goal 2 of the fiscal year 2023 work plan.

- The ARB used its expertise in coordination with staff and their consultant to develop Objective Standards from the City’s existing subjective guidelines and findings that are unique to the City. This will help to ensure that housing development projects continue to meet the City’s high-quality design standards while also going through the City’s streamlined review process. This work satisfied Goal 3 of the 2022-2023 work plan.
- The ARB held an awards ceremony on September 21st to celebrate outstanding projects that have been built in the city between 2015 and 2020, meeting objective 4 of the annual Work Plan for 2022-2023.
- The ARB adopted updates to its by-laws to conform with Council’s new handbook and again more recently to address new changes to the Brown Act in accordance with Council’s direction, meeting Goal 5 of the 2022-2023 annual work plan.
- The ARB provided feedback for the Homekey project, prioritizing this critical housing project for the homeless. The ARB’s feedback ensured that the project is well designed to address the residents needs and is appropriate to its location within the Baylands with respect to colors and massing.
- The ARB reviewed and swiftly approved amendments to the Stanford Medical Center Master Signage program to accommodate new directional signage, ensuring ease in locating needed medical services.

PROJECT/GOAL 1:	Review Planning applications for conformance with ARB Findings and Objective Standards			
BENEFICIAL IMPACTS	TIMELINE	RESOURCES NEEDED	MEASURE OF SUCCESS	STATE MANDATED / LOCAL LAW / COUNCIL-APPROVED
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
HIGH PRIORITY		LOWER PRIORITY		COUNCIL-DIRECTED POLICY UPDATE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects that include new housing units that will help with City reach its regional housing needs allocation (RHNA) 				N/A

PROJECT/GOAL 2:	Assist the City as it considers modifications to various 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 and address Objective Standards applicability to Coordinated Area Plans.			
BENEFICIAL IMPACTS	TIMELINE	RESOURCES NEEDED	MEASURE OF SUCCESS	STATE MANDATED / LOCAL LAW / COUNCIL-APPROVED

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 Fall 2023; If directed by Council, work with staff to propose specific code language for Council adopted by the end of FY 2024	Additional staff at Planning so that the quality and completeness of the work is maintained.	Council Approval	No
HIGH PRIORITY		LOWER PRIORITY		COUNCIL-DIRECTED POLICY UPDATE
In order of priority: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modifications to address townhome projects • Modifications to address SB 9 • Modifications to address SOFA I and SOFA II areas 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modifications based on implementation of the objective standards for projects under review (addition of standards or modifications to existing standards based on experience implementing the standards) 		No
PROJECT/GOAL 3:	Discuss specific Comprehensive Plan Goals, Policies, Programs or Design Guidelines the ARB would like to further explore/implement; If the City Council directs outreach to boards and commissions, provide comments on a preliminary schedule for the development of new Coordinated Area Plans for San Antonio, California Avenue, Downtown, El Camino Real areas.			
BENEFICIAL IMPACTS	TIMELINE	RESOURCES NEEDED	MEASURE OF SUCCESS	STATE MANDATED / LOCAL LAW / COUNCIL-APPROVED
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	No
HIGH PRIORITY		LOWER PRIORITY		COUNCIL-DIRECTED POLICY UPDATE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide input on development standards for the GM Zoned properties between San Antonio and Fabian Way, which will be required to rezone to allow multi-family housing in accordance with the proposed Housing Element • Explore modifications to zoning code and/or land use as needed to facilitate and encourage mixed-use development of surface parking lots in the downtown area without loss of parking and on Stanford lands • Modifications to the El Camino Real and South El Camino Real Design Guidelines 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinated Area Plan for the San Antonio Area • Bird-friendly design guidelines 		No