

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Palo Alto Public Safety Building (PSB) and California Avenue Garage project occupies two city blocks at the intersection of Sherman Avenue and Birch Street, and represents Palo Alto's largest investment in municipal infrastructure since the construction of City Hall. During the initial study session in June of 2017, the ARB reviewed three uniquely different approaches to building this new civic complex. In summary review, these previous schemes were: *Screening/Greening*, which proposed to veil public safety building and public parking garage in a naturalized setting to reduce their visual presence and secure vulnerable openings; *Dynamic Massing*, which proposed to break down building massing by modulating the building volumes to make the two-block project appear smaller, more intimate and visually dramatic; and, *Simple Civic*, which proposed a dignified and semi-formal visual presence to create a confident, approachable and community-scaled civic image for Public Safety. The ARB had an opportunity to offer input about the design opportunities inherent in each concept and provide direction to the design team on how best to further refine the design as the project progresses; a summary of all comments and comprehensive responses are included in the *Comments & Responses Table* in the body of the submittal. During this same time frame, the three options were also presented to the building's user groups, and some community representatives. Overall comments were documented and addressed. The current proposal has emerged from this process.

### 00 OVERVIEW

The **Public Safety Building (PSB)** at 250 Sherman Ave, is located on the City's existing surface Parking Lot C6. The PSB is approximately a 46,000 square-foot, three-story police station and fire/police administration building. The PSB includes two full-block subterranean floors of police parking and operations, and shares its parcel with smaller operational accessory buildings, a secure operational yard, and a public plaza. The PSB has generous setbacks from its property lines, a standoff perimeter that offers both security and community design benefits. The PSB is a secure, essential services facility that will be designed to support and protect the critical operations that occur inside. The design of the PSB requires the careful balancing of transparency and solidity.

As a law enforcement and emergency response building, there are a series of *specialized building and site design* accommodations that design of the PSB is required to meet. No unscreened vehicle may come within 20'-0" of the building, requiring a security setback that is enforced with perimeter vehicle barriers. The subterranean parking for Patrol vehicles must have two separate vehicular exits onto two unique streets in the event that one street is obstructed in some way (flooding, protest, fire, or other obstructing hazard). Site design should follow CPTED (*Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design*) best practices. Windows and openings are to be protected from line-of-sight vulnerabilities, resulting in careful placement and type of windows, types of visual screening, quantity of openings. Outdoor programmatic areas must be secured

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and screened from view to protect critical operations. The project will include facility resiliency, redundancy and hardening strategies which when deployed will enable the PSB to remain operational after a major disaster.

The **Parking Garage (Garage)** at 350 Sherman Ave, was previously approved by the ARB and is currently under building permit review. The new garage will be located on the City's existing surface Parking Lot C7. The parking garage is a four-story above grade and two-story below grade, 636 stall public parking structure serving the parking needs of the California Avenue business district. The parking structure fills its site to nearly the property lines and utilizes strategies such as a cascading exterior grand staircase and landscaped setback (on Birch Street), and a pedestrian lobby at Birch Street to provide scale-mitigating site amenities. The height of the California Avenue Garage will be approximately 49'-0" above sidewalk level to top of roof-mounted photovoltaic panels. As a public-serving amenity, the garage's key design imperatives include ease of wayfinding, generosity toward the pedestrian environment, and a perimeter skin that offers an appropriate visual character when viewed by its neighbors.

### 01 GENERAL CONCEPTS

The proposed design creates a distinctive civic identity through a series of prominent civic markers nested within an understated backdrop of rich landscaping and informal visual textures. The overall building volumes are de-emphasized, receding in deference to the smaller-scale, dynamic and colorful *civic points-of-contact*. Each colorful accent highlights an archetypal urban moment—entry, arcade, plaza, gateway, grand staircase—reinforcing and elevating civic instances like arrival, orientation, entry, protection, repose and connection with nature. The project's visual palette draws upon Palo Alto precedents: the terra cotta and off-white materials of the City's historic buildings coupled with the formal invention of its modernist landscape past, all reworked and updated to address contemporary urban design priorities.

The PSB and Parking Garage designs embrace the unique qualities of the California Avenue district. This neighborhood's defining characteristics include: an eclectic mix of scales, materials, uses and styles; significant local investment in quality of design and materials; sensitivity to the pedestrian public realm; and, a "gateway" quality along Birch Street frontage based on existing patterns of pedestrian and vehicular circulation. and embody these characteristics. **The PSB and Garage** find expression for each of these qualities. The new buildings feature a mixture of scales, from multi-block gestures to small-scale and intimate points-of-contact. The materials palette is based on high-quality local historic precedents—terra cotta, finely detailed concrete. The public realm is reinforced through civic amenities such as arcades, a grand staircase, and an enveloping plaza environment, even overlapping into the PSB entry lobby and multi-purpose room. The PSB and garage designs emerge from and contributes to the uniqueness of the California Avenue Business district.

### 02 SITE DEVELOPMENT

The PSB and Garage sites create several diverse pedestrian environments with character and uses based on location. The main focal point is a plaza zone that bookends the two sides of Birch Street; the east plaza in front of the PSB—the larger of the two—accommodates a variety of pedestrian activities in small- to medium-sized groupings, while the plaza on the west side of Birch primarily accommodates seating and shade for individual passive activities. The Park Blvd. and Ash Street frontages are focused on accommodating generous pedestrian movement to and from California Avenue, wide sidewalk areas for people walking together as a group (as is common during the lunch hour rush). Sherman Avenue does not experience as much pedestrian activity, and has been designed for quiet, passive shaded seating. Jacaranda Alley is a low pedestrian-use area as well and has been designed to support and reinforce the mid-block *paseos* that connect the alley to California Avenue. The Jacaranda frontage of the PSB has a solid wall along its length that serves as both a vehicle barrier and security screen; this wall has been elaborated with vines, and setback seating to mitigate its presence and offer visual and furniture amenities for the alley neighbors. From a street lighting standpoint, all the pedestrian areas will be lit with a low-level, focused pedestrian lighting that reinforce the intimate and small-scale aspects of the plazas/streets, avoid light-pollution, and reinforce the civic character of the facilities.

Vehicular movement is a key consideration in the site development of these two blocks. Due to its lower pedestrian volumes, Sherman Avenue will be the primary vehicular activity zone, with patrol vehicles entering off Sherman. The staff vehicle ramp will be located on Jacaranda lane. The primary building entries for both the PSB and the Garage are oriented toward the Birch Street plaza zone. The PSB entry is a single -story pavilion scaled to match the deep setback of the PSB plaza and is approached through a generous civic staircase and ramp. The Garage has a dramatic exterior staircase that animates the plaza side of the garage with pedestrian movement. These building entrance orientations reinforce the plaza zone with pedestrian access and movement. Staff entry to the PSB will be adjacent to the emergency vehicle-only curb cut-out along Sherman.

The site design has also been influenced by input from city agencies as part of the DRC design review process. Meetings with DRC, design revisions based on input from various City departments (Planning, Transportation, etc.) including:

PSB:

- The 10'-0" high security wall along Jacaranda was moved further away from the property line to provide a continuous sidewalk and meet the 10' planning setback requirement.
- A Design Enhancement Exception (DEE) will be required for portion of alley-facing Concrete wall taller than 4'-0"
- PF Zone exception will be required for the basement parking at PSB
- The entry alignment of the Birch Street ramp has been shifted to connect with Jacaranda
- Sidewalk curb locations have been adjusted and pedestrian crossing bulb-outs have been added

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- The provision for native trees has been increased to 25% overall
- The Birch street median will be shortened slightly @ Sherman to facilitate pedestrian crossing

### 03 MATERIAL RELATIONSHIPS AND ARCHITECTURE

Formally, the PSB and Garage exterior designs combine to create a consistent approach to the public realm, yet, each of the buildings retain an independent aesthetic identity. The PSB is the more civic of the two projects and is designed to convey the dignity and importance of the functions housed within. The Garage has a more deferential presence, with its large volume downplayed through massing and screening strategies, and deferring to the civic moments it can offer—a grand staircase, an arcade and various public art sites. The two buildings work in tandem to create a dramatic framing of the Birch St. right-of-way and a generous pedestrian realm.

The PSB and Garage share a material palette for what are called the civic *points-of-contact*. These exceptional moments—entry portal, grand staircase, arcade, pedestrian seating, overarching canopies—share a palette of *terra cotta*, a material/color consistent with Palo Alto precedents. It is a color that helps elevate the visual impact of these *points-of-contact* by creating dramatic visual accents. The two buildings also share an understated palette for the remainder of the buildings, favoring quiet, restrained surfaces that are animated through texture and subtle massing strategies.

#### **PSB:**

The PSB massing is based on the articulation of a simple three-story rectangular volume. This volume is elaborated through a series of additive, subtractive and textural strategies. Subtractively, the volume is eroded utilizing: glass revealing a public staircase at Birch/Sherman; carve-outs at a Level 02 exterior deck; a glazed ground level along the Birch Street plaza referential to the consistent storefront porosity of California Ave; and, generous window areas for key programmatic functions (such as the publicly accessible Multi-purpose Room). The additive massing components include: a dramatic canopy at the roofline of the building that inflects toward the main public plaza; site security walls articulated as though the building base has “slipped out” and extended over the site.

The primary exterior material for the PSB is in cast-in-place concrete. This material provides for the stringent ballistic resistance requirements as well as the desired durability and aesthetics. The terra cotta concrete panels have a rough, board formed texture. Additional exterior materials include clear glass; painted steel at overhangs, color-coded as “civic” elements, as described above; and, Porcelain tile mixed with glass at the third floor

The building requires a 135’ high telecommunications tower. This element will be integrated into the building by providing a roof-mounted monopole. This element visually relates to the pattern of verticals in the exterior design. Mounting it to the building will improve its overall visual integration.

Overall, the PSB design provides an operationally responsive, high-security environment required of a law enforcement and emergency response building but does so without visible fortressing.

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### 04 LANDSCAPE STATEMENT OF DESIGN INTENT

The project includes the landscape at two central parcels of the busy commercial area surrounding the new Public Safety Building and the Parking Structure.

**Public Safety Building:** The landscape of the PSB occupies a full block with four unique frontages. Each orientation has distinct programmatic demands, yet the overall landscape shares a family of elements and a vocabulary of streetscape, plantings and furnishings. The landscape reinforces the role of the PSB site as 1) a good neighbor, 2) a promoter of diverse activities, and 3) a symbol of community policing. The landscape also provides a great civic amenity and enhanced streetscape for this vibrant commercial center. The landscape is seen as a protective envelope that provides color, texture and contact with nature, and serves as a space for civic functions and public use.

Birch Street is a gateway into the California Avenue Business District and the sidewalk street trees reinforces this role. The plaza on the Birch Street frontage marks the main entry to the Public Safety Building with an open and welcoming civic space. The Plaza is approximately 5,000 square feet, fronts the Birch Street sidewalk, and provides places for people to sit, eat, socialize and pass through on their way to the California Avenue business district. The plaza steps leading to the entry of the PSB provide a plinth for the building as a clear forecourt to the PSB.

The PSB plaza features a low stone wall, a series of natural stone bollards and a large raised planter that provides landscaping soil and plantings otherwise absent due to the parking structure directly below. The stone wall and bollards provide a security barrier to vehicles, while providing a natural material that demarcates entry into the public plaza. This large civic-scaled planter is shaped to invite passage from the direction of California Ave. The plaza area is bordered to the southwest by a double row of trees that reinforces the pedestrian realm and provides shade for the sidewalk and for seating within the plaza. A diversity of seating types – built-in, planter edge, and moveable units—characterize the furnishings. The plaza paving is a variable pattern of stone or pre-cast concrete, differentiated from the field paving to accent building entry, community room, and an inside/outside flow into the lobby. The paving within the seating areas in the planting bands is a smaller, intimate scale. Fixed furnishings support the light poles within the plaza and function as discrete vehicular barriers. The fixtures are tapered poles with multiple heads providing a tree-like motif that drifts through the plaza. Site furniture-integrated lights supplement the poles lights for visual variety. The plaza planting is purposefully designed as a “demonstration” garden highlighting plants for water conservation and provision of habitat - for example California native pollinator species, native grasses, drought tolerant succulents, and native meadow rain garden planting palettes. Educational signage is intended to further explain and enhance the plantings.

The remaining frontages demonstrate an equivalent attention to the public realm. Sherman Avenue and Park Avenue frontages feature a double row of street trees, utilizing raised planters where needed due to parking structure below; the profile of the raised planters varies to create nested seating areas and provide raingardens for storm water treatment. Jacaranda Lane features a raised garden courtyard secured for PSB staff; this walled garden has a mounded grove of trees, vine-covered walls along the perimeter, and benches within gravel pathways. The Jacaranda Lane side of the security wall also features vine plantings and lighting to create a safe and greened passageway. The Birch Street, Sherman Avenue and Park Avenue frontages have pedestrian pole lights and planter mounted landscape lights to provide safe and attractive passage around the perimeter of the PSB.

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The general street tree planting strategy around the PSB frontages is to select species that will thrive in an urban environment, provide appropriate architectural emphasis and scale on each of the three frontages, and have relatively low maintenance and water requirements. The selection also prioritizes the use of native species where appropriate. Specifics:

- On Birch Street the priority attributes include a larger shade tree (> 40 ft. height and >30' width) that will frame Birch Street on east and west sides creating a gateway to California Avenue. The tree should generally have a spreading, vase-shaped canopy, relatively fine to medium textured foliage, and providing bright green foliage coupled with dense shade. The preferred species is a variety of Chinese Evergreen Elm (*Ulmus parvifolia*).
- The Birch Street median provides a setting for three large shade trees with a priority for providing a tree that is differentiated from those on the sidewalks. The attributes of this tree may include a broad canopy as it has room horizontally over the street. With a preference for a large, native tree a potential preferred species is Valley Oak (*Quercus lobata*).
- On Sherman Avenue the desirable attributes include a south-east exposure, with larger shade trees to provide summer shade and a more open canopy in winter. Ideally we would create continuity from the Garage site across Birch Street along Sherman and plant a tree or trees that provide a large canopy over 50' height. The preferred species are considered to be London Plane (*Platanus x acerifolia*), alternating with California sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*) to provide diversity and a native species.
- On Park Boulevard the trees have horizontal space and good exposure in all directions. They will be functioning to screen the operations yard from residences across Park Blvd. The scale of these trees should be medium to large, with a more spreading canopy form. The potential species include Linden, Cork Oak, Sweet Gum, and London Plane.
- On the north side of the building there is an enclosed employee courtyard that will have tree plantings. Trees here should be shade tolerant, provide an intimate architectural setting, be of a medium to small scale with a spreading canopy, and provide screening of the buildings to the north from the office spaces above. Potential species include Japanese Maple, Silk Tree, Crape Myrtle, Redbud, or Flowering Plum.

All trees shall be planted at 24" box size and Silva Cell systems shall be installed under sidewalk area and over structure to expand tree root volume and ensure long-term health of trees. Average extent of Silva Cell system components shall be from back of curb to full width of sidewalk and connecting all tree plantings using Silva Cell 2 for Streetscapes.

The understory plantings around the PSB include the following typologies: Native and Ornamental Grass palette, California Native and Flowering palette, Succulents and Companion drought tolerant palette, Rain Garden Meadow palette, and Vertical palette of vine plantings. In the plaza the Native and Ornamental Grass palette, the California Native and Flowering palette, and the Succulents and Companion will be planted in the large raised planters that frame the spaces in the plaza. Species may include grasses such as *Muhlenbergia*, *Leymus*, *Lomandra*, and *Sesleria* and flowering plants with aerial flowers and long seasonal bloom for example *Salvia*, *Yucca*, *Knifophia*, *Anigozanthos*. Succulents that may be planted include *Aloe*, *Aeonium*,

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Echevaria, and Sedum. The plantings along Sherman Avenue and Park Avenue will be in a series of elevated planters alternating between the Rain Garden palette for storm water treatment and California Native and Flowering Palette. The plant palettes will be characterized by meadow-like plantings with accent plants that flower, add texture, and have increased habitat value for insects, hummingbirds and butterflies, these may include Rushes, Native Poppies, Salvias, California Fuschia, Cistus, Baccharis and others. On all of the frontages there are opportunities for vertical plantings of a diversity of vines including Thunbergia, Jasminum, Solanum, Distictus (Trumpet Vine) and Ficus (Creeping Fig) among others.

The irrigation strategy throughout the is to provide a fully automated irrigation system that is weather controlled and uses water conserving low flow irrigation heads and drip irrigation where appropriate. Controllers and backflow preventers are intended to be located in interior locations when possible in vandal proof enclosures screened by landscaping.

Palo Alto Public Safety Building and California Avenue Parking Garage

## SUPPLEMENTAL NARRATIVE – Public Safety Building

### 00

**Public safety** represents a diverse range of activities and responsibilities. The police and fire departments, along with the office of emergency management, oversee prevention, enforcement, rescue, outreach, education, monitoring, and a range of other critical activities. Public safety duties are dynamic, watchful, protective, engaged, helpful, serious, unpredictable.

Palo Alto's California Avenue neighborhood—the context for the City's new Public Safety Building (PSB)—boasts of a character equally diverse and fluid. The commercial and civic neighborhood conflates a plurality of styles, scales, eras and characteristics. Over-scale civic and office buildings abut fine-grain historic commercial fabric, right angles clash with diagonals, small local businesses stand national chains. The neighborhood defies singular characterization; it displays this diversity and vibrancy proudly.

The design for the new Palo Alto Public Safety Building draws inspiration from these diversities. It is a building with a plurality of characteristics—operational and symbolic—that weave together to create a dynamic, integrated, programmatically and contextually responsive civic building. In this project, the civic lies in the negotiation of difference and diversity. Eschewing hierarchy, this project lifts, gestures, embraces, opens, inflects, reaches and glows in a dynamic balance of multiple qualities.

### 01

#### RELATIONSHIPS

The new PSB is a composition of relationships. Warm materials and varied spaces weave together in a dynamic sequence of experiential vignettes. This building is the opposite of monolithic: relationships change continuously as one traverses the building. These interplays are intimate and pedestrian-scaled, accessible to touch and direct experience. The personality of the building emerges from these dynamic interplays, coasting from welcoming to protective, inviting, shady, comfortable, colorful, civic, generous, supportive, engaged, mysterious, firm.

### 02

#### A COMPOSITION OF THREE

The varied building elements are distilled into three analogues: *Context*, *Mission*, and *The Public*. Each boasts its own unique material palette:



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**Context.** The legacy and historic scale of the California Avenue neighborhood is important to acknowledge. By symbolically quoting the two-story scale with a stone-like volume, the PSB evokes this historic fabric and speaks directly to its neighbors. The sand-colored porcelain tile suggests gravity and permanence, evoking the legacy of the historic township of Mayfield.

**Mission.** The public safety mission is regional and expansive; in this design, the PSB mission is beacon and light. Clear glass and polished white porcelain—poised above the two-story sand-colored volume—reflect sky, glow at night.

**The Public.** The intimate experience of the individual weaves the project's elements together. An intimate, visceral terra-cotta tinted board-formed concrete building base inflects, and expands to support a pedestrian-scale topography of seating, canopies, landscaping, and protection. With vertical gestures and key symbolic junctures—the building entry, the communications tower--this terra-cotta realm provides a sense of belonging.

### 03

The dynamic composition of materials and spaces converge at the point of entry to the building. The *context* volume lifts, the *beacon* becomes transparent, and the terra-cotta realm reaches out to invite *the public* inside.