



CITY OF
**PALO
ALTO**

Historic Resources Board

Staff Report (ID # 14532)

Report Type: Approval of Minutes **Meeting Date:** 7/14/2022

Summary Title: HRB Draft Minutes April 28, 2022

Title: Approval of Historic Resources Board Draft Minutes of April 28, 2022

From: Jonathan Lait

Recommendation

Staff recommends the Historic Resources Board (HRB) adopt the attached meeting minutes.

Background

Attached are minutes for the following meeting(s):

- April 28, 2022

Attachments:

- Attachment A: HRB Draft Minutes April 28, 2022 (DOCX)



HISTORIC RESOURCES BOARD MEETING

MINUTES: April 28, 2022

Virtual Teleconference Meeting
8:30 A.M.

Call to Order/Roll Call

Present: Chair Caroline Willis; Vice Chair Christian Pease; Board Members Michael Makinen, Margaret Wimmer, Gogo Heinrich, Alisa Eagleston-Cieslewicz and David Bower

Absent: None

1. Adoption of a Resolution Authorizing Use of Teleconferencing for Historic Resources Board during Covid-19 State of Emergency

MOTION

Board Member Bower moved to adopt the Resolution Authorizing Use of Teleconferencing for Historic Resources Board. Seconded by Board Member Alisa Eagleston-Cieslewicz, the motion carried (5-0)

Oral Communications

Agenda Changes, Additions and Deletions

City Official Reports

2. Historic Resources Board Schedule of Meetings and Assignments

Chair Willis asked if they could move the June meeting to June 30th. Ms. French stated that staff will look into this and advise the Boardmembers if the meeting has been moved.

Action Items

2. CEQA PUBLIC HEARING/QUASI-JUDICIAL. 525 University Avenue [21PLN-00209]: Review of Proposed Exterior Modifications for Compliance with Secretary of the Interior's Standards, Associated with Architectural Review Application. Property was Found Eligible for Listing on the California Register of Historical Resources, Environmental Assessment: California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Exempt per Guidelines 15301 for existing Structures.

Ms. French presented slides showing changes to the project at 525 University, which have been determined Secretary of the Interior Standards compliant by the applicant's consultant, as well as peer-reviewed by the City's consultant. The Palo Alto Office Center has been determined eligible for the California Register under Criterion 3. The architect, Tallie Maule, was well known for his work with the BART concepts and internationally known as well. The structure was completed in 1966 and received a citation of merit from a well-known magazine at the time. Ms. French shared statements regarding the project's embodiment of Criterion 3 architecture, as well as an image of the original Tallie Maule design.

Ms. French displayed images of the existing building showing its historic integrity. The project includes curtain wall replacement at the first three stories of the building. The building was the tallest building between San Francisco and Los Angeles at the time it was built. It also was one of the buildings that led to height restrictions of 50 feet in Palo Alto. Other criteria for eligibility included Criterion 2. The firm that developed the project was Hare, Brewer, and Kelley, that located within the building. This firm developed a number of residential and commercial projects in Palo Alto at the time, including the Mayfield Mall, which is now a Google campus. The period of significance was their residency there from 1966 to 1976. The

project is not eligible under Criterion 1 since there were several planned and built developments that precipitated the height restriction conversation in Palo Alto, including redevelopment in Downtown North and University Avenue as well as a trend in the development of corporate office parks. Character-defining features are listed in the staff report. Landscape features are part of the character-defining features, and the proposed changes include some modifications to landscape features and exterior landscape courts.

Ms. French explained that the HRB's purview is to confirm that the project will not be detrimental to an eligible historic resource as it comes before the HRB as a discretionary architectural review application. The HRB has the purview to support the work of architectural review and provide comments specifically on architectural review finding 2b regarding historic character. Also included is a CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act) task, which is to ensure that what is being done to this eligible building during a discretionary review is Secretary of Interior Standards compliant. The task is to look at exterior modifications, not the interior.

Ms. Emily Foley, Project Planner, City of Palo Alto, handed the presentation over to the applicant/architect, Rob Zirkle, principal of Brick. Also present were Hannah Simonson, of Page and Turnbull; and members of the SWA Group, collaborating landscape architects on the extended project team. Mr. Zirkle noted that he has been presenting building projects in Palo Alto for many years, but this is his first trip to the HRB, and he was happy to be present, noting that what the Board does is a labor of love, which contributes to the discourse in a public process which benefits architecture and urban design.

Mr. Zirkle shared photos of the project site. The project is comprised of not only 525 University, which is an eligible resource, but also 530 Lytton, which is not, but the project is a fusion of the two structures with a public space between them. The project takes up an entire city block, providing an interesting scope of work for architects and urban designers to think about how to improve the sense of place. The original question from the client to Mr. Zirkle's team was about a wind problem, which creates an undesirable environment within the plaza itself. The wind washes down the face of this sole tall building in the area and funnels the wind down into the plaza.

Mr. Zirkle said that the team had enjoyed studying original material related to Tallie Maule's practice, particularly with his work with BART, of which the archives at UC Berkeley had a treasure trove of information, period pieces, as well as his manuscripts and drawings. In studying these materials they asked themselves what Tallie would do while they were coming up with ideas.

Mr. Zirkle said the three-story base treatment is an important element for the team including patterns of the window mullions and the bush-hammered concrete. The team met with a wind consultant in the consultant's wind tunnel in Denver to do an analysis of how the wind worked. A trellis included in the plan came from the idea of needing a way to baffle the wind traveling down the face of the building. The baffle design would solve the performance problem and also create an aesthetic out of it. The trellis on the back side of the building allows sun in and makes for a more pleasant environment. Also, it is 50 percent transparent as a wind baffle, so it acts to decelerate and neutralize the wind traveling down the face of the building, making the space against the building and the entire plaza more habitable and functional.

Mr. Zirkle said the team was interested in how the base of the building hits the ground. He noted that there is currently tenant lease space on the ground floor which usually has drawn shades at the sidewalk level, and there are building operations and offices that face the courtyard. The team set out to create a more friendly, more transparent, and welcoming atmosphere where the building hits ground level, both on University Ave and also the courtyard. Their idea was to vacate all of the tenant space on the ground floor and create an open, publicly-accessible lobby in the building, including space to allow for informal meeting areas, a front desk, a new front door off of University Avenue, and a small café space with a direct connection to the plaza. Mr. Zirkle shared a view on University Avenue, including the new front door, and said there are still egress points on the sides, under the wings, but the front door features a simply-detailed entry canopy and address opportunity, and allows for views inside, through the lobby, all the way to the plaza, connecting passersby on University to the plaza itself.

Mr. Zirkle focused on some of the elements of the project, including a grade change between the 530 Lytton side and the 525 University side, which creates a place to congregate, a junction of sorts, between a lower plaza and upper plaza, a place for people to linger formally or informally throughout the day. It also creates a scalar difference between more of a public space on the lower plaza and a somewhat more

intimate setting on the upper plaza, with a bridge between the two scales. Mr. Zirkle emphasized SWA's attention to detail, pointing out precast seat walls on the terraced area which are a derivative of the geometry of the plaza's architectural details, creating visual linkages around the project. The landscaping includes a few more guardrails and barriers to protect passersby as well as landscape maintenance workers. Details of the landscape elements play on the original egress motif created by Tallie, which SWA developed throughout the project. The result is an orderly, composed, balanced proposal befitting the architecture and creating different opportunities for seating and experiences. A final view of the project illustrated how the upper plaza and lower plaza connect, but follow a strongly organizing feature, which connects back to University Avenue as well. Mr. Zirkle explained that the idea is to be both visually and physically porous, creating connections to experience the area.

Chair Willis invited questions from the Boardmembers.

Board Member Wimmer appreciated the thorough presentation and visual images and illustrations. She asked for clarification on whether there are two new pergolas proposed, looking at the site plan at 1.01. She thought it looked like there is a new one being attached to the building on the north elevation. Mr. Zirkle responded and pointed out the one that is attached to the western side of the plaza, which controls the downwash of wind moving down the face of the tower and into the plaza. This trellis, attached to the building, does the preponderance of work in controlling the wind problem, but the second new trellis serves as a secondary "shock absorber" to help dissipate the wind in the area, including wind flow over the top of 530 Lytton. It also adds to the more intimate setting for gathering on the upper plaza.

Board Member Wimmer asked what their approach is to attaching the trellis to the existing and soon-to-be -historic building and its potential impact on the building. She also wondered about the glass canopy at the entry on University Avenue and the impact of attaching new elements to an existing building. Mr. Zirkle responded that the intent with any additions to the building is that any of them can be removed. The attachments are intended to be lightweight, both because they wish to create a light element, but also because they need to be 50 percent transparent which is the optimal amount to control the downflow of wind. On the University side, the attachment to the building moves across a beam element that moves from column to column and is also reversible as needed. It does not have the same effect of dissipating the wind, but does create a proper front door and creates a more public face. The canopy helps identify that front door and is intended to be very light and reversible, but also to demarcate a new way to move into the building that is more befitting of the urban context.

Chair Willis asked about the seating in the courtyard and whether they anticipate having to put metal elements in to keep the skateboarders from running them down. Mr. Ben Waldo, of SWA Group, explained the way they are designed will make them essentially un-skateable, so they won't need any of the metal studs on them. Chair Willis appreciated the explanation and the great solution. She asked if the grass would be artificial or real. Mr. Zirkle advised that that is being studied because the weight of watered grass was not factored into the design of the structure, so they are evaluating the capacity to be able to carry an increased load for that. Also, there is minimal depth because of the brick pavers that are wet-grouted on top of the structure. He said they are open to either outcome, but they are studying whether one is more efficacious than the other.

Chair Willis complimented the glass band rolls, stating they are nicely detailed and it was nice to see the granite remaining beneath. She wondered whether the adjacent buildings will maintain their granite sections, spandrels, and walls. She wondered why they switched to glass. Mr. Zirkle shared a photo of the desired effect in contrast with the starting point, noting that the technology of glazing coatings has evolved since the building was built, so the building will have a preponderance of dark-tinted glass to be able to control solar infiltration. He said this is unilaterally used around the building. He described the more closed appearance of the base of the tower itself, dealing with the first three stories where there is a pronounced architectural distinction between the lower tower and the upper tower, that portion of the building that hits the ground. The goal for this portion is to feel as transparent, open, and friendly as possible. With advances in Low-E coatings and dual pane glazing, they can achieve greater levels of energy efficiency as well as greater levels of visual transparency. The lobby is one story, so they could focus only on the transparency of that area, but because of the architectural statement there being three stories tall, they want to avoid creating a disjunction in that zone, with replacement of the clear glazing at the base of the tower to create visual continuity in each of the arches, but specifically to make the building feel and act more transparent.

Chair Willis said she was referring just to the granite and was just curious why the decision to cover the granite. It seemed to her that the unity of the granite through the three buildings is a desirable thing, so she wondered if future plans are to replace the granite on the adjacent buildings. Mr. Zirkle explained the team's thinking on this including considerations around the mullion structure and depth. Related to the granite, he said one thought was to give the base of the building a little more unified appearance as opposed to being segmented the way it is now. He understood the point about the continuity of the material and said it was one of the things they discussed. What they are trying to propose is - because the tower itself acts in a singular nature in the way that it hits the ground, particularly with curved buttresses and columns that come down and the overall shape and form of the archways - to keep the continuity of the surface of the glass, the shape becomes the figure-ground. What they have proposed is to honor that piece of figure-ground design. It is helpful in how the wall itself is detailed and fabricated and also allows it to be reversible and able to be adjusted over time if needed to get back to the original condition.

Board Member Heinrich referenced drawing L6.01 showing the landscaping over the parking garage and asked if the slab over the garage is in good shape now and how much of the work will be compromising that slab. Mr. Zirkle said the original design of the slab did entertain a number of planters and landscape features in and around the areas that are there already. They are doing a little demolition and reconfiguring in places to maximum connectivity. They are trying to control how everything works together structurally and making spot improvements utilizing carbon fiber reinforcement technology on the underside of the waffle slab in areas where is increased stress because of the planters. The work being proposed requires thought about how to mitigate it structurally, trying to balance how much, where and how heavy those elements are. SWA Consultant Rene Bihan added that, with a couple of exceptions, the trees being proposed are in similar locations to where trees are now. Although the structure is in good shape, the waterproofing is not, which is part of solving the problem of replacing planting and waterproofing, and improving the planting strategy.

Board Member Heinrich asked if all of the brickwork was part of the original design. Hannah Simonson, Architectural Historian, Page and Turnbull, responded to the question. The brick paving is original to the construction. There was a larger design concept that would have involved the entire block and some additional buildings and a more refined landscape design throughout the block, which was not fully realized. Board Member Heinrich asked if the brick was original to the design as well as the construction. Ms. Simonson thought Tallie Maule would have specified that in the design. In the drawing, the overall 9 x 9 grid is the more driving design factor, but it was her understanding that the brick was part of his design process. Board Member Heinrich asked if all of the brick is being removed from the new design. Mr. Zirkle said the brick must be removed because the waterproofing is in terrible condition. Board Member Heinrich was happy to hear this because she doesn't like the brick and thinks their design is much better. She said it was hard to imagine that Tallie Maule would have included the brick as it was constructed. Ms. Simonson added that the new paving strategy does align with the existing 9 x 9 grid, so there won't be a disjunction there, so they felt it was compatible given the site constraints. Board Member Heinrich expressed she thought they did a nice job.

Board Member Eagleston-Cieslewicz inquired about the rationale for which areas of brick they chose to retain around the sidewalks and asked if there were any thoughts in that regard. SWA Consultant Rene Bihan responded that the brick that is in the public right-of-way is in pretty good shape and consistent with some of the other remaining walkways, so they decided to leave it in place. The area where waterproofing needs to be replaced is the central courtyard. He agreed with the comment and was not certain the architect would have chosen brick unless someone else advised them. The drawings clearly show the articulated 9 x 9 grid which comes off the façade of the building, bringing it down to the ground plane, so they feel the concrete is a much better strategy. It also holds the two projects more tightly together in the center space as one space. He said other issues with ADA ramps, et cetera, are better solved with cast-in-place concrete.

Mr. Zirkle pointed out another zone that is being proposed as concrete as well, with the rationale being it is reasonable to do so, although tricky with the garage, as it goes out underneath the public right-of-way. From the waterproofing standpoint if they were to keep the existing brick in place there would be an odd interruption where the waterproofing is meeting new paving and also a derivative of how the building hits the ground and funnels velocity visually and pedestrian access into the lobby, past the lobby, into the courtyard. He noted that it is the one spot that would be better served by keeping concrete continuous to

the curb, whereas brick remains everywhere else in the public right-of-way. Mr. Waldo noted that they are keeping the last strip of brick between the curb and new concrete on University Avenue so that it matches the sidewalk across the street, which also used to be brick and was replaced with concrete, and they left one strip of brick between the curb and concrete sidewalk.

Chair Willis asked if noise studies were done on the trellises, for wind noise through the baffles. Mr. Zirkle thought when they worked with the wind consultant there was a portion of the report dedicated to the acoustics of wind, so part of balancing the optimal transparency of the baffle ultimately was predicated on how it decelerates the wind and how it might sound.

Chair Willis thanked the team for the presentation and said she gets drawn into the plaza and then blown out, so she was excited and happy to have it back in Palo Alto. She loved the front entry and the elements that are bringing it back into the community. She liked the front door particularly and bringing the lobby visually back into town. She liked the symmetry which has been missing. She has been taken with the granite details on the building and feels it is part of the architect's statement, so she is sorry to see them covered over, but is pleased that it is a reversible detail.

Chair Willis invited further comments from the Board.

Board Member Wimmer noted that their task is to make a recommendation to the Director of Planning, particularly regarding Architectural Review Finding 2b, on packet sheet 13, but she could not find this in the packet. Chair Willis noted that the task was to make a recommendation that, "the project has a unified and coherent design that preserves, respects and integrates existing natural features, that contribute positively to the site and the historic character including historic resources of the area, when relevant," as shown on page 16 of the packet. Ms. French added that this part of the Downtown has not been deemed an area of historic character, but it is more about the fact that the building has been deemed historic eligible, so is its own block of historical relevance. This is where the Board could make recommendations and contribute thoughts for the ARB or staff which, because it's considered a minor project, can be used as supporting findings in approval of the project. If they don't feel like it meets this finding, they would want to know that. She suggested perhaps a straw poll of the finding and said most important is the Secretary of Interior Standards finding. Ms. French said they have peer-reviewed the applicant's consultant, so it would be important to concur with staff on that.

Board Member Wimmer said they should discuss which potential historic listings the buildings are eligible for because it is stated that they are deemed eligible but have not been placed on the local or California or National register. She said the building is perfect to nominate for the California register, as well as to include on Palo Alto's local historic inventory as a Category 1 or 2, because it is an excellent example of late modern design, noted as an excellent local example by a master architect, Tallie Maule. Ms. French suggested pausing that conversation as the discussion is not advertised as such. The Council has directed them to proceed, focusing more on residential projects, because there are ministerial projects that would not involve CEQA review; whereas this is a project, like many other commercial projects, where CEQA does kick in and therefore is more protected from demolition and destruction. Ms. French said, while it is a good conversation to have, the analysis for it has not been prepped or discussed with the property owner, who is welcome to go directly to the State and register their building. She said they can have more discussions about their inventory update process when it is advertised.

Chair Willis felt they should have some system in place when a building is determined to be California register-eligible, and when they review it, part of the process should be adding it to the inventory, because that is one of their charges, to maintain the inventory. She thought it obvious that this building belongs on the inventory. She thought it would be good to hear from the owner how they feel about it, but felt they need to start integrating that into their process. She said they couldn't do it that day, but would love to hear that they want to be on the inventory.

MOTION

Board Member Wimmer moved to approve the project at 525 University as presented with a strong recommendation that it is added to the City of Palo Alto Historic Inventory as well as nominated for listing on the California register of historic places, as deemed eligible.

Board Member Wimmer remarked that she wanted to suggest the historic listing in her motion even though it was not the day to move that forward.

Chair Willis invited public comment. Hearing none, she asked for a motion supporting what staff asked the Board to determine – that the design is not detrimental to the resource and does meet the Secretary of the Interior standards and preserves, respects, and integrates with the existing building. Another motion to add it to their inventory would be great, but she wanted to separate it out.

Board Member Wimmer agreed to this.

Board Member Bower seconded the motion.

Chair Willis invited discussion.

Board Member Bower commented that the design as proposed is a significant improvement over the brick in the courtyard. He suspected that the brick was used when the building was constructed because it was a very inexpensive material used extensively in the 60s and 70s. He thought it actually was closer to the design concept that the buildings represent. He thought the project easily meets the requested terminology in b.2., and he strongly supported it and congratulated the design team in creating a better demonstration of the building's very strong architectural features.

The motion passed (7-0) by roll call vote.

MOTION

Board Member Wimmer moved to make a strong recommendation to add the property to the Palo Alto Historic Resources Inventory, as well as nominate it to the California Register of Historical Resources.

Board Member Wimmer suggested informing the applicant that there are potential incentives to being on the local inventory. She mentioned the floor area bonus, parking bonus, et cetera, and advised the applicant team to consider this.

Board Member Bower seconded the motion.

The motion passed (6-0-1).

Ms. French explained for the public that the Board's work plan goal is to nominate and bring forward the California Register and National Register eligible properties, and there will be a process begun using consultant resources to begin that process. The recommendation will be folded into that process at the time it proceeds. She added that they will need support for it and to have conversations with owners about such nominations.

Chair Willis reiterated that the Boardmembers are available to answer questions if the property owner has any questions about adding it to the inventory.

Information Reports

4. Receive Certified Local Government (CLG) Annual Report for the 2020-2021 Reporting Period

Ms. French said the CLG report is due to the Office of Historic Preservation on May 13th. The reporting period is October 2020 through September 2021. She said she had heard from one member about attendance at training, and advised if Boardmembers had trainings that occurred during this reporting period, to send it to her to be included in the report.

Board Member Bower said he spent a lot of time on Zoom training with the California Preservation Foundation and he had just listed the one he remembered but he could go back and find others if necessary. Ms. French said there is no minimum requirement for training, but just a commitment to keep up on training and interest. She added that the reporting period conveniently includes the CPF conference in June 2021. She said the seminars are posted online so they could do research on their own.

Ms. French explained that it is not a requirement for the HRB to approve the CLG report, but it is more of a compilation of data during the reporting period. The HRB held a small number of meetings during the height of COVID while the city was shut down, but the four meetings that they held were enough for the CLG reporting.

Chair Willis invited further discussion and encouraged Boardmembers to look at the report to think about what they could add for next year, or how their activities will impact next year's report.

Approval of Minutes

5. Approval of Historic Resources Board Draft Minutes of March 24, 2022

MOTION

Motion by Board Member Bower to approve the minutes of the March 24, 2022, Historic Resources Board meeting. Seconded by Board Member Heinrich, the motion passed (6-0) by roll call vote.

The motion passed (7-0) by roll call vote.

Subcommittee Items

Chair Willis said their first meeting in May will be dedicated to the subcommittees and how they want to move forward. She asked that committees confer with each other before the May meeting. There will not be a staff report. She said they do need to start figuring out how to approach the public so when they get the go-ahead to work with the consultants they're ready to go. She said they will have information the consultants don't have and thought they should think about how to direct the consultants to process the inventory update.

Board Member Questions, Comments or Announcements

Chair Willis asked Board Member Bower to talk about upcoming PAST tours. Board Member Bower announced that the next Sunday at 3 p.m. there would be a Zoom opportunity to attend the annual PAST and Palo Alto Historic Association joint awards meeting in which several historic buildings successfully renovated will be recognized. He also announced the PAST spring walking tours which will be re-started this year, after the pandemic interruption. Tours will include Saturday, May 7th at Mayfield; Saturday, May 14th at College Terrace; Sunday, May 15th at Professorville; Saturday, May 21st at Crescent Park, and Saturday, May 28th, Homer Avenue. All of the tours are explained on the PAST website. Chair Willis hoped all would go and encouraged the public to attend them as well.

Board Member Wimmer acknowledged an email regarding Chair Willis' draft outreach letter. She asked if it could be agendaized for the May meeting. Chair Willis said it is in their subcommittee and said it was a very rough draft and she is very open to suggestions. Board Member Wimmer said it was a perfect starting point. She will also bring the pamphlet that she previously created. She also thought they should agendaize the review of the Bulletin, to go over the Resource A/Resource B discussion. Ms. French said there is another study session on outreach contemplated for the next meeting, which would take some effort. She had thought to target the July meeting for review of the Bulletin, since she will be out for the month of June, and there is a development project coming for the second May meeting. She thought she could present a staff report presenting the Bulletin and calling out areas of it.

Chair Willis asked Board members to review the bulletin and think about the presentation, clarity, things to make it more friendly. Board Member Wimmer thought especially the newer members of the Board needed to have a copy of the Bulletin, and everyone should review it prior to the meeting and make their comments. She said she hasn't looked at it for a while, so they could all look at it with fresh eyes and identify any changes they want to make. Ms. French said it was in the HRB packet of September 9th, and it is online as well.

Chair Willis wanted to acknowledge that she nominated PAST for an award from the Santa Clara County Preservation Alliance for their website and to Carolyn George in particular for the job she has done over the 30 years or so she has been working on it. She has not heard back from PAST in that regard and thought it would be nice if Boardmembers would show up at the ceremony to be supportive of the nomination. Ms. French said it is on May 21st, with a \$15 charge per person.

Ms. French reminded the Board that there is a May Fete parade that all boards and commissions are invited to which she thought was the next Saturday. Chair Willis said it is a good parade and fun to go.

Board Member Bower strongly urged staff to encourage applicants not to include tree protection sheets in the plan sets, most of which was not relevant to their review. He stressed it was not to criticize, but it

makes it harder to do the review, and he said he has been saying for years that they should never see tree protection pages. Ms. French said she had not seen them. She said they were ordered specially for the HRB so that they could have a hard copy, but if they do not want a hard copy and are comfortable online, to please let her know. Board Member Bower said he does like hard copies because they are easier for him to see, but not this is a huge amount of information that was not relevant to what they were doing. He said anything that can be done to diminish the recycling load is appropriate. Chair Willis agreed there were many unnecessary pages. Ms. French noted that it was an ARB application, and they do have purview to cover other things, but she understood and said the next HRB packet will not have all the extra sheets.

Adjournment

Board Member Bower moved to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Board Member Heinrich, the motion carried unanimously by voice vote.