

4 February, 2021

Samuel Gutierrez
Planner, City of Palo Alto

RE: 955 Alma PHZ Application
City Council Pre-Screening

Hi Samuel –

Thank you for working with us to bring this new mixed-use project to the City Council for a pre-screening review. The project goals are to add 36 Innovation Micro Studio units to an existing office use site. This mixed-use project will be all rental. To support this project we're requesting a change to PC Zoning including increased FAR, 50' building height, parking reduction for the residential units, and a rooftop terrace for use by the building occupants.

Context & Height

955 Alma is located in the RT-35 zone across from the CalTrain line and the proposed height of 50' is consistent with the scale and mass of other existing multi-family housing developments and RT-50 zoned sites in the area. The property is located between an RT-50 and RT-35 site on Alma with RT-35 zoned properties across Lane A West. The site is over 160' from any R-1 neighborhood, far enough away to ensure that residents of this project will not have any view angles into any yards or solar impact on single family homes.

FAR

The max allowed residential square footage for this site under RT-35 would be 1.15 FAR or 12,075 sf. If the project were pursued under the HIP (Housing Incentive Program), 1.5 FAR or 15,750 sf would be allowed. This project is requesting 22,384 sf or 2.13 FAR for residential housing. The total project area of 28,186 sf or 2.68 FAR includes stairs, elevator, corridors, lobbies and other building circulation spaces that support the residential units.

Jobs / Housing Ratio

This project proposes to reduce existing office square footage and add 36 new Innovation Micro-Studio residences to an existing site in the RT-35 District. The site will be redeveloped by removing 1,740 sf of office use and adding 36 residential units. By simultaneously removing (5) jobs and adding 36 units, there's a net add of 41 housing units to the community.

Land Use	Jobs/1,000 sf	Proposed Project SF	# of Jobs Created	Employed Residents per Household	# of New New Housing Units
Retail	1.75	0	0.0	1.23	0.00
Office - EXISTING	3.4	8,088	27.5	1.23	-22.36
Office - NEW	3.4	6,348	21.6	1.23	17.55
Hotel	2	0	0.0	1.23	0.00
R&D	2.5	0	0.0	1.23	0.00
MIN Number of Net New Housing Units Required:					-5
Total Number of Proposed New Housing Units:					36
Proposed Project Net Impact on Housing Units:					41

Parking

The existing office use on the site has 15 parking spaces serving the 8,088 sf of office FAR. The proposed new office square footage will reduce over 20% down to 6,348 sf and replace the existing 15 parking spaces. With an average unit size of only 342 sf, its position near the downtown Bus hub and Caltrain, as well as its proximity to a wealth of infrastructure resources such as grocery stores and restaurants, we believe car dependency is greatly reduced and we are requesting a 30% parking reduction on the residential portion of the project. Both short and long term on-site bike parking in generous quantities further supports the request of a parking reduction.

Affordability

Of the 36 units provided, 7 units are planned as Affordable units as part of the City's 20% inclusionary housing requirement and under the PHZ will serve as the primary community benefit for the project. Under City of Palo Alto Option 2, (3) units would be Very-low income, (1) Moderate Income, and (3) Above Moderate Income/Workforce Housing.

OPT 2 STUDIO 1-Person Household			TOTAL UNITS 36				7 INCLUSIONARY UNITS			
	Income Level	Area Median Income	2020 Santa Clara County	Weighted Value	# of Units Assigned	% of Units Assigned	Weighted %	Tenant Paid Rent*	Monthly Revenue	Annual Revenue
BMR Units	Very-low Income	31-50%	55,300	1.9	3	8.3%	15.8%	1,382	4,146	\$49,752
	Low Income	51-80%	78,550	1.2	0	0.0%	0.0%	1,963	0	\$0
	Moderate Income	81-120%	118,950	0.6	1	2.8%	1.7%	2,973	2,973	\$35,676
Workforce Housing	Above Moderate Income	121-140%	198,240	0.3	3	8.3%	2.5%	3,000	9,000	\$108,000
Market Rate	Above Moderate Income	141% and above	201,072	0.0	29			3,000	87,000	\$1,044,000
TOTAL Weighted Value BMR Units:							20.0%			\$1,237,428

Unit Design

At an average size of 342 square feet, these Innovation Micro Studio units are designed with efficiency in mind, utilizing every possible square foot of the space and employing some innovative storage techniques. Each unit will contain a full size, ADA compliant bathroom with a full size stacking washer and dryer. The galley kitchen is outfitted with a full complement of fixtures and amenities one would find in a standard one bedroom

apartment, including a full size refrigerator. What makes the unit innovative is its clever use of space and transformability to address changing daily needs.

Along with a full media wall and approximately 34 linear feet of storage, the unit will have a retractable coffee table, which is convertible to a dining table, that slips snugly into the media wall to make more floor space. On the adjacent wall, a fold down desk converts to a home office work station, including recessed storage for a computer and books. 4 fold out chairs stack above this desk and are completely hidden when the cabinet is closed. Instead of a standard Murphy bed unit which takes up valuable floor space, the sofa unit converts to a queen size bed and is integrated with power and USB ports. Ten foot ceiling heights and a 9' wide by 10' high glazed wall with a sliding door, bringing generous amounts of light and air into the space.

Open Space

Due to the unit efficiency and compact nature, open space for the residents will be at a premium. Each unit opens out to a full size private balcony of roughly 72 sf, which is almost 25% as large as the unit itself. This project contains a South facing second floor common outdoor space for the residents, which is intended to be a more organic and lushly landscaped and will include private pockets of seating that serve as private outdoor rooms. While the 2nd floor plaza is relatively compact, the proposed roof top garden terrace serves as the primary common open space for the building occupants. Layout of the roof terrace is organized around individual outdoor "living rooms" which are separated comfortably from one another by planters and landscape zones. Roof screening elements, which also serve as guardrails and HVAC enclosures, further organize and maximize the usable roof space. A common access path connects all seating areas and serves as a link to both exit stairs and the accessible elevator. The organization of the roof garden elements also allows, at a future date, to accept solar panels to meet the requirements of Title 24, Part 6, Subchapter 2, of Section 110.10 of the 2019 Building Energy Efficiency Standards for Solar Ready Buildings.

RT-35

As proposed, the project complies with all RT-35 setback requirements and will continue to provide streetscape landscaping at Alma, consistent with the current conditions and the adjacent buildings on either side.

In reviewing this project, we would like the City Council to consider the following adjustments under a PC-Rezone to approve 36 new housing units to the SOFA-2 district:

1. Increased height: Revising height from 35' to 50', consistent with the pattern of other approved PC projects and RT-50 projects along Alma Street.
2. Increased FAR: from 1.15:1 to 2.68:1
3. Parking: 30% parking reduction on the new Innovation Micro Studios
4. Open Space: Allowance for a Rooftop Terrace as common open space: Including allowing for an elevator overrun and 2 code required exit stairs to access the roof level.

We believe that approval of 955 Alma with these zoning modifications will contribute a new variety of housing stock for the community and will extend the established pattern of vibrant multi-family housing along the Alma Street corridor.

Sincerely –

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Heather Young". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Heather Young, Heather Young
Architects