**C I T Y O F E A S T P A L O A L T O**
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# Notice of Exemption
# California Environmental Quality Act

**TO: COUNTY CLERK**
County of San Mateo
555 County Center Redwood
City, California 94063-1665

**TO: STATE OF CALIFORNIA**
Office of Planning and Research
1400 Tenth Street, Room 121
Sacramento, California 95814

**FROM: CITY OF EAST PALO ALTO**
Planning Division
1960 Tate Street
East Palo Alto, California 94303

**PROJECT TITLE:** University Corner Mixed Use Project

**PROJECT LOCATION SPECIFIC:**
573 Runnymede Street and 2331 University Avenue, northwest corner of Runnymede and University Ave.

**PROJECT LOCATION, CITY, COUNTY:**
East Palo Alto, San Mateo County

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION:**
The proposed project "University Corner" located at 2331 University Avenue in East Palo Alto, will construct a 47,594 square foot four-story mixed-use building with retail space and parking on the ground level and 33 residential dwelling units on the level above the ground floor. The proposal would combine 3 existing parcels into one 38,905 sf parcel. Two of these parcels are presently vacant and the third contains a small single-family residence and accessory building.

The site is located on the northwest corner of University Avenue and Runnymede Street and is zoned MUC-2. The MUC-2 zone promotes mixed-use buildings with higher density floor area ratios (FAR) and height limits along arterial roads to encourage the redevelopment of arterial roadways in East Palo Alto.

The proposed mixed-use building conforms to all of the zoning requirements for this zone.

The ground floor includes 2,500 sf of retail space plus a residential entrance and lobby, totaling 5,159 sf of floor area. The retail use may consist of storefront retail or a small café.

The three upper floors comprise a total of 33 units:
(12) one bedroom/one bath units ranging in size from 538 to 730 sf,
(15) two bedroom/two bath units from 1,045 to 1,258 sf, and
(6) three bedroom/three bath units at 1,711 sf, with a combined 14,147 sf per floor.

Private and public open spaces are provided throughout the project. Each residential unit has a balcony, and a large common area for residential use is located on the second level over some of the on-grade parking. Along University Avenue, a large public terrace provides a landscaped area to support outdoor functions associated with the retail space.

The building would be of type VA construction, predominately of wood framing with exterior finishes of metal siding and stucco. To accommodate expansive glazing in the retail space in addition to the open parking area on the ground level, the structure will include concrete shear walls within the first story. Parking will be provided on-grade along the interior property lines. Required accessible parking spaces, electric vehicle charging stations, accessible parking, and uncovered as well as covered public and private bicycle parking/storage are provided on site.

| NAME OR PUBLIC AGENCY APPROVING PROJECT | NAME OF PERSON OR AGENCY CARRYING OUT PROJECT: |
|---|---|
| City of East Palo Alto, a municipal corporation | John Suppes, Clarum University Corner, LLC |

**EXEMPT STATUS (Check One)**

☐ Ministerial (Sec. 21080 (b) (1); 15268)

☐ Declared Emergency (Sec 21080 (b) (4); 15269 (a)

☐ Emergency Project (Sec 21080 (b) (4) 15269 (b) (c)

☐ Statutory Exemption – CODE NO:_____

x Categorical Exemption – **CLASS: 32** SECTION NO: **15332 – In-fill Development Project**

**REASON WHY PROJECT IS EXEMPT**

**Finding 1: The project is consistent with the applicable general plan designation and all applicable general plan policies, as well as with applicable zoning designation and regulations**.

**Evidence**: The General Plan identifies the site as "Mixed Use Corridor". The site zoning is MUC-2, a mixed-use zone that promotes mixed use buildings with higher density, floor area ratios (FAR) and height limits along arterial roads to encourage the redevelopment of arterial roadways in the City. General Plan Goal LU-10 is to "transform University Avenue into a mixed-use corridor with a diversity of residential, mixed use and commercial development in a walkable urban fabric". This zone allows 22 to 65 du per acre. The project proposes 33 units, or 37 du/acre based on the size of the site. The proposed FAR is 1.22, while the zoning allows a FAR up to 1.75. The type of development proposed represents the implementation of this zoning designation.

**Finding 2: The proposed development occurs within city limits on a project site of no more than five acres substantially surrounded by urban uses**.

**Evidence**: The project site 0.89 acres and completely within the city limits. Based on a review of Google satellite imagery and a field visit by planners on December 13, 2019 and other occasions, the site is surrounded on two sides by urban residential development, and on two sides by roadway frontage.

**Finding 3: The project site has no value as habitat for endangered, rare or threatened species**.

**Evidence:** The project site consists of three existing infill parcels. These parcels contain a vacant weedy lot and a single-family residence in poor condition. The site is less than one acre and is completely surrounded by urban development. The site contains no wetlands, creeks, natural areas, and is not located adjacent to the Bay. Based on an arborist's reports (Monarch Consulting, 2014 and 2019; and peer review by Arborwell, 2020), the site does contain 23 trees of 9 different species. Most of the trees are in fair to poor condition; however, the site plan will incorporate and retain up to 9 trees as part of the landscape plan. The existing trees may provide localized foraging or nesting habitat for common bird species; however, this constrained and highly disturbed site would not support endangered, rare or threatened species. Based on the General Plan EIR (2016), the site does not contain the aquatic, salt marsh, grasslands, riparian or other habitats that may support special status species.

**Finding 4: Approval of the project would not result in any significant effects relating to traffic, noise, air quality, or water quality**.

**Evidence:**

Traffic. A transportation impact analysis was completed for the project (Hexagon Transportation Consultants, February 2020). From an operational standpoint, the analysis concluded that the trips generated by the project (less than 100 trips on CMP facilities) would not trigger an analysis pursuant to the

C/CAG's CMP guidelines. In addition, local operations on nearby roadways and intersections would not be significantly affected by the proposal, based on this study.
CEQA requirements for traffic studies have changed, and now require an analysis of vehicle miles travelled (VMT). VMT analysis will be the recognized method as of July 2020. This analysis was conducted for the project with the understanding that the City of East Palo Alto, like many land use agencies in California, is still in the process of developing its VMT significance thresholds. The analysis conservatively – and qualitatively - recommends that TDM measures be considered to further reduce the project's VMT consistent with State recommendations. Such measures could include additional bicycle racks, transit passes or other incentives to project residents and visitors. Any such measures would be at the discretion of the City, as coordinated with the developer.
Noise. An acoustical analysis of the project was prepared (Kimley-Horn, 2020). This analysis concludes that construction noise, while elevated, would be temporary would be required to adhere to Standard Permit Conditions. Noise levels at some portions of the project site also currently exceed the City standard of 60 CNEL, indicating higher levels of existing noise in the area.
With respect to traffic noise, traffic volumes on project area roadways would have to approximately double for the resulting traffic noise levels to increase by 3 dBA (the threshold of significance). Given the high traffic volumes (and ambient noise levels) along University Avenue, the project's additional traffic would be nominal in this context and less than 3 dBA. Therefore, permanent increases in ambient noise levels of less than 3 dBA are considered to be less than significant. The analysis also shows that parking areas and mechanical equipment also would not exceed city standards at the nearest sensitive receptors.
Air Quality. An air quality and greenhouse gas (GHG) analysis was conducted for the project (Kimley-Horn, 2020). Based on the results of this analysis, the construction and operational emissions would be consistent with the General Plan and 2017 clean Air Plan Progress Report, could address construction emissions through required permit conditions, would not trigger operational impact thresholds, nor result in significant cumulative effects from project emissions. The potential for objectional odors, increased GHG emissions and CO concentrations were also found to be less than significant.
Water Quality: The project includes a Preliminary Hydrology Study Stormwater Control Plan (Lea & Braze Engineering, January 2020). Surface water quality in East Palo Alto is primarily a function of compliance with City of East Palo Alto drainage design criteria and C.3 stormwater control and treatment requirements. On site stormwater treatment will be provided in bio-treatment areas along the north and west property lines. Treated runoff from the new construction and impervious surface will be directed to a new below grade stormwater retention and metering system located under the parking at the southeast corner of the lot. Metered runoff will then be directed to an existing storm drain main under Runnymede Street. With these stormwater management controls, water quality would not be adversely impacted.

**Finding 5: The site can be adequately served by all required utilities and public services.**

**Evidence:** The General Plan EIR finds that the mixed-use land uses envisioned by the City can be served by existing utilities and service providers. The project would connect to existing electrical, communications, water, sewer and storm drain infrastructure that currently exists within public rights of way. The project will be required to pay development impact fees intended to support public service systems such as police, fire and government services.

**Finding 6: The site is not listed on any regulatory data bases that track hazardous material sites.**

**Evidence**: The property was the subject of a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) (Lowney Associates, 2003) that concluded that no hazardous materials incidents have been report in this location or nearby locations that would likely affect the site. Kimley-Horn (2020) performed an updated regulatory database search of the Department of Toxic Substances Control Envirostor website (http://www.envirostor.dtsc.ca.gov/public/) and the State Water Resources Control Board's (SWRCB) Geotracker website (http://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/) to identify if any new hazardous material regulated facilities or sites within or proximate to the project are present. Based on this review, no new recorded hazardous sites are located at the project site. As a condition of approval, and given the age of existing structures, demolition will need to comply with all current Cal/OSHA and NESHAP guidelines for the treatment and removal of potentially occurring lead paint and Asbestos Containing Materials (ACMs).

**Attachments (on file with the City of East Palo Alto):**

1. Transportation Impact Analysis, Hexagon Transportation Consultants, February 2020
2. Hazardous Materials Memorandum, Kimley-Horn, February 2020
3. Air Quality and GHG Emissions Analysis, Kimley-Horn, February 2020
4. Noise Prediction Memorandum, Kimley-Horn, February 2020
5. Arborist's Report, Third Party Peer Review, Arborwell, February 2020

| **LEAD AGENCY CONTACT PERSON** | **AREA CODE, TELEPHONE, Extension** |
|---|---|
| Daniel Berumen, AICP, Senior Planner | (650) 853-3151 |

**This notice shall be filed only after approval of an exempt project.**

**IF FILED BY APPLICANT**

1. **Attached certified document of exemption finding.**
2. **Has a Notice of Exemption been filed by the public agency approving the project? Yes____ No ___**
3. **Attach orginal and two copies of this Notice of Exemption.**
4. **Attach two self-addressed, stamped envelopes.**

| SIGNATURE | TITLE | DATE |
|---|---|---|
| *Daniel Berumen*<br>Signed by __ Applicant X Lead Agency | Senior Planner<br>Daniel Berumen, AICP, Senior Planner | 5/20/20 |

**AFFIDAVIT OF COUNTY CLERK FILING AND POSTING**

I declare that on _____ I received and posted this Notice as required by California Public Resources Code Section 2115.2. Said Notice will remain posted for thirty (30) days from the filing date.

By_____Date_____