

CLUSTER MIDRISE BLOCKS: SOFA, 2000s

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When Palo Alto Medical Foundation moved, the South of Forest (SOFA) area was planned through a community involved Area Plan Process. Housing, parks, day care were carefully included. Today, a mix of 2-4 story multifamily residential projects, affordable + market rate, condos, apartments and single family homes make up the area, interspersed with parks, public areas and some commercial uses.



PROJECT 1A: OAK COURT (845 Ramona)

Affordable Housing project built by Palo Alto Housing Corporation and partially funded by the city, is designated affordable rental housing for families. Individual clusters of apartments are carefully placed within the block with porches and people friendly details along the street. Ventilated basement garage parking is included.

Year Built: 2003
Parcel size 53,579 sf (1.23 acres)
of units: 53 (61.5 allowed)
Units/Acre: 43 (50 allowed)
Building Height: 4 stories
Unit types (by # of bedrooms)
Affordable, Rental
Owner: Palo Alto Housing Corp
Developer: Summerhill Homes
Zoning: AMF (Attached Multiple-Family Housing)

PROJECT 1B: WOODMARK (325 Channing)

This market rate condominium complex respects the mature oaks and trees that were previously on site. and creates several lovely public spaces at the street and connecting Scott Park. A recessed entry also breaks up the massing along Channing, creating a comfortable street edge to walk along

Year Built: 2005
Parcel size 51,330sf (1.18 acres)
of units: 36
Units/Acre: 30 actual (50 allowable)
Building Height: 50' allowed
Unit types (by # of bedrooms)
Market Rate, Ownership
Developer Summerhill Channing, LLC
Zoning: AMF, (Attached Multiple-Family Housing)

PROJECT 1C: CLUSTERED HOUSES (832-872 Waverley, 351-367 Channing)

Ten clustered homes fit well with its single family neighbors along Waverley and Channing. Front doors & porches are oriented toward the street and a public park, and car traffic directed through a private mews in the back. Several homes were relocated nearby.

Year Built: 2005
Parcel size 21,878 sf (0.5 acres)
of units: 10
Units/Acre: 20
Building Height: 30' allowed

Unit types: Cottages
Market Rate, Ownership
Developer: Summerhill Channing, LLC
Zoning: DHS (Detached Single Family Housing)

URBAN DESIGN HIGHLIGHT



HERITAGE PARK AND SCOTT STREET WALKTHROUGH

This delightful walkthrough carefully connects Scott Street Park with newly created Heritage Park. With mature trees, a meandering path and places to sit, residents and random visitors alike are lured in to linger. The space also generates light and air for the two adjacent buildings while creating a lovely, well used public amenity.

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SOFA I&II BACKGROUND

In 1997 the City started a 6 year process to determine how to plan for the use of the land that PAMF was vacating. The task ended up being divided into two geographical parts: SOFA 1 which dealt with the area from Ramona to Waverley and Addison to Homer. And then later, SOFA 2 which dealt with the area between Alma and Ramona and Addison to Homer.

It was accomplished by utilizing a formal Area Plan Process, and implemented by utilizing PC zoning, and the creation of several new zones in the SOFA I area, East of Ramona, including: DHS (Detached Single Family Housing on Small Lots, 8-20 units/acre), AMF (Attached Multiple-Family Housing, 30-50 units/acre), MOU (Mixed-Use Overlay on top of Attached Multiple-Family).

In the SOFA II area, West of Ramona, two new zones were created: MU-1 (Moderate Density Mixed Use Combining District), and MU-2 (High Density Mixed Use Combining District).

The goals of SOFA I included: Provide approximately 300 or more units of new housing in the Plan Area, with upward of one third of the proposed new units to be accommodated on the former PAMF sites to increase the probability they will be developed in the near term. (Policy L-1) Today there are 272 units in the SOFA I and II areas.

Provide adequate open space through development of a new neighborhood park within the area currently occupied by PAMF facilities to serve the neighborhood and downtown. (Policy L-2)

Facilitate the development of a child care center within the Plan Area to serve the established need for the neighborhood and the downtown. (Policy L-3)

Existing office uses in this area were allowed only where they are required to preserve historically significant buildings such as the Roth building and 737 Bryant Street. (Policy L-4)

The SOFA Coordinated Plan area was recognized as a growth area that if developed to its highest potential, will use a substantial portion of the non-residential development allowed by the downtown development cap. (Policy L-6)

The area was also to continue to allow commercial service uses in the commercial portion of the Plan area which support the neighborhood, the downtown area, and the City as a whole. (Policy L-7)

In 2004 Yoriko Kishimoto and Bern Beecham wrote a "Guest Opinion" on the lessons learned in completing the SOFA II plan and listed the accomplishments of the plan as follows:

- 1) The City commissioned economic analyses to help guide the the coordinated area plan ordinance. Although they came late in the process, they gave the City valuable data to confirm economic viability of proposed development standards and incentive packages.
- 2) The City took steps towards transit-oriented policies. Parking requirements were reduced, housing density is increased and developers were given incentives because of the the proximity of the area to the transit center and being within a walkable distance to the downtown area.
- 3) The City developed clearer parameters for PC applications in this area, that at the time they hoped would create precedent for other PC that were applied for in the City. The PCs that were utilized in the SOFA plan more clearly tied increases in development to residential uses.
- 4) The City used the architectural and historic heritage of the neighborhood as part of the "compatibility standard" that guided the architectural review of new projects in the area.
- 5) The City changed setbacks and floor-area ratios to more of an "urban village" standard. Thus buildings can be larger and closer to the street and to each other but must offer acceptable private and common open space.
- 6) The City established a cap on the size of average housing units in an effort to create "attainable" (i.e. more affordable) housing.

SOFA I&II TIMELINE

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|------|---------|---|
| 1930 | PAMC | "Palo Alto Medical Clinic is created The eight founding partners were: Dr. Russel Van Arsdale Lee, Edward Fritz Roth, Blake Wilbur, Milton Saier, Harold Sox, H.L. Niebel, Robert Dunn and Esther Clark the first female doctor and sister to Birge Clark, a local Architect." |
| 1931 | PAMC | "Palo Alto Medical Clinic moves into thier new home; the ROTH Building, designed by Birge Clark. The building was at the corner of Homer Avenue and Bryant Street, on the edge of downtown." |
| 1950 | PAMC | "The Clinic grows rapidly due to the post-World War II population boom: houses and buildings are purchased and offices lease on Homer, Bryant, Channing, El Camino and Park Avenue. " |
| 1958 | PAMC | A new research facility is built on Bryant Street |
| 1961 | PAMC | "The three-story Lee Building is completed. The Internal Medicine department is now fully housed in the main Clinic building, while Psychiatry moves to 737 Bryant Street and Obstetrics and Gynecology to 333 Homer Avenue." |
| 1981 | PAMF | Palo Alto Medical Foundation (PAMF) is created |
| 1997 | SOFA 1 | "The City creates a Policy Framework in preperation of the South Of Forest Area (SOFA) Coordinated Area Plan (CAP). " |
| 1997 | SOFA | City Council initiates the The SOFA study was launched in September 1997 and later broken into two phases. The first dealt with the Palo Alto Medical Foundation site and the second with the area to the west, to Alma Street. |
| 1999 | PAMF | PAMF moves into its new 305,000sf Campus on El Camino |
| 2000 | SOFA I | "A special Architectural and Historical Review Board committee was appointed by City Director of Planning Ed Gawf to examine the projects. The committee was made up of three members from the ARB and HRB. The committee held nine public meetings and three study sessions for the three SummerHill projects. The review process began in July 2000 and was slightly revised in 2005. T |
| 2000 | SOFA I | City Council Approves South of Forest Area, Coordinated Area Plan Phase 1 |
| 2003 | SOFA II | City Council Approves South of Forest Area, Coordinated Area Plan Phase 2 |
| 2003 | SOFA I | 845 Ramona - 53 Units Built. The CCountil approves the sale of the 845 Ramona Street housing site to Palo Alto Housing Corporation, subject to two City loans, a fully deferred land loan of \$5,874,000 and a \$1,960,000 loan for development costs, and a regulatory agreement. Total Project Funding \$22,195,200 Funding Per Unit (53 units): \$418,777 |
| 2005 | SOFA I | 325 Channing built. |
| 2005 | SOFA I | 832-872 Waverley |

CLUSTER HIGH RISE TOWERS

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In the late 1920s and early 1930s, Palo Alto saw several high rise towers constructed. They were all tall for their time, over 50' high and designed to be people friendly, with great entries, street scapes and or public spaces. Cars were not common at the time, and the train one of the main modes of transport. Conversion of uses happened for some of these structures, but today, they are predominately residential.



PROJECT 2A: STALLER COURT (345 Forest)

Formerly Staller Court, this five story residential block is flanked by two lovely redwood trees and a public courtyard at the entry. The lower level was originally garage, but was converted to commercial space in the 1970s and recently updated.

Year Built: 1927

Parcel size: 11,250 square feet (0.26 acres)

of units: 45 per 2011 Historic Structure Report, 85 per 1981 Historic Resources Inventory

Units/Acre: 175

Building Height: 5 Stories plus

of Parking Spaces Available: 0 (original parking converted to office in 1970s)

Unit types (by # of bedrooms): studio (450sf), one bedroom, penthouse

Market Rate, Rental

Owner/Builder William Staller (original)

Architect: J.C. Hladik

Zoning: CD-C (P)

PROJECT 2B: CASA REAL (360 Forest)

Sporting a grand entrance, the setback and defined base level of this seven story building creates a comfortable feel even at street level. The building still retains its ground floor garages, and there is a large private shared common space in the rear

Year Built: 1930

Parcel size: 31,500 (.72 acre)

of units: 36 per city records, 40 per 1978 Historic Resources Inventory

Units/Acre: 50

Building Height: 7 stories

of Parking Spaces Available: 28

Unit types (by # of bedrooms): 1 & 2 bedroom

Market Rate, Rental

Owner/Builder William Staller (original)

Architect: Edwards & Schary

Zoning: RM-40

PROJECT 2C: HOTEL PRESIDENT

(488 University @ Cowper)

Originally built as a hotel to serve the SF-LA Moonlight Express in the 1930s, the 70 rooms were converted to studios & one bedrooms in the 1970s. At the ground floor, six small retail spaces with awnings support a lively street scape that is difficult to distinguish from it's neighbors.

Year Built: 1929-30 as hotel, converted to apartments in 1970s

Parcel size: 9425 square feet (.22 acres)

of units: 70

Units/Acre: 312 (plus ground floor commercial)

Building Height: 6 stories

of Parking Spaces Available: 6

Unit types: Studio (500 sf), some 1 bedrooms

Market Rate Rental

Builder James McLaughlin

Architect Birge Clark

Zoning: CD-C (GF) (P)

URBAN DESIGN HIGHLIGHT



PEOPLE ORIENTED STREET SCAPE, PROTECTED ENTRIES, SMALL SCALE RETAIL & AWNINGS

The ground floors are well crafted, you don't immediately notice the height. Casa Real and Staller Court have great entryways, and a "base" that articulated by different material or detail. Hotel President has an interesting mix small retail spaces and awnings, so you notice the six shops at street level, not the six stories above.

CLUSTER

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LOW RISE INFILL 1980s & 1990s

Townhomes and small lot single family residential (aka village residential) homes can provide smaller scale structures and densities that blend more subtly into the existing neighborhood fabric. The two projects in this cluster are more than 15 density units per acre, which is double the density of a typical single family development. Townhomes, in particular, are not common in Palo Alto.

PROJECT 3A: TOWNHOMES (321-341 Ramona)

This set of six townhomes (each 18' wide x 50' long) has great street frontage, individual facades to break up the building mass. One garage space per unit is provided in the back, and a common space was renovated recently for all homeowners to use. (Please respect the residents' privacy and do not try to trespass on the common area)

- Year Built: 1980
- Parcel size: 12687.5 square feet (0.29 acres)
- # of units: 6
- Units/Acre: 20
- Building Height: two stories
- # of Parking Spaces Available: 7
- Unit types: 2 bedrooms
- Market Rate, Ownership
- Zoning: PC-3111 (1979)

PROJECT 3B: HOPKINS PLACE (Ramona & Everett)

This houses have a private street where all car traffic and parking flows. A homeowner's association maintains it. The lots were also carefully crafted with central lot lines and lease covenants to grant each unit access to their neighbor's side yard to create a full side yards

- Year Built: 1994-1995
- Parcel size: 1.22 acres
- # of units: 21
- Units/Acre: 17
- Building Height: 2 stories
- # of Parking Spaces Available: 38 (2 covered per main unit, 1 uncovered per second unit)
- Unit types: 17 2, 3, 4 bedroom houses, 4 2-bedroom second units
- Market rate ownership for houses, 4 rental second units, 4 BMR units across the street
- Developer: John Mozart, Classic Communities
- Zoning: PC-4243

URBAN DESIGN HIGHLIGHT

PARKING MULLET: PORCHES IN THE FRONT, PARKING IN THE BACK
Entries and porches in the front create nice people oriented stoops. Parking at the back through private lanes or courts means no curb cuts/drive-ways which allow for nice continuous sidewalks with more plantings and longer curbs for street parking.

