

## Agenda Item 11: PAN Urges Support for the 429 University Appeal

February 3, 2017

Dear Mayor Scharff, Vice Mayor Kniss, and City Council members:

Per a unanimous vote of members attending our January meeting, PAN (Palo Alto Neighborhoods) requests that you support the appeal of the 429 University Ave project and ask the applicant to modify the plans to conform with city laws.

The issues before you are of enormous interest to our community. 92% of responses to PAN's most recent survey ranked local architectural issues as important. Yet the 2016 National Citizens Survey found that only 37% of Palo Altans rated the city's current land use, planning, and zoning positively. This project gives the Council an opportunity to help turn that around.

Council members, the ARB, appellants, and neighbors have already enumerated the many problems with the proposed 429 University project, so we'll note just a few:

- The four-story building will dwarf the low one-and-two story homes and small businesses on Kipling and not achieve the "visual unity of the street" required by the Municipal Code.
- The alley will become an (undersized!) loading zone for the building without the mandated landscape buffer rather than the pedestrian- and bike-friendly access serving residents and other businesses as prescribed in the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines.
- The historic New Varsity and Kipling buildings that rank high among our city's landmarks will be confronted by a highly incompatible massive structure.
- Although the building claims to be legally parked, thanks to an improperly-issued exemption, the additional cars it will bring to the city have no place to park except in neighborhoods, thus violating the Comprehensive Plan.
- Two of the three designs in the current Council packet were not reviewed by the ARB, undercutting its role and the opportunity for public participation.

We encourage the Council to use this appeal to insist on a higher-quality architectural solution that conforms with all laws. By doing so, you will benefit both business and resident constituencies, minimize neighborhood objections, address city-wide concerns about zoning compliance, expedite project development, and still provide excellent income opportunities for the owners. It's a win-win way to proceed and we urge the Council to adopt it.

Thank you,

Sheri Furman

PAN Co-Chair