



**TO:** Nick Zornes, Zoning Administrator

**FROM:** Jia Liu, Associate Planner

**SUBJECT:** SC23-0012 – 741 Sunshine Court

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## RECOMMENDATION

Approve design review application SC23-0012 for the construction of a new 4,091 square foot, two-story house, with an additional 2,078 square-foot basement, subject to the listed findings and conditions of approval; and find the project categorically exempt under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15303 (“New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures”).

## BACKGROUND

### Project Description

- Project Location: 741 Sunshine Court, located on the north side of Sunshine Court
- Lot Size: 13,867 square feet
- General Plan Designation: Single-Family, Medium Lot (SF4)
- Zoning Designation: R1-10
- Current Site Conditions: One-story house

The proposed project includes the demolition of the existing single-story house and replacement with a new two-story house (see Attachment A – Project Plans). An 800 square-foot attached ADU is also proposed but it is not part of the design review application. The new residence is designed in a modern ranch architectural style, incorporating high-quality materials including a metal tile roof, smooth stucco exterior finish with wood siding accent, fiberglass framed windows, and wood doors and eave soffit.

The subject property is located on a cul-de-sac in a proximate trapezoid shape, measuring approximately 111 feet in width and 130 feet in depth. The proposed home is situated on the lot similar to the existing home and the proposed site improvements include a new driveway to the attached garage along the eastern side of the property and new hardscape and softscape throughout the property.

Apart from a few hedges in the front yard, the site has no trees so no protected trees are proposed for removal as part of the redevelopment of the site. The proposed landscaping plan introduces new trees in the front and rear yard areas and plantings throughout the site.

## ANALYSIS

### Design Review

The proposed home complies with the R1-10 district development standards found in LAMC Chapter 14.06, as demonstrated by the following table:

	<b>Existing</b>	<b>Proposed</b>	<b>Allowed/Required</b>
<b>COVERAGE:</b>	3,409 square feet	3,039 square feet	4,160 square feet
<b>FLOOR AREA:</b>			
First floor	3,409 square feet	2,202 square feet	4,136 square feet
Second floor	-- square feet	1,449 square feet	
Total	3,409 square feet	4,091 square feet	
<b>SETBACKS:</b>			
Front	25.42 feet	25 feet	25 feet
Rear	41.67 feet	49.42 feet	25 feet
Right side (1 <sup>st</sup> /2 <sup>nd</sup> )	37.50 feet/-- feet	10 feet/21.75 feet	10 feet/17.5 feet
Left side (1 <sup>st</sup> /2 <sup>nd</sup> )	13.58 feet/-- feet	10 feet/23.21 feet	10 feet/17.5 feet
<b>HEIGHT:</b>	14.50 feet	25.29feet	27 feet

Pursuant to Chapter 14.76 of the LAMC, new two-story residences shall be consistent with policies and implementation techniques described in the Single-Family Residential Design Guidelines. The proposed home complies with the Single-Family Residential Design Guidelines because it exhibits an appropriate design with elements, materials, scale, and landscaping that are consistent with the neighborhood.

The surrounding neighborhood is considered a Diverse Character Neighborhood according to the Design Guidelines. The immediate neighborhood is comprised of one-story and two-story houses. Homes in the neighborhood exhibit similar massing, a combination of simple and complex roof forms, and distinctive front setback patterns due to the cul-de-sac, resulting in irregular front yards. The horizontal eave lines at the first story typically range from approximately eight to nine feet in height. Most of the homes in the neighborhood feature attached garages in the front yard facing the street while a few properties deviate from this pattern with detached two-car garages from the main residences.

The front elevation of the proposed two-story house is designed in a modern ranch architectural style, incorporating traditional ranch elements such as a 3.5 in 12 hipped roof, aligned and balanced fenestrations on the facade, as well as traditional exterior finish materials. Modern design aspects include a flat-roof entry porch and a tall-ceiling living room at the forefront. The mixture of traditional and modern elements is well-integrated with vertical and horizontal variations in proportion, natural wood siding accents to soften the transition, and a less predominant garage design, all contributing to the overall harmony of the architecture.

The massing of the proposed new residence is compatible with the immediate neighborhood. The first story features two different plate heights: nine feet and six inches as the primary height throughout and thirteen feet and six inches for the forefront living room. Similarly, the second story encompasses two varying plate heights: eight feet and three inches on the left and right sides, and nine feet and three inches

for the middle section. The taller plate height sections on both the first and second stories are integrated into one architectural area, harmonizing with aligned window designs, resulting in a compatible architecture. All design considerations and alignments demonstrate a thoughtful approach for achieving a harmonious architectural composition within the neighborhood.

The proposed landscaping includes twelve new trees and evergreen screening vegetation along the perimeter of the site which will be integrated with existing vegetation to remain. The landscaping plan will comply with the Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance, which requires water-efficient landscaping for new residences with landscaping over 500 square feet.

The proposed project meets the development standards in the R1-10 zoning district and complies with the Single-Family Residential Design Guidelines because it is compatible with the character of the neighborhood as the design maintains an appropriate relationship with adjacent structures, minimizes bulk, and enhances landscaping to the extent possible.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

This project is categorically exempt from environmental review under Section 15303 (“New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures”) of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) because it involves the construction of a single-family dwelling in a residential zone.

## **PUBLIC NOTIFICATION AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH**

A public meeting notice was posted on the property, mailed to property owners within a 300-foot radius, and published in the Town Crier newspaper. The applicant also posted the public notice sign (24” x 36”) in conformance with the Planning Division posting requirements.

The applicant reached out to five neighbors in person and sent emails to the rest of the immediate area for the community outreach. As of the writing of this report, two neighbors have expressed concerns regarding the proposed balcony and the selected bamboo for the screening vegetation to the staff.

Attachment:

A. Project Plans

Cc: LEL Design, Inc., Applicant  
Tianheng Yao, Property Owner

## FINDINGS

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With regard to the proposed new two-story residence, the Zoning Administrator finds the following in accordance with Section 14.76.060 of the Municipal Code:

- A. The proposed new two-story residence complies with all provisions of this chapter because the proposed residence is consistent with the development standards of the R1-10 zoning district and policies and implementation techniques described in the Single-Family Residential Design Guidelines.
- B. The height, elevations, and placement on the site of the proposed new house is compatible when considered with reference to the nature and location of residential structures on adjacent lots, and will consider the topographic and geologic constraints imposed by particular building site conditions as the proposed home maintains a similar finished floor elevation and orientation on the lot as the existing home and complies with the allowable floor area, lot coverage, height maximums, and daylight plane requirement pursuant to LAMC Chapter 14.06.
- C. The natural landscape will be preserved insofar as practicable by minimizing tree and soil removal; grade changes shall be minimized because the existing site has no trees and is relatively level and does not require substantial grading and does not involve the removal of soil.
- D. The orientation of the proposed new residence in relation to the immediate neighborhood will minimize the perception of excessive bulk and mass because the proposed structure incorporates architectural design features such as moderate scale, horizontal eave lines, building articulation, and roof forms that break up the massing and minimize excessive bulk.
- E. General architectural considerations, including the size and scale, the architectural relationship with the site and other buildings, building materials, and similar elements have been incorporated in order to insure the compatibility of the development with its design concept and the character of adjacent buildings. The proposed home complies with the allowable floor area, lot coverage, and height maximums as well as the daylight plane requirement pursuant to LAMC Chapter 14.06 and the design of the home incorporates consistent and compatible features including standing seam metal roofing, smooth cement plaster and wood siding exterior finish with sheet metal siding accents, aluminum framed windows, and fiberglass doors.
- F. The proposed new house has been designed to follow the natural contours of the site with minimal grading, minimum impervious cover, and maximum erosion protection because the site is relatively flat and has incorporated softscape and hardscape surfaces into the plan and proposes a drainage plan to minimize off-site stormwater drainage.

## CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL

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### **GENERAL**

**1. Expiration**

The Design Review Approval will expire on March 20, 2026 unless prior to the date of expiration, a building permit is issued, or an extension is granted pursuant to Section 14.76.090 of the Zoning Code.

**2. Approved Plans**

The approval is based on the plans and materials received on March 12, 2024, except as may be modified by these conditions.

**3. ADU Not Reviewed**

The proposed ADU included in the plan set is not part of this design review application. Prior to commencement of the ADU construction, a separate building permit issued by the Building Division shall be obtained by the applicant.

**4. Driveways**

One driveway approach transitioned to the City's public right-of-way is approved for the life of the project. The entire walkway extending from the driveway to the left must be removed and redesigned in the construction drawings.

**5. Landscaping**

The project shall be subject to the City's Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance (WELo) pursuant to Chapter 12.36 of the Municipal Code if over 500 square feet or more of new landscape area, including irrigated planting areas, turf areas, and water features is proposed.

**6. Encroachment Permit**

An encroachment permit shall be obtained from the Engineering Division prior to doing any work within the public right-of-way including the street shoulder. All work within the public street right-of-way shall be in compliance with the City's Shoulder Paving Policy.

**7. New Fireplaces**

Only gas fireplaces, pellet fueled wood heaters or EPA certified wood-burning appliances may be installed in all new construction pursuant to Chapter 12.64 of the Municipal Code.

**8. Underground Utility and Fire Sprinkler Requirements**

Additions exceeding fifty (50) percent of the existing living area (existing square footage calculations shall not include existing basements) and/or additions of 750 square feet or more shall trigger the undergrounding of utilities and new fire sprinklers. Additional square footage calculations shall include existing removed exterior footings and foundations being replaced and rebuilt. Any new utility service drops are pursuant to Chapter 12.68 of the Municipal Code.

**9. Indemnity and Hold Harmless**

The applicant/owner agrees to indemnify, defend, protect, and hold the City harmless from all costs and expenses, including attorney's fees, incurred by the City or held to be the liability of the City in connection with the City's defense of its actions in any proceedings brought in any State or Federal Court, challenging any of the City's action with respect to the applicant's project. The City may withhold final maps and/or permits, including temporary or final occupancy permits, for failure to pay all costs and expenses, including attorney's fees, incurred by the City in connection with the City's defense of its actions.

## **INCLUDED WITH THE BUILDING PERMIT SUBMITTAL**

### **10. Conditions of Approval**

Incorporate the conditions of approval into the title page of the plans and provide a letter which explains how each condition of approval has been satisfied and/or which sheet of the plans the information can found.

### **11. Water Efficient Landscape Plan**

Provide a landscape documentation package prepared by a licensed landscape professional showing how the project complies with the City's Water Efficient Landscape Regulations and include signed statements from the project's landscape professional and property owner.

### **12. Reach Codes**

Building Permit Applications submitted on or after January 1, 2023 shall comply with specific amendments to the 2022 California Green Building Standards for Electric Vehicle Infrastructure and the 2022 California Energy Code as provided in Ordinances No 2022-487 which amended Chapter 12.22 Energy Code and Chapter 12.26 California Green Building Standards Code of the Los Altos Municipal Code. The building design plans shall comply with the standards and the applicant shall submit supplemental application materials as required by the Building Division to demonstrate compliance.

### **13. California Water Service Upgrades**

The applicant is responsible for contacting and coordinating with the California Water Service Company any water service improvements including but not limited to relocation of water meters, increasing water meter sizing or the installation of fire hydrants. The City recommends consulting with California Water Service Company as early as possible to avoid construction or inspection delays.

### **14. Green Building Standards**

Provide verification that the house will comply with the California Green Building Standards pursuant to Chapter 12.26 of the Municipal Code and provide a signature from the project's Qualified Green Building Professional Designer/Architect and property owner.

### **15. Underground Utility Location**

Show the location of underground utilities pursuant to Chapter 12.68 of the Municipal Code. Underground utility trenches shall avoid the drip-lines of all protected trees unless approved by the project arborist and the Planning Division.

### **16. Mechanical Equipment**

Show the location of any mechanical equipment and demonstrate compliance with the requirements of Chapter 11.14 (Mechanical Equipment) and Chapter 6.16 (Noise Control) of the Los Altos City Code.

### **17. Off-Haul Excavated Soil**

The grading plan shall show specific grading cut and/or fill quantities. Cross section details showing the existing and proposed grading through at least two perpendicular portions of the site or more shall be provided to fully characterize the site. A note on the grading plans should state that all excess dirt shall be off-hauled from the site and shall not be used as fill material unless approved by the Building and Planning Divisions.

### **18. Storm Water Management**

Show how the project is in compliance with the New Development and Construction Best Management Practices and Urban Runoff Pollution Prevention program, as adopted by the City for the purposes of preventing storm water pollution (i.e. downspouts directed to landscaped areas,

minimize directly connected impervious areas, etc.).

## **PRIOR TO ISSUANCE OF BUILDING OR DEMOLITION PERMIT**

### **19. School Fee Payment**

In accordance with Section 65995 of the California Government Code, and as authorized under Section 17620 of the Education Code, the property owner shall pay the established school fee for each school district the property is located in and provide receipts to the Building Division. The City of Los Altos shall provide the property owner the resulting increase in assessable space on a form approved by the school district. Payments shall be made directly to the school districts.

## **PRIOR TO FINAL INSPECTION**

### **20. Landscaping Installation and Verification**

All landscaping materials, including plants or trees intended to provide privacy screening along the side and rear property lines, as provided on the approved landscape plans shall be installed prior to final inspection. The applicant shall also provide a landscape Certificate of Completion, signed by the project's landscape professional and property owner, verifying that the trees, landscaping, and irrigation were installed per the approved landscape documentation package.

### **21. Green Building Verification**

Submit verification that the house was built in compliance with the City's Green Building Ordinance (Chapter 12.26 of the Municipal Code).