



TO: Nick Zornes, Zoning Administrator

FROM: Jia Liu, Associate Planner

SUBJECT: SC21-0044 – 627 Covington Road

RECOMMENDATION

Approve design review application SC21-0044 for the construction of a new 4,132 square foot, two-story house 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: 627 Covington Road, located on the northeast corner of Covington Road and Parma Way
- Lot Size: 14,121 square feet
- General Plan Designation: Single-Family, Medium Lot (SF4)
- Zoning Designation: R1-10
- Current Site Conditions: One-story home

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 842 square-foot attached ADU is also proposed but it is not part of the design review application. The new residence is designed in a transitional modern architectural style, incorporating high-quality materials including a standing seam metal roof, smooth cement plaster and wood siding exterior finish with sheet metal siding accents, aluminum framed windows and fiberglass doors.

The subject property is a corner lot of rectangular shape, measuring approximately 85 feet in width and 167.5 feet in depth. In comparison with the existing house that will be demolished, the new two-story house is designed in an “L” shape, expanding further into both side yards and the northeast corner to the rear yard, creating a courtyard along with the placement of the attached ADU. Additionally, vehicle and pedestrian access are modified to front Parma Way.

When the application was submitted, there were a total of 13 trees, including eight protected trees, located within the proximity of the subject site. Three of the protected trees, a 36-inch Coast Live Oak, a 17-inch Fruitless Pear, and a 17-inch Pepper tree, located in the rear and side yards were removed under a separate

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tree removal permit in 2023 due to severe decline and hazardous conditions. Two more protected trees including a 20-inch Liquidambar (Tree No. 5) and a multi-stem Privet (Tree No.7) are proposed to be removed as part of the design review project because of their poor structure and form as assessed by a Certified Arborist. Additionally, two Coast Live Oak trees located within the public right-of-way are proposed for removal. Condition No. 5 requires the applicant to obtain approval from the Public Works Department prior to the tree removal.

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:

	Existing	Proposed	Allowed/Required
COVERAGE:	1,776 square feet	3,365 square feet	4,236 square feet
FLOOR AREA:			
First floor	1,727 square feet	2,801 square feet	4,162 square feet
Second floor	-- square feet	1,331 square feet	
Total	1,727 square feet	4,132 square feet	
SETBACKS:			
Front	29.96 feet	25 feet	25 feet
Rear	66.95 feet	50.83 feet	25 feet
Right side (1 st /2 nd)	29.96 feet/-- feet	17 feet/23 feet	17 feet/17 feet
Left side (1 st /2 nd)	26.33 feet/-- feet	10 feet/19.50 feet	10 feet/17.5 feet
HEIGHT:	16 feet	24.75 feet	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 homes. The homes in the neighborhood exhibit similar front setback patterns, massing, and a combination of simple and complex roof forms due to past renovations and upgrades. The horizontal eave lines at the first story typically range from approximately eight to nine feet and six inches in height. Many of the homes feature attached garages in the front yard facing the street.

The front elevation of the proposed two-story house is designed in a transitional modern architectural style that is a mixture of traditional and modern architecture which incorporates a flat roof for the first story and shed roof for the second story, along with asymmetrical window fenestrations. The proposed residence retains key design attributes indicative of the neighborhood including pitched roof lines at the second story, traditional exterior materials such as cement plaster and wood siding, and maintains a moderate scale found in the neighborhood. The first floor features a uniformed plate height of nine feet,

with a double ceiling height area for dining and living facing the rear yard and courtyard. The second story has two various plate heights: seven feet and six inches for the primary bedroom and eight feet for the Bedroom Suite 3. The proposed design thoughtfully aligns the first story and second story eave lines with the adjacent structure's eave line and the roof ridge line, respectively. The alignments have shown the design consideration for a harmonious architectural composition within the neighborhood.

The proposed landscaping includes approximately nine new trees throughout the site and evergreen screening vegetation along the perimeter of the site. The remaining two protected trees, along with the newly proposed trees, are to be preserved for the duration of the proposed project unless a subsequent tree removal permit is approved by the Development Services Director. 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, preserves existing trees, 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 contacted eleven neighbors in the immediate area for the community outreach. According to community outreach summary provided by the applicant, one property's owner has expressed concerns for the new two-story house. No written comments from neighbors have been received by staff as of the writing of this report.

Attachment:

A. Project Plans

Cc: Bahi Oreizy, Applicant
Warren Cheng, 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 complies with the allowable floor area, lot coverage, height limitation, 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 is relatively level and does not require substantial grading and does not involve the removal of soil. Two protected trees with poor structure will be removed and replaced with nine new trees with a minimum size of 15 gallons or 24-inch container box in size. New trees along with two existing two protected trees to remain will be protected through the life of the project unless a subsequent permit is approved for the removal of any such trees.
- 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 on the same project site. 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 January 19, 2024, except as may be modified by these conditions.

3. **Protected Trees**

Trees Nos. 4 and 11 along with the approved privacy screening and new trees shall be protected under this application and cannot be removed without a tree removal permit from the Development Services Director.

4. **Tree Removal Approved**

Trees Nos. 5 and 7 shown to be removed on plan Sheet A1.1 of the approved set of plans are hereby approved for removal. Tree removal shall not occur until a building permit is submitted and shall only occur after issuance of a demolition permit or building permit. Exceptions to this condition may be granted by the Community Development Director upon submitting written justification.

5. **Trees in Public Right-of-Way**

The request for the removal of Trees Nos. 1 and 2 located within the public right-of-way is not part of this design review approval. The removal and replacement of the two trees shall obtain approval from the Public Works Department.

6. **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.

7. **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.

8. **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.

9. **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.

10. **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

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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.

11. 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

12. 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.

13. Tree Protection Note

On the grading plan and the site plan, show all tree protection fencing consistent with City standards and/or the arborist report and add the following note: "All tree protection fencing shall be chain link and a minimum of five feet in height with posts driven into the ground."

14. 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.

15. 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.

16. 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.

17. 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.

18. 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.

19. 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.

20. 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.).

21. Change of Address

A Change of Address application must be submitted to the Building Division to correlate the project site address with the street that the front of the house faces.

PRIOR TO ISSUANCE OF BUILDING OR DEMOLITION PERMIT

22. Tree Protection

Tree protection fencing shall be installed around the driplines, or as required by the project arborist, of trees No. 4 as shown on the site plan. Tree protection fencing shall be chain link and a minimum of five feet in height with posts driven into the ground and shall not be removed until all building construction has been completed unless approved by the Planning Division.

23. 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

24. Landscaping Installation and Verification

All landscaping materials, including plants or trees intended to provide privacy screening, 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.

25. 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).