



DATE: October 19, 2022
 AGENDA ITEM # 6

TO: Design Review Commission

FROM: Jia Liu, Associate Planner

SUBJECT: SC22-0006 – 240 Alta Vista Drive

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve design review application SC22-0006 subject to the listed findings

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This is a design review application for a new 6,428 square-foot two-story residence. The project consists of 4,220 square feet at the first story and 1,648 square feet at the second story, and a 560 square-foot basement that counts towards the floor area. There is also a 2,437 square-foot basement area that does not count towards the floor area. This project should be considered categorically exempt from further environmental review under Section 15303 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) guidelines because it involves the construction of one single-family residence on an existing lot zoning for residential development. The following table summarizes the project’s technical details:

GENERAL PLAN DESIGNATION: Single-Family, Residential
ZONING: R1-10
PARCEL SIZE: 43,146 square feet
MATERIALS: Single membrane flat roof, stone veneer with horizontal and vertical wood exterior siding, with decorative wood screen slats, and metal window and doors.

	Existing	Proposed	Allowed/Required
COVERAGE:	3,733 square feet	5,406 square feet	12,944 square feet
FLOOR AREA:			
First floor	2,586 square feet	4,220 square feet	
Second floor	1,254 square feet	1,648 square feet	7,065 square feet
Basement (Counted)		560 square feet	
Total	4,082 square feet	6,428 square feet	
SETBACKS:			
Front/Rear	25 feet	43 feet	25 feet
Right side (1 st /2 nd)	83.58, 79.08, and 54.33 feet	61, 27, and 42.5 feet	25 feet
Left side (1 st /2 nd)	77.17 feet/77.17 feet	19.19 feet/28.19 feet	10 feet/17.5 feet
	59.33 feet/59.33 feet	18.15 feet/25.15 feet	10 feet/17.5 feet
HEIGHT:	26.58 feet	23 feet	27 feet

BACKGROUND

Neighborhood Context

The subject property is located on the west side of the intersection of Alta Vista Avenue and Chamisal Avenue. The surrounding neighborhood is considered a Transitional Character Neighborhood as defined in the City's Residential Design Guidelines. The homes in the immediate neighborhood are mostly two-story homes with a few one-story homes at 300, 301, and 309 Blue Oak adjacent to the rear property line and 375 & 370 Chamisal Avenue across Alta Vista Avenue. There is not a district front yard area pattern in the immediate neighborhood resulting from inconsistent front setbacks. There is also varying sizes of residences and a variety of architectural styles in the immediate neighborhood including but not limited to traditional Ranch, modern Ranch, Mediterranean Spanish, French Country, Shed, and Contemporary. It is also found. With all the distinct architectural styles, the structural features of the residences are of mostly moderate scale, with horizontal eave lines and wall plates that appear to be between eight to nine feet and six inches in height. Most garages are attached to the existing homes in the front yard facing the street with a few homes that have a detached garage in the rear yard. Roof forms are a combination of simple and complex roof structures due to certain houses renovations/upgrades in the neighborhood over the years. A mix of roofing materials are found in the immediate neighborhood including wood shake, asphalt shingle, and tiles. The exterior materials commonly used include stucco, and wood siding with stone veneer or brick accents. Landscapes in the front consist of mature street trees on most properties with more dense screening shrubs interior.

Property History

The existing two-story residence with a basement was reconstructed in 2001 after a fire damaged the original structure. The reconstruction of the residence went through a pre-existing Architectural and Site Control Committee's approval on March 31, 2000 (Application No. 00-SC-21). A building permit (Permit No. 61833) was issued on February 20, 2001, to allow the existing home's construction. The 00-SC-21 staff report and the Permit card are provided in Attachment A for the Commission's reference.

DISCUSSION

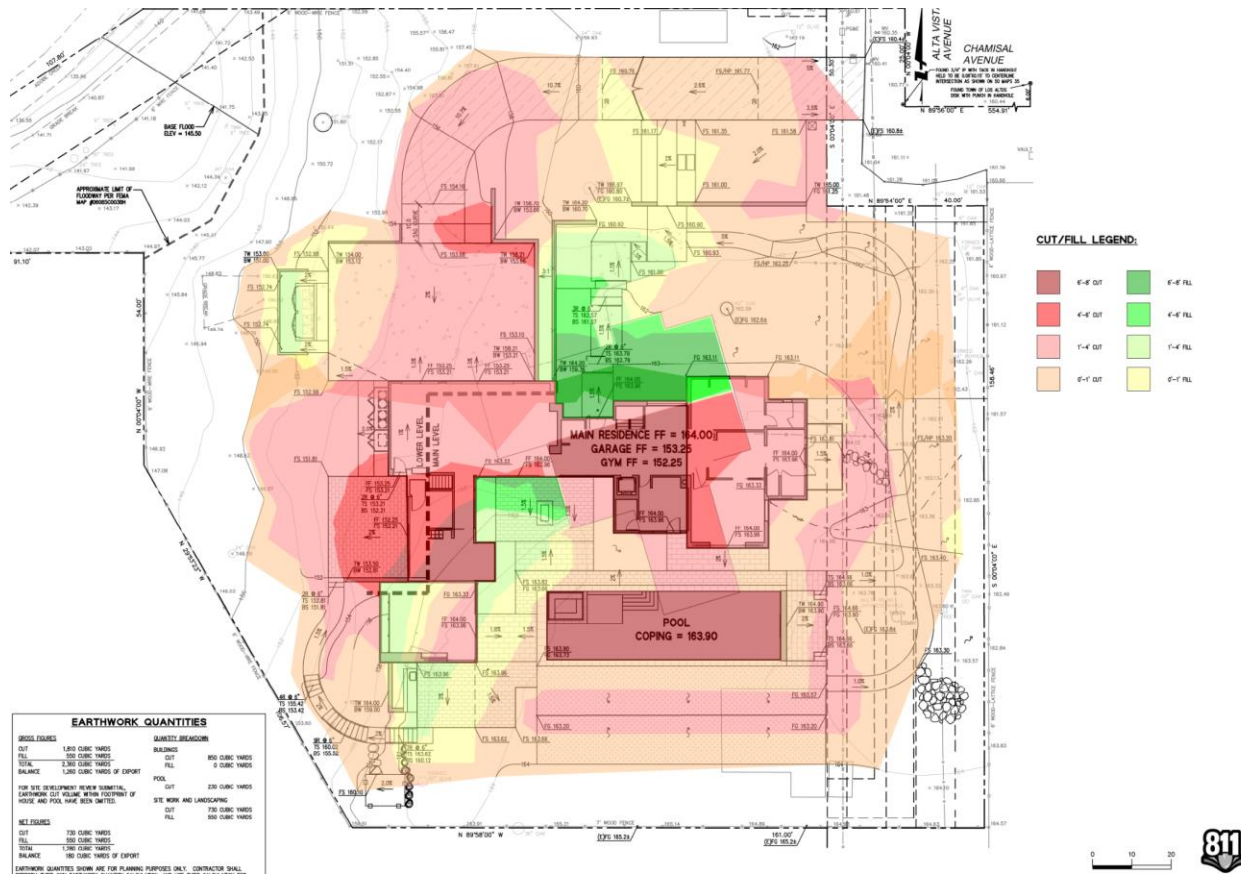
Design Review

According to the Residential Design Guidelines, in Transitional Character Neighborhoods, a good neighbor design reduces the abrupt changes that result from juxtaposing radically different designs or sizes of structures; proposed projects should not set the extreme and should be designed to soften the transition.

The proposed residence is on an irregular shaped lot that is approximately one acre in size and is fronting the intersection of Chamisal Avenue and Alta Vista Avenue. The lot has atypical property lines due to the shape of the lot and street frontage, per the definition of the property lines per Section 14.02.070 of the Municipal Code. The subject site has two front property line segments abutting the public right-of-way (ROW), side property lines that are adjoining the front property lines, and six rear property line segments that are opposite the front lot lines. The site also features a downward slope from the highest elevation of 164.00 close to the street to the lowest elevation of 136.00 at the rear of the property across an approximate lot depth of 200 feet. Adobe Creek is located at the rear portion of the lot with dense plants in the riparian area closest to the creek.

The footprint of the proposed structure is in the same location of the existing two-story house and further expanded to the west and east sides. The north and south sides of the existing structure will be

eliminated: either filled as part of the front yard landscaping or further cut to be aligned with the interior yard landscaping design with the swimming pool. Based on the earthwork quantity analysis provided by BFK Engineers, there will be 830 cubic yards of existing land cut to excavate for the main dwelling and 960 cubic yards of cut and 550 cubic yards of fill for grading of the landscaping including the swimming pool with a balance of 1,260 cubic yards that will be exported as a result of the construction. Given the complexity of the proposed earthwork, the applicant has provided a color-coded preliminary grading exhibit on Sheet X-1 showing the cut and fill movements onsite and as shown below:



As shown in the exhibit, most earthwork cut (dark red) will occur at the new proposed basement areas and the swimming pool. Most of the fill (dark green) will occur at the existing structure basement area facing the street and will be used as part of the front landscaping. Areas adjacent to the most cut and fill will gradually transition to the natural grading elevations. Considering the large lot area of almost one acre and an extensive buildable area, staff found that the proposed earthwork is consistent with the Residential Design Guidelines to reflect the topography in their designs by following the natural and existing contours of the site.

The design of the proposed structure will replace the existing Colonial architectural style to a contemporary modern architectural style with a flat roof design. The overall height of the proposed residence is 23 feet, consistent with the maximum height of 27 feet in the R1-10 zoning district. The proposed plate height will be nine feet and six inches at the first story and nine feet at the second story. As compared to the existing two-story residence with a height of 26.58 feet, the massing of proposed residence will be reduced and will have a less bulky appearance by utilizing several design techniques including a lower building height, strong horizontal roof features, less emphasis on vertical wall, and

distinct exterior materials.

Only the northeast corner of the proposed building will be visible from the public right-of-way (ROW) due to the location of the site at the end of intersection of Alta Vista Avenue and Chamisal Avenue. The applicant's rendering of the visible portion of the structure from the ROW is shown below:



Per the rendering and elevations, the house will have further setbacks from all the front property lines and side property line to the right. The new residence proposes a below grade garage accessed from an adjacent motor court. The motor court should only be partially visible from the street and the garage door will likely be hidden from view from the public ROW. The building articulation at the first story and second story with the modern window design and applied high quality materials including vertical and horizontal wood exterior siding, stone veneer siding, and wood slates will further break down the building into smaller elements. Given that the immediate neighborhood is a Transitional Character Neighborhood with various architectural styles, staff found that the project appears to be an appropriate design within this Transitional Character Neighborhood setting that will not set the extremes. Moreover, the extensive setbacks from property lines and existing and proposed dense screening vegetation and trees on the subject site will further soften the transition from adjacent neighbors.

Privacy

The proposed two-story house will have large windows proposed at the second floor fenestrated from the finish floor to the ceiling on all four sides of the elevations. A second-floor terrace with a depth of 14 feet and four inches and a width of 19 feet and 2 inches is also proposed facing the south side. Staff does not consider the potential privacy impacts to neighboring properties unreasonable considering the following avoidance and mitigation factors that are unique to this project:

- The site is not a typical lot with its large lot size and increased setbacks. The proposed setbacks from the second floor to the north, west, south, and east property lines are 93.5 feet, 103 feet, 71.5 feet, and 55 feet, respectively. The large site area and extensive setback design should minimize privacy impact from its second-floor windows.
- A large number of trees and evergreen screening vegetation, either proposed or retained, will be placed along all the property lines to further mitigate the privacy impact. As a condition of approval,

the homeowner(s) shall maintain all the screening vegetation and trees for the life of the project. The details of the proposed evergreen plants will be provided in the Landscaping and Trees section of the staff report.

Landscaping and Trees

Sixty-five trees including 18 protected trees are located on the subject site and further assessed by the project arborist, Michael Young with Urban Tree Management, Inc. The summary of the assessment and tree protection plan is provided in the Attachment C. Seven protected trees and seventeen unprotected trees will be removed due to a variety of reasons including but not limited to dead or diseased trees, poor structure such as codominant and thin canopy, and over concentration for all the trees to grow at certain areas. All other trees will be retained and protected during future construction. One large Coast Live Oak, Tree No. 165, that is located close to the new basement in the front yard may be impacted by the basement excavation during the construction. In order to ensure the tree’s long-term health, staff has required condition No. 5 in the report to require a shoring plan to be included in the construction drawings, which shall be further assessed by the arborist. Condition No. 6 will require a certification letter from an arborist to ensure that tree protection measures are in place prior to the foundation inspection. Sixteen new trees will be planted onsite including Maple, Crape Myrtle, Tea tree and Coast Live Oak with a minimum size of 36-inch box.

The landscaping plan proposes a large number of evergreen screening plants planted along all the property lines and are outlined in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Proposed Screening Plant List

Location	Common Name	No.	Size	Description
Front property line	Laurus Nobilis (Saratoga Sweet Bay)	7	15 gallons	12'-15' tall x 6'-8' wide
	Arctostaphylos densiflora (Howard McMinn Manzanita)	2	15 gallons	7'-10' tall x 15' wide
Right side property line	Prunus Lauroceasus (English Laurel)	19	15 gallons	12' tall x 6' wide
	Arctostaphylos densiflora (Howard McMinn Manzanita)	2	15 gallons	7'-10' tall x 15' wide
	Carpenteria californica (Bush Anemone)	4	15 gallons	4'-6' tall x 4'-6' wide
Left side property line	Laurus Nobilis (Saratoga Sweet Bay)	19	15 gallons	12'-15' tall x 6'-8' wide
	Arctostaphylos densiflora (Howard McMinn Manzanita)	2	15 gallons	7'-10' tall x 15' wide
Rear property line	Laurus Nobilis (Saratoga Sweet Bay)	42	15 gallons	12'-15' tall x 6'-8' wide
	Arctostaphylos densiflora (Howard McMinn Manzanita)	14	15 gallons	7'-10' tall x 15' wide
	Ramnus "Mound San Bruno" (Coffeeberry)	5	15 gallons	5'-10' tall x 4'-6' wide
	Myrica California (Pacific Wax Myrtle)	17	15 gallons	10'-30' tall x 10'-12' wide
	Ceanothus 'Concha' Concha California Lilac	15	15 gallons	4'-8' tall x 6'-12' wide

In addition to the evergreen screening plants, the landscape plan also includes a variety of shrubs/hedges and groundcover plants throughout the site. Since the project includes a new house and new landscaping area that exceeds 500 square feet, it is subject to the City's Water Efficient Landscape regulations. Overall, the existing and proposed landscaping meets the intent of the City's landscape regulations.

Environmental Review

This project is categorically exempt from environmental review under Section 15303 of the California Environmental Quality Act 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 and mailed to 14 adjacent properties on Alta Vista Avenue, Chamisal Avenue, Mariposa Avenue, and Blue Oak. The Notification Map is included in Attachment D. On October 7, 2022, a billboard of Notice of Development Proposal (Attachment E) was installed onsite.

The applicant has also reached out to the neighborhood two times during or prior to the design review process. The first outreach occurred during the week of December 12 to 18, 2021 via Zoom with the design group. Additional follow-up Zoom meetings and site visits were provided by the owners and applicant through January 2021 and February 2021. The community outreach summary and neighbors' correspondence are provided in Attachment F.

Cc: Karim & Alissa Faris, Property Owner
Matt Wiebe, Applicant

Attachments:

- A. 00-SC-21 Staff Report and Permit No. 61833 Permit Card
- B. Neighborhood Compatibility Worksheet
- C. Arborist Report
- D. Notification Map
- E. Pictures of Notice of Development Proposal
- F. Proof of Community Outreach
- G. Material Boards

FINDINGS

SC22-0006 – 240 Alta Vista Avenue

With regard to design review for the new two-story house, the Design Review Commission finds the following in accordance with Section 14.76.050 of the Municipal Code:

- a. The proposed residence complies with all provisions of this chapter;
- b. The height, elevations, and placement on the site of the proposed addition, when considered with reference to the nature and location of residential structures on adjacent lots, will avoid unreasonable interference with views and privacy and will consider the topographic and geologic constraints imposed by particular building site conditions;
- c. The natural landscape will be preserved insofar as practicable by minimizing tree and soil removal; grade changes shall be minimized and will be in keeping with the general appearance of neighboring developed areas;
- d. The orientation of the proposed addition in relation to the immediate neighborhood will minimize the perception of excessive bulk;
- e. General architectural considerations, including the character, size, scale, and quality of the design, 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; and
- f. The proposed addition has been designed to follow the natural contours of the site with minimal grading, minimum impervious cover, and maximum erosion protection.

CONDITIONS

SC22-0006 – 240 Alta Vista Avenue

GENERAL

1. Expiration

The Design Review Approval will expire on October 19, 2024 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 October 6, 2022, except as may be modified by these conditions.

3. Protected Trees

Trees No. 101, 107, 110, 112-116, 124, 135, 141, and 155-165 along with the approved newly planted trees and privacy screening shall be protected under this application and cannot be removed without a tree removal permit from the Community Development Director. A Tree Protection Plan detailed in the approved arborist report shall be implemented. Prior to the occupancy of the residence, a letter signed by the subject arborist shall be provided to certify the implementation of the Tree Protection Plan.

4. Tree Removal Approved

Trees Nos. 117, 121, 123, 126, 136, 138, and 149 shown to be removed on plan Sheet A0.3 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. Shoring Plan and Arborist Assessment

A shoring plan shall be provided and included in the construction drawings. The shoring plan shall be further assessed by the arborist to ensure the long-term health of Tree No. 165.

6. Arborist Certification Letter

A certification letter from the subject arborist shall be provided to ensure all the recommended tree protection mitigations in place. Such letter shall be provided to the Planning Division prior to the foundation inspection.

7. 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.

8. 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 2,500 square feet or more of new or replaced landscape area, including irrigated planting areas, turf areas, and water features is proposed. Any project with an aggregate landscape area of 2,500 square feet or less may conform to the prescriptive measures contained in Appendix D of the City's Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance.

9. 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.

10. 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

11. Conditions of Approval

Incorporate the conditions of approval into the title page of the plans.

12. Applicant Acknowledgement of Conditions of Approval

The applicant shall acknowledge receipt of the final conditions of approval and put in a letter format acceptance of said conditions. This letter will be submitted during the first building permit submittal.

13. Tree Protection Note

On the grading plan and/or the site plan, show all tree protection fencing 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. Reach Codes

Building Permit Applications submitted on or after January 26, 2021 shall comply with specific amendments to the 2019 California Green Building Standards for Electric Vehicle Infrastructure and the 2019 California Energy Code as provided in Ordinances Nos. 2020-470A, 2020-470B, 2020-470C, and 2020-471 or as further amended 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.

15. California Water Service Upgrades

You are 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.

16. 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.

17. 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.

18. Air Conditioner Sound Rating

Show the location of any air conditioning unit(s) on the site plan including the model number of the

unit(s) and nominal size of the unit. Provide the manufacturer's specifications showing the sound rating for each unit. The air conditioning units must be located to comply with the City's Noise Control Ordinance (Chapter 6.16) and in compliance with the Planning Division setback provisions. The units shall be screened from view of the street.

19. 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.).

20. 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.

PRIOR TO ISSUANCE OF BUILDING OR DEMOLITION PERMIT

21. Tree Protection

Tree protection fencing shall be installed around the driplines, or as required by the project arborist, of trees Nos. 101, 107, 110, 112-116, 124, 135, 141, and 155-165 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.

22. 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

23. Landscaping Installation

All front yard landscaping, street trees and privacy screening trees shall be maintained and/or installed as shown on the approved plans or as required by the Planning Division.

24. Landscape Privacy Screening

The landscape intended to provide privacy screening shall be inspected by the Planning Division and shall be supplemented by additional screening material as required to adequately mitigate potential privacy impacts to surrounding properties.

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).