



ZONING ADMINISTRATOR AGENDA REPORT

TO: Nick Zornes, Zoning Administrator

FROM: Brittany Whitehill, Senior Planner

SUBJECT: SC25-0004 – 677 Linden Ave

RECOMMENDATION

Approve design review application SC25-0004 for the construction of a new 3,945 square-foot two-story residence 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: Located on the east side of Linden Avenue between Pine Lane and West Portola Avenue
- Lot Size: 12,000 square feet
- General Plan Designation: SF4 (Single-Family - 4 dwelling units/net acre)
- Zoning Designation: R1-10
- Current Site Conditions: One-story house

The subject property is located on the east side of Linden Avenue, in front of a flag lot that fronts onto Linden Avenue via a private driveway. Across the private driveway there are two additional lots with a similar configuration (see Figure 1). The proposed two-story home will be situated on the lot in a similar location to the existing home, and the new home's primary entrance will remain fronting onto Linden Avenue.



Figure 1: Lot Configuration

The project includes the demolition of the existing one-story house and construction of a new two-story house (see Attachment 1 – Project Plans). The new house will feature an attached garage and an attached accessory dwelling unit, which will be reviewed ministerially as part of the building permit submittal. The new house is designed in a contemporary farmhouse architectural style, incorporating high quality materials including a composition shingle with hip and gable roof forms, vertical and horizontal composite siding in dark, muted colors, natural stained wood garage and front doors, and wood-clad windows with black frames. The primary entrance will be accented with a covered porch.

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:	25.5%	24.0% *	30%
FLOOR AREA:			
First floor	2,710 sq. ft.	2,284 sq. ft.	-
Second floor	-	1,661 sq. ft.	-
Total	2,710 sq. ft. (22.6%)	3,945 sq. ft. (33%)*	3,950 sq. ft.
SETBACKS:			
Front	23.5 ft.	25 ft.	25 ft.
Rear	34 ft.	44 ft.	25 ft.
Right Side (1 st /2 nd)	10.5 ft.	23.33 ft./29 ft. (ADU 4 ft.)*	10 ft./17.5 ft.
Left Side (1 st /2 nd)	9 ft.	10 ft./20ft.	10 ft./17.5 ft.
HEIGHT:	18 ft.	26.75 ft.	27 ft.

** The project proposes an attached ADU, which will be reviewed ministerially as part of the building permit. Pursuant to Los Altos Municipal Code (LAMC) Section 14.14.060, the ADU has not been included in the floor area or lot coverage calculations for the site.*

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 (Design Guidelines). The immediate neighborhood has both one- and two-story homes in a variety of architectural styles, plate heights, and sizes, and is characterized as a “Diverse Character Neighborhood” per the Design Guidelines. The proposed house has relatively simple gable and hip roof forms which is characteristic of the proposed farmhouse style, and compatible with the homes in the surrounding neighborhood. The home utilizes modest plate heights (approximately 10’ at the first floor, and 8’ at the second floor) and significant second-story step backs which reduce the perceived massing and create a design that is of appropriate scale when compared to neighboring homes.

An arborist report was prepared for the project by Robert Apolinar of San Jose Tree Service which evaluated the trees on site. The project site currently has seven trees and significant tree canopy coverage, primarily from the mature California White Oak tree at the front of the property (Tree No. 1), and two mature Coast Live Oaks at the rear of the property (Trees No. 6 and 7). The project has been designed to retain these three trees, as well as a protected Roble Negro tree toward the front of the property (Tree No. 2). Three protected Coast Live Oak trees (Trees No. 3, 4, and 5) in the side yard of the proposed home are proposed to be removed. Based on the arborist report, Trees No. 3 and 4 have

experienced canopy crowding due to their constrained location and close proximity to each other. Additionally, Tree No. 5 has experienced improper pruning to provide clearance from the neighbor's home. Trees No. 3, 4, and 5 are immediately adjacent to the proposed foundation and will be substantially impacted by the construction; therefore, their removal is proposed as part of the project.

Since the initial application submittal, staff and the project applicant have worked diligently and conducted several site visits to evaluate the existing trees onsite with the goal of maximizing tree preservation. As a result, the plan was revised to retain two additional trees (Trees No. 7 and 2). Additionally, the design was revised to incorporate enhanced landscape screening along the northern property line, to address privacy concerns from neighbors at 689 Linden Avenue. In addition to the existing trees which will remain onsite, the landscape plan includes nine new trees: five 24" box Water Gum trees, three 15-gallon Heart of Gold Redbud Trees and one 15-gallon Japanese maple. Additionally, a variety of shrubs, vines, and groundcover plants are proposed. The proposed landscaping complies with the Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance (WELO).

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 healthy existing trees, and enhances onsite landscaping. Therefore, staff recommends the Zoning Administrator approve the Design Review application, subject to the attached findings and conditions of approval.

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 mailed to property owners within a 300-foot radius and published in the Palo Alto Daily Post. The applicant also posted the project site with the public notice sign in conformance with the Planning Division posting requirements.

The applicant reached out to nine neighbors in person or by email in the immediate area for the community outreach. Staff has received two public comment letters as of the writing of this report which are included as Attachment 2.

Attachment:

1. Project Plans
2. Public Comment Letters

Cc: Sam Lee (Applicant/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, maximum height, and daylight plane requirement pursuant to Los Altos Municipal Code Chapter 14.06.
- C. The natural landscape will be preserved insofar as practicable by minimizing tree and soil removal because the project has been designed to preserve four protected trees onsite (two Coast Live Oaks, one Roble Negro and one California White Oak). Additionally, the finished floor of the proposed home will be at a comparable elevation to the existing home, and no substantial grading is proposed with the project.
- 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 moderate wall plate heights and second-story step backs, and roof form all serve to visually break up the vertical massing of the building.
- 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 because 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 high quality materials including a composition shingle with hip and gable roof forms, vertical and horizontal composite siding in dark, muted colors, natural stained wood garage and front doors, and wood-clad windows with black frames.
- 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 the plan incorporates ample softscape surfaces and a drainage plan to minimize off-site stormwater drainage.

CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL

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PLANNING DIVISION

1. **Expiration:** The Design Review Approval will expire on May 7, 2027 unless prior to the date of expiration, a building permit is issued, or an extension is granted pursuant to the procedures and timeline for extensions in the Zoning Code.
2. **Approved Plans:** The approval is based on the plans and materials received on April 15, 2025 except as modified by these conditions as specified below.
3. **Revisions to the Approved Project:** Minor revisions to the approved plans which are found to be in substantial compliance with the approval may be approved by the Development Services Director.
4. **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.
5. **Notice of Right to Protest:** The conditions of project approval set forth herein include certain fees, dedication requirements, reservation requirements, and other exactions. Pursuant to Government Code Section 66020(d)(1), these conditions constitute written notice of a statement of the amount of such fees, and a description of the dedications, reservations, and other exactions. You are hereby further notified that the 90-day period in which you may protest these fees, dedications, reservations, and other exactions pursuant to Government Code Section 66020(a) began on the date of approval of this project. If you fail to file a protest within this 90-day period complying with all of the requirements of Section 66020, you will be legally barred from later challenging such exactions
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.
7. **Protected Trees:** Trees Nos. 1, 2, 6, and 7 shall be protected under this application and cannot be removed without a Tree Removal Permit from the Development Services Director.
8. **Tree Removal Approved:** Trees Nos. 3, 4, and 5 shown to be removed on plan Sheet LC.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 the issuance of a demolition permit or building permit. Exceptions to this condition may be granted by the Development Services Director upon submitting written justification.

9. **Replacement Trees:** The applicant shall offset the loss of each protected/street tree with one replacement trees, for a total of three replacement trees. Each replacement tree shall be no smaller than a 24” box and shall be noted on the landscape plan as a replacement tree.
10. **Tree Protection Fencing:** The grading and tree or landscape plan of the building permit submittal shall show the required tree protection fencing which shall be installed around the driplines of Trees Nos. 1, 2, 6, and 7. Verification of installation of the fencing shall be submitted to the City prior to building permit issuance. 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.
11. **Landscaping:** The project shall be subject to the City’s Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance (WELo) pursuant to Chapter 12.36 of the Municipal Code. 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. **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 prior to final inspection.
13. **Mechanical Equipment:** Prior to issuance of a building permit, the applicant shall show the location of any mechanical equipment which complies with the requirements of Chapter 11.14 (Mechanical Equipment) and Chapter 6.16 (Noise Control) of the Los Altos City Code.

BUILDING DIVISION

14. **Building Permit:** A building permit is required for the project and building design plans shall comply with the latest applicable adopted standards. The applicant shall submit supplemental application materials as required by the Building Division to demonstrate compliance.
15. **Conditions of Approval:** Incorporate the conditions of approval into the building permit submittal 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.
16. **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.
17. **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. Payments shall be made directly to the school districts.

18. **Payment of Impact and Development Fees:** The applicant shall pay all applicable development and impact fees in accordance with State Law and the City of Los Altos current adopted fee schedule. All impact fees not paid prior to building permit issuance shall be required to provide a bond equal to the required amount prior to issuance of the building permit.
19. **Swimming Pools, Water Features, and Outdoor Kitchens:** The proposed pool and associated equipment, water feature, and/or outdoor kitchen require a separate building permit and are subject to the City's standards pursuant to Section 14.06.120 and Chapter 14.15.
20. **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.
21. **Change of Address:** A "Request for Address Assignment or Change" form must be submitted to the Building Division to correlate with the addition of a new dwelling unit on the existing property or reorientation of the front of the home to a different street.
22. **Underground Utility and Fire Sprinkler Requirements:** New construction and 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.
23. **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.
24. **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.
25. **Green Building Verification:** Prior to final inspection, submit verification that the house was built in compliance with the City's Green Building Ordinance (Chapter 12.26 of the Municipal Code).
26. **Underground Utility Location:** Show the location of underground utilities pursuant to Chapter 12.68 of the Municipal Code. Underground utility trenches shall avoid the driplines of all protected trees unless approved by the project arborist and the Planning Division.
27. **Work Hours/Construction Site Signage:** No work shall commence on the job site prior to 7:00 a.m. nor continue later than 5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, and no work is permitted on Sunday or any City observed holiday. The general contractor, applicant, developer, or property owner shall erect a sign at all construction site entrances/exits to advise

subcontractors and material suppliers of the working hours and contact information, including an after-hours contact.

ENGINEERING DIVISION

28. **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.
29. **Public Utilities:** The applicant shall contact electric, gas, communication, and water utility companies regarding the installation of new utility services to the site.
30. **Sewer Lateral:** Any proposed sewer lateral connection shall be approved by the City Engineer. Only one sewer lateral per lot shall be installed. All existing unused sewer laterals shall be abandoned according to the City Standards, cut and cap 12" away from the main.
31. **Transportation Permit:** A Transportation Permit, per the requirements specified in California Vehicle Code Division 15, is required before any large equipment, materials or soil is transported or hauled to or from the construction site. The applicant shall pay the applicable fees before the transportation permit can be issued by the City Engineer.
32. **Grading and Drainage Plan:** The applicant shall submit detailed plans for on-site and off-site grading and drainage plans that include drain swales, drain inlets, rough pad elevations, building envelopes, and grading elevations for review and approval by the City Engineer prior to the issuance of the building permit.
33. **Storm Water Management Plan:** The applicant shall submit a Storm Water Management Plan (SWMP) in compliance with the San Francisco Bay Region Municipal Regional Stormwater (MRP) *National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES)* Permit No. CA S612008, Order R2-2022-0018, Provision C.3 dated May 11, 2022. All large single-family home projects that create and/or replace 10,000 sq. ft. or more of impervious surface on the project site and affected portions of the public right-of-way that are developed or redeveloped as part of the project must also complete a C.3. Data Form available on the City's Building Division website.
34. **Storm Water Filtration Systems:** Prior to the issuance of the building permit the applicant shall ensure the design of all storm water filtration systems and devices are without standing water to avoid mosquito/insect infestation. Storm water filtration measures shall be installed separately for each lot. All storm water runoff shall be treated onsite. Discharging storm water runoff to neighboring properties or public right-of-way and connections to existing underground storm water mains shall not be allowed.

FIRE DEPARTMENT

35. **Applicable Codes and Review:** The project shall comply with the California Fire (CFC) & Building (CBC) Code, 2022 edition, as adopted by the City of Los Altos Municipal Code (LAMC), California Code of Regulations (CCR) and Health & Safety Code Review of this developmental proposal is limited to acceptability of site access, water supply and may include specific additional requirements as they pertain to fire department operations, and shall not be construed as a substitute for formal plan review to determine compliance with adopted model codes. Prior to performing

any work, the applicant shall make an application to, and receive from, the Building Department all applicable construction permits.

36. **Violations:** This review shall not be construed to be an approval of a violation of the provisions of the California Fire Code or of other laws or regulations of the jurisdiction. A permit presuming to give authority to violate or cancel the provisions of the fire code or other such laws or regulations shall not be valid. Any addition to or alteration of approved construction documents shall be approved in advance. [CFC, Ch.1, 105.3.6].
37. **Construction Site Fire Safety:** All construction sites must comply with applicable provisions of CFC Chapter 33 and our Standard Detail and Specification S1-7. Provide appropriate notations on subsequent plan submittals, as appropriate to the project. CFC Chapter. 33.
38. **Fire Sprinklers Required:** An automatic residential fire sprinkler system shall be installed in accordance with National Fire Protection Association's (NFPA) Standard 13D in all new one and two-family dwellings.
39. **Required Fire Flow:** The minimum required fire flow for this project is 1,000 Gallons Per Minute (GPM) at 20 psi residual pressure. This fire flow assumes installation of automatic fire sprinklers per CFC [903.3.1.3]. Provide a fire flow letter from a local water purveyor confirming the required fire flow of 1,000 GPM @ 20 psi residual from a fire hydrant located within 600' of the farthest exterior corner of the structure is required. Contact your local water purveyor (California Water) for details on how to obtain the fire flow letter.
40. **Water Supply Requirements:** Potable water supplies shall be protected from contamination caused by fire protection water supplies. It is the responsibility of the applicant and any contractors and subcontractors to contact the water purveyor supplying the site of such project, and to comply with the requirements of that purveyor. Such requirements shall be incorporated into the design of any water-based fire protection systems, and/or fire suppression water supply systems or storage containers that may be physically connected in any manner to an appliance capable of causing contamination of the potable water supply of the purveyor of record. Final approval of the system(s) under consideration will not be granted by this office until compliance with the requirements of the water purveyor of record are documented by that purveyor as having been met by the applicant(s). 2019 CFC Sec. 903.3.5 and Health and Safety Code 13114.7.
41. **Address Identification:** New and existing buildings shall have approved address numbers, building numbers or approved building identification placed in a position that is plainly legible and visible from the street or road fronting the property. These numbers shall contrast with their background. Where required by the fire code official, address numbers shall be provided in additional approved locations to facilitate emergency response. Address numbers shall be Arabic numbers or alphabetical letters. Numbers shall be a minimum of 4 inches (101.6 mm) high with a minimum stroke width of 0.5 inch (12.7 mm). Where access is by means of a private road and the building cannot be viewed from the public way, a monument, pole or other sign or means shall be used to identify the structure. Address numbers shall be maintained. CFC Sec. 505.1.
42. **Construction Site Fire Safety:** All construction sites must comply with applicable provisions of CFC Chapter 33 and our Standard Detail and Specification S1-7. Provide appropriate notations on subsequent plan submittals, as appropriate to the project. CFC Chapter. 33.