



DATE: February 1, 2023

AGENDA ITEM # 3

TO: Design Review Commission
FROM: Jia Liu, Associate Planner
SUBJECT: SC22-0025 – 311 Hawthorne Avenue

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve design review application SC22-0025 subject to the listed findings

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This is a design review application for a new two-story house. The project consists of 2,090 square feet at the first story and 1,760 square feet at the second story. A 577 square-foot attached ADU is part of the project but not subject to design review. This project is categorically exempt from further environmental review under Section 15303 of the California Environmental Quality Act. The following table summarizes the project's technical details:

GENERAL PLAN DESIGNATION:	Single-Family, Residential
ZONING:	R1-10
PARCEL SIZE:	11,108 square feet
MATERIALS:	Composition shingle roof, cementitious horizontal and vertical siding with wood eave, fascia, header, and posts at the entry porch, fiberglass framed windows and doors with cementitious trims.

	Existing	Proposed	Allowed/Required
COVERAGE:	--	2,519 square feet	3,332 square feet
FLOOR AREA:			
First floor	--	2,090 square feet	
Second floor	--	1,760 square feet	3,861 square feet
Total	--	3,850 square feet	
SETBACKS:			
Front	--	25 feet	25 feet
Rear	--	37.96 feet	25 feet
Right side (1 st /2 nd)	--/--	20 feet/23.75 feet	20 feet/20 feet
Left side (1 st /2 nd)	--/--	13.5 feet/24 feet	10 feet/17.5 feet
HEIGHT:	--	26.58 feet	27 feet

BACKGROUND

Neighborhood Context

The subject property is located on the northeast corner of Hawthorne Avenue and South Gordon Avenue between Valley Street and El Monte Avenue. The surrounding neighborhood is considered a Diverse Character Neighborhood as defined in the City's Residential Design Guidelines. The homes in the immediate neighborhood context are a combination of one-story and two-story houses, with two-story homes at 285 and 318 Hawthorne Avenue. Properties in the immediate neighborhood, specifically on the northside of Hawthorne Avenue, do not appear to have consistent front setback patterns. Most homes in the neighborhood feature low to moderate scale horizontal eave lines with wall plates that appear to be between eight to nine feet in height except for the two-story house at 318 Hawthorne Avenue that has an emphasis of two-story vertical walls. Most garages are attached to the existing homes in the front yard facing the street. Roof forms are a combination of simple and complex roof lines 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, composition 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 dense screening shrubs further in.

Property History

On September 31, 2019, a fire accident occurred and damaged the previous house structure. The prior homeowner applied for a Design Review (DR21-0016) application for the construction of a new one-story single-family house on January 19, 2021 and obtained the approval from the Planning Division on February 19, 2021. The Building Division issued a demolition permit for the main structure on March 8, 2021. The damaged house was later fully demolished. In October 2021, the property was sold to the current owner with no construction activities. In August 2022, the applicant applied for a new two-story house, which is being considered by the Design Review Commission at the February 1, 2023 meeting. The topographic survey (Sheet 1) shows there are two accessory structures and a few existing trees remaining on the site..

DISCUSSION

Design Review

According to the Residential Design Guidelines, in Diverse Character Neighborhoods, a good neighbor design has its own design integrity while incorporating some design elements, materials, and scale found in the neighborhood.

As the subject site is a corner lot, the proposed residence will have two street facing elevations. The front elevation fronting South Gordon Way uses design elements that have integrated gable and hipped roof forms, recessed second story massing from the first story, horizontal eave lines, a six-foot projecting front porch, and articulated architecture on both first and second floor. The exterior side elevation facing Hawthorne Avenue also provides compatible gable and hipped roof forms with consistent horizontal eave lines, and articulated architecture with consistent siding materials throughout. Both elevations are found compatible in design and materials with the surrounding neighborhood due to maintaining a consistent horizontal eave lines, articulated architecture and similar materials as found in the immediate neighborhood context.

The project is utilizing high quality materials such as the composition shingle roof, cementitious

horizontal and siding exterior finish, and fiberglass framed windows and wood doors, which are integrated into the overall architectural design of the residence and found to relate to the surrounding neighborhood.

The overall height of the proposed residence is 26.58 feet, consistent with the maximum height of 27 feet in the R1-10 zoning district. Consistent wall plate heights are designed at both floors: nine feet and one inch at the first floor and eight feet and six inches at the second floor. Regarding the roof design, the proposed two-story house has a uniformed 4:12 roof pitch for the whole structure with the roof material being composition shingle.

Overall, according to the Residential Design Guidelines, the project appears to be an appropriate design within this Diverse Character Neighborhood setting. The proposed addition has design elements, materials, and scale found in the neighborhood and meet the intent of the design review findings.

Privacy

The following analysis will discuss the privacy impacts on left (north) side elevation plan and rear (east) elevation plan as the other two elevations are facing public right-of-way that do not result in any privacy invasions.

On the left elevation, five windows are proposed at the second floor, including: four small-sized windows and one medium-sized, laundry room window. The four small windows will have the same sill height of five feet and six inches. The medium-sized window will have a sill height of four feet and six inches.

The privacy impact to the interior side neighboring property is found very minimal due to all windows that designed with a minimum sill height of four feet and six inches which are considered by the Design Review Commissioners as an acceptable practice to minimize privacy impact.

Along the rear second story elevation, there are five windows proposed: one small window with a sill height of three feet and six inches, three medium sized windows with the same sill height of two feet and six inches, and one large window with a sill height of three feet. Staff found the design is consistent with the Residential Design Guidelines to minimize the privacy impact from the following aspects:

- The placement of the second story portion is located more than 42 feet away from the rear property line that is further than the required 25-foot rear setback, and
- New screening vegetation and trees will be planted along the rear property line to further mitigate the privacy impact. The details of the proposed evergreen plants will be provided in the Landscaping and Trees section of the staff report.

Landscaping and Trees

The site plans (Sheet A1.0) shows there are eight trees, including five street trees and three onsite trees currently exist within the proximity of the subject site and further assessed by the provided arborist report (Attachment B). One on-site protected tree 52-inch Coast Redwood (No. 1) is located in the rear yard, and it will be removed due to its unrecoverable condition caused by the fire damage in 2020. Two onsite protected trees (Nos. 6, and 7) will be retained and protected during the construction. Four street trees are also proposed for removal; but they are not part of the design review application. As a condition of approval, the applicant shall obtain approval to remove the three trees (Nos. 3 to 5) in the public right-of-way from the Public Works Department. The subject arborist, Edwin E. Stirtz (ISA License #WE-0510A), assessed the proposed construction and provided tree protection recommendations.

A new landscaping plan is proposed including a number of evergreen screening vegetation and new trees.

The proposed screening vegetation will be 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
Left property line	Saratoga Laurel (Laurus noblis)	5	15 gallons	10'-15' tall x 20'-35' wide
Rear property line	Saratoga Laurel (Laurus noblis)	4	15 gallons	10'-15' tall x 20'-35' wide
Rear property line	Feijoa (Acca Sellowiana)	6	24-inch box	10'-15' tall x 10'-15' wide

In addition to the evergreen screening plants, the landscape plan also includes three new trees with 36-in box in size, 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 nearby property owners on Hawthorne Avenue and South Gordon Way. The Notification Map is included in Attachment C.

The applicant was also dedicated to the community outreach for the subject project. On June 16, 2022, the applicant provided certified mail to the immediate neighborhood for early community awareness. After the application was deemed complete in December, the applicant sent out the second-round certified mail and posted the Notice of Development Proposal (Attachment D). On January 10, 2023, an online community meeting was also hosted for community engagement. The proof of all community outreach and a summary of the community meeting are attached to the staff report in Attachment E.

Cc: Adam Kates c/o SF21G, LLC., Property Owner
Aaron Hollister, Applicant

Attachments:

- A. Neighborhood Compatibility Worksheet
- B. Arborist Report
- C. Notification Map
- D. Pictures of Notice of Development Proposal
- E. Proof of Community Outreach
- F. Material Boards

FINDINGS

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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 new two-story residence complies with all provisions of this chapter;
- b. The height, elevations, and placement on the site of the proposed new house, 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 new house 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 new house has been designed to follow the natural contours of the site with minimal grading, minimum impervious cover, and maximum erosion protection.

CONDITIONS

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GENERAL

1. Expiration

The Design Review Approval will expire on February 1, 2025 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 20, 2023, except as may be modified by these conditions.

3. Protected Trees

Trees Nos. 1, 6, and 7 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 Community Development Director.

4. Tree Removal Approved

Tree No. 2 shown to be removed on plan Sheet A1.0 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. 3-5 and a non-protected tree that are located within the public right-of-way are not part of this design review approval. The removal and replacement of the four trees shall obtain the approval from the Public Works Department.

6. 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.

7. 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.

8. 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

9. Conditions of Approval

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

10. 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.

11. 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."

12. 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 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

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.

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. 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.

17. 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

18. Tree Protection

Tree protection fencing shall be installed around the driplines, or as required by the project arborist, of trees Nos. 1, 6, and 7 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.

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

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.

21. 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.

22. 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).