

Attn: City of Los Altos

I am writing to make a request regarding my property at 962 Acacia Ave. Just to remind you a bit about the property, it's a brand new building that we got our Certificate of Occupancy for on June 1, 2023.

The building includes two 2-story condominiums that take up the 2nd and 3rd floors and are each about 2000 square feet. On the first floor, we were told we needed to build a retail space, so that's what we did. It's a 600 sf commercial space facing Acacia Ave and has one designated parking space and one handicapped parking space.

The whole building became available to rent in June of last year, and we easily rented out the 2 residential units, but have gotten no inquiries on the commercial unit. We've listed it on loopnet, had several realtors try to rent it for us, and done personal door knocking and phone calling and haven't been able to get it rented. It's not in a place that gets any kind of foot traffic, it's hard to find, and doesn't have great parking, so we haven't gotten a single inquiry.

Because of this I have several concerns. First and most obviously, I don't think it's safe or good for the neighborhood to have an empty unit there. I think in general it's always better to have spaces filled, just to lower vandalism and crime in an area. I'm sure all the neighbors would agree that they'd rather not have that unit empty. Second, I'd rather not be the owner of a completely vacant unit, and based on my experience so far I'm not sure if I will be able to rent it.

So, as I think of my alternatives, since I haven't been able to rent it as a commercial space, I'm thinking we should convert the space to residential. Residential has proven to rent easily in that area. And the 3 points I listed above for why it's not a good commercial unit actually are great benefits for a residential unit. And, I know Los Altos is looking for more affordable options for people to rent in the community. Even at market rates, because this would be a smaller unit, this would be a space that would be much more affordable to rent for anyone who works and wants to live in Los Altos. So, I think this would really help. And to make it even more attractive, we do have a commercial storage space attached behind this unit, that we could add into the reconstruction so we could make the unit an 800 sf unit. It's going to cost us a bit to remodel this area, but I think it could be a really good thing for everyone involved.

To make this happen, we are willing to remap the property since the current condo plan shows a commercial use on the ground floor, if the City is willing to allow for a residential use.

Additionally, based on what I understand about the zoning of the area, I believe that in section 14.40.030 of the zoning code, we would need to do a zoning modification. This would be a private party request (which I am requesting now) to do a zone text amendment to allow for a residential unit on the ground floor of my building. One way to do this is to maybe do a site specific zone amendment for my building only because the Commercial unit is not realistic for commercial viability. That way you don't need to worry about changing the code for all CN zones and all the implications of that. Another option might be to just write into the code an option to convert to residential any commercial space in the CN zones that are less than 1000sf.

You know much more about this than I do, so I'm of course open to any ideas or suggestions you may have.

My question is, would you like to consider allowing us to do this remodel, and what would you need from us to make it work the best for the Los Altos community? Please let me know your thoughts.

Warmly,
Moneeka