



DATE: MAY 3, 2023

AGENDA ITEM #3

TO: Nick Zornes, Zoning Administrator
FROM: Steve Golden, Senior Planner
SUBJECT: SC22-0026 – 705 Vista Grande Avenue

RECOMMENDATION

Approve design review application SC22-0026 for the construction of a new 3,827 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: 705 Vista Grande Avenue, on the northeast corner of Springer Road and Vista Grande Avenue
- Lot Size: 12,166 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 an existing one-story home and replacement with a new two-story home with 2,222 square feet on the first story and 1,522 square feet on the second story (see Attachment A – Project Plans). The proposed residence will maintain the front façade of the residence oriented towards Vista Grande Avenue, however, proposes to relocate the driveway on the opposite side of the lot closest to Springer Road. The residence is designed with 3:12 pitched roofs with mostly hipped roof structure forms except for a first-story gable over the covered porch entry and a small gable roof at second story on the Springer Road elevation. The project also incorporates two, second-story balconies. One balcony is accessed from the second story master bedroom area that faces Springer Road and is approximately five feet in depth. The other balcony is accessed from the second story family room facing towards the rear of the house, approximately 36 feet from the property line and is 3.5 feet in depth. Both balconies incorporate some sort of screen wall (at the sides) into the design. The project is utilizing high quality materials such as the clay tile stucco siding, stone veneer applied as a water table and exterior siding, wood trim, and aluminum clad windows, which are composed and integrated well into the overall architectural design of the residence.

The subject site has five existing trees on the property or have driplines that encroach within the property that are considered protected trees per the city’s Tree Protection Regulations (Chapter 11.08)

because their diameter is over 48 inches in circumference (Tree Nos. 1-4 and 18). Four of the trees are on the property (Tree Nos. 1-3 and 18) and are proposed to remain and one tree is off-site (Tree No. 4) and was determined to be removed as part of the design review approval for the adjacent parcel. An arborist assessed the conditions of the trees and provided recommended tree protection measures before, during and after construction. The arborist evaluated the condition of Tree Nos. 1-3 and determined they were in poor to fair condition, but as noted, the plan shows to preserve them. Aside from the existing trees to remain, the applicant proposes to plant six additional trees including four Chinese Pistache and two Strawberry trees. These are proposed to also serve as landscape screening between properties. In addition to the trees, the conceptual landscape plan includes a variety of plantings including evergreen plantings, shrubs, and groundcover type of plants.

Previous Site Applications

The subject property is part of a two-lot subdivision that was approved by the City Council on April 26, 2022. A final map is currently being reviewed by the city and will be required to be recorded prior to the issuance of building permits for the proposed project (see Condition #19). Prior to recordation of the final map, the existing residence will be required to be demolished.

ANALYSIS

Design Review

The proposed home complies with the R1-10 district development standards found in Los Altos Municipal Code (LAMC) Chapter 14.06, as demonstrated by the following table:

	Existing	Proposed	Allowed/Required
COVERAGE:	3,126 square feet	3,634 square feet	3,650 square feet
FLOOR AREA:			
1st Floor	3,126 square feet	2,222 square feet	
2nd Floor	-	1,522 square feet	
Total	3,126 square feet	3,827 square feet	3,961 square feet
SETBACKS:			
Front	43.5 feet	25 feet	25 feet
Rear	73.75 feet	29.6 feet	25 feet
Right side(1 st /2 nd)	21.1 feet	20 feet/25 feet	20 feet (Exterior)
Left side (1 st /2 nd)	37.5 feet	30.3 feet/30.3 feet	10 feet/17.5 feet
HEIGHT:	14 feet	25.5 feet	27 feet

Although the front door is oriented to Vista Grande Avenue, for the purposes of the analysis and per the definition of front lot line in the Los Altos Zoning Code, the front lot line/front yard is abutting Springer Road.

The project also includes a 757 square-foot attached accessory dwelling unit (ADU) at the first story, which is not included in the floor area total in the above table per state law and city ordinance per

Chapter 14.14 of the Municipal Code and the ADU is not to be considered in the design review approval.

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. According to the design guidelines, in “Consistent Character Neighborhoods”, good neighbor design has design elements, material, and scale found within the neighborhood and sizes that are not significantly larger than other homes in the neighborhood. The emphasis should be on designs that "fit in" and lessen abrupt changes. Sheets A-1.001 and A-1.002 show the proposed residence in relation to the surrounding properties and structures and the streetscape elevations of surrounding residences. The proposed project has consistent characteristics as the existing surrounding neighborhood because incorporates hipped roof forms and exterior stucco and stone materials found in other residences. The proposed wall plate heights of the first story is 9.5 feet and the second story is 8.5 feet, which relates well to the scale of the surrounding residences and is compatible with Consistent Character Neighborhood characteristics.

The design guidelines and design review findings also require designs to minimize the bulk of the structure. The lower pitched roof structures do not substantially add to the bulk of the structure. The design of first story roof form and horizontal eave line breaks up the wall plane and massing between the first and second stories. The first story also includes a stone veneer water table which also visually breaks down the massing of the first story. Building articulation and the roof forms at the second story further breaks down the massing into smaller portions which helps to minimize the bulkiness of the structure as suggested in the Residential Design Guidelines.

Existing trees to remain on site and new tree plantings are proposed to serve as privacy screening between properties. The new or rebuilt landscaping would need to satisfy the Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance requirements since it exceeds the 500 square-foot landscaping threshold for new residences and is conditioned as such.

Overall, the project complies with the development standards in the R1-10 zoning district, is an appropriate design within this Consistent Character Neighborhood setting, would maintain an appropriate relationship to the adjacent structures, minimizes excessive bulk, and protects trees insofar as practical.

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 CORRESPONDENCE

A public meeting notice was posted on the property, mailed to 12 property owners in the immediate vicinity, and published in the Town Crier. The applicant also posted the public notice sign (24” x 36”) in conformance with the Planning Division posting requirements.

The applicant sent out letters to 18 neighbors in the immediate area by certified mail. No concerns were identified by the neighbors.

Attachment:

A. Project Plans

Cc: Burhan Baba, Livio, Applicant/Designer
Sandesh and Shikha Tawari, 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 residence complies with all provision 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, and height maximums as well as the 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 and will be in keeping with the general appearance of neighboring developed areas because the trees on the property protected by city ordinance are proposed to remain and there will not be any substantial grade changes nor soil removal to construct the residence. The proposed landscaping including new trees, shrubs, and ground cover will be in keeping with the surrounding neighborhood.
- 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 low scale, horizontal eave lines, a stone veneer water table, building articulation, and roof forms that break up the massing and minimize 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. The design incorporates clay tile roof material, stucco exterior siding, aluminum clad wood windows, and window and door trim that are high quality and architecturally integrated. The size and scale of the proposed residence based on the overall building height and height of each story relates well with the neighborhood.
- F. The proposed residence 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

SC22-0026 705 Vista Grande Avenue

GENERAL

1. Expiration

The Design Review Approval will expire on May 3, 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 February 21, 2023 except as may be modified by these conditions.

3. Building Design Revisions

- a. The second story railings shall be increased to a minimum of 42 inches in height, consistent with the California Building Code.
- b. A high-quality exterior window and door trim material shall be installed which include, but are not limited to wood trim, cellular PVC trim, cast stone, and stone. Stucco over a foam substrate (or other substrate) is not considered a high-quality finish material and shall not be used.

4. 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.

5. Protected Trees

Tree Nos. 1-3 and 18 as shown on Sheet A-2.001 shall be protected under this application and cannot be removed without a tree removal permit from the Development Services Director. The tree protection plan outlined in the arborist report (Kielty Arborist Services LLC, dated 6/25/21) shall be incorporated into the building permit plans and implemented before and during construction.

6. 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.

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. Underground Utility and Fire Sprinkler Requirements

New residences 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.

9. 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

10. 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.

11. 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.

12. Tree Protection Note

On the grading plan and/or the site plan, show all tree/landscape 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.”

13. 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.

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. Outdoor Condensing Units

The plans shall show the location of any outdoor condensing unit(s) on the site plan including the model number of the unit(s) and nominal size of the unit. The Applicant shall provide the manufacturer’s specifications showing the sound rating for each unit. The condensing 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.

16. Storm Water Management

The Plans shall 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.).

17. 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.

18. Underground Utility Location

The Plans shall 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.

PRIOR TO ISSUANCE OF BUILDING OR DEMOLITION PERMIT

19. Final Map Recordation

Prior to the issuance of the building permit, the final map for the 2-lot subdivision (Application No. TM21-0002) creating the subject parcel for the approved project shall be recorded.

20. Tree Protection

Tree protection shall be installed around the dripline(s) of the trees as shown on the site plan approved with the building permit plans. 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.

21. 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

22. 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.

23. 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).