



TO: Nick Zornes, Zoning Administrator
FROM: Nazaneen Healy, Associate Planner
SUBJECT: SC23-0002 – 925 Echo Drive

RECOMMENDATION

Approve design review application SC23-0002 for the construction of a new approximately 3,914 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: 925 Echo Drive, on the east side of Echo Drive between Avon Way and Covington Road
- Lot Size: 13,011 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 removal of an existing one-story home and replacement with a new two-story home (see Attachment A – Project Plans). The proposed home incorporates traditional gabled and hipped roof forms as well as exterior materials that include a composition shingle roof, stucco exterior finish with stone veneer, and wood clad windows and trim. The proposed home is situated on the lot similar to the existing home and the proposed site improvements include a circular driveway in the front yard that also leads to the attached garage, as well as new landscaping and landscape features in the front and rear yards. Nine existing trees (four of which are protected) will remain and one 7-inch diameter non-protected tree is proposed for removal.

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
LOT COVERAGE:	1,953 square feet	3,039 square feet	3,903 square feet
FLOOR AREA:			
First floor	1,870 square feet	2,686 square feet	4,051 square feet
Second floor	--	1,228 square feet	
Total	1,870 square feet	3,914 square feet	
SETBACKS:			
Front	34.5 feet	40 feet	25 feet
Rear	78 feet	39.5 feet	25 feet
Right side (1 st /2 nd)	9.5 feet/--	14.4 feet/20.8 feet	10 feet/17.5 feet
Left side (1 st /2 nd)	9.5 feet/--	10 feet/19.1 feet	10 feet/17.5 feet
HEIGHT:	15 feet	24.7 feet	27 feet

The proposed home generally complies with the Single-Family Residential Design Guidelines by minimizing bulk by incorporating a greater front setback than required, inseting the second story, and proposing a lower height than the maximum, as well as preserving mature landscape features by retaining all but one of the existing trees. However, Section 5.6 (House, Garage, and Driveway Placement) of the Design Guidelines calls for the following:

1. Orient the front of the house parallel with the street.
2. Avoid making the garage the focal point of the house.
3. Reduce the amount of front yard setback area devoted to vehicular parking to allow for more landscaping.

The proposed design locates the attached garage several feet in front of the home, angles the home away from the street, and maximizes the front yard paving, contrary to the Design Guidelines above. Therefore Condition of Approval No. 4 requires replacement of the proposed circular driveway with a single driveway leading to the garage and additional tree and shrub plantings and Condition of Approval No. 5 requires implementation of at least one of the methods listed in Section 5.6 of the Design Guidelines under Garage Placement for making the garage less prominent such as incorporating a hipped roof, adding a trellis, and/or inseting the garage door back from the face of the garage at least one foot.

In addition, Section 5.3 of the Design Guidelines calls for careful design to prevent privacy impacts from second story sightlines. To minimize potential privacy impacts from the proposed rear balcony and second story south side window, Condition of Approval No. 6 requires evergreen tree plantings to be maintained along the rear and south side property lines. As conditioned, the project complies with the Single-Family Residential Design Guidelines.

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 contacted 10 neighbors in the immediate area and obtained signatures from seven of them acknowledging receipt of the plans. No comments from neighbors have been received by staff as of the writing of this report.

Attachment:

A. Project Plans

Cc: Chapman Design Associates, Applicant
Navpreet & Rohan Puri, Property Owners

FINDINGS

SC23-0002 – 925 Echo Drive

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, 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 because the existing site is relatively level and does not require substantial grading and does not involve the removal of soil. Tree removal is minimized, with nine existing trees remaining on site and the removal of one existing 7-inch diameter, non-protected tree.
- D. The orientation of the proposed new house in relation to the immediate neighborhood will minimize excessive bulk because the proposed home provides a front setback ranging from 40 to 50 feet where 25 feet is the minimum and a second floor inset several feet from the first floor on the front and sides. In addition, the home's height is proposed at 25 feet where 27 feet is the maximum.
- 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 on the same project site. 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 consistent and compatible features including a stucco exterior, stone veneer, columns, and eave details.
- 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 proposed grading provides for drainage away from the home and away from adjacent properties and conforms to existing grades along the property lines. Condition of Approval No. 4 requires replacement of the proposed circular driveway with additional landscape, which will reduce the amount of impervious coverage on site.

CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL

SC23-0002 – 925 Echo Drive

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 March 30, 2023, except as may be modified by these conditions.

3. **Protected Trees**

Trees Nos. 1,2, 5, and 6 shall be protected under this application and cannot be removed without a tree removal permit from the Development Services Director.

4. **Driveway**

The plans shall be revised to replace the proposed circular driveway with a single driveway leading to the garage and additional tree and shrub plantings.

5. **Garage**

The plans shall be revised to implement at least one of the methods listed in Section 5.6 of the Single-Family Residential Design Guidelines under Garage Placement for making the garage less prominent such as incorporating a hipped roof, adding a trellis, and/or inseting the garage door back from the face of the garage at least one foot.

6. **Landscape Screening**

The plans shall be revised to incorporate new evergreen tree plantings along the rear and south side property lines unless the adjacent property owner indicates no new trees are necessary to minimize privacy impacts. The existing tree plantings along the rear and south side shall be maintained and replaced if removed.

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. **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.

9. **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.

10. **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.

11. 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

12. 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.

13. 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.

14. 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."

15. 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.

16. 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.

17. 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.

18. 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.

19. Air Conditioners

The plans shall 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. The Applicant shall 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.

20. 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

21. Tree Protection

Tree protection fencing shall be installed around the driplines, or as required by the project arborist, of trees Nos. 1-5, and 7-10 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 with 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 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.

24. 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).