

DATE: MAY 3, 2023

AGENDA ITEM #2



TO: Nick Zornes, Zoning Administrator

FROM: Jia Liu, Associate Planner

SUBJECT: SC22-0017 – 1219 Portland Avenue

RECOMMENDATION

Approve design review application SC22-0017 for the construction of a new approximately 3,938 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: 1219 Portland Avenue, on north side of Portland Avenue between Miramonte Avenue and Grant Road
- Lot Size: 11,891 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 the existing single-story house and replacement with a new two-story house (see Attachment A – Project Plans). The new residence is designed in a modern ranch architectural style, incorporating high-quality materials including flat concrete tile roof, cement plaster finish with stone veneer and Hardie board siding accents, fiberglass framed windows and wood doors.

The subject property is a regular rectangular lot, measuring approximately 92.18 feet in width and 129 feet in depth. A 20-foot driveway easement is located to the west side through an adjoining parcel to the north to give another vehicle access. While the new house will slightly expand into the front yard compared to the existing house’s footprint, the vehicle access will remain unchanged through the driveway easement in order to protect the existing protected trees in the front yard. The overall height of the proposed residence is 25.75 feet, which is consistent with the maximum height of 27 feet allowed in the R1-10 zoning district.

When the application was submitted, there were a total of 21 trees, including seven protected trees, located within the proximity of the subject site. One of the protected trees, a 36-inch Coast Live Oak, was located in the front yard and was removed under a separate tree removal permit in 2022 due to severe decline and hazardous conditions. However, the remaining seven protected trees will be preserved with the proposed

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project. As 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, and proposed landscaping is designed to meet the intent of these regulations.

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:	2,286 square feet	3,562 square feet	3,567 square feet
FLOOR AREA:			
First floor	2,266 square feet	2,433 square feet	3,939 square feet
Second floor	-- square feet	1,505 square feet	
Total	2,266 square feet	3,938 square feet	
SETBACKS:			
Front	58.83 feet	46.50 feet	25 feet
Rear	25.42 feet	25.00 feet	25 feet
Right side (1 st /2 nd)	8.25 feet/-- feet	11.50 feet/24.5 feet	10 feet/17.5 feet
Left side (1 st /2 nd)	10 feet/-- feet	10 feet/22 feet	10 feet/17.5 feet
HEIGHT:	14.06 feet	25.75 feet	27 feet

The proposed home generally complies with the Single-Family Residential Design Guidelines because it exhibits an appropriate design with elements, materials, scale, and landscaping that are consistent with the neighborhood.

The surrounding neighborhood is considered a Diverse Character Neighborhood according to the Design Guidelines. The immediate vicinity comprises a mix of one-story and two-story houses, with notable two-story homes located at 1195, 1209, 1225, and 1235 Portland Avenue, 1300 and 1305 Carvo Court, as well as 1305 Sunrise Court. The homes in the neighborhood exhibit some variation in front setback patterns, living area sizes, massing, and roof forms due to past renovations and upgrades. The horizontal eave lines at the first story typically range from approximately eight to twelve feet, while those at the second story are approximately eight to nine feet in height. Many of the homes feature attached garages in the front yard facing the street. Various roofing materials, such as wood shakes, composition shingle, and tiles, are utilized in the area, while exterior materials commonly include stucco, brick, and wood siding, often with accents of stone veneer or brick. Front landscapes in the neighborhood are typically characterized by mature street trees on most properties, accompanied by dense screening shrubs further in.

The front elevation of the proposed two-story house is designed to be compatible with the surrounding neighborhood, incorporating hipped roof forms, articulated architectural massing on both the first and second floors, a horizontal eave line, and a five-foot projected entry porch with high-quality materials that are integrated into the overall architectural design of the residence, creating a cohesive look that

relates well to the surrounding neighborhood.

With regard to the massing, the first story of the proposed residence will feature two different plate heights, with a main plate height of ten feet for the main house and a nine-foot plate height for the ADU on the right side. The second story has a uniform plate height of eight feet and six inches. The massing of the new residence is in line with the immediate neighborhood, taking into consideration that the adjoining property at 1209 Portland Avenue presents a bulkier massing at the first story with a plate height estimated to be between 11 and 12 feet. Furthermore, the extensive front setback of 45 feet, along with the presence of dense evergreen trees in the front yard, helps to mitigate the perceived massing of the ten-foot plate height.

The proposed landscaping includes a number of evergreen screening vegetation and new trees along the perimeter of the site which will be integrated with existing vegetation to remain.

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, mailed to nine 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 11 neighbors in the immediate area for the community outreach. No comments from neighbors have been received by staff as of the writing of this report.

Attachment:

- A. Project Plans

Cc: Mike Ma, Property Owner and Applicant

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, 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 seven protected trees remaining on site.
- 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 25.75 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 flat concrete tile roof, cement plaster finish with stone veneer and Hardie board siding accents, fiberglass framed windows and wood doors.
- 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.

CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL

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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 29, 2023, except as may be modified by these conditions.

3. **Protected Trees**

Trees Nos. 1-4 and 7-9 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. **Bay Window Interior Height**

Three bay windows labeled as Z1, Z2, & Z3 on Sheet A2.4 shall have an interior height, measured from the top of the framed window seat to the ceiling, less than five feet for the life of the project.

5. **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.

6. **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.

7. **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

8. **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 be found.

9. **Tree Protection Note**

On the grading plan and/or the site plan, show all tree protection fencing and add the following note:

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“All tree protection fencing shall be chain link and a minimum of five feet in height with posts driven into the ground.”

10. 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.

11. 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.

12. 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.

13. 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.

14. 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.

15. 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.

16. 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.).

17. Off-Haul Excavated Soil

The grading plan shall show specific grading cut and/or fill quantities. Cross section details showing the existing and proposed grading through at least two perpendicular portions of the site or more shall be provided to fully characterize the site. A note on the grading plans should state that all excess dirt shall be off-hauled from the site and shall not be used as fill material unless approved by the Building and Planning Divisions.

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. 1-4 and 7-9 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 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.

21. 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).