



TO: Nick Zornes, Zoning Administrator

FROM: Sean Gallegos, Senior Planner

SUBJECT: SC24-0001 – 284 Alvarado Avenue

RECOMMENDATION

Approve design review application SC24-0001 for the construction of a new 3,540 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: 284 Alvarado Avenue, located on the south side of Alvarado Avenue between Los Ninos Way and Panchita Way
- Lot Size: 10,014 square feet
- General Plan Designation: Single-Family, Medium Lot (SF4)
- Zoning Designation: R1-10
- Current Site Conditions: One-story house

The proposed project includes the demolition of the existing single-story house and replacement with a new 3,540 square-foot two-story house (see Attachment A – Project Plans). The new residence is designed in a traditional architectural style with exterior materials that include a composition shingle roof, shingle exterior finish with wood trims, aluminum clad wood framed windows and wood doors.

The subject property is a corner lot in a rectangular shape, measuring approximately 85 feet in width and 120 feet in depth. While the new house will expand further into the south yard compared to the existing house’s footprint, the orientation of the house will remain the same as the existing house with its front entry oriented towards Alvarado Avenue. The new driveway will now take access from Los Ninos but is proposed more than 45 feet from the corner of Alvarado Avenue and Los Ninos Way to prevent potential conflicts.

On the property, there are three trees in total, consisting of one protected Privot tree (No. 10), one unprotected apricot tree (No. 9), and one unprotected Privot tree (No. 9). All protected trees, including the Privot tree (No. 10), will be maintained during any future construction. However, the unprotected tree (No. 7) situated in the rear yard and the unprotected tree (No. 9) on the left side yard are scheduled for removal.

Beyond the property boundaries, there are six trees either within the public right-of-way or on adjacent properties, but not within the site itself. Among these, three trees—an oak tree (No. 1), an Elm tree (No. 5), and an Ash tree (No. 6)—are protected and located in the public right-of-way. Additionally, there is a protected redwood tree (No. 8) at 564 Los Ninos Way, slated for preservation. Conversely, the two unprotected trees (Nos. 2 and 3) in the right-of-way will be removed.

ANALYSIS

Design Review

The proposed house 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:	2,262 square feet	2,850 square feet	3,034 square feet
FLOOR AREA:	2,262 square feet		
1st Floor	-	2,310 square feet	
2nd Floor	2,262 square feet	1,230 square feet	
Total		3,540 square feet	3,540 square feet
SETBACKS:			
Front (Los Ninos)	24.75 feet	25 feet	25 feet
Rear	30 feet	26 feet	25 feet
Right side (Alvarado Ave)	14.58 feet/-	17.5 feet/22.5 feet	17 feet/17 feet
Left side (1 st /2 nd)	25.33 feet/-	16.7 feet/ 17.7 feet	10 feet/17.5 feet
HEIGHT:	17.33 feet	24.5 feet	27 feet

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. The subject property is located in a Diverse Character Neighborhood, as defined in the Design Guidelines. The houses in the Alvarado Avenue neighborhood are a mixture of one- and two-story structures with a variety of architectural styles, materials, and sizes. The landscape along Alvarado Avenue is varied with no distinct street tree pattern.

For a Diverse Character neighborhood, the guidelines recommend the incorporation of design elements, materials, and scales present in the area, while ensuring the design remains distinct. The proposed home 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 proposed residence presents an architectural design that complements its immediate surroundings, featuring a traditional two-story layout with design elements and materials harmonious with the existing houses and neighborhood. Notable features include gable and hipped roofs, a projecting front porch with columns, articulated massing, and a low-pitched roof, all contributing to its integration with the neighborhood while maintaining its own design integrity. The use of shingle

siding helps reduce the perceived bulkiness, while the choice of high-quality materials such as composition roof shingle, wood shingle siding, wood trim, aluminum-clad wood windows and doors, ensures compatibility with the surrounding area.

The proposed project aligns closely with the Residential Design Guidelines, ensuring that it integrates seamlessly into the neighborhood without standing out conspicuously. It carefully considers the scale and character of the surrounding area by incorporating similar massing. By utilizing a low-pitched roof and roof form, the perceived bulk of the structure is minimized. The second story is softened due to being recessed into the roof form and centered over the first-story massing at the front, sides and rear of the house. The design effectively breaks up the wall plane with the first-story roof form and horizontal eave line, while the articulation and roof forms of the second story simultaneously create visual interest and reduce the overall bulkiness of the building.

The proposed landscaping includes approximately ten new trees and evergreen screening vegetation and new trees along the perimeter of the site which will be integrated with existing vegetation to remain. Due to the evergreen screening not providing screening along the southwest corner, staff recommends Condition No. 3 to require that the three Woodwardia plants at the southwest corner of the property be replaced with 24-inch box evergreen trees to fill-in the unscreened portions of the left (south) and rear (west) property lines to minimize privacy impacts.

The proposed landscaping plan includes ten new trees and evergreen screening vegetation, with the evergreen screening strategically positioned along the sides and rear of the site. However, staff determined the evergreen screening fails to adequately screen the southwest corner of the property. Therefore, it is recommended, as per Condition No. 3, that three Woodwardia plants situated at the southwest corner be replaced with 24-inch box evergreen trees. The landscaping plan will comply with the Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance, which requires water-efficient landscaping for new residences with landscaping over 500 square feet.

The proposed project meets the development standards in the R1-10 zoning district and complies with the Single-Family Residential Design Guidelines because it is compatible with the character of the neighborhood as the design maintains an appropriate relationship with adjacent structures, ensuring compatibility with neighboring structures, reducing perceived bulk, and prioritizing the preservation of existing trees.

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 property owners within 300 feet of the subject site, and published in the Town Crier newspaper. 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 nine neighbors in the immediate area by certified mail. At the time of compiling this report, the staff has received feedback from five neighbors in response. Among these, four letters voiced opposition to the project, highlighting concerns about its two-story design, potential visual impact as an eyesore, and apprehensions regarding privacy in relation to the new structure's height. Conversely, one letter expressed support for the project, (see Attachment B – Public Correspondence).

Attachment:

- A. Project Plans
- B. Public Correspondence

Cc: Steve Collom, Applicant/Architect
Ji Hong and Lin Dang, Owners

FINDINGS

SC24-0001 - 284 Alvarado Avenue

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 house maintains a similar finished floor elevation and orientation on the lot as the existing house and complies with the allowable floor area, lot coverage, height maximums, and 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 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. A total of 10 trees, comprising 2 protected trees, are situated on or near the subject site, with all protected trees slated for preservation and maintenance during future construction, while two unprotected trees in the front yard and two in the rear yard are set for removal. The proposed landscaping including new trees, shrubs, and ground cover will be in compliance with the Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance.
- D. The orientation of the proposed new house in relation to the immediate neighborhood will minimize excessive bulk because the proposed structure incorporates architectural design features such as low scale, horizontal eave lines, building articulation, and roof forms that break up the massing and minimize excessive bulk.
- E. General architectural considerations, including the size and scale, the architectural relationship with the site and new house, 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 house meets the floor area, lot coverage, and height limitations specified in LAMC Chapter 14.06, and its size and scale harmonize with the neighborhood. This is achieved through a combination of a low-pitched roof, horizontal eave lines on both the first and second stories, segmented massing, and a height that avoids excessive bulkiness. Additionally, the project integrates consistent and compatible features such as composition shingle, wood shingle siding, wood trim, aluminum-clad wood windows and doors, and wood trim.
- F. The proposed new house has been designed to follow the natural contours of the site with minimal grading, minimal impervious cover and maximum erosion protection because the 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

SC24-0001 284 Alvarado Avenue

GENERAL

1. Expiration

The Design Review Approval will expire on April 3, 2026, 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 13, 2024, except as may be modified by these conditions. The scope of work is limited to that shown on the plans and may not exceed rebuilding 50 percent of the existing floor area of the structure.

3. Building Design/Plan Modifications: The following modifications shall be made to the architectural design, building materials, colors, landscaping, and/or other site or building design details shall be shown on building permit drawings:

- a. The three Woodwardia plants at the southwest corner of the property shall be replaced with 24-inch box evergreen trees to fill-in unscreened portions of the left (south) and rear (west) property lines to minimize privacy impacts

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

The existing trees shall be protected under this application and cannot be removed without a tree removal permit from the Development Services Director.

6. 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.

7. 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

8. 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.

9. Swimming Pool, Water Feature, and Outdoor Kitchen

The proposed pool and associated equipment, water feature, and/or outdoor kitchen require a separate building permit and are subject to the City’s standards pursuant to Section 14.06.120 and Chapter 14.15.

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 be found.

13. 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.”

14. 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.

15. 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.

16. 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.

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 driplines of all protected trees unless approved by the project arborist and the Planning Division.

19. Mechanical Equipment

Prior to issuance of a building permit, the applicant shall show the location of any mechanical equipment and demonstrate compliance with the requirements of Chapter 11.14 (Mechanical Equipment) and Chapter 6.16 (Noise Control) of the Los Altos City Code.

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, 6, 8 and 10 as shown on Sheet A1. 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).