



**TO:** Nick Zornes, Zoning Administrator  
**FROM:** Sean Gallegos, Senior Planner  
**SUBJECT:** SC23-0014 – 370 Chamisal Avenue

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## **RECOMMENDATION**

Approve design review application SC23-0014 for the construction of first and second-story additions to an existing one-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 15301 (“Existing Facilities”).

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Project Description**

- **Project Location:** 370 Chamisal Avenue, on the south side of Chamisal Avenue between Los Altos Avenue and Alta Vista Avenue
- **Lot Size:** 12,632 square feet
- **General Plan Designation:** Single-Family, Medium Lot (SF4)
- **Zoning Designation:** R1-10
- **Current Site Conditions:** One-story house

The proposed project includes construction of a 246 square-foot first story and 792 square-foot second-story addition to an existing one-story house (see Attachment A – Project Plans).

The existing house has a traditional Ranch architectural style with hipped roof forms, low-scaled forms and simple details. The design of the addition incorporates elements of a ranch house, with its simplistic massing, practical aesthetic, and stripped-down details. The project design materials include composition shingle roof, brick and stucco siding, as well as fiberglass-framed windows and doors.

## **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
<b>COVERAGE:</b>	2,939 square feet	3,185 square feet	3,790 square feet
<b>FLOOR AREA:</b>	2,876square feet		
1st Floor	-	3,122 square feet	
2nd Floor	2,876 square feet	792 square feet	
Total		3,914 square feet	4,013 square feet
<b>SETBACKS:</b>			
Front	25.3 feet	25.3 feet	25 feet
Rear	62.6 feet	62.6 feet	25 feet
Right side (1 <sup>st</sup> /2 <sup>nd</sup> )	10.2 feet/-	10.2 feet/18.6 feet	10 feet/17.5 feet
Left side (1 <sup>st</sup> /2 <sup>nd</sup> )	9.6 feet/-	9.6 feet/ 21.8 feet	10 feet/17.5 feet
<b>HEIGHT:</b>	15 feet	22.5 feet	27 feet

The subject property has a nonconforming first story left side yard setbacks of 9.6 feet, where 10 feet is required in the R1-10 District. Since the proposed addition is maintaining over 50 percent of the existing house, the nonconforming setbacks are allowed to be maintained.

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. 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 current residence has a Ranch architectural style, characterized by hipped and gable roof forms, modest scales, and understated details. This hipped roof form and facade have been retained with the addition to blend with the original one-story design. The house’s massing, with its hipped and gable roofs also mirrors the design of neighboring houses. The proposed additions seek to preserve the traditional brick and stucco siding—a rustic material fitting the architectural style. The design materials chosen encompass composition shingle roof, brick and stucco siding, as well as fiberglass-framed windows and doors. Collectively, these materials resonate with the rustic charm of the vicinity and align with the neighborhood's character. A comprehensive material board for the project can be found in the attached project plans.

The project is designed to be compatible with the scale and bulk of surrounding houses. The lower-scale, 246 square feet first story mass is located along the rear (south) side of the residence, and the 792 square-foot second story addition is located at the center of the roof behind the primary ridgeline. The design of the second story effectively breaks up its massing to create a more varied and aesthetically pleasing facade. By positioning an 18.5-foot-wide section of the second story directly behind the primary ridgeline and setting back a 22.5-foot-wide section 15.5 feet from the ridgeline, it introduces depth and layering. This layering breaks the monotony and avoids a boxy appearance, creating visual interest and reducing the perception of bulk.

The proposed two-story house, standing at 22.5 feet, is not only 4.5 feet below the permitted 27-foot height but also aligns with the 17 to 20-foot structures in the neighborhood. Its low-pitched roof, combined with the first- and second-story horizontal eave lines and the building's articulation,

segments the massing, offering visual appeal and reducing perceived bulk. This design is both well-proportioned and fitting for the Diverse Character Neighborhood context.

The subject property contains 19 trees, four of which are classified as protected under the City's Tree Protection Regulations. The proposed project plans to retain 18 of these trees, supported by an arborist report indicating no expected negative impacts from the development. Only one non-protected Bay Laurel tree will be removed. While specific tree protection guidelines and restrictions are recommended for the protected trees, their preservation aligns with the regulations and ensures a harmonious balance between the property's landscape aesthetics and safety considerations. By adhering to these measures, the project demonstrates a commitment to complying with the City's Tree Protection Regulations.

If new or renovated landscaping surpasses the 2,500 square-foot threshold for rehabilitated landscaping, it must adhere to the Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance, as outlined in Condition of Approval No. 6. Overall, the existing and proposed landscaping meets the intent of the City's landscape regulations and street tree guidelines.

The proposed project aligns with the R1-10 zoning district's development standards and adheres to the Single-Family Residential Design Guidelines. Its design harmoniously integrates with the design composition, 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 15301 ("Existing Facilities") of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) because it involves an addition to an existing single-family residence.

## **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 ten neighbors in the immediate area by certified mail. No comments from neighbors have been received by staff as of the writing of this report.

Attachment:

A. Project Plans

Cc: Sahil Sahni and Sonia Sahni, Applicant/Owners  
Ragliaxmi Guhagarkar, Designer

## FINDINGS

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With regard to the addition to the existing one-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 main or accessory structure or addition, 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, 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 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 addition. The proposed landscaping including new trees, shrubs, and ground cover will be in keeping with the surrounding neighborhood.
- D. The orientation of the proposed main or accessory structure or addition 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 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 design retains the existing durable, high-quality and architecturally composition shingle roof, brick and stucco siding, as well as fiberglass-framed windows and doors. The size and scale of the residence also fits well with the neighborhood, based on low-pitched roof, combined with the first- and second-story horizontal eave lines and the building's articulation that segments the massing, and the overall building height and height of each story which offers visual appeal and reducing perceived bulk.
- F. The proposed structures have been designed to follow the natural contours of the site with minimal grading, minimal impervious cover and maximum erosion protection. The project follows the natural contours due to the site being relatively flat, and it maximizes erosion protection due to only expanding the footprint of the structure by 246 square feet, which minimize off-site stormwater drainage impacts.

## CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL

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### **GENERAL**

**1. Expiration**

The Design Review Approval will expire on November 15, 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 October 23, 2023 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. 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.

**4. Protected Trees**

Tree Nos. 1 to 14, and 17 to 19 as shown on Sheet A-1.3 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 (Savatree Consulting Group Arborists, dated 7/10/2023) shall be incorporated into the building permit plans and implemented before and during construction.

**5. 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.

**6. 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.

**7. 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.

**8. 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**

### **9. 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.

### **10. 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."

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

### **15. Mechanical Equipment**

The plans shall show the location of any mechanical equipment (including air conditioning units) on the site plan. All equipment must comply with the City's Noise Control Ordinance (Chapter 6.16) and Mechanical Equipment Ordinance (Chapter 11.14).

### **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.).

#### **PRIOR TO ISSUANCE OF BUILDING OR DEMOLITION PERMIT**

##### **17. Tree Protection**

Tree protection fencing shall be installed around the driplines, or as required by the project arborist, of trees Nos. 1 to 14, and 17 to 19 as shown on Sheet A-1.3. 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.

##### **18. 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**

##### **19. 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.

##### **20. 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).