

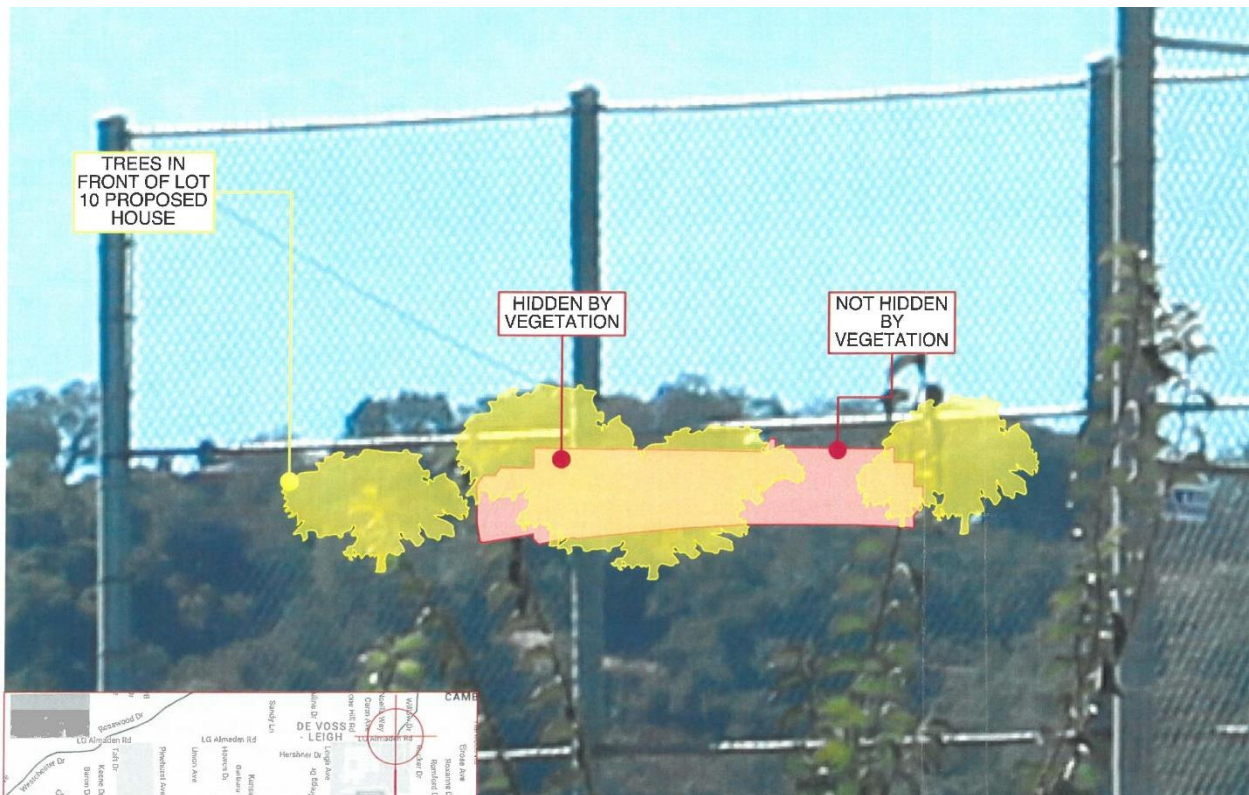
To: Town Council, meeting March 3, 2020
Re: 15365 Santella Court, S-18-052
From: Dave Weissman

I write in regard to my appeal of the project at the above address, focusing on the building elevation of this proposed house and the Town's recently revised Visibility Analysis Methodology. Per Los Gatos Town codes, if more than 24.5% of a building elevation is visible from a designated Town viewing area, then the house's height is limited to 18 feet.

I presented this issue at the Planning Commission hearing on January 8, 2020. Subsequently, from information supplied by the applicant, in response to a request I made following the Commission hearing, it appears that I underestimated the extent of the problem.

According to Town staff, 'Building Elevation', or just 'Elevation' is not defined anywhere in Town codes. But its definition is readily accessible in textbooks and on the Internet. Here are 2 identical, if differently worded alternatives: (1) An accurately scaled, 2-dimension drawing of any vertical surface of a building, or (2) A horizontal orthographic projection of a building on to a vertical plane, the vertical plane normally being parallel to one side of the building.

Staff supplied the applicant with an example of an elevation Visibility Analysis (see Figure 1) that was recently done on the adjacent Lot 10 house. Note the pink rectangular section in Fig. 1 – that is the building elevation of the proposed Lot 10 house from the same Viewing Platform that was used for the A&S application before you.



For the proposed house on Lot 10 in Figure 1, the relevant numbers were:

Visible Area: 606.6 SF

Total Area: 2,306.7 SF

This yields a value of 24.2% ($606.6 \div 2306.7$) SF Visible.

The applicant for the A&S application under this appeal, presented the following numbers to the Town and Commission:

Visible Area: 917 SF

Total Area: 3,825 SF

This yields a value of 23.97% ($917 \div 3825$) SF Visible, which is below the threshold of 24.5% and permits the house to be taller than 18 feet.

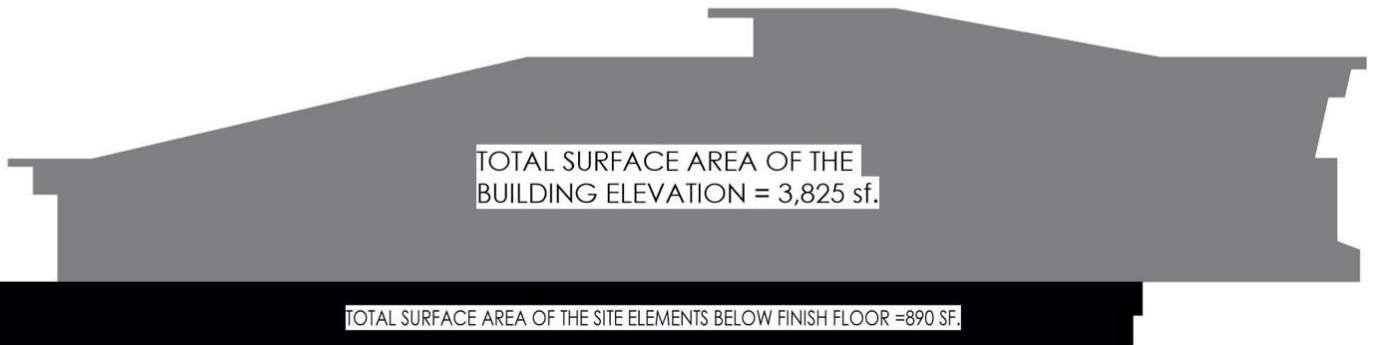
But the new information (see Figure 2), submitted by the applicant after the Commission meeting, shows that of the claimed 3,825 SF total building elevation area, only 2,935 SF are part of the 2-dimensional vertical surface of the proposed house. The remaining 890 SF are actually “site elements below finish floor.” The elevation of the proposed house is 2,935 SF, not 3,825 SF. As the applicant says in his justification letter of February 4th: “We then calculated the surface area of the building elevation *and all connected mass in front of the building (including site elements such as the outdoor seating area in front of the building).*” (my emphasis).

Using these corrected numbers:

Visible Area: 917 SF

Total Area: 2,935 SF

This yields a value of 31.24% ($917 \div 2935$) SF Visible, not 23.97% as claimed by the applicant. Therefore, this house should be limited to 18’ in height since it is above the threshold of 24.5%.



In that same letter of February 4th, the applicant continues “As shown for project at lot #10, we show all the building mass area that would be visible from the viewpoint. This logically includes the mass of the outdoor seating area, in front of the building and **all site elements** (applicant’s emphasis). In a similar scenario, a project with a large visible area of site elements, should be included, to give an accurate calculation of visible home.”

Previous building conventions and community standards, including those applied to adjacent Lot 10, do not include ‘site elements’ when calculating building elevation area. The applicant proposes that his standard be the new Town standard going forward. It is my understanding that the Town Council and staff are given the responsibility of making Town policy, not project applicants.

Now this may be a well-designed and environmentally friendly house, but at 22’ tall, it is in violation of our Town codes. I am arguing for the process here. The Planning Commission did not grant, nor did the applicant ask for, an exception to the Hillside Guidelines for height.

In fact, Commissioner Janoff expressed concern that the house’s roof extended above the ridgeline, as shown on the applicant’s own drawing (see red arrow in Figure 3):



And the Hillside Guidelines, page 15, limit building heights to 18 feet on significant ridgelines where the primary building projects above the physical ridgeline. (**Significant ridgelines** are defined on page 15 as any hill or mountain, the uppermost part of which forms the skyline visible from any established viewing platform or area. Significant ridgelines include

Aztec Ridge, the ridge between Blossom Hill Road and Shannon Road, but the HDS&G do not limit significant ridgelines to just these areas).

I request that my appeal be granted and that this A&S application be returned back to the Planning Commission with instructions to consider this new information regarding elevation area, and that the conventional definition of building elevation be applied here and to all future A&S applications.