



Letter of Justification

Project Address: 116 Vallecitos Way, Los Gatos, CA

Assessor's Parcel Number: 407-13-018

Zoning District: R-1:10

Applicant: Michelle Miner Design

Owner: Eyal & Annat Tokman

Introduction

This Letter of Justification accompanies the application for a new two-story single-family residence with an attached accessory dwelling unit (ADU) at 116 Vallecitos Way. The purpose of this letter is to demonstrate that the proposed project complies with the Town of Los Gatos's General Plan, Residential Design Guidelines, and zoning standards, and that it enhances the architectural quality and neighborhood character of the community.

a. Description of the Proposed Request

The proposal includes the demolition of an existing 2,150 square-foot single-story residence and detached 540 square-foot garage, and construction of a new two-story single-family residence with a fully integrated first-floor ADU and an attached two-car garage.

Project Summary:

- Main Residence: 1,495 sf (first floor) + 2,066 sf (second floor) = 3,561 sf total living area
- Attached Garage: 650 sf
- Attached ADU: 1,037 sf, located on the first floor with a private side entry
- Total Proposed Building Area: 5,248 sf
- Zoning Compliance: The project meets all required setbacks, height limits, and lot coverage standards for the R-1:10 zoning district

The home will serve as a private family residence with standard residential occupancy. No commercial activity is proposed.

Existing Structure and Justification for Demolition

The existing residence was constructed in 1962 and reflects the design limitations of that era. The structure is awkwardly sited on the lot, making expansion or functional remodeling impractical.

The detached garage, located behind the house, is accessed through a narrow, 95-foot-long driveway that provides no room to turn around—requiring vehicles to back all the way down the driveway to exit. This configuration is unsafe, inefficient, and does not meet modern residential standards.

The combination of the home's outdated construction, inefficient site layout, and constrained access justifies full replacement of the existing structures. The proposed project will correct these functional issues, improve circulation and safety, and create a code-compliant, energy-efficient residence that enhances the property's livability and long-term value.

Neighborhood Compatibility and Visual Context

Comprehensive 3D neighborhood studies—including both street-level and aerial perspectives—were prepared to evaluate the project's visual relationship to adjacent homes. These renderings confirm that the new residence integrates seamlessly into the existing cul-de-sac. The roof forms, proportions, and setbacks are consistent with the established neighborhood pattern, and the home maintains a respectful scale relative to nearby one- and two-story residences.

The site's position at the end of the court, combined with mature trees and proposed landscaping, minimizes visibility from the main approach and prevents the home from appearing dominant. Existing vegetation, new drought-tolerant planting, and softened roof transitions allow the design to blend naturally into its surroundings, reinforcing the cohesive and attractive character of the neighborhood.

b. Benefit to the Community

1. Architectural Enhancement:

The proposed Modern Spanish Revival design replaces an aging 1962 home with a new, thoughtfully detailed residence. High-quality materials—smooth stucco, clay tile roofing, decorative corbels, and black-clad windows—reflect the craftsmanship and design integrity valued in Los Gatos.

2. Neighborhood Compatibility:

Mature trees will be preserved where possible, and new landscaping will provide additional screening along both side property lines. Offsets in the upper floor and varied rooflines reduce bulk and massing, ensuring that the home fits comfortably within its setting.

3. Sustainability and Site Stewardship:

The property's flat topography allows construction with no grading, preserving the natural terrain and minimizing environmental disturbance. All new landscaping will comply with the Town's Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance.

4. Community Reinvestment:

The project represents a reinvestment in Los Gatos housing stock, aligning with the Town's goals of promoting high-quality residential design while integrating additional housing opportunities through the inclusion of an ADU.

c. Consistency with the General Plan

The project aligns with several goals and policies in the Town of Los Gatos General Plan:

- Land Use Goal LU-1: Maintain and enhance the existing character and quality of residential neighborhoods.
- Community Design Goal CD-1: Ensure new development contributes positively to the Town's visual

character and complements surrounding structures.

- Housing Goal H-2: Encourage housing diversity through well-integrated ADUs within existing residential neighborhoods.
- Environmental Sustainability Goal ENV-2: Preserve natural site conditions and reduce grading to protect the integrity of the landform.

The project achieves these goals through a contextually appropriate, well-articulated design that enhances both the property and the neighborhood.

d. Facts Justifying the Application

1. Neighborhood Compatibility:

The home's scale, articulation, and Spanish-style character are consistent with the surrounding neighborhood. Roofline variation and second-story setbacks ensure visual balance.

2. Architectural Quality and Detail:

- A stone accent wall at the arched entry porch adds warmth and texture.
- Deep eaves, decorative corbels, and varied roof planes provide rhythm and shadow.
- Vertically proportioned windows and a modest balcony add balance and interest.

3. Minimal Environmental Impact:

The project follows existing topography with no grading, minimizing disturbance and maintaining site character.

4. Preservation and Enhancement of Landscaping:

Mature trees will remain to soften views from the street and neighboring lots. New drought-tolerant plantings enhance visual appeal and sustainability.

5. Community Benefit:

The design replaces an outdated, inefficient structure with a modern, architecturally refined home that improves functionality, livability, and neighborhood quality.

Supplemental Height and Massing Justification

6. Justification of Building Height, Size, and Second-Floor Plate Height

The proposed residence has been carefully designed to balance livability, architectural quality, and neighborhood compatibility. While the home will be modestly larger than some immediate neighbors, its apparent scale has been deliberately reduced through design strategies consistent with the Town's Residential Design Guidelines.

Height Reduction and Upper Floor Design

In direct response to staff concerns, the second-floor plate height has been reduced from 10 feet to 9 feet. This reduction lowers the overall building height and significantly decreases the perceived vertical mass

of the home. A 9-foot plate height is typical of high-quality residential construction and allows for appropriate ceiling proportions while maintaining a lower roofline than originally proposed.

The reduced plate height results in:

- A lower ridgeline and overall building profile
- Less visible wall area above the first-floor roof plane
- Improved compatibility with adjacent one- and two-story homes
- Reduced shadowing and visual impact

Perceived Mass vs. Measured Size

Although the proposed home is approximately 500 square feet larger than the largest home in the immediate vicinity, the design minimizes bulk through stepped wall planes, recessed upper-floor elements, varied roof forms that break up the building mass, deep eaves with decorative corbels that create shadow and visual layering, and integration of the ADU into the first floor rather than a separate two-story volume. These elements ensure the home reads as a collection of smaller volumes.

Context of Neighborhood Development

The property is located at the end of a cul-de-sac, where surrounding homes already exhibit a mix of one- and two-story forms. The proposed roof heights and proportions are consistent with other Spanish and Mediterranean homes in the broader neighborhood. Mature trees and new landscaping further soften views and reduce visual prominence.

Need for a 9-Foot Second-Floor Plate Height

A 9-foot plate height is necessary to provide functional, code-compliant living spaces with proper window and door proportions, maintain the architectural integrity of the Spanish Revival style, and avoid a compressed appearance that would detract from the quality and longevity of the home. This plate height represents a design compromise that achieves livable interior space while responding to the Town's direction to reduce overall height.

Conclusion

This project has been carefully designed to reflect the Town of Los Gatos's vision for high-quality, context-sensitive residential design. It replaces an outdated home with a thoughtfully scaled and articulated residence that preserves natural features, complements the neighborhood, and enhances the community's architectural character.

We respectfully request approval of this application based on the project's consistency with the Town's General Plan, Design Guidelines, and zoning standards.

Sincerely,
Michelle Miner

Michelle Miner Design
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Below please find documentation that shows the neighborhood context in 3d and google views, Spanish and Mediterranean homes in the greater neighborhood as well as a view of 2 story homes in the neighborhood.

Neighborhood Context Views

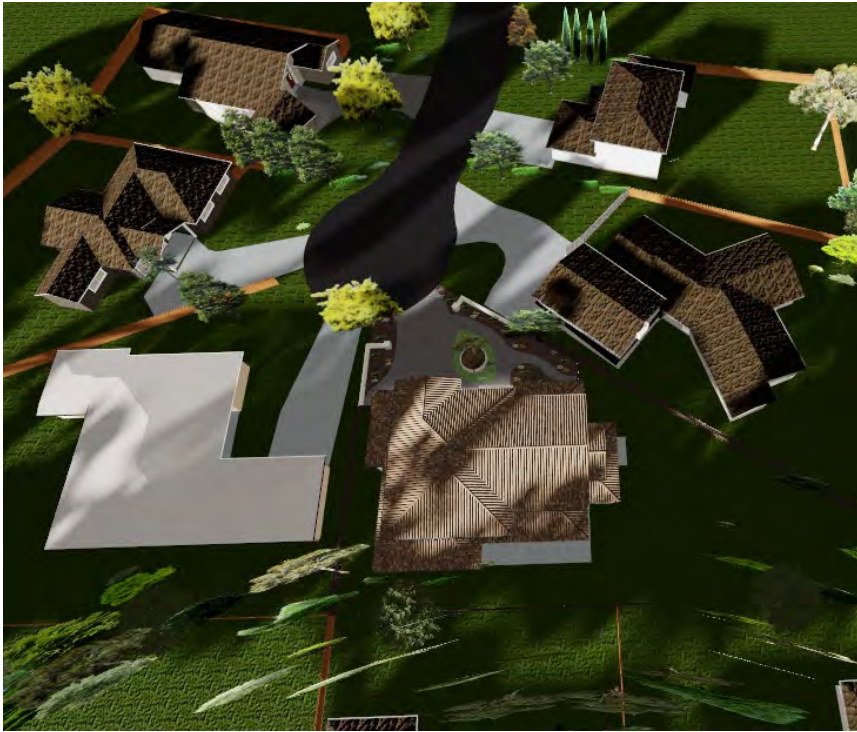


3d view of neighborhood compared to google view below of current neighborhood



Additional views of 3d below







Aerial Survey of 2 story homes around subject home



The following are Spanish/Mediterranean Homes in the neighborhood

18450 Bicknell Rd (445 ft)



15070 Becky Ln. (500 ft)



15121 Becky Ln. (990 ft)



102 Via Teresa (100 ft)





18330 Bicknell Rd (500 ft)



107 Verona Ct. (840 ft)



251 Old Adobe Rd. (630 ft)



261 Montclair (1300 ft)





148 Via de Tesoros (425 ft)



152 Via de Tesoros (430 ft)



231 Plaza La Posada (880 ft)



243 Via La Posada (770 ft)



18588 Woodbank Way (1200 ft)



18564 Rancho Las Cimas Way (1300 ft)



18532 Aquino Way (1150 ft)



18500 Aquino Way (1000 ft)

