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16510 Topping Way, Architecture and Site Application S-23-016

ADDITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD/VILLAGE FABRIC / NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT

The proposed design blends in seamlessly with the neighborhood pattern which is exceptionally diverse.

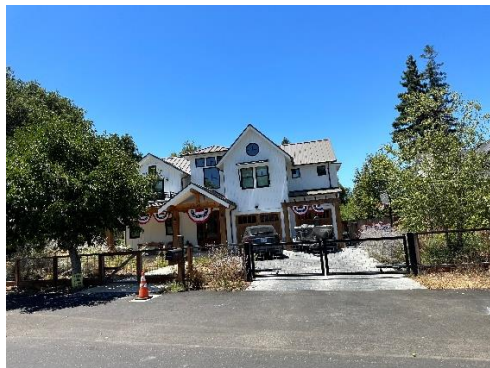
Los Gatos was founded with a dense village fabric in the 1880's, centered around the rail station downtown spreading out along Santa Cruz Avenue and over to Los Gatos Boulevard. The Los Gatos Boulevard neighborhood is the subject of this proposed house. There was considerable postwar 'suburban' development across the USA and in Los Gatos Boulevard neighborhood. The entire country experienced rapid growth of 1 and 2 story houses of medium quality (some less than medium quality).

Up until the 1960/70's the real estate values in Los Gatos had parity with other neighborhoods across the USA. Then Silicon Valley's industry might rose quickly. Real estate values have skyrocketed to be some of the highest residential land prices in the USA. For others visiting or relocating to the Bay Area, the real estate price shock is unbelievable. This is due to the deep, diverse Tech Ecosystems here. The Bay area is considered the 2nd wealthiest economic zone after the Dubai area.

The real estate values in Silicon Valley are at a global level. This extraordinary value increase can be seen in just a few of the tax assessments near the subject property as seen on **A1.3**. A typical homeowner who purchased their homes back in the 1950-70's can become an instant millionaire when selling a typical suburban home. This unique to Silicon Valley. Los Gatos School system becomes one of the main drivers for this high valuation, similar to other Bay Area communities such as Palo Alto, Menlo Park, Los Altos, Saratoga, etc. The subject property is walking/bicycle distance to Van Meter, Fisher and Los Gatos High.

Due to this extraordinary real estate valuation increase and the subsequent high \$/sf land costs, it is typical for most lots to transition from 1 to a 2-story house. The increased density is a better use of space and is the worldwide trend. Many of the 1-story houses were not built for the long term, they were quick, cheap builds and most post war structures are quite tired out. Fortunately, Los Gatos has a 140 year tradition of quaint, diverse and dense 2 story village fabric so that any new 2-story home 'blends in' with the historic pattern and recent conversions as seen below. People move to Los Gatos for this quaint/dense fabric, they move to Morgan Hill and other communities for more space at a lower cost.

The neighborhood pics below reveal the very diverse design fabric around the subject property and throughout neighborhoods closer to the Los Gatos. The current proposed design blends in seamlessly with the neighborhood pattern which is exceptionally diverse, just as the people are diverse in Los Gatos which is our strength. The Architect and Design Partner recently finished their own 2-story house nearby in the Loma Alta neighborhood on a 5,250 sf lot.



S-23-016 Response #2-Neighborhood pics 16510 Topping Way

16510 PROPOSED DESIGN



BECKSTROM ARCH. DESIGN-ENGLEWOOD AVE.













Architect's house near Loma Alta, note houses either side

SOME OF THE ISSUES AND CONCERNS FROM THE CONSULTING COMMERCIAL ARCHITECT

The proposed house is very well designed in a traditional architectural style and with details that are consistent with the style and the diversity of this neighborhood. There are only a few issues related to the Town's Residential Design Guidelines.

1. The proposed house has a partial second story. The majority of nearby homes are one story in height, but there are two homes in the immediate neighborhood with partial second stories.

Response: See separate letter on neighborhood village fabric. This response letter does not truly assess the larger neighborhood fabric which is a very diverse mixture of styles. If the input from the Consulting, Commercial Architect was applied to all the houses above, then all would have Shed Dormers front and back.

Comparing the proposed project to this small sample set in the response is not accurate with all due respect. It is obvious from the house photos in the separate attachment that there is a profusion of 2-story homes, some are old, many are new. Many new ones have much larger street presences in terms of full 2-story walls, single or multiple gables facing the street. There appears to be a deep misunderstanding of what makes village fabric especially here in Los Gatos? There is no 'harm' or 'negative' effect of seeing a 2-story house with a multitude of different 'form' vocabulary. The neighborhood itself has a very rich tapestry of styles-the people of Los Gatos are not 'harmed' by this situation. It is what makes Los Gatos desirable. The Architect lives walking distance from the subject property. The pattern in Los Gatos and other peninsula communities is a conversion of 1-story post war, very mediocre houses into larger houses especially due to the \$7-figure costs of merely buying an empty lot or in many cases removing a very substandard

structure and then constructing a new house so that the total investment is \$4m-8m and more. The attached letter attempts to show and describe this. The proposed house has a mixed form vocabulary as desired by the client. However, the proposed house could have an even larger full 2-story 'face' and it would still be 'appropriate' for the neighborhood and Los Gatos. It is not as if someone would drive by the subject site and expect anything different than the multitude of even larger 'presence' houses within a 2 min. walk. The Architect has a masters in Urban Design and has the opportunity to work in London(English, Swedish and Saudia Arabian project), Stockholm, Lund, NYC(I M Pei, HOK), SF, VT, ME on many residential and historic projects in a 40 year career.

The Residential guidelines are suggestive and extremely subjective. Given the response in this review letter almost none of the houses shown on the separate attachment would be allowed and they would be abhorred by Los Gatos residents. The proposed 'design' input of having exclusively 'shed dormers' front and back is not needed and frankly 'totally kills' the design and makes it quite ugly. It is not necessary at all to make these changes. The Architect would be delighted to do a neighborhood walk with the commercial, consulting Architect and Los Gatos Planners to learn the diverse form vocabulary in Los Gatos. The way this letter is written it would make it seem that most of Los Gatos is 'bad' due to the distances to the street, etc.

I apologize profusely if this letter comes on strong but we spend hours and hours developing designs in collaboration with the client with an ultimate goal of having welcome additions to the Los Gatos neighborhood fabric. We try to make designs that are portraits of the people we work with-that is the entire point. The house should connect to the client, to the site, to the neighborhood. The house should have a face and countenance that makes people want to visit, come in and have a cup of coffee and chat with the owners. It can be a place that the children can have their friends come over and feel safe and connected. That is all that matters.