



**TOWN OF LOS GATOS
PLANNING COMMISSION
REPORT**

MEETING DATE: 04/09/2025

ITEM NO: 3

DATE: April 4, 2025
TO: Planning Commission
FROM: Joel Paulson, Community Development Director
SUBJECT: Consider a Request for Approval to Construct a Single-Family Residence and Site Improvements Requiring a Grading Permit on a Vacant Property Zoned R-1:8. **Located at 15411 National Avenue.** APN 424-12-140. Architecture and Site Application S-23-033. Categorically Exempt Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15303: New Construction. Property Owner: Vyankatesh and Rammy Muddada. Applicant: Jose Rama. Project Planner: Erin Walters.

BACKGROUND:

On November 13, 2024, the Planning Commission considered the application, including written and verbal public comments (Exhibit 1, Attachments 1-3). The Planning Commission approved the application subject to modified conditions as described in the Action Letter (Exhibit 1, Attachment 4).

On November 25, 2024, the decision of the Planning Commission was appealed to the Town Council by an interested person, Ms. Martinez, property owner of 377 Blackwell Drive (Exhibit 1, Attachments 5 and 6). The appellant indicated that there was an error or abuse of discretion by the Planning Commission.

On December 17, 2024, the Town Council discussed the item and received public testimony (Exhibits 1-3). The Town Council directed staff to prepare a resolution granting the appeal of a decision of the Planning Commission, and remanding the application back to the Planning Commission with specific direction including the following:

1. Reduce the second-floor massing;
2. The number, location, and species of the privacy trees shall be mutually agreed upon by the neighbors;
3. Work with the neighbors and Town staff to minimize and relocate windows to mitigate privacy impacts to the neighbors; and
4. Use obscure glass to address privacy at impacted locations.

PREPARED BY: Erin M. Walters
Senior Planner

Reviewed by: Planning Manager and Community Development Director

The Town Council found that there was an error by the Planning Commission in approving the Architecture and Site application because the Commission's decision was not supported by substantial evidence. The Council found that the application did not comply with the Residential Design Guidelines, including Section 2.1, which states residential development shall be similar in mass, bulk, and scale to the immediate neighborhood and consideration will be given to the existing floor area ratios (FARs), residential square footages, and lot sizes in the neighborhood.

On January 21, 2025, the Town Council passed and adopted Resolution 2025-010 granting the appeal of the decision of the Planning Commission approving a request for construction of a new single-family residence and site improvements requiring a grading permit on vacant property zoned R-1:8 and remanding the application back to Planning Commission with specific direction as described above (Exhibit 4).

DISCUSSION:

In response to the Town Council's direction, the applicant submitted revised development plans (Exhibit 10) and a letter detailing the revisions to the project (Exhibit 5). In addition, the applicant provided a summary of neighborhood outreach following the December 17, 2024, Town Council meeting (Exhibit 6). A summary of the applicant's response to the Town Council's direction follows.

1. Reduce the Second-Story Massing

The applicant reduced the second-story massing through the following modifications:

- a. Reduced Building Height
 - i. Reduced the overall building height from 30 feet to 27 feet, 9.6-inches; and
 - ii. Reduced the second-story plate height by six inches (22 feet, 10-inches to 22 feet, 4-inches).
- b. Reduced Second-Story Floor Area
 - i. Eliminated the second story storage area (-61.65 square feet);
 - ii. Reduced size of bedroom #4 (-31.65 square feet); and
 - iii. Reduced the total second-story floor area from 1,518 square feet to 1,425 square feet (-93 square feet).

The table on the following page summarizes the revised floor area.

Floor Area Summary			
	Original Project SF	Revised Project SF	Allowed SF
Main Residence			
Second Floor	1,518	1,425	--
First Floor	1,722	1,731	--
Total Countable	3,240	3,156	3,263 max.
Attached Garage	846**	837	901 max.
Below-Grade Area	1,200	1,200	Exempt
Below-Grade JADU*	500	500	500 max.
Detached ADU*	900	900	1,073 max.

*Accessory Dwelling Units are not a part of the Architecture and Site Application.

**Original proposed garage floor area corrected.

The revised project results in a total reduction of the second-story floor area by 93 square feet. The revised project also includes modifications to the first-story by reducing the garage square footage and enlarging a bathroom. The first-story floor area has increased from 1,722 square feet to 1,731 square feet and the garage has been reduced from 846 square feet to 837 square feet.

The revised project results in a total countable house floor area of 3,156 square feet, an overall total reduction of 84 square feet.

Neighborhood Compatibility

Pursuant to Section 29.40.075 of the Town Code, the maximum FAR for the subject property is 0.30 (3,263 square feet). As detailed above, the applicant has revised their project, and the proposed residence now includes an FAR of 0.29 (3,156 square feet). The table on the following page reflects the current conditions of the residences in the immediate neighborhood.

Revised FAR Comparison - Neighborhood Analysis							
Address	Zoning	Residential SF*	Garage SF	Total SF**	Lot Area SF	Residential FAR	No. of Stories
373 Blackwell Dr.	R-1:8	2,693	489	3,182	10,180	0.26	2
377 Blackwell Dr.	R-1:8	2,693	468	3,161	9,883	0.27	2
381 Blackwell Dr.	R-1:8	2,173	411	2,584	10,303	0.21	1
15385 National Ave.	R-1:8	1,056	128	1,184	10,707	0.10	1
15415 National Ave.	R-1:8	1,719	317	2,036	8,060	0.21	1
15425 National Ave.	R-1:8	1,357	483	1,840	20,727	0.07	1
15439 National Ave.	R-1:8	2,386	777	3,163	9,655	0.25	1
15461 National Ave.	R-1:8	2,729	693	3,422	7,439	0.37	2
15899 LG Almaden Rd.	O	--	--	--	--	--	--
15400 National Ave.	O	--	--	--	--	--	--
279 De Soto Dr.	R-M:5-12	--	--	--	--	--	--
15411 National Ave. (E)	R-1:8	--	--	--	10,729	0.00	--
15411 National Ave. (P) <i>Original Project</i>	R-1:8	3,240	846***	4,086	10,729	0.30	2
15411 National Ave. (P) <i>Revised Project</i>	R-1:8	3,156	837	3,993	10,729	0.29	2

*Residential square footage includes the residence and detached accessory structures, except garages.

**The total square footage numbers do not include below grade square footage.

***Original proposed garage floor area corrected.

Based on Town and County records, the residences in the immediate neighborhood range in size from 1,056 square feet to 2,729 square feet. The FARs range from 0.10 to 0.37. The applicant proposes a 3,156-square foot residence (not including a proposed 900-square foot attached ADU, 500-square foot below-grade JADU, 1,200 square feet of below-grade square footage), and an 837-square foot detached garage on a 10,729-square foot parcel. The revised residence would be the largest in terms of square footage, by 427 square feet and the second largest FAR in the immediate neighborhood. The proposed project does not exceed the maximum allowable FAR or maximum allowable square footage allowed per Town Code.

The applicant has reduced the second-story massing by lowering the building height by two feet, two inches and reducing the second story floor area by 93 square feet.

2. Privacy Trees

Per Council's direction, the number, location, and species of the privacy trees shall be mutually agreed upon by the neighbors.

The applicant revised the planting plan, removing all proposed privacy trees from the rear of the property after consulting with the rear neighbor (Sheet A0.12 of Exhibit 10).

On January 23, 2025, and January 29, 2025, the applicant reached out to the 373 and 377 Blackwell Drive neighbors to discuss the proposed number, location, and species of the privacy trees to be located along the shared northern property fence (Exhibit 6). The applicant proposed two species, attempting to address the neighbors' allergy and privacy concerns. On January 30, 2025, one of the neighbors provided a response that the proposed species were highly allergenic and requested a clear understanding of the full scope of the modifications to the plans including, reduction of the second floor and windows facing their property, and requested a full rendering of the project. On February 6, 2025, the applicant requested the neighbor provide a few acceptable privacy tree species, provided the revised site plan, and revised north elevation.

The applicant requested to meet with the Town Arborist to get recommendations for privacy trees after not hearing from the neighbors. The applicant met with the Town Arborist and staff on March 3, 2025. The Town Arborist recommended planting 24-inch box *Pittosporum tenuifolium* 'Silver Sheen' along the fence line to provide privacy between properties. *Pittosporum tenuifolium* 'Silver Sheen' is a fast growing upright deciduous privacy screen tree growing between 12 and 16 feet in height and six to 10 feet wide. The Town Arborist specified that the proposed privacy screening should be planted outside of the existing dripline of the large oak. The applicant revised the planting plan to reflect these changes (Sheet A0.12 of Exhibit 9).

On March 4, 2025, the applicant emailed the neighbors with the proposed number, location, and species of the privacy trees for their consideration and feedback. At the time of drafting the report, the applicant has not heard back from the neighbors at 373 or 377 Blackwell Drive (Exhibit 6).

The revised draft Conditions of Approval (Exhibit 9) includes Condition of Approval #10:

***PRIVACY TREE PLANTING:** Prior to obtaining a building final/Certificate of Occupancy, the property owner shall plant five 24-inch box *Pittosporum tenuifolium* 'Silver Sheen' along the northern fence line per approved development plans to address privacy between the properties and that the species is non-allergenic for the neighbor. The privacy screening must be maintained by the property owner in perpetuity. Should any of these trees fail, they shall be replaced.*

On April 4, 2025, the applicant emailed the neighbors summarizing the project modifications including the proposed privacy tree planting (Exhibit 6).

On April 4, 2025, the neighbor at 377 Blackwell Drive emailed a response confirming the proposed plant species would not have an allergenic impact on their family and has requested at least eight trees to be planted along the fence to provide privacy (Exhibit 7).

3. Windows

Per Council's direction, the applicant is to work with the neighbors and Town staff to minimize and relocate windows to mitigate privacy impacts to the neighbors.

The applicant revised the windows located on the north elevation to address the neighbors' located on Blackwell Drives privacy concerns, as follows (Sheet A4.1 of Exhibit 10):

- a. Eliminated storage room and two windows on second story north elevation;
- b. Relocated the egress window from the second-story bedroom #4 on the north elevation to the front elevation;
- c. Reduced the size of the second-story bedroom #4 window on the north elevation;
- d. Modified the operation of the second-story bathroom window on the north elevation from a four-inch operable to a non-operable window;
- e. Relocated the egress window from the second-story bedroom #3 on the north elevation to the rear elevation;
- f. Modified all second-story windows on the north elevation to be non-operable; and
- g. Eliminated two garage windows on the first story on the north elevation.

As described above the applicant has provided the proposed window changes to the neighbors at 373 and 377 Blackwell Drive (Exhibit 6).

4. Obscure Glass

Per Council's direction, use obscure glass to address privacy at impacted locations.

All windows located on the second-story north elevation have been revised to have obscure glass. The second-story bedroom egress window on the rear elevation will have obscure glass on the two lower window panels (Sheets A4.0, A4.1 and A4.3 of Exhibit 10).

The revised draft Conditions of Approval (Exhibit 9) includes Condition of Approval #11:

***OBSCURE PRIVACY WINDOWS:** The second story windows located on the northern elevation and the second-story bedroom window on the rear elevation shall have obscure glass to provide privacy between properties per approved development plans. Privacy film shall not be used.*

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Revised story poles and signage were installed on the site and written notice was sent to property owners and tenants located within 300 feet of the subject property. At the time of drafting the report no public comments have been received.

CONCLUSION:

A. Summary

The applicant submitted a response letter summarizing the revisions to the project (Exhibit 5), summary of neighborhood outreach (Exhibit 6), and revised development plans (Exhibit 10) in response to the Town Council's direction provided at the December 17, 2024, Town Council meeting.

B. Recommendation

Should the Planning Commission determine that the revised project meets the direction provided by the Town Council and find merit with the proposed project, the Commission can take the actions below to approve the Architecture and Site application:

1. Make the finding that the proposed project is Categorically Exempt, pursuant to the adopted Guidelines for the Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act, Section 15303: New Construction (Exhibit 8);
2. Make the finding that the project complies with the objective standards of Chapter 29 of the Town Code (Zoning Regulations) (Exhibit 8);
3. Make the finding that the project complies with the Residential Design Guidelines (Exhibit 8);
4. Make the considerations as required by Section 29.20.150 of the Town Code for granting approval of an Architecture and Site application (Exhibit 8); and
5. Approve Architecture and Site application S-23-033 with the conditions contained in Exhibit 9 and the development plans in Exhibit 10.

C. Alternatives

Alternatively, the Commission can:

1. Continue the matter to a date certain with specific direction;
2. Approve the application with additional and/or modified conditions; or
3. Deny the application.

EXHIBITS:

1. December 17, 2024, Town Council Staff Report with Attachments 1-9
2. December 16, 2024, Town Council Addendum Report with Attachment 10
3. December 17, 2024, Town Council Desk Item Report with Attachments 11-13
4. January 21, 2025, Town Council Resolution 2025-010
5. Applicant's Response Letter
6. Applicant's Summary of Neighborhood Outreach

PAGE **8** OF **8**

SUBJECT: 15411 National Avenue/S-23-033

DATE: April 4, 2025

7. Neighbor's Response
8. Draft Findings and Considerations
9. Draft Revised Conditions of Approval
10. Revised Development Plans