

4/20/22

Updated Letter of Justification

To whom it may concern,

We live at 16668 Shannon Road (APN 532-05-002), and would like to remodel the home which will requires a tech demo per the Planning Dept. The lot is 15,392 sq feet with less than 1% slope. The house was built in 1957. The yard was very overgrown with dried Juniper, Oleander, Bamboo and Ivy that we have slowly been removing for future landscaping as it was a fire hazard. The current home needs a new roof as it is very old shake (another fire hazard) and at the end of its life span. It also needs single pane windows replaced, improved insulation, grounded electrical work, and other repairs, including repairs to walls where stucco reaches the ground and many cracked windows.

We have lived in Los Gatos for 12 years, and absolutely love this town! Our roots here go deep, as Peter grew up in Saratoga and his father graduated from Los Gatos High School in 1958. We moved to this house recently because it had a larger south facing lot for gardening, with great solar power potential, and a location that allows Peter to bicycle commute, and the kids to bike to school. We hope to make our forever home here in this spot.

Environmentalists at heart, we hope to build a home that is efficient, uses solar energy (hopefully enough to power the home and a couple of electric vehicles), and uses greywater for irrigation. We also hope to enlarge the garage a bit to make space for a family of bikes that we use for our day-to-day transportation, while still having two vehicles in the garage. Our current "two car" garage is too narrow to functionally fit 2 cars. We feel that garaging our bikes is also important for ease of access and encouraging our use of bikes for commuting and getting to school.

The planning department brought up concerns about the 3 car garage element. The allowed area for the garage is 1,077 sq feet and we are requesting only 715 sq feet. The proposed width of the garage is 32 feet which is only 8 feet more than a standard 2 car 24 foot garage. We purpose only 2 openings, one existing, and a 2nd opening set back in order to reduce the overall appearance. We would like to have this space in order to keep our cars out of sight and house a family of bikes and scooters. Reducing cars on the sides of the road and in driveways is more aesthetically pleasing plus it gives more space for children walking and helps visibility for safety on Shannon Rd., which is a Safe Route to School. Tucking our cars away in the garage will also allow guests to park in the driveway rather than the street. Street parking will be limited with the new pedestrian/bikeway project that is scheduled for this fall on Shannon Road as part of the Connect Los Gatos and Safe Routes to School initiatives. Many of the older homes in our neighborhood have garages that are frankly too small to fit two cars. They therefore keep cars in the driveway and on the side of the road. We think the town is more beautiful when the cars aren't all lining the streets and filling the driveways. The size and number of cars per household have drastically increased since the 1950s when these houses were built, and the town planning department should not be ignoring this significant change, nor ignoring the importance of

making bike commuting more simplified and practical.

We feel a small recessed 2nd garage door is better than a window in that location, since it helps reduce the mass & scale of the home itself, plus allows for easy access to bikes for every-day use. Any bike-commuter can testify: it is frustrating to push a bike through a hinged pedestrian door regularly. Storing bikes in a shed around the back is also not viable given the difficulty of access and for security reasons given the current cost of bikes.

We have added the use of trellising and landscaping to help beautify the 2nd garage door. Furthermore the adjacent property behind us at 16317 Englewood has a 3 car garage facing our backyard. Looking at the extended neighborhood, this element is present including examples at: 16428 Englewood and 16373 Englewood. Forward facing three car garages can be seen along W. La Chiquita at property addresses 16316, 16396, and 16355.

To address the committee's concern about mass & scale, we have changed several elements and would like to highlight others. First we would like to point out that 2 of 3 of the adjoining properties are 2 story homes. The FAR of our property is 4,109 sq ft. We initially requested to build a home closer to 4,000sq feet but have drastically reduce the second story and home to 3,426 sq feet plus we removed 2 story high rooms on the first floor to make the second floor smaller. We were asked to compare our home to our "immediate neighborhood" that includes mostly properties on the north side of Shannon Road that are on properties much smaller than ours. Our property is over 15,000sq feet and more appropriate to be compared to the home behind & adjacent to us or to nearby homes on similar size lots. Below are some of our immediate neighbors lot sizes:

Our lot 15,392 sq feet

16639 Shannon Road 8,001 sq feet
16653 Shannon Road 10,036 sq feet
16667 Shannon Road 9,230 sq feet
16675 Shannon Road 10,000 sq feet
16301 Shannon Road 13,504 sq feet

As you can see above, many of our "immediate neighbors" have lots 5,000 sq feet less than our lot and therefor not comparable. Our adjacent neighbor behind our property that is not included as a comparison by the city is a similar sized home of 3,203 sq feet at the property address of 16317 Englewood.

The newest version of our project is only 600 sq feet larger than our immediate neighbor with 2,788 sq feet at 16680 Shannon Road. This square footage will allow for home office spaces that are needed for a family that has 2 working adults in an era where working from home is encouraged. Also we need the extra space for grandparents to sleep over when we work late or overnight in the hospital as we are both Emergency Medicine physicians.

We have also decreased the size of the entry and have already added rows of decorative olive and citrus trees in the driveway island and around the driveway to soften the look of the home. The second story will be set back from the bottom floor – 12.5 feet set back over

the garage and about 17 feet in the middle. The first floor roof line softens the mass of the second story. Other 2nd story design elements such as side set backs are included in the design. We would also like the committee to consider that our home is set back up to 16.5 feet further than others in our immediate neighborhood. For example our home is 67 feet from the middle of Shannon Rd, while by comparison, 16667 Shannon Road is 50.5 feet from center of road, and 16675 Shannon Road is 54 feet back. Keeping this set back will greatly reduce the size and appearance of the home and allow room for landscaping to obscure the house.

Other second story homes in our immediate neighborhood were completed prior to being annexed into the city. Therefore, the second stories of some of these homes were pushed to one side of the home. Per Los Gatos, design guidelines we have the second story set back from the front and both sides.

The Planning Committee's architectural review by Cannon Design Group notes that, in regard to our immediate neighborhood, "newer homes [have] 2 stories and greater floor area than the older homes." We feel that our home will fit the neighborhood in that regard. Our intention is to enclose the current front courtyard, and add a second story. The property across the street at 16675 Shannon Road has similar front entry and mass when viewed from Magneson Loop. Also the property at 16653 Shannon Road is 4,588 sq feet, uses a larger portion of the lot, plus is closer to the road at 53 feet. Another example is 16608 Shannon Rd which is 4,147 sq feet and approx 50 feet from the center of Shannon Road. The next door property 16301 Englewood appears small from Shannon Road but viewed from Englewood, has a much wider house, 114 feet wide with the garage and is much closer to the road at only 36 feet from the middle of Englewood. Our proposed project is only 68'4" in width and 67 feet from the center of Shannon Road.

Homes in the extended neighborhood that have similar appearing 2nd stories include:

16516 Shannon Road
16457, 16428, 16401, 16373, 16358, 16330 Englewood
16358, 16382, 16394 Robbie Ln
16336 W. La Chiquita

Per the Architectural Review by the Cannon Design Group "The site is relatively large and surrounded by other similar sized parcels, some of which have recently seen the addition of larger homes..." and "the proposed design is well done with substantial architectural integrity on all sides." Furthermore the review finds "ridge heights of the house would be similar to other new two story homes in the immediate neighborhood."

The architectural style of the neighborhood varies quite substantially. Nearby homes range from Craftsman, Contemporary, to Ultramodern. Our next door neighbors at 16668 Shannon Road have a Mediterranean styled home, and across the street 16675 Shannon Road is Modern Farmhouse with metal roofing. We hope to style our home Modern Mediterranean to fit into this section of Shannon Road and allow for drier landscaping ideas for less water usage.

We would also like the committee to note our current home at 16668 Shannon Road is a eclectic collection of different architectural styles already. Although at first glance the home looks like a California ranch style tract home, it has a large wall enclosing the front courtyard in a California mission style, window overhangs in the style of Swiss Chalet, and exterior walls are wooden siding in front of the house, and Mediterranean style stucco on the sides an rear. Updating the home will allow for a more consistent and beautiful style.

As part of our community outreach efforts, we have spoken to many of our neighbors, many times, via fliers and in person. So far we have unanimous support from our community. The home owners directly across the street, at 16667 Shannon Rd. Mr. Varun Shivakumar says “[it will] improve the look of the street & community and will fit into the neighborhood ” and at 16675 Shannon Rd. Mrs. Sheila Bony says “two thumbs up”. Our immediate neighbors to either side also expressed full support. Mrs. Helen Sun at 16680 Shannon Road feels we “have been attentive to any concerns.” We are continuously discussing the plans with neighbors and continuing our outreach. Everyone we have spoken to is excited to have this home updated per our plans.

Thank you for your consideration of our project!

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