



March 26, 2019

Ms. Jennifer Armer
Community Development Department
Town of Los Gatos
110 E. Main Street
Los Gatos, CA 95031

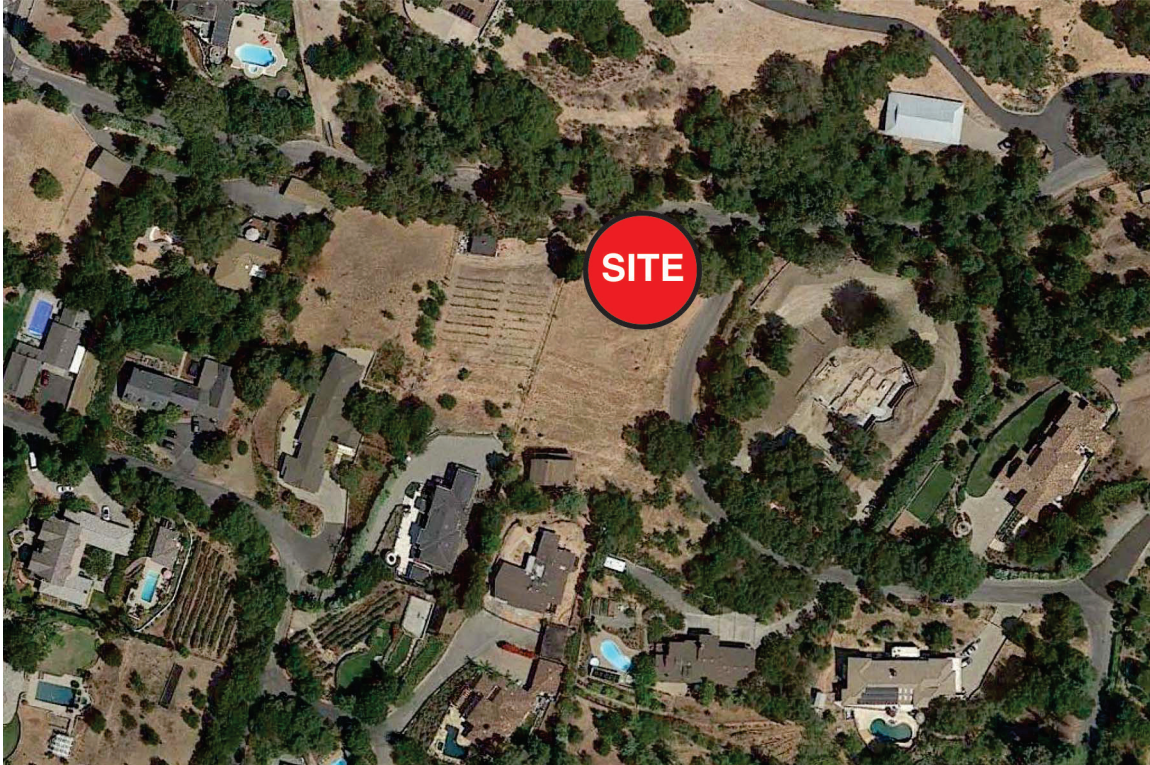
RE: 15925 Quail Hill Road

Dear Jennifer:

I reviewed the drawings, and evaluated the site context. I previously reviewed another home located at the top of this sloping site. My comments and recommendations are as follows:

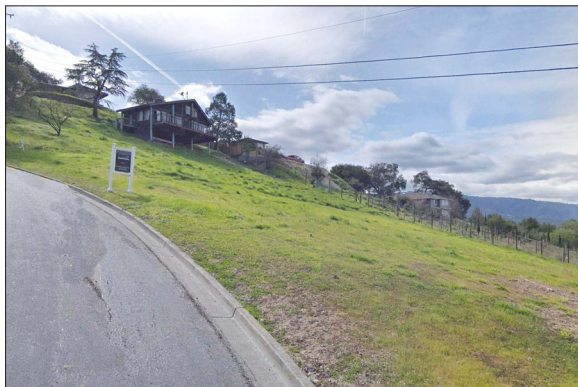
Neighborhood Context

The site is steeply sloped with an existing house located at the top of the slope. This proposal is for a new house to be located at the base of the slope at the intersection of Shady Lane and Drysdale Drive. The site is shown on the aerial photo below, and photos of the site and its surroundings are on the following page.





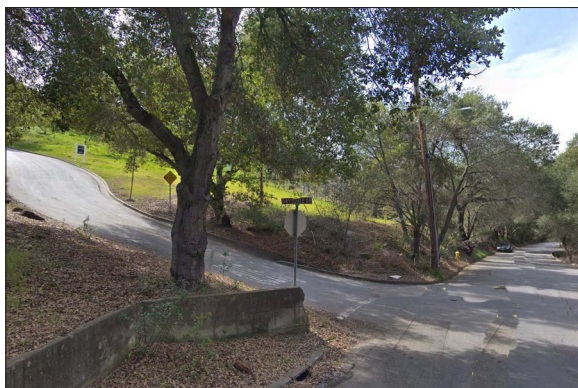
Aerial Photo looking South



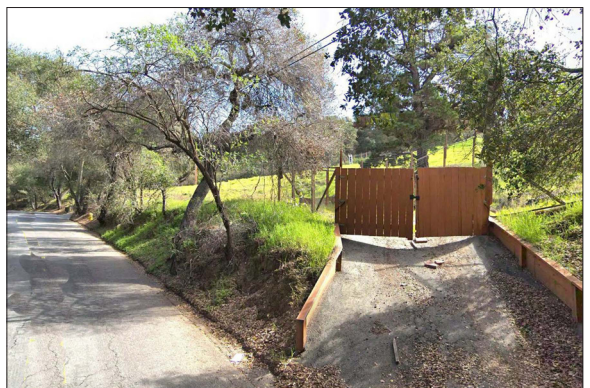
The Site looking Uphill



The Site looking Downhill



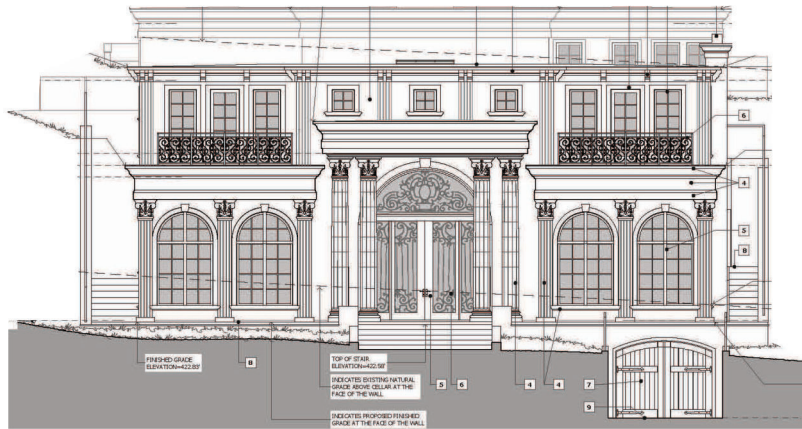
The Site from Shady looking West



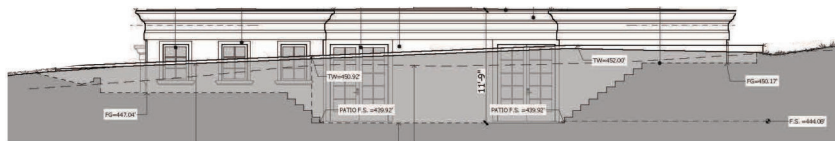
The Site from Shady looking East

Issues and Concerns

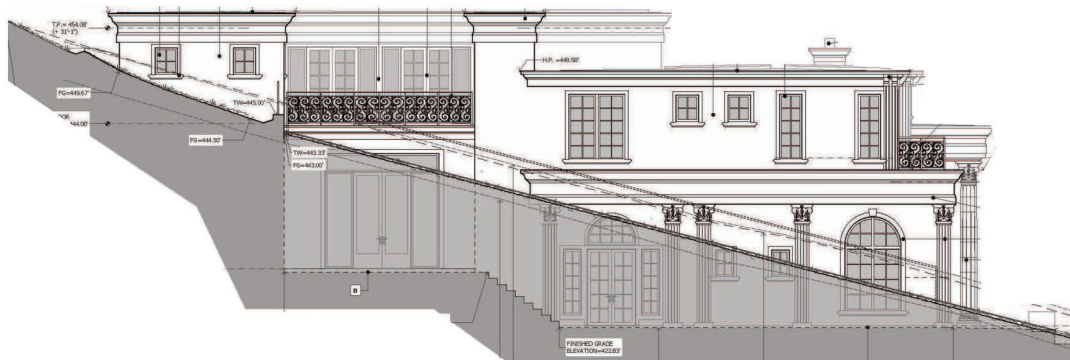
The proposed house has an identifiable architectural style with authentic details executed in high quality materials - see proposed elevations below.



PROPOSED FRONT ELEVATION



PROPOSED REAR ELEVATION

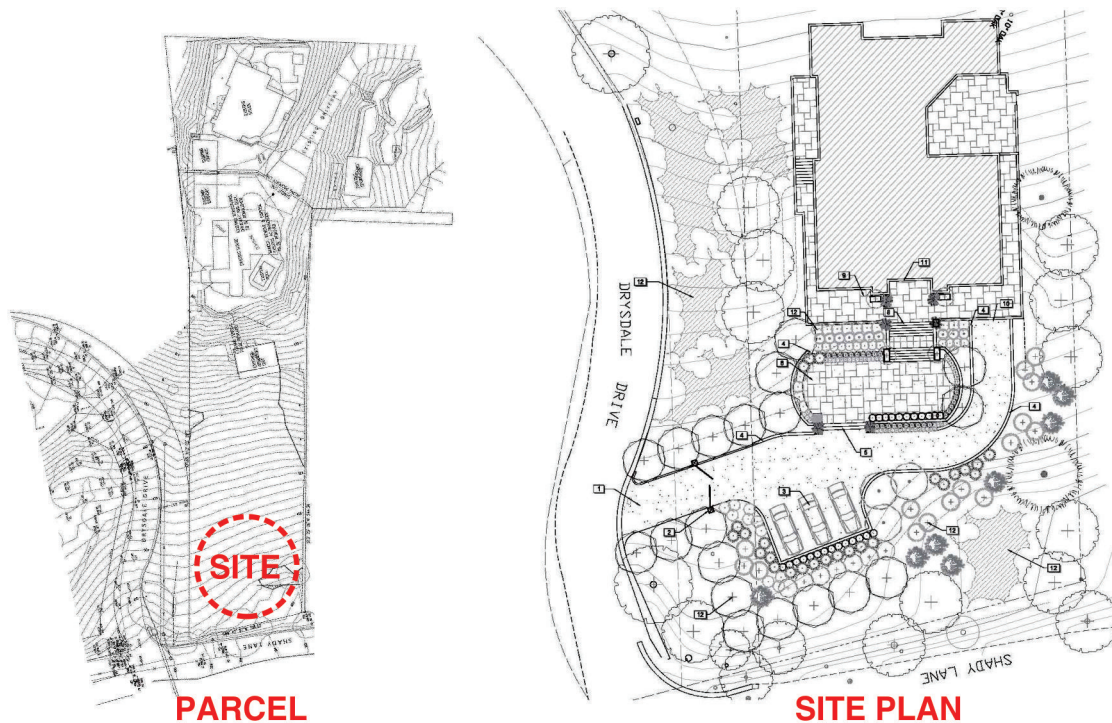


PROPOSED LEFT SIDE ELEVATION



PROPOSED RIGHT SIDE ELEVATION

The proposed site for the house is at the bottom of the parcel adjacent to both Shady Lane and Drysdale Drive with substantial landscaping proposed to buffer views of the house - see landscape plan below.



From a pure architectural design standpoint, it would be difficult to fault the proposed design. However, the proposed architectural style is typically constructed on a flat building pad, and the structure may be difficult to reconcile with the Town's *Hillside Development Standards and Design Guidelines*. Some specific elements of the *Hillside Development Standards and Design Guidelines* which may not be adequately met by this design include the following:

E. Objectives of the Hillside Development Standards and Guidelines

The following objectives are intended to implement the Town of Los Gatos vision statement for its hillside and to ensure that all development is in compliance with the goals, policies, and implementing strategies of the General Plan.

- 4. Maintain the natural appearance of the hillsides from all vantage points including the valley floor.***
- 9. Ensure that development does not dominate, but rather visually blends and achieves harmony between the natural and built environment.***

V. ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

A. Design objectives.

The standards and guidelines in this section are intended to encourage architectural design that is:

- 1. in harmony and visually blends with the natural environment,***
- 3. compatible with the surrounding neighborhood and respectful of neighbors, and***
- 4. respectful of the rural character of the hillsides.***

E. Building height.

Standards:

- 1. The maximum allowed height for homes in hillside areas shall be 25 feet. Building height shall be measured in compliance with provisions of the Town's Zoning Ordinance.***
- 2. The maximum height of a building's tallest elevation shall not exceed 35 feet measured from the lowest part of the building to the highest part, except buildings extending above a ridgeline or that are visible from a viewing platform where the maximum height from the lowest to highest points shall not exceed 28 feet.***

Note: Vertical measurement shown on the applicant's drawings may not conform to the Town's standards for vertical measurements.

F. Minimize building bulk and mass

One of the primary concerns of Los Gatos residents is that some new houses in the hillsides appear overly large and bulky, resulting in high visibility from surrounding properties and the valley floor. The design standards and guidelines in this section address this issue.

Standards:

- 1. Buildings shall be designed to minimize bulk, mass and volume so as not to be prominently visible from a distance or from surrounding properties.***
- 2. Buildings shall be designed to conform to the natural topography of the site and run with the contours. Blending with the existing terrain reduces the appearance of bulk.***

Guidelines:

- 1. The building design should incorporate but not be limited to, the following techniques to effectively reduce the appearance of mass, bulk and volume:***
 - b. Avoid architectural styles that are inherently viewed as massive and bulky.***
 - d. Minimize volume; avoid large volume buildings.***

G. Roofs.

Standards:

- 1. Roof forms and roof lines shall be broken into smaller building components to reflect the irregular forms of surrounding natural features.***
- 2. The slope of the main roof shall generally be oriented in the same direction as the natural slope of the terrain.***

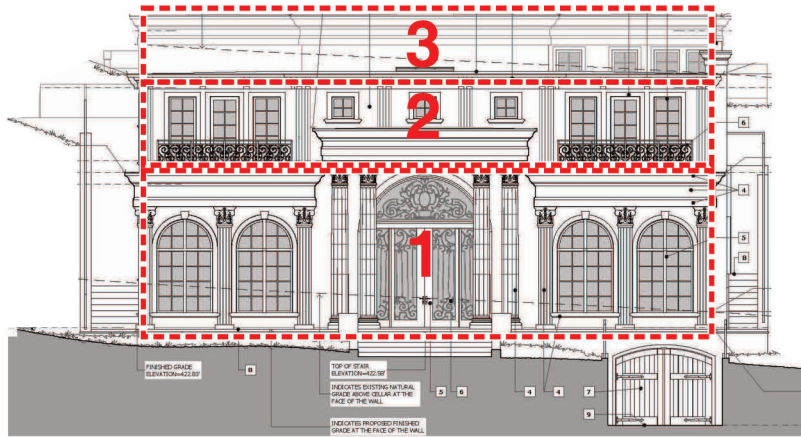
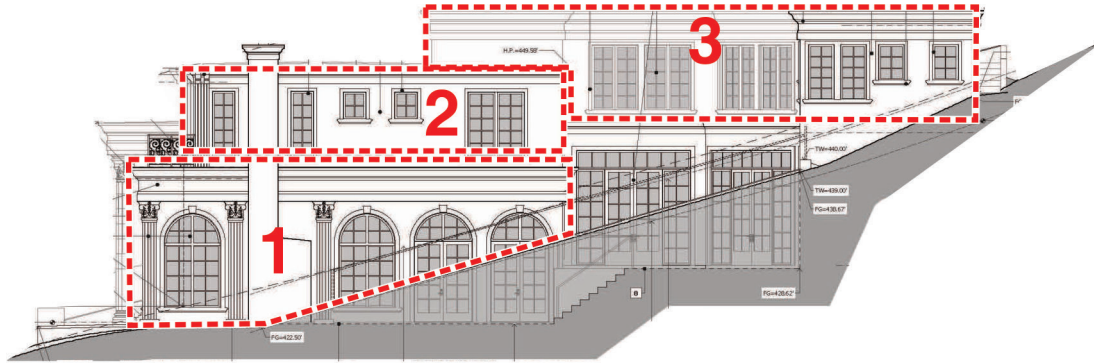
Guidelines:

- 1. The use of large windows and glass doors should be kept to the minimum to reduce the daytime glare and nighttime lighting emanating from large glazed areas, and to increase heating and cooling efficiency. Of particular concern is glare that impacts neighboring properties and is visible from the valley floor.***
- 2. The use of architectural features that increase visual prominence should be avoided. Massive, tall elements, such as two-story entries, turrets, and large chimneys should be avoided. Such elements on the downhill facade of the house is of particular concern.***

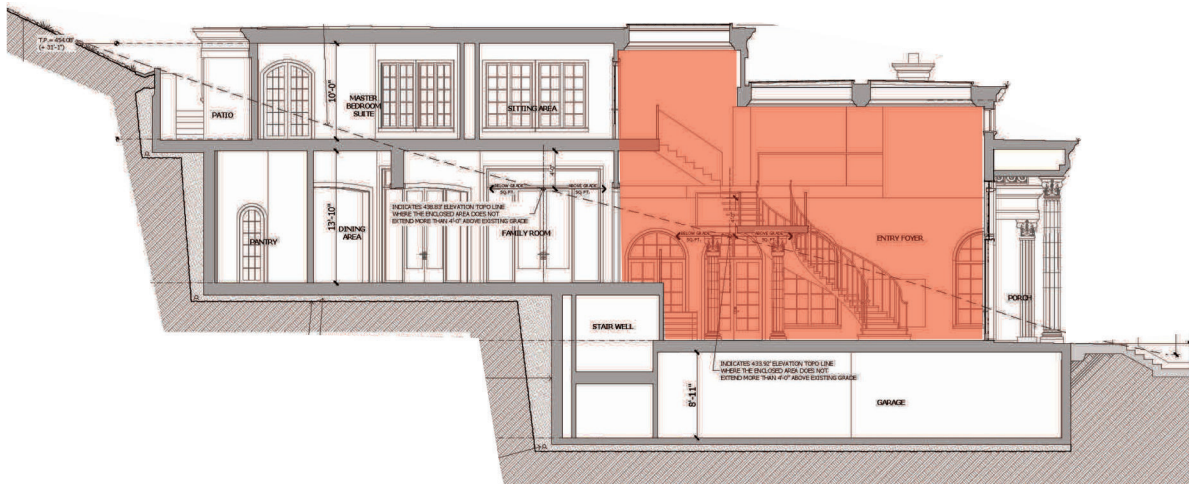
In fairness to the applicant, it should be noted that within the constraints of the general architectural style, the designer has provided for some stepping of the building form down the hill slope, but the result may be more bulky than envisioned in the Town's *Hillside Development Standards and Design Guidelines*.

Specific features of the proposed house that seem most at odds with the *Development Standards and Design Guidelines* include the following:

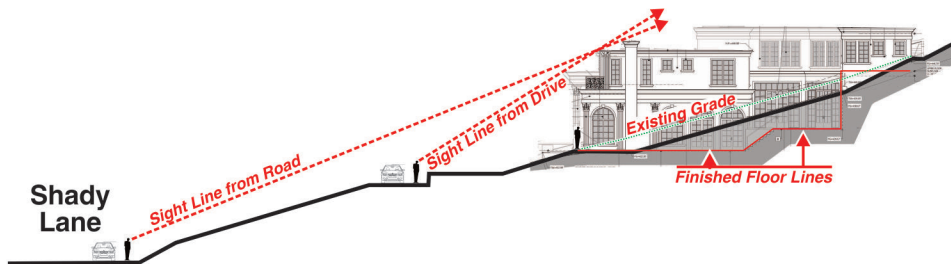
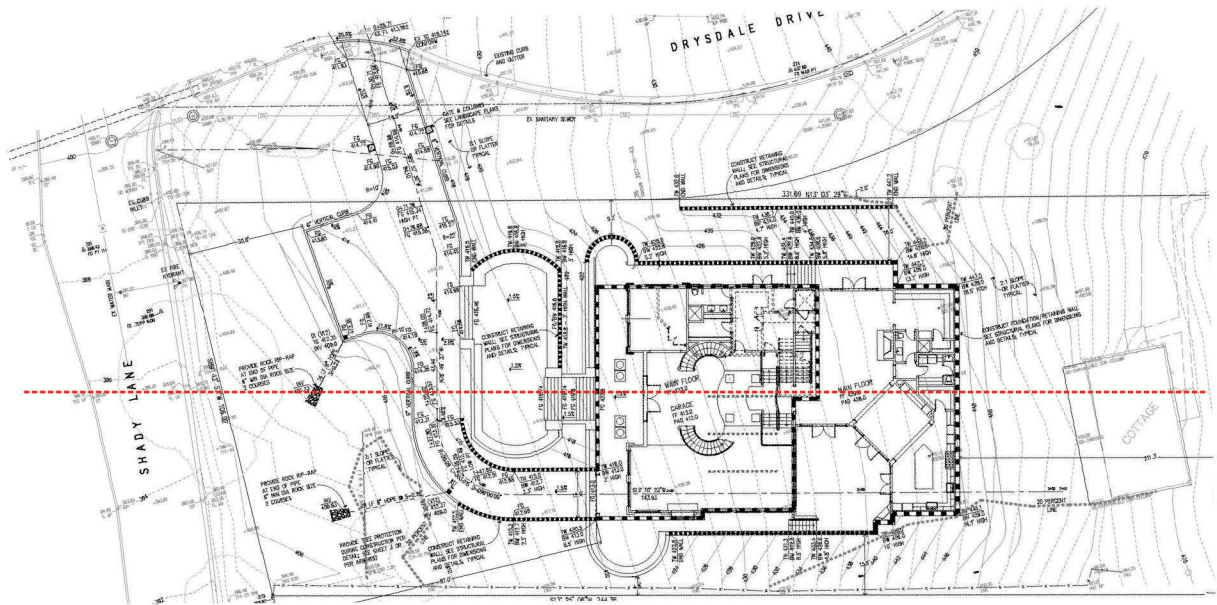
1. The general building form reads as three boxes stacked on top of each other.



2. The grand scale of the front portion of the house which would be 25 feet in interior height would increase the structure's visual bulk.



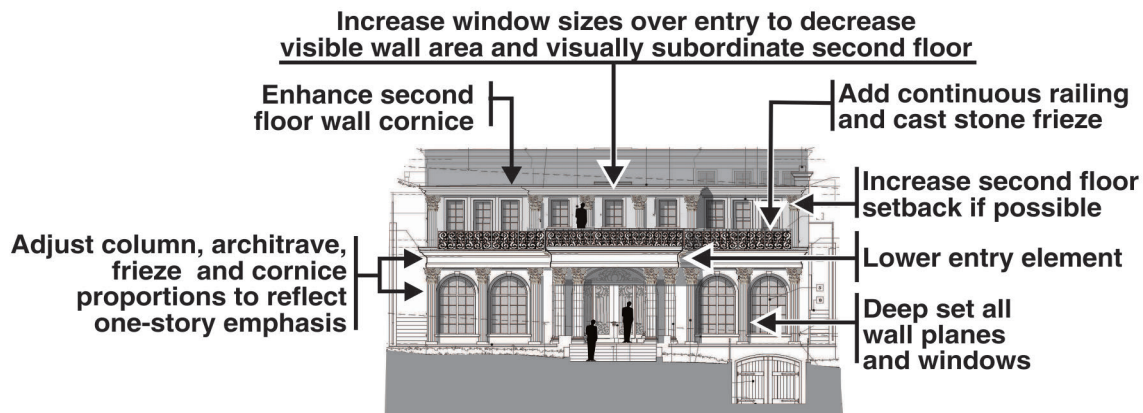
3. While there is a slight setback from the front facade for the second floor volume, it is likely not enough to avoid the first and second floor facades appearing as a single large volume. This would be further emphasized by the tall entry element and the elevated building pad relative to Shady Lane - see illustration below.



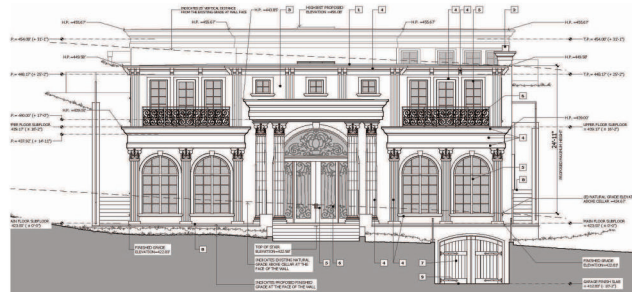
Recommendations

The primary issue is whether the proposed design or some modified version of it would be sufficiently consistent with the Town's *Hillside Development Standards and Design Guidelines*. In the past, the Town has welcomed architectural variety, and much has changed in home size and household expectations in the fifteen years since the *Hillside Development Standards and Design Guidelines* were adopted.

The formal style of the proposed home makes modifications to more strictly conform to the standards and guidelines difficult without resulting in a distortion of the basic forms and details of the traditional style. There are a few modifications that I can suggest that would maintain the spirit of the architectural style. They would include the following:



SMALLER SCALE APPROACH



CURRENT PROPOSED FRONT ELEVATION

1. Increase the second floor setback, if possible.
2. Add continuous railings and cast stone friezes in lieu of the currently proposed three separated front elevation forms.
3. Increase the window sizes on the second floor over the entry.
4. Enhance the second floor cornice to add more visual substance.
5. Deep set all wall planes and windows.
6. Add additional landscape buffering along the street edge.



Jennifer, please let me know if you have any questions, or if there are other issues that I did not address.

Sincerely,
CANNON DESIGN GROUP

Larry L. Cannon

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