



**TOWN OF LOS GATOS
PLANNING COMMISSION
REPORT**

MEETING DATE: 01/8/2020

ITEM NO: 2

DATE: January 3, 2020
TO: Planning Commission
FROM: Joel Paulson, Community Development Director
SUBJECT: Architecture and Site Application S-18-052. Project Location: **15365 Santella Court**. Applicant: Hari Sripadanna. Property Owner: Christian and Hellen Olgaard. Project Planner: Erin Walters.
Requesting approval for construction of a new single-family residence and removal of large protected trees on a vacant property zoned HR-2 1/2:PD. APN 527-09-036.

RECOMMENDATION:

Approval, subject to the recommended Conditions of Approval.

PROJECT DATA:

General Plan Designation: Hillside Residential
Zoning Designation: HR-2½:PD
Applicable Plans & Standards: General Plan; Hillside Development Standards and Guidelines
Parcel Size: 2 acres
Surrounding Area:

	Existing Land Use	General Plan	Zoning
North	Residential	Hillside Residential	HR-2½
South	Residential	Hillside Residential	HR-2½:PD
East	Residential	Hillside Residential	HR-2½:PD
West	Undeveloped	Hillside Residential	HR-2½:PD

PREPARED BY: Erin Walters
Associate Planner

Reviewed by: Planning Manager and Community Development Director

CEQA:

An Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was prepared for the Planned Development and was certified by the Town Council on December 19, 2005. No further environmental analysis is required for the individual lot development.

FINDINGS:

- As required by the Hillside Development Standards and Guidelines that the project complies with the Hillside Development Standards and Guidelines.
- As required by the Hillside Specific Plan.
- As required by Planned Development Ordinance 2237.

CONSIDERATIONS:

- As required by Section 29.20.150 of the Town Code for granting approval of an Architecture and Site application.

ACTION:

The decision of the Planning Commission is final unless appealed within ten days.

BACKGROUND:

The subject property is lot 9 in the Highlands of Los Gatos, a 19-lot Planned Development (PD), originally approved by the Town Council in 2005. On March 17, 2015, the Town Council approved Ordinance 2237, a request to modify the existing PD to allow the use of color averaging for non-visible homes within the development. The property is at the north end of Santella Court (see Exhibit 1). The Architecture and Site application has been referred to the Planning Commission to allow additional consideration of the hillside home, which is the largest in terms of square footage in the Highlands PD and approaches the threshold for a visible home per the Hillside Development Standards and Guidelines (HDS&G).

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

A. Location and Surrounding Neighborhood

The subject site is a vacant lot located on the northern end of Santella Court (Exhibit 1). Single-family homes are located to the north, east, and south of the subject property. Vacant property is located to the west of the subject property.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION (continued):

B. Project Summary

The applicant is proposing to construct a new 5,840-square foot two-story single-family residence with an attached garage. The proposed house would be located at the northern end of the vacant hillside property. The proposed residence would have a maximum height of 22 feet. The project does not require any exceptions to the HDS&G.

C. Zoning Compliance

A single-family residence is permitted in the HR-2½:PD zone. The proposed residence is in compliance with the allowable floor area for the property. Additionally, the proposed residence is in compliance with height, setbacks, and on-site parking requirements.

DISCUSSION:

A. Architecture and Site Analysis

The applicant is proposing to construct a new 5,840-square foot single-family home, with 5,529 square feet of living area, 756 square feet of below grade area, and a 711- square foot attached garage. A floor area table for countable square footage for the proposed home is shown below.

Floor Area Table		
	Proposed Square Footage	Counts as FAR
Lower Level	2,696	2,696
Upper Level	2,833	2,833
Subtotal	5,529	5,529
Below Grade*	756	0
Attached Garage**	711	311
Total		5,840 s.f.

** Pursuant to Sec. 29.10.020, floor area means the entire enclosed area of all floors that are more than four feet above the proposed grade, measured from the outer face of exterior walls or in the case of party walls from the centerline.*

*** Pursuant to the HDS&G a garage up to 400 square feet in area is not included in the floor area ratio calculation.*

DISCUSSION (continued):

The project proposes a contemporary architectural style to blend with the natural surroundings. Proposed materials include a green roof with single ply membrane roofing, steel fascia, iron and gray colored stone cladding panels, and oxidized metal aluminum doors and windows, see Sheet A118 of Exhibit 12. A color and materials board will be available at the public hearing. Please see the applicant’s project description (Exhibit 4) and letter of justification (Exhibit 5) for additional information regarding the proposed project.

B. Building Design

The Town’s Consulting Architect reviewed the proposed contemporary style project (Exhibit 7). The Consulting Architect had no issues or concerns and stated in the report, “that the proposed design would be similar to the recently approved home at 15358 Santella Court.” The Consulting Architect also stated, “that in contrast to the adjacent house which has its upper floor at street level, this proposed house would be located substantially down the hillside and the house forms step down the hillside slopes, as specified in the HDS&G.” Additionally, the Consulting Architect reported the project incorporates high quality materials and details and had no recommendations for changes.

C. Height

The proposed location of the residence is at a lower grade than the street level and appears as one-story from Santella Court and two-stories at the side and rear elevations. The maximum height of the proposed residence is 22 feet where the maximum allowed height for homes in the hillside area is 25 feet. Per the HDS&G, 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 point. The proposed residence would have a maximum low to high height of 28 feet.

Building Height		
	Proposed	Allowed per HDS&G
Height	22 ft.	25 ft. max.
Low to High Height	28 ft.	35 ft. max.

DISCUSSION (continued):D. Neighborhood Compatibility

The Highlands PD contains one and two-story residences and includes a mix of architectural styles. Lot sizes within the Planned Development and immediate area range from 1.09 to 5.05 acres. Based on Town and County records, the total countable square footage for residences located in the Highlands PD and the immediate area range from 4,881 square feet to 6,009 square feet. The applicant is proposing a residence with 5,840 of total countable square footage on a two-acre parcel, resulting in the largest home in terms of square footage in the Highlands PD.

The adjacent residence at 15500 Francis Oaks Way, located outside of the Highlands PD to the north and at a grade approximately 110 feet below subject property, is larger than the proposed house with 6,009 of countable square feet.

Pursuant to the HDS&G, the maximum house square footage for the lot size is 6,000 square feet. The table below reflects current conditions of the homes in the immediate area and in the Highlands PD. The homes in the immediate area are highlighted.

Immediate Area and Highlands Planned Development						
PD Lot	Address	House SF	*Garage SF	**Total Countable SF	Site SF	FAR
1	15685 Shady Ln.	4,457	904	4,961	89,226	0.05
2	15672 Shady Ln.	4,652	737	4,989	94,220	0.05
3	15644 Shady Ln.	4,796	1,172	5,568	176,242	0.03
4	15657 Shady Ln.	4,169	1,120	4,889	99,566	0.04
5	15615 Shady Ln.	4,658	740	4,989	80,730	0.06
6	15315 Santella Ct.	4,534	817	4,951	75,006	0.06
7	15343 Santella Ct. <i>Vacant</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	66,336	N/A
8	15371 Santella Ct. <i>Vacant</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	65,886	N/A
10	15358 Santella Ct. <i>Under Construction</i>	4,401	876	4,877	114,871	0.04
11	15330 Santella Ct.	4,625	746	4,971	60,493	0.08
12	15310 Santella Ct.	4,660	1,011	5,271	60,493	0.08
13	15415 Santella Ct. <i>Vacant</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	45,467	N/A
14	15574 Shady Ln.	4,574	784	4,958	83,402	0.05
15	15588 Shady Ln.	4,508	802	4,910	62,078	0.07
16	15602 Shady Ln.	4,331	950	4,881	65,913	0.07

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17	15630 Shady Ln.	4,712	686	4,998	92,771	0.05
18	15685 Gum Tree Ln.	4,590	807	4,997	179,921	0.03
19	15675 Gum Tree Ln.	4,602	765	4,967	93,552	0.05
9	15365 Santella Ct.	5,530	711	5,840	87,475	0.06
N/A	15500 Francis Oaks Wy	5,897	512	6,009	219,978	0.03

**The garage square footage numbers in the table include 400 square feet of exempt square footage.*

***The total square footage numbers in the table do not include below grade square footage or a garage up to 400 square feet in area.*

The proposed residence would not be the largest FAR in the Highlands PD or the immediate neighborhood. The proposed residence would be the largest home in terms of square footage in the Highlands PD, however, it would not be the largest in terms of square footage in the immediate neighborhood.

The applicant has provided justification for proposing the largest home in terms of square footage in the Highlands PD in Exhibit 5. The proposed location of the house is at a lower elevation than the existing homes located at street level, therefore reducing the visibility of the residence from street view.

E. Site Design

The subject property is a triangular-shaped corridor lot sloping downward from the north end of Santella Court. The property takes access through a private driveway downhill to the proposed site of the residence. A performance standard of the Highlands Planned Development requires, “new homes to be sited within the grading envelopes shown of the Official Development Plans unless it can be demonstrated that another location is more appropriate for the lot. The burden of proof is on the applicant to justify any deviation from the approved grading envelope.” The applicant has provided justification for siting the home north of the approved grading envelope (Page 5 of Exhibit 5). Due to the corridor lot shape and length of the private driveway, the Santa Clara County Fire Department requires a fire engine turnaround area that does not exceed five percent slope. The building was sited further north to accommodate the required fire engine turnaround area and to accommodate a 17-percent driveway slope for fire engine access, which has been approved by the Santa Clara County Fire Department. The applicant designed a linear mass for the home to minimize impact to existing trees and reduce site grading. The proposed building location is located within the site’s Least Restrictive Development Area (LRDA) per the HDS&G.

DISCUSSION (continued):

F. Tree Impacts

The development plans were reviewed by the Town's Consulting Arborist (Exhibit 8). The project proposes to remove fourteen protected trees, of which five are considered to be large protected trees. The initial arborist report included fifteen trees to be removed; however, the applicant has since modified the plans to retain tree #665.

The fourteen protected trees (Blue Oaks - #652, #653, #656, #660, #662, #668, #671, #675, #676, #677, #679, #680, and #690 and Coast Live Oak - #691), are proposed to be removed to accommodate the proposed residence, driveway, and fire truck turn around. If the project is approved, replacement trees would be required to be planted pursuant to Town Code.

An Addendum report was prepared by the Consulting Arborist regarding the health of the existing trees located along the rear and side downward slope of the lot proposed to remain. The Consulting Arborist was not able to get close enough to inspect the health and condition of each individual tree due to the dense and nearly impenetrable brush. However, the Consulting Arborist was able to provide an evaluation of the grouping of trees based on their size, color, and crown. The Arborist stated that the area contains a stand of Coast Live Oaks, approximately 25 to 35 feet tall that would appear to be considered to be in good condition with dense crowns and normal foliar color and size. Along the northwest portion on the lower slope there are three Blue Oaks, approximately 30 feet tall, that are in fair to good condition (Exhibit 9).

Tree protection measures are incorporated as conditions of approval (Exhibit 3) to protect the trees proposed to remain on the subject property and within the development area.

G. Visibility

Pursuant to the HDS&G, a visible home is defined as a single-family residence where 24.5 percent or more of an elevation can be seen from any of the Town's established viewing areas. The applicant's visibility analysis illustrates that the proposed home would not be visible from the southwest corner of the intersection of Blossom Hill Road and Los Gatos Boulevard viewing area and would be 24 percent visible from the northwest corner of the of Selinda Way and Los Gatos - Almaden Road viewing area (Exhibit 10).

Pursuant to the requirements of the View Analysis section of the HDS&G, the applicant installed story poles on-site that identified the proposed building.

DISCUSSION (continued):

The applicant took photographs of the project site from the established viewing platform located at the Northwest corner of Los Gatos-Almaden Road and Selinda Way with a 50 MM and a 300 MM lens. The photographs and computer modeling were then aligned to determine the areas of the proposed residence that would be visible, excluding any trees that are proposed to be removed or are in poor condition (Exhibit 10). The existing trees that have been identified in the photographs as providing screening for the proposed single-family residence are rated in good or fair condition and are proposed to remain.

As discussed in the Tree section of the report, the Consulting Arborist was not able to get close enough to the stand of trees along the rear and side downward slope to inspect the health and condition of each individual tree; however, overall, he found the grouping of Coast Live Oaks and Blue Oaks to be in fair to good condition with dense crowns and normal foliar color and size. The applicant has labeled the trees included on the subject property in the Visibility Analysis as X1, X2, Y1, Y2, Y3, Z5, and Z3. Three trees used in the Visibility Analysis, trees Z2, Z4, and Z6 are not located on the subject property (Sheet 17 of Exhibit 10).

The applicant's methodology complies with the current methodology to not use trees in poor condition in the Visibility Analysis.

H. Neighbor Outreach

The applicant reached out to their neighbors and provided copies of the three responses they received (Exhibit 11).

I. CEQA Determination

An Environmental Impact Report was prepared for the Planned Development and was certified by the Town Council on December 19, 2005. No further environmental analysis is required for the individual lot development.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Story poles and signage were installed on the site and written notice was sent to property owners and tenants located within 500 feet of the subject property. No public comments were received by 11:00 a.m., Friday, January 3, 2020.

CONCLUSION:

A. Summary

The applicant is requesting approval of an Architecture and Site application to construct a single-family residence on a vacant lot within the Highlands PD. As proposed, the project would create the largest home in terms of countable square footage in the Highlands PD with a proposed 5,840-square foot residence. However, the proposed project would not be the largest home in terms of square footage in the immediate area as the adjacent downhill residence is larger. Due to the property configuration and downward sloping topography of the subject site the proposed residence would be located below street level from Santella Court. The project is consistent with the Zoning, General Plan, applicable HDS&G, Hillside Specific Plan, and Highlands PD Ordinance 2237. The proposed project does not request any exceptions.

B. Recommendation

Based on the analysis above, staff recommends approval of the Architecture and Site application subject to the recommended conditions of approval (Exhibit 3). If the Planning Commission finds merit with the proposed project, it should:

1. Make the finding that no further environmental analysis is required (Exhibit 2);
2. Make the finding that the project is in compliance with the Hillside Development Standards and Guidelines (Exhibit 2);
3. Make the finding that the project is in compliance with the Hillside Specific Plan (Exhibit 2);
4. Make the finding that the project is in compliance with the Highlands Planned Development Ordinance 2237 (Exhibit 2);
5. Make the required considerations as required by Section 29.20.150 of the Town Code for granting approval of an Architecture and Site application (Exhibit 2); and
6. Approve Architecture and Site Application S-18-052 with the conditions contained in Exhibit 3 and the development plans in Exhibit 12.

C. Alternatives

Alternatively, the Commission can:

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

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EXHIBITS:

1. Location Map
2. Required Findings and Considerations (one sheet)
3. Recommended Conditions of Approval (16 sheets)
4. Project Description, received on December 11, 2019 (two sheets)
5. Letter of Justification, received December 16, 2019 (14 sheets)
6. Project Data (one sheet)
7. Consulting Architect's Report, received November 14, 2018 (six sheets)
8. Consulting Arborist's Report, dated November 29, 2018 (37 sheets)
9. Consulting Arborist's Addendum Report, dated August 20, 2019 (eight sheets)
10. Visibility Analysis, received December 10, 2019 (28 sheets)
11. Applicant's neighbor outreach efforts, received November 18, 2019 (four sheets)
12. Development Plans, received November 15, 2019 (29 sheets)