

Re: Olgaard Residence- Project Justification Letter  
Site Address: 15365 Santella Court; APN: 527-09-036. Architecture & Site Application# S-24-002.

Date:  
Jan 31, 2024

Dear Planning Commissioners  
Community Development Department.  
Town of Los Gatos

On behalf of Christian & Helen Olgaard, we request the Town of Los Gatos to extend the previously approved planning Permit.

The proposed single-family home design to be developed on a vacant lot has two-levels, 4 bedrooms, 4 ½ baths and 3 car-garage of 5,840 sf. allowable floor area and a 756 sf below grade (basement) space. The Los Gatos Planning Commission and the Town Council unanimously endorsed this proposal in January and March of 2020. Please see attached approval documents.

However, due to some unavailable circumstances, the project submission for the Building Department has been delayed. With the guidance and guidance of your planners, we are resubmitting the same set of documents and drawings, which were previously approved. Furthermore, we are submitting relevant documents that demonstrate compliance with the updated Los Gatos zoning regulations and design guidelines, since the project was approved in 2020.

### **EXISTING PROPERTY DESCRIPTION**

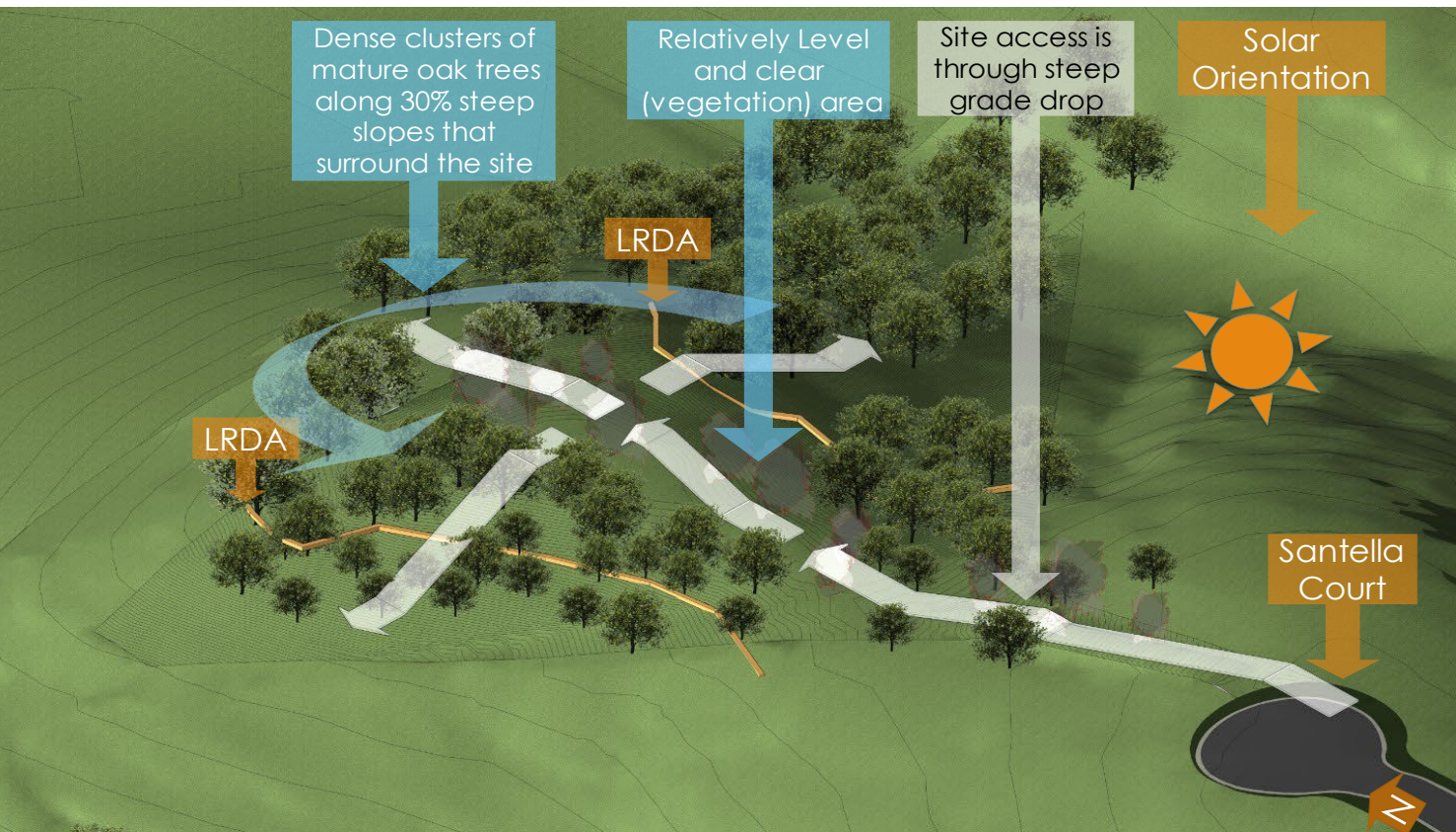


Figure 1 Site and Neighborhood Terrain was modelled based on topography drawings and Google Earth

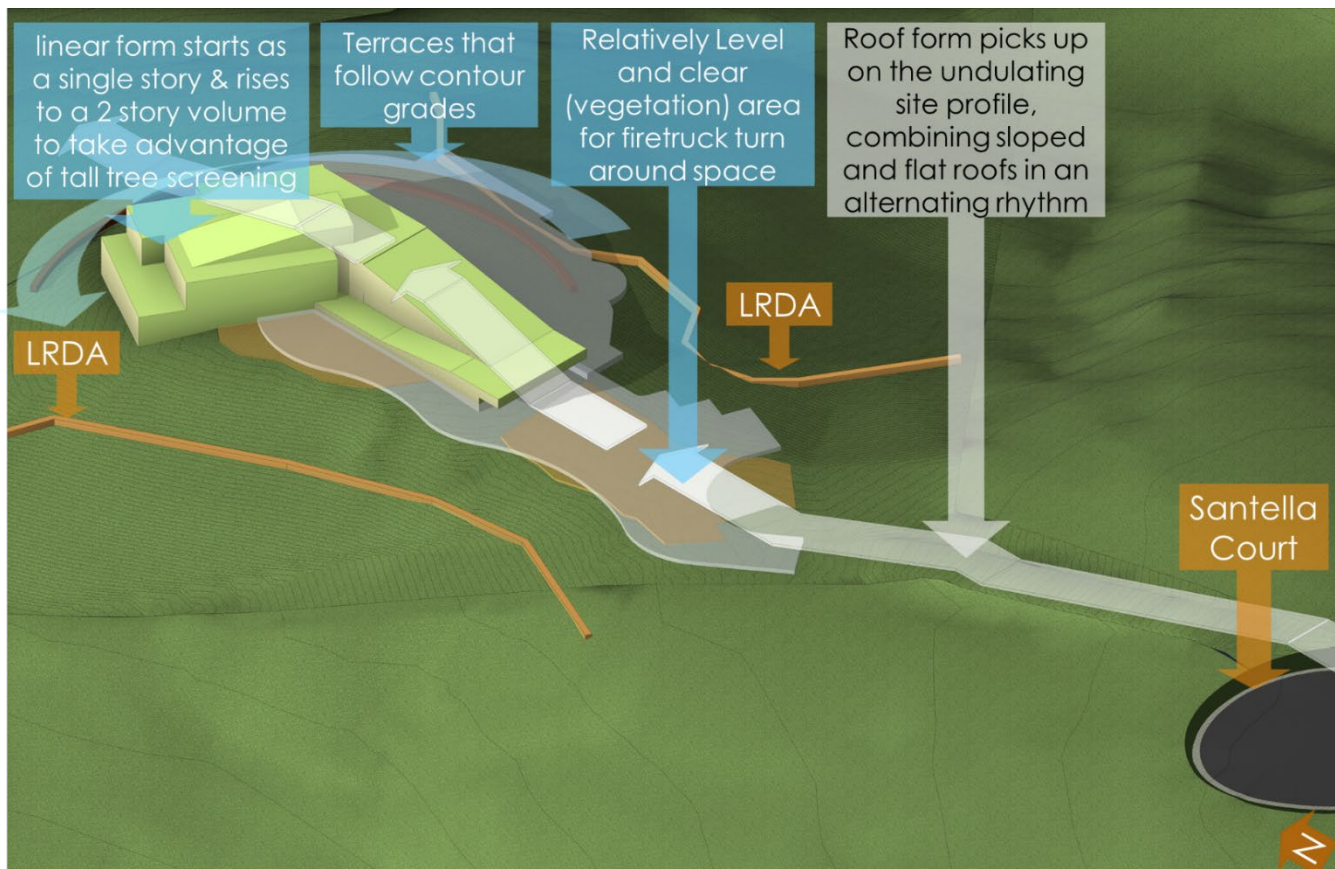
The site is part of the planned development of Highlands of Los Gatos subdivision that encompasses approximately 66 acres of custom hillside residential lots, accessed from Shady Lane and Gum Tree Lane. This 2-acre vacant property, situated on the north end of Santella Court, presents many great opportunities and some limitations that we carefully researched and mapped before any placement of the proposed residence was considered.

The project scope includes the development of a downward sloping, south-facing flag lot with a natural setting of lush hillsides and oak trees. In contrast to the other street-level homes on Santella court, this proposed residence would be situated significantly lower on the hillside and accessed through a private driveway. From here, the lot reaches a triangular shape forming in the east-west direction. The site is surrounded by dense clusters of mature coast live oak and blue oak trees along its slopes, with a small relatively clear and level area that extends to the rear. The arborist's tree inventory contains 44 trees (with some undocumented along inaccessible slopes) in either good or fair condition, 4 trees in poor health, and one that fell due to natural causes after the arborist report was prepared. The land descends to a steeper slope along the perimeter of the property. Due to these steep 30% slopes surrounding the site, the LRDA is limited to the level area in the middle of the property.

## **DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED RESIDENCE**

### **Site Design**

Given all the opportunities and constraints, and with considerable deliberation, we chose a linear form for the house, and a winding driveway to reduce the slope. We chose these forms for their adaptability to the shape of the site grading contours and to reduce tree removal. The private driveway from Santella Court slopes down to the fire truck turnaround/visitor parking area in front of



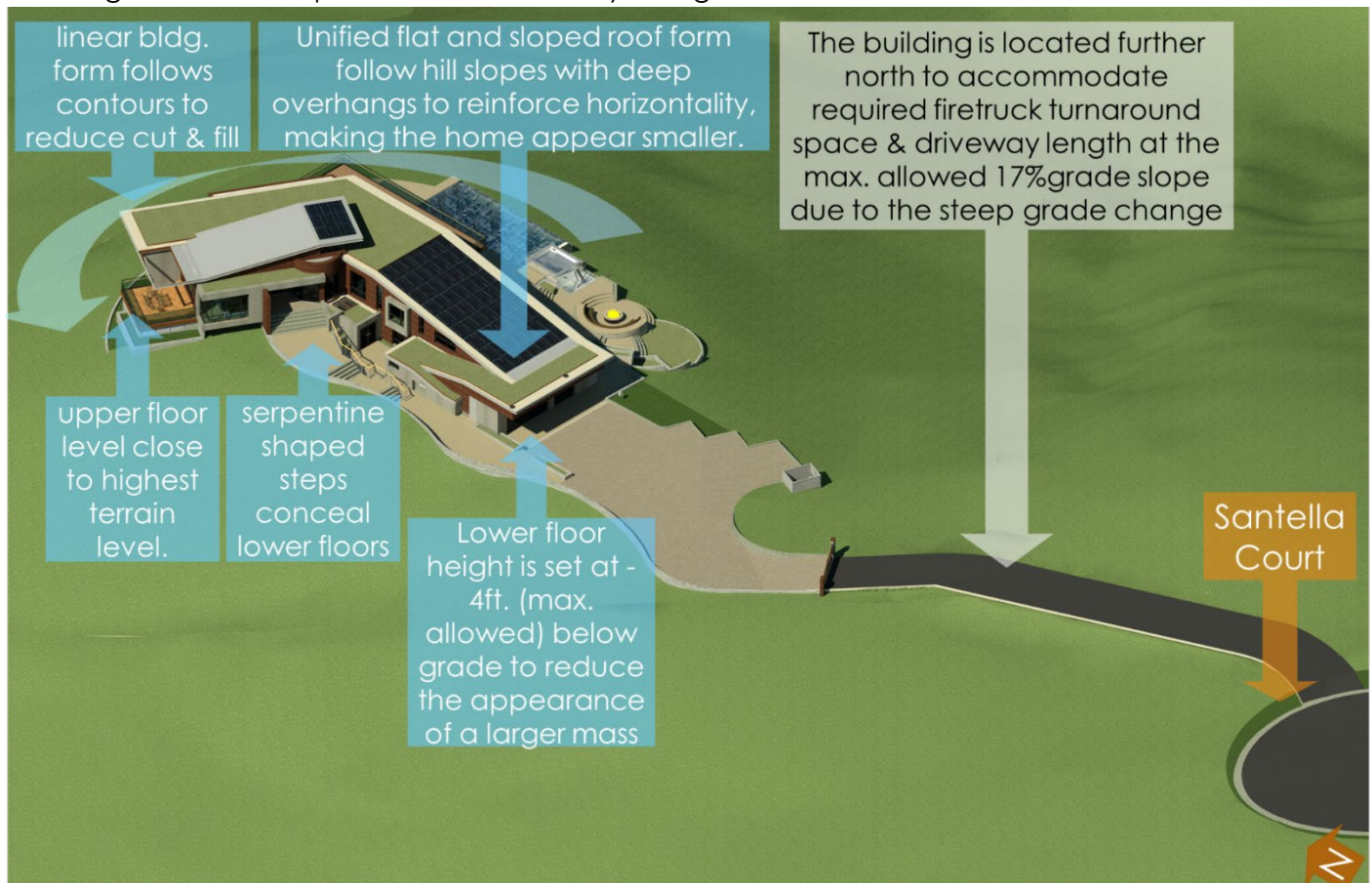
the residence's garage. From here, a winding stair path leads to the front entrance and a side yard that extends to a patio and pool towards the north-east of the property. The site and hillside slopes are stable and geotechnically suitable for the proposed structure. The geologist report is included in this submission, which has been approved by peer review.

**Site grading**

The driveway design became a crucial component of the site layout, and was characterized by the narrow and steep terrain, existing trees, firetruck turnaround space requirements. We utilized the level changes in the terrain to create floor levels that closely aligned to the adjacent grades. As the land dipped and flattened out at the firetruck turn around space, we set the lower floor level 4ft (maximum permissible cut) below grade to reduce the appearance of a larger mass. As the height of the terrain increased to the rear of the property, we set the upper floor level close to the higher level. A series of serpentine shaped steps rise with the existing grade to access the upper level concealing the lower-level floor below and effectively transforming the building into a single-story home. As the terrain slopes more gradually on the east side of the home, we created terraces that adhere to contour grades, which open to the lower floor level, thus reducing cut and fill. The upper floor level was able to access the outdoor deck set close to the higher terrain level on the west side of the home. This approach reduced the cut and fill volumes and height of retaining walls.

**Articulation of the building mass**

We designed the linear form to begin as a single story at the garage, and to increase to a two-story volume towards the rear. This shape enables screening of the larger mass by tall trees along the north and the west property lines, which form a dense cluster around the building. There are 15 trees, including the 4 trees in poor condition, mostly along the exterior of the site that will be removed to



construct the residence and driveway. This low-profile residence with a linear horizontal building form follows the site contours and levels so that the structure appears integrated into the hill side. At the north end of the property, the building form turns 60 degrees after the contours, creating a backdrop for the terraces and patio areas to follow. Following the terrain along the contours, reduces the amount of grading required and integrates the building into the site.



### **Building Features**

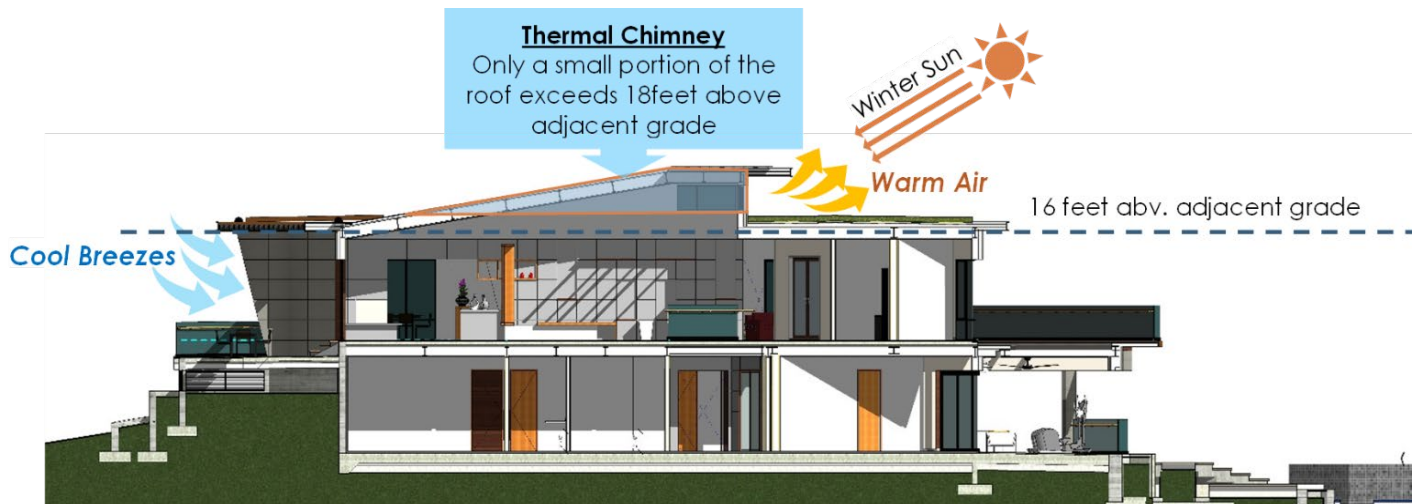


The building roof structure is based on the undulating site profile, combining sloped and flat roofs in an alternating manner. The alternating flat and sloped rhythms create a unified roof structure, consisting of live green roof and photovoltaics. Much of the home will be located at the lower level with private spaces such as bedrooms, media and family rooms, and a wine cellar, as well as a garage. The upper level will have an entry foyer, kitchen, dining, and living spaces that offer breathtaking views of the distant hills. The contemporary home design with doors and windows that open to the outdoor spaces merge them seamlessly with the indoors to maximize the enjoyment of natural settings and

the moderate weather we all enjoy in California. The house wraps around the entrance courtyard with operable windows to catch the summer breezes from the west to naturally cool the house. The exterior of the home has an insulated rain-screen system clad with sintered stone panels.



These earth toned sintered stone panels are installed every 2 ft in vertical direction to emphasize the horizontal nature of the building. The aluminum windows and door frames with a dark oxidized metal finish match the horizontal and vertical lines of the stone cladding system. The glazing of doors and windows is clear to provide more natural light indoors and reduce reflection to the exteriors. This glazing has a heat reflective coating on the inner side to reduce glare and enhance the thermal performance of the home.



**Figure 9: Passive Solar Design**

Only a small portion of the roof extends beyond a height of 18feet to create a clearstory windows. (homes below 18 feet height wouldn't be considered as a visible home). This roof structure is a thermal chimney, a crucial component of the home's passive solar design. It brings in cool air in the summer and warmth from low angle sun in the winter.

## **COMPLIANCE WITH HILLSIDE DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS & GUIDELINES**

In addition to what was identified above, the proposed home specifically addresses the Hillside Development Standards and Guidelines as follows:

### **Justification for home size in the immediate neighborhood**

The proposed home is both smaller in total size and smaller in appearance than others in the neighborhood. This home area when below-grade is also considered, is smaller than the neighborhood homes. To illustrate the point, we have created a neighborhood floor area comparison sheet that shows the floor areas including below grade areas. For example, the home at 15310 Santella Court has 5,671 sf floor area, which is smaller than the proposed home with 5,840 sf of floor area. If the below grade area is included, the total home floor area for 15310 Santella Court is 7,425 sf, which is larger than the total area of this proposed home of 6,596 sf. This neighborhood home situated on a relatively large area and all the home's upper mass is visible to the observer. To reduce the appearance of a large home size, more of the area was allocated to the below grade for this project. See picture below (courtesy -Redfin website).

This home would be located significantly lower on the hillside, compared to the other street level homes on Santella court. This home design reduces the appearance of a larger residence due to the home sitting and the articulation of the massing.(see rendering on previous page). This slender shape, split-level design and low-profile home with the roof close to the ground, will appear smaller than a traditional home with traditional hip and gable roofs. We have attached the neighborhood comparison data for your reference.

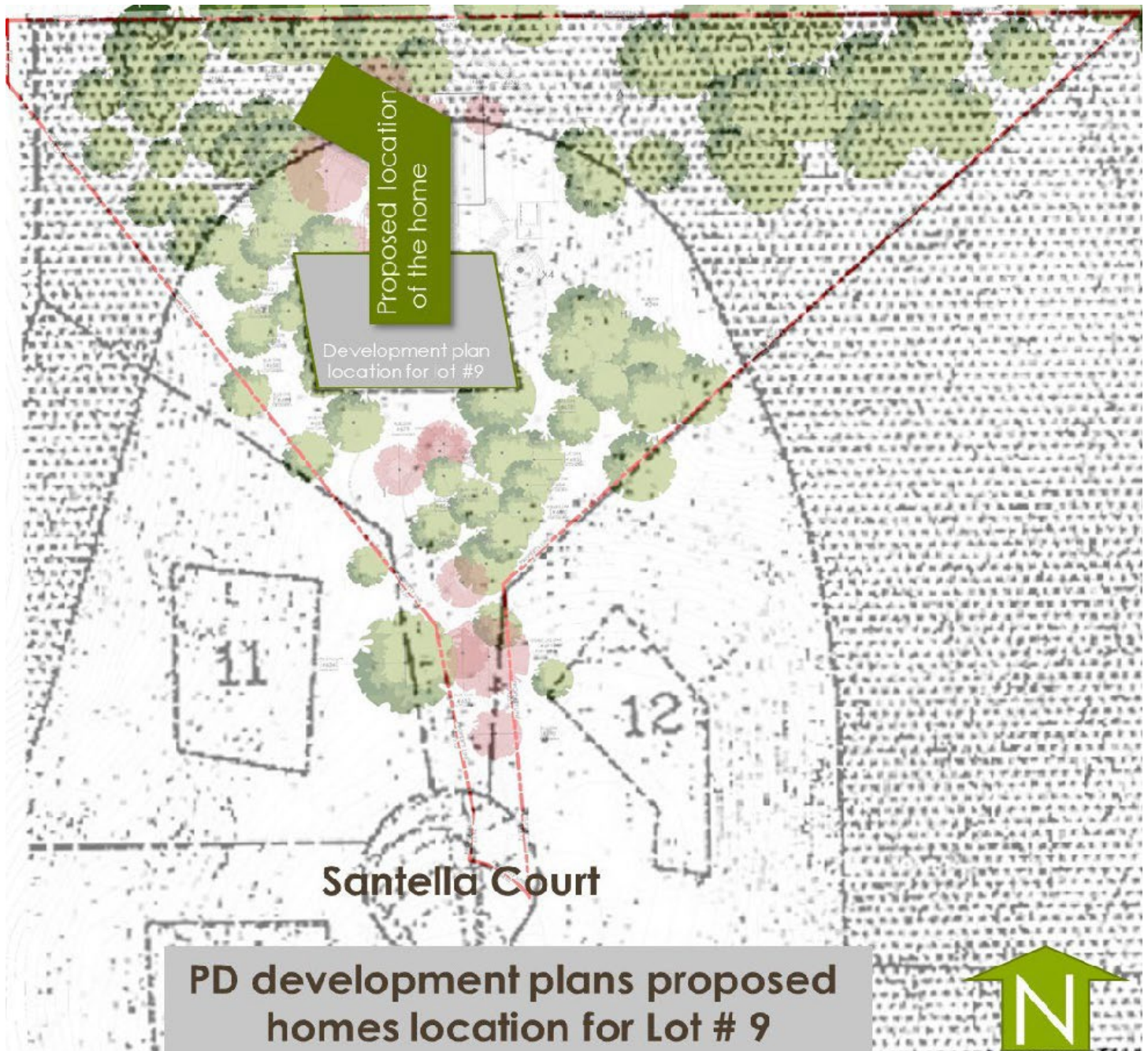


### **Siting of the home**

Following a detailed review of the site conditions, we placed the home further north than the location indicated in the approved PD development plans. The image below shows the original location in the PD development plans that were overlaid by our proposed home.

Below are several compelling reasons:

- Due to the flag lot shape and the narrow access exceeding 150 ft, we were required by the Santa Clara County fire department to construct a large fire engine truck turn around space with a shallow grade at the end of the driveway.
- The building location was pushed further north to accommodate the required the fire truck turnaround space and driveway at the maximum allowed 17% grade slope.



- We chose a linear mass for the home to reduce the impact of the building footprint on the existing tree locations. This enabled us to preserve many native oak trees, increase the tree screening and reduce visibility of the home to the neighborhood.
- The linear building structure also followed the site grading contour levels to have the house sit at a lower level, reduce site grading and overall building height. We achieved this by partially building into the hill side to maximum allowed depth of 4 ft cut, so that the structure appears as an integrated part of the terrain.
- The north-south direction of the home allows the maximum amount of solar energy to be harvested.



**Specific site conditions that influenced the location of the home within the site**



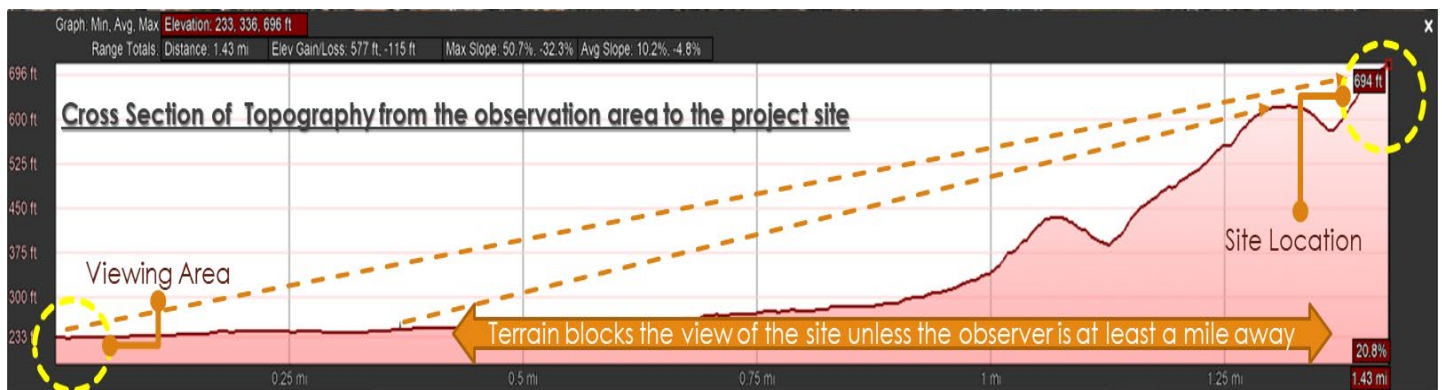


**Project visibility analysis**



**Figure 2: "Sketchup" and Google Earth were used to configure the location and altitude of the View angles.**

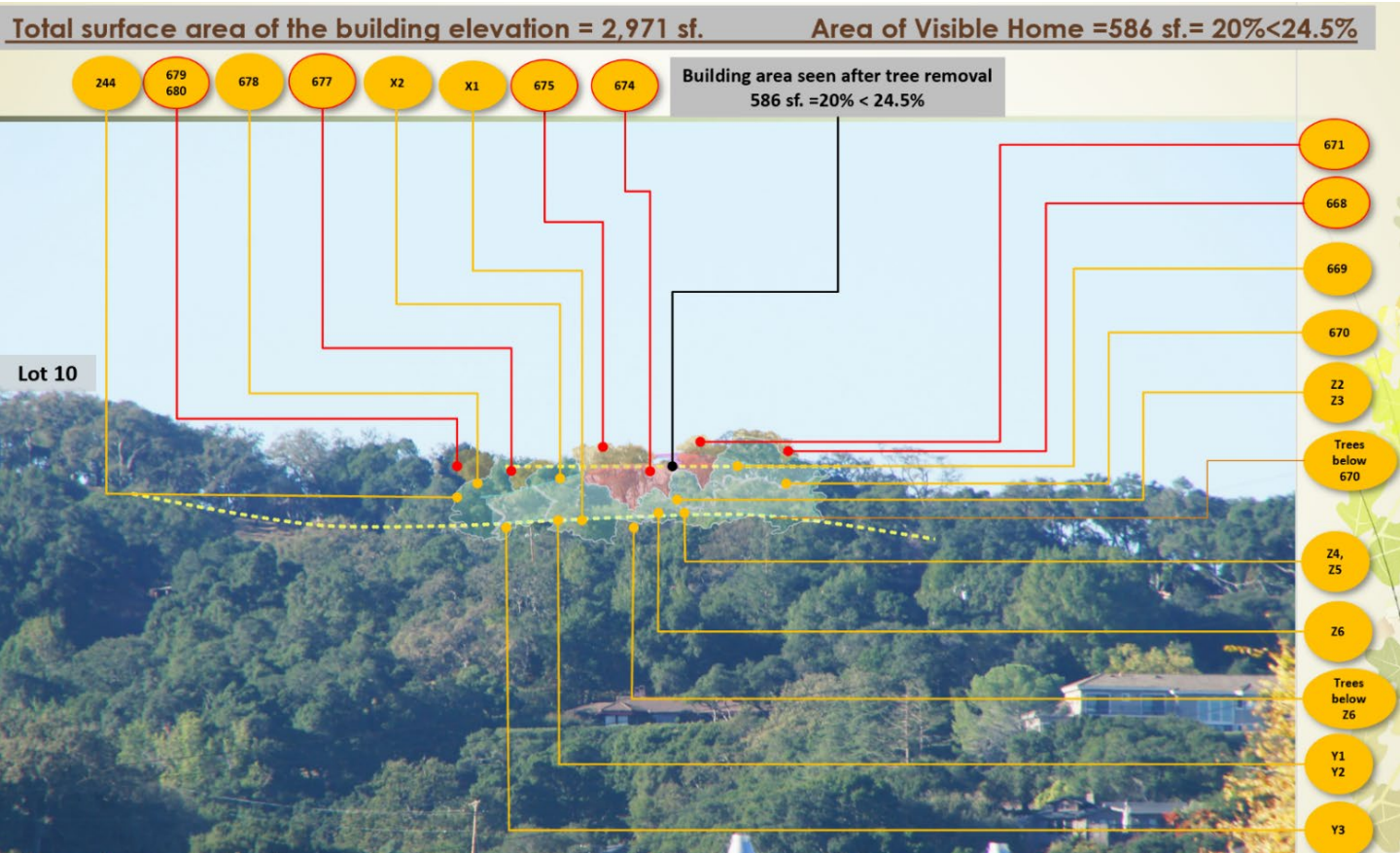
We have conducted an extensive examination of the site, the surrounding landscape, the screening of mature trees in the vicinity, and the visibility of the project from the viewing areas. **Blossom Hill/LG Blvd.** and **Selinda Way/LG Almaden Rd.** viewing areas were identified as the two viewing areas nearest to the project from where the home could potentially be seen. Our initial research with the computer model indicated that the project would not be seen from Blossom Hill /LG Blvd intersection viewing area due to dense tree cover. This was later confirmed by the subsequent pictures taken after the story-poles were installed.



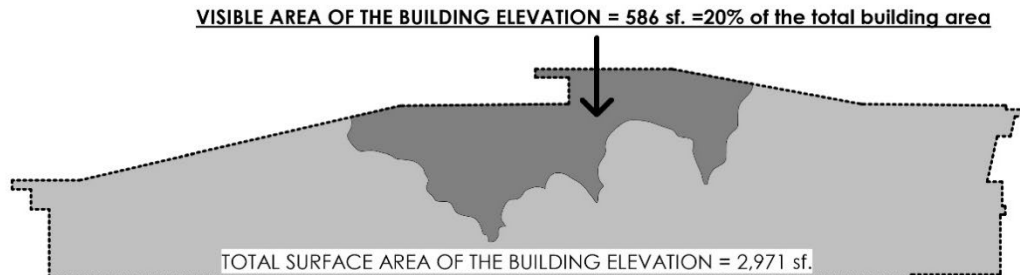
**Figure 7: Terrain in front of the home blocks the view of the home from nearby.**

We then focused on our study on the Selinda Way/LG Almaden Rd. viewing area. When we examined the cross section of the topography of the hillsides and the ridges from the Selinda Way/LG Almaden Road, it became evident that this project site would not be seen from anywhere nearby. The home would not be seen due to a secondary ridge in front of the site unless the observer is a mile or more away. In the illustration above, the view is blocked when an observer enters within a mile of the project.

The property is barely visible with the naked eye when seen from **a mile away**. This picture below is taken from Selinda Way/LG Almaden Rd. intersection, which is further than a mile away. To get an unobstructed view we took the 50mm lens picture (below) from the Lee high school fence. To accurately view this site, one would need 300 mm telephoto lens standing a mile or more away, as it is not possible to see it closer due to the ridge in the front.



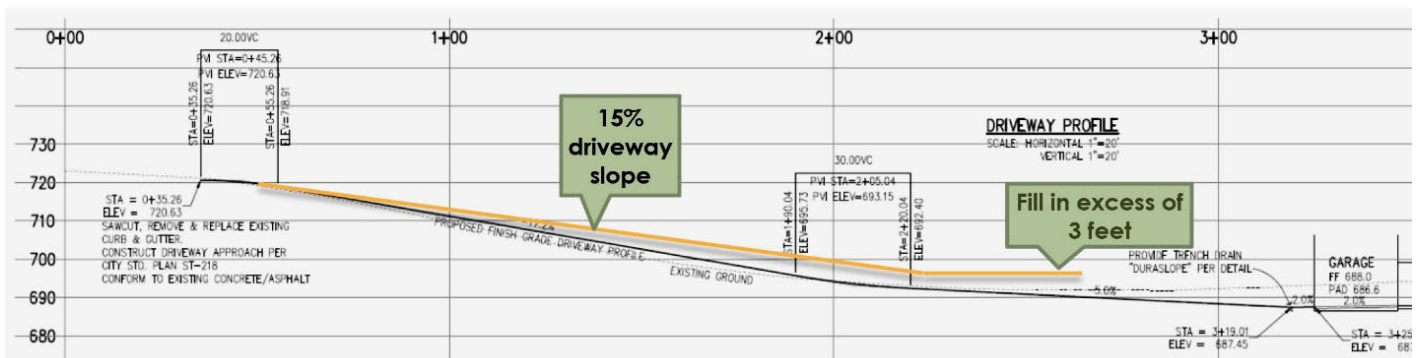
Our subsequent detailed analysis based on the updated design guidelines and zoning regulations indicated that only a portion of the home (that is less than 24%) would be seen with a 300 mm telephoto lens. This was confirmed by subsequent images taken after story-poles were installed as shown in the images and elevations above. This home would not be considered a visible home by Los Gatos HDS&G. We included a comprehensive and comprehensive analysis of home's visibility.



### **Grading for driveway and visitor parking**

As previously mentioned, the narrow and steep terrain at the entrance of the site affects the design of the driveway.

- We utilized the shallow terrain to create the firetruck turn around space, and guest parking. Staying close to the terrain and utilizing the shallow grade allowed us to meet the fire truck turn-around space clearances & grading slope (5% maximum) and the HDS&G cut and fill requirements.
- The 5% slope of the firetruck turn around space enabled us to set the home's lower floor height 4ft below grade to reduce the appearance of a larger mass.
- As the terrain reached the rear of the property, we set the upper floor level close to the higher terrain level.



- A series of serpentine shaped steps rise with the existing grade to access the upper level, masking the lower-level floor below and effectively transforming the home into a single-story home.

We requested a driveway slope of 17%, versus the typical 15%, for the following reasons-

- A driveway slope of 15% would cause the lower parts of the driveway at the firetruck turnaround space to exceed the 4ft maximum fill requirement of HDS&G.
- A driveway slope of 15% would also require the home to relocate further north due to the fire truck turnaround space requirements and that would encroach into the rear setback area. A 17% slope allows the firetruck to turn around space closer to the cul-de-sac and locate it in the shallow existing terrain area (relatively free of mature trees) and ensures the grading is compatible with HDS&G requirements.
- We met with the Fire Marshal early in the construction process and had his consent for a 17% slope for the driveway. We also collaborated with the lot #8 design team to provide a lower desired driveway access level for their site, as it is shared with this neighbor.

### **Neighborhood friendly, site design**

Privacy of the neighbors is protected by dense surrounding vegetation and the additional landscape screening proposed along the north property line.

- All the upper-level doors, windows and outdoor areas face away from neighbors' properties.
- Outdoor activity areas at the lower level are designed to face the eastern side of the property which is further away from the immediate neighbors. These outdoor activity areas are also surrounded by dense vegetation.
- All four adjacent neighbors have reviewed the design drawings and have no concerns regarding the design.

### **Sustainable Design**

The sustainable design elements of this home include a net zero energy design and LEED certification. The homes orientation utilizes the clear shade free area in front of the home for incorporating the photovoltaic system into the sloping roof.



**Figure 10: Sustainable Net Zero Energy Design**

### **Passive Solar Design**

All the living and active spaces at the upper level open to the south-southeast orientation to allow low angle winter sun to enter and the deep overhangs over openings protect them from summer heat gain. The home wraps around the entry courtyard to capture summer breezes for cross ventilation. The clear story windows at the high level create a stack effect such as a chimney to let warm air out while drawing cooler air from the lower level.

### **Hi performance Thermal Envelope**

The home has a rainscreen wall system with sintered stone panel cladding. It breathes much like our skin, with an airgap behind the exterior cladding to let any moisture in the building escape. Layers of high-performance insulation, which are located behind airgap, reduce building heat gain or loss.

### **Live Green Roof**

The live roof will feature succulent plants that collect and filter rainwater, while keeping the home cool. Once these plants are established, they can survive with low water usage, using drip irrigation in summer.

### **Geothermal and Solar Thermal Heating Systems**

The home's domestic hot water, pool/jacuzzi, cooking, heating / cooling, and other home energy loads are reduced by solar thermal and geothermal systems. The geothermal system utilizes the earth's temperature of 60° F to pre-heat or cool the water for the electric HVAC heat pump. This Heat pump further cools or warms this water and circulates it throughout the home's highly efficient radiant heating/cooling ceiling panels. Solar thermal roof panels heat the domestic hot water for daily use and pool /Spa from spring to autumn.

### **Photovoltaic System for NET Zero Energy Use**

A 48,400 kwh/year photovoltaic (PV) system for the home shall be designed to offset 100% of the anticipated energy usage of the home its occupants, on an annual basis. The roof mounted photovoltaic system will provide enough electricity for all the home's energy needs, and also for charging for two electric vehicles.

### **LEED Certification**

Among all other stringent requirements for the LEED certification, we are considering rainwater harvesting and grey water from showers for landscape irrigation. Our current estimation of LEED V4 for Homes certification credits totaled 76.5 points, close to certification thresholds for LEED Gold or Platinum.

### **Fire safety**

The home design incorporates the following fire safety measures and complies with stringent Wildlife Urban Interface standards and HDS&G;

- Fire rated exterior envelope with ceramic panel exterior cladding.
- All steel structure with concrete slab foundation, floors and retaining walls.
- Fire sprinkler system.
- Tempered exterior glazing.
- The undersides of roofs and decks are protected with noncombustible materials.
- Live green roof with succulent plants.
- The 100 feet defensible space for landscaping.
- An 18 ft. wide firetruck access road and location of turn-around space deep into the property for firefighting access.

- Drought tolerant landscaping with underbrush cleared.

The Fire department also reviewed the project site for its conformance of the Fire Safe Regulations, per 14 CCR § 1270.02. and approved it for construction. A copy of the approval is attached with this document.

### **Building height, bulk and mass**

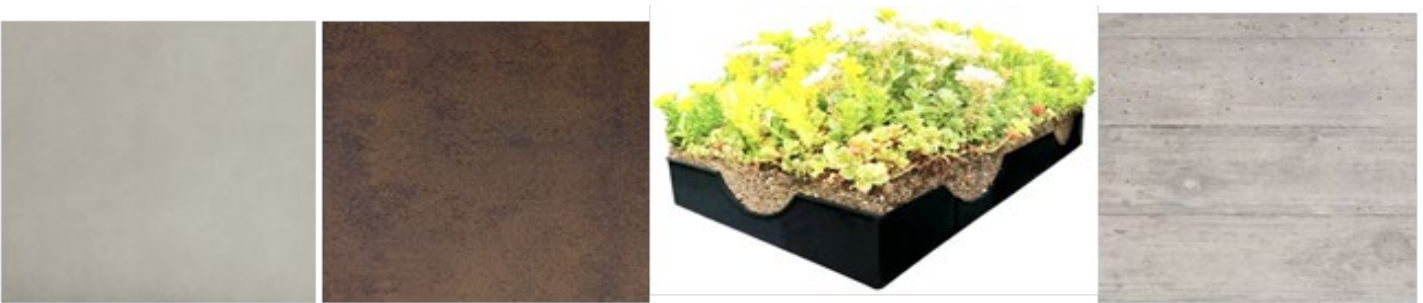
This home utilizes a sloped lot to reduce the appearance of larger home with home sitting and the articulation of the massing. This low-profile home with a slender shape, split-level design and a continuous roof that is close to the ground will appear as a single-story home. The following design strategies are utilized to minimize bulk and mass:

- The linear form of the home begins at the garage as a single story and rises to a two-story volume towards the rear. This shape enables screening of the larger mass by tall trees along the north and the west property lines, reducing the impact of a taller mass.
- The varying flat and sloped roof forms follow the hill slopes with deep overhangs to reinforce horizontality, resulting in the home appearing smaller.
- The live roof blends with different site terrain patterns in its form, color, and texture.
- Most of the roof adheres to the site slopes at a 18 ft maximum height from the adjacent grade. A small portion is formed as a clearstory element in the roof composition at 22 feet from the adjacent grade. This small clearstory roof area is only 15% of the overall roof area and is setback from the exterior face. This is the only element of the building that is higher than the rest of the roof, but it is crucial to the roof structure, massing composition, and indoor air circulation.

### **Selective use of glazing**

This contemporary residence is designed to have a strong connection to outdoor spaces and bring in the natural beauty of the site. The doors and windows with dark oxidized aluminum frames are integrated with the rhythms and patterns of the exterior sintered stone panels to make the home appear smaller, lighter, slender and delicate. They are integral part of the exterior building skin and the architectural composition. The exterior panels with low LRV surface material values are punctuated by the window openings used selectively at critical locations. The solid structure with its projections, roof awnings and recesses reduces the continuity of the glazing. They are deliberately placed to frame the views of the distant hills and away from their neighbors to protect their privacy. The dense tree cover and surrounding hillside ridges also offers them privacy from all lower-level views.

### **Materials and colors**



All materials colors and textures conform with HDS&G. See images above.

The two primary exterior sintered stone (such as ceramic tile) cladding panels are of earth tones (warm gray and oxidized iron colors) have low LRV values of 17 and 12. Stained concrete retaining wall have a LRV value of 13. All are maintenance free durable materials. Exposed metal surfaces shall be painted to complement adjacent materials or anodized to a dark color. The glazing used is a low-reflective and energy-efficient coating. The live roof system will have the same colors and textures of the native vegetation. The cumulative LRV of the home is 13.

### **Landscaping & retaining walls**

The landscape design is a crucial element in creating the seamless transition of indoor-outdoor spaces. The interior spaces open directly to the terraces with natural travertine stone or wood decking. The terrace levels set close to the existing grades minimize cut and fill quantities and reduce the height of the walls.

The driveway surface is asphalt up to the entry gate of the home, and then paved tile to support the fire trucks and vehicular traffic in front of the home. All site retaining walls are equal to or less than 4 ft in height. They will be constructed with textured concrete walls that have a natural appearance and allow water to seep through weep holes.

Most of the landscaping is specified to be native Californian, deer resistant and drought tolerant. The landscaping is also designed to complement the native landscaping and most of the property will remain in its natural state in perpetuity. The clearing of underbrush will reduce wildfire hazard by creating a 100 ft defensible space for planting. All outdoor spaces, seating areas and the pool are located away from the neighbors to maintain the privacy of the neighbors and the homeowners.



### **CONCLUSION**

This design has been designed and developed from the beginning to enhance and enhance the natural beauty of the hillside area. The home is designed to be incorporated into the land to become part of the harmonious nature. The design closely adheres to Hillside Development Standards and Guidelines in its intent, scale, colors, massing, and overall design. This proposed project has already been unanimously approved both by the Los Gatos Planning commission and the City Council in January and March of 2020. This project also complies with all updated Los Gatos zoning ordinances and design guidelines, since the project's approval in 2020.

We hope the review process will be timely and efficient and that you will grant us the extension of the planning approval at your earliest convenience. If you have any questions, or need any additional information please contact me at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely



Hari Sripadanna AIA C-30730

 **Srusti Architects**

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We collaborate to create sustainable spaces.

[www.srustiarchitects.com](http://www.srustiarchitects.com)



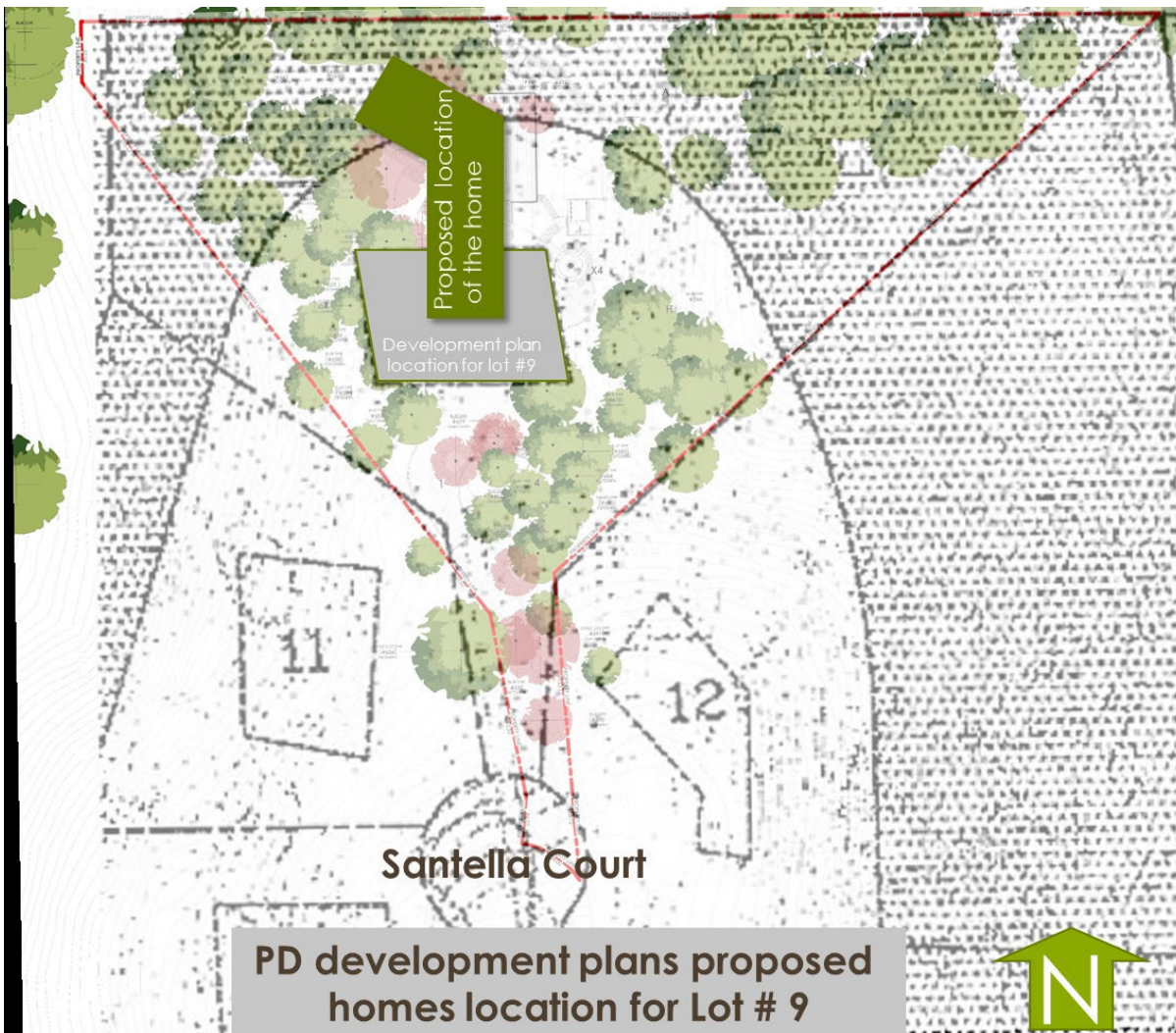
Re: **Olgaard Residence-Letter of justification supporting location of the home & driveway grade**  
Site Address:15365 Santella Court; APN: 527-09-036. Architecture & Site Application# S-24-002.

Date:  
Jan 31, 2024

Dear Planning Commissioners  
Community Development Department.  
Town of Los Gatos,110 E Main St, Los Gatos, CA 95030

This letter is a response to the planning department's request to justify the proposed house sitting. Proposed location of the home deferred from Condition #6 of the PD- ***“locate a home within the grading envelopes shown on the Official Development Plans unless it can be demonstrated that another location is more appropriate for the lot.”***

Following a thorough evaluation of the site conditions, we situated the home further north than the location indicated in the approved PD development plans. The image below shows the original location displayed in the PD development plans overlaid by our proposed location of the residence.



PD development plans proposed homes location for Lot # 9

There are several compelling reasons for this decision. See image below.



**Specific site conditions that influenced the location of the home within the site**

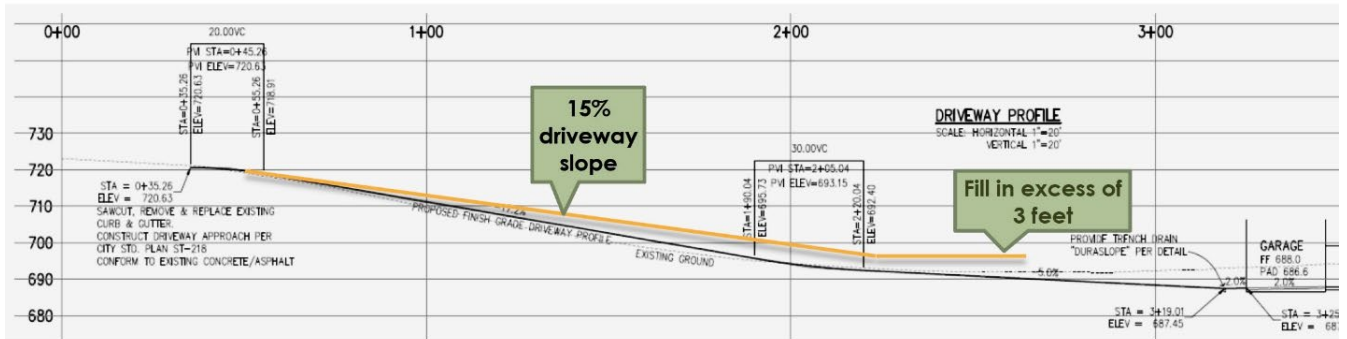


- Due to the flag lot shape and the narrow access exceeding 150 feet we were required by the Santa Clara county fire department to create a fire engine truck turn around space of 55 feet by 75 feet with the grade level of the turnaround space not exceeding 5%, at end of the drive way.
- We have already increased the maximum allowed driveway slope 17% to shorten the driveway, however the minimum length of the driveway for the vertical grade change of 30 feet and the firetruck turnaround space necessitated the building to be located further north.
- We chose a linear mass for the home to reduce the impact of the building footprint on the existing tree locations. This enabled us to save numerous native oak trees, increase the tree screening and reduce the visual impact of the home to the neighborhood.
- The linear building form also followed the site grading contour levels to provide the house with a lower level, reduce site grading and the overall building height. We achieved this by burying

the home into the hillside to a maximum depth of 4 feet so that the structure appears to be an integral part of the environment.

- The north south orientation of the home allows the maximum amount of solar energy to be harvested. We have set a goal of net zero energy use for this home while providing electric energy for two automobiles.

**Justification of the driveway slope exceeding the max allowed slope of 15 %**



- A driveway slope of 15% would cause the lower parts of the driveway at the firetruck turnaround space to exceed the 4ft maximum fill requirement of HDS&G.
- A driveway slope of 15% would also require the home to relocate further north due to the fire truck turnaround space requirements and that would encroach into the rear setback area. A 17% slope allows the firetruck to turn around space closer to the cul-de-sac and locate it in the shallow existing terrain area (relatively free of mature trees) and ensures the grading is compatible with HDS&G requirements.
- We met with the Fire Marshal early in the construction process and had his consent for a 17% slope for the driveway. We also collaborated with the lot #8 design team to provide a lower desired driveway access level for their site, as it is shared with this neighbor.

I hope this clarifies our justification for minor deviations from HDSG standards. If you have any questions, or need any additional information please contact me at your earliest convenience.  
Sincerely



Hari Sripadanna AIA



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