

February 6, 2025

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

**RE: 16742 Chirco Drive**

I reviewed the drawings and evaluated the neighborhood context. My comments and recommendations on the design are as follows:

**NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT**

The site is located in an established neighborhood of one and two story homes with a range of traditional architectural styles. Photos of the site and its surrounding neighborhood are shown on the following page.





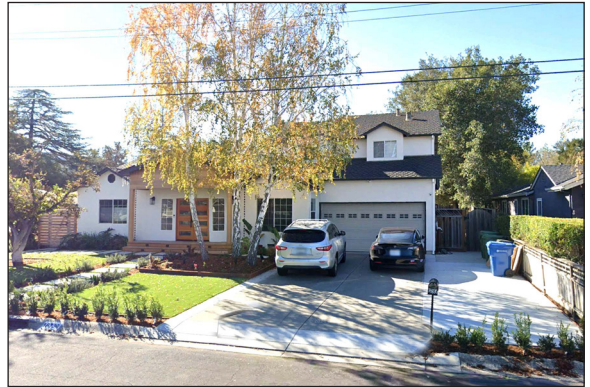
*THE SITE*



*House immediately across Chirco Drive*



*House to the immediate left*



*House to the immediate right*



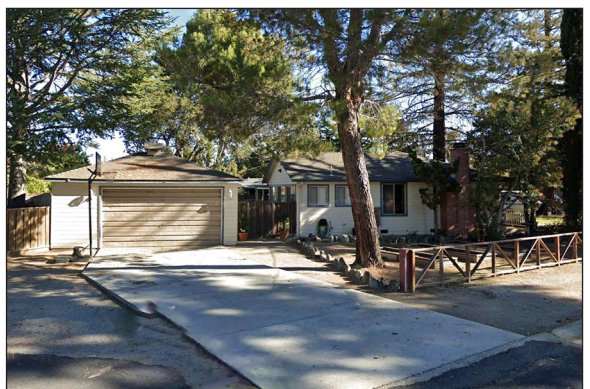
*Nearby house to the left*



*Nearby house to the right*

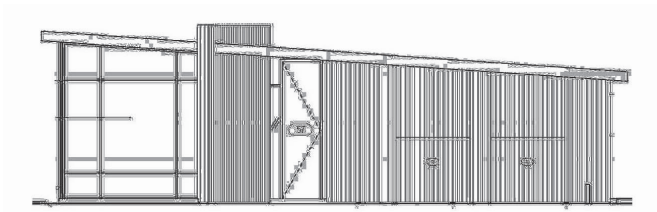


*Nearby house across Chirco Drive*

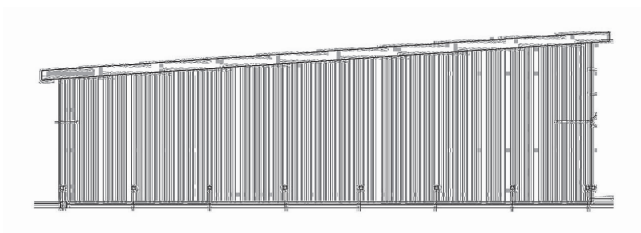


*Nearby house across Chirco Drive*

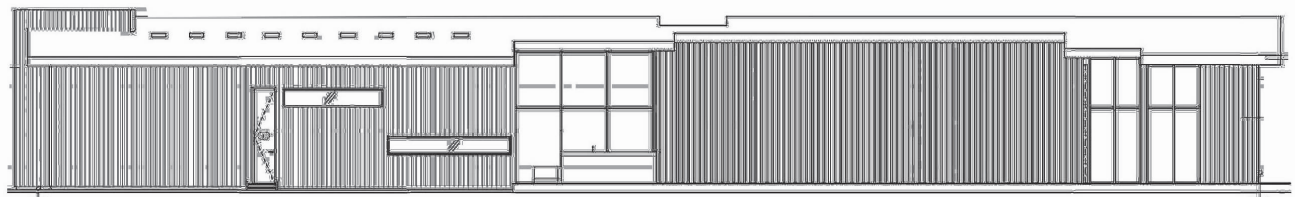
**PROPOSED PROJECT**



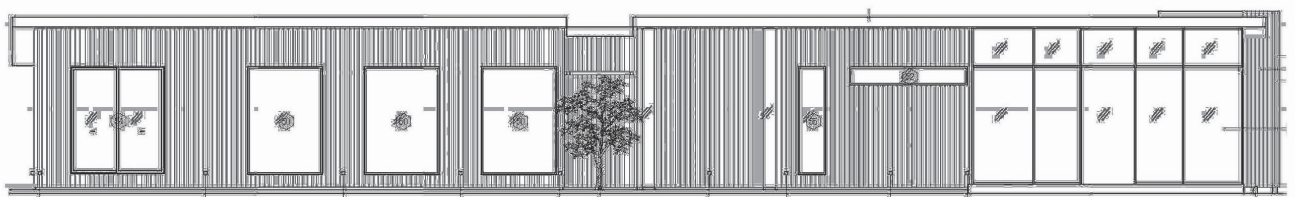
*FRONT ELEVATION*



*REAR ELEVATION*



*RIGHT ELEVATION*



*LEFT ELEVATION*

## ISSUES AND CONCERNS

The proposed home is designed in a Contemporary Style. While a home in that general style might be designed to fit into its immediate neighborhood context, this specific design would be difficult to reconcile with the town's Residential Design Guidelines. It has more apparent conflicts with those design guidelines than any that I have previously reviewed in Los Gatos. Inconsistencies with the guidelines include the following excerpted from the Residential Design guidelines.

### 1.4 COMMUNITY EXPECTATIONS

- *Homes will respect the scale and character of their immediate neighborhoods.*

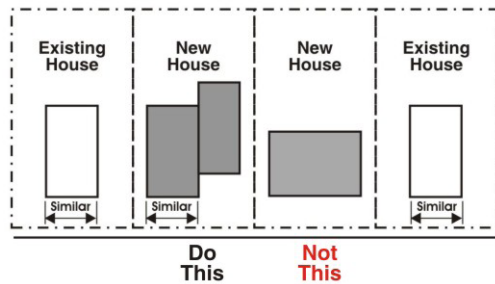
### GENERAL DESIGN PRINCIPLES

*The following principles have been used in the development of these guidelines, and will be used by the Town to evaluate plans and designs that are not covered by a specific design guideline.*

- *Design to blend into the neighborhood rather than stand out.*
- *Reinforce prevailing neighborhood development patterns.*
- *Design street setbacks with sensitivity to the predominant street front character.*
- *Relate a structure's size and bulk to those in the immediate neighborhood.*
- *Utilize roof forms and pitches similar to those in the immediate neighborhood.*
- *Use materials that are consistent or compatible with the neighborhood.*
- *Select colors to blend with the neighborhood.*

### 2.2.2 Provide front facade articulation similar to those predominant in the neighborhood

- *If facades along a street front are generally simple, avoid large changes in front wall planes.*
- *Where front wall setbacks are varied in the neighborhood, new homes should relate more to those of adjacent homes.*
- *The width of projecting building masses and the amount of horizontal offsets in wall planes should also be similar.*



### 2.2.4 Relate any street visible fences and gates to the house facades

### 2.3.4 Use roof forms and pitches that are similar to other houses in the neighborhood

### 2.4.5 Mitigate the impact of driveways on the streetscape

- *Limit the width of curb cuts to the minimum size needed to access the garage. This will reduce the amount of paving in the front setback, and preserve on-street parking spaces.*

## LANDSCAPING

*Landscaping decisions are largely left to the discretion of the individual property owner. However, residents are encouraged to be aware and respectful of the landscape character of their neighborhood. The following are suggested guidelines.*

### ***New landscaping should:***

- *Respect the character defining landscape elements of the lot and adjacent neighborhood.*
- *Respect the tree and planting patterns of the block front.*
- *Equal or exceed the quality and density of landscaping of the block front.*
- *Limit the amount of hardscape paving in the front setback.*
- *Use landscape materials (e.g., lawn) similar to other homes along the block front.*
- *Utilize a similar degree of formality or informality as seen on other district lots.*

### **2.5.3 Design with conscious recognition of the treatment of street and sidewalk edges in the neighborhood.**

## **3.1 GENERAL BUILDING DESIGN PRINCIPLES**

*The following principles have been used as touchstones for the development of these design guidelines. In the event that specific guidelines do not clearly address a given condition, these principles, along with the Basic Design Principles on page 11 should be consulted for direction. The following principles will be used by the Town when evaluating projects, and when considering the acceptability of unique proposals that vary from the specific guidelines.*

*The entire document must be applied in context when considering the general and basic design principles.*

*Selected architectural styles shall be compatible with the surrounding neighborhood, acknowledging that some neighborhoods have a variety of architectural styles and that diversity contributes to the Town's unique character.*

### **3.2.1 Select an architectural style with sensitivity to the surrounding neighborhood**

- *Styles with front facade eaves at the first floor level will be easier to adapt to predominantly one story neighborhoods than styles with two story, unbroken front facades.*
- *Styles with variations in the plane of the front facade wall may fit more comfortably in neighborhoods with smaller houses or with smaller building masses close to the street.*
- *Avoid selecting an architectural style which typically has roof pitches that are substantially different from others in the nearby neighborhood.*

### **3.3.2 Height and bulk at front and side setbacks**

- *Avoid eave lines and roof ridge lines that are substantially taller than the adjacent houses.*
- *Give special attention to adapting to the height and massing of adjacent homes. Avoid tall, unbroken front facades when other nearby homes have more articulated front facades with horizontal wall plane changes*

### **3.6.3 Design entries with sensitivity to the surrounding neighborhood**

- *Avoid large and formal entries unless that is the norm for nearby houses. It is often best to start the design consideration with an entry type (e.g., projecting or under eave porch) that is similar to nearby homes.*

**3.7.1 Arrange windows in patterns and groupings consistent with the architectural style and surrounding neighborhood**

- Many architectural styles have individual windows that are grouped into patterns of two, three or more windows. Be conscious of this fact, and organize the windows to complement the style.

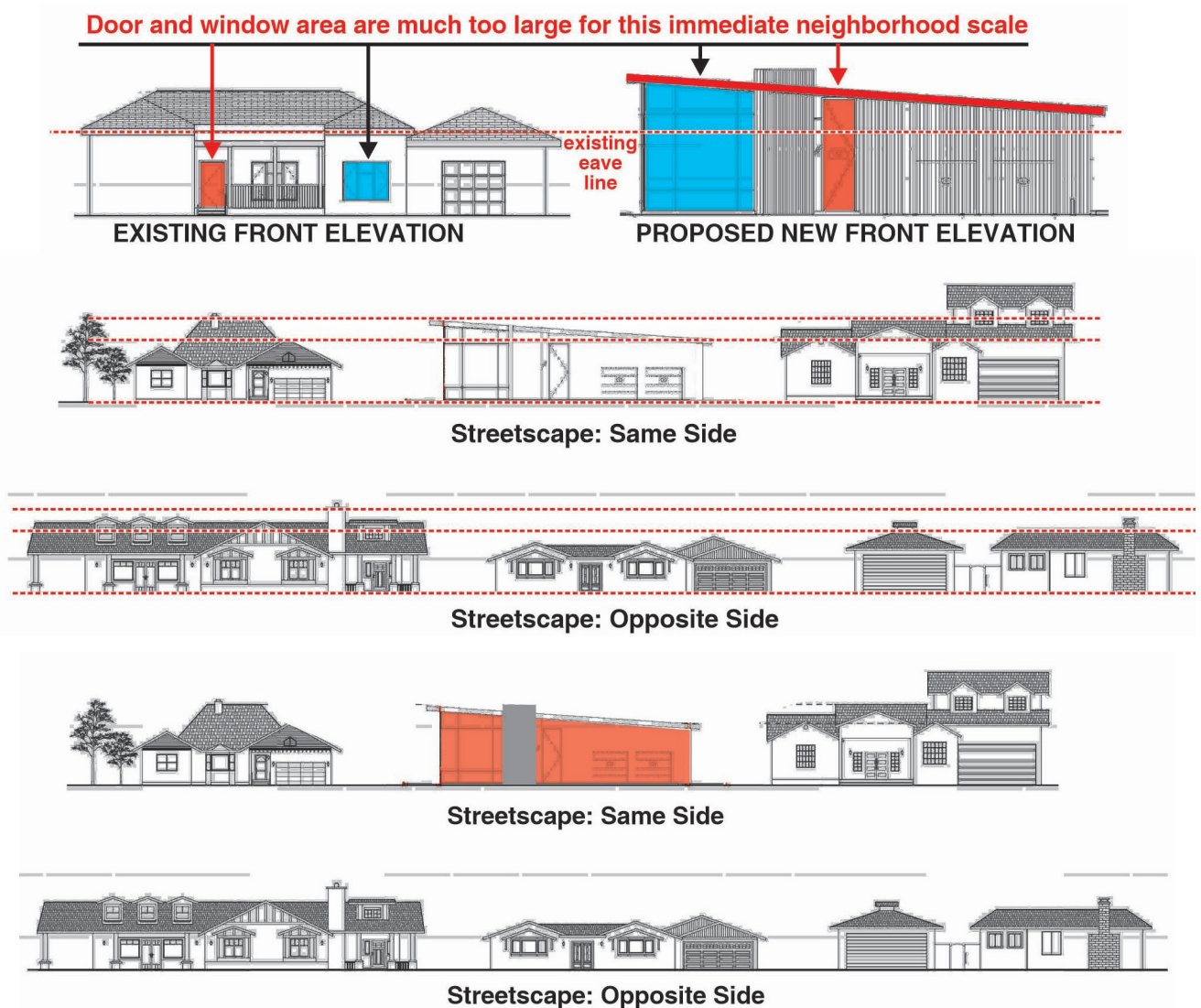
**3.7.2 Match window types and proportions to the architectural style and to the surrounding neighborhood**

- Limit the number of different window types and proportions to enhance the visual unity of the house design.

**3.7.3 Match window materials to the architectural style and to the surrounding neighborhood**

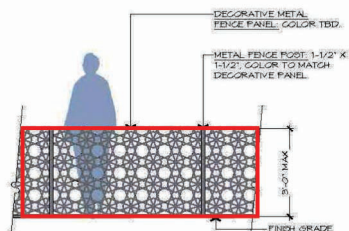
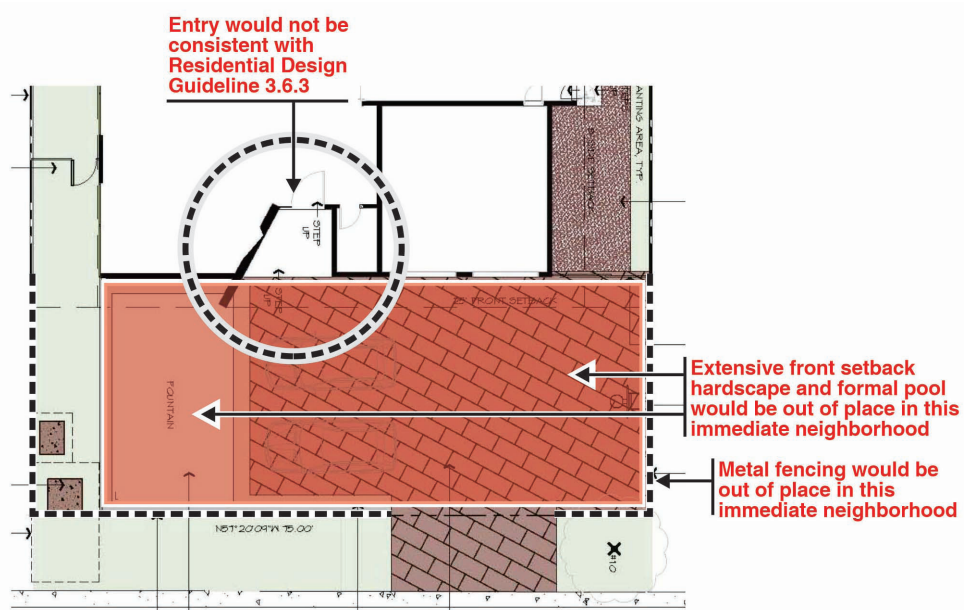
- Wood windows are common in Los Gatos. Wood is still the desired choice for styles that traditionally used wood. However, today there are some window materials, such as vinyl clad wood windows that are not noticeably different from wood at a short distance. They may be used if their visual appearance matches wood.
- Generally, avoid metal windows. They may be considered acceptable for a Modern Style house, but would be strongly discouraged for all other styles.

**3.8.2 Select materials that are sensitive to the surrounding neighborhood**



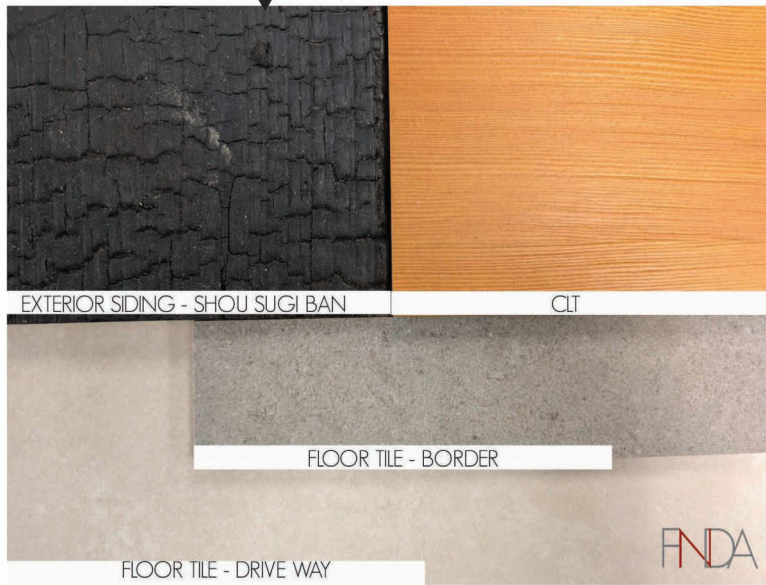


Existing street setbacks are predominately softscape materials except for necessary driveways



Metal fencing would not be consistent with Residential Design Guideline 2.5.3

**Wood burned siding would not blend well with other homes in the immediate neighborhood and would not be consistent with Residential Design Guideline 3.8.2**



**BURNT WOOD SIDING EXAMPLES**



## RECOMMENDATIONS

Normally I would offer specific recommendations on changes to address the identified issues and concerns. In this case there are so many inconsistencies relative to the town's adopted Residential Design Guidelines, I find that impossible. The scope of changes to bring the design into compliance will require multiple choices and decisions that only the applicant can make.

My recommendation is to request the applicant to redesign the home to be more consistent with the Residential Design Guidelines and more consistent with the other homes in the immediate neighborhood,

CANNON DESIGN GROUP



Larry L. Cannon

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