



September 18, 2024

Planning Department
Community Development Department, Town of Los Gatos
110 E. Main Street
Los Gatos, CA 95030

**Re: The [REDACTED] Residence, Formerly 119 Harwood Court
Project Description/ Letter of Justification**

To Whom it May Concern:

On behalf of [REDACTED] I am pleased to present this new project to the Town of Los Gatos. The proposed project is the remodel and addition of an existing garage and accessory structure which will become a new single family residence as part of an SB-9 lot split. The Town considers this a Technical Demo. This letter accompanies the submitted building plans and additional exhibits for the above referenced project, and contains descriptions of the property, the neighborhood, and how it complies with the Residential Development Standards.

EXISTING PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

This hillside neighborhood has many large two story homes, several of which are mediterranean or Tudor in style. Many of the homes are not entirely visible from the street. The property sits at the juncture of Harwood Court and Harwood Road. The original main property being divided is located on Harwood Court with street frontage both at the top and bottom of this property.

The newly created lot is the lower half of 119 Harwood Court. It is steeply sloped uphill from front to back and enjoys direct frontage on Harwood Court. The current structure on site consists of a garage on the lower level that is mostly submerged into the hillside. Above it, sits an accessory structure that is partially buried as well. The style of the structure is Mediterranean and matches the style of the home on the upper portion of the lot.

A dense hedge of oleander and Oak trees mostly obscure the view of the building from the street. There are several oak trees on the site, only one of which is proposed to be removed.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT DESCRIPTION

The existing structure on site will not be completely demolished. We propose a major addition (approx. 2,300 SF) and remodel to create a new single family residence with a 3 car garage. The existing retaining walls of the structure are in excellence condition and will continue to be utilized. A continuation of the lower and upper floors are proposed on the eastern side. The addition of the lower floor will be 12" down from the existing to allow for greater ceiling heights without going up. Most of the existing garage will remain, but some area will be converted into living area. The new home will be 3,367 SF, with 1,933 SF of buried basement area. The proposed home is well below the maximum allowed (3,900SF + 400SF) and well below the average home size of the neighborhood, around 5,150SF.

The existing roof and second floor walls will be removed so that the home can take the shape of a new more contemporary style. It will have some single sloped roofs and some flat roofs. A blend of stucco and wood siding is proposed in darker neutral colors, with stone accent walls. The doors and windows will be dark metal framed.

The project requires no exceptions to the zoning code and complies with all development standards.

LANDSCAPING

A preliminary landscape plan is included with the application. The existing driveway and associated retaining walls will remain. To the east of that, the landscaping will buffer the driveway and entry from the private yard area also in the front. Because of the extensive slope, the views and the existing flatter areas of the site, it makes the most sense to have the private yard area in the front. A fin wall also helps create this separation between the covered entry and covered veranda. The existing lower driveway retaining wall will be lengthened and two additional low terracing site walls are proposed to allow for more usable yard area. Several large trees are proposed around the perimeter of the home which will provide both privacy and shade.

ADDENDUM: FLATTER TURF AREA

The maximum cut and fill quantities are being met. The area that is proposed to be retained and made level is relatively small compared to the size of the site; 1,000sf of 30,000 sf. It is also the flattest portion of the site. About 25,000 sf of the 30,000 sf lot will be left untouched.

ADDENDUM: BUILDING OUTSIDE THE LRDA

The existing site as shown on sheet 1 (page 5) of the plan set shows the newly created lot and existing topography. We've also added the LRDA and dashed lines indicating probably predevelopment contours. Before the existing structure was built, the entire lot had no slopes less than 30% at all. The only LRDA now is what was created for the existing structure and the driveway in front of it. The LRDA is basically an outline of the structure and driveway, that's it. And it's entirely artificial. Since we are trying to keep the existing structure and driveway access, the only remaining LRDA to build in is a driveway that sits in front of and downhill of the home. There is no reasonable way to place an addition that does not extend out of the LRDA. If it were to stay in the LRDA, it would have to be almost completely detached with a small 10' wide section that would connect from the existing house to the addition. This would make no sense from a functionality stand point.

In order to reduce disturbance, the existing structure is being utilized and the addition is placed where the grades have previously been disturbed and are not natural terrain. In order to build any house at a size close to the allowed floor area, the footprint of the house must expand out of the LRDA.

ADDENDUM: SITE WALL LONGER THAN 50'

There is one wall behind the house that is proposed at 67 feet long without a break. This wall is behind the house where no one, not even the owners can see it. This wall does not create recreation area. It is purely functional for two purposes; to hold the hill back off the house so that drainage is better directed, and also for safe access around the house. The guideline was created for aesthetic reasons, but since the wall is not visible, that is not an issue. The wall could have a break in it, but that would be purely to satisfy this rule and would add more grading and disturbance since the jog in the wall would have to turn uphill.

COMPLIANCE WITH RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

The proposed home specifically addresses the Residential Design Guidelines as follows:

SITE/ PLANNING:

- The driveway location has been reutilized, which maintains existing traffic patterns.
- The existing structure will be remodeled and added onto for minimal sit disturbance.
- Short terracing walls are proposed versus taller walls.

HARMONY/COMPATIBILITY:

- The proposed home utilizes rich darker neutral colors that will blend in with the hillside.
- Existing privacy screening at the front will remain.

SCALE AND MASS:

- Because the home is significantly buried on the first floor and some of the second, the home is well below the height limit.
- Low sloped roofs diminish the massing of the home. The proposed roof line is no taller than the existing roof line.
- The garage frontages are being reduced from one double and one single car garage doors to 2 single car garage doors.

EXTERIOR MATERIALS:

- High quality materials adorn this home, including the use of smooth-troweled 4-coat stucco, large format stone tiles, cedar wood siding and high-end metal framed windows and doors.

ENERGY CONSERVATION:

- The house will employ high quality dual glazed, low E wood windows, ultra-high performance insulation packages and high efficiency mechanical systems for heating, cooling and domestic hot water.
- Strategically placed windows throughout the house will illuminate the interior to reduce the need for artificial lighting during the daytime.
- Cross ventilation is provided to allow natural cooling in order to reduce the need for A/C.

PRIVACY:

- The two story home does not pose any privacy issues to any adjacent neighbor. The proposed home is well away from any of the neighbors. Proposed larger windows and doors face the front street.

LANDSCAPING:

- All proposed landscaping shall comply with the Town's Landscaping Policies as well as the California WELO.
- Proposed drought tolerant plants and landscape materials have been chosen to enhance both the architecture and the setting of the property.

COMPLIANCE WITH HILLSIDE DESIGN STANDARDS & GUIDELINES

The proposed home specifically addresses the Hillside Design Standards & Guidelines as follows:

II. CONSTRAINTS ANALYSIS:

- The proposed home preserves views and is not visible from any viewing platform.
- The proposed home utilizes an existing structure and driveway on a steep lot, thereby reducing grading.

- The entire site has no available LRDA. The proposed home uses the existing home with an addition that takes advantage of the existing driveway flat areas.

III. SITE PLANNING:

- The proposed home will sit at the same approximate floor levels of the existing structure.
- Proposed activity areas are on or near the existing driveway and terraced to allow for short retaining walls.
- Existing drainage courses are proposed to remain, while new drainage is below grade.

IV. DEVELOPMENT INTENSITY:

- The proposed home floor area is well below the maximum allowed.

V. ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN:

- The materials proposed are natural wood and stucco with dark warm tones that will blend into the hillside.
- Additional square footage is added away from any adjacent homes.
- The home sits nestled into the hillside and does not protrude more than the existing home.
- Existing screening trees are to remain.
- Roofs are designed to face south where solar photovoltaic panels can be the most efficient.
- In order to take advantage of South facing light, a patio and proposed at the upper floor.

VI. SITE ELEMENTS:

- No entry gates are proposed.
- Existing retaining walls are proposed to remain.
- Short retaining walls are proposed with nothing over 4 feet tall.
- Terraced retaining walls are proposed rather than single taller walls.
- Only the driveway and covered patios are proposed impervious areas.

VII. LANDSCAPE DESIGN:

- All proposed plantings are California natives and/or drought tolerant.
- Landscaping is proposed at all retaining walls to soften their appearance.
- Proposed trees and shrubs are located in a natural and irregular pattern to blend with the natural landscape.

CONCLUSION

This house has been conceived from the beginning to be compatible with both the neighborhood and the site. By utilizing the existing structure, the owner saves on construction costs, but also disturbs less site area and helps maintain the feel of the neighborhood.

Sincerely,



Gary Kohlsaatt
Architect C19245