

7 September 2022

Community Development Department,
Town of Los Gatos
110 East Main Street
Los Gatos, CA 95030

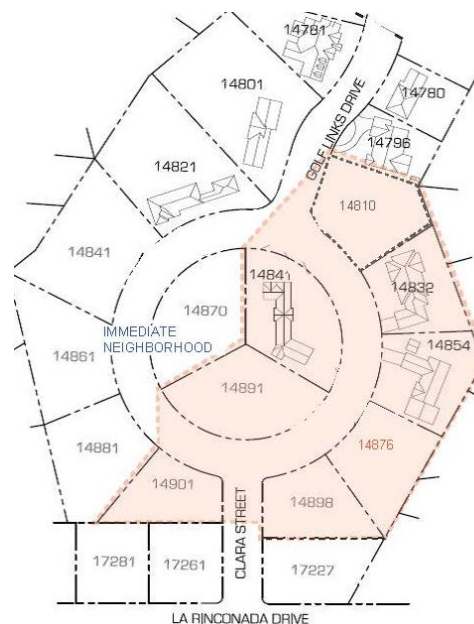
Re: Letter of Justification for proposed second-story addition at 14876 Clara Street, Los Gatos
Attn: Planning Staff

Jacob John and Kavitha Rao have lived at 14876 Clara Street for the past 2-1/2 years. The house was originally constructed in 1950's and is a single-story home. With two growing kids, grandparents who visit frequently for long durations and work-at-home situations, the current home is insufficient. They have concluded that it would be more economically feasible to add a second story rather than expand on a single level. This would preserve yard area and also maintain more separation from the neighbors, as the home next door (at 14854) had made recent additions to their home, which brought their home closer to their shared fence line.

The following is a general description of the project, identifying the project's compliance to the Single Family Residential guidelines.

The project site is an interior lot on Clara Street, approximately 20,000 sq.ft with a 7.9% slope down and away from the street.

Clara Street is unique in that it is a circular street, with 3 homes inside the circle and ten homes around the outside of the circle. The circular road is entered on one side by Clara Street and on the other by Golf Links Drive. As such, the immediate neighborhood definition diagrams shown in the Design Guidelines (Section 1.6), don't really fit in this case. Applying "common sense" as stated by the Design Guidelines, we would make the case that the immediate neighborhood consists of the homes visible from our site and on the same side of the circle. These would include the 3 homes on the outer circle to left side of our parcel, the two homes on the outer circle to the right side of our parcel, and the 2 homes across the street on the inner side of the circle. (see adjacent diagram)



Immediate neighborhood diagram

The existing homes in this immediate neighborhood are single story, ranch or tract style homes with a combination of hip and gable roofs. Five of the homes have asphalt shingle roof, one shake roof, and one metal roof. The house with the metal roof recently burned down, and is rebuilt as a single story contemporary home with a metal roof and 10'-plus plate heights. The other homes appear to be of original construction dating back to the 1950's. The home at 14832 Clara appears to more recent due to its higher pitched roof.

All of these homes have some sort of gable element in their roofline facing the street. Two have gabled entry elements (14898 Clara, 14832 Clara), and two have brick or stone accents on the front elevations of the home (14854 Clara and 14841 Clara).



(House next door at 14854 Clara, has gable roof over garage, gabled roof lines, stone used as an accent in middle of façade, and different eave heights.)



(House at 14832 Clara, has gabled entry, and gabled roof lines)



(House at 14898 Clara St, has a gabled entry feature).

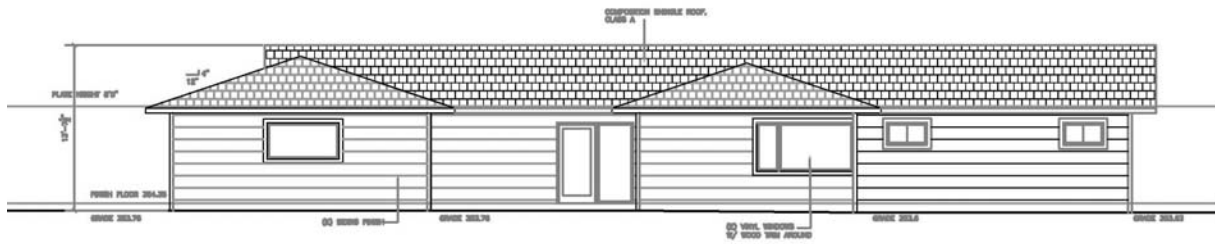
Description of Proposed Design:

The proposed design is for a second-story addition of 1,243 square feet above the existing 1,980 square foot lower level. The height of the new home will increase approximately from 13.5 feet to 24 feet. However, it should be noted that this site is the lowest site in the circle, and the current home sits about 2 feet below the road. It is the only house that sits below street level, while all other sit at or above the street level. It is also separated from the street by 5 huge cedar trees, which provides substantial screening. As such, this two-story addition will have less visibility and impact on adjoining homes.



(Our property at 14876 Clara Street, showing the existing trees that screen the home)

Our proposed design stays within the neighborhood pattern in terms of its use of simple gable forms and exterior materials. The second story portion has a plate height of only 8' and its visual mass is broken up by a lower roof line. The upper roof is a hip roof with gabled dormers. The house next door has a gable roof over their garage. This design proposes changing the current hip roof over the garage to a gable roof to be like the house next door, and to be consistent with the other gable elements proposed on the house.



Existing front elevation



Proposed front elevation

Gable roof forms above a lower roof line are common on several homes just outside of the intermediate neighborhood. (14781 Golf Links Dr. and 17261 La Rinconada, homes which are just two properties removed from the immediate neighborhood by definition)



(Houses with gable roof forms above a lower roof line-14781 Golf Links Dr. and 17261 La Rinconada)

The home incorporates similar architectural elements, dormers, low pitched and gabled roofs common in the area. The exterior materials will retain the existing horizontal wood siding, and add brick accent to the front mid-section of the home. The brick runs full height from the ground to the roof line at the lower level and returns to the inside corners of the building. The brick will be painted to match the wood siding, so it will be more of a subtle accent. This technique can be seen on a nearby house at 14737 Eastview.



(house at 14737 Eastview, showing use of painted brick to create different texture next to wood siding)

LOUIE LEU ARCHITECT^{INC}

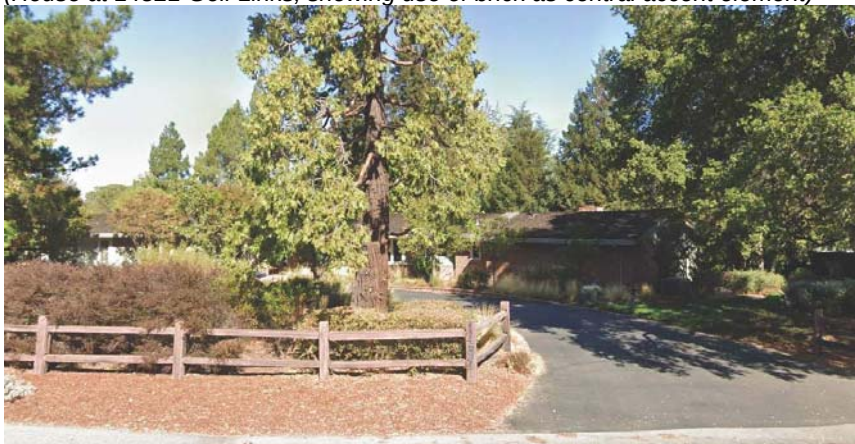
Several homes in the immediate neighborhood combine the use of stone or brick as an accent material (next door at 14854 Clara, across the street at 14891 Clara, and around the circle on 14821 Golf Links)



(House at 14854 Golf Links, uses stone as central accent element)



(House at 14821 Golf Links, showing use of brick as central accent element)



(House at 14891 Clara St., showing use of brick and wood combination)

Our project proposes a metal standing seam roof. While a metal roof is not as common, a standing seam metal roof will be on the new re-built house just 3 properties to the left within the sphere of the immediate neighborhood (14810 Clara St).



(house to be built at 14810 Clara St)

Metal roofs are also on several homes in the broader neighborhood, (14737 Eastview, 14745 and 14784 La Rinconada). Metal roofs are a more ecological friendly (green) roofing material than asphalt shingles, and is being used more commonly as a preferred roofing material. The metal roof color will be dark gray, similar to the color of asphalt shingles, so as not to easily stand out.

The proposed addition saves all the current mature trees on the site and should have minimal impact on the neighbors. There will be no privacy impacts or solar access impact to the neighbors. The home does not alter the site's topography or drainage patterns. The floor area is below the allowable F.A.R and all setbacks are met. No exceptions are being requested.

As this will be the first two story home in the neighborhood, the building should not only be sensitive to the neighborhood in terms of scale, colors, and rooflines (as per the Design Guidelines), but should also be somewhat interesting and have some character. It should set a good example for those to follow. It should not be a bland two-story home that appears to be copy the same architecture of the original homes. The neighborhood is in the beginning stages of transition as most all of the homes are over 50-60 years old and will be eventually be re-built or remodeled sometime in the near future. The home being re-built at 14810 Clara St is a modern single-story home, with different wood siding materials, taller plate heights and large expanses of windows. This is a good example of how transitional architectural can be slightly different in character and be interesting, using different but current materials, and be a positive improvement for the neighborhood. We believe that our design is in keeping with this idea.

We hope that this project description provides the Planning and Development Review Committee with sufficient evidence of general compliance to Residential Design "guidelines" to support approval of the project.

Sincerely,
LOUIE LEU ARCHITECT, Inc.

Louie Leu, AIA



Cc: Jacob John and Kavitha Rao