

LAW OFFICES OF
BRENT N. VENTURA

December 5 2022

Los Gatos Planning Commission
Honorable Chairperson and Commissioners
110 E. Main Street
Los Gatos, CA 95032

RE: Site and Architecture Application for 14876 Clara St., Los Gatos

Dear Commissioners;

I reside two doors down from this proposed Remodel. I oppose this application because of its mass, and height and its unnecessary projection of that mass and height so close to the street. The Town's Residential Design Guidelines state that the mass and height of an residential applications such as this must be reviewed in light of "Neighborhood Compatibility".

The Clara St./Golf Links Circle is a unique neighborhood in Los Gatos. It was developed in the early 1950s with a perfectly geometric, 360 degree circle, surrounded with very large lots and all single story, classic ranch style homes. If the Town were to update it's Housing Inventory and recognize post War neighborhood designs, this neighborhood could be found worthy of special protection.

Since the Circle was subdivided in 1952, for 70 years now, no 2 story house was ever built. As the homes have passed to subsequent generations and numerous ownerships, no owner has ever built or sought to build a 2 story structure. The neighborhood has maintained a cohesive design preserving the ranch style homes all these years due to the unusually large lots (approx. 20,00 sq. ft. each) making 2 Story houses unnecessary, as well as a tradition of cooperation and good will where neighbors were considerate of how changes would affect each other. When Sandy and I were designing our remodel to accommodate our growing family, we originally intended to build a 2 Story home. We shared our plans with our neighbors, Two of the original homeowners who had lived on the Circle since the 1950s explained the original design intent of the developer of single story, traditional ranch style homes. We changed our plans as we wanted to maintain the integrity of the Circle, and did not want to build a home that would cause friction with our very kind neighbors. Now in my 60s, with knee replacements, I have no regrets arising from the omission of staircases.

Since we moved here in 1993, I have witnessed 13 home remodels on the Circle, some large, some small, but absolutely none of them involved adding a Second Story.

The critical issue here is Precedent. Currently on the Circle we have several very elderly neighbors, one house up for sale, a burned up, nuisance house, and one house that has not been occupied for years. All of these houses are likely to be ripe for new remodel applications. If one 2 Story house is permitted, despite the Town's Residential Design Guidelines and our historic design consistency for single story ranch homes, then we will lose what the neighbors value most, our open mountain views and unbridled privacy that has made this neighborhood so wonderful. This issue becomes even more acute when contemplating future applications for ADUs and SB 9 subdivisions. The whole neighborhood would become densely packed multi story structures if our large lots were developed under these broad state mandates.

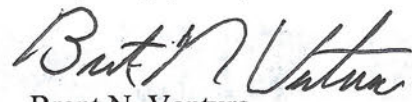
The lot currently has several large conifers planted along the very front. These trees must be preserved as a condition of any approval granted, as they help shield the mass and height of any new structure. But these trees will not shield the mass and height of the current design application as the application proposes moving the house 8-10 feet closer to the street, and the structure will be unobstructed when approaching facing east on Clara St.

I oppose using metal roofing on this proposed structure or on any new proposed remodels on the Circle. It is inconsistent with traditional ranch style homes, and it creates a fire hazard to neighboring homes. The metal roof will be particularly prominent from the street view where the hip roof will project between the dormer windows. When the new, remodeled, 1 Story house next door to me caught fire (14841 Clara St.), the flames leaped from the structure horizontally, as opposed to vertically. The flames burned shrubs in my yard and singed some of the paint on my house, about 20 feet away. My house may have been consumed as well due to the horizontal flames but for the arrival of Central Fire. There has not been enough study or history with metal roofs in our area to claim they are fire safe.

I would urge the applicant's to be more willing to listen to their neighbors and not be so insistent on building their house only one way, as they may be surprised of the unexpected benefits that arise from compromise and adaptability.

Again, I urge that this application be denied given its Neighborhood Incompatibility, or sent back to DRC for redesign consistent with the design traditions of this existing unique neighborhood.

Very truly yours,


Brent N. Ventura

From: [REDACTED] t <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Thursday, December 1, 2022 12:14 PM
To: Jocelyn Shoopman <jshoopman@losgatosca.gov>
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: 14876 Clara St LG second story addition

Dear Ms. Shoopman:

Please submit our email concerning the planned second story addition at 14876 Clara St.

We purchased our home in 1996. All of the homes around the “circle” are single story “rambling ranch” kind of homes. Some have been remodeled but all are single story. We are concerned about the planned second story for the house on Clara St. We feel this will set a new precedent to any new homeowners or remodeling homeowners that building “up” is OK. This planned addition will block the view of the mountains which is aggravating as more and more mountain views are being blocked by tall buildings in this town. (North 40)

We currently have a vacant lot across from us (the house burned down a few years back) and a vacant house above us. (known as the “weed house”) If the “second story” door is cracked open, we are afraid that the owners of the vacant lot/home will quickly submit plans that will include McMansions with looming second story’s. This type of build would block the mountain views even more and eliminate any privacy we currently have in our back yard.

The family that lives in the home seem to be lovely. I hate to have issues like this tear our neighborhood apart. It is sad that the current owner doesn’t seem to care about how their remodel will change the look of the neighborhood.

Thank you for your time

Bruce and Lainey Richardson

[REDACTED]

From: Jeffrey Whalen <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Wednesday, November 30, 2022 3:47 PM
To: Jocelyn Shoopman <jshoopman@losgatosca.gov>

Cc: [REDACTED]; Brent Ventura <[REDACTED]>;
[REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]

Subject: 14876 Clara street

Dear Ms. Shoopman, please allow me to submit my observations of the proposed 2nd story addition to the address above. While the applicants are very nice people I am *adamantly opposed* to a 2nd story addition for the following reasons;

This neighborhood consists of mid-century single story ranch houses in the style of Cliff May. In fact, our house (which is contiguous to the applicants) was designed by a student of Frank Lloyd

Wright in 1951. Most all of us are 1st, 2nd, or 3rd generation owners who moved here over 25+ years ago because of the *integrity of the architectural style, privacy, and views of the mountains* from our windows and yards. In fact, this addition will block my view of the sunrise when looking to the East from my family room. By setting a precedent as illustrated in the plans, the character and makeup of the entire (and unique "circle") will forever be altered if other new owners attempt to follow suit. Approval could mean there is no protection in the next applicant submitting plans for a house 30' in height, per code, eroding our views and privacy. Further, I submit that if the town were to update it's "historical designation" dating formula/methods as other towns on the peninsula have, mid-century architecture would be protected.

The proposed plan is also incongruent with others houses in the neighborhood in that the plans "push" the house toward the street by some 7-10' when in fact the lot is 20,000 square feet with plenty of room to add on to the rear and/or sides. The proposed entry, stairwell, office, and "lounge" are much too close to the street when contrasted to the existing home and contiguous houses.

When viewed from the west, the entire northwest elevation creates much too much "mass" with its elevation (a sheer wall with dormers) climbing from grade to some 25' in height at the ridge, vs the 12' it (and contiguous houses) is/are now. The proposed metal roofing material is completely out of character with the architectural style and compatibility of the surrounding ranch style houses. Whereas the architect attempts to use 14810 as an example, this house in fact *does not exist*, and it posed a grave danger to surrounding houses when it burned in a 4 alarm fire with firefighters not being able to penetrate its metal roof.

If after listening to the neighbors, for some reason the town sees fit to approve a 2nd story I submit the following;

1. *Move* the entire northwest elevation plans for the 1st and 2nd story, including dormer windows and entry 10' *to the rear (east), and over* the existing covered porch.
2. *Reduce* the mass of the entry and overall height of the ridge line.
3. *Require* the 40 year old cedars in the front yard to remain. Under no circumstances should they be cut down.
4. Leave garage roof pitch as is.

Thank you.

Respectfully, Jeff whalen [REDACTED].
(A lifelong resident of the town)

From: [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Sunday, November 13, 2022 12:28 PM
To: Jocelyn Shoopman <jshoopman@losgatosca.gov>
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: 14876 Clara St

Jocelyn;

I saw the story poles up at 14876 Clara St LG. I am concerned because all of the houses on the circle (and beyond) are single story. Is the town of LG allowing 2 stories in our neighborhood?

We have an empty lot across the street.....and a vacant house above our lot.....if 2nd stories are going to be allowed, we could lose all privacy in our back yard and lose our view of the mountains.

Please advise as to if the town allows 2 story structures in our neighborhood?

Thanks in advance
Lainey and Bruce Richardson

[REDACTED]

From: Brent Ventura <[REDACTED]>

Sent: Sunday, November 6, 2022 3:46 PM

To: Jocelyn Shoopman <jshoopman@losgatosca.gov>; Brent Ventura <[REDACTED]>

Subject: 14876 Clara St Application

What is the deadline for comments on this application?

I oppose any second story addition to any home on the Golf Links Circle that includes Clara St. No other second story addition has ever been permitted for any home on the Circle. This one will set a precedent and must not be allowed with the possibility of applications for ADUs or SB9 divisions. If this precedent is broken, Our whole neighborhood will evolve into a dense collection of tall thin structures crammed onto our existing lots depriving long term owners of privacy and deprivation in the desirability of the neighborhood.

The lots on the Circle average 20,000 sq ft so there is plenty of room on each plot to remodel or add onto a structure without need for a second story.

I object to this application and for any statutory time periods that may have started on this application on the ground that the current story poles and netting do not show the full extent of the second story addition. It looks too square and boxy. I believe they may have failed to include the netting to illustrate the full extent of the height addition, especially on the sides. Can you have the plans checked vs the poles and netting that are in place?

The lot in question slopes down away from the street. The second story addition currently sits on top of the existing structure, as close to the street as possible. At a minimum, any addition to the height of the structure should occur at the rear of the existing house, where its elevation from the street will be the lowest, not at the front of the existing house where its elevation will be the tallest.

I will submit further comments on this application once the story pole/netting situation is clarified..

Thank you