

TO: SEAN MULLIN, Town of Los Gatos  
LARRY CANNON, Cannon Design Group

DATE: June 6, 2024

RE: RESPONSE TO MARCH 26, 2024 CANNON DESIGN GROUP COMMENTS  
50 Los Gatos-Saratoga Road  
Architecture and Site Application S-23-042  
Conditional Use Permit Application U-23-017  
Subdivision Application M-23-009

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SummerHill appreciates the feedback received from Cannon Design Group. Responses to Cannon's recommendations are below (in *blue italics*) to the March 26, 2024 Cannon Design Group Comments of SummerHill's development application for 50 Los Gatos-Saratoga Road.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

Although the applicant has the ability, by virtue of new state laws encouraging increased housing development, to disregard normal requirements for projects of this type and scale, it would likely not be in their best interest to do so if they are not able to provide the on site amenities and environmental quality of other competing developments and meet the expectations of discerning Los Gatos home buyers.

The following recommendations illustrate some ways in which the applicant might consider changes to improve the development plans consistent with other past similar multifamily developments in nearby Bay Area cities.

#### **1. Reduce the Amount of Building Coverage**

The proposed three story building heights are appropriate for Los Gatos. However, the relative isolation of this site from nearby residential neighborhoods and the development flexibility provided by state law would allow some additional height on this site without adversely impacting the overall sense of community. One example of a recent San Mateo project is shown below where an additional floor has been added while designing the building to maintain a predominate three story height. The architectural style of this example is much different than proposed on this site, but a denser product type within the proposed architectural style is not out of the ordinary. An example of this is shown below in a project in Pasadena.

*SummerHill 6/6/2024 response: Thank you for your comment. However, based on extensive experience with other recent projects in the Bay Area, SummerHill believes that the proposed project provides the best balance to meet homebuyer demand in this location. SummerHill evaluated a number of different programming options for the site, ranging from single-family*

*detached homes to multi-story podium-style buildings. SummerHill concluded that three-story townhome-style condominiums would generate more demand in the market while still being feasible to approve, finance and build.*

## **2. Refine the Uses and Design of the Open Spaces and Pathways**

The addition of some taller buildings, as suggested above, would allow more open space on the site to better suite the needs of families with children as well as provide greater social interaction opportunities for resident adults. In terms of location, one needs to recognize the requirements for the bioswale open space elements. However, if possible, other locations might be considered. Two are illustrated below. The first would give it a more central location easily accessible to more units while the second would also be more centrally located while positioning it as a major focal point at the neighborhood entry, establishing a strong sense of shared community identity.

The smaller bioswale is illustrate in the applicant's drawings package - see below.

However, the intended development of the larger bioswale is unclear. and should be clarified by the applicant. The basic components are shown on the drawings and are consistent with a normal bioswale Building on that engineering base, many other landscape and plan options are available. Some examples are shown below from minimal treatment to inclusion as part of a more fully developed park.

If some additional open space area can be allotted within the development, there would be opportunities to create small combination active and passive recreational areas for families - one example is shown below.

*SummerHill 6/6/2024 response: Thank you for your comment. However, increasing the height of the buildings to four stories would not significantly increase the amount of open space. Each unit requires, at the ground level, a two-car garage, an entry area and a staircase, at a minimum. The proposed floor plans are very efficient, keeping the ground-level footprint to the minimum needed to meet homebuyer requirements. Increasing the height of the buildings to four stories would not significantly reduce the minimum size for the two-car garage, the entry area or the staircase, and therefore would not significantly increase the amount of open space.*

*As the Consulting Architect acknowledges, the stormwater treatment requirements for development projects pose a substantial challenge for site design. The proposed open space and stormwater treatment locations were selected to optimize the site layout within the constraints of the grade and slope of the site and the connection points to public storm drains.*

*SummerHill will continue to look for opportunities to increase the value of the open space for the residents.*

### **3. Provide Additional Guest Parking**

Providing additional guest parking that would be easily accessible to visitors would be highly desirable. Multiple approaches could be considered. However, the best approach might be to widen the Street B width to include parallel parking and landscaping as shown on the diagram and Rivermark development photo example below.

To enhance this approach it would be desirable to have the fronting buildings' entries facing the street.

*SummerHill 6/6/2024 response: The project is required to provide a minimum of 303 parking stalls per the Town Code, inclusive of the attached garages. However, SummerHill acknowledges the likely demand for guest parking. To meet the anticipated demand, the project will provide 35 parking stalls for guests, increasing the total number of parking spaces to 330. The proposed number of parking spaces strikes a balance between the needs for guest parking and the demand for homes and open space. If B Alley were widened as suggested, it would result in reduction of units which would conflict with the project objectives and the Town's need for housing.*

### **4. Improve the Street Auto Court Frontages**

Having all street frontages lined with identical garage facades would not be a pleasant community environment. It is monotonous and falls well short of a community expectation that units will have some sense of individual identity. It is also not common for this type of development where units face long alleys parallel to streets with unit entries (e.g., recent North Forty development) or shorter auto courts perpendicular to primary streets are the common plan approaches. Both alternative approaches would be possible on this site but might require some taller buildings to maintain the applicant's proposed unit count. The adjacent illustration shows one approach to this.

*SummerHill 6/6/2024 response: Based on extensive experience with similar projects, SummerHill believes that the combination of architectural details and landscaping will ensure that the interior paseos and the alleys will be attractive and pleasant for the residents. The homes are oriented to focus on the pedestrian experience, with front stoops and porches along landscaped paseos to encourage interaction. On the alley side, the intent is to minimize conflict between cars and pedestrians, while still creating a soft scene with landscape areas next to each garage with ornamental trees and a mix of trellises, pot shelves and other details to add life to the architecture.*

If that approach is not acceptable to the applicant, some effort should be given to softening the repetition along these alley-streets. Some typical approach include:

- Adding more landscaping.
- Providing additional facade variety and offsets.
- Providing balconies along the alley ways.
- Providing larger facade offsets and emphasizing individual unit identities.
- Varying the building heights.

*See example photos below.*

*SummerHill 6/6/2024 response: Thank you for your comment. While it may not have been clear given the scale of the drawings, there will be extensive landscaping along the alleys, with landscape areas next to each garage with ornamental trees. In addition, consistent with the Consulting Architect's suggestion, SummerHill has revised the alley-facing façades to include the following enhancements:*

- *Added trellis elements at intervals above some of the garage doors at each building type. These trellises are supported on building popouts that now extend to the ground, providing added offset depth at the first floor level.*
- *Enhanced the visual quality of the building massing at the upper floors by narrowing some of the larger gable elements and adding more gable popouts to provide more variety and quantity to changes in wall planes along the length of the elevations.*
- *At hipped-roof buildings, we added Juliet balconies, pot shelves, and belt trim at recessed window conditions. The color blocking of all building types has also been updated to enhance the variety of the elevations.*
- *At gable-roof buildings, the gables were refined, and pot shelves were added to a number of the windows. In addition, as with the hipped-roof buildings, the color blocking was updated to enhance the variety of these elevations.*
- *At all building types, 2x12 cornice trim was added at the eave conditions (excepting gable ends) in order to add an extra layer of detail at the highest point of the exterior walls.*

## **5. Add Architectural Variety and Improve End Elevations**

Currently all of the buildings have the same front, rear and side elevations composed in tight rows. Adding some more variety would be welcome. The applicant's architect has done a good job on the structure prototype currently proposed so they should be able to easily adapt their plans to provide more variety. Below are a few photo examples of a similar architectural style with increased facade and height variety.

*SummerHill 6/6/2024 response: As noted above, consistent with the Consulting Architect's suggestion, the architecture has been revised to add more detail and differentiation.*

## **End Elevations**

Currently, all end elevations are similar and uninteresting. The applicant should be encouraged to provide unit entries on the end elevations facing streets or at least provide more interesting facade articulation  
- see examples below.

*SummerHill 6/6/2024 response: The end elevations have been substantially enhanced by introducing recesses with ceramic tile surrounds and in some case wrought-iron recesses. Also, as mentioned above, the use of belt trims and enhanced color blocking has been expanded to further improve the visual quality of the end elevations throughout the site.*

## **6. Enhance the Edge Landscaping**

It is unclear from the drawings what the project edge conditions will be after development. The current edges have a great deal of mature landscaping that imparts a special character to the site. The engineering site edge sections below seem to show little potential for any significant retention or addition to that edge treatment. It would be desirable for the applicant to provide more information on the planned site edges - especially since they are immediately adjacent to many walkways leading to unit front door entries.

*SummerHill 6/6/2024 response: Along the east side of the project site, SummerHill proposes to retain the hillside open space and the mature trees, which will maintain the current edge condition and the privacy and separation for the properties along Bella Vista Avenue. Along the west side of the site, there is a thick existing screen of trees and bushes located along the verge of the offramp from Highway 17. The trees and bushes are located off-site and will continue to provide screening. Similarly, along the edge of Los Gatos-Saratoga Road, there is a thick screen of trees and bushes that will remain. Along the south edge of the site, SummerHill will install a fence to separate the project site from the high school.*

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