



ARCHITECTURE PLANNING URBAN DESIGN

July 29, 2024

Mr. Sean Mullin
Community Development Department
Town of Los Gatos
110 E. Main Street
Los Gatos, CA 95031

RE: 15349 & 15367 Los Gatos Blvd.

Dear Sean:

NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT

The site is located on Los Gatos Blvd. in an area largely dominated by commercial development. A single family neighborhood is located immediately to the rear across Garden Lane. Photos of the site and surrounding neighborhood are shown on the following pages.





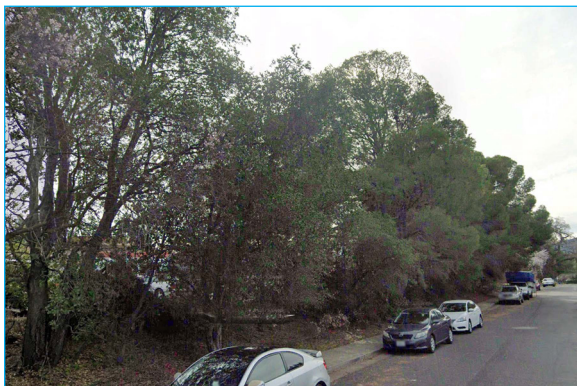
THE SITE



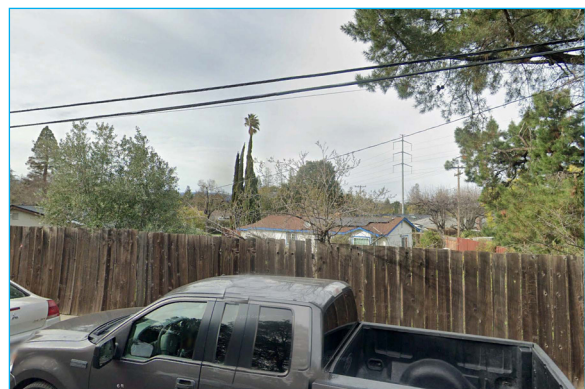
Site Los Gatos Blvd. Frontage



Recent office project immediately across Los Gatos Blvd.



Site: Garden Lane Frontage



Single Family Neighborhood immediately across Garden Lane

PROPOSED PROJECT



PROPOSED SITE LAYOUT PLAN



A STREETScape - LOS GATOS BLVD.

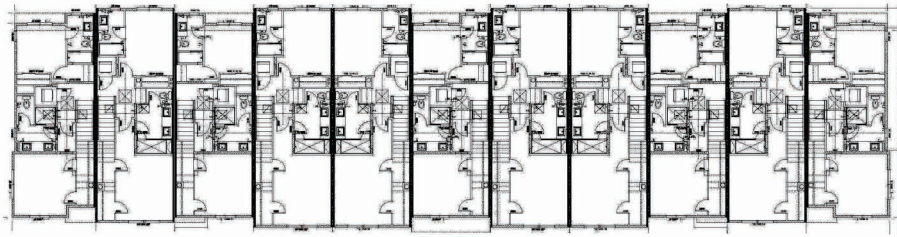
LOS GATOS BLVD. STREETScape



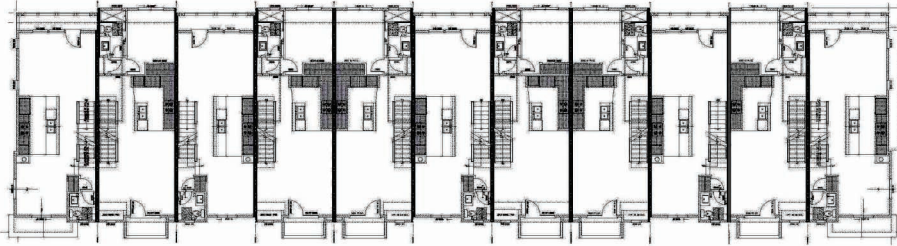
R STREETScape - GARDEN LANE

GARDEN LANE STREETScape

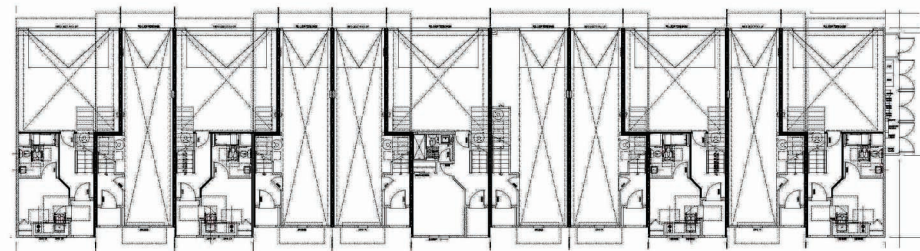
BUILDING A



THIRD FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR



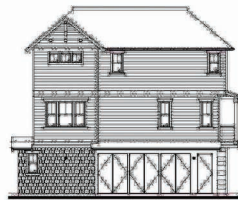
FRONT ELEVATION



REAR ELEVATION

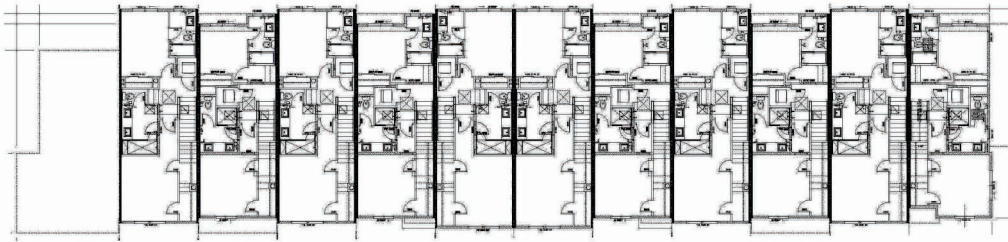


LEFT ELEVATION

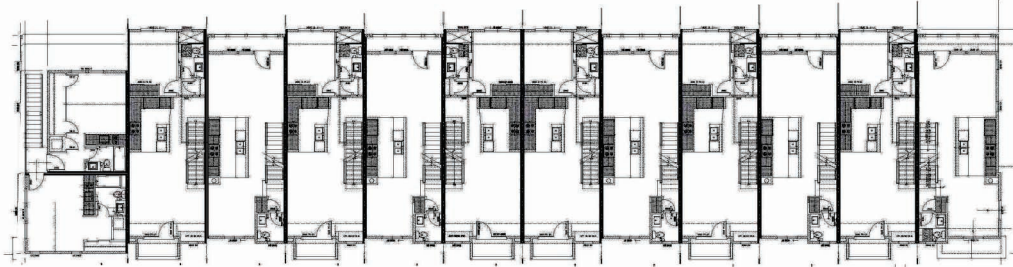


RIGHT ELEVATION

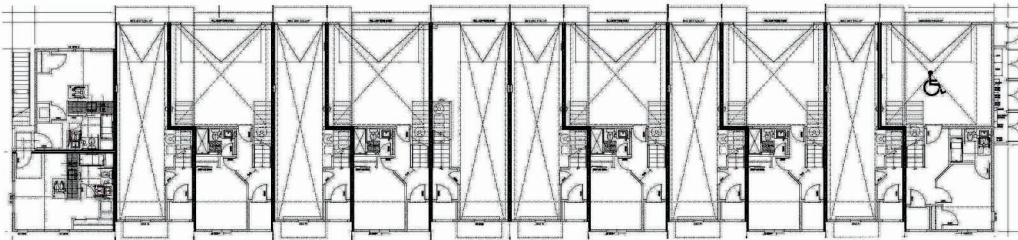
BUILDING B



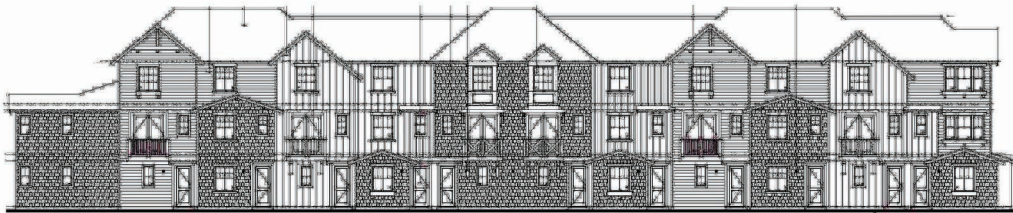
THIRD FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR



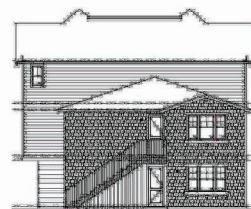
FRONT ELEVATION



REAR ELEVATION

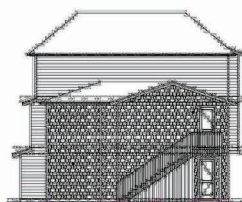
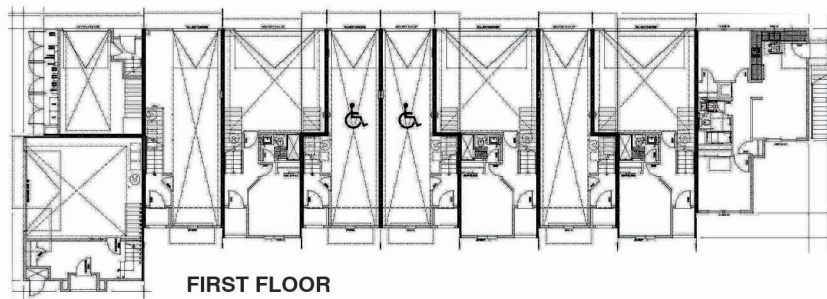
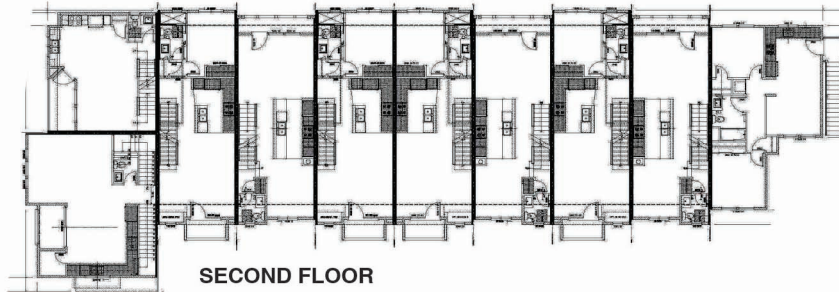
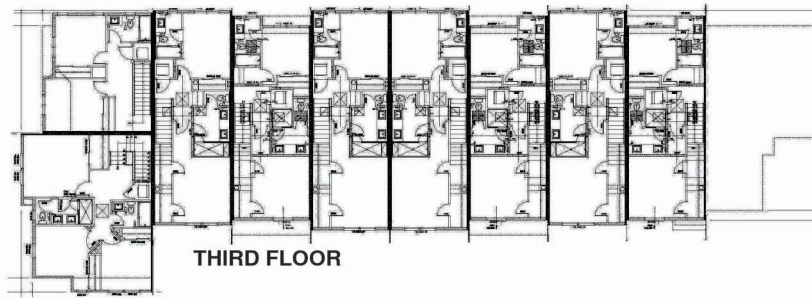


LEFT ELEVATION

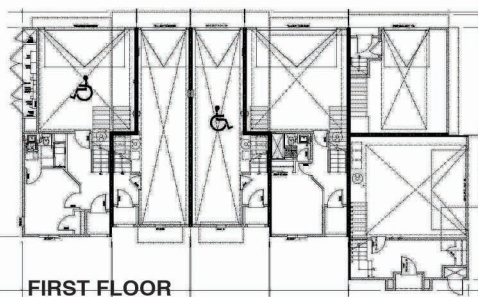
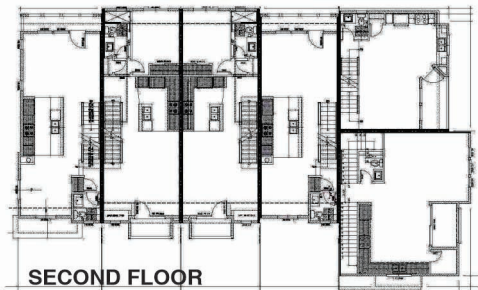
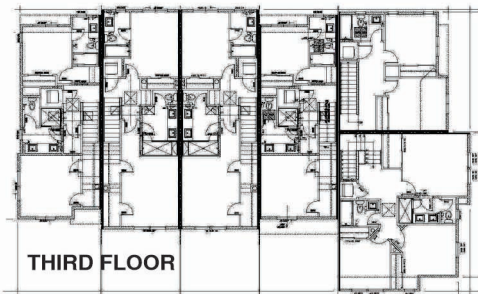


RIGHT ELEVATION

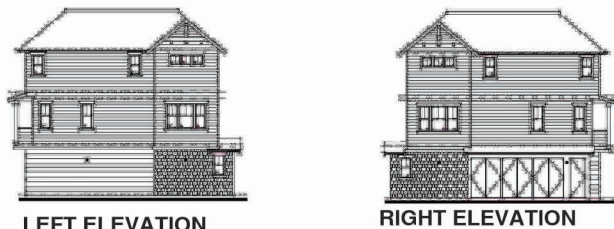
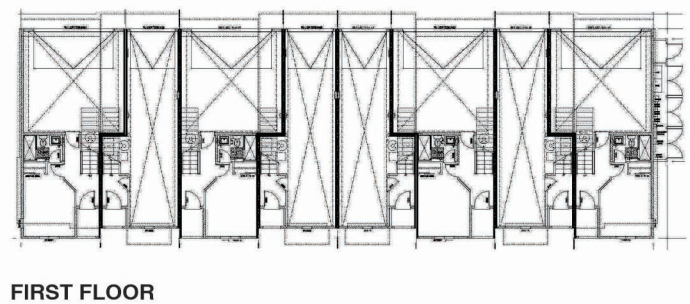
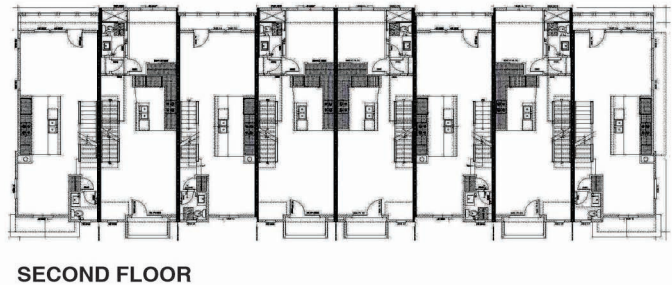
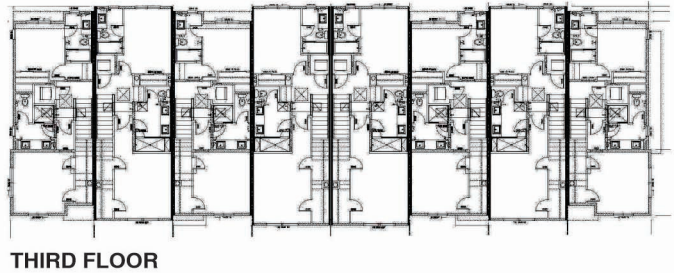
BUILDING C



BUILDING D



BUILDING E



ISSUES AND CONCERNS

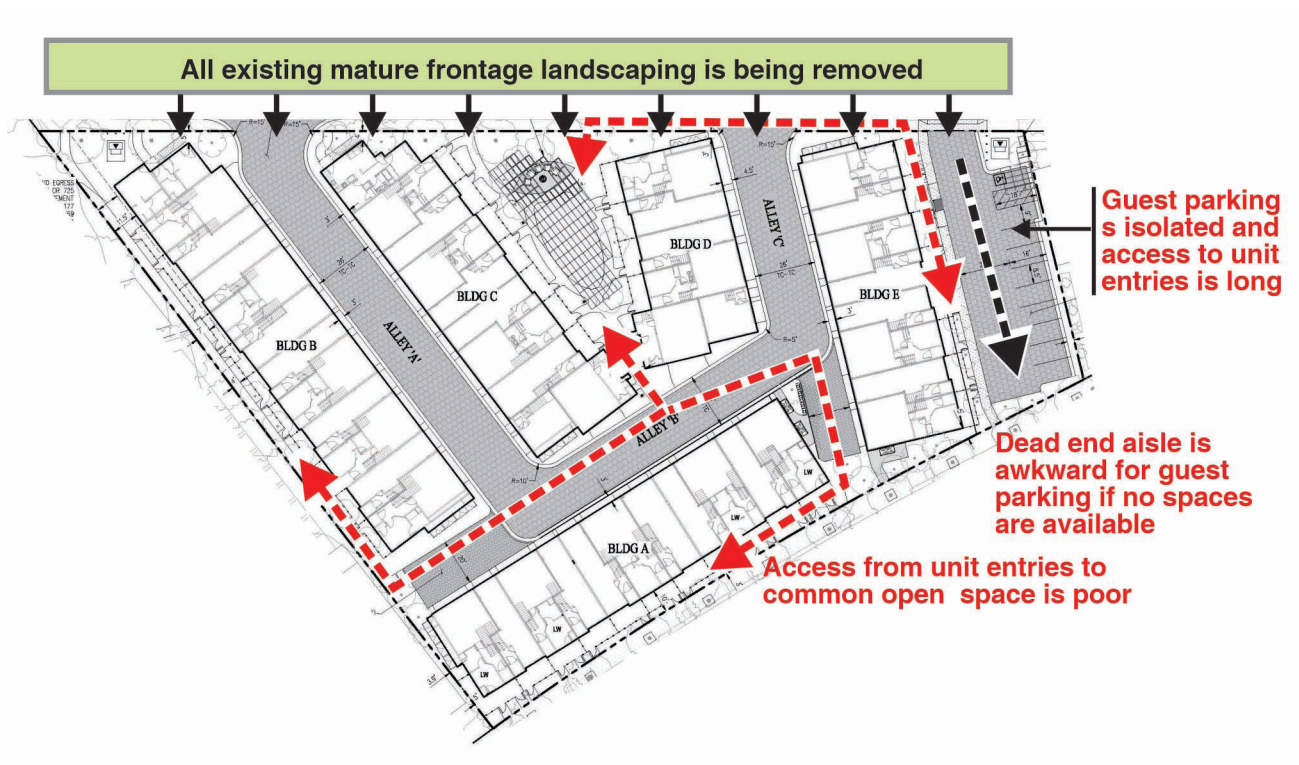
The proposed development plan appears to maximize the development capacity within the framework of its proposed three story townhome configuration and the framework of the application type. The need to meet the site's required minimum density and the constraints of the site do pose special challenges while still building a project that respects the community's expectations of new construction that will be sympathetic to the town's small scale and character. I would note that Los Gatos has become a highly desirable community for individuals and families drawn to the town's unique scale and character. While residential development projects that might be out of the norm of those expectations may be possible under this proscribed approval process, they may not achieve the applicant's marketing goals if perceived to be at odds with the established scale and character of the town.

This review will be focused on identifying issues and suggesting a range of examples that might be considered in addressing those issues while remaining available to collaborate with staff and the applicant in the further refinement of the project, if needed.

Some of the relevant issues include the following:

1. Guest Parking

The placement of all of the guest parking along the northern edge of the site is out of balance with the site development. Pedestrian access to the individual unit entries is mostly funneled to the exterior street frontages. Also the dead end parking aisle could pose turn around difficulty if all of the guest spaces were occupied.



2. Internal Pedestrian Circulation

The site development plan is organized around a common central landscaped open space which could create a sense of neighborhood community. Unfortunately, the pedestrian linkages between the units and that central commons area and between individual units is circuitous or awkward. Residents of all units except those immediately fronting on the common area would need to walk around the full length of a building and then across an auto drive aisle to reach the commons area. Alternatively, they could exit through their garage to the auto drive aisle to reach the common area - a feature not very desirable for residents accompanied by guests.

In addition, access from many units to the Los Gatos Blvd. sidewalk frontage is limited and circuitous.

3. Site Edge Landscaping

Currently the Garden Lane street frontage is dominated by a strong row of mature landscaping which will be removed for the proposed project. While the existing single family neighborhood immediately across Garden Lane is inward turning and would not seriously be impacted by the loss of this landscaping, it will nevertheless change the mature wooded character of Garden Lane. Given the need and desire for additional housing in the community this may be acceptable, but there should be at least some focused attention on the details and character of both the new landscaping and the residential end elevations facing Garden Lane.

4. Facade Massing

The proposed building are all composed of rectangular floor plates with some facade changes to provide an implied breakdown in building mass.



However, the majority of residential street frontages along Los Gatos Blvd. and other major town thoroughfares are single family homes on separated lots with more current higher density projects comprised of separated small lot single family homes or connected rowhomes with substantial front facade offsets to relate to the scale and appearance of the single family homes - see photo examples of facing the North 40 Lark Avenue and Blossom Hill Road frontages below.



Lark Avenue



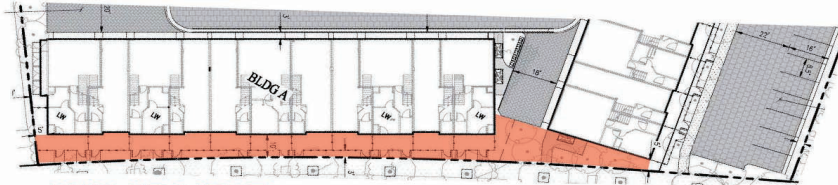
Blossom Hill Road

5. Los Gatos Blvd. Frontage Setbacks

In addition to the street frontage massing noted above, the facade articulation and building setback along Los Gatos Blvd. is of concern. As proposed the setback line is established at a uniform 10 feet. Other recent similar multifamily developments along Los Gatos Blvd. have larger and more varied building setbacks. The Laurel Mews project has a 17 front setback and the 371 Los Gatos Blvd. homes were approved with individual setbacks which vary from 10 to 18 feet.

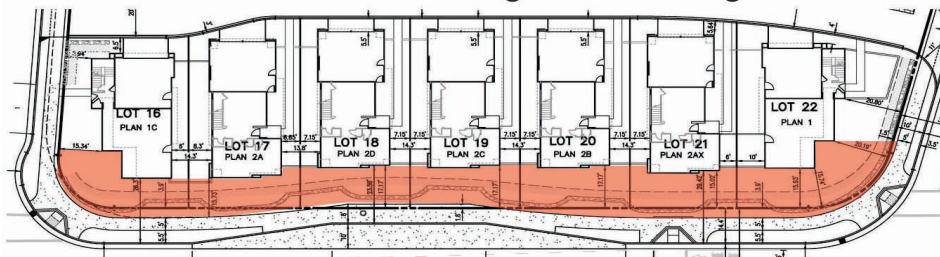


THIS PROJECT

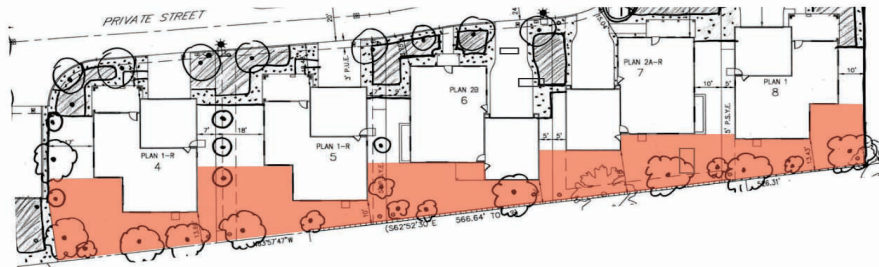


THIS PROJECT

Los Gatos Blvd. setbacks appear smaller and more rigid than other similar and existing setbacks along the street frontage



Approved site plan for Laurel Muse



Approved site plan for 371 Los Gatos Blvd.

6. Facade Roof Slopes

The major roof slopes are relatively steep but there are other smaller masses with much lower roof pitches. Other residential development in Los Gatos has been strongly encouraged to provide unified roof slopes throughout a residential structure and is included specifically as a guideline in the town's single and double family residential design guidelines,



Different roof slopes are awkward

6729 FAIRFIELD DRIVE SANTA ROSA, CA 95409

7. Facade Articulation and Materials

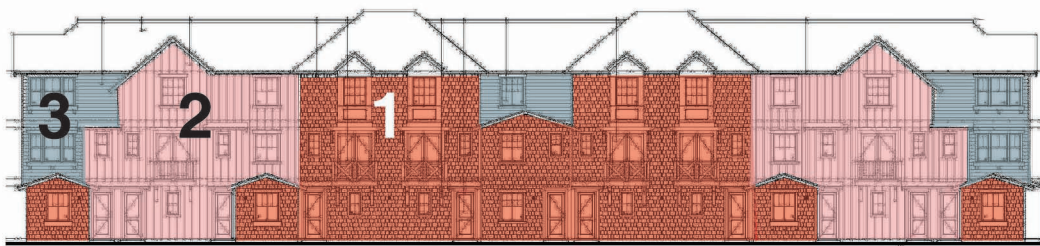
It is clear that a lot of thought has gone into the articulation of the building facades. However, there is one element where the massing and roof form seems to be less well integrated into the overall facade design. That element is the small projecting first floor gabled masses adjacent to unit entries on many of the front facades.



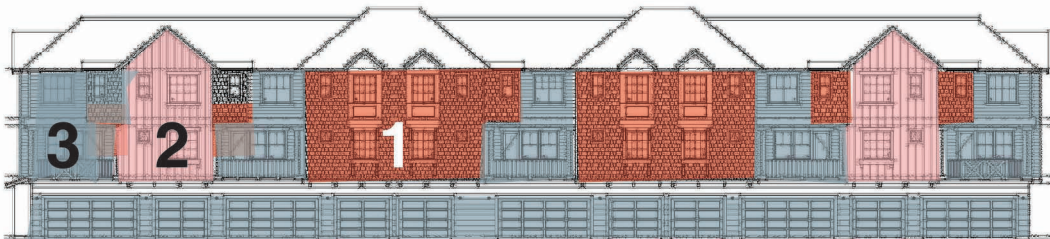
These roof forms do not seem to be well integrated into the overall design

The other facade articulation and materials issue is much more nuanced. In the past the town has emphasized the identification of individual units in multifamily rowhome and small lot detached home developments as a priority, and has largely discouraged designs with more of an apartment building character where the design does not emphasize individual unit identity. The proposed design appears to be a single color throughout the project utilizing three different types and textures of hardboard materials. The uniform color should help in unifying the appearance of each individual building but the very activated distribution of materials seems like it would not, in most cases, articulate a sense of individual townhomes. The diagrams below illustrate the distribution of the three proposed materials on the front and rear facades of the five proposed buildings.

BUILDING A

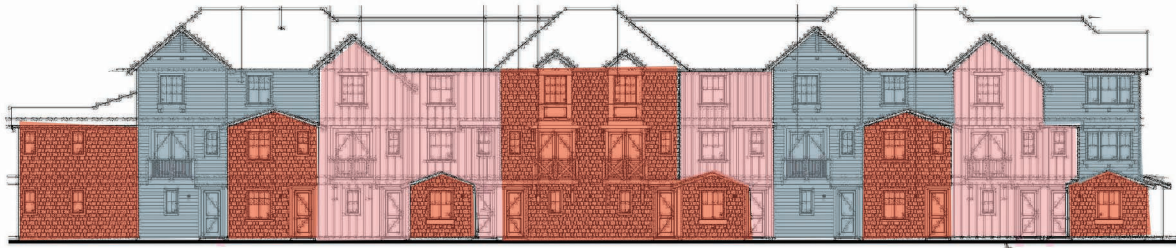


FRONT ELEVATION



REAR ELEVATION

BUILDING B

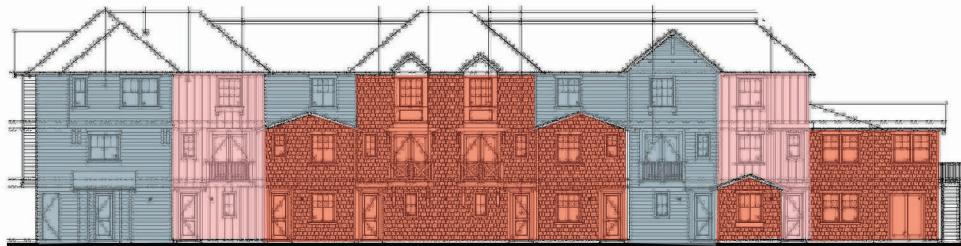


FRONT ELEVATION



REAR ELEVATION

BUILDING C

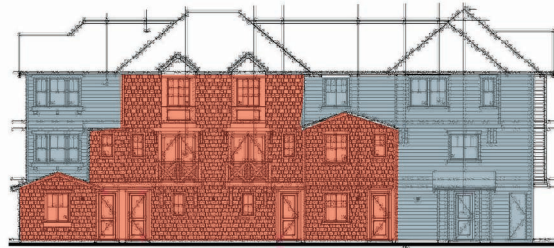


FRONT ELEVATION



REAR ELEVATION

BUILDING D

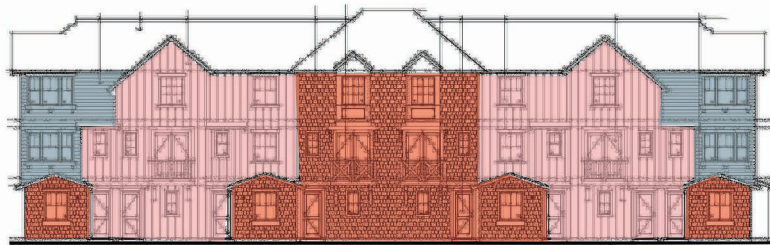


FRONT ELEVATION



REAR ELEVATION

BUILDING E



FRONT ELEVATION



REAR ELEVATION

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Guest Parking and Internal Pedestrian Circulation

For enhancing a sense of neighborhood community, pedestrian circulation paths would benefit from further refinement and connectivity. A resident should be able to walk out their front door and easily travel to the front door of any other neighbor's front door in the complex.

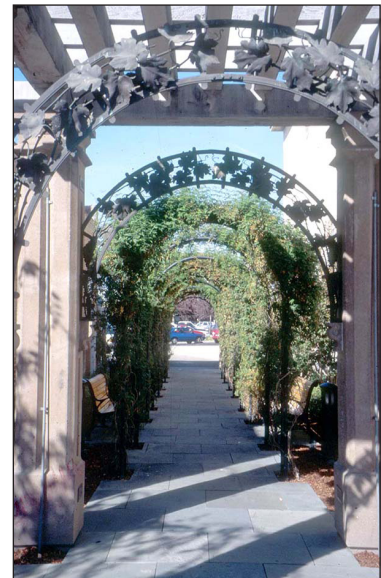
Improved linkages would also be beneficial in making the remote guest parking concentration more convenient for serving all units in the complex.

One approach is shown on the illustration below.



Consider stronger pedestrian linkages to connect unit entries to common open space and guest parking

Areas where paseos might be incorporated into a row of townhomes could facilitate the pedestrian circulation system. While that approach might entail some changes to the unit plans, the unit count and square footage might be recovered by utilizing a small number of two story-over-two story townhouses, similar to other that I have reviewed in the Bay Area, and adding an additional residential floor within the roof structure. This approach is shown in the San Mateo example photo below.



2. Los Gatos Blvd. Frontage

Increased facade plane depth changes on the front facade would be beneficial.

Perhaps the easiest way to enhance the Los Gatos Blvd. frontage appearance and reinforcement of a Los Gatos character would be through fencing and landscaping similar to other multifamily projects in Los Gatos and San Mateo - see photos below.



Los Gatos



San Mateo

3. Garden Lane Frontage

While the mature trees along the Garden Lane frontage are being removed, substantial new landscaping is being added. One other change would be useful and that is the refinement of the building end facades facing Garden Lane. This refinement would also be appropriate for all other end facades in the project, especially the one facing Los Gatos Blvd.

Typical current end facads are shown below along with a couple of examples of more fully developed facades.



BUILDING B



BUILDING E



4. Facade Roof Slopes

The low slope gable roofs, which are currently proposed at a roof pitch substantially lower than the main roof slopes, would probably be better integrated into the overall building design if they utilized a shed roof form instead of the current gable form.



Replace low slope gable roofs with shed roofs



Replace low slope gable roofs with shed roofs

One additional change that should be considered is the extension of these ground floor shed roofs over the adjacent unit entries. That would produce a porch-like entry more typical of the residential development along Los Gatos Blvd.



Replace low slope gable roofs with shed roofs
Consider wider shed roofs to create stronger "entry porch" feel

5. Facade Articulation and Materials

The issue of facade articulation and materials placement should be discussed by the staff and the applicant's design team. Should staff feel that the previous emphasis on individual units identity that the town has generally followed is appropriate for this project, they should collaborate with the applicant on refining the project facades.

Sean, please let me know if you have any questions, or if here are any staff concerns that I did not address.

Sincerely,

CANNON DESIGN GROUP

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Larry L. Cannon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Larry" and last name "Cannon" clearly distinguishable.

Larry L. Cannon

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