



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

April 23, 2020

**Re: The Diep Residence, 15925 Quail Hill Road
Project Description/ Letter of Justification
S-19-012**

To Whom it May Concern:

On behalf of John and Allison Diep and their young family, I am pleased to present this completely revised project of a current Architecture and Site application. The proposed project includes the demolition of an existing single story house, carport and cottage along with the construction of a new multi-story home with an attached four car garage. 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 Hillside Development Standards and Guidelines.

EXISTING PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

The property is physically located at the south-east corner of Shady Lane and Drysdale Drive, although the official access and street address are on Quail Hill Road. The 0.96 acre property is currently accessed from a shared driveway that serves two other residences. The main residence and carport are located at the top of the property, and there is a cottage/ADU below on the sloped portion. All structures will be demolished as part of this application.

From the existing building pad, the remainder of the site slopes down towards Shady Lane. The average site slope is 25%; some portions of the slope exceed 30%, while the proposed building area is within the LRDA.

The existing residence and cottage, both of which will be removed, are visible from the intersection of Blossom Hill and LG Blvd., but the remainder of this property is not visible from any of the Town's identified viewing areas. While there are several homes nearby, the property is relatively private and isolated. There are several mature trees on the property, including several coast live oaks.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED RESIDENCE

The design team has taken into consideration the comments provided by staff and planning commissioners, and this new proposal is a major departure from the previous application. From the style to the massing to the minimal number of exceptions to the HSDNG, this is really a complete redesign.

For starters, the style of this house is decidedly contemporary. It will feature horizontal rooflines stepping up the hill. Flat overhanging roof elements and large windows interact with a few vertical elements to ground the house into the hill. Exterior materials of stone, wood and colored stucco are

well-suited to the hillside environment. It will feature stone veneer, stucco, and stained wood siding; doors and window frames will be premium level aluminum in a dark anodized color. The forms are simple and appropriate for the hillside setting. A color and materials spreadsheet was completed and complies with the HDG&S.

As a condition to developing this property, the owners have agreed to vacate the Quail Hill vehicular easement and access their new residence from Drysdale Drive. This means that the existing flat pad The proposed house is situated wholly within the LRDA, just below the existing cottage. The front setback from Shady Lane is 101 feet, while the narrow lot dictates using the entire width (to the 20 foot setbacks). The house relates to Drysdale as the main entryway faces the street. A new walkway leads to a clearly delineated entry porch.

Both the first and second floors are set into the hillside to reduce visual impact. The house never touches the 25 foot height limit plane, maxing out around 22 feet, and in most instances is substantially lower. The overall combined height of the front elevation (as viewed from Shady Ln) comes in at 34'-9". It should be noted that it is virtually impossible for anyone to see this overall height from a straight vantage point, so the height will feel even less than what is actually there.

The proposed residence will not be more than 25% visible from any viewing area, including Blossom Hill and Los Gatos Blvd. The proposed development will not impact the privacy of the neighbors, and in fact, it will only improve the situation.

The proposed size of the home has been reduced by over 20%, from the previous 10,482 total sq. ft. to 8,621 sq. ft. The house has 5,076 sq. ft. of exposed living space that is countable towards the allowable FAR (5,100 SF + 400 SF Garage Allowance). There is basement space on both the main and lower floors totaling 3,545 sq. ft. Of this, 2,222 sq. is for parking and storage on the lower floor, while 1,323 sq. ft. is on the main level. By contrast, the previous design included 5,387 sq. ft. of below grade area.

To reduce visibility from both Drysdale and Shady Lane, the garages are tucked under the main floor and are accessed by a driveway off Drysdale. The garages are almost entirely below grade. Instead of a drive-in type of structure of the previous design, these are more traditional in nature and are a much more efficient use of space. Extra parking and maneuvering space has been provided since Drysdale is a steep and narrow street with limited parking opportunities. A total number of four covered and five uncovered parking spaces have been provided, all achieved with relatively minor grading.

SITE RESTORATION

Once the existing structures have been removed, the man made building pad will become very apparent and noticeable. We are proposing to restore the upper slope to as natural a slope as possible, preferably less than 30% slope. This will also address a major potential liability of an unsupported fill slope, which happens to loom over the new residence. This area will be re-landscaped both for naturalization and for stability; a new trail will eventually be put in to provide access to the remaining upper pad area.

As a result of the grading and naturalization operation, two trees will need to be removed. One is Tree #597, a 20" dia. deodar cedar, listed as "fair", and the other is #598, an 18" dia. incense cedar, which is listed as being in poor condition.

EXCEPTIONS TO H,S,D&G REQUESTED

This design is achieved with the minimum number of requested exceptions to the HSD&G. In fact the house itself doesn't require any exceptions either to grading or in terms of cut and fill. The exceptions we are formally requesting are itemized as follows:

Side Terrace: An exception to exceed the maximum fill height is being requested to fill under the main floor exterior terrace. The height needed will be 6 feet to be able to have this relatively small terrace be on the same level as the main floor. Due to the tight constraints of the property, this area is the only legitimate exterior entertaining space, and the lower retaining wall will be landscaped.

LANDSCAPING AND SITE WORK

Preliminary Grading and Drainage plans were prepared by the civil engineering firm Hanna Brunetti. Earthwork quantities are relatively low for a hillside project. 1,891 cubic yards of cut and fill are required for the driveway and landscape areas; an additional 885 cu. yds. are required to naturalize the upper hill and old building pads.

Preliminary landscape plans were prepared by David Fox LA. The plan shows the site layout with the entry walk and stairs, outdoor terraces, existing and new trees as well as planted areas. A total of 73 new trees are shown to be planted. Several new trees are shown along the western property line to provide privacy screening between neighbors. Layers of trees and shrubs are being planted on both Shady Lane and Drysdale to screen the house from the road. Drought and deer tolerant plants are proposed- especially beyond 30 feet from the house- refer to the landscape plans for more detail.

One terrace is planned on the West side that connects both to the driveway and upper hill levels. There is also a small walk-out terrace behind the house, on the upper level, to provide light and access to the upper hill. This is achieved with two semi-circular retaining walls and a staircase.

COMPLIANCE WITH HILLSIDE DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS & GUIDELINES

In addition to what was identified above, the proposed home specifically addresses the Hillside Development Standards and Guidelines as follows:

SITE/ PLANNING:

- The new home has been sited to maintain privacy of neighboring properties (II.C.G2)
- The siting of the house in relation to Drysdale Drive reduces the driveway length and grading impacts
- All of the perimeter trees have been preserved;
- The siting of the house reduces impact on visibility from the valley by being below the existing two structures being removed.

HARMONY/COMPATIBILITY:

- Given the hillside setting, with minimal neighbors for architectural context, the property allows for some freedom in exterior styling. The Contemporary Modern style responds very well to the design intent of the HDG&S in that it blends with this natural setting.

SCALE AND MASS:

- The multi-story home steps down the slope and the massing is tucked into the hillside. Flat roofs are used throughout and the majority of the ridgeline is under 20 feet.

- The house has been designed with simple forms and horizontal rooflines- along with blocks of varying exterior materials that break up each elevation into smaller units.

EXTERIOR MATERIALS:

- Materials are natural to blend with the environment
- All meet stringent WUI classified fire resistant materials.
- All exterior surfaces to meet the 30 LRV weighted average requirement.

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.
- Covered porches will shade the major doors from the sun.
- The house is oriented to take full advantage of cross ventilation practices.
- Substantial amount of roof areas provide plenty of space for solar collectors
- The home will comply with the new 2019 REACH Codes

PRIVACY:

- The existing and new homes are in completely different areas, with the proposed residence set so much lower on the hill than before, so the changes will dramatically improve the privacy situation between all of the neighbors!
- The perimeter of the property will be lined with many trees and hedges that screen the house and exterior entertainment areas, providing privacy for all.

LANDSCAPING:

- All proposed landscaping shall comply with the Town's Landscaping Policies including the HDS&G section.
- Proposed drought tolerant plants and landscape materials have been chosen to enhance both the architecture and the natural setting of the lot.
- While only a few trees will be removed under this permit, several trees have been added to the site. Many of these will provide privacy screening between neighbors.

GEOLOGICAL:

- There are no significant geological hazards that exist to prevent a safe and secure structure to be constructed on this site.

CONCLUSION

This house has been conceived from the beginning to be compatible with the hillside setting. The size, mass, color and exterior style are in keeping with the intent of the Hillside Development Standards and Guidelines, and more importantly this home fits in with the immediate neighborhood.

Sincerely,



Gary Kohlsaat
Architect C19245