



**TOWN OF LOS GATOS**  
**PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT**  
**Meeting Date: August 22, 2012**

**ITEM NO: 3**

PREPARED BY: Marni F. Moseley, Associate Planner, AICP  
moseley@losgatosca.gov

APPLICATION NO.: Architecture and Site Application S-12-028

LOCATION: **357 Pennsylvania Avenue** (south side of Pennsylvania Avenue near the intersection of Palm Avenue)

**APPLICANT/PROPERTY**

OWNER: Dave Lazares

CONTACT PERSON: Dave Lazares

**APPLICATION SUMMARY:**

Requesting approval to demolish a single family residence and construct a new single family residence on property zoned R-1:8. APNs 510-41-069 and 070.

DEEMED COMPLETE: June 25, 2012

FINAL DATE TO TAKE ACTION: December 25, 2012

RECOMMENDATION: Approval

PROJECT DATA: General Plan Designation: Low Density Residential  
 Zoning Designation: R-1:8, Single Family Residential  
 Applicable Plans & Standards: Residential Design Guidelines  
 Parcel Size: 16,271 sq. ft. (combined)  
 Surrounding Area:

	Existing Land Use	General Plan	Zoning
North	Single Family	Low Density Residential	R-1:8
East	Single Family	Low Density Residential	R-1:8
South	Single Family	Low Density Residential	R-1:8
West	Single Family	Low Density Residential	R-1:8

CEQA: Categorically Exempt pursuant to Section 15303 of the State Environmental Guidelines as adopted by the Town.

FINDINGS: ■ As required by Section 15303 of the State Environmental Guidelines as adopted by the Town that this project is Categorically Exempt.

CONSIDERATIONS: ■ As required by Section 29.20.150 of the Town Code for Architecture and Site applications.

ACTION: The decision of the Planning Commission is final unless appealed within ten days.

EXHIBITS: 1-13. Previously submitted  
14. Consulting Architect's second report (six pages), received August 2, 2012  
15. Letter from 361 Pennsylvania Avenue (two pages), received August 3, 2012  
16. Revised Development Plans (nine pages), received July 24, 2012

BACKGROUND:

The proposed project was considered by the Planning Commission on July 11, 2012. The Planning Commission continued the item with the direction that the applicant consider either a redesign or justify the areas of the Commission's concern. The Planning Commission also requested that the application and or the redesign be returned to the Town's consulting architect for further consideration and explanation.

The applicant has submitted submitted revised plans that they believe address the Planning Commission's concerns (Exhibit 16).

ANALYSIS:

A. Architecture and Site

Based on the direction from the Planning Commission, the applicant revised the proposed plans to include a dominant front facing gable with Dutch/clipped ends. In addition the revised plan includes a conceptual landscape plan as requested by the Commission.

B. Consulting Architect

The original and redesigned plans were reviewed by the Town's Consulting Architect, Larry Cannon of Cannon Design Group (Exhibit 14). The consulting architect has provided background for his original analysis of the project in regards to neighborhood compatibility, as well as a review of the modified design. While he could support either approach, his analysis is that the original design is better suited to the neighborhood for the following reasons:

- There is a wide variety of roof types and house sittings within the neighborhood.
- While slightly wider than the other homes immediately nearby, the emphasis on the ground floor helps the residence be sensitive to the adjacent single story residence.
- There is a strong emphasis on the ground floor with the original design.
- The larger gable element shown on the revised plans is quite large when compared to those nearby.
- The width of the house is not out of scale with the neighborhood, so the application is consistent with the direction on page 14 of the Residential Design Guidelines.

C. Trees

The applicant has provided a conceptual landscape plan that has reduced the number of tree removals to five instead of the 11 originally proposed and/or recommended from the Town's consulting arborist. In addition, the plan shows one tree (a Japanese Maple) to be transplanted onsite, and 18 new trees (24" to 48" box) to be planted onsite (Exhibit 16). Staff would like to note that the design is conceptual and is meant to show the change in the tree removals and the intent of the property owner to install substantial landscaping in the front yard. The trees that are specifically required to remain and to be planted per the conditions of approval are those shown on the proposed site plan sheet A-1 of Exhibit 13 or 16. Please note that the conceptual improvements in the rear yard shown on the conceptual landscape plan have not been reviewed for consistency with Town Codes or Standards and therefore cannot be conditioned as a final landscape plan.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Staff received one additional letter of support from the neighbors at 361 Pennsylvania Avenue (Exhibit 15).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION:

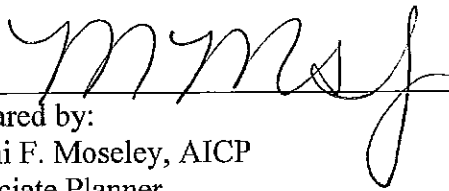
A. Conclusion

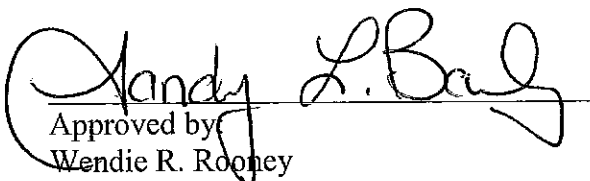
Based on the Planning Commission's direction and the response from the Town's Consulting architect, staff could support the approval of either design. As discussed above and within the latest report by Larry Cannon, the consulting architect provided justification that the original design is better suited to the neighborhood; however, either design will fit well into the existing neighborhood. The applicant is willing to implement either plan.

B. Recommendation

Staff recommends the Planning Commission approve the application and take the following actions:

1. Find that the proposed project is categorically exempt, pursuant to Section 15303 of the California Environmental Quality Act as adopted by the Town (Exhibit 2); and
2. Make the required findings as required by Section 29.10.09030(e) of the Town Code for the demolition of a single family residence (Exhibit 2); and
3. Make the required considerations as required by Section 29.20.150 of the Town Code for granting approval of an Architecture & Site application (Exhibit 2); and
4. Determine that the project is in compliance with the Single and Two Family Residential Design Guidelines; and
5. Approve the Architecture & Site Application S-12-028 subject to the attached conditions (Exhibit 3) and the development plans (Exhibit 13 or 16).

  
Prepared by:  
Marni F. Moseley, AICP  
Associate Planner

  
Approved by:  
Wendie R. Rooney  
Director of Community Development

WRR:MM:ct

cc: Dave and Cynthia Lazares, 16795 Lark Avenue, Suite #106, Los Gatos CA 95032

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ARCHITECTURE

PLANNING

URBAN DESIGN

RECEIVED

AUG 2 - 2012

TOWN OF LOS GATOS  
PLANNING DIVISION

July 31, 2012

Ms. Marni Moseley  
Community Development Department  
Town of Los Gatos  
110 E. Main Street  
Los Gatos, CA 95031

**RE: 357 Pennsylvania Avenue**

Dear Marni:

I reviewed the revised applicant drawings which were prepared in response to the Planning Commissioners' comments. I am repeating the Neighborhood Context portion of the last review letter to provide that contextual information in this review as well. My comments and recommendations are as follows:

**Neighborhood Context**

The site is located in an established older neighborhood with a wide mix of home sizes and architectural styles. All homes have a strong relationship with the fronting streets, and all have substantial mature landscaping. Photos of the site and surrounding neighborhood are shown below and on the following page.





*The Site*



*House immediately adjacent to the right*



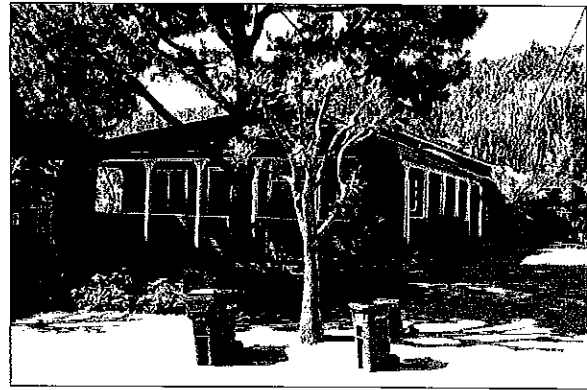
*House immediately adjacent to the left*



*Nearby House*



*Nearby House*



*Nearby House*



*Nearby House*



*Nearby House*

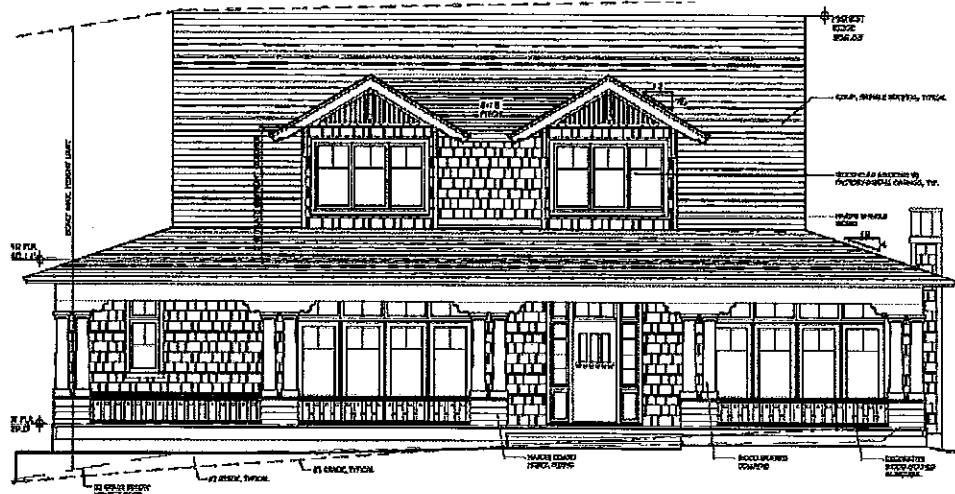
**Issues and Recommendations**

My conclusion in the earlier review was that the house was well designed with traditional forms, quality materials, and good details. I had only one recommendation which related to the amount of paving in the front setback. The recommendation was that, at a minimum, the paving up to the driveway gate should be changed to a modular paving, and I suggested that it would also be appropriate to reduce the amount of paving in the front setback, and replace it with landscaping. I noted in the revised drawings that the driveway has been noted as *Permeable Driveway*, but the material was not specified. My recommendation would be to require a modular material or one acceptable to staff that has a very high quality appearance since it includes use for parking in the front setback.

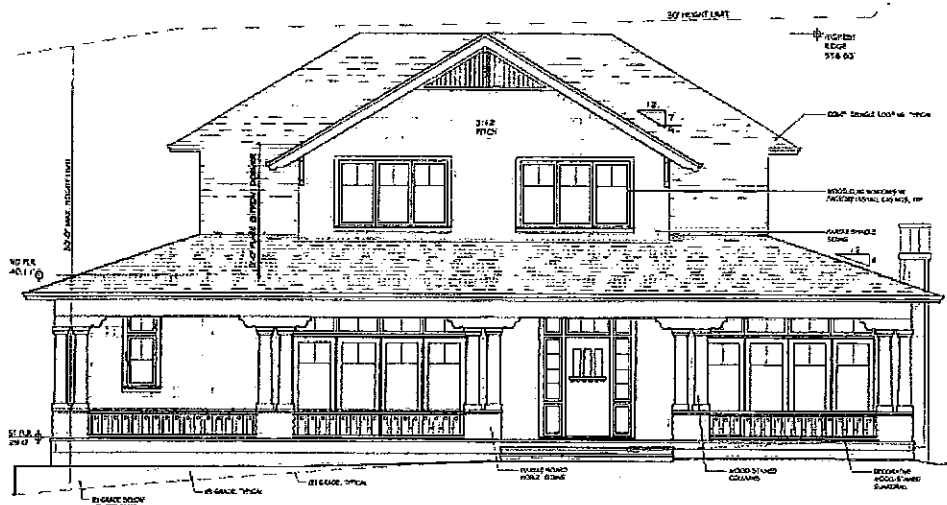
With regard to the Planning Commission's review of the project, it is my understanding that there were two specific concerns as follows:

- *Gable ends usually face the street in this neighborhood while the proposed design had the roof orientation parallel to the street.*
- *The neighborhood footprint pattern is rectangular shaped with the short end facing the street (specifically sheet 14 in the Residential Design Guidelines).*

The applicant has responded with a design change on the front elevation to provide a larger second floor gable element facing the street. In looking at the revision and comparing it to the previous design, my feeling is that either one of the designs would be acceptable. However, I have reasons why I believe that the original design would be a better option. I will summarize those reasons at the conclusion of this review letter, but I thought it might be useful to staff and the Commission to explain the evaluation process that I went through in concluding that the previous design was appropriate for the neighborhood.

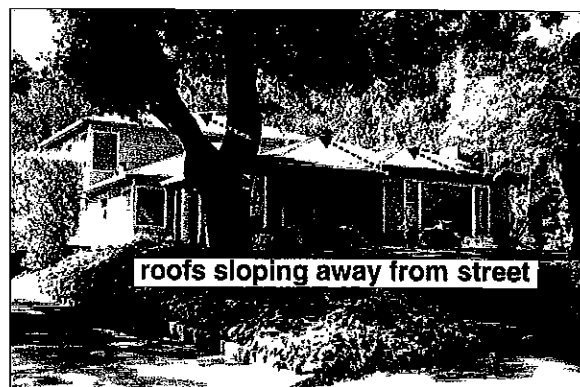
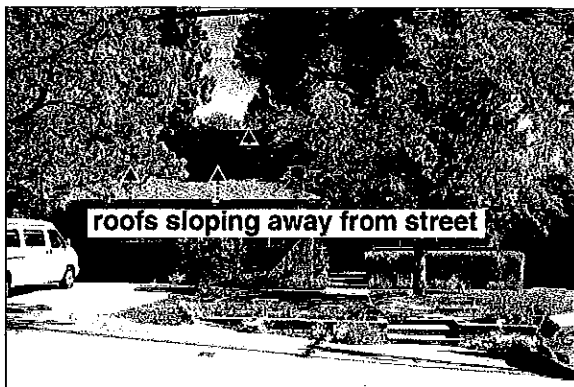
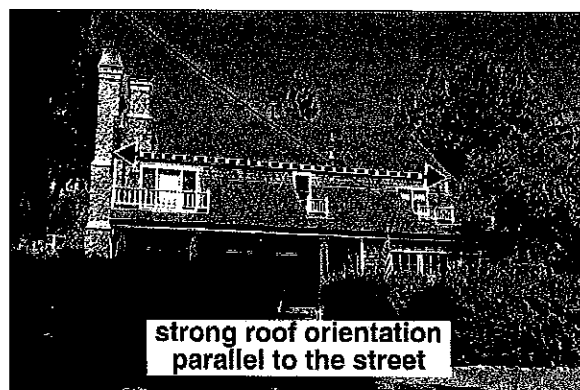
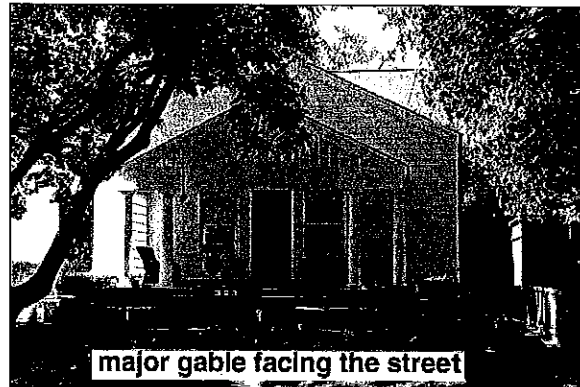


Previous Front Elevation



Currently Proposed Front Elevation

As I walked the immediate neighborhood, my reaction was that there was a wide variety of roof types, and that the spacing of the homes and substantial vegetation filtered many of the views to the houses. There were a couple of homes with large gable ends facing the street, but overall there were many more with hip roofs, ridges parallel to the street or relatively small gable ends as part of the street facade. Significant ones are shown annotated below.



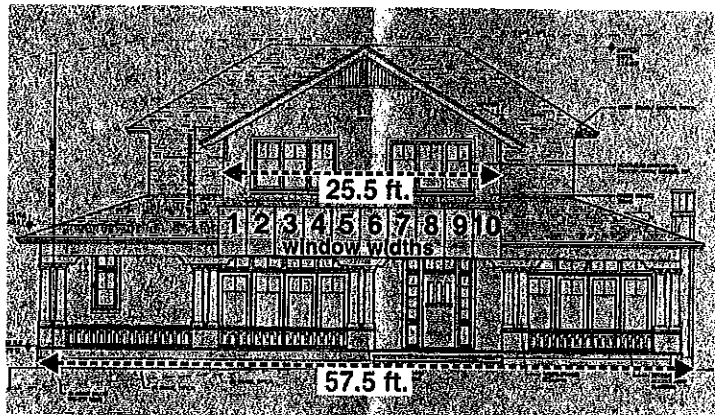


One of the reasons that I felt the previous design was a good one for the neighborhood was the strong emphasis on the ground floor and the relatively small size of the second floor dormer element (See previous streetscape diagram below).

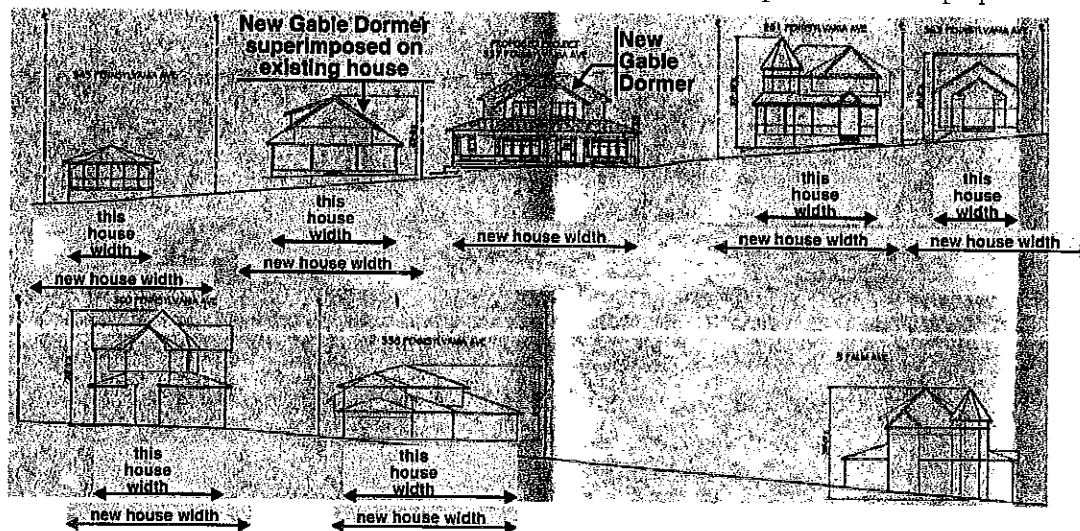


This seemed to me to be a well balanced design. Although the proposed house was a bit wider than some others in the immediate neighborhood, this emphasis on the ground floor level seemed a good way to fit into the neighborhood, and to also be sensitive to the one-story homes nearby.

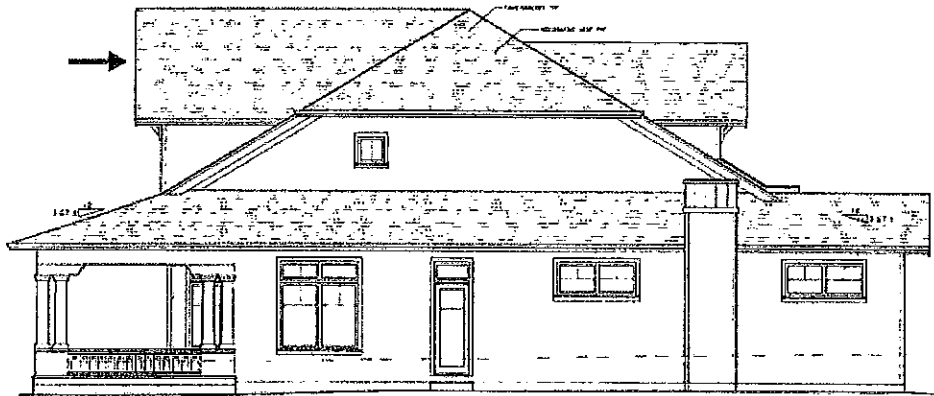
The concern with the new proposed design is that the second floor gable element is quite large - in some cases almost as wide as the full house on nearby smaller homes. Front elevation dimensions are shown on the diagram immediately below. Note the information on the gable width in terms of multiple window widths, and refer back to the notes on the photos of neighborhood houses on the previous page.



To put this in perspective, the new streetscape diagram below shows the proposed street-facing gable superimposed on each home in the immediate neighborhood to give some sense of its scale compared to the other homes. Also shown on this diagram is a comparison of each homes front elevation width compared to the new proposed home.



The side elevation diagram below also shows the relative bulk of the proposed second floor dormer.



My feeling is that this is not the best option for fitting the house into the neighborhood. Compared to the previous design, I feel that the second floor mass is too large, the width of the dormer is out of scale with the surrounding homes, and the large second floor element detracts from the very well designed ground floor porch. My recommendation would be to go with the previous design. However, as noted earlier, reasonable people could disagree with this assessment, and approval of this currently proposed design would not be a major mistake.

Marni, please let me know if you have any questions, or if there are specific issues of concern that I did not address.

Sincerely,

CANNON DESIGN GROUP

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Larry Cannon".

Larry Cannon

**Dennis Chambers**

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**Subject:** FW: 357 Pennsylvania

**RECEIVED**

AUG 3 - 2012

TOWN OF LOS GATOS  
PLANNING DIVISION

**To:** Marcia Jensen, Chair of the Planning Commission and  
Members of the Planning Commission

**From:** Heather Roberts and Dennis Chambers  
361 Pennsylvania Ave (the property on the uphill side of the applicants proposed home)  
Los Gatos

**Ref:** The proposed home at 357 Pennsylvania Architecture and Site Application

Ladies and Gentlemen, the proposed project:

1. Will get rid of a run down and abandoned home with the accompanying weed infested landscaping.
2. Will improve the visual character of the site with a well-designed "Los Gatos" style single family home designed by one of the premier Los Gatos architects.
3. Will add to the current inventory of two story homes that are common on Glen Ridge, Hernandez, Peralta, Palm, Pennsylvania, Walnut, Ellenwood, etc. The home is totally consistent with the neighborhood.
4. Was unanimously approved by the towns planning staff which one would think has the best interests of the town as their number one goal. This project was also given a glowing recommendation by the Town's architect which I believe was in your package.
5. Has been designed with extended setbacks and house design to avoid overcrowding the neighbor at 347 Pennsylvania. A ten foot set back from the first floor and a 20 foot set back from the second floor. (Remember, the other option is for the applicant to do away with building his own home, over the two lots, and build two for sale residences. One can be assured the setbacks will be the minimum and the vertical walls of the two homes will not give relief to the downhill neighbor).
6. Has the home located 20 feet back from the street, plenty of setback, as is our home and most of the neighbor's homes.
7. The project is not seeking any wavers or variances from the Town's ample supply of building regulations.
8. Any planned removal of trees or brush will only add to the betterment of the existing condition of the site. Remember, the Town's arborist has recommended which trees to be removed and how many trees to be planted; and then, approved again by your planning staff. In fact, the applicants will be saving 4 large trees, on the street frontage, rather than remove the trees as per the Town arborist's suggestion. After reviewing the landscaping plan, it appears not only

is the applicant wanting to save trees that the Town's arborist recommended removing but seems to be adding more trees than are required by the Town ordinance.

In summary, and as an adjacent neighbor, we strongly recommend the Planning Commission approve the project to move forward at its August 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting. Allowing one or two perennial antagonists to prevail, because they like to tell the Town how "they" visualize the Town should look, goes against everything that makes Los Gatos a desirable place to live. Please remember, this project has been in the works for 9 months plus; has cost the owners over \$100,000 to date; meets every rule and regulation required by the planning staff; and, is consistent with the two story homes so common on every nearby street.

Dennis Chambers  
361 Pennsylvania Ave  
Los Gatos, Ca

