



DATE: December 18, 2013

AGENDA ITEM # 5

TO: Design Review Commission
FROM: Sierra Davis, Assistant Planner
SUBJECT: 13-SC-31 – 428 Traverso Court

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve design review application 13-SC-31 subject to the listed findings and conditions

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This is a design review application for construction of a two-story residence. The following table summarizes the project:

GENERAL PLAN DESIGNATION: Single-family, Residential
ZONING: R1-10
PARCEL SIZE: 10,227 square feet
MATERIALS: Shingle siding, wood trim, wood panel shutter, composition shingle roof, aluminum clad wood casement window, wood trellis and columns

	Existing	Proposed	Allowed/Required
LOT COVERAGE:	2,181 square feet	2,654 square feet	3,068 square feet
FLOOR AREA:			
First floor	1,690 square feet	2,384 square feet	
Second floor		1,195 square feet	
Total	1,690 square feet	3,579 square feet	3,579 square feet
SETBACKS:			
Front	26 feet	30 feet	25 feet
Rear	16 feet	25 feet	25 feet
Right side	13 feet	10 feet/17.5 feet	10 feet/17.5 feet
Left side	10 feet	10 feet/17.5 feet	10 feet/17.5 feet
HEIGHT:	15 feet	25 feet	27 feet

BACKGROUND

The subject property is located in a Consistent Character Neighborhood as defined in the City's Residential Design Guidelines. The homes in the neighborhood are predominately single-story structures with three, two-story structures in the immediate neighborhood. The structures have consistent setbacks, simple forms and rustic materials. The street has unimproved shoulders and does not have a consistent street tree pattern.

DISCUSSION

The subject property is in a cul-du-sac with a curved front lot line and two property lines at the rear. Staff determined that the property has two rear property lines along the south and the west which results in the house sitting forward on the lot. The lot narrows at the front with a 30-foot front yard setback which exceeds the requirement.

The house is compatible within the low profile neighborhood context with a low finished floor, nine-inches from grade, and low first and second story plate heights of nine feet on the first story and eight feet, seven inches on the second story. The second story is centered over the first story with gable ends facing the front and rear of the property with hipped roofs on the sides to minimize its profile. The gables on the front and rear of the house are appropriate because it places the bulk of the house toward the greater setbacks. The sides are hipped with horizontal eaves line that minimizes the bulk of the house on the sides. The overall height of the structure is 25 feet, two-feet under the height limit.

The proposed structure uses materials compatible with the design concept and incorporates materials that are found in the neighborhood. The building materials are of a high quality and include shingle siding, wood trim, wood panel shutters, composition shingle roof, aluminum clad wood casement window, wood trellises and columns. The rustic materials will help to de-emphasize the mass of the two-story structure and help the structure relate to the adjacent one-story structures.

Privacy and Landscaping

The windows on the second story on the southeast (left) include three windows in the stairwell with four-foot sill heights. Windows in a stairwell are not a privacy concern because of the passive nature of the stairwell. The windows are setback from the property line 31 feet and have two wings of the second story extending out on either side minimizing their impact. There is a large tree on the adjacent property that will be protected during construction and will help to mitigate potential views to the neighboring property.

There are three windows on the northwest side of the second story and include a window in the laundry room, a window in the master bathroom and a window in the master bedroom. The window in the laundry room has a three and one-half foot sill height and is located behind the washer and dryer which would make it difficult to view out and down out of the window because one cannot walk up to the window. The window in the master bathroom is located behind a bathtub, which like the laundry room makes it difficult to walk up to the window and view down. The window in the master bedroom is located in the corner of the room with a sill height of four feet. Although the window sill height is low it is a small window set back 47 feet from the side property line, which

would not cause a significant privacy concern because of its size and the distance from the property line.

At the rear of the structure there are three windows on the second story; one in the master bathroom, one in the master bedroom and one in the master bedroom closet. The windows are set back 60 feet from the south rear property line. A letter of concern was received from the rear neighbor regarding the second windows and potential privacy concerns. The landscaping plan includes three, 36-inch box liquidambar trees which are deciduous along the southerly property line. The landscaping plan should be revised to include evergreen species at the rear property line to provide continuous screening. Condition No. 2 has been included that requires the landscaping plan to be revised to include evergreen trees at the rear property line.

The windows at the rear of the structure also face the westerly property line and are 41 feet from the property line. An evergreen hedge is proposed along this property line to help preserve privacy; therefore the windows would not cause a significant privacy concern because of window sizes and the distance from the property line.

A landscape plan also includes two street trees at the front of the property which should help to buffer the project.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

This project is categorically exempt from environmental review under Section 15303 of the Environmental Quality Act because it involves the construction of a single-family home.

CC: John Forsyth and Denise Anne James, Owners
Andrew Young, Young and Borlik Architects

Attachments:

- A. Application
- B. Neighborhood Compatibility Worksheet
- C. Area Map and Vicinity Map
- D. Comment letter, dated December 9, 2013

FINDINGS

13-SC-31—428 Traverso Court

With regard to the construction of a single-family structure, the Design Review Commission finds the following in accordance with Section 14.76.050 of the Municipal Code:

- A. The proposed project complies with all provision of this chapter;
- B. The height, elevations, and placement on the site of the proposed structure, when considered with reference to the nature and location of residential structures on adjacent lots, will avoid unreasonable interference with views and privacy and will consider the topographic and geologic constraints imposed by particular building site conditions;
- C. The natural landscape will be preserved insofar as practicable by minimizing tree and soil removal; grade changes shall be minimized and will be in keeping with the general appearance of neighboring developed areas;
- D. The orientation of the proposed structure in relation to the immediate neighborhood will minimize the perception of excessive bulk and mass;
- E. General architectural considerations, including the character, size, scale, and quality of the design, the architectural relationship with the site and other buildings, building materials, and similar elements have been incorporated in order to insure the compatibility of the development with its design concept and the character of adjacent buildings; and
- F. The proposed structure has been designed to follow the natural contours of the site with minimal grading, minimum impervious cover, and maximum erosion protection.

CONDITIONS

13-SC-31—428 Traverso Court

1. The approval is based on the plans received on November 14, 2013 and the written application materials provided by the applicant, except as may be modified by these conditions.
2. The landscaping plan shall be revised to include three, 36-inch box trees on the south, rear property line that shall be of an evergreen species.
3. The three air conditioning unit on the southeast, side property line shall be separated by a minimum of 25 feet or an acoustical report shall be provided to ensure that that the three units together would meet the noise.
4. Encroach permit issued from the Engineering Division shall be obtained prior to doing any work within the public street right-of-way.
5. Only gas fireplaces, pellet fueled wood heaters or EPA certified wood-burning appliances may be installed in all new construction pursuant to Chapter 12.64 of the Municipal Code.
6. **Prior to the issuance of a demolition permit**, install tree protection fencing around the dripline of the following tree (no. 1) as shown on the site plan. Tree protection fencing shall be chain link and a minimum of five feet in height with posts driven into the ground. **The tree protection fencing shall not be removed until the building permit is ready for final.**
7. **Prior to zoning clearance, the project plans shall contain/show:**
 - a. The conditions of approval shall be incorporated into the title page of the plans.
 - b. On the grading plan and/or the site plan, show all tree protection fencing and add the following note: “All tree protection fencing shall be chain link and a minimum of five feet in height with posts driven into the ground.” **The tree protection fencing shall be installed prior to issuance of the demolition permit and shall not be removed until all building construction has been completed.”**
 - c. Verification that the house will comply with the City’s Green Building Standards (Section 12.26 of the Municipal Code) from a Qualified Green building Professional.
 - d. Fire sprinklers to be installed pursuant to Section 12.10 of the Municipal Code.
 - e. The location of underground utilities pursuant to Section 12.68 of the Municipal Code. Underground utility trenches should avoid the drip-lines of all protected trees.
 - f. Show the measures to comply with the New Development and Construction Best Management Practices and Urban Runoff Pollution Prevention program, as adopted by the City

for the purposes of preventing storm water pollution (i.e. downspouts directed to landscaped areas, minimize directly connected impervious areas, etc.).

8. Prior to final inspection:

- a. All front yard landscaping, street trees and privacy screening shall be maintained and/or installed as required by the Planning Division.
- b. Submit verification that the house was built in compliance with the California Green Building Standards pursuant to Section 12.26 of the Municipal Code.



CITY OF LOS ALTOS
GENERAL APPLICATION

Type of Review Requested: (Check all boxes that apply)

Permit # 1105908

<input type="checkbox"/>	One-Story Design Review	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sign Review	<input type="checkbox"/>	Multiple-Family Review
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Two-Story Design Review	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sidewalk Display Permit	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rezoning
<input type="checkbox"/>	Variance(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Use Permit	<input type="checkbox"/>	RTS Overlay
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lot Lane Adjustment	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tenant Improvement	<input type="checkbox"/>	General Plan/Code Amendment
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tentative Map/Division of Land	<input type="checkbox"/>	Preliminary Project Review	<input type="checkbox"/>	Appeal
<input type="checkbox"/>	Subdivision Map Review	<input type="checkbox"/>	Commercial Design Review	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other

Project Address/Location: 428 Traverso Court

Project Proposal/Use: Single Family home

Current Use of Property: Single Family home

Assessor Parcel Number(s) 167-14-053 Site Area: _____

New Sq. Ft.: 3,579.2 Remodeled Sq. Ft.: Ø Existing Sq. Ft. to Remain: Ø

Total Existing Sq. Ft.: 2,180.7 Total Proposed Sq. Ft. (including basement): 3,579.2

Applicant's Name: John Forsyth James & Denise Anne James

Cell Home Telephone #: 650-218-4337 Business Telephone #: 650-543-1090

Mailing Address: 561 Guadalupe Drive

City/State/Zip Code: Los Altos, CA 94022

Property Owner's Name: John Forsyth James & Denise Anne James

cell Home Telephone #: 650-218-4337 Business Telephone #: 650-543-1090

Mailing Address: same as above

City/State/Zip Code: _____

Architect/Designer's Name: Andrew Young Telephone #: 650-387-5129

*** If your project includes complete or partial demolition of an existing residence or commercial building, a demolition permit must be issued and finalized prior to obtaining your building permit. Please contact the Building Division for a demolition package. ***

ATTACHMENT B



City of Los Altos

Planning Division

(650) 947-2750

Planning@losaltosca.gov

NEIGHBORHOOD COMPATIBILITY WORKSHEET

In order for your design review application for single-family residential remodel/addition or new construction to be successful, it is important that you consider your property, the neighborhood's special characteristics that surround that property and the compatibility of your proposal with that neighborhood. **The purpose is to help you understand your neighborhood before you begin the design process with your architect/designer/builder or begin any formal process with the City of Los Altos.** *Please note that this worksheet must be submitted with your 1st application.*

The Residential Design Guidelines encourage neighborhood compatibility without necessarily forsaking individual taste. Various factors contribute to a design that is considered compatible with a surrounding neighborhood. The factors that City officials will be considering in your design could include, but are not limited to: design theme, scale, bulk, size, roof line, lot coverage, slope of lot, setbacks, daylight plane, one or two-story, exterior materials, landscaping et cetera.

It will be helpful to have a site plan to use in conjunction with this worksheet. Your site plan should accurately depict your property boundaries. The best source for this is the legal description in your deed.

Photographs of your property and its relationship to your neighborhood (see below) will be a necessary part of your first submittal. Taking photographs before you start your project will allow you to see and appreciate that your property could be within an area that has a strong neighborhood pattern. The photographs should be taken from across the street with a standard 35mm camera and organized by address, one row for each side of the street. Photographs should also be taken of the properties on either side and behind your property from on your property.

This worksheet/check list is meant to help *you* as well as to help the City planners and Planning Commission understand your proposal. Reasonable guesses to your answers are acceptable. The City is not looking for precise measurements on this worksheet.

Project Address 428 Traverso Court
Scope of Project: Addition or Remodel _____ or New Home X
Age of existing home if this project is to be an addition or remodel? N/A
Is the existing house listed on the City's Historic Resources Inventory? NO

Address: 428 Traverso Court
Date: 11-11-13

What constitutes your neighborhood?

There is no clear answer to this question. For the purpose of this worksheet, consider first your street, the two contiguous homes on either side of, and directly behind, your property and the five to six homes directly across the street (eight to nine homes). At the minimum, these are the houses that you should photograph. If there is any question in your mind about your neighborhood boundaries, consider a radius of approximately 200 to 300 feet around your property and consider that your neighborhood.

Streetscape

1. Typical neighborhood lot size*:

Lot area: About 10,000 square feet
Lot dimensions: Length 120 feet
Width 80 feet

If your lot is significantly different than those in your neighborhood, then note its: area _____, length _____, and width _____.

2. Setback of homes to front property line: (Pgs. 8-11 Design Guidelines)

Existing front setback if home is a remodel? N/A
What % of the front facing walls of the neighborhood homes are at the front setback 50%
Existing front setback for house on left 35 ft./on right 25 ft.
Do the front setbacks of adjacent houses line up? NO

3. Garage Location Pattern: (Pg. 19 Design Guidelines)

Indicate the relationship of garage locations in your neighborhood* only on your street (count for each type)

Garage facing front projecting from front of house face 2
Garage facing front recessed from front of house face 1
Garage in back yard 0
Garage facing the side 1
Number of 1-car garages 0; 2-car garages 4; 3-car garages 0

Address: 428 Traverso Court
Date: 11-11-13

4. Single or Two-Story Homes:

What % of the homes in your neighborhood* are:

One-story 79%

Two-story 21%

5. Roof heights and shapes:

Is the overall height of house ridgelines generally the same in your neighborhood*? NO

Are there mostly hip 1/2, gable style 1/2, or other style ___ roofs*?

Do the roof forms appear simple _____ or complex X?

Do the houses share generally the same eave height NO?

6. Exterior Materials: (Pg. 22 Design Guidelines)

What siding materials are frequently used in your neighborhood*?

wood shingle stucco board & batten ___ clapboard

___ tile ___ stone ___ brick combination of one or more materials

(if so, describe) Some combination of stucco & wood or board & batten with brick.

What roofing materials (wood shake/shingle, asphalt shingle, flat tile, rounded tile, cement tile, slate) are consistently (about 80%) used?

NONE

If no consistency then explain: Not including subject lot; 2 tile roofs, 6 composition roofs, & 5 shake roofs.

7. Architectural Style: (Appendix C, Design Guidelines)

Does your neighborhood* have a consistent identifiable architectural style?

YES NO

Type? Ranch Shingle ___ Tudor ___ Mediterranean/Spanish

Contemporary ___ Colonial ___ Bungalow ___ Other

Address: 428 Traverso Court
Date: 11-11-13

8. Lot Slope: (Pg. 25 Design Guidelines)

Does your property have a noticeable slope? NO

What is the direction of your slope? (relative to the street)
Rear to front

Is your slope higher _____ lower _____ same X in relationship to the neighboring properties? Is there a noticeable difference in grade between your property/house and the one across the street or directly behind?

9. Landscaping:

Are there any frequently used or typical landscaping features on your street (i.e. big trees, front lawns, sidewalks, curbs, landscape to street edge, etc.)?

Front lawns, nice shrubs, some smaller focal point trees; birch, maple, olive

How visible are your house and other houses from the street or back neighbor's property?

Can see house from street - can see also from home directly behind but home in rear is set back

Are there any major existing landscaping features on your property and how is the unimproved public right-of-way developed in front of your property (gravel, dirt, asphalt, landscape)?

Lawn in front yard - no major landscaping features on property now.

10. Width of Street:

What is the width of the roadway paving on your street in feet? 50'

Is there a parking area on the street or in the shoulder area? On Street only not shoulder area.
Is the shoulder area (unimproved public right-of-way) paved, unpaved, gravel, landscaped, and/or defined with a curb/gutter? NO shoulder area landscaped to edge of street. NO curb gutter.

Address: 428 Traverso Court
Date: 11-11-13

11. What characteristics make this neighborhood* cohesive?

Such as roof material and type (hip, gable, flat), siding (board and batten, cement plaster, horizontal wood, brick), deep front yard setbacks, horizontal feel, landscape approach etc.:

Composition Roof material is most cohesive aspect of neighborhood along with landscape approaches with nice landscape and grass in front yards. Wood exterior features such as board & batten, shingle siding are cohesive.

General Study

- A. Have major visible streetscape changes occurred in your neighborhood?
 YES NO
- B. Do you think that most (~ 80%) of the homes were originally built at the same time?
 YES NO
- C. Do the lots in your neighborhood appear to be the same size?
 YES NO
- D. Do the lot widths appear to be consistent in the neighborhood?
 YES NO
- E. Are the front setbacks of homes on your street consistent (~80% within 5 feet)?
 YES NO
- F. Do you have active CCR's in your neighborhood? (p.36 Building Guide)
 YES NO
- G. Do the houses appear to be of similar size as viewed from the street?
 YES NO
- H. Does the new exterior remodel or new construction design you are planning relate in most ways to the prevailing style(s) in your existing neighborhood?
 YES NO

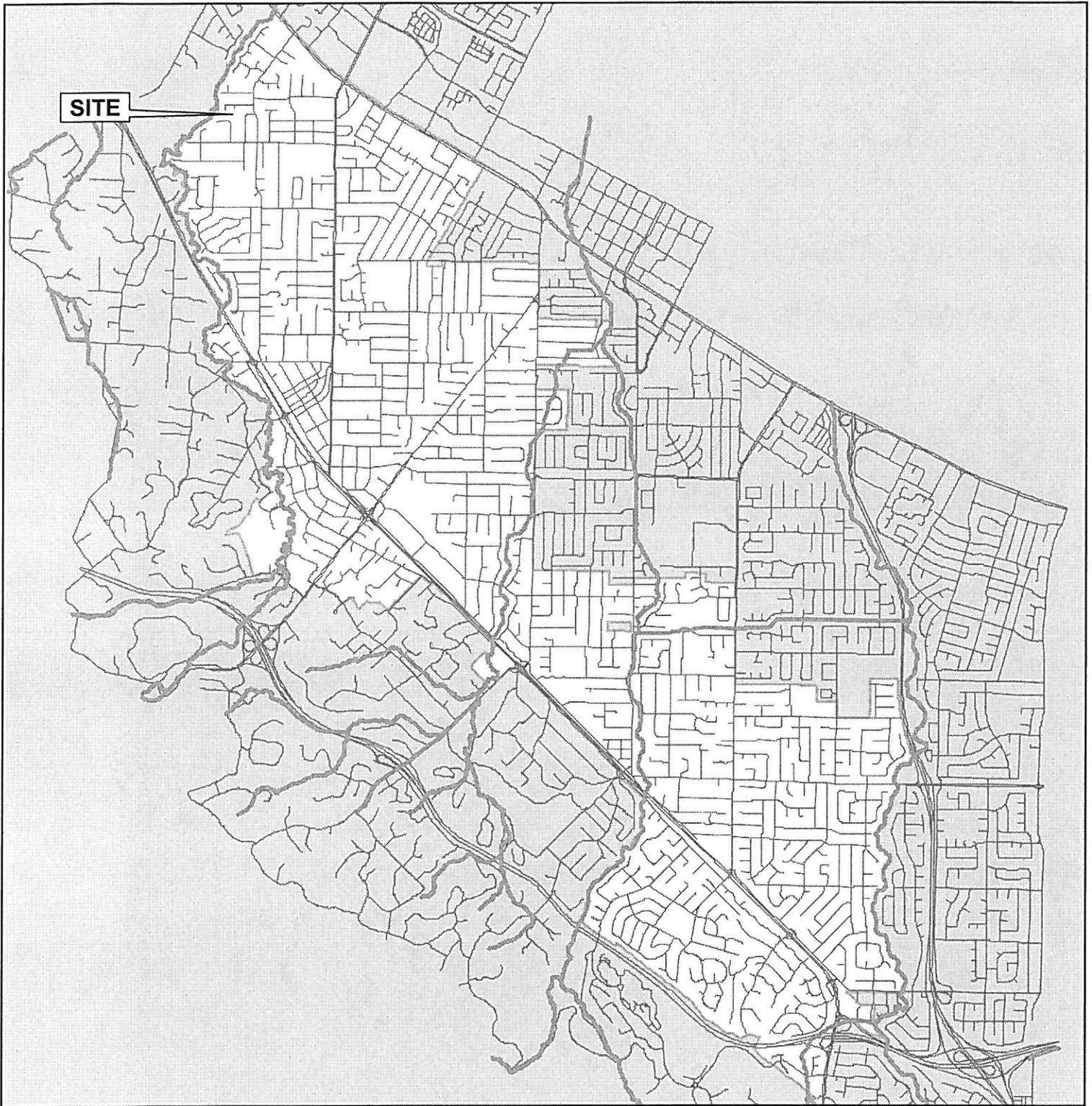
Address: 428 Traverso Court
 Date: 11-11-13

Summary Table

Please use this table to summarize the characteristics of the houses in your immediate neighborhood (two homes on either side, directly behind and the five to six homes directly across the street).

Address	Front setback	Rear setback	Garage location	One or two stories	Height	Materials	Architecture (simple or complex)
417 Traverso	25'	35'	front	1		stucco	simple
427 Traverso	25'	45'	front	2		stucco / wood siding	complex
439 Traverso	22'	40'	front	1		batten board	simple
447 Traverso	18'	40'	front	1		stucco	simple
434 Traverso	25'	27'	front	1		brick stucco	simple
422 Traverso	35'	40'	front	1		stucco	simple
414 Traverso	35'	40'	front	1		batten board	simple
410 Traverso	25'	25'	front	1		stucco / batten board	complex
448 Traverso	18'	5'	side	1		brick / batten board	simple
454 Traverso	25'	25'	front	2		shingle	complex
857 Laverne Way	60'	40'	front	2		stucco	complex

AREA MAP



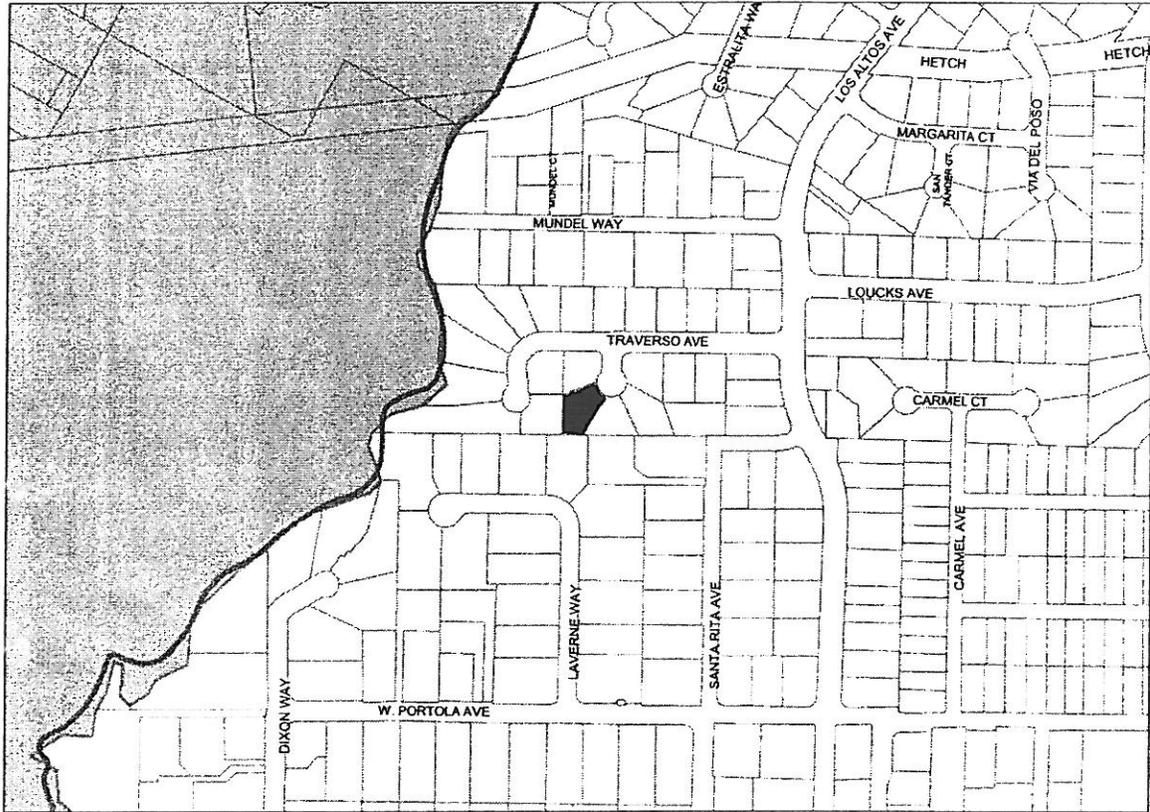
CITY OF LOS ALTOS

APPLICATION: 13-SC-21
APPLICANT: J. and D. James
SITE ADDRESS: 428 Traverso Avenue

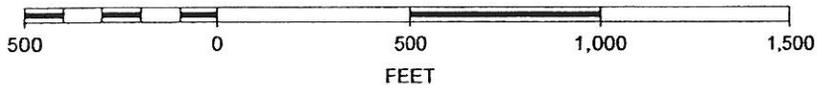


Not to Scale

VICINITY MAP



SCALE 1 : 6,000

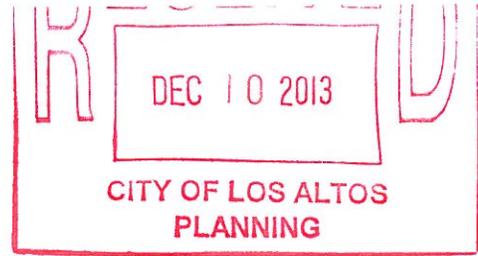


CITY OF LOS ALTOS

APPLICATION: 13-SC-21
APPLICANT: J. and D. James
SITE ADDRESS: 428 Traverso Avenue

ATTACHMENT D

Subj: **428 Traverso Project Concerns...**
Date: 12/9/2013 8:54:23 P.M. Pacific Standard Time
From: TBlaisdell@dcm.com
To: sdavis@losaltosca.gov
CC: Sheriblaisdell@aol.com, TBlaisdell@dcm.com



Hi Sierra,

As you discussed with Sheri earlier today, we have put together a quick summary of our concerns with the 428 Traverso project, including the attached letter with 9 photos. Sheri will deliver a hard copy of the packet tomorrow afternoon. Please let us know if you need any additional information. As you can see in the letter we would be happy to have members of the Design Review Commission visit our home to see the potential impact of the proposed project as currently designed.

Thanks,

Tom & Sheri Blaisdell
857 Laverne Way
650-948-3984

December 9th, 2013

Dear Members of the Los Altos Design Review Commission,

As adjacent neighbors to the proposed project at 428 Traverso Avenue, we would like to highlight several concerns we have with the proposed plans, particularly in regards to the Residential Design Guidelines that call for windows to be sited so that "sight lines into your neighbors' homes and yards is eliminated." (p. 14) Our property (857 Laverne Way) is located immediately behind 428 Traverso (we share a backyard fence), and from our review of the plans, it appears that the second floor master bedroom windows will look directly into our backyard and the rear rooms of our house. We are attaching several photos which demonstrate that the entire roofline of the existing one story home, from nearly gutter to crown and end to end, is clearly visible from the primary use areas of our backyard (including pool, lawn, and patio areas) as well as from several of our first floor living areas (including the dining room, kitchen, and one bedroom). The current plans for the proposed two-story house include large windows on the rear second story facing directly into our backyard and into our home.

We purchased our home at 857 Laverne Way in its current condition in 2005. We have not remodeled or added to the home. We do have a partial second story; however, we also have an 18,000 square foot lot, our second story is 45½ feet from the fence line, and we cannot see into our neighbor's yard or house from anywhere on our property. We would appreciate the same consideration from our neighbors. We do not believe that landscaping will reduce the impact on our privacy as we already maintain a 10 foot high hedge at the fence line and have a mature Deodara tree between our homes.

In reviewing the Residential Design Guidelines there are at least two suggestions to applicants that they consult with neighbors in the early stages of the design process and before plans are submitted. Unfortunately we have had no communications, nor were we aware that the property had changed hands, or that a project was in the works. We are unsure what the options are for remedying this situation, but we have been taken by surprise by the speed of the review process. We first received notice of the project from the Community Development Department on Saturday, December 7th and reviewed the plans at City Hall on Monday, December 9th. We were advised to document our concerns in writing by Wednesday, December 11th, which gave us two days to prepare this letter and photos. As long-time Los Altos residents (Sheri was born and raised in Los Altos/Los Altos Hills and as married adults we have lived in Los Altos for the last 16 years), we deeply value the peaceful and private character of the neighborhood. As we intend to spend the next 30 to 40 years in our house on Laverne (as Sheri's mother has spent the last 47 years in hers), we are very sensitive to any hasty changes that might negatively impact the enjoyment of our home and yard over the long term.

We welcome members of the Commission to visit our home and yard to observe for themselves the impact the proposed project would have on our privacy. It might also be helpful to have pictures taken from the roof of the current home at 428 Traverso looking into our property to further confirm the potential privacy impacts.

Please feel free to contact us at 650-948-3984 to set up a time to visit.

Respectfully,

Tom & Sheri Blaisdell (Thomas B. and Sheryl G. Blaisdell)
857 Laverne Way, Los Altos, CA 94022
650-948-3984





View from breakfast table



View from kitchen sink



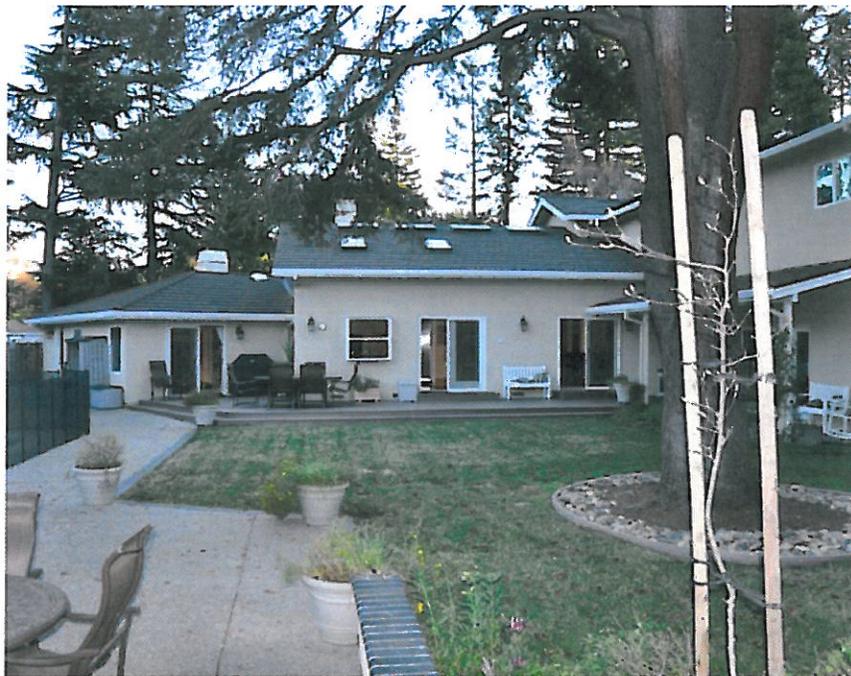
View from dining room table



View from downstairs bedroom



From Patio along pool



View from back (shared) fence into bedroom/kitchen/dining room



In the evening.



View from pool



From Deck

