



DATE: July 15, 2015

AGENDA ITEM # 4

**TO:** Design Review Commission  
**FROM:** Sean K. Gallegos, Assistant Planner  
**SUBJECT:** 15-SC-17 – 462 Casita Way

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Continue the design review application 15-SC-17 subject to recommended direction.

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**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

This is a design review application for a new two-story, single-family house. The project includes 2,154 square feet on the first story and 1,426 square feet on the second story. The following table summarizes the project:

**GENERAL PLAN DESIGNATION:** Single-family, Residential  
**ZONING:** R1-10  
**PARCEL SIZE:** 10,235 square feet  
**MATERIALS:** Composite roof, stucco, wood clad windows, precast window trim and stone veneer

	<b>Existing</b>	<b>Proposed</b>	<b>Allowed/Required</b>
<b>LOT COVERAGE:</b>	2,024 square feet	3,032 square feet	3,071 square feet
<b>FLOOR AREA:</b>			
First floor	2,024 square feet	2,154 square feet	
Second floor		1,426 square feet	
Total	2,024 square feet	3,580 square feet	3,582 square feet
<b>SETBACKS:</b>			
Front (Langton Ave)	25 feet	25 feet	25 feet
Rear	57 feet	35 feet	25 feet
Right side	10.5 feet	10 feet / 30 feet	10 feet/17.5 feet
Left side	10 feet	12 feet/19 feet	10 feet/17.5 feet
<b>HEIGHT:</b>	16 feet	26 feet	27 feet

## **BACKGROUND**

The subject property is located in a Consistent Character Neighborhood as defined in the City's Residential Design Guidelines. The parcels in the neighborhood are similar sizes, consistent front setbacks and the structures are a combination of older and new one- and two-story, single-family structures, with low wall plate heights and simple roof forms (low-pitched gable and hipped roofs) and rustic materials. While there is not a distinctive street tree pattern on either street, there are many large trees along both streets.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Design Review**

According to the Design Guidelines, in Consistent Character Neighborhoods, good neighbor design has design elements, materials and scale found within the neighborhood and sizes that are not significantly larger than other homes in the neighborhood. This requires a project to fit in and lessen abrupt changes.

The proposed project uses more contemporary forms and materials than those found in the surrounding neighborhood and is designed in some ways to be compatible with the area. The project incorporates design elements that are found in the area such as low-sloped hipped and gable roofs, two-car garages, and recessed porches. It also introduces newer elements with Dutch gable roofs and shed roofs that complicate the design concept. The proposed structure uses high quality rustic materials that relates well to the neighborhood. The building materials include composite roofing, wood clad windows, precast trim and stone veneer, are high quality materials and appropriate for the character of the area.

The project is designed with low-scale elements along the first story, which reflect the nature of the neighborhood. The uniform eaves on the first story, horizontal trim detail, low roof pitch and the projecting porch emphasize the horizontal profile of the first story and help to break up the solid plane of the front elevation.

However, the first floor has an 11-foot eave height, which differs from the nine-foot to ten-foot, six-inch, eave heights of existing residences in the neighborhood. Along the right elevation, a 15-foot tall eave line is out of character and bulky and the clerestory element over the great room is awkwardly integrated with the shed roof. Along the left elevation, the second floor located above the patio contributes to the bulkiness of the structure. Although the second story has increased setbacks along the left side of the structure, the second story continues to be more prominent and bulkier than surrounding properties. While the applicant responded to staff concerns by lowering the clerestory four inches and adding screening along the right property line, the building continues to be more complex in massing than the adjacent neighborhood and significantly bulkier to other homes within the context.

To meet the findings related to compatibility and bulk, staff recommends that the Design Review Commission provide the following direction:

- Reduce the overall prominence and eave height of the first story walls to lower the scale;

- Reduce the eave height along the right elevation to lower its scale;
- Reduce the bulkiness of the left elevation; and
- Simplify the massing of the structure including wall and roof forms to be more compatible with the character of the immediate neighborhood.

### **Privacy and Landscaping**

On the right (north) side elevation of the second story, there is one window in bedroom No. 4 with a sill height of six feet, six inches. Due to the higher windowsill height, the proposed second story window does not create unreasonable privacy issues.

On the left (south) side elevation of the second story, there are four windows: one window located in the master bathroom, with a two-foot, six-inch, sill height, one window the master bathroom with a three-foot, six-inch, sill height, one window in bedroom No. 2 with a two-foot, six-inch, sill height and one located in bathroom No. 2 with a three-foot, six-inch sill height. The views to the sides are partially diminished by a 19- to 21-foot setback from the side property lines. However, staff is concerned the windows may create privacy impacts to adjacent properties. To diminish the privacy impacts from the second story windows, staff recommends that the Design Review Commission consider additional evergreen screening trees along the left side property line.

The rear (west) second story elevation includes one second story window and one sliding door: one window is located in master bedroom with a two-foot, six-inch, sill height. The sliding door off the master bedroom exits onto a balcony. This balcony has a width of 13 feet and depth of 11 feet deep, is partially buffered to the side by the project's adjacent first story roof ridge and existing redwood trees along the rear property line. However, staff continues to be concerned the low windowsill height and the balcony may result in privacy impacts. Therefore, staff recommends that the Design Review Commission consider additional evergreen trees screening along the left side and rear property lines. As designed and with the recommended direction, staff finds that the project maintains a reasonable degree of privacy

There are 13 trees on the property and the project removes two trees (Nos. 8 and 13). The trees being removed are a four-inch buckeye (No. 8) and a six-inch fringe tree (No. 13). The buckeye tree seems appropriate for removal based on its proximity to the structure, and the fringe tree seems appropriate for removal based on its lack of significance. Tree protection guidelines will be followed to maintain the remaining trees during construction. The proposed landscape plan will meet the City's Landscaping and Street Tree Guidelines.

Staff must note that the site plan (Sheet A1.1) has a typographical error due to tree Nos. 10 through No. 12 being identified as pine trees; however, the trees are actually redwood trees.

### **CORRESPONDENCE**

Staff received six letters from adjacent residents who expressed concern regarding bulk and scale, privacy and landscaping (Attachment D).

## **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

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

## **PUBLIC CONTACT**

A public meeting notice was posted on the property and mailed to 12 nearby property owners on Casita Way and Echo Drive.

Cc: Kan Liu, Applicant/Owner

### Attachments:

- A. Application
- B. Neighborhood Compatibility Worksheet
- C. Area Map and Vicinity Map
- D. Correspondence
- E. Public Noticing and Notification Map

## FINDINGS

15-SC-17—462 Casita Way

With regard to design review for two-story single-family structure, the Design Review Commission finds the following in accordance with Section 14.76.050 of the Municipal Code:

- a. The orientation of the proposed structure in relation to the immediate neighborhood does not minimize the perception of excessive bulk;
- b. 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 not been incorporated in order to insure the compatibility of the development with its design concept and the character of adjacent buildings; and
- c. The height, elevations, and placement on the site of the proposed addition, when considered with reference to the nature and location of residential structures on adjacent lots, will not avoid unreasonable interference with views and privacy.

## **RECOMMENDED DIRECTION**

15-SC-17—462 Casita Way

1. With regard to minimizing bulk and promoting an appropriate relationship to the adjacent structure:
  - a. Reduce the overall prominence and eave height of the first story walls to lower the scale;
  - b. Reduce the eave height along the right elevation to lower its scale;
  - c. Reduce the bulkiness of the left elevation; and
  - d. Simplify the massing of the structure including wall and roof forms to be more compatible with the character of the immediate neighborhood.
2. With regard to avoiding unreasonable interference with privacy:
  - a. Evergreen screening trees shall be located along the left (south) and rear (west) property lines to diminish privacy impacts.



# ATTACHMENT A

## CITY OF LOS ALTOS GENERAL APPLICATION

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

Permit # 1106647

<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"/>	R1-S Overlay
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lot Line 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: 462 Casita Way

Project Proposal/Use: Single Family Dwelling R-3/U

Current Use of Property: Single Family Dwelling R-3/U

Assessor Parcel Number(s) 170-18-020 Site Area: 10,235

New Sq. Ft.: 4,862 Remodeled Sq. Ft.: 0 Existing Sq. Ft. to Remain: 0

Total Existing Sq. Ft.: 2,024 Total Proposed Sq. Ft. (including basement): 4,862

Applicant's Name: Kan Liu

Home Telephone #: (650) 450-9526 Business Telephone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: 462 Casita Way

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

Property Owner's Name: Kan Liu

Home Telephone #: (650) 450-9526 Business Telephone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: 462 Casita Way

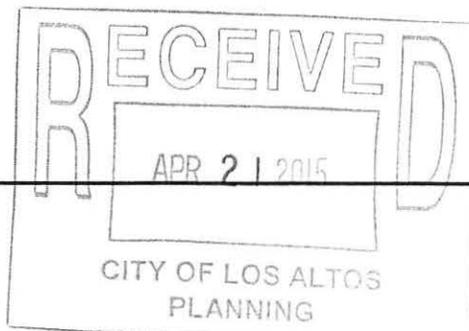
City/State/Zip Code: Los Altos, CA 94022

Architect/Designer's Name: Bryan Do bryan@td-arch.com Telephone #: (916) 662-5580

**\*\*\* 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. \*\*\***

*(continued on back)*





# ATTACHMENT B

(650) 947-2750

[Planning@losaltosca.gov](mailto: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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 462 Casita Way

Scope of Project: Addition or Remodel  or New Home

Age of existing home if this project is to be an addition or remodel? 64

Is the existing house listed on the City's Historic Resources Inventory? No

Address: 462 Casita Way  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## 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: 10,235 square feet

Lot dimensions: Length 115 feet  
Width 89 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? No

What % of the front facing walls of the neighborhood homes are at the front setback 99 %

Existing front setback for house on left 25 ft./on right 25 ft.

Do the front setbacks of adjacent houses line up? Yes

#### 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 Yes

Garage facing front recessed from front of house face No

Garage in back yard No

Garage facing the side No

Number of 1-car garages \_\_\_; 2-car garages X; 3-car garages \_\_\_

Address: 462 Casita Way  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Single or Two-Story Homes:**

What % of the homes in your neighborhood\* are:  
One-story 90  
Two-story 10

**5. Roof heights and shapes:**

Is the overall height of house ridgelines generally the same in your neighborhood\*? Yes  
Are there mostly hip , gable style , or other style  roofs\*?  
Do the roof forms appear simple  or complex ?  
Do the houses share generally the same eave height Yes?

**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) \_\_\_\_\_

What roofing materials (wood shake/shingle, asphalt shingle, flat tile, rounded tile, cement tile, slate) are consistently (about 80%) used?  
Shingle, wood shake, tile  
If no consistency then explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**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: 462 Casita Way

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**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)

4:12 away from street, hip roofs, some gables

Is your slope higher  lower  same  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.)?

Trees, front lawns, no sidewalks.

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

Typical same visibility as surrounding houses.

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)?

Existing 3 trees to remain. Gravel shoulder area, dirt.

**10. Width of Street:**

What is the width of the roadway paving on your street in feet? 60

Is there a parking area on the street or in the shoulder area? Yes

Is the shoulder area (unimproved public right-of-way) paved, unpaved, gravel, landscaped, and/or defined with a curb/gutter? Gravel.

Address: 462 Casita Way

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**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.:  
Hip roofs, cement plaster, shingle

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**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: 462 Casita Way

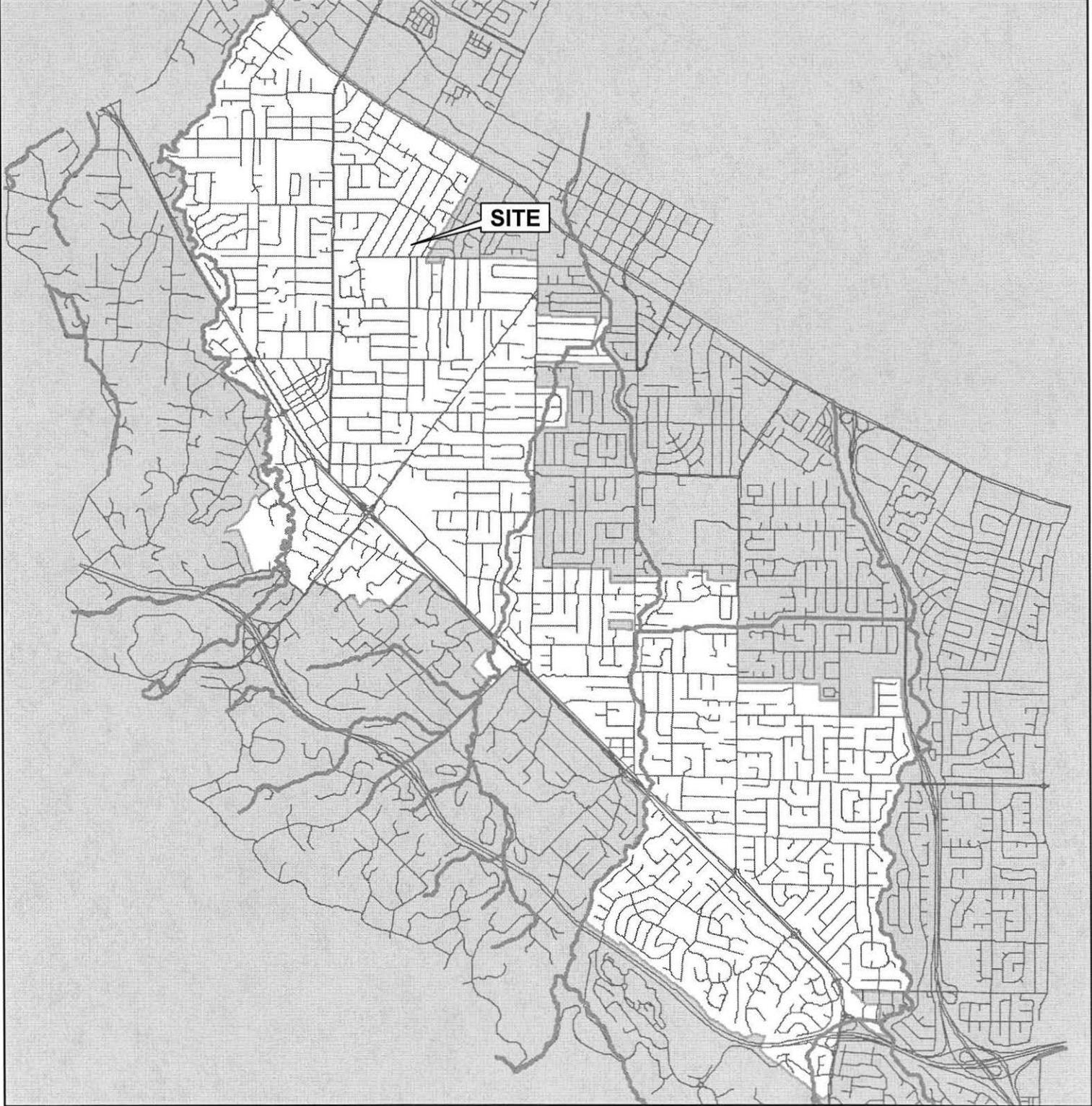
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### 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)
474 Casita Way	25'	30'	Left	One	20'	Stucco	Simple
486 Casita Way	25'	40'	Left	Two	26'	Stucco	Simple
452 Casita Way	25'	35'	Left	One	20'	Stucco	Simple
440 Casita Way	25'	30'	Left	One	20'	Brick, siding	Simple
483 Distel Drive	25'	30'	Right	One	20'	Stucco	Simple
471 Distel Drive	25'	40'	Right	One	20'	Siding	Simple
469 Casita Way	25'	40'	Left	One	20'	Stucco	Simple
459 Casita Way	25'	30'	Right	One	20'	Stucco	Simple
447 Casita Way	25'	40'	Right	One	20'	Stucco	Simple
435 Casita Way	25'	40'	Right	One	20'	Stucco	Simple

# AREA MAP



CITY OF LOS ALTOS

**APPLICATION:** 15-SC-17  
**APPLICANT:** K. Liu  
**SITE ADDRESS:** 462 Casita Way

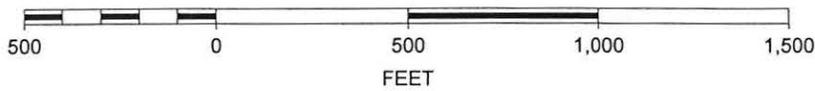


Not to Scale

# VICINITY MAP



SCALE 1 : 6,000



CITY OF LOS ALTOS

APPLICATION: 15-SC-17  
APPLICANT: K. Liu  
SITE ADDRESS: 462 Casita Way

**From:** Ellen Chu <ellenc.chu@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, July 08, 2015 3:17 PM  
**To:** Sean Gallegos  
**Subject:** 462 Casita Way - response from K Liu

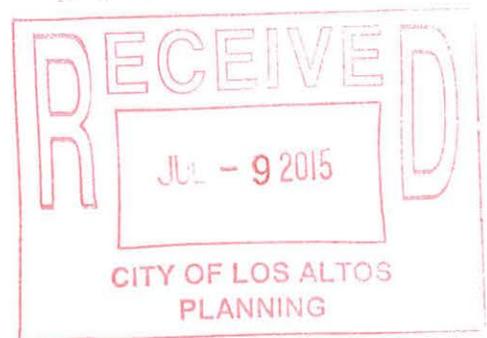
Dear Sean,

Here is email response from Kan Liu, after we met face to face on Monday, July 6 to express my concern. Please take this into account for the design review.

Thanks,  
Ellen Chu (474 Casita)

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** Kan Liu <kan@gmail.com>  
**Date:** Tue, Jul 7, 2015 at 9:14 AM  
**Subject:** Thanks!  
**To:** Ellen Chu <ellenc.chu@gmail.com>



Hi Ellen,

Thanks again for inviting me and my daughter to your lovely home yesterday! I really appreciated you sharing your experience and learnings about house building with me! It was very useful and I actually agreed with pretty much everything you said. And I really liked how you used software design/building as an analogy though unfortunately just like software design / building, a lot of requirements / design choices come as trade offs w/ one another because of various constraints the system has. And that's definitely one thing I've found to be true for designing my house too so again I really appreciate your input and thoughtful feedback!

And as I mentioned yesterday, I want to address your very real privacy concerns by doing these 3 things:

1. **Remove the second story window facing your house (my right/north elevation)** - I've already reached out to my architect to see how we can do this.
2. **Maximize fence height between our houses** - And I will pay for this as well. I'm going to look into what the max possible height is here.
3. **Plant any additional trees / shrubbery** that you think would be helpful to protect your privacy even more. Please let me know what recommendations you have / prefer, no rush here as we can always do this once you see the house and know exactly where you would like more privacy protection.

And also, if you don't mind, I'd love the contact info for both your architect as well as your contractor that you had such great experiences with.

Thanks again for all your help and info! And PS. my daughters and parents really liked your yam mochi! it was just the right amount of sweetness for them! And again, please don't hesitate to let me know if there's anything else you need!

Warmest,  
/Kan



## Sean Gallegos

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**From:** Ellen Chu <ellenc.chu@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, July 08, 2015 3:21 PM  
**To:** Sean Gallegos  
**Subject:** 462 Casita Way - Ellen's response to Kan Liu

Dear Sean,  
Here is my response to Kan. Please make a note of it.  
Thanks,  
Ellen

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** Ellen Chu <ellenc.chu@gmail.com>  
**Date:** Tue, Jul 7, 2015 at 11:54 AM  
**Subject:** Re: Thanks!  
**To:** Kan Liu <kan@gmail.com>

Hi Kan,  
Thank you for your visit and your offer to remove the window facing my side and your willingness and consideration to build a taller fence and trees to protect my privacy.

I totally understand your reasons that you want to proceed with your current plan as you have come a long way with your plan. But please take some moments to step back and reflect on if two story is really what you want. Will it really give you a sense of living in harmony with mother nature and the neighbors surrounding you? Nowadays the elementary schools in Los Altos are incorporating "Living Classroom" to teach kids basic gardening and appreciate what mother nature provides them. I'd love to volunteer but currently I do not have the bandwidth for the commitment. Think about your kids' bedroom windows open up to a fruit tree where they can smell the flowers and the fruits. This will stay with them as they grow up. You cannot do that with a two story. It is also more likely your children will go out to the garden and play if they live in a one story.

Yes, we can build taller fences and plant trees, but don't forget trees are living things. They grow and require maintenance. The drought situation in California is real. We should all do our part to minimize resource use, and the impact to our environment. This is what I learn in the Environmental Horticulture program that I have not thought of before.

Apart from my privacy issue, I have a great big concern to live in harmony with my neighbors. My understanding is I am not the only one who want to preserve the semi-rural atmosphere of our neighborhood whom we all love and cherish. Yes, the city may allow you to build a two story, but will you be really happy if it is against the neighbors' wish. So far I have not heard of a single neighbor stepping forward and happily endorsing a two story home. Please take some moments to reflect.

Here is the architect I use.

<http://www.yelp.com/biz/glush-design-architects-san-jose>

I will call my contractor and see if he is still in the area. Thanks for your time.  
Best regards,  
Ellen



On Tue, Jul 7, 2015 at 9:14 AM, Kan Liu <[kan@gmail.com](mailto:kan@gmail.com)> wrote:  
Hi Ellen,

Thanks again for inviting me and my daughter to your lovely home yesterday! I really appreciated you sharing your experience and learnings about house building with me! It was very useful and I actually agreed with pretty much everything you said. And I really liked how you used software design/building as an analogy though unfortunately just like software design / building, a lot of requirements / design choices come as trade offs w/ one another because of various constraints the system has. And that's definitely one thing I've found to be true for designing my house too so again I really appreciate your input and thoughtful feedback! And as I mentioned yesterday, I want to address your very real privacy concerns by doing these 3 things:

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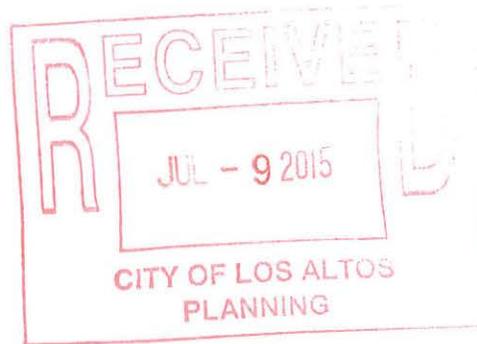
And also, if you don't mind, I'd love the contact info for both your architect as well as your contractor that you had such great experiences with.

Thanks again for all your help and info! And PS. my daughters and parents really liked your yam mochi! it was just the right amount of sweetness for them! And again, please don't hesitate to let me know if there's anything else you need!

Warmest,  
/Kan

Jeff & Lisa Cuppett  
483 Distel Drive  
Los Altos, CA 94022  
408-821-6917  
jeff.cuppett@gmail.com  
July 8, 2015

Sean Gallegos  
Assistant City Planner  
City of Los Altos  
1 San Antonio Road  
Los Altos, CA 94022



Dear Sean,

We are writing you concerning the proposed construction of a two-story home at 462 Casita Way. Our house at 483 Distel Drive shares approximately 80 feet of rear property line with the property on Casita and the proposed plan significantly impacts our family's privacy in our yard, pool and our home.

We have reviewed the "City of Los Altos Single-Family Residential Design Guidelines – New Homes & Remodels (RDG)" and have the following comments/concerns about the proposed design:

1. The owners/builders have made no effort to listen to and/or incorporate the views and opinions of the nearest neighbors, in violation of the guideline recommendations, and also not in the spirit of the municipal code (Chapter 14.10)
  - a. None of the adjacent neighbors were notified by the owner or architects of the plans for 462 Casita Way before the public notice was made.
  - b. The first instance of communication with the owner of the property did not come until we reached out to him on July 7<sup>th</sup> after receiving the letter from the City to express concerns over the scale of this project and its impact on the privacy of our home. This lack of communication is in conflict with RDG section 2.3 paragraph 5.
2. From section 4.1 of the RDG, in response to the paragraph beginning: "In consistent character neighborhoods, *good neighbor* design has design elements, material, and scale found within the neighborhood and sizes that are not significantly larger than other homes in the neighborhood."
  - a. Casita and the Casita side of Distel have a consistent character and a two-story house is out-of-character. In fact there are only 2 two-story houses on either Casita or the adjacent part of Distel. One is an older addition where the 2<sup>nd</sup> story is quite small and the other is the recent new construction at 421 Casita which is completely out-of-scale with any other projects in this area. All other remodels and new constructions, including our own submitted remodeling project, maintain the one story look-and-feel of the neighborhood. The house, as designed, definitely does not "fit in" with the other homes in the neighborhood.
3. From section 4.1 of the RDG, in response to the paragraph beginning: "Approval of an inconsistent design will require mitigating design measures to lessen the neighborhood impact"

- a. There is some mitigation effort in design for immediate adjacent neighbors with the addition of landscaping, however, no consideration has been made for rear adjacent neighbors.
4. From section 5.3 of the RDG, in response to the paragraph beginning: "Study sight lines to locate windows and maintain privacy. Carefully size and place windows and other forms of glazing so that sight lines into your neighbors' homes and yards is eliminated. Orient second story windows so that their egress is away from neighbors when privacy invasion may result."
  - a. The current design ignores all aspects of this paragraph.
  - b. Reversing the design of the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor would at least utilize existing landscaping to minimize invasion.
  - c. Any additional landscape screening should minimize light impact and droppings on our yard as this is already excessive from the existing 3 redwood trees on the property. Their desire for a 2<sup>nd</sup> story should not result in our having a home/yard that either has no privacy or is alternatively all blocked in by large trees.
5. From section 5.3 of the RDG, in response to the paragraph beginning: "Second floor decks oriented towards side or rear yards should use appropriate screening measures when privacy invasion would otherwise result."
  - a. The proposed 11x13 deck size is too large and can only be intended for a consistent use. The deck should be removed entirely or at a minimum made smaller (no larger than 4 feet deep) and designed as a passive deck.
  - b. Screening devices, such as solid railing walls and lattice, should be used to provide additional privacy along the sides and back of any allowed balcony as indicated on pg15.
6. From section 2.3 paragraph 6, in response to the statement: "Will avoid unreasonable interference with views and privacy"
  - a. The proposed structure including the balcony off the master bedroom, sliding doors from master, and the 4'x7' window in master bath will provide direct line of sight into our yard and home. Any required windows in the rear of the house facing the rear adjacent neighbors should be sized according to the egress rules in compliance with the UBC and placed at the highest point allowable to minimize this invasion of privacy.
7. From section 5.4, in response to the statement: "design to minimize perception of excessive bulk"
  - a. The design as proposed is maximizing all limits of size on all levels. Doing this makes home appear out of place, massive and bulky.
  - b. The size and position of 2<sup>nd</sup> story accents rather than minimizes size of the structure. The 2<sup>nd</sup> story is actually deeper front to back than the first story footprint. It would be more acceptable from both a bulk and privacy perspective if 2<sup>nd</sup> story were set in from both front and back of first story footprint in a fashion similar to the front elevations shown on pg13 of section 5.2
8. From section 3.0, in response to the statement: "residence appears massive and overwhelming to the eye"
  - a. The scale of the project is much larger than other houses in the neighborhood. Given the design maximizes all of the allowed dimensions, the residence will appear massive and overwhelming by comparison.

Sean Gallegos

July 8, 2015

Page 3

Thank you for your time and consideration of the issues we have raised in this letter. We request that our letter be included in the package for the Design Review Committee's consideration at the hearing on July 15<sup>th</sup>.

Sincerely,

Jeff & Lisa Cuppett



## Sean Gallegos

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**From:** Ellen Chu <ellenc.chu@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 09, 2015 11:54 AM  
**To:** Sean Gallegos  
**Subject:** Additional comment on 462 Casita Way

Dear Sean,

In addition to my original letter sent yesterday, here is one more comment I need to make.

I would like to have a landscape plan done by a qualified Landscape Architect, with exact plant identity and placement of plant materials to be used for privacy screening purposes. For this, the owner will have to work with all impacted neighbors to agree on the plant selection.

I request that my letter sent yesterday, and this request be included in the package for the Design Review Committees consideration.

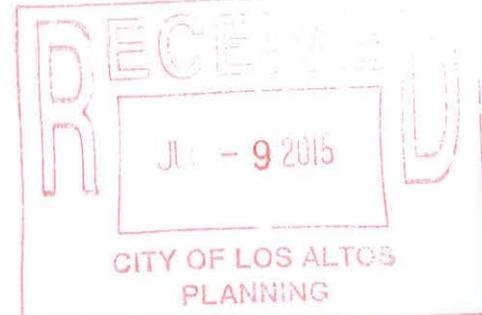
Thanks,  
Ellen Chu  
474 Casita Way





Cynthia Lorence  
495 Distel Dr., Los Altos CA 94022  
831-663-0835  
[clorence@gmail.com](mailto:clorence@gmail.com)

July 8, 2015



Sean Gallegos  
Assistant City Planner  
City of Los Altos  
1 San Antonio Rd  
Los Altos CA 94022

Dear Mr. Gallegos,

I am writing you concerning the proposed construction of a two story home at 462 Casita Way. My house at 495 Distel Dr. shares a rear corner with the property line of 462 Casita Way. The proposed plan for this construction significantly impacts privacy in my yard and my home. I am currently in the process of re-landscaping my back yard, and the proposed plan includes a sanctuary garden behind my master bedroom. The 462 Casita Way plan would completely destroy the effect of my planned garden, in which my husband and I have already invested over \$12,000 in designing. My landscape plan is within the parameters of other landscape projects in the neighborhood and poses no threat to my surrounding neighbor's privacy in contrast to the 462 Casita plan.

I agree with my neighbors Jeff and Lisa Cuppett at 483 Distel Dr. in regards to the concerns that they have raised in their July 8, 2015 letter to you. Specifically, sections 1A and 1B of their letter are true: I have not been notified, or consulted except by my neighbor Ellen Chu. Furthermore, I also strongly agree with section 2A of the Cuppett's letter. The 462 Casita plan sounds out of character for the surrounding neighborhood. In fact, the word "Casita" literally means "little house." The homes on our streets have always been modest, but tasteful, one-story family homes with large yards. Residents of Distel and Casita have resisted large two-story remodels for sixty years! Only two houses on Distel are two stories, 514 Distel and 470 Distel, both of which belonged to large families that needed the extra space. And, these homes were designed in such a way as to not impact neighbor's privacy or view. The property at 495 Distel Dr. has been owned by my family since the early 1950's. My family has always been careful to make modest changes to our property so as not to disturb or antagonize our neighbors. I grew up in this house and am planning to move back into the house when I retire, and am currently in the process of doing work on the house to that end. One of the things that I have always liked about Los Altos is the fact that the neighborhoods retain much of their original character when other things in the Santa Clara County area have changed completely without regard to effects on existing residents. I love the fact that the houses in Los Altos have large lots and single family homes, rather than oversized houses that completely overshadow the lot size, and decrease privacy between neighbors. In the Cuppett's letter, their concerns about the proposed house being out of character with the rest of the neighborhood sounds very reasonable.

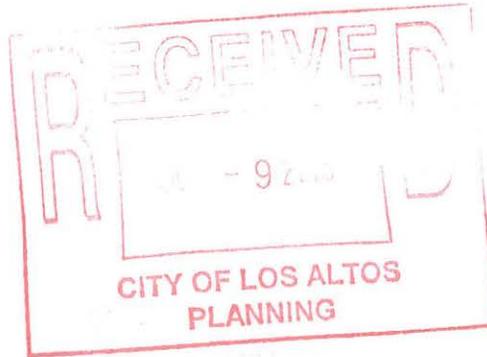
My landscape design, which I would be happy to submit to you has a courtyard sanctuary garden planned for the area behind the master bedroom, with several fruit trees that I have already planted, and a brick patio. I was expecting that I would have sun for this area, but if my neighbors are planning to plant large trees and raise structures that would have a significant impact on my garden's sunlight, I would be extremely unhappy. I have been working with Astrid Gaiser Garden Design LLC for most of

the past year planning this landscape project. We are finally at the point where we can start the garden construction. Sections 7A and 7B of the Cuppett's letter are of particular concern to me since I disapprove of house remodels that are inconsistent with the existing neighborhood. I have always felt that they look out of place, and it makes neighboring homes look dull and uninteresting by comparison. I also agree with Section 8A of the Cuppett's letter for the same reasons, it would start a trend in the neighborhood where everyone must match their neighbor's extravagance or look cheap by comparison. Part of the charm of Los Altos is a village character, quality of design and privacy in its homes and real estate. This proposed project seems somewhat inappropriate in design, and impinges on the privacy and view of the neighbors involved. Once everybody has added a second story, the neighborhood has higher density and less privacy. It loses that feeling of space in trade for claustrophobia. In the end everybody would be worse off than if the trend never started.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I request that my letter be included in the package for the Design Review Committee's consideration.

Sincerely,  
Cynthia Lorence

Sean K Gallegos  
City of Los Altos  
1 North San Antonio Road  
Los Altos, CA 94022  
July 8, 2015



Ellen Chu  
474 Casita Way,  
Los Altos, CA 94022  
(650)948-8926

Dear Sean,

I am writing this letter to express my extreme concern on the proposed plan for a two story home located at 462 Casita. My house is located on the left side of the proposed new home, facing the street. I have lived in this neighborhood since 1989, and I am currently a volunteer at the City of Los Altos Senior Center. I have been doing this since 2012, and was one of the award recipients for putting in 100+hours, at the 2015 Volunteer Appreciation Ceremony, held at the LAYC in April.

Upon reviewing the plan for 462 Casita Way, the first thing I noticed was that the title on the front page is wrongfully stated as "New One Story Home". The firm that did the drawing is based in Sacramento. I don't know how familiar the firm is with the City of Los Altos building code. Please review carefully to see if the proposed structure complies with the City of Los Altos building code.

Having a two story home next to mine is unimaginable. It will jeopardize the privacy of my home. My backyard is my sanctuary. I spend a lot of time in my backyard to rejuvenate myself or tending my mostly edible and sustainable garden. Upon reviewing the plan, seeing all the window openings on the second story is enough, but I was even more shocked to find there is a balcony at the back of the building. Can you please review the second floor deck and whether or not it is compliant? This seems to be a great invasion of privacy for the surrounding neighbors.

Casita Way consists of predominantly one story homes with a lovely semi rural atmosphere. Many homes on our street including mine, have been extensively remodelled keeping the one story structure. The two story mansion recently rebuilt on 421 Casita Way is an eyesore. It does not blend in with the all the other homes on our street. I have not heard of a single positive comment from neighbors or anyone passing by. Please take this into consideration in your review process. I understand there is a long and lengthy overlay process, but it is too late for us to consider.

As suggested by the City building department staff, I arranged a meeting with the owner, Mr. Kan Liu and expressed my concerns directly to see if there is any possibility I can persuade him to change his mind. I extensively remodelled the home I live in, and have gained some substantial experience in home design with sustainability in mind, so I happily shared my knowledge with him. The meeting went as well as it could, in that he compromised by agreeing to remove the window

on my side and redo the fence and plant trees to screen the new two story. That is a good start, but not good enough in the long run. I will forward you the email we exchanged, so you have an idea what we discussed and his offer to compromise. I am tempted to suggest an evergreen redwood or pine tree that grows to 50+ft high. The California drought is a real issue for all of us. Using plant materials to screen unsightly two story building is costly and not the best use of our resources. It would be much more sustainable to grow drought tolerant plants or edibles in our backyards for our lot size. Please help educate the newcomers to a more sustainable lifestyle and help preserve the limited resources we have for our future generation. By this, I mean please do whatever you can within your power to stop this new two story development.

When we moved in to our house in 1989, the house on the left already had a room added to the second story with a small window facing to the side of our house and also the back neighbors. To this day, we are still struggling with the privacy issue. We planted trees for screening, but in our experience, trees and shrubs are living things, and they don't always work out as planned. This includes as well as having to deal with all the long term maintenance issues.

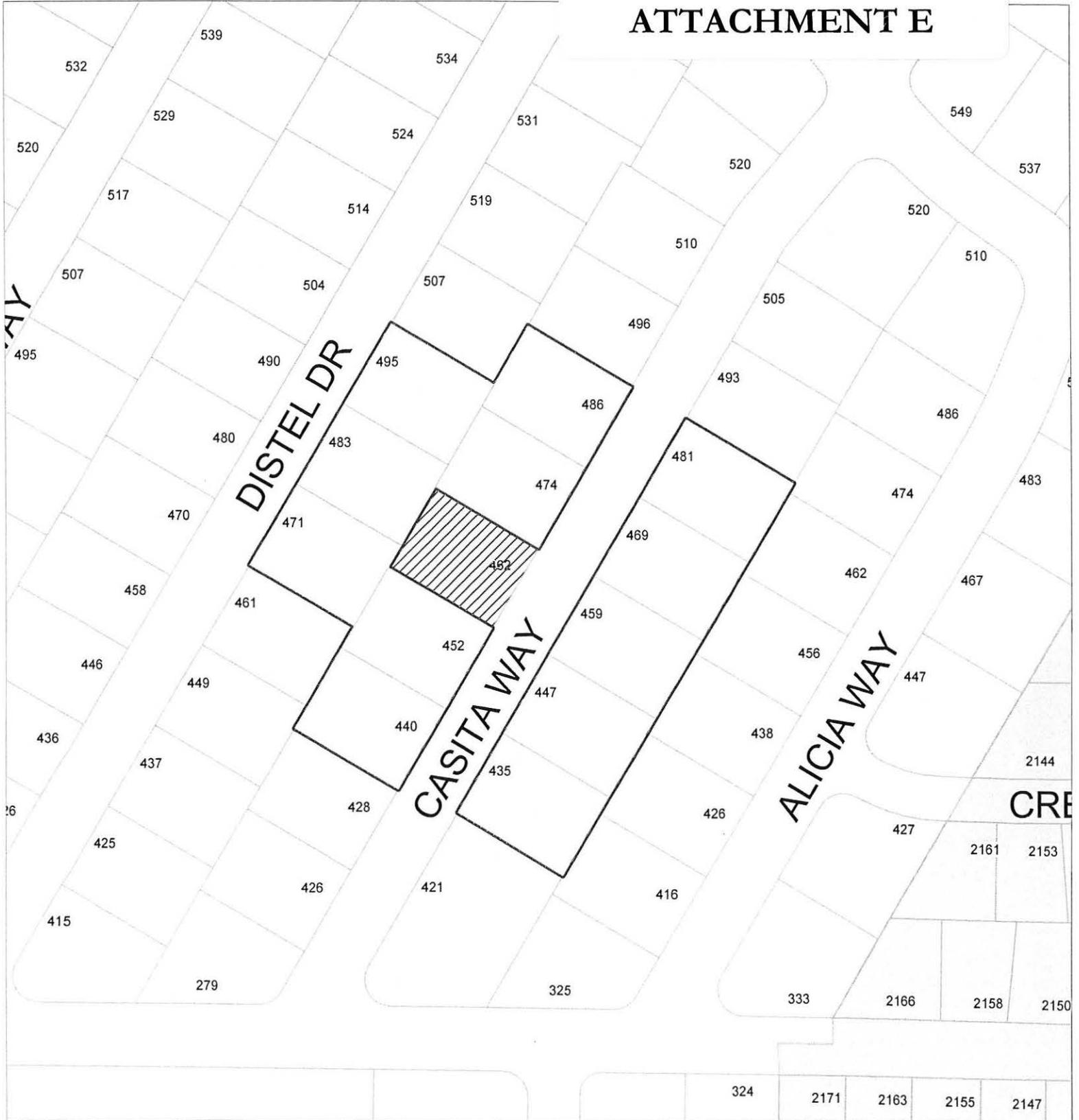
I have been extremely happy and proud to live on our street since we moved in. The homes on our street are predominantly one story with the exception of 421 Casita and my (486 Casita) neighbor's bedroom addition upstairs. Please drive by and take a close look. I want to enjoy this rural atmosphere for as long as I continue to live in my home. I still have the apricot tree that came with the house in my backyard. Please do your very best to help preserve this lovely rural atmosphere that almost all our neighbors love and cherish. This is the Los Altos that my children know and love. Please help us preserve the good for our current and future residents. No more two story homes on our street please.

I will attend the hearing on July 15th. If you have any suggestions, please let me know. Will it help if I collect signatures from our street and those impacted on Distel Ave before the hearing date? Please advise.

Thank you for your time.  
Sincerely,  
Ellen Chu  
(650)823-8672 (cell)

# 462 Casita Way Notification Map

ATTACHMENT E



SCALE 1 : 1,500

