



DATE: September 14, 2016

AGENDA ITEM # 4

TO: Design Review Commission
FROM: Sierra Davis, Assistant Planner
SUBJECT: 16-SC-06 – 705 Casita Way

RECOMMENDATION:

Deny design review application 16-SC-06 per the listed findings

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This is a design review application for a new two-story house. The project includes 2,747 square feet on the first story and 1,585 square feet on the second story. The following table summarizes the project's technical details:

GENERAL PLAN DESIGNATION: Single-Family, Residential
ZONING: R1-10
PARCEL SIZE: 16,203 square feet
MATERIALS: Composition shingle roof, stucco siding, wood clad windows, wood fascia, and precast stucco trim

| | Existing | Proposed | Allowed/Required |
|---|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| COVERAGE: | 2,878 square feet | 2,798 square feet | 4,861 square feet |
| FLOOR AREA: | | | |
| First Floor | 2,453 square feet | 2,747 square feet | |
| Second Floor | N/A | 1,585 square feet | |
| Total | 2,453 square feet | 4,332 square feet | 4,370 square feet |
| SETBACKS: | | | |
| Front | 23 feet | 25.5 feet | 25 feet |
| Rear | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Exterior Side | 20.5 feet | 20 feet | 20 feet |
| Interior Side (1 st /2 nd) | 18.3 feet | 17.5 feet/22 feet | 10 feet/17.5 feet |
| HEIGHT: | 13.5 feet | 26.7 feet | 27 feet |

BACKGROUND

Neighborhood Context

The subject property is located on Casita Way, which is considered a Consistent Character Neighborhood as defined in the City's Residential Design Guidelines. The corner property is located at the northern end of the street, where Casita Way dead ends into two cul-du-sacs. The property is on the east side of the street and approximately two-feet higher than the street elevation, making this a prominent corner lot within the neighborhood context. The houses in the neighborhood context are consistent with low scale plate heights, simple massing, and rustic materials. Casita Way north of Marich Way has a curb and gutter street edge, but does not have a distinct street tree pattern.

Zoning Compliance

The subject property is triangular in shape and does not have a defined rear yard. Therefore, it is considered a three sided lot with a front yard and exterior side yard adjacent to Casita Way and an interior side yard adjacent to 709 Casita Way.

DISCUSSION

Design Review

According to the Residential 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. The design should be on designs that "fit in" and lessen abrupt changes. Approval of an inconsistent design would require mitigating design measures to lessen the neighborhood impact.

The property is a prominent corner lot with a building envelope that is approximately two feet above the street level at the corner. The placement of the proposed house is consistent with the location of the existing house, which is centered in the building envelope, with a greater than required interior side yard setback. The second story is centered over the first story with a single-story garage element on the left side of the house. The front entry is located at the front of the property on the cul-du-sac portion of the Casita Way frontage, with the garage facing west on Casita Way. The house is located forward on the lot at the front and exterior side yard setbacks to help preserve the existing pool and maintain the interior side yard as a usable rear yard space.

The project is an eclectic design with elements taken from different architectural styles. The proposed house has a symmetrical facade with a centered entry element inspired by Greek revival architectural style with a pediment and columns. Stacked over the front entry element is a rounded element with a rounded roof form. The entry is flanked by conical roof forms at the first story with gable roof forms at the second story. The rounded roof forms are used in various classic architectural styles; however, these elements are usually a focal point of the structure and not used throughout the design. Rounded or conical architectural elements and roof forms are inherently bulky and a design with multiple rounded forms results in a design that appears excessively bulky within this neighborhood context.

The basic massing of the structure is a stacked first and second story with prominent two-story height elements. The first- and second-story plate heights relate well to the structures within the neighborhood, with 9.5-foot plate height at the first story and 8.5-foot plate height at the second story. While these plate heights relate well to the scale of Ranch style homes in the neighborhood context, the design of the house exposes the full wall height of the first and second story with superficial roof details used to break up the two-story massing.

The architect worked with staff and provided some additional design details to soften the two-story height walls that were initially proposed. While superficial details such as the shed roof between the first and second story, a ledge detail below the windows and horizontal control joints at the first and second story were added, the massing of the house was not revised. The details appear to result in a design that is more complex than the unarticulated walls in the previous proposal, but these details do not mitigate the bulk of the structure, because the basic form of the house remains unchanged. Overall, the project does not result in an integral design concept and does not relate to the adjacent houses within the neighborhood context.

In order to approve this design, the Design Review Commission must make the required design review findings (pg. 5) as outlined in Chapter 14.76 of the Municipal Code. However, based on the scale of the architectural elements, bulky roof forms, the perception of excessive bulk and mass, and the lack of compatibility with the surrounding neighborhood, staff cannot recommend approval based on the following findings:

- The height, elevations, and placement on the site of the new house, when considered with reference to the nature and location of residential structures on adjacent lots, will avoid unreasonable interference with views and privacy and DOES NOT consider the topographic and geologic constraints imposed by particular building site conditions;
- The orientation of the proposed new house in relation to the immediate neighborhood will NOT minimize the perception of excessive bulk and mass; and
- 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.

The Residential Design Guidelines include mitigation measures that can help reduce the perception of bulk, which includes changing the size of the house, increasing setbacks, and providing large trees or other landscape materials for screening. The goal is to soften the differences between the new construction and the existing houses in the neighborhood structurally, with landscaping used as secondary mitigation to soften bulk and mass. However, for this project, it appears that a more comprehensive redesign of the proposed house is necessary to comply with the design review guidelines and the design review findings.

ALTERNATIVES

Overall, as discussed above and outlined in the required design review findings staff is unable to make positive findings and cannot recommend approval of this project. However, should the Commission vote to approve the project, the action should include positive design review findings and standard conditions of approval related to tree protection, grading and drainage, green building, fire sprinklers, undergrounding utilities, and Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance compliance.

The Commission can also vote to continue the project with specific direction to modify the design of the house in order to comply with the design review guidelines and required design review findings.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

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

PUBLIC CONTACT

A public meeting notice was posted on the property and mailed to 16 nearby property owners on Casita Way.

Cc: Sophia Yen and Steve Ko, Applicant and Property Owner
John Ploss, Architect

Attachments:

- A. Application
- B. Neighborhood Compatibility Worksheet
- C. Area, Vicinity and Public Notification Maps

FINDINGS

16-SC-06 – 705 Casita Way

With regard to the new two-story house, the Design Review Commission finds the following in accordance with Section 14.76.050 of the Municipal Code:

- a. The proposed new house complies with all provision of this chapter;
- b. The height, elevations, and placement on the site of the new house, when considered with reference to the nature and location of residential structures on adjacent lots, will avoid unreasonable interference with views and privacy and DOES NOT 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 new house in relation to the immediate neighborhood will NOT 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 NOT 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 new house has been designed to follow the natural contours of the site with minimal grading, minimum impervious cover, and maximum erosion protection.



ATTACHMENT A

CITY OF LOS ALTOS GENERAL APPLICATION

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

Permit # 107044

| | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | One-Story Design Review | <input type="checkbox"/> | Commercial/Multi-Family | <input type="checkbox"/> | Environmental Review |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Two-Story Design Review | <input type="checkbox"/> | Sign Permit | <input type="checkbox"/> | Rezoning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Variance | <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"/> | Sidewalk Display Permit | <input type="checkbox"/> | Appeal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Historical Review | <input type="checkbox"/> | Preliminary Project Review | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other: |

Project Address/Location: 705 Casita Way

Project Proposal/Use: single family home Current Use of Property: single family

Assessor Parcel Number(s): 170-04-007 Site Area: 16.553 sf

New Sq. Ft.: 4,372 Altered/Rebuilt Sq. Ft.: 0 Existing Sq. Ft. to Remain: 0

Total Existing Sq. Ft.: 2,878 Total Proposed Sq. Ft. (including basement): 4,372

Is the site fully accessible for City Staff inspection? yes

Applicant's Name: Sophia Yen & Steve Ko

Telephone No.: 415 806-7818 Email Address: syen@alum.mit.edu

Mailing Address: 411 Los Ninos Way

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

Property Owner's Name: same as above

Telephone No.: _____ Email Address: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City/State/Zip Code: _____

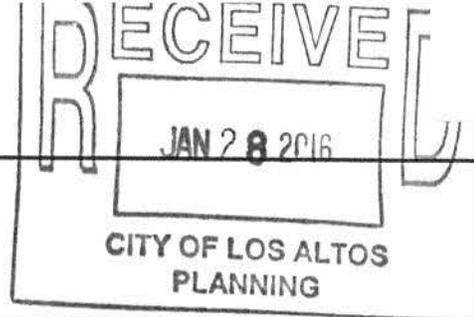
Architect/Designer's Name: John Ploss Architect

Telephone No.: 510 654-5084 Email Address: jparchitect@sbcglobal.net

Mailing Address: 42 Glen Eden Ave

City/State/Zip Code: Oakland, Ca 94611

** 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

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 705 Casita Way

Scope of Project: Addition or Remodel O or New Home X

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

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

* PLEASE SEE PHOTOS SHEET A4 OF SUBMITTAL

Date: 1/25/14 705 CASITA WAY

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: 12,080 square feet
Lot dimensions: Length _____ feet VERY VARIOUS
Width _____ feet SHAPES

If your lot is significantly different than those in your neighborhood, then note its: area 10,553, length _____, and width _____.

THE LOT IS TRIANGULAR

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

Existing front setback if home is a remodel? _____

What % of the front facing walls of the neighborhood homes are at the front setback 50 %

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 2

Garage facing front recessed from front of house face 5

Garage in back yard _____

Garage facing the side 2

Number of 1-car garages 0, 2-car garages 1; 3-car garages 0

Date:

1/25/14 ^{705 CASITA WAY}

4. Single or Two-Story Homes:

What % of the homes in your neighborhood* are:

One-story 100

Two-story _____

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?

If no consistency then explain: 50% COMP SHINGLE WITH SPANISH TILE, CONCRETE & WOOD SHAKE

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

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)

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.)?
No

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

VISIBLE FROM SOME - HIDDEN FROM OTHERS

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)?

LARGE TREES, ROAD IS ASPHALT

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? No

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

Date:

105 CASITA WAY
1/25/14

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.:

SET BACKS, ~~ROOF~~ MATURE TREES

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

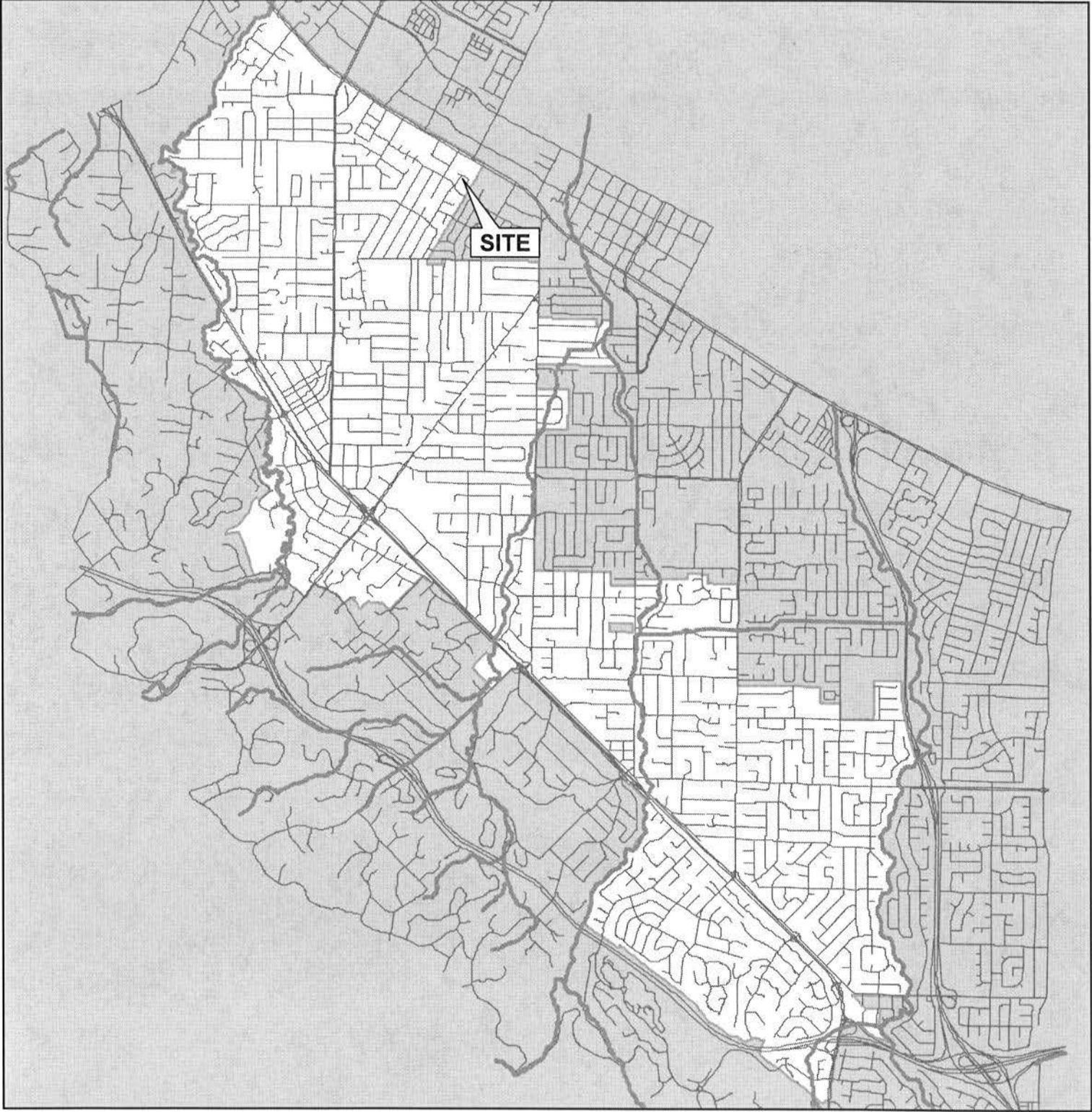
Address: 705 CASITA WAY
 Date: 1/25/14

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) |
|------------|---------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------------|--------|--------------|----------------------------------|
| 702 CASITA | 25 | 30 | SIDE | ONE | | STUCCO | S |
| 704 CASITA | 25 | 10 | SIDE | ONE | | WOOD | S |
| 743 CASITA | 25 | 40 | FRONT | ONE | | STUCCO/WOOD | S |
| 739 CASITA | 25 | 40 | FRONT | ONE | | STUCCO | S |
| 735 CASITA | 25 | 40 | FRONT | ONE | | STUCCO | S |
| 731 CASITA | 25 | 40 | FRONT | ONE | | STUCCO | S |
| 725 CASITA | 25 | 70 | FRONT | ONE | | STONE + WOOD | S |
| 711 CASITA | 25 | 20 | FRONT | ONE | | STUCCO | S |
| 709 CASITA | 25 | 40 | FRONT | ONE | | WOOD | S |
| | | | | | | | |

AREA MAP



CITY OF LOS ALTOS

APPLICATION: 16-SC-06
APPLICANT: S. Yen and S. Ko
SITE ADDRESS: 705 Casita Way



Not to Scale

VICINITY MAP



SCALE 1 : 6,000



CITY OF LOS ALTOS

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SITE ADDRESS: 705 Casita Way