



July 11, 2003

To: **Gabriel Rowan**
San Mateo County Planning and Building Division
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re: **PLN2002-00238**: Coastal Development Permit (CDP) and Coastsides Design Review for a new 4,034 s/f 2-story triplex residential building on a 8695 s/f parcel at the se corner of The Alameda and Ave Alhambra in El Granada APN(s) 047-201-010, 030 & 040.

Gabriel:

The MidCoast Community Council’s Planning and Zoning Committee reviewed this project at our regular meetings of May 21 and June 4 of 2003. Overall, we think the proposed project is well suited for the property and the area, and we are encouraging of well-designed multi-unit buildings within the zoning regulations. In considering the highly visible (from both the highway and the surrounding neighborhood) and impactful location of this project, we had the following additional comments:

Unit Configuration and Parking

Our main concern is the parking situation – although two of the units are designated as “single bedroom”, with the large amounts of space in the second floor lofts (322 and 218 s/f) these could easily be used as two or three bedroom units.

We feel the single car garages for these units to be inadequate parking for how these units will realistically be utilized. Even a single couple using it just as a one- bedroom will likely have two cars, and if the loft areas are utilized as extra bedrooms, we could easily expect each of these two units to have up to four cars. We think that the current parking requirements for these units is inadequate – the third, three-bedroom unit could also four cars, so even its two-car garage may not be sufficient.

We discussed with the applicant some possibilities about incorporating more off-street parking into the landscaping. See comments below.

Integration of Building with Natural Grade

We feel the building’s basic design does an excellent job of following the natural slope of the lot from north to south. We would like to be sure that the south side of the structure is brought down to natural grade (approx. 37’ elevation) so that the building is not sitting up on it’s foundation, and that the building is set into the grade in the rear where necessary.

Exterior

We feel the building’s apparent height and mass could be significantly reduced with the use of horizontal lap, instead of vertical board and batten, siding, and that the building’s faces could be further

enhanced and broken up by using shingles and decorative vents under the eaves on all sides. Other recommendations included using multi-paned glass at the entrances and in the windows instead of single, and continuing the bracket, pillar and beam detail of the west elevation to the other sides of the structure. We feel the design and the setting lends itself to a medium-to-dark, green-brown two-color scheme with finished wood detail.

Landscaping

A good landscaping plan will do a lot to integrate the structure fully the lot and minimize its visual impact. Along the north and south elevations, tall shrubs (6 – 8 ft) should be used along the windowless walls, with medium ones (3-4 ft) below the higher windows. Medium height (30 ft) shade trees should be planted along the west and north sides, and taller trees (like Monterey cypress) could be planted southeast corner.

Off-street gravel parking areas for additional cars (see parking comments above) could be integrated into the landscaping plan along the north elevation and possibly in the southeast section of the parcel – these areas could be screened by taller shrubs and connected to the entrances with pathways and plantings.

Visual Impact

Because of the extremely visible location of the project and to help inform the community of what is being proposed, we recommend that the applicant erect story-poles at the project for at least a two week period during the remainder of the processing period for this application. In the past, we have found that this approach, accompanied by posted drawings at the site of what the proposed structure will look like, is very effective in letting the community know what is being proposed, gaining additional input on the proposed project, and avoiding unnecessary complaints and opposition based on misinformation.

Misc.

On the Second Floor Plan sheet of the plans we were supplied, the dimension of the left section of the building is notated as 21', but measurement shows it to be only 19.5'. As this dimension is related to the setback conformance of the building, we would like to see this corrected and verified.

Thank you for your help, and please keep us informed of any further developments, redesigns, hearings, approvals or appeals concerning this application.



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