

ARCHITECTURE PLANNING URBAN DESIGN

August 15, 2025

Mr. Ryan Safty  
Community Development Department  
Town of Los Gatos  
110 E. Main Street  
Los Gatos, CA 95031

**RE: 647 N. Santa Cruz Avenue**

Dear Ryan:

I reviewed the drawings, and evaluated the site context. My comments and recommendations are as follows:

#### **NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT**

The site is located at the transition point between residential and commercial development at the northern entry to Downtown Los Gatos. Photographs of the site and its surrounding context are shown on the following pages.











*THE SITE*



*Commercial building immediately across North Santa Cruz Avenue.*



*House to the immediate left*



*Commercial building to the immediate right*



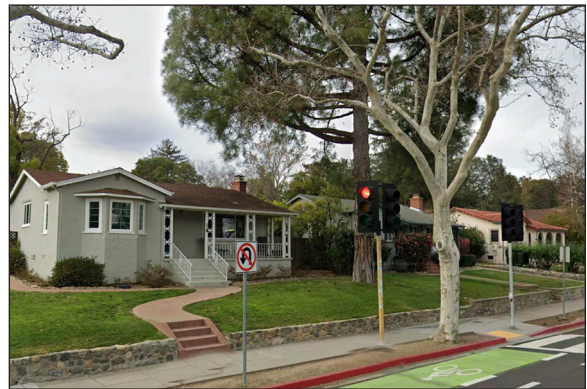
*Nearby commercial building across North Santa Cruz Avenue.*



*Nearby commercial building across North Santa Cruz Avenue.*



*Nearby home on North Santa Cruz Avenue across Mariposa Avenue.*



*Nearby homes on North Santa Cruz Avenue across Mariposa Avenue.*



## PROPOSED PROJECT



*SITE PLAN*



*N. SANTA CRUZ AVE & SOUTH SIDE*



*N. SANTA CRUZ AVE & NORTH SIDE*



*AUTO COURT NORTH FACADES*



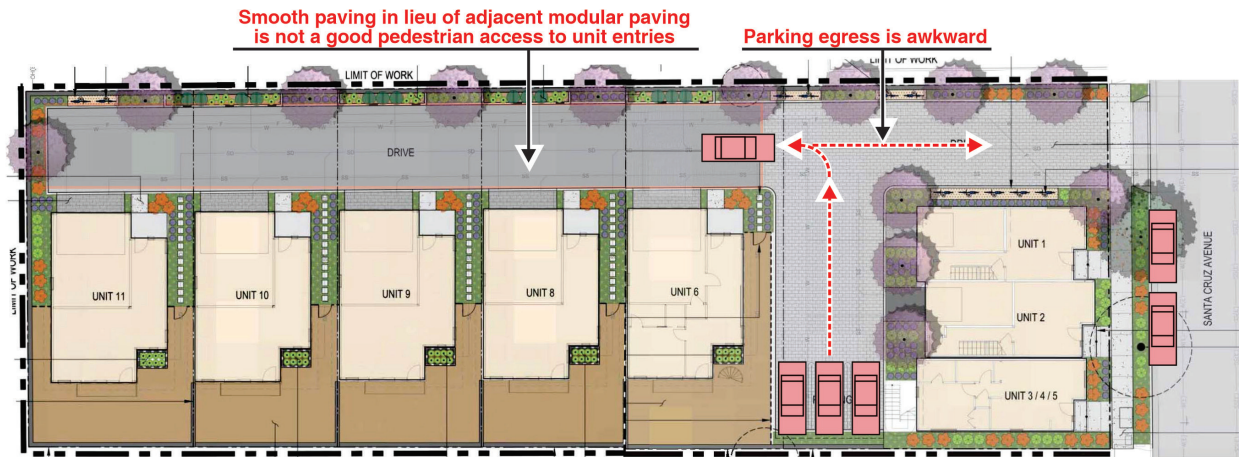
*NORTH SANTA CRUZ AVENUE FACADE*



## ISSUES AND CONCERNS

The site is in a sensitive location of the transition from single family homes to the north to a mix of residential and commercial uses to the south. The proposed design is not well suited to these conditions and there are quite a number of inconsistencies with the town's Residential Design Guidelines.

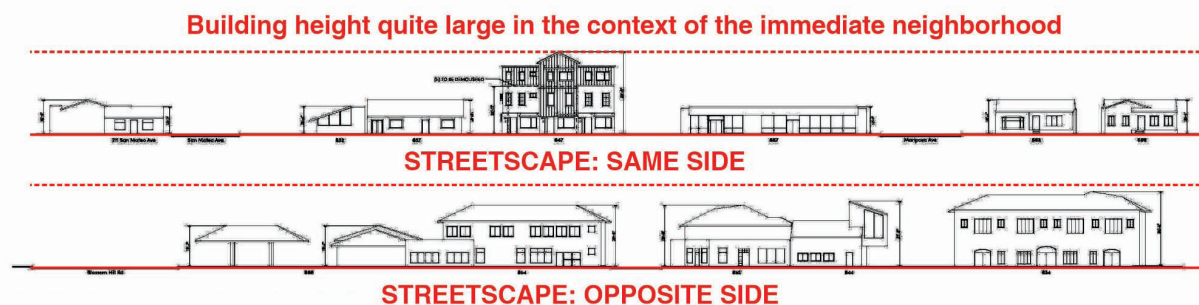
### SITE PLAN



1. Some modular driveway paving is provided near the street but the remaining flat paving access to the single family homes is not very pedestrian friendly.
2. Exiting the site from the surface parking would be awkward, requiring a long back up maneuver.

### MULTIFAMILY STRUCTURE

1. The proposed building height is larger than others along the street including the commercial buildings across North Santa Cruz Avenue. This would not be consistent with Residential Design Guideline 3.3.2.



#### 3.3.2 Height and bulk at front and side setbacks

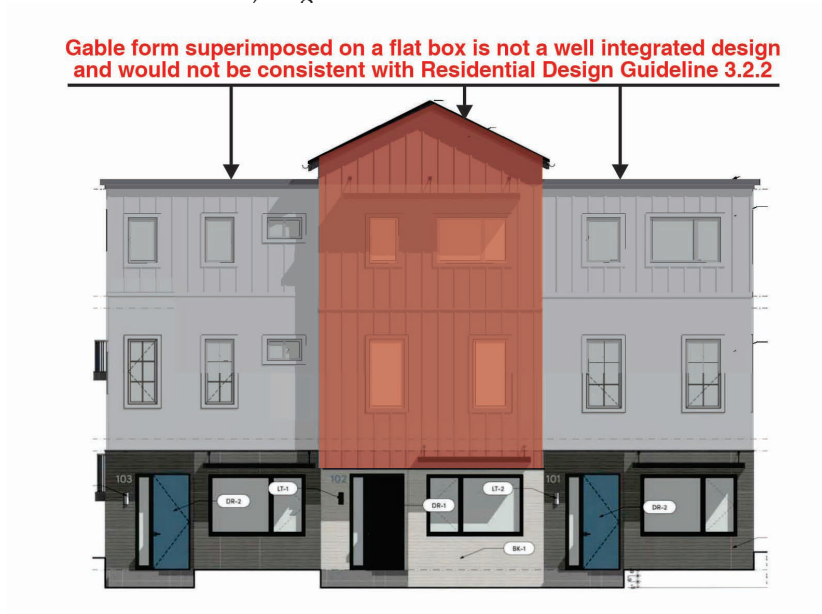
- *Avoid eave lines and roof ridge lines that are substantially taller than the adjacent houses*



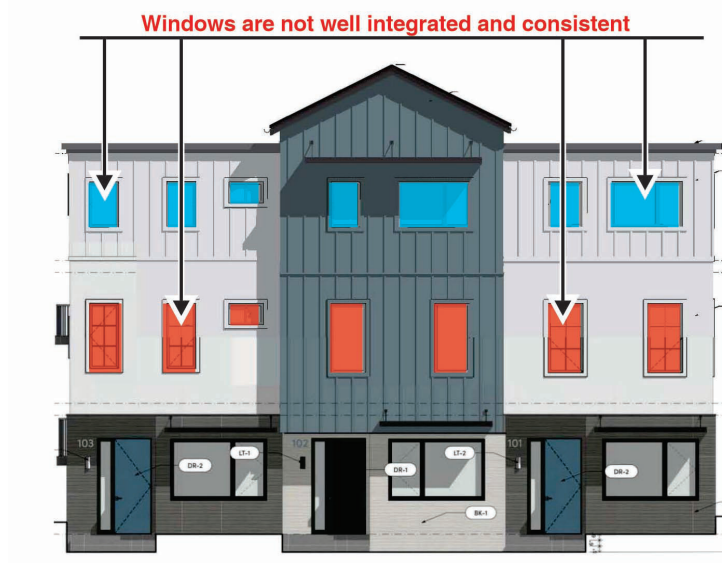
2. The gable form superimposed over a flat box is not well designed, does not relate to the immediate neighborhood and would not be consistent with Residential Design Guideline 3.2.1.

**3.2.1 Select an architectural style with sensitivity to the surrounding neighborhood**

- *Styles with front facade eaves at the first floor level will be easier to adapt to predominantly one story neighborhoods than styles with two story, unbroken front facades.*
- *Avoid selecting an architectural style which typically has roof pitches that are substantially different from others in the nearby neighborhood.*



3. Window styles, proportions and details are not consistently articulated and would not be consistent with Residential Design Guideline 3.7.1, 3.7.2 and 3.7.4.





### 3.7.1 Arrange windows in patterns and groupings consistent with the architectural style and surrounding neighborhood

- *Many architectural styles have individual windows that are grouped into patterns of two, three or more windows. Be conscious of this fact, and organize the windows to complement the style.*

### 3.7.2 Match window types and proportions to the architectural style and to the surrounding neighborhood

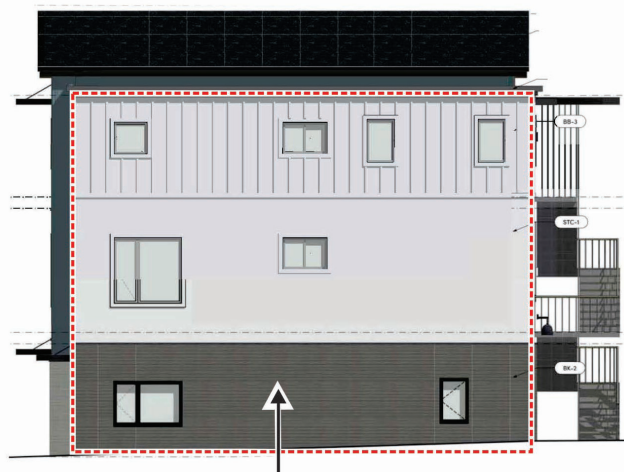
- *Select window types to complement the style of the house. Each architectural style generally has one or two window types that are traditional to the style. Double hung windows, for example, are common features of Victorian and Craftsman Styles while casement windows are seen frequently in Mission and Spanish Eclectic styles.*
- *Most architectural styles feature windows that have either vertical or square proportions. Avoid horizontal window proportions unless the style (e.g., Modern or Ranch Style) is clearly supportive of that shape. Horizontal groupings of vertical and square windows are one means of providing visual balance to a facade design.*
- *Limit the number of different window types and proportions to enhance the visual unity of the house design.*

### 3.7.4 Design the windows with attention to matching the traditional details of the architectural style

- *Most architectural styles - except Mission, Spanish Eclectic or Modern - should have wood trim around the windows. The trim width should be matched to the style, but in general, should not be less than 3 1/2 inches wide. Head trim depth should be equal to or wider than the jamb casing, but not less than one-sixth of the opening width.*
- *Projecting window sills and heads are strongly encouraged unless the architectural style would not normally have those features.*
- *Wood trim is also encouraged on stucco houses unless the window frames are recessed at least 6 inches from the outside face of the wall. The use of stucco covered foam trim is strongly discouraged.*
- *Divided lights (i.e., larger window panes broken up into smaller pieces) are common in many home styles found in Los Gatos. Use either vertical or square proportions for the smaller window elements. Be consistent in the proportions (i.e., the ratio of the horizontal to the vertical dimension) of the smaller panes. Do not use snap in flat grids to simulate divided lights. Use either true divided lights or one of the newer window systems that have dimensional muntins on both the exterior and interior of the glass along with a spacer muntin between the panes of glass. Use consistently for windows on all sides of the house.*

4. The two story side wall at the entry drive is not a good edge to the entry and would not be consistent with Residential Design Guideline 3.3.3.

### 3.3.3 Provide visual relief for two story walls



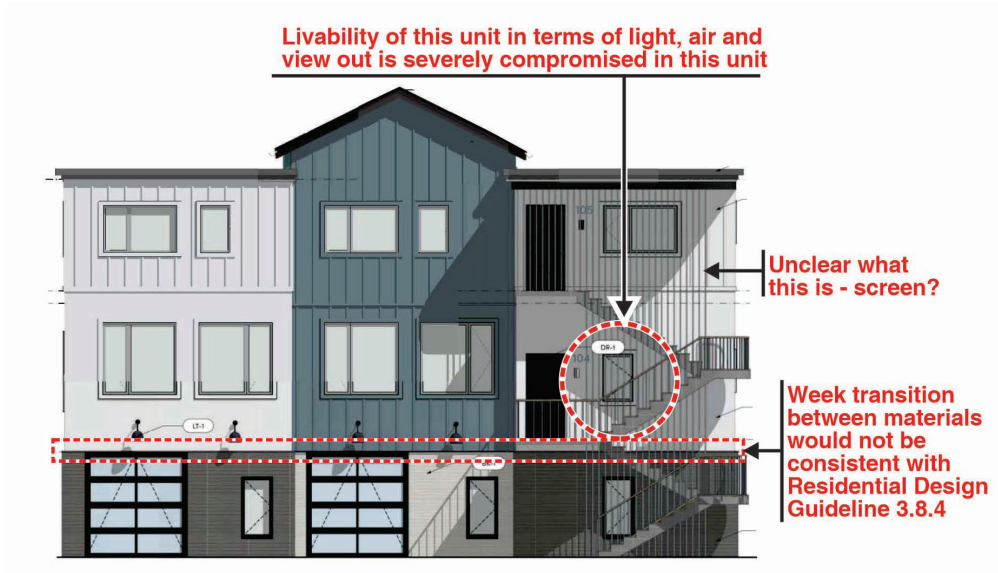
Two story wall is a poor edge to the entry drive and would not be consistent with Residential Design Guideline 3.3.3



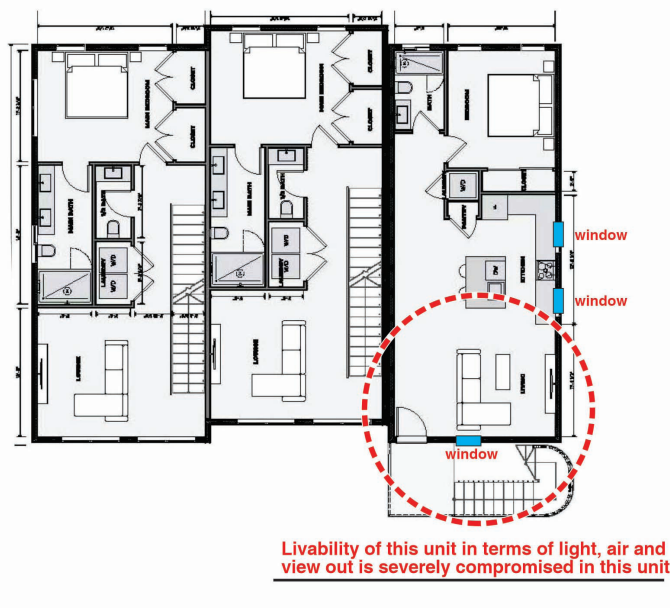
5. The transitions between facade materials is not well detailed and would not be consistent with Residential Design Guideline 3.8.4.

#### 3.8.4 Materials changes

- *Make materials and color changes at inside corners rather than outside corners to avoid a pasted on look.*



6. The livability of the second floor unit accessed by a stairway at the rear of the building would be severely compromised in terms of access to light and air with limited windows.





## SINGLE FAMILY DETACHED HOMES

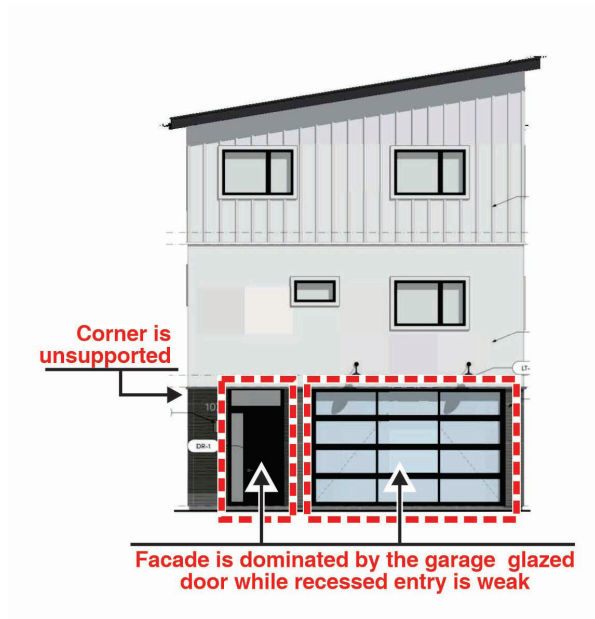
1. The first floor facades are dominated by the garage doors, made more prominent by what appears to be translucent glazing, while the recessed entries diminishes the sense of home entry which would not be consistent with Residential Design Guidelines 3.4.1 and 3.6.1.

### 3.4.1 Limit the prominence of garages

- *Avoid designs that allow the garage to dominate the street facade.*
- *Limit the garage width to a maximum of 50 percent of the total facade width.*
- *Set garages back from the front facade.*
- *Recess garage doors as much as possible from the garage facade.*
- *Consider adding trellises with landscaping over garage doors to soften their visual appearance.*

### 3.6.1 Provide a clear expression of entry

- *Orient the entry to the street front. It should be visible from the street.*



- Note that the two story facade over the recessed entry appears to be unsupported except by a potential structural cantilever.
2. The transitions between facade materials is not well detailed and would not be consistent with Residential Design Guideline 3.8.4.

### 3.8.4 Materials changes

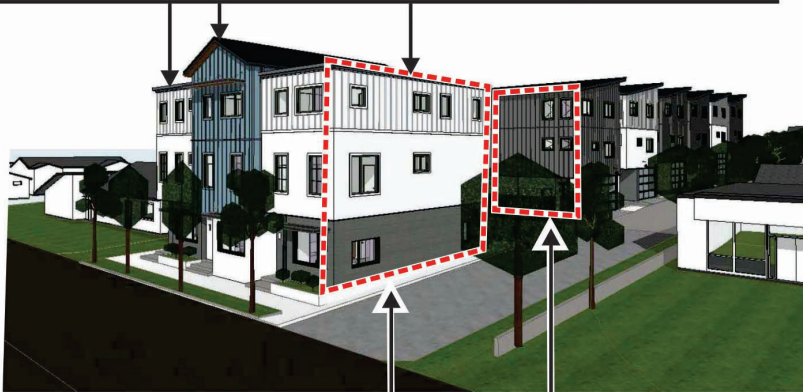
- *Make materials and color changes at inside corners rather than outside corners to avoid a pasted on look.*



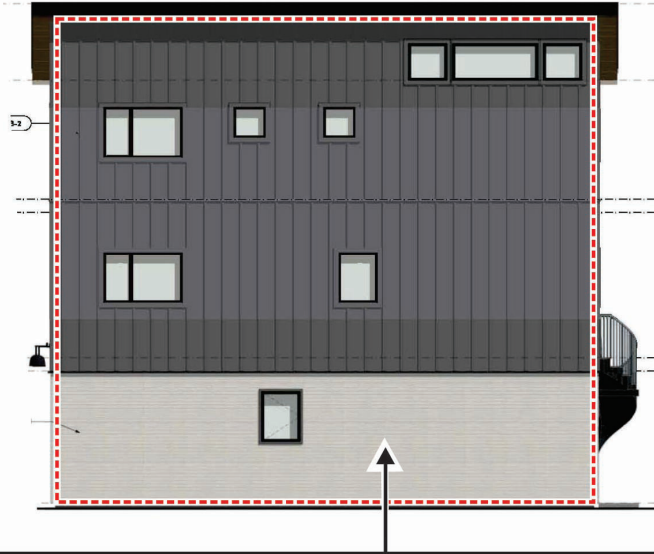
3. The two story plus wall at the shared auto court would be a poor edge to the auto court, not provide a good view from the adjacent multifamily units and would not be consistent with Residential Design Guideline 3.3.3.

**3.3.3 Provide visual relief for two story walls**

**Gable form superimposed on a flat box is not a well integrated design and would not be consistent with Residential Design Guideline 3.2.2**



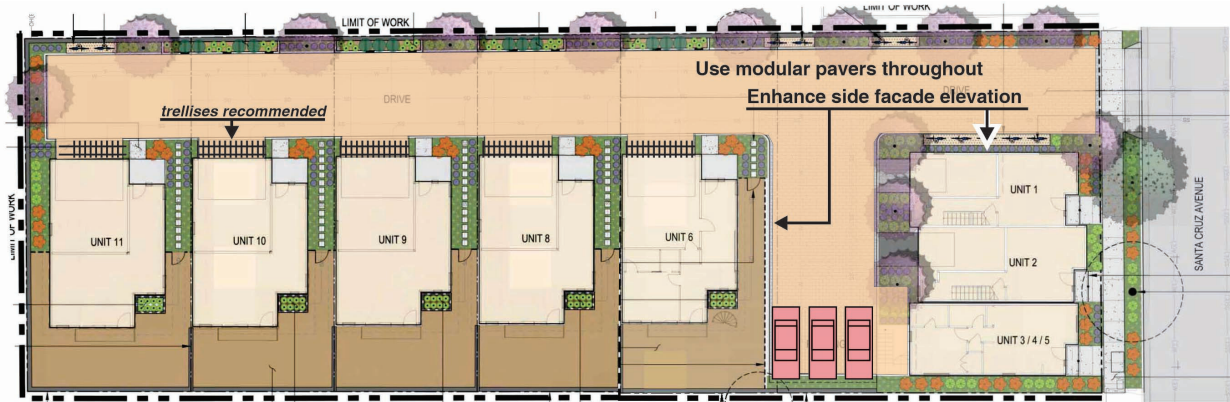
**Two story wall is a poor edge to the entry drive and auto court and they would not be consistent with Residential Design Guideline 3.3.3**



**Two story plus wall is a poor edge to the auto court and would not be consistent with Residential Design Guideline 3.3.3**



## RECOMMENDATIONS:



1. Use modular pavers for all driveway surfaces.
2. Ensure guest parking space maneuverability is adequate.
3. Break up tall walls adjacent to the entry drive and shared auto court.
4. Use hip roofs on the multifamily units.
5. Project second floors on multifamily units and add supporting corbels.



6. Improve window distribution for second story multifamily unit at the entry stair.



7. Provide more traditional windows for all units in the development and provide traditional frame detailing.

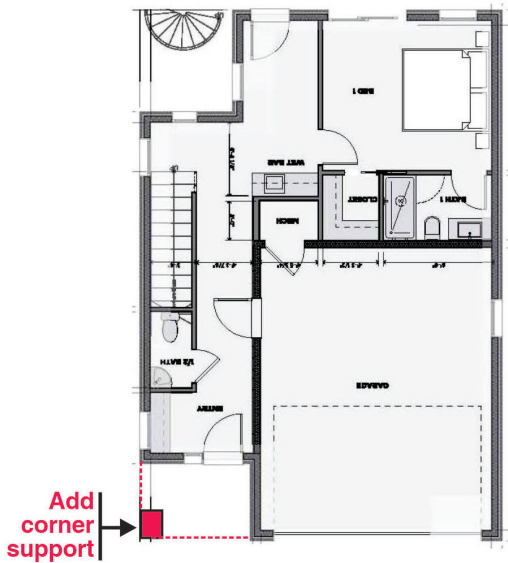


8. Add detailed trim bands at all facade floor lines.

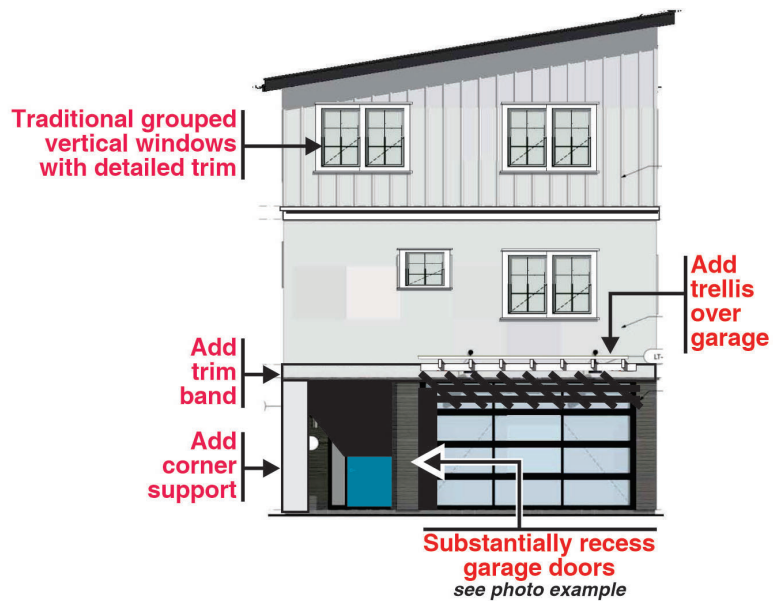




9. Improve single family detached unit entries.



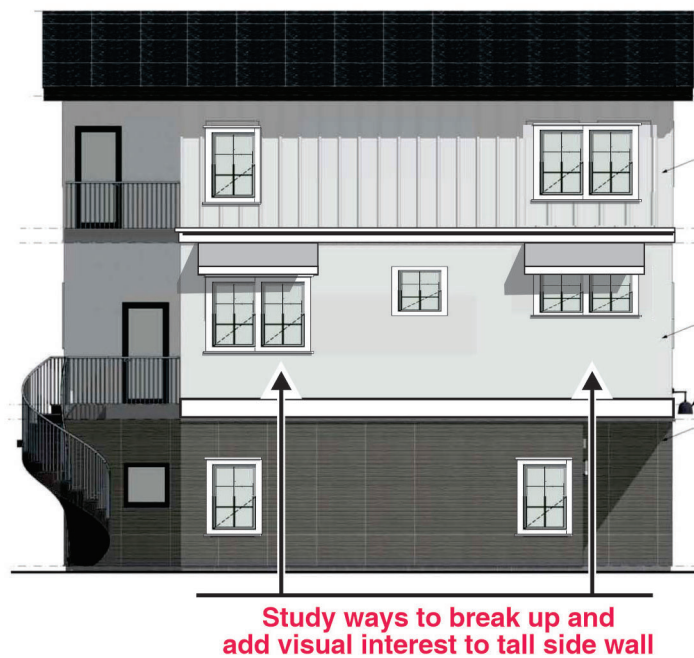
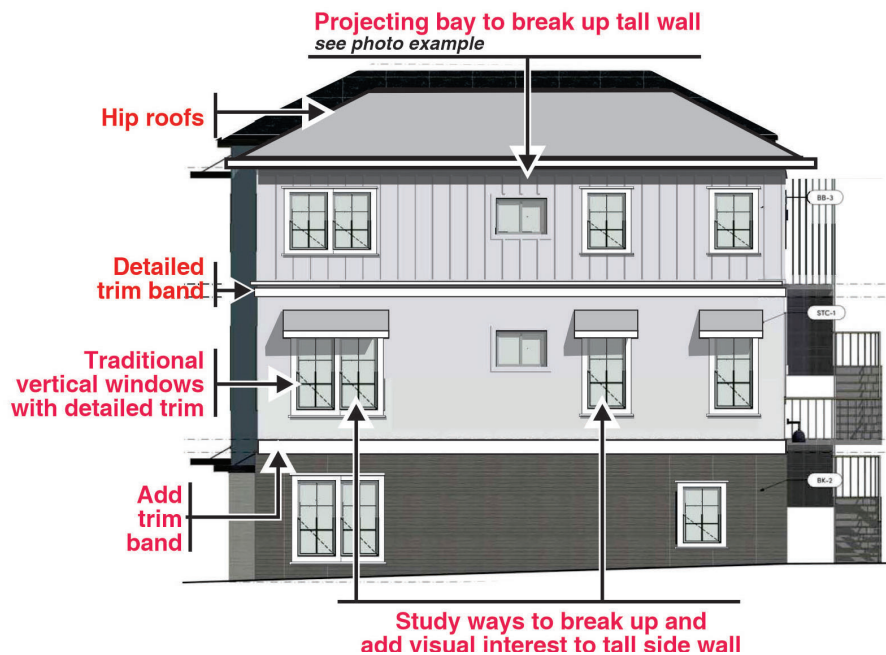
10. Recess all garage doors.



11. Add trellises over single family detached garages.

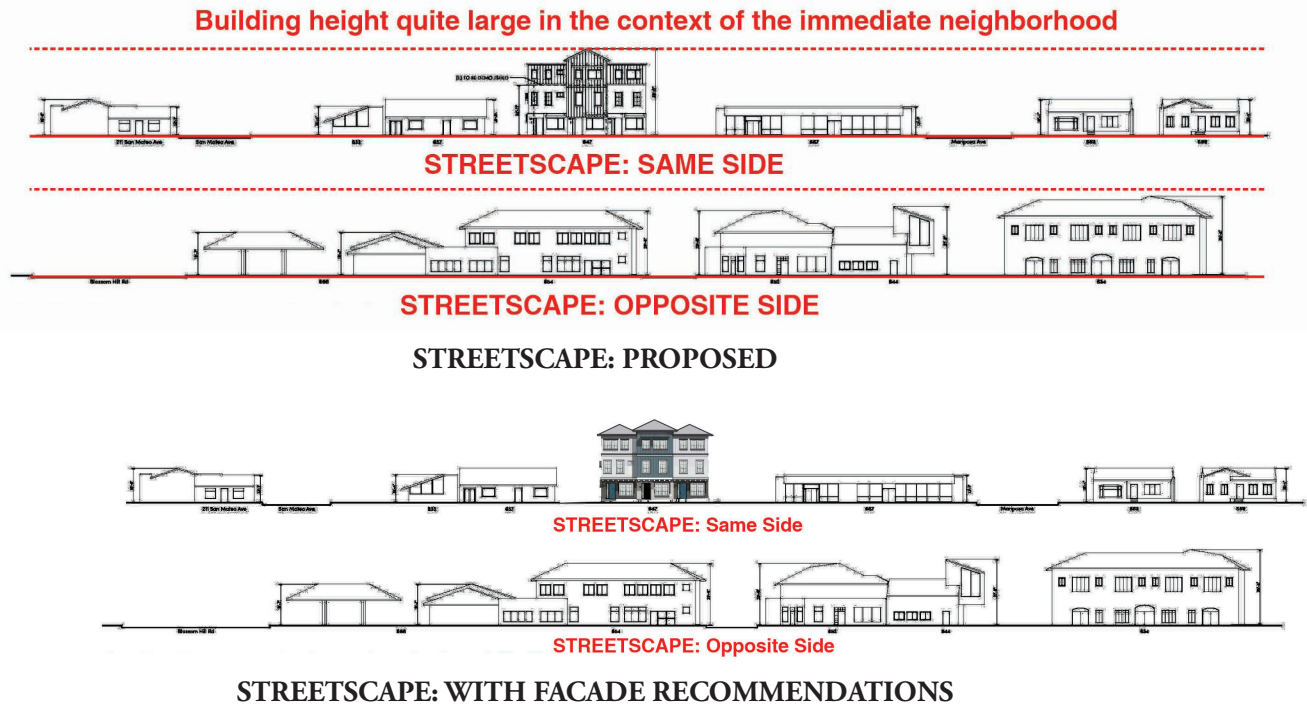


12. Study ways to break up and visually improve tall side wall facades at the entry drive and auto court.





13. The recommendations above would not mitigate the substantial height differential between the project and other buildings in its immediate neighborhood, but would soften its image to be a better fit the character and style of the area - see comparison streetscape illustrations below.



However, the proposed *floor-to-ceilings* heights in the multifamily structure are considerably taller than what we normally see with 10 feet on the ground floor, 12 feet on the second floor and 9 feet on the top floor. Some height reduction could be gained by reducing those dimensions.

CANNON DESIGN GROUP

Larry L. Cannon