

April 15, 2024

Ms. Erin Walters
Community Development Department
Town of Los Gatos
110 E. Main Street
Los Gatos, CA 95031

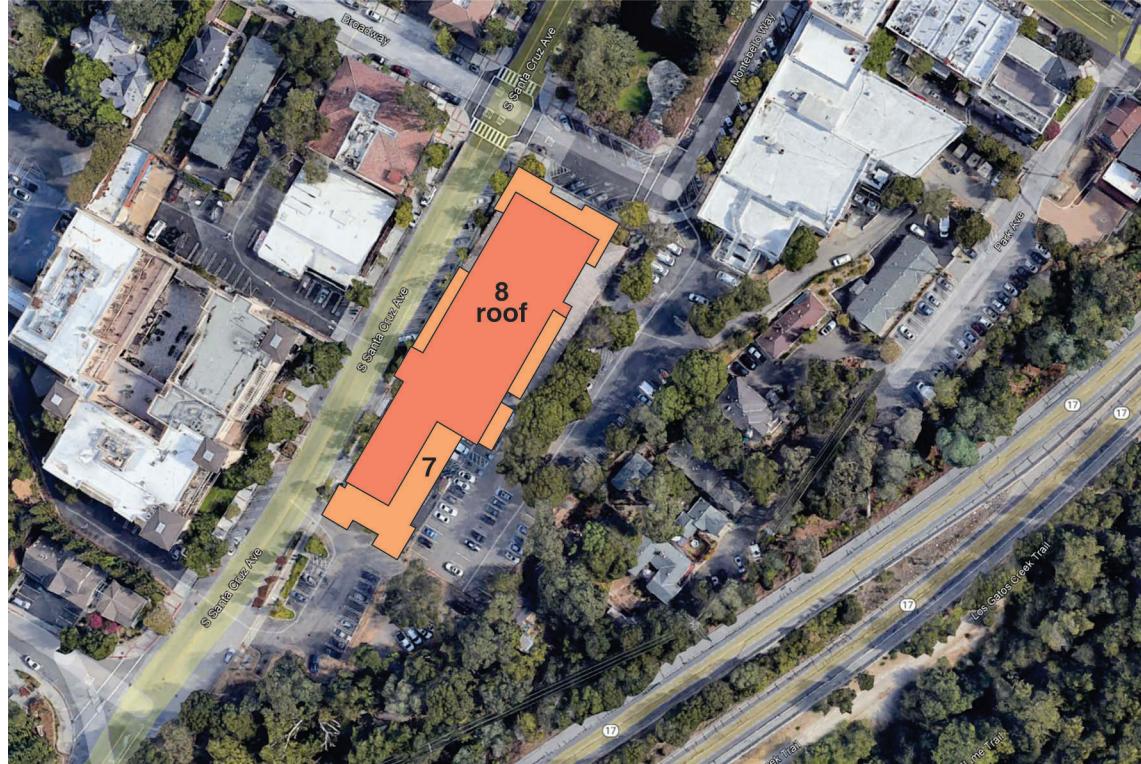
RE: 101 South Santa Cruz Avenue

Dear Erin:

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

PROJECT CONTEXT

The site is located in Downtown Los Gatos immediately across from the Town Plaza and the Toll House Hotel. Photographs of the site and its surrounding context are shown on the following page.





The Site



Public Park Immediately across Montebello Way



Toll House Hotel immediately across South Santa Cruz Avenue



Retail stores immediately across South Santa Cruz Avenue



Mixed Use building across South Santa Cruz Avenue



Building across South Santa Cruz Avenue



Nearby buildings along Montebello Way



Immediately adjacent building on Montebello Way



Nearby buildings on East Main Street



Mixed use building on West Main Street



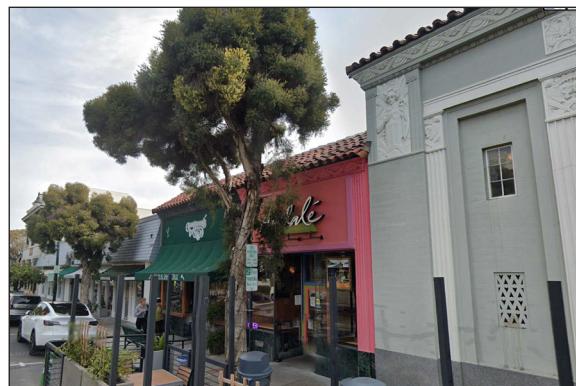
Nearby buildings on Santa Cruz Avenue



Mixed use building on East Main Street



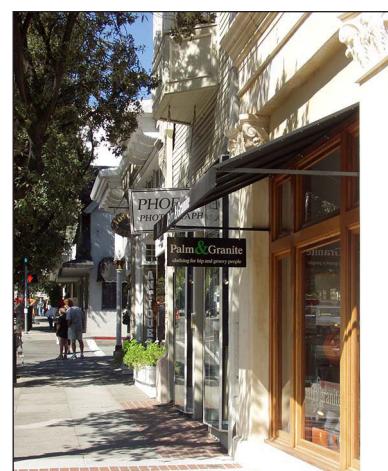
Nearby buildings on Santa Cruz Avenue



Nearby buildings on Santa Cruz Avenue



Nearby storefronts on East Main Street



6729 FAIRFIELD DRIVE

PROPOSED PROJECT



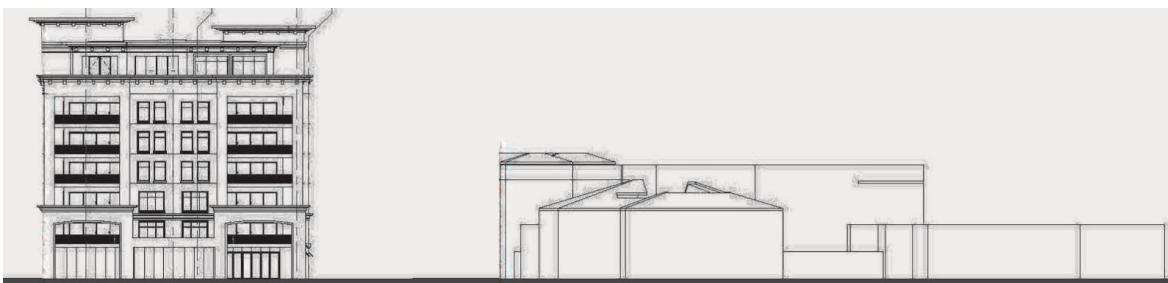
PROPOSED SOUTH SANTA CRUZ AVENUE FAÇADE



PROPOSED SOUTH SANTA CRUZ AVENUE / MONTEBELLO WAY
FAÇADES

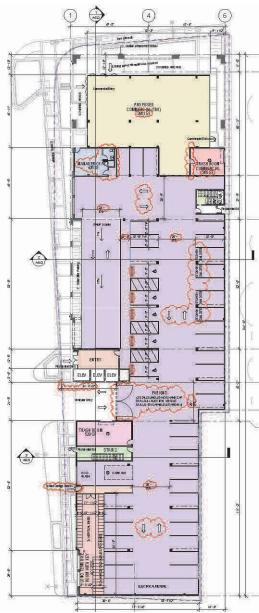


PROPOSED SOUTH SANTA CRUZ AVENUE / SOUTH END FAÇADES



PROPOSED SOUTH SANTA CRUZ AVENUE CONTEXT: North Elevation from Town Plaza

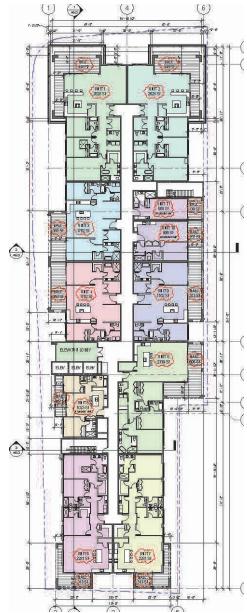
PROPOSED PROJECT FLOOR PLANS



FLOOR PLAN 1



FLOOR PLAN 2



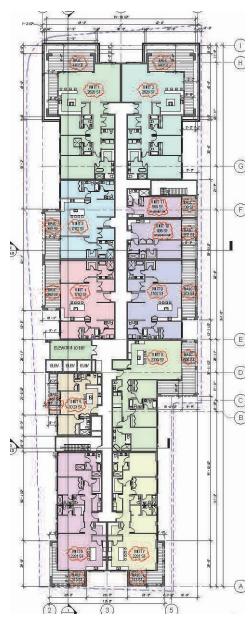
FLOOR PLAN 3



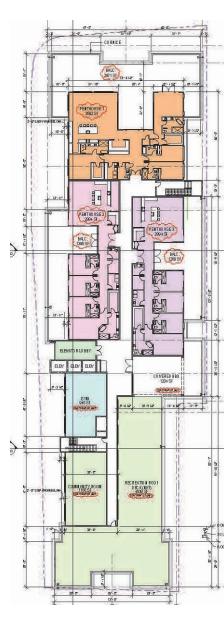
FLOOR PLAN 4



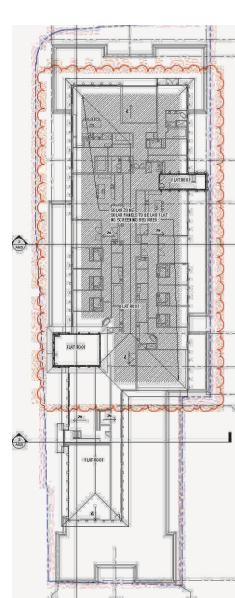
FLOOR PLAN 5



FLOOR PLAN 6



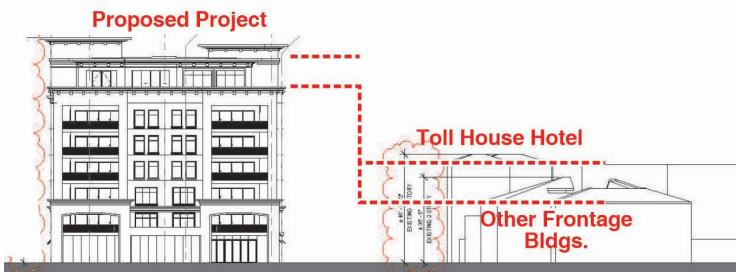
FLOOR PLAN 7



ROOF PLAN

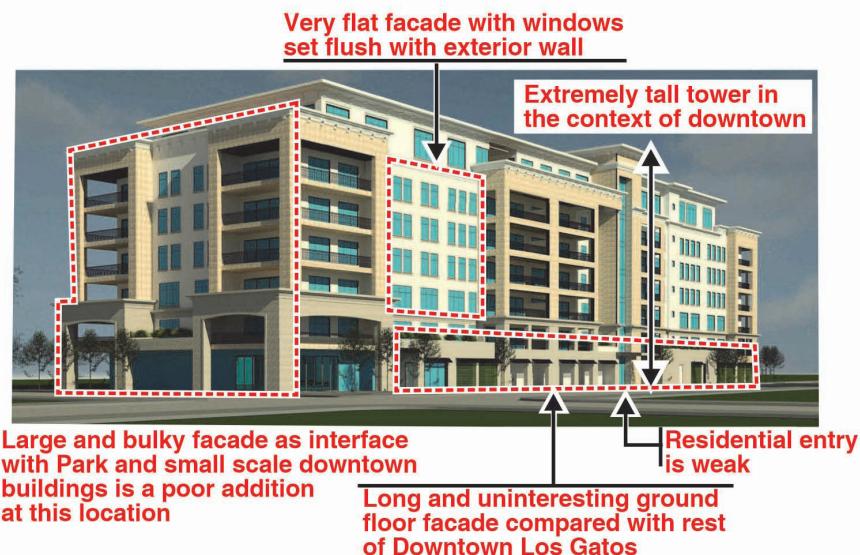
ISSUES AND CONCERNS:

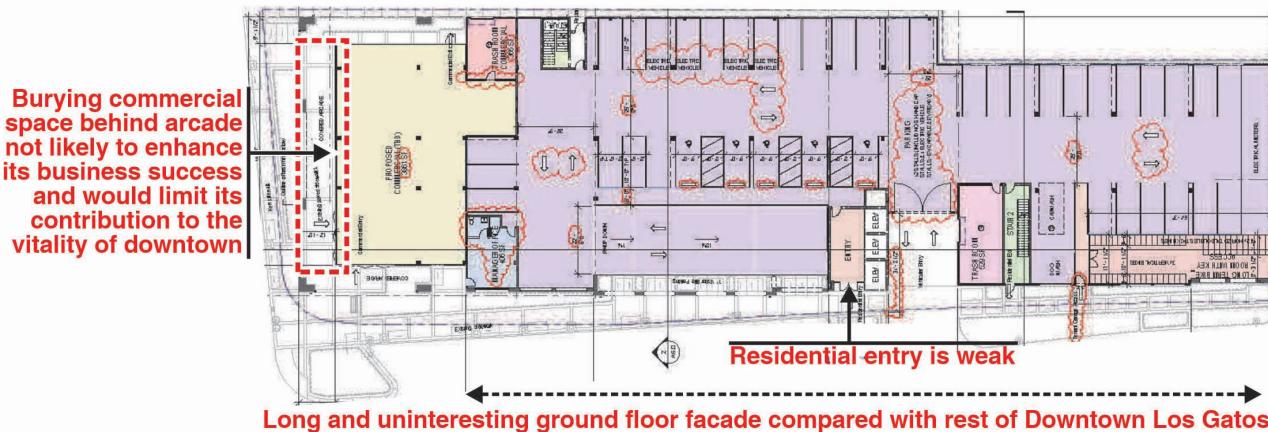
The proposed project under review is the most challenging that I have seen in my over twenty years of assisting staff and the town's decision makers in reviewing new projects and renovations across a range of project types and scales. I have watched the community steadfastly support change while emphasizing neighborhood compatibility and mutual respect for one another across the whole community. Over the decades the community has worked very hard to preserve the special qualities of its downtown core area as the historic traditional architectural uses and building design styles have evolved over time. The proposed project is quite massive for its prime downtown location and appears to lack much of an attempt to treat its context with the respect that has to date been emblematic of developers' collaborate efforts with the community.



On a general design level the proposed project is well designed. It would be a fine hotel or modern condo project if located on some sections of the El Camino Real, but would be totally out of character and scale with this proposed location. In addition to its overall size, bulk and height some of the issues and concerns include the following.

1. The north facade, facing the Town Plaza and the small one to three story downtown buildings along South Santa Cruz Avenue and West Main Street, is quite overpowering in height, scale and bulk. In comparison to the richness of experience found along those main activity streets, the proposed ground floor facade treatment seems like a lost opportunity both for the community and the success of any future commercial tenants.
2. The ground floor facade along South Santa Cruz Avenue is long and uninteresting compared to other downtown street frontages.





3. The residential entry is weak - especially given its isolated location relative the main portion of the downtown.
4. Many walls are quite flat with windows set very near the exterior wall surface.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Reducing the physical size and bulk of the structure would be impossible without the loss of a significant number of residential units or reduction in unit size. However, there are opportunities for the design to be modified to one more sympathetic to its site and community expectations of a softer residential character. A few larger multifamily residential buildings constructed in other communities are shown below as examples of alternative approaches designed to visually mitigate the size and bulk of the structures while enhancing their residential use.





While there are several alternative approaches that might be explored to achieve a project that would be better suited to the community and this site, I did select one that I thought would be the most easy to implement without any changes to the proposed floor plans. It is a well-received multifamily project in San Mateo called Metropolitan Apartments. While smaller at four to five stories than this proposed project, many of the design concepts and techniques would be equally applicable to this larger structure.



Currently Proposed Approach



Recommended Alternative Approach

Key features include the following.

- Strong structural composition of building base, middle and top.
- Strong building base with deeply recessed bays.
- Second floor facade enhanced with attractive, residential-feeling architectural detailed trellis to reduce the structure's apparent height and relate upper floor residences with the pedestrian level.
- Simple and unified changes of color and residential character materials.
- Residential character windows with traditional trim.
- Facade height variations.
- Building step downs at important public realm areas.
- Top floors color and material changes to visually reduce the building height and bulk.
- Strong and varied profile top floor overhangs



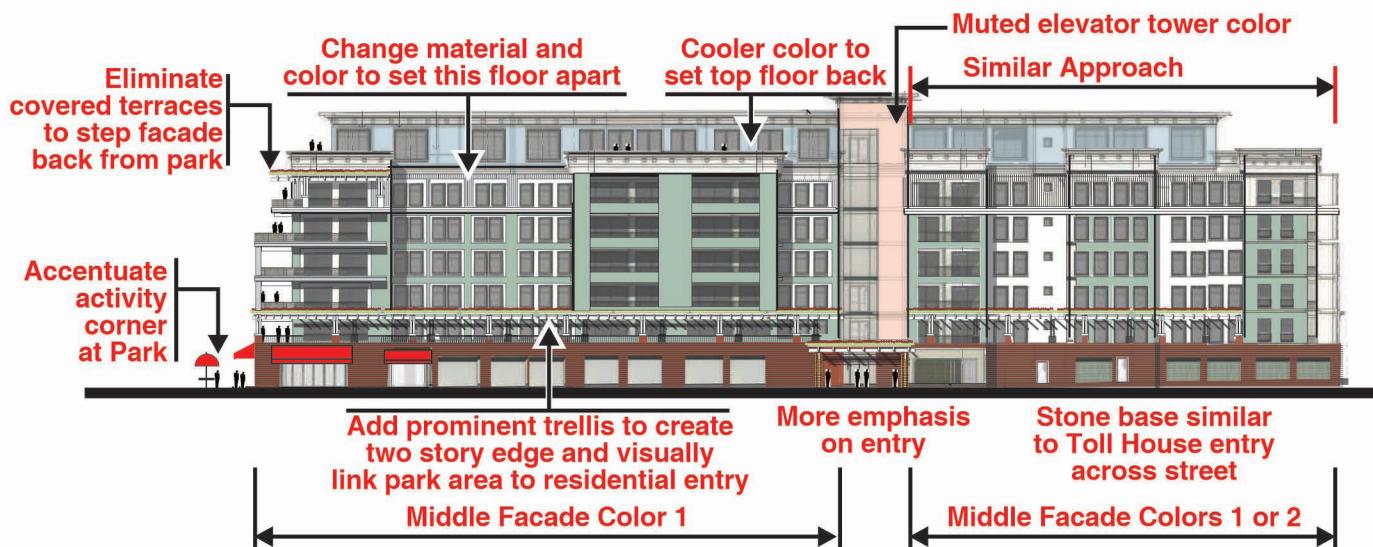
In comparing this example with the currently proposed design above, one can see that there are similarities of general components but that the example has a much smaller scale appearance and more of a traditional residential character.

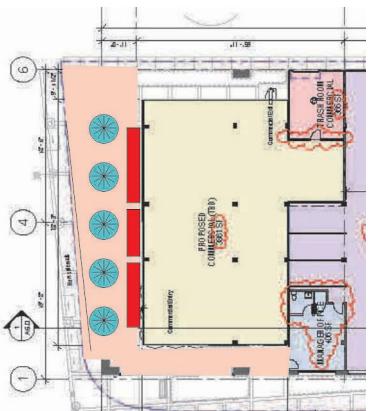


Currently Proposed Santa Cruz Avenue Facade



Recommended Alternative Approach





Park Facade A
Trellises



Park Facade B
Awnings

Erin, please let me know if you have questions or if I missed any important issues.

CANNON DESIGN GROUP

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Larry L. Cannon".

Larry L. Cannon