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## Planning & Transportation Commission Staff Report

**From: Jonathan Lait, Planning and Development Services Director**  
**Lead Department: Planning and Development Services**

**Meeting Date: August 9, 2023**  
**Report #: 2306-1722**

### **TITLE**

PUBLIC HEARING / QUASI-JUDICIAL. 575 Los Trancos Road [21PLN-00196] Request for Major Site and Design Review to Allow the Construction of a new 7,110 sf single-family residence with a new 895 sf Accessory Dwelling Unit and Associated Site Improvements, Including a Swimming Pool, on a 5.38-acre Site. Environmental Assessment: A Mitigated Negative Declaration has been prepared for the proposed project. Zoning District: OS (Open Space). For More Information Contact the Project Planner Emily Kallas at [Emily.Kallas@CityofPaloAlto.org](mailto:Emily.Kallas@CityofPaloAlto.org).

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff Recommends the Planning and Transportation Commission (PTC) take the following action(s):

1. Consider the Final Mitigated Negative Declaration and Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan; and
2. Recommend approval of the proposed project to the City Council based on findings and subject to conditions of approval.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This project is a request for a new single-family house, Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) and pool in the OS zoning district. Due to its location, a Site & Design Review permit is required. This project was previously reviewed by the PTC and Council, Council requested revisions to the plans and sent it back to PTC for review. Changes to the plans include 1) increasing the distance between the proposed house and the creek, 2) increasing safety for potential nearby wildlife, 3) reducing nighttime lighting, and 4) addressing inconsistencies between the arborist report and the plan set.

The IS-MND has also been revised in response to public comments from the Draft IS-MND Circulation Period which occurred between August 17, 2022 and September 16, 2022.

## Background

### Project Information

Owner:	Innovative Homes, LLC
Architect:	Leonard Ng, LNAI Architecture
Representative:	N/A
Legal Counsel:	N/A

### Property Information

Address:	575 Los Trancos Road
Neighborhood:	Foothills
Lot Dimensions & Area:	5.38 acres (234,352 sf), irregularly shaped lot over 1,300 ft along road frontage, depth varies from 40 ft to approximately 250 ft
Housing Inventory Site:	No
Located w/in a Plume:	No
Protected/Heritage Trees:	Yes, 38 protected oak trees on the property. 1 proposed for removal.
Historic Resource(s):	No
Existing Improvement(s):	Vacant
Existing Land Use(s):	None
Adjacent Land Uses & Zoning:	North: OS (Single Family Residential) West: City of Portola Valley (residential) East: OS (Open Space, Single Family Residential) South: OS (Open Space, Single Family Residential)
Special Setbacks:	20ft Stream Corridor Slope Stability Protection Area
Aerial View of Property:	



Source: Google Satellite Maps

#### Land Use Designation & Applicable Plans/Guidelines

Comp. Plan Designation: Streamside Open Space (SOS)

Zoning Designation: Open Space (OS)

	Yes		Yes		Yes
Baylands Master Plan/Guidelines (2008/2005)	<input type="checkbox"/>	El Camino Real Guidelines (1976)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Housing Development Project	<input type="checkbox"/>
Downtown Urban Design Guidelines (1993)	<input type="checkbox"/>	South El Camino Real Guidelines (2002)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Utilizes Chapter 18.24 - Objective Standards	<input type="checkbox"/>
Individual Review Guidelines (2005)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Within 150 feet of Residential Use or District</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Context-Based Design Criteria applicable	<input type="checkbox"/>
SOFA Phase 1 (2000)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Within Airport Influence Area	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
SOFA Phase 2 (2003)	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>

## Prior City Reviews & Action

City Council:	January 23, 2023 <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TWqZPdoWLcE&amp;t=615s">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TWqZPdoWLcE&amp;t=615s</a>
PTC:	August 31, 2022 <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SXaan0US-AY&amp;list=PLJ0x6PDuVXIMSp07GZ4Ixf0LYnO_apJxu&amp;index=19">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SXaan0US-AY&amp;list=PLJ0x6PDuVXIMSp07GZ4Ixf0LYnO_apJxu&amp;index=19</a>
HRB:	None
ARB:	None

## **Project Description**

The proposed project consists of a new, two-story, 7,110 sf main house (including a 734 sf garage), and an 895 sf Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU). A portion of the site is sloped and contains a creek, and the site is an undeveloped 5.38-acre lot in the Open Space zoning district. The project also includes improving and extending the existing driveway and fire access road, a new swimming pool, and landscape improvements. Three covered garage spaces are provided, and the auto court provides additional space for tandem parking. Project Plans are located in Attachment E.

### Requested Entitlements, Findings and Purview:

The following discretionary applications are being requested and subject to PTC purview:

- Site and Design Review: The process for evaluating this type of application is set forth in PAMC 18.30(G). Site and design review is intended to provide a review process for development in environmentally and ecologically sensitive areas, including established community areas which may be sensitive to negative aesthetic factors, excessive noise, increased traffic or other disruptions, in order to assure that use and development will be harmonious with other uses in the general vicinity, will be compatible with environmental and ecological objectives, and will be in accord with the Palo Alto Comprehensive Plan. If recommended for approval, the project requires review before the Architectural Review Board before the project is forwarded to the City Council for final action of all requested entitlements. Site and design review applications are evaluated to specific findings. All findings must be made in the affirmative to approve the project. The findings to approve a site and design application are provided in Attachment C.
- Note: the ADU is not subject to Site and Design review. Under state law, when an application for an ADUs is submitted concurrently with an application for a primary dwelling unit that is subject to discretionary review, action on the ADU may be delayed until the City acts on the primary unit, but the ADU must still be processed ministerially, without discretionary review or hearing.

## Analysis<sup>1</sup>

The following changes have been made to the project per PTC and Council guidance:

Comment	Plan Change
Evaluate a project design that provides for approximately 50-foot setback from the top of bank	<p>The walls of the house have been moved to be at least 50 ft from top of bank, though the roof overhangs up to 3 ft in a couple minor areas. In order to accomplish this, the overall house sized was reduced from 7,245 sf to 7,110 sf. Additionally, the portion allocated to the second floor was increased from 1,215 sf to 2,388 sf.</p> <p>The pool remains in its proposed location, varying approximately 28-45 ft from top of bank.</p>
Effective bird-safe glazing treatment of all glass surfaces achieving the American Bird Conservancy Threat Factor rating of 15.	The creek-facing facade has been reduced to include only a single small window. Other non-egress windows on the second story have decorative wood slat screens which will decrease the likelihood of bird strikes.
Minimize nighttime lighting along the riparian corridor and allow only minimal lighting in all other locations. Lighting should not interfere with wildlife movement through the landscape, and all outdoor lighting should be limited to Correlated Color Temperature of 2700 Kelvin or less, and extinguished at 11:00 PM.	<p>Windows facing the creek have been reduced. Lighting fixtures have been moved away from windows to more interior locations in the rooms. Windows will also have shades. The Condition of Approval #8 has been updated to include this fact, as well as the 2700 Kelvin limit and 11:00 pm shut-off time.</p> <p>A light shield wall has been added to the driveway to prevent light from car headlights from reaching the creek.</p>
Eliminate fencing that could impede wildlife movement along the creek.	No fencing is proposed for the majority of the property. An automatic safety cover will be used on the pool, and will meet the requirements of the Swimming Pool Safety

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<sup>1</sup> The information provided in this section is based on analysis prepared by the report author prior to the public hearing. Planning and Transportation Commission in its review of the administrative record and based on public testimony may reach a different conclusion from that presented in this report and may choose to take an alternative action from the recommended action.

Pool should be covered and fenced in a way that ensures that small animals, such as amphibians and reptiles cannot enter the swimming pool.	Act. An approximately 55 foot-long wall will block headlights from shining towards the creek, but otherwise no fences are proposed.
Update the Arborist Report, Plan Set, and IS-MND for consistency regarding number of trees preserved and removed on site	Documents have been updated accordingly. 82 trees exist on the property, though some are located a significant distance from the project area. 37 of these trees are protected species to remain. 1 protected tree is dead and proposed for removal.
Address the public comments received on the IS-MND	Response to comments is included as Attachment E.

### Consistency with Application Findings

Overall, the changes decreased the footprint of the building and decreased its potential impact on local wildlife and is therefore more consistent with the application findings than the original design.

### **Environmental Review**

The subject project has been assessed in accordance with the authority and criteria contained in the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the State CEQA Guidelines, and the environmental regulations of the City. Specifically, an Draft IS-MND was prepared and circulated from August 17, 2022 until September 16, 2022. Three comment letters were received and a Response to Comments, as well as the Final IS-MND has been prepared. The Final IS-MND included updates based on changes to the project made after circulation, comments received, and to clarify information. Corrections and additional text are shown as track changes in the text of the Final IS-MND.

In no case did the project revisions, any of the public comments or the changes made to the IS-MND result in or identify new significant impacts or new, avoidable significant effects compared to the impacts identified in the Draft IS-MND. Because none of the revisions to the IS-MND are “substantial” as defined in CEQA Guidelines Section 15073.5(b) and the information added merely clarifies and amplifies the information previously provided in the analysis, recirculation of the IS-MND is not required.

### **Public Notification, Outreach & Comments**

The Palo Alto Municipal Code requires notice of this public hearing be published in a local paper and mailed to owners and occupants of property within 600 feet of the subject property at least ten days in advance. Notice of a public hearing for this project was published in the *Daily Post* on

July 28, 2023, which is 13 days in advance of the meeting. Postcard mailing occurred on July 26, 2023, which is 15 days in advance of the meeting.

### Public Comments

As of the writing of this report, no new comments were received. Prior comments, including comment letters received during IS-MND Circulation are included in Attachment E.

### **Alternative Actions**

In addition to the recommended action, the Planning and Transportation Commission may:

1. Recommend approval of the project with modified findings or conditions;
2. Continue the project to a date (un)certain; or
3. Recommend project denial based on revised findings.

### **Attachments**

- A. Location Map
- B. Draft RLUA
- C. Zoning Comparison Table
- D. Correspondence
- E. Applicant's Project Description
- F. Project Plans / Environmental Documents
- G. Environmental Response to Comments

#### **Report Author & Contact Information**

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#### **PTC<sup>2</sup> Liaison & Contact Information**

Amy French, Chief Planning Official  
(650) 329-2336

[amy.french@cityofpaloalto.org](mailto:amy.french@cityofpaloalto.org)

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<sup>2</sup> Emails may be sent directly to the PTC using the following address: [planning.commission@cityofpaloalto.org](mailto:planning.commission@cityofpaloalto.org)