

TO: The Planning Department, City of Palo Alto

From: Susie Richardson, 353 Addison, Palo Alto



November 13, 2023

I live next door to the cottage at 949 Scott Street and I want to appeal a Plan Approval. File number 22PLN-00410. I never thought it would be in danger because the lot is so small no one would be able to tear it down and build anything else. I was, obviously, wrong. It is surprising that someone who already lives on Scott Street would want to change anything about the property. It is perfect the way it is.

The replacement plan I have seen takes a lovely building away and replaces it with a garage on the first floor. After the cottage has been scraped and a hole dug, a large room with living space underground will be built. There are many rules against allowing anyone to do such a thing, but our Planning Department has given it the okay. There are so many variances, they occur practically at every stage of the project. In addition, it violates the Palo Alto's General Housing Plan and the Senate Bill 330. Building a bunker or bomb shelter does not improve the amount of housing in the neighborhood.

The existing building is charming with large windows looking out on a wonderful little garden from the living room and one of the bedrooms. It has a separate dining room and a fireplace in the living room. We bought the house next door in 1972 and several people have been very happy in the cottage.

On the other hand, the replacement looks like an attachment to a tract house. There is no front yard. The entry is a small door that opens into the garage. The street no longer has space for 2 cars. The entry to the garage cuts away the curb. The tree in the parking strip has to be removed. The sidewalk merges with the driveway. The construction is a nightmare for Scott Street. Putting up with construction on a street with only one entrance is bad enough, but to add all the traffic and parking created by the park makes it a congested mess. I have to mention one part of the construction I find particularly disturbing is the installation of pillars being pounded or drilled every eighteen inches around the exterior of the basement. But there is also the major inconvenience for the neighbors of a dumpster parked for maybe a year. It really will be awful.

I am asking you to please save the little house at 949 Addison. It has provided a nice home for many people and I am sure it would continue to do so if given the chance.

Andrew Martin  
940 Scott St  
Palo Alto, CA 94301

Garrett Sauls  
Department of Planning  
City of Palo Alto  
250 Hamilton Ave  
Palo Alto, CA 94301

23 March, 2023

Dear City Planning Staff,

I am writing this letter to register concerns regarding the proposed redevelopment and variance for 949 Scott Street, File number 22PLN-00410.

The plans for 949 Scott contain many of the rudimentary building blocks for a house on paper but are designed in a way that seem inconsistent with the intended zoning use. I am concerned that, in practice, this design may be less of a single-family home and more of a garage extension. As such, this may be reducing, not maintaining density and be in violation of the General Housing Plan and SB330.

In our neighborhood most houses have "curb appeal" - that is, they have a front door or clear entry, they have windows or some visibility from the street, and they have a front yard and/or porch. If none of these are met, and if the primary living quarters, kitchen, living room, are all underground, is it still a viable family house? Is it consistent with the General plan? Would such a property be the future home of a new family? Or, is it possible such a development would become an extension to a nearby residence – a large, albeit very expensive, garage and bonus space?

Senate Bill 330 expressly redefines "lower density" to include any action that has the effect of reducing housing density:

*"Lower density" includes any conditions that have the same effect or impact on the ability of the project to provide housing.*

One could assert, and the City of Palo Alto has argued similarly in the past, that designing a house that serves, in effect, to form a multi-lot compound violates SB330 in word or certainly in spirit. As designed, 949 Scott may no longer be a realistic home for a future family but, de facto, an accessory unit for the 935 property and thus further reduce density in the neighborhood.

In 2008 there were three single-family homes adjacent on the odd side of Scott street numbered 935, 943, and 949. One buyer then purchased both 935 and 943, removed the existing houses, combined the two properties into a 10k sq ft lot, and built a 5,500 sq ft home. In 2019, a new

owner bought 935 Scott and the adjacent substandard lot of 949 Scott. The two homes sat unoccupied for four years until both properties were bought by the current applicants in 2022, where 935 is the primary residence and 949 is adjacent.

Palo Alto has many residents who own multiple properties - which is certainly legal. However, if the properties are developed in such a way that they form a compound where residents are not occupying the properties, where neighbors have fewer neighbors, this should be of concern for the Council. Could it be that in a 15 year span we will go from 3 family housing units to just 1 on this stretch of Scott St?

Furthermore, the proposed plans are not consistent with and will have a negative impact on the immediate neighborhood in other ways:

- From the street, the proposed plans do not resemble a home, but rather a garage entry in San Francisco where the sidewalk blends into a door with little between.
- If approved, this small property (less than 1498 sq ft) would be the only double-wide cutout on Scott - with almost the entire frontage of the lot as entrance to the garage.
- Since the lot is so small, the front setback, as designed, does not leave space to park on what would be a driveway - you go from street to sidewalk to garage.
- If approved, the double driveway would require the removal of two street trees - leaving that side of the block relatively barren.
- If approved, the proposed two car garage would take 2-3 street parking spots. Parking is a challenge on the street during the day with the close proximity to Scott Park, the basketball hoop, and Palo Alto Sub-Acute visitors.

I would welcome a revised design that has more features resembling a home and less impact on the existing neighborhood, such as a front door or entry way, perhaps a one-lane parklet or single garage, loss of only one parking space, loss of only one street tree, all provided off-street parking is really essential for such a small lot. If we were to grant a variance on this house, let it be to have NO parking as on-site parking isn't really compatible with such a small lot.

The variance is an opportunity for the City to ensure the proposed plans are in the best interest of its residents and its larger plan. In the case of the currently proposed design for 949 Scott, I struggle to see how the 2-car garage concept is compatible and may be in violation of the General Plan and SB330 by effectively reducing density.

Over 10 years ago, our family moved to downtown Palo Alto because we wanted our children to grow up in a neighborhood with a sidewalk and with neighbors. We are thrilled to have the applicants move in across the street, to have another home serving treats on Halloween and another family joining the annual block party. I hold out hope that with 949 there is or will be space for one more family in the future.

Sincerely,  
-Andy Martin

**From:** [Andrew Martin](#)  
**To:** [Sauls, Garrett](#)  
**Subject:** 949 Scott  
**Date:** Friday, May 19, 2023 6:20:09 AM

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Hi Garrett,

I recently found that there had been some updates with 949 Scott. I was able to view a rendering of the second version and view the plans.

I wanted to share my feedback with you and the planning department.

1. The rendering and plans are not in-sync. The curb cut is larger in the rendering than plans - it is hard for people evaluate if not matching. (Or, perhaps I could have seen an incorrect rendering).

2. The proposed plans do not seem very residential in nature. A few examples:

- there isn't a distinct pedestrian walkway from the sidewalk to the door
- there is no roof element covering the front entrance. The existing structure has a small porch as do most other homes.
- the wide driveway and excessive paving leave little space for any front yard.
- the front door leads to the garage

Zoning is meant to control use of land. Is this consistent with the zoning?

3. In addition to these points, the strongest challenge to the proposal is, once again, the intended use of the this property if these plans are approved.

- a design that requires one to enter the garage and walk through it (so long as there isn't a car inside) and the go down to the basement seems suspect given the current home.
- as the submitters of these plans are also the owners of the adjacent 10+M property, does it seem like these plans are an extension of their adjacent lot or a real attempt at building a better single family residence? How common is it for a neighbor to support a setback reduction when both properties lie on the shared setbacks?

While the city may not be able to reject a set of plans based on an interpretation of intended use, they can certainly exercise the right to refuse any variances.

The approval of variances for this design by the city effectively endorses a reduction in housing and is contrary to the intent, and perhaps actual word, of both city code and state law (SB330).

If the result of this project were a new home that would enhance our neighborhood and provide a place for someone to realistically move into I would be supportive of granting variances.

Unfortunately, I do not see that in these plans.

Sincerely,

Andrew Martin

940 Scott  
650-380-3405

**From:** [Andrew Martin](#)  
**To:** [Sauls, Garrett](#)  
**Subject:** Re: 949 Scott Street - 22PLN-00410  
**Date:** Thursday, November 2, 2023 5:24:03 PM  
**Attachments:** [image003.png](#)  
[image007.png](#)  
[image009.png](#)  
[image034.png](#)  
[image019.png](#)  
[image028.png](#)  
[image015.png](#)  
[image001.png](#)  
[image014.png](#)  
[image029.png](#)  
[image030.png](#)  
[image027.png](#)  
[image023.png](#)  
[image035.png](#)  
[image012.png](#)  
[image025.png](#)  
[image032.png](#)  
[image018.png](#)  
[image024.png](#)  
[image017.png](#)  
[image033.png](#)  
[image036.png](#)  
[image020.png](#)  
[image022.png](#)

Thank you for the information.

On Thu, Nov 2, 2023 at 1:18 PM Sauls, Garrett <[Garrett.Sauls@cityofpaloalto.org](mailto:Garrett.Sauls@cityofpaloalto.org)> wrote:

Hi Andrew,

The City issued a decision letter for the application on October 25 but notice cards didn't get sent out until October 26. As a result, the 14 day appeal period will continue through November 9. Should anyone wish to appeal the decision, they will need to fill out the attached form and send it to myself or those listed in the form, as well as pay the appeal fee prior to the end of business day on November 9 (5:00pm). If no appeal is received, then the decision will be final on November 10.

Let me know if you have any questions.

Best regards,



**Garrett Sauls**  
Planner  
Planning and Development Services Department  
(650) 329-2471 | [Garrett.Sauls@CityofPaloAlto.org](mailto:Garrett.Sauls@CityofPaloAlto.org)



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**From:** Andrew Martin <[123andy@gmail.com](mailto:123andy@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, November 2, 2023 12:54 PM  
**To:** Sauls, Garrett <[Garrett.Sauls@CityofPaloAlto.org](mailto:Garrett.Sauls@CityofPaloAlto.org)>  
**Subject:** Re: 949 Scott Street - 22PLN-00410

Hello Garrett,

Can you please provide me with an update of the approval timeline and variance process for the 949 Scott project along with relevant future dates / hearings / deadlines?

Thank you.

-Andy

650-380-3405

On Thu, Mar 23, 2023 at 3:41 PM Sauls, Garrett <[Garrett.Sauls@cityofpaloalto.org](mailto:Garrett.Sauls@cityofpaloalto.org)> wrote:

Sorry, Andrew. I think I read Scott in the title of the email and put that as the name instead.



**Garrett Sauls**  
Planner  
Planning and Development Services Department  
(650) 329-2471 | [Garrett.Sauls@CityofPaloAlto.org](mailto:Garrett.Sauls@CityofPaloAlto.org)



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**From:** Sauls, Garrett  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 23, 2023 3:40 PM  
**To:** 'Andrew Martin' <[123andy@gmail.com](mailto:123andy@gmail.com)>  
**Subject:** RE: 949 Scott Street - 22PLN-00410

Thanks Scott. I read through the letter and will add it to the record as comments against what has been submitted so far.

Best regards,



**Garrett Sauls**  
Planner  
Planning and Development Services Department  
(650) 329-2471 | [Garrett.Sauls@CityofPaloAlto.org](mailto:Garrett.Sauls@CityofPaloAlto.org)



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**From:** Andrew Martin <[123andy@gmail.com](mailto:123andy@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 23, 2023 3:25 PM  
**To:** Sauls, Garrett <[Garrett.Sauls@CityofPaloAlto.org](mailto:Garrett.Sauls@CityofPaloAlto.org)>  
**Subject:** Re: 949 Scott Street - 22PLN-00410

Thanks Garrett,

I reached out a few months ago and gave some feedback. They said they might take it to their architect, but I think this wasn't the case. Attached is my feedback.

Thank you,

-Andy Martin

650-380-3405

On Thu, Mar 23, 2023 at 3:16 PM Sauls, Garrett <[Garrett.Sauls@cityofpaloalto.org](mailto:Garrett.Sauls@cityofpaloalto.org)> wrote:

Hi Andrew,

I have not received any resubmittal from the applicant.

Best regards,



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Garrett Sauls

Planner

Planning and Development Services Department

(650) 329-2471 | [Garrett.Sauls@CityofPaloAlto.org](mailto:Garrett.Sauls@CityofPaloAlto.org) .



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**From:** Andrew Martin <[123andy@gmail.com](mailto:123andy@gmail.com)>

**Sent:** Thursday, March 23, 2023 3:16 PM

**To:** Sauls, Garrett <[Garrett.Sauls@CityofPaloAlto.org](mailto:Garrett.Sauls@CityofPaloAlto.org)>

**Subject:** Re: 949 Scott Street - 22PLN-00410

Hi Garrett,

Has there been any update on this proposal? If not, I have an official letter to send to register my issues.

-Andy

On Fri, Jan 27, 2023 at 1:45 PM Sauls, Garrett <[Garrett.Sauls@cityofpaloalto.org](mailto:Garrett.Sauls@cityofpaloalto.org)> wrote:

Hi Andrew,

Thanks for letting me know. If you have any questions, feel free to ask. At the moment, we provided comments to the applicant on January 13. I haven't heard back from them about those comments so I imagine they are working with the homeowner on it.

Best regards,



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Garrett Sauls

Planner

Planning and Development Services Department

(650) 329-2471 | [Garrett.Sauls@CityofPaloAlto.org](mailto:Garrett.Sauls@CityofPaloAlto.org) .



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**From:** Andrew Martin <[123andy@gmail.com](mailto:123andy@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 25, 2023 12:51 PM  
**To:** Sauls, Garrett <[Garrett.Sauls@CityofPaloAlto.org](mailto:Garrett.Sauls@CityofPaloAlto.org)>  
**Subject:** Re: 949 Scott Street - 22PLN-00410

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Hi Garrett.

Just FYI that I have reached out to the owners to talk about the project. I do have some concerns and will address them when we meet.

Please keep me posted on the status of this project and any scheduled public meetings or deadlines.

Thanks!

-Andy Martin

On Wed, Jan 4, 2023 at 8:39 AM Sauls, Garrett <[Garrett.Sauls@cityofpaloalto.org](mailto:Garrett.Sauls@cityofpaloalto.org)> wrote:

Hi Andrew,

Due to new copyright laws that took effect on January 1 we can't provide unfiltered plan sets anymore unfortunately which is probably why you can't access the drawings on BuildingEye. I have modified the drawings to include information that we can share and attached it to this email.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

Best regards,



Garrett Sauls  
Planner  
Planning and Development Services Department  
(650) 329-2471 | [Garrett.Sauls@CityofPaloAlto.org](mailto:Garrett.Sauls@CityofPaloAlto.org)

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**From:** Andrew Martin <[123andy@gmail.com](mailto:123andy@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 3, 2023 1:25 PM  
**To:** Sauls, Garrett <[Garrett.Sauls@CityofPaloAlto.org](mailto:Garrett.Sauls@CityofPaloAlto.org)>  
**Subject:** Fwd: 949 Scott Street - 22PLN-00410

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Hello Garrett,

I tried to view the application on the BuildingEye site but there was only reference to an electrical panel upgrade a few years ago.

Can you please send me all the plans/information regarding the proposed development for 949 Scott St. I live across the street.

Thank you,

-Andy Martin

650-380-3405