

September 4, 2019

City Council
City of Los Altos
One North San Antonio Road
Los Altos, CA 94022

SUBJECT: STORY POLE EXEMPTION FOR 4350 EL CAMINO REAL

Dear Mayor Eng and Council Members:

As the applicant and property owner of a multiple-family residential project for our property at 4350 El Camino Real we are writing this letter in support of receiving an exemption to the City's Story Pole Policy. Our project would replace the existing gas service station with 47 multiple-family condominium units in a five story building including seven affordable housing units.

As you know, the purpose of the Story Pole Policy is to demonstrate the height, mass and bulk of the project (Story Pole Policy, April 2019). The policy allows exceptions for public health and/or safety concerns as well as if such installations impair the use of the existing structures and business. In this instance an exception is necessary for our project to protect the public health and safety from hazards associated with story poles and to maintain the existing and necessary operations of the service station.

There are substantial public health and safety concerns with constructing story poles. After reviewing our plans with our architect, engineer and story pole contractor we have determined that it is impossible to erect story poles that demonstrate the height, mass and bulk of the project and at the same time maintain safe clearances for the necessary driveways for customer and fuel truck delivery access. Story poles would need to be located at the corners of the proposed structure and at changes in wall planes. These locations would interfere with driveways and need to be located atop canopies and the service station structure. The guy (support) wires for each story pole would span across the site in several directions from each pole and further impair and interrupt the safe operations of the gas station and essentially render the existing use infeasible. The attached site plan shows the problematic locations of the story poles compared to the existing structures and site conditions including driveways, fuel truck loading, vehicle pump access, service bays and service areas.

The following list illustrates many of the significant public, employee hazards and operational safety concerns from erecting story poles:

- On an average day approximately 400 vehicles enter the station to buy gas, approximately 50 to 100 more vehicle per day enter the site to buy items from the snacks shop; another 25 to 30 cars per day are on site for auto repair, some being worked on inside the shops, but the majority being worked on outside the shop. Every other day a two trailer semi-truck loaded with 9,000 gallons of gas, must have clear access in and out of the site. Everyday multiple vendors driving semi-trucks, such as Coca Cola, DBI, CoreMark, Cintas, Tire Trucks, et cetera, access our property. In addition, Mission Trail Waste Systems needs to access the dumpster in the back corner of the lot;
- Safe, unimpeded access to two under ground fuel tanks, 12,000 gallons each;
- Safe, unimpeded access to the 500-gallon Waste Oil Tank;
- Safe, unimpeded access to the fuel dispenser inlands for the customers—each of the four fueling islands has bidirectional access that must remain free of obstacles to facilitate the sometimes complex vehicle movements by the customers. Customers are often in a hurry and/or stressed-out choosing the correct approach to the dispenser. Additionally, there are regular “pump-pulls” where distracted customers drive away with the fuel hose remaining in their vehicle (~5 per month), which requires quick, unimpeded action by the employees to resolve and minimize fire potential;
- Underground constraints from the location of fuel lines and vapor lines that run from the tanks to the pumps and back;
- Lease violation for obstruction that restrict access in and out of station for the approximately 45-foot long, 9,000 gallon Tanker Truck;
- Insurance liability;
- More than half the auto repair and service is done outside the building with an Auto Technician working outside;
- Open service area outside the service bays for vehicle movements, drop-offs and storage. Tow trucks especially need open areas to circulate.

- Two Public Waiting areas both outside; and
- Due to underground fuel tanks, oil tanks, fuel pipe lines, vapor pipelines and electrical conduits the ground cannot be punctured fear of explosion or soil contamination.

Requiring story poles in accordance with the City's policy would essentially shut down the gas and service station for the duration of the public review process. Not only does this conflict with our contractual obligations with the Oil Company, it is not economically viable to limit the existing use of the property for the many months of public review. Closing the service station also substantially reduces sales taxes to the City and a desirable and necessary service.

In exchange for granting the exception, the project could provide additional digital, to-scale, imagery simulations to help show the height, mass and bulk of the project in relation to the buildings in the immediate vicinity.

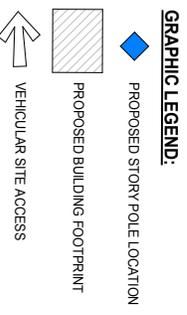
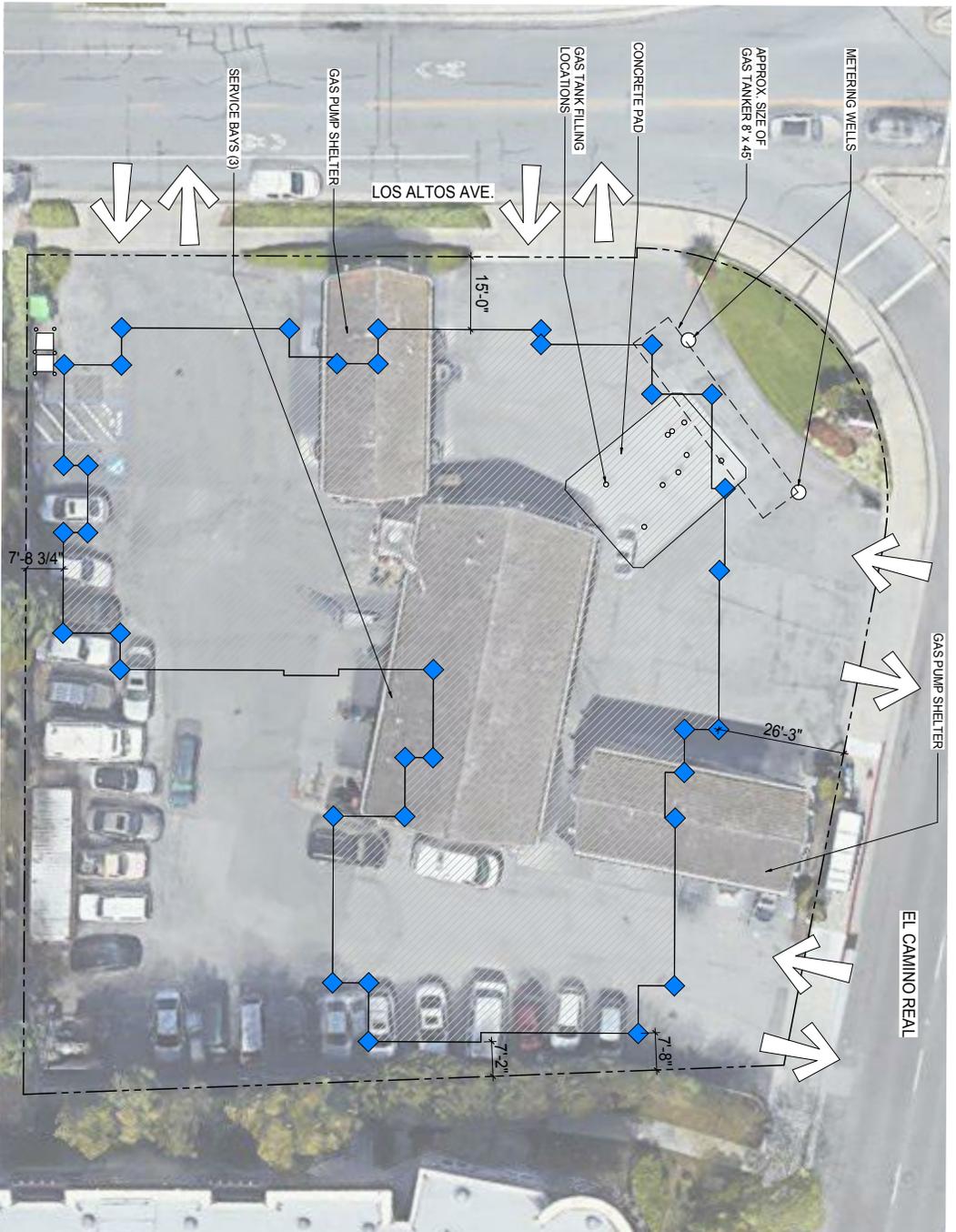
We look forward to your favorable decision granting an exception to the City's Story Pole Policy. Such action will facilitate our application and help us get one step closer to adding the necessary housing for the community.

Sincerely,

Angie Galatolo

Angie and Greg Galatolo
Owner and Applicant

Attachments:
Story Pole Diagram
Photos



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Figure 1 (top). Fuel tanker truck loading area near corner. Needs access from Los Altos Avenue and El Camino Real and open area surrounding it.



Figure 2 (left). Second type of fuel tanker.

Figure 3 (top). Service area needs open access for customers, employees and deliveries.

Figure 4 (bottom, left). Service area.

Figure 5 (bottom, right). Service area vehicle circulation.



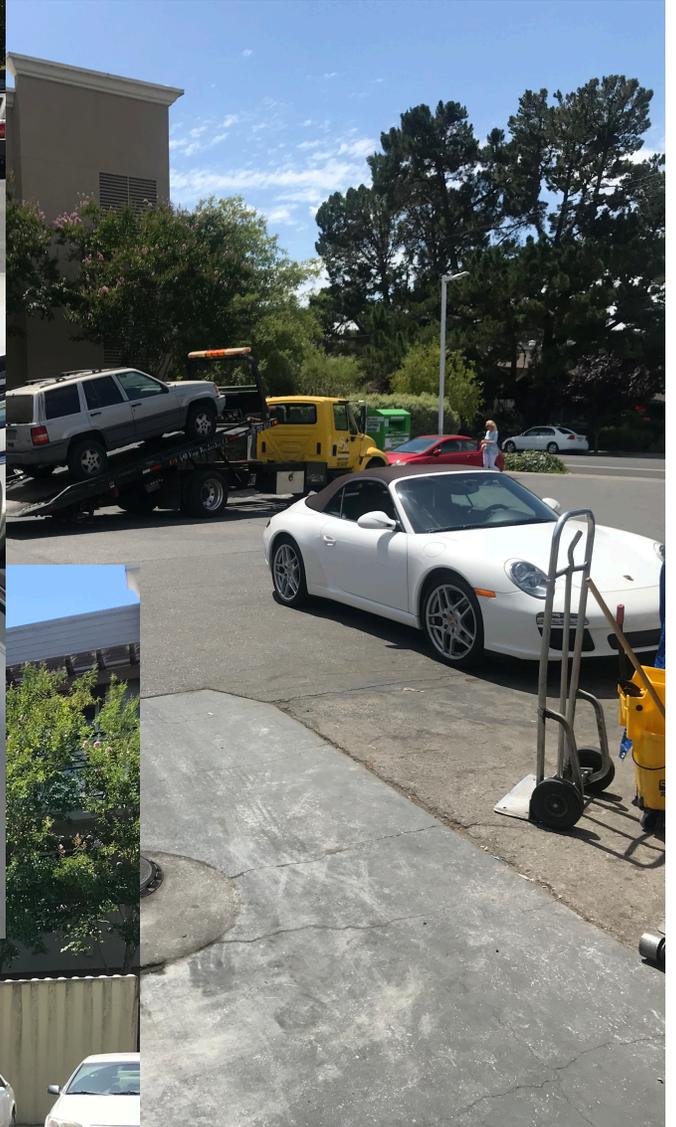


Figure 6 (top, left). Towing drop-off.

Figure 7 (top, right). Tow truck backing in from Los Altos Avenue.

Figure 8 (bottom). Tow truck parking a vehicle for subsequent repair.

Figure 9 (top, right). Tire trucks east side of the building.

Figure 10 (middle, left). Service trucks in parking area off Los Altos Avenue.

Figure 11 (bottom, right). Service truck at corner parking and loading area.

