



**TOWN OF LOS GATOS
PLANNING COMMISSION
REPORT**

**MINUTES OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
AUGUST 13, 2025**

The Planning Commission of the Town of Los Gatos conducted a Regular Meeting on Wednesday, August 13, 2025, at 7:00 p.m.

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER AT 7:00 PM

ROLL CALL

Present: Chair Emily Thomas, Vice Chair Kendra Burch, Commissioner Jeffrey Barnett, Commissioner Susan Burnett, Commissioner Steve Raspe, Commissioner Joseph Sordi, Commissioner Rob Stump

Absent: None.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

VERBAL COMMUNICATIONS

None.

CONSENT ITEMS (TO BE ACTED UPON BY A SINGLE MOTION)

1. Approval of Minutes – June 25, 2025

MOTION: **Motion by Vice Chair Burch** to approve adoption of the Consent Calendar. **Seconded by Commissioner Stump.**

VOTE: **Motion passed unanimously.**

PUBLIC HEARINGS

2. 16805 Loma Street

Request for Review PHST-25-007

APN 532-07-101

Applicant: David Britt, Britt-Rowe

Property Owner/Appellant: William Wundram

Project Planner: Sean Mullin

Consider an appeal of a Community Development Director decision to deny a request to remove a pre-1941 property from the Historic Resources Inventory for property zoned R-1:8. Exempt pursuant to CEQA Section 15061(b)(3).

Sean Mullin, Planning Manager, presented the staff report.

Opened Public Comment.

William Wundram, Appellant

- We are appealing the decision to deny our application to remove our structure from the inventory list for the following reasons: 1) the house satisfies all the Town's required findings for removal; 2) the HPCs incorrect application of the required findings; and 3) bias toward maintaining structures on the inventory. We have provided two technical memos from architectural historians to respond to the original HPC decision.

Jen Hembree, Page & Turnbull

- Page & Turnbull has found that the property does not fully embody the character defining features necessary to individually convey architectural merit as a Craftsman bungalow, and arrived at that conclusion through industry standard methodology, such as visual inspection, historical comparison, and analyzing the property in its historic architectural context.

Lee Quintana

- I am a member of the Historic Preservation Committee, but I am speaking as a member of the public. I agree with the conclusions of the two historic reports that this structure would not qualify for being a landmark using the criteria the National Park Service uses for that designation, however, I don't believe that the Town of Los Gatos expects all of its pre-1941 structures to meet that standard. Given the Town's criteria, the Commission's focus should be strictly on this particular structure, not on neighboring structures, not on the defining features of the type of architecture, but rather on the defining features of this particular structure. The Commission should not focus on the federal findings for determination, on demolition, the replacement structure, or the neighbors' support of the replacement structure.

Dave Renner

- The subject house is over 1.5 miles from the Town's historic district, and is a very simple structure with no noteworthy features. The executive summary and two professional historic reports clearly state that the property does not qualify under national, state, and Town criteria. All neighbors on Loma Street support this proposal. There is no known documentation of what the home looked like before 1941, with the first known photo of the property being from 1967. A 1936 satellite image shows a different footprint of the home than it is today, so it is unclear what is even being preserved.

Thomas Salge

- I read the two professional reports, and it is quite clear that this structure was never architecturally significant in the first place. There are also examples of other similar modest structures on the street that have been removed from the inventory list under the same required findings. The neighbors are supportive of the Appellant's vision, as am I.

Catherine Rose

- I'm a neighbor bordering the subject home, which has been in disrepair the 35 years I've lived there; I have never heard of or considered it to be of historic value. I agree with the previous two neighbors' comments, and I support the Appellant's appeal to demolish the house and continue with their project.

Clay Wayman

- I live around the corner from the subject house and walk by it every day, and I agree with the last speaker that the house has been in disrepair for as long as I've lived there. Speaker Lee Quintana says the neighbors' opinions shouldn't matter, but in Los Gatos we support each other, and it's important for the Commission to understand we support this project.

Kerry Lindholm

- I live immediately adjacent to the property, and the grass there has been over 3 feet tall for my 27 years there. We bought a pre-1941 home and went through the same process, and were allowed to tear down the home and rebuild, and our neighbors were also allowed to tear down their pre-1941 home. I attended the HPC meeting where the Appellant requested removing the home from the inventory and was baffled, because the Committee was confused regarding what standards to use, how to deem a house historical, etc., and stated during deliberation that the guidelines are ambiguous. The HPC needs to get clear standards to apply. I don't believe this project meets any of the standards.

Brian Balistreri

- My wife and I have not known the Appellants for a long time, but we are very familiar with the house in question, and as others have said, it is not in the historical district. Most people who walk this neighborhood, when learning what the Appellants are going through, say, "For that house? Are we talking about the same house?" We fully support the Appellant's plans to build a house that would absolutely add to this neighborhood.

William Wundram, Appellant

- It concerns me that the HPC chair, presenting as a neighbor yet who lives two miles away, is further expressing her view to the Planning Commission, considering she was the tie-breaking vote to deny our request in May. It doesn't feel like the HPC process was impartial. The house's front façade, roof, windows, door, etc., have been modified, leaving only 30 percent originality by measurement. The 1967 addition added 25 percent to the footprint, and the house wasn't annexed until 1999. Other similar houses have been approved, and there have been no denials on Loma Street. HPC members have an

obligation to provide an unbiased assessment for all residents, regardless of personal views.

Closed Public Comment.

Commissioners discussed the matter.

MOTION: **Motion by Commissioner Barnett** to grant an appeal of a Community Development Director Decision to deny a request to remove a pre-1941 property from the Historic Resources Inventory for property zoned R-1:8. **Seconded by Vice Chair Burch.**

VOTE: **Motion passed unanimously.**

3. 14595 Clearview Drive, 17400 Wedgewood Avenue, and 17445 Zena Avenue

Architecture and Site Application S-25-005

APNs 409-18-008, -009, -010, and 409-31-001

Applicant: Andy Kimball

Property Owner: Clearview Gold Associates LLC

Project Planner: Ryan Safty

Consider a request for a Grading Permit and Removal of Large, Protected Trees associated with a comprehensive Redevelopment of the La Rinconada Golf Course on property zoned RC and R-1:20. Categorically exempt pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Sections 15301: Existing Facilities, and 15302: Replacement or Reconstruction.

Commissioner Stump disclosed that he received a 30-minute tour of the golf course from the applicant.

Commissioner Burnett disclosed that she also toured the golf course with the applicant, has been a member of La Rinconada twice in the past, and her son is a current member, but it would not affect her decision making.

Commissioner Raspe, Commissioner Barnett, and Commissioner Sordi all disclosed that they had also toured the golf course with the applicant.

Ryan Safty, Associate Planner, presented the staff report.

Opened Public Comment.

Bob Riland, President

- I am the president of the La Rinconada Country Club, which was founded in 1929, and has over 541 members. We are planning our next 100 years around three key goals: 1) Modernization: The project modernizes aging infrastructure and improves operating efficiency; 2) Sustainability: We want to make the entire property less reliant on water by reducing our water consumption by over 30%; and 3) Safety: We have a failing tree problem, which is a major safety risk we need to address while also improving our fire resiliency.

Andy Kimball, General Manager

- We propose a generational landscape restoration and infrastructure renovation of the property, a \$20 million investment entirely funded by our membership. The new course would play much like it was originally intended back in 1929. The course would be closed 12-14 months while all other club facilities remain open. We plan to start construction in March and work on each hole for 3-4 weeks, minimizing neighbor inconvenience. The construction will take 7-8 months, followed by a 5-6 month grow-in period with the course reopening in the first half of 2027. Our plan to convert to drought tolerant Bermuda grass would reduce our water consumption by 30 million gallons of water a year, but it requires more sunlight than current course has, and the abundance of overgrown trees shading the course must be addressed. We proposed tree removal for both health and safety reasons, and to achieve our water saving goals. Our course currently has 1,200 trees; after planting 173 mature native trees during construction, the course will end up with nearly 1,100 trees. The club intends to remain a good neighbor with a comprehensive community outreach program begun in June.

Kristin Lamson

- I have lived in Los Gatos for 30 years, I'm a member of La Rinconada, and I support the project. There are many reasons to approve the project, including: 1) this is a necessary course modernization and sustainability plan; 2) water usage is decreased by 30% by replacing existing grass with a drought tolerant variety; 3) native trees will replace unsafe, aging, and non-native trees; 4) over 100 local neighbors endorse the project; and 5) the plan proposes no new growth; it is simply a landscape redesign and infrastructure rebuild.

Brad Krouskup

- My wife and I are La Rinconada members. This project is the result of four years of intense work between La Rinconada members and adjoining neighbors, and in my view is about the sustainability of one of the larger open spaces in Los Gatos. Reducing water consumption, planting native drought-tolerant oak trees, reducing fire danger, and improving safety are all good things. The number of trees to be reduced is less than 10% of the existing inventory, and the reforestation of La Rinconada will be more drought-tolerant and sustainable for generations to come.

Ed Hofer

- My wife and I are members of La Rinconada. Our board and design team have put together a thoughtful proposal that emphasizes sustainability, and it is right for the club. The club had over 70% approval for the project from its members.

Greg Simpson

- I'm a member of La Rinconada and support the project. Two of the biggest issues in our state are water and fire. The redwood trees on the course were planted generations ago by La Rinconada members, but they didn't have to worry about water back then. Each redwood tree can take up to 500 gallons of water per day, and the club has to irrigate those. Redwood trees are also not natives, and eucalyptus trees are a high fire danger.

Ty Hecky (phonetic)

- The Bermuda grass may not be good for my short game, but I still recommend doing it for the savings of 30-40 million gallons of water.

Mike Gallagher

- We live directly across from the La Rinconada entrance and are members. This is a generational project, because when these trees and this golf course were formed 96 years ago, none of us were there, but we're benefiting today, and I think this thoughtful plan will impact long beyond any of us. Water savings is the key thing, and in order to do that, changes to the trees must be made. A year ago, I was on the fourth hole and a eucalyptus tree dropped a large branch onto the cart path; and they are not native, so I would support getting rid of them. I urge the Planning Commission to support the project.

Dennis McEvoy

- My wife and I are members of La Rinconada. Water is scarcer than 100 years ago when this golf course was built and 35 years ago when it was remodeled; choices made then are no longer suitable for today's climate. The non-natives plants and trees on the course require an inordinate amount of water in the summer, and this project addresses this by putting a warm season grass on 40 acres of the property, significantly reducing the amount of water needed in the summer; and replacing many of the non-native trees that require more water with native oak trees that will thrive in the warmer climate.

Ted Baumuller

- I live seven minutes from the La Rinconada country club and my wife and I are members, as are my children, and I hope their children someday. I believe this is a once in a generation opportunity that can make this happen. The irrigation system at La Rinconada has failed, and I also have seen significant tree branches fall while playing golf. The amount of resources required to keep this property in a sustainable environment needs an upgrade. Reducing 30 million gallons of water is an obligation that we have, not an opportunity.

Lotus Mahon

- I support changing the lawn, putting in the drought tolerant grasses, and removing non-native eucalyptus trees known to be torches, But I don't support removing mature old growth trees; it has taken them decades to grow and replacing them will also take decades. Larger trees clean the air, remove carbon dioxide, and contribute oxygen. The current old growth trees have survived decades of drought, so how much water each individual tree takes compared to the lawn and other things, I don't know that those old growth trees are the ones consuming all the water. These trees also provide sound dampening, and provide much habitat for wildlife. I support oak trees, but they're not going to grow very fast.

Lisa Sieber

- The issue of the irreversible removal of 287 mature trees from the La Rinconada golf course warrants a thorough, fact-based review of the construction and design proposal, including the Environmental Impact Report to ensure legal compliance and ecological preservation. I have submitted a petition to the Town with 113 signatures on MoveOn.org that was only issued to people in the La Rinconada area, so they are relevant. The project began with 190 trees being removed, then 240, and now 287. Is the Town of Los Gatos contemplating granting the La Rinconada country club an exemption from the California Environmental Quality Act to remove the numerous trees classified as large, protected trees by the Town?

Jeff Gallinat

- I've been a member of La Rinconada for over a decade, and I have served on its board for five years. We believe our plan is comprehensive, fact-based, balanced, and fully integrated. Our team has a lot of skill sets, including a preeminent experienced golf course designer; several different specific experts, engineers and other specialists, and two arborists. We have selected and engaged the very best golf construction company in America, because they have practices in the most advanced techniques to ensure that the project runs as described by general manager Andy Kimball, and with limited environmental disruption. This plan you see is governed by the opportunity to not only retrofit and renovate the property, but to create a sustainable solution that reduces the use of water and chemicals, and has a reforestation plan that puts more native trees on the property.

Jim Rubnitz

- I've been a member of La Rinconada for 30 years, and I'm here to speak about the relationship La Rinconada has with the town. As a past president of the club, I've worked with the Town over the years for remodels and feel quite good about our relationship, and the Town and residents have been happy with La Rinconada. I have no doubt that when this project is completed, the Town will be very proud of the finished product.

Scott Lansin (phonetic)

- I am also a member of La Rinconada country club and strongly supportive of this project. La Rinconada is a pillar of society for the Town; many events that benefit the community are

held at the club. This project is about long-term sustainability through water savings, and part of that is the removal of non-native trees, which have been fully reviewed and approved by two arborists, including the Town arborist. The club will pay substantial in lieu fees, and is willing to pay them, because moving this project forward is very important. This is not a development project; it involves no changes in the club's conditional use permit, there is no facilities expansion, and no increase in membership. It is a landscape and infrastructure modernization with a responsible, well-balanced plan that involves no import of expert of soils, minimal grading, and no impacts to existing facilities.

Sandy Decker

- Don't completely destroy this urban forest wonderland, which is beautiful and well-loved. Members, imagine the family pictures after your daughter's wedding, standing on a Bermuda grass fairway with bordering chaparral shrubbery and an occasional oak. There has got to be a better compromise on the destruction of the old oak and the other old growth trees that are being destroyed. Please require a rendering of what this design will eventually look like. There is no argument that the eucalyptus needs to go, but most of us have deep feelings for the redwoods; they are California. These trees have a collaborative root system that works together to search out ground water and surface water, and they will work well with the reduced amount of water.

Christine Matheson (phonetic)

- My husband and I have been a direct neighbor to the La Rinconada country club for 30 years, and are members. We are in full support of both the tree safety and water reduction and hope the Planning Commission will support it as well.

Lorina Chew

- We live next to the entrance of La Rinconada, and our back yard faces the 18th green. I am also a member of the club, and this plan impacts us greatly. Many of the trees identified for removal are at the end of their lives and can become hazardous. In June of this year a huge branch from the tree bordering my back yard and the 18th green fell into our yard. The petition from MoveOn.org talks about the 287 trees that are being removed, but did not mention the 176 trees that will be replanted. While some people who signed the petition are neighbors, there are others from as far away as LA, Orange County, Colorado, Washington, Ohio, Hawaii, and even the Philippines.

Sean Morley,

- I am with Morley Brothers, LLC, and a long-time Los Gatos resident. We are assisting La Rinconada in the management of the applications, but I am not a member of the club. The redwoods proposed for removal were planted in the sixties and seventies, so we are not talking about old growth redwoods or other trees. The full environmental effects of the project have been thoroughly studied, including a detailed tree survey, and biology, health risks, and noise reports. No impacts were identified, and the project will not alter the landscape or hurt wildlife habitat, air quality, or neighborhood character, as suggested. No

scientific evidence has been presented to support this, just a lot of opinion. It is not possible avoid tree removal and still achieve the club's objectives, including drought tolerant grass to save water, long-term safety, and maintaining the course in competitive play over the years. Our application complies with all Town requirements, and we do not seek a variance. We do have a serious falling tree risk problem; more than 100 trees have fallen on the site over the last few years, and more will follow if we don't prudently manage our future.

Closed Public Comment.

Commissioners discussed the matter.

MOTION: **Motion by Vice Chair Burch** to approve a Grading Permit and Removal of Large, Protected Trees associated with a comprehensive redevelopment of the La Rinconada Golf Course at 14595 Clearview Drive, 17400 Wedgewood Avenue, and 17445 Zena Avenue.

Associate Planner Safty requested the motion be amended to modify Condition of Approval 8 to reflect the changes to the replacement trees.

The Maker of the Motion accepted the amendment to the motion.

Seconded by Commissioner Raspe.

Commissioners discussed the matter.

Chair Thomas requested the motion be amended to include language stating the tree replacement be no smaller than what is currently proposed.

Opened Public Comment.

Commission questions to the Applicant.

Closed Public Comment.

The Maker of the Motion accepted the amendment to the motion.

Chair Thomas requested the motion be amended to add language stating that no less than what the current identified native plants are, besides the trees and the other landscaping.

The Maker of the Motion accepted the amendment to the motion.

Associate Planner Safty read the two separate changes to the conditions of approval:

- 1) **Condition 8, the ratio requirement. Condition shall reflect the changes to the replacement trees.**
- 2) **An additional condition of approval shall state, "The landscape plan shall be in substantial compliance with the plans presented to and approved by the Planning Commission on August 13, 2025."**

The Maker of the Motion accepted the amendments to the motion.

The Seconder of the Motion accepted the amendments to the motion.

Commissioners discussed the matter.

VOTE: Motion passed unanimously.

2. 130 Vasona Oaks Drive

Planned Development Amendment Application: PD-25-002

APN 424-42-008

Applicant: Elad Batito, Green Bay Remodeling Inc.

Property Owner: Ken MacDonald

Project Planner: Samina Merchant

Consider a request for approval to modify Planned Development Ordinance 1281 to increase the maximum Floor Area Ratio (FAR) and lot coverage for property zoned R-M:5-12:PD. This request for modification of a Planned Development Ordinance is not considered a project pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act.

Commissioner Barnett disclosed that he did legal work for the applicant's business in 2004, and noted that the HOA is in support of the application.

Samina Merchant, Associate Planner, presented the staff report.

Opened Public Comment.

SLC Design

- I am the building designer for the project. Our proposed residential renovation includes a new sunroom, an addition to existing structure, relocated kitchen, expanded family room, remodeled bedrooms, and conversion of the mezzanine to a new ensuite bedroom to better accommodate family members, or for use as a home office. The project seems to be exceeding the normal FAR, but we have obtained HOA approval, and are asking for Planning Commission approval.

SLC Design

- The family has gone back and forth regarding the home's existing footprint, and it doesn't work for them having parents and adult children visiting. The proposed renovation would help them with the functionality of the space.

Closed Public Comment.

Commissioners discussed the matter.

MOTION: **Motion by Commissioner Raspe** to forward to Town Council a request for approval to modify Planned Development Ordinance 1281 for 130 Vasona Oaks Drive. **Seconded by Commissioner Burnett.**

Commissioners discussed the matter.

VOTE: **Motion passed unanimously.**

REPORT FROM THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

Joel Paulson, Director of Community Development

- Town Council met August 8, 2025 to consider an appeal from an adjacent neighbor of the Planning Commission's decision regarding 45 Reservoir Road. The appeal was denied and the project was approved.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS/COMMISSION MATTERS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 10:02 p.m.

This is to certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the minutes of the August 13, 2025 meeting as approved by the Planning Commission.

/s/ Vicki Blandin

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