



**TOWN OF LOS GATOS
PLANNING COMMISSION
REPORT**

**MINUTES OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
AUGUST 27, 2025**

The Planning Commission of the Town of Los Gatos conducted a Regular Meeting on Wednesday, August 27, 2025, at 7:00 p.m.

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER AT 7:00 PM

ROLL CALL

Present: Chair Emily Thomas, Commissioner Jeffrey Barnett, Commissioner Susan Burnett, Commissioner Steve Raspe, Commissioner Joseph Sordi

Absent: Vice Chair Kendra Burch, Commissioner Rob Stump

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

VERBAL COMMUNICATIONS

None.

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

1. Approval of Minutes – August 13, 2025

MOTION: Motion by Commissioner Barnett to approve adoption of the Consent Calendar. **Seconded by Commissioner Raspe.**

VOTE: Motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

2. 31 University Avenue

Architecture and Site Application S-25-004

Planned Development Modification Application PD-25-001

Conditional Use Permit Application U-25-001

APN 529-02-044

Applicant: Rick Nelson, MBH Architects

Property Owner: SRI Old Town, LLC

Project Planner: Erin Walters

Consider a request for approval to modify Planned Development Ordinance 2025 to allow modifications to Building E; an Architecture and Site Application for exterior modifications to an existing commercial building in the University/Edelen Historic District; and a Conditional Use Permit for Formula Retail over 10,000 square feet, and for a restaurant with alcohol service on property zoned C-2:LHP:PD. Categorically exempt pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15301: Existing Facilities.

Sean Mullin, Planning Manager, presented the staff report.

Opened Public Comment.

Gary Freidman, Applicant

- I'm the Chairman and CEO of RH, the leading luxury home furnishings brand in North America. We find great architecture and readapt it, or we build it, with spaces that reflect human design and a study of balance, symmetry, and perfect proportions. We don't build retail stores, we build inspiring spaces that blur the line between residential and retail, indoors and outdoors, and home and hospitality. Examples of our work includes a compound in Yountville, CA; an historic firehouse in Montecito, CA; the Bethlehem Steel Building in San Francisco; and a 17th century English countryside estate.

Jennifer Lynn

- I am the CEO of the Los Gatos Chamber of Commerce and I am here to express the Chamber's strong support for the proposed RH gallery and restaurant. Our support rests on four pillars: 1) Durable economic impact. The RH flagship concept consistently generates millions in sales, and provides the benefits of stable sales tax revenue and steady foot traffic; 2) Balance in our retail ecosystem. Thoughtfully selected anchors like RH serve as regional magnets, and hospitality and retail; 3) Placemaking at a dormant corner. RH would transform this underutilized prime location into an all-day destination, and bring renewed energy to the street; and 4) Brand elevation and a defining opportunity. A flagship RH further elevates Los Gatos' recognized identity for retail, design, and culinary experiences.

Ryan Rosenberg

- I am in favor of this for three reasons: 1) I like the idea of two for one with the opportunity for both retail and restaurant; 2) I agree with others that the façade is kind of "samey," but it has more detail than what is seen in Old Town; and 3) There is the chance for a little corridor with the two significant furniture stores next to each other, creating a destination.

Taylor Burke

- What I found when living in NYC is that the neighborhoods and the walkability become your community, so having a destination such as this where people can walk downtown and socialize and sit at a table with others is so important, and is lacking in Los Gatos. Currently people usually have to leave Los Gatos for options for going out.

Peter Burke

- I am in favor of this project for four reasons: 1) Los Gatos is visibly enhanced through beautiful architecture; 2) It drives revenue for the community; 3) Provides the culinary experience that Los Gatos lacks; and 4) It provides customer traffic, as outlined by Jennifer Lynn of the Chamber of Commerce.

Maria Gerst

- I also support RH. I don't understand why the current building is considered historic, but this change would be a good thing, as we need to evolve. All RH stores are placed in prominent areas, and we are lucky to be considered one of those places, because they are destination spots. I love and frequent downtown Los Gatos, and RH would complete and enhance our downtown area.

Annette Badger

- I am the Director of Construction and Tenant Services for Federal Realty, owners of Old Town and Santana Row, and I am in favor of the modification of the Planned Development for several reasons, many of which have already been stated, the economic growth, increasing sales tax, increasing jobs, and bringing world class architecture to Los Gatos to enhance the already beautiful architecture of the Town.

Scot Vallee

- I am Federal Realty's Head of Development for the west coast. We have been a strong partner in Los Gatos with the Town and its businesses. We believe RH would be a destination for both Old Town and Los Gatos, and we appreciate any support on this topic.

Christian Irwin

- I am the Vice President of Leasing for Federal Realty. Working on Old Town for the past eight years has been a passion project for me. Los Gatos has momentum, and the idea of meeting people where they are and being in a smaller, vibrant community resonates with retailers. The balance of small business and brands that people know in Los Gatos is better than it has ever been, and RH is the crown jewel. I am a staunch supporter of the project.

Michael Costigan

- The current buildings remind me of structures built by engineers and not architects. I saw what happened when storefronts were left vacant in San Francisco, and this building has been vacant for three years. That's not good for foot traffic and vibrancy, and this project could bring that to the downtown. This type of store, having more space to showcase more items, both in the restaurant and in the gallery space, would be useful and drive people to shop and eat in Los Gatos. I firmly recommend the project.

Jim Foley

- I am a member of the Chamber of Commerce, but I'm speaking now on behalf of my family, who own the historical La Canada building in Town. This version of Old Town has served its purpose for a long time, but when you have RH, who is known for worldwide design here, we ought to put our trust in them. I love the beautiful design RH has come up with and think it will update everything very nicely.

Carol Custer

- I love spending time in downtown Los Gatos, and very much support the RH project. I agree with the reasons articulated here tonight and believe the design is beautiful and thoughtfully done. I attended the Historic Preservation Committee meeting and personally think there is appropriate variation in the façade of the RH design with the varying rooflines and the awning treatment. I also think the design is harmonious with the character of downtown Los Gatos and would elevate the area.

Gary Freidman, Applicant

- RH would love to be in Los Gatos, and we will do something to make the community proud. We are also open to feedback. At our core, everything we do comes through the lens of architecture. We invest on average three times more than the next closest retail store, and we are prepared to make a meaningful investment in Los Gatos. We run three businesses in one building: a restaurant; interior design; and retail home furnishings.

Closed Public Comment.

Commissioners discussed the matter.

MOTION: **Motion by Commissioner Raspe** to forward a recommendation of approval to Town Council to approve a Planned Development Modification Application and an Architecture and Site Application for 31 University Avenue. **Seconded by Commissioner Sordi.**

VOTE: **Motion passed 4-1 with Commissioner Burnett dissenting.**

MOTION: **Motion by Commissioner Raspe** to forward a recommendation of approval to Town Council to approve a Conditional Use Permit for 31 University Avenue. **Seconded by Commissioner Barnett.**

VOTE: **Motion passed unanimously.**

REPORT FROM THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

Joel Paulson, Community Development Director

- Town Council met 8/19/25 and considered an appeal for 10 Charles Street for a Fence Height Exception. The appeal was denied.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS/COMMISSION MATTERS

Historic Preservation Committee

Chair Thomas

- HPC met 8/27/25 and considered five items:
 - A request for approval to construct exterior alterations to a home on Broadway. The request was approved.
 - Constructing exterior alterations on Magneson Loop for window replacement. The request was approved with some modifications to the applicant's design to streamline the process and maintain the integrity of the home.
 - A request to remove a house on Pleasant Street from the Historic Resources Inventory. The vote was split, triggering an automatic recommendation of denial.
 - Preliminary review for a house on Los Gatos Boulevard looking to construct a second story addition.
 - Preliminary review for a house on Bachman Avenue looking to construct an addition.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:34 p.m.

This is to certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the minutes of the August 27, 2025 meeting as approved by the Planning Commission.

/s/ Vicki Blandin

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