



**TOWN OF LOS GATOS
PLANNING COMMISSION
REPORT**

**MINUTES OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
FEBRUARY 12, 2025**

The Planning Commission of the Town of Los Gatos conducted a Regular Meeting on Wednesday, February 12, 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.

Absent: Commissioner Rob Stump.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

VERBAL COMMUNICATIONS

John Shepardson

My question relates to 220 Belgatos Road (former Mirassou School) and the fact that they appealed the DRC decision approving a lot split. The 220 Belgatos grass fields should not be split from the school buildings, because they create a fire break, a staging ground for firefighters, and a safe place to run to. The Town's General Plan states that Santa Clara County, including Los Gatos, has a high potential for devastating wildland fires and strong land use policies and mitigation measures are necessary.

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

1. **Approval of Minutes** – January 8, 2025
2. **Approval of Minutes** – January 22, 2025

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

VOTE: **Motion passed unanimously.**

PUBLIC HEARINGS

3. 50 Los Gatos-Saratoga Road

Architecture and Site Application S-23-042

Conditional Use Permit Application U-23-017

Subdivision Application M-23-009

APNs 529-24-032, 529-24-001, and 529-24-003

Applicant: SummerHill Homes, LLC

Property Owner: Keet S. Nerhan

Project Planner: Sean Mullin

Consider a Request for Approval to Demolish Existing Hotel Structures (Los Gatos Lodge), Construct a Multi-Family Residential Development (155 Units), a Conditional Use Permit, a Condominium Vesting Tentative Map, Site Improvements Requiring a Grading Permit, and Remove Large Protected Trees Under Senate Bill 330 (SB 330) on Property Zoned CH:PD:HEOZ. No Additional Environmental Review is Necessary Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15183: Streamlining Process, Since the Proposed Project's Environmental Impacts were Adequately Addressed in the 2020 General Plan EIR and/or 2040 General Plan EIR, as Applicable.

Gabrielle Whelan, Town Attorney, provided a PowerPoint presentation.

Sean Mullin, Planning Manager, presented the staff report.

Opened Public Comment.

Kevin Ebrahimi (Applicant)

I am the Senior Vice President of SummerHill Homes. We propose to build 155 new townhome condominiums at 50 Los Gatos-Saratoga Road, a site designated by the Town Council as a housing inventory site. We submitted an SB 330 preliminary application in June 2023. We could have opted to submit our application as a "builder's remedy" project; however, we chose instead to design a project to comply with the Town's objective standards with the minimum waivers possible. We began community outreach in 2023 even before submitting our development application, with the latest neighborhood meetings earlier this year. We have worked closely with our neighbor, the School District. The project complies with the State's Energy Code and the Town's Reach Code, will be all-electric, all the homes will have solar panels, and each garage will be EV-ready. The project will provide several public benefits: 155 new homes; 26 units designated as below market rate, 16 of the BMR units will be low-income and 10 will be moderate-income; will build a new bike and pedestrian trail along the edge of the site to provide a connection between Los Gatos-Saratoga Road and the high school; and build a reciprocal emergency access route between Los Gatos-Saratoga Road and the high school to serve the high school and the project.

Kristin Finkelstein

I am against the proposed project, which I believe raises significant concerns. This project would add high-density housing to an area ill-prepared for it, and place additional strain on infrastructure, traffic, and neighborhood character. We do not have the space to widen highway entrances and expand streets to accommodate more traffic in this part of Town, particularly in the warmer months when we experience significant beach traffic. There are several other proposed developments in our Town and we have yet to understand their cumulative impact. The project also threatens our older trees, diminishing our green spaces and wildlife habitats.

Nick Lamson

I am with McCarthy Development, a local property owner. I support the project and think it is a major step in addressing the community's housing needs. This project can make it easier for people to achieve their dream of living in Los Gatos. The project is well thought out, the product type is correct, and the location provides walkable access to local amenities, which would benefit the downtown and give a needed boost to the local retailers.

Jim Lyon

As the Town architect indicated, this project is too dense and there is not enough green space, but the applicant blew off all the architect's recommendations. This project also brings major traffic impacts, but the applicant is hiding behind the EIR of the 2040 Town Master Plan. The applicant has not provided the required transportation demand management program required in the Initial Study. What about wildfire evacuation with this area already a choke point in the Town? The applicant should be required to provide, on their own land, a dedicated right-turn lane for entry and exit of the project. I do not support the project as it now stands; it should be reworked.

Carlos Azucena

I'm speaking in support of the project. It is a challenge to get housing in Los Gatos, and this project is trying to solve the problem in the most responsible way possible, while still preserving the character of the Town and adding some benefits to the community. The project strikes a good balance of density, although we wouldn't want anything denser. The developer's other projects around Los Gatos seem to increase the value of those areas. Having the housing with this overlay of a certain amount of below market rate units is extremely helpful in that it could provide housing for essential workers. The project minimizes negative impacts while being an overall net positive to the Town.

Nico Flores

I also support this project, which is reasonable and balanced. I am a father and assistant principal and don't have the finances to buy a house in Los Gatos, but this is an opportunity for me to keep my family here and put down roots in this wonderful Town. SummerHill is a reliable developer and have done their best to reduce the density and approach the traffic concerns.

Lee Quintana

I am a member of the Historic Preservation Committee, but I speak tonight my own behalf. I commend SummerHill Homes for the number of three- and four-bedroom units proposed under low- and moderate-income categories, which is far above what we have in Los Gatos now. It is clear the project has met all the requirements of the law.

Jason Farwell

I submitted a letter of support for this project. I echo the statements of the previous speakers also in support of this project. I appreciate the frustration regarding high density and the impacts, but that frustration must be directed to your State legislature and not the Planning Commission and Town staff whose hands are tied. This is a responsible development under the circumstances and it should be approved.

Rich Stephens

With the State demanding Los Gatos add 1,993 units, I see the proposed project as one of the better new projects in Town, and I support it. I hope other developers move away from their tall skyscrapers and more in this direction, because this project is well done. Although it has 155 units, there are 516 bedrooms, so it needs to be considered much larger than it sounds. There are 310 resident parking spaces in the complex, and that only supports six cars per ten rooms or residents, and with only 20 visitor spaces, how will residents have guests with very little parking opportunities in the near area. What if there were a fire in one of Buildings #4, #5, or #18, which would shut off Highway 9? I'd love to see the affordable income units dedicated for local teachers, firefighters, or police officers.

Rue

This project seems to be all or nothing in terms of what is approved or not and does not allow for nuance, which this project could use. I agree with the previous speakers who made positive comments about the design. The combination of different sized apartments and affordable housing seems fine. The real big issue is the traffic, which has not been addressed. The idea that they want to be exempted from the setback from the road pushes the buildings up to the road, which does not allow for any additional traffic modifications to be made. I encourage the commissioners to revisit the site at various times, especially before and after school. We know this project is going to move forward, the question is whether there is room to make modifications, because the hazards for the additional traffic will be disastrous if not addressed.

Kevin Ebrahimi (Applicant)

There was a traffic study done for the project and it was reviewed by Town staff to make sure it was adequate and met the project's needs. There is a condition of approval to do a TDM plan, and that will come in upon approval. We exceed the State density bonus parking requirements for the site. We have several different communities throughout the Bay Area with a similar parking ratio, and it is a lifestyle decision of the people who buy into these communities. We have reviewed several different iterations of the site plan with the Fire

Department with respect to fire and safety, building locations, and the frontage improvements that were coordinated between our traffic consultant and the Town's traffic engineer, and the design was based on that.

Closed Public Comment.

Commissioners discussed the matter.

MOTION: **Motion by Commissioner Raspe** to recommend Town Code approval of an Architecture and Site Application, Conditional Use Permit, and Subdivision Application for 50 Los Gatos-Saratoga Road. **Seconded by Vice Chair Burch.**

VOTE: **Motion passed unanimously.**

4. 14335 La Rinconada Drive, Parcel 1

Architecture and Site Application S-23-028

APN 409-14-046

Property Owner/Applicant: MGKG Properties, LP

Project Planner: Erin Walters

Consider a Request for Approval to Demolish and Existing Single-Family Residence, Construct a New Single-Family Residence, and Site Improvements Requiring a Grading Permit on Property Zoned R-1:8. Categorically Exempt Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15303: New Construction.

Erin Walters, Senior Planner, presented the staff report.

Opened Public Comment.

Greg Zierman (Applicant)

Parcel 1 is the front lot of a two-lot subdivision for a lot split that was approved on September 19, 2022. The Town's Historic Preservation Committee agreed that the house had no historical value on February 28, 2024, and it was removed from the Historic Resources Inventory List. Parcel 1 is 9,210 square feet, and the maximum allowable floor area for a house on a lot this size is 2,947 square feet and the maximum allowable garage area is 810 square feet. We propose a floor area of 2,805 square feet and a garage area of 703 square feet. The maximum allowable building height in this zoning district is 30 feet; we propose a building height of 25 feet, 6 inches. The existing house is not a candidate for remodeling or rebuilding, because the home has no foundation, and the subfloor is built directly on grade. A two-story home is proposed because the footprint of a two-story home is typically much smaller than that of a similar size single-story design, creating less impact to the site, larger yards, and greater

setbacks. Three protected trees are proposed for removal, with replacements provided as required. The applicant has done neighborhood outreach to the immediate neighbors and those on the adjacent streets and has not received any objections or concerns; and several neighbors support the project. The project meets the objective standards of the Town's zoning regulations and complies with the residential design guidelines for a home not located in the hillside area.

Will Maynard

I am the neighbor directly across the street from the subject site and have some concerns. This is a very large structure compared to the existing home and those immediately surrounding it. Other large homes on the street have a lot of greenery to soften their appearance. I asked the applicant if they planned to do the same type of landscaping, but received no answer. I am in favor of developing this neighborhood further, but I'd feel better about the project if I knew what efforts would be made to soften the appearance of this very large house.

Greg Zierman (Applicant)

A landscape plan will be developed during the construction drawing phase and will be included in our construction documents. We are required to replace the removed protected trees with nine 15-gallon trees. We would be glad to share our landscape plan with Mr. Maynard and any other neighbors, and certainly those nine trees may be best suited to be planted in the front yard to provide screening. There are no major windows facing any of the side properties.

Closed Public Comment.

Commissioners discussed the matter.

MOTION: **Motion by Commissioner Barnett to approve an Architecture and Site Application for 14335 La Rinconada Drive. Seconded by Vice Chair Burch.**

VOTE: **Motion passed unanimously.**

5. 15365 Santella Court

Architecture and Site Application S-24-069

APN 527-09-036

Applicant: Hari Sripadanna

Property Owner: Christian and Hellen Olgaard

Project Planner: Erin Walters

Consider a Request for Approval of a One-Year Time Extension to an Existing Architecture and Site Application (S-18-052) to Construct a New Single-Family Residence, Site Work Requiring a Grading Permit, and Removal of Large Protected Trees

on a Vacant Property Zoned HR-2½:PD. An Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was Prepared for the Planned Development and was Certified by the Town Council on December 19, 2005. No Further Environmental Analysis is Required for the Individual Lot Development.

Erin Walters, Senior Planner, presented the staff report.

Opened Public Comment.

Hari Sripadanna (Applicant)

This project has already been approved by the Planning Commission and Town Council. We are asking for a time extension to accommodate the building development process, as this is a highly technical project.

Closed Public Comment.

Commissioners discussed the matter.

MOTION: **Motion by Commissioner Burnett** to approve a one-year time extension to an existing Architecture and Site application for 15365 Santella Court.
Seconded by Commissioner Raspe.

VOTE: **Motion passed unanimously.**

6. Town Code Amendment Re: Special Needs Housing

Town Code Amendment Application A-25-001

Project Location: Town-wide

Applicant: Town of Los Gatos

Forward a Recommendation to the Town Council on an Ordinance Amending Chapter 29 (Zoning Regulations) of the Town Code Regarding Emergency Shelters, Small Employee Housing, Transitional Housing, Supportive Housing, Employee Housing, Group Homes, and Findings for Reasonable Accommodation Requests Pursuant to Implementation Program AP of the 2023-2031 Housing Element. Adoption of this Ordinance is Exempt Pursuant to CEQA, Section 15061(b)(3) in that it Can be Seen with Certainty that it Will not Impact the Environment.

Erin Walters, Senior Planner, presented the staff report.

Opened Public Comment.

No public comments.

Closed Public Comment.

Commissioners discussed the matter.

MOTION: **Motion by Commissioner Raspe** to recommend Town Council adoption of an ordinance amending Chapter 29, Zoning Regulations of the Town Code, regarding emergency shelters, small employee housing, transitional housing, supportive housing, employee housing, group homes, and findings for reasonable accommodation requests pursuant to Implementation Program AP of the 2023-2031 Housing Element.
Seconded by Commissioner Barnett.

VOTE: **Motion passed unanimously.**

OTHER BUSINESS

REPORT FROM THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

Joel Paulson, Director of Community Development

- Town Council met January 21, 2025:
 - Introduced the ordinance for 110 Wood Road, The Meadows, and opted for the version where one floor was taken from the rear building next to the neighbors and moved to one of the front buildings.
 - Approved two of the Housing Element Implementation Program items the Planning Commission had previously seen.
 - Second reading for 120 Oak Meadow for the ordinance for a new house and the PD off Roberts Road.
- Town Council held a Strategic Priorities Session on February 11, 2025. Staff will summarize Council's comments and return to the Council for confirmation.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS/COMMISSION MATTERS

Conceptual Development Advisory Committee

Vice Chair Burch

- CDAC met on February 12, 2025:
 - Reviewed an item with the potential of developing three lots out of one parcel in the hillsides.
 - Commissioner Barnett was elected Chair and Commissioner Burch was elected Vice Chair of CDAC.

General Plan Committee

Chair Thomas

- GPAC met February 12, 2025:
 - o Forwarded a recommendation to the Planning Commission regarding an implementation program from the Housing Element, and requested staff include additional information in the staff report to show the full impact to the Town before it is forwarded to Town Council.
 - o Reappointed Ryan Rosenberg as Chair and Commissioner Emily Thomas as Vice Chair.
 - o New GPAC members include Councilmember Rob Rennie and Planning Commissioner Rob Stump. GPAC will do recruitment soon for more members.

Commission Matters

None.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:26 p.m.

This is to certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the minutes of the February 12, 2025 meeting as approved by the Planning Commission.

/s/ Vicki Blandin

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