

TOWN OF LOS GATOS
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SUMMARY MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF THE GENERAL PLAN COMMITTEE
OF THE TOWN OF LOS GATOS, **AUGUST 23, 2006** HELD IN THE TOWN COUNCIL
CHAMBERS, CIVIC CENTER, 110 EAST MAIN STREET, LOS GATOS, CALIFORNIA.

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 pm by *Chair Jane Ogle*.

ATTENDANCE

Members present: *Jane Ogle, Joe Pirzynski, Barbara Spector, John Bourgeois, Tom O'Donnell, Phil Micciche,, Marcia Jensen & Margaret Smith*

Members absent: *Barry Waitte*

Staff present: *Bud Lortz, Community Development Director; Randy Tsuda, Assistant Community Development Director; and Sandy Baily, Associate Planner.*

VERBAL COMMUNICATIONS: NONE

ITEM 1 RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

• **General Plan Policy on Replacement Homes**

Bud Lortz discussed the various General Plan policies and strategies which dealt with replacement homes.

Bourgeois noted neighborhoods in transition are where the decision on this matter is difficult.

O'Donnell stated that the Committee must start with the assumption of why you must preserve and then evaluate the overriding considerations to not preserve.

Smith questioned what it is that the Town wants to preserve (i.e., economic value, prosperity).

O'Donnell felt that it was the charm of Los Gatos being preserved.

Spector referred to page 11 of the Draft Guidelines regarding replacement structures, and felt that this was a good place to start. She agreed with *O'Donnell's* comments.

Lortz discussed Villa Avenue. The context of the neighborhood had not changed with the new residences.

O'Donnell, trying to follow Council direction to preserve, expressed concern that large homes are replacing smaller houses. He suggested that the wording be maintained but add "however, or unless" to balance the policies and strategies.

Smith expressed the need to balance the economics of a house.

Micciche stated that the Planning Commission has never required an applicant to build a similar size home.

Pirzynski stated that it's not a bad thing to have conflicting policies. It makes the deciding body think more about the matter. There is a need to realize what the "intent" is. We have degrading neighborhoods, neighborhoods with varying house sizes and uncharacteristic architectural features. We need to be strategic in determining how to apply the policies.

O'Donnell stated that we need to be consistent in implementing our policies. We need to keep the neighborhoods down in size to retain the Los Gatos charm.

Spector commented with the extreme house sizes, it's obvious what to do. It's the intermediate size houses where it becomes an issue.

Lortz stated we will look at rewriting the policy to include the "however/unless" scenario.

- **Cellars**

Lortz explained that there may be an issue when someone wants to build to the maximum FAR with a cellar. There is also an issue regarding intensity - the number of bedrooms which may equate to additional vehicles for the site.

Spector thinks that the cellar policy is still a good policy.

Micciche said when the policy was written, consideration was not given to someone wanting to build a second story and a cellar. He suggested that cellars totally below grade should be exempt from the FAR. Cellars that are partially above grade should be partially counted toward the FAR.

Pirzynski stated the issue is still mass and scale. The intent is that we don't want demolitions. We want similar looking houses to maintain the context of a neighborhood. Therefore, cellars are a good opportunity to obtain additional square footage and maintain the neighborhood.

O'Donnell expressed that some streets are not adequately designed. With cellars the intensity can be increased and, therefore, more vehicles on the street.

Smith questioned if cellars incorporated bedrooms since cellars do not seem to function as a good living environment. Various committee members responded that numerous cellars are designed with bedrooms.

The Committee felt that the intensity issue was too difficult to deal with and stated that this issue should not be pursued.

Lortz summarized that full cellars should be acceptable if the house is not elevated. This is a way to create more floor area without increasing the bulk and mass of the house.

- **Appropriateness of a Second Story**

Lortz summarized the issue.

Micciche commented that flat, full two story houses are not a good design. He prefers partial second stories.

Smith believes that it is a matter of design.

Pirzynski stated the need to exclude the mistakes made in a neighborhood when reviewing neighborhood context.

O'Donnell feels we still need to look at neighborhood compatibility for a second story even if there are lot constraints that restrict a single story.

Lortz stated that the guidelines will be revised to address this issue and will reflect the Committee's comments.

- **Consistency of Front Setbacks**

The Committee unanimously agreed that diversity is good if there is already a diversity in the neighborhood.

- **Circular Driveways**

The Committee felt that it was a design issue. Driveways should not be used as a parking area and a minimum percentage of landscaping would be aesthetically pleasing.

- **Fences**

Lortz stated that fences that come through the Architecture & Site review process can be addressed. Any other fence, six feet or less in height, does not require a building permit and are not regulated.

Jensen commented that if a fence ordinance is developed, there should be different criteria for different areas (example: hillsides, Los Gatos Blvd, historic districts).

Lortz reported that the concept of a fence ordinance will be brought back to the Committee at a later date.

- **Structural Upgrades to Attics**

Lortz discussed the background of this issue.

The Committee felt that the upgrades were acceptable. The matter was continued to discuss further.

ITEM 2 ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:45 p.m. by *Jane Ogle*. The next meeting of the General Plan Committee is tentatively scheduled for September 13, 2006.

Prepared By:

Sandy Baily, Associate Planner