

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, **JANUARY 25, 2006** HELD IN THE TOWN COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CIVIC CENTER, 110 EAST MAIN STREET, LOS GATOS, CALIFORNIA.

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The meeting was called to order at 5:00 pm by *Chair Jane Ogle*.

ATTENDANCE

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

Members absent: Margaret Smith

Staff present: Bud Lortz, Community Development Director; Sandy Baily, Associate Planner; and Larry Cannon, Cannon Design Group

VERBAL COMMUNICATIONS

None

ITEM 1 RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

Larry Cannon summarized the Loma Alta tour and stated how difficult it was to define a neighborhood. As a result, a "How to Read Your Neighborhood" workbook was drafted. *Cannon* questioned the Committee members about the workbook.

Barbara Spector stated she liked the workbook. It was very helpful. Neighborhood compatibility is the prime factor. For the neighborhood studied, San Mateo Avenue, the one-story look was the prominent feature. She noted that she understands that neighborhood.

Tom O'Donnell commented that the workbook was very helpful, but there will still be an issue in certain areas of Town regarding what defines a neighborhood. In these types of neighborhoods, scale is important to consider no matter what the design is like. The exercise did not help to define the neighborhood however, the workbook will definitely help design the house. Quality of materials is important.

Marcia Jensen stated the workbook was helpful to identify issues in the neighborhood which could have easily been missed by someone. She suggested changing the organization of the evaluation sheet so it was easier to work off of one sheet for each parcel. The neighborhood is

simple in form and massing and is predominately one story. Porches and entryways were also interesting. The workbook took some time to fill out. There is a cohesiveness between properties with use of landscape walls.

Larry Cannon commented the workbook may want to address these items.

Phil Micciche reported about using this workbook for his street where there is no compatibility, yet it is a cute street.

Joe Pirzynski stated it was a good exercise. A neighborhood can be completely compatible but have no design. The issue is how to define each neighborhood; can you tell when you're leaving one neighborhood and going into another based on house designs? It has nothing to do with proximity, it has to do with time of construction. Neighborhoods are defined by common architecture and time of development. Another characteristic of good development is the neighbors and what they do with their property which may be different than other neighbor's perception of the neighborhood. Some neighborhoods are eclectic, they may not be common in architecture, but in quality. In more complex neighborhoods (i.e., Loma Alta), more time needs to be spent in these neighborhoods to develop a successful project. The workbook is good to be used in these eclectic neighborhoods. Organization of workbook is complex. Start with looking at the houses immediately next to it and across the street.

Barry Waitte was not able to do the assignment. He is still struggling with the compatibility issue. He looked at his neighborhood where nothing is compatible and likes it that way.

John Bourgeois thought the workbook was good but it was time consuming. He thought he could come to the same conclusion without being so detailed with the workbook. Landscaping was lacking in the workbook.

Jane Ogle had a hard time with the workbook. She indicated it was too detail oriented. The issues are architectural excellence in design. Other details were not important. She raised concern that a house right around the corner was very large and not compatible with the rest neighborhood. Questioned where the neighborhood really was.

Joe Pirzynski discussed when the hotel was proposed on Villa Avenue and that someone raised a comment that it would not be compatible with the neighborhood. The neighborhood, however, was in decline. The question to consider for new developments is, has it evolved in a way where it is better than what it was before?

Marcia Jensen raised the question, should we be saying that the new development needs to be complimentary, not compatible?

Joe Pirzynski recommended going to the County pocket at Blossom Hill Manor. It use to be a cute county neighborhood, which has totally changed. The whole neighborhood is being changed. It is a good example of evolution versus revolution.

Larry Cannon questioned the Committee as to how they felt about formal architecture being introduced in an informal neighborhood. The Committee responded that it would depend, and it's back to, is it complimentary to the neighborhood?

Bud Lortz discussed defining a neighborhood. Glossary needs to define compatibility in words easier to understand. The cover sheet on the workbook should state that it is an exercise for Town staff to work with the applicant in developing a design. It needs to be clear that the workbook is not to limit architectural style. The document should provide reference materials (i.e., a Field Guide to American Homes) which has numerous architectural styles and details to consider. The need is to guide applicants so they do not create a “sore thumb” in the neighborhood.

Barry Waitte stated, as discussed earlier in the process, it’s easier to define what we don’t want, not what we want. Mr. Lortz commented that it needs to be positive so if we can define what we don’t want, we can turn the words around to say what we do want. Through the use of proper words and diagrams, we can get our point across of what we want.

The Committee discussed the following items addressed in the workbook:

Garages

Consensus that garages are a major issue (i.e., placement, size, etc.).

Neighborhood Patterns

Would depend on the neighborhood. More useful in historical neighborhoods.

Architectural Styles

Useful in determining style for neighborhood.

Forms and Massing

Letter of justification is useful to discuss the evolution of a project regarding the street presence. Entries are important to tie neighboring houses together. Forces applicant to think about the exterior of the house as opposed to designing the exterior to meet the owner’s desires for what happens in the interior.

Two-Story Homes

Most conflicts occur with second-story additions where interior upstairs are designed which do not take the architecture of the house into account, or the size of the lot, and the neighborhood. Applicants try to jam everything into the second floor where they believe the space is needed. The applicant expects that this needed space justifies getting an approval.

Windows and Roofs

Very important issue. Applicants tend to not consider how proposed windows are compatible to the existing windows. Typically, these elements don't need to be compatible with the neighborhood. Back to quality of design.

Mass and scale is critical. Architecture of home needs to be compatible within itself. Design of home (aside from mass and scale) needs to compliment the neighborhood.

The Committee discussed the test parcel and what home designs presented would be compatible for the site. The Committee then discussed what community expectations are and what basic design principals were important. It was recommended that each Committee member rank these items and return to staff in a couple of weeks.

Viewsheds are important to consider, even though views are not protected.

ITEM 2 APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Barry Waitte moved to approve the minutes of September 14, 2005 and October 26, 2005 as submitted. The motion was seconded by *Phil Micciche* and passed with three abstentions (*Pirzynski*, *Spector* and *Jensen*).

ITEM 3 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 February 22, 2006.

Prepared By:

Sandy Baily, Associate Planner