

From: thomas reichert <thomasmichaelreichert@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 9, 2022 9:12 AM
To: Sean Mullin <SMullin@losgatosca.gov>
Cc: Jay Plett <jay@plett-arc.com>
Subject: Re: 118 Olive - Public Comments

EXTERNAL SENDER

Hi Sean,

Thanks for sending this public comment. Going into the meeting tonight we realize there may not be enough time allotted to speak, so we'll summarize a few thoughts after reviewing this additional information.

First, we appreciate the open nature of the process for neighbors to be able to share concerns.

In our Planning Commission meeting last month they asked us All to discuss the project as neighbors- in person would be ideal, but phone or e-mail would work. We personally reached out with a letter to each household identified, shared our personal contact information, hosted two meetings at our home and had follow up letters suggesting our openness to any further direct contact to discuss. We supplied a summary of all the discussions that took place to the Planning Department for reference (as accurate as possible knowing it would be open to public scrutiny) for anyone to review.

We wanted to call out one specific item with the recent public comment letter. Understanding everyone is entitled to voice their opinions, there was one comment that was expressed which was different from our interpretation in regard to the meeting at our home on Jan 28th with Jim from 110 Olive. After reading the public comment, which we had a separate conversation with Jim we were immediately concerned that he may have been offended about our outreach attempt. Just in case, we wanted to make sure Jim didn't not share the perspective in the public comment. We reached out to connect directly with him last night at his home where he confirmed we didn't offend him during our meeting on Jan 28th and that he is still good with our proposed project given our feedback. Furthermore, suggested we ignore the representation from the public comment in regard to the negative impact of that letter. We are very aware some neighbors may choose to change their mind or avoid potential conflict, but are pointing out that all our interactions with Jim continue to be positive.

Not specific to the public comment submitted, but to clarify some of the history of the planning process we have up to this point:

We originally submitted the home as a renovation project. As we moved further along the process with Planning Department it became clear they were ready to proceed to with a recommendation for Planning Commission, but we started to discuss pros and cons of a project of this scale to either be a new build vs saving 50% of the structure to fall under specific guidelines for renovation. At this point we grew concerned that unexpected costs from delays, wood dry rot or other unknown issues may be outweighed by doing a new build. We engaged

Planning to understand that we could potentially keep the design exactly the same as if we were planning a renovation, but make concessions as if it were a new build: add fire sprinklers, lose gas powered appliances, underground utilities, etc. This wasn't a straightforward or easy decision, the cost of renovating a home and building a basement while maintaining the structure with understanding the overall impact and disruptions to the neighbors while we either lift or roll the existing structure to the back of the lot for months while we dig a basement. All to say, we made compromises to our intentions, thinking about overall impacts to the neighbors and project costs which ultimately plays into our feasibility to expand the house for our growing family.

Our current design for a new home is EXACTLY the same as it was when we had recommended approval for a renovation (except the placement of one window). The design keeps the house in the EXACT same setting as it sits today, with only 2 small difference- (1) garage is bumped out to be compliant and help with parking and (2) we have a small room added to the front which adds visual appeal/street presence scale so the massing of the house isn't a large flat 2 story. To add, the design brings massing off of the second story and maintains most of the volume on the ground floor which intentionally is meant to be part of the neighborhood context.

In regard to the front setback: the front is set back similar to the context of the neighbors. If we tried to move the whole house back it would limit the already small area for our kids to play in back and we want to respect the back neighbor's privacy by not getting closer to their property.

One of the questions that we haven't heard a strong case for yet based on the discussion to this point: How does our use of the FAR or setbacks impact the other homes for this lot and context? Specifically citing, the code allows these exceptions for this use case and there are so many examples in the immediate neighbors that have similar exceptions, including those who signed the public comment of opposition. It was not clear to us what issue would be solved by making an adjustment to our plan that wasn't readily part of the fabric of many of the adjacent homes. We believe that Town Planning Commission and the Planning Department with their consulting architect considered all the details in recommending our plan for approval.

A bit long winded here, apologies. Just wanted to write since the time to discuss may be very limited during the actual session.

Thank you,
The Reichert's