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PROJECT PLANNER: Savannah Van Akin

Town of Los Gatos - Planning Department

110 E. Main Street, Los Gatos CA 95031

16510 Topping Way, Architecture and Site Application S-23-016

Proposed Height Info

The neighborhood is zoned R-1:8 which legally allows structures 30' high, regardless if the structure has a flat or slope roof. A 30' flat roof is allowed. However, modern design style flat roofs have also been allowed in Los Gatos. The Architect/Applicant lives right next door to a flat roofed, modern 'Bauhaus-ish' design in the historic Loma Alta neighborhood nearby. Below is a comparison of what is legally allowed overlaid on the proposed design.



Proposed design w/ sloping roof



Proposed design w/ allowed flat roof overlaid

A sloped roof is constantly descending from the ridge, which means the height goes down. The proposed design's main roof pitch is 9/12 which is 'compatible' with many historic Los Gatos homes. House constructed after World War II tend to have much lower pitch roofs which was a cost saving approach-the Ranch-burger type house. Some 1920's craftsman houses also had low pitches in the USA.

However, neither approach is wrong or right, nor is either approach **less compatible or more compatible**. Compatibility in the Los Gatos fabric is nearly impossible to determine. Perhaps the most important quality is a house design that 'talks' or 'connects' to the City and street scape. Los Gatos is blessed to be covered with a healthy and tall tree canopy similar to the street which this project sits.

This neighborhood alone has an incredible wide range of Architectural expression and morphology. No one suffers from this situation, the opposite seems true. The variety of design vocabulary is 'all over the map' in Los Gatos-which this Architect believes is a good thing. It also appears that everyone else thinks that too as there is such a high demand to live in Los Gatos. It does not appear that people are moving to other Bay area cities because the architecture in Los Gatos is overwhelming or scary? Los Gatos embraces every design morphology.

There are historic and new houses with roofs 30' high that do not cause harm to the public.

Ironically Los Gatos was first developed with tall houses with steep roofs as that was how all cities/towns in the USA developed. The current proposed design is working within the legal height limit and is compatible with the precedents in Los Gatos and this neighborhood.

The 30' height is legally allowed within the setbacks without requiring a variance. Sometimes a jurisdiction grants a variance to exceed the height due site or other circumstances. This application is not requesting a variance.

The subject property sits in a neighborhood west of Los Gatos Boulevard:

Englewood Ave. to Hillow Rd; with the cross streets Kennedy Rd, Littlefield Lane, Marchmont Dr & Topping Way. The history of development of this area is shown in maps and photos below. Becoming familiar with the unique Village/Urban historical context of Los Gatos is vital in making future decisions as the City evolves.

USA morphology history (an attempt.): the first settlers constructed the classic cape and shortly after the 2-story Colonial below. Both designs would be modified extensively over the ensuing decades. Additions of Shed dormers, Dog-house dormers, porches, wings, etc. This was the classic American domestic typology until the 19th C. Then a profusion of styles sprouted all over the country, some are shown below.



Plymouth, MA-circa 17th C



Cape Design, circa 17th -18thC



Colonial Design, circa 17th -18thC



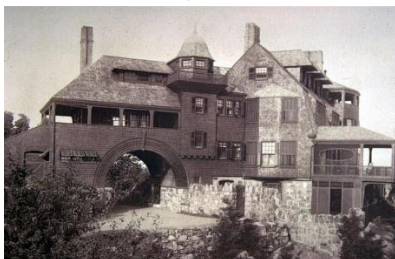
Abraham Lincoln, Ohio-circa 19th C



Craftsman-circa 19th C



Shingle Style-circa 19th C



Shingle Style-circa 19th C



Queen Anne-circa 19th C



Beckstrom project-SF-circa 19th C; Sutro house



Beckstrom project-SF-circa 1840; Maine



Beckstrom project-SF-circa 1910; Maine



Beckstrom project-SF-circa 1910; Maine



Gast Arch project-Beckstrom on team-SF-circa 1926, R Williams house

The Architect/Applicant's ancestors arrived in 1635 and some of their New York/Connecticut/Vermont houses are still standing. This is the Tapping Reeve house in Litchfield Connecticut, current population 1200. Houses are what gave fabric and anchored the new towns



Tapping Reeve House and Law School Litchfield, Connecticut Photograph by Evan DaRoss, first Law School in USA

The applicants earlier submission ‘Neighborhood/Village Fabric/Neighborhood Context’ provides additional background to this Height Discussion/Justification.

The applicant and the owners have worked for many months on several designs. The owners selected the applicant/Architect based on the design of 16457 Englewood Ave. shown below which is a 5 min. walk away. This design also replaced a worn 1940’s 1-story house, just like the house to the right and left.



16457 Englewood Ave. – Beckstrom Architecture

The current design proposal is below the height limit, the FAR limit, the coverage limit.

The current zoning guidelines were **imposed** on this pre-existing, 1945 neighborhood in the 1970’s. This was a few decades after the neighborhood was platted/subdivided (composed of 30-50 lots).

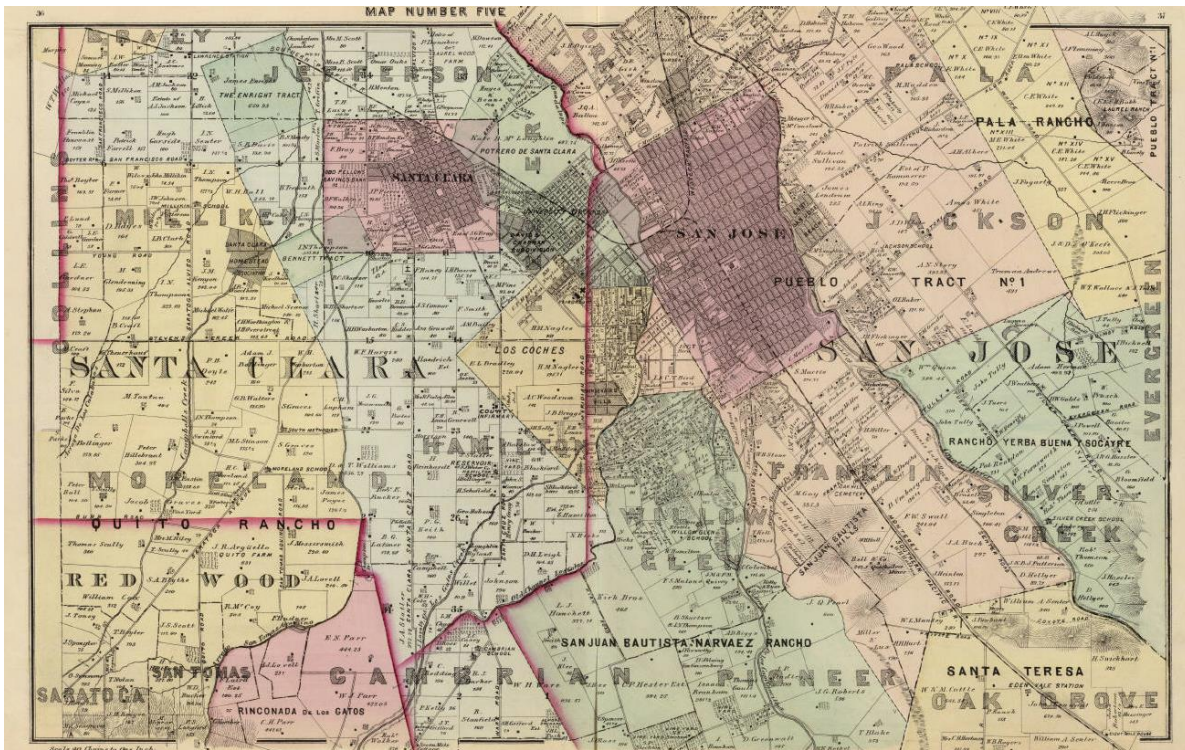
This neighborhood/area was probably platted right after WWII 1945-ish, when the GI bill financially allowed many middle-class families to own their first homes. The existing 1-story homes built in the area at this time are very basic in nature as befits the middle-class incomes at the time.

It was in the 1950’s/60’s when Moffet field was selected by the US military as a base which brought the large aerospace concerns which then led to the foundation of Silicon Valley. In the late 70’s the land values started the sharp upward trend which is still prevalent today. Silicon Valley/Bay area is the wealthiest zone in the world after Dubai.

This is relevant as the costs of land and construction are extremely steep. Economics always plays a part in urban design/density. In many ways the density of Silicon Valley/Los Gatos is way under what it should be given the raw land costs.

This entire area had previously been orchards 1850’s to 1940’s; prior to that it was exceeding large Mexican ranches used primarily for cattle grazing. 10,000-12,000 years ago, the primary

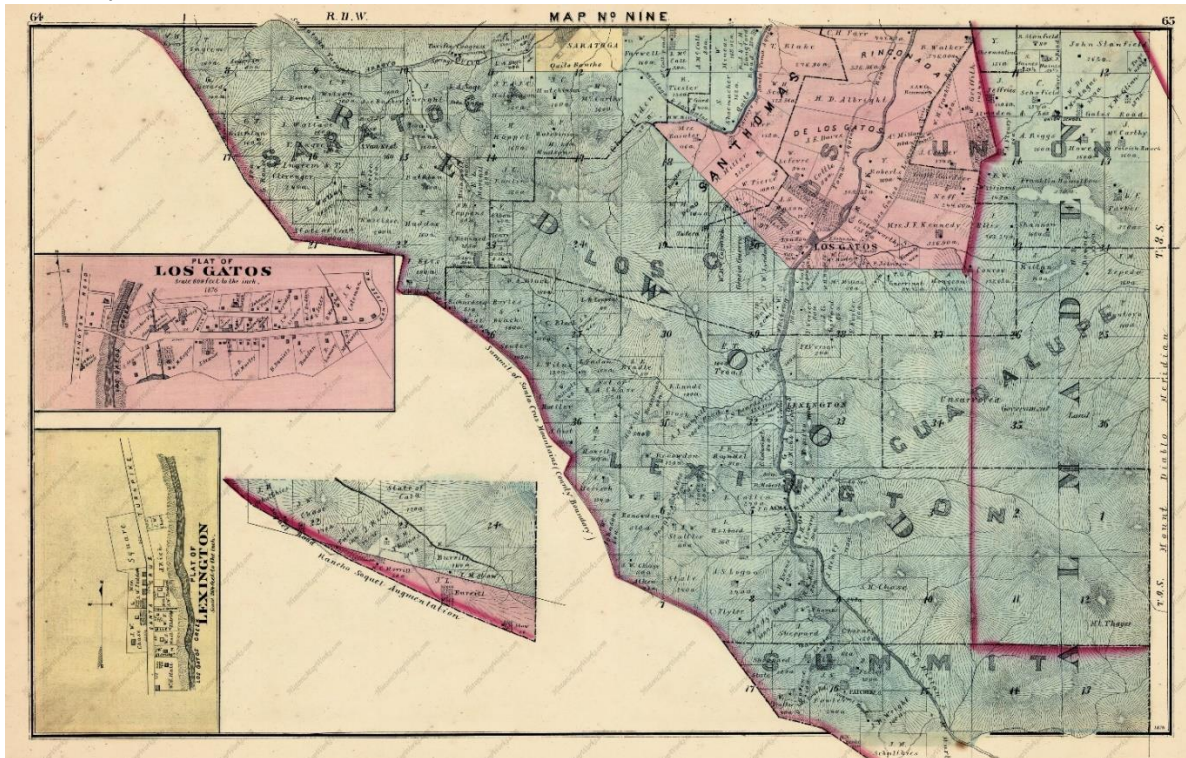
inhabitants were the 'newcomers' who came out of the area of Eastern/Northern China(before there was a China) over the land bridge to Alaska when the ice sheets of the glaciers retreated some. This mixture of Native Indians inhabited the area for approx. 10,000-12,000 years and it was used jointly between them as tribal lands.



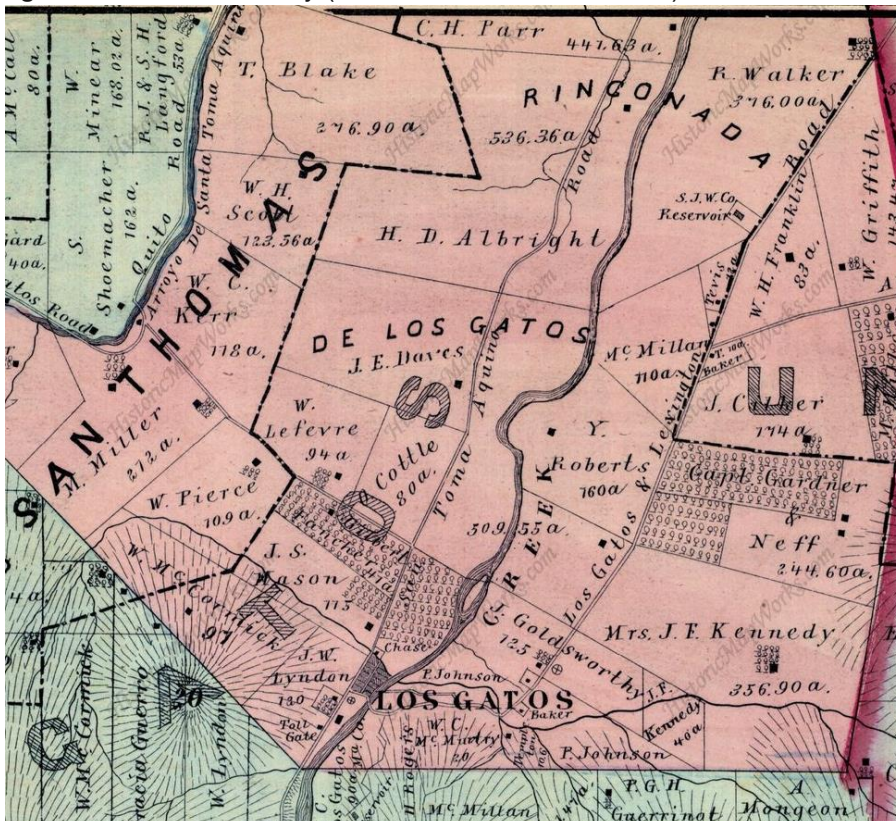
1873 Santa Clara Map, detail of part of the Los Gatos area(bottom left, pink area), shown enlarged below



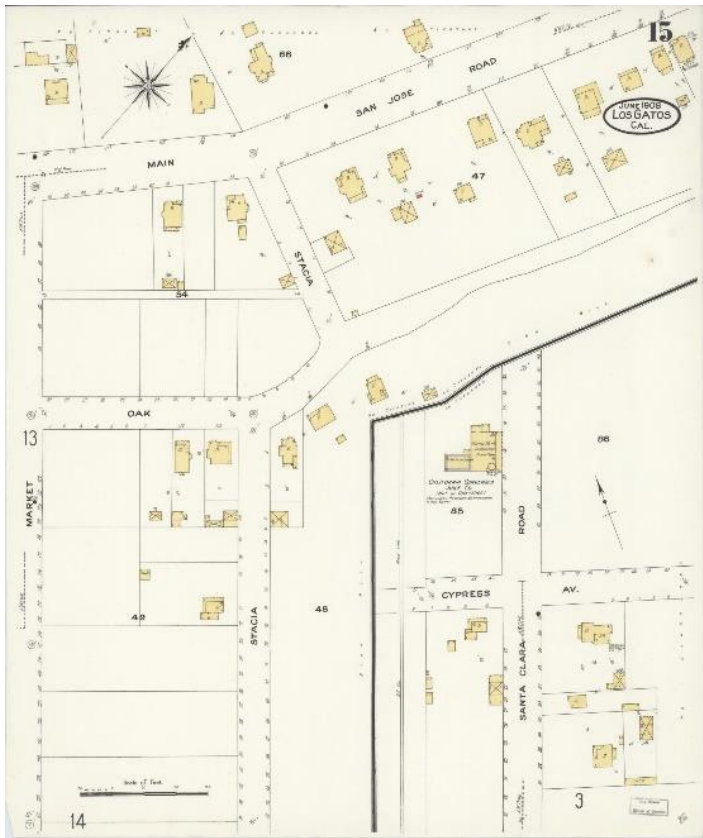
1873 Map detail



1876 map, see enlarged version below for more detail, Topping Way is approx. In the pink zone on lower right at Mrs. J. F. Kennedy (where the letter 'J' is located)



1876 map enlargement; the future subject neighborhood: from Englewood to Hillow; with cross streets Kennedy/Littlefield/Marchmont/Topping is located in the lower right side where it says: Mrs. J. F. Kennedy



1908 Sanborn Fire map, this is the limit of detailed mapping; San Jose Road is the previous name of Los Gatos Boulevard. Market street is the previous name for Loma Alta



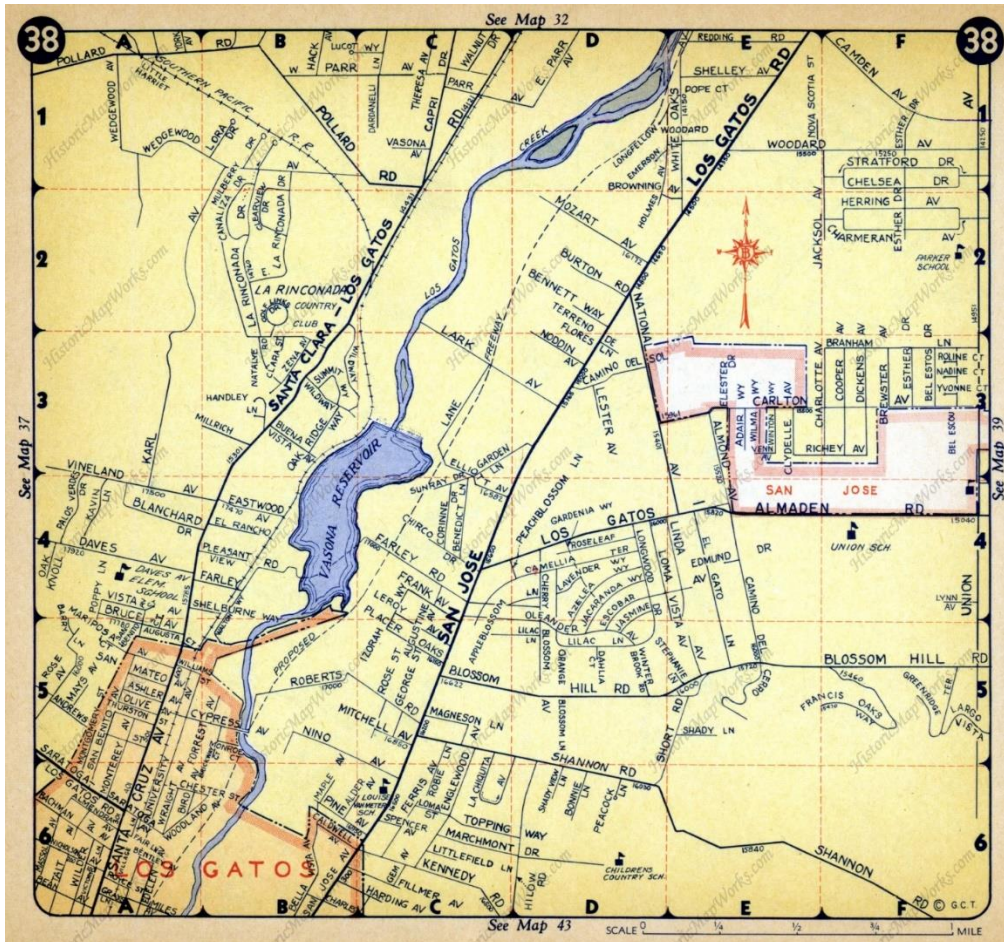
2023 Google earth view similar to 1910 view below. Note the high density and mixed use of the downtown core which also ebbs and flows along the Los Gatos Boulevard corridor.



1910 view above Los Gatos, looking towards subject property-middle/slightly left (downtown is in front). Enlarged view below. Please note the high density of Los Gatos downtown and the heights of the buildings which were 2-4 stories and more. The density was focused around the downtown train stop (where the current Post Office is located). Unlike other South Bay towns, Los Gatos has always had a dense, urban village fabric since the 1870's.



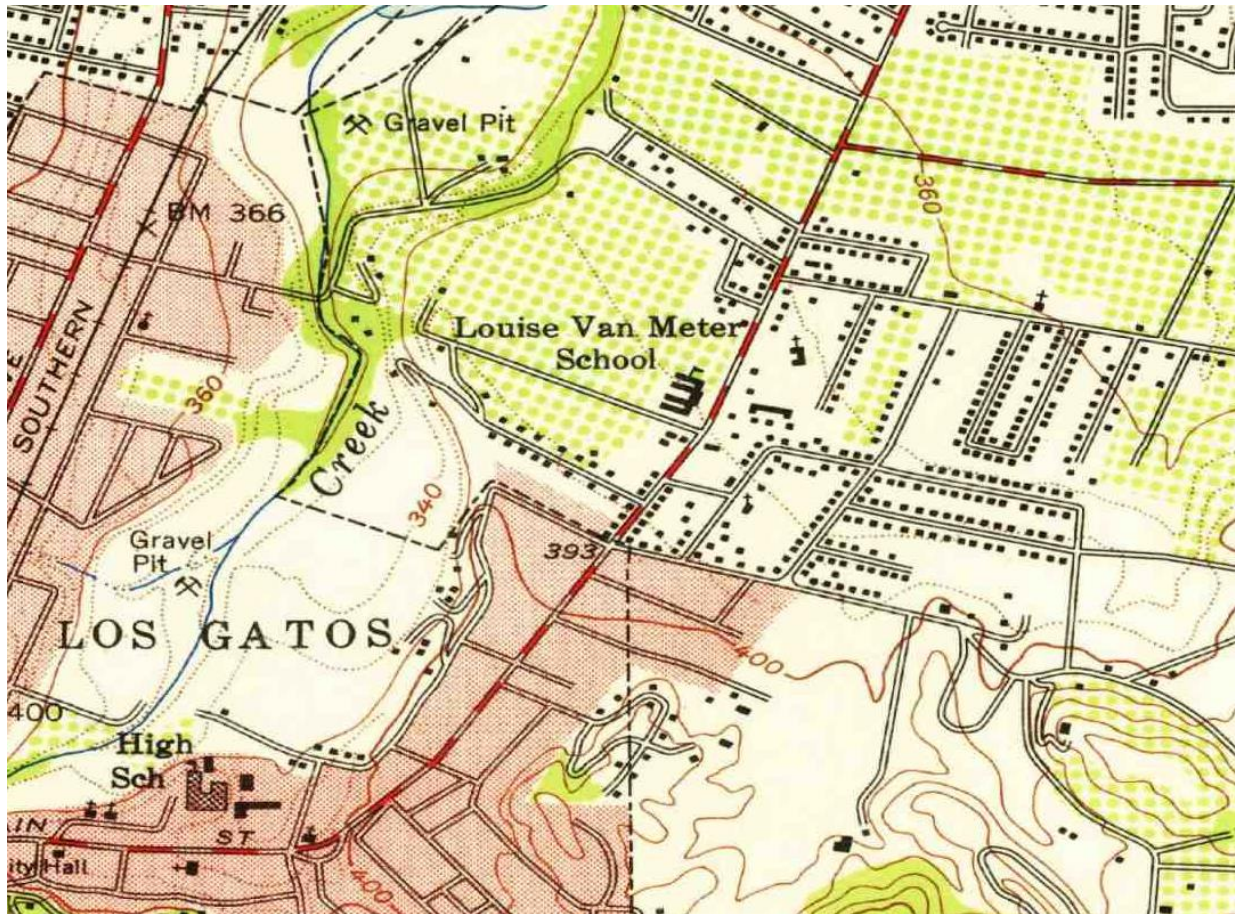
1910 zoom view, the future subject neighborhood: from Englewood to Hillow; with cross streets Kennedy/Littlefield/Marchmont/Topping is located just behind the middle group of white houses located on San Jose Road/future Los Gatos Boulevard.



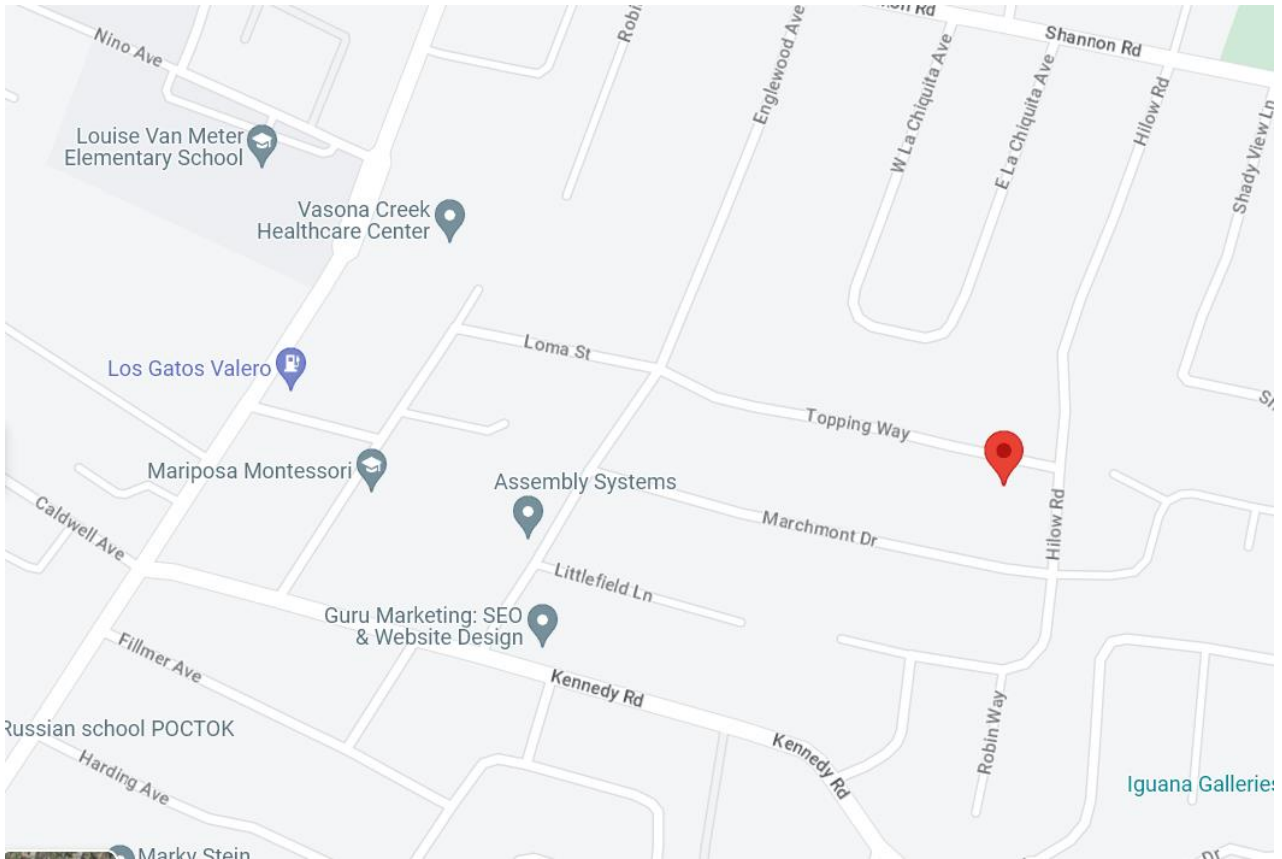
1956 map, Topping Way at quadrant C/6 above; this area was probably platted right after WWII 1945-ish, when the GI bill allowed many middle-class families to own homes. The existing 1-story homes built in the area at this time are very basic in nature as befits the middle class incomes at the time. It was in the 1950's/60's when Moffet field was selected by the US military as a base which brought the large aerospace concerns which then led to the foundation of Silicon Valley. In the late 70's the land values started the sharp upward trend which is still prevalent today. Silicon Valley/Bay area is the wealthiest zone in the world after Dubai.

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1973 USGS Map, the neighborhood is in the middle right, to the left of the 393' topo demarcation and above the 400' topo demarcation. This map shows the post war development of the neighborhood of middle-class housing prior to the existence of zoning. It is this map which shows the 'neighborhood' as a child coming home from school on a bicycle would understand



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16510 Topping Way proposed design