



**TOWN OF LOS GATOS
PLANNING COMMISSION
REPORT**

MEETING DATE: 08/13/2025

ITEM NO: 3

DATE: August 8, 2025
TO: Planning Commission
FROM: Joel Paulson, Community Development Director
SUBJECT: Consider a Request for a Grading Permit and Removal of Large Protected Trees Associated with a Comprehensive Redevelopment of the La Rinconada Golf Course on Property Zoned RC and R-1:20. **Located at 14595 Clearview Drive, 17400 Wedgewood Avenue, and 17445 Zena Avenue.** APNs 409-18-008, -009, -010, and 409-31-001. Architecture and Site Application S-25-005. Categorically Exempt Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Sections 15301: Existing Facilities, and 15302: Replacement or Reconstruction.
Property Owner: Clearview Golf Associates LLC. Applicant: Andy Kimball.
Project Planner: Ryan Safty.

RECOMMENDATION:

Consider a request for a Grading Permit and removal of Large Protected Trees associated with a comprehensive redevelopment of the La Rinconada Golf Course on property zoned RC and R-1:20, located at 14595 Clearview Drive, 17400 Wedgewood Avenue, and 17445 Zena Avenue.

PROJECT DATA:

General Plan Designation:	Open Space
Current Zoning Designation:	R-1:20 – Single Family Residential, and RC – Resource Conservation
Applicable Plans and Standards:	General Plan, Town Code
Parcel Size:	118.4 acres

PREPARED BY: Ryan Safty
Associate Planner

Reviewed by: Planning Manager and Community Development Director

Surrounding Area:

	Existing Land Use	General Plan	Zoning
North	Residential	Low Density Residential	R-1:8
South	Residential	Monte Sereno	Monte Sereno
East	Residential	Low and Medium Density Residential	R-1:12, R-1:12:PD
West	Residential, Water Treatment Plant	Low Density Residential, Monte Sereno	R-1:10, R-1:20, R-1:20:PD, Monte Sereno

CEQA:

The project is Categorically Exempt pursuant to the adopted Guidelines for the Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act, Sections 15301: Existing Facilities, and 15302: Replacement or Reconstruction.

FINDINGS:

- The project is Categorically Exempt pursuant to the adopted Guidelines for the Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act, Sections 15301: Existing Facilities, and 15302: Replacement or Reconstruction.
- The project meets the objective standards of Chapter 29 of the Town Code (Zoning Regulations).

CONSIDERATIONS:

- As required by Section 29.20.150 of the Town Code for granting approval of an Architecture and Site application.

ACTION:

The decision of the Planning Commission is final unless appealed within ten days.

BACKGROUND:

The subject property includes the La Rinconada Country Club and golf course occupying approximately 118.4 acres across several different parcels. The golf course is located south of Highway 85 and west of Winchester Boulevard, with access along Wedgewood Avenue, Clearview Drive, and Zena Avenue (Exhibit 1). The golf course has been in operation at this location for nearly 100 years and presently includes a full 18-hole golf course, driving range, practice greens, maintenance facility, clubhouse, pool, and fitness facility.

The applicant submitted an Architecture and Site application to modernize the 18-hole layout, with site work requiring a Grading Permit, and removal of 287 trees, 16 of which are considered Large Protected. Several holes would be realigned, the fairway contours refined, and new bunkers and greens installed throughout the course. The redevelopment of the golf course requires a large amount of grading across the site, but the grading is designed to be balanced on-site to minimize truck hauling. Cart paths and the entry drive off Clearview Drive would be redesigned, and a new 250-square-foot restroom and comfort station would be added. Existing fairway grass would be replaced with more drought tolerant Bermuda grasses, with updated irrigation systems, and new trees would be planted to better suit the climate and modernization plan (Exhibit 5).

Grading Permits, and associated Architecture and Site applications, and Large Protected Tree removals do not automatically trigger Planning Commission approval; however, due to the size of the project, amount of tree removals, grading quantities, and exceptions requested to the tree fencing and tree replacement requirements, this application is being forwarded to the Planning Commission for approval.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

A. Location and Surrounding Neighborhood

The subject property is a golf course and country club that occupies approximately 118.4 acres and spans several different parcels. The golf course is located south of Highway 85 and west of Winchester Boulevard, with access along Wedgewood Avenue, Clearview Drive, and Zena Avenue (Exhibit 1). Single-family residential development surrounds the property on all sides, with the Rinconada Water Treatment Plant located along a portion of the western border of the site.

B. Project Summary

The applicant proposes a comprehensive redevelopment of the golf course, requiring a Grading Permit, removal of Large Protected Trees, and construction of a new restroom comfort station (Exhibit 5).

C. Zoning Compliance

The golf course and country club operates under an approved Conditional Use Permit (CUP), which was most recently amended in 2011 (Exhibit 4). The golf course modifications proposed with this Architecture and Site application would not affect the applicable conditions of approval tied to their CUP.

DISCUSSION:

A. Architecture and Site Analysis

The applicant proposes a comprehensive redevelopment of the golf course, which includes a modernization of the 18-hole course, site grading, tree removal, construction of a new comfort station, and new vehicular entrance. Details of each of these components are provided below. The existing club house building and other on-site structures are not a part of this application.

Golf Course Modernization

The overarching goal behind this application, as noted in Exhibit 5, is to redevelop and modernize the existing 18-hole golf course. The golf course has been operating in its current configuration since the early 1990's. As noted in Exhibit 5, golf courses typically require major rehabilitation every 30 years because fairway grasses become compromised and irrigation and drainage begin to fail.

The existing 18-hole layout would be slightly modified in terms of the locations of each hole, and would include refined fairway contours, new bunkers, new greens throughout the course, and slight modifications to the existing water features. Drainage and irrigation would be updated, and cart paths would be modified and substantially reduced throughout the course. In addition to the course greens, site landscaping would be updated as well (Exhibit 11).

Grading

To facilitate the course modernization, the associated site work requires approval of an Architecture and Site approval for a Grading Permit. The proposed grading is for the reconfiguration of the course, and would result in a total of 52,300 cubic yards of cut and 52,300 cubic yards of fill (Sheet A0-10, Exhibit 11). No off haul or importing of native soil is anticipated for this project. Maximum proposed cut depth would be approximately 10 feet (near Holes 11 and 16) and maximum proposed fill depth would be approximately 10 feet (near Holes 7, 8 and 16). As this project is not located within the Hillside Area, compliance with the Hillside Development Standards and Guidelines for maximum cut and fill depth is not applicable. Justification for the project grading is provided in Exhibit 5.

Tree Removal

The existing 118.4-acre property contains over 1,200 trees. The applicant submitted an arborist report (Exhibit 6), which tagged and surveyed 945 trees within the project area. This arborist report was peer reviewed by the Town's Consulting Arborist (Exhibit 7), and the applicant provided a response in Exhibit 8, and updated their report. The applicant proposes removal of 287 protected trees as a part of this project. The arborist report included as Exhibit 6 identifies 240 trees that require removal based on proposed construction activities, as well as another 47 trees that are recommended for removal based on current health, condition, and safety ratings. These additional 47 trees are identified as "HR" (Hazard Removal) within Exhibit 6 and the project plans (Exhibit 11) and are generally located along the perimeter of the golf course.

Of the 287 trees proposed for removal, eight are considered exempt based on the species and size, and 16 are considered Large Protected Trees. Most of the Large Protected Tree removals (14 of the 16) are eucalyptus trees, which are known to be a fire risk. The Consulting Arborist reviewed the applicant's arborist report and agreed with the list of 287 trees proposed for removal.

The applicant provided detailed justification for the removals in Exhibit 5. In summary, the applicant notes that a critical element of the modernization project is to reduce water usage by planting new drought tolerant Bermuda grass and native trees that are better equipped to thrive in this climate. Many of the existing trees were planted over the past 60 years to separate the fairways and are non-native. The new drought tolerant Bermuda grass needs more sunlight to grow, and the current tree locations and heights are creating narrow fairways and excessive shading. Over the past few years, over 100 trees have fallen on the course either due to storms or drought. The majority of the proposed removals (150 out of 287) are Coast Redwoods, which require excessive watering that can no longer be supported, and eucalyptus trees (47 out of 287).

Tree Replacement

Town Code requires tree replacements for each protected tree proposed for removal. Based on the canopy size of the 287 trees proposed for removal, a total of 977 24-inch box trees (or 489 36-inch box trees) must be replanted on-site. For each of the 977 trees not proposed to be replaced, Town Code allows the applicant to pay an in-lieu fee to the Town's Tree Replacement Fund.

The applicant is proposing a reforestation plan that includes replanting 173 native trees, most of which would be oak trees (121 out of 173). The majority of the proposed replacements would exceed the standard 24-inch box replacement standard, with 66 of them being 48-inch box and 26 being 60-inch box trees. Town Code treats a 36-inch box trees as counting for two 24-inch box trees, but does not specify how to treat a 48-inch or

60-inch box tree. Working with the Town Arborist and Consulting Arborist, staff would consider a 48-inch box tree as three 24-inch box trees and a 60-inch box tree as four 24-inch box trees. Based on these determinations, the proposed reforestation plan would be short 538 trees and would require an in-lieu fee payment of \$134,500. The applicant attests that these larger trees should count more towards the replacement requirement, which would reduce the in-lieu fee total. The Planning Commission has the authority to increase the value of the 48- and 60-inch box trees, and also decrease the required tree in-lieu fees. The tables below outline the applicant's replacement calculation compared to staff's.

Staff's Replacement Calculation			
Tree Size	Number	Ratio between 24" box trees	Number of 24" box trees
24"	25	1 to 1	25
36"	56	2 to 1	112
48"	66	3 to 1	198
60"	26	4 to 1	104
Total Proposed:			439
Required Replacements:			977
Amount Under:			538
Total In-Lieu Fee (\$):			134,500

Applicant's Replacement Calculation			
Tree Size	Number	Ratio between 24" box trees	Number of 24" box trees
24"	25	1 to 1	25
36"	56	2 to 1	112
48"	66	4 to 1	264
60"	26	8 to 1	208
Total Proposed:			609
Required Replacements:			977
Amount Under:			368
Total In-Lieu Fee (\$):			92,000

Tree Protection

The applicant and their arborist have prepared tree protection plans (Exhibit 11, TP Sheets) to ensure protection of the 658 trees that would be preserved on the site. The tree protection plans show that Town standard Type I protection, with six-foot tall chain-link fencing, is proposed for all trees in high-impact areas. For trees in areas deemed to have low to no construction impact, the applicant is proposing to use orange plastic fencing. The applicant has provided detailed justification for this exception request within Exhibit 5, detailing the cost savings associated with fencing a property of this size. The Consulting Arborist reviewed the request and noted that this option will need to be discussed and approved by staff and that one option is to have regular monitoring of the fence in-lieu of

the sturdier chain-link fencing (Exhibit 7). The Town Arborist also reviewed this request and stated that this type of request has been supported in the past on larger projects. Staff has included Condition of Approval 9 within Exhibit 3 requiring monthly monitoring of the alternative fencing materials.

Accessory Building

As a part of the modernization and update plan for the property, a new 250-square foot comfort station is proposed on the site, between Holes 10 and 18 (Exhibit 11). The proposed comfort station includes two restrooms and a beverage station. The building would be approximately 13 feet tall and would include a tile roof and a mixture of stucco and stone veneer siding to match the club house.

New Vehicular Entrance

The modernization plan also includes a modified and realigned vehicular entry accessed via Clearview Drive, which serves as the primary public entrance to the property (Exhibit 11). The new entrance drive would be substantially in the same location, would be 22 feet wide, compliant with Town Code, and would require 480 cubic yards of grading.

B. Environmental Review

The applicant hired David J. Powers & Associates, Inc. to prepare a California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) analysis on the proposed redevelopment plan. As provided in Exhibit 9, a noise study, construction emissions and health risk assessment, and biology report were conducted, concluding that, with implementation of the draft conditions of approval in Exhibit 3, the project is categorically exempt from CEQA per Sections 15301 (Existing Facilities) and 15302 (Replacement or Reconstruction).

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Story poles and signage were installed on the site along three street frontages and written notice was sent to property owners and tenants located within 300 feet of the subject property. The applicant has also conducted substantial neighborhood outreach, including sending seven separate letters to all properties within 300 feet and hosting six different open house events. A summary of this neighborhood outreach is provided in Exhibit 10. Public comments received by 11:00 a.m., August 8, 2025, are provided in Exhibit 12.

CONCLUSION:

A. Summary

The applicant is requesting approval of an Architecture and Site application, Grading Permit, and removal of Large Protected Trees associated with a comprehensive redevelopment and modernization plan for the La Rinconada Golf Course. The project grading would include 52,300 cubic yards of cut and 52,300 cubic yards of fill, balancing the dirt on-site. A total of 287 trees are proposed for removal, including 16 Large Protected Trees. The tree removal would be offset through replacement plantings and payment of in-lieu fees.

B. Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission consider the request and, if merit is found with the proposed project, take the following steps to approve the Architecture and Site application and Large Protected Tree removals:

1. Find that the proposed project is Categorically Exempt pursuant to the adopted Guidelines for the implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act, Section 15301: Existing Facilities, and Section 15302: Replacement or Reconstruction (Exhibit 2);
2. Make the finding that the project complies with the objective standards of Chapter 29 of the Town Code (Zoning Regulations) (Exhibit 2);
3. Make the considerations as required by Section 29.20.150 of the Town Code for granting approval of an Architecture and Site application (Exhibit 2); and
4. Approve Architecture and Site application S-25-005 with the conditions contained in Exhibit 3 and the development plans in Exhibit 11.

C. Alternatives

Alternatively, the Commission can:

1. Continue the matter to a date certain with specific direction; or
2. Approve the application with additional and/or modified conditions; or
3. Deny the application.

PAGE 9 OF 9

SUBJECT: 14595 Clearview Drive, 17400 Wedgewood Avenue, 17445 Zena Ave/S-25-005

DATE: August 8, 2025

EXHIBITS:

1. Location Map
2. Required Findings and Considerations
3. Recommended Conditions of Approval
4. 2011 Conditional Use Permit
5. Project Description and Letter of Justification
6. Applicant Arborist Report
7. Consulting Arborist Peer Review
8. Applicant Response to Consulting Arborist Peer Review
9. CEQA Memorandum and Studies
10. Neighborhood Outreach Summary
11. Project Plans
12. Public comments received by 11:00 a.m., Friday, August 8, 2025

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