

Town of Los Gatos
Planning Department
Attn: Planner Ryan Safty,
(408) 354-6802; rsafty@losgatos.ca.gov
110 East Main Street
Los Gatos, CA 95030

November 9, 2020

Re: Site Application S-20-029; APN 532-29-045
102 Alta Heights Court, by Beckstrom Architecture

To Whom It May Concern:

I am recanting my previous letter approving the construction of a new "single-family" residence for the above-mentioned site at 102 Alta Heights Court because I am opposed to the architect's design plans that include an Alternative Dwelling Unit.

It appears that the architect did not act in good faith by showing the neighbors a conceptual drawing of what looks to be a single family house and now changing the concept to include a nADU rental unit without notifying the neighbors. Once most of the neighbors consented to the tudor style house, Beckstrom Architect proceeded deviously by submitting plans to the Planning Department for a two family residence without notifying the neighbors of the revised design concept.


Although we have no objection to the general appearance of the tudor style house, the idea of squeezing 2 residences onto a 5,250 square foot lot is inappropriate for this cul-de-sac neighborhood. Adding 2 more houses implies that 4 or more cars, 2 for each house, will be added to this cul-de-sac, which is already impacted by parked cars and traffic, when Los Gatos High School is in session.

Beckstrom Architecture's letter dated September 25, 2020 is requesting a reduction of the front setback from 25' to 18'. Beckstrom's request for a front setback exemption erroneously equates the front setback for the proposed house with the side setback of the adjoining garage and house. The adjoining house, at 175 Loma Alta is complying with a side setback of 5 feet. The request for an 18' front setback should not be granted because the 25' front setback is needed to accommodate any future parking in front of the garage. The 25' setback is also necessary to lessen the impact of the height of the house relative to the narrow street.

Beckstrom's letter indicates that "the design is meant to bring a friendly face to the neighborhood" when in fact it could be a "Trojan Horse" if the wrong plans are approved.

I implore you to deliberate carefully about how 2 residences on 5,250 square feet will have a negative impact on the parking and traffic to this cul-de-sac neighborhood.

Sincerely


Ron Eng
175 Loma Alta Avenue
Los Gatos, Ca 95030

Town of Los Gatos
Planning Department
Attn: Planner Ryan Safty, Associate Planner
Cc: Sally Zarnowitz, Planning Manager
110 East Main Street
Los Gatos, CA 95030

April 6, 2021

Re: Site Application S-20-029; APN 532-29-045
102 Alta Heights Court, by Beckstrom Architecture

Hello Ryan

Your email response dated (11/9/20) did not address the proposed reduction in front setback from 25' to 17'-6". The architect's letter dated (9/25/2020), inappropriately compares an adjoining garage side setback with his proposed front setback and validates his design by citing Town Code 29.40.055. But this Code is referring to the **front setbacks** of two adjoining lots, "the front yard requirement on such lot may be the average of the **front yards** of the existing buildings."

The 17'-6" foot setback shown on the plans is not consistent with the front setbacks of other houses facing the cul de sac. A two story house 17'-6" from the street would appear too massive for a cul de sac street that is only 24'-6" wide.

When vehicles are parked in front of the house, occupants will have constricted access between the garage and cars parked in the driveway. This would prompt cars parked in the driveway to protrude into the sidewalk. Reducing the front setback will compromise pedestrian access along the sidewalk in front of the house. Note that a standard pickup truck is 17 feet long. A GMC truck with a standard cab and long bed is more than 18.5 feet long. Town code requires 20 feet between parked cars to accommodate access between the front and back of parallel-parked cars. The "story poles" are installed at the site and they give onlookers a sense how intrusive and massive the proposed house can be if the current plans are approved with this reduced front setback.

If the architect were asking the Town Planning for mitigation of standards for this sub standard lot, a reduction of the rear setback would be more appropriate and less intrusive to the cul de sac neighborhood.

I understand the need for additional housing but I am appealing to the Town Planning Department to be prudent and sensible while reviewing the Alternative Dwelling Unit on a lot that is only 5,250 SF. Square footage on the architectural plans indicates: Main house, 1817.50 SF; ADU, 797.74 SF; garage, 433.26, for a total of 3,102 SF of building including garage. A 3,102 SF house is disproportionate for lot that is only 5,250SF.

Please weigh in my concerns as you review the architectural plans for this development.

Sincerely,


Ron Eng
175 Loma Alta Avenue
Los Gatos, CA 95030

Ryan Safty

From: Ron E <175.ron@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 8, 2021 1:36 PM
To: Ryan Safty; Sally Zarnowitz
Subject: 102 Alta Hts Cts building separation
Attachments: IMG_0051.jpg; IMG_0052.jpg

Follow Up Flag: Flag for follow up
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RE: 102 Alta Heights Court
S-20-029

Hello Ryan

I forgot to mention side setback reduction in my last letter.

The architect is proposing to reduce the Side Setback from 8' to 5'-6". The ramification is that the proposed house would only have 7 feet of separation between my garage and the proposed house.

What is the Building Code that addresses minimum separation between structures?

I tried calling the Building Dept but they are not answering phone calls nor did they call me back

Please ask your contemporaries to help answer my question about building separation

Thank you in advance

Regards

Ron Eng





Ryan Safty

From: Ron E <175.ron@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 8, 2021 2:54 PM
To: Ryan Safty
Cc: Sally Zarnowitz
Subject: Re: 102 Alta Hts Cts building separation

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Thank you for your quick response.

If I understand your response correctly, setbacks for a non-conforming lot are left to the discretion of the plan review committee. The Town has an 8' side setback requirement, which would in essence require houses to have 16' of separation. Allowing a house to be constructed 7 feet adjacent to a garage sounds perversely counterintuitive. Given the density of trees adjacent to the property and recent fires in densely populated cities, we hope that the plan reviewers can appreciate our concern for having houses built too close to each other. Please share this message with your colleagues and the plan review committee.

Regards

Ron Eng

On Thu, Apr 8, 2021 at 1:59 PM Ryan Safty <RSafty@losgatosca.gov> wrote:

Hi Ron,

Thank you for your email. Your email will be added to the public record and forwarded to the applicant and deciding body.

Please note that per your last letter, you are correct in that Town Code Section 29.40.055 regarding front yard setback reductions would not apply in this case. The applicant is requesting a front yard and side yard setback reduction per Town Code Section 29.10.265 (copied below).

Respectfully,
Ryan

Sec. 29.10.265. - Nonconforming lots.

The following provisions apply to nonconforming lots:

- (1) If the lot is in a residential zone and recognized by the Town as a lawful, separate nonmerged lot pursuant to section 29.10.070, a single-family dwelling may be erected if architecture and site approval is obtained.*
 - (2) If the lot is in other than a residential zone, it may be used for any purpose allowed in the zone.*
 - (3) Any rule of the zone including front, side and rear yard requirements may be modified by the terms of the architecture and site approval so that the building and its use will be compatible with the neighborhood.*
- (Ord. No. 1316, § 3.50.140, 6-7-76; Ord. No. 1344, 1-17-77; Ord. No. 1756, 8-1-88; Ord. No. 2024, § II, 12-2-96)*

Ryan Safty • Associate Planner

Ryan Safty

From: Eric Beckstrom <eric@beckstromarchitecture.com>
Sent: Wednesday, April 14, 2021 9:54 AM
To: Ryan Safty
Cc: 'Catherine DuBridge'
Subject: RE: Staff Tech Review - 102 Alta Heights Ct - S-20-029

Hi Ryan
Thanks for the meeting today.

Below is the email from Ron
We will meet with Ron the week of April 26th

Eric

Having lived here for 40 years I have seen many changes to our cul de sac neighborhood. Every house has undergone major reconstruction or renovations, which has enhanced our area and undoubtedly increased the value of the surrounding properties. Generally speaking, the entire community can benefit from gentrification and the transformation can be especially gratifying if improvements can be carried out in a mutually agreeable manner.

It is inherent that property development and changes to our environment will trigger repercussions and have consequences for all parties involved. After during our 40 years of tenancy we have endured many inconveniences with noise, dust, and traffic congestion. Although we are not inherently against your development, privacy and security remain our primary concerns.

I know you have committed time and resources to purchase the property and develop the plans as they stand today. It would be impractical for us to wish for solitude in the area we live but I wish to find a common ground wherein we can preserve our privacy and ensure safety for our cozy cul de sac.

I believe the Town staff prefers that we work out our differences and come to some amicable terms so they don't have to be an intermediary between developer and neighbors.

To avoid any future acrimonious feelings, I would be remiss if I did not provide an opportunity for us to discuss our individual issues.

That said, provide me with a date and time that you are available to meet at your office.

Regards

Ron Eng

Eric Beckstrom
Architect
Beckstrom Architecture + Interiors
650-847-8351
www.BeckstromArchitecture.com



Town of Los Gatos
Planning Department
Attn: Planner Ryan Safty, Associate Planner
Cc: Sally Zarnowitz, Planning Manager
110 East Main Street
Los Gatos, CA 95030

May 21, 2021

Re: Site Application S-20-029; APN 532-29-045
102 Alta Heights Court, by Beckstrom Architecture

Hello Ryan

I wanted to provide some context and inform the Planning Staff on the latest development in our dealings with the architect on this project.

Eric Beckstrom and Catherine DuBridge never notified the neighbors of their intent to construct two residences (including an ADU) and reduce the setbacks before they submitted plans to the Town. It is unfortunate that the neighborhood was blindsided to discover these pertinent details after the plans were submitted.

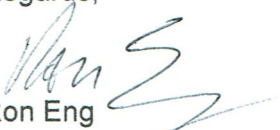
As suggested by the Planning Department Staff, we had a meeting with Eric Beckstrom and Catherine DuBridge on May 11, 2021 to discuss our issues with the proposed plans. The meeting opened with Beckstrom and DuBridge expressing resentment and discontent towards us because I transmitted our concerns to the Town Planning Staff. Beckstrom and DuBridge were not receptive to our suggestions and the meeting concluded with Beckstrom and DuBridge essentially saying they **will not capitulate** on any aspects of their plans.

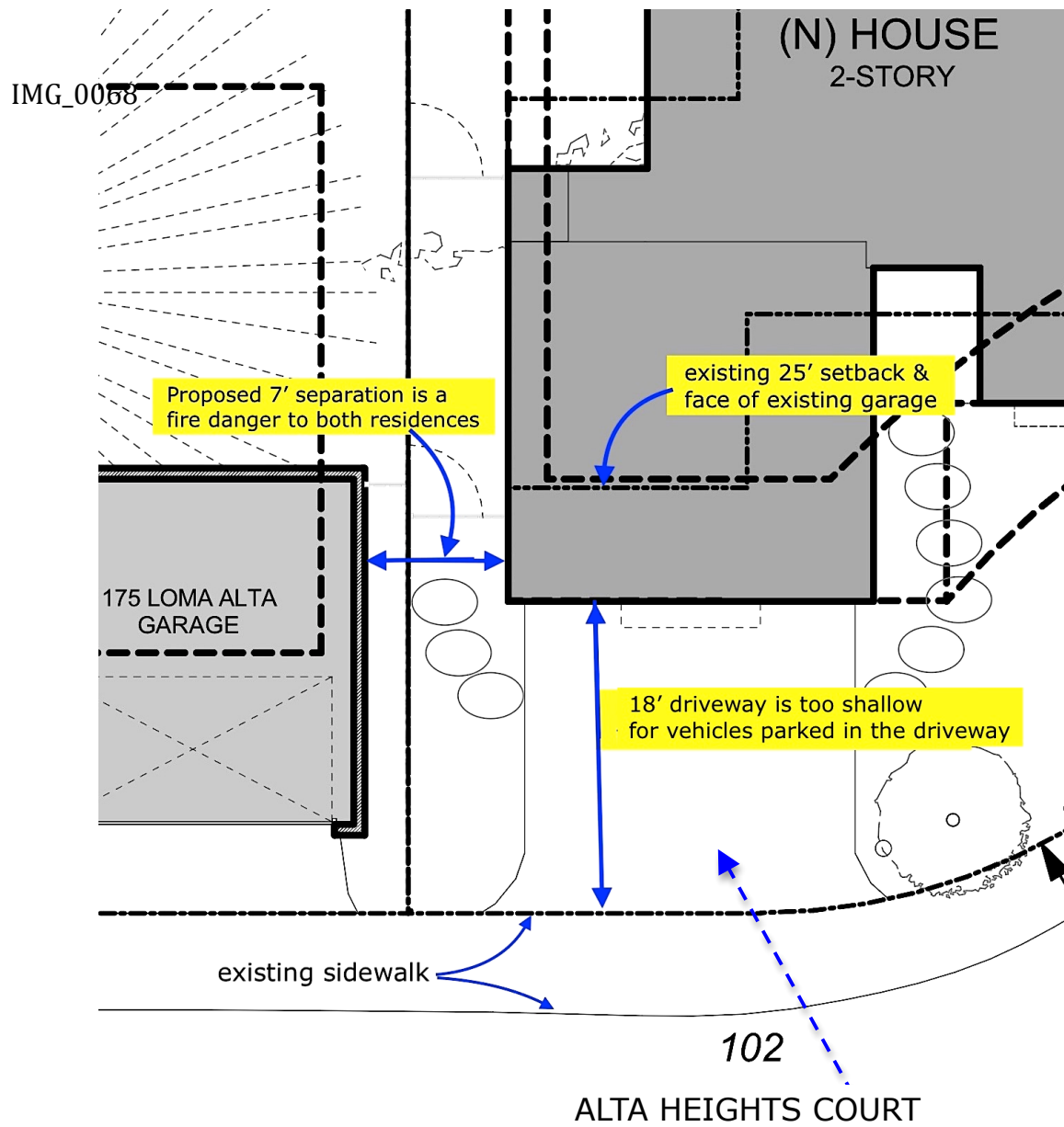
To reiterate our main concerns:

1. Constructing a house 7 feet from an adjacent garage is **not** consistent with separation of houses in the neighborhood and **creates an unsafe condition** in the event of earthquake or fire. We are fearful that emergency first responders will have difficulty with access between the two structures.
2. Constructing the garage 18' from the existing sidewalk will not accommodate vehicles parked in the driveway and parked vehicles will encroach into the sidewalk creating **unsafe pedestrian and ADA access problem** along the sidewalk
3. Size and massiveness of the project. Project Area Calculations on sheet A0.0 of the plans indicates constructing a 3077sf house on a 5250sf lot, which equates to a 0.586 FAR. This FAR ratio and the reduced setbacks **are not consistent** with fabric of the neighborhood.

In consideration of the issues outlined above, the concerns raised are public-spirited and intended to benefit the entire neighborhood.

Regards,


Ron Eng
175 Loma Alta Avenue



photos illustrate that 18' setback is too shallow, 25' is more appropriate
 architect's car encroaches into sidewalk because of reduced setback set by story poles

5/12/2021

Mr. Ryan Safty
Associate Planner
Town of Los Gatos
CC: Ms. Jennifer Armer, Los Gatos Planning
RE: proposed project at 102 Alta Heights Court, Los Gatos

Dear Mr. Ryan Safty,

This letter is regarding the proposed project at 102 Alta Heights Court by Beckstrom Architecture And Interiors. For reference, this is "Architecture and Site Application S-20-029".

We are the owners and residents of the neighboring house at 104 Alta Heights Court, Los Gatos.

We have reviewed both the current plans available online at the Town of Los Gatos Pending Planning Projects page, and have also reviewed the story pole installation.

We have strong objections to several aspects of the project which we enumerate below:

1) This design comes across as too big a house on too small a lot with too little setback at the front, and especially on the sides.

- a. The small size of the applicant's lot (at 5250 sq ft, this is the smallest lot on the cul-de-sac), combined with the large size of the house exacerbates this effect
- b. When one examines the story poles, the applicant's house does NOT "*look relatively small in scale*"
 1. From applicant's Project Description. April 21, 2020; p. 16: "The low grade and the existence of a very large oak and redwood on the west side property line cause the proposed 102 house design to *look relatively small in scale.*"
- c. The current proposal requests exceptions for both the side setbacks and the front setback rules. **These proposed exceptions to the setback requirements significantly impact the presentation of the proposed house to the cul-de-sac and the proposed 5'6" side setbacks result raise significant safety, natural light and privacy concerns.** In addition, the applicant's proposed design contains a projection of 1' 9" for the dining room and stairwell on the already reduced East setback side. On the West side, the two garage structures are too close together. On the side shared with 104 Alta Heights Court, the requested 5'6" setback is simply insufficient.
- d. **Given the size and scale of the proposed construction on what is a small lot, we ask that the applicant's request for a 5'6" setback on the East & West side be denied and it be maintained at 8'.**

2) The massing of the house is out of scale/character with the other houses on the cul-de-sac.

- a. The steep, visually dominant Tudor-inspired roofline with such a small setback from the front of the lot is simply not in keeping with the other houses on the cul-de-sac. It visually presents as an overwhelming view of roof and wall to the neighboring houses in the cul-de-sac and is not visually consistent with other houses on the cul-de-sac.
- b. The west facing views of the upper floor of 104 Alta Heights Ct now are presented with a mass of roofline and wall by the proximity and height of the proposed 102 Alta Heights Ct. plans (See Picture Attachments #1, #2, #3) to the west side of 104 Alta Heights Ct.
- c. In addition, the current plans (Picture attachment #5) indicate that the roof ridge line for the proposed construction is to be about the same height as that of 104 Alta Heights Ct. roof line. But from pictures taken of the peak story-pole roofline, from the roof of 104 Alta Heights (Picture Attachment #4), the peak ridge height of the roof at 102 appears to be higher than that of 104 Alta Heights Ct. **We request that the height of the roof ridge be checked given the contradictory appearance as seen from the roof of 104 Alta Heights Ct.**
- d. **In the interest of both adequate light and privacy for 104 Alta Heights Court, we request that roof ridge line of the proposed house be lowered and that the front setback be increased to be similar to the other houses on the cul-de-sac.**

3) The impact to existing mature tree's on the applicants property is substantial.

- a. Tree #74, the Coast Live Oak, is a prominent visual feature of the Cul-De-Sac and home to many bird species. The Arborist's report indicates that the Coast Live Oak should have no more than 10-15% of its canopy live biomass reduced. **We are concerned that the impact to the Coast Live Oak's canopy may be more substantive and request that measures be taken to ensure that it is not.**

Summary

Last year, Beckstrom Architecture and Interiors (BAI) visited us and showed a 3D render of the proposed construction. Based on that early information, we had provided BA with a letter of approval.

Unfortunately, the current plans appear to be substantively different in scope and in detail from what was initially presented. The current story pole installation and detailed plans suggest a huge mass placed forward on a small lot, very close to the neighboring properties.

We understand that some of the changes were done at the request of the consulting architect, yet we were not presented with any new renderings or plans.

The story-poles communicate a design with an oversized house on an undersized lot, with inadequate setbacks, and substantive impact to mature and appealing trees which might have served to soften the presentation to the cul-de-sac.

We feel that the proposed project does not present well to the cul-de-sac as currently designed and negatively impacts light, safety and privacy on our property. We feel that it will degrade not only our quality of life, but also decrease our property value.

Given these serious concerns, we withdraw our earlier approval of the design and strongly request that the current proposal be modified to accommodate these concerns, per aforementioned requests.

Sincerely,

Raj Parihar & Swati Shah, 104 Alta Heights, Owners and Residents

Story Pole Pictures for 102 Alta Heights Ct.

1. Front Balcony View facing west (from 104 Alta Heights Ct)



a.

2. Stairwell Windows View facing west (from 104 Alta Heights Ct)



a.

3. Upstairs Family Room View facing west (from 104 Alta Heights Ct)



a.

4. Rooftop View facing west (from 104 Alta Heights Ct)



5. 102 Proposed Height vs 104 Height Plan



a.

6. View of 102 Alta Heights back from backyard of 104 Alta Heights Ct



a.

Ryan Safty

From: raghuvir@gmail.com
Sent: Thursday, June 3, 2021 10:10 AM
To: Ryan Safty
Cc: Veeru
Subject: Concerns regarding 102 Alta Heights Ct Demolition (Application S-20-029)

Follow Up Flag: Flag for follow up
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Dear Mr. Safty

My name is Raghuvir Ramachandran and I am the owner of 108 Alta Heights, Los Gatos, CA 95030. There is a proposal to demolish one of the houses in our small cul-de-sac: 102 Alta Heights Ct (Applicant: Eric Beckstrom) and a public hearing is planned for June 9, 2021.

I will be traveling during this time. **Hence, please use this email as a proxy of my attendance and my concerns regarding the proposed construction.**

Here are some of the key points:

- They are proposing building 3078 sq ft on a 5250 sq ft lot. The house will be too big for the lot.
- Their front setback is too small and too close to the street. This is out of character with other houses in the cul-de-sac. It could also make car parking more difficult. The street is already crowded with a lot of cars, given it is a small cul-de-sac.
- They have inadequate setbacks on the side of the house. The standard setback is 8ft and they are asking for a 5'6" setback. This is too close and raises safety and privacy concerns.

For these reasons, I would like to rescind our approval of this project till some modifications are made. Please email me if you would like any further information.

Sincerely,
Raghuvir Ramachandran
Hamsa Subramanian

Ryan Safty

From: Harvey Grasty <harveygrasty@yahoo.com>
Sent: Friday, June 4, 2021 10:18 AM
To: Ryan Safty
Subject: 102 Alta Heights Ct

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Ryan,

I live at 106 Alta Heights Ct, in the same cul-de-sac, two houses from the proposed new construction at 102 Alta Heights Ct.

From my perspective, it seems that the proposed new structure protrudes closer to the street than one would proportionately expect based on the two houses on either side. It seems the front should be constructed slightly back from the street as proposed. Not only will this make the cul-de-sac more visually consistent, additionally, this will allow larger cars, like a minivan for instance, to be parked in the driveway without blocking the sidewalk.

Additionally, the height of the proposed house also seems slightly taller than both houses on either side. While I do not know the exact measurements, please consider a slight reduction to be consistent with the other houses that are adjacent.

Thank you for your consideration,

Harvey Grasty
106 Alta Heights Ct

Harvey Grasty

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