

# **176 Loma Alta Proposal**

## **Response from Blake & Jessica Thornberry**

3/7/2025

Please find the following attached below:

- 1) Neighborhood Outreach History
  
- 2) General Response to Public Comment
  - House Size & FAR
  - FAR Comparison to Adjacent Neighbors
  - Setbacks
  - Privacy

# 1) Neighborhood Outreach History

We met with staff numerous times for guidance in the design of this project and to gain understanding of town design guidelines and policy.

After our initial design was submitted, per Town policy, we met with the neighbors as directed to explain the project. We were met with objection from [REDACTED] but no specific objections were articulated by them.

All of the other immediate neighbors gave us their approval. [REDACTED] asked that an arborist be present during construction to help protect their front yard tree it was agreed the stairwell windows may or may not need to be obscured at time of framing. We readily agreed with their requests and to move forward.

The planning commission gave direction for us and to consult with staff as directed to revise our plans accordingly.

The Town deadline for our submittal was Feb 26.

Prior to the deadline to submit, on Monday, February 24, we requested of the neighbors at [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] (the neighbors on each side) to meet and review. The neighbors told us they were unable to meet until March 2 as [REDACTED] was going on vacation. We offered to meet immediately, but were told they did not have the time and it would need to wait upon their return March 2.

We submitted revised plans to Town on end of day Weds Feb 26.

Staff contacted us for some clarifications on the following Thursday and Friday, the 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>.

We reached immediately on Mar 2 to [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] to meet and then met at end of day.

The neighbors indicated they reviewed the plans on line and and were not satisfied. We had plans available at the meeting, but they offered no constructive thoughts nor wanted to review the plans together with us. – only they were still not happy. With every iteration with the neighbors at [REDACTED], they kept moving the goal posts of demands.

There is no need to do a window study as we are proposing to plant a dense privacy hedge between our house and both [REDACTED] and [REDACTED].

On Thursday, March 6, we received at end of day letters of objection from staff the neighbors sent in at the last minute. The deadline for us to respond and for the response to be included in the staff report was next day Friday the 7<sup>th</sup> at 11am ( this letter).

We made every effort to follow the direction of the planning commission and staff by reducing the Homes Floor area, floor Area ratio, height (after documenting the measured heights of neighboring houses on sheet A-1.1) and setbacks.

Here is our architect's letter outlining our revisions:

JAY PLETTE  
ARCHITECT

THORNBERRY  
176 LOMA ALTA AVENUE  
LOS GATOS, CA 95030

REVISIONS TO PLANS PER PLANNING COMMISSION:

1. THE NOOK HAS BEEN MOVED AWAY FROM [REDACTED] BY 1'-0", GIVING THE STRUCTURE A 5'-0" SETBACK FROM THE PROPERTY LINE.

THE NOOK HAS ALSO BEEN MOVED 1'-0" BACK, INCREASING THE REAR YARD SETBACK.

2. THIS HAS RESULTED IN A SMALLER NOOK SPACE, REDUCING THE FLOOR AREA BY 23sf.

3. THE CHIMNEY HAS BEEN MOVED AWAY FROM [REDACTED] BY 6" AND ITS WIDTH REDUCED. THIS SMALL PORTION COMPRISES ONLY 10% OR LESS OF THE ENTIRE WALL LENGTH ADJACENT TO [REDACTED]. WE BELIEVE THIS CHIMNEY SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AN ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENT AND BE ENTIRELY EXCLUDED FROM THE SETBACK MEASUREMENT.

IF THE COMMISSION BELIEVES THE CHIMNEY SHOULD BE ELIMINATED, WE WILL DO SO.

4. MEASUREMENTS OF THE NEIGHBORING BUILDING HEIGHTS WERE CHECKED FOR ACCURACY. [REDACTED] AND [REDACTED] WERE FOUND TO ACTUALLY BE HIGHER THAN THE ORIGINAL DEPICTION. THE STREETSCAPE HAS BEEN REVISED ACCORDINGLY. WE HAVE OFFERED TO REDUCE THE HOMES HEIGHT BY 6", BUT IN LIGHT OF THE NEW FINDINGS, WE BELIEVE A 6" REDUCTION IS NOT WARRANTED.

5. WE HAVE PROPOSED PRIVACY LANDSCAPE SCREENING AND APPROPRIATE FENCING BETWEEN BOTH [REDACTED] AND [REDACTED] TO MITIGATE ANY PRIVACY CONCERNS. THIS SOLUTION HAS BEEN UTILIZED SUCCESSFULLY NUMEROUS TIME BY THE PLANNING COMMISSION AND OR STAFF ON PRIOR PROJECTS.

6. NEIGHBOR OUTREACH WAS CONDUCTED BETWEEN THE PARTIES - SEE THORNBERRY ([REDACTED]) RESPONSE.

We believe this project clearly fits within the average and median of the neighborhood in terms of height, size, setbacks, and complies in every way with the Town's design guidelines for non-conforming lots.

■ makes an issue that they complied with setbacks – of course they did – they're lot is in a state of over-compliance – the lot meets and exceeds the zoning requirements. There bis no issue here.

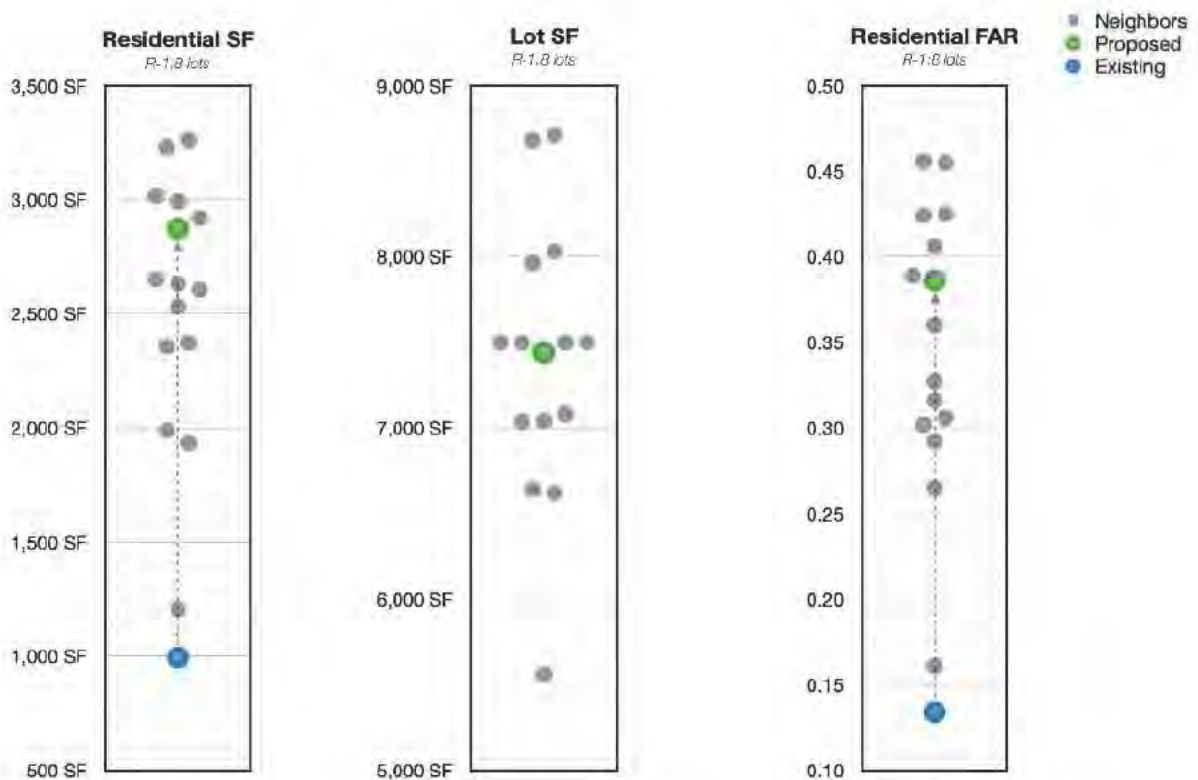
## 2) General Response to Public Comment

### House Size & FAR

Much has been said about the size of our house and lot. Fortunately, the Floor-Area-Ratio (FAR) provides an objective metric to measure this relationship.

As clearly demonstrated in the neighborhood survey

1. our proposed house SF is average,
2. the size of our lot is average (not “small”, as claimed), and
3. our proposed FAR is average.



- We currently have the smallest house
- Our proposed SF is not exceptional

- Our lot is of average size

- We have the smallest FAR
- Our proposed FAR is not exceptional

## FAR Comparison to Adjacent Neighbors

It should be noted that our immediate neighbors at [redacted] Loma Alta have a greater Floor-Area-Ratio than what we are proposing. The owners of [redacted] have extended and converted their garage into a 600 SF cabana / wine cellar and can no longer house a car. By the Town's definition, the FAR of [redacted] Loma Alta is now 0.41. Therefore, it is unreasonable for the owners of [redacted] to object to our lesser FAR of 0.39.

	176 Loma Alta	[redacted] Loma Alta
Above-grade Floor Area	2,897	2,661
Cabana Extension		275
Garage Conversion (wine cellar)	-	325
<b>Total Residential Area:</b>	<b>2,874</b>	<b>3,261</b>
<b>Lot Size</b>	<b>7,440</b>	<b>8,033</b>
<b>FAR</b>	<b>0.39</b>	<b>0.41</b>



Our neighbors at [redacted] Loma Alta also have an FAR that exceeds the town guidelines. The lot is smaller than ours (7,039 SF) with an FAR 0.36 — similarly exceeding the 0.33 guidelines for this lot size.

It is unreasonable for either neighbor to make the argument that we must comply with the FAR guidelines when neither of them comply with it themselves.

## Setbacks

Both [redacted] and [redacted] show 5'-0" setbacks with our property in the construction documents found in the Planning Division's microfiche files. However, when surveyed, the setback with [redacted] is only 4'-6".

Based on the existing setbacks our neighbors enjoy relative to our property, it is unreasonable for them to object to anything greater-than-or-equal-to 5'-0".

Our setback with [REDACTED] is 5'-0" — with the exception of a chimney that we've made smaller in the latest revision. *If the planning commission wishes us to remove the chimney, we can.*

Our setback with [REDACTED] is also 5'-0". In the latest revision we reduced the size of the nook to match the 5'-0" setback [REDACTED] nominally enjoys with our property — despite the fact that their surveyed setback is only 4'-6".

The second-story setback with 178 is 9'-6".

## Privacy

We share a mutual and natural desire for privacy with our neighbors. We've offered to provide landscaping privacy and fencing, which is better than the existing condition today.

Currently, [REDACTED] Loma Alta has a two-story house with unobstructed views of our property and dwelling. (see photo below)

[REDACTED] Loma Alta has a large side window 4'6" from the property that looks into our property and dwelling. (see photo below)

Both [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were constructed decades after our existing dwelling. Minimal consideration for privacy was given during their construction. With our proposal, we seek to improve the privacy situation for all. (see diagrams below)



View of [REDACTED] from backyard of 176



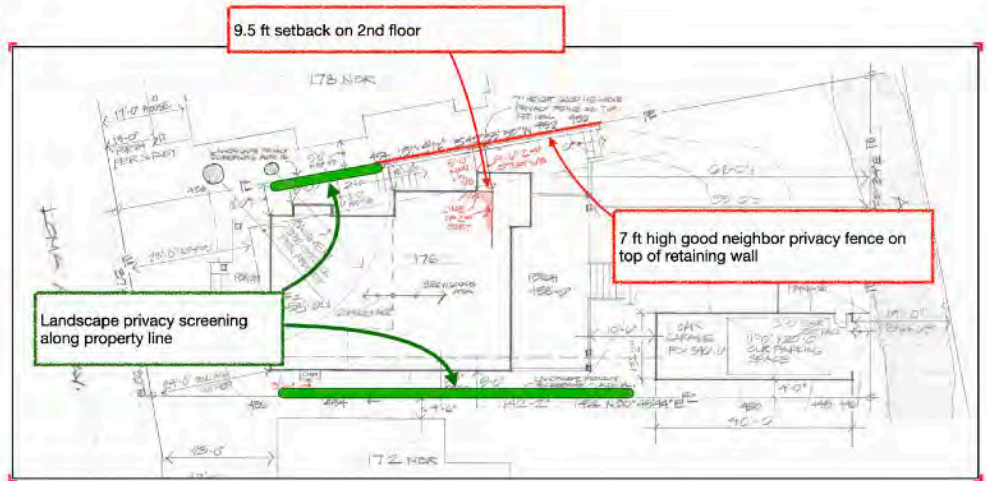
View of [REDACTED] from side yard of 176

176 Loma Alta | Privacy

**Key Takeaways:**

- We are committed to improving ongoing privacy issues with fencing and landscaping

- We share a mutual desire for privacy
- Landscaping privacy screening and good neighbor 7-ft high fencing will be installed to protect privacy

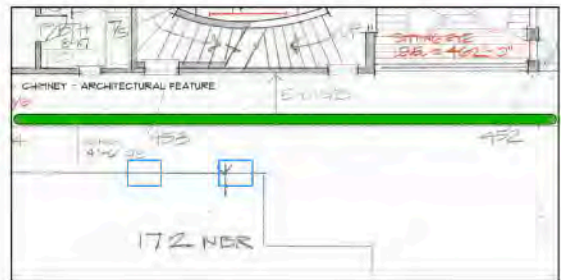


176 Loma Alta | Privacy: Windows on 172 side

**Key Takeaways:**

- Design and privacy screen will address the privacy concerns

**Main floor**



**1st floor**

- Will be shielded by landscaping privacy screen

**2nd floor**

- Will be shielded by landscaping privacy screen
- Kid's window doesn't face any neighboring window
- 2x staircase windows at the top landing do not face any neighboring windows
- 2x staircase windows away from the landing cannot provide line of sight to neighboring windows because they are too high from the floor of the descending stairs

**2nd floor**

