

CITY OF LA CAÑADA FLINTRIDGE

MEMORANDUM

April 28, 2015 Continued Hearing

To: Planning Commission

From: Roger Cantrell, Consulting Architect/Planner

Subject: Second-Floor Review 14-17
Koeppen Residence
4812 Crown Avenue

1. Background:

The Commission continued the project at its initial hearing on February 10, 2015. Stated concerns of the Commission focused on the need for effective landscaping. A landscape plan was identified as an essential component of continued review. Primarily the focus was screening from the front, although confirmation of screening to adjacent backyards was cited as a Second-Floor Review item of potential concern.

The Commission also expressed concern about the architectural treatment and massing. The staff report's specific recommendations for better articulation of the front elevation were endorsed by the Commission, but comments went beyond that to address the project's difference with the neighborhood pattern of second floors set back generously behind the ground floors.

2. Update:

Landscape

The landscape plan indicates the retention of the two front yard trees and a tree at the south edge of the back yard. Additional trees consist of six canopy trees and five Queen Palms surrounding the back yard. Staff regards that as ample with regard to ensuring screening to neighboring properties.

Additionally, a row of Italian cypresses is proposed to be centered on the single second-floor window on the north side of the property. Staff does not regard those as desirable, due to flammability. A substitute with at least similar drought tolerance is recommended.

The front yard is indicated to be partially covered with decomposed granite or pea gravel. That would not qualify as plant material fulfilling the minimum 50% coverage code

requirement. Also, the portion of the concrete slab atop the basement lying within the front yard is shown with a combination of the aforementioned d.g. or gravel, lawn continued from natural soil, and small shrubs. Planting atop the slab needs careful design and evaluation, with soil depth, drainage, and plant selection crucial to the survival of that planted area. Along with the substitute for the Italian cypress, this component of the landscape plan should be subject to a condition for further review and approval by the Director.

The Commission was interested in the project's compliance with the minimum front yard landscaping regulation, given that the basement extends over part of the front yard. The code section is as follows:

Minimum Front Yard Landscaping. Within the front yard, a minimum of fifty (50) percent of the land area shall be maintained with landscaping. For the purposes of this section, "front yard" means the area forward of the primary structure. Paving which incorporates planting cells shall be counted toward the requirement with the exclusion of the hard surface, and parking on such composite planted paving shall not be allowed within the front yard. Exceptions to this section shall be allowed upon determination by the director of community development and shall be subject to neighbor notification per Section 11.45.060(C)(2)(a) that the front yard treatment is compatible with the neighborhood and is not prominently visible from the street.

Planting on the basement roof needs a careful approach, as discussed above. With that landscaping, and with the deletion of the d.g. or gravel from the front yard, the paved area (504 sf) would comprise 31% of the front yard (1,610 sf total). (If the landscaping of the slab is discounted, paved area would be 854 sf -- 53% of front yard area -- or 49 sf over the 50% point.

Staff does not regard this as an area of concern, as follows:

- There is no basis for not counting the slab as landscaping if it credibly intended as such. "Landscaping" is defined in the Zoning Code as "areas devoted to vegetation and to paved areas for pedestrian movement and use exclusive from vehicular movements and service access". Thus, if vines are planted in natural soil adjacent to the slab and allowed to grow over the slab, the covered slab area would be "devoted to vegetation".
- Even an uncovered slab would be within 49 sf of compliance.
- The subject area is behind other vegetation, distant from the street.
- The Director (or in this case, the Commission) has discretion over application of the regulation, case by case.

House Design

The original submittal was identified in the staff report as needing refinement in order to comply with the City's Single-Family Residential Design Guidelines, as reflected in the following draft conditions from that meeting:

16. *The front elevation shall be revised as follows, subject to approval by the Director of Community Development prior to plan check submittal:*
 - a. *An arcade or portico shall be extended forward from the entry.*
 - b. *The transitional south roof seen above the living room on the west elevation shall be pulled back at least one foot to allow it to be articulated from the adjacent second floor wall and from the gable roof below the transitional wall.*
 - c. *The decorative entry lintel should be either presented in a manner that upholds the integrity of the design or eliminated.*
17. *Detail such as decorative molding, detailed window frames and muntins, building bases, and open soffits with exposed rafter tails shall be integrated into the elevations, subject to approval by the Director of Community Development prior to plan check submittal.*

The resubmitted design is seen on the following page, along with the original submittal. The redesigned project responds to Condition 16 as follows:

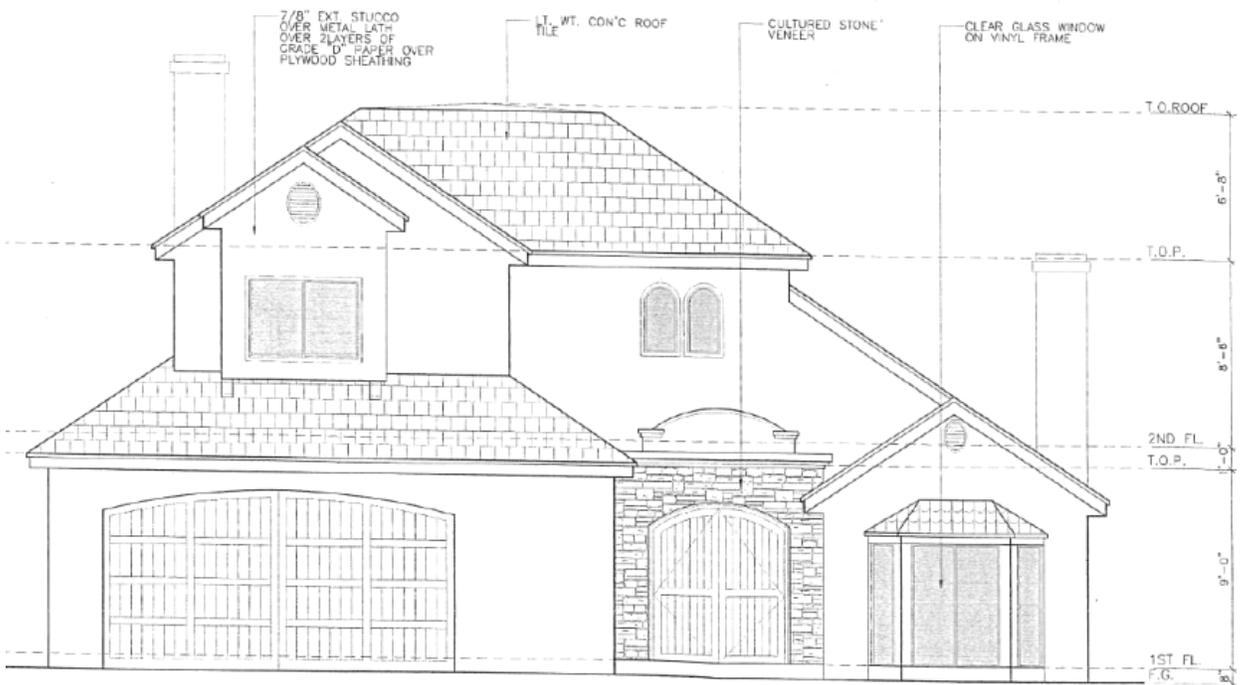
- a. The front porch now extends forward eight feet. It meets the code criteria for exempt roofed area.
- b. The reveal at the roof has been provided.
- c. The entry is marked by a simplified portal that is harmonious with the house design and neighborhood setting.

Minor refinements to the design to achieve the integrity required by the Design Guidelines are shown on the following page.

With regard to Condition 17, the elevations appear to have an adequate level of detail aside from second-floor windows without any muntins. Also, staff notes that the soffits are shown square to the walls, which is an awkward approach. Instead, the soffit, whether open or closed, should simply be the underside of the rafter tails. Also noted is the substitution of paneled doors for the planked items previously shown. Perhaps that is an effort to add detail, but staff regards it as working against an integral appearance.



Front (West) Elevation: redesigned submittal (above); original submittal (below)





Front (West) Elevation: City Alternate (above); current submittal (below)



The recommended revisions allow the building to conform to the Design Guidelines with regard to refining details (muntins; soffit angle; wall reveals above entry porch), integrity (location of wall reveals above entry porch; simplified garage door) and proportion (living room and upper bedroom window heights).

Not shown, but recommended, is revision of the oval vents to a round shape, dropped comfortably below the peak.



South Side Elevation: City Alternate (above); current submittal (below)



Refinements are limited to the muntins on the highly visible front windows, deepening the beam of the extended entry porch, and introducing recessed clerestory windows to break up the mass of the second-floor roof. There would be no view out of the windows, but they would enhance the interior space of the stairs and alleviate the dominating view of the large second floor roof mass.

The floating appearance of the chimney is also addressed as a suggestion only, because the view would be very limited, and because it would involve an administrative approval for the substandard setback it would entail.

A. Second-Floor Review Findings:

1. *The two-story design includes adequate setbacks, screening and modulation.*

The proposed second floor would have visually adequate setbacks, greatly exceeding the code minimum on the south side. Modulation would be provided by the graduated setback and other massing features, enhanced by required details. Screening of the sideyard and backyard second-floor balcony and windows would be provided as redesigned and conditioned for additional trees and species revisions. Staff supports the finding.

2. *The two-story design preserves the existing scale and character of the surrounding neighborhood.*

The project would present to the street and neighboring properties a well-modulated, and, as redesigned, adequately detailed building of stepped massing, preserving the scale and character of the street in a sensitively designed manner. The finding can be made.

3. *The two-story design protects public views, aesthetics, privacy, and property values of the neighbors.*

The second floor would respect the aesthetic values of the existing property as well as its surroundings, and due to ample distances and screening would not have any detriment to privacy or other neighbor concerns. Staff supports the finding.

4. *The two-story design is consistent with the Residential Design Guidelines as adopted by resolution of the City Council.*

The design, scale and materials used by the project as refined for screening, detailing, and entry refinement relate well to the site and surroundings, and would be consistent with the primary directives of the City's Residential Design Guidelines as related to Site Design, Physical Design Components, Neighborhood Compatibility and Landscaping. Staff supports the finding.

D. Recommendation:

Based on the above discussion, the proposed design subject to Second-Floor Review approval meets the required findings. Therefore, staff recommends that the requested Second-Floor Review **BE APPROVED**, subject to the conditions listed in Exhibit "A", attached to the draft resolution.

*Attachments: February 10, 2015 Planning Commission Minutes
Draft Approval Resolution*

*cc: Ernest Koeppen / 4812 Crown Avenue / LCF
Jaehee Ghanati / 3454 W. 1st Street / Los Angeles, CA 90004*

CITY OF LA CAÑADA FLINTRIDGE

RESOLUTION NO. 15-

A RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF LA CAÑADA FLINTRIDGE APPROVING SECOND-FLOOR REVIEW 14-17 FOR A NEW TWO-STORY HOUSE AND RELATED SITE WORK AT 4812 CROWN AVENUE AS REQUESTED BY ERNEST KOEPPEN

WHEREAS, a request by Jaehee Ghanti, agent on behalf of owner Ernest Koeppen, has been received for a Second-Floor Review to allow a new two-story residence and associated site work, said request attached hereto and incorporated herein by reference; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission, on February 10, 2015, after publication and posting of notice in the prescribed manner, held a public hearing on the Second-Floor Review request and continued the project to the date certain of April 14, 2015; and

WHEREAS, prior to the date certain of April 14, 2015, the project was determined by staff as not being prepared for review, leading for a recommendation for summary continuance; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission, on the date certain of April 14, 2015, continued the project to the date certain of April 28, 2015; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission, on the date certain of April 28, 2015, held a continued public hearing on the Second-Floor Review request; and

WHEREAS, the Commission reviewed the project and determined that no significant environmental impacts would result from the project, which is Categorically Exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act, under Class 2.5(c)(1) (new single-family residential construction) of the City of La Cañada Flintridge Guidelines for the implementation of CEQA; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission has reviewed the facts contained in the staff report dated February 10, 2015 and staff memorandum dated April 28, 2015 regarding the application for a Second-Floor Review approval at 4812 Crown Avenue, and heard and considered the testimony of the applicant and the public; and

WHEREAS, based on the evidence presented by the application materials, staff report, and public testimony, the Planning Commission hereby finds the following:

Section 1.

1. The two-story design includes adequate setbacks, screening and modulation, because the setback would greatly exceeding the code minimum on the south side. Modulation would be provided by the graduated setback and other massing features. Screening of the

sideyard and backyard second-floor balcony and windows would be provided as redesigned.

2. The two-story design preserves the existing scale and character of the surrounding neighborhood, because the project would present to the street and neighboring properties a well-modulated, and, as redesigned, adequately detailed building of stepped massing, preserving the scale and character of the street in a sensitively designed manner.
3. The two-story design protects public views, aesthetics, privacy, and property values of the neighbors, because the second floor would respect the aesthetic values of the existing property as well as its surroundings, and due to ample distances and conditioned screening would not have any detriment to privacy or other neighbor concerns.
4. The two-story design is consistent with the Residential Design Guidelines as adopted by resolution of the City Council, because the design, scale and materials used by the project as redesigned for screening, detailing, and entry refinement relate well to the site and surroundings, and would be consistent with the primary directives of the City's Residential Design Guidelines as related to Site Design, Physical Design Components, Neighborhood Compatibility and Landscaping.

Section 2.

Based on the above findings, the Planning Commission of the City of La Cañada Flintridge hereby approves the Second-Floor Review for a new house at 4812 Crown Avenue, subject to the conditions listed in Exhibit "A", attached to this resolution.

PASSED, APPROVED AND ADOPTED this 28th day of April, 2015.

Chair of the Planning Commission

ATTEST:

Secretary to the Planning Commission

EXHIBIT "A"
CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL
SECOND-FLOOR REVIEW 14-17
4812 Crown Avenue

Standard Conditions:

1. Compliance with and execution of all conditions listed herein shall be necessary prior to obtaining final building inspection clearance and/or prior to obtaining any occupancy clearance. Deviation from this requirement shall be only by written consent of the Director of Community Development.
2. This approval is granted for the land or land use as described in the application and any attachments thereto, and as shown on the site plan submitted, labeled Second-Floor Review 14-17.
3. Prior to obtaining a building permit or when applicable initiation of use, the applicant and property owner shall file with the Secretary of the Planning Commission written acknowledgment of the conditions stated herein on forms provided by the Planning Department.
4. All structures, site work and other features including but not limited to, buildings, roadways, parking areas, landscaping and other facilities shall be located and maintained as shown on the site plan labeled Second-Floor Review 14-17, Sheet A-1.0, except as otherwise stated in these conditions.
5. All buildings and structures shall be of the design as shown on the elevation drawings labeled Second-Floor Review 14-17, Sheet A-3.0, except as otherwise stated in these conditions.
6. This approval will expire unless "start of construction" is commenced within 12 months after approval is granted and diligently pursued thereafter. The Director of Community Development may extend the original expiration date by as much as 12 months upon receipt of a written request from the applicant prior to expiration of the original project if the approved project and applicable zoning standards are unchanged. Start of construction is defined as:
 - a. All zoning and related approvals are effective; and
 - b. All required building and grading permits for the project have been issued; and
 - c. The "foundation inspection" and "concrete slab or underfloor inspection" have been made and received approval from the Division of Building and Safety; i.e., all trenches must be excavated, forms erected, and all materials for the foundation delivered on the job and all in-slab or underfloor building service equipment, conduit, piping accessories and other ancillary equipment items must be in place. Nothing in this definition shall be construed to alter the applicable legal standards for determining when vested property rights to complete the project have arisen.

7. All applicable requirements of any law, ordinance, or regulation of the City of La Cañada Flintridge shall be complied with.
8. This approval is subject to the applicant paying all fees and assessments to the City of La Cañada Flintridge, as established by ordinance, resolution or policy of the City Council.
9. In the event the City determines that it is necessary to take legal action to enforce any of the provisions of these conditions, and such legal action is taken, the applicant agrees to pay any and all costs of such legal action, including reasonable attorney's fees, incurred by the City, even if the matter is not prosecuted to a final judgment or is amicably resolved, unless the City should otherwise agree with the applicant to waive said fees or any part thereof. The foregoing shall not apply if the permittee prevails in the enforcement proceeding.
10. The applicant shall defend, indemnify, and hold harmless the City and its officers, agents, and employees from any claim, action or proceeding against the City or its officers, agents, or employees to attack, set aside, void, or annul approval of this Second-Floor Review. The City shall promptly notify the applicant of any such claim, action, or proceeding and shall cooperate fully in the defense.
11. An approval granted by the Planning Commission does not constitute a building permit or authorization to begin any construction. An appropriate permit issued by the Division of Building and Safety must be obtained prior to construction, enlargement, relocation, conversion, or demolition of any building or structure within the City.
12. All construction/contractor parking shall be on-site only. At the time of approval, if it is deemed by the Planning Commission that sufficient on-site parking may not be available, then on-street parking in front of the site will be permitted if it can be demonstrated that such parking will not interfere with the immediate neighbors, and will not interfere with the public's use of the surrounding streets. If this cannot be found, then any additional construction vehicle or equipment parking must occur off-site at a location approved by the Director of Community Development. Approval of the off-site location shall be based on the submittal of a Parking Management Plan by the applicant that demonstrates that the site shall not interfere with the neighbors in the area or hinder the public's use of the surrounding streets. Contractors and construction workers will be required to carpool to the construction site. No construction, no deliveries and no movement of construction materials shall occur on Sundays or City recognized holidays.
13. All work shall comply with City Ordinance 313 (Chapter 9.14 of the Municipal Code). A Building Debris management Report (BDMR) is required to provide documentation that verifies a minimum of fifty (50) percent of the debris or material generated was diverted from a landfill. A performance security is required prior to the issuance of the grading and building permits.
14. Any subsequent substantive change to these approved plans by the Fire Department or any other agency having subsequent approval authority shall cause these plans to be returned to the Planning Commission for additional review and approval prior to permit issuance.

Public Works Condition:

15. Public Works Department approval shall be required, including but not limited to the following items:
 - a. Onsite drainage plan.
 - b. Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) for lots less than one acre in size.
 - c. Site plan indicating all existing and proposed improvements within the public right-of-way.
 - d. No above-ground structures shall be constructed within the street right-of-way.
 - e. Type of mailbox structure subject to Public Works approval
 - f. An encroachment and/or excavation permit shall be required for any work within the public right-of-way.
 - g. The right-of-way behind the edge of pavement shall have a 2% to 4% slope graded to drain toward the street.
 - h. The driveway apron shall conform to the provisions of Chapter 8.01 of the Municipal Code and the Standard Plans for Public Works Construction (SPPWC), latest edition.

Planning Commission Conditions:

16. House design shall be modified per City Alternate illustrations, with the additional modification to vent design cited in the staff report dated April 28, 2015, subject to approval by the Director of Community Development prior to plan check submittal.
17. The landscape plan shall be amended to include planting to replace the decomposed granite and gravel indicated for the front yard, documentation of soil depth and drainage conditions atop the concrete slab in the front yard, and substitution of a less fire-prone species than the Italian cypress on the north side of the property, subject to approval by the Director of Community Development prior to plan check submittal.
18. Unless this approval is appealed to the City Council, story poles shall be removed promptly (within one week) after expiration of the 15-day appeal period. Verification of this shall be required prior to submittal of the project for plan check OR prior to issuance of building permits for those projects where "at-risk" plan check is in process or has already been completed.

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