

# CITY OF LA CAÑADA FLINTRIDGE

## PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

June 9, 2015 Meeting

### Applicant:

Astra Woodcraft  
20812 Ventura Blvd.  
Woodland Hills, CA 91364

### Case Types / Numbers:

Hillside Development Permit 15-08  
Second-floor Review 15-08  
Setback Modification 15-03

### Property Owner:

Ron Bae  
135 Inverness Drive  
La Canada Flintridge, CA 91011

### Project Address:

135 Inverness Drive

### Case Planner:

Chris Gjolme - Planner

## 1. Request:

The applicant requests a Hillside Development Permit and Second-floor Review to allow 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>-floor expansion of an existing single-story residence, inclusive of a new 1,824 sq. ft. 2<sup>nd</sup>-floor. Roof removal to accommodate said 2<sup>nd</sup> floor would exceed 30% and qualify the project as new construction. A Setback Modification would allow retention of an existing 22'-10" minimum front setback at the 1<sup>st</sup>-floor level, below the 38'-4" requirement for the lot. The Setback Modification would also allow the new 2<sup>nd</sup> floor to encroach into the required front and south side yard setbacks.

## 2. Location:

The site is on the east side of Inverness Drive, one lot south of its intersection with Normandy Drive, in the R-1-40,000 zone.

## 3. Project Area:

Site:	26,592 sq. ft.
Existing residence, garage and rec. room:	3,051 sq. ft.
Proposed 1 <sup>st</sup> -floor addition:	384 sq. ft.
Proposed 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor:	1,824 sq. ft.
<b>Total:</b>	<b>5,259 sq. ft.</b>
<b>FAR:</b>	<b>0.20</b>

#### **4. General Plan/Zoning/Existing Land Use:**

The General Plan Land Use Map designates the site Very Low Density Residential (up to 2 dwelling units per acre). The site is zoned R-1-40,000 (Single Family Residential - 40,000 Square Foot Minimum Lot Size). The site contains a one-story single family residence which would be expanded at the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>-floor levels.

#### **5. Environmental Review:**

Staff has determined that the proposed project is Categorically Exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act, under Section 2.5(a)(4)(ii)(additions) and 2.5(e)(1)(minor yard and setback variances) of the City of La Cañada Flintridge Guidelines for the Implementation of CEQA.

#### **6. Previous Action:**

None

#### **7. Pending and/or Potential Actions:**

Plan check and issuance of building permits.

#### **8. Staff Analysis:**

##### **A. Context:**

At its south end, Inverness Drive parallels Normandy Drive at an upper terraced level. Both streets look out over the Canada Valley, with panoramic views common among their wide lots. The steep hillside extends from Inverness down to Normandy and up to higher knolls, forming a backdrop to the properties along the subject portion of the street. The one property across Inverness Drive (140) in proximity to the subject property is adequately elevated above as to be unaffected by any potential construction.

The subject property, the third parcel from the Pasadena boundary, is a through-lot with curved frontage on both Inverness Drive and Normandy Drive. A driveway accesses the site to the north and descends to the main pad upon which a modest one-story residence sits below street level at the south end of the site. Beyond the pad, the slope falls over 50 feet to Normandy Drive, contributing to the site's 36% average slope and hillside designation.

The site's Inverness frontage is lined with a relatively new wrought-iron fence and intermittent landscaping, through which the residence is readily visible. Another one-story residence is adjacent to the south at 125 Inverness Drive; the north façade of this

home and south façade of the subject home are quite proximate, separated by approximately 20 feet. In contrast to the subject lot, driveway access to the neighbor is from the far southeast corner. Second-floor expansion of this home was approved by the Planning Commission in 2007, though the project was never built. North of the project site is the 2-story home at 145 Inverness Drive, which is comparably sited below the street and partially screened by shrubbery.



**B. Project Description:**

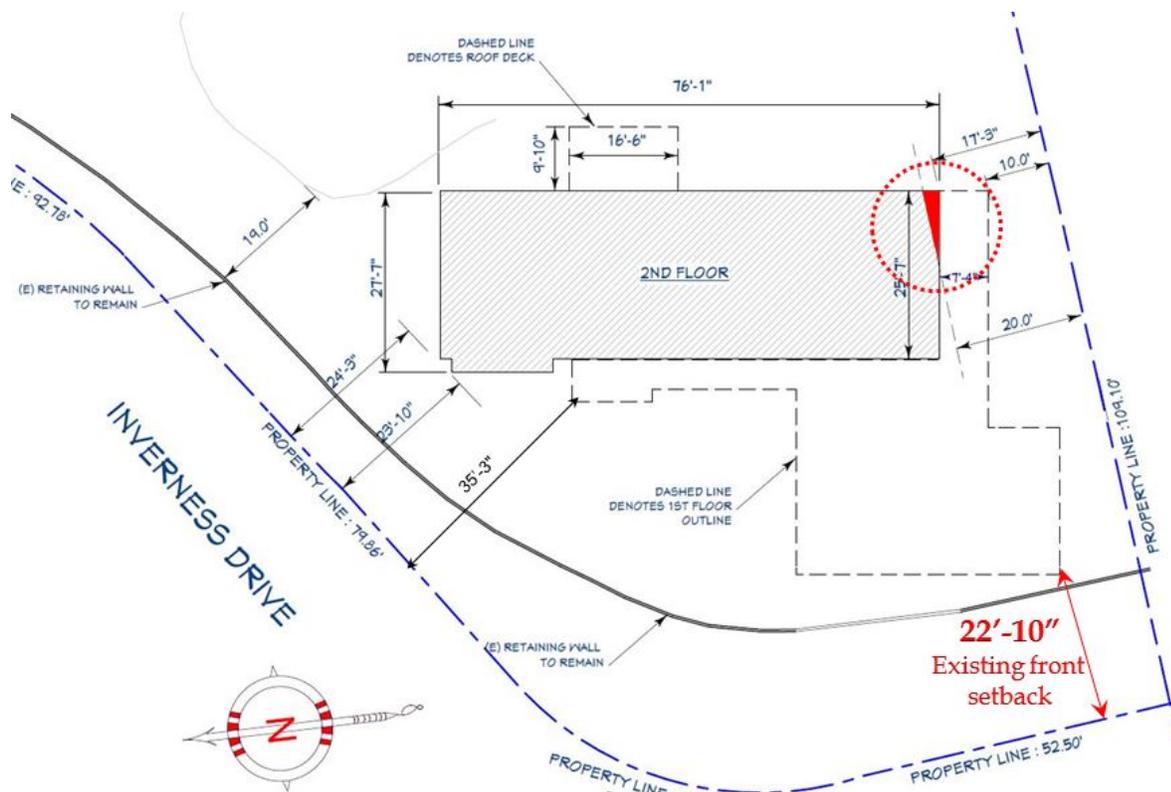
This project involves 1<sup>st</sup>-floor expansion of the existing 3,051 sq. ft. residence to the front and construction of a new 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. In addition, the exterior of the home would be remodeled to reflect an understated Spanish style. Floor area and height requirements would be met by the project. However, the additions would present encroachments into the required front and south side yard setbacks.

Currently, the residence is connected to the garage and an attached rec. room by a covered breezeway. The breezeway would be enclosed and converted to a new mudroom. Adjacent to the north, a new covered porch would be added. With enclosures

along the sides, the porch qualifies as new floor area. Together, the mud room and porch would add 384 sq. ft. at the 1<sup>st</sup>-floor level, increasing the home's footprint to 3,435 sq. ft.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> floor would match the linear form of the home's main section and add 1,824 sq. ft. Second-floor length would be 76 feet, consistent with the footprint, while depth would be very modest at 27'-7". Three bedrooms would be included; two symmetrical bedrooms to the south and a master suite to the north. A small laundry room is also proposed at the southwest corner. Window usage along the sides of the 2<sup>nd</sup>-floor would be minimal, in particular to the south, where a lone laundry room window is proposed.

To the front, setbacks for the additions would range from 23'-10" (2<sup>nd</sup> floor) to 35'-3" (1<sup>st</sup> floor). This is below the 38'-4" requirement for the lot - as derived from the adjacent two lots - but greater than the 22'-10" front setback currently provided by the recreation room. The south end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor would also encroach into the side setback. Based on the lot's width, a 20-foot side setback is required. The 2<sup>nd</sup> floor would be slightly angled in relation to the property line, providing a minimum 17'-3" setback, increasing to 23 feet. Importantly, an 'average' side setback of 20 feet would be provided while the encroaching area would be a sliver comprising less than 15 sq. ft.



The home's remodel from a mid-century contemporary structure to a Spanish-styled villa includes a new tile roof of mid-pitch, with a primary ridge that would achieve a

consistent 23'-10" height at the 2<sup>nd</sup>-floor level, modest for a two-story structure and well below the 28-foot hillside limit.

While the lot is technically a through-lot, with rear frontage on Normandy Drive, the down slope half is much narrower than the top half. The Normandy frontage is covered by native vegetation and undistinguishable from that of the neighboring parcels. With the narrow, steep down slope portion and the rim below Inverness Drive, the slope of the lot averages 36%. This results in a Slope Factor Guideline (SFG) of 0.78. The project would add 384 sq. ft. at the 1<sup>st</sup>-floor level and a new 1,824 sq. ft. 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, increasing the size of the home to 5,259 sq. ft. The maximum floor area allowed for the 26,592 sq. ft. lot is 7,068 sq. ft., reduced to 5,515 sq. ft. through application of the SFG. At 5,259 sq. ft., project floor area would be 1,809 sq. ft. below the normal standard for the lot and 256 sq. ft. below the adjusted standard.

Aside from the aforementioned height and floor area review items, the project conforms to other code requirements. This includes angle-plane compliance, easily met given the rising frontage in relation to the pad and corresponding raised point of inward projection, modest overall structure height and 20-foot average setback at the 2<sup>nd</sup>-floor level to the south. Also, compliant on-site parking would continue to be afforded by a 21'x21' 2-car garage and surplus driveway area.

In all, the project relates to code standards as follows:

	<u>Standard</u>	<u>Standard x SFG:</u>	<u>Existing</u>	<u>Project</u>
Floor Area:	7,068 sq. ft.	5,515 sq. ft.	3,051 sq. ft.	5,259 sq. ft.
Front Setback	38'-4"	n/a	22'-10"	22'-10"*
North Side SB				
1 <sup>st</sup> floor:	18 feet	n/a	77 feet	77 feet
2 <sup>nd</sup> floor:	20 feet	n/a	n/a	74 feet
South Side SB				
1 <sup>st</sup> floor:	18 feet	n/a	10 feet	10 feet*
2 <sup>nd</sup> floor:	20 feet	n/a	n/a	17'-3"
Rear SB:	15 feet	n/a	105 feet	105 feet
Height:	28 feet	n/a	14-15'	23'-10"

*\*no change – existing deficient setback sought for retention.*

### C. General Plan and Hillside Development Permit:

Goal 4 of the General Plan Land Use Element pertains to Hillside Areas:

*Maintain hillside areas for the purpose of preserving the visual quality of the City, protecting the public from safety hazards, and conserving natural resources.*

Supporting this goal are the following objectives and policies:

Objective 4.1: New development and/or remodeling of existing structures and property will be designed, constructed, and maintained to preserve important views, topographic and other natural features, and the semi-rural character of the City's hillsides.

*Policy 4.1.1: Preserve ridgelines, natural slopes, knolls, canyons, and bluffs in their natural state to protect important views and topographic and other natural features.*

*Policy 4.1.3: Ensure that development preserves the City's natural environment, setting, and viewsheds, through design, siting, and construction that avoids obtrusive breaks in the natural skylines and minimizes the visual impact of grading, intrusion of highly visible cut and/or fill slopes, building and roof lines, and/or roadway surfaces.*

*Policy 4.1.5: Continue to implement the City's Hillside Development Chapter of the Zoning Ordinance, which establishes standards to minimize landform alteration, preserve significant environmental features, and control development densities.*

*Policy 4.1.6: Encourage residences developed in hillside areas to be designed, landscaped, and built of materials that blend with the existing environment; use of bright or reflective surfaces will be disallowed.*

Objective 4.2: Ensure that hillside development will be designed, constructed, and maintained to minimize natural and human-made safety hazards to persons and property.

*Policy 4.2.1: Require that development in hillside areas be designed and constructed in such a manner as to avoid flooding, mudslides, erosion, and subsidence to residents and structures on or near hillside areas as well as downstream of any project.*

*Policy 4.2.2: Ensure that the appropriate goals, objectives, policies, and implementation programs in the Safety and Conservation elements are applied to hillside development.*

*Policy 4.2.3: Discourage development in areas of known slope instability and/or high landslide risk.*

This is further supported in the Hillside Development Ordinance, Section 11.35.020.a, which states:

*Existing community character, as defined by such factors as visual appearance, density, road widths and vegetation shall be preserved and/or enhanced.*

*Discussion*

In concept, the project has much to recommend it. It allows for efficient use of the site without any appreciable grading. Architecturally, its design is tasteful and refined, using the existing building's placement and configuration in response to site constraints to create a pleasing degree of character and interest. Balanced against those conceptual determinants is consideration of whether the project's relation to hillside views, massing, neighbor interfaces, and other concerns is consistent with City policies and objectives as outlined above.

House and lot sizes and architectural styles within the area vary, though this variation is not readily apparent from the street given the area's undulating topography and secluded setting of many homes. The following properties and their respective homes are proximate to the subject property:

<b>Address</b>	<b>Lot Size</b>	<b>House Size</b>	<b>FAR</b>	<b># Stories</b>
102 Inverness Drive	30,991 sf	2,070 sf	0.07	2
109 Inverness Drive	24,069 sf	2,446 sf	0.10	1
125 Inverness Drive	20,356 sf	2,349 sf	0.11	1
140 Inverness Drive	17,008 sf	2,362 sf	0.14	2
145 Inverness Drive	43,916 sf	5,131 sf	0.12	2
150 Inverness Drive	27,972 sf	2,356 sf	0.08	1
280 St. Katherine Drive	34,591 sf	2,652 sf	0.08	1
282 St. Katherine Drive	25,133 sf	2,545 sf	0.10	1
284 St. Katherine Drive	28,415 sf	3,222 sf	0.11	2
<b>Average w/o project</b>	<b>28,050 sf</b>	<b>2,793 sf</b>	<b>0.10</b>	
<b>*135 Inverness Drive</b>	<b>26,592 sf</b>	<b>4,650 sf</b>	<b>0.17</b>	<b>2</b>

\*Project site - excludes garages and other exterior covered areas and is intended for general comparison only.

The City's major hillside concerns are visible bulk, view preservation, safety, conserving the natural setting, and neighborhood character. With its lack of grading, issues of safety, drainage, and conserving the natural setting are not raised. The issues discussed below are related instead to the building's size and visual prominence as seen from nearby vantage points.

View Preservation

The only parcels with views over the subject property are at 140 Inverness Drive and 280 Saint Katherine Drive. As already discussed, these houses are

sufficiently elevated above the subject property as to have continued enjoyment of a long-range view after addition of a story to the subject house.

### Visible Bulk & Ridgeline Protection

The change to the home's profile would be readily apparent from proximate vantage points along Inverness Drive, especially in light of the re-landscaping of the site's frontage, which is in its infancy. Part of the public viewscape to the east would be lost. However, two considerations are noteworthy; traveling south on Inverness Drive, the north end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor would first be seen, and, as already mentioned, its limited width of 28 feet would not impose on the street. Frontal view of the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor would not occur until passersby have reached the mid-portion of the lot and are looking to the east. By this point, the pad's sunken location relative to ascending street grade would mitigate the overall effect to an appreciable extent as the story poles reveal. Additionally, the length of the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor would continue to reinforce the home's linear/horizontal form while effort has been made to limit overall height. Again, at 23'-10", the home's height would be very modest for a two-story structure.

This site is not part of a prominent ridgeline as defined in the Environmental Resource Management Element of the General Plan. While it would be viewed from afar as part of a low-density developed hillscape, the knoll and trees behind the structure would continue to provide a softening backdrop despite the increased building height. From closer range, particularly on Normandy Drive, the house would become visible at the second-floor level as contrasted with the complete screening of the existing house. However, the limitation of that visibility to the second floor does not suggest an issue, provided that the design quality meets the objectives of the Hillside Development Ordinance, which staff believes to be the case.

### Landscaping

Ultimately, the project will benefit from existing and new landscaping for further visual relief. Boxwood plants and several Crape Myrtle trees are already in place and a continuous bank of Japanese Privets are proposed to create a privacy buffer along the street matching the height and course of the existing wrought-iron fence. The site was previously screened by tall dense shrubs (which have been removed) and the owner's objective is to replicate the previous condition, albeit not quite to the same extent.

## Light Reflectance

With its visibility from a variety of viewing distances from longer-range down slope, the house should be required to conform to light reflectance value (LRV) limits. A condition is included to that effect.

### *Findings*

- 1. The project, through elements of architectural and landscape design, will uphold the policies of this chapter, and will be harmonious with the better aspects of the built and natural setting.**

The project is contained upon an existing graded pad and preserves surrounding vegetated slopes. The design of the expanded residence is tasteful and sensitive to the constraints of the property. Existing and proposed landscaping along the site's frontage will provide screening of the expanded home. Therefore staff can recommend support of this finding.

- 2. The project will maximize potential for sensitive use and effective preservation of open space.**

The project would gain floor area in the most efficient manner possible, and would enhance front yard landscaping while preserving substantial sloped area to the rear. Staff supports the finding.

- 3. The project will not be detrimental to the public health, safety, or general welfare.**

Grading, with its potential for drainage pattern alteration, is not proposed. The project does not affect the driveway or site's parking capacity. Turnaround movement on site would continue to be possible, allowing users to avoid backing onto the street. Staff recommends this finding.

- 4. The project will not adversely affect the orderly development of property within the City.**

The project involves expansion of an existing single-family residence at an allowable density, which would be confined to the existing graded pad and would not introduce any anomalous effects. Staff supports the finding.

- 5. The project will conform to the goals and policies set forth in the General Plan.**

The project will conform to the goals and policies set forth in the General Plan because the house will utilize existing pad area and respect the sloping terrain while adding reasonable development in terms of density on the site and other applicable code standards. Massing and view impacts would also be minimized through a combination of siting, design and landscaping. No changes affecting the safety of the site or the area are proposed. The compatibility of the house as analyzed in this report upholds the General Plan Land Use Element Goal 4 to "(m)aintain hillside areas for the purpose of preserving the visual quality of the City, protecting the public from safety hazards, and conserving natural resources", and the applicable policies and objectives contained therein. Staff can recommend support of this finding.

**6. The project will not create a nuisance, hazard or enforcement problem within the neighborhood or the City or require the City to provide an unusual or disproportionate level of public services.**

The project consists of expansion of an existing single-family residence that has existed on the site for many years. This will not result in any change in anticipated use or intensification of development beyond that allowed in the General Plan and zoning codes. Infrastructure is already in place to provide public services to the site. The site is served by an existing street system. Staff supports the finding.

**7. There are special conditions or unique characteristics of the subject property and its location or surrounding which justify exceeding one or more of the provisions set forth in this Chapter to permit project development.**

The expanded home would continue to fit well into its street setting, while LRV compliance would be required. The home's substandard front setback is accommodated through the Setback Modification process. All other Hillside standards and guidelines are met. Staff supports this finding.

**8. Any potential for the project to present visibly excessive bulk from any vantage point, near or far, is mitigated by screening or siting characteristics.**

The expansion concept is sound, and the house would continue to visually benefit from a pad elevation below street level and hillside backdrop precluding the presentation of mass against an open skyline. Existing and proposed landscaping would enhance buffering along the site's frontage. Staff supports the finding.

**9. The project does not create an avoidable or unreasonable impairment of the view from any other property.**

Despite increased prominence as seen from the street, the larger and taller house would continue to be below the viewshed of any surrounding houses. Therefore staff can support this finding.

#### D. Second-floor Review:

##### *Discussion*

There is simplicity in the project's massing. In response, the architectural treatment would be straightforward, and from the drawings it appears to involve a high level of detail quality: recessed windows, decorative corbels and rafter tails, exterior lighting sconces. This is indicative of the home's Spanish style, which is more broadly represented by stucco facades, clay tile roofs and an arched colonnade.

A review of the Floor Area Matrix on page 7 of the report indicates variation in parcel and fairly consistent house size within the immediate area, with parcels ranging from 17,000 sq. ft. to 43,000 sq. ft. and homes averaging approximately 2,800 sq. ft. Though the proposal would be above the 'average' house size, the increased size and change to the home's profile is suited to the site and is not significantly discordant with the character of the area largely due to lack of a uniform streetscape and the understated style and modest height of the new 2<sup>nd</sup> floor.

While views of the additions from certain neighboring homes and a small section of Inverness Drive would be possible, the massing presented is not excessive and would be eased by modest 2<sup>nd</sup>-floor width and height. Moreover, the grade difference between the pad and street effectively renders a one-story building profile at or above street level. Public view impacts would be similarly negligible considering their confinement to a narrow view corridor along a limited portion of the site's frontage.

The most proximate neighboring home is adjacent to the south at 125 Inverness Drive, with which the south end of the new 2<sup>nd</sup> floor would interface. As mentioned, an encroachment is proposed in this area (addressed in Section E of this report). Staff would again note the second floor's minimal 26-foot width as presented to the south. Along this façade a single laundry room window is proposed at the 2<sup>nd</sup>-floor level. From this point, the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor would extend away from the common property line. Thus, massing and privacy impacts on the lone adjacent property potentially impacted by the project are anticipated to be less than significant.

In short, the project would be consistent with both the 'neighborhood compatibility' and 'site development' provisions of the City's Residential Design Guidelines, as detailed in the following findings.

## *Findings*

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

Considering the configuration and topography of the site, adequate setbacks and visual separation is provided at the 2<sup>nd</sup>-floor level while the design and size of the addition expresses tasteful scale, detail and integration with the existing residence. New landscaping is in place and would be augmented by additional plantings. Staff supports the finding.

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

The proposed 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, though of notable length, is of minimal depth and height, and would be visually diminished by the building's position below street level. Independent of this, the project would not significantly depart from the scale and character of the area since a uniform street setting or consistent development pattern is not apparent. Staff supports the finding.

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

A public view corridor over and beyond the site would be impacted, but not to an unreasonable extent. The addition would not manifest adverse massing or privacy impacts considering its location and scale and the site's relationship with nearby properties, which are at varying elevations. 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 scale, massing and materials utilized by the project reflect a Spanish design that would relate well with the site and immediate area, and would be consistent with the primary directives of the City's Residential Design Guidelines as related to neighborhood and streetscape compatibility. Staff supports the finding.

## **E. Setback Modification:**

### **Issues**

While a reduction to the length of the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor could alleviate the encroachments, a number of factors lend to justification of the Setback Modification as proposed. The lot's irregular configuration and sloped topography to the rear yields pad area at the

southwest quadrant, where the existing house has existed since 1967. This siting bias presents encroachments into the front and south side setbacks. In other words, the home's status is already considered non-conforming with respect to setbacks.

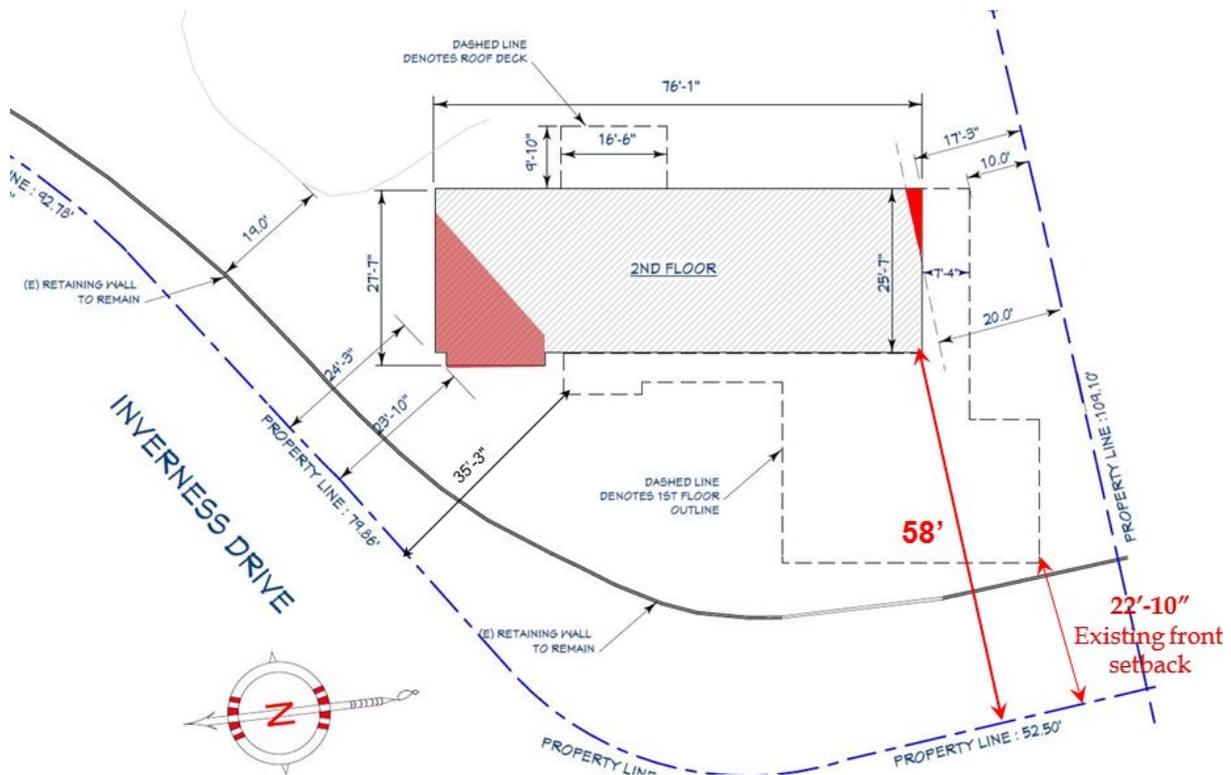
The area's hillside topography situates homes at different elevations, including proximate homes across the street, which are elevated above the street and well above the subject lot. As such, these homes would not be crowded given their vertical relief. Staff anticipates a similarly negligible impact on the general street setting as well given the seeming absence of development to the west.

Although the new 2<sup>nd</sup> floor would not extend beyond the footprint at any point, similar encroachments are proposed and are, in part, a product of the home's current position. As detailed in Section B of the report, the northwest corner of the 2<sup>nd</sup>-floor would provide a 23'-10" front setback, 1 foot greater than the 22'-10" recreation room setback, but well below the 38'-4" requirement for the lot. In addition, the south end of the 2<sup>nd</sup>-floor would provide a 17'-3" side setback, below the 20-foot requirement.

As the Commission is aware, a reduction of the front setback to 20 feet through hillside review may be allowed for single-story construction, provided applicable findings can be made. This allowance was intended to allow setback flexibility for project's on sites where topographic constraints limit available pad area. Clearly, this is the case with the subject lot since a lack of viable expansion opportunity at the 1<sup>st</sup>-floor level necessitates 2<sup>nd</sup>-floor expansion if potential and compliant floor area gains are to be realized. Although the area in question is a 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, the grade difference between the pad and street provides notable vertical relief, adequate in staff's estimation to consider the addition akin to a single-story component. Although the reduction cannot be formally allowed as part of the Hillside review, a comparable argument can be made through the Setback Modification process.

Also important is the 2<sup>nd</sup>-floor's relationship to the site's curved street frontage. While a 'minimum' 24-foot setback is proposed, the street's curved course extends away from the house and in so doing increases the front setback to the south, where a 58-foot front setback is proposed. This would result in an average front setback of approximately 41 feet which exceeds the 38'-4" requirement. To the south, a minor sliver encroachment would occur. Staff has already noted that the 20-foot average setback meets the requirement and is adequate given the narrow building profile and lack of windows presented to the south, despite the proximity of the neighboring home.

The diagram below shows the existing 'minimum' front setback at the southwest corner of the rec. room, proposed setbacks at the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>-floor levels, and resulting encroaching area to the front and south:



As reflected in the following findings, staff believes that the Setback Modification request can be reasonably supported.

*Findings*

- 1. The proposed project is compatible with existing development on the site, and is consistent with other development in the immediate vicinity.**

The setbacks provided along the site’s curving frontage and to the south are appropriate considering the location of the existing residence and proposed additions, configuration and topography of the lot and reasonable scale of the new second floor. Staff supports the finding.

- 2. The Modification would not be a grant of special privilege that is inconsistent with the limits placed on other properties in the area and in the R-1 zone.**

The project maintains the existing single-family use of the property, while the non-conforming location of the house is largely a product of the lot’s configuration and topography, and the additions as proposed would not unduly intensify this situation. Staff supports the finding.

3. **Strict application of the R-1 zoning standards results in practical difficulties or unnecessary hardships inconsistent with the general purpose of the R-1 zone regulations and standards.**

The project would provide an average front and south side setback that comply with the respective requirement, while the home's siting below street level, limited width of the south façade, elevated position of neighbor's across the street and existing and proposed screening allow for the additions as proposed. Adherence to setback requirements would be unduly restrictive since the project as designed is appropriately sited and scaled, and would not present adverse impacts. Staff supports the finding.

4. **The Modification will not be materially detrimental to the public health, safety or general welfare, or to the use, enjoyment or valuation of property located in the vicinity.**

A majority of the encroachment would occur along a rising portion of the street, where the house is below street level and would benefit from enhanced screening over time, while the addition's interface to the south would be eased by a compliant average setback at the 2<sup>nd</sup>-floor level and building profile of very limited width. Staff supports the finding.

5. **The proposed project preserves the existing scale and character of the surrounding neighborhood and protects public views, and aesthetic and other property values in the neighborhood.**

The encroachments would not significantly disrupt the scale of the neighborhood or impact public view-sheds considering the reasonable expansion scheme and limited visual impact of the encroaching floor area, grade difference between the pad and street and development diversity typical of the immediate area. Staff supports the finding.

#### **F. Conclusion / Recommendation:**

Based on the above discussions and related findings, staff has concluded that the proposal is reasonably designed and scaled in relation to its hillside site as well as the surrounding neighborhood. Staff therefore recommends that the Hillside Development Permit, Second-floor Review and Setback Modification **BE APPROVED**, subject to the conditions listed in Exhibit "A", attached to the draft resolution.

C: *Astra Woodcraft / 20812 Ventura Blvd. / Woodland Hills, CA 91364*  
*Ron Bae / 135 Inverness Drive / La Canada Flintridge, CA 91011*

# CITY OF LA CAÑADA FLINTRIDGE

## RESOLUTION NO. 15-xx

**A RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION  
OF THE CITY OF LA CAÑADA FLINTRIDGE  
APPROVING HILLSIDE DEVELOPMENT PERMIT 15-08  
SECOND-FLOOR REVIEW 15-08, SETBACK MODIFICATION 15-03  
FOR CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW 2-STORY RESIDENCE  
AT 135 INVERNESS DRIVE  
AS REQUESTED BY  
RONALD BAE**

WHEREAS, a request by Ronald Bae has been received for a Hillside Development Permit, Second-floor Review and Setback Modification to allow construction of a new 2-story residence, said request attached hereto and incorporated herein by reference; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission, on June 9, 2015, held a public hearing and conducted a review of the 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 construction), and 2.5(e)(1)(minor yard and setback variances) 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 June 9, 2015, regarding the application for a Hillside Development Permit, Second-floor Review and Setback Modification at 135 Inverness Drive, 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 finds the following:

### Section 1:

#### *Hillside Development Permit:*

1. The project, through elements of architectural and landscape design, will uphold the policies of this chapter, and will be harmonious with the better aspects of the built and natural setting because the project is contained upon an existing graded pad and preserves surrounding vegetated slopes. The design of the expanded residence is tasteful and sensitive to the constraints of the property. Existing

and proposed landscaping along the site's frontage will provide screening of the expanded home.

2. The project will maximize potential for sensitive use and effective preservation of open space because the project would gain floor area in the most efficient manner possible, and would enhance front yard landscaping while preserving substantial sloped area to the rear.
3. The project will not be detrimental to the public health, safety, or general welfare because grading, with its potential for drainage pattern alteration, is not proposed. The project does not affect the driveway or site's parking capacity. Turnaround movement on site would continue to be possible, allowing users to avoid backing onto the street. Staff recommends this finding.
4. The project will not adversely affect the orderly development of property within the City because the project involves expansion of an existing single-family residence at an allowable density, which would be confined to the existing graded pad and would not introduce any anomalous effects.
5. The project will conform to the goals and policies set forth in the General Plan because the project will conform to the goals and policies set forth in the General Plan because the house will utilize existing pad area and respect the sloping terrain while adding reasonable development in terms of density on the site and other applicable code standards. Massing and view impacts would also be minimized through a combination of siting, design and landscaping. No changes affecting the safety of the site or the area are proposed. The compatibility of the house as analyzed in this report upholds the General Plan Land Use Element Goal 4 to "(m)aintain hillside areas for the purpose of preserving the visual quality of the City, protecting the public from safety hazards, and conserving natural resources", and the applicable policies and objectives contained therein.
6. The project will not create a nuisance, hazard or enforcement problem within the neighborhood or the City or require the City to provide an unusual or disproportionate level of public services because the project consists of expansion of an existing single-family residence that has existed on the site for many years. This will not result in any change in anticipated use or intensification of development beyond that allowed in the General Plan and zoning codes. Infrastructure is already in place to provide public services to the site. The site is served by an existing street system.
7. There are special conditions or unique characteristics of the subject property and its location or surrounding which justify exceeding one or more of the provisions set forth in this Chapter to permit project development because the expanded

home would continue to fit well into its street setting, while LRV compliance would be required. The home's substandard front setback is accommodated through the Setback Modification process. All other Hillside standards and guidelines are met.

8. Any potential for the project to present visibly excessive bulk from any vantage point, near or far, is mitigated by screening or siting characteristics because the expansion concept is sound, and the house would continue to visually benefit from a pad elevation below street level and hillside backdrop precluding the presentation of mass against an open skyline. Existing and proposed landscaping would enhance buffering along the site's frontage.
9. The project does not create an avoidable or unreasonable impairment of the view from any other property because despite increased prominence as seen from the street, the larger and taller house would continue to be below the viewshed of any surrounding houses.

*Second-floor Review:*

1. The two-story design includes adequate setbacks, screening and modulation because when considering the configuration and topography of the site, adequate setbacks and visual separation is provided at the 2<sup>nd</sup>-floor level while the design and size of the addition expresses tasteful scale, detail and integration with the existing residence. New landscaping is in place and would be augmented by additional plantings.
2. The two-story design preserves the existing scale and character of the surrounding neighborhood because the proposed 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, though of notable length, is of minimal depth and height, and would be visually diminished by the building's position below street level. Independent of this, the project would not significantly depart from the scale and character of the area since a uniform street setting or consistent development pattern is not apparent.
3. The two-story design protects public views, aesthetics, privacy and property values of the neighbors because a public view corridor over and beyond the site would be impacted, but not to an unreasonable extent. The addition would not manifest adverse massing or privacy impacts considering its location and scale and the site's relationship with nearby properties, which are at varying elevations.
4. The two-story design is consistent with the Residential Design Guidelines as adopted by resolution of the City Council because the scale, massing and materials utilized by the project reflect a Spanish design that would relate

well with the site and immediate area, and would be consistent with the primary directives of the City's Residential Design Guidelines as related to neighborhood and streetscape compatibility.

*Setback Modification:*

1. The proposed project is compatible with existing development on the site, and is consistent with other development in the immediate vicinity because the setbacks provided along the site's curving frontage and to the south are appropriate considering the location of the existing residence and proposed additions, configuration and topography of the lot and reasonable scale of the new second floor.
2. The Modification would not be a grant of special privilege that is inconsistent with the limits placed on other properties in the area and in the R-1 zone because the project maintains the existing single-family use of the property, while the non-conforming location of the house is largely a product of the lot's configuration and topography, and the additions as proposed would not unduly intensify this situation.
3. Strict application of the R-1 zoning standards results in practical difficulties or unnecessary hardships inconsistent with the general purpose of the R-1 zone regulations and standards because the project would provide an average front and south side setback that comply with the respective requirement, while the home's siting below street level, limited width of the south façade, elevated position of neighbor's across the street and existing and proposed screening allow for the additions as proposed. Adherence to setback requirements would be unduly restrictive since the project as designed is appropriately sited and scaled, and would not present adverse impacts.
4. The Modification will not be materially detrimental to the public health, safety or general welfare, or to the use, enjoyment or valuation of property located in the vicinity because a majority of the encroachment would occur along a rising portion of the street, where the house is below street level and would benefit from enhanced screening over time, while the addition's interface to the south would be eased by a compliant average setback at the 2<sup>nd</sup>-floor level and building profile of very limited width.
5. The proposed project preserves the existing scale and character of the surrounding neighborhood and protects public views, and aesthetic and other property values in the neighborhood because the encroachments would not significantly disrupt the scale of the neighborhood or impact public view-sheds considering the reasonable expansion scheme and limited visual impact of the

encroaching floor area, grade difference between the pad and street and development diversity typical of the immediate area.

Section 2:

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved that the Planning Commission approves the Hillside Development Permit, Second-floor Review and Setback Modification requests at 135 Inverness Drive, subject to the conditions listed in Exhibit "A", attached to this resolution.

**PASSED, APPROVED AND ADOPTED** this 9<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2015.

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Chair of the Planning Commission

ATTEST:

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Secretary to the Planning Commission

**EXHIBIT "A"**  
**CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL**  
HILLSIDE DEVELOPMENT PERMIT 15-08  
SECOND-FLOOR REVIEW 15-08  
SETBACK MODIFICATION 15-03  
135 Inverness Drive

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 Hillside Development Permit 15-08, Second-floor Review 15-08, and Setback Modification 15-03.
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 plans labeled Hillside Development Permit 15-08, Second-floor Review 15-08, Setback Modification 15-03, Sheets A0.0-A9.0, except as otherwise stated in these conditions.
5. This approval will expire unless "start of construction" is commenced within 24 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 approval 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 Department 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.
6. All applicable requirements of any law, ordinance, or regulation of the City of La Cañada Flintridge shall be complied with.
7. This approval is subject to the applicant paying all fees, deposits and assessments to the City of La Cañada Flintridge, as established by policy, ordinance or resolution of the City Council prior to occupancy or initiation of use. This includes payment for contracted staff services as invoiced to the city.
8. 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.
9. 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 Hillside Development Permit, Second-floor Review and Setback Modification. The City shall promptly notify the applicant of any such claim, action, or proceeding and shall cooperate fully in the defense.
10. 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 Department of Building and Safety must be obtained prior to construction, enlargement, relocation, conversion, or demolition of any building or structure within the City.
11. All construction/contractor parking shall be on-site only. If it is deemed by the Director of Community Development 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.

12. 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.

Planning Conditions:

13. Primary roof and wall color shall comply with light reflectance value (LRV) limits.
14. No occupancy shall be granted until the Director of Community Development or his designee confirms that the landscaping installation is complete and consistent with the approved plan.
15. 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.

Public Works Conditions:

16. The project shall comply with Los Angeles County's Low Impact Development standards.
17. This project **disturbs less than one acre of land**, the project is subject to the following minimum construction requirements:
  - o Sediments from areas disturbed by construction shall be retained on site, using structural drainage controls to the maximum extent practicable, and stockpiles of soil shall be properly contained to minimize sediment transport from the site to streets, drainage facilities, or adjacent properties via runoff, vehicle tracking, or wind.

- Construction-related materials, wastes, spills or residues shall be retained on site to minimize transport from the site to streets, drainage facilities, or adjoining properties by wind or runoff.
  - Runoff from equipment and vehicle washing shall be contained at construction sites unless treated to remove sediments and pollutants.
18. Prior to any construction (including, but not limited to, drive approaches, sidewalks, curb and gutter, etc.), trenching or grading within public or private street right-of-way, the applicant shall submit a street improvement plan consistent with the approved Site Plan and conditions of approval and obtain encroachment permits from the Engineering Division.
19. Any proposed mailbox structure shall be approved and permitted by Public Works.

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