

# CITY OF LA CAÑADA FLINTRIDGE

## PLANNING COMMISSION MEMORANDUM

July 25, 2017 Meeting

To: Planning Commission  
From: Chris Gjolme ~ Planner  
RE: Continued Public Hearing; Hillside Development Permit 17-19; 4621 Indiana Avenue; PDS Studio Monte/Valido LLC  
Date: 7-18-2017

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### A. BACKGROUND:

At the last meeting, the Commission reviewed the proposal to construct a new 5,343 sq. ft. single-story residence and related site improvements including a rear yard pool/patio, expanded and reconfigured driveway, and retaining walls to facilitate expansion of the existing building pad.

While the architectural design, size of the house and basic project concept were favorably regarded by a majority of the Commission, the overall height of the house, inclusive of a raised building pad, and 134-foot length of the house to the west, which necessitated **removal of a 19" oak tree, were problematic to an extent.**

Accordingly, the item was continued with direction to reduce overall height, explore options to reduce building length and/or improve modulation along the lengthy west wing, retain the oak tree, and provide a site survey showing existing conditions. This included specifying the location of a large deodar cedar tree in the rear yard of the adjacent property to the west.

### B. REVISIONS & EVALUATION:

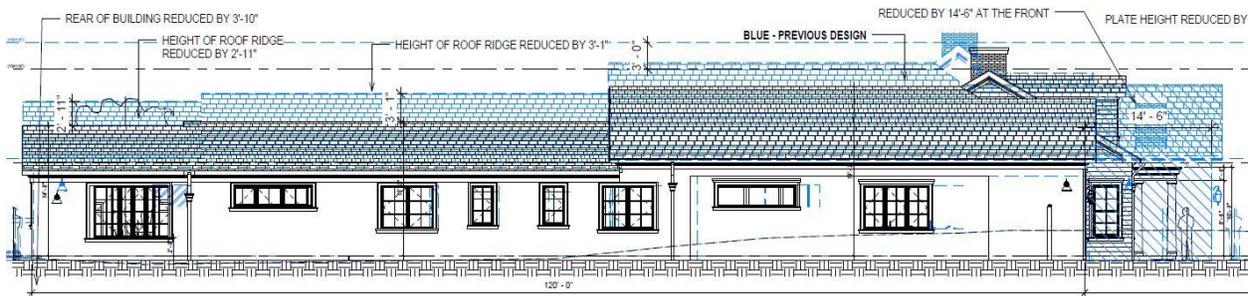
#### *Building Height*

**The proposed home's height has been reduced by approximately 3 feet, accomplished through lowered plate height and revised the roof pitch. Maximum structure height from finished grade would be 21'-8", as opposed to 24'-8" as originally proposed.**

In order to maintain positive drainage to the street, proposed pad elevation(s) could not be lowered. Finished pad and floor elevations at 1517.00 and 1517.50 remain consistent with the original project. Increased pad height would continue to contribute to overall project height. However, the revised project now achieves an overall maximum height below the 28-foot hillside standard: **the 21'-8" structure height would combine with the raised pad to yield a total maximum height of approximately 27'-6".** The height

exemption allowed for qualified architectural extensions that was previously sought is no longer part of the project.

Although the final building pad elevation was not lowered as anticipated, the changes to **the home's height and profile are significant in staff's estimation, yielding a more linear mass** that imparts a single-story impression. The changes are best reflected on Sheet A-6, where the previous and current building profiles are compared. The west elevation is shown below:



### *Building Length*

In **addition to the home's initial height, the length of the home's west wing has** been reduced to 120 feet, thereby negating a 2nd exception that was required as part of the original project. The 14-foot reduction is most apparent to the front, at the southwest corner, where the library has been reduced in size and recessed from the adjacent foyer, as opposed to projecting forward beyond it. A corresponding benefit pertains to the adjacent retaining wall proposed along the west slope; its length has been reduced by approximately 15 feet, further ensuring preservation of the slope/grade proximate to the neighboring deodar cedar.

### *Trees*

The plans have been revised to show a large deodar cedar tree in the back yard of the neighboring property to the west at 4620 Alta Canyada Blvd. **The project's arborist** revisited the site and determined that the tree is adequately separated and elevated from the construction zone and no impacts are anticipated.

**Revisions to the home's layout have yielded** approximately 6 feet of separation from the **19" Palmer oak tree, slightly above the 5.5 feet required by code.** Removal of the tree is still requested and a condition requiring a Tree Removal Permit is again included as part of the conditions of approval.

The grading plan still shows soil berms within the protection buffers of two large rear yard oaks and the front sycamores near the driveway. There was not enough time to

accurately revise the civil plans. Conditions of approval #14-16 remain in place, and will require revisions to the grading plan.

*Survey*

**Per the Commission’s request, the plan set now includes a survey of the existing property, with corresponding elevations to substantiate project height.**

In all, the revised residence compares with the original project as follows:

	STANDARD	W/SFG ADJUST.	ORIGINAL PROJECT	REVISED PROJECT
Floor Area:	5,354 sf	n/a	5,343 sf	5,221 sf
Front SB:	25 feet	n/a	<b>26'-9"</b>	<b>30'-11"</b>
West Side SB	<b>11'-4"</b>	n/a	<b>11'-4"</b>	<b>11'-4"</b>
East Side SB	<b>11'-4"</b>	n/a	<b>11'-6"</b>	<b>11'-6"</b>
Rear SB:	15 feet	n/a	15 feet	15 feet
Height	---	---	---	---
Structure:	28 feet	n/a	<b>24'-8"</b>	<b>21'-8"</b>
Overall:	28 feet	n/a	<b>30'-6"</b>	<b>27'-6"</b>

C. FINDINGS:

1. The project, through elements of architectural and landscape design, will enhance its setting.

The project uses logical site planning, low-profile massing and refined detailing to achieve its overall scope, while maintaining major tree landscaping and adding landscape accents. Staff supports the finding.

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

Pad area would be expanded to accommodate the new footprint and to achieve desired floor area, and some sloped areas would be altered in conjunction, but not to an extent **that would exhaust or degrade the site’s open space to an unreasonable level.** Staff supports the finding.

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

With regard to safety, the project would provide ample and compliant parking and maintain vehicular access to the public street; no public health or welfare issues are raised by the

provision of a new/replacement single-family residence on the site. Staff supports the finding.

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

The project would introduce a new home on a residential lot in a subdivided and developed area at a code-compliant density. The house would be larger than the neighborhood average, but no appreciable adverse effects would result from the home's size and continued single-family residential use of the property. Staff supports the finding.

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

The project will alter some hillside terrain, but not to an excessive extent, and protect most significant trees by primarily utilizing existing pad area for the new home. It would also introduce code-compliant development in terms of density, setbacks and height. Moreover, a single-floor plan would be employed in recognition of the largely one-story character of the immediate area. 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 Objective 4.1 which states **"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."** Staff supports the 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, consisting of an enhanced single-family residential use, will not result in a change of use or intensification of development beyond those allowed in the General Plan and Hillside Development Ordinance. Staff supports the finding.

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

All primary hillside requisites are satisfied by the project, while lack of recommended modulation along a portion of the west wing would be alleviated by the home's reduced height, profile and length, absence of a 2<sup>nd</sup>-floor level and lack of prominent offsite visibility. Staff supports the 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 lot is somewhat isolated and well screened, and views of the residence would be primarily from short range. From these resultant vantage points, the home would be seen as traditionally massed and detailed, screened by existing and proposed landscaping, and of modest height and profile. Staff supports the finding.

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

Although the house would be seen from short range, it is not in a position to impact views from neighboring properties considering the location, elevation and orientation of proximate homes and non-hillside character of the Indiana Avenue streetscape. Staff supports the finding.

#### D. SUMMARY / RECOMMENDATION:

Based on the above discussion, staff has concluded that the revised proposal, through its reduced scale and clarification of technical concerns, is consistent with the Planning **Commission's direction**. It also satisfies required Hillside Development Permit findings as detailed in this memo and revised resolution. Staff therefore recommends that the project **BE APPROVED**, **subject to the conditions of approval listed in Exhibit "A", attached to the draft resolution.**

C: *PDS Studio Inc. / 68 Genoa Street, Unit B / Arcadia, CA 91006*  
*Monte Valido LLC / 68 Genoa Street, Unit A / Arcadia, CA 91006*  
[pchan@pds-studio.com](mailto:pchan@pds-studio.com)

# CITY OF LA CAÑADA FLINTRIDGE

## RESOLUTION NO. 17-xx

A RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION  
OF THE CITY OF LA CAÑADA FLINTRIDGE  
APPROVING HILLSIDE DEVELOPMENT PERMIT 17-19  
FOR A NEW RESIDENCE, RETAINING WALLS, POOL, SPA  
AND RELATED SITE IMPROVEMENTS  
AT 4621 INDIANA AVENUE  
AS REQUESTED BY PDS STUDIO INC.  
ON BEHALF OF  
MONTE VALIDO LLC

WHEREAS, a request by PDS Studio Inc., on behalf on Monte Valido LLC, has been received for a Hillside Development Permit to allow construction of a new residence, retaining walls, pool, spa and related site improvements, said request attached hereto and incorporated herein by reference; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission, on July 11, 2017, after posting and publication in the prescribed manner, held a public meeting, conducted review of the request and continued the item to a date certain of July 25, 2017 to address scale, massing and grading concerns; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission, on July 25, 2017, held a continued public meeting and conducted review of the revised project; 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) 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 July 11, 2017 and update memo dated July 25, 2017 regarding the application for a Hillside Development Permit at 4621 Indiana 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 finds the following:

### Section 1.

*Hillside Development Permit:*

1. The project, through elements of architectural and landscape design, will enhance its setting because the project uses logical site planning, low-profile massing and refined detailing to achieve its overall scope, while maintaining major tree landscaping and adding landscape accents.
2. The project will maximize potential for sensitive use and effective preservation of open space because pad area would be expanded to accommodate the new footprint and to achieve desired floor area, and some sloped areas would be altered in conjunction, but not to an extent that would exhaust or degrade the **site's open space to an unreasonable level.**
3. The project will not be detrimental to the public health, safety, or general welfare because with regard to safety, the project would provide ample and compliant parking and maintain vehicular access to the public street; no public health or welfare issues are raised by the provision of a new/replacement single-family residence on the site.
4. The project will not adversely affect the orderly development of property within the City because the project would introduce a new home on a residential lot in a subdivided and developed area at a code-compliant density. The house would be larger than the neighborhood average, but no appreciable adverse effects would **result from the home's size and continued single-family residential use of the property.**
5. The project will conform to the goals and policies set forth in the General Plan because the project will alter some hillside terrain, but not to an excessive extent, and protect significant trees by primarily utilizing existing pad area for the new home, and introducing code-compliant development in terms of density on the site. Moreover, a single-floor plan would be employed in recognition of the largely one-story character of the immediate area. 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 **Objective 4.1 which states "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."**
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, consisting of an enhanced single-family residential use, will not result in a change of use or intensification of development beyond those allowed in the General Plan and Hillside Development Ordinance.

7. There are special conditions or unique characteristics of the subject property and its location or surroundings which justify exceeding one or more of the provisions set forth in this Chapter to permit project development because all primary hillside requisites are satisfied by the project, while lack of recommended modulation along **a portion of the west wing would be alleviated by the home's reduced** height, profile and length, absence of a 2<sup>nd</sup>-floor level and lack of prominent offsite visibility.
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 lot is somewhat isolated and well screened, and views of the residence would be primarily from short range. From these resultant vantage points, the home would be seen as traditionally massed and detailed, screened by existing and proposed landscaping, and of modest height/profile.
9. The project does not create an avoidable or unreasonable impairment of the view from any other property because although the house would be seen from short range, it is not in a position to impact views from neighboring properties considering the location, elevation and orientation of proximate homes and non-hillside character of the Indiana Avenue streetscape.

Section 2.

Based on the above findings, the Planning Commission of the City of La Cañada Flintridge hereby approves the Hillside Development Permit for a new residence and related site improvements at 4621 Indiana Avenue, subject to the conditions listed in **Exhibit "A"**, attached to this resolution.

PASSED, APPROVED AND ADOPTED this 25<sup>th</sup> day of July, 2017.

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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 17-19  
4621 Indiana 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 Hillside Development Permit 17-19.
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 17-19 Sheets A-1 thru C-1, 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, assessments and other services as invoiced to the City of La Cañada Flintridge, as established by Resolution of the City Council.
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. 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.
13. 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.

*Planning Conditions:*

14. Protective chain-link fencing shall be installed around all protected trees potentially impacted by construction activity and/or within the construction zone prior to the commencement of any grading, demolition, or excavation and shall remain in place until construction activity no longer threatens tree health. Confirmation to this effect shall be required prior to issuance of any permits.
15. All recommendations contained in the arborist report dated May 10, 2017 shall be complied with to the maximum extent possible during all phases of construction.
16. Prior to submittal of the project for plan check, the grading plan shall be revised to eliminate the soils berms (fill) and circular concrete patio where within the protection zones of oak trees #4 and #5.
17. A revised landscape plan demonstrating planting variation along the west side property line shall be reviewed and approval by the Director of Community Development prior to issuance of building permits.
18. A Tree Removal Permit application shall be submitted to the City prior to issuance of building permits.
19. 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.
20. Retaining wall color and material shall be reviewed and approved by the Director of Community Development prior to issuance of permits. In general, split-face material or stucco treatments of recessive color are encouraged.
21. The site shall be watered regularly during all grading activity to limit dust/debris emissions.

*Public Works Conditions:*

22. Provide hydrology study and identify all drainage areas that are tributary to the project site.
23. **Project shall comply with City's Low Impact Development Standards. Record covenant with the Los Angeles County Registrar/Recorder's office for the maintenance of the Best Management Practices (BMPs) per the City's Low Impact Development (LID) prior to the issuance of any permits.**
24. This project disturbs less than one acre of land, the project is subject to the following minimum construction requirements:
  - 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.
25. Construct new driveway approach per City Standard and provide Fire Department approval for allowable width of driveway.
26. **Construct 8" curb and gutter fronting property restore pavement.**
27. 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 permit(s) from the Public Works Department.
28. No above ground structures are to be constructed within the public ROW.

CONSTRUCTION & DEMOLITION (C&D) DEBRIS

29. Project shall comply with **City's Construction and Demolition (C&D) Ordinance 313, per Chapter 9.14 of the City Municipal Code** to satisfy the City's Debris Management requirement.

30. Prior to Demolition and/or Building Permit issuance, the Applicant shall submit a Performance Security, calculated as the lesser of three percent (3%) of the total project valuation or \$10,000. The Performance Security is refunded upon **Applicant's submittal and approval of a Building Debris Management Report** indicating that at least 50% of the total debris generated by the project was reused or recycled.
31. Prior to Final Building Inspection, Applicant shall submit a Building Debris Management Report and obtain Public Works approval. The Building & Safety Department will not complete Final Building Inspection until the Public Works Department makes a determination regarding refund or forfeiture of the Performance Security.
32. Applicant must use a City authorized and permitted waste hauler for all debris, including soil import/export, resulting from construction and demolition activities on the project. A list of authorized waste haulers will be provided to the Applicant.
33. Self-hauling of C&D debris must be authorized by the Department of Public Works prior to Building & Safety issuance of Demolition or Building permit(s). Applicant must submit a Debris Management Plan and a Haul Route Plan, execute a self-haul agreement, as well as fund a Haul Route Manager for monitoring of all self-hauling activities. Self-hauling approval must be acquired from the Public Works Department prior to issuance of any permit(s).

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