

CITY OF LA CAÑADA FLINTRIDGE

PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

February 10, 2015 Meeting

Applicant:

Jaehee Ghanati
3454 W. 1st Street
Los Angeles, CA 90004

Case Types / Numbers:

Second-Floor Review 14-17

Owner:

Ernest Koeppen

Case Planner:

Roger Cantrell
Consulting Architect/Planner

Site Address:

4812 Crown Avenue

1. Request:

The request is to allow construction of a new two-story house comprising 2,871 sq. ft. on a 7,976 sq. ft. property. The house area is exclusive of a planned 3,473 sf basement, exempt from floor area limits.

2. Location:

The site is on the east side of Crown Avenue, north of San Juan Way, in the R-1-7,500 zone.

3. Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends that the request **BE APPROVED**, subject to the conditions listed in Exhibit "A", attached to the draft resolution.

4. Project Size:

Lot area: 7,976 sf

Proposed House:	First Floor	1,761 sf
	<u>Second Floor</u>	<u>1,110 sf</u>
	Total	2,871 sf

Basement: 3,473 sf (area exempt)

Total area as proposed:

2,871 sf

Density:

36%



5. General Plan / Zoning / Existing Land Use:

The Land Use Map identifies the site as Medium Density Residential – Up to 4 Dwelling Units per Acre. The property is designated R-1-7,500 (Single Family Residential – 7,500 Square Foot Minimum Lot Size). The site is occupied by an existing house.

6. Environmental Impact Review:

Staff has determined that the proposed project is Categorically Exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act, under Section 2.5(c)(1) (new construction) of the City of La Cañada Flintridge Guidelines for the Implementation of CEQA.

7. Previous Action: None

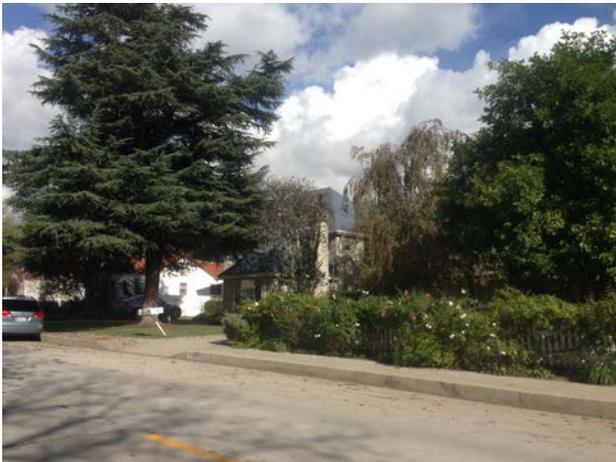
8. Pending and Potential Actions:

Plan check and issuance of building permit.

9. Staff Analysis:

A. Context:

The lower end of Crown Avenue is nearly flat, and characterized by a fairly uniform pattern of subdivision and house design dating from the immediate postwar era. The subject property is typical in its 60-foot width and 133-foot depth. Similar lot dimensions are found on the abutting properties. With the street ascending to the north at only around 2%, the site and its neighbors are at virtually the same level.



East side of Crown, north of subject house . . . and south

Two-story houses are becoming more common in the neighborhood, generally additions showing a graceful approach to relating to the ground floor and other houses.

WEST SIDE:



House across street (2-story in background)



House across street w/ 2-story 4819 adjacent



House to north across street at 4819

EAST SIDE:



Subject property



House to north at 4824



House farther north at 4832

The mix of houses is reflected in the following table:

Address	House Size	Lot Size	Density %	# Stories	Year Blt
4800 Crown Ave.	1,834	8,221	22.3	1	1947
4804 Crown Ave.	1,518	8,213	18.5	1	1939
4808 Crown Ave.	1,643	8,188	20.0	1	1947
4809 Crown Ave.	1,654	8,138	20.3	1	1946
4813 Crown Ave.	2,062	7,768	26.5	1	1947
4818 Crown Ave.	1,908	8,057	23.7	1	1949
4819 Crown Ave.	2,351	7,787	30.2	2	1947
4823 Crown Ave.	1,365	7,729	17.7	1	1947
4824 Crown Ave.	2,194	8,028	27.3	2	1947
4830 Crown Ave.	2,036	8,133	25.0	1	1932
4827 Alminar Ave.	1,907	7,826	24.3	2	1946
4833 Alminar Ave.	1,907	7,830	24.3	1	1946
4837 Alminar Ave.	1,852	7,835	23.6	1	1946
4841 Alminar Ave.	1,876	7,857	23.9	1	1947
4847 Alminar Ave.	1,106	7,340	15.1	1	1947
4851 Alminar Ave.	1,124	7,932	14.2	1	1947
Average:	1,771 sf	7,930 sf	22.3		
4812 Crown Ave.	2,330 sf	7,976 sf	29.2	2	

Note: The table lists assessor record figures which do not include garages and other solid-roof non-living areas.

As the table shows, the neighborhood dates generally from the late 1940s, with no second-generation houses in the immediate vicinity. The table reflects the lower density more typical of midcentury. Thus the density of this new development is near the top of the range, exceeded by only one of the sixteen houses. However, as seen in the photographs and discussed further on, this does not necessarily indicate any issue of neighborhood compatibility.

B. Project Description:

The request involves construction of a new two-story house with an attached garage. The house would be built to the limit of allowable floor area. It would also be built at or within inches of the setback limits except at the rear and at the south side second floor. Beyond maximizing floor area, the project would utilize the City's exemption for basement area with a basement larger than the rest of the house, to be devoted to antique car storage. The vehicular access to the storage would be via a lift in one of the two conventional garage spaces.

The house steps back at portions of the second floor, chiefly at the front projection over the garage and at the south side. The garage door would be the feature closest to the street, and it is indicated as a detailed planked pattern with no windows. The house design uses fairly steep roof pitches and modest overhangs with plain fascia boards. There is a lack of ornament in general, except at the entry featuring a stone veneer portal and plaster architrave. The windows are laid out in a spare and orderly manner. Most notably, there is only one side-facing second-floor window, in the bedroom located midway along the north elevation.

The project would conform to code requirements as follows:

	<u>Standard</u>	<u>Project</u>
Floor /Roofed Area:	2,871 sf	2,871 sf
Front SB:	28'-6"	28'-6"
South Side SB		
1 st floor:	6'-0"	6'-0"
2 nd floor:	12'-0"	19'-6"
North Side SB		
1 st floor:	6'-0"	6'-9"
2 nd floor:	12'-0"	12'-6"
Rear SB, house:	15'-0"	49'-6"
Height, house:	28'-0"	25'-10"

C. Second-Floor Review:

Privacy

The south side second floor would have no windows and would be set back 7'-6" more than the code minimum. As such, it would pose no issues. On the north side, the setback would be only 6 inches more than the code minimum, and it would have only a single window situated midway within the elevation, and thus overlooking the neighboring roof, far from the yards. Thus the most sensitive interfaces, the sides, raise no particular Second-Floor Review issues beyond what is conventionally handled through sideyard screening, and staff is recommending a condition to that effect.

The front second-floor windows are limited to a single window of the front bedroom and a paired window facing the stair volume space. A street-facing bedroom window is not ideal, but is preferable to one facing the neighboring house and still proximate to the street.

Finally, the rear elevation has the master bathroom window and a window and glass doors for the master bedroom. The doors open onto a balcony with a depth of only 2 feet and a width of 8 feet. It would be located at the center of the property. Although the balcony would be as far as possible from the neighboring yards and of such minimal depth to ensure that it would be basically decorative, the condition requiring sideyard screening would be reasonable. It is not apparent that existing screening is otherwise effective, and new screening is hardly an onerous requirement as it is a conventional feature in most sideyards.

Design

As mentioned previously, the stepping-back of the second floor is a positive feature of the project. It is also key to neighborhood compatibility in a setting where several two-story houses have generous recessing of the second floor from the street. The compatibility is most apparent with the neighboring house at 4824, which has less detailed articulation than many other houses on the block, but has attractive steep roofs and a deeply set back two-story mass as emulated in the project.

The front elevation seems to express that stepping back well until the roof and floor plans are compared. Then it becomes apparent that the entry bay of the west elevation is essentially flush

across its width and with the second floor above. This violates the Single-Family Residential Design Guidelines section on Façade Treatment, which states that

- ~ *Facades should be articulated with an orderly and rhythmic layout of windows and recessed planes. Large areas of flat, blank wall and lack of treatment are strongly discouraged.*
- ~ *Smaller entries help create a more human scale to a home and are strongly encouraged.*

It is also contrary to the Entries provisions:

- ~ *Recessed entries can create an elegant, intimate feel while adding human scale to a home and are strongly encouraged.*
- ~ *One-story roofs or overhangs that serve as porches and appropriate to the architectural style, are strongly encouraged.*

Because of these concerns, staff is recommending a condition that an arcade or portico be extended forward from the entry. Another recommendation is for the transitional south roof seen above the living room on the west elevation, 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. The portico would also make the protruding garage more graceful. In conjunction with that work, the decorative entry lintel should be either presented in a manner that upholds the integrity of the design or eliminated.

Detail

Refinement is a particularly important part of Second-Floor Review when the house is raising the profile of a predominantly one-story neighborhood. The Single-Family Residential Design Guidelines states that

- ~ *Refining elements, such as facade and roof articulation, wall texture, ornamental details, and layered landscaping, add visual interest and reduce the impression of scale.*
- ~ *Ornamental details are essential to giving a residence the charm and refinement to make it a home and collectively to create a welcoming neighborhood. Details should be carefully designed rather than hastily applied from an off-the-shelf source, and should be delicate in scale as befitting the single-family use.*
- ~ *Architectural features such as decorative moldings, accent windows, dormers, chimneys, balconies and railings, and landscaped elements such as lattices, are encouraged.*

While the building massing is sufficiently interesting, the house is shown without any detail that would make it relate to human scale and traditional neighborhood context. Detail such as decorative molding, detailed window frames and muntins, building bases, and open soffits with exposed rafter tails is recommended as a requirement per draft condition.

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 conditioned. 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 conditioned, 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 conditioned 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 conditioned 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.

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

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 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 conditioned.
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 conditioned, 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 conditioned 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 10th day of February, 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. 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.
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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