

CITY OF LA CAÑADA FLINTRIDGE

PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

January 27, 2015 meeting

Applicant/Property Owner:

Ken and Lori Gorvetian
1345 Green Lane
La Canada Flintridge, CA 91011

Case Type / Number:

Second-floor Review 14-41

Site Address:

655 Hillcrest Avenue

Case Planner:

Chris Gjolme ~ Planner

1. Request:

The request is for Second-floor Review to allow construction of a new 8,635 sq. ft. 2-story residence on a 47,045 sq. ft. non-hillside lot. The home would comply with all floor area, setback and height limits.

2. Location:

The site is on the north side of Hillcrest Avenue, one lot east of its intersection with Alta Vista Drive and across from Dartmouth Place, in the R-1-40,000 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:	47,045 sq. ft.
Proposed 1 st -floor, garage and patios:	6,285 sq. ft.
Proposed 2 nd -floor:	2,350 sq. ft.
Total:	8,635 sq. ft.
FAR:	0.18

5. General Plan / Zoning / Existing Land Use:

The Land Use Map identifies the site as Estate Density Residential – Max. of 1 Dwelling

Unit per Acre. The property is designated R-1-40,000 (Single Family Residential – 40,000 Square Foot Minimum Lot Size). The site is developed with a single-story residence, garage and swimming pool, all of which would be removed in conjunction with project approval.

6. Environmental Impact Review:

Staff has determined that the proposed project 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.

7. Previous Action:

None

8. Pending and Potential Actions:

Plan check, Fire Dept. approval and issuance of building permit.

9. Staff Analysis:

A. Context:

Hillcrest Avenue is one of the most impressive examples of the grand, yet graceful, scale of the Flintridge neighborhoods developed in the early years of this century. Like most of Flintridge, this area provides significant stands of trees, but the properties are so generously scaled as to also allow sweeping views into the properties. Many estates along this street uphold this architectural tradition, exemplified by Spanish revival designs. The subject property is more representative of a later era in which design detail and integrity was lost to simpler traditional styles, as evidenced by the single-story home built in the 1953 that currently occupies the site.

Large houses are in their appropriate setting of scale in this area. Along Hillcrest, Alta Vista and other nearby streets, the 17 parcels in the following survey average 45,444 sf in area. The 17 houses averaged approximately 5,700 sf in floor area, exclusive of garages and open roofed areas counted by the City toward its floor area limit.

Address:	House Size (sf):	Lot Size (sf):	FAR:
4055 Alta Vista	2,714	26,100	0.10
4033 Alta Vista	9,664	77,101	0.12
4025 Alta Vista	3,861	47,020	0.08
3972 Alta Vista	8,172	53,420	0.15
624 Chatham	3,294	22,540	0.15
524 Dartmouth	4,153	25,690	0.16
519 Dartmouth	3,487	26,610	0.13
607 Foxwood	13,097	31,796	0.41

645 Hillcrest	7,685	41,818	0.18
633 Hillcrest	3,187	23,360	0.14
665 Hillcrest	2,266	40,511	0.06
717 Hillcrest	6,429	93,218	0.07
731 Hillcrest	5,214	40,511	0.13
739 Hillcrest	7,319	134,600	0.05
602 Hillcrest	3,132	21,840	0.14
612 Hillcrest	2,930	21,120	0.14
718 Hillcrest	9,885	45,302	0.22
Average	5,676 sf	45,444 sf	0.13
*655 Hillcrest	7,185 sf	47,045 sf	0.15

***Project site** – above figures exclude garages and other non-habitable areas and are intended for general comparison only

The subject lot is just over 47,000 sq. ft. and is one of four lots that comprise a unique island bounded by Alta Vista’s curved course to the north and west and Hillcrest Avenue to the south and east. Dual frontage along two streets qualifies each of the lots as ‘through lots’, though this aspect is moot in the case of the project given the location of the proposed residence.

Views into the subject property are open along the 107-foot Hillcrest frontage, from which a large level yard fronts the existing residence, which has a low-profile pleasing scale. To the rear, the site descends to Alta Vista Drive, as do the other four parcels on this block. That gradient is fairly steep, but combines with the large flat pad to yield an average slope of 14.36%, just below the 15% hillside standard.



B. Project Description:

The project involves construction of a two-story residence with an attached 3-car garage. The project would comply with all floor area, setback and height requirements.

The 1st floor would afford generous living, family and dining area as well as the master bedroom suite. Beyond a varied footprint, modulation of the 1st-floor footprint would occur to the front where the garage would project forward and a wide covered porch would grace the entry. Compliant side 14-foot side setbacks would be provided to the east and west, with the west setback measured to a light well retaining wall; the home’s setback to the west would increase to 18’-8”. As a note, the new footprint would remedy longstanding side setbacks that are now considered deficient (5 and 10 feet to the east and

west, respectively). To the front, the garage ‘wing’ would be set back 48’-6” from the property line, well above the approximate 35-foot requirement for the site. Interior floor area would combine with garage and patio area to yield 6,285 sq. ft. at the 1st-floor level.

The 2nd-floor would mirror the 1st-floor, with recesses along all sides, and would add 2,350 sq. ft. Side setbacks in excess of the 20-foot code requirement would be provided; a 24’-5” setback is proposed to the west while a 27-foot setback would be to the east. Recession from the garage wing would increase the front setback at the 2nd-floor level to approximately 62 feet. The 2nd-floor would include four bedrooms, a study/game room above the garage, and, somewhat unique, would be served by 3 staircases. Total floor area for the 2-story residence and garage would be 8,635 sq. ft., well below the 11,159 sq. ft. limit for the site.

A maximum height of 31 feet would be achieved at the home’s central ridge as seen from the front, within the 32-foot limit for the site. Building height would step down as seen from the sides, with a lesser 26-foot evident along the garage wing, important considering the home’s 102-foot length presented to the west. In all, the project compares with code standards as follows:

	STANDARD	EXISTING	PROPOSED
Floor Area:	11,159 sq. ft.	4,200 sf (Demo)	8,635 sq. ft.
Front SB:	35 feet	65 feet	48’-6”
West Side SB			
1st floor:	14 feet	10 feet	18’-8” (res.)
2nd floor:	20 feet	n/a	24’-5”
East Side SB			
1st floor:	14 feet	5 feet	14 feet
2nd floor:	20 feet	n/a	27 feet
Rear SB:	15	200 feet	194 feet
Height:	32 feet	16 feet	31 feet (max.)

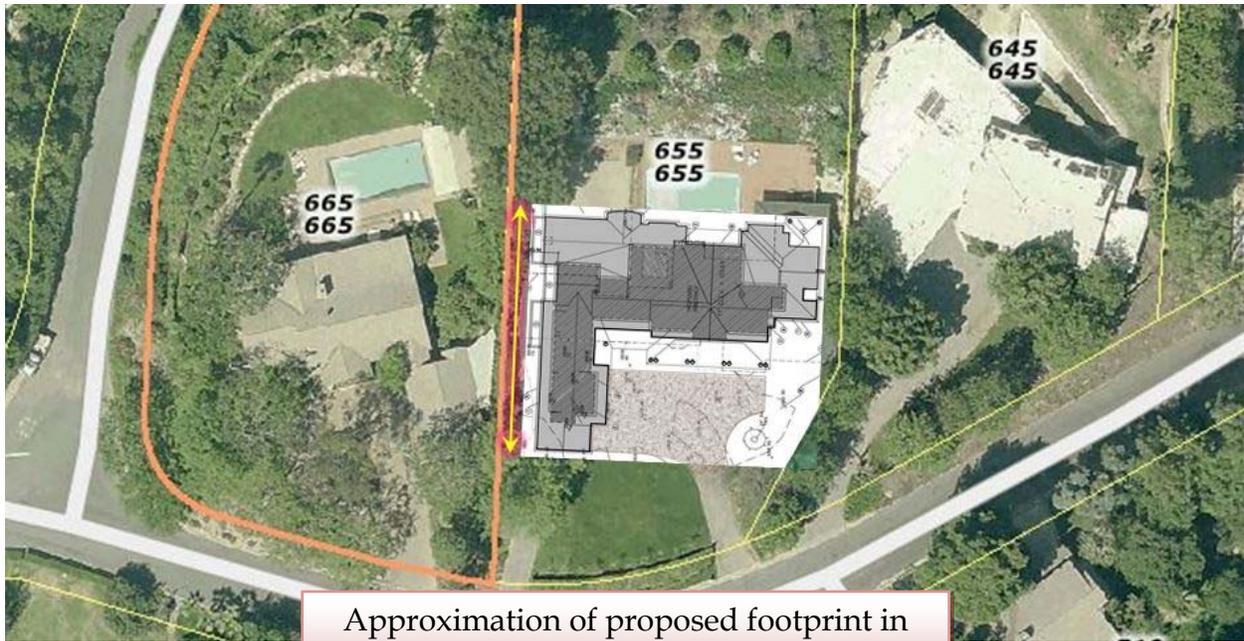
C. Second Floor Review:

Discussion

The home reflects a Traditional/Cape Cod design, as evidenced by shingle siding, steep gables and accented white woodwork. The context and project description sections already addressed several spatial and site characteristics which indicate that the proposal is appropriate for the subject lot and area, including:

- Compliant floor area well below the limit for the lot.
- 0.15 project FAR vs. 0.13 neighborhood average FAR
- Ample 2nd-floor setbacks to the front and sides.
- Average building height below code limits.

More specifically, increased setbacks would aid in accommodating the size and scale of the home, in particular to the sides where existing non-conforming setbacks would be remedied by the project through provision of code-minimum 14-foot setbacks. To the front, a 48-foot front setback measured to the single-story garage wing is proposed, increasing to 62 feet at the 2nd-floor level. Behind the garage wing, the central mass of the new home would be comparably sited to the existing structure, which is well set back from Hillcrest Avenue in a capacious location capable of supporting larger development such as that proposed.



Approximation of proposed footprint in relation to neighboring homes.

Another consideration is the height of the project. The home's main east-west ridge would be 31 feet in height. However, structure height from the sides would be stepped, with an average height of 26 feet presented, important considering the adjacency of smaller homes to the east and west, in particular the home to the west at 665 Hillcrest Avenue, which is at a lower elevation and would have view of the new garage wing. Although this neighboring home is positioned at an angle and extends away from the common property line, the increased size and length of the new west facade (*highlighted in the above photo*) warrants additional landscaping to enhance buffering along the property line, and a condition of approval to this effect is included.

Second-floor windows relate well to the design and are not excessive in staff's estimation. Smaller windows are used for bedroom, bathroom and study area along the west elevation. Bedroom #6 would employ standard windows while a tall 3-pane array would be used for a staircase. To the east, a single bedroom window flanking a chimney is proposed, removing this side of the house entirely from view/privacy concerns. Decks and balconies typical of many 2-story projects that have come before the Commission are not proposed.

The City's Residential Design Guidelines address four primary considerations, which are italicized in bold font. Staff's favorable summary analysis of each consideration follows in parenthesis:

- ***Neighborhood Compatibility*** (the Traditional/Cape Cod architectural style combines with deep front and rear setbacks to minimize the massing of the structure. The size of the home is proportionate to the site while the overall visual scale of the home would not be excessive given the articulation demonstrated and estate character of the area, within which other large 2-story homes are found.
- ***Site Development*** (the home would utilize existing pad area and would provide increased side setbacks and ample front and rear setbacks while preserving the entirety of a wooded slope to the rear. The garage wing allows for retention of driveway access to the east and provision of 3 non-street facing parking spaces.
- ***Physical Design Components*** (the project includes two primary building wings and mirrored floor levels that result in recessed and graceful massing. The architecture provides facade and roof articulation, wall texture, and ornamental details that add visual interest.)
- ***Landscaping*** (is served by preserving a heavily wooded slope and perimeter trees already in place. Enhancement along the west side property line is recommended in conjunction with project approval.)

Findings

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

The proposed residence would be well articulated and tastefully detailed in a manner representative of the Traditional/Cape Cod style while compliant and ample setbacks are provided at both floor levels, including greater than required front and side setbacks to the proposed 2nd floor. Enhanced landscaping would be provided to the west to buffer the home's fairly prominent garage wing. Staff supports the finding.

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

The proposed home is large and two stories, but sensitively massed, and would not convey an excessive visual scale considering the central and recessed location of the second floor atop a proportionate footprint. Other mid-to-large homes of comparable scale are found on nearby streets while the subject home would utilize rustic materials and colors that would integrate well within the neighborhood's estate quality. Staff supports the finding.

3. The two-story design protects public views, aesthetics, privacy and property

values of the neighbors.

View of the new home would be possible though not to an extent that public views or the visual quality of the neighborhood would be unduly compromised. In general, neighboring homes are adequately separated and/or screened while the 2nd-floor window array is not excessive or insensitive to neighboring properties. Enhanced tree screening would provide further buffering of the new home for the benefit of the neighbor to the west. 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, massing and materials utilized by the project relate well with the site and immediate area and would be consistent with the primary directives of the City's Residential Design Guidelines, the foremost consideration of which is neighborhood and streetscape compatibility, which the project would achieve. Staff supports the finding.

D. Recommendation:

Based on the above discussion, the project is well designed and suited to the site and neighborhood. Therefore, staff recommends that the request **BE APPROVED**, subject to conditions listed in Exhibit "A", attached to the draft resolution.

C: *Ken and Lori Gorvetian / 1345 Green Lane / La Canada Flintridge, CA / 91011*
 Craig Stoddard / 4452 Ocean View Blvd. #201 / Montrose, CA / 91020

CITY OF **LA CAÑADA FLINTRIDGE**

RESOLUTION NO. 15-xx

**A RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION
OF THE CITY OF LA CAÑADA FLINTRIDGE
APPROVING SECOND-FLOOR REVIEW 14-41
FOR A NEW TWO-STORY RESIDENCE
AND RELATED SITE IMPROVEMENTS
AT 655 HILLCREST AVENUE
AS REQUESTED BY
KEN AND LORI GORVETIAN**

WHEREAS, a request by Ken and Lori Gorvetian has been received for Second-floor Review to allow the construction of a new two-story house and related site improvements, said request attached hereto and incorporated herein by reference; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission, on January 27, 2015, after notification in the prescribed manner, held a public hearing and conducted a review of the request; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission reviewed the project and determined that no significant environmental impacts would result from the project, which is Categorical 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; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission has reviewed the facts contained in the staff report dated January 27, 2015 regarding the application for Second-floor Review at 655 Hillcrest Avenue, and heard and considered the testimony of the applicant and the public; and voted to continue the project for redesign; and

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

Section 1:

Second-floor Review:

1. The two-story design includes adequate setbacks, screening and modulation because the proposed residence would be well articulated and tastefully detailed in a manner representative of the Traditional/Cape Cod style while compliant and ample setbacks are provided at both floor levels, including greater than required front and side setbacks to the proposed 2nd floor. Enhanced landscaping would be provided to the west to buffer the home's fairly prominent

garage wing.

2. The two-story design preserves the existing scale and character of the surrounding neighborhood because the proposed home is large and two stories, but sensitively massed, and would not convey an excessive visual scale considering the central and recessed location of the second floor atop a proportionate footprint. Other mid-to-large homes of comparable scale are found on nearby streets while the subject home would utilize rustic materials and colors that would integrate well within the neighborhood's estate quality.
3. The two-story design protects public views, aesthetics, privacy and property values of the neighbors because view of the new home would be possible though not to an extent that public views or the visual quality of the neighborhood would be unduly compromised. In general, neighboring homes are adequately separated and/or screened while the 2nd-floor window array is not excessive or insensitive to neighboring properties. Enhanced tree screening would provide further buffering of the new home for the benefit of the neighbor to the west.
4. The two-story design is consistent with the Residential Design Guidelines as adopted by resolution of the City Council because the design, massing and materials utilized by the project relate well with the site and immediate area and would be consistent with the primary directives of the City's Residential Design Guidelines, the foremost consideration of which is neighborhood and streetscape compatibility, which the project would achieve.

Section 2:

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved that the Planning Commission approves Second-floor Review 14-41 for a new 2-story residence and related site improvements, subject to the conditions listed in Exhibit "A", attached to this resolution.

PASSED, APPROVED AND ADOPTED this 27th day of January, 2015.

Chair of the Planning Commission

ATTEST:

Secretary to the Planning Commission

EXHIBIT "A"
CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL
SECOND-FLOOR REVIEW 14-41
655 Hillcrest Avenue

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 14-41.
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 project plans labeled Second-floor Review 14-41, Sheets A1.1-A3.2, 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 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.

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 and assessments to the City of La Cañada Flintridge, as established by ordinance, resolution or policy 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 Second-Floor Review. 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 Division 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. 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.

12. 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.
13. An onsite drainage plan shall be provided and approved in conjunction with project plan check.
14. A Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) shall be provided and approved prior to issuance of permits.
15. Any work in the public right-of-way shall conform to City standards, codes and requirements.
16. An encroachment and/or excavation permit shall be required for any work within the public right-of-way.
17. The right-of-way behind the edge of pavement shall have a 2% to 4% slope graded to drain towards the street.
18. The new driveway apron shall conform to the provisions of Chapter 8.01 of the Municipal Code and the Standard Plans for the Public Works Construction (SPPWC), latest edition.
19. Primary roof and wall colors shall be reviewed and approved by staff prior to issuance of building permits.
20. Prior to issuance of building permits, a landscape plan shall be reviewed and approved by the Director of Community Development or his designee. Said plan shall indicate additional tree screening along the west side property line of appropriate species, planting height and density to buffer the new residence.
21. 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.
22. 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.

23. Over-height light standards along the west side property line shall be removed prior to final clearance and issuance of occupancy.
24. The City of La Cañada Flintridge is a Permittee under the Los Angeles County National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System, NPDES Permit No. CAS614001 and as such is required by federal and state law to implement procedures to prevent and control the entry of pollutants and non-storm water discharges into the City’s storm drain system to the maximum extent practicable. No person shall commence or continue any construction project in the City of La Cañada Flintridge that causes the disturbance of City right-of-way by clearing, grading, cold milling, saw cutting, paving, or excavating without obtaining a permit from the City. Pursuant to state and federal law, such permit shall include NPDES requirement as summarized below. The following requirements shall apply to all projects undergoing construction in the City of La Cañada Flintridge. The requirements set forth below shall apply at the time of demolition of an existing structure or construction.
 1. No washing of construction or other industrial vehicles shall be allowed adjacent to a construction site. No water from washing vehicles on a construction site is allowed to run off into the City’s storm drain system.
 2. Sediment, construction waste, and other pollutants from construction sites and parking areas shall be retained on the site to the maximum extent practicable.
 3. The discharge from washing out concrete trucks and saw cutting, cold milling materials to the gutter or storm drain system is prohibited.
 4. Any sediment or other materials which are not retained on the site shall be removed the same day prior to leaving the site. Where determined necessary by the City Engineer or his or her designated representative, a temporary sediment barrier shall be installed.
 5. On an emergency basis only, plastic covering may be utilized to prevent erosion of an otherwise unprotected area, along with runoff devices to intercept and effectively convey the runoff to the storm drain system after elimination of contaminants.
 6. Drainage controls shall be utilized, as needed, depending on the extent of

proposed construction activities.

7. Contractor shall refer to and be familiar with the most recent edition of the Construction Best Management Practices Handbook, produced and published by the Storm Water Quality Task Force, to be used for specific guidance on selecting Best Management Practices for reducing pollutants in storm water discharges from construction activities.
8. Littering. No person shall throw, deposit, place, leave, maintain, keep or permit to be thrown, deposited, placed, left or maintained or kept, any refuse, rubbish, garbage, broken concrete, or any other discarded or abandoned, articles or accumulations, in or upon any street, alley, sidewalk, storm drain, inlet, catch basin conduit or drainage structure, business place, or upon any public or private plot of land in the City, so that the same might be or become a pollutant, except in containers, recycling bags, or other lawfully established waste disposal facilities.

Whenever an authorized inspector has reasonable cause to believe that there exists on the construction site any condition which constitutes a violation of the provisions of the requirements herein, the permit will be voided and no longer in effect, and all construction work on the site shall be terminated at the contractor's expense.

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