

CITY OF LA CAÑADA FLINTRIDGE

PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

June 23, 2015 Hearing

Property Owner/Applicant:

Juliet Kim
4508 Littleton Place
La Canada Flintridge, CA 91011

Case Types/Numbers:

Second Floor Review 15-06
Modification 15-02

Site Address:

4508 Littleton Place

Project Planner:

Jo-Anne Parinas

1. Request: The request is for a Second Floor Review and Setback Modification to allow the construction of a 3,700-square foot two-story house. A Setback Modification is required because the project encroaches 3'-0" into the required 8'-0" first-floor north side setback.

2. Location: The property is located on the east side of Littleton Place, North of its intersection with Foothill Boulevard, in the R-1-10,000 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:	10,440 sq. ft.
First Floor:	1,887 sq. ft.
Garage:	434 sq. ft.
Second Floor:	1,379 sq. ft.
Total:	3,700 sq. ft.
FAR:	0.35

5. General Plan/Zoning/Existing Land Use: The General Plan Land Use Map designates the site Low Density Residential (up to 4 dwelling units per acre). The site is zoned R-1-10,000 (Single Family Residential - 10,000 Square Foot Minimum Lot Size). The site is presently developed with a single-story residence.

6. Environmental Impact Review: Based on the review of the Initial Study Questionnaire and related materials, staff has determined that no significant environmental impacts would result from the project, which is exempt from the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under 2.5(a)(4)(i)(Additions) and 2.5(e)(1)(minor variances) of the City of La Cañada Flintridge Guidelines for the Implementation of CEQA.

7. **Previous Action:** None

8. **Pending and Potential Actions:**

Plan check submittal and issuance of building permits.

9. **Staff Analysis:**

A. Context: The project site is located on the east side of Littleton Place just North of its intersection with Foothill Boulevard. Littleton Place is a 450' long street that ascends from south to north with lots that vary in size and shape. Existing improvements on the site include the single-story residence and swimming pool.

A survey of the immediate neighborhood shows that the neighborhood is composed of primarily single-story homes. The following table shows lot sizes, house sizes, floor area ratios and number of stories for 10 neighboring properties:



Adjacent Properties Chart

Address	Lot Size	House Size	FAR	Number of Stories
4502 Littleton Place	14,080 sf	2,173 sf	0.15	1
4512 Littleton Place	12,070 sf	1,662 sf	0.14	1
4519 Littleton Place	21,120 sf	1,948 sf	0.09	1
4520 Littleton Place	14,400 sf	2,686 sf	0.19	2
4529 Littleton Place	17,450 sf	1,892 sf	0.11	1
4530 Littleton Place	15,700 sf	2,110 sf	0.13	1
4537 Littleton Place	15,870 sf	1,858 sf	0.12	1
4538 Littleton Place	15,100 sf	1,798 sf	0.12	1
4542 Littleton Place	18,750 sf	2,088 sf	0.11	1
4543 Littleton Place	19,200sf	1,643 sf	0.09	1
Average (Mean):	16,374 sf	1,986 sf	0.13	---

4508 Littleton Place	10,440 sf	3,266 sf	0.31	2
----------------------	-----------	----------	------	---

(floor area figures DO NOT include garages & other exterior covered area & are intended for general comparison only)

Under the Floor Area Ratio (FAR) standard for lots of this size, the project site could support a house of 3,701 square feet. The proposed house is within its allowable floor area based on its 10,440-square foot lot size. Although the subject property is the smallest lot in the street and would have the largest home, the proposed house's architectural style and existing mature Oak

trees along the front of the property mitigate the visual/massing impacts on the neighborhood and allows the project to relate well to its location. Although the neighborhood is composed of primarily single-story homes, there is another two-story home present in the area. In staff's opinion, the request is appropriate for the site and is not incompatible with the character of the area.

B. Project Description: The request involves the demolition of approximately 40% of the existing residence, expansion of the first-floor and the construction of a new second-floor. The proposed house would have a 1,887-square foot first floor, 434-square foot garage, and a 1,379-square foot second floor. The first floor contains the following rooms: kitchen, dining room, living room, one bedroom, library/office and laundry room. The second floor has two bedrooms, a bathroom, and a master bedroom suite.

The first floor of the proposed house is set back 5'-0" and 8'-11" respectively from the northerly and southerly property lines while the second floor is set back 16'-11" on both the north and south sides. The house is set back 43'-9" and 35'-1" respectively from the front and rear property lines. Approval of a Setback Modification is required because the project involves the retention of the existing house's legal non-conforming north side setback and demolition of greater than 30-percent of the existing roof area, thus, deeming the proposed construction as a new house.

The proposed residence is compliant with respect to floor area, height, and angle plane. The overall height would be 27'-6". The project compares with code standards as follows:

<u>House</u>	<u>Standard:</u>	<u>Project:</u>
Floor Area:	3,701 sf	3,700 sf
Front SB:	38'-8"	43'-9"
North Side SB:		
1st Floor	8'-0"	5'-0"
2nd Floor	16'-0"	16'-11"
South Side SB:		
1st Floor	8'-0"	8'-11"
2nd Floor	16'-0"	16'-11"
Rear SB:	15'-0"	35'-1"
Height:	32'-0"	27'-6"

D. Second Floor Review:

The purpose of Second Floor Review is to ensure that two-story development is appropriate, in terms of scale and design, for both the subject property and immediate area. Although a review of the Adjacent Properties Chart on page 2 indicates the neighborhood is composed of primarily single-story homes, there is one two-story home present two houses north of the project site. The proposed residence is of a minimal-traditional architectural style. The minimal-traditional architecture is evidenced by the home's roof pitch, short eaves, roof tiles, wood details, and the use of both stucco and stone wall-cladding materials. The proposed house features a variety of planes and has significant modulation provided along the front and side elevations. The modulation at the rear could be improved by addition a trellis patio to visually minimize the horizontal mass of the house from the backyard. In staff's opinion, the request is appropriate for the site and is not incompatible with the character of the area. Further, the proposed house

would not appear to be out of scale with other homes in the neighborhood given the substantial screening long the street provided by the Oak trees and the ascending topography of the street.

Although the proposed second-floor has a balconies and bedroom windows, staff has minimal concerns regarding privacy impacts upon the north, south, and east side neighbors. The front balconies would not have any privacy impacts since views from the balcony are oriented towards the street, while the neighbors to the rear are distant and are partially screened by a tall fence and existing landscaping. A condition of approval has been included in the draft resolution requiring additional landscape screening to be installed along the rear property line. The proposed north elevation has two windows: a bedroom window and a bathroom window. The north side neighbor is approximately 4 feet higher than the project site and is buffered by palm trees. Privacy concerns on the north side could be addressed by requiring the north bedroom windows to be clerestory. The proposed south elevation has one window that serves the master bedroom. The south side windows would not have any privacy impact because the neighbor's roof and a large tree on the project site would block views to the south side neighbor's back yard.

The City's Residential Design Guidelines address four primary considerations, which are italicized in bold font and followed by Staff's favorable analysis:

- ***Neighborhood Compatibility:*** The proposed minimal-traditional style house is compatible with other homes in the neighborhood. The size of the home is proportionate to the site while the overall visual scale of the home would not be excessive due to the existing mature trees that provide buffering from the street, the presence of another two-story house in the area, and the use of compliant second-floor setbacks.
- ***Site Development:*** The second floor would comply with height, angle-plane, and front, side and rear setback requirements. The first-floor side setback encroachment is long-standing and would be retained as part of the project. Based on the zoning code's floor area standards and earlier analysis, the subject lot is able to support the size and shape of the proposed house.
- ***Physical Design Components:*** The proposed minimal-traditional style is well represented in the building materials utilized, which include: roof tiles, wood details, and the use of both stucco and stone wall-cladding. The proposed house would preserve the privacy of adjacent neighbors: the proposed house is distant and screened from the rear neighbors, and is screened by existing landscaping and trees from views to and from the north and south side neighbors.
- ***Landscaping:*** The subject property has existing mature trees onsite that provide screening and visual buffering of the proposed residence from street and neighboring views.

Findings

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

The proposed second-floor setbacks are sufficient given the height of the house and its low profile. The elevations of the house would have sufficient modulation and diverse building

materials to create a house that is consistent with its architectural style. Existing mature trees in front of the house would provide some visual buffering from street view. Staff supports this finding.

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

While the neighborhood is predominately single-story, an existing two-story house is located to the north of the project site. While the largest home in the neighborhood, the proposed two-story house's low profile, height, and existing mature trees help preserve the character and scale of the neighborhood. Staff supports the finding.

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

The proposed second-floor front, side and rear setbacks protect neighboring properties and minimize the impacts of the proposed house on the neighborhood. The proposed house is of minimal-traditional architectural style and is compatible with the designs of houses in the neighborhood. As conditioned, the proposed second floor would have minimal privacy impacts to north, south, and east side neighbors. 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 use of materials proposed for the project relate well with the site and are consistent with the directives of the City's Single Family Residential Design Guidelines. Staff supports the finding.

E. Setback Modification

Issues

The existing house has a legal non-conforming 5'-0" first floor north side setback. The project would retain the existing 5'-0" first floor north side setback and would encroach 3'-0" into the required 8'-0" north side setback. The legal nonconforming status for the existing first floor setback encroachments is lost because the project would require the demolition of more than 30-percent of the existing roofed area. Per Zoning Code Section 11.01.030, the project is considered a new structure, therefore, is required to comply with current code standards. The retention of the 5-foot north side setback is viewed as reasonable considering the longstanding nature of the encroachment (dating from 1950). One of the intentions of establishing setback requirements is to alleviate possible massing and crowding impacts to adjacent neighbors. Since the north side setback is longstanding and the building pad is approximately 4 feet lower than the north side neighbor, the proposal would not cause any crowding or massing impacts to the north side neighbor. The 30-percent roof removal/new construction requirement was included in the code to ensure that complete demolition and re-construction does not occur when residential additions are approved. A Condition of approval has been added to the draft resolution requiring the retention of the north and east garage walls as presented by the project plans.

Findings

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

The proposed setback encroachment is comparable to the setback encroachments present on neighboring properties; 8 out of the 10 properties in the area have similar north side setback encroachments present. 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 comparable encroachments are presented by structures on other properties in the immediate area. Eight other properties in the neighborhood have homes that encroach into the required side setback. In addition, the proposed 5'-0" north side setback is longstanding and the project would simply retain an existing setback encroachment. 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 existing house has a longstanding first floor north side setback encroachment. The project would simply retain the existing 5'-0" north side setback. Requiring a compliant 8'-0" north side setback would entail complete demolition of the existing garage and would increase the difficulty of cars accessing the garage's southerly parking area, causing unreasonable and unnecessary hardship inconsistent with the purpose of the zoning regulations. Staff can support 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.**

The proposed setback encroachment would not be detrimental to the public health and safety because the proposal would conform to building code standards. The setback encroachments would not yield an adverse crowding or massing effect. 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 size of the proposed house is within the floor area standards allowed for the lot. The proposed house is of minimal traditional architectural style and is compatible with the designs of houses in the neighborhood. Significant public views are not apparent and would not be impacted beyond the effects associated with a two-story house in any event. Staff supports the finding.

10. Recommendations:

Based on the above discussions, staff recommends that the request **BE APPROVED**, subject to the conditions listed in Exhibit "A", attached to the draft resolution.

RESOLUTION NO. 15-

**A RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION
OF THE CITY OF LA CAÑADA FLINTRIDGE
APPROVING SECOND FLOOR REVIEW 15-06
AND SETBACK MODIFICATION 15-02
FOR A NEW TWO-STORY RESIDENCE WITH
NORTH SIDE SETBACK ENCROACHMENTS
AT 4508 LITTLETON PLACE
AS REQUESTED BY
JULIET KIM**

WHEREAS, a request by Juliet Kim has been received for a Second Floor Review and Setback Modification to allow construction of a new 2-story residence with north side setback encroachments, said request attached hereto and incorporated by reference; and

WHEREAS, after publication and posting of the request in the prescribed manner, the Planning Commission, on June 23, 2015, held a public hearing on the project; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission determined that no significant environmental impacts would result from the project, which is Categorically Exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under Class 2.5(a)(4)(i) and (e)(1) 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 reports dated June 23, 2015 regarding the application for a Second Floor Review and Setback Modification, and heard and considered the testimony of the applicant and the public; and of the Zoning Code.

Section 1.

Second Floor Review Findings

1. The proposed second-floor setbacks are sufficient given the height of the house and its low profile. The elevations of the house would have sufficient modulation and diverse building materials to create a house that is consistent with its architectural style. Existing mature trees in front of the house would provide some visual buffering from street view.

2. While the neighborhood is predominately single-story, an existing two-story house is located to the north of the project site. While the largest home in the neighborhood, the proposed two-story house's low profile, height, and existing mature trees help preserve the character and scale of the neighborhood.

3. The proposed second-floor front, side and rear setbacks protect neighboring properties and minimize the impacts of the proposed house on the neighborhood. The proposed house is of minimal-traditional architectural style and is compatible with the designs of houses in the

neighborhood. As conditioned, the proposed second floor would have minimal privacy impacts to north, south, and east side neighbors.

4. The scale, massing and use of materials proposed for the project relate well with the site and are consistent with the directives of the City's Single Family Residential Design Guidelines.

Setback Modification Findings

1. The proposed setback encroachment is comparable to the setback encroachments present on neighboring properties; 8 out of the 10 properties in the area have similar north side setback encroachments present.

2. The project maintains the existing single-family use of the property while comparable encroachments are presented by structures on other properties in the immediate area. Eight other properties in the neighborhood have homes that encroach into the required side setback. In addition, the proposed 5'-0" north side setback is longstanding and the project would simply retain an existing setback encroachment.

3. The existing house has a longstanding first floor north side setback encroachment. The project would simply retain the existing 5'-0" north side setback. Requiring a compliant 8'-0" north side setback would entail complete demolition of the existing garage and would increase the difficulty of cars accessing the garage's southerly parking area, causing unreasonable and unnecessary hardship inconsistent with the purpose of the zoning regulations.

4. The proposed setback encroachment would not be detrimental to the public health and safety because the proposal would conform to building code standards. The setback encroachments would not yield an adverse crowding or massing effect.

5. The size of the proposed house is within the floor area standards allowed for the lot. The proposed house is of minimal traditional architectural style and is compatible with the designs of houses in the neighborhood. Significant public views are not apparent and would not be impacted beyond the effects associated with a two-story house in any event.

NOW, THEREFORE, Based on the above findings, the Planning Commission of the City of La Cañada Flintridge hereby approves the Second Floor Review for a new 2-story residence and related site work at 4508 Littleton Place, subject to the conditions listed in Exhibit "A", attached to this resolution.

PASSED, APPROVED AND ADOPTED this 23rd day of June 2015.

Chair of the Planning Commission

ATTEST:

Secretary to the Planning Commission

**CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL
SECOND FLOOR REVIEW 15-06
SETBACK MODIFICATION 15-02
4508 Littleton Place**

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 15-06 and Setback Modification 15-02.
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 Second Floor Review 15-06 and Setback Modification 15-02, 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 and assessments 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 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 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. 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.

13. Any work conducted on the public right-of-way requires an encroachment permit issued by the Public Works Department. There shall be no work conducted on the public right-of-way without an approved encroachment permit.

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.

15. Applicable tree protection guidelines for all protected trees (Oak trees) proximate to the residence shall be strictly adhered to during all phases of construction, including installation of chain link protection barriers prior to the issuance of building permits. A protection barrier plan shall be submitted to the Planning Department and approved by the Director of Community Development. The protection barrier shall be installed prior to building permit issuance.

16. The location of all mechanical equipment shall be indicated on the plan prior to building permit issuance. If mechanical equipment is proposed to be located on the roof, a Director's Review application shall be submitted and must be approved prior to placement.

17. The garage walls (both interior and exterior) on the north and east side of the property shall be retained per the submitted project plans.

18. Landscape screening shall be installed along the rear property line. A landscape plan shall be submitted to the Planning Department and approved by the Director of Community Development or his designee prior to building permit issuance.

19. The bedroom window on the north side shall be revised to clerestory. The revised plan shall be submitted to the Planning Department prior to plan check submittal.

20. The following Public Works Condition of approval shall be adhered to:

- a. Prior to any construction (including, but not limited to, driveway 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 construction encroachment permits from the Engineering Division. The site plan shall indicate all existing and proposed improvements within the public right of way.
- b. No above ground structures shall be constructed in the public right of way.
- c. A new driveway width and type shall be indicated on the site plan.
- d. Mailbox shall be approved by Public Works prior to installation.
- e. Prior to building occupancy, applicant shall demolish existing Asphalt driveway approach, and install a new concrete driveway approach, conforming to the provisions of Chapter 8.01 of the Municipal Code and the Standard Plans for Public Works Construction (SPPWC), 110-2.

#