

**A MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION
OF THE CITY OF LA CAÑADA FLINTRIDGE HELD
JANUARY 9, 2001**

CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Orr called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

ROLL:

Present were Commissioners Del Guercio, Engler, Levine and Mehranian, Assistant City Attorney Steres, Director of Community Development Stanley, Planner Cantrell and Planning Aide Gjolme.

**COMMENTS FROM
THE PUBLIC:**

Comments were not offered.

CONSENT CALENDAR:

M/S/C Levine/ Mehranian to approve Minutes of November 14th as amended. 4 Ayes. Abstain: Del Guercio.

M/S/C Levine/Del Guercio to approve the Minutes of November 28, 2000 as corrected. Unanimous.

**RESOLUTION 01-01; ST.
GEORGE'S EPISCOPAL
CHURCH;**

M/S/C Del Guercio/ Mehranian to adopt Resolution 01-01 as amended. 3 Ayes: Abstain: Engler and Levine.

Chairman Orr advised the audience that the two items under Continued Public Meetings for 4309 Bel Aire Dr. and 4309 Beulah Drive, would not be heard and would be continued. He confirmed that no one in the audience wished to speak on either matter.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

**HILLSIDE
DEVELOPMENT
PERMIT 99-72
(AMENDMENT);
McMillen; 4291 MESA
VISTA DRIVE:**

Planning Aide Gjolme recalled an earlier proposal that involved a series of additions comprising 5,900 sf, was heard by the Planning Commission in April of last year. Conversion of a garage to an ALQ was approved by the Planning Commission and later appealed by a neighbor. The appeal was withdrawn after the applicant agreed to move the ALQ out of the setback areas.

The applicant's amended project eliminates the previously approved 2,900-sf 2nd floor and reduces the previously approved ground floor expansion from 3,000

sf to 2,600 sf. Overall height has also been reduced from 27 ft to 21 ft. Planning Aide Gjolme noted that the ALQ component remains unchanged from what was approved, through the recorded agreement reached between the applicant and neighbor.

The amended request expands the garage to the south and adds living area along the north and south sides of the residence. All R-1 standards are met, including setbacks. Staff recommended positive findings, and project approval. Planning Aide Gjolme explained that while the amended plans represent a considerably smaller project than what the Commission approved, Staff could not make a determination of 'substantial conformance' because of the first floor changes.

Commissioner Mehranian confirmed that the current proposal represents 6,924 sf.

Chairman Orr opened the public hearing.

Applicant, Craig McMillen, was present to respond to any questions.

Robert Lemchen, 4249 Mesa Vista Lane, resides upslope and to the rear of the project site. He stated that the revisions were a great improvement and verified that the conditions from the initial project were carried over.

Further comments were not offered and the public hearing was closed.

Chairman Orr polled the Commission for comments or questions. The Commissioners were unanimously supportive of the project noting that represented a much lower profile than the original submittal.

M/S/C Levine/ Engler to approve Hillside Development Permit as amended and conditioned. Unanimous.

**CONDITIONAL USE
PERMIT 317; JAKE'S
KARATE/ CHURCH OF
THE LIGHTED
WINDOW; 1223
VERDUGO BLVD.:**

Planner Cantrell reported that the applicant is seeking approval to establish a martial arts studio in a building located on the west side of the Church of the Lighted Window property. The leased area comprises 1,888 sf

on the 2.5 acre site which is zoned Public/ Semi-Public. He noted that the Commission had previously determined that the proposed use correlates to conditionally permitted uses in the zone.

The applicant advises that the focus would be on instruction for small groups with class size indicated to be a maximum of 6 students and one instructor. Classes would be held Monday through Friday between 1:30 pm and 9:00 pm and Saturdays from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm. Two homes on St. Francis Place about the building and its front yard.

Parking-The church has two separate parking lots that comprise a total of 102 spaces. The parking spaces are almost evenly split between the upper lot on Foothill and the lower lot which is adjacent to the building where the karate studio is proposed. Moreover, the Caltrans lot on Foothill, west of the Church provides 52 public spaces.

The staff report called out the parking demands for the sanctuary, the preschool and ancillary meetings and concludes that the requested hours of operation would not result in a parking shortage-except when the sanctuary was in full use.

Staff did not believe that imposing a condition restricting the house of operation to those stated on the application would be productive. However, the draft conditions do prohibit classes between 9:00 pm and 10:00 am or within one hour of regularly-scheduled church service or assembly use.

Aside from parking and circulation, the proposed instructional use does not have the potential for creating disturbances to nearby uses. Only one of the two residences are within audible range and in any event, the proposed use is expected to be quiet and of low in impact.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Mehranian, Assistant City Attorney Steres explained the finding of comparable use that the Commission made on

December 12th. Any similar requests in the Public/Semi-Public Zone would be analyzed on a case-by-case basis. What is appropriate here, may not be appropriate in another location.

Chairman Orr confirmed that the condition regarding temporary signs was boilerplate language taken from the Sign Ordinance.

Chairman Orr opened the Public Hearing.

Applicant, Jake Nelson, provided his background and experience. He has taught adults and children for 8 years and noise has never been a problem. He termed his business as a Christian recreational facility as his classes include reading of Scripture.

Chairman Orr asked for Mr. Nelson's thoughts regarding temporary signage and if he intended to attract clientele in that manner.

Mr. Nelson stated that he would relocate his identification sign from its present location and has a grand Opening sign that he would like to use. Eventually, he would like to install a monument sign.

Further comments were not offered and the public hearing was closed.

Commissioner Del Guercio stated that he had no concerns with the request given the conditions and adjacent uses. While he was initially concerned with the noise factor, the class size is limited to 6. As to signage, he felt that area of town is not ordinarily thought of as commercial, and agreed with Chairman Orr that limiting the size of a temporary sign would be in order.

Commissioner Engler stated that he had no problem with the request or for a temporary 30-day sign as allowed by Ordinance.

Commissioner Mehranian supported allowing a temporary sign and suggested a more restrictive condition than what the Sign Ordinance allows.

Commissioner Levine stated that he had no problem with the proposed request. He stated that the applicant has the same right as anyone else to put up a sign. However, if a condition was imposed that is more limiting than what the Sign Ordinance allows, he would vote 'no' based on the restrictiveness.

Chairman Orr stated that it was a 'good' project; and that he was willing to accept Mr. Nelson's word that he did not want to be obtrusive with excessive signage without the necessity of imposing an additional condition.

M/S/C Levine/ Engler to approve Conditional Use Permit 317 as conditioned. Unanimous.

**HILLSIDE DEVELOP -
MENT PERMIT 00-47;
BARANIAN; 760
WALDORF DR.:**

Planning Aide Gjolme described the applicant's request to construct a new, 4,260 sf, two-story home and related site work, including a pool. The 22,390 sf lot has an average slope of 39% and is located on the south side of Waldorf Drive. At its southerly edge, the lot borders the City of Glendale. The site slopes significantly upward along the entire frontage and northwest side to a building pad that is 20 ft above street level. The slope continues eastward and upward to the adjacent lot at 750 Wendover, which is 15 ft higher in elevation than the subject building pad. Its siting above the street allows panoramic views of the San Gabriel mountains to the north and the Glendale foothills to the south.

An existing driveway at the northeast corner provides access and rises approximately 10 to 12 ft over a 70-ft course. Its 15-16% grade complies with code.

Primary mass would be along the west side of the pad with a garage wing extending at an angle to the northeast. The majority of the Mediterranean designed home would reach an overall height of 25 ft, though a single-hip element would achieve a 27-ft-maximum height. The first floor would comprise just under 3,300 sf and the recessed, second floor would consist of 1,350 sf. The design is sensitive in that it extends mass towards the center of the lot and away from the southerly slope. Views from the east would be only minimally affected since the neighboring house is on a raised pad, 15 ft

above the subject lot. Planning Aide Gjolme noted that a single-story development, at level grade, would present identical effects. Views from the north and south would be limited by sunken vantage points that do not afford direct views of the site. Neighboring homes to the west are afforded adequate separation and screening. Side setbacks exceed 100ft at the west side and 45 ft at the east side; front and rear setbacks meet code. A retaining wall, paralleling Waldorf Drive, with a maximum height of 5 ft would span approximately 100 ft at the west side to accommodate a pool and a patio area. The submitted landscape plan includes perimeter planting as well as 14 new trees along Waldorf and 9 at the property's southern border. Staff recommended planting a total of 5 trees rather than the 2 proposed, along the west side of the lot to buffer the pool area. Staff determined that the project is reasonably scaled and sensitive to other development in the immediate area, though the majority is single story. Staff recommended positive findings and project approval.

Armen Baranian, a 14-year resident and a licensed structural engineer, advised that his family needs a home of 3,500 sf at minimum, plus a pool. Following many conferences with his architect, he began meeting with neighbors before finalizing his plans. No major opposition was reported and the neighbors stated they were pleased to have the vacant property developed. He felt that the proposal was compatible with the neighborhood and extensive landscaping would serve to screen the project.

Chairman Orr opened the public hearing.

Donald Phinney, 830 Waldorf, who resides west of the project site, referred to the Staff report citing the need for sufficient room for a motor court. Mr. Phinney related of the continual parking problems in the area. The paved area in front of his home is a 20-ft wide private road and is continually either blocked or used for turn around purposes. He stated that he wanted unobstructed ingress and egress.

Commissioner Levine confirmed that Mr. Phinney's chief concern was related to parking, rather than the proposed development.

Donald Sells, 751 Wendover, related that the majority of homes in the area are single-story. While the project would result in partial loss of his view, it seemed to him that the house "would fit." His two concerns were that proposed trees might block his views and he wanted to work with the applicant in that regard. He asked if the Commission had any authority to intervene if, for some reason, the applicant did not complete the project and another developer stepped in.

Helen Phinney asked that the Commission prohibit construction vehicles from blocking Waldorf Road.

Craig Stoddard, project architect, commented that there is a two-car garage and a large motorcourt that could easily accommodate 4-5 cars.

Director Stanley advised that the Planning Commission could impose a condition restricting all construction vehicles to parking on site. Delivery trucks would probably have to park on that portion of Waldorf that is a public street - which means that the City can restrict parking. He offered to contact the Department of Public Works in this regard.

Further comments were not offered and the public hearing was closed.

Commissioner Engler stated that he "always has a problem with ridgeline, two-story homes" and commented that the neighborhood is predominately single-story. He commented that drainage was not indicated on the landscape plan.

Planning Aide Gjolme explained that the City Engineer reviewed the plans and recommended that water discharge flow to Waldorf Road and that a drainage plan was reviewed and approved prior to issuance of building permits.

Commissioner Engler stated that he would prefer a single-story design.

Commissioner Del Guercio concurred that this is a prominent ridgeline site. The letter recently received from the Sells troubled him. While he was cognizant of the property owner and his expectations, he preferred "not to jump to conclusions as to what may or may not be appropriate without the opportunity of revisiting the site with story poles erected to determine how the project would affect the Sells". He felt the landscape issues could be by some type of restriction - perhaps via a recorded covenant prohibiting installation of landscaping that could obstruct views.

Commissioner Levine remarked that the landscaping issue could be easily resolved and felt that a permanent solution to the parking problem needs to be reviewed by Public Works. Addressing the residence, Commissioner Levine noted that it meets lot coverage and floor area standards and the neighborhood comparison figures proved it was 'in line.' He recognized that it would appear prominent from the Glendale side and shared some of Commissioner Engler's concerns with regard to prominence from the ridge line.

Commissioner Mehranian agreed with the comments regarding parking. She did not feel that a 4500 sf home was too large, given the 22,000+ lot. Her issue was the introduction of a two-story structure in that area.

Chairman Orr complimented the architect on the design; introducing a two-story home where there 'aren't any, raises a concern; the other concerns can be addressed." He took a straw vote to confirm that a majority - Commissioners Engler, Del Guercio and Mehranian - had lingering concerns regarding the second story.

Commissioner Levine confirmed that their concerns had to do with the two-story configuration *and* the view from the ridgeline.

Mr. Stoddard stated that for a ridgeline lot, the project is of modest scale. He felt he could reduce the 10-ft-high plate height on the first floor and reduce the pitch, but he needed to talk to his clients, who have felt very strong about a second-story home from the inception.

Director Stanley remarked that Mr. Stoddard was the project architect on a recently-approved project on Sugar Loaf Drive where the height was reduced 4 ft. Further, the General Plan identifies ridgelines that are worthy of protection, and this ridgeline is not one of them.

Mr. Baranian advised that he had spoken with Planners on two occasions, advising that he wanted a two-story home – that is why his escrow includes a contingency that the City approve a two-story home with a minimum of 3500 sf, including a swimming pool. He stated that a single-story home, at the required setbacks, would not serve his purposes. Mr. Baranian stated that he “would have stayed away from the property” if he had any idea that he could not have a two-story home.

Following discussion, the applicant agreed to a continuance to February 13th. The applicant will erect story poles at a reduced height.

M/S/C Levine/ Del Guercio to continue Hillside Development Permit 00-47 to February 13 and the applicant is to erect story poles for both stories and at the lowered height. Unanimous.

Director Stanley advised Mr. Stoddard that the revised plans must be in Staff’s hands no later than February 1.

Director Stanley advised the audience there would be no further public notice.

Chairman Orr reconfirmed that no one wished to speak on this matter. M/S/C Del Guercio/ Engler to continue Modification to February 13. Unanimous.

Chairman Orr noted that further notice would not be mailed, since the matter was continued to a date certain.

**CONTINUED PUBLIC
MEETINGS:
MODIFICATION 00-48;
4309 BELAIR DRIVE**

Director Stanley advised that the applicant would be submitting a new application; no Commission action was required.

**COMMENTS FROM
THE COMMISSION:**

Commissioner Engler inquired as to the status of the Ordinance limiting the Duration of Building Permits.

Director Stanley responded that the Ordinance was introduced at the last City Council meeting for its first reading.

Commissioner Del Guercio confirmed that the revisions would not apply to work in progress.

Assistant City Attorney Steres advised that building permits would now have an overall life of two years with a one-year extension possible, which would be granted by the building official.

Director Stanley advised that a computerized tickler system would be implemented and that would be making the "third year call."

Commissioner Engler asked Staff to inspect an oak at Flintridge and Chevy Chase which appears to be in the throes of removal. Also, at Oxford and Cambridge, upward from the Berkshire Bridge - there appears to be a non-engineered wall.

Chairman Orr confirmed that Staff is responding to a letter from Ann Sandquist of Indiana Street, who was concerned with a new parking lot on the Zentmyer property on Foothill.

Commissioner Levine suggested removing the entrance sign at Verdugo, which was recently hit by an unknown vehicle.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Director Stanley reported that the Council would hold a second workshop on the Housing Element on January 29th.

Commissioner Del Guercio confirmed that the R-1 revisions would have a second reading at the next City Council meeting.

ADJOURNMENT:

M/S/C Levine/Engler to adjourn at 8:00 p.m.
Unanimous.

Secretary to the Planning Commission