

**A MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION  
OF THE CITY OF LA CAÑADA FLINTRIDGE,  
HELD ON JANUARY 14, 2003**

- CALL TO ORDER:** Chairman Levine called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.
- ROLL:** Present were Commissioners Brown, Engler, Gelhaar and Mehranian, Assistant City Attorney Steres, Director of Community Development Stanley, Planner Cantrell and Assistant Planner Gjolme.
- CONSENT CALENDAR:** M/S/C Gelhaar/Engler to adopt the Minutes of Minutes: November 12, 2002. 4 Ayes; Abstain: Mehranian
- M/S/C Gelhaar/Mehranian to adopt the Minutes of November 26, 2002. 4 Ayes; Abstain: Brown.
- Resolution 02-81; re: amendment to CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT 351; THE VONS COMPANY:** Commissioner Engler confirmed that Vons agreed to require its employees to park in the rear parking lot.
- M/S/C Brown/Gelhaar to adopt resolution 02-81. 4 Ayes; Dissenting: Levine.
- PUBLIC HEARINGS:**
- CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT 361; WARM and LOVING MINISTRIES; 1223 VERDUGO BLVD.:** Planner Cantrell reported the applicant's request to establish a family counseling service in the Public/Semi-Public Zone. Planner Cantrell recalled that in October 2002, the Commission determined family counseling as a permitted use in the Public/Semi-Public Zone.
- The proposed site is the building formerly occupied by Jake's Karate Studio. The building was originally constructed as a residence, with a front lawn and set back from Verdugo Boulevard; it is set back only 4 ft from the west property line that abuts residential properties on St. Francis Place. The larger meeting rooms are located along the east side and are buffered by smaller rooms. While a maximum of four counselors

would be available from 8:30 a.m. to 9:30 pm, all four would not be on the premises at any given time.

Parking - the Verdugo Boulevard and Foothill Boulevard parking lots provide 102 spaces and can easily accommodate the proposed use and other uses on the church site simultaneously.

Staff did not recommend restricting hours of use other than to avoid simultaneous use of the Church and Fellowship Hall. The draft conditions reflect that recommendation. Planner Cantrell noted that there were not any problems reported during occupancy by Jake's Karate. The proposed use is expected to be quiet and of low impact. Planner Cantrell reported that his most recent site visit revealed that a trailer on site is drawing electricity to the building and appears to be a Building Code violation. The draft conditions require compliance.

Staff recommended positive findings and approval as conditioned.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Mehranian regarding the maximum number of clients at any given time, Planner Cantrell advised that an extreme scenario would be a maximum of 14 clients, if 2 clients occupied each room.

Commissioner Engler questioned if Code allowed the trailer and noted that the plans show the trailer "to be removed".

Director Stanley commented that the former tenant, Hillside Learning Center, had a caboose and a trailer on the site. He offered to review the conditions placed on Hillside Learning Center.

Chairman Levine stated that he would not want to extend the permitted hours of use beyond what was allowed for Jake's Karate.

James Owens, representing the property owner, Church of the Lighted Window, advised that Hillside Learning

Center brought the trailer to the site. He believed that the plan was to upgrade and make use of it.

Assistant City Attorney Steres advised that Staff would have to review the former Conditional Use Permit. If the trailer was not initially permitted, Staff would take appropriate action.

Commissioner Mehranian commented that 9:30 p.m. seemed to be a little late to be conducting business.

Mr. Owens advised that many clients cannot keep day appointments because of their work schedules.

Commissioner Brown commented on the disheveled appearance of the buildings at the rear of the property.

Mr. Owens advised that the garage doors were destroyed during a recent robbery. The Church collects and stores newspapers in the garage, which is cleared monthly by a vendor.

Chairman Levine suggested that the buildings in disrepair be addressed via code enforcement.

Chairman Levine opened the public hearing. Comments were not offered and the public hearing was closed.

Commissioner Brown stated that the proposed use was good for the building and for all concerned. He noted that the building in disrepair was visible from Verdugo Boulevard and advised Mr. Owens that it would be greatly appreciated if he addressed that.

Commissioner Mehranian asked if Staff could review any complaints or problems following establishment of the counseling service.

Director Stanley responded that Staff would add a condition requiring a 6-month review after start of operation.

Commissioner Engler stated that counseling services would be a good use for a church and that his sole concern was property maintenance.

Commissioner Gelhaar commented that he could support the request with added conditions as discussed.

Chairman Levine was concerned with allowing hours to exceed those approved for Jakes Karate.

Commissioner Brown observed that the Karate use was more intense than counseling. Regardless of prior uses, 9:30 p.m. did not seem unreasonable for counseling services.

Director Stanley advised that all adjacent property owners had been notified of the proposed use; no objections had been filed.

M/S/C Brown/Mehranian to approve Conditional Use Permit 361 with added conditions that there be no simultaneous use with the Church and this building, that all structures be brought to Code, allowed hours of operation shall be 8:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. and establishing a 6-month review to analyze any issues with parking, noise of hours of use.

4 Ayes; Dissenting: Levine.

Chairman Levine stated that his sole objection was with the hours of operation.

**CONDITIONAL USE  
PERMIT 362; FLOOR  
AREA REVIEW 02-17;  
CROWLEY; 4314  
FAIRLAWN DRIVE:**

Assistant Planner Gjolme reported the applicant's request to expand an Accessory Living Quarters Unit by 216-sf and to construct a new, 420-sf, two-car garage. Floor Area Review is required since total project area would exceed 4,500-sf on a lot less than 80-ft wide at the front property line. The subject lot is 23,900-sf in area with a 75 ft wide frontage.

The project site is located on the east side of Fairlawn Drive, one property north of its intersection with Descanso Drive, in the R-1-20,000 Zone.

An attached guest unit, legally constructed in 1947, would be extended 11 ft to the rear and add 218-sf of

new floor area, for a total area of 636-sf, well within the 775-sf maximum allowed for the lot. The new, 20' x 20' two-car garage would be attached to the south side of the expanded ALQ and provide a 9 ft-setback, per Code.

All setbacks, angle plan and height requirement are met and the project would maintain the low profile character of the neighborhood.

Staff considered the request to be straightforward and without issuesobject approval.

Chairman Levine opened the public hearing. Comments were not offered, and the public hearing was closed.

Commissioner Gelhaar expressed concurrence with Staff's recommendations and requested an added condition requiring that construction vehicles park on site.

Commissioner Brown commented that having the garage at the rear of the property was a positive feature.

M/S/C Gelhaar/ Mehranian to approve Conditional Use Permit 361 and Floor Area Review 02-17 as requested, with an added condition requiring construction equipment and vehicles to park on site. Unanimous.

**PUBLIC MEETINGS:**

**BUILDING DEPTH  
REVIEW 02-09;  
HILLSIDE  
DEVELOPMENT  
PERMIT 02-63;  
CHANDRAMOHAN;  
1946 LAMP POST LANE:**

Planner Cantrell reported that the applicants' proposed addition would exceed the 60-ft review threshold for second floor depth. The project site is located on Lamp Post Lane, a private road off the upper portion of Jessen Drive, in the R-1-15,000 Zone. The lot barely qualifies as hillside property. The lot is 26,250-sf in area; the proposed 645-sf addition bring total floor area to 5,517-sf. The house does not present an imposing structure from nearby homes, due to their orientation, screening and elevation differences.

The project is limited to a small area at the southeast corner of the ground floor and a master bedroom suite

at the northeast corner on the second floor. Planner Cantrell noted that the current second-floor depth slightly exceeds the 60-ft threshold review, which would reach 84 feet if the project is approved. There is minimal view of this area from the street or from neighboring properties.

Total development on the site would remain below allowed standards and the concerns of view blockage and visible mass which are typically associated with hillside projects are not an issue. During a site visit, the Director of Community Development noticed a large oak on the site which might need to be trimmed to accommodate the project; therefore, a condition was added requiring consultation with an arborist.

Staff recommended positive findings and project approval.

Chairman Levine invited testimony. Neither the applicant nor any member of the audience wished to speak.

Commissioner Brown expressed appreciation for the additional condition requiring an arborist. He advised of having viewed the project site from the adjoining property and noted that mature landscaping provides adequate screening.

Commissioner Engler stated that the major concern with tree protection is intrusion into the root zone, according to the Los Angeles City Arborist.

M/S/C Gelhaar/Mehranian to approve Building Depth Review 02-09 and Hillside Development Permit 02-63 with added conditions requiring an arborist report in connection with trimming of oak trees and accommodation of construction vehicles and equipment on site. Unanimous.

**FLOOR AREA REVIEW  
02-20; BUILDING  
DEPTH REVIEW 02-13;  
SMITH;  
5164 CASTLE ROAD:**

Assistant Planner Gjolme described the applicant's request to allow a 5,628-sf addition (including a new second floor), that would result in total floor area of 8,319-sf. Floor Area Review is triggered because the lot

has only 75 ft of frontage and exceeds 4,500 sf in floor area. The 34,300-sf site is located on the east side of Castle Road between San Gorgonio Road and Escalante Drive in the R-1-15,000 Zone. It's 75-ft-wide frontage increases steadily as it steps back achieving an 80 ft width just beyond the front property line, 100 ft-wide at the front setback line, ultimately achieving a width of 150 ft. Assistant Planner Gjolme emphasized that the project satisfies the underlying 8,630-sf maximum allowed for the lot. Building Depth Review is also required since the project would generate a second-floor depth of 78 feet; however, a side setback ranging from 20 to 44 ft would mitigate any associated impacts.

First floor expansion would extend to the rear and south side. An east wing includes a living room, two bedrooms and a wet bar, which does not qualify as a kitchen. A partial subterranean basement is proposed directly below and, though partially submerged and hidden by an easterly slope, it is included in floor area calculations. The west wing is limited to a second garage that would align with the south side of the home; the north wing would expand living area and provide a new bedroom. The second floor would accommodate a master suite. Minor additions at the front would extend forward, but not beyond established development.

The project meets all setback, height and angle plane requirements.

Staff recognized that an 8,319-sf home is significant, but given the lot's average width of 113 ft over 34,000 ft of area and lack of view from off-site, it would not crowd the lot or present a visual disruption. Staff considered the FAR as somewhat of a technicality, since the required width is achieved just beyond the front property line. The majority of the project consists of first floor additions to the rear of the lot. The draft conditions address any concerns with the accessibility of the east wing from the interior of the existing home. Lastly, the Floor Area Review and Building Depth Review process were developed to address long, narrow properties, which is not the case with this project.

Responding to a question from Chairman Levine regarding the basement, Assistant Planner Gjolme advised that it is only partially subterranean, though its entirety is counted toward floor area.

Bill Smith, applicant and property owner, reiterated that all setbacks are met and the second story was kept to a minimum and towards the center of the house. He advised that his mother would reside in one of the side bedrooms.

Chairman Levine invited testimony.

Wayne Dipprey, 2053 Los Amigos, advised that he resides approximately 150 ft away from the project. Raising the level of the house at the back corner might make it visible from his home. He suggested landscape screening to mitigate light pollution.

Rick Guglielmino, 2055 Los Amigos, resides immediately behind the project site. He had a general concern with the proposed size of the home, stating that his home and his neighbors are in the 2,000-sf range. He advised that the applicant is a contractor, who regularly stores refuse lumber, backhoes and construction equipment in his back yard.

Director Stanley advised that Code allows such equipment on one's property; however, if Mr. Smith is storing the equipment and conducting a business from his home, a Home Occupancy Permit would be required.

Mr. Dipprey reported that the applicant removed a grove of mature pine trees along the rear property line, which may be legal, but eliminated his privacy. He was concerned that he would be looking at a very large house and construction equipment.

Adrian Dipprey, commented that the subject site fronts a bend on a narrow roadway and was concerned with traffic in general.

Liz Doud, 5179 Castle Road, resides directly across the road. She acknowledged that the home would be large,

but noted that it would not be visible from the street as it would be built on the side of the lot.

Responding to a question from Chairman Levine, Ms. Doud advised that her home is just over 3,000-sf, but that her lot is much smaller than the applicant's.

Vahe Mazmanian, 5238 Castle Road, reported that he does not reside near the property. He stated that he had no problem with the project so long as it met Code. He reiterated concerns regarding construction traffic along the blind curve, where there is only room for one car to pass.

Mr. Smith responded to comments. The construction traffic emanates from 3 new homes on Los Amigos, all on flag lots. He pointed out that the garage and basement areas account for a good deal of the sq footage; the home downslope is 6,800-sf in area and he purchased a bobcat and trail within the last few months, specifically to work on his home.

Commissioner Gelhaar confirmed that there are two trailers in the backyard --- one is a travel trailer.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Engler, Mr. Smith advised that he is not operating a business from his home; when the project is complete, the bobcat will be relocated to his business.

Chairman Levine requested comments from the Commission.

Commissioner Mehranian stated she realized the house meets floor area guidelines "but Building Depth review was put there for a purpose". She felt that an 8,000-sf project was excessive and could not support it.

Commissioner Gelhaar stated that the project is considerably larger than what should be in this neighborhood, even though the lot is large. He requested that second-floor story poles be erected and noted that if the basement and second story were eliminated the resulting 5,744-sf would fit the neighborhood much better.

Commissioner Brown referred to the findings and stated that the project's siting, screening and massing effects are compatible. Agreeing with his colleagues, he stated that he could not support anything close to the size requested which is triple the sq. footage of the existing home. He viewed the project as a duplex and felt that the wet bar area could easily be converted to a kitchen. Commissioner Brown stated that the double garage facing the street was bothersome and noted that the project presented a 108-ft, three-story exposure on the south side, meeting the definition of mansionization. He recognized that 4,500-sf is a trigger for Commission review, but felt that 8,300-sf in this configuration is not acceptable.

Chairman Levine stated that he did not necessarily disagree and confirmed that the basement did not meet the City's definition of a basement. He stated that the project, as proposed, is not appropriate for its area.

Commenting that if he called for a vote, that a denial would be likely. He gave Mr. Smith the option of requesting a vote with the option of filing an appeal to the City Council, or continuing the project for redesign.

Mr. Smith requested a continuance to February 25<sup>th</sup>.

Director Stanley responded to comments from Commissioner Brown. He advised that Code is very clear as to what triggers Front Garage Review; this project does not fall under that category. Secondly, while it is possible to convert the addition into an attached ALQ, the project meets Code in that regard also; Staff cannot presuppose illegal intentions.

Chairman Levine requested that Staff provide a comparison of adjacent house sizes at the next hearing.

M/S/C Engler/Gelhaar to continue Floor Area Review 02-20 and Building Depth review 02-13 to February 25<sup>th</sup>. Unanimous.

**COMMENTS FROM  
THE COMMISSIONERS:**

Commissioner Engler provided a list of properties with potential violations, which he requested that Staff check and report.

Commissioner Mehranian requested that Staff check 4047 Chevy Chase for protection of oak trees – trenches appear to be very close to the root area.

Commissioner Engler asked how many notifications to a property owner are required before forwarding a case to the City Prosecutor. He requested Staff to provide a timeline of the property maintenance process.

Chairman Levine asked that the Commission have a discussion of proposed revisions to R-1 definitions, prior to being presented with a draft resolution.

A short discussion followed regarding when story poles should be required. Commissioner Engler felt that they should be provided on all Floor Area Review projects. Commissioner Gelhaar stated that story poles should certainly not be required on all hillside projects, but it was evident they would have been helpful on some past projects.

It was agreed that Staff would apply the story pole requirement on a case-by-case basis.

Commissioner Brown asked if there was anything we could do about the bamboo fencing on the corner lot across from the YMCA.

Chairman Levine referred Staff to the temporary sign on JEI Learning Center, which has been in place for many months. Also, Trader Joe's continual outdoor displays and visible debris in the trashbin area.

**DIRECTOR'S  
COMMENTS:**

Director Stanley advised that staff would be making a presentation to the City Council the following Tuesday regarding bulb-outs. The Council would also be hearing an appeal of the Commission's denial of Modification 02-34 and Floor Area Review 02-12 at 4723 Almar.

Commissioner Gelhaar commented on a press article stating that Sport Chalet would not be building Phase II. If that was the case, he felt there is even more reason to be certain that the rental properties meet Code.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

M/S/C Gelhaar/Brown to adjourn at 7:25 p.m.  
Unanimous.

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Secretary to the Planning Commission