

**A MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF
THE CITY OF LA CAÑADA FLINTRIDGE HELD
FEBRUARY 25, 2003**

- CALL TO ORDER:** Vice Chair Engler called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.
- ROLL:** Present were: Commissioners Brown, Gelhaar and Mehranian, Assistant City Attorney Steres, Senior Planner Buss and Assistant Planner Gjolme. Chairman Levine was expected to arrive shortly.
- COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC:** Comments were not offered.
- CONSENT CALENDAR:** M/S/C Gelhaar/Mehranian to adopt the minutes of January 28, 2003 and February 11, 2003 as submitted. 4 Ayes.
- PUBLIC HEARINGS:**
- HILLSIDE DEVELOPMENT PERMIT 02-50;
BUILDING DEPTH REVIEW 02-08;
GREGORIAN; 5385
VISTA LEJANA LANE:**
- Planner Cantrell described the applicants' request to construct a new, two-story home and related site work on hillside property. Building Depth Review is required for a second-story depth exceeding the 60-ft threshold.
- The 78,410-sf site is located at the upper end of Vista Lejana Lane, a private street, which extends northward from Vista Del Valle. It has an average slope of 43% and is isolated from other parallel streets by topography and distance.
- The initial intent was to expand the existing home; however, after meeting with Staff and neighbors, the applicant agreed to lower the house pad by 4 ft and the yard pad by 3 ft. This decision requires construction of a new house rather than an addition, and over 100 truckloads to move approximately 1,210 cubic yards of export
- A 7,494-sf home, including garage and all roofed and floor area is proposed, including a one-story game room and gym on a lower level. The yard would be widened with fill and a new pool installed near the south boundary.

A retaining wall at the south would have to be shifted northward to meet the required 17-ft side yard setback.

The wall would range in height from 6 ft at its midpoint to approximately 13 ft at the west corner, where it would continue along the west side.

Staff's report included a comparison chart of 22 homes on Vista Lejana and Big Briar Way, depicting an average floor area *excluding non-habitable areas* of 2,458-sf, an average lot area of 21,101-sf and a density of 12.9%. The proposal would be the largest home on the largest lot; only 3 other properties would lower density.

Views - Views from Vista Lejana do not raise the concern as do views from surrounding streets. A couple of homes on Big Briar would experience some extent of view blockage. The most affected view of the proposed home's increase of 5 ft in height would be from 916 Big Briar, where the existing roofline is visible from the rear yard. Planner Cantrell noted that the applicant's offer to lower the pad, including excavation into bedrock, avoids interruption of sweeping mountain views from 916 Big Briar.

Planner Cantrell stated that the new house is well modulated and proportioned and noted that it would not project farther south than the existing house. It would comply with all development standards, including the Slope Factor Guideline of the Hillside Ordinance and the R-1-Zone. A maximum height of 28-ft would be attained as measured above low grade at the game room. Height above primary floor level would reach 23½ ft. The structure's siting on a knoll calls for special attention with regard to screening and view protection; neighbors have expressed disapproval of large trees that could block views. Staff was concerned with the visibility of retaining walls from below and made the following recommendations: curved crib walls with planting pockets to replace the retaining walls; shift the rear yard walls inward to comply with the setback at

the south and shift the westerly wall 5 ft inward. Additionally, in the interest of privacy, surfaces to the west and south edges of the pool should be non-walkable.

West of the most affected property at 916 Big Briar, is 928 Big Briar, which would view the west retaining wall and the subject house in silhouette against the sky. That property owner reports that the project would block upstairs bedroom views of the San Gabriel Valley, particularly the night lights. Planner Cantrell stated that those components are relevant to screening, rather than view blockage. He reminded the Commission that the Hillside Ordinance places low priority on such views and focuses more on central views of those from primary living area. With the draft conditions, staff recommended positive findings and project approval.

Responding to a request from Commissioner Gelhaar, Planner Cantrell clarified that the retaining wall reaches a high point of 13 ft at the southwest corner, decreasing to 6 ft in the center and even lower towards the east.

Vice Chair Engler asked how many caissons would be required to support the structure and if more export would be necessary. He also noted that the soils report states that all vegetation shall be hauled off, yet the landscape plan shows the oleanders remaining.

Chairman Levine arrived at this point.

Vice Chair Engler asked if Staff studied how much more excavation would be required for crib walls; "it might create more problems".

Planner Cantrell noted that Staff's recommendation called for an updated soils report.

Chairman Levine confirmed that the Negative Declaration was based on the excavated plan.

Marlene Roth, agent for the applicant, advised of having assisted in coordinating neighborhood meetings. She displayed an exhibit of the most current proposal with retaining wall height at a maximum of 9 ft. She advised that caisson depth would be approximately 15 ft, compared with 20 ft before her client decided to lower the pad and the notation "remove all vegetation" referred only to the caisson area. There would be minor widening of the road to satisfy the Fire Department. Addressing Staff's recommendation to replace the retaining walls with curved crib walls, she felt there might be better solutions for the divergent locations around the site. She suggested that alternatives comprised of split faced block, keystone walls and crib walls be presented for Staff approval.

Regarding neighborhood outreach, Ms Roth advised that neighbors within a 300-ft radius were invited to attend either of two on-site meetings. Those meetings resulted in lowering: the pad by 4 ft, the yard area by 3 ft and the house by an additional foot. Her client also agreed to lower the perimeter walls to a maximum of 9 ft, remove the ash tree located in the northwest corner of the site, replacing it with a tree of lower height, remove all rooftop mechanical equipment to the side of the house and record a covenant to prohibit future division of the lot. Ms. Roth expressed concern with Staff's suggestion for non-walkable area around a section of the pool. Because her clients need a livable yard area for their 4 children; full access around the pool is highly desirable for security and maintenance purposes.

Project Landscape Architect, Larry Tison, advised that the plans which Staff reviewed show 13-ft-high walls. He distributed revised plans with 9-ft-high walls and oleanders planted in front, which he stated would soon screen the wall. He proposed shifting the wall back "a couple of feet" to eliminate the need for an extra planter wall - he advised that Staff's suggestion would leave a 4-ft section of wall unscreened. Addressing the 8-ft-high wall behind the garage on the downslope side, he stated that the Fire Department requires complete perimeter access. Lowering that wall would require shifting the house outward; he noted that the excess height and encroachment would not impact anyone.

Ms. Roth summarized her clients' concessions to delete two conditions, and add one. She agreed that the south wall would be 10-ft in height or less to achieve setback compliance and the north retaining wall could be reduced to 8 ft in height. She asked that condition #18 be modified to read that the west retaining wall be shifted east and not exceed a height of 9 ft; revised wall locations and planting wall locations shall be subject to the Director's approval. Add a condition #24 "subject to approval of the Director, walls appropriate to the location, crib wall, keystone or split-face block wall shall be tan in color".

Ms. Roth restated her effort to come up with a win-win plan for her clients and the neighbors; the expense of demolishing the existing house to lower the pad by 4 ft comes at significant additional expense. She acknowledged that views of others would only be minimally impacted.

Assistant City Attorney Steres confirmed for Chairman Levine that even though the application addresses a remodel, it is appropriate to proceed with the project under consideration.

Mr. Tison responded to Commissioner Engler's earlier question; removing "all slope vegetation" would be counterproductive. The oleanders would be maintained and he recommended planting more along the east side for more rapid screening. He acknowledged that the civil engineer will review the modified plans.

Applicant and developer, Chris Gregorian, related that he purchased the property 2½ years ago and that only 10-15% of the 78,000-sf site would be disturbed by development. Addressing removal of dirt, he stated that approximately 100 loads of dirt would have to be removed by a minimum of 10 trucks. One truck would leave the site every ½ hour, because of the narrow roadway; it should take no longer than one week. Excavated dirt from caisson installation would be used as filler behind the retaining walls.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Engler, Mr. Gregorian advised that he decided not to pursue the proposed game room outside the site development ---- it is now part of the house.

Chairman Levine opened the public meeting.

Sam Rajagopalan, 916 Big Briar, stated that his kitchen and family room would have a view of the project. He advised of having moved to his home 2 ½ years ago, specifically for the view. He expressed appreciation for the revisions and acknowledged that a portion of the project would be unseen. He felt that a viable alternative would be a single-story development, which would be 100% larger than the average home in the neighborhood but "satisfy everyone".

Jim Briggs, 936 Big Briar, resides west of the project. He was concerned with the visibility of the retaining walls, but stated that crib walls or an equivalent would be a big improvement. His issues were removal of the stables in disrepair at the bottom of the site and given the house and its value, he felt it was appropriate to require undergrounding of utilities.

Planner Cantrell advised that the removal of the stables was included in the conditions and that undergrounding is a standard required for all new homes.

Kirk Sellman, 908 Big Briar Way, advised that he is in the midst of upgrading his property, but felt that "this project pushed the envelope as to what is reasonable". He recalled that when his project was under reviewed by the Commission, there was significant concern with maintaining the retaining walls to 6 ft in height and the development to single-story. He related that the tract's developer sited the homes to preserve views. He asked that the Commission apply the same standard that was applied to him and require the applicant to scale back to the house to something more reasonable.

Planner Cantrell informed the Commission that Mr. Sellman's project was for a detached guest house and therefore required by Code to be single-story.

Amareh Nazrian, 928 Big Briar, stated that the project was too large and out of character with the neighborhood. He stated that he could not support the second floor "or anything close to this size in the neighborhood".

Ms. Roth responded to comments. Vista Lejana is a private street, unlike the Big Briar and Ridgecliff neighborhoods, which were developed as separate subdivisions. Vista Lejana has many two-story homes and is not accessed from adjacent subdivisions. She stated that her client worked diligently to accommodate the sole issue of "view" - all else conforms with the Zoning Code. Her clients would like outdoor space and believe that their request is reasonable, given the zoning, compliance and efforts to address the concerns.

Chairman Levine closed the public hearing.

Commissioner Brown expressed appreciation for the extensive communication between the applicant and neighbors, which precipitated many of the revisions. He felt there is a series of impacts and things to deal with i.e., the large retaining wall that would be exposed to the neighbor is simply a result of too much house on the lot; loss of views along Big Briar, particularly from 916 Big Briar. He stated that homes in Vista Lejana and Big Briar tracts are primarily in the 2,000-sf range; though there are a few of 3,000-sf. He commented that there is room on this lot to accommodate single-story development; a two-story home is what requires dump trucks on a narrow street. He agreed with Mr. Sellman that the area was developed in a manner to preclude view blockage. Building Depth is an issue "because the house is too big". Commissioner Brown acknowledged the generous lot and open space, but he felt that the walls would effect the open space. He concluded by stating that the project could totally avoid view impairment and could be expanded considerably without affecting those views. He also felt the proposed depth fails to preserve the existing scale and character of the surrounding neighborhood.

Commissioner Mehranian stated that the project totally contradicts the entire approach of neighborhood preservation and residential districts. Her concerns were the proposed retaining walls, the size, bulk and design. "It doesn't belong there and is mansionization", being larger than any other home, despite the lot size.

Commissioner Engler commented that the applicant should have stayed with his original intent to remodel the house.

Commissioner Gelhaar commented that the existing home lacks retaining walls. The project is much too large and 100 truckloads of dirt down the narrow road posed a real concern.

Chairman Levine advised that he had a problem with the large retaining walls and noted that Building Depth Review is a trigger for the Commission to be assured that a project is appropriate for the lot. Mindful of his colleagues' comments, a denial was the likely if he called for a vote. He offered the applicant the available options.

Ms. Roth opted for a continuance to March 25.

M/S/C Mehranian/Brown to continue Hillside Development Permit 02-50 and Building Depth Review 02-08 to March 25. Unanimous.

Chairman Levine announced that there would not be further notice of the continued public hearing.

**CONDITIONAL USE
PERMIT 359;
VARIANCE 03-02;
BUILDING DEPTH
REVIEW 02-11;
GHARIBIAN;
5167 HASKELL ST.:**

Planner Cantrell reported the applicant's request to demolish a 1,650-sf house and a 950-sf guest house, replacing it with a two-story home, garages, a detached pool house and a detached upper level exercise room. The pool house and exercise rooms are considered as Accessory Living Quarters. The Variance addresses detached structures over 15-ft in height, more than one ALQ on a property and detachment of ALQs in the R-1-15,000 Zone, where only attached ALQs are permitted.

The subject site has an unusual frontage, with minimal access from Haskell and long frontage along Angeles Crest. Its 44,010-sf area would accommodate 7,267-sf of floor and roofed area, including garages.

A new, two-story home of 32 ft in height and a length of 86' 4", parallel to the street, is proposed. First floor depth would be 55' 4", measured wall-to-wall. The north end of the house would have a wing extending back to include a master bedroom and a family room below. Extending even further back on the second floor, would be a bridge over an open arcade and Jacuzzi. An exercise room would be atop the bridge. The arcade below, would terminate even further back at the proposed pool house.

Planner Cantrell noted that all these components would have eave height of more than 10 ft, and reach a depth of 135 feet, triggering Building Depth Review. He stated that the project is a formal, neoclassic estate, well proportioned with fully developed detailing. It would be large compared with surrounding houses on smaller lots, but developed only to approximately 2/3 of the density limit and far exceeds setback requirements.

Neither the pool house nor the exercise room are suited for bona fide guest house use and are rather part of a sophisticated recreational setting. No issues of use are presented.

Staff recommended CUP approval with a condition prohibiting habitation, in isolation of any Variance findings.

Variance component, Planner Cantrell advised that if the two ALQs were attached through interior space, there would be no need for the conditional use permits. He pointed out that the pool room could remain detached if one side were to remain open; however the height would have to be reduced to the 15-ft maximum. While detachment of the structures is part of the effect the applicant wishes to create, Staff could not make Finding #2, special circumstances which would deprive the applicant of privileges enjoyed by other properties in

the vicinity. A special circumstance exists since the lot is much larger than those in the area (it is 10% larger than required for parcels in the largest lot size zone in the City), which accommodate detached guest houses, but justification is not found for the remaining components.

Building Depth – Staff’s viewpoint was that this was a technicality in this case, given the significant separation from other homes, the pad height difference and screening between this house and the only potentially affected property to the North. Planner Cantrell noted that this was not a side-by-side situation with potential crowding of the neighboring property. Staff could not make the required findings for detaching the exercise room or the excess height for the pool house.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Brown, Planner Cantrell stated that the applicant could enclose the upper hallway and attach the exercise room and pool house to the main residence – height would no longer matter and they would no longer be considered as ALQs.

Project architect, Sako Marcoosi, explained that he wanted to create interior gardens around the main structure; the colonnades, trellis structure and water features also create visual open space. He reported that materials would be of high quality; stone veneers, cast stone colonnades and a flat clay tile roof. A blend of colors is integral to the mountain backdrop. He displayed a color rendering showing that the proposed structure is for the most part, sited entirely on the existing pad.

A discussion followed regarding the 2-ft difference in elevation between the subject site and the neighbor’s property. Mr. Marcoosi advised that a short wall was removed that had been retaining from 12 to 36” of dirt along the south property line. Concrete has been poured for a new wall.

Commissioner Engler commented that there is dirt piled against the new wall, and water is ponding in that area.

Chairman Levine asked Staff to investigate.

Shima Shidhar, 5183 Haskell, purchased her home immediately north of the project site, one year ago. She advised of having received the notice of public hearing on the previous day - insufficient time for her architect to review the plans. She was concerned with views into her pool area and noise from the pool house. If approval was granted, she requested eliminating any windows on the east side of the pool house.

Mr. Marcoosian commented that an undeveloped flag lot separates his client's property and Ms. Shidhar's. Visual screening is provided by the large stone pine trees and mature vegetation. He noted that Ms. Shidhar's home is sited further east and he agreed to reduce the height of the pool house.

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

Commissioner Gelhaar stated that the home is well designed and that it sits well on the lot with the exception of the Building Depth Review issue, particularly the 3 windows on the north side of the exercise room. He commented that, eventually, someone would purchase the flat lot and develop it. His preference was to eliminate the exercise room with a second preference to eliminate the 3 windows.

Commissioner Engler remarked that the plan depicts pilasters and fencing in the front yard.

Planner Cantrell stated that would be a separate approval request; it is shown to be within the setback and out of the right-of-way.

Commissioner Engler stated that he could support the Building Depth Review but that he had a problem with the ALQ.

Commissioner Mehranian stated that she had a problem with the ALQ.

Commissioner Brown commented that the Depth Review process was implemented to address very large homes, which this one is. Findings have to be made that

the project preserves the existing scale and character of the neighborhood. He concurred with Commissioner Gelhaar's concerns, stating "we're talking about 62' to 135 ft in depth". He agreed with Commissioner Engler regarding the front yard treatment, adding that the hedges along Angeles Crest should be preserved, given the prominence of the site.

Chairman Levine found the openness of the design to be pleasant, but he could not make the finding of hardship for either ALQ. He expressed his belief that the house does not fit in the area and that it would be considerably larger than most in the neighborhood.

Commissioner Brown commented that it was reasonable for neighbors to have the opportunity to review a project of this scope, and would therefore support a continuance.

Chairman Levine stated he could support a continuance for redesign.

Commissioner Gelhaar added that redesign should include depth review and height of the ALQ.

Chairman Levine advised the applicant that he was entitled to a vote and noted that if one were taken, that a denial was likely. He provided available options.

Mr. Marcoosi requested a continuance.

Planner Cantrell stated he was unsure if sufficient consensus direction was given to the applicant.

Chairman Levine asked the applicant to contact the neighbor with respect to the building depth and the proposed size of the home.

Commissioner Mehranian concurred there was an issue with the project's size, and not simply an issue of attaching structures.

Mr. Marcoosi commented that he could have designed a 10,000-sf home, met the depth standard, and saved 4-5

months of time. He advised that initially, building depth and height were issues; afterwards, he was told that a variance would be required for two ALQs

Commissioner Gelhaar encouraged Mr. Marcoosi to contact the Commissioners individually to get feedback.

M/S/C Gelhaar/Mehranian to continue Conditional Use permit 359, Variance 03-02 and Building Depth Review 02-11 to March 25. Unanimous.

**ZONE CHANGE 03-01;
CITY OF LA CAÑADA
FLINTRIDGE;
R-1 ZONES CITYWIDE:**

Planner Cantrell recalled that R-1 definition revisions were adopted in December 1999. The current effort would correct problematic definitions that have proven unproductive, unreasonable and/or vague --mostly those dealing with how front lot lines are considered. At its last meeting, the Planning Commission held a study session and directed Staff to return with a draft ordinance pursuant to its comments and recommendations.

Chairman Levine noted the added definition for "right-of-way" and confirmed that it is compatible the new definition for Lot Area.

Commissioner Brown noted that the exclusions for lot area did not include "driveways". He suggested adding "or driveways serving other properties", since any easement serving another property should be excluded as it serves as a road and the owner of the subject lot has no control over it.

Assistant City Attorney Steres felt adding such language could become complicated as roadways are sometimes under single ownership.

Planner Cantrell explained that private access easements are included in the draft language. He suggested adding a comma at the end of the sentence and add "or private driveway serving another property". Commissioner Brown concurred.

Chairman Levine opened the public hearing.

Ken Gorvetzian, 4321 Chula Senda, suggested “driveway that provides ingress or egress to another parcel from a public right-of-way”.

Attorney Steres doubted that the city would determine that a recorded easement is in effect. The intent of the suggestions is that of a private driveway servicing other lots – arriving at the same conclusion.

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

There were no further comments from the Commissioners.

M/S/C Gelhaar/Engler recommending that the City council adopt the Ordinance. Unanimous.

CONTINUED PUBLIC MEETING:

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

Assistant Planner Gjolme recalled the request for first and second floor additions to an existing single-story home that would reach total FAR of 8,319-sf. Although the majority of the project was single-story and an FAR of 24% proposed, the project was perceived as excessive for the area. Direction was given to reduce the overall scale to achieve greater compatibility with the area.

The revised project eliminates 1,935-sf, and now presents an overall project area of 6,384-sf, compared with the original 8,319-sf. The former split-level basement is now fully below grade and qualifies under Code as ‘basement area’. This configuration eliminates 1,235-sf of floor area, lowers the easterly 1/3 of the home and negates the need for Building Depth review since the 2nd floor depth was reduced from 78 ft to 42 ft. The project is therefore subject only to Floor Area Review.

Assistant Planner Gjolme referred to data provided regarding lot and house sizes in the area. Average lot size is 19,559-sf and 16% FAR, with homes averaging 3,110-sf (excluding garages and accessory structures). He noted that the project (sans garage), presents a 16% FAR and is therefore reasonably consistent with the neighborhood in that regard. The site is mostly level and

there are no topographical constraints. Setbacks remain significant, ranging from 21 ft to 44 ft at the south; the 54-ft front setback would be maintained. Staff continues to believe that the shape of the lot, it's 80-ft width just beyond the front property line and the 115-ft average width, make floor area review overly restrictive. Assistant Planner Gjolme reminded the Commission that the proposed 6,400-sf project is 2,000-sf below the maximum Code allowance.

Commissioner Brown confirmed that there are no other houses in the area with two garages.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Engler, Mr. Gjolme advised that the overall height was reduced from 35 ft to approximately 27 ft.

Applicant, Bill Smith, noted that the proposed garage was moved back 8 ft and the back of the house trimmed by 5 ft. The initial project required digging-out a basement; which is now underground.

Commissioner Mehranian confirmed that the existing landscaping would be maintained and augmented.

Commissioner Engler verified that post project, the applicant would not be storing construction equipment on site.

Chairman Levine confirmed that Mr. Smith would accept such a condition.

Rick Gugliemino, reported that he lives immediately behind the project. His concerns continued with the size of the project compared with others in the neighborhood. He view was that, including the basement the request is for a 7,600-sf structure.

Chairman Levine advised Mr. Gugliemino that fully enclosed basements are excluded from floor area calculations.

Mr. Gugliemino continued, advised that his home is approximately 2,000-sf. He questioned the methodology for the comparative study and considered the project to be 'mansionization'. He expressed concern that the project could be converted to multi-family occupancy by the applicant or a future property owner. Mr. Gugliemino stated that economic pressures are forcing people to build as large as possible and asked the Planning Department to plan for the future. He acknowledged that his lack of objectivity was attributed to the removal of several large pine trees, which affect his privacy and to the storage of construction materials and vehicles. He stated that the project would be more acceptable if it were scaled down and if a new row of trees was installed.

Duane Dupree, 2053 Los Amigos, stated that the revised plans look the same from his perspective. He felt that the project is too large for the area.

Applicant Bill Smith, advised that several non-protected trees were removed from the rear of the lot. He noted that Edison frequently cuts the trees because of their interference with the power lines. He was willing to add more trees if required to do so.

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

Commissioner Engler stated that only the datum point had been altered; he felt the massing was unchanged.

Commissioner Mehranian expressed appreciation for the revisions; however, she was still wrestling with the issue of size and was unsure if the 16% FAR was correct as reported in Staff's report. She also requested a landscape plan.

Commissioner Brown felt that the project was moving in the right direction and noted that the basement area is no longer impacting the neighbors. He asked the applicant to focus on the neighborhood "feel" rather than lot size. He added that despite eliminating 1,000-ft of garage space, it would still be the largest home in the area.

Commissioner Gelhaar stated that the applicant was “half-way there”. He was concerned that the neighbor to the rear would have a view of 3 floors. He stated that if the second-story were removed, it would be a reasonable project.

Chairman Levine commented that at 400-500 ft larger than the largest home in the area, it is still probably too large. He expressed appreciation for the applicant’s willingness to add landscaping and to remove construction vehicles from the site. He believed that if he called for a vote, a denial would be the likely outcome and provided options to the applicant.

Mr. Smith requested a continuance to March 25th.

Following confirmation with Staff that the agenda could accommodate another continuance, Chairman Levine called for a vote.

M/S/C Brown/Mehranian to continue Floor Area Review 0-20 to March 25. Unanimous.

PUBLIC MEETING:
FLOOR AREA REVIEW
02-23; TROEDSSON;
4827 LA CAÑADA
BLVD.:

Commissioner Gelhaar recused himself from this review, stating that he adamantly opposed the subdivision that preceded this request, and he could not be objective in his analysis.

Senior Planner Buss recalled that the conditions of the associated Variance restricted future development to single-story, maximum floor area to 4,500-sf, side yard setbacks at 7 ft minimum and design review by the Planning Commission

The property is 18,663-sf in area with 60 ft of frontage. It is located on the west side of La Cañada Boulevard, north of Flanders Road. Grading is underway to meet the Parcel Map’s drainage requirements to the street, which includes retaining walls in the middle of the site and at the sides.

A single-story home, set back 50-ft from the street (and beyond the 10-ft dedication required by the Parcel Map, is proposed. Total floor area including an attached

garage amounts to 4,500-sf. Building wall height is depicted at 9 ft; height to the gables is 15 ft. Overall depth reaches 176 ft out of which 40 ft is garage area. Side yards are 7 ft with pop-out windows encroaching one-ft.

Staff's initial concern with the 176-ft-long depth was allayed, given the elevation differences between the project and homes to the north, which are 3 to 7 ft lower. Those homes would have only incremental views of the project if 6-ft-high fences were installed along their rear property lines (which 2 owners have recently done) . Further, 2 homes to the north have rear corner garages that would totally block certain views of the project. Finally, an extensive landscape plan along the north and south property lines (15 trees and a terraced planting bed at the northern side yard) would provide maximum screening. Senior Planner Buss noted that none of the neighboring properties would have a view of the project's entire length.

Staff's recommendation of approval was based on the low mass in terms of height, the extensive landscaping along both side property lines, the higher elevation of neighboring properties and because the subterranean floor area does not add to the visible mass.

Commissioner Brown stated his belief that the 6-ft-high wall in front of the front porch would be visible from the street.

Applicant, Anders Troedsson, recalled the limitations set by the Commission and further parameters set by the City Council establishing 7-ft side yard setbacks and 4,500-sf of floor area . He stated that the design and landscape screening mitigate any concerns of massing. Living space of 3,823-sf covers only 24% of the lot, including the garage, which leaves ample room for trees and landscape screening. Side yard setbacks are consistent with 70-ft-wide lots, the rear setback of 75 ft will be reduced by 4 ft when the front setback is relocated per Staff's measurements. Mr. Troedsson advised that the 1920's Spanish Revival design is a product of countless hours of design to meet the desires of his client and the neighbors' concerns. The garage is

offset to create modulation and steps down, following the house to the north. The front wall serves to create an entry courtyard, and is an extension of the house -- it would allow the front yard to be used as living space. A center courtyard compliments the style of the home and allows natural light into each room. The west section, comprised of a master suite and guest bedroom would have limited activity during the day.

Elevations – Mr. Troedsson noted that the neighbor’s home to the north is 6-ft above grade with a 6-ft-high wall. Their view would consist of a small triangular section of the gable end. The north elevation is stepped back; the pop-out window and gable serve to break the roof mass in the event it was seen; however, neighbors in that direction are at higher elevations. The south elevation (left side) is recessed approximately 20 ft. The west, or rear elevation, is a repeat of the front with 2 gable ends and a maximum height of 15 ft.

Landscaping – all plants are called out and situated and chosen for their screening capability. At the front are 2 trumpet trees, 6 bottle trees and Carolina cherry hedging along the property line to the north. The structure’s center section would have 1 carrot wood tree, 2 fern pines and Carolina cherry hedges. At the rear would be 3 jacaranda trees, 3 pine trees and ivy hedging along the property line.

He displayed a computer generated video showing a motorist’s view driving down La Cañada Boulevard, which he stated demonstrates minimal viewable mass. He stated that his working with Staff and the neighbors resulted in a plan that addresses the project’s siting, massing and screening effects.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Brown, Mr. Troedsson advised that the house is 46-ft wide. The garage is 20 x 30 for a 10-ft span and decreases to 20 x20 ft for another 10-ft. span.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Engler, he explained that one of the walls under construction was replacing the neighbor’s 50-yr wall that caved in. Also,

the air conditioning units were relocated to the south side.

Carlo Orlando, advised that he is a practicing physician in Glendale and hopes to purchase the home. He stated that Mr. Troedsson was very conscientious with the design and with neighborhood contact.

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

Commissioner Mehranian remarked that since the Commission allowed the change, the project is what she would want to see in this neighborhood. She felt the project was in proportion and harmonious with the neighborhood and complimented Mr. Troedsson's design. Commissioner Mehranian stated that her support of the subdivision was based on the conditions imposed on future development – this is preferable to a gigantic home that could have been built if the lot split were denied.

Commissioner Brown recalled the difficult decision to allow the lot split or allow a 9,200-sf home to be constructed. Since the property had 3 structures on it at the time of deliberations he did not believe density would be increased. It was important to him that splitting the lot would not create more sq footage that would otherwise occur and that the setbacks not be decreased. He stated that he foresaw a detached garage and a driveway on the north side to mitigate a "box car" effect. Commissioner Brown stated that he couldn't be more disappointed; two lots developed at 4,500-sf would produce more sq footage than the larger lot and he felt the project presented 6-ft side setback with the pop-out windows encroaching. He concluded by stating that the plan was unacceptable to him; it needs to be smaller, greater setbacks and a traditional front that looks like the rest of the neighborhood.

Commissioner Engler referred to the 6-ft-high wall located in front of the porch. He noted that walls over 42" in height are not allowed within the front yard setback.

Senior Planner Buss advised that under Code, *front yard* refers to the front *setback*.

Chairman Levine recalled his prior comments as clearly stating that he would review the development “completely subjectively”. He opposed locating mechanical equipment within the side setback or any encroachment into the 7-ft side yard setback, “regardless if it’s a pop-out window”. He questioned if the side yard landscaping would block emergency access and stated that the 173-ft building length reminded him of a convalescent home. Reducing the length by 20-30 feet would be desirable.

Given the Commissioners’ comments, he provided the applicant with options for a vote and possible appeal to the City Council, or a continuance.

Mr. Troedsson requested specific direction and stated that it is difficult to design by committee and impossible to design subjectively. He advised of having considered a detached garage, however, the amount of concrete and traffic over a span of 200 ft would not be visually pleasing. Mr. Troedsson stated that the Commission did not address the required findings of siting, massing and effect.

Chairman Levine stated that he did not disagree with that comment and recalled his dissent with the language at the previous meeting. He stated that he would not address the required findings and if necessary, would recuse himself from further deliberations. His understanding was that this would be a subjective review.

Commissioner Brown stated that the siting is not compatible nor are the massing effects and that the problem is that the house is too big.

Mr. Troedsson commented that the City Council gave him parameters, which he followed. Absent something tangible to work with, he was unsure how to present a plan that pleased the Commission.

Chairman Levine suggested breaking the 173-ft-long span with a detached garage.

Assistant City Attorney commented that the Commission might want to consider a study session. The applicant could present alternatives for the Commission to review.

Commissioner Mehranian remarked that she did not share her colleagues' concerns, having observed the high quality of Mr. Troedsson's work and the allowed lot configuration when the Parcel Map was approved. She felt her colleagues were asking him to reconsider some of the dimensional design issues.

Chairman Levine stated that he didn't have a concern with the length because it would not be seen from La Cañada Boulevard; however he felt the 176-ft long wall needed modulation.

A discussion followed whether to hold a study session or call a special meeting. It was agreed that Mr. Troedsson would meet with the Commissioners individually and to continue the hearing to March 25th.

M/S/C Brown/Engler to continue Floor Area Review 02-23 to March 25. Unanimous.

**OTHER BUSINESS:
Policy regarding story
poles:**

Senior Planner Buss advised that this item was on the agenda at the request of Commissioner Engler.

Commissioner Gelhaar expressed concern that the concept of requiring story poles was becoming "watered down". He distributed policy from the City of Laguna Beach, which refers to a "staking plan" - which he would like to emulate. He asked Staff to review "and come up with something that is more specific that we can hand out".

Commissioner Engler stated that all hillside projects should be staked with the exception of Director's approvals.

Planner Cantrell stated that in some cases, it is impractical to use snow netting. He suggested that the

Commission require different materials for horizontal lines

Commissioner Brown recognized the benefits derived from story poles and questioned if some accommodation shouldn't be made for projects that do not include a full structure. He felt Staff should be given discretion so long as the applicant understands not erecting story poles is a risk they assume, as the Commission might later require them.

It was agreed that Staff would return with consistent language.

**Tree Removal Permit 03-03; Carr;
4605 Hillard Avenue:**

Senior Planner Buss reported the applicant's appeal to the Director's determination to deny a request to remove deodar cedar. The subject tree is located in the applicant's front yard and has a diameter of 16", when measured 4-ft above grade.

Mr. Carr contends that the tree presents a hazard to his property and advised that two large deodars, near his residence, were toppled during recent windstorms. The Director could not support the required findings --- the tree, which is approximately 30 ft from the residence does not interfere with the structure and allowing the tree to remain would not present an unreasonable hardship. There was no evidence of disease and an arborist report to the contrary was not submitted.

Applicant, Mike Carr, advised of having resided at his current residence since 1984. His concern was that should the tree fall, and depending in which direction, it would either hit the center of his home or fall into the street. He stated that he preferred not to lose the tree, but he respects nature and considers the tree in question as a threat to his property.

Commissioner Brown asked if professional advice was solicited.

Mr. Carr stated that his tree was not diseased or damaged and therefore an arborist's report was not required. He stated "this is more than requirements; we're talking about my investment".

Commissioner Brown advised Mr. Carr that the Commission was constrained by Code and that as presented, his request does not meet Code requirements.

The Commissioners concurred.

Chairman Levine remarked that he has numerous deodars on his property and near his home. Given Mr. Carr's argument, all the trees along Earlmont, Fairmount and Alta Canyada, have the potential of falling.

M/S/C Mehranian/Gelhaar to uphold the Director's determination and deny the appeal. Unanimous.

**COMMENTS FROM
THE
COMMISSIONERS::**

Commissioner Gelhaar inquired if the City had evidence in hand that Mr. La Bruna timely purchased the land from the north property line to the outer perimeter of the wall and fencing, which is currently owned by the County of Los Angeles, as required by the original conditions of approval.

Attorney Steres advised that issues have arisen which include the City and the City might want a partial easement. The question was raised as to when the one-year timeframe to purchase the property in question begins. His opinion was that it begins at the most recent approval and will therefore expire in 2004.

Commissioner Gelhaar stated that he was aghast and asked if he had the right to appeal Attorney Steres' decision, as it is not what the Commission had in mind. He added that "it doesn't make sense to keep extending every time he comes in for a revision; he was prepared to request Staff to send a 30-day notice to the applicant.

Attorney Steres reported that the purchase was near completion and substantially done; the issue at hand arose with the City of La Cañada Flintridge.

Commissioner Engler requested a copy of the site and landscaping plans for 365 Corona Drive; also for Commonwealth. He asked if there was any reason he shouldn't receive copies; he was willing to pay duplication costs.

Attorney Steres advised that inspection of the plans was always an option. There are some restrictions regarding making copies under the Government Code Section; he would review and advise.

Commissioner Brown inquired about ongoing renovations at the former Marsh Pharmacy site.

Planner Cantrell responded that a market would soon occupy the premises and, since it is an allowed use (alcohol would not be sold), it is strictly a Design Commission issue.

ADJOURNMENT:

M/S/C Mehranian/Brown to adjourn at 9:50 p.m.
Unanimous.

Secretary to the Planning Commission