

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION
OF THE
CITY OF LA CAÑADA FLINTRIDGE
HELD MARCH 13, 2007**

I. CALL TO ORDER:

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

II. ROLL CALL:

Present were Commissioners Gelhaar, Hill and Mehranian, Deputy City Attorney Cobey, Senior Planner Buss, Planner Gjolme and Assistant Planner Lang. Commissioner Cahill was expected to arrive shortly; Director of Community Development Stanley was absent.

III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairman Davitt led the salute to the flag.

IV. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Comments were not offered.

V. REORDERING OF THE AGENDA

Chairman Davitt stated that there was no need to re-order the agenda.

VI. CONSENT CALENDAR

Minutes of February 13, 2006. M/S/C Gelhaar/Mehranian to approve; 3 Ayes. Commissioner Hill abstained due to his recusal on item VIII. D.

VII. PUBLIC HEARING:

A. Second Floor Review 06-13; Floor Area Review 07-07; Kim; 4300 Oakwood Avenue:

Planner Clarke reported the applicant's request to demolish a single-story home and all detached structures, replacing them with a 6,336-sf, two-story home and detached garage. Total floor/roofed area would total 6,336-sf of floor area on a lot with less than 80 ft of street frontage.

The 22,940-sf subject side is located on east side of Oakwood, between Georgian and Berkshire Avenue, in the R-1-20,000 Zone. The lot size is a bit smaller than the neighborhood average of 23,918-sf.

The project would be set back more than 70 ft from Oakwood, approximately 10-ft above street elevation, and presents an FAR of 25.4%, compared with the neighborhood average of 17.7%.

A Power Point presentation showed the neighborhood development mix of single and two-story homes. Elevations, floor plans and a site plan showed the

proposed two-car garage and a pool at the rear. The first and second floors would have setbacks of 8' and 16', respectively. The west elevation, which faces the street, accommodates a front porch, which is setback 9'-9" further than the 70-ft front setback.

All mature trees would remain, including a number of oaks. Since one oak in the back yard is within 19 ft of the proposed deck, the draft conditions assure sufficient space and protection for the tree's progressive growth. Additionally, the draft conditions require that either the master bedroom be cut back, or that the deck be extended to allow more room for growth, given that the oak's canopy would come in contact with the 2nd floor.

Commissioner Gelhaar stated that an arborist report would provide more specific information regarding the tree's viability.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Gelhaar, Senior Planner Buss explained that a demolition permit is under the purview of Building & Safety and removal of asbestos is under the control of the AQMD. He offered to have the Building & Safety Inspector provide an explanation of the process.

Chairman Davitt opened the public hearing.

John Horrall, 1471 Oakwood, resides across the street from the project. He expressed his belief that "lot by lot, the City of La Cañada Flintridge is destroying the charm and character of its neighborhoods". He recognized that most of the replaced homes "had seen better days, but they were unobtrusive." He stated that the replacements are much the same ilk; much too large. He suggested that contractors and owners be required to meet Code and reported that the Planning Commission has approved 5 large homes, each with less than 80 ft of street frontage, and considerably more than 4500-sf.--- each is a precedent for the next project. He also doubted that the existing trees would hide the bulk and noted there is no mention of added landscaping. He stated there should be on site parking requirements or shuttles for construction workers and shuttle as well as on-site space for dumpsters during construction.

Larry Stone, 4261 Oakwood, resides one house down from the Horralls and had submitted a letter earlier, addressing the overall issue --- "the Planning Commission continually ignores the standards and sets precedent - there must be some explanation." While the layout of house was acceptable to him, "it appears to be another mammoth home." He stated that this was frustrating and he looked forward to hearing an explanation.

Since further comments were not offered, Chairman Davitt closed the public hearing and solicited comments from the Commissioners.

Commissioner Gelhaar observed that since Mr. Horral built his very attractive, 2-story home, second floor setbacks have been increased and second-floor review set in place. From a massing perspective, the project has less viewable mass from the street than does Mr. Horral's home. He explained that 4,500-sf is a threshold --- not a standard -- that triggers Planning Commission review for lots with less than 80 ft of street frontage, and the amount of square footage allowed is predicated on the lot size. He had concerns based on the staff report, e.g., ---the project's impact on the oak in the rear was not adequately addressed. He did not have a problem with the height or proposed size, but preferred that the hearing be continued for an arborist report.

Commissioner Mehranian concurred with Staff's comment that the north elevation could be modulated more and strongly felt that the oak tree issue must be addressed.

Commissioner Hill commented that the neighborhood is in transition and it appeared that the design and size 'fit', but it would be helpful to have additional information regarding the oak tree in the back yard.

Commissioner Cahill clarified Staff's position that the 2nd floor setback on the north side was done rather abruptly. Staff believed that more modulation and interest could be applied out of concern for the adjacent neighbor.

He then commented that he did not have a problem with the north side modulation, but he thought the south side second floor could have more interest, though he wouldn't make it a condition. He concurred with the comments thus far, including the concern with the oak.

Commissioner Mehranian concurred with Staff's concern with the lack of modulation on the 2nd floor north side and felt that more interest would help soften that façade. She agreed to continue the hearing for an arborist report.

Chairman Davitt preferred a continuance pending an arborist's report and postponed his comments until he reviewed the report. He offered the applicant the option of a vote or a continuance.

The applicant opted for a continuance to a date uncertain.

M/S/C Gelhaar/Davitt to continue Second Floor Review 06-13 and Floor Area Review 07-07 to a date uncertain. Unanimous.

B. Modification 07-01; Yan; 1040 Lavender Lane:

Planner Clarke described the applicant's request to legalize a storage shed as located, within the side and rear yard setbacks.

The 18,267-sf subject site is located on the south side of Lavender Lane, in the R-1-15,000 Zone. Sheds under 6 ft in height are not subject to setback requirements, while those 6 to 10 ft high require minimum setbacks of 5 ft. The subject shed is 11'-6" high.

A Power Point demonstration showed the shed at the southwest corner of the property on the side and rear property lines, where there is ample vegetation and a pool, but is visible to properties to the south and west.

A photo provided by the former owner of the property, depicted a storage shed, which had rotted over time and which was replaced by the current owner on a concrete slab. Flashing on the shed's south side wall directs rain to the neighboring property. The applicant has offered to lower the shed height by 2 ft and remove the flashing; however, the encroachments would remain.

Staff could not make the necessary findings to recommend approval and therefore recommended denial of the request.

Marilyn Yan explained their need for a storage shed and stated she was willing to modify it to accommodate the neighbors.

Chairman Davitt opened the public hearing.

Peter Hwangbo, 1047 Green Lane, who shares a common rear property line with the applicant, distributed photos of the shed from his property. He noted that the shed has a window which looks directly to his back yard and asked that his privacy be protected.

Grant Wood, 1041 Green Lane, also lives south of the subject site. He stated that the views from his back patio are now of a looming shed and there is no landscape buffer. He also felt that the color was too reflective.

Marilyn Yan reiterated her willingness to work with the Commission to lower and re-paint the shed.

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

Commissioner Cahill remarked that the photos taken from Mr. Hwangbo's back yard were quite telling; the shed stood in stark contrast to the screened and green garden. He felt that the shed presented a tall wall with a bright color and stated that he was inclined to deny the request. He suggested that the applicant work with the neighbors with a smaller structure in mind.

Commissioner Mehranian concurred that the shed should be denied in its current form, in its present location and the existing color.

Commissioner Hill agreed and advised that he could not make the required findings.

Commissioner Gelhaar concurred and suggested that the structure be reduced to 6 ft in height and that it be relocated to meet the setback requirements.

Chairman Davitt also concurred and stated that he could not support allowing the structure to remain in its current configuration and location.

A brief discussion followed regarding options available to the applicant. The commissioners concurred that there were not a lot of opportunities to make the structure acceptable as located.

Commissioner Gelhaar remarked that he did not support having the issue resolved among neighbors, as neighbors tend to move; "a Code-compliant structure makes a lot of sense."

M/S/C Mehranian/Gelhaar to deny Modification 07-01. Unanimous.

Deputy City Attorney Cobey asked that the applicant be advised of the consequences of denial.

Senior Planner Buss advised that Staff would follow up with the Code Enforcement officer, who will work with the applicant to either remove the shed or modify so that it meets Code. Additionally, the applicant has the right to file an appeal to the City Council within 15 days.

C. Floor Area Review 07-04; Ledbetter; 1050 Vista Del Valle Drive:

Planner Gjolme reported the applicant's proposal to allow sq. footage in excess of 4,500-sf on a lot with less than 80 ft of street frontage. The proposal involves a 1,049-sf, first -floor addition to a two-story home that would result in total square footage of 6,323-sf., well within the 8,120-sf allowed on the lot, based on its 32,000-sf size.

An aerial view showed the 31,850-sf, through lot, comprised of 2 parcels located on the south side of Vista Del Valle Road. The north parcel, comprised of just under 13,000-sf, fronts Vista Del Valle with 79'-7" of street front. The majority of this parcel accommodates lawn, landscaping and a driveway. The residence is sited on the 18,730-sf southern parcel, which has 25 ft of secondary frontage along the north end of Hayman Avenue. Since the existing house straddles the boundary line between the 2 parcels, the draft conditions mandate a merger of the 2 parcels into a single lot to allow the requested sq footage.

A 1,049-sf first-floor addition (including a 350-sf covered patio) is proposed at the rear of the home. Side setbacks in excess of 50 ft and a compliant 15-ft rear

setback would be provided. Planner Gjolme reported that a neighboring property at 5145 Hayman, currently has views of the existing two-story home. Though the project is limited to the first floor and well below the ridge of the second story, the upslope nature of the existing house and the fact that the expansion would project outward and reduce the minimal separation between the project and 5145 Hayman, caused Staff to recommend installation of landscape screening along the south property line.

Elevations were shown on Power Point. A proposed sub floor -- a product of slightly descending grade to the south occurring over the entire building footprint, would raise the height of the addition to 19-20 ft from low adjacent grade. The addition includes a single gable roof with the high ridge oriented toward the neighbor to the south.

All other homes proximate to the site are well separated by distance; it's the rear yards of neighboring properties that are most proximate to the subject lot.

With the suggested landscaping condition, Staff believed that positive findings could be made and recommended approval.

Applicant Steve Ledbetter, advised that he and the neighbor at 5145 Hayman, who is also planning an expansion, are working out a landscape plan that would benefit both properties.

Chairman Davitt opened the public hearing.

Peter Racicot, 1025 Vista Del Valle, supported the request and stated that the Ledbetter's lot is one of the most beautiful on the street; their landscaping was an inspiration to him when he purchased his property. He stated that 80-ft-wide frontages have always been recognized on the street and when the County mapped the tract to the north where he resides, all the lots have 80 ft of frontages, so the intent well demonstrated.

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

Commissioner Mehranian stated that she was pleased with the presentation of the space and it's preservation of the neighborhood's scale.

Commissioner Hill stated that he did not have any issues with the request and could make the findings.

Commissioner Gelhaar walked the site and felt that the existing landscaping at the south boundary is adequate. He did not see a need to add the condition suggested by Staff.

Commissioner Cahill and Chairman Davitt concurred on the same basis.

M/S/C Mehranian/Gelhaar to approve Floor Area Review 07-04 as submitted. Unanimous.

D. Second-Floor Review 06-11; Modification 07-09; Patel; 466 Oliveta Place:

Planner Gjolme described the applicants' request for a minor residential first-floor expansion and construction of a new 2nd floor. Total proposed floor/roofed area would reach 3,630-sf. A Modification is required, as the project involves removal of more than 30% of the existing roof. The project must therefore be evaluated based on the existing and requested setbacks. The Modification also addresses partial demolition and reconstruction of a 6-ft-high wood fence located within the required street side setback on Knight Way.

The 10,140-sf corner lot is located on Oliveta Place, at the corner of Knight Way, in the R-1-10,000 Zone. It is 75 ft wide along Oliveta, and 150 ft deep along Knight Way. The house faces Oliveta Place and, because it is the narrower of the two frontages, it is recognized as the "front" of the property.

Residential development is noticeably absent to the north, where Paradise Canyon Elementary athletic field is located. To the south is the only 2-story Craftsman design home on Oliveta. That home and the proposal, if approved, would be the only two-story homes in an area that is single-story.

Site plan - highlighted existing detached garage, that would be retained

New 2nd floor would be centrally located, and recessed so that it easily meets the 25-ft front setback requirement. Though a recess between floors is not provided to the north, the 27-ft street side yard setback from Knight Way is nearly twice the 15-ft requirement. A hip roof would reach a maximum height of 28 ft, and 26 ½ ft as seen from higher grade to the north. To accommodate the sq. footage, a portion of the existing garage would be removed, but nonetheless provide a code compliant garage size and setback. Code allows rear and side setbacks as low as 5 ft for detached garages located in the rear of properties.

A Power Point presentation depicted the existing front setback which would be retained and at its closest point, is 23 ½ ft from Oliveta, just under the 25-ft requirement. The minimal encroachment represents a small rectangle of 15-20 ft. The remaining first floor footprint would be preserved and is code compliant.

The Modification also addresses a small extension of the existing 6-ft-high, wood fence that wraps around the corner and west along Knight Way, connecting to the existing garage. Since that portion of the garage would be eliminated, the fence would be extended to tie with the northeast corner of the

garage. The fence is comprised of 2-3 ft of block with solid wood atop. Because of its location in the street side yard, its height and solid composition is considered to be non-conforming.

Trees along the property's perimeter, including a mature pine and oaks along the Knight Way, would be retained, as well as 3 mature olive trees in the right-of-way. The second floor depth designed with a depth of 35 ft and a width of 30 ft to allow distance from the tree canopies. Even so, minimal trimming might be necessary.

A color site plan compared existing development and proposed development. Planner Gjolme pointed out the modulation and offset from the south, more so from the front and somewhat from the north, as well as separation from the detached garage. A new trellis would attach the house to the garage for aesthetic purposes.

The design is minimalist cottage with a hip roof and attractive exterior elements. The north elevation is the most significant in terms of the overall span and presentation, but it would face Knight Way, where across the street is school property. The front (east elevation) would face single-story homes across the street; however, the substantial second floor setback and the articulation, design and materials result an appropriate presentation, given the nature of the neighborhood.

Another benefit is that Knight Way is several ft above pad level. There is a gradual slope to existing wall and a gentle slope to the house. The grade difference combined with the olive trees in the right of way effectively reduce the overall mass and profile of the structure as viewed from the north.

Given the adjacency of school property and the attractive single-story home to the south, Staff considers the project as appropriate for the area as located on the unique corner lot.

Staff considered the Modification request as a minor issue. The existing setback of 23 ½ ft, increases to 35 ft., resulting in an average setback exceeding the requirement. Further the fence is longstanding and legally constructed and would be minimally changed by the addition.

Staff recommended approval as submitted.

Project architect Dennis Dickerson, introduced himself and stated he was pleased with the thorough report.

Commissioner Gelhaar referred to a storage shed located in a corner of the property. He asked if the applicant would be willing relocating it outside the setback or lowering its height.

Mr. Dickerson advised that would be acceptable.

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

Commissioner Hill commented that the staff report was outstanding and he agreed with the analysis.

Commissioner Gelhaar concurred.

Commissioner Cahill also concurred and remarked that the color presentation comparing existing and proposed development was most helpful

Commissioner Mehranian and Chairman Davitt agreed.

M/S/C Cahill/Hill to approve Second Floor Review 06-11 and Modification 07-09 as conditioned. Unanimous.

VIII. OTHER BUSINESS

There was no business to report.

IX. COMMENTS FROM THE COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Hill asked for details regarding an article in the newspaper regarding numerous trees that were cut down on Valley Sun Way.

Senior Planner Buss advised that the property was formerly owned by Caltrans and has not been annexed to the City as yet. Apparently, a nearby commercial property owner acquired the land and intended to expand the parking area by clearing the site. Code Enforcement was called and issued a Stop Work Order.

X. COMMENTS FROM THE DIRECTOR

Senior Planner Buss reported on the groundbreaking ceremony for the La Cañada Properties project

XI. ADJOURNMENT

M/S/C Hill/Cahill to adjourn at 7:30 p.m. Unanimous.

Secretary to the Planning Commission