

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION
OF THE
CITY OF LA CAÑADA FLINTRIDGE
HELD MAY 9, 2006**

I. CALL TO ORDER:

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

II. ROLL CALL:

Present were Commissioners Cahill, Davitt, Engler, Deputy City Cobey, Director of Community Development Stanley, Senior Planner Buss and Planner Gjolme.

III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Commissioner Davitt led the salute to the flag.

IV. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Comments were not offered.

V. REORDERING OF THE AGENDA

The agenda remained unchanged.

VI. CONSENT CALENDAR

A. Minutes of April 25, 2006; M/S/C Engler/Davitt to adopt the minutes with a correction in the motion for HDP 05-66. Unanimous.

B. Line Adjustment 06-03; Gayton/Meurer; 445-53 Somerset Place.

M/S/ Davitt/Engler to approve the requested lot line adjustment.
Unanimous.

VII. PUBLIC HEARINGS

A. Variance 05-11; Ghaby (Hill Street Café); 1004 Foothill Boulevard;

Senior Planner Buss related the applicant's proposal to remodel and expand his restaurant, located on the south side of Foothill, just east of Chevy Chase Drive. Improvements are limited to the kitchen, restrooms and the parking lot; importantly, seating capacity would not change. The Variance would allow a reduction of the required 72 parking spaces. Currently, 60 spaces are provided, some of which do not meet Code for size and placement. The applicant seeks to reduce that number to 57 code-compliant spaces. Mr. Buss noted that historically, the restaurant has been under-parked. The request has been preliminarily and favorably reviewed by the Design Commission, which will

review it again, should the entitlement be granted by the Planning Commission.

The site is comprised of two parcels: the northern parcel is located within the DVSP and accommodates the restaurant, parking along the east and west entries and immediately to the rear of the restaurant. The southerly parcel is zoned Residential. It is limited to parking and is accessed from two driveways on Foothill and from another driveway on Chevy Chase, which crosses the southern tip of the adjacent lot (the former Flintridge Flower Farm site).

Staff requested comments from the City's Traffic Engineer, which were included in the Commissioners' packets. Staff also met with the applicant's agent to review parking space alignment and determine if there was any way to add at least 3 more spaces and get back to the 60 spaces that seem to have adequately served the site over the years. Removal of a portion of the ramp on the east side should be considered to gain more parking.

Staff recommended approval with conditions including removal of the Chevy Chase driveway from the adjacent lot. Mr. Buss noted the absence of complaints to the City regarding this site, the project does not represent an increase in use, and the parking lot would be upgraded, landscaped and circulation improved.

Greg Powell with Architecture +, and agent for the applicant, addressed the Commission. He and his client researched the possibility of adding 2 more spaces at the southwest corner and 1 in the south east corner. Since his client's intent is to beautify the site and preserve the trees along the west boundary, he felt that a compromise on the reduced number of spaces should be favorably considered.

After confirming that parallel parking meets Code requirements, Chairman Gelhaar suggested that at least 2 more cars could park parallel if the slope at the east entrance was eliminated.

Mr. Powell felt the area could provide 1 more space with no landscaping.

Commissioner Cahill confirmed that the easement on the adjacent property was not available for parking, as that property will be developed.

Chairman Gelhaar opened the public hearing.

Ray Stockus, who resides south of the parking lot, stated that he did not oppose the project, but suggested that employees be required to park offsite, to

solve the parking problem. He related of having observed restaurant patrons parking on Chevy Chase and in the Community Center, which at times, has conflicted with availability of parking at the Center. He questioned how a variance could be allowed when there are other alternatives to solve the problem.

Leonard Totta, owner of the commercial property to the east, was concerned that the plan shows a trash container near a soon-to- be-remodeled back entrance to his building. He related of having complained to Mr. Ghaby approximately 20 times about odors emanating from open trash containers and a grease pit.

Commissioner Engler commented that those are health code issues that need to be reported. He asked for an additional condition that a code-compliant grease tank be provided.

Chairman Gelhaar confirmed that the plan should the trash containers approximately 18 ft north of their existing location. He inquired what the prospects were of moving them near the Chevy Chase driveway.

Director Stanley noted that would be too close to residential uses; moving them closer to the restaurant would gain 2 more parking spaces.

Mr. Powell confirmed that the plans show the trash container within a roofed enclosure.

Senior Planner Buss stated that relocating the bins closer to the kitchen door would not block traffic and allow refuse trucks to service the restaurant.

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

Commissioner Engler stated that Mr. Buss' suggestion was reasonable and questioned how the applicant expected to accommodate construction parking and allow the restaurant to remain open. He asked that construction vehicles park off site.

Commissioner Davitt stated that the project would improve the site and noted that the majority of businesses on Foothill have parking deficiencies. He concurred with Staff's findings and with added conditions to relocate the trash enclosure, that a code-compliant grease facility be provided, that construction be limited to daylight hours and that parking lot lighting be directed so that it does not affect neighboring homes, he could support the project.

Commissioner Engler remarked that AQMD deals with stove/oven vents and asked Staff to check that out.

Commissioner Cahill pointed out that seating capacity would not be increased and that most businesses in the City are not code compliant when it comes to parking spaces. The biggest impacts seemed to be noise and odors. He asked that ventilation fans be muted, that the odor problem with the trash be addressed, and that construction be prohibited at night.

Mr. Buss advised that the City's Noise Ordinance deals with noise that can be heard from off site. Interior work such as painting, etc., would be permissible at night.

Chairman Gelhaar asked for an additional condition requiring the applicant to work with Staff to acquire as many parking spaces as possible. He endorsed the idea of an underground grease trap.

M/S/C Engler/Cahill to approve Variance 05-11 with added conditions that lighting be cut off at adjacent residential property lines and recessed, that the trash bins be relocated to the southeast corner of the building and that a trash enclosure with a roof be provided, that an underground grease trap, accepted by the Health Department be provided, any new ventilation must emit minimum noise, odors, etc., and meet AQMD requirements, parking to be added if possible along the east wall where the trash is now located and also at the Chevy Chase entrance. Unanimous.

B. Modification 06-09; Morlett; 5254 Alta Canyon Road:

Planner Gjolme described the applicant's request expand the first floor of his home and add a new second floor.

The 9,717-sf property is located at the corner of Alta Canyon and Linda Vista Drive and falls under the designation of a 'hairpin' lot, where both frontages are subject to front yard setback regulations. Expansion of the home is severely limited due to the lot's configuration.

Approximately 150-sf would be added to the first floor and connect the detached garage to the home. A 17-ft, front setback would be provided - below the required 36'-8" for the lot, but greater than the existing garage's 5-ft front setback.

A modest, 838-sf, second-story would be centrally located for a total floor area of 2,846-sf. Side and rear setbacks are code compliant; however, the front setback, which maintains the existing building line, encroaches into the Linda

Vista 'front' setback. An open balcony is proposed off the second-floor master bedroom and could potentially afford views into the neighboring rear yard and pool area. It would extend into the front setback on Linda Vista, similar to the existing garage and proposed additions.

Planner Gjolme pointed out that the project retains a compliant, 36-ft front setback along Alta Canyon and would not encroach any further than the existing encroachments along Linda Vista. Existing landscaping would also be retained. Staff concluded that the proposed expansion is reasonable, given the configuration of the lot and recommended positive findings and project approval.

Chairman Gelhaar opened the public hearing.

Bob Craven, who resides on Linda Vista, did not oppose the project and agreed that it is a difficult lot to work with. The two items he brought up were: the balcony and visible trash cans. He agreed that the balcony would impact the neighbor to the west and noted that the subject lot is the only property on Linda Vista where the back of the house fronts Linda Vista. This results in trash barrels, etc., visible from the street. He requested a condition requiring a trash enclosure.

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

Commissioner Davitt commented on the uniqueness of the lot; the expansion is reasonable. Once the balcony is removed, he could make all the findings and he requested an additional condition to require a trash enclosure.

Chairman Gelhaar commented that the trash enclosure would most likely be a solid wall, over 42" in height, so the requested Modification could address that also

Commissioner Cahill observed that the lot is unusual in shape and the proposal is practical. He agreed with Mr. Craven that Linda Vista is the back yard for the subject site and agreed that a trash enclosure would be appropriate. He did not have an issue with the balcony, it faces the rear yard and an occupant would have to look sideways to gain views of the neighbor's back yard.

Commissioner Engler concurred with Commissioner Davitt – remove the balcony and require a trash enclosure.

Chairman Gelhaar agreed that the balcony should be removed.

Director Stanley commented that constructing a solid wall where the garage ends and heading back would screen the trash as well as the applicant's back yard.

Chairman Gelhaar agreed and left it to the Director's discretion as to any landscaping needed to soften the wall.

M/S/C Davitt/Engler to approve Modification 06-09 with added conditions to eliminate the balcony from the plan, approving a wall to screen the trash receptacles enclosure to screen the cans and the back yard - wall material and landscaping is subject to the review and approval of the Director. Unanimous.

Architect Janice Seo asked if her client would be allowed a trellis rather than a balcony.

Chairman Gelhaar advised that Staff would re-word the condition to allow that.

C. Hillside Development Permit 06-19 (Dir.); Floor Area Review 06-04; Modification 06-11; Toyoshima; 506 Dartmouth Place:

Planner Gjolme reported that applicants' proposal to convert a covered deck to a 237-sf great room.

The 52,708-sf project site is located at the end of Dartmouth Place that extends south from Hillcrest Drive, in the R-1-40,000 zone. It is at street grade at the front, where it has only 40 ft of frontage; however, it extends 350 ft to the rear, with an average width of 115 ft. The lot's low point is at the southwest corner, where it is approximately 90 ft below street grade.

The proposed great room would replace a covered deck located at the southwest corner of the house, and despite resulting in a 96-sf floor area reduction, total floor area would exceed the 4,500-sf threshold for lots with less than 80 ft of frontage. The new great room would increase the north side yard setback from 11 ft to 16 ft and achieves an 18-ft height when measured from the adjacent sloping grade. This height qualifies as "second story" construction and triggers a 20-ft second-floor setback, resulting in a 4-ft encroachment.

The deck and the heavily screened rear yard were shown on Powerpoint, as was the new floor area and the increased setback.

Staff supported the request, given the property's size, isolation and the limited scope of the project which increases a deficient setback and reduces the floor area.

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

Commissioner Cahill did not have any issues with the request, noting that it reduced the impacts, did not add bulk, the FAR would be reduced and the setback increased.

Commissioner Engler stated that he did not have a problem with the request, but felt a condition should be added requiring construction vehicles to park off site, given the lack of space on site.

Commissioner Davitt and Chairman Gelhaar concurred.

M/S/C Engler/Davitt to approve Hillside Development Permit 06-19 (Dir.); Modification 06-11 and Floor Area Review 06-04 with an added conditions regarding construction parking as discussed. Unanimous.

VIII. OTHER BUSINESS

Study Session - Draft Residential Design Guidelines

Director Stanley advised that staff had just completed re-typing the draft guidelines that afternoon. He had copies for distribution and discussion if that is what the Commissioners wanted to do at this point. It was agreed to continue the item and allow the Director time to include Chairman Gelhaar's notations in the Draft copies.

IX. COMMENTS FROM THE COMMISSIONERS

Chairman Gelhaar addressed the press. He read articles regarding the Flintridge Tract that was called up by the City Council. He asked the press to familiarize themselves with the 132 condition so that they will be better informed when writing their articles.

On another matter, he advised that the chain link fence fronting Foothill on the Caltrans lot appears cluttered with the multitude of signs attached to it.

Planner Gjolme advised that those signs are exempt from review and that the chain link fence will soon be gone. Public Works has a plan approved by the Design Commission and he believed the project should go out to bid soon.

Commissioner Engler advised that on the south end of Cornishon, there is a circular driveway under construction that doesn't appear to have the required 25 ft of separation between aprons. He also asked what Staff had done about the parking at 1100 Inverness and asked how the Director could have approved a skylight since it wasn't on the original design.

Director Stanley advised that it was within his purview to determine that it was in substantial conformance with the approved design.

X. COMMENTS FROM THE DIRECTOR

Director Stanley advised that the Ordinance addressing the R-1 revisions would have a second reading on May 15th. The Council called-up the Flintridge Tract and the Bilaver project on Rosebank is on the May 15th Council agenda. The Council had requested that the applicant submit an approved geological approval prior to taking action. That has happened and it is now in the Council's hands.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

M/S/C Engler/Davitt to adjourn at 7:17 p.m. Unanimous.

Secretary to the Planning Commission