

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION  
OF THE  
CITY OF LA CAÑADA FLINTRIDGE  
HELD JULY 8, 2003**

**I. CALL TO ORDER:**

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

**II. ROLL CALL:**

Present were Commissioners Davitt, Gelhaar and Levine, Deputy City Attorney Campbell, Director of Community Development Stanley, Planner Cantrell, Assistant Planner Gjolme and Planning Aide Shimazu. Commissioner Mehranian was absent.

**III. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC:**

Comments were not offered.

**IV. CONSENT CALENDAR:**

- A. Minutes of June 24, 2003  
M/S/C Levine/Gelhaar to adopt the minutes as submitted. Unanimous
- B. Approval of Final Map 26322; 5024-30 Angeles Crest Highway; Nicholas  
M/S/C Gelhaar/Davitt, approving the final map. Unanimous.

**V. CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARING:**

**A. HILLSIDE DEVELOPMENT PERMIT 02-53; BUILDING DEPTH REVIEW 03-06; YOUNANIAN; 4596 LEIR DRIVE:**

Planner Cantrell recalled that on June 10<sup>th</sup>, the Commission continued the hearing, with direction to reduce the view blockage caused by the entry tower. Three alternatives were discussed to achieve that goal. The applicant has resolved the concern by lowering the tower, which now shares the eave line with the second floor. The peak of the tower is now only inches above the 24' 9" ridge. Staff believes that the applicant responded well and has done everything possible to eliminate view blockage from the Plaga residence on Conle Way.

The applicant and the Plagas expressed concern with the draft condition requiring random planting of large oaks on the property. Since the City does not allow topping of any trees, the oaks could eventually impact views. Staff's objective was to soften the view of the house from downslope, which could be accomplished by other trees that reach maturity level at the eave height. A

revised condition calls out that performance standard. A condition requiring the usual on-site parking of construction vehicles was not included; Staff noted the lack of parking problems on Leir Drive from two other recently completed projects.

Planner Cantrell then distributed a letter received from a neighbor to the Northeast, residing on Ocean View Boulevard. The neighbor, who shares the northern portion of the subject property's rear lot line, requested that the large eucalyptus tree on the applicant's property and near the common property line be removed because of litter and the hazard of falling limbs. Staff had requested that the tree be maintained to screen that neighbor's view of the project.

Director Stanley advised that the City Engineer was present to respond to any questions the Commission might have.

Chairman Engler commented that originally, the Director stated the applicant would have the ability to attach the drain pipe 2 ft above the lower part of the catch basin. Since then, it was discovered that the basin is 4 ft below the surface; he asked for an explanation of where the pipe could connect to the catch basin.

City Engineer Kwan advised that if the lot has sufficient slope, the drainage would be via gravity flow through either a curb drain or direct conversion into the catch basin. If the pad is lower than the street, drainage could be pumped using the same methods. Pipe size would be dictated by gravity of flow and the size of the pump required. He preferred that the pipe be as close as possible to the inside ceiling to prevent backup.

Responding to a question from Chairman Engler, Engineer Kwan advised that he was still exploring ownership of the catch basin, since Leir Drive is a private street.

Commissioner Gelhaar asked what minimum slope is required for gravity fed drains.

Engineer Kwan responded that based on the typical cross slope of a sidewalk, the minimum slope is 1 to 2%.he preferred a 1%-2% minimum.

Answering a question from Commissioner Levine, Engineer Kwan reported that the industry standard is 1%-2% of fall.

There were no further questions from the Commissioners.

Hrach Javadvesian, project designer and engineer, advised of having reviewed the plan with the County drainage engineer. The plan uses 80% gravity flow. He advised that the bottom of the catch basin is at a 6'-9' elevation, and there is plenty of slope for drainage to go to the center of the large catch basin, rather than all the way to the top. He then addressed the two items of concern at the last meeting; 1) He advised that his client unwillingly lowered the height of the tower; 2) he offered to replace the eucalyptus tree with one that would not damage the crib wall system and would not object to planting trees other than oaks if that pleased the Commission.

A discussion followed regarding the elevation of the storm drain and the elevation of the catch basin.

City Engineer Kwan advised that he preferred the Plan to be designed to City standards.

Director Stanley commented that all should assume the basin was designed for the drainage capacity of the lot and the subdivision and noted that it was approved by the City. He cautioned that if the Commission was contemplating lowering the pad, it would be looking at an alternative other than what the lot was designed for.

Chairman Engler stated that the issue is where the water enters the catch basin.

Mr. Javadvesian advised that he would speak with the City Engineer and arrive at an agreement.

Arat Badalian, 4625 Ocean View, distributed photos and reiterated his written concerns regarding the eucalyptus tree on the common boundary line. He reported that branches fell during the January windstorm and was concerned that its roots would damage the catch basin.

Commissioner Gelhaar confirmed that Deputy City Attorney Campbell read Mr. Badalian's letter. Attorney Campbell stated that the tree is a civil matter between two property owners and there would be no liability exposure on the part of the City.

For the record, Mr. Badalian stated that in the event the City denies removal of the eucalyptus tree and subsequently causes damage, that he would look to the City for restitution.

Attorney Philip Barbaro, Jr., spoke on behalf of his clients Mr. and Mrs. Plaga. He distributed photos of the story poles as they currently stand and advised

that his clients continue to be concerned with visual mass of the tower and structure. He urged that a condition be imposed to lower the building pad --- "4 ft would be great and 2 ft would be wonderful; and would restore the view they've had for 30 years". He believed that findings 3 and 8 could not be made. Should the Commission approve the project as conditioned, he asked that the absolute maximum height be 24'-9" as shown on the plan, that draft condition 14 be maintained and he requested assurance that the mature height of any new trees would not be any higher than the eaves. He noted that a spruce tree is located at the northwest corner of the property, rather than as shown on the plan.

Mr. Javadvesian recalled that at the last meeting, the Commissioners concluded that the entry tower should be lowered. His client reluctantly did so. He advised that further lowering of the building pad would result in a single-story structure. Mr. Javadvesian reported that his client was not opposed to removing the tree at the north and concurs with the neighbor that the eucalyptus tree be removed.

Commissioner Gelhaar recalled his prior request that the story poles show the ridge lines - "that didn't happen". He asked if the photo submitted by the Plaga's attorney, with the ridge lines marked in pen was accurate.

Mr. Javadvesian responded that he was unaware of where the photo was taken or from what angle. He advised that the story poles show the slope and the height and that it was difficult to connect them.

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

Commissioner Gelhaar reiterated what he wanted to see via story poles. In order to make findings 3 and 9, he would need the poles correctly reflecting the ridge lines. He believed that the pad could be lowered and still provide gravity drainage to the inlet at the curb.

Planner Cantrell interjected that he believed the discussion would be on the entry tower. At the previous meeting, it was agreed by the neighbors and the Commission that the ridge line was acceptable. He advised that the Plaga's photo was from the back of their lot and just above grade. He asked the Commission to focus on the minimal effect the lowered tower entry would have on the Plaga's home.

Commissioner Engler concurred that the photo was taken from grass level.

Commissioner Levine agreed with Staff's report in its entirety with the exception of the turret.

Commissioner Davitt recalled that the issue at the last meeting was the height of the entry tower; the Commission thereafter discussed the idea of lowering the building pad. He stated that if the pad could be lowered, he would like to see that worked out; otherwise, the reality was that the ridgeline was acceptable, with the issue being the height of the tower.

Chairman Engler concurred, adding that the Commission "asked for and got", a tower of reduced height. He remarked that the applicant might have to install a pumping system.

Commissioner Levine made a motion allowing removal of the eucalyptus tree, that the spruce tree be correctly shown on the plans, that the project be built per the submitted plans and that construction parking be restricted to on site or in front of the subject site.

Commissioner Engler preferred that Staff's parking management plan be included, as it also prohibits deliveries on Saturdays or Sundays and requires notification of delivery schedules to neighbors.

Commissioner Levine remarked that the concept of Staff's parking plan was "fine", but he did not accept everything that Staff included.

Attorney Campbell suggested adding "and all applicable standards must be approved by the City Engineer" to condition 19.

Commissioner Levine stated he still had a problem with Staff's wording for the parking management plan; "not everything is practical". The only added conditions he wanted was prohibition of parking on Saturdays and requiring construction parking on site or in front of the property.

Second;- Davitt. The motion passed 3-1 with Gelhaar dissenting.

Commissioner Gelhaar explained that he could not support the project since he had to guess what the story poles represented and because he continued to believe that the pad could be lowered more and still drain by gravity.

Attorney Barbaro was advised of his opportunity to appeal the decision to the City Council within fifteen days.

**VI. PUBLIC HEARINGS:**

**A. HILLSIDE DEVELOPMENT PERMIT 03-25; FLOOR AREA REVIEW 03-09; GULATI; 5467 LA FOREST DRIVE:**

Planner Cantrell reported the applicant's request to add 1,686-sf of floor area to their single-story home. The project consists of 1,650-sf of new second floor and a 36-sf first floor expansion. Since the lot does not have street frontage, and the end result would exceed the 4,500-sf review threshold, Floor Area Review is required.

The project site is located above the curve of the northernmost portion of La Forest Drive, north of Los Amigos Drive and is accessed via a driveway easement. Properties to the Northwest, West and South are developed; those to the North and East will likely remain undeveloped.

Planner Cantrell explained that the second floor is essentially a shrunken version of the first floor, and is set back on all sides from the existing footprint. The design is compatible with the existing design; complex roof forms relate well to the existing wall and lower roof configurations. Overall height would reach 23'-6" at the highest ridge, which comprises only a small portion of the roof. A bridge, that would be unseen from offsite, is proposed to span the driveway from the second floor to the hillside to the north. It creates 132-sf of covered area, and was included in floor area calculations. The draft conditions require Fire Department clearance for the bridge.

Major concerns of visible bulk and view blockage are limited; the project would be substantially screened and distant from the downslope neighbor. Parcels to the Northwest are at a higher elevation, negating any concerns of view blockage. Staff also did not believe that meeting the LRV guideline was justified by offsite views.

Addressing the Floor Area Request, Planner Cantrell noted that the potential crowding created by large homes on parcels with small frontages is not characteristic of this project. The 48,401-sf site would be developed at less than 10% density.

Staff recommended positive findings and project approval.

Chairman Engler commented that he had difficulty finding the site due to its isolation.

Project architect, Craig Stoddard reported that his clients had spoken with all the neighbors and there were no objectors to his knowledge.

Chairman Engler opened the public hearing.

Walt Diem, who has resided at 2051 Los Amigos, which fronts La Forest Drive, for 37 years, concurred with Staff's report and recommendations. He believed that the 80-ft frontage threshold was impractical for a project of this size and because the property is not viewed from the street.

Commissioner Levine was unable to locate the site, but was concerned with the availability of parking for construction vehicles.

Mr. Stoddard advised that there is adequate turnaround space on site ; at least 5-6 trucks could park on site and perhaps a few more in the driveway.

Commissioner Gelhaar was able to locate the site. He believed the project was appropriate and the footprint acceptable. Condition #12 regarding construction vehicle parking was satisfactory to him.

Commissioner Davitt made a site visit. He stated that it is a good project for the size of the lot and that he could support it, though he felt there would be material delivery and parking issues.

Chairman Engler stated that his biggest concern is fire protection and he was certain that the Fire Department would have comments. He encouraged the applicants to consider adding sprinklers the entire structure, since it is no longer a costly proposition.

M/S Gelhaar/Levine to approve Hillside Development Permit 03-23 and Floor Area Review 03-09.

Commissioner Levine addressed draft condition 12. He suggested eliminating the sentence regarding on-site parking, and prohibiting deliveries or movement of construction materials on *Saturdays* as well as Sundays and holidays.

Commissioner Gelhaar advised that he was comfortable with allowing deliveries on Saturdays and would like to begin using Staff's language for parking management. He noted that the Commission would be reviewing the subject in the near future.

The motion passed unanimously.

**B. HILLSIDE DEVELOPMENT PERMIT 03-27; KING; 5157 CROWN AVENUE:**

Assistant Planner Gjolme described the applicant's request to allow a 1,400-sf first-floor expansion at the rear of a residence in the form of two new "wings". An inward facing retaining wall ranging in height from 5-6 ft and spanning for 60 ft, would accommodate the expansion. A minor front porch colonnade is also proposed to accent the front facade. It would be recessed and provide a code compliant 40-ft front setback.

The project site is located on the northwest side of Crown Avenue, across from the Stardust Road intersection, in the R-1-15,000 Zone.

Assistant Planner Gjolme reported that the project would be screened from street view and not viewed from upslope. Building density of 3,506-sf is reasonable and is 1,400-sf below the maximum allowed for this site. He stated that the project is consistent with the spirit and intent of the Hillside Ordinance and would not adversely affect neighboring properties.

Chairman Engler inquired if the retaining wall might be somewhat visible from the neighboring property.

Assistant Planner Gjolme responded that it would be difficult to do so.

Chairman Engler opened the public hearing.

Mary Barrie, 5159 Crown Avenue, resides to the rear of the project site. She reviewed the plans and felt that the design was tasteful and sensitive to the area, and was pleased that the home would remain single-story.

Robert McCoy, 5147 Crown Avenue, resides below the project site. He also reviewed the plans and supported the project.

M/S/C Davitt/Gelhaar to approve Hillside Development Permit 03-27.  
Unanimous.

**C. HILLSIDE DEVELOPMENT PERMIT 03-22; MARQUEZ;  
4527 ALVEO ROAD:**

Planner Cantrell recounted the applicant's request for a 247-sf first-floor expansion and a new 735-sf, second floor above the central area of the house.

The project site is located on the west side of Alveo Road, three houses above its intersection with Lamour Drive in the R-1-7,500 Zone. The project presents 2,531-sf of floor and roofed area on the 7,800-sf lot. The lot's average slope at 23% is associated with a slope factor guideline of 0.9; total floor area is well below Code and the Guideline. The overall slope is perceived as a modestly elevated house pad and backdrop slope. The front setback would be built to the setback line; however, other setbacks would considerably exceed Code requirements. Properties behind the site on Daleridge Road are at a higher elevation so that view blockage is not an issue. There would not be any long-range views of the addition, where it would be positioned against a higher landscaped backdrop and framed by trees. With such limited views, Staff determined that applying the Light Reflectance Value Guideline was not justified.

Staff modified the on site parking condition due to the minimal space on site to accommodate construction vehicles. The street's width, visibility and light traffic create a favorable setting for curbside construction parking. The condition limits such parking to on site or in front of the house when feasible.

Chairman Engler stated he had a problem with the word *feasible*.

Commissioner Levine referred to Staff's statement regarding "light traffic" and confirmed that Staff did not conduct a traffic count study.

Kurt Bednar, project architect, related that the project was purposely designed to be low impact and to preserve views.

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

Commissioner Levine stated that he did not have a problem with the design, but from his perspective, if this project was approved, it would be the beginning of changing the neighborhood. He related of having driven the street 3 or 4 times, observing the character of the neighborhood, which for the most part is single-story.

Commissioner Davitt expressed appreciation for the design and considered it appropriate for the neighborhood. While the majority of homes in the area are single-story, he questioned whether the project would have a rippling effect.

Chairman Engler complimented the architect on the unobtrusive second story. He stated that he could support the project and requested that *feasible* be

stricken from condition 12 and that material deliveries be prohibited on Saturdays, as well as on Sundays.

M/S/C Gelhaar/Davitt to approve Hillside Development Permit 03-22 with modified conditions as noted. 3 Ayes. Dissenting: Levine.

**VII. PUBLIC MEETINGS:**

**A. FLOOR AREA REVIEW 03-12; MODIFICATION 03-36; KIM;  
309 BAPTISTE WAY:**

Assistant Planner Gjolme related the applicant's request to construct a new, 399-sf, two-car garage at the front of the property, along the east side property line, that would encroach 1'-6" into the required 5'-6" side yard setback. Floor Area Review is triggered since the project exceeds the 2,668-sf floor and roofed area maximum for the lot by 183 sf.

The subject site is located on the north side of Baptiste Way, just west of Crown Avenue, in the R-1-7,500 Zone.

The 19' x 21' garage would provide two, enclosed parking spaces to a property that currently lacks a garage. The design incorporates a single 12-ft-high gable and meets Code with the exception of the east side yard encroachment. Staff considered the request as appropriate, given the lack of a garage and that disruption of the street setting was not an issue. However, there did not appear to be any legitimate design or functional benefit derived from the encroachment; therefore, Staff recommended shifting the garage to provide a compliant side yard setback. Assistant Planner Gjolme noted that doing so would also align the garage with the house entry.

Staff recommended positive findings for the Floor Area Request and denying the Setback Modification.

Commissioner Gelhaar remarked that non-conforming structures were not shown on the site plan.

Chairman Engler preferred to continue the request or impose condition requiring their removal.

Director Stanley advised that if the structures are non-permitted, the applicant must be given the opportunity to apply for a Modification. If built with permits, they must be allowed to remain.

Commissioner Davitt commented that there seemed to be a substantial amount of interior construction going on.

Assistant Planner Gjolme advised that he would investigate and report.

M/S/C Levine/Gelhaar to approve Floor Area Review 03-12 and denying Modification 03-36 with direction to Staff to investigate the accessory structures. If they are non-permitted, they must be removed and a Stop Work Order should be issued on any non-permitted work. Unanimous.

A five-minute break was taken at this point, with the Commission reconvening at 7:48 p.m.

**B. FLOOR AREA REVIEW 03-04; BUILDING DEPTH REVIEW 03-03;  
OAKWOOD LCF, LLC; 4250 OAKWOOD AVENUE:**

Planner Cantrell described the applicant's proposal to demolish an existing home and replace it with a new, two-story residence. Though total floor area complies with Code, Floor Area Review is required because the project exceeds the 4,500-sf review threshold for lots with less than 80 ft of frontage. Building Depth Review is also required, as the depth, including roof treatments, would exceed 60 ft.

The subject site is located on the east side of Oakwood Avenue between Berkshire and Georgian Road, in the R-1-20,000 Zone. The 21,066-sf lot is 75 ft wide, with a depth exceeding 270 feet, which is typical of many parcels along lower Commonwealth and Oakwood. Pad elevation is approximately 11 ft above average street elevation. The front of the lot is screened with mature trees, which conceal the existing home. Along the south side, a single-story home extends to the rear over 100 ft, close to the property line and approximately 6 ft lower in elevation. Landscape screening is also provided along that property line.

Planner Cantrell pointed out that three adjacent homes to the north and several others in the general area are two-story structures and comparable in size to the proposed home.

Approximately 60% of new area would be devoted to the first floor, including a side-facing, two-car garage. The front wall of the garage would slightly exceed the required front setback; the house would be set back another 35 ft, behind a motor court. Second-floor massing steps back from the perimeter and a new driveway would be cut at a 13% grade between existing trees. Aside from preserving trees in the front yard, an oak with a trunk diameter of 12" would

be preserved within a large recess designed into the north side of the house. Staff believed that the massing is tasteful and adequately articulated. Frontage, which is 5 ft below the threshold, has no effect, and the project is consistent with the neighborhood development pattern. The threshold for Building Depth Review is exceeded by 10 ft, due to eaves that would extend slightly beyond the wall planes, which Staff considered as a technicality, since the excess depth is visually negligible and would not adversely affect views or massing.

A letter was recently received from the neighbor to the south, whose input resulted in high window sills on the south elevation. She also requests more dense screening along the south side and reports that the existing fence is bowed, due to landscape overgrowth and neglect. Staff regarded these as reasonable requests for conditions that Staff understood to be acceptable to the applicant.

Staff recommended positive findings and project approval as conditioned.

Craig Stoddard, project architect, displayed a color board and advised that the majority of the immediate neighbors support the project. He advised of having spent a good deal of time with the neighbor to the south to address her concerns. For the record, he advised of a pending tree permit to remove an oak with a trunk diameter of 14", which is crowding the larger oak. Also, two acacia trees would be removed.

Chairman Engler remarked that he preferred Mr. Stoddard's design next door, with the garage at the rear of the property. He asked if any consideration was given to doing the same for this project.

Mr. Stoddard responded that he did not want the two developments to appear similar and he felt that the garage at the front, with side oriented doors "looked right" for this development.

Commissioner Levine asked Mr. Stoddard how he would design the home if the tree permit were denied.

Mr. Stoddard advised that due to its location and the required setback, he would request to relocate it. If that request were denied, an appeal would most likely be filed.

Replying to a question from Chairman Engler, Mr. Stoddard advised that the property owners prefer to have a back yard without a garage.

Elisabeth Powell, 4200 Oakwood, stated that street-facing garages are becoming "too common and too ugly".

Linda Swick, owner of the 4258 property for which a new house was recently approved, was willing to accept the oak tree if it is to be relocated. While she did not object to relocating the garage to the rear, she did not believe doing so would make a difference or impact the neighborhood.

Jerri Pih, 4246 Oakwood, resides in the single-story home immediately adjacent and south of the project. She advised that Mr. Stoddard has met with her several times regarding additional trees and placement of windows facing her property. She stated that design is sensitive and believed that putting the garage at the rear would affect her privacy.

No further comments were offered.

Commissioner Levine stated that the garage as proposed, was not a concern, but he asked that construction be limited to Monday through Friday, with construction vehicle parking identical to what was required for the adjacent lot.

Commissioner Davitt supported the project and expressed appreciation for the modest size of the second-story component.

Commissioner Gelhaar concurred with staff's findings and conditions. He concurred with Commissioner Levine's comments regarding construction parking and he was not concerned where the oak was relocated.

Chairman Engler stated that he strongly believed that what has happened on Commonwealth should not be repeated on Oakwood. He stated that if the garage were relocated to the rear, he would quickly support removal of the oak.

Discussion followed regarding construction parking. It was agreed to modify draft condition 13 so that it reads identical to the conditions imposed on the Raymond project on Oakwood.

M/S/C Gelhaar/Davitt to approve Floor Area Review 03-34 and Building Depth Review 03-03, modifying condition 13 as discussed, relocating the 14" trunk diameter oak on the subject property or on the adjacent property in accordance with a certified arborist report and Director approval. 3 Ayes; Engler dissenting.

**VIII. OTHER BUSINESS:**  
**CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT 361; WARM 'N LOVING**  
**MINISTRIES; 1223 VERDUGO ROAD:**

Planner Cantrell recalled that when the Commission allowed the CUP, it imposed a 6-month review to analyze any issues of parking, noise, etc. Staff has not received any complaints in connection with the use and therefore concluded that the positive findings were appropriate. Staff also discovered that the trailer on site was approved as part of earlier conditions for the Hillside Learning Center.

This item was a receive and file report.

**IX. COMMENTS FROM THE COMMISSIONERS:**

Chairman Engler asked the Director schedule a study session to discuss a general condition regarding construction parking. He requested that Staff's version be included in all resolutions and the Commission would tailor the language to fit the individual projects. He believed that eventually, the City Council should adopt ordinance that would apply to all construction sites, including those that the Commission does not review.

Director Stanley suggested that the Commission discuss this with the Council at the joint meeting.

**X. COMMENTS FROM THE DIRECTOR:**

Director Stanley reported that the joint meeting was rescheduled from August to September. He asked the Commissioners to report their availability dates.

A West End Workshop is scheduled for Saturday, July 19, which will include a public tour on shuttle buses of the West Gateway and Link Districts.

The appeal filed by Larry Muro on Hilldale Drive was withdrawn.

**XI. ADJOURNMENT:**

M/S/C Gelhaar/Davitt to adjourn at 8:23 p.m. Unanimous.