

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION
OF THE
CITY OF LA CAÑADA FLINTRIDGE
HELD JULY 12, 2005**

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 and Mehranian, City Attorney Steres, Director of Community Development Stanley and Planner Gjolme.

III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Commissioner Mehranian led the salute to the flag.

IV. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC:

John Chen, whose request for Floor Area Review 05-40 was denied the prior week, requested reconsideration of his project, rather than have the Commission act on the Resolution at hand. He intends to present a more comprehensive plan, including landscape.

The Commissioners unanimously agreed to address the request when the Draft Resolution was considered under the Consent Calendar.

V. REORDERING OF THE AGENDA

No action taken.

VI. CONSENT CALENDAR

A. Minutes of May 24, 2005; M/S/C Engler/Davitt to adopt as submitted. Unanimous.

B. Resolution 05-45; Denying Modification 05-19; Wannier; 5131-27 Gould Avenue. M/S/C Davitt/Mehranian to adopt. Unanimous.

C. Resolution 05-46; denying Floor Area Review 05-04; Chen; 5135 La Cañada Boulevard. M/S/C Cahill/Davitt to allow reconsideration as requested. Unanimous.

VII. PUBLIC HEARINGS

A. Conditional Use Permit 318; Variance 01-02; St. Bede the Venerable Catholic Church; 215 Foothill Boulevard:

Commissioner Davitt was recused, as he is employed by the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

Senior Planner Buss reported that the 2001 approval to complete a master plan provided 36 months (and an additional year) in which to vest the project. Phase I has been completed and the fourth year of approval will be expiring soon without vesting of Phase II. Since there is no zoning mechanism to extend the vesting period, the applicant had to resubmit an identical application and proceed once again through the approval process. The project has not changed, and the parish hall is the sole structure comprising Phase II. The applicant has requested an additional 36 months (and one additional year allowed by the Director) in which to vest Phase II. Staff recommended approval of the request.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Mehranian, Senior Planner Buss advised that the corner parking lot at Crown and Foothill is owned by Flintridge Preparatory. There have not been any formal complaints filed with the City regarding parking.

Chairman Gelhaar confirmed that the Commission could modify the prior approval, since the request is being reviewed anew.

Jeff Boysen spoke on behalf of the parishioners and introduced Msgr. James Gehl, Steve Pavich, the church business manager and John Teghmeyer, project architect. He advised that it took 2½ years to get from the conceptual spot to vesting Phase I. The prior approval allowed them to pursue their master plan; Phase I, the school and parish center, were completed, leaving only construction of a parish hall. He advised that St. Bede's has written parking agreements with Flintridge Preparatory and St. Francis.

Project architect, John Tegtmeyer with TDM architects, provided a brief overview of the parish, which was established in the mid 1960s. Phase I, the parish center and the education center are complete, as are parking improvements. Phase II, an 18,000-sf structure is proposed to replace the existing parish hall, together with assorted circulation improvements. He explained that the process for Phase I took a considerable amount of time, with Planning and Design Commission meetings, Public Works approval and County Plan Check. He advised his clients that they need as much additional time as possible for Phase II.

Commissioner Cahill confirmed that the parking lot owned and maintained by Flintridge Preparatory is shared with the applicant and St. Francis. On site parking is based on the largest assembly space, which is the church building.

Chairman Gelhaar opened the public hearing.

Patricia Rohan, representing Mary Jane Linder, the neighbor to the north, read from Staff's last report. She advised that Mrs. Linder continues to be impacted by soccer, tennis baseball, basketball and golf balls in addition to fertilizer sales and car washes held in the church parking lot. She stated that mature trees were to have been planted on the north side and slats put in the chain link fence - "that never happened". She questioned the existence of an agreement with St. Francis High School for parking and commented and/or asked for the following:

- A condition affirming enrollment

- An investigation of parking requirements for the new parish hall

- The parish hall could accommodate more classrooms, which would change the scope of the request.

- She was unclear as to what "associated site work" means

- Requested a new sound study and an environmental impact report

- Define "religious services"

- Wants a traffic study - noise, traffic, drag racing, after school activities impact the neighborhood. Recent car washes caused cars to line up on Crown Avenue.

- Streets need to be cleaned; street parking precludes that from happening.

- She did not believe the new project was compatible with the existing neighborhood.

Sally Armitrano, 4609 Crown Avenue, resides across the street from the school playground and stated that she was not notified of the Phase I public hearings. She reported that her biggest concern is traffic, many times the playground gates are not open, causing drop-off traffic to back-up to Foothill. At times, she is unable to enter either of her two driveways. Balls go into the street and hit cars, the street cannot be cleaned due to street parking. She wanted Flintridge Preparatory and St. Francis to "do something about parking and clean the streets". She pointed out that there is no traffic monitor among the 3 schools and stated that she did not have any comments regarding the architecture.

Senior Planner Buss commented that identical issues were raised during the 2001 hearings. A sound study conducted for the project was positive; nevertheless, St. Bede's erected a sound wall at the north end of the parking lot for Mrs. Linder. The City Traffic Engineer reviewed this plan and observed that parking in this area has always been problematic.

Commissioner Cahill confirmed that comments asserting that Phase II equated to an intensified use were incorrect.

Senior Planner Buss advised that there was a traffic monitor for the first year of Phase I. In addition, construction of Flintridge Preparatory's library and the parking structure for St. Francis required a traffic monitor. Some street improvements followed, including a cross walk and an island where the parking structure was built. He suggested that the three schools confer, since it appeared that not all issues were resolved.

Director Stanley commented that a condition could be added requiring review after a set time.

Jeff Boysen responded to comments. He stated that St. Bede's has made great efforts to be a good neighbor and asked that the Commission keep in mind that the St. Bede's complex is located on a 4½-acre site, in the middle of a town that has grown around it. He noted that many of the traffic patterns are a result of Phase I improvements and reiterated that the initial application was not modified; this was simply a request for more time to vest the project.

Parish manager, Steve Pavich, pointed out that many of the issues raised by Mrs. Linder's daughter were raised in the past. He believed that Mrs. Linder had been satisfied for the last few years and thought all was going well. He noted that Mrs. Linder has not reported any problems.

Commissioner Mehranian requested facts of what has been done and if there were any mechanisms in place to comply with the agreements.

Mr. Pavich advised: basketball hoops are required to be a certain distance from the Linder home; the north driveway is the designated point for drop offs and pick-ups (the south driveway would cause traffic to back on Foothill); the majority of parishioners use the Flintridge Prep parking lot for Sunday mass as it is closer to the church; security guards are hired for Christmas, Easter and large funerals; there are parking agreements with Flintridge Prep and St. Francis.

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

City Attorney Steres observed that the request could be considered as an amendment to condition 6, which set a timeframe for vesting. The identical project was approved in 2001.

Commissioner Cahill stated that he was not on the Commission in 2001; however, he read the background material and was inclined to approve the extension. His general impression was that the church and school had existed for approximately 50 years and that the project would be an improvement. He suggested that a condition be added to revisit the traffic situation, given the amount of activity on this corner. He added that perhaps more could be done to mitigate Mrs. Linder's situation and pointed out that landscaping needs to be added to the corner parking lot owned by Flintridge Prep, to soften its appearance.

Director Stanley recalled that the Commission required Flintridge Prep to add landscaping in that area and advised that he would research it.

Commissioner Mehranian observed that it is fair to have establishments be mindful of their neighbors. If St. Bede's did not comply with the conditions that were initially imposed, the project would represent an intrusion. She stated that she felt strongly about regulating traffic flow and circulation and that the schools need to apply resources to cleaning the streets.

Commissioner Engler supported the request and advocated 3 years + 1 additional year available from the Director to vest. He stated that the onus for the traffic situation should be directed to one of three parties and suggested that the neighbors approach Public Works and request more red curbs.

Director Stanley made a point to clarify that extensions are granted by letter. The length of time was not a concern for Staff; and the numerous one-year extensions would provide Staff with a mechanism to catch any code change that would apply to an incomplete project.

Commissioner Mehranian commented that, during construction, the applicant should take measures to mitigate any impacts to the traffic flow, etc.

Chairman Gelhaar stated that it was important to allow an adequate extension to preclude the applicant from having to return with a similar request. He noted the numerous conditions imposed on the CUP and encouraged the applicant to see that they are addressed.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Mehranian regarding a traffic monitor, Director Stanley noted that a 6-month review is typically required for commercial projects -- mainly to review parking. Traffic issues are more appropriately addressed by Public Works, where neighbors could request restricted parking ---- he added that City Hall frequently encounters the same problems with traffic from La Cañada Elementary. He encouraged Mrs. Linder to call the Sheriff regarding drag racing on Crown Avenue and advised that the

applicant had addressed parking issues by providing more on site spaces and written and securing parking agreements.

M/S/C Mehranian/Engler approving a one year extension, and allowing 4 additional one-year extensions by the Director. Unanimous.

Commissioner Davitt returned to the table.

B. Hillside Development Permit 04-36; Building Depth Review 04-07; Kim; 3901 Hampstead Road:

Commissioner Engler was recused from this matter as he resides within 500 ft of the project site.

Planner Gjolme described the applicants' proposal to demolish an existing home, and construct a 9,750-sf, two-story home on hillside property. As designed, the 73-ft-long depth of the second story exceeds the 60-ft depth review threshold. Homes to the north, east and west are well below the site; the closest homes, to the southwest, are at higher elevations.

The project site parallels a lengthy curve along Hampstead, where it intersects with Madison Road. It has an average slope of 37%. At 72,745-sf, it is by far the largest lot in the area. It has more than 600 ft of curved frontage, where a substantial slope rises 20-50 ft over a majority of its course, to a large flat pad at the south east end of the site. Planner Gjolme advised that the site allows floor area of 16,000+, but application of the .78 slope factor reduces that number to 12,714-sf. Proposed grading would lower the pad by 2-3 ft and extend it to the west; excavation would be used to backfill the retaining walls. Removal of trees would be involved and Staff has thus far identified 2 protected trees. A complete tree inventory and landscape plan will follow.

Retaining walls are proposed along the perimeter of the pad, while the west wall would span nearly 200 ft and reach a maximum height of 6 ft. To the north, where an infinity edge pool is proposed, 3-4-ft-high retaining walls would be buffered by new shrubs.

Planner Gjolme explained that Staff could not support the original submittal, which included 13,000-sf of floor/roofed area, higher and visible retaining walls and intrusion into the heavily vegetated and steep, natural slope to the west. Staff's report was written based on modifications agreed to by the applicant and a concept plan; however, revised materials, including a formal grading plan, were not timely submitted. The City Engineer reviewed the original grading plan and cleared it for Commission review. Notwithstanding the lack of new materials, Staff continued to be concerned with the dramatic deviation from the neighborhood's development pattern. Planner Gjolme

noted that the proposed second floor would be as large, if not larger, than many homes in the area. The eastern elevation has the potential of overwhelming the street setting. Staff doubts that a more complete landscape plan would mitigate those concerns -- the steep slope makes it difficult to sustain landscaping. Only a reduction of floor area at the second floor level and greater "stepping" between floor levels would pull the mass away from Hampstead Road. Staff determined that the siting, massing and design conflicts with Findings 1, 4, 5, and 8 of the Hillside Ordinance and recommended redesign, emphasizing the need for an updated grading plan.

Commissioner Mehranian questioned why an incomplete project was before the Commission.

City Attorney Steres commented that she was raising the more technical issues that are reviewed during the plan check period when more accurate plans, drainage, grading, etc., are submitted. If there is a problem, it might stop the project or require a redesign and the applicant would have to return to the Commission.

Chairman Gelhaar commented that some of the reports are quite old.

Project architect Jay Johnson, discussed revised elevations, which he displayed on Power Point. He pointed out that at Staff's suggestion, the second floor was stepped back approximately 20 ft from the first floor. The pad was lowered approximately 3 ft after discussions with a neighbor. The highest retaining walls would be 6 ft on the north side to expand the pad.

Mr. Johnson recognized that the project represents the largest home in a group of approximately 12 residences. He advised that the 73,000-sf lot is comprised of two legal parcels and originally, the idea of subdividing the property was considered, but his clients preferred to maintain a single estate property. He related of having worked with Staff over a year on this project and noted that the original 13,000-sf proposal met Slope Factor Guidelines. He believed he was getting close to a recommendation of approval from Staff.

Addressing views, Mr. Johnson stated that distant view of the project would be from Foothill and upward; a clearer view would be from the County Club. He questioned if moving the north wall and a retaining wall 5 ft inward, or even reducing the house by 1,000-sf would be detectable from distant views. There is 20-25 ft between the house and the daylight line at the pad's edge on the north side and 50-60 ft near the pool area. He suggested that the slope be planted. Mr. Johnson proposed that the Commission require larger size trees rather than reducing the sq footage, adding that if compatibility was an issue, there is no home within 150 ft of the project. He concluded by pointing out that

the Slope Factor Guideline allows a larger home, the percolation test for the originally larger home was positive and he was unaware of any slope failure in the area.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Davitt, Mr. Johnson stated that the original design, 1,250 cubic yards would be graded. Half of that is attributed to a potential basement and lowering the pad by 3 ft. He assured the Commission that those numbers would be recalculated.

Commissioner Davitt asked for his thoughts regarding Staff's recommendation to eliminate the north side retaining walls.

Mr. Johnson responded that he continues to work with Staff; he eliminated a crib wall and believed that Staff is closer to accepting the revised design.

Chairman Gelhaar recognized that a 6-ft-high retaining wall was eliminated; however, a new one was shifted upslope. He believed the consensus was to either eliminate the retaining walls on the north side or reduce their height even further. He agreed with Mr. Johnson that there was little to be gained by providing more articulation on the north side of the house; however, Staff focused on the east side, facing Hampstead, where second-floor massing would be 30 ft from the street. Staff found that to be overpowering. While landscaping would help, he did not believe it would not completely mitigate that view.

Director Stanley observed that the contour lines reveal a very steep slope, which limits survivability of most plants. Staff continued to believe there is enough room on the lot to pull the house back, install a pool, and eliminate retaining walls on the north side.

Mr. Johnson commented that those walls were lowered on the revised design. He offered to move the pool from the slope, more towards the center, and plant trees at the daylight line.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Cahill, Mr. Johnson advised that the existing pad is approximately 22,000-sf, and would increase to approximately 25,000-sf.

Project Landscape Architect, Roy Leisure, addressed grading; the more the pad is lowered, the lower the house would sit, resulting in a greater reduction of impacts. After meeting with the neighbor to the south, it was determined that the best thing to do would be to lower the house and install tall trees. Staff asked him to remove the wall from the top of the fire road and pull the retaining walls back, towards the house. Doing so reduces the area where he

could reach a balance for the cut and fill. He commented that it is a quandary -- if he eliminates the retaining walls, the house cannot be lowered and it will be more visible. He believed thousands of cubic yards of dirt would be exported. Addressing trees, Mr. Leisure advised that approximately twelve trees of varying heights would be removed; one is a 12-inch-diameter oak; the others "are in the 3-4-inch category". His clients propose to plant 20 new trees, varying between 24 to 48-inch boxes. He wanted to install trees that grow and screen quickly, but not to the extent that they block his clients' views.

Chairman Gelhaar pointed out that two protected trees would be removed under the initial design and only one would be removed if the retaining walls were eliminated. All others are small and/or non-protected trees.

Chairman Gelhaar opened the public hearing.

Bill Principie, 3932 Robin Hill Road, resides directly to the west and across the gulch. He reported that several homes west of the project site would have views of the proposed home and that the house would stand in profile against the sky and he believed the ridge should be an identified. Mr. Principie stated that the lot was big enough to support a large single-story home that would protect the ridgeline.

Charlotte Dewey, 3891 Hampstead Road, stated that project would most affect her property, as would the number of people who would occupy a house of the proposed size. She stated that it was not simply a matter of mansionization, but lifestyles and compatibility of people. The gates and distance from neighbors breaks community communication; occupants of the home would rarely be seen. The entrance to the property disturbed her; east and west views from her driveway would be gone, particularly the easterly view. Ms. Dewey stated that acknowledged that she would not see the project from her home, but she would see it daily from her 500-ft-long driveway. She related that Hampstead was closed due to two landslides during the recent heavy rains; one which originated on the project site. The east elevation was most troubling, looming from the edge of a steep slope. She asked for assurance that the oaks, which she has maintained over the years, be protected. Lastly, she requested a construction timeline.

Margot Learned, 3889 Hampstead, who resides across the driveway and up the hill from the project site, reported that she is in the process of slope repair work from the winter rains. She considered the project to be mansionization and the story poles indicate that the project would have views into her family room.

Cecilie Boysen, 1218 Inverness, stated that while she does not have a direct view of the project, she purchased her home two years ago because she enjoys

living in a country-like setting. She shared Ms. Dewey's concern that the house would appear as a towering wall from Hampstead and was concerned with slope failure.

Mr. Johnson thanked the neighbors for their comments and agreed there are areas that need to be reconsidered, particularly the southeast elevation from Hampstead. Addressing requests for a single-story home, Mr. Johnson advised that the project meets 98% of the Hillside Guidelines and that an even higher structure could be built by terracing it. The story poles are indicative of the ridge line, rather than of window placement. He concluded by requesting comments from the Commissioners and advised that he would request a continuance for redesign.

Mr. Leisure agreed that the comments were helpful and that his next step would be to meet with the neighbors.

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

Commissioner Davitt commented that the Commission looked more favorably on the larger projects when a lack of impact is demonstrated. Given the size of the lot, the proposed square footage did not trouble him, and he noted that from a percentage standpoint, the density falls pretty much in line with the neighborhood. Nonetheless, since this is a new project, there is room to maneuver and design a more compatible project. He preferred to see the house repositioned and more articulation provided to lessen its impact and clear information given regarding the amount of export.

Commissioner Mehranian stated that the buildable area, volume and massing were issues for her. As designed, the house attempts to make a statement and stands out; she suggested a single-story home or a less significant second-story.

Commissioner Cahill confirmed that a 6,750-sf home would be allowed on the 25,000-sf pad, if the pad alone constituted the entire property. Looking at numbers only, a 10,000-sf home on a 72,000-sf lot is a non-issue until one makes a site visit. The rendering revealed that the house has the feel of mansionization; it would not be compatible with its rural area and it is oriented in the wrong direction. He pointed out that the lot is 2½-times longer than it is wide, yet the house is built across the width and looms over Hampstead and neighbors to the south. He suggested re-orienting the house toward the north side of the lot ---tinkering with the design would not be acceptable to him. He agreed with Commissioner Mehranian that a single-story design with a basement would be more appropriate.

Chairman Gelhaar concurred with the concerns expressed by his colleagues and asked for updated hydrology and soils reports, especially since some of the dirt has been lost to landslides. He believed that the basement alone would require 300 truckloads of dirt and felt that a large, single-story home would be more appropriate on this site.

M/S/C Davitt/Cahill to continue Hillside Development Permit 04-36 and Building Depth Review 04-07 to a date uncertain. 4 Ayes.

Commissioner Engler returned to the table.

A three minute recess was taken at 8:40 p.m.

Commissioner Engler returned to the table.

C. Hillside Development Permit 04-68; Floor Area Review 04-14; Modification 05-36; Jamison; 5471 La Forest Drive:

Planner Gjolme reported the applicants proposal to construct 9,963-sf, two-story residence, a 3-car garage, covered patios and pergolas. Floor Area review is triggered because the project exceeds 4,500-sf on a lot with less than 80 ft of frontage. A Modification is required because the proposed 133-ft front setback would exceed 150% of the average setback of the two adjacent properties.

The project site is located at the most northern portion of La Forest Drive in the R-1-40,000 Zone. It is 60,894-sf in area, has an average lot width of 244 ft, and is more than 230 ft deep. The frnt slope rises approximately 50 feet and is bisected by a driveway that leads to the 23,000-sf pad. The driveway then continues north, eventually reaching the most proximate site at 5467 La Forest Drive, where a home is under construction. The subject site is adequately separated from 5467 La Forest by distance and elevation. Lots to the east are undeveloped and to the west, homes are located down slope. A combination of tree screening and dissimilar elevation limits direct views into the site's interior.

Planner Gjolme noted that the requested floor area is 6,000-sf below the 12,134-sf that is allowed with the adjusted Slope Factor Guideline. The resultant 10% FAR is quite moderate. The required 20-ft side setbacks are generously exceeded with a 60-ft setback on the east side and 70 ft on the west side; the rear setback ranges from 27 ft to over 60 ft as it extends westward, while a 132-ft, front yard setback is provided. Overall height is 28 ft and the 53-ft second floor depth would not be apparent from any neighboring property. The Mediterranean design includes well modulated facades and tile roofs at varying levels. New trees and shrubs are proposed along the front and rear slopes and southern portion of the pad.

Site improvements include retaining walls at: the front to define the driveway, along the southern perimeter of the pad and at the rear of the house. The existing driveway would be widened to accommodate emergency vehicles, but its location would not change.

Planner Gjolme noted that while the home would be the largest in the area, the 60,000-sf lot is also the largest. The house is well within code for density and its elevated and distant siting from the street, generous setbacks, screening and modulation ensure its compatibility with its setting. He pointed out that the applicant has intentionally offered a compliant building program independent of the sloping perimeter and the proposed floor area complies with the limit for the pad.

The project does not raise the typical concerns with hillside projects of visible bulk and/or view blockage. Some long-range views would be framed by trees and against a higher, natural backdrop that would be retained nearly in its entirety. Nonetheless, the draft conditions require compliance with the Light Reflectance Guidelines.

Staff considered the Floor Area Review and the Modification as technicalities, given the size and location of the site and recommended positive findings and project approval as conditioned.

Commissioner Mehranian asked what the concern was with the 150-ft front setback.

Planner Gjolme responded that the 150% average front setback rule was established to preclude intrusion into adjoining back yards; however, that is not an issue with this request.

Commissioner Engler noted that geotechnical and hydrology reports were waived by the Director. He inquired what size house was demolished.

Director Stanley responded that a single-story home and detached garage were demolished. Geotechnical and hydrology will be addressed in the Plan Check phase and Public Works will determine whether a geology report is necessary.

Commissioner Engler felt the proposed landscaping was minimal, given that the lot has been cleared. He preferred that the Commission review the landscape plan rather than leaving it to the Director.

Commissioner Mehranian agreed that a landscape plan should be required.

Planner Gjolme pointed out that the conditions require a landscape plan with emphasis for groundcover to retain the slope. He advised of having driven throughout the City to determine if the story poles were visible and he could not distinguish the site.

Project designer Aroun Jain, reported that he has a current and positive soils report and that drainage would be addressed through Plan Check. He explained that the design brought in the mass at the sides and though the house is site on the highest portion of the lot, only the upper roof would be seen from below, on La Forest Drive. He pointed out that covered patios and a pergola add to the floor area numbers.

Chairman Gelhaar opened the public hearing. Since comments were not offered, the public hearing was closed.

Commissioner Mehranian stated that except for a full landscape plan, the project is compatible with the site and its surroundings, despite the size. She complimented the designer for the well modulated design.

Commissioner Cahill observed that 70% of the house is single-story, which results in less visible mass and good for hillside sites. Long range views would be minim and the tile roof and compliance with the LRV Guidelines will make it less visible.

Commissioner Davitt complimented the designer on the story poles and suggested that Staff photograph them for use as a model of what the City wants to see. He remarked that the majority of the massing is single-story and that the house is well positioned on the site. He supported the project and believed that condition 21 addressed any concerns with regard to landscaping.

Commissioner Engler stated that it is important that full landscape plans be submitted for new houses on hillside lots, but he "would let this one go this time".

Commissioner Gelhaar stated that the project was an impeccable example of how story poles should be erected. He supported the project and stated that condition 21 was also acceptable to address landscaping.

M/S/C Mehranian/Cahill to approve Hillside Development Permit 04-68; Floor Area 04-14; Modification 05-35 as conditioned. Unanimous.

D. Tentative Parcel Map 061169; Young/Kim; 4504 Viro Road:

Senior Planner buss described the applicant's request to divide a 22,554-sf lot into three residential parcels of approximately 7,500-sf each. The subject site is

located on the east corner of Foothill and Viro Road in the R-1-7,500 Zone, and has a Land Use Map designation of Low Density Residential (up to 4 dwelling units per acre). It is a corner property, semi-rectangular in shape and located in an area where the lot sizes and shapes are homogeneous, with the exception of the subject lot. It is bordered to the south by Foothill Boulevard, to the east by the Cross Town Trail and by single-family residential to the north and west. Nearby uses such as the Flintridge Riding Club and La Cañada High, have higher land use designations

Originally, the applicant requested a two-lot subdivision and later amended the application to create three new parcels. Since 9,800-sf is the average lot size in the area and the General Plan Land Use Designation for the lot only allows 4 dwellings per acre, Staff recommended a two-lot subdivision. The applicant maintained their application for three lots, but stated to Staff that two lots would be acceptable. All improvements and utilities are in place and the existing home will be demolished. Allowing a two-lot subdivision, divided north/south, would be consistent with the General Plan and the area. Senior Planner Buss advised that Public Works is applying for a Safe Route to School Grant to widen the right-of-way, add sidewalks, curbs, gutters and landscaping. The draft requirements address the required land dedication.

Applicant, Jay Johnson, representing the property owners confirmed that a two-lot subdivision was acceptable.

Commissioner Engler commented that a sizeable amount of water flooded the Cross Town Trail, into Michigan Avenue during the winter rains. He asked if the City Engineer was looking into that in relation to this property.

Senior Planner Buss advised that the subject property did not flood and that the trail will have to be improved when the Safe Routes to School Grant is awarded.

Chairman Gelhaar opened the public hearing.

Frank Leppla, 144 Lamour Drive, resides across from Viro Road, opposed a three-lot split and favored a two-parcel split. He advised that his lot is approximately 10,000-sf and confirmed that some of the flooding was from the Trail.

Mirna Roach, 4547 Viro Road, is employed by JPL and has witnessed rains all the way to the Riding Club. A two-lot split was acceptable to her.

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

Commissioners Cahill, Davitt and Mehranian supported a two-lot split.

Commissioner Engler was concerned with the proposed driveway off Michigan Avenue and what "type of house would be built in a predominately single-story neighborhood".

M/S/C Davitt/Mehranian approving Tentative Parcel Map 060069 and allowing a single lot to be divided into two, single-family parcels at 4504 Viro Road. 4 Ayes; Engler dissenting.

VIII. OTHER BUSINESS

A. Conditional Use Permit 382; La Cañada Presbyterian Church; 525 Foothill Boulevard:

Senior Planner Buss recalled that the conditions of approval allowed the neighbors to participate in the development of the landscape plan, specifically at the west and south sides.

The project architect and landscape architect, as well as Design Commissioners Moss and Roberts met with the neighbors (the Browns and Johnsons) and agreement was subsequently reached.

Commissioner Davitt confirmed that the submitted landscape plan addresses the neighbors' comments.

Director Stanley advised that the Design Commission modified the plan and that the applicant would return before the Design Commission in August.

Lou Dominy, project architect, advised that the Design Commission determined that a single, specimen oak should be installed in the patio. Additionally, the Traffic Engineer stated that the driveway might have to be widened.

Landscape architect Jon Powell, advised of having met with the Design Commission and later with Design Commissioners Moss and Roberts and the neighbors to the west and south. He provided color sections and elevations for the neighbors - straight-on and at an angle. He advised that all the neighbors' comments have been implemented e.g., a palm tree would be retained at Mrs. Brown's request and another is proposed at the southwest corner. The two palms will screen the entire first floor at the back edge of the property. The Ajalat's requested specific plantings, which were added to the plan. The Design Commission had 3 comments: 1) the plant palette was too extensive, 2) install a signature tree in the main plaza, rather than a grove of trees, 3) the site should not be "hedged off" from the street front.

Mr. Powell advised that he redesigned the street front landscaping. Six trees were eliminated from the center patio and will be replaced with a single, 96-inch, oak that will have a 20-ft spread upon installation. The interior landscaping will remain as previously reviewed.

Commissioner Cahill inquired as to the height of the hedges at the rear.

Mr. Powell responded that they could reach 15-ft in height if never pruned. There is a notation on the plan that they are to be maintained at 12 ft – the neighbors desire screening, but do not want to be walled-in.

Commissioner Davitt confirmed that approximately seven sycamores would replace the four that will be removed and would primarily be at the front. He noted that the Commission asked the applicant and neighbors to work together and that all parties seem satisfied.

Commissioner Cahill stated that he was satisfied if the neighbors are.

M/S/C Davitt/Engler approving the final landscape plan for CUP 382.
Unanimous.

IX. COMMENTS FROM THE COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Cahill confirmed that the most recent letters received regarding the Bolton project on Vista Miguel would be included in the packets for the next meeting.

He asked Staff to check the conditions for the Flintridge Preparatory library project and determine if a condition requires that the corner parking lot at Foothill and Crown be landscaped.

He asked if there was a means of eliminating the two remaining billboards in town, as they present an eyesore driving down Foothill. He suggested that the City look into the possibility of buying them.

Director Stanley recalled that the former City Attorney, Ken Brown, negotiated the purchase of two other billboards. There is a budget line item that talks about eliminating billboards.

City Attorney Steres advised that construction of new billboards is prohibited; however, the existing ones are allowed by state law. He suggested adding that item to the Commission's goals and objectives.

Commissioner Engler favored further investigation.

Director Stanley advised that Staff needs to draft a report and place the matter on an agenda.

Commissioner Mehranian – asked about a field trip date for the Flintridge Tract and commented that something needs to be done about the traffic problem in the vicinity of Flintridge Preparatory, St. Bede’s and St. Francis schools.

Commissioner Davitt added that the high school traffic is a contributor to the problem; it has more Junior and Senior High students than the other three schools combined. Crestview School is also located at the bottom of Michigan Hill.

Director Stanley stated that he would check with Public Works and report.

Commissioner Gelhaar – advised of having met with Tony Roberts to try and work out something with M/M Wannier regarding the surveillance camera issue.

Commissioner Engler – read suggested wording for new hillside homes: “that the City appoint a Deputy Inspector to perform continuous inspection for grading, footing, excavation, rebar and concrete replacement. The service shall also supply compaction test reports, core breaks on cylinders and daily reports to Building & Safety and to the Geo-tech Engineer of record.” He believed doing so would relieve Building & Safety and assure a much higher quality of construction. He also noted that many geotechnical reports are replete with “may” statements, rather than “shall”. He suggested that the project contractor hire the Deputy Inspector at the applicant’s cost.

Commissioner Gelhaar felt that doing so would be good insurance for the City and, the cost would be minimal compared with the cost of the entire project.

X. **COMMENTS FROM THE DIRECTOR**

Director Stanley addressed the Commission’s walking tour of the Flintridge Tract. Following discussion, it was determined that a Special Meeting was not possible, due to conflicting time commitments. It was agreed that the applicant would be given the Commissioners e-mail addresses to set up appointments.

R-1 revisions were continued to the second meeting in September. The City Council was provided a redline/strikeout version. The Council decided to maintain the Decorative Fence Ordinance for the R-1-20,000 and R-1-40,000 zones as currently written and eliminated the Commission’s suggestion to limit the height of shrubs in front of, or behind, decorative fences.

Lastly, the Council overruled the Commission's denial of the Floor Area Review for Peterson on Hayman Avenue.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

M/S/C Engler/Davitt to adjourn at 10:05 p.m. Unanimous.

Secretary to the Planning Commission