

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION
OF THE
CITY OF LA CAÑADA FLINTRIDGE
HELD OCTOBER 23, 2007**

I. CALL TO ORDER:

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

II. ROLL CALL:

Present were Commissioners Davitt, Hill, Gelhaar and Mehranian, Director of Community Development Stanley, Deputy City Attorney Vargas, Planner Gjolme and Consulting Planner/ Architect Cantrell.

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

Chairman Cahill confirmed there was no need to reorder the agenda.

VI. CONSENT CALENDAR

M/S/C Gelhaar/Davitt to approve the Consent Calendar - Minutes of September 11 and 25, 2007. Unanimous.

VII. PUBLIC HEARING:

A. Hillside Development Permit 07-44; Second-Floor Review 07-49; Conditional Use Permit 421; McGlashen; 4269 Hampstead Road:

Mr. Cantrell described the applicants' request to construct a new, 6,349-sf, two-story residence, as well as a pool and deck, on hillside property with an average slope of 32%. The proposed location of the pool in the front yard requires a Conditional Use Permit.

The subject site is located near the north terminus of Chevy Chase Drive and nestled into the hillside on a curving course. It is sharply upslope from the street and below properties further north. To the south, are a few lower-lying properties along Hampstead Road and Beresford Drive. The most proximate house is approximately 24-ft lower in elevation and within 6 ft of the easterly shared property line; its exposure is mitigated by large oaks and shrubs. Properties to the north and west are at sufficiently higher elevations as to preclude view blockage.

A Power Point presentation showed the vacant lot and the sole neighbor on Beresford that would have views of the proposed house. The driveway access would remain as it exists; the retaining wall along the driveway would be removed to allow widening of the driveway in that location and at the northwest corner, to make a more maneuverable motor court.

While it is possible that a pool could be constructed in the back yard and still have room for vehicular access, the proposed location for the pool is more logical, as it is the only yard area with a view and open feeling.

The proposed house is code compliant for height and angle plane, setbacks far exceed code requirements and massing would be varied to the north and east, away from offsite views. Only one house, at 4265 Beresford, would have clear views of the entire second floor's south (street) elevation.

Hillside issues – view preservation and ridgeline protection are not issues. The architectural treatment is straightforward and involves a high level of detail and the landscaping will be enhanced significantly by two new oaks at the driveway entry. Staff views imposing the LRV guideline as unnecessary, given the lack of long-range views or of a prominently viewed building profile. The lack of grading is a plus insofar as impact on the neighborhood is concerned; however, the area's constricted street and hazardous turning motions to Chevy Chase Drive, led Staff to add a condition requiring a haul route and schedule.

The project is 38 sq ft below the code limit for the lot, but at 5,493-sf, it exceeds the Slope Factor Guideline applicable to this lot by 856-sf. Mr. Cantrell noted that the slope of the site does not increase visual impact, and grading is not a factor. A chart comparing nearby parcels and house sizes reflects that the project would be 1,259-sf over the average, but within the range of those in the neighborhood.

Proposed pool – the potential impacts of a pool located in the front yard led the City to require a CUP when those instances arise. The proposed pool's location would take advantage of the site's open southern exposure and would be elevated above street view. The potential for noise disturbance would be greater if the pool and spa were located in the rear yard.

Second-story – setbacks far exceed code requirements and the second floor would not be visible at close range with the ground floor. The south side's vertical treatment would be seen only from considerable distance from 4255 Beresford. The project meets the City's Residential Design Guidelines in terms of design compatibility and siting.

Landscaping – the story poles reveal that adding plants at the top of the upslope, next to the street, would lessen the visible height.

Commissioner Gelhaar confirmed that the landscape plan was not included in the Commissioners' packets, which created a dilemma, since it is referenced in many of the findings. His concern was that a retaining wall would be needed for the pool, which is shown at an elevation of 115 ft. The staff report does not address that or how the wall would be landscaped. He questioned if the Commission had sufficient information act on this request.

Director Stanley advised that pools could stand on their own and be reviewed separately, unless the Commission was not comfortable doing so.

Project architect Craig Stoddard, related that the pool would step down and since there are two back sides to the pool, retaining walls no more than 2-3-ft high would be required.

Commissioner Gelhaar commented that a cross section was needed, as the pool is not shown on what the Commission had.

Commissioner Hill stated he was not comfortable with a piecemeal approach; the pool seemed to be an integral part of the plan.

Property owner Bob McGlashan noted that it would be a fairly small pool and that he could move it back to preclude the need for retaining walls. He considered it to be more of a decorative item.

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

Commissioner Mehranian stated that she did not have concerns with the project, including exceeding the Slope Factor Guideline, and noted that the oaks would be retained and augmented. Her issue was with mitigating the view from Beresford Drive.

Commissioner Davitt related that when reading the staff report, he had a concern with exceeding the Slope Factor Guideline; however, his site visit confirmed that a reduction in sq. footage would not make a difference. He did not believe it was wise to have retaining walls to support the pool and he supported moving the pool back as well as adding more landscaping on the Beresford side.

Commissioner Gelhaar concurred and requested an added condition stating that the pool and spa would not require retaining walls.

Commissioner Hill agreed and supported Commissioner Davitt's comment regarding the Slope Factor Guideline.

Chairman Cahill appreciated how the architect set the house against the hill, he did not have a problem with the proposed location for the pool, and could support either moving it back or adding a small retaining wall. He agreed with adding more landscaping along Beresford.

Director Stanley suggested an added condition requiring an arborist's oversight during construction of the retaining walls near the driveway, as the walls would be in proximity to an oak with a 12-inch trunk diameter oak and two others with 18-inch trunk diameters. While Staff would not allow any construction within 3 ½-times of the trunk diameter, when retaining walls are needed, he suggested bringing in an arborist.

M/S/C Mehranian/ Davitt to approve Hillside Development Permit 07-44, Second-Floor Review 07-49 and Conditional Use Permit 421 with added conditions to augment the landscaping on the south side, that the pool must be relocated so that retaining walls are not needed and retaining an arborist to oversee and report with regard to construction of the retaining walls near protected trees. Unanimous.

B. Second-Floor Review 07-47; Kim; 4504 Viro Road:

Planner Gjolme reported the applicant's request to construct a two-story residence with an attached garage, comprising 3,862-sf, on a vacant lot at the corner of Viro Road and Foothill.

The 11,149-sf subject site is located at the northeast corner of Viro Road, in the R-1-7,500-sf zone. It is bordered by a diversity of uses: to the north are primarily single-family residences, to the west are several modest two-story homes, to the South are Institutional and Public/Semi Public uses such as Crestview Preparatory and La Cañada High, and Oak Grove Park and the Flintridge Riding Club to the east.

An aerial photo was shown of the previously subdivided property. Retaining walls and accessory structures have been removed and all conditions of the Map have been satisfied.

Since the shorter of the two frontages is Foothill Boulevard, Foothill constitutes the "front" of the lot, despite the residence being oriented towards Viro and the assigned address on Viro. Consequently, the lot has a width of 100 ft, with 10 and 20-ft side setbacks required for the first and 2nd floors. Along Viro Road, 20-ft side setbacks are required.

The project is entirely code compliant and at 28 ft in height, is 4 ft below the 32 maximum allowed. The garage is shown at the southeast corner of the property. There is a large oak adjacent to the driveway, but the curb cut and driveway are in place, so only new driveway paving is required.

Staff regarded the project as well modulated with traditional cottage style details and large front porch. There are only 2 windows on the second floor's north elevation. A large balcony is proposed off the master bedroom with exposure to the easterly adjacent vacant property and obliquely exposed to the north. Sight lines show that the rear of the northerly adjacent property is heavily wooded. However, impacts to the adjacent vacant lot is a concern depending on how the house is sited and use of the rear yard, but without any submitted plans, Staff considered the balcony as appropriate for the lot.

Story poles reveal that the house would be exposed from Viro Road, but the large oaks in the Foothill right-of-way would serve as buffers to the south, so those views would not be excessive.

Staff determined that the request and design are reasonable and the fact that it is code compliant allows for positive findings.

Director Stanley suggested adding a condition requiring his review and approval prior to any new plantings under the oaks. Additionally, then the driveway is poured, an arborist should be on site to assure that the oaks are not impacted.

Commissioner Gelhaar commented that the story poles do not meet the City's requirements and reminded Staff that they must be properly installed before the Commissioners make site visits.

Landscape architect Roy Leisure, noted that a landscape plan is not required for Second-Floor Review; nonetheless, he wanted to give the Commissioners some idea of the landscape plan. He distributed a concept plan and noted that trees would be installed around certain portions of the residence, but well spaced to the point that there is no need for a lot of new trees. Bed plantings and lawn areas were also called out. Given the proximity to the high school, he thought it would be prudent not to put decorative rocks under the oaks and stated that he would work with the Planning Department in that regard.

Project architect Jay Johnson, pointed out that this site serves as the entry to the neighborhood, so he designed a traditional home to fit in. The front porch provides depth and he intentionally kept the height to 28 ft. He wanted a Landscape Architect involved so the Commission would be confident that he is sensitive to the oaks. He offered to plant three or four, 36"-trunk-diameter oaks if the Commission so desired. Pouring the driveway should not be a problem since the nearby oak has survived

Responding to a question from Chairman Cahill regarding the balcony, Mr. Johnson advised that his clients would occupy the home as their residence.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Hill, Mr. Johnson related that the balcony is important to his client. He attempted to convince him to eliminate it, but given that his daughter will most likely live in the adjacent home for 30 years, he left it on the plan.

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

Commissioner Davitt stated that the house was well designed and importantly, code compliant, and fits with the neighborhood. He preferred adding a condition requiring the Director's approval of planting materials under the oaks despite the fact that Second-Floor Review does not require a landscape plan. He also preferred that the balcony be eliminated.

Commissioner Gelhaar concurred, stating that is a beautiful design, but the balcony does not belong where proposed.

Commissioner Hill stated that the house and the landscaping were beautifully designed, but he was very concerned with the balcony.

M/S/C Mehranian/Gelhaar to approve Second-Floor Review 07-47 with added conditions to remove the balcony, planting under the oaks to be reviewed and approved by the Director prior to installation and an arborist shall be retained by the City at the applicant's expense to draft a report and oversee the driveway pouring. Unanimous.

C. Second-Floor Review 07-48; Floor Area Review 07-12; Beland; 1032 Wiladonda Drive:

Planner Gjolme described the applicant's proposal to demolish an existing single-story home and replace it with a two-story residence and attached, street-facing garage, comprising 4,612-sf.

The subject site is on a private street between Angeles Crest Highway and Hayman Avenue. The street extends west from Angeles Crest for approximately 350 ft and terminates just east of the subject site, resulting in the site's lack of street frontage, and triggering Floor Area Review for projects of 4,500-sf or greater on lots with less than 80 ft of street frontage. Of note, the easement for the private street continues west through the site and encompasses the northerly 20 ft of the lot, or 1,600-sf. Code excludes the 1,600-sf from the net lot area. Therefore, for purposes of review, the lot is 14,400-sf in area.

The subject lot is rectangular in shape and the requested floor area is code compliant for the 14,400-sf net lot. Three mature deodars are located in the front yard; two will be preserved and the smallest of the three, near the north property line, will be removed to accommodate a Fire Department-mandated

turnaround. Removal of that tree was granted at staff level. Lastly, 2-3 branches of the deodar closest to the proposed second story would have to be trimmed; otherwise, it would remain untouched.

The shingle-style house is compact with understated rooflines and the primary mass centrally sited. It is tastefully accented with hardi shingles, wood shutters, redwood trim and a front trellis. The 1,594-sf second-floor is shown recessed from all sides and setback 16-ft and 20 ½-ft from the east and west. Only 2 bathroom windows are shown on the second floor's west elevation and the east elevation (2nd floor) is devoid of windows, as a consideration to the neighbors. A small central balcony is proposed above the entry and relates only to the front --- a projecting second floor room precludes views to the west. A majority of the house presents a 40-ft front setback with the exception of a patio trellis that extends from the living room, reducing the setback in that area to 31'-8" --- still code-compliant. A height of 31'-7" is reached only at the highest point.

Story poles showed the height and footprint. Planner Gjolme noted that the easement, though omitted for the review process, adds depth and screening to the property. 4730 Hayman would be exposed to the project's second floor as revealed by the story poles. Photos, taken from that property owner's deck (approximately 4 ft off the ground), were shown on Power Point. Staff regards the view blockage as partial and distant, - and not sufficient to preclude positive findings for Second Floor Review. Options were discussed with the applicant in the event that the Commission had concerns with 4730 Hayman. Grading the property down approximately 1 ft might be possible, even with the nearby deodars, as well as lowering the first floor plate height from 10 to 9 ft. This would result is a height of 29 ½-ft at the rear.

Overall, Staff recommended positive findings and project approval. A letter of endorsement from the immediate neighbor to the east was submitted as well as one from Kevin Martin , 4730 Hayman, outlining his concerns.

Project designer Dave De Angelis, submitted two more letters of support from neighbors residing on Wiladonda. He reported of negotiating with the Fire Department for 2 ½-months, as they have required a turn around to improve emergency response for Wiladonda (currently, the Fire Department will not drive down the street). He related of his struggle with the Department to retain all the trees, including being forced to remove one of the deodars in order to provide the turnaround. He is also working with the Department on the house materials.

Addressing the house design, Mr. Martin's letter of opposition cites the City's Residential Design Guidelines. Mr. DeAngelis advised that the Guidelines were applied in the design; he was involved with drafting the Guidelines and is very familiar with them. He pointed out that there are only 2 windows

facing the Martin property, and those are bathroom windows. The scale of the house is reasonable and comparable with the neighborhood; there are six, two-story houses within 400 ft of the project and the home immediately north is larger than his project. The setbacks are generous --- the largest is on the west side to avoid the trees and to provide a maximum distance from Mr. Martin's back yard. The west elevation also has the most undulation with offset walls. The height is within the Guidelines and the slope is what causes a height of 32 ft at the back. The front balcony is off a bathroom and merely an architectural detail to create interest. He concluded by stating that the project is reasonable and sited in the best location to screen the elevations.

Chairman Cahill opened the public hearing.

Kevin Martin, 4730 Hayman Avenue, thanked all for their interest; Staff and the Commissioners made site visits. He felt the design is outstanding and appreciated the lack of windows on his side. His only concern was the mass and size and the way it 'feels' from his back yard. Mr. Martin stated that the neighborhood comparison matrix in the staff report includes two large homes that were built during the mansionization period in La Cañada. He felt it was misleading to include them in the matrix. He noted that Wiladonda is a short street and it is difficult to turn around. Mr. Martin stated that when floor area is increased, the number of people using the street is increased, and that fact should be considered.

Sebu Grigorian, 4726 Hayman, was concerned that the project would allow views into his backyard and pool area.

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

Mr. DeAngelis responded to comments. He related of having visited the Martin's property and stood on the deck to understand their issues. He distributed a photo taken from the deck as well as photos of large two-story homes on Hayman. He reiterated that he gave serious consideration to the Residential Design Guidelines and that what he was proposing was reasonable. He stated that there seems to be a gap that lacks mature landscaping where the liquid ambars are planted; they are deciduous and are bare approximately 2 months out of the year. He consulted with a landscape architect to remedy that and could do the same for side facing the Grigorian property.

Responding to a question from Chairman Cahill, Mr. DeAngelis advised that the house has a 5:12 roof pitch and is single-story at the front on the west side. The deodars' root systems are dictating the height of the second floor.

Property owner Brad Beland responded to a question from Chairman Cahill and advised that the property to the east appears lower than his project because of the grade difference, but in reality, they are of similar height.

Mr. DeAngelis responded to a question from Commissioner Davitt and stated that he was willing to lower the first-floor plate height from 10-ft to 9 ft. Doing that and lowering the grade one foot did not seem to be enough for Mr. Martin. Mr. DeAngelis stated that grading was a big concern for him; he might be able to lower the pad another 6", but it would be dangerous to do more in that area for fear of drainage problems.

Chairman Cahill solicited comments from the Commissioners.

Commissioner Gelhaar reported that he spent a lot of time walking the subject site and the Martin property and he was sensitive to the issues raised. He believed that the lot could support the project and he acknowledged that standing on the lower end of Mr. Martin's lot, the house can appear imposing; however, from the remainder of his yard, there are numerous trees and only partial views of the second-floor. When Mr. Martin's landscaping matures, it will screen the second floor. The rooflines are all pitched, and he did not consider the project as causing significant loss of views. Lowering the first-floor plate height would be very helpful as would lowering grade without creating drainage problems.

Commissioner Hill commented that the Commissioners try to balance the equities versus the hardships. He viewed the project from the Martin's property and believes that the story poles reveal an imposing structure. He could not make the finding that states the project would protect property values. While the project might be compatible with properties on Wiladonda, the actual "neighborhood" extends beyond. He stated that lowering the house 3-4 ft "might do it".

Commissioner Mehranian remarked that this was a close call. The 2nd story might be more vertical than other two-story homes in the neighborhood and she was concerned with the impact to the Martin property.

Commissioner Davitt agreed that the project had to balance impacts on Wiladonda as well as Hayman. He stated that the design was "great and code compliant" and that Mr. DeAngelis had taken all appropriate measures to deal with the negative impacts associated with a house on this unique lot. His preference was that the house be lower, and he recognized the challenge in doing that. "A one-foot reduction in height would be a big help and another 6-10" would be even more important." He expressed support for the project with added conditions that the structure be lowered and that additional landscape screening be added along the west elevation.

Chairman Cahill commented that upon reading the staff report, the request seemed fairly straightforward, but was struck upon seeing the story poles from the Martin's back yard. He felt there must be some way to mitigate that profile

and felt it was worth revisiting the grading or another design. He stated he would like to see those options explored.

After confirming that a majority of the Commission could not support the project at this time, he informed the applicant of his options.

Mr. DeAngelis opted for a continuance to a date certain.

Mr. Beland advised the Commissioners that he was unsure of this options. He was willing to work with the plate height and asked for clarification as to what the Commission meant by "explore". Were they asking for a redesign?

Chairman Cahill responded that currently, the majority believes the project impacts the Martin property. It could be that there isn't a solution.

Commissioner Gelhaar encouraged Mr. Beland to individually contact the three Commissioners who did not support the project and get their thinking.

Director Stanley advised that the next available date was December 11th and announced to the audience that they would not receive another notice.

M/S/C Gelhaar/Mehranian to continue Second Floor Review 07-48 and floor Area Review 07-12 to December 11th. Unanimous.

For the record, Deputy City Attorney Vargas advised the applicant that he could not use the Commissioners comments collectively e.g., he may not relay one Commissioner's thinking to another Commissioner.

VIII. OTHER BUSINESS

Report on meetings attended at the expense of the City:

Director Stanley reported that he and Senior Planner Buss attended the California APA conference in San Jose; one of the highest attended conferences to date. One of the seminars was on *Green Building*, where demonstrations of green roofs and porous concrete projects were presented.

IX. COMMENTS FROM THE COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Gelhaar advised that he had presided over an Administrating Hearing earlier in the day. The project included columns at the driveway entrance with light fixtures on top. Staff instructed the applicant that short of a Modification hearing before the Commission, the overall height of the column/light fixtures would have to be lowered to a code-compliant 42-inch height. He asked if there was an easier way to address such requests, since there are numerous homes with similar over-height features.

Chairman Cahill suggested that perhaps a low-key Modification would work.

Planner Gjolme advised that allowing over-height fixtures as described by Commissioner Gelhaar may not need an Ordinance change; he believed it might be a long-instituted policy.

X. ADJOURNMENT

M/S/C Hill/Davit to adjourn at 8:15 p.m. Unanimous.

Secretary to the Planning Commission