



Planning & Community Development Department

Call for Review Hillside Development Permit #7134 1530 Scenic Drive

City Council
January 12, 2026





Project Description

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- **Hillside Development Permit**: To allow the construction of a new 4,280 square-foot, two-level single-family residence, built above a partially below grade 2,685 square-foot six-car garage.
- **Variance**: To allow 37.5 percent paving in the front setback area where a maximum 30 percent is allowed.
- **Tree Removal Permits**: To allow removal of two protected trees: One 11.5" DBH Coast Live Oak tree and one 18.7" DBH Olive tree.



Hearing Officer Public Hearing

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- **April 16, 2025 – Hearing Officer Approved the HDP**
- **April 28, 2025 – Appeal application filed by Sharon Bober**
 1. Neighborhood Compatibility.
 2. Biological Resources.
 3. Excess Grading.
 4. Trees.
 5. CEQA Exemption.
 6. Variance for Excess Hardscape.
 7. Construction Management Plan.



BZA Public Hearing

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- **October 23, 2025 – BZA Meeting**
 - Staff recommended approval of the project.
 - Prior to the hearing, 10 public comments were received. During the public hearing, five people spoke on the item.
 - Concerns expressed during the hearing were primarily related to the size of the house and impacts on wildlife.
 - BZA approved the HDP with a vote of 5-0, with no modifications to the project or conditions.



Call for Review

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- **November 3, 2025 – Request for Call for Review**

- Councilmember Madison requested the HDP be called for review due to concerns related to:
 - Size of the home;
 - Neighborhood compatibility findings; and
 - Removal of protected trees
 - An application to appeal the BZA's decision was also filed.

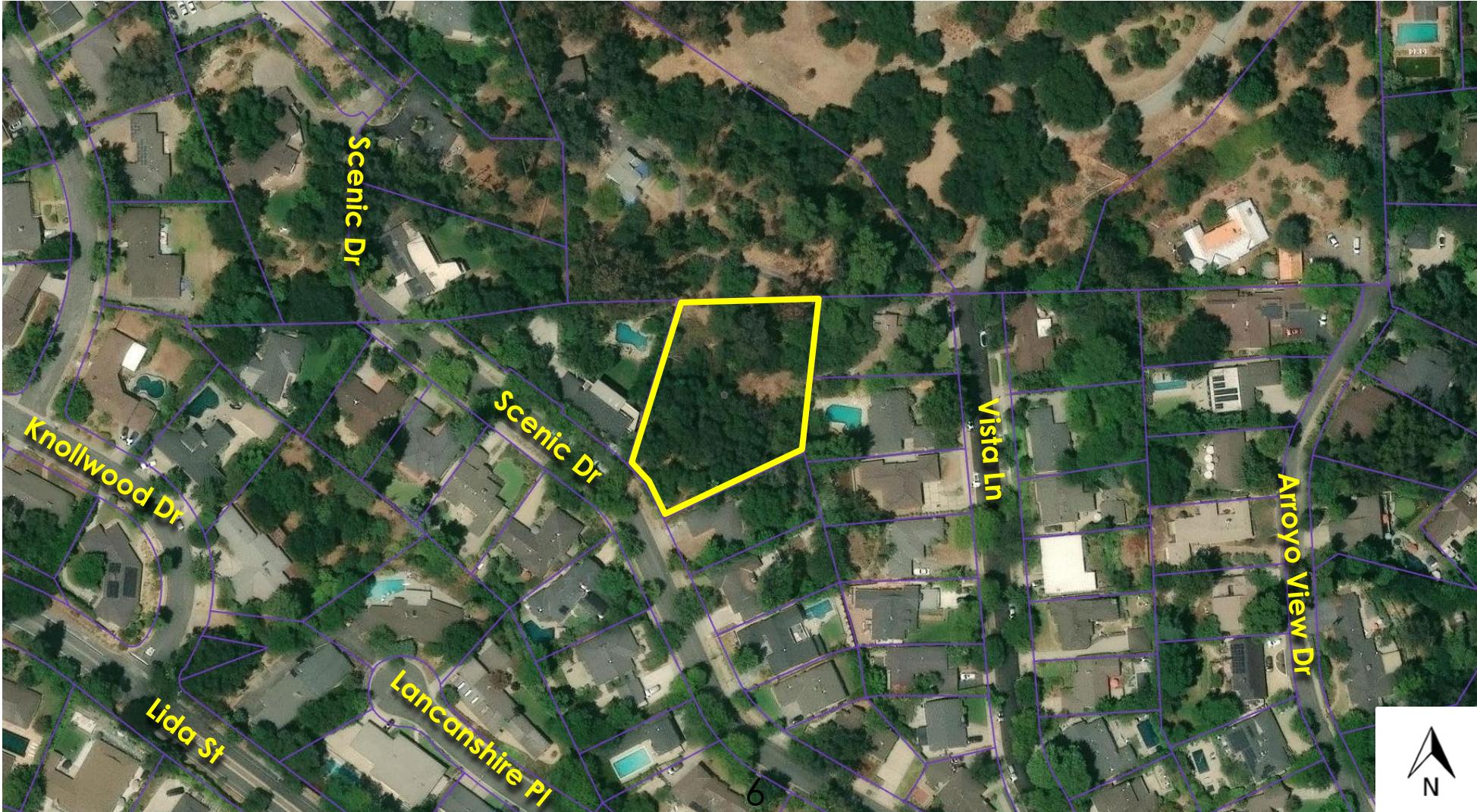
- **November 10, 2025 – Council voted to Call for Review**

- The City Council voted to call the item for review by a vote of 6-2.



Aerial Map

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Site Plan

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Rendering – Street View

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SOUTH PERSPECTIVE (VIEW FROM SCENIC DRIVE)



Rendering, Rear View

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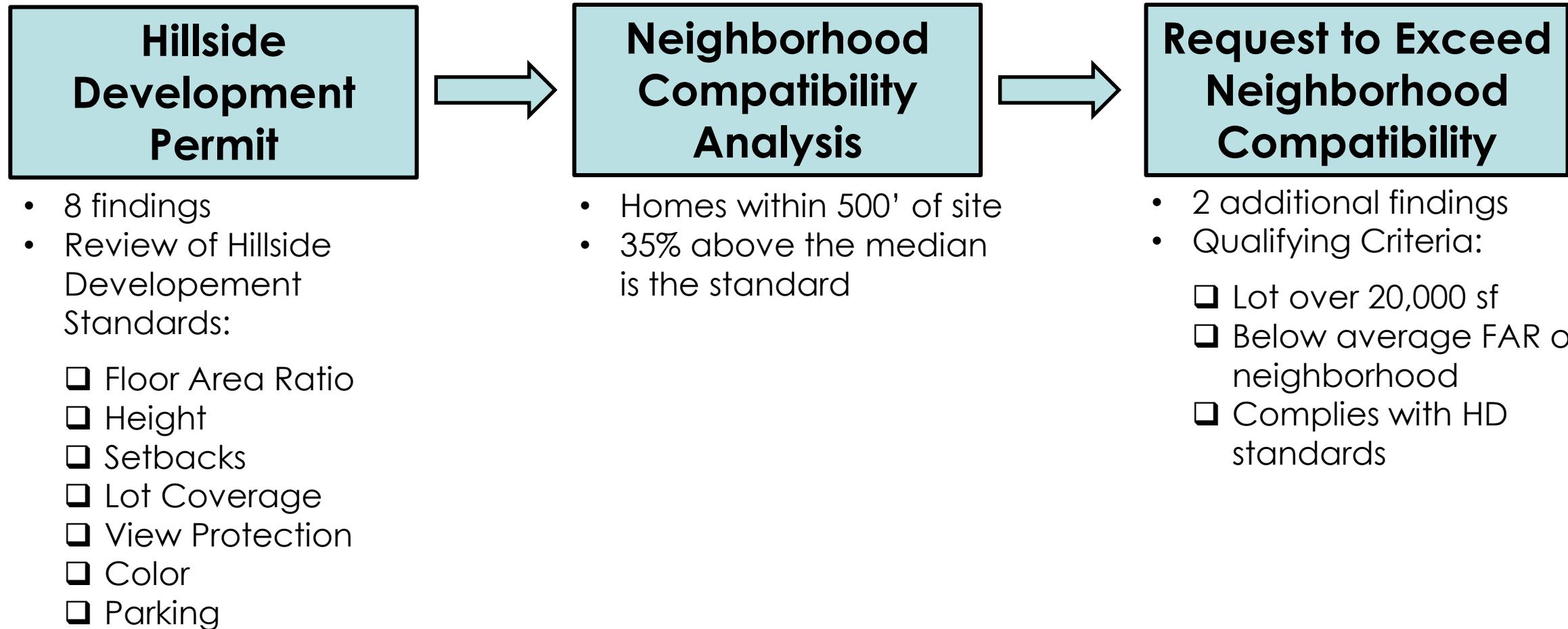


W: NORTH PERSPECTIVE



HDP Review Process

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Size of Residence

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- **There are two requirements that regulate floor area of proposed structures:**
 - Floor Area Ratio.
 - Neighborhood Compatibility Analysis.



Size of Residence-FAR

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- **Floor Area Ratio establishes max size of home and structures, including garage, relative to the lot size.**
 - Areas of the lot equal to or greater than 50 percent slope are removed.
 - Further reductions for lots that have an average slope greater than 15%

Lot Size	Area Sloped $\geq 50\%$	Average Slope	Allowed FAR	Proposed FAR
29,891 sq. ft.	2,556 sq. ft.	25.3%	6,966 sq. ft.	6,965 sq. ft.



Size of Residence-Neighborhood Compatibility

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- **Neighborhood Compatibility analysis establishes max size of the home relative to the neighborhood (500 ft radius).**
 - Analysis does not include garages, accessory structures, basements.
 - Neighborhood Compatibility is 35 percent above the median floor area of the existing homes.

Neighborhood Compatibility	Proposed Home Size
2,761 sq. ft.	4,280 sq. ft.

- The applicant requests to exceed neighborhood compatibility.



Neighborhood Compatibility

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To exceed neighborhood compatibility, the project must comply with all the following requirements and two additional findings must be made:

- **Lot Size**
 - The lot size must be a minimum size of 20,000 square feet. The project site is 29,891 square feet in size.
- **Average FAR of the Neighborhood**
 - The project shall not exceed the average FAR (home/lot size) of the neighborhood. The average FAR of the neighborhood is 0.18. The project provides an FAR of 0.14.
- **Hillside District Compliance**
 - The project shall comply with the Hillside District standards. The project meets the standards.
- **Additional Findings**
 - No additional view impacts will occur to neighboring properties as a result of granting additional square footage.
 - The massing, scale, and building articulation of the proposed dwelling or other structure is compatible with the neighborhood as viewed from public or private streets.



Neighborhood Compatibility Cont.

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First finding to exceed Neighborhood Compatibility:

“No additional view impacts will occur to neighboring properties as a result of granting additional square footage.”

- New improvements shall not be centered directly in the view of any room of a primary structure on a neighboring property and shall avoid blocking the following protected views:
 - Culturally significant structures such as the Rose Bowl, Colorado Street Bridge, City Hall, etc.;
 - Downslope views of the valley floor;
 - Prominent ridgelines; and/or
 - The horizon line
- Neighboring properties generally have views of existing structures, foliage, trees, and the open sky when looking toward and across the subject property. These views are not protected by the Zoning Code.



Neighborhood Compatibility Cont.

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Second finding to exceed Neighborhood Compatibility:

“The massing, scale, and building articulation of the proposed dwelling is compatible with the neighborhood as viewed from public or private streets.”

- The proposed dwelling provides a two-story elevation at the street and is located at the required front setback, consistent with the adjacent development pattern.
- The front building line of the residence is at an acute angle from street property line, which minimizes the massing and perceived height of the building from the street. The larger massing is visible from the rear elevation, not the street elevation.
- The front elevation includes compatible building articulation such as windows, varying wall planes, step-backs and recessed entry, and a covered patio.

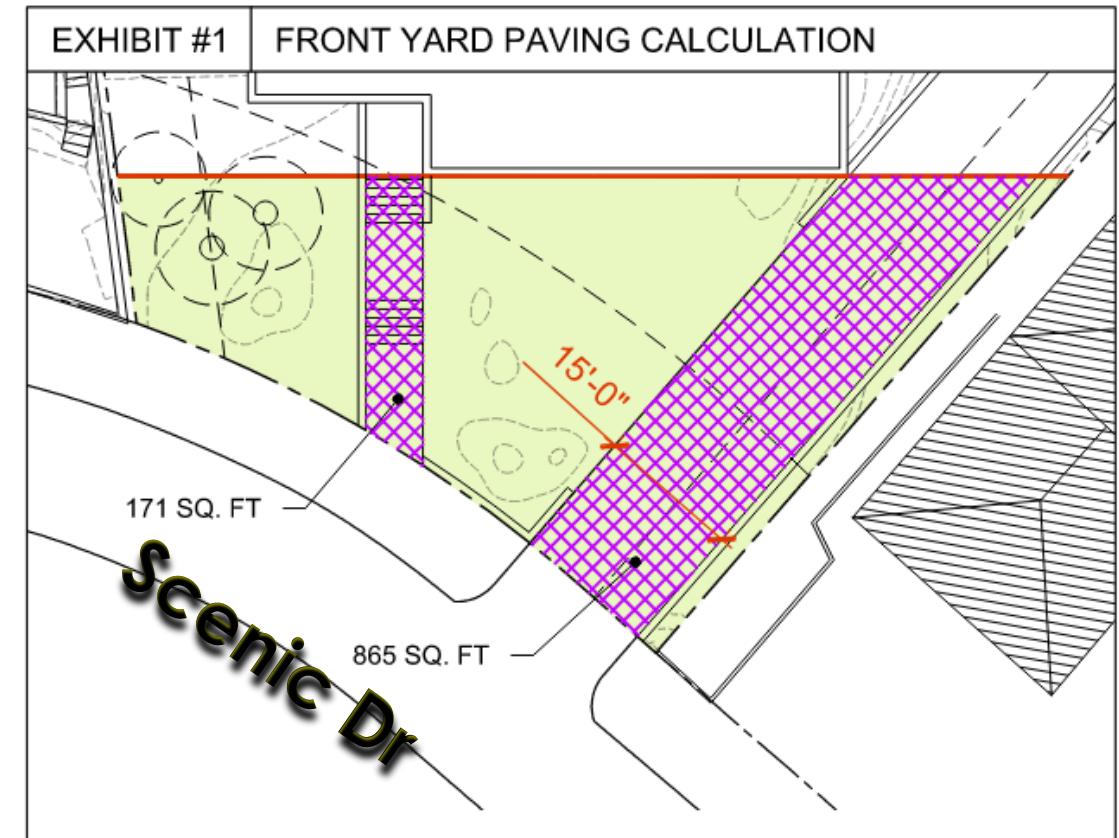


Variance: Front Yard Paving

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Applicant proposes a Variance to exceed paving allowed in front yard.

- > Maximum allowed paving is 30% of the front yard (827 sf).
- > The project proposes 37.5 % (1,036 sf) to allow a front walkway and the minimum 15' driveway width.
- > Unique conditions to support the Variance include:
 - Shape of the lot
 - Narrow street frontage
 - Placement of the proposed residence
- > Remaining areas of the front yard will be landscaped with trees, shrubs, and groundcover





Trees

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The property has a total of 65 trees.

34 are proposed for removal and 31 are proposed to remain.

- Of the 34 trees to be removed, 20 require replacement. 25 replacement trees are provided:

Protected trees proposed for removal				
Number of Trees	Species	DBH	Required Replacement	Proposed Replacement
2 Trees	Tree #8 - Coast Live Oak	11.5 DBH	3 x 24" box trees	3 x 72" box Coast Live Oaks
	Tree #17 - Olive	18.7 DBH	4 x 36" box trees	4 x 36" box Olive Trees

Non-protected native trees proposed for removal				
Number of Trees	Species	DBH	Required Replacement	Proposed Replacement
18 trees	Coast Live Oak	>4-inch caliper	1:1	18 Coast Live Oaks provided

- In addition, the applicant is proposing 7 additional trees.

Non-protected non-native trees proposed for removal				
Number of Trees	Species	DBH	Required Replacement	Proposed Replacement
14 trees	Varies	Varies	None	7 Extra Trees

Total proposed trees is 63, comprised of existing and proposed.



Concerns and Staff Responses

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1. **Neighborhood Compatibility.** The BZA was incorrect in approving additional square footage over the maximum allowed for neighborhood compatibility, and the house is not in scale or compatible with the neighborhood.
 - After review of the evidence and information provided and given the applicable standards can be met that allow the additional square footage, the Board of Zoning Appeals made the findings to approve the request to exceed neighborhood compatibility.
2. **Biological Resources.** The Constraints Analysis and Biological Resources report are inadequate and incomplete.
 - Staff and the City's CEQA consultant reviewed the Constraints Analysis submitted by the applicant and determined it was adequate. The report was prepared by a Biologist with Bargas Environmental Consulting. The project is not within nor adjacent to conserved areas or Significant Ecological Areas as identified by LA County, the nearest is 3.5 miles away. No wildlife corridor crosses through the site.
3. **Environmental Impact.** The project would result in excessive amounts of grading which would impact the on-site existing trees, the neighborhood, and the overall environment.
 - The project aims to preserve as many existing trees as feasible by only removing trees necessary to accommodate the building footprint and improvements. Grading is regulated by the Building Code and must meet all applicable code requirements.



Appeal and Staff Responses cont.

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4. **Landscape Plan.** Replacement trees are not sustainable over the long term.

- The project includes a landscape plan, prepared by a licensed landscape architect. Conditions of approval are included to ensure a tree protection plan is provided for existing trees to remain, that the project provide the required replacement trees, and that the trees are planted in a manner that ensures survival.

5. **Excavation and Grading.** Proposed retaining walls exceed allowable heights.

- The height of the driveway retaining walls shall not exceed eight feet in height as viewed in the vertical plane, in compliance with Building and Safety requirements. Conditions of approval are included requiring that site grading, retaining walls, structural foundations, and all methods of retention shall comply with the requirements of the Building Code which includes preparation by licensed professionals.

6. **Construction Plan.** The project would result in excessive amount of grading which would impact the wildlife corridor and neighborhood.

- The design avoids steeply sloped areas to the maximum extent feasible while preserving a natural swale. The proposed dwelling would utilize a relatively small footprint as the floors have a stacked design, minimizing the building footprint and overall alteration to the hillside topography. A Construction Staging and Traffic Management Plan will be required.



Staff Recommendation

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- Staff recommends that the City Council:
 1. Find that the action proposed herein is categorically exempt from environmental review pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15303, Class 3 (New Construction); and
 2. Adopt the findings in Attachment A to uphold the Board of Zoning Appeals' decision and approve Hillside Development Permit #7134, with the conditions in Attachment B.



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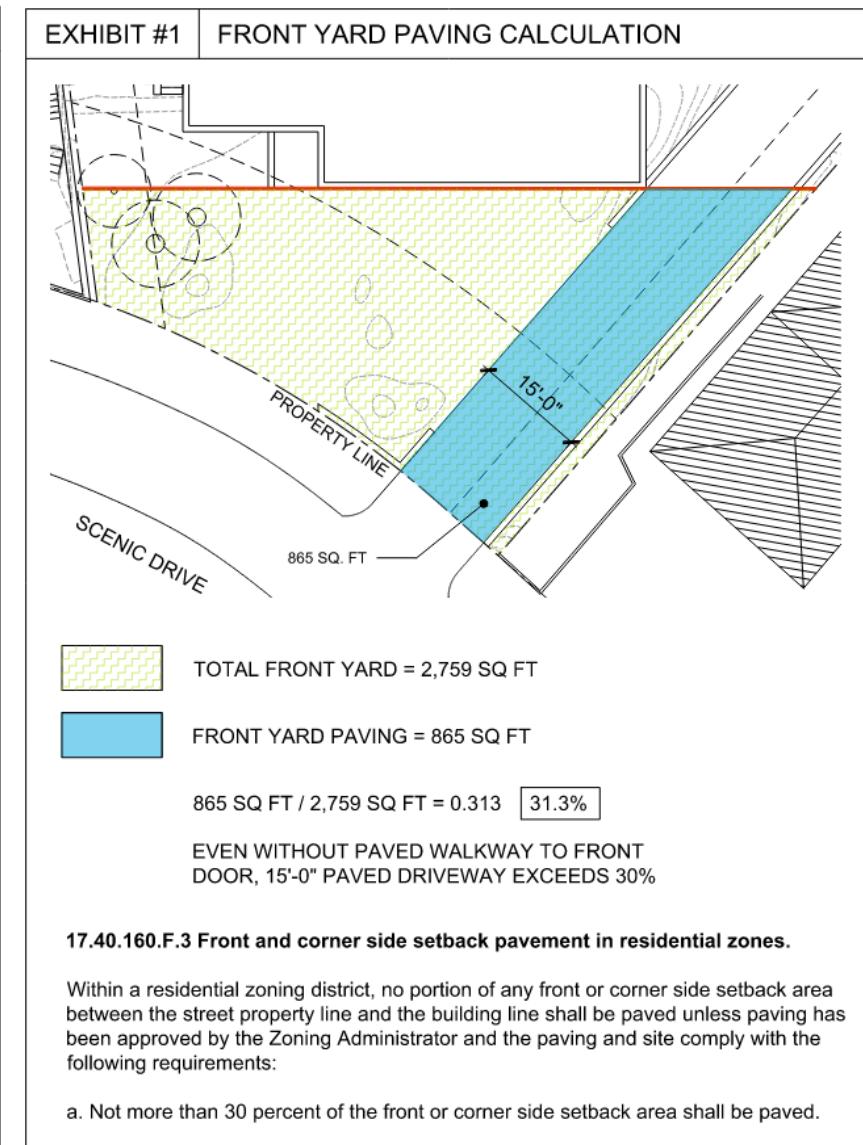
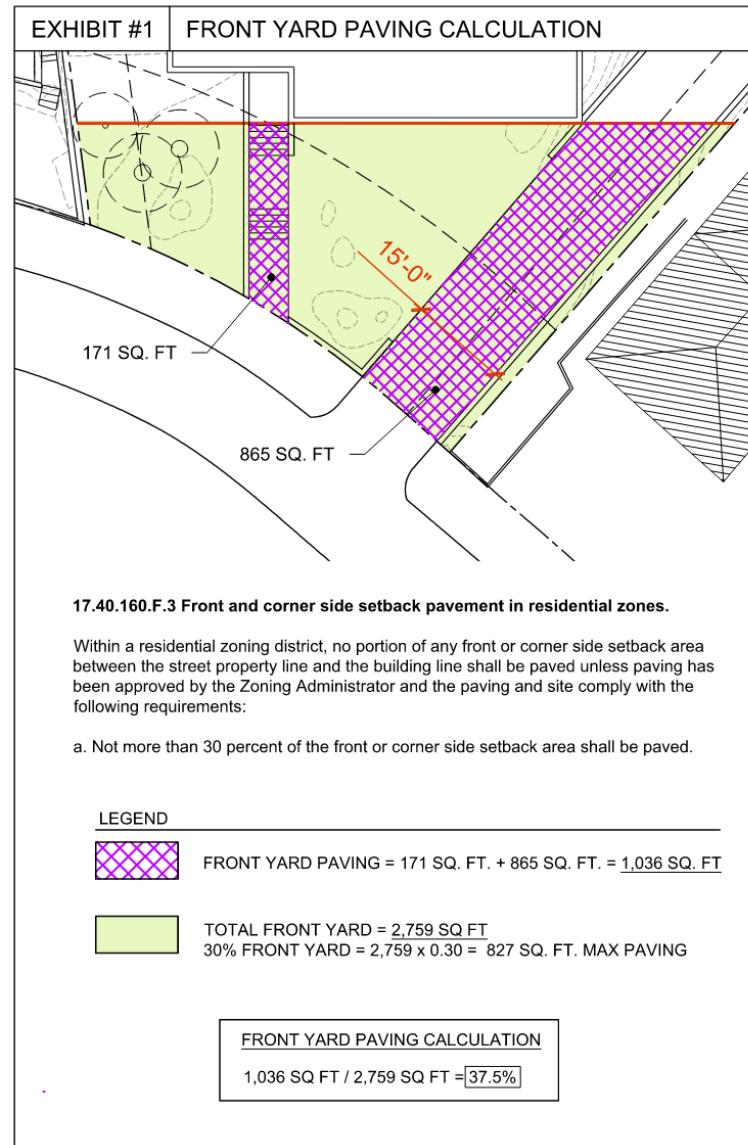
Front Yard: 2,759 SQ. FT.

Max Front Yard Paving: 827 SQ. FT. (30%)

Proposed Paving: 1,036 SQ. FT. (37.5%)

209 SQ. FT over the max.

- Driveway: 865 SQ. FT. (31.3%)
- Walkway: 171 SQ. FT. (6.2%)







EARTHWORK QUANTITY TABLE		CUT (CY)	FILL (CY)
ROUGH GRADE*		2,213	4
OVEREX & RECOMPACT (ASSUMED 24" UNDER ALL PAVEMENT)		200	200
SUBTOTAL:		2,413	24
SHRINKAGE (10% OF R&R ASSUMED)		0	2
TOTAL:		2,413	27
ESTIMATED EXPORT AMOUNT:		2,143	C

*APPROXIMATE VALUES FOR BUILDING SUBSURFACE, ROUGH GRADE LEFT 8" LOW FOR FOOTING AND OTHER SPOILS. VOLUME GENERATED USING AUTODESK, AUTOCAD CIVIL 3D SOFTWARE. CUT/FILL DEPTHS AS SHOWN IN PLAN. COMPARISON BETWEEN EXISTING GRADE AND HOUSE ROUGH SURFACE.

EARTHWORK LEGEND

- ◆ xx.x FILL DEPTH
- ◆ -xx.x CUT DEPTH
- [Solid gray box] FILL AREA
- [Hatched box] CUT AREA

SOILS ENGINEER:
CONTACT
ADDRESS
LOCATION

OWNER: HONG & ZUNMING CHEN
10 GRANITE DRIVE, #412
SACRAMENTO, CA 95804



PREPARED BY: FORMA ENGINEERING INC.
4400 SAN FERNANDO MISSION BLVD. SITE 200

EARTHWORK
1530 SCENIC DRIVE
PASADENA, CA 91103

DATE
8/26/20
JOB NO. 2221

C2

NOTE: ADD 1.000FT TO ALL ELEVATIONS SHOWN



Case #	Address	Description	Lot Size	NCA	House Size	Exceed	NCA Aver FAR	NCA FAR	Max FAR	Prop Site FAR
6823	1065 La Loma Drive	New SFR (demoed SFR 2,615 sf)	34,024 sf	4,108 sf	5,235 sf	1,127 sf	0.17	0.12	7,442 sf	6,790 sf
6876	400 Mooresque Dr	287 sf addition to 3,821 sf SFR	46,595 sf	3,816 sf	4,108 sf	292 sf	0.10	0.08	6,902 sf	4,503 sf
7105	1230 Hartwood Point Dr	6,641 sf additions to 8,468 sf SFR	196,396 sf	4,126 sf	15,108 sf	10,982 sf	0.10	0.08	27,123 sf	16,347 sf
7134	1530 Scenic Dr	New SFR	29,891 sf	2,761 sf	4,280 sf	1,519 sf	0.18	0.14	6,966 sf	6,965 sf
7239	200 Los Altos Dr	2,835 sf addition to 2,606 sf SFR	79,002 sf	5,280 sf	5,441 sf	161 sf	0.10	0.068	10,350 sf	7,517 sf



Site Visit Photos

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View looking south on Scenic Drive



Site Visit Photos

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View looking north on Scenic Drive



Site Visit Photos

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Viewed from Scenic Drive



Viewed from Scenic Drive



Site Visit Photos

Planning & Community Development Department



Photo looking into the property

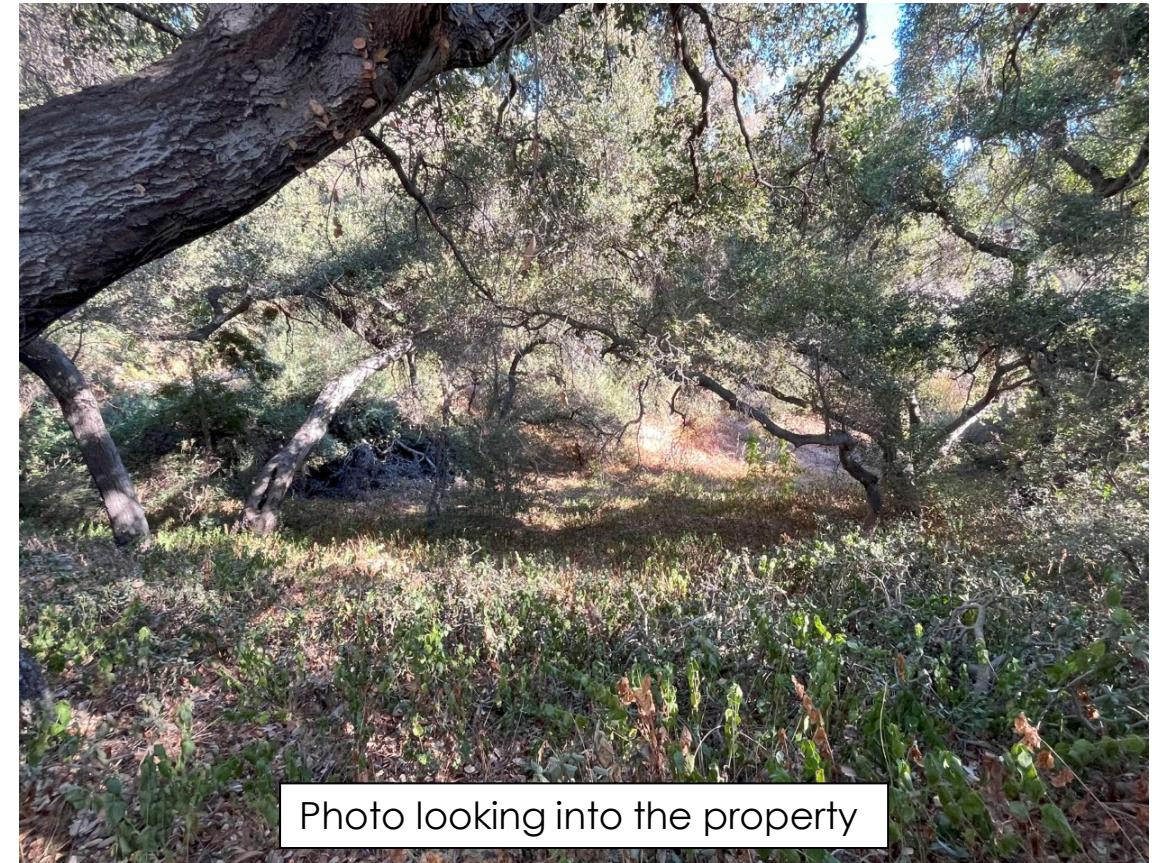


Photo looking into the property



Site Visit Photos

Planning & Community Development Department



Photo looking into the property

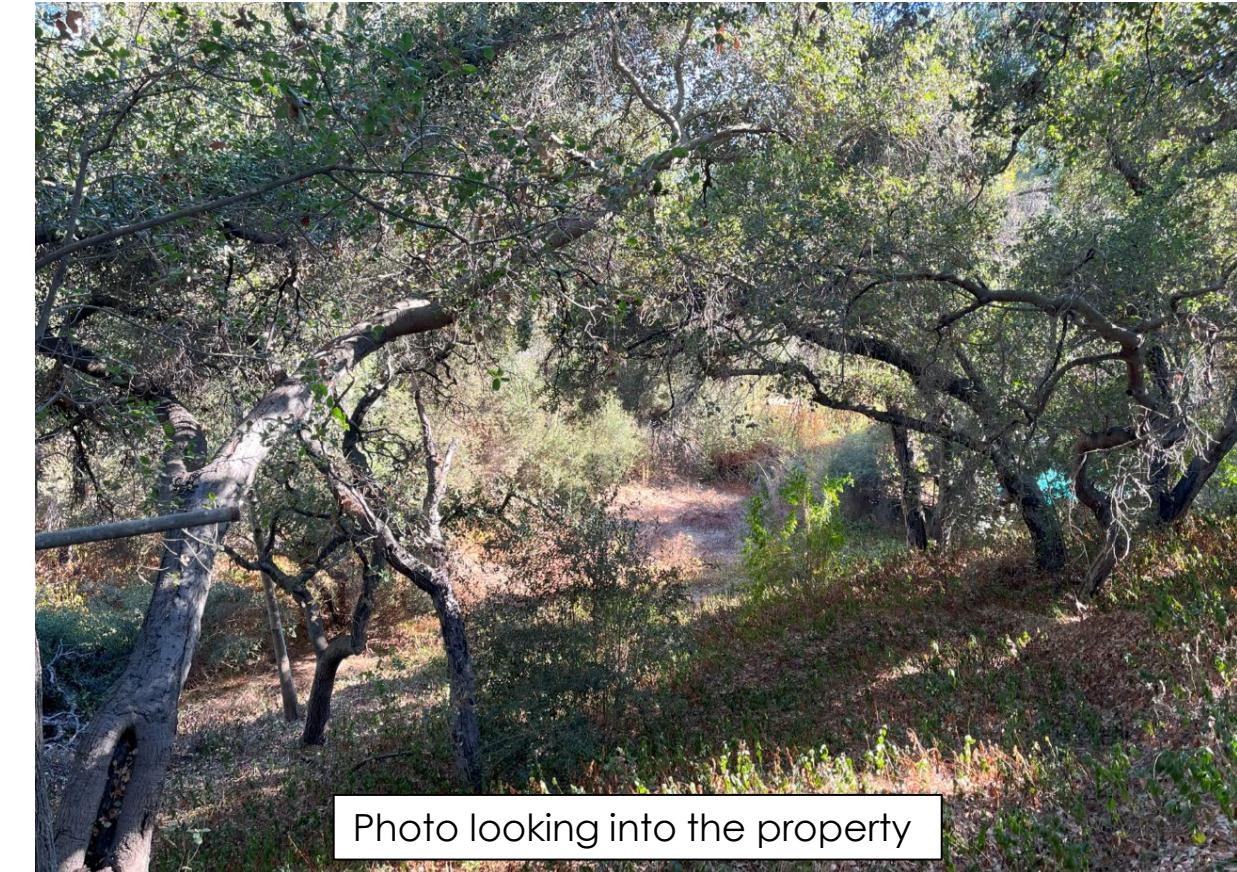
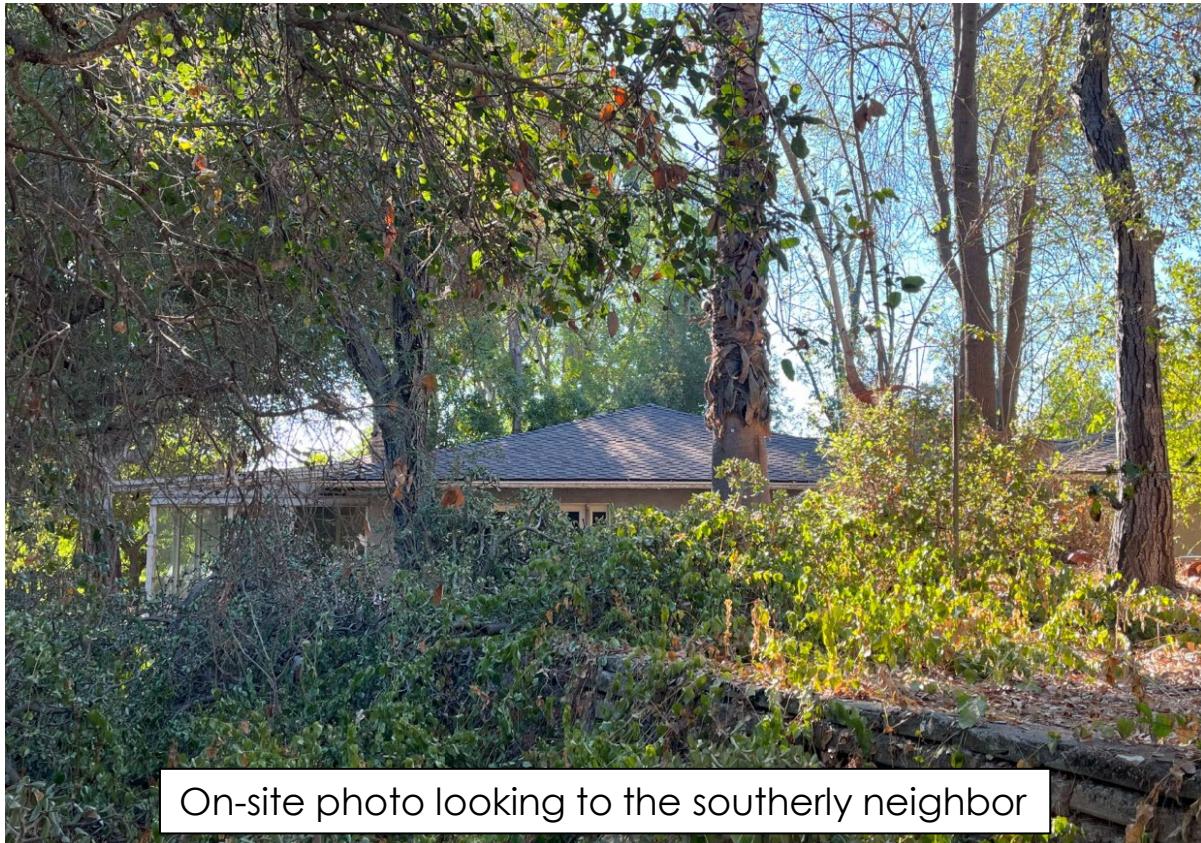


Photo looking into the property

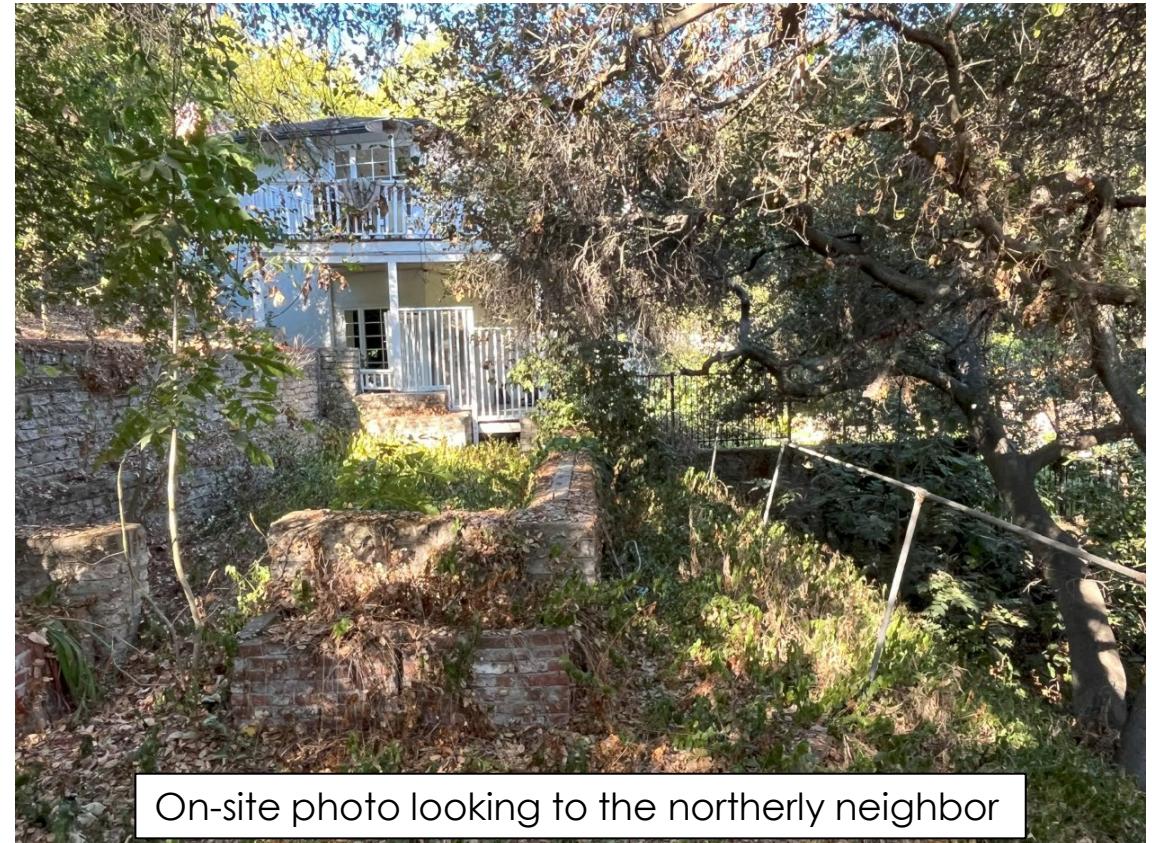


Site Visit Photos

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On-site photo looking to the southerly neighbor



On-site photo looking to the northerly neighbor



Site Visit Photos

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Existing on-site walls



On-site photo looking towards the street



Renderings

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RENDERED VIEW: SOUTH PERSPECTIVE (VIEW FROM SCENIC DRIVE)



Renderings

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RENDERED VIEW: NORTH PERSPECTIVE



Renderings

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RENDERED VIEW: EAST PERSPECTIVE



Colors and Materials

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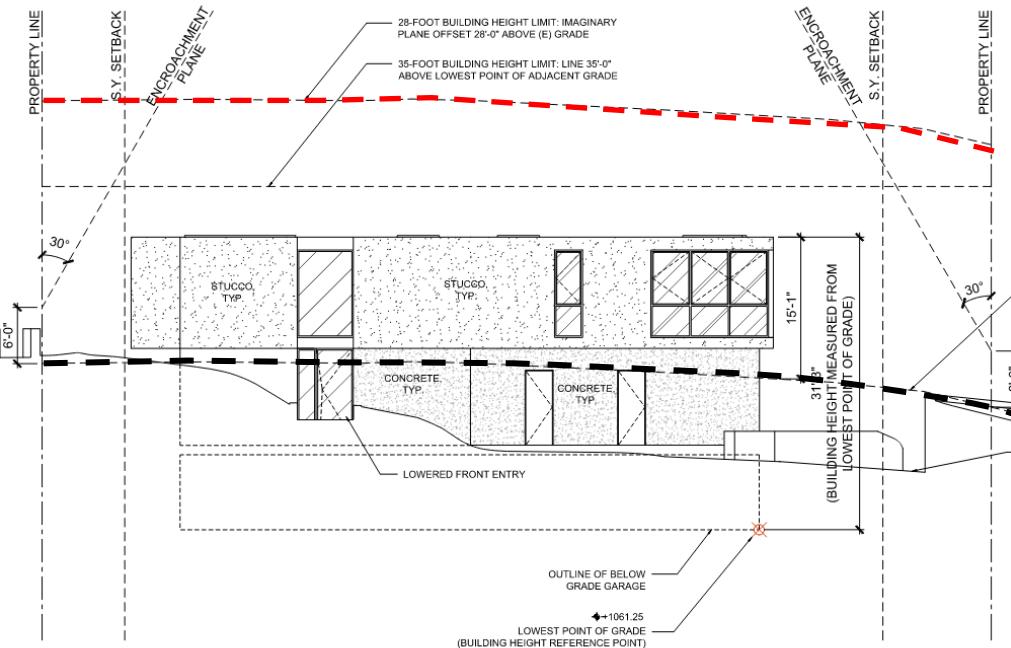




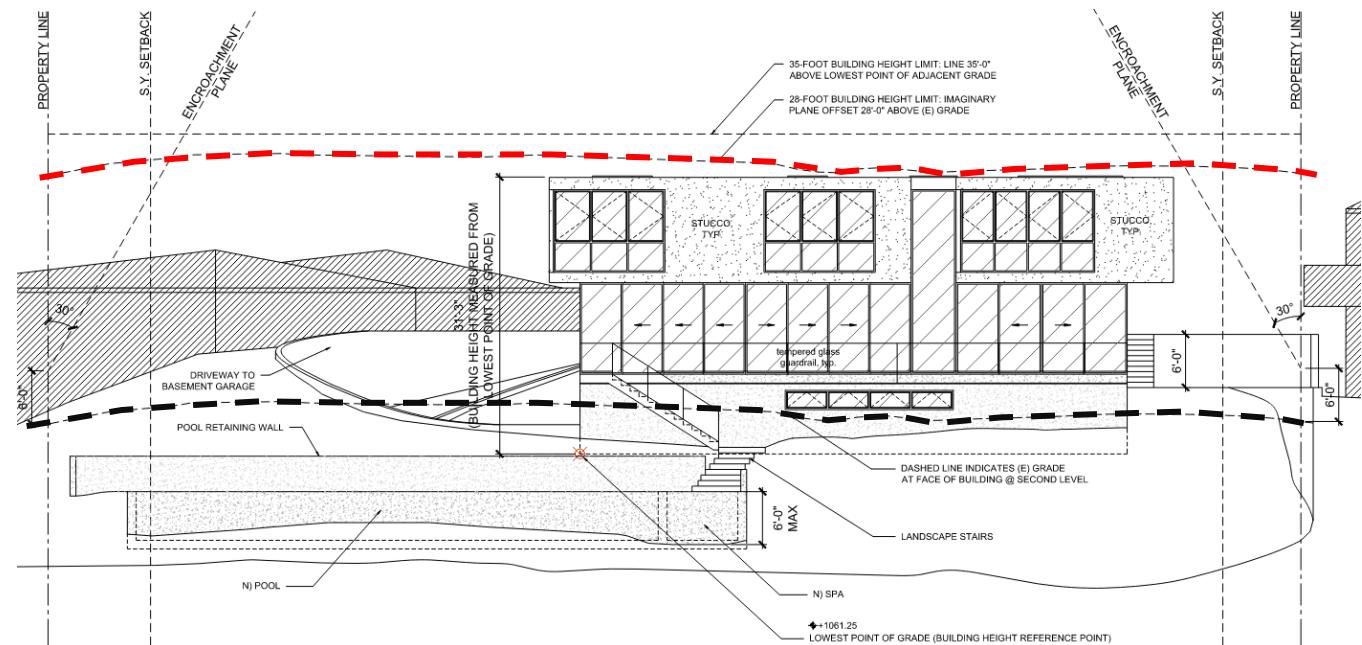
Elevations

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South Elevation (Front)



North Elevation (Rear)



— Height Limit

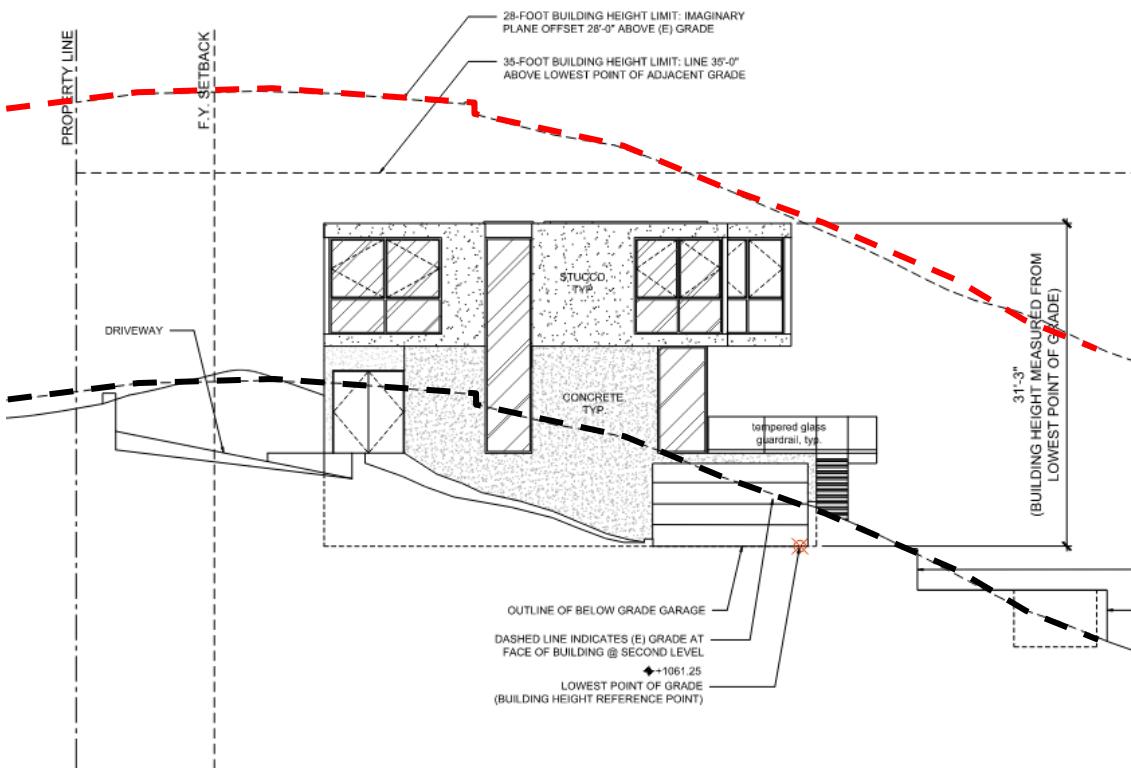
— Existing Grade



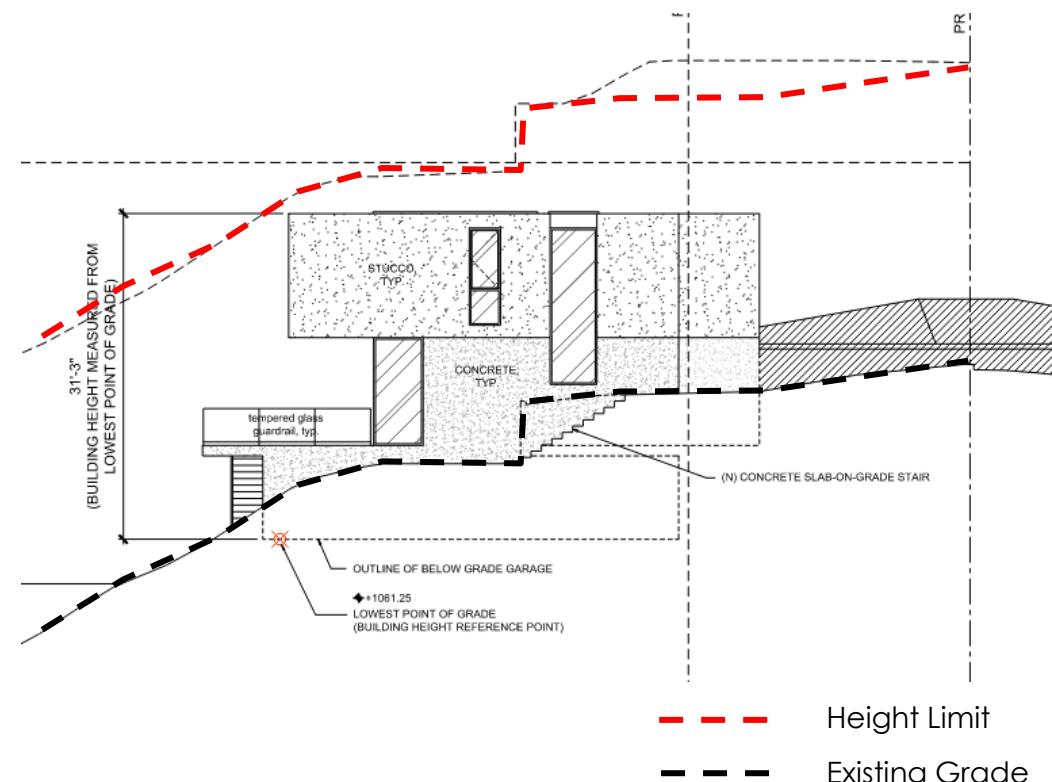
Elevations

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East Elevation (Side)



West Elevation (Side)



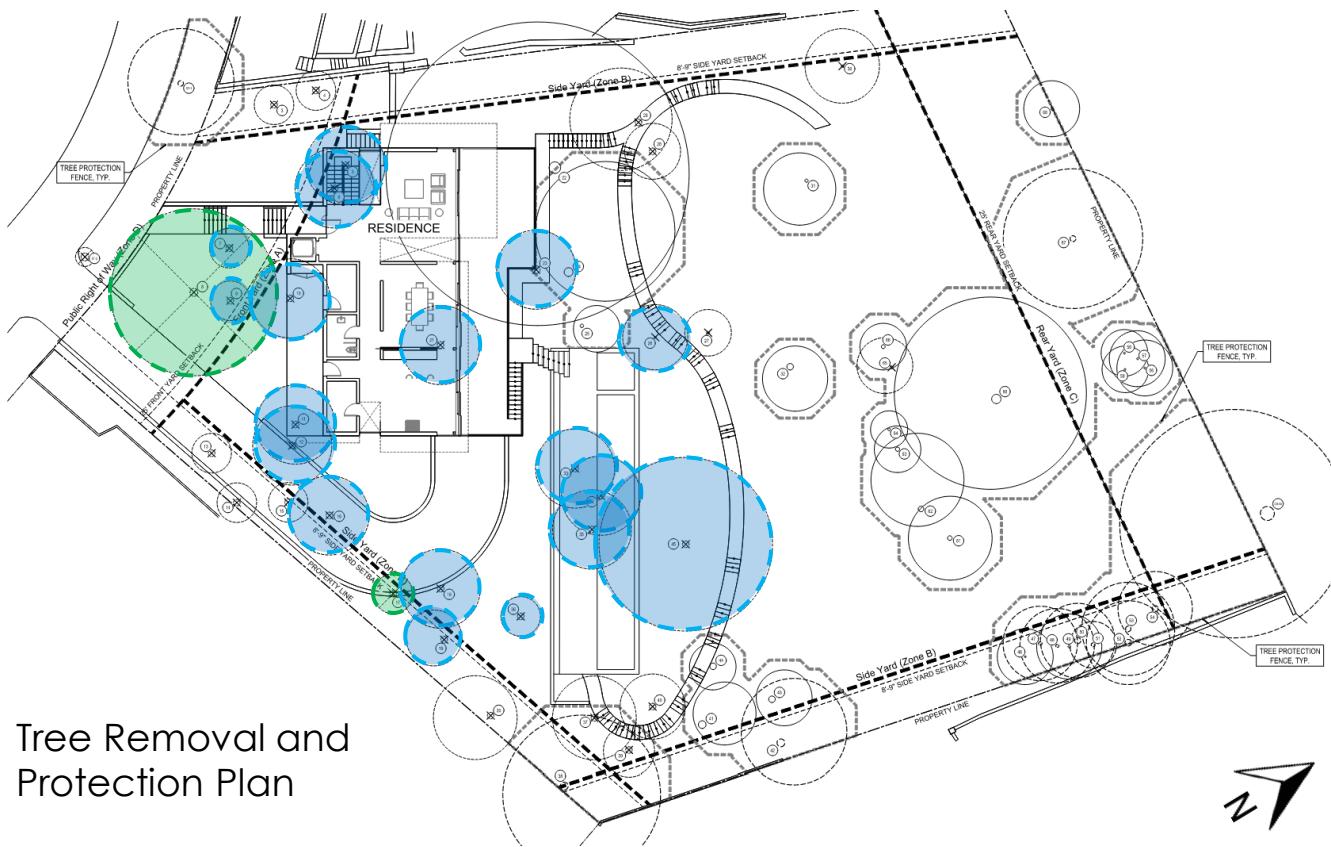
Height Limit

Existing Grade



Tree Removal

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Tree Removal and Protection Plan

Protected trees proposed for removal

Tree #	Species	DBH	Required Replacement	Proposed Replacement
Tree #8	Coast Live Oak	11.5 DBH	3 x 24" box trees	3 x 72" box Coast Live Oaks
Tree #17	Olive	18.7 DBH	4 x 36" box trees	4 x 36" box Olive Trees



Protected trees proposed for Removal

Non-protected native trees proposed for removal

Tree #	Species	DBH	Required Replacement	Proposed Replacement
18 trees	Coast Live Oak	>4-inch caliper	1:1	18 Coast Live Oaks provided



Non-protected native trees proposed for Removal

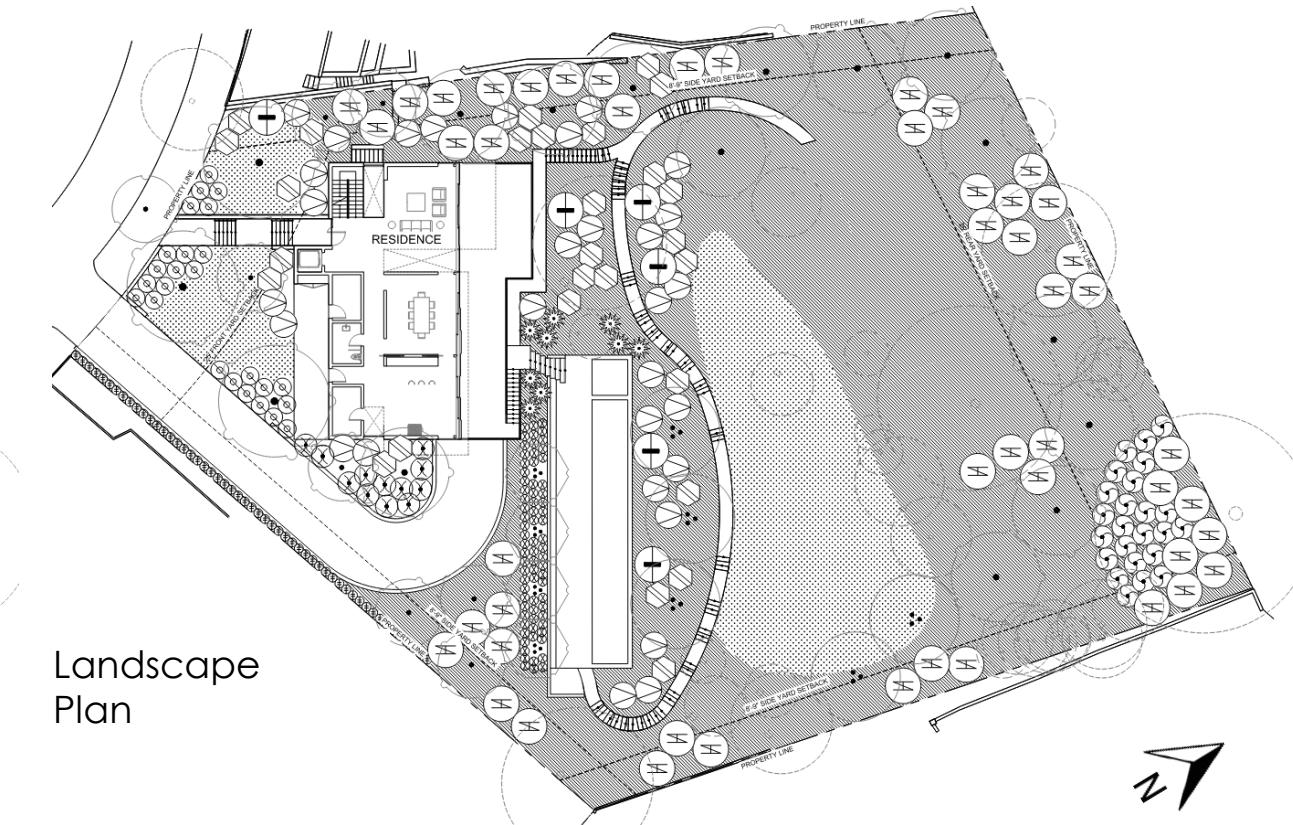


Tree Replacement Plan

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Tree Planting
Plan



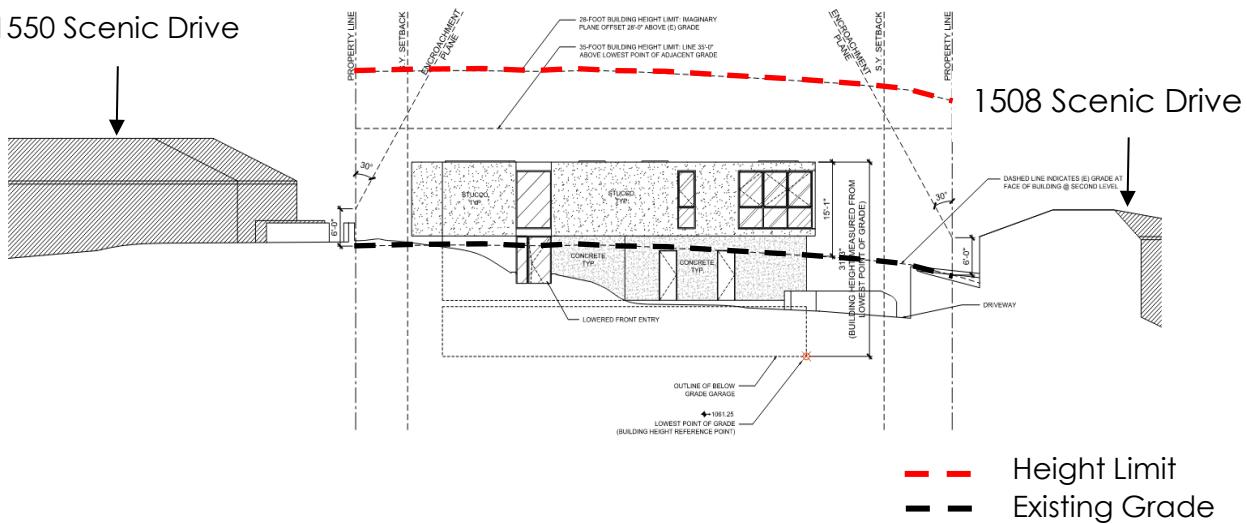
Landscape
Plan



Neighborhood Compatibility Cont.

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1550 Scenic Drive



Front elevation from the street



Rendered view from the street



Development Standards

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Table 1: Summary of RS-4 and Hillside Overlay Development Standards

Development Standard	Required/ Allowed	Proposed	Analysis
Maximum Gross Floor Area	6,966 square feet	6,965 square feet	Complies
Maximum Lot Coverage	35% of lot size (10,461 square feet)	13.4% (4,003 square feet)	Complies
Minimum Setbacks			
Front (Scenic Drive)	25'	25'	Complies
Side (East and West)	8'-9"	17'-7" east	Complies
		11' west	Complies
Rear (North)	25'	102'-5"	Complies
Maximum Height			
Height at any point	28'	28'	Complies
Overall height	35'	31'-3"	Complies
Minimum Parking	Two covered spaces	Two spaces within garage	Complies
Minimum Guest Parking	Two on-site spaces	Four spaces within garage	Complies
Neighborhood Compatibility	2,761 square feet	4,280 square feet	Requested
Average FAR	18 percent	14 percent	Complies
Front Yard Paving	30 percent	37.5 percent	Variance



Neighborhood Compatibility

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In 2017, the City Council approved amendments to neighborhood compatibility in response to public concerns about mansionization.

The amendments introduced a minimum lot size threshold of 20,000 square feet to qualify and two additional findings to assist the decision maker in determining when it may be appropriate for a project to exceed the neighborhood compatibility standard.

These new requirements were in addition to existing requirements. Prior to the amendment, any project, regardless of lot size, could request to exceed the neighborhood compatibility standard.