


McMillan, Acquanette (Netta)

From: M Liao
Sent: Friday, January 9, 2026 5:57 PM
To: PublicComment-AutoResponse
Subject: Original statement regarding Proposed Development 1530 Scenic Drive (HDP #7134)

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Statement sent to BZA on October 20, 2025

Dear Members of the Hearing Committee,

My name is Dr. Martha Liao, MD, and I reside at 1465 Scenic Drive. I am writing to express my concerns regarding the proposed development for the property at 1530 Scenic Drive (HDP #7134). Unfortunately, I am unable to attend today's hearing in person, as I am post-call after completing a 24-hour shift at Kaiser LAMC, where I am an OB/GYN.

First, I would like to clarify that I do not oppose a homeowner's right to build a residence on their property. When I purchased my home at 1465 Scenic Drive in 2018, it was in significant disrepair, with health hazards such as asbestos and mold. I made the decision to renovate, ultimately tearing down most of the original structure and rebuilding, while adding fewer than 500 square feet to the existing footprint. Throughout the design and construction process, I worked closely with my designer and engineer to ensure the new home fit within the aesthetic and character of the Linda Vista neighborhood. Sustainability and code compliance were also important priorities; I incorporated solar panels and batteries, among other environmentally conscious features.

It has come to my attention that the design firm proposing the new build at 1530 Scenic Drive has cited my home as supporting precedent. However, their representation of my property is inaccurate. They list the living space as exceeding 2,900 square feet, while the actual size is 2,425 square feet, as submitted to the City of Pasadena and documented in the approved blueprints and permits. I encourage the committee to verify this information. Additionally, my home is situated across the street from the late Nina Chomsky's residence, and during her lifetime, she expressed no objections to the improvements made on my property.

As the daughter of a civil engineer who retired from the Environmental Protection Agency in 2010, I was raised with a deep respect for the environment. I was an early adopter of electric vehicles in California and remain committed to sustainability. I support local conservation efforts, including those of the Pasadena Humane Society and marine protection initiatives. My pets—one dog and two cats—are rescues, and I take great joy in the presence of local wildlife, including bears, coyotes, bobcats, raccoons, and many bird species. These animals remind us that we are sharing space with nature and must act as responsible stewards of this land.

I am deeply concerned about the potential environmental impact of the proposed development. This area is one of the few remaining places in greater Los Angeles where wildlife can still roam relatively freely. Tree removal and the disruption of natural brush could endanger vital habitats, particularly those of protected species such as owls, hummingbirds, monarch butterflies (which are endangered), and other native animals. The broader regional commitment to conservation, exemplified by the recent construction of the Wallis Annenberg Wildlife Crossing, reflects how deeply this issue resonates with residents.

Therefore, I respectfully urge the committee to request that the property owners at 1530 Scenic Drive reconsider the scale and impact of their current proposal. I believe a more reasonable design would better align with the character of the Linda Vista neighborhood and preserve the natural environment we all value.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Dr. Martha Liao, MD

Resident, 1465 Scenic Drive

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Dr. Martha L. Liao, MD, FACOG
Attending Staff/Partner
Physician Champion - Women's Mental Health/Maternal Mental Health
Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology
Kaiser Permanente - Southern California Permanente Medical Group
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HDP #7134

Pasadena, CA 91103
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2026 JAN 12 AM 9:11

CITY CLERK
CITY OF PASADENA

Good day,

I'm the neighbor at _____, across the street from the proposed public hearing #7134 house building permit. We are the second owners of this home and long time residents of Scenic Drive.

We have concerns about the development of this property on several major points that were never sufficiently addressed by the previous city meeting. We strongly request that the notice of public hearing review each and every building code regulation in addition to hearing the continued, numerous, and diverse input provided by the neighbors who have submitted letters and attended the hearings.

This proposed development continues to request variance to allow for a 37.5 percent paving where a maximum of 30 percent is allowed. A VARIANCE. Again, a variance. This shows that no attempt has been made to build within existing regulations. **No permit SHALL be provided, if variances are requested.**

The house is NOT compatible with existing house sizes on this street. Not within 50%, not within 70%. The house should be compatible with the average (or maybe slightly above average), with the existing houses, yet it is NOT. The comparisons made at previous city meeting by the developer were inaccurate and pointed out by several neighbors – including myself. I know my lot size, my house square feet. And the number quoted by the developer was NOT the lot size or my house square feet. At least two other neighbors have documented similar data inaccuracies. So in addition to false and misleading data presented to support the “compatibility” claim, the house size is does not fall within the average house size on the street. It is NOT even similar in structure, build, or material likeness. **At 8,000 square feet, this house is being proposed in a neighborhood with houses ¼ the size. It is NOT compatible.**

The house proposes a concrete 188 foot drive way. That is in violation of the zoning code. Period. Violation of the zoning codes which states at least 8-15 feet shall separate homes. The amount of retaining walls is extreme and are a safety risk on the property of neighbors. There are standards for building on a hillside and neither the retaining wall or drive way do anything to meet these standards.

As long time neighbors, as a neighborhood association, we have a voice in how our neighborhood should be maintained. We have a voice. We work here. I work here remote. Others are retired. This is a 2 lane street on a major fire risk area (Altadena 2025!), with NO through street or parking available for construction crews or dump trucks. This is a street on an uphill with a cul del sac with a difficult turn around. There SHALL be no turn around or access for our residents

**HDP #7134
1521 Scenic Drive
Pasadena, CA 91103
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on a normal day if construction crews and construction crew parking is accessing the build site. Period. I am not willing to live and work (I work from home) to give up access to my house, my home, my quality of life on having to hear and navigate the constant construction noise, beeping, or access that could take 5 full work days (maybe even 6). There have been NO provisions to limit construction hours and I am strongly requesting that the city work with the developer to limit construction hours, days and ensure that access and fire safety be provided in a plan to each resident prior to construction. We live here. We bought here. We have a right to have a normal, peaceful, similar quality of life, and not be faced with a 1 or 2 year project where noise, sound, access, inconvenience is pushed on us. In addition, should ANY limited access up the street or access to my property or should any truck, car, or build related activity be perceived, I will document and submit to the city of Pasadena, as well as report to agencies that might need to be notified such as the police and fire departments. Again, a 2 way street, fire zone (parking limited to one side), a dead end street, all lead me to wonder – where are they parking these cars? Where are the crews turning around?

We have documented neighborhood compatibility. It is not. We have documented that the tree removal and replacement does not ensure similar canopy. The selection of larger trees has been shown to have a low survival rate. The landscape plan did little to sure what the older trees shall survive.

In summary, I again voice and document the following, **the variances shall only be permissive ONLY if other zoning requirements are met.** This development does not meet that because the retaining walls and grading are not quantified for a hillside development and the architectural standards are NOT compatibility with the existing neighborhood. The geotechnical aspect of the submitted report with respect to core samples and the no guarantee that the 24-inch swale will prevent run off with our seasonal rains to our existing neighbors on vista lane.

We strongly request, with my scientific background and 30 plus years of engineering, that
(1) each and every zoning requirement be reviewed in detail
(2) each variance be scrutinized
(3) that the multiple and numerous voices of our neighbors be heard and that mitigating actions as to the impact of quality of life during the construction period be put in place

**Alexandria Wiercigroch
Bozena Wiercigroch**

Pasadena CA 91103

The Honorable Victor Gordo, Mayor
Members, Pasadena City Council
Pasadena City Hall
100 North Garfield Avenue
Pasadena, CA 91101

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2026 JAN 12 AM 9:10

CITY CLERK
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SUBJECT: **Agenda Item 13** – CALL FOR REVIEW OF THE BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS' QUASI-JUDICIAL DECISION TO APPROVE HILLSIDE DEVELOPMENT PERMIT NO. 7134 TO ALLOW A NEW 4,280 SQUARE-FOOT, TWO-LEVEL SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENCE ABOVE A PARTIALLY BELOW GRADE 2,685 SQUARE-FOOT SIX-CAR GARAGE AT 1530 SCENIC DRIVE

Dear Mayor Gordo and Council Members,

I am writing to urge you to overturn the Board of Zoning Appeals' approval of Hillside Development Permit (HDP) No. 7134 (1530 Scenic Dr.) because the proposed grading is excessive and planned construction will adversely affect the natural features of the site.

The amount of grading required for the construction of a hillside residence is related to the project design and the placement of the structure on the site. When the amount of grading exceeds 250 cubic yards, the Pasadena Municipal Code requires an engineering geology report (Code Section 14.05.081) and a soil engineering report (Code Section 14.05.082). If the natural average slope is 10% or greater, and the grading exceeds 1,000 cubic yards, the grading requires oversight by a civil engineer (Code Section 14.05.210). If grading exceeds 2,000 cubic yards, the Code also requires a hydrology and soils loss report (Code Section 14.05.083).

The preliminary grading plan for this project proposes an approximate cut of 2,413 cubic yards of soil, fill of 270 cubic yards, and an estimated export of 2,143 cubic yards. Proponents plan to construct a 4,280 square foot residence, a 2,685 square foot six-car below-grade garage, and an extensive driveway 124 feet in length that adds 1,860 square feet of lot coverage, plus another 864 square feet for a spa and pool deck.

When a project exceeds 2,400 cubic yards of grading, it begs the question whether the proposed project (HDP No. 7134) is reasonable for our Linda Vista Hillside neighborhood or not. The Municipal Code establishes grading thresholds for particular levels of review. Obviously, the additional requirement for a hydrology and soils loss report indicates that there is a need for extensive oversight for the possible risks and unforeseen problems that could result. This itself should raise a red flag for the City.

A provision of the Hillside Ordinance is to ensure a safe means of ingress and egress for vehicular (including emergency equipment) and pedestrian traffic to and within the hillside areas, with **minimum disturbance to the natural features**. This project breaches this provision because the driveway construction fails to reduce the impact on natural features. The descending driveway is planned to be constructed with walls ranging in height between eight and 15 feet and will extend

into the east side setback impeding any wildlife movement through the abutting homes. Grading for the driveway alone will remove seven (7) trees (three native non-protected trees and one protected tree). These trees provide natural screening and soil stability between the residences.

If the proposed project respected the Hillside Ordinance to preserve and protect the natural resources including the native flora and fauna, sensitive wildlife habitats, and mature trees to the greatest extent feasible, the grading would be substantially less. An earlier project approved for 1530 Scenic Drive in 2009 (HDP No. 5105) is a more appropriate build for the site as it aligns with the principles of the Hillside Ordinance.

While a major purpose of the Hillside Development Permit is to ensure that a proposed project minimizes its visual and environmental impact, the applicant failed to follow the provisions of the Hillside Ordinance to minimize environmental impact. The City's approval of this project is irresponsible as it has the potential to put the safety of the residents at risk.

Even though the proposed project includes a tree replacement plan for the removal of 34 trees, the replacement trees are not a substitute for the loss of the mature tree canopy that provides the continuity of the tree-lined landscape that connects adjacent properties. More importantly, the root systems of the mature trees provide hillside stability. This loss not only diminishes the visual appeal and overall aesthetic value of the neighborhood, but it also impacts wildlife and the overall environmental health of the area. It will be decades before the replacement trees grow to the heights of the existing mature canopy. For this project, maximum effort was not exercised to retain existing trees in place.

This project (HDP No. 7134) is not a responsible project for our neighborhood as it outsizes the neighborhood and significantly impacts the environment. I urge the City Council to overturn the Board of Zoning Appeals' decision to uphold approval of this project.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Peck

McMillan, Acquanette (Netta)

From: Stephen Lichten < >
Sent: Monday, January 12, 2026 10:11 AM
To: PublicComment-AutoResponse
Subject: Item 13 on Jan 12 2025 Pasadena City Council Mtg - Comments on 1530 Scenic Drive proposed construction project

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I am writing to register my opposition to oppose the proposed development of a house as proposed on the vacant lot at Pasadena 1530 Scenic Drive HDP #7134. This is item #13 on the January 12, 2025 Pasadena City Council agenda.

I own a residence and live on Scenic Drive, not far from the location of the proposed construction project. The size of this proposed house is immense and as designed it clashes severely with the neighborhood character: whether one counts the 4280 sf alone, or 4280 sf + 2685 sf garage, it dwarfs nearby homes and virtually all other homes on the streets nearby. Most homes in the area have less square footage for the primary residence than what is proposed just for the below grade garage at 1530 Scenic. For instance, the house next door is one story with 1711 sf and has what appears to be a 500 sf garage. The loss of scores of trees, most protected native California live oaks, will be a transformative degradation and tragedy for the entire neighborhood. The destruction of these trees will take days and days with an extraordinary amount noise, dust and pollution, and that will be just the first phase of what will no doubt be an extremely unpleasant construction zone for dozens if not hundreds of nearby residents who will then have to endure levels noise and disruptions at a scale never before seen anywhere in the neighborhood, ever, no doubt for a year or more. The final result will be an enduring presence of a huge highly visible, imposing and intrusive structure unlike anything nearby in scale or magnitude or character; instead of the present park-like forest of native live oak trees that we now see on a daily basis, teeming with wildlife, the new owner requests a variance to allow a significantly greater amount of paving in the front yard than is ordinarily allowed. This is very out of character with existing homes in the neighborhood. Scenic Drive is a small street both in overall length and width that has nowhere near the capacity for the parking, the number of people, vehicles, and visitors that will no doubt continue to be associated with a 4280 sf + 2685 sf house of this size. The quality of life for both other residents and the considerable wildlife on this and nearby streets will degrade considerably.

A more moderate proposed construction plan, with smaller structures more in character with the neighborhood, and with a mix of landscaping and preservation of trees to stay in character with the rest of the street and neighborhood, would be considerably more acceptable and less objectionable.

There are also notable concerns about drainage and rain runoff that will loom large with such a development on a steep (>20% grade) hillside. I live further down on Scenic drive and have firsthand experience with flooding (in our home) due to underestimates of runoff and drainage. While I am far enough away from 1530 Scenic Drive to not be directly affected by its drainage, based on my reading of public materials on this project, I believe that the drainage and hydrology issues have been inadequately addressed in the current plan for the 1530 Scenic Drive project. The large excavations and concrete paving planned will exacerbate these issues.

I suggest that the developers be instructed to return with a more moderate plan that is less destructive to the existing natural surroundings and more in character with the existing neighborhood, and that they be instructed to produce a much more comprehensive and detailed analysis and plan for drainage and hydrology impacts from this proposed project. At this time, I recommend that the variance being requested be denied.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.


Sincerely,

Stephen M. Lichten

From: John Callas
Sent: Monday, January 12, 2026 3:10 PM
To: PublicComment-AutoResponse
Cc: Weaver, Joseph
Subject: Public Comment for Call for Review of HDP #7134

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To whom it may concern:

I write to oppose the Hillside Development Permit (HDP) #7134 at 1530 Scenic Drive for the following reasons:

Unprecedented Scale

In any established neighborhood existing homeowners often object to the size of a new home to be built. But this proposal (HDP #7134) is egregiously excessive in its scale, scope, and impact. At 4280 ft² with a 2685 ft² six-car below grade garage, this home is of unprecedented size, far exceeding anything in the neighborhood.

One of the major purposes of the Hillside Ordinance is to preserve neighborhood scale and character. However, the Board of Zoning Appeals failed to properly apply the provisions of the Hillside Overlay District Ordinance requiring how the size, mass, and scale of the proposed project is compatible with the neighborhood. That the applicant is seeking variances is an obvious red flag when it comes to evaluating such compatibility. But the BZA simply ignored the fact that the proposed house is more than twice the size of homes in this neighborhood where the median is 2045 ft². The garage alone is larger than most of the homes in this neighborhood. A review of city permits for hillside development from the last 5 years shows no proposed build of any house approaching twice the median had been approved.

The city staff report (dated April 16, 2025) grossly mischaracterized this proposed build as a 2-story home with attached garage. It is, in fact, a 3-story, 6965 ft² structure with 4280 ft² on the top 2 floors and 2685 ft² in a six-car garage on the bottom level, a 124-foot concrete driveway with concrete sidewalls, and an 864 ft² pool deck. The build obliterates the natural topography and natural landscape with the excavation of 2413 yd³ of hillside and the destruction and removal of 34 trees (21 of which are native or protected).

Approval of such an excessive build above neighborhood compatibility sets a dangerous precedent for the city and our neighborhood communities, effectively dismantling the protections of the Hillside Ordinance. Every neighborhood will be at risk of mansionization and loss of character from excessive builds approved by a single hearing officer.

Neighborhood Incompatibility

Contrary to the staff report, the design of this house shares no compatibility with the modest homes in the neighborhood. Not only is this proposed build incompatible in terms of its gross size and scale, but its architectural design shares no similarity with any other homes in the neighborhood. The build is a 3-story, flat-roof, solid-masonry surface with no first-floor windows, solid bronze doors and extensive concrete hardscape. No existing home in this neighborhood shares any of these characteristics. Further, the Hillside Ordinance requires a build to follow the sloped terrain (17.29.060 Building Design Standards), not excavate the hillside for a monolithic flat-land structure. No where in this neighborhood is there the extensive hardscape of this design. The 124-foot concrete driveway with high concrete retaining walls has no neighborhood peer. The design shares more similarity with a commercial building you would expect in an industrial park (e.g., flat roof, windowless first floor, metal doors, extensive concrete hardscape and retaining walls.).

In fact, the staff report acknowledges the excessive massing and scale of this design. "The applicant has sought to minimize the **massing** of the proposed residence by recessing it down into existing grade." "...the building is positioned at an acute angle from the street property line which minimizes the **massing** and **perceived height** of the building from the street and adjacent properties." (p.7, emphasis added) If this design was not massive, then why do they need these mitigations? Attempts at masking and optical illusion do not change the fact that this is a massive, incompatible build.

Non-compliance

The Hearing Officer erred in granting the excess square footage beyond the neighborhood median+35%. Such granting requires compliance with all other ordinances as required in the Building Design Standards (see 17.29.060). This proposed build violates the City of Pasadena General Plan and the Hillside Ordinance provisions. It fails on neighborhood compatibility (21.9 Hillside Housing, 22.1 Appropriate Scale and Massing - Discourage Mansionization, 17.29.010 Traditional Scale and Character). It fails to limit hillside excavation (17.29.080 Hillside Development Permit) and tree removal (17.44.090 Tree Retention). The 3-story structure exceeds the 8-foot retaining wall height maximum (14.05.250 Retaining Walls) with basement floor retaining walls/interior walls of 18 feet and more than 8 to 15 foot retaining walls along the driveway. The below-grade garage as an enclosed floor exceeds the first-floor footprint by 833 ft² violating 17.29.060 Building Design Standards D4. For any of these violations, the additional square footage should have been denied.

During the Board of Zoning Appeal (BZA) proceedings on October 23, 2025, the BZA mistakenly referenced an earlier 4113 ft² build proposal for this lot (HDP #5105) as part of

their reasoning for not challenging the Hearing Officer grant of additional square footage. Though that proposal was approved, it was approved with conditions reducing the house size not to exceed 3,357 ft². That approved proposal had a design closer in character with the neighborhood with pitched roofs, laterally attached garage, and tiered foundation that followed the natural terrain minimizing excavation. Thus, the previously approved permit with reduced square footage does not support the BZA reasoning to approve this current HDP #7134 proposal.

Neighborhood Harm

This excessive build will disrupt and change the natural landscape and the character of the neighborhood with the loss of native trees replaced by an uncharacteristic design and concrete hardscape. The excessive build process for such a massive structure will inflict disruptive and disquieting conditions on the residents for months, likely years during the construction process.

The staff report HDP #5105 lists an average slope to the lot of 14.6% (p1) whereas staff report for HDP #7134 lists an average slope of 25.3% (p2). That is a concerning and dramatic change in just 15 years. If correct, there is a dangerous deterioration in the hillside. The fact that this was not addressed by the city raises troubling concerns for neighborhood public safety. The city must investigate and resolve this before any build is considered.

The proposed build is especially close to the house next door at 1550 Scenic Drive, with only 11 feet side setback, putting at risk their foundation and brick masonry during the massive excavation at 1530 Scenic. The 2413 yd³ excavation will remove the supporting hillside and numerous foundation pylons will be driven down into bedrock, risking foundation and wall cracking and subsidence for the home next door.

This removal of thousands of cubic yards of natural landscape, the destruction of so many established trees, and the replacement with thousands of square feet of concrete hardscape will exacerbate rainwater runoff. The homes below on Vista Lane at the terminus of the property's drainage swale will be more vulnerable to more frequent and severe atmospheric river events that will deluge these vulnerable neighborhood properties with destructive flooding. This is especially true for 1529 Vista Lane. The conclusion of the hydrology report for HDP #5105 (BLD2008-01076, Hydrology Calculations, March 13, 2010) states, "...the drainage bottleneck at 1529 Vista Lane will need to be reviewed and resolved...upgrading the downstream outlet conditions thereby eliminating the potential flooding which may occur in the backyard of 1529 Vista Lane during a severe rainstorm." The proposed 24-inch drainage pipe in HDP #7134 for 1530 Scenic Drive terminates at the property line with no mitigation for 1529 Vista Lane. And yet rainstorms have become more frequent and more severe increasing the flooding risks for homes on Vista Lane.

The residents of this neighborhood include many families with young children at home, retirees, and neighbors that work from home. As such, most residents are home during the

workday. It will be nearly unbearable to sit through continuous, daily construction from early morning to after dinner of hammering, chain sawing, chippers, drilling, digging, pounding, truck and equipment engines running, truck backup beeping, among many others. The seismic forces from the heavy construction will propagate throughout the neighborhood over the prolonged construction period as numerous foundation pylons are driven into the bedrock.

Scenic Drive is not a through street. For this proposed build it is estimated that over 100 trucks will be required for tree removal, over 200 dump trucks will be needed for excavated soil removal, and comparable numbers of cement mixers and lumber flatbeds will be required to deliver the construction material. Large truck and heavy equipment activity will block the road for potentially hours cutting off access to homes above the construction site for months, limiting not only resident access and denying them free movement, but limiting access for delivery trucks and US mail, and importantly emergency vehicles and first responders. All of this is exacerbated by the excessive scope of this build.

Acceptance of a New Home

As a neighborhood we recognize the owners' rights to build a home on this vacant lot. We welcome new neighbors. However, we ask that a more appropriate home compatible with the neighborhood character be built. We suggest a home size in the 3400 ft² range as been approved previously for that lot, still very large by neighborhood standards. A smaller design will help reduce the amount of hillside excavation and reduce the construction impacts. We ask that more trees be preserved to stabilize the hillside. This can be accommodated by the smaller house and a relocation of the pool and spa. We also ask that the hardscape design permit the transit of wildlife through the property via unobstructed side setbacks that preserve the wildlife permeability of this natural hillside location in the San Rafael Hills. We further request that construction hours and activity be limited to within 7 AM to 5 PM Monday thru Friday and that only inside work be performed on Saturdays.

With these accommodations, we all get something. The applicant gets a large, beautiful new home. The neighbors welcome a new family into a house more compatible with the natural beauty of the neighborhood environment. The city gets another home to mitigate the housing shortage.

Because of the unprecedented scale, the incompatibility with the neighborhood, the non-compliance with Hillside Ordinances, and the harm to the neighborhood from such an excess build, this proposal should be denied and sent back for redesign to be more compatible with the neighborhood and sensitive to environmental concerns.

Sincerely,
John Callas

Pasadena, CA 91103

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2026 JAN 12 PM 4: 56

SUBJECT: Agenda Item 13 – CALL FOR REVIEW OF THE BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS
DECISION TO APPROVE HILLSIDE DEVELOPMENT PERMIT NO. 7134

January 12, 2026

Dear Mayor Gordo and Members of the City Council.

The purposes of the Hillside Ordinance are many, they include preserving and protecting the hillside environment; insuring the habitability, stability, and value of properties; and preserving and protecting the residents and the wildlife that roam freely through hillside neighborhoods.

Excavation and Grading

The proposed project HDP #7134 for the 1530 Scenic Drive parcel concerns our neighborhood not just because of the size, but the because of the destruction to the hillside and the consequences and risks that may follow. This nearly 8000 square foot design will excavate 2413 cubic yards of soil from the hillside lot. The proposed design will require extensive civil engineering, which is excessive for a 25% slope. After reviewing the public records for the previously approved zoning case, HDP #5105, the average slope was reported to be 14.6%. Fifteen years later, the slope has increased by more than 10%, which is alarming, especially for the type of project proposed for HDP #7134.

I want to be clear that I am not opposed to a house being built on this site, provided that it is consistent with the City of Pasadena General Plan policy 22.1 Discourage mansionization in single-family neighborhoods and follows the provisions of the Hillside Ordinance to minimize alteration of hillside topography and maintain environmental equilibrium. The proposed project, HDP #7134 does not.

Before a single tree is removed from this hillside lot, I want to make sure that the City of Pasadena understands what is about to happen. Once the trees are removed, the stability of this hillside will be compromised. The significant amount of grading will exacerbate the fears of the residents and the safety of our neighborhood.

I have read and re-read the Hillside Ordinance including documents uploaded to the online City permit center to learn and uncover the history of this hillside lot. I have talked with residents of our neighborhood who have lived in this neighborhood more than 25 years, some more than 35 years. Through conversation, I have learned that the previous applicant

encountered major hydrology issues when trying to build on this site previously. Through the online permit center, I found that the Building permit for the previous zoning case was issued on 9/9/11 for a 3357 square foot house. I also found the grading permit issued for 1142 cubic yards on 9/9/11.

Neighborhood Compatibility

When I reviewed the records uploaded to the City of Pasadena's Permit Center and compared them to the Staff's reference to the previous zoning case on the Staff Report for HDP #7134, the noted residence square footage of 4113 square feet house conflicted with the public records I found. Not sure whether the omission was intentional or not, I wanted to find out the approved square footage. Perplexed by the discrepancy, I submitted a Records Request to the City to determine if the approved square footage for the previous zoning case was 4113 square feet or 3357 square feet.

The documents I received from my Records Request for HDP #5105 included the Staff Report, Hearing Officer Decision Letter, Hydrology Report, Preliminary Geotechnical Report, and the Initial Environmental Study, which describes the project site at 1530 Scenic Drive as "an undisturbed vacant hillside lot ...", with average slope of 14.6%.

These documents reveal significant facts about the previous zoning case.

Related to the house size, in 2009, the Staff was concerned with the significant size of the proposed house relative to the Neighborhood Compatibility maximum even though the project met compliance with view protection, ridgeline protection, and proposed FAR. For the previous project HDP #5105, the proposed house size was 4113 square feet, 1432 square feet (53%) over the Neighborhood Compatibility maximum size. For this project HDP #5105, the Staff did not recommend approval as proposed, given its significant size relative to the Neighborhood Compatibility limit even though the size of the lot would warrant some consideration to exceed neighborhood compatibility maximums.

But rather, the Staff recommended that the HDP be approved, **with the condition of approval that the house size, not including the garage or basement, not exceed 3357 square feet.** This crucial fact was omitted from the Staff Reports for HDP #7134, which is misleading to the residents of Pasadena, the Hearing Officer, and the Board of Zoning Appeals.

How does the City in 2025 now say that the proposed house size at 4280 square feet is appropriate for our neighborhood when 4113 square feet was not?

Variance Request

Additionally, HDP # 7134, requests a variance to allow paving across 37.5 % of the front yard area, where a maximum of 30% is allowed.

In 2009, the approval of permit 5105 demonstrated **it was possible** to build on this property without a variance. If the project for HDP #7134 was redesigned, reduced in size, or set back farther, the variance would not be needed.

How does the City in 2025 now say that a variance is needed when in 2009 it was not?

The Municipal Code, Building Code, and the Hillside Ordinance guide the design of a Hillside Development Permit project, not just for the purpose of mathematical compliance to calculations, but compliance to all provisions of the Hillside Ordinance for the preservation and protection of the environment, the safety of the residents and wildlife; the enjoyment and protection of our homes, and to maintain the desirability of our neighborhood.

Regarding the house size, although the review authority may grant excess square footage above the neighborhood maximum when the criteria are met, this is a request not an entitlement. Since a previous zoning case was approved for this parcel, one that grants excess square footage above the neighborhood maximum, it is a model that grants the applicant additional square footage, but one that also respects neighborhood compatibility limits.

Tree Sustainability

Regarding the sustainability of the replacement trees for the Required Landscape Plan, there remains conflicting information when comparing both the previous zoning case HDP #5105 Staff report to the Staff Report for HDP #7134. In a review of Staff Report for project HDP #5105 (Pg. 5), it is noted that two 36-inch box trees will be planted within the front yard setback so that the new trees would be spaced properly to allow room for walkways, building foundations, and other obstructions to allow sufficient room for future root growth and canopy.

For project HDP #7134, the survivability of the three proposed 72-inch box trees in the front yard setback is still in question since this project is requesting a variance for the additional hardscape, 37.5% instead of the allowed 30% which would mean even more hardscape. How will these larger trees survive?

Similar concerns arise for the trees to be planted at the end of the driveway between the house and the driveway pavement as the Preliminary Geotechnical Report indicates the

importance of including paved planters near the house foundation to avoid water seepage. The survivability of these trees over the long term remains in question if the tree root systems will be bound by pavement.

For this project, we are requesting a project redesign, one that minimizes the alteration of hillside topography, maintains environmental equilibrium, ensures safety for the residents of our neighborhood, reviews and plans for the survivability of the replacement trees, and respects neighborhood compatibility. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Sharon Bober

1560 Scenic Drive