



COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
Inter-Departmental Correspondence
Planning and Building



Date: December 7, 2016
Board Meeting Date: December 13, 2016
Special Notice / Hearing: 10-Day Notice/300 Feet
Vote Required: Majority

To: Honorable Board of Supervisors

From: Steve Monowitz, Community Development Director

Subject: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Public hearing to consider an appeal of the Planning Commission's decision to approve a Design Review Permit for the construction of a new 2,132 sq. ft. two-story single-family residence, plus a 474 sq. ft. attached two-car garage on an existing 5,000 sq. ft. legal parcel in Montara. No trees are proposed for removal.

PROPOSAL:

The applicants propose to construct a single-family residence on an existing undeveloped parcel. The project involves grading of 121 cubic yards (c.y.) of balanced cut and fill (242 c.y. total). There are no trees on the property. The site is located within a developed residential neighborhood, with the exception of an adjoining undeveloped lot located to the south of the parcel.

RECOMMENDATION:

Deny the appeal and uphold the decision of the Planning Commission to approve the Design Review Permit, based on the findings and subject to the conditions of approval contained in Attachment A.

SUMMARY:

After several project revisions presented at three meetings, the Coastsides Design Review Committee (CDRC) approved the project on February 11, 2016. On February 25, 2016, Planning staff received an appeal of the CDRC's decision filed by Charles Gerard, the owner of the adjoining parcel to the north.

On September 14, 2016, the Planning Commission, after reviewing the staff report and considering public testimony, found that the project complies with the applicable policies and regulations and denied the appeal of the CDRC's decision to approve the project. On September 26, 2016, the Planning Commission's decision to approve the project was appealed by David Gilbert, the owner of a residence located to the southeast of the subject site. Mr. Gilbert lists the original appellant (Charles Gerard) as well as other neighbors as opposing the project.

The Appellant states the project's First Floor Elevation of 493 feet (reduced from 495 feet) is still too high and would result in a house that is much higher than the height of houses in the immediate area. The Appellant requests the Applicants to further lower the building pad by an additional 3 feet, achieving a 5-foot drop in the elevation of the house from the CDRC-approved floor elevations. The Applicants object to this request because it would increase grading, require a slab foundation, and raise other design concerns such as window placement of the first floor bedroom egress windows at grade.

The Appellant also states that the project does not meet design review standards pertaining to compatibility with the neighborhood context, because the proposed house will have a higher roofline than neighboring homes and will be 34% larger than the average house size in the area. It is not the design of the two-story house that makes the house taller than other houses in the areas, but the natural topography of the site which is at a higher elevation than the adjoining properties. The Applicants have revised the project to lower the existing grade by 2 feet, and propose a house height of 23 feet where 28 feet is allowed. Two-story houses are common in this neighborhood. The current proposal adequately complies with design review standards pertaining to compatibility with neighborhood context, while also balancing compliance with other County requirements that call for minimization of grading and alteration of the natural topography.

Regarding house size, a spreadsheet provided by the Appellants shows sizes of 57 houses in the area, including 25 houses (43.8% of total) over 2,000 sq. ft. in size. Of the total, 7 of the 57 houses (12.2% of total) are 2,500 sq. ft. in size or larger. The Applicants propose a 2,606 sq. ft. house (2,132 sq. ft. house plus 474 sq. ft. garage) which is compatible in size with the neighborhood and where a 2,650 sq. ft. house is allowed.