

June 12, 2014

Marc Homes, LLC  
Attn: Michael J. Lutz, Chief Operating Officer  
8282 White Oak Avenue, Suite 110  
Rancho Cucamonga, CA 91730

**RE: 318 BROCKMONT DRIVE  
VARIANCE CASE NO. PVAR 1400517**

Dear Mr. Lutz:

On April 16, 2014, the Planning Hearing Officer conducted and closed a public hearing, pursuant to the provisions of the Glendale Municipal Code, Title 30, Chapter 30.43, on your application for Standards Variance application to allow a single family dwelling to be re-constructed on a lot with less than 7,500 square feet, to exceed the allowable floor area by 596 square feet, to allow a three story house where two stories is allowed, to allow a less than required driveway length of one-foot three-inches, to have a ten foot wide one-car garage where 12 feet is required (total two parking spaces will be provided), and Setback Variances to allow a street front setback of one-foot three-inches where 15 feet is required and interior setbacks of five-feet and three-feet eight-inches where 10 feet is required, located at **318 Brockmont Drive**, in the "R1R"-Restricted Residential Zone, Floor Area District II, described as Lot 5, Block 6, Tract No. 8280, in the City of Glendale, County of Los Angeles.

CODE REQUIRES

Standards Variance

- 1) Minimum lot area of 7,500 square feet.
- 2) Maximum allowable floor area ratio of 0.4 or 2,352 square feet.
- 3) Maximum of two stories.
- 4) Minimum driveway length of 18 feet.
- 5) Minimum dimension of a one-car garage is 12 feet wide by 20 feet deep.

Setback Variance

- 1) Minimum street front setback of 15 feet.
- 2) Minimum interior setback of 10 feet.

## APPLICANT'S PROPOSAL

### Standards Variance

- 1) To construct a single-family residence on a property with a lot area of 5,880 square feet.
- 2) To allow a floor area of 0.5 or 2,908 square feet.
- 3) To construct a three story house.
- 4) To provide a driveway length of one-foot three inches.
- 5) To construct a garage with a width of 10 feet.

### Setback Variance

- 1) To provide a one-foot three-inch street front setback.
- 2) To provide interior setbacks of five feet and three feet eight inches.

ENVIRONMENTAL RECOMMENDATION: The project is exempt from CEQA review as a Class 3 "New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures" exemption pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15301.

## **REQUIRED/MANDATED FINDINGS**

After thorough consideration of the statements contained in the application, the plans submitted therewith, the report by the Community Development Department staff thereon, and the testimony provided at the public hearing with respect to this application, the Planning Hearing Officer has **DENIED** your application based on the following:

Case No. PVAR 1400517 is a request for eight variances. Each variance is identified within each finding for purposes of clarity.

- A. That the strict application of the provisions of the ordinance would not result in practical difficulties or unnecessary hardship inconsistent with the general purposes and intent of the ordinance.**

To construct a single-family residence on a property with a lot area of 5,880 square feet

The subject lot has 5,880 square feet and is located within the R1R Zone, with utilities and services available to serve a single-family residence. The lot was previously developed with a single family residence that was destroyed by fire. The site retains steps along the eastern property line that provide access to the lower (southern) levels of the property. The site also has an existing one-foot three-inch driveway on the west side of the property directly

adjacent to a fence belonging to the neighbor. There are existing, non-conforming retaining walls on the property that create the lower pad area where there is a swimming pool and the footings for the previous single-family residence. All surrounding residential properties are developed, so there is no option for the property to add land to meet the minimum lot size of 7,500 square feet. The location of the existing steps, retaining walls, lower level pool patio and foundations, driveway and fencing on the western portion of the property create constraints on the location of development for this site. Therefore, the strict application of the minimum lot size provisions of this ordinance would result in a practical difficulty inconsistent with the general purposes and intent of the ordinance because it would prohibit development of a single-family home on a lot zoned for single-family development where a single-family dwelling existed prior to a house fire.

To allow a floor area of 0.5 or 2,908 square feet

The strict application of the provisions of the ordinance would not result in practical difficulties or unnecessary hardship inconsistent with the general purpose and intent of the ordinance because there are no constraints on the site which would prohibit a functional home to be built within the code-required FAR of 0.4. Exceeding FAR on this site would be incompatible with the intent of the City's Hillside Ordinance. When City Council adopted the Hillside Ordinance in 1993 and established FAR for hillside properties in the R1R zone, their intent was to limit massing by relating the size of homes to lot size. While this lot may be smaller than many surrounding it, an FAR of 0.4 would allow for a home with square footage up to 2,352 square feet, which is of comparable square footage with other homes in the area. The applicant provided no information demonstrating that a code-compliant floor area ratio of 0.4 would result in a house that would not be incompatible with the size or FAR in the surrounding neighborhood, nor that a home with up to 2,352 square feet would be of such limited square footage as to be non-functional. In fact, the previous single-family home on this property was under 0.4 FAR.

The applicant argues that the standard for establishing unnecessary hardship is not the existing square footages and pattern of development, but rather the potential for development on surrounding hillside homes. The build-out potential exhibit provided by the applicant is a comparison of "apples to oranges" since build-out potential for hillside property depends as much on individual site characteristics, such as slope and access, as lot area. The same hillside characteristics that restrict development on the subject lot are also applicable to surrounding residences. It is for this reason that new hillside development is subject to hillside development review policies in

Section 30.11.040 of the Zoning Code. Hillside development review policy states that "development shall be compatible with the surrounding neighborhood in terms of size, scale, bulk/mass, roofline orientation, setbacks and site layout." Thus, the provisions of the zoning code relating to FAR provide an important measure for comparing new hillside residential development with the existing neighborhood, not imagined development potential in hillside neighborhoods.

To construct a three-story house

The applicant is requesting to have a three-story house where two stories are permitted by code and where two stories previously existed. The zoning code allows a three-story building when the average current slope within the building footprint is more than 40%. Because the site has already been graded and the applicant proposes to place the new building on the existing building pad, the building will be placed in an area with an average slope well below 40%, and, therefore, the zoning code limits development utilizing the existing building pad to two stories. The applicant states that it was the intent of the code to allow three stories to be built in this location because if the site wasn't previously graded the average current slope would be over 40%. It is the intent of the code to allow a third story on steeper lots in order to allow more design flexibility. However, additional design flexibility does not mean additional floor area. On properties where development is proposed on areas with a slope of 40% or greater, the Zoning Code also limits FAR to a maximum of 0.3 in order to reduce the massing and visual impacts of taller structures on hillsides. However, the fact remains that the site has been previously graded and the developer is proposing to use the existing building pad. The calculation for average current slope is based on existing contour lines and not speculation as to what they may have been prior to creation of the existing building pad. While there may be steeper portions of the site where a building envelope may be over 40% that is not the location where the house is proposed. The intent of allowing the third story is to allow flexibility for dealing with steep topography, not to allow additional height for development on existing building pad areas which are predominantly flat.

As noted by the applicant during his presentation, there are several existing retaining walls on the property which do not comply with current zoning, either for height or location, yet are considered legal, non-conforming. These non-conforming retaining walls support the existing building pad area where the new residence is proposed. Thus, the applicant is receiving a benefit from using the building pad created through past development, whereas such a building pad could not be created under current codes. While the applicant

states that the strict application of the two-story limit would deny him the benefits of hillside provisions which allow additional stories for development on areas of a lot with steeper slopes, the opposite is actually true. The applicant is receiving a benefit from using the existing building pad and non-conforming retaining walls which do not comply with the current code. Were a third story allowed, the applicant would have an undue advantage and benefit in comparison to developed neighboring hillside properties. The developer states that although three stories, the house will not exceed the allowable height of 35 feet. However, this is misleading because the home and pool deck are attached by Zoning Code definition and the height of the structure must be measured from the bottom of the wall supporting the pool deck, adding at least another nine feet to the overall height.

During the hearing it was mentioned that the third story was necessary to accommodate additional living area which could not be accommodated on the lower level and street level of the property. The house design with excessive floor area and the two one-car garage proposed by the applicant is responsible for this constraint, not the dictates of the property; and therefore, the third story is a self-imposed hardship. The applicant is already proposing a one-foot three-inch driveway length and street front setback to accommodate a one-car garage. Were a two-car garage proposed with this setback in the same location (and where such a garage previously existed), then there would be adequate living area on the lower and street levels of the home to accommodate a code-compliant floor area ratio, without the need to build a third story, or alternatively, encroach upon the pool deck or remove the pool. Therefore, the strict application of the provisions of the ordinance limiting the development to two stories would not result in practical difficulties or unnecessary hardship inconsistent with the general purposes and intent of the ordinance.

To provide a driveway length of one-foot three inches and to provide a one-foot three-inch street front setback

The existing driveway has a length of one-foot three inches and the previous house had a one-foot three-inch street front setback. These setbacks reflect the sharp downslope of the property from Brockmont Drive. Following code-required driveway length and street front setbacks on this site would force the living area of the home to be moved further to the south, potentially losing floor area and impacting the privacy of neighboring properties in order to keep

the building footprint on the lower building pad. Several hillside lots in the 300 block of Brockmont Drive have similar short driveways and reduced street front setbacks. Therefore, allowing a new home to also have a one-foot three-inch reduced street front setback and a one-foot three-inch deep driveway would allow use of the property similar to that enjoyed by the previous home and consistent with those enjoyed by several other homes on Brockmont Drive. Brockmont Drive would provide adequate width to allow safe backing which is often a concern with narrow garages and driveways. Therefore, the strict application of provisions of the driveway length and street front setback requirements would result in practical difficulties or unnecessary hardship inconsistent with the general purposes and intent of the ordinance.

To construct a garage with a width of 10 feet

The applicant requests a reduced garage width of 10 feet where 12 feet is required for a one-car garage. The current design proposes to have two one-car garages, one with a one-foot three-inch long driveway and the other with an 18-foot long driveway. One of the garages would meet the code width of 12 feet, and the other would be non-code compliant at 10 feet wide. Previously a two-car garage existed on the property with a one-foot three-inch setback. Thus, there is a trade off between having a code-compliant two-car garage with a variance for a reduced driveway length, and having two one-car garages with one of the garages meeting a code-required 12-foot width and variance for driveway length and the other having a variance for a 10-foot garage width and code-compliant 18-foot driveway length. The Zoning Code requires a 12-foot width for one car garages in order to fit most vehicles and allow for adequate door swing to allow easy access for driver and passengers. A 10-foot garage is narrow and would restrict the ability of a driver to access a car or truck because the garage wall would limit door swing and accessibility. Allowing a reduced width garage increases the likelihood that future residents will not use it to garage vehicles and instead would park on Brockmont Drive, a winding hillside street. Other homes with garages facing Brockmont Drive have two-car garages, so having a code-compliant two-car garage is possible and would fit the prevailing neighborhood pattern. Additionally, having a code-compliant garage will still leave plenty of room in the width of the lot for attractive, functional living space. Therefore, the strict application of the provisions of the ordinance relating to garage width would not result in practical difficulties or unnecessary hardship inconsistent with the general purposes and intent of the ordinance.

To provide an interior setback of three feet eight inches (west side)

The applicant requests an interior setback of three feet eight inches on the west side of the property where interior setbacks of ten feet are required.

Allowing a three-foot eight-inch setback on the west side would minimize landform alteration by allowing construction within the existing footings and would allow the existing driveway to serve as access to a garage in the same location as the one previously existing. While there are design concerns with the western elevation in regards to privacy and massing, the reduced setback would allow for development of the property similar to that enjoyed by the previous home and consistent with reduced setbacks of other homes in the vicinity. Therefore, the strict application of provisions of the interior-setback requirements for the west side of the property would result in practical difficulties or unnecessary hardship inconsistent with the general purposes and intent of the ordinance.

To provide an interior setback of five feet (east side)

The applicant requests an interior setback of five feet on the east side of the property where interior setbacks of ten feet are required. The applicant stated that the new home is to be built directly adjacent to and within the existing footings of the previous structure, which is within five feet of the pool deck. Therefore, the new home and pool deck are attached for purposes of determining building height and setbacks. Comparing the plans submitted by the applicant dated January 14, 2014 with public testimony and photos submitted at the public hearing, the plot plan and lower level site plan reveal inconsistencies. The site plan appears to show that the stairs on the east side of the property provide direct access to the pool deck and lower level habitation. However, this is misleading. Based on the architectural survey of existing conditions, the concrete pool deck on the east side of the property cantilevers over stairs which lead to the lower backyard levels. No cross sections were submitted showing this area and actual setback between the pool deck structure and the eastern property line. Such cantilevered portion of the pool deck structure appears to have a near zero interior setback from the eastern property line, not the five-foot setback requested by the applicant. While removal of the cantilevered portion of the pool deck on the east side of the property could be a condition of approval, such removal was not included in the public hearing notice, nor was preserving a near zero setback on the east side of the property.

Neither the plot plan nor lower level plan shows adequate fire access to the pool deck from the stairs on the east side of the property. The proposed site plan requires modification to accommodate a minimum three-foot wide unobstructed access to the pool deck from the east side stairs. While not shown on the plans submitted, the applicant would need to provide a minimum three-foot clear access from the stairs to the pool deck and an

additional minimum three-foot clear access on the stairwell itself. The purpose behind code required setbacks is to ensure adequate access, particularly fire safety access to a property previously damaged by fire. Therefore, the strict application of the provisions of the ordinance would not result in practical difficulties or unnecessary hardship inconsistent with the general purpose and intent of the ordinance because the requested five-foot setback from the eastern property line does not address the site improvements that will be maintained as implied on the plans and as stated by the applicant, nor does a five-foot setback demonstrate adequate fire access.

- B. There are no exceptional circumstances or conditions applicable to the property involved or to the intended use or development of the property that do not apply generally to other property in the same zone or neighborhood.**

To construct a single-family residence on a property with a lot area of 5,880 square feet

There are exceptional circumstances or conditions applicable to the property involved or to the intended use or development of the property that do not apply generally to other property in the same zone or neighborhood. The subject lot has 5,880 square feet and is located within the R1R Zone, with utilities and services available to serve a single-family residence. Lots in the hillside areas vary in size, and this property does fall below the minimum lot size of 7,500 square feet for new development. Previously this property was developed with a single-family house and the proposal is to use the existing building pad to build a new single-family house. Since neighboring properties are developed, there is no opportunity for this lot to add additional square footage to meet the minimum lot size. Therefore, there are exceptional circumstances or conditions applicable to the property involved or to the intended use or development of the property that do not apply generally to other property in the same zone or neighborhood.

To allow a floor area of 0.5 or 2,908 square feet

The applicant is requesting a floor area ratio of 0.5 or 2,908 square feet where a maximum floor area ratio of 0.4 or 2,352 square feet is permitted by code. This hillside residential lot was previously developed with a single family home that complied with the 0.4 floor area ratio and the applicant is proposing to build on the same building pad. The applicant stated that the exceptional circumstances for this property are that it is on a steep hillside and the lot size is one of the smallest in the neighborhood. Testimony provided by residents attests to the fact that this is an eclectic hillside



neighborhood with a variety of lot sizes, home sizes and floor area ratios. The hillside provisions of the zoning code were enacted to address the site characteristics of hillside development, including specifying allowable floor area ratios to relate the size of residential development to lot size where it is recognized that lot sizes in hillside neighborhoods vary, hence the reason for different floor area ratio districts in hillside areas. Having a hillside property or one of the smaller lots is not an exceptional circumstance or condition because the entire area consists of hillside residential lots and floor area ratios that apply generally to all hillside properties in this R1R neighborhood. This property is not raw land and has an existing building pad where new development is proposed. Having a previously developed lot is not an exceptional circumstance because every lot in this neighborhood was previously developed. It is the intent of the Hillside Ordinance for development on all hillside lots to follow allowable FAR to preserve compatibility with the neighborhood, regardless of the degree of rebuilding.

A small lot size creates design challenges for ensuring compatibility with existing hillside development, but it is not an excuse for excessive square footage or poor design. In looking at the variances in light of the total project, the excess floor area requested is used as a rationale for a separate variance request for an additional story. Using one variance to create the need for another is not an exceptional circumstance or condition. Therefore, there are no exceptional circumstances or conditions applicable to the property involved or to the intended use or development of the property that do not apply generally to other property in the same zone or neighborhood.

#### To construct a three-story house

The zoning code allows a three-story building when the average current slope within the building footprint is more than 40%. Because the site has already been graded and the applicant proposes to place the new building on the existing building pad, the building will be placed on an area with an average slope well below 40%. Therefore, the zoning code limits new development in the area designated by the applicant to two stories. The applicant states that three stories should be allowed to be built in this location because it is an exceptional circumstance that this hillside property has already been graded and a building pad exists. If the property was in its original ungraded form, the applicant states that the average current slope would be over 40% and, therefore, a third story should be allowed. The facts show this property was graded and developed with a single-family home in the 1950s. Similarly, all surrounding lots in the neighborhood have been graded and developed. Any

development on hillside lots in this zone and neighborhood is subject to the same story limitations based on the average current slope in the particular area on the lots chosen for construction. To ignore the fact that this property has been previously graded and that the new development proposes to use the existing building pad created through legal, non-conforming retaining walls and also to add a third story would give this property an additional benefit that other properties in the area do not enjoy. While involuntary destruction of a home may bring opportunities for reconstruction, it does not create an exceptional circumstance to apply zoning rules differently when building in an area with a slope less than 40% on an existing building pad. To allow a third story would benefit this development beyond that enjoyed by existing residences in the neighborhood which are subject to the 40% rule. Additionally, the applicant stated that there is inadequate space on the lower level and street level to accommodate the square footage requested, which exceeds allowable floor area. If the floor area was reduced to a code-compliant square footage, then the existing building pad would be able to accommodate the allowable square footage and there would be no need for the third story. Therefore, there are no exceptional circumstances or conditions applicable to the property involved or to the intended use or development of the property that do not apply generally to other property in the same zone or neighborhood that necessitate a third story where code limits development to two stories.

To construct a garage with a width of 10 feet

The applicant requests a reduced garage width of 10 feet where 12 feet is required for a one-car garage. The current design proposes to have two one-car garages, one with a one-foot three-inch long driveway and the other with an 18-foot long driveway. One of the garages would meet the code width of 12 feet, and the other would be non-code compliant at 10 feet wide. Previously a two-car garage existed on the property with a one-foot three-inch setback. A 10-foot wide garage limits functionality and accessibility for many vehicles because it does not allow for adequate door swing to allow for easy driver and passenger access. When garages are sized inadequately they are not used for vehicle storage and instead vehicles are parked on the street. Given that the previous home had a two-car garage, adequate room exists to construct a code-compliant two-car garage, and those homes on Brockmont Drive with garages have two-car garages, there are no exceptional circumstances or conditions applicable to the property involved or to the intended use or development of the property that do not apply generally to other property in the same zone or neighborhood to support a reduced garage width.

To provide a driveway length of one-foot three inches

There are exceptional circumstances or conditions applicable to the property involved or to the intended use or development of the property that do not apply generally to other property in the same zone or neighborhood that necessitate a reduced driveway length. The previous house had a one-foot three-inch driveway length and a one-foot three-inch street front setback and this development proposes to use these same standards. The proposed driveway length and street front setback are reduced because this property has no land for a driveway due to the steep slope and providing a garage as close as possible to Brockmont Drive minimizes the need to build a structure to support the driveway. By using reduced standards for driveway length and street front setback, the applicant would be able to use the existing building pad and still have room for adequate floor area for living space. Following code-required driveway length and street front setbacks on this site would force the living area of the home to be moved further to the south, potentially losing floor area and impacting the privacy of neighboring properties in order to keep the building footprint on the lower building pad. Other hillside lots on Brockmont Drive have similar short driveways and reduced street front setbacks in order to accommodate topographic constraints. Therefore, allowing a new home to also have a one-foot three-inch reduced street front setback and a one-foot three-inch deep driveway for one- or two-car garages would allow use of the property similarly to that enjoyed by the previous home and would be consistent with those setbacks enjoyed by other hillside homes in the neighborhood.

To provide a one-foot three-inch street front setback

There are exceptional circumstances or conditions applicable to the property involved or to the intended use or development of the property that do not apply generally to other property in the same zone or neighborhood. Previously a two-car garage existed on the property with a one-foot three-inch setback. The current design proposes to have two one-car garages, one with a one-foot three-inch setback and the other with an 18-foot setback. This street front setback matches the previous setback and accommodates the topography by allowing the garage to be placed close to the street and allowing for additional living area to be placed on the street level of the house. Other homes in the immediate vicinity have similar reduced street front setbacks to reflect topography.

To provide an interior setback of three feet eight inches (west side)

There are exceptional circumstances or conditions applicable to the property involved or to the intended use or development of the property that do not apply generally to other property in the same zone or neighborhood. The applicant requests an interior setback of three feet eight inches on the west side of the property where interior setbacks of ten feet are required. Allowing a three-foot eight-inch setback on the west side would minimize landform alteration by allowing construction within the existing footings and would allow the existing driveway to serve as access to a garage in the same location as the one previously existing. While there are design concerns with the western elevation on the street level in regards to privacy (see findings C and D), the reduced interior setback on the western side of the property would allow for development of the property similarly to that enjoyed by the previous home and consistent with reduced interior setbacks of other homes in the vicinity.

To provide an interior setback of five feet (east side)

There are no exceptional circumstances or conditions applicable to the property involved or to the intended use or development of the property that do not apply generally to other property in the same zone or neighborhood that would accommodate a reduced setback that does not meet the fire code. The applicant requests an interior setback of five feet on the east side of the property where interior setbacks of ten feet are required in order to use the existing building pad. As noted in finding A, the new home and pool deck are attached for purposes of determining building height and setbacks. The cantilevered portion of the pool deck structure appears to have a near zero interior setback from the eastern property line, not the five-foot setback requested by the applicant. Neither the plot plan, nor lower level plan, shows adequate fire access to the pool deck from the stairs on the east side of the property. The purpose behind code required setbacks is to ensure adequate site access to the property, particularly fire access.

- C. The granting of the variance will be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to the property or improvements in such zone or neighborhood in which the property is located.**

To construct a single-family residence on a property with a lot area of 5,880 square feet

The subject lot has 5,880 square feet and is located within the R1R Zone, with utilities and services available to serve a single-family residence. The lot

was previously developed with a single family residence. As an infill, hillside lot it is required that the design of the house be consistent with the City's hillside development review policy and with the Hillside Ordinance. Although this is one of the smaller lots in the neighborhood, its size is comparable to other developed single-family lots in hillside areas. The design of this house exceeds allowable FAR and includes a third story which adds height and mass/bulk in excess of that permitted by the code, and the reduced interior setbacks shift that bulk closer to neighboring properties, particularly toward the eastern property line where the third story is proposed. While the application states that a five foot interior setback is requested on the eastern property line, in actuality the setback shown is near zero due to the attached pool deck. From the western property line the requested setback is three feet eight inches, although given that the neighbor has an existing fence and easement at that setback which is not shown on the plans, the effective setback on the western property line is also near zero. The size of the home does not fit this lot because the FAR is too large, the third story is inconsistent with the neighborhood pattern, the overall height shown on the plans does not account for the attached pool deck which makes this new construction well over 35 feet, the plans show inadequate fire access and the proposed five-foot interior setback is shown incorrectly on the plans and may require different variances. Thus, the proposed project to construct a home on a lot with reduced lot area of 5,880 square feet is inconsistent with the intent of the hillside ordinance and the hillside development review policy and will be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to the property or improvements in the surrounding R1R-zoned neighborhood.

To allow a floor area of 0.5 or 2,908 square feet

The granting of the variance will be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to the property or improvements in such zone or neighborhood in which the property is located because exceeding FAR of 0.4 would be incompatible with the intent of the City's Hillside Ordinance. New hillside development is subject to hillside development review policies in Chapter 30.11.040. Hillside development review policy states that "development shall be compatible with the surrounding neighborhood in terms of size, scale, bulk/mass, roofline orientation, setbacks and site layout." When City Council adopted the Hillside Ordinance and established FAR for hillside properties in the R1R zone, their intent was to limit massing by relating the size of homes to lot size. While this lot may be smaller than many surrounding it, an FAR of 0.4 would allow for a home with square footage up to 2,352 square feet, which is of comparable square footage with other homes in the area, whereas

an FAR of 0.5 would allow for a home with greater mass and bulk. If the third story argument provided by the applicant was substantiated and construction was proposed on a portion of the lot with a 40% slope, then it would follow that floor area would also be limited to a FAR of 0.3, as the Code requires in that situation. In addition to requesting the additional FAR, the applicant requests a third story to accommodate this additional square footage. Requiring the new construction comply with the 0.4 FAR would allow a redesign to accommodate code-compliant square footage within two stories, similar to the previous home. Testimony from neighbors stated their concerns that this infill lot project requests setback variances which will place the new home close to other existing residences and, therefore, excessive floor area on this lot will have more impact upon their surrounding properties. Given that this is an infill lot with reduced setbacks, compliance with hillside standards including standards for FAR, is necessary to ensure compatibility with surrounding residential uses.

#### To construct a three-story house

The granting of the variance will be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to the property or improvements in such zone or neighborhood in which the property is located because the third story is out of character with the neighborhood. The applicant proposes to place the new building on the existing building pad in an area with an average slope well below 40%, and, therefore, the zoning code limits development utilizing the existing building pad to two stories. The applicant argues that the third story would be compatible because the overall height would be less than 35 feet. From the street level, only one and a half stories would be visible, similar to other homes in this neighborhood. The applicant provided numerous street view photos of homes in the neighborhood showing one to three stories. However, none of the three story homes were built under current hillside standards. The homes on the south side (downslope) of Brockmont Drive are one and two-story homes which reflect the prevailing character of homes in this established residential neighborhood. The plans submitted by the applicant are misleading in identifying the height of the new home. Since the new house and pool patio are considered attached (see finding A), the height of the building is determined from the lowest point on the retaining wall supporting the patio. While not dimensioned on the plans, the applicant did state that the wall supporting the patio was 9-feet which would mean the proposed three-story house would well exceed 35 feet in height. Were a third story allowed, the applicant would have a building out of character with this existing hillside neighborhood in terms of stories and height.

To provide a driveway length of one-foot three inches

The granting of the variance will not be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to the property or improvements in such zone or neighborhood in which the property is located. The previous residence had a driveway length of one-foot three inches to accommodate a two-car garage. The current design shows a split driveway, with one half having reduced length and the other having a standard 18-foot length. While a one-foot three-inch driveway is short, adequate backup and turning distance is available on Brockmont Drive to allow for ingress and egress to the garage. Photos submitted by the applicant show that many hillside homes in this neighborhood have reduced driveway lengths. Public testimony from neighbors indicates their support for the reduced driveway length and safety and design concerns with the portion of the driveway that has an 18-foot length because of a steep drop off on the western side of the driveway. The presence of the neighbor's fence and easement on the subject property at the proposed western edge of the driveway limits options for constructing a safety barrier to the west of the driveway because that area is under control of the neighbor. This may affect the existing driveway and garage design, potentially reducing the length of the proposed 18-foot long driveway. Since the previous driveway length was one-foot three inches for a two-car garage, a redesign for a similar driveway length would be in keeping with the neighborhood character. Thus, a one-foot three-inch driveway setback would not be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to the property or improvements in such zone or neighborhood in which the property is located whether such driveway serves one-car or two-car garages.

To construct a garage with a width of 10 feet

The applicant requests a reduced garage width of 10 feet where 12 feet is required for a one-car garage. The current design proposes to have two one-car garages, one with a one-foot three-inch long driveway and the other with an 18-foot long driveway. One of the garages would meet the code width of 12 feet, and the other would be non-code compliant at 10 feet wide. Previously a two-car garage existed on the property with a one-foot three-inch setback. When a garage is of inadequate width to allow convenient access for drivers and passengers, the garage will not be used for vehicle storage. Instead, vehicles will park in driveways and on streets. Since this proposal includes a reduced driveway length of one-foot three inches, cars not using the garage will park along Brockmont Drive or park in the 18-foot long driveway and block access to the second garage. Brockmont Drive is a windy, narrow, hillside street located in a known fire area where topography and

street design limit on-street parking. People park on both sides of the flatter sections of Brockmont Drive, such as the portion of street fronting this property, impeding through access. Therefore, the granting of the variance would be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to the property or improvements in such zone or neighborhood because it would result in parking impacts to Brockmont Drive.

To provide a one-foot three-inch street front setback

The granting of the variance will not be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to the property or improvements in such zone or neighborhood in which the property is located because the previous house had the same one-foot three-inch street front setback and other hillside homes in the neighborhood also have reduced street front setbacks. Testimony provided from the applicant and neighbors supports a finding that a reduced street front setback is consistent with the existing building pad design and the character of this hillside neighborhood.

To provide an interior setback of three feet eight inches (west side)

The granting of the variance will be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to the property or improvements in such zone or neighborhood in which the property is located. The plot plan is misleading in that it appears that the three-foot eight-inch setback on the western portion of the property is available to provide separation between the properties and would allow access for construction on the subject site, particularly construction of the eighteen-foot long driveway and garage near the western property line. While the applicant has stated his intention to rebuild in the location where the home was previously located, the three-foot eight-inch setback previously accommodated a two-car garage at a one-foot three-inch street front setback and afforded privacy to the neighbor on the west side. While the current design may use the lower level footprint with a three-foot eight-inch setback, adding the 18-foot long driveway adjacent to the western property line moves the mass of the garage southward, closer to slope and the backyard and living areas of the residence to the west. Additionally, the house design includes a third-story balcony on the southwest portion of the house that overlooks the neighbor's back yard and living areas, raising privacy concerns with this design. Moving the mass of the garage at the street level (second story) toward the rear slope of the property and closer to the neighbors living area and pool patio at a reduced three-foot eight-inch setback and adding a third story balcony overlooking the neighbor's pool and living areas is contrary to the hillside design guidelines which encourage new development to follow the topography and consider privacy.



Testimony from the neighboring homeowner indicates that he has a private use easement on a western portion of the subject property. The neighbor's wooden fence lies on the three-foot eight-inch interior setback line, protecting the neighbor's easement area. The subject property has no access to use this portion of the lot. Although it appears that the proposed building has a three-foot eight-inch interior setback from neighboring property, in actual use the proposed three-foot eight-inch setback would function as a zero interior setback. Plans submitted by the applicant dated January 14, 2014 do not show the neighbor's easement or that the fence is owned by the neighbor, although the three-foot eight-inch interior setback is shown on the plans. While the City does not enforce private easements, the applicant does need to address the easements in his title report through project design and building techniques in order to ensure that a project may be built should it be approved. Thus the granting of the variance will be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to the property or improvements in the neighborhood because the design of the house does not comply with the hillside design guidelines and hillside development review policy and the plans do not show an easement and existing improvements that could be injurious if not addressed.

To provide an interior setback of five feet (east side)

The granting of the variance will be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to the property or improvements in such zone or neighborhood in which the property is located. The applicant requests an interior setback of five feet on the east side of the property. Based on the architectural survey of existing conditions, the concrete pool deck on the east side of the property cantilevers over stairs which lead to the lower backyard levels. Such cantilevered portion of the pool deck structure appears to have a near zero interior setback from the eastern property line, not the five-foot setback requested by the applicant. The plans dated January 14, 2014 do not show adequate fire access to the pool deck from the stairs on the east side of the property. The proposed site plan requires modification to accommodate a minimum three-foot wide unobstructed access to the pool deck from the east side stairs. While not shown on any of the plans submitted, the applicant would need to provide a minimum three-foot clear access from the stairs to the pool deck and an additional minimum three-foot clear access on the stairwell itself. The purpose behind code required setbacks is to ensure adequate site access to the property, particularly fire access to a property that was previously destroyed by fire. The granting of the variance will be

materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to the property or improvements in such zone or neighborhood in which the property is located because the site plan and photos show a near zero interior setback for the attached pool deck while the site plan itself and statements from the applicant identify that the project proposes a five-foot interior setback. Furthermore, a five-foot interior setback is inadequate to provide required fire access to the pool deck/lower living area.

**D. The granting of the variance would be contrary to the objectives of the ordinance.**

To construct a single-family residence on a property with a lot area of 5,880 square feet

The granting of the variance to allow single-family residential development on an R1R lot with a lot area of 5,880 square feet would be contrary to the objectives of the ordinance because the proposed design does not comply with safety codes and is inconsistent with the hillside development review policy. The size of the home does not fit this lot because the FAR is too large, the third story is inconsistent with the neighborhood pattern, the overall height shown on the plans does not account for the attached pool deck that would make this proposed residence over 35 feet tall, and the proposed five-foot interior setback is shown incorrectly on the plans and may require different variances. While the lot was previously developed with a single family residence, the proposed site and architectural design for this lot does not fit into the neighborhood, and therefore does not meet with objective of the ordinance.

To allow a floor area of 0.5 or 2,908 square feet

The granting of the variance would be contrary to the objectives of the ordinance because there are no constraints on the site which would prohibit a functional home to be built within the code-required FAR of 0.4. Exceeding FAR on this site with the design proposed would be incompatible with the intent of the City's Hillside Ordinance and with the hillside development review policy. When City Council adopted the Hillside Ordinance in 1993 and established FAR for hillside properties in the R1R zone, their intent was to limit massing by relating the size of homes to lot size. While this lot may be smaller than many surrounding it, an FAR of 0.4 would allow for a home with square footage up to 2,352 square feet, which is of comparable square

footage with other homes in the area. The applicant provided no information demonstrating that a code-compliant floor area ratio of 0.4 would result in a house that would not be compatible with the size or FAR in the surrounding neighborhood, nor that a home with up to 2,352 square feet would be of such limited square footage as to be non-functional. In fact, the previous single-family home on this property was under 0.4 FAR.

While arguments were put forth that the additional FAR is needed because the lot is small, this additional FAR was also mentioned as being accommodated on the third story, which is also a requested variance. If the FAR was at or under 0.4 FAR, then the square footage could be accommodated within two stories which would be consistent with the predominant neighborhood character of one and two-story homes hillside homes.

The applicant argues that the standard for establishing unnecessary hardship is not the existing square footages and pattern of development, but rather the potential for development on surrounding hillside homes. The build-out potential exhibit provided by the applicant is a comparison of "apples to oranges" since build-out potential for hillside property depends as much on individual site characteristics, such as slope and access, as lot area. The same hillside characteristics that restrict development on the subject lot are also applicable to surrounding residences. It is for this reason that new hillside development is subject to hillside development review policies in Section 30.11.040 of the Zoning Code (see analysis below). Hillside development review policy states that "development shall be compatible with the surrounding neighborhood in terms of size, scale, bulk/mass, roofline orientation, setbacks and site layout." Thus, the provisions of the zoning code relating to FAR provide an important measure for comparing new hillside residential development with the existing neighborhood, not imagined development potential in hillside neighborhoods.

#### To construct a three-story house

The granting of the variance would be contrary to the objectives of the zoning ordinance to limit stories in hillside areas based upon the existing slope where the building is proposed. The zoning code allows a three-story building when the average current slope within the building footprint is more than 40%. Because the site has already been graded and the applicant proposes to place the new building on the existing building pad, the building will be placed on an area with an average slope well below 40%. Therefore, the zoning code limits new development in the area designated by the applicant to two stories.

The applicant states that three stories should be allowed to be built in this location because it is an exceptional circumstance that this hillside property has already been graded and a building pad exists. If the property was in its original ungraded form, the applicant states that the average current slope would be over 40% and, therefore, a third story should be allowed. The facts show this property was graded and developed with a single-family home in the 1950s. Similarly, all surrounding lots in the neighborhood have been graded and developed. Any development on hillside lots in this zone and neighborhood is subject to the same story limitations based on the average current slope in the particular area of the lots chosen for construction. To ignore the fact that this property has been previously graded and that the new development proposes to use the existing building pad created through legal, non-conforming retaining walls by allowing the development to also add a third story would give this property an additional benefit that other properties in the area do not enjoy. While involuntary destruction of a home may bring opportunities for reconstruction, it does not create an exceptional circumstance to apply zoning rules differently when building in an area with a slope less than 40% on an existing building pad. To allow a third story would benefit this development beyond that enjoyed by existing residences in the neighborhood which are subject to the 40% rule.

To provide a driveway length of one-foot three inches

The granting of the variance for a driveway of one-foot three inches would be contrary to the objectives of the zoning ordinance because, while a reduced driveway length may be acceptable with some designs, the setback must be considered as part of the overall site design and architectural design of the project. The third story is out of character with the neighborhood and contributes to excessive floor area given the size of the lot and would necessitate a redesign. The reduced driveway length is not acceptable with this design, because the driveway, like other exceptions the applicant has requested, will be considered in the context of a revised design.

To construct a garage with a width of 10 feet

The granting of the variance for a new 10-foot wide garage would be contrary to the objectives of the zoning ordinance. Previously a two-car garage existed on the property with a one-foot three-inch setback. Since this is a new construction there is room to construct a code-compliant garage within the proposed building area. When a garage is of inadequate width to allow convenient access for drivers and passengers, the garage will not be used for vehicle storage. Instead, vehicles will park in driveways and on streets. Since

this proposal includes a reduced driveway length of one-foot three-inches, cars not using the garage will park along Brockmont Drive or park in the 18-foot long driveway and block access to the second garage. Brockmont Drive is a windy, hillside street located in a known fire area where parked cars may reduce street access.

To provide a one-foot three-inch street front setback

The granting of the variance would be contrary to the objectives of the ordinance because, while a reduced street front setback may be acceptable with some designs, the setback must be considered as part of the overall site design and architectural design of the project. Redesign of the project is necessary to bring the project into compliance with codes and consistency with the City's hillside development policy.

To provide an interior setback of three feet eight inches (west side)

The granting of the variance to provide a three-foot eight-inch interior setback from the western property line would be contrary to the objectives of the ordinance. The plans shows a three-foot eight-inch interior setback for both the lower and street levels of the residence and for the driveway. The lower level pool patio on the west side of the property lies at the same grade as the western neighbor's pool patio. The design of the lower level of the proposed house shows no openings facing the neighboring property to the west at the lower level. Such a design would allow development similar to that of the previous residence, while still maintaining privacy for the neighboring backyard at the lower level. However, the street level proposal for the 18-foot long driveway and 12-foot wide one-car garage at a three-foot eight-inch interior setback is inconsistent with hillside development policy and design review privacy considerations because the second floor massing and third-story balcony would loom over the neighbor's pool patio and living area.

Additionally, as noted in finding C, the site plan is misleading because it appears to show that this setback is under control of the subject property, when testimony from the neighbor, including photos submitted at the hearing by neighbors and the applicant, show that this area is under the control of the neighboring property to the west. Therefore, while the three-foot eight-inch setback from the western property line may be acceptable with a proper design, the submitted plans are not consistent with the hillside development review policy and the granting of this variance would be contrary to the objectives of the ordinance.

To provide an interior setback of five feet (east side)

The granting of the variance to provide an interior setback of five feet on the east side of the property where a setback of 10 feet is required would be contrary to the objectives of the ordinance. Based on the architectural survey of existing conditions, the concrete pool deck on the east side of the property cantilevers over stairs which lead to the lower backyard levels. Such cantilevered portion of the pool deck structure appears to have a near zero interior setback from the eastern property line, not the five-foot setback requested by the applicant. The plans dated January 14, 2014 do not show adequate fire access to the pool deck from the stairs on the east side of the property. While not shown on the plans submitted, the applicant would need to provide a minimum three-foot clear access from the stairs to the pool deck and an additional minimum three-foot clear access on the stairwell itself in order to meet minimum fire safety requirements. The five-foot setback and building design submitted by the applicant does not provide an interior setback that ensures adequate fire safety access to the property, particularly necessary access to the living areas from the lower level pool deck.

Therefore, granting of the variance for a five-foot interior setback from the eastern property line will be contrary to the objectives of the ordinance because plans and photos show a near zero interior setback for the attached pool deck while the submitted plans and statements from the applicant identify that the project proposes a five-foot interior setback. Furthermore, a five-foot interior setback is inadequate to provide required fire access to the lower level living area.

GMC Section 30.11.040A Hillside Development Review Policy

Every discretionary decision made by the City Council, along with City Boards, Commissions and Administrators related to development in the ROS and R1R zones shall take the following into consideration:

- a. Development shall be in keeping with the design objectives in the Glendale Municipal Code, the hillside design guidelines and the landscape guidelines for hillside development as now adopted and as may be amended from time to time by City Council.

The existing neighborhood has a variety of lot sizes, home sizes and floor area ratios, which is typical for hillside neighborhoods. Many of the lots, including the subject lot, were developed prior to the hillside ordinance which was adopted in 1993. There are homes in the neighborhood which have floor area ratios in excess of 0.4; however, it was the specific intent of the hillside ordinance to limit floor area ratio in new development to prevent overly large hillside homes in the future.

Utilizing the existing building pad area for new construction is consistent with hillside design guidelines to limit retaining walls, since the building pad and retaining walls which support it exist. However, the supposition that the height of the new development would have a maximum height of 35 feet, consistent with the code, is incorrect. The new construction and the attached pool deck would form one mass, and the overall height must be measured from the lowest exposed portion of the pool deck. While only a portion of the mass would be visible from Brockmont Drive, the overall height of the construction at well over 40 feet would be visible to neighbors, especially to those living below the development. This would be incompatible with the intent to reduce massing by following topography

There is one three-story home in the neighborhood which was built prior to the Hillside Ordinance; however, the presence of one home with a third story does not make that home consistent with the neighborhood character. The predominant character of this hillside neighborhood is low scale one and two-story homes. Given that the street front setback of this home is less than two feet, the testimony provided by neighbors that a second story rising close to the street would create a corridor effect when viewed in relation to the steep slope on the other side of Brockmont Drive is a valid design concern that is incompatible with both the topography and low scale neighborhood character of existing development.

- b. Development shall be compatible with the surrounding neighborhood in terms of size, scale, bulk/mass, roofline orientation, setbacks, and site layout.

The proposal is not compatible with the neighborhood in terms of size, scale, bulk/mass, roofline orientation, setbacks, and site layout. The new building does not comply with FAR standards for new hillside development which are based on lot size and limit new development in this area to a maximum FAR of 0.4. Homes and lot sizes in this hillside neighborhood are of various sizes and FAR, however, they are all subject to the Hillside Ordinance which was adopted by the City Council in 1993 specifically to stop "mansionization" or overly large homes on small lots in hillside residential neighborhoods. Utilizing the existing building pad results in construction on a portion of the lot with less than a 40% slope, allowing a two story home, not three stories as requested. Where construction is proposed on slopes 40% or greater, the maximum floor area ratio is 0.3, or 1,960 square feet for this lot. This development proposal is inconsistent

with the hillside design guideline direction to relate the building to the existing context because this design exceeds the number of stories on a slope less than 40%. If a third story were permissible (construction on a slope over 40%), then a maximum floor area ratio of 0.3 would apply, not the 0.5 floor area ratio requested. Since the area of development allows for up to two stories, then a 0.4 floor area ratio would be appropriate and that is also below the 0.5 floor area ratio requested. Since floor area ratio is used as an indicator of bulk/mass, the third story and the additional floor area ratio are incompatible with the design objectives of the Hillside Ordinance.

In addition, the applicant did not adequately identify the overall height of the new construction, nor accurately identify the east side interior setback. The overall height is over the 35 feet stated by the applicant, because the proposed new home will be attached to the pool deck, adding approximately 9 feet to the height. Additionally, the pool deck cantilever which was not shown on the plans has a near zero interior setback from the eastern property line. A near zero setback and building height were not advertized, and, therefore, were not considered by the neighborhood during public review.

- c. Site plans shall show preservation of prominent natural features, native vegetation and open space in a manner compatible with the surrounding neighborhood, minimizing alteration of terrain necessary for development.

This proposal utilizes the existing building pad area and preserves the pool deck. The proposal minimizes alteration of terrain necessary for development. The lowest level of the property will remain open space and landscaped as it is.

- d. Site plans for development of property on steep slopes shall take into account the visual impact on surrounding properties.

The site plan for development does not take into account the visual impact on surrounding properties. The third story does not comply with the slope provisions in the zoning code which is intended to address visual impact.

The predominant character of the neighborhood is one and two story homes, which would be consistent with the two stories that code permits for the area where this home is proposed for construction.



A corridor effect is likely to occur on Brockmont Drive as a result of building an additional story above grade on a home with a one-foot three-inch setback on one side of Brockmont and a slope in excess of twenty feet with a residence atop on the opposite side of the street. The predominant visual character of Brockmont Drive is low scale, but the proposed development has the potential to change that character.

Also, the design creates an 18 foot driveway, garage and outdoor balcony on the west side of the property at a three foot eight-inch interior setback. This design places building mass and a balcony overlooking a neighboring back yard pool deck which would have a visual and privacy impact on the neighboring property to the west.

- e. The architectural style and architectural elements of in-fill development shall be compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.

The third story and setbacks are not compatible with the surrounding neighborhood for reasons previously expressed. As an infill development, particularly one on a small lot and with reduced setbacks, compatibility for height, bulk, and access are primary concerns for maintaining neighborhood character. Materials proposed for use are compatible with the surrounding neighborhood; however, the use of rock should be limited to the lower floor and not upper levels of the home.

#### **SUMMARY OF PLANNING HEARING OFFICER'S DECISION**

The Planning Hearing Officer was unable to make all four findings for the seven requested variances. The applicant proposes to build a new home on an infill residential lot, using an existing building pad as a foundation for new development. Non-conforming standards applicable to the previous residence have been lost because the site has been unused for over two years. This new infill residence is subject to current zoning code standards for the R1R zone including hillside development review policy. Some findings support some variances, but the overall design is incompatible with fire safety codes, the site plans do not address hillside development review policies, and the third story and floor area requests are at odds with the character of this hillside neighborhood. There is no justification to approve a third story or an FAR request to exceed the maximum allowable FAR. Taken together in context with the building being over 35 feet, requested setback variances which do not disclose a near zero interior setback, a proposed interior setback that does not meet minimum fire codes, and a minimal garage dimension, the project must be analyzed in its totality. This project falls short of the criteria needed to grant reasonable exceptions and is incompatible with the hillside development review policy and with this hillside neighborhood.

**APPEAL PERIOD, TIME LIMIT, LAPSE OF PRIVILEGES, TIME EXTENSION**

Under the provisions of the Glendale Municipal Code, Title 30, Chapter 30.62, any person affected by the above decision has the right to appeal said decision to the Planning Commission if it is believed that the decision is in error or that procedural errors have occurred, or if there is substantial new evidence which could not have been reasonably presented. It is strongly advised that appeals be filed early during the appeal period and in person so that imperfections/incompleteness may be corrected before the appeal period expires.

Any appeal must be filed on the prescribed forms within fifteen (15) days following the actual date of the decision. Information regarding appeals and appeal forms will be provided by the Permit Services Center (PSC) or the Community Development Department (CDD) upon request and must be filed with the prescribed fee prior to expiration of the 15-day period, on or before **JUNE 27, 2014**, at the Permit Services Center (PSC), 633 East Broadway, Room 101, Monday thru Friday 7:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., or at the Community Development Department (CDD), 633 East Broadway, Room 103, Monday thru Friday 12:00 p.m. to 5 p.m.

**APPEAL FORMS available on-line:**

<http://glendaleca.gov/government/departments/community-development/planning-division/services/how-to-submit-a-planning-application>

To save you time and a trip - please note that some of our FORMS are available on line and may be downloaded. AGENDAS and other NOTICES are also posted on our website.

**NOTICE – subsequent contacts with this office**

The applicant is further advised that all subsequent contact with this office regarding this determination must be with the case planner who acted on this case. This would include clarification and verification of condition compliance and plans or building permit applications, etc., and shall be accomplished **by**

**appointment only**, in order to assure that you receive service with a minimum amount of waiting. You should advise any consultant representing you of this requirement as well.

Sincerely,



Laura Stotler  
Planning Hearing Officer

LS:sm

CC: City Clerk (K.Cruz); Police Dept. (S.Bickle/Z.Avila); City Attorney's Dept. (G. van Muyden/Y.Neukian); Fire Prevention Engineering Section-(D.Nickles); City Engineer and Traffic & Transportation Section (Roubik Golanian/G.Tom); Director of Public Works and General Manager for Glendale Water and Power (S.Zurn); Glendale Water & Power--Water Section (R.Takidin); Glendale Water & Power--Electric Section (M.Kelley/M.Jackson); Parks, Recreation and Community Services Dept. (E.Tatevosian); Neighborhood Services Division (A.Jimenez); Integrated Waste Management Admin. (D.Hartwell); Maintenance Services Section Admin. (D.Hardgrove); Street and Field Services Admin.; Environmental Management (M.Oillataguerra); A.Graham; N.Amirian; J.Freemon; B.Getts-Northwest Glendale Homeowners' Association; P.Keller; J.Kussman; M.Hayes; G.Lemoine; C.&T.Molloy; G. L.Naeve; S.Phillips; C.Weling; D.L. & S.Zachary; and case planner- Brad Collin.