



DESIGN REVIEW BOARD RECORD OF DECISION

Meeting Date January 11, 2018

DRB Case No. PDR 1707199-B

Address 659-669 Atkins Drive

Applicant Ani Abramian

PROPOSAL: The applicant is proposing to construct a new two-story, 2,915 square-foot (SF) single-family residence with an attached, two-car garage on a vacant, 12,450 SF lot hillside lot, zoned R1R (FAR District I) with an average current slope of 63%.

DESIGN REVIEW

Board Member	Motion	Second	Yes	No	Absent	Abstain
Arzoumanian		X	X			
Benlian	X		X			
Charchian				X		
Malekian						
Simonian						X
Totals			2	1		
DRB Decision		Approve with Conditions.				

CONDITIONS:

1. Soften the massing by slightly decreasing the overall size and length of the house and refining the second floor central portion to be less bulky.
2. Redesign and lighten the weighted appearance of geometric canopy form above the front door and garage door, such as by re-introducing the cable railing for the portion in front of the master bedroom, as depicted in the previous proposal.
3. Substitute the proposed avocado and lemon trees with more drought-tolerant, California native trees that are complementary to the contemporary architecture.
4. Provide patterned, horizontally-oriented, true board-formed concrete retaining walls (with vertical joints) along the driveway.

CONSIDERATION:

5. Consider installing trailing vines above the top of the rear retaining wall.

ANALYSIS:

Site Planning: The proposed site planning is appropriate to the site and its surroundings, as modified by any conditions, for the following reasons:

- The site plan remains essentially the same as in the previous proposal, given that the irregular shape and steep slope of the site, as well as the significant number of protected trees around the perimeter of the lot, influence and impact the site plan and placement of the house, driveway and attached garage. The elongated building footprint is somewhat angled to mimic the contour of the sloped topography.
- The required impact and retaining walls along the rear elevation of the house and along the front driveway have not changed, though the previously proposed vertical finish has been substituted with a horizontal poured concrete finish to better respond to the hillside topography.
- The current proposal maintains all existing protected trees on-site, including Tree #14 along the northerly interior property line (previously slated for removal in the original submittal), though pruning might be required for certain trees close to the residence and retaining walls.
- The submitted landscape plan has been updated with additional vines, trees and shrubs to cover and soften the retaining walls, as required by the DRB conditions. Climbing and trailing vines are now proposed at the bottom and top of the front retaining wall adjacent to the driveway and house. Meanwhile, the rear patio deck behind the house has been redesigned to be primarily landscape. Trailing vines should be added at the top of the rear retaining wall. Also, avocado and lemon trees are proposed in the updated landscape plan; such trees are not considered drought-tolerant and should be replaced with California native trees that are complementary to the contemporary architecture.

Mass and Scale: The proposed mass and scale are appropriate to the site and its surroundings, as modified by any conditions, for the following reasons:

- The two-story, 2,915 SF proposal (reduced from 2,985 SF in the previous submittal) will be larger in size than the neighborhood survey average, yet the proposed FAR of 0.23 (down from 0.24) is below the neighborhood average of 0.30. The new proposed square footage and FAR is within the range of homes within the surveyed area. While not the largest house in survey, the overall building size located atop the cut front slope of the site affects the streetscape along Atkins Drive at this location. Most of the neighboring houses on the same side of Atkins Drive are built into the hillside with street level garages, constructed between the 1940s and the 1980s under prior zoning standards, and are currently legal non-conforming in terms of front setbacks and driveway lengths. The proposed house complies with today's zoning code standards, but does not fully relate to the surrounding context.
- The overall height of the house remains at 32 feet, which is the maximum height in the R1R for flat roofed residences (overall height includes portions of the driveway retaining wall below). The roofline of the structure has been modified and the second floor portion above the garage lowered, in response to the Board's condition. This staggering and change in parapet level/height helps the design to better express the topography of the site.
- On the east-west axis (from front elevation to rear elevation), the residence and retaining wall are staggered to follow the cut up-slope of the lot. In the current proposal, the previous two-story atrium has been eliminated and the wall on the second floor pulled back to not be vertically stacked with the wall below. This modification, along with the lowering of area above the garage, helps the massing of the building to better conform to the Hillside Design Guidelines.

Building Design and Detailing: The proposed building design and detailing are appropriate to the site, as modified by any conditions, and its surroundings for the following reasons:

- The proposed residence remains contemporary in style, with the same articulated facades, flat roof forms, and walls clad with horizontal siding, stucco and concrete tile, except for minor modifications to the roof parapet on the north above the garage, the central stairwell portion on the second floor and the fenestration for the upper hallway.

- The previous geometric canopy of the roof parapet across the front façade has been modified and the central stairwell portion has been streamlined. The boxy, minimal design of this stucco piece seems chunky in comparison to the horizontality of the rest of the front façade, and its treatment should be reconsidered, along with the weightier appearance of the first floor canopy element atop the front entry and garage door.
- The overall horizontal emphasis and clean lines of the proposed contemporary style are appropriate for the hillside lot and fit within the surrounding neighborhood that features an eclectic mix of architectural styles.
- The proposed high-quality materials and finishes are complementary to the chosen contemporary architectural style and the earth-toned color palette is appropriate to the hillside location.
- The gutters and downspouts are identified on the roof plan as being internal leaders, and the trash area and AC units are appropriately screened from view.

The Design Review Board approves the design of projects only. Approval of a project by the Design Review Board does not constitute an approval of compliance with the Zoning Code and/or Building Code requirements.

If an appeal is not filed within the 15-day appeal period of the Design Review Board decision, plans may be submitted for Building and Safety Division plan check. **Prior** to Building and Safety Division plan check submittal, Design Review Board approved plans must be stamped approved by Design Review Board staff. **Any** changes to the approved plans may constitute returning to the Design Review Board for approval. **Prior** to Building and Safety Division plan check submittal, **all** changes in substantial conformance with approved plans by the Design Review Board must be on file with the Planning Division.

Please make an appointment with the case planner for DRB stamp/sign-off prior to submitting for Building plan check.

DRB Staff Member Vilia Zemaitaitis, AICP