



DESIGN REVIEW BOARD RECORD OF DECISION

Meeting Date October 14, 2021 **DRB Case No.** PDR2100167

Address 2745 Kennington Drive

Applicant Benny Arias

Project Summary:

To construct a 3,020 sf, three-story single-family residence with an attached 791 SF, two-car attached garage on an undeveloped 10,307 SF hillside uphill lot. The subject site has an average current slope of 74.1%, and 64.1% average current slope at the building footprint location. The project proposes to grade approximately 1,657 cubic yards cut and export 1,657 cubic yards of earth in conjunction with the project, while 63% (6,451 SF) of the lot will remain ungraded. The new house will provide 1,483 SF of livable space on the main/second floor and 1,246 SF of livable space on the upper/third level, and a roof deck.

The project will also include the construction of retaining walls directly in front of the house, adjacent to the driveway, and three successive retaining walls behind the house with landscape and an orchard planted between the walls.

Design Review:

Board Member	Motion	Second	Yes	No	Absent	Abstain
Minas					X	
Simonian					X	
Smith		X	X			
Tchaghayan	X		X			
Welch			X			
Totals			3	0	2	
DRB Decision	Approved with Conditions					

Conditions:

1. Eliminate retaining walls at the rear and in front of the house to the extent possible, while still in compliance with Building Code requirements. This includes eliminating

the use of multiple retaining walls to create a fruit orchard, and minimizing/eliminating successive retaining walls along the pedestrian walkway, and within close proximity of the street when natural grading can be applied. Every method available to disguise or obscure visibility of the walls including but not limited to height, vegetation, material, and color, should be used.

2. Redesign and enhance the entry doorway to be at the center spine of the building and more of a focal point. Eliminate the extra stair run and in its place consider extending the deck around the corner.
3. Reorient the lower portion of the entry stairs towards the driveway in order to extend a landscaped area in front of the stairs and provide a more natural/ungraded appearance from the street.
4. Reduce excessive paving at the front by narrowing the driveway entry as much as possible while not conflicting with the Zoning Code. Add a minimum one-foot planting strip at the base of the retaining wall on the right side of the driveway to allow vegetation to grow and screen the retaining wall.
5. Planter boxes should be less of a barrier separating the walkway and driveway.
6. Revise the plant palette, and propose all California Friendly, drought tolerant landscaping appropriate to a hillside lot.
7. Use higher quality material for the windows such as fiberglass.
8. Lighting on the steps should be lit from the side, and directed downwards toward the interior of the steps.
9. Paint color palette should be darker and earth-toned.

Determination of Compatibility: Site Planning

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

- The attached garage at the front is consistent with the neighborhood pattern, and is accessible from a 37'-7" long/deep by 16'-2" wide driveway. The driveway features permeable pavers with turf stone, which is appropriate.
- The project features several retaining walls at the front and rear of the house constructed with board formed concrete (see proposed retaining walls on sheet A1.0 & A1.1). As conditioned, the retaining walls at the rear and in front of the house shall be eliminated, unless required to comply with Building Code requirements. This includes the use of multiple retaining walls for the purpose of creating a fruit orchard. Similarly, the successive retaining walls along the pedestrian walkway shall be eliminated and/or minimized. Additionally, at the front yard, the retaining walls should be eliminated within close proximity of the street if natural grading can be applied. Every method available to disguise or obscure visibility of the walls including but not limited to height, vegetation, material, and color, should be used.
- As conditioned, the lower portion of the entry stairs will be reoriented towards the driveway in order to extend a landscaped area in front of the stairs and to provide a more natural/ungraded appearance from the street, while planter boxes will be redesigned to be less of a barrier separating the walkway and driveway, and excessive paving at the front will be reduced by narrowing the driveway entry as much as possible while not conflicting with the Zoning Code. A minimum one-foot planting strip will be

added at the base of the retaining wall on the right side of the driveway to allow vegetation to grow and screen the retaining wall.

- The building's location considers the site's topography and its profile reflects the topography and uphill slope condition, and takes into account the visual impact on surrounding properties.
- The project proposes 76% landscaping for the entire site. The landscape palette (sheet L-3) features a variety of fruit trees and other species some of which are not "California-friendly", nor drought tolerant. The proposed "orchards" (fruit trees) at the rear of the house are not appropriate for hillside development. As conditioned, the plant palette must be revised to include "California-friendly", drought tolerant landscaping appropriate to a hillside lot.

Determination of Compatibility: Mass and Scale

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

- The project is consistent with the Comprehensive and Hillside Design Guidelines because it fits well with the surrounding building fabric. The new three-story house relates to the surrounding context since the majority of the homes in the neighborhood are three stories. The homes across the street located on down-hill slope properties are three levels with the garage located at street level and the main living areas are beneath it. The lots directly adjacent to the subject are undeveloped.
- The home's building form and profile follow existing topography, its mass and scale appropriately transitions into the existing context. The new home appropriately relates to the predominant neighborhood pattern or massing configuration, and its design and use of materials assist in diminishing its size and scale, especially when viewed from the street.
- The contemporary design of the new home appropriately articulates mass and scale through its use of design and details. The architectural concept is consistent along all elevations, which is paramount given that the building will be visible at the front and sides. The contemporary design includes vertical and horizontal architectural elements with a varied palette of materials, and thoughtful window pattern to help enliven the building's appearance.
- Similar to other homes in the area on up-hill slopes, the new home is appropriately designed with three levels consisting of an attached garage at street level and living areas on the two upper floors with an overall building height of 32 feet, which is the maximum allowed by the Zoning Code. The building is designed to be nestled into the hillside, appropriately reducing potentially overwhelming building mass at the street front and the sides. The site's hillside setting and staggered building forms help to reduce the home's perceived mass from the street. Overall, the proposed development is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood in terms of mass and scale.
- The project proposes a flat roof with variations in height, which is consistent and appropriate to and reinforces the contemporary style of the house and is consistent with the neighborhood. The flat roof lends itself to a roof deck accessible from an interior stair case.

Determination of Compatibility: Design and Detailing

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

- The development features a contemporary design that employs a variety of geometric volumes and mix of materials for architectural effect. The project is stylistically consistent on all four elevations, recognizing that the front and side elevations will be visible from the street. Overall, the building's design, is appropriate to the site and the neighborhood, and employs a well-crafted design with high quality materials.
- The proposed materials include a variety of finishes: board-formed concrete, hardie vertical siding, smooth-finish stucco, glass railings, and dark color window frames. The materials reinforce the overall contemporary building design. As conditioned, using a darker earth-toned color palette would be appropriate as well as the proposed board-formed concrete (natural color), and brown color siding appropriately enhances the design and blend with the hillside and neutral colors of other homes in the neighborhood. The project features turf stone permeable paving material, which is appropriate to the site and the neighborhood.
- As conditioned, the entry doorway is to be redesigned and enhanced to be at the center spine of the building in order to create an appropriate focal point entry, and the extra stair run will be eliminated and in its place, consider extending the deck around the corner.
- The design of the house includes multiple balconies on the second and third floors of the residence, and a roof deck. Given the location of the house, topography, and vacant parcels to the north, east, and west, the roof deck and balconies will not pose privacy issues. The balconies located at the front façade overlook homes across the street, but should not pose privacy concerns since the new home is significantly setback from the street, and the considered homes are on downhill slope lots.
- The project proposes vinyl windows, sliding operation, recessed within the opening. The window style and operation are appropriate to the house and design. However, a condition is included to use higher quality material for the windows such as fiberglass.
- A modern design light sconce is proposed with a dark colored aluminum and concrete material, which appropriately complements the house. As conditioned, lighting on the steps must be lit from the side, and directed downwards toward the interior of the steps.

DRB Staff Member Milca Toledo, Senior Planner

Notes:

Contact the case planner for an appointment for a DRB stamp. DRB stamps will not be stamped over the counter without an appointment with the case planner.

The Design Review Board approves the design of project 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 approved for Building Division plan check. Prior to Building Division plan check submittal, Design Review Board approved plans must be stamped approved by the Design Review staff.

Any changes to the approved plans may constitute returning to the Design Review Board for approval. Prior to Building 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.