



CITY OF GLENDALE, CALIFORNIA

Community Development
Planning

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July 17, 2024

Jeanna Ruby
2706 Artesia Boulevard, Suite D
Redondo Beach, CA 90277

**RE: 519 VALENTINE DRIVE
SETBACK & STANDARDS VARIANCE CASE NO. PVAR 2119057**

Dear Jeanna Ruby:

On June 5, 2024, the Planning Hearing Officer conducted and closed a public hearing, pursuant to the provisions of the Glendale Municipal Code, Title 30, Section 30.43, requesting a Setback and Standards Variance to construct a new 2,963 square-foot (SF), three-story, single-family residence with an attached two-car garage with reduced street front setback [eight-feet, two-inches (8'-2"), whereas fifteen (15) feet is required], reduced driveway length [eight-foot, two-inch (8'-2"), whereas eighteen (18) feet is required], building height exceeding Zoning Code maximums [fifty-two (52) feet requested/forty-seven (47) feet approved, whereas the building height maximum is thirty-two (32) feet is required] and retaining wall heights within the required street front setback exceeding Zoning Code maximum [thirteen-feet (13), whereas five (5) feet is the maximum) on a vacant 10,967 SF double frontage hillside lot, located at **519 Valentine Street**, in the "R1R-II" - (Restricted Residential, Floor Area Ratio District II) Zone, described as Lot 29 Tract No. 4881/ 5630-011-027, in the City of Glendale, County of Los Angeles.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION

This project is categorically exempt from environmental review as a Class 3 "New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures" per Section 15303(a) of the State CEQA Guidelines because the project involves construction of one single-family residence.

After considering the evidence presented with respect to this application, the plans submitted therewith, the Community Development Department has **APPROVED WITH CONDITIONS** the variance request, based on the following findings:

REQUIRED / MANDATED FINDINGS

- A. That strict application of the provisions of any such ordinance would result in practical difficulties or unnecessary hardship inconsistent with the general purposes and intent of the ordinance;**

The strict application of the provisions of any such ordinance would result in practical difficulties or unnecessary hardship inconsistent with the general purposes and intent of the ordinance because the intents of the various regulations are being met and the project strikes a balance between meeting the R1R development standards and compliance with the Hillside Design Guidelines.

Intents of the R1R zone include preserving valuable open space, physical features and scenic resources while permitting substantial and reasonable beneficial use of such property. Minimum street-front setback standards ensure separation and open space/landscaping between residences and the public right-of-way. Compliance with the required minimum 15-ft. street-front setback would require the residence to project further from the natural slope of the site, increasing its mass, and would result in an overall increase in the height of the house. The Hillside Design Guidelines recommends new houses reflect the topography and slope of the site and encourages building into the hillside to lessen the visual impact of mass and scale of the residence. Requiring the minimum street-front setback of the proposed residence would make it less compliant with these Guidelines. It would also necessitate more grading and lessen the amount of ungraded open space on the site. The Hillside Design Guidelines state that in addition to Code requirements, prevailing building setbacks on the street shall be considered. While Valentine Drive is sparsely developed, the house immediately south of the subject site has a similar street-front setback as the residence currently proposed. Development east on Rohr Street and in the surrounding neighborhood where lot topography is similar to the subject site also typically include shallower setbacks. Approval of a reduced street-front setback will allow for reasonable development of the site in a manner that is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood and consistent with the Hillside Design Guidelines.

The intent of the minimum driveway depth requirement is to ensure that cars will not encroach onto the street, creating a safety hazard. The proposed approximately 8-ft. driveway length precludes temporary parking without encroaching into the public right-of-way. Valentine Drive is a local street with light traffic, given its location, and no sidewalks or parking restrictions. The size of the proposed residence requires two covered and enclosed parking spaces. An attached garage, well excess of the minimum two-car garage size standards, is proposed. To address concerns related to the reduced driveway depth, as conditioned, internal changes to the residence are required such that the currently proposed oversized two-car garage becomes a standard three car garage. Providing a longer driveway would increase the amount of on-site grading and height of the house (because it would need to be sited further west on the site). Given street and garage characteristics and the City's desire through the Hillside Design Guidelines to minimize grading and mass/bulk of homes in the hills (which a longer driveway would exacerbate), requiring a code-compliant driveway length would be practically difficult and an unnecessary hardship.

The intent of the maximum building height requirement is to assist addressing mass, bulk and scale concerns. The overall height of the proposed house is approximately 50 feet. However, the residence, as it will appear from Valentine Drive, is only one story. Along Rohr Street, the house will appear as three stories, as well as an

“understory”, given the topography of the site and requirements that this “understory” be enclosed for fire safety purposes. The proposed residence will be located approximately 100 feet from Rohr Street and, as proposed conditions of approval, will require landscaping against the western base of the house as well as eliminating the western planter and that portion of the house below the lowest balcony. These conditions will reduce the real and perceived height of the residence to approximately 47 feet. While the proposed residence is wide adjacent to the street, it is relative shallow – the living areas are at most 25 feet in depth. This design (along with the proposed flat roof) helps to diminish the overall height of the proposed residence. It will also minimize the amount of grading required for construction of the residence. The narrow depth of the proposed house also reduces its massing impact for the existing residence to the immediate south.

The intent of restricting retaining wall height in the front yard is to provide open streetscapes and reduce overall grading. The subject site slopes down from Valentine Drive to Rohr Street. Retaining walls within the street-front setback adjacent to Valentine Drive are used to support the driveway leading to the attached garage and provide a landscape yard roughly at the same elevation as the front door. Because of the site topography and landscaping that will be required in this area, the proposed retaining walls will not be readily visible from Valentine Drive and the streetscape will be open. Given the downslope topography, grading will increase to support the driveway and front yard. To minimize grading, a condition of approval has been added to the project to eliminate all street-front retaining walls with the exception of those that support the driveway and walkway leading from the driveway to the front door. However, overall only the eastern 25% of the subject site will be graded to enable construction of the house as well as the driveway/yard; the western approximately 75% of the site will not be graded.

B. 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.

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 because the frontage of the subject site along Valentine Drive contains an “S” shaped curvature and the site characteristics of many R1R-developed lots. The S-shaped curvature of the frontage is a unique feature for lots in this area and distorts the street-front setback area. If the proposed residence was required to provide the minimum street-front setback or driveway length, other areas of the front façade would be in excess of the setback standard. Re-siting the house further west (to gain compliance with street-front setback and driveway length standards) would increase grading and decrease the amount of ungraded open space on the site. It would also likely result in a taller house. Related to the retaining wall variance, while sloping lots are not an exceptional circumstance in this zone or this particular neighborhood, there are many R1R-zoned areas of the City that were mass graded or terraced to allow for single-family homes. Development of these graded/terraced sites do not typically require the use of retaining walls to gain typical residential access to the

garages/front entrances of these houses. While acknowledging the conditions of approval to eliminate most of the proposed street-front retaining walls, the City's restrictions on these walls in the present case are at odds with some of the goals of the Hillside Design Guidelines. Given the topography of the lot, reducing street-front setback, driveway length, building height and retaining walls strikes a balance between providing a generous front yard and additional site grading and an increase in mass and bulk that would otherwise result.

C. 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 granting of the variances for street-front setback, driveway length, building height and retaining walls 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 requested deviations meet the intent of their respective regulations and the project is developed in similar fashion to other homes in the area. The subject site and the surrounding area are zoned R1R, a hillside single-family zone. The proposed project is a single-family house. The intent of the minimum 15-foot street-front setback requirement is to maintain an attractive neighborhood with consistent streetscape and rhythm. While Valentine Drive is sparsely developed, houses in the neighborhood with comparable topography are developed in a similar manner. The reduced street-front setback of these homes has not proven detrimental to the neighborhood and has allowed development consistent with the Hillside Design Guidelines. The intent of the minimum driveway length requirement is to ensure cars will not encroach into the street right-of-way, creating a safety hazard. The reduced driveway depth is consistent with many other existing residences in the surrounding neighborhood and has not proven detrimental in the past from a safety standpoint. No parking restrictions exist on this portion of Valentine Drive, which has little traffic and development, and vehicles can park on the street. The proposed garage, as conditioned, can accommodate three car parking, which is one space more than this size house requires. The intent of maximum building height standards is to legislate mass/bulk concerns of hillside single-family homes. The increased building height will not be visible from Valentine Drive, as the residence appears as one story from this street. The shallow depth of the residence will reduce the impact of building height for residents of the existing house south of the project. The 100-foot setback between Rohr Street and the proposed house will lessen the appearance of mass from the west. To further reduce impacts, conditions of approval will require that landscape plans for the project include trees and other landscaping of varying heights planted at the house's western base and the elimination of the western planter and that portion of the house below the lowest balcony. The increase in allowable retaining wall height is due to supporting the proposed driveway. These walls are not readily visible from the front of the house. In addition and as conditioned, these retaining walls will be limited to those needed to support the driveway and walkway leading to the front door. Viewing the house from the sides, the proposed retaining walls will be masked with required landscaping. The proposed house is developed in a similar manner to the existing residence next door.

D. The granting of the variance will not be contrary to the objectives of the ordinance.

The granting of the variance will not be contrary to the objectives of the ordinance because the project is the construction of a single-family house, is developed in a manner similar to other houses in the surrounding neighborhood, contains a three-car garage, is designed in shallow form and the front yard will remain open. The objective of the Zoning Code is to designate, regulate and restrict the locations and uses of buildings to protect them from harmful encroachment by incompatible uses. The variance request is associated with the development of a single family home in a residentially-zoned areas and, therefore, is consistent with the Zoning Code's overall objective. Street-front setback requirement objectives ensure the maintenance of an attractive rhythm and streetscape and provide landscaped open space along streets. The project achieves these objectives since the space between the proposed residence and the street is similar to the adjacent house as well as other houses in the surrounding area on sites with similar topographical constraints. The objective of the driveway length regulations is to ensure sufficient temporary off-street parking and lessen traffic congestion and safety fears on public streets. Valentine Drive is a local street with little traffic. Parking on the street is permitted and should not result in undue traffic congestion and safety concerns. As conditioned, the garage will accommodate three cars, one space in excess of that which is required. The object of building height standards is to assist in reducing the appearance of mass and bulk. The house appears as one story at the Valentine Drive elevation. The shallow design of the residence will mitigate the mass of the house by the neighbor to the south. The approximately 100-foot setback of the proposed residence from Rohr Street, along with the conditions of approval to require landscaping at the western base of the residence and eliminate the western planter and portion of house below the lowest balcony will lessen the appearance of mass for the neighborhood to the west of it. The objective of the retaining wall height standards is to maintain an open streetscape and reduce overall grading. Proposed retaining walls will support the driveway and walkway leading to the front door and will be located at a lower level than the street. This arrangement will maintain the open streetscape desired and is similar to the development of the house next door. Grading will be minimized and is largely contained underneath the driveway between it and the existing grade of the lot, and, therefore, not readily visible.

E. HILLSIDE DEVELOPMENT REVIEW

Pursuant to GMC Section 30.11.040, 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 proposed home and landscape plans will require the approval of the Design Review Board to ensure compatibility with the surrounding

neighborhood. Design Review Board approval is required prior to issuance of a building permit for the residence.

- The proposed residence follows the topography of the site.

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

- The proposed residence will be approximately 2,900 square feet in area with one floor visible from Valentine Drive and three levels visible from Rohr Street. This size and site layout is similar to other homes in the nearby neighborhood.
- The proposed flat roof is consistent with the contemporary design of the residence
- The interior setbacks comply with the R1R standards and the street-front setback (of which a variance is requested) is consistent with nearby development.
- The floor area of the proposed building complies with the zoning code and floor area ratio for the project site.

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

- The terrain of only approximately the eastern most 25% of the subject site will be modified as a result of the project.
- The long, shallow shape of the proposed residence will minimize grading and terrain alteration.
- The City's Landscape Guidelines emphasize drought-tolerant and native plants. Landscape plans for the proposed residence will be reviewed by the Design Review Board against the Landscape Guidelines.

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

- The house is designed such that it appears as one level from Valentine Drive, a similar condition to the house on this street as well as the surrounding neighborhood.
- The house is wide adjacent to the street but not deep to minimize terrain alteration and alleviate its visual impact on the adjacent house to the south.

E. The architectural style and architectural elements of infill development shall be compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.

- There is only one other house on Valentine Drive, a Spanish Revival style home. Homes in the surrounding area vary in style. The proposed residence is contemporary and will be compatible with the neighborhood.
- The Design Review Board will analyze the design and detailing of the proposed residence to ensure it is internally consistent and complementary to the surrounding development.

CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL

APPROVAL of the Setback and Standards Variance shall be subject to the following conditions:

- 1) That the development shall be in substantial accord with the plans submitted with the application and presented at the hearing except for any modifications as may be required to meet specific Code Standards or other conditions stipulated herein to the satisfaction of the Planning Hearing Officer.
- 2) That all necessary permits (i.e., building, fire, engineering, grading, etc.) shall be obtained from the Building and Safety Division and all construction shall be in compliance with the Glendale Building Code and all other applicable regulations.
- 3) That the premises shall be made available and accessible to any authorized City personnel (Building, Fire, Police, Neighborhood Services, Planning, etc.), for inspection to ascertain that all conditions of approval of this variance are complied with.
- 4) That additional or other building code requirements or specific code requirements (i.e. CA Green Building Code, etc.) will be required upon submittal of plans for building plans check and permit.
- 5) That Design Review approval shall be obtained prior to the issuance of a building permit.
- 6) That if any buildings, sidewalks curb or gutter, fencing or landscape areas, etc. adjacent to the site are damaged during the course of construction on the public or private property, the damage shall be repaired to the satisfaction of the Planning Hearing Officer for private property and the Director of Public Works for the public property.
- 7) That any proposed exterior lighting shall be directed onto the driveways, walkways and parking areas within the development and away from adjacent properties and the public right-of-way to the satisfaction of the Planning Hearing Officer.
- 8) That the maximum overall height for the building shall not exceed forty-seven (47) feet measured from the lowest point of the building to the highest point of the roof or parapet wall.
- 9) That the design of the proposed residence shall be amended to eliminate the planter adjacent to the western portion of the residence as well as the area of the house below the lowest proposed balcony.
- 10) That the design of the proposed residence be amended to eliminate all retaining walls within the street-front setback with the exception of those needed to support the driveway and walkway leading from the driveway to the front door of the residence.
- 11) That the internal design of the proposed residence be amended such that a standard third car garage space is created. This space shall provide a minimum depth of 20 feet.
- 12) Landscaping of varying heights shall be proposed at the western base of the proposed residence as well as adjacent to the driveway retaining walls. Landscape plans shall be reviewed and approved by the Design Review Board.

- 13) That the development shall comply with the conditions of approval as specified in the Glendale Water and Power conditions, dated August 8, 2023.
- 14) That the development shall comply with the conditions of approval as specified in the Glendale Fire Department conditions, dated August 17, 2023.
- 15) That the development shall comply with the conditions of approval as specified in the Glendale Community Services and Parks Department conditions, dated August 7, 2023.
- 16) That the development shall comply with the conditions of approval as specified in the Building and Safety conditions, dated September 17, 2023.
- 17) That the development shall comply with the conditions of approval as specified in the Public Works – Land Development Section comments dated June 5, 2024.

APPEAL PERIOD

The applicant's attention is called to the fact that this grant is not a permit or license and that any permits and licenses required by law must be obtained from the proper City and public agency.

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.

All appeals must be filed using the City's online permit portal: www.glendaleca.gov/Permits. Create an account, click "Apply," select, "Skip Application Guidance...", then type "appeal" in the search bar, and apply for "Appeal of Planning Decision." Any appeal must be filed within fifteen (15) days following the actual date of the decision with the prescribed fee prior to the expiration of the 15-day appeal period, on or before August 1, 2024. Information regarding appeals and appeals and fees may be obtained by calling the Community Development Department staff at 818-548-2140, or contacting the case planner, Roger Kiesel, at rkiesel@glendaleca.gov or 818-937-8152.

GMC CHAPTER 30.41 PROVIDES FOR

Termination

Every right or privilege authorized by a Variance shall terminate two (2) years after the granting of such, unless the exercise of such right or privilege has commenced in good faith prior to such time, except as otherwise provided for.

Cessation

A Variance may be terminated by the review authority upon any interruption or cessation of the use permitted by the Variance for one year or more in the continuous exercise in good faith of such right and privilege.

Extension

Permits granted by such right or privilege may be requested one time and extended for up to a maximum of one (1) additional year upon receipt of a written request from the applicant and demonstration that a reasonable effort to act on such right and privilege has commenced within the two (2) years of the approval date. In granting such extension the applicable review authority shall make a written finding that neighborhood conditions have not substantially changed since the granting of the Variance.

TRANSFERABILITY

This authorization runs with the land or the use for which it was intended for and approved. In the event the property is to be sold, leased, rented or occupied by any person or corporation other than yourself, it is incumbent that you advise them regarding the conditions and/or limitations of this grant.

VIOLATIONS OF THESE CONDITIONS

Violations of conditions required by this determination may constitute a misdemeanor or infraction under section 1.20.010 of the Glendale Municipal Code (GMC) and/or a violation of other local, State or Federal laws or regulations. Unless a specific penalty is provided, any person convicted of a misdemeanor shall be punished by a fine not to exceed one thousand dollars (\$1,000.00), or imprisonment for a term not to exceed six (6) months, or by both fine and imprisonment. Infractions are punishable by a fine not exceeding the sum of five hundred dollars (\$500.00) for each violation. Violations of conditions required by this determination may be grounds for a revocation.

REVOCAION

Section 30.64.020 – Revocation – The Community Development Department shall have continuing jurisdiction over variances. To consider the revocation, the Director of Community Development shall hold a public hearing after giving notice by the same procedure as for consideration of a variance at least ten (10) days' notice by mail to the applicant or permittee.

NOTICE – SUBSEQUENT CONTACT WITH THIS OFFICE

The Applicant is further advised that all subsequent contacts with this office regarding this determination must be with the Case Planner first and then, the Hearing Officer who acted on this case. This would include clarification, 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.

You may contact the case planner, Roger Kiesel, during normal business hours at (818) 937-8152 or via e-mail at rkiesel@glendaleca.gov.

Sincerely,
Bradley Calvert
Director of Community Development

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dennis Joe", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Dennis Joe
Senior Planner

DJ:RK:sm

CC: City Clerk (K.Cortes); Police Dept. (J.Newton/Z.Avila); City Attorney's Dept. (G. van Muyden/Y.Neukian); Fire Prevention Engineering Section (S.Partamian); Public Works (D.Hernandez); Traffic & Transportation Section (P.Casanova/Mark Bueno); General Manager for Glendale Water and Power (M.Young); Glendale Water & Power--Water Section (G. Tom/S.Boghosian/R.Takidin/ C.Babakhanlou/D.Scorza); Glendale Water & Power--Electric Section (B. B.Ortiz/E.Olsen/ M.Navareete/M.Kouassi); Parks, Recreation and Community Services Dept. (T. Aleksanian/A.Limayo); Neighborhood Services Division; Integrated Waste Management Admin; Maintenance Services Section Admin.; Street and Field Services Admin.; Engineering and Environmental Management; and case planner – Roger Kiesel.