

Council Meeting of
August 21, 2007

Honorable Mayor and Members
 of the City Council
 City Hall
 Torrance California

PUBLIC HEARING

Members of the Council:

SUBJECT: Community Development - City Council consideration of an appeal of a Planning Commission denial of a Precise Plan of Development to allow the construction of first and second-story additions to an existing one-story single family residence on property located in the R-1 zone in the Hillside Overlay District at 5108 Newton Street.

PRE06-00041 - Najib & Nahla Al-Samarrai

Expenditure: None

RECOMMENDATION

The Planning Commission recommends that the City Council deny the appeal and take the following action on property located in the R-1 zone in the Hillside Overlay District at 5108 Newton Street.

1. Adopt a Resolution denying without prejudice:
 - A Precise Plan of Development (PRE06-00041) to allow the construction of first and second story additions to an existing one-story single family residence.

The Community Development Director recommends that the City Council grant the appeal and grant the project.

Funding: Not applicable

BACKGROUND

The subject property is located on the west side of Newton Street and is developed with a one-story single-family residence with detached garage originally constructed in 1954. The parcel is approximately 13,700 square feet and slopes up towards the rear. On March 7th, 2007, the Planning Commission denied PRE06-00041 by a unanimous vote absent Commissioner Uchima. On March 22nd, 2007, Nahla and Najib Al-Samarrai filed an appeal with the City Clerk. On April 4th, 2007, the item was brought back to the Commission for a request for reconsideration and the reconsideration request was denied by a unanimous vote.

Prior Hearings and Publications

A Planning Commission Public Hearing was scheduled for March 7, 2007. On February 23, 2007 72 notices were mailed to property owners within a 500 foot radius and to the Riviera Homeowners Association. A City Council hearing was scheduled for August 21, 2007. On August 10, 2007, 70 notices of the City Council Public Hearing were mailed to property owners within a 500-foot radius and the Riviera Homeowners Association. A

notice of public hearing was posted at the site on August 10, 2007, and a legal advertisement was published in the newspaper on August 10, 2007.

Environmental Findings

Additions to existing structures provided that the addition will not result in an increase of more than 2,500 square feet to a single family residence in a residential zone is Categorically Exempted by the 2007 Guidelines for Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act; Article 19, Section 15301 (e)(1). Setback Waivers are categorically exempted by the 2007 California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines, Article 19, Class 5, Section 15305 (a);

ANALYSIS

The applicant is requesting approval of a Precise Plan of Development to construct first and second story additions to an existing one story single-family residence. The proposed residence will contain a family room, kitchen, dining room, bedroom, two bathrooms, laundry room, and drawing room on the first floor. The second floor will contain a master suite, three bedrooms, two bathrooms and a study and two balconies. The plans indicate an attic area that Staff had previously calculated at 1,200 square feet. After clarification from the applicant, Staff calculates this area on the revised plans to be 601 square feet. The plans label the attic height as 6 foot four inches, however, Staff calculates the height at 7 feet four inches by scaling the plans and recommends a condition be added that the height will be no greater than 6 foot four inches as represented on the plans. Staff also recommends a condition be added that a floorplan of the attic be submitted at time of plancheck and that the area be no greater than 601 square feet.

At the time of posting, Staff observed that some of the flags of the silhouette had come down and notified the applicant. At the time of the preparation of this report, the applicant was in the process of reconstructing and re-certifying the silhouette. Based on Staff observations, the proposed development does not have significant impacts on view, light, air, or privacy of surrounding properties. The properties to the west are not impacted by the proposed project as they are at a much higher elevation. Properties to the north and south do not appear to have views over the proposed project. The neighborhood is a mixture of one and two-story residences. The neighboring property to the south completed a second story addition in 1991 (PP85-26).

A summary of the project statistics follows:

Statistical Information

• Lot Size	13,700 square feet
• Existing First Floor Area	1,200 square feet
• Existing Garage	365 square feet
• Total Proposed First Floor Living	1,623 square feet
• Total Proposed Second Floor Living	1,854 square feet
• Total Proposed Attic Space	601 square feet
• Total Floor Area (Inc. Garage)	3,842 square feet
• FAR	0.28
• Lot Coverage	17.5%

The proposed project is categorically exempt by CEQA and complies with the R-1 standards. For these reasons, Staff recommends approval of this appeal and approval of this project.

PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

The Planning Commission reviewed the Precise Plan of Development request on March 7, 2007. The applicant voiced her agreement with the recommended conditions of approval. A Commissioner asked about the purpose of the attic and access and the applicant explained that it would be used for storage of books and would be accessed by a pull-down stairway. Another Commissioner questioned the need for skylights and bay window in the attic and the applicant stated that it was good to have light everywhere and that one skylight will provide light to the stairway. The neighbor at 5102 Newton Street voiced objections to the project because it was not in harmony with the neighborhood and noted that the attic was essentially a third story. The property owner at 5114 Newton stated that he was not opposed to the addition but would like to see the height of the project reduced to allow more sunlight into his property. A member of the public urged the Commission to take into consideration the project's view impact at 5102 Newton Street. Ms. Al-Samarrai contended that the project would not adversely impact her neighbors and requested approval as submitted. Several Commissioners voiced concerns about the attic space and how it could be used as habitable space and would like to see it reduced. They also recommended eliminating the windows and skylights. The project was denied without prejudice by a unanimous roll call vote, absent Commissioner Uchima. A Resolution reflecting the Planning Commission denial is attached for your consideration. Should the Council consider approval of the subject request, a list of recommended conditions for the project are set forth in Attachment H.

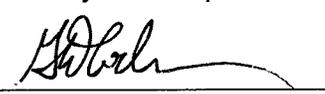
Respectfully submitted,

Jeffery W. Gibson
Community Development Director

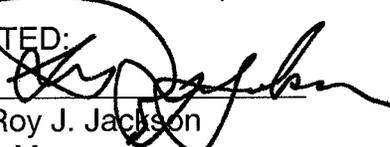
CONCUR:


Jeffery W. Gibson
Community Development Director

By


Gregg D. Lodan, AICP
Planning Manager

NOTED:


LeRoy J. Jackson
City Manager

Attachments:

- A. Resolutions
- B. Silhouette Certification
- C. Correspondence dated 08/13/07
- D. Letter of Appeal
- E. Planning Commission hearing Minutes Excerpts of 03/07/07, 03/21/07, and 04/04/2007
- F. Previous Planning Commission Staff Reports and Supplemental
- G. Proofs of Publication and Notification
- H. List of Recommended Conditions if Approved
- I. Plot Plan, Floor Plan and Exterior Elevations (Limited Distribution)
- J. Mayor's Script (Limited Distribution)

RESOLUTION NO. 2007

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF TORRANCE, CALIFORNIA, DENYING WITHOUT PREJUDICE A PRECISE PLAN OF DEVELOPMENT AS PROVIDED FOR IN DIVISION 9, CHAPTER 1, ARTICLE 41 OF THE TORRANCE MUNICIPAL CODE TO ALLOW THE CONSTRUCTION OF FIRST AND SECOND STORY ADDITIONS TO AN EXISTING ONE STORY SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENCE ON PROPERTY LOCATED IN THE HILLSIDE OVERLAY DISTRICT IN THE R-1 ZONE AT 5108 NEWTON STREET.

PRE06-00041: Najib & Nahla Al-Samarrai

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission of the City of Torrance conducted a public hearing on March 7, 2007, to consider an application for a Precise Plan of Development filed by Najib & Nahla Al-Samarrai to allow the construction of first and second story additions to an existing one story single family residence with a detached garage on property located in the Hillside Overlay District in the R-1 Zone at 5108 Newton Street; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission denied without prejudice the Precise Plan of Development request; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission denied the request for reconsideration; and

WHEREAS, the City Council of the City of Torrance conducted a public hearing on August 21, 2007, to consider an appeal of a Planning Commission denial without prejudice of a Precise Plan of Development filed by Najib & Nahla Al-Samarrai to allow the construction of first and second story additions to an existing one story single family residence with a detached garage on property located in the Hillside Overlay District in the R-1 Zone at 5108 Newton Street; and

WHEREAS, due and legal publication of notice was given to owners of property in the vicinity thereof and due and legal hearings have been held, all in accordance with the provisions of Division 9, Chapter 6, Article 2 of the Torrance Municipal Code; and

WHEREAS, Additions to existing structures provided that the addition will not result in an increase of more than 2,500 square feet to a single family residence in a residential zone is Categorically Exempted by the 2007 Guidelines for Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act; Article 19, Section 15301 (e)(1); and

WHEREAS, the City Council of the City of Torrance does hereby find and determine as follows:

- a) That the property is located at 5108 Newton Street.
- b) That the property is identified as Lot 216 of Tract 18249.

- c) That the proposed first and second story additions will have an adverse impact upon the view, light, air and privacy of other properties in the vicinity because there is a potential for significant view and light impairments to surrounding properties.
- d) That the proposed residence has not been located, planned, or designed so as to cause the least intrusion on the views, light, air and privacy of other properties in the vicinity due the bulk and height of the structure.
- e) That the design does not provide an orderly and harmonious development with other properties in the vicinity because the exterior design elements and appearance of a third story are not in keeping with the architecture and design of the surrounding residences.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that PRE06-00041, filed by Najib & Nahla Al-Samarrai to allow the construction of first-and-second story additions to a single-family residence on property located in the R-1 Zone within the Hillside Overlay District at 5108 Newton Street, on file in the Community Development Department of the City of Torrance, is hereby denied without prejudice subject to the following conditions:

Introduced, approved and adopted this 21st day of August, 2007.

MAYOR, of the City of Torrance

ATTEST:

City Clerk of the City of Torrance

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

JOHN FELLOWS III, City Attorney

By _____



City of Torrance, Community Development Department Jeffrey W. Gibson, Director
3031 Torrance Blvd., Torrance, CA 90503 (310) 618-5990 Fax: (310) 618-5829

Height and Location Certification

AUG 16 2007

The survey must be performed by a licensed land surveyor or civil engineer and should be accompanied by a map which shows the location of the bench mark and the locations where the measurements were taken. The map should also show the location of existing and proposed structures.

SILHOUETTE CERTIFICATION

I have surveyed the silhouette located at 5108 Newton Street Torrance
(address) CA 90

on August 14, 07, based on plans submitted to the City of Torrance
(date)

by NAJIB AL-SAMARAL on 12-18-06. The survey was taken
(applicant/architect) (date)

from a bench mark located at North West Property corner
(address)

(attached map) which established a base elevation of 101'8".

The ridge line/highest point of the roof was determined to have an elevation of 128'8".

The plans indicate that the elevation should be 128'8".

I certify that I have measured the location of pertinent features located on the subject property. Based on the plans submitted to the Community Development Department, I have verified that the silhouette/construction accurately represents the proposed structure in terms of height, building envelope, location on the site, and all setbacks.

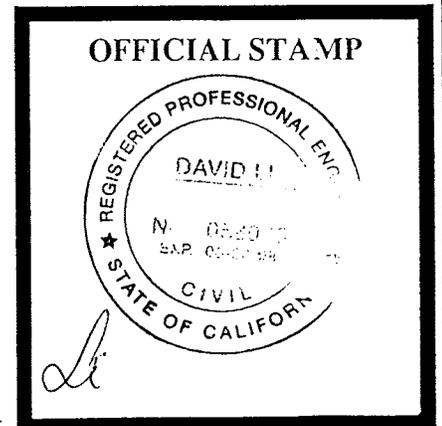
David Li
Name (please print)

058075
LS/RCE# Exp 6-30-08

David Li
SIGNATURE

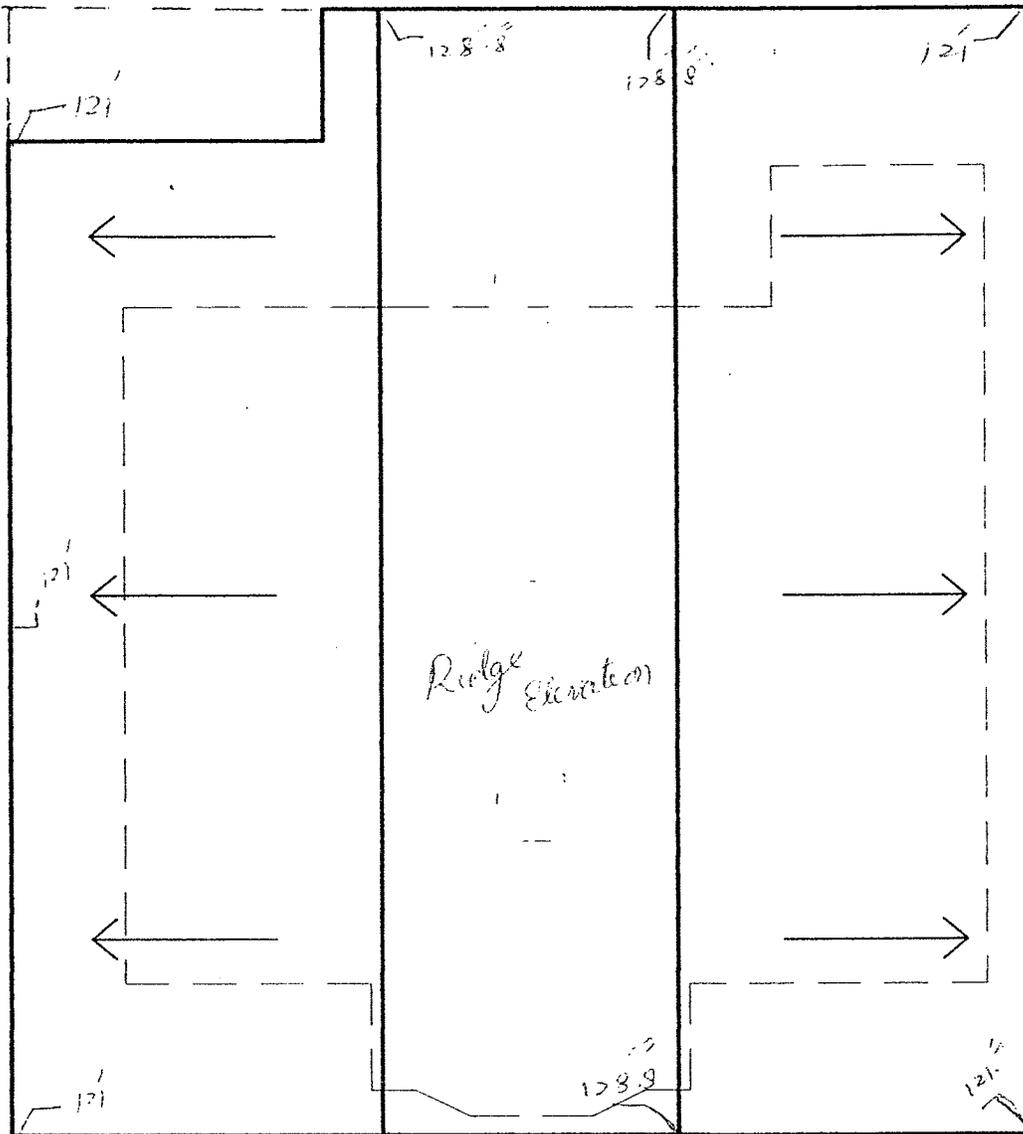
213-520-2228
PHONE

Aug 14, 2007
DATE



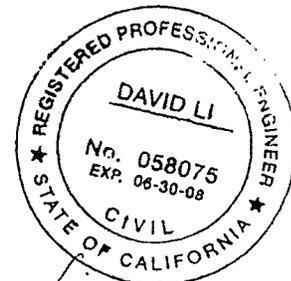
Notes: _____

Li
121.1



Ridge Elevation

Existing grade of House
101.9



Li Aug 14, 07

Newton Street

RESIDENCE REMODEL FOR
MR. AND MRS. AL SAMMARAI AT
5108 NEWTON ST.
TORRANCE, CA 90505

ROOF PLAN

SCALE = 1/8"=1'-0"

Bench Mark 100'
North West Property
Reserve
Elev. = 100'



Martinez, Oscar

From: WML HAAS [jewlhaas@msn.com]
Sent: Monday, August 13, 2007 10:33 PM
To: Martinez, Oscar
Subject: PRE06-00041 (Al Samarra)

Attention: Honorable Mayor, City Council Members, Planning Commission & Community Development Department

Re: PRE06-00041 (Al Sammarai)

From: Mr. & Mrs. William L. Haas
 5114 Newton Street
 Torrance, CA 90505

This correspondence is to state our opinion regarding the City Council's consideration of an appeal of the Planning Commission's denial of a Precise Plan of Development to allow construction of a first and second story additions to an existing one story single family residence on property located in the R-1 Zone in the Hillside Overlay District at 5108 Newton Street.

We are not against the much needed renovations to the 5108 Newton Street property, next door and East of us. It has been in disrepair for several years. However, we do have questions/exceptions with the plans that were presented to the Planning Commission on 03/07/07 and will again be presented on 08/21/07.

- The attic height of this project makes this a 3-story addition. The majority of surrounding homes in this tract have a standard of 3'-6" to 4'-0" attic heights.
- As a point of interest, the project drawings incorrectly indicate an "attic clear height" of 6'-4". The elevation heights for "top of wall" indicate 18'-0" and "top of roof" as 27'-0". Considering attic floor and roof joists of 10-inches each this results in a "clear attic height" of 7'-4", not 6'-4".
- We propose and would approve an "attic clear height" consistent with the neighborhood homes which is 3'-6" to 4'-0" for top of attic floor to the bottom of roof joists.
- The profile height created by this excessively tall attic is our main concern with the proposed structure, since it aggravates an existing problem we already have with mold on the East side interior and exterior walls of our home. We have fought this problem for most of the 46 years at this location. Reducing the attic height of this proposed project would help some, particularly during the winter and fall months when the sun is lower during the morning hours.
- The profile of this proposed structure is also "out of character" with the rest of the neighborhood. Since "mansionization" is being closely scrutinized by many of the South Bay cities, this only sets a precedent in Torrance by allowing structures of this profile to be approved.

We offer you our opinion/suggestions for your consideration. Thank you for your time and cooperation.

08/14/2007



CITY OF TORRANCE APPEAL FORM

AN APPEAL TO:

- City Council
- Planning Commission
- _____

RETURN TO:

Office of the City Clerk
 3031 Torrance Boulevard
 Torrance CA 90509-2970
 310/618-2870

RE: PRE06-00041: Najib and Nahla Al-Samarrai
 (Case Number and Name)

MAR 22 2007

Address/Location of Subject Property _____
 (If applicable)

Decision of:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Administrative Hearing Board | <input type="checkbox"/> License Review Board |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Airport Commission | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Planning Commission |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Civil Service Commission | <input type="checkbox"/> Community Development Director |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Quality & Energy Conservation Commission | <input type="checkbox"/> Special Development Permit |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

Date of decision: March 7, 2007 Appealing: APPROVAL DENIAL

Reason for Appeal: *Be as detailed as necessary. Additional information can be presented at the hearing. Attach pages as required with additional information and/or signatures.*

please see attach page.

Name of Appellant Nahla and Najib Al-Samarrai

Address of Appellant 5108 Newton st. Torrance CA 90505

Telephone Number (310) 378-1820

Signature Nahla

For office use only	
Appeal Fee paid \$ <u>160.00</u>	Date <u>3/22/2007</u> Received by <u>(Signature)</u>
Notice to: Community Development Department: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Planning <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building & Safety <input type="checkbox"/> City Council <input type="checkbox"/> City Manager <input type="checkbox"/> City Attorney <input type="checkbox"/> Other Department(s)	

PREO 6-00041: Najib and Nahla Al-Samarrai

The project met all the Planning Department requirements and according to the City of Torrance Codes.

We do not have clear answer to why the planning Commission denied our project.

The project is very important for our family needs, and any denial will cause us financial, emotional and physical hardships.

We need to be given the opportunity to continue working with the Planning Commission to accommodate their suggestions to complete the project.

Nahla R. Al-Samarrai

~~Nahla~~

EXCERPT OF MINUTES
 Minutes Approved
~~Minutes Subject to Approval~~

March 7, 2007

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF
THE TORRANCE PLANNING COMMISSION**

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Torrance Planning Commission convened in a regular session at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, March 7, 2007, in City Council Chambers at Torrance City Hall.

3. ROLL CALL

Present: Commissioners Browning, Busch, Gibson, Horwich, Weideman and Chairperson Faulk.

Absent: Commissioner Uchima (excused).

Also Present: Planning Manager Lodan, Planning Associate Hurd, Planning Assistant Graham, Fire Marshal Gebel, Plans Examiner Noh, Deputy City Attorney Sullivan, and Associate Civil Engineer Symons.

11E. PRE06-00041: NAJIB AND NAHLA AL-SAMARRAI

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Precise Plan of Development to allow first and second-story additions to an existing single-family residence on property located in the Hillside Overlay District in the R-1 Zone at 5108 Newton Street.

Recommendation

Approval.

Planning Associate Hurd introduced the request.

Nahla Al-Samarrai, 5108 Newton Street, applicant, voiced her agreement with the recommended conditions of approval. She stated that she did not believe the project would impact anyone's view and noted that there are other two-story homes in the immediate area.

Commissioner Busch asked about the purpose of the 1200 square-foot attic and how it would be accessed. Ms. Al-Samarrai explained that the attic would be used mainly for storage as she has many books and that it would be accessed by a pull-down stairway.

Commissioner Busch asked about staff's experience with attics of this size, Planning Manager Lodan reported that he had never seen a project with an attic of this size and nature.

Commissioner Browning expressed concerns about excessive weight in the attic.

Plans Examiner Noh advised that attics are not designed for heavy storage, however, if the Commission approves the attic space for storage, staff will make sure that it is engineered to handle the load.

Commissioner Gibson, echoed by Commissioner Weideman, questioned the need for skylights and a bay window in the attic. Ms. Al-Samarrai stated that she thought it was good to have light everywhere, noting that one of the skylights will provide light to the stairway.

Judy Lanfried, 5102 Newton Street, voiced objections to the proposed project, maintaining that its design was not in harmony with the neighborhood. She noted that the attic is larger than the existing home and with a 7-foot ceiling, skylights and a bay window, it is essentially a third story. She related her understanding that the applicants have only one child living at home and questioned the need for such a large residence. She reported that she previously signed a document allowing the applicants to build an accessory structure in the backyard, but would like to retract her signature because of its location on the hillside.

William Haas, 5114 Newton Street, stated that he did not want to discourage the addition because the property needs renovation, but he would like the height of the project reduced to allow more sunlight to his property. Referring to photographs to illustrate, he explained that he has an ongoing problem with mold and mildew on interior and exterior walls and the proposed project would only exacerbate the problem. He related his understanding that the height of the attic would be 8'10" and asked that this be reduced by 5 feet. He also asked that overgrown cypress trees on the subject property be trimmed to allow more light and air to his backyard.

Dan Rudin, 677 4th Street, Hermosa Beach, urged the Commission to take into consideration the project's impact on the view at 5102 Newton Street.

Responding to audience members' comments, Ms. Al-Samarrai clarified that she decided not to build the accessory structure Ms. Lanfried referred to and noted that Ms. Lanfried's home is taller than the proposed project. She explained that while two of her children are away at college on the East Coast, they plan to live at home after they complete their education. She reported that she has lived in the United States for 23 years and that she does geriatric research at UCLA and her husband is a professor. She contended that the project would not adversely impact her neighbors and requested approval as submitted.

Commissioner Weideman indicated that he favored a substantial reduction in the height of the attic to ensure that this space is not habitable.

Ms. Al-Samarrai clarified that attic is under 7 feet in height.

Commissioner Busch asked staff for a recommendation on the height of the attic, and Planning Manager Lodan recommended a height of 3 feet.

Ms. Al-Samarrai indicated that she was not amenable to reducing the height of the attic to 3 feet.

MOTION: Commissioner Browning moved to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Horwich and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Chairperson Faulk stated that he would not support the project due to concerns about the potential that the attic could be used as habitable space by a future owner and because he felt it was not in harmony with the neighborhood.

Commissioner Browning noted his concurrence with Chairperson Faulk's remarks.

Commissioner Weideman stated that he observed that the project would have a significant impact on views and light and that he did not believe the architecture was appropriate for this neighborhood.

Commissioner Horwich indicated that he would not support the project as proposed, but could support it if the height of the attic was reduced to 4 feet and the bay window and skylights were eliminated.

Commissioner Busch stated that he believed the proposed project violates the Hillside Ordinance therefore he could not support it.

MOTION: Commissioner Browning moved to deny PRE06-00041 without prejudice. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Weideman and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Commissioner Uchima).

Planning Manager Lodan noted that a resolution reflecting the Commission's action would be brought back for approval.

###

EXCERPT OF MINUTES
 Minutes Approved
~~Minutes Subject to Approval~~

March 21, 2007

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF
 THE TORRANCE PLANNING COMMISSION**
1. CALL TO ORDER

The Torrance Planning Commission convened in a regular session at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, March 21, 2007, in City Council Chambers at Torrance City Hall.

3. ROLL CALL

Present: Commissioners Busch, Gibson, Uchima and Chairperson Faulk.

Absent: Commissioners Browning, Horwich and Weideman.

Also Present: Sr. Planning Associate Santana, Planning Assistant Yumul, Fire Marshal Kazandjian, Plans Examiner Noh, Associate Civil Engineer Symons and City Attorney Fellows.

Sr. Planning Associate Santana noted that Commissioners Browning, Horwich and Weideman were previously granted excused absences from this meeting.

7. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC #1

7A. Najib Al-Samarrai, 5108 Newton Street, asked that the Commission reconsider his project (PRE06-00041), which was denied at the March 7, 2007 meeting. He explained that he was unable to attend that meeting and the opposition to the project had taken his wife by surprise and she could not respond to the issues raised effectively. He expressed his willingness to work with the Commission, noting that he and his family have lived in Torrance for the past 15 years and they have a great fondness for the city. He also noted that two of his children served as ambassadors for Torrance when they visited Japan and that his wife, who does geriatric research, has a company in Torrance.

City Attorney Fellows provided clarification regarding the reconsideration process. He explained that should the Commission agree to Mr. Al-Samarrai's request, the matter would be placed on the agenda for the next meeting and the Commission would vote on whether to reconsider PRE06-00041 at that time, however, there would be no discussion on the merits of the case. Should a motion to reconsider be approved, a hearing on the case itself would be scheduled for a subsequent meeting. He noted that he had informed Mr. Al-Samarrai of his right to appeal the Commission's decision to the City Council and of the need to file the appeal in a timely manner.

Chairperson Faulk indicated that he was not interested in reconsidering this case.

Mr. Al-Samarrai reiterated his request for reconsideration, stating that there was misinformation and lies at the previous hearing.

As no commissioner expressed an interest in reconsidering the case, Chairperson Faulk moved forward with the meeting.

17. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC #2

17A. Referring to Mr. Al-Samarrai's request for reconsideration of PRE06-00041 (Oral Communications #1), Commissioner Busch stated that he favored placing this matter on the agenda for the next meeting due to the absence of three commissioners from this meeting.

City Attorney Fellows confirmed that Commissioner Uchima could vote on this matter even though he was not present at the original hearing.

MOTION: Commissioner Busch moved to add the item to the next meeting's agenda. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gibson and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Commissioners Browning, Horwich and Weideman).

###

EXCERPT OF MINUTES

Minutes Approved
 Minutes Subject to Approval

April 4, 2007

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF
 THE TORRANCE PLANNING COMMISSION**

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Torrance Planning Commission convened in a regular session at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, April 4, 2007, in City Council Chambers at Torrance City Hall.

3. ROLL CALL

Present: Commissioners Browning, Busch, Gibson, Horwich, Uchima, Weideman and Chairperson Faulk.

Absent: None.

Also Present: Planning Manager Lodan, Sr. Planning Associate Chun, Planning Associate Martinez, Fire Marshal Kazandjian, Plans Examiner Noh, Deputy City Attorney Whitham, and Associate Civil Engineer Symons.

Agenda Item 14A was considered out of order at this time.

14A. REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION OF PRE06-00041: AL-SAMARRAI

Planning Commission consideration for reconsideration of a previously denied Precise Plan of Development for one and two-story additions to an existing single-family residence on property located in the Hillside Overlay District in the R-1 Zone at 5108 Newton Street.

Najib Al-Samarrai, 5108 Newton Street, reported that he was unable to attend the hearing at which this project was denied and didn't get a chance to provide information that he believes would have been helpful. He requested that the Commission grant a new hearing and expressed his willingness to work with his architect to make the changes necessary to arrive at an acceptable project.

A brief discussion ensued, and Commissioners indicated that they did not favor scheduling a hearing to reconsider a project when the applicant has already mentioned that he intends to revise it. It was noted that Commissioners gave clear direction at the previous hearing regarding the changes necessary for them to support the project.

Deputy City Attorney Whitham confirmed that the applicant may submit a new or revised project at any time because the project was denied "without prejudice."

Mr. Al-Samarrai explained that it has been a long and expensive process to get the project to this point and he has the added expense of lost wages when he appears at Commission meetings because he works on Wednesday nights.

Commissioner Horwich proposed that any additional fees associated with the re-submittal be waived, and Planning Manager Lodan offered to have staff do what they can to expedite the process when plans are resubmitted.

Commissioner Browning indicated that he did not favor waiving fees because the City would still be incurring the same costs as the revised project undergoes review by various City staff.

Deputy City Attorney Whitham advised that the matter of waiving fees is left to the discretion of the Community Development Director.

Judy Lanfried, 5102 Newton Street, stated that she would like to see the project redesigned to be more in character with the neighborhood instead of a three-story box.

Bill Haas, 5114 Newton Street, stated that he would like to see the house renovated, but objects to the height of the proposed project.

MOTION: Commissioner Uchima moved to deny the request for reconsideration of the Commission's action on PRE06-00041. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Busch and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Chairperson Faulk encouraged Mr. Al-Samarrai to work with his neighbors to arrive at an acceptable design.

###

AGENDA ITEM NO. 11E**CASE TYPE & NUMBER:** Precise Plan of Development – PRE06-00041**NAME:** Najib & Nahla Al-Samarrai**PURPOSE OF APPLICATION:** Request for approval of a Precise Plan of Development to allow the construction of first and second story additions to an existing one story single family residence with a detached garage on property located in the Hillside Overlay District.**LOCATION:** 5108 Newton Street**ZONING:** R-1, Single-Family Residential District (Hillside Overlay District)**ADJACENT ZONING AND LAND USE:**

NORTH: PU, R-1 Hillside Overlay District, School, One and Two-Story Single Family Residences

SOUTH: R-1 Hillside Overlay District, One and Two-Story Single Family Residences

EAST: R-1 Hillside Overlay District, One and Two-Story Single Family Residences

WEST: R-1 Hillside Overlay District, One and Two-Story Single Family Residences

GENERAL PLAN DESIGNATION: Low-Density Residential**COMPLIANCE WITH GENERAL PLAN:** Yes. A two-story residence complies with the Low-Density Residential Designation of the General Plan.**EXISTING IMPROVEMENTS AND /OR NATURAL FEATURES:** The lot is predominantly rectangular with a narrowing width from front to back and slopes up towards the rear. The subject property contains a one-story, single family residence with a detached two-car garage that was originally constructed in 1954.**ENVIRONMENTAL FINDINGS:** Additions to single family residential properties are Categorically Exempted by the Guidelines for Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act; Article 19, Section 15301 (e).**BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS:**

The applicant requests approval to construct a second story addition to an existing one story single family residence with a detached garage. A Precise Plan is required because the property is located within the Hillside Overlay District and the new construction is over fourteen feet in height.

The 13,700 square foot lot is rectangular in shape and slopes up towards the rear of the property. The project consists of the construction of first and second story additions to the residence. The residence will have a 21-foot front yard setback and a 231-foot rear yard setback. The side yard setbacks for the property are 5 foot three inches and 10 foot one inch. The existing detached garage is eight feet away from the residence, has a one foot side yard setback and a 203 foot rear yard setback.

The first floor of the residence will contain a kitchen, dining room, family room, drawing room, two bathrooms, a laundry room, and one bedroom. The second story will contain a master suite, three bedrooms, study room and two balconies. The plans also indicate an attic space with 1,200 square feet of area. No indication of access to the attic space or floorplan was shown on the plans. Staff recommends a condition of approval to show this area on the building plancheck plans and that the attic space shall only be used as storage and not as a habitable floor. The remodeled residence will be 27 feet in height from the lowest adjacent grade of 101.8 to the highest ridge of 128.8.

The Floor Area Ratio is 0.28 and the Lot Coverage is 17.5%.

A project summary is provided below:

Statistical Information

◆ Lot Area	13,700	square feet
◆ Existing Living	1,120	square-feet
◆ First Floor Addition	447	square-feet
◆ Second Floor Addition	1,854	square-feet
◆ Attic Space	1,200	square-feet
◆ Existing Garage	365	square-feet
◆ Total Area	3,786	square-feet
◆ Floor Area Ratio (Proposed)	0.28	
◆ Maximum Floor Area Allowed @ 0.6	8,220	square feet
◆ Lot Coverage (Proposed)	17.5%	
◆ Max. Lot Coverage Allowed	40%	

The Hillside Ordinance requires that the Planning Commission make a series of findings relating to the design of the project and its potential impact on the view, light, air and/or privacy of properties in the vicinity. The applicant has responded to this requirement in the Hillside Ordinance Criteria Response Sheet (Attachment #3). The applicant was required to construct a silhouette to demonstrate potential impacts (Attachment #4). A licensed engineer has verified the height of the silhouette and staff made a field inspection.

Based on staff observations, there do not appear to be significant impacts to the view, light, air or privacy of surrounding properties by the proposed new construction. The neighborhood has a mixture of one and two-story single family residences and it does not appear that there are any significant views that occur across the roof of the resulting residence. The residences located to the west (rear of the property) are at higher elevations due to the natural slope in the neighborhood and do not appear to be impacted by the proposed construction. The residences to the north and south currently do not appear to have views over the existing single story. The neighboring property to the south completed a second story addition in 1991 (PP85-26).

Privacy impacts have been minimized by orienting the balconies to the rear yard and maintaining the existing driveway as a buffer between properties. Staff made a field observation of the proposed residence and based on the silhouette, it does not appear to cause significant impacts for surrounding properties. Staff has not received any correspondence at the time of the preparation of this staff report.

The applicant has prepared a plan that complies with the R-1 standards, exceeds the open space requirements and is within the allowable lot coverage and F.A.R. The home is of a contemporary design and will incorporate a smooth stucco finish with brick veneer, a mansard roof with a metal finish, bay windows, cement board siding, and double entry doors. This project does not appear to cause significant intrusion on the view, light, air or privacy of adjacent properties. For these reasons, Staff recommends approval of this request, as conditioned.

The applicant is advised that Code requirements have been included as an attachment to the staff report, and are not subject to modification.

PROJECT RECOMMENDATION: APPROVAL

FINDINGS OF FACT IN SUPPORT OF APPROVAL OF THE PRECISE PLAN:

Findings of fact in support of approval of the precise plan are set forth in the attached Resolution.

RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS, IF PROJECT IS APPROVED:

Recommended conditions of the proposed project are set forth in the attached Resolution.

Prepared By,



Oscar Martinez
Planning Associate

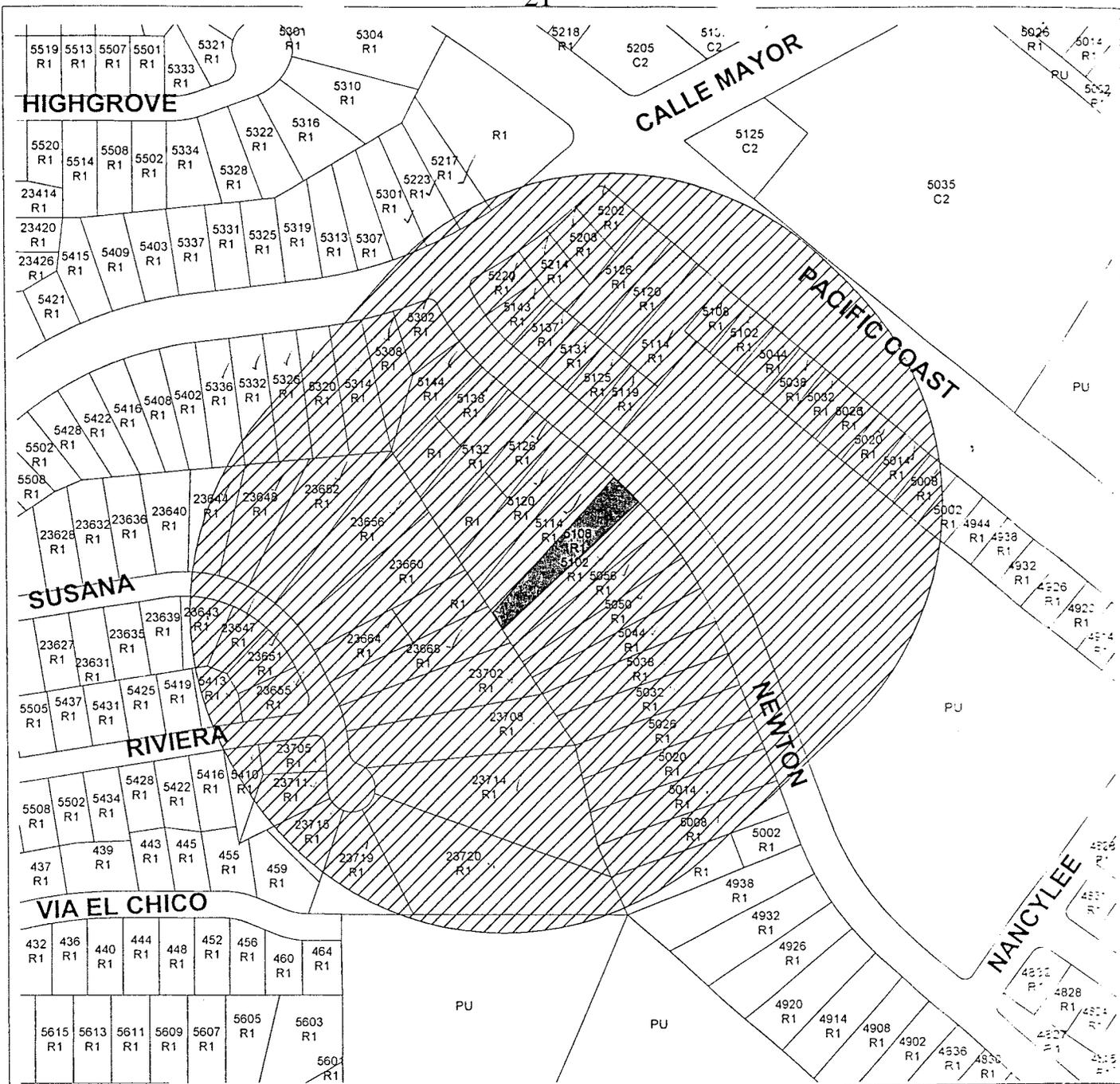
Respectfully submitted,



Gregg Lodan, AICP
Planning Manager

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Planning Commission Resolution
2. Location and Zoning Map
3. Hillside Ordinance Criteria Response
4. Silhouette Verification
5. Code Requirements
6. Site Plan, Floor Plans, & Elevations



LOCATION AND ZONING MAP

5108 Newton St
PRE06-00041



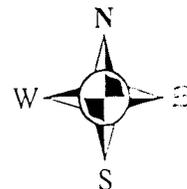
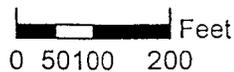
LEGEND



5108 Newton St



500 Foot Notification



CITY OF TORRANCE- COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

TO BE SUBMITTED WITH HILLSIDE PRECISE PLAN APPLICATION PRE

GIVE FACTS TO SUBSTANTIATE THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA BY WHICH THE PLANNING COMMISSION MAY GRANT THIS HILLSIDE PRECISE PLAN. IT IS MANDATORY THAT THESE CRITERIA BE MET BEFORE THE CITY MAY LEGALLY GRANT A HILLSIDE PRECISE PLAN: AND, IT IS INCUMBENT UPON THE APPLICANT TO PROVE THE SATISFACTION OF THE CITY THAT THE CRITERIA ARE MET:

(To be completed by all applicants)

1. Planning and Design (91.41.6)

- a. The following facts demonstrate that the proposed development will not have an adverse impact upon the view, light, air and privacy of other properties in the vicinity:

Although our house is located in an area that may considered a hill side area, in reality it is not. Our house is located on a flat area. ((Pleas see the enclose plan on the land)). There are no houses in front of us or behind us. The front area is open and facing a school playground. The houses behind us are very far from us (600 feet +) and on very high hill. Our neighbor's houses from the right are extended to the back adjutant to our back yard, and from the left is a two story house with high ceiling. There are two and three story housed in the vicinity:

The project position on the site, proximity to adjacent and surrounding neighbors and the location of windows has been thoughtfully utilized to maintain the existing quality of view, air, light and privacy of other properties. In fact the project will enhance the overall quality of the vicinity.

- b. The following planning, design and locational considerations will insure that the proposed development will cause the least intrusion on the views, light, air, and privacy of other properties in the vicinity:

There is no intrusion on the views, light, air and privacy of other properties in the vicinity since our house is located in a flat area not on a hill.

- c. The following design elements have been employed to provide an Orderly and attractive development in harmony with other properties in the vicinity:

The project design considered traditional with some added contemporary Windows, doors and the roof will be a shingle roof.

- d. The following aspects of the design insure that the development will not have a harmful impact upon the land values and investment of other properties in the vicinity:

There is absolutely no harmful impact and there is a gain impact upon the land values and investment of other properties in the vicinity. The project has been designed to enhance and complement the surrounding new homes in the area and at the same time offer some attractive features that blend nicely into the existing framework of the neighborhood.

- e. Granting this application would not be materially detrimental to the public welfare and to other properties in the vicinity for the following reason(s):

The project has been designed to complement the surrounding homes in the area and at the same time offer some attractive features that blend nicely into the existing framework of the neighborhood. It maintains and preserves the view, air, light and privacy of the properties in the vicinity. There are no properties on the front side and the ones in the back are very far from our property.

- f. The proposed development will not cause or result in an adverse Cumulative impact on other properties in the vicinity, for the following reasons:

As stated above this project will not have an adverse cumulative impact on other properties in the vicinity. In fact it will contribute to the beautification and increase the property value of the homes in the vicinity.

2. LIMITATION IN INCREASES IN HEIGHT (91.41.10) (To be completed by applicant for a Precise Plan that would increase the height of any part of building to a height greater than that of the existing building)

- a. It is not feasible to increase the size of or rearrange the space within the existing building or structure for the purposes intended except by increasing the height, demonstrated by the following facts:

The addition is within the allowable height and the needed square footages has to be done by adding a second story.

- b. Denial of this application would constitute an unreasonable hardship for the following reasons:

The purpose of the project is to add rooms to accommodate our family and accommodate our children and respond to their needs for privacy.

- c. Granting this application would not be materially detrimental to the public welfare and to other properties in the vicinity for the following reason(s):

The project designed thoughtfully and it will preserve the view, light, air and privacy of the properties in the vicinity. There are no properties on the front side and the ones in the back are very far from our site. The project will contribute to the beautification and improvement of our neighborhood.

CODE REQUIREMENTS

The following is a partial list of code requirements applicable to the proposed project. All possible code requirements are not provided here and the applicant is strongly advised to contact each individual department for further clarification. The Planning Commission may not waive or alter the code requirements. They are provided for information purposes only.

Building and Safety:

- Comply with the State Energy Requirements.
- Provide underground utilities.
- Provide 6' between garage and rear trellis.
- Minimum slope on roof is ¼" per foot.

Environmental:

- The front yard of any property zoned for residential use shall not be more than 50% paved (92.5.14).
- The property shall be landscaped prior to final inspection (92.21.9).

SUPPLEMENTAL #1 TO AGENDA ITEM 11E

TO: Members of the Planning Commission

FROM: Development Review Division

SUBJECT(S): PRE06-00041 (SAMARRAI)

LOCATION: 5108 Newton Street

The attached correspondence was received subsequent to the preparation of the agenda item.

Staff continues to recommend approval of the project as conditioned.

Prepared by,



Oscar Martinez
Planning Associate

Respectfully submitted,



Gregg D. Lodan, AICP
Planning Manager

Attachments:

- 1) Correspondence Dated March 5, 2007
- 2) Correspondence Dated March 7, 2007

February 27, 2007

City of Torrance
Community Development Department
City Hall
3031 Torrance Blvd.
Torrance, CA 90503

MAR 05

RE: Public Hearing PRE06-00041
Property at 5108 Newton Street

Planning Commissioners:

This is to express our concern and to challenge the subject plan of development to allow first and second story additions to the existing single family residence on property located in The Hillside Overlay District at 5108 Newton St. We live next door to the proposed development on the West side at 5114 Newton Street.

Our concerns and challenge addresses the height of the second story. We question whether the development is in compliance with Permits & Applications, Section 91.41 for The Hillside Overlay Area which stipulates requirements for a special review criteria based on view, light, air and privacy concerns. In this case, the height of the proposed second story structure will block sunlight to the adjacent 5114 Newton St. property's East wall, where a mold growth problem already exists..

We experience a mold growth problem on the interior and exterior East walls, and on a gate which is also on the East side of our property. Part of this problem is due to overgrown and neglected Italian cypress trees that extend South away from the back of the existing 5108 property structure. Other overgrown trees on this owner's property continue South up the hill to the rear of the property. The trees should be trimmed or pruned to allow sunlight and air into the back yard of the 5114 Newton St. residence. The Italian cypress trees are 18'0" tall and have grown together to form a dense "wall" that lets no sunlight in. Thus, it is a perfect environment for mold and green moss growth.

Coincidentally, the owner at 5108 Newton stated to me last summer that they were painting the interior East wall in their home and had a mold problem to correct before painting. Obviously, this incident was brought on since the two-story home at 5102 Newton which is East of the 5108 property shields the sunlight from their East wall. Environmentally speaking, this cannot be healthy for any property owner in this area.

We respectfully request the Planning Commission review this proposed structure for its environmental impact on the adjacent property at 5114 Newton St. Photographs are enclosed for the Commission in order to familiarize themselves with the existing area on both sides of the 5108 Newton site and view from the rear of property at 5114 Newton.

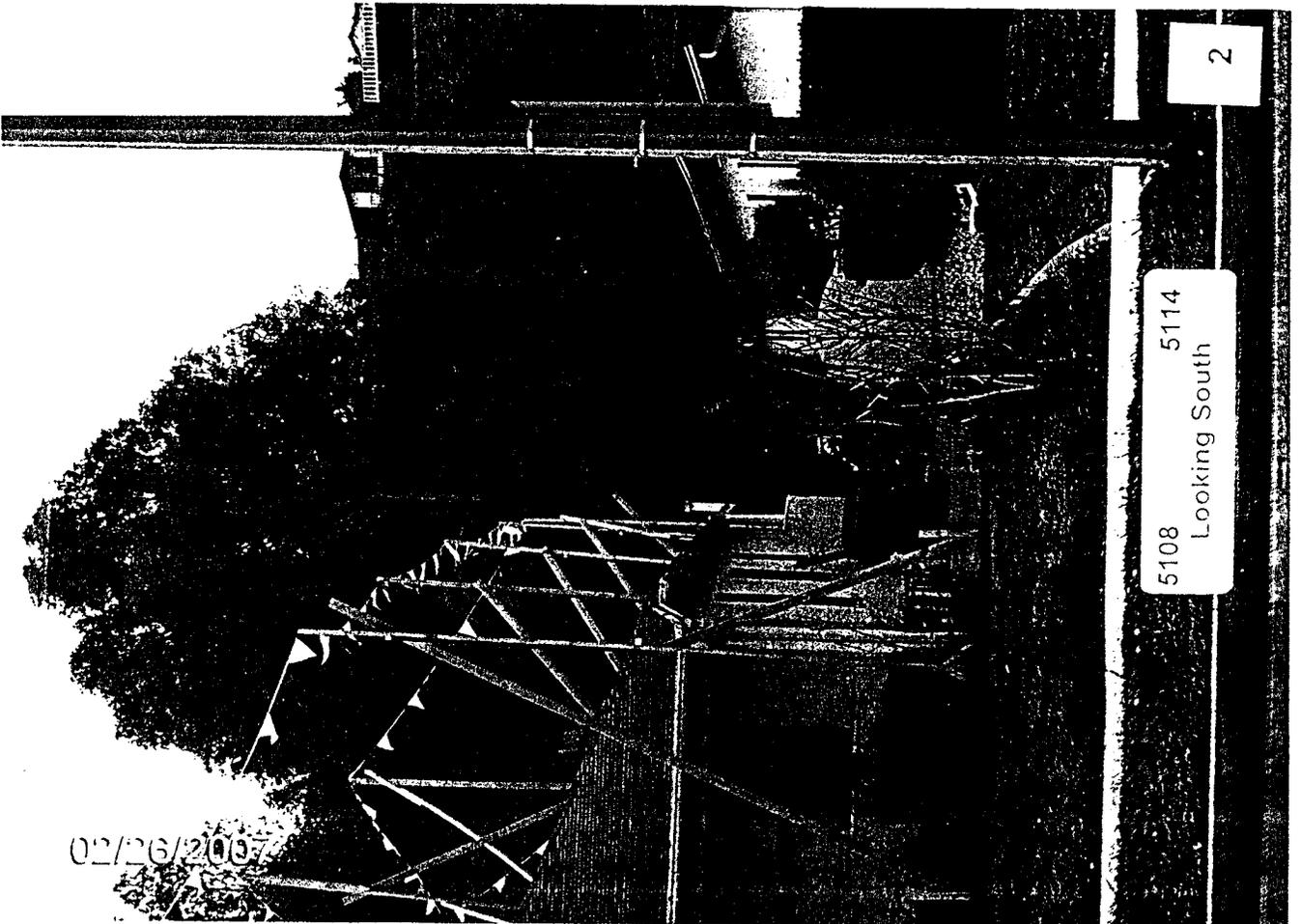
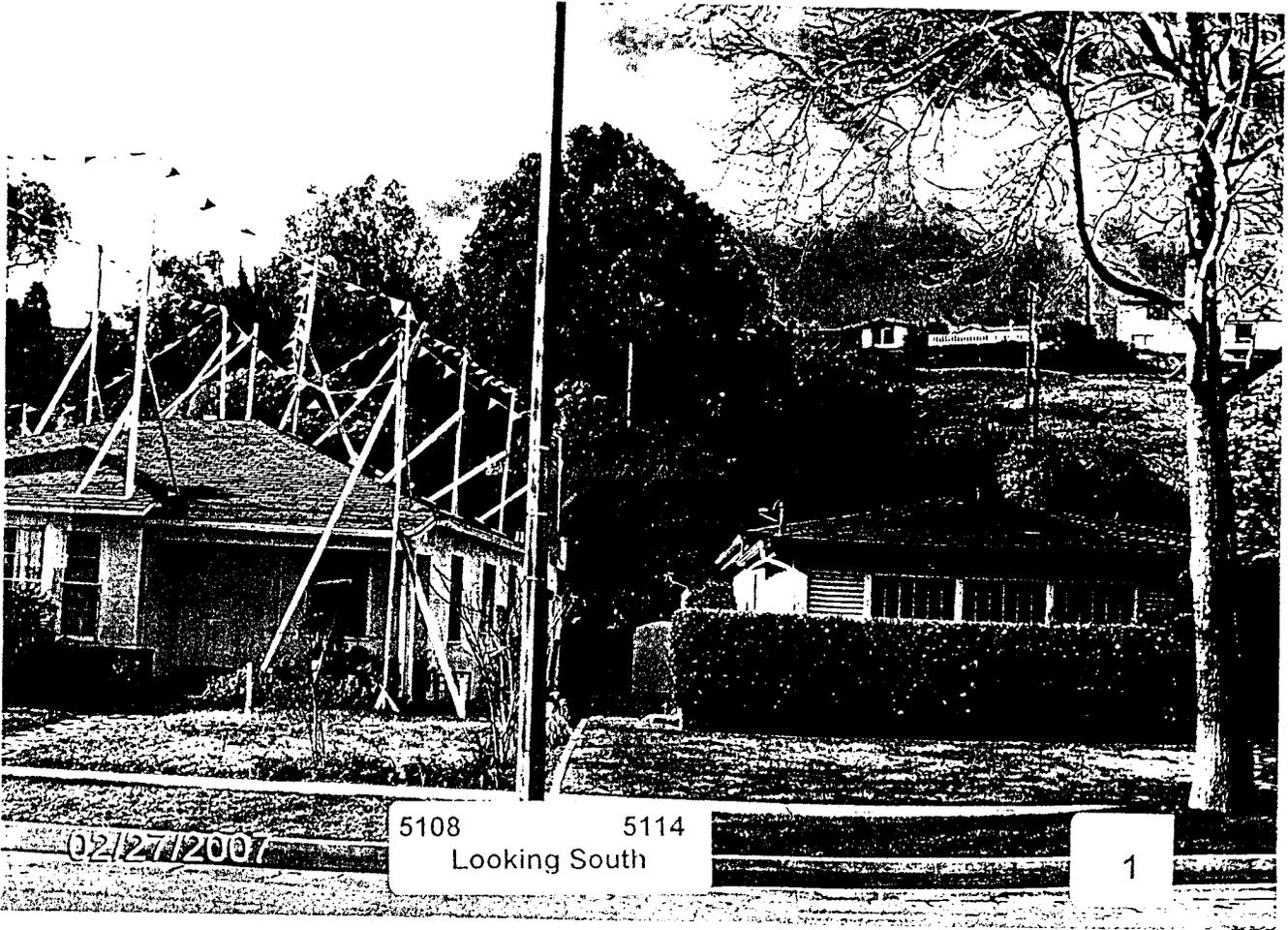
Your cooperation in this matter is appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "William L. Haas". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name and address.

Mr. & Mrs. William L. Haas
5114 Newton Street
Torrance, CA 90505
Tel: 310-378-7375

enclosures: Photographs (5)



02/26/2007

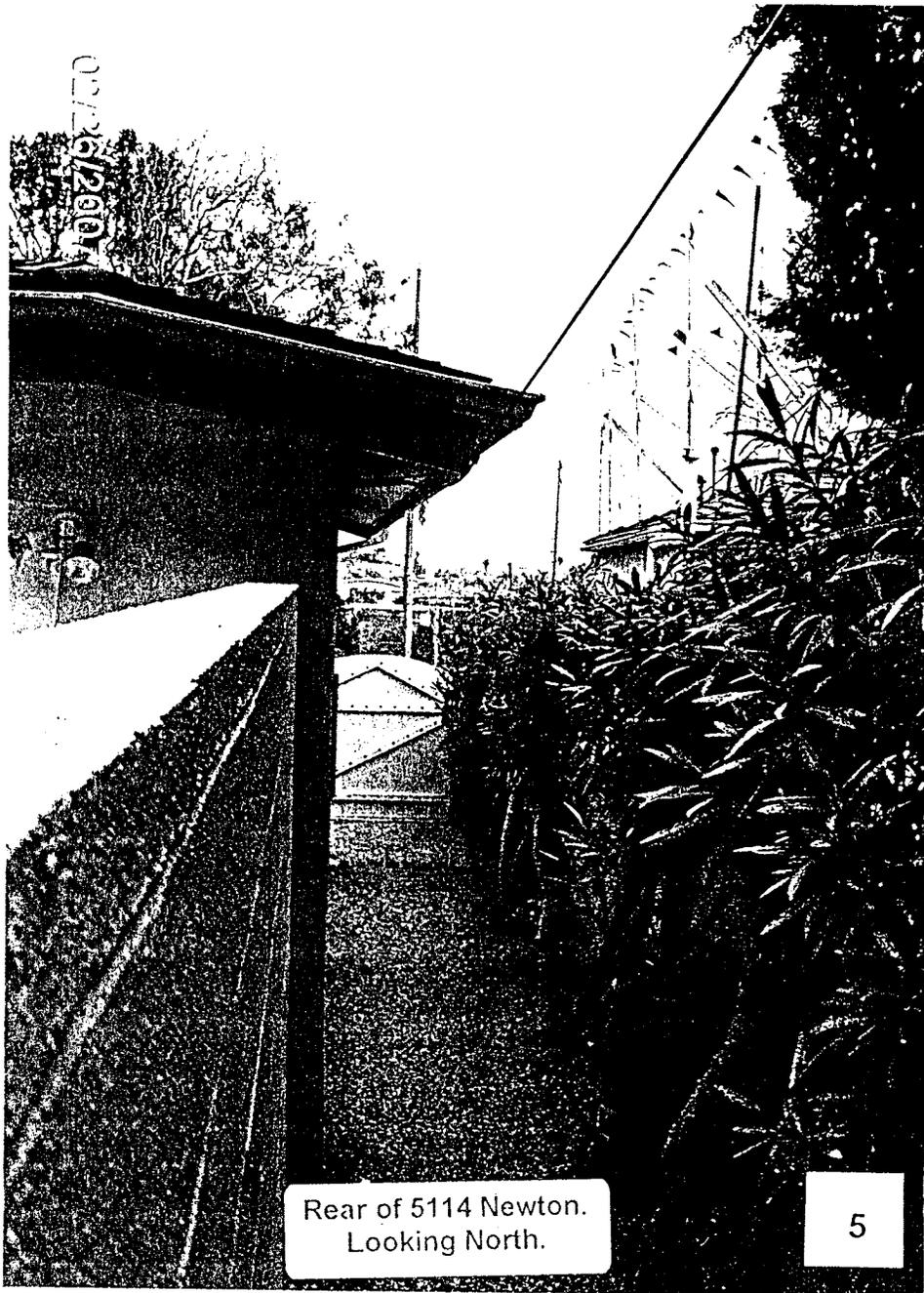
5102 5108
Looking South

3

02/26/2007

Rear of 5114 Newton
Looking East.

4



Rear of 5114 Newton.
Looking North.

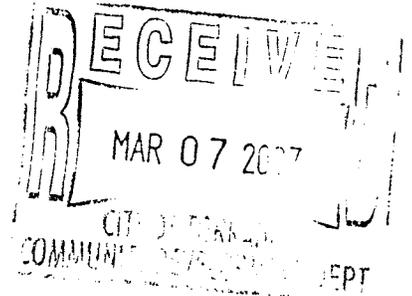
An Alternative Approach to Conflict

JUDY LANFRIED

MEDIATOR



Fax Request



Date: 3/7/2007

Send To: City of Torrance Community Development

Phone: (310) 618-5990

Fax: (310) 618-5829

Pages: 2 + Cover

From: Judy Lanfried

This message is intended only for the use of the individual or entity to which it is addressed and may contain information that is *Privileged, Confidential and Exempt From Disclosure* under applicable law. If the reader of this message is not the intended recipient, or the employee or agent responsible for delivering the message to the intended recipient, you are hereby notified that any dissemination, distribution or copying of this communication is strictly prohibited. If you have received this communication in error, please notify us immediately by telephone, and return the original to us by mail without making a copy. Thank you.

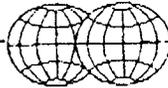
Attn: Oscar Martinez

That's you Oscar!

An Alternative Approach to Conflict

JUDY LANFRIED

MEDIATOR



March 7, 2007

City of Torrance
Community Development Department
3031 Torrance Blvd.
Torrance, CA 90503

Attn: Oscar Martinez

RE: PRE06-00041, 5108 Newton Street, Torrance, 90505
Hearing date set for 3/7/2007

From: Lanfried
5102 Newton Street, 90505

I wish to state for the record my objections to the new construction on 5108 Newton Street and I request changes to the design.

- View obstruction
- Privacy
- Property line encroachment and water drainage
- Multiple separate and permanent structures planned
- R-1 zoning maintenance of a high impact building
- Hillside construction
- Preservation of open space
- Compatibility of curbside design to neighborhood

This property is regulated by hillside overlay and Coastal Commission. This is a single family, R-1 zone with pastoral and city view features. Open space has been preserved on this fragile hillside and provides habitat for wildlife and migratory birds.

Discussion:

- 1.) Loss of view to the West and North-West due to the profile of the structure threatens the value of my property.
- 2.) Loss of privacy to the back yard and the NW side of my home is a quality of life and property value issue.
- 3.) The driveway access to the existing garage at 5108, runs along the property line of 5108 and 5102. The garage is less than 1 foot from that property line. Nahla has requested that I tear down my existing fence built on the property line (existing over

20 years and was present upon the purchase of 5108 by the Al-Samarrai family) and build a block wall fence that will support a car port structure to house the vehicles at 5108. Newton Street homes are built on very narrow pieces of property. My home is 5 feet from this fence and the walk-way provided there is my only access to my back yard. Any property line encroachment will harm my access.

My fence has been hit by cars entering and leaving this property many times. The Fence gate attaches to my home. I wish to prevent further damage to my home. A block wall with a car port will be much more expensive to repair and direct the water shed from that roof onto my property. This is unacceptable encroachment to my property.

- 4.) The proposed development will place three separate buildings on the R-1 property. I must protest the zoning change required for multifamily dwelling consent.
- 5.) Nahla requested that I grant written consent for her to build a one room office in her backyard. I approved the addition with the understanding that the room would be the same elevation as their existing home. They are now clearing the property for building on a higher elevation much further back on their property. We do not have a meeting of the minds. I now formally withdraw my approval. Privacy, pastoral view, concerns about geological stability of the hillside are the issues.

The mini fissures of geological fault lines become more evident with construction, intense rain and earth movement. I refer specifically to the Newton Street landslide that the City of Torrance spent years rebuilding and stabilizing in our recent history. I have seen no geological surveys of this sight. My property will be directly affected. The proposed room will be 20 plus feet above other homes on this block.

- 6.) The Hollywood Riviera is a unique area that preserves open space for eco-habitat. I Request consideration for a different profile that respects the community profile.
- 7.) Properties developed in this area have maintained a similar neighborhood profile. I request respect to the neighborhood by keeping the standards for street elevations that have been established for generations. Construction that does not conform to the look of the neighborhood, threatens the value of the exclusive nature of this community. The curbside design is unacceptable.

Beautiful homes can be built within local restrictions. Please do not allow this building to proceed as planned.

Thank You for your consideration., 
Judy Lanfried
Homeowner, 5102 Newton Street, Torr., CA 90505

AGENDA ITEM 14A

TO: Members of the Planning Commission
FROM: Development Review Division
SUBJECT(S): Precise Plan of Development - PRE06-00041 (SAMARRAI)
LOCATION: 5108 Newton Street

On March 7th, 2007, the Planning Commission voted to deny without prejudice PRE06-00041 by a vote of 6-0, with Commissioner Uchima absent. On March 21, 2007, the Planning Commission voted by a vote of 4-0, absent Commissioner Browning, Horwich and Weideman, to place the item on the agenda for the April 4, 2007 meeting to discuss the possibility of reconsidering the previous denial.

Staff recommends that should the Planning Commission vote to reconsider the item that it be scheduled to be presented before the Planning Commission on May 2nd, 2007. Staff notes that the reconsideration of the project will be re-noticed to ensure that all interested parties receive proper notification.

Prepared by,



Oscar Martinez
Planning Associate

Respectfully submitted,



for: Gregg D. Lodan, AICP
Planning Manager

Attachments:

- 1) Past Minutes
- 2) Past Staff report

SUPPLEMENTAL #1 TO AGENDA ITEM 14A

TO: Members of the Planning Commission

FROM: Development Review Division

SUBJECT(S): PRE06-00041 (SAMARRAI)

LOCATION: 5108 Newton Street

The attached correspondence was received subsequent to the preparation of the agenda item.

Prepared by,



Oscar Martinez
Planning Associate

Respectfully submitted,



Gregg D. Lodan, AICP
Planning Manager

Attachments:

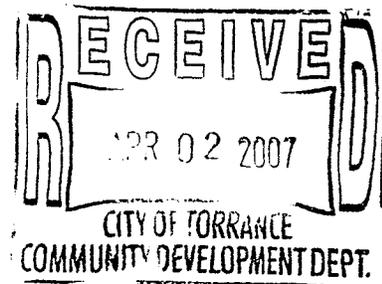
- 1) Correspondence Dated April 2, 2007
- 2) Correspondence Dated April 4, 2007

March 31, 2007

City of Torrance
 Community Development Department
 City Hall
 3031 Torrance Blvd
 Torrance, CA 90503

Attention: City Planning Commission

RE: April 4, 2007, Planning Commission Agenda
 Items 12 (Resolution) & 14 (Miscellaneous Items)



This is a follow-up to Subject items for further discussion and consideration at the April 4, 2007 Planning Commission public meeting.

As a homeowner at 5114 Newton St. and neighbors to the owner of proposed project at 5108 Newton St. for a two-story addition in The Hillside Overlay District, I wish to restate our position (as presented in our Feb.27, 2007 letter to the Commission and presented at the Commission's March 7, 2007 public hearing) of opposition to the height of this proposed project relative to the mold problem this addition will create.

Further, as a reminder, the Owner of the 5108 Newton property previously stated before the Planning Commission at the 3/7/2007 meeting that she also had a mold problem on her East wall created by the two story structure at 5102 Newton. As evidence of a distinct mold problem in this area, the 5102 Newton structure has a visible black mold problem already on the West wall. This exists due to the lack of sunlight on the surface of the structure walls.

We would also request that the Commission further investigate the purpose for the size of the proposed attic. The 5108 Newton Owner stated at the March 7, 2007 Commission meeting that the attic size was for storage of books. This size attic allows for a unreasonable number of books. As an example, our home has two bookshelves, 6'0" high by 3'0" wide by 1'0" deep with 6 shelves that holds 450 books and occupies 6 sq. feet plus 2'0" access across the front for a total of 18 square feet. This project has a 1200 square foot attic proposed for book storage. By my calculation, this 1200 sq. ft. attic space with an 8'10" ceiling would conservatively allow for storage of 20,000 to 25,000 books.

Once again, we respectfully request the Planning Commission move to deny this proposed structure for its environmental impact on the adjacent property at 5114 Newton Street. The extent of this project does not set a good example for future homes in the City of Torrance, and does not fit the character of the neighborhood.

Thank you for your time.

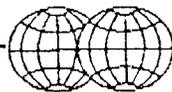
Sincerely,

Mr. & Mrs. William L. Haas
 5114 Newton St.
 Torrance, CA 90505
 (310) 378-7375

An Alternative Approach to Conflict

JUDY LANFRIED

MEDIATOR



April 4, 2007

City of Torrance
Community Development Department
3031 Torrance Blvd.
Torrance, CA 90503

APR 04 2007

Attn: Oscar Martinez

RE: PRE06-00041, 5108 Newton Street, Torrance, 90505
Hearing date set for 4/4/2007

From: Lanfried
5102 Newton Street, 90505

A complete list of objections was set forth in the 3/7/2007 letter to the planning commission. The following statement is an affirmation of position, intended as an amendment to 3/7/2007, submitted in response to the reconsideration of the precise plan of the Al-Samarrai family, scheduled for 4/4/2007.

The building design presented by the Al-Samarrai family is an unacceptable design for the Hollywood Riviera. The planning commissioners have rejected the plan.

Unlike the city of Los Angeles, this exclusive Ocean-Hillside community is not "an architectural free-for-all," as described by the article I have enclosed from March 24, 2007 edition of "The Economist." We do have design codes that are self and city enforced. This **social contract, backed up by the planning commission**, provides consistency of design in our R1 community.

There are other areas of the city where extended family dwelling are the norm. Condominiums and apartment houses in R3 sections of Southern California can accommodate large groups of people. If it is important for this family to keep this set of plans, then perhaps an R-3 section, where box like structures are a more acceptable design, should be used.

The designer and architect were not sensitive to the character of the community. There is no acceptable modification to this design. In order to keep the exclusive nature and value to the homes of the residents on Newton Street, please reject the current proposal or any modification to this plan.

Thank You for your consideration, Judy Lanfried.

them, which neither wants to. Mr Gore says it is up to America to show leadership.

The Democrats have two options. They can push now for the toughest carbon-curbing law that will survive a filibuster in the Senate and a possible veto by President George Bush. Or they can wait two years and hope to pass something tougher in 2009, with someone greener in the White House. Mr Gore says there is no time to waste, but Congress may waste it anyway.

Meanwhile, Mr Gore appears to be enjoying the limelight. He says he will not seek the presidency again, but many Democrats wish he would. Since he quit politics for advocacy, he has sounded more passionate and less calculating than Hillary Clinton, the front-runner for the Democratic nomination. But still, only 7% of Americans think the environment or global warming should be the government's priority. ■

"Persian palaces" created more recently by builders such as Mr Omrani, and clearly anticipates that no more will be built.

Compared with such finicky restrictions on architectural freedom, the measure proposed by the Los Angeles planning department is a wrecking ball. Following the lead of small, stylish settlements elsewhere, it wants to cut new buildings down to size. At present the owner of a 5,000 square-foot (465 square-metre) lot in a residential district is allowed to build a three-storey house with a floor area of 7,020 square feet. The planning department suggests restricting the floor area of a house on such a lot to 3,088 square feet—less than half the present size.

Increasing prosperity means the average American home is expanding (see chart). In Los Angeles, many of the big-house-builders are immigrants, who tend to have larger, more cohesive families. Yet even those who oppose restrictions believe that further limits on house size are inevitable. The fear that gardens will be shaded and privacy intruded on is simply too strong. Charlotte Laws, an estate agent who represents a district in the San Fernando Valley, says that when several options for building controls were presented to local people, they plumped for the most restrictive.

Mr Omrani, who, like many of his clients, is an Iranian Jew, is furious. "If I wanted to have mullahs telling me what to do, I wouldn't have left Iran," he growls. Yet, like others, he is trying to adapt to the growing list of controls by reining in designs and advising clients to remodel rather than rebuild. The result of the drift to preservation, he predicts, will be a blander city, less appealing to immigrants.

Perhaps only from some angles. A house where Leonard Bernstein, the composer, once lived is being replaced by an edifice that looks, from the front, like a conventional Beaux Arts mansion. But drive round to the back and it is clear that a different aesthetic prevails. Although only half-built, the roof has already buckled and bulged into a shape characteristic of the despised Persian palace. ■



Los Angeles architecture

From Persian folly to boring boxes

LOS ANGELES

Plans to make Lala Land look like anywhere else, almost

THE house that Hamid Omrani built in Elm Drive has the bulk of an iceberg and the appearance of a wedding cake. Sumptuous balconies jut out of the cream-coloured structure. Corinthian columns prop up the bulging roof. "Everybody likes columns," explains Mr Omrani. Everybody, that is, apart from local officials, who now frown on such architectural confections, and the Los Angeles planning department, which this week opened public hearings on a plan that would bar houses like it from being built in much of the city.

Los Angeles has long been an architectural free-for-all. Until recently, just about anything could be knocked down and replaced with just about anything else. The lack of control has produced undistinguished offices but an exuberant hodgepodge of housing styles. Walking south on Palm Drive from the corner of Burton Way in Beverly Hills, for example, the first four properties you pass are an Italian villa, a Tudor house, a Spanish-style bungalow

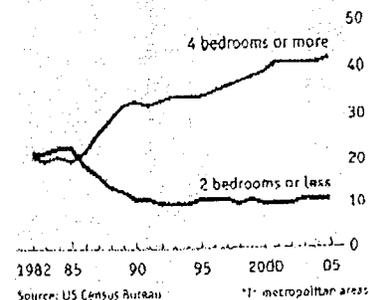
and a columned mansion. By the mid-1960s, observed Alison Lurie, a novelist, the city looked "like a stage set for some lavish comic opera".

As the city matures, though, it is turning conservative. It began labelling districts as "historic" in 1983, and the pace of preservation has increased in recent years. There are currently 22 historic neighbourhoods, containing some 14,000 properties, where boards vet plans for demolition and ensure that new buildings do not spoil the overall look of the area. Another 16 districts are waiting to join the club.

In some places politicians have gone further. Beverly Hills and San Marino have adopted design codes that make it hard to gain permission for new houses that are not stylistically "pure". Planners in Beverly Hills nod through English-style cottages and faux Normandy farmhouses, because houses like those were being built before the second world war. The city's style catalogue has nothing to say about the ornate

That mansion feeling

Bedrooms in new one-family houses*, %



Daily Breeze

5215 TORRANCE BLVD • TORRANCE CALIFORNIA 90503-4077
(310) 543-6635 • (310) 540-5511 Ext. 396

PROOF OF PUBLICATION (2015.5 C.C.P.)

STATE OF CALIFORNIA

County of Los Angeles,

I am a citizen of the United States and a resident of the County aforesaid; I am over the age of eighteen years, and not a party to or interested in the above-entitled matter. I am the principal clerk of the printer of the _____ THE DAILY BREEZE

a newspaper of general circulation, printed and published _____

in the City of _____ Torrance
County of Los Angeles, and which newspaper has been adjudged a newspaper of general circulation by the Superior Court of County of Los Angeles, State of California, under the date of _____

June 10, 1974

Case Number SW07146

that the notice, of which the annexed is a printed copy (set in type not smaller than nonpareil), has been published in each regular and entire issue of said newspaper and not in any supplement there of on the following dates, to wit

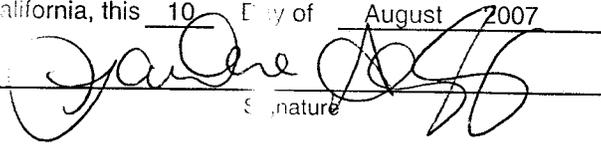
August 10,

all in the year 2007

the foregoing is true and correct.

Dated at Torrance

California, this 10 Day of August 2007

Signature 

This space is for the County Clerk's Filing Stamp

CITY OF TORRANCE

07 AUG 13 PM 12: 12

FINANCE DEPT.

Proof of Publication of

DB

DB 8-66 NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that a Public Hearing will be held before the Torrance City Council at 7:00 p.m., August 21, 2007, in the City Council Chambers of City Hall, 3031 Torrance Boulevard, Torrance, California, on the following matter:

PRE06-00041, Najib & Nahla Al-Samarrai:

City Council consideration of an appeal of a Planning Commission denial of a Precise Plan of Development to allow the construction of first and second-story additions to an existing one-story single family residence on property located in the R-1 zone in the Hillside Overlay District at 5108 Newton Street.

Material can be reviewed in the Community Development Department. All persons interested in the above matter are requested to be present at the hearing or to submit their comments to the City Clerk, City Hall, 3031 Torrance Boulevard, Torrance, CA 90503, prior to the public hearing.

If you challenge the above matter in court, you may be limited to raising only those issues you or someone else raised at the public hearing described in this notice, or in written correspondence delivered to the Community Development Department or the office of the City Clerk prior to the public hearing, and further, by the terms of Resolution No. 88-19, you may be limited to ninety (90) days in which to commence such legal action pursuant to Section 1094.6 of the Code of Civil Procedure.

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact the Community Development Department at (310) 618-5990. If you need a special hearing device to participate in this meeting, please contact the City Clerk's Office at (310) 618-2870. Notification 48 hours prior to the meeting will enable the City to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to this meeting [28 CFR 35.102-35.104 ADA Title II]. For further information, contact the DEVELOPMENT REVIEW DIVISION of the Community Development Department at (310) 618-5990.

**SUE HERBERS
CITY CLERK**

Pub.: August 10, 2007.

PROOF OF SERVICE BY MAIL

I, the undersigned, am a resident of the County of Los Angeles, State of California, over the age of eighteen years, and not a party to the within action. I am employed by the City of Torrance, 3031 Torrance Boulevard, Torrance California 90503.

On August 10, 2007, I caused to be mailed 70 copies of the within notification for City Council PRE06-00041: NAJIB AND NAHLA AL-SAMARRAI to the interested parties in said action by causing true copies thereof to be placed in the United States mail at Torrance California.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Executed August 10, 2007, at Torrance California.



(signature)

RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS IF APPROVED:

1. That the use of the subject property for a single-family residence shall be subject to all conditions imposed in Precise Plan of Development 06-00041 and any amendments thereto or modifications thereof as may be approved from time to time pursuant to Section 92.28.1 et seq. of the Torrance Municipal Code on file in the office of the Community Development Director of the City of Torrance; and further, that the said use shall be established or constructed and shall be maintained in conformance with such maps, plans, specifications, drawings, applications or other documents presented by the applicant to the Community Development Department and upon which the Planning Commission relied in granting approval;
2. That if this Precise Plan of Development 06-00041 is not used within one year after granting of the permit, it shall expire and become null and void unless extended by the Community Development Director for an additional period as provided for in Section 92.27.1;
3. That the maximum height of the residence at the highest point of the roof shall not exceed a height of 27 feet as represented by the elevation of 128.8 on the plans and a lowest adjacent grade of 101.8 based on a bench mark elevation of 100 located at the north westerly corner of the property as shown on the official survey map on file in the Community Development Department. The Silhouette Certification indicates the highest ridge is 128.8 and the lowest adjacent grade is 101.8 based on a benchmark elevation of 100 located at the north westerly corner of the property; (Development Review)
4. That the height of the structure shall be certified by a licensed surveyor/engineer prior to requesting a framing or roof-sheathing inspection and shall not exceed 27 feet based on the elevation of 128.8 as indicated on the plans and a lowest adjacent grade of 101.8 and based on the benchmark elevation of 100 as shown on the survey map on file in the Community Development Department; (Development Review)
5. That the within 30 days of the final public hearing, the applicant shall remove the silhouette of the proposed structure to the satisfaction of the Community Development Director; (Development Review)
6. That within 30 days of the final public hearing, the applicant shall remove the City's "Public Notice" sign to the satisfaction of the Community Development Director; (Development Review)
7. That exterior color and material samples shall be submitted to the Community Development Department for approval prior to the issuance of any building permits; (Development Review)
8. That automatic roll-up doors shall be provided; (Development Review)
9. That the applicant shall indicate true north on the plans; (Development Review)

10. That the applicant shall use the attic space for storage only and not as a habitable floor and only pull-down type stairs shall be allowed, not permanent stairs; (Development Review)
11. That the height of the attic space shall not exceed 6 foot four inches as represented on the plans; (Development Review)
12. That the attic space shall not exceed an area of 601 square feet; (Development Review)
13. That the applicant shall provide four inch minimum contrasting address numerals for residential, condo, etc. uses; (Environmental)