

August 14, 2002

Honorable Chairman and Members of the
Hermosa Beach Planning Commission

Regular Meeting of
August 20, 2002

SUBJECT: APPEAL OF DIRECTOR'S DECISION REGARDING THE GRADE AT A
RETAINING WALL ADJACENT TO A STREET CUT USED FOR THE HEIGHT
MEASUREMENT.

LOCATION: 224 HOLLOWELL

APPLICANT: GERALD W. COMPTON A.I.A.
1200 ARTESIA BLVD. #300
HERMOSA BEACH, CA 90254

Recommendation

To direct staff as deemed appropriate by minute order, from the following alternatives:

1. Use the grade from the actual existing corner points.
2. Use an alternative point at the top of the retaining wall as the best representation of existing unaltered grade.
3. Use a grade elevation at $\frac{1}{2}$ the difference between the bottom and top of the retaining wall.

Background

The subject lot is located at the southeast corner of 3rd Street and Hollowell Avenue. The corner points under consideration are the two located along the west side of the lot along Hollowell Avenue.

Analysis

Pursuant to the definition of building height, as set forth in Section 17.04.040 of the Zoning Ordinance, and the method of determining building height, as set forth in Section 17.46.015, the grade used for the height measurements is based on the surveyed elevation points at the property corners. The method for determining building height also allows consideration of "an alternative points within 3 horizontal feet which, based on supporting evidence, represents existing unaltered grade". Also, the definition states that "in the absence of supporting documentation the corner point elevation shall be established at $\frac{1}{2}$ the difference between the adjacent elevation and the elevation" at the corner. Pursuant to the definition, the final determination of the grade is referred to the Planning Commission, if required.

For the subject lot, the applicant is requesting consideration of alternative points on the top of the retaining walls which he argues were constructed to protect a street cut, not to raise the grade of the lot. The evidence provided includes a copied section of a street profile obtained several years ago from the Public Works Department which shows that Hollowell Avenue between 2nd and 3rd Streets was cut lower than the prior existing grade. At the northwest corner of the property it was cut approximately 2.5 feet and at the southwest corner it was cut approximately 5 feet. The difference between the top of

the existing retaining wall and the corner points on the current survey are consistent with this profile information.

Staff was not able to locate the street profile record as provided by the applicant to determine the date the street was cut, however, the street profile information appears to support the applicant's claim that the retaining walls were constructed to protect a street cut.

CONCUR:

Ken Robertson
Associate Planner

Sol Blumenfeld, Director
Community Development Department

Attachments

1. Information submitted by applicant.