

June 8, 2004

**Honorable Chairman and Members of the
Hermosa Beach Planning Commission**

**Regular Meeting of
June 15, 2004**

SUBJECT: C.U.P. AMENDMENT 04-2

LOCATION: 1911, 1921, 1931,1941 POWER STREET

APPLICANT: PROPERTY OWNERS / HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION
1911-1941 POWER STREET

REQUEST: TO AMEND THE PLANS RELATING TO THE REAR YARD RETAINING
WALL AND HILLSIDE LANDSCAPING FOR AN R-1 PLANNED
DEVELOPMENT

Recommendation

To direct staff as deemed appropriate from the following alternatives.

1. Deny the project.
2. Continue the project for the applicants to provide a complete plan for project landscaping including improvements in the individual back yards, a thorough and complete grading plan, and revised drainage calculations reflecting all improvements to verify that this project will not impact the storm drain system.

Background

At their meeting of May 13, 1997 the City Council approved the subdivision and Conditional Use Permit for an R-1 Planned Development consisting of four single-family lots, and a private street which contains storm water detention below the street. The City Council concurred with the Planning Commission of approval of the project March 4, 1997. The project was specific regarding the low profile retaining and landscaping improvements to stabilize the slope. The project approval was also very specific regarding drainage improvements because the project replaced a largely undeveloped 1.3 acre site located at one of the lowest points in the Valley Park area, which is an area known for insufficient capacity of the storm drain system, and which historically suffered from intermittent drainage and flooding problems.

In 1998, the Planning Commission approved an amendment to the drainage plan and conditions of approval allowing the developer to connect the detained storm water flows directly into the existing L.A. County storm drain under Valley Park Avenue, through an underground pipe. This was a preferable alternative as it allows the storm water to gravity flow directly into the storm drain, and bypass the public streets, and eliminated the need for pumping. This amendment, however, did not eliminate the

need for the on-site detention pipes incorporated into the project, which were designed to keep discharge rates in the storm drain below pre-development levels.

Since the last amendment, all the lots have been sold and developed with single family homes pursuant to the approved plans, and are owned by four separate property owners who are all party to the proposed amendment request in an effort to increase the amount of flat and usable rear yard areas.

Staff accepted the application without an environmental assessment, based on the scope of the project, and the project description, which is considered exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act. However, further information is required to evaluate the existing slope conditions and drainage impacts and it may be necessary to confirm this exemption finding, given the history of the site.

Analysis

The applicants are proposing to replace an existing low profile retaining wall located at the toe of the sloped along the western side of the properties. The existing retaining wall was constructed pursuant to plans, and consists of a slump-stone wall ranging between about 1.5 feet and 4 feet in height. The proposed new retaining wall structure would be placed further into the hill, in order to provide another 15-20 feet of yard area for each lot. The proposed new wall would measure as high as 13 feet.

At this point, the applicant has submitted conceptual plans, photographs, and a narrative description of the proposed construction scope of work. The conceptual plans are superimposed on the original survey and landscaping plans for the project and include detail sheets for the shoring, “shotcrete” retaining wall, stormwater leaching system, and waterproofing. The applicant plans to submit soils reports, detailed structural designs, and calculations prior to issuance of building permits. The applicant indicates that once the retaining wall is finished each property owner will then submit plans for improvements and landscaping in each rear yard area.

The construction will involve erecting a shoring wall with steel beams with wooden planks in between, and erection of a new concrete retaining wall using the shotcrete method. The storm water leaching system will be incorporated into this design, as shown on the detail sheets, by installing perforated pipes at the base of the retaining wall which connect into 7 dry well tanks to detain the water for percolation into the soil below the rear yard areas.

The proposed retaining wall itself would not appear to have any immediate effect on drainage, and therefore be consistent with the conditions of approval with respect to drainage. However, the overall impact on drainage will depend on future improvements to the rear yard areas, which are enlarged by constructing this wall, and which may include pools, concrete patios or other impermeable surfaces. These types of improvements might then have a collateral effect that would compromise the original drainage plan and calculation. The original drainage and detention system was designed to limit runoff from the site to the storm drain system at rates below pre-development levels. This is achieved by the use of underground storm water detention pipes, which temporarily store storm surges, and releases the water at rate lower than pre-development rates. The detention area is located below the surface of the private street, which is held in common by the property owners. The sizing of this storage area and the

outflow pipes are based on the original site design, which assumed a certain amount of permeable surfaces.

Therefore, since the landscaping was part of the original C.U.P. and the storm water detention devices were sized based on the original amount of permeable surface dictated by this landscape plan, a future case by case review of back yard improvements and landscaping may render to the original drainage plan unworkable. Instead, all the applicants should collaborate on a landscaping and grading plan, and make the necessary revisions to the hydrology calculations to verify that the existing system is sized appropriately.

Further, while the project can likely be engineered to safely shore and stabilize the slope, it is not totally clear at this point what the scope of that work might consist of, and how the construction process might effect neighboring properties. The plans at this point do not include detailed finished grading information or details regarding how much sand or soil will have to be hauled off site. The slope is unusually steep, ranging from 30-50%, and consists of sandy soil, further complicating the shoring and construction process. Also, the landscaping plan will be significantly compromised, and the amount of trees and shrubs that were planted to help stabilize the slope, and keep it in its natural condition, will be reduced.

Given the unique history, sensitive slope condition, and the specific nature of the planned development approval, staff does not believe the Planning Commission should consider approving this project unless fully developed plans are submitted, supported by the full complement of geotechnical studies, hydrology studies, structural calculations and grading information necessary to make an informed assessment.

CONCUR:

Ken Robertson
Senior Planner

Sol Blumenfeld, Director
Community Development Department

Attachments

1. City Council staff report and minutes 5/13/1997
2. Planning Commission minutes 3/4/97
3. Correspondence and exhibits submitted by applicant

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