

February 8, 2005

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

**Regular Meeting of
February 15, 2005**

CONTINUED FROM THE MEETINGS OF 6/15, 7/20, 8/17, 9/21, 10/19, 11/16/04, AND 1/18/05

SUBJECT: C.U.P. AMENDMENT 04-2- TO AMEND THE REAR YARD RETAINING WALL
AND LANDSCAPING FOR AN R-1 PLANNED DEVELOPMENT

LOCATION: 1911, 1921, 1931, 1941 POWER STREET

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

Recommendation

To direct staff as deemed appropriate.

Background

At the meeting of June 15, 2004, the Planning Commission continued the project to allow the applicant time to provide a complete plan for backyard landscaping, including improvements in the individual backyards, revised hydrology calculations reflecting all improvements to verify the project would not impact the storm water detention and drainage system, and a final detailed grading and construction plan for the wall. The applicant requested additional time to obtain all the landscape plans from the property owners, and the project was publicly noticed again for the January 18, 2005 meeting. The applicant has now submitted individual site and landscape plans for backyard improvements, and a revised hydrology study.

In May, 1997 the City Council concurred with the Planning Commission and approved the subdivision and C.U.P. for an R-1 Planned Development consisting of four single-family lots, and a private street. 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 since the project replaced a largely undeveloped 1.3 acre site located at one of the lowest points in the Valley Park area. The area is known for insufficient capacity of the storm drain system, and historically suffered from intermittent drainage and flooding problems.

In 1998, the Planning Commission approved an amendment to the drainage plan 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 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 into the County storm drain below pre-development levels.

All the lots have developed with single family homes pursuant to the approved plans, and are owned by four separate property owners who are party to the proposed amendment in an effort to increase the amount of flat and usable rear yard areas. There have been no reported problems relating to drainage since the project was constructed.

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.

Analysis

The applicants are proposing to replace an existing low profile retaining wall located at the toe of the slope 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 will be placed further into the hill, in order to provide another 15-20 feet of yard area for each lot. The proposed new wall measures as high as 13 feet. Also, the original landscaping plan is proposed to be changed since some of the trees and shrubs that were planted to help stabilize the slope, will be removed and replanted further up the slope where feasible.

The applicant has now submitted landscape plans for each lot, and a revised hydrology study to supplement previously submitted information which included description and details of the proposed wall construction and photographs. The plans submitted include the original survey and landscape plan. The applicant plans to submit detailed structural designs, and calculations, and any needed soils reports and detailed shoring plans regarding construction of the wall 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 which will be consistent with plans submitted as part of this C.U.P. amendment.

The construction will involve removing and hauling away the soil at the base of the slope, erecting a shoring wall with steel beams with wooden planks in between, and erection of a new concrete retaining wall using the shotcrete method. Staff is recommending, if approved, that the conditions include a requirement that a soil/debris hauling plan be included prior to the issuance of building permits, with detailed calculations as to the amount of soil and debris, and the route and timing for hauling the soil away.

The overall storm water runoff from the four lots will be impacted by proposed future improvements to the rear yard areas, which include pools, concrete patios, a guest house, a bathhouse, and other impermeable surfaces which are shown on the submitted landscape plans. These improvements increase the amount of runoff requiring an evaluation of the capacity of the sub-surface detention area. The drainage and detention system was designed to limit storm water flows into the County 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. The applicant has submitted a revised hydrology study, which evaluates the impact of the increased impervious surface area. The conclusion is that the existing capacity of the sub-surface detention is adequate to hold the increased runoff caused by the increased impervious surfaces, although the City has not confirmed whether all the assumptions and findings are accurate, because of the late submittal of the hydrology report and plans.

Further, while the project can likely be engineered to safely shore and stabilize the slope during and after construction and designed to resolve on-site drainage and grading issues, it is not clear based on the overall submittal what the scope of that work consists of, and how the construction process and

overall drainage will be coordinated between the adjoining property owners. The plans at this point also do not include detailed finished grading information, site specific drainage 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 that will complicate the shoring and construction process. Therefore, if the Commission approves the project based on the plans submitted, staff is recommending that the following issues be addressed in further plan submittals and approved by the City prior to issuing permits for the new retaining wall:

1. A final grading plan with detailed calculation for soil and debris removal, and a plan for hauling the soil and debris out of the neighborhood with minimum impact on the neighborhood.
2. A sediment and erosion control plan including best management practices to protect water quality.
3. Detailed geotechnical studies as necessary, and detailed engineering and shoring plans, including calculations to verify the stability of the slope during and after construction and method for shoring at each lot relative to existing built conditions.
4. Public Works Department final approval of the revised hydrology calculations and confirmation that the capacity and design of the existing system is adequate to handle the added runoff caused by this project.
5. Overall site plan with details (i.e. direction of drainage flows, catchment areas, drainage pipes) to show coordinated drainage among four lots and drainage to the detention system, and including drainage behind retaining (i.e. v-ditch, swale, etc.).
6. Overall plan clearly indicating wall heights and finished grades to verify applicants statement that the height of the wall will be adjusted to follow the natural contours of the hillside.
7. Retaining wall plan showing footing size and design and accurate depiction of retaining wall height and footing conditions with proposed hardscape and landscape in each lot.
8. Review of proposed plan by a geotechnical engineer.

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
4. Summary of Hydrology Study

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