

April 13, 2006

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

**Regular Meeting of  
April 18, 2006**

SUBJECT: APPEAL OF DIRECTOR'S DECISION TO CONFIRM HEIGHT  
MEASUREMENT ON A CONVEX SLOPING LOT

LOCATION: 535 GRAVELY COURT

APPLICANT: MONICA OWEN

**Recommendation**

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

1. Determine the property to be a regularly sloping lot and interpolate the grade from the corner points only; or
2. Determine the property to be a convex sloping lot and interpolate from intermediate points on the top of the slope, as proposed by the applicant.

**Background**

The subject lot is located on the west side of Gravelly Court. The lot is zoned R-2B with a height limit of 30-feet, and can be developed with one dwelling unit. The lot, like others along the west side of this block, slopes down gently from the street frontage for the majority of the lot and then slopes down steeply thereafter.

**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 elevations points at the property corners. The method for determining building height, however, also allows consideration of other points for lots with "convex" contours. In these situations, the grade of a lot may be based on alternate points along the property line in addition to the corner points. In cases where the datum for height measurement is disputed, the final determination of the grade may be referred to the Planning Commission.

The applicant is requesting consideration as a convex lot, and is proposing alternative points at the top of the bank as the basis for measuring height rather than the westerly corner points. This will allow the construction of a proposed two-story single-family dwelling on the flat portion of the lot. If a standard straight-line interpolation from the corner points were used, the construction of a two-story dwelling with a loft or roof deck would not be possible unless the building is lowered approximately 2 feet into the grade. No other properties on this block have requested convex slope determinations.

The applicant's request appears to be reasonable given the existing condition of the lot and surrounding terrain. Though staff believes a convex condition exists, the survey does not show much information regarding grade elevations along the north property line near the northwest property corner. Staff will work with the applicant to ensure this information is shown on the survey prior to plan submittal. The attached photos of the property and surroundings indicate that the grade of the lot, like others on the block, slopes steeply up from the rear of the lot and is relatively flat in the front portion of the lot. This condition appears to be a convex slope condition (see topographic profile).

CONCUR:

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Scott Lunceford  
Associate Planner

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Sol Blumenfeld, Director  
Community Development Department

Attachments

1. Property Survey
2. Topographic Profile
3. Photos



535 Gravelly Court – front view



535 Gravely Court – View along north property line looking west



535 Gravely Court – view of southwest property corner



535 Gravely Court – View along south property line looking west