

From: dave guthrie [mailto:guthried24@gmail.com]
Sent: Wednesday, May 29, 2019 7:01 PM
To: Johnston, Kristen <kjohnston@cityofpasadena.net>
Subject:

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Dear Kristen
City of Pasadena

We are neighbors to the property at 1155 Linda Vista Ave., where a new house is proposed to be built. The purpose of this letter is to let the City and the neighborhood know of our strong support for the proposed project, and the reasons for it. We are communicating with you, the City and the larger neighborhood, because we are concerned about the unity of the neighborhood and harmony among its residents, and believe that this project deserves to be supported.

A year ago we all received a flyer from Rodney & Deborah Ross, the new property owners, asking if they could introduce themselves and describe their plans to build a house on Linda Vista Ave. We met and we informed them of long standing problems with the property, and gave our own suggestions about what was needed to be done to resolve these issues, specifically the tree retention. Rodney & Deborah were exceptionally collaborative, responsive and sensitive to our concerns and issues.

Over a month ago, their initial proposal was approved by The City of Pasadena Hearing Officer, a necessary step for a Hillside Permit. The City's Hearing Officer based its decision on a set of issues within its purview under the Zoning Ordinance including the use of property, the height of buildings, the setbacks of buildings, the percentage of lot coverage, the lot area requirements, and the parking requirements. Their approval was based on the design meeting the criteria of the City's Zoning codes. The project is completely in keeping with the standards of the City Zoning Ordinance, blocks no protected views and poses no other detriments. In fact it provides amenities and improvements valuable to the neighborhood, such as the extensive landscaping, and tree retention.

However, as you know the appeal was then filed by the Linda Vista Annandale Association. The appeal raises concerns both about the project and the City's process. From what we see, the eight month City Zoning process, preceded by the months of working with the neighbors, was neither short nor deficient but rather, complete and proper. And as a neighbor, it is concerning that the local Neighborhood Association has filed an appeal without first soliciting and/or communicating to its members the concerns about this project and its obvious unilateral action against this property seems counter to the purpose of a neighborhood association.

We assume that we all have some areas of agreement like the willingness to welcome new neighbors and the interest in improving a blighted property. The project is designed to minimize its impact by providing the required parking for guests, by setting the house outside of the tree zone, and by making the house colored to blend in with surrounding vegetation.

Moreover the Ross's, in deference to their neighbors, are willing to invest in solutions to maintain the health of trees. All of us have been long distressed by the hazardous, dilapidated existing house and lot in the neighborhood – a problem that we want dealt with as soon as possible. All of us would prefer not to have an intensive development with disregard to the compatibility of the neighborhood, which would be a developer's likely alternative.

We are planning to appear at the June 5th meeting in support of this project.

Hopefully Joining together our support of this project will go a long way.

dave guthrie
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Ms. Kristen Johnston

City of Pasadena

Planning & Community Development Department

Planning Division

175 N. Garfield Avenue

Pasadena, CA 91101

kjohnston@cityofpasadena.net

Re: 1155 Linda Vista Ave

HDP # 6675

Dear Ms. Johnston:

We are writing in support of the project at 1155 Linda Vista Avenue. We live at 1450 Arroyo View Drive in Linda Vista. My husband is a Board member of the West Pasadena Residents Association as well as the Arroyo Seco Foundation. We are also members of the Linda Vista Annandale Association ("LVAA") and have had long careers as environmental lawyers.

While we are not going to address each aspect of the appeal, as a general matter it lacks substance and makes statements without any factual support to substantiate the assertion that the Hearing Officer erred in his decision. It appears that the appellant just does not like the design of this home or the owners but unfortunately for her, that cannot form the basis of an appeal. The fact is that the project applicants have complied with city standards and rules. The appeal is founded on the mistaken view that appellant's aesthetic tastes and baseless accusations about a well-respected arborist's opinion should prevail.

LVAA's challenge to the categorical exemption in CEQA that applies to the construction of every single family home in the State is meritless. In order for the limited "unusual circumstance" exception to apply, a reasonable possibility that the activity will have a significant effect on the environment due to the unusual circumstance must exist. No such circumstances exist here. The City's finding that there are no features that distinguish this project from others in the exempt class and therefore there are no unusual circumstances is correct. Having trees on a lot in Linda Vista is hardly an unusual circumstance. This argument is baseless.

Additionally, claims relating to the arborist are also without merit. As the Hearing Officer affirmed, the arborist hired by the applicants has been in business for over 40 years and has a stellar reputation. His findings were reviewed and determined to be satisfactory by the City. All parties involved should be able to rely on his findings without further review or inquiry. LVAA's innuendo that somehow the arborist is tainted or worse since he is paid by the applicant is offensive and without any factual basis. Appellants have presented no professional testimony or factual evidence backing their claims.

The applicant has designed a house that will fit into the beautiful landscape that exists on the lot. The home will be constructed around all of the oak trees and the matte brown metal cladding on the house will meld seamlessly into the landscape. What makes Linda Vista special are not the homes – there is no

architectural significance to most of the homes on Linda Vista Avenue - but the trees. The applicants have spent a lot of time, money and thought into creating a home that will fit into the lot and preserve the trees. This is something that previous owners of the property did not propose. So many of the newer homes in Linda Vista are oversized boxes with minimal or no landscaping. This house will be a refreshing change from that. Additionally, as discussed at the planning meeting, there are other houses in Linda Vista that have brown metal siding. This is nothing new for this community.

Finally, if others in the community felt strongly that 1155 Linda Vista should be preserved without development, they could have purchased the lot and controlled its fate. The applicants have property rights and should be allowed to develop the property so long as they are in compliance with the Hillside Ordinance and the General Plan and other applicable ordinances. The applicants have jumped through all the hoops and the project is in compliance with the Hillside Ordinance and the General Plan. They should be allowed to move ahead with this project and this appeal should be denied.

Barbara Zimmermann & Bill Christian

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May 28, 2019

Board of Zoning Appeals
Planning & Community Development Department
Planning Division, Current Planning Section
175 North Garfield Ave.
Pasadena CA 91101

re: June 5 hearing on HDP #6675, 1155 Linda Vista Ave

The poster on display at the property says that the proposed project "has been determined to be exempt from environmental review..., and there are no features that distinguish this project from others in the exempt class; ..." And the Development Permit was approved by the Hearing Officer on March 20, 2019. That the matter is coming before the Zoning Board on June 5 tacitly acknowledges that the earlier approval is not necessarily the final determination. (Otherwise, what would be the point of the June 5 hearing?)

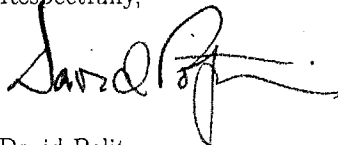
I am not an expert on code nor on tree health. However, as judged from the street, the proposed project seems to have an unusual environmental issue.

The lot is the center of a stand of ten mature Live Oaks. My understanding is that these trees are "protected" by the City of Pasadena. Three of the ten are actually outside the fences (which are likely the property lines), but they are on the fence, within a couple of feet, and about six feet distant, respectively. Perhaps only two of the ten are more than eight feet from the proposed construction or demolition. (These numbers are the best I can do from the street, but it is hard to imagine that a close-up inspection would be very different.)

The earlier hearing announcement poster noted that no tress would be removed. My concern is that, nevertheless, there are trees that will die. I imagine that the root system of a mature tree is at least as big as its canopy --- and likely much larger. And Live Oaks, while very hardy in their natural environment, have a hard time with many of the assaults that come from urban civilization.

I believe that this project warrants an environmental review including an evaluation by a qualified and impartial arborist.

Respectfully,



David Politzer