

Molinar, Tess

From: Christle Balvin <gobalvin@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, September 9, 2020 11:40 AM
To: Molinar, Tess; Wilson, Andy; André Coleman; Felicia Williams; Victor Gordo; Tim Brick; Lawrence Wilson; Sue Mossman
Subject: Manionization and housing in Pasadena

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To : members of the Pasadena Planning Commission

From: Christle Balvin

I strongly commend the Planning Commission and our City Council for reviewing the rules governing protection of Pasadena's older neighborhoods which contain much of Pasadena's history. I live in such a neighborhood. The homes that surround me were built by Sylvanus Marston and moved from what was either the Saint Francis court or the old Hotel Maryland. They are all craftsmen of a particular era and serve as a historic record of the period. But they are being threatened.

Two years ago, a couple from another country moved into our neighborhood and demolished one of the Marston homes which was not in good condition. Unfortunately they knew nothing of the history of the area. In the place of the demolished home, they have been allowed under Pasadena law to put up a two-story "mansion" that now blocks the sun from reaching the surrounding gardens and homes. They have also built a wall that exceeds height regulations. They did this by waiting until after the wall inspection and then adding additional height. As a result we have a craftsmen neighborhood with one huge structure in the middle that does not conform with the style and feel of the rest of the area and that is choking off sunlight to surrounding homes and gardens.

I have three recommendations. First, when residents from other countries come to make their homes here, it might be appropriate to hand them some information about Pasadena housing and our neighborhoods. Stressing compatibility with surrounding architectural styles should be a part of that message. Second, we need to look at height regulations and proximity to surrounding buildings. To me it is inappropriate to allow two-story mansions in mostly one-story neighborhoods. And new buildings should not be allowed to come so close to the property lines that they block the sun and the gardens that often surround the older pre-existing homes.

Finally, I want to make a comment about gardens. As most of you know, Pasadena was once referred to as the "City of Gardens."

With the City's decision to reduce setbacks for homes and condominium projects, trees and bushes that once protected properties from the urban heat island effect are no longer required. In this fire season and with all we are learning about the importance of trees to our health and the environment, we need to reexamine our rules and allow for more not less green space around all buildings. We need to recommend trees against all sun-facing building projects. Such changes can allow nature to help us reduce our energy use from air conditioners, etc. My plea to you is please let more nature back into Pasadena.

Thank you for considering my comments. .