



CITY OF GLENDALE, CA

DESIGN REVIEW STAFF REPORT – HILLSIDE SINGLE FAMILY

December 12, 2024

Hearing Date

652 Robin Glen Drive

Address

Design Review Board (DRB)

Review Type

5630-009-017 and 5630-009-014

APN

PDR-002779-2024

Case Number

Suro Barchyan

Applicant

Aileen Babakhani

Case Planner

Alen Petrosyan

Owner

Project Summary

The applicant is proposing to demolish an existing two-story, 3,391 square-foot single-family residence (built in 1977) along with all existing accessory buildings and structures; and to construct a new 9,756 square-foot, two-story single-family residence, a new detached five-car garage, a new infinity pool deck, and new retaining walls on an approximately 99,000 square-foot hillside site with an average current slope of 50 to 60 percent, located in the ROS-III zone (Residential Open Space - Floor Area Ratio District III). This is a second submittal for Final Review; on August 22, 2024, the DRB voted to "Return for Redesign".

Environmental Review

The project is exempt from CEQA review as a Class 3 "New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures" exemption pursuant to Section 15303 (a) and 15303 (e) of the State CEQA Guidelines, because the project is proposing to build one single-family residence and accessory (appurtenant) structures.

Existing Property/Background

The project site is an irregularly shaped, interior lot with an upsloping topography that consists of two adjoining lots, totaling approximately 99,000 square feet with an average current slope of 50 to 60 percent (according to the City Records). The site was originally developed in 1977 with an existing 3,391 square-foot, two-story single-family residence which is located on the southeast portion of the site. The current development features an attached three-car garage, a detached tennis court with an attached game room underneath located to the north side of the house, and a pool deck at the rear of the house. All existing buildings and associated structures are proposed to be demolished. The site contains one protected Oak tree (eight inches in trunk diameter), which is proposed to remain. As proposed, the project will involve an approximately 3,000 cubic yards of grading and a total of 75 percent of the site will remain as ungraded open space.

Research and analysis conducted by preservation staff finds that the property is not eligible for historic designation at the federal, state, or local level and is therefore not considered a historic resource under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Staff Recommendation

Approve with Conditions

Last Date Reviewed / Decision

This project was last reviewed by the DRB on August 22, 2024. The DRB decision was "Return for Redesign" with nine (9) conditions with a 3-0 vote. The Record of Decision and project plans are included with this report as Attachment #3.

Zone: ROS FAR District: III

Although this design review does not convey final zoning approval, the project has been reviewed for consistency with the applicable Codes and no inconsistencies have been identified.

Active/Pending Permits and Approvals

None.

Site Slope and Grading

50% or greater average current slope. The project will involve of approximately 3,000 cubic yards grading (export).

Neighborhood Survey

	Average of Properties within 300 linear feet of subject property	Range of Properties within 300 linear feet of subject property	Subject Property Proposal
Lot size	15,782 sq.ft.	7,8776 sq.ft. to 66,528 sq.ft.	99,000 sq.ft.
Setback	15 ft.	3 ft. to 50 ft.	39.5 ft.
House size	3,214 sq.ft.	1,668 sq.ft. to 4,464 sq.ft.	9,756 sq.ft.
Floor Area Ratio	0.26	0.1 to 0.39	0.10
Number of stories	1 to 2 stories (31% of homes are two-story)	1 to 2-stories	2-stories

DESIGN ANALYSIS

Site Planning

Are the following items satisfactory and compatible with the project site and surrounding area?

Building Location

☒ **yes** ☐ **n/a** ☐ **no**

If “no” select from below and explain:

- ☐ Setbacks of buildings on site
- ☐ Prevailing setbacks on the street
- ☐ Building and decks follow topography
- ☐ Alteration of landform minimized

Yards and Usable Open Space

☒ **yes** ☐ **n/a** ☐ **no**

If “no” select from below and explain:

- ☐ Avoid altering landform to create flat yards
- ☐ Outdoor areas integrated into open space
- ☐ Use of retaining walls minimized
- ☐ Provide landscaping to reduce visual impact of retaining walls
- ☐ Decorative material used for retaining walls to blend into landscape and/or complement the building design

Garage Location and Driveway

☒ **yes** ☐ **n/a** ☐ **no**

If “no” select from below and explain:

- ☐ Consistent with predominant pattern on street
- ☐ Compatible with primary structure
- ☐ Permeable paving material
- ☐ Decorative paving

Landscape Design

☒ **yes** ☐ **n/a** ☐ **no**

If “no” select from below and explain:

- ☐ Complementary to building design and surrounding site
- ☐ Maintains existing trees when possible
- ☐ Maximizes permeable surfaces
- ☐ Appropriately sized and located

Walls and Fences

☒ **yes** ☐ **n/a** ☐ **no**

If “no” select from below and explain:

- ☐ Appropriate style/color/material

- ☐ Perimeter walls treated at both sides
- ☐ Retaining walls minimized
- ☐ Appropriately sized and located
- ☐ Stormwater runoff minimized

Determination of Compatibility: Site Planning

The proposed site planning is appropriate, as modified by any proposed conditions, to the site and its surroundings for the following reasons:

- The proposed site planning has not changed from the first DRB review and it will not alter the existing site planning significantly because the new house and its associated accessory buildings and structures will mostly be sited on the existing flat portions of the site, which had been previously graded in 1977 and 1984. The proposed development meets the required setbacks.
- The new two-story house will be built on the existing flat pad of the existing house, while the new house will be moved toward the north side of the site by approximately 30 feet. The proposed detached garage will replace the existing tennis court and game room that are located on the north side of the house. The proposed pool deck and open patio at the rear of the house will replace the existing pool deck and will be extended toward the south and west side, following the site topography.
- To address the DRB condition no. 6 from the first DRB hearing, the pool deck and retaining walls on the west side were redesigned to meet the zoning code height restrictions. The maximum height of the new retaining walls behind the house and garage will not exceed 15 feet and the new retaining walls outside the 3-foot of the interior setbacks will have a maximum height of 5 feet. The project is proposing three successive retaining walls with at least a five-foot separation toward the northwest side of the site. The rear deck will have a maximum height of 14 feet (to the top of railing), meeting the zoning code requirements.
- The redesign meets the condition of the first DRB review (condition no. 7) and proposes a new retaining wall on the east side of the new house after the project's civil engineer verified the soli condition to avoid potential runoff.
- With the proposed additional grading of approximately 3,000 cubic yards, approximately 75 percent of the site will remain as ungraded open space.
- New retaining walls help to minimize the landform alterations and will replace the existing retaining walls in almost the same locations. The walls will have a white stucco finish, and new landscaping is proposed to reduce visual impact of the proposed retaining walls.
- The project's site does not directly face the street and is accessed from Robin Glen Drive by an approximately 100-foot-long and 44-foot-wide driveway. The driveway will remain unchanged; however, new stamped concrete, which is appropriate to the overall design is proposed for the driveway finish. The location and design of the new detached five-car garage are compatible with the primary building and meet the zoning code requirements.
- The existing protected Oak tree (eight inches in trunk diameter) which is located on the west side the existing tennis court will remain on the site. A condition of approval is added requiring the applicant to obtain required permits from Urban Forestry to protect the tree during construction. The proposed project will maintain most of the

existing landscaping and new drought-tolerant landscaping is proposed which is complementary to the building design and surrounding. The current project redesigned the landscape plan to meet the DRB condition no. 8 and replaced the proposed shrubs on the east side of the house with drought-tolerant trees (Catalina Ironwood/ Lyonothamnus) that will grow tall to provide privacy buffer.

- A new 4'-6" driveway gate is appropriately sized and located 35'-9" away from the street front property line. The gate includes wrought iron fences and stucco walls which are architecturally consistent with the proposed design and concept.

Massing and Scale

Are the following items satisfactory and compatible with the project site and surrounding area?

Building Relates to its Surrounding Context

☒ **yes** ☐ **n/a** ☐ **no**

If "no" select from below and explain:

- ☐ Appropriate proportions and transitions
- ☐ Impact of larger building minimized

Building Relates to Existing Topography

☒ **yes** ☐ **n/a** ☐ **no**

If "no" select from below and explain:

- ☐ Form and profile follow topography
- ☐ Alteration of existing land form minimized
- ☐ Retaining walls terrace with slope

Consistent Architectural Concept

☒ **yes** ☐ **n/a** ☐ **no**

If "no" select from below and explain:

- ☐ Concept governs massing and height

Scale and Proportion

☒ **yes** ☐ **n/a** ☐ **no**

If "no" select from below and explain:

- ☐ Scale and proportion fit context
- ☐ Articulation avoids overbearing forms
- ☐ Appropriate solid/void relationships
- ☐ Entry and major features well located
- ☐ Avoids sense of monumentality

Roof Forms

☒ **yes** ☐ **n/a** ☐ **no**

If "no" select from below and explain:

- ☐ Roof reinforces design concept
- ☐ Configuration appropriate to context

Determination of Compatibility: Mass and Scale

The proposed massing and scale are appropriate, as modified by any proposed conditions, to the site and its surroundings for the following reasons:

- The proposed architectural concept governs the mass and scale since the project reinforces a modern neo-classical architectural style which is characterized by larger scale, symmetrical forms, columns, friezes, and a preference for blank walls and simplicity of forms. In order to provide better proportions and avoid the sense of monumentality, as well as minimize the visual impact, the project was redesigned to meet the DRB condition no. 1 to reduce the proposed floor to ceiling height of 13'-6" feet at the first floor to 11'-6" and the previous floor to ceiling height of 11'-6" feet at the second floor to 9'-6"; the height of the proposed detached garage was lowered from 15 feet to 12'-6"; and the redesign removed the previously proposed detached cabana. The mass and scale of the proposed project are appropriate to the site and relate to the surrounding context.
- The proposed design provides articulations at the elevations of the house, fits within the neighborhood context of one and two-story homes, and meets the Hillside Design Guidelines as the house is designed to be located on the existing flat pad with the rear patio and new pool deck following the existing topography. Additionally, the current design addresses the DRB condition no. 2 that was related to the articulation on the facades that are visible from the street, particularly the east façade. The redesign reduces the boxy appearance and monumentality of the house by stepping back the second floor on the east façade.
- While the proposed 9,756 square-foot house is larger than the neighborhood's average house size of 3,214 square feet (within 300 lineal feet of the subject property including adjoining properties), the proposed house relates to the approximately 99,000 square-foot size site, which is the largest site in the neighborhood with the average lot size of 15,782 square feet. Furthermore, the new house and associated buildings will not directly face any street since the site is located behind the neighboring parcels that face Robin Glen Drive. In addition, any impact of the proposed larger building will be minimized due to the significant distances from the neighboring properties, higher elevation of the site, landscaping buffers; and staff believes the proposed second-floor setback along the east façade, the overall height reduction from 32'-11" (first submittal) to the current proposed 30'-11", and the proposed distinct color palette between the first and second floors exterior wall finishes meet the intent of the first DRB conditions for better proportions and avoiding the sense of monumentality as well as minimizing the visual impact.
- As proposed, the overall height of the house is 30'-11" which is less than the maximum allowed 35'-0" height limit in this zone for houses with pitched roofs of a minimum 3-feet in 12-feet.
- The proposed roof consists of hipped roofs with various pitches (3-feet in 12-feet, 4-feet in 12-feet, and 5-feet in 12-feet) and a flat roof in the center. The roof form reinforces the design concept, and the configuration of the roof is appropriate to the context.

Design and Detailing

Are the following items satisfactory and compatible with the project site and surrounding area?

Overall Design and Detailing

☒ **yes** ☐ **n/a** ☐ **no**

If “no” select from below and explain:

- ☐ Consistent architectural concept
- ☐ Proportions appropriate to project and surrounding neighborhood
- ☐ Appropriate solid/void relationships

Entryway

☒ **yes** ☐ **n/a** ☐ **no**

If “no” select from below and explain:

- ☐ Well integrated into design
- ☐ Avoids sense of monumentality
- ☐ Design provides appropriate focal point
- ☐ Doors appropriate to design

Windows

☒ **yes** ☐ **n/a** ☐ **no**

If “no” select from below and explain:

- ☐ Appropriate to overall design
- ☐ Placement appropriate to style
- ☐ Recessed in wall, when appropriate

Privacy

☒ **yes** ☐ **n/a** ☐ **no**

If “no” select from below and explain:

- ☐ Consideration of views from “public” rooms and balconies/decks
- ☒ Avoid windows facing adjacent windows

Finish Materials and Color

☒ **yes** ☐ **n/a** ☐ **no**

If “no” select from below and explain:

- ☐ Textures and colors reinforce design
- ☐ High-quality, especially facing the street
- ☐ Respect articulation and façade hierarchy
- ☐ Wrap corners and terminate appropriately
- ☐ Natural colors appropriate to hillside area

Paving Materials

☒ **yes** ☐ **n/a** ☐ **no**

If “no” select from below and explain:

- ☐ Decorative material at entries/driveways
- ☐ Permeable paving when possible
- ☐ Material and color related to design

Lighting, Equipment, Trash, and Drainage

☒ **yes** ☐ **n/a** ☐ **no**

If "no" select from below and explain:

- ☐ Light fixtures appropriately located/avoid spillover and over-lit facades
- ☐ Light fixture design appropriate to project
- ☐ Equipment screened and well located
- ☐ Trash storage out of public view
- ☐ Downspouts appropriately located
- ☐ Vents, utility connections integrated with design, avoid primary facades

Ancillary Structures

☒ **yes** ☐ **n/a** ☐ **no**

If "no" select from below and explain:

- ☐ Design consistent with primary structure
- ☐ Design and materials of gates complement primary structure

Determination of Compatibility: Design and Detailing

The proposed design and detailing are appropriate, as modified by any proposed conditions, to the site and its surroundings for the following reasons:

- The exterior design, detailing, distribution of materials, and colors meet the intent of the Hillside Design Guidelines and reinforce the proposed architectural style which blends into the neighborhood context of various architectural styles. The design utilizes high-quality materials which include smooth stucco finish, limestone wall finish, precast moulding and details, clay barrel roof tiles, bronze color steel doors and windows, wrought iron railings (black).
- The front entry is well integrated into design, provides focal point, and the scale is appropriate to the overall design concept.
- The proposed fenestration complements the architectural style. To address the DRB condition no. 9, the current design proposes thermal steel windows to meet the Building and Safety code (Title 24) requirements. The project's fenestration features dark color casement and fixed windows with exterior precast sill and trim.
- The current design eliminated the large balconies next to second floor bedrooms (rear façade) to avoid potential privacy conflicts with the neighboring properties at the east side (DRB condition no. 4). The proposed development does not appear to create any privacy conflict with the surrounding neighbors to the north, east, and south side due to the site topography, significant distances from the neighboring homes, and the existing and proposed landscape buffers. In addition, no windows from public rooms directly faces the neighboring properties. The proposed pool deck does not have direct views to the adjacent properties to the east as well. There is no neighboring property to the west side of the subject site.
- The proposed stamped concrete for the driveway finish relates to the design concept.

- To meet the DRB condition no. 5, the redesign relocated the outdoor kitchen (BBQ counter) and HVAC condensers to the west side of the house. The project's trash storage bins are well screened and located out of public view.
- The project is proposing an internal roof drainage system, and no exterior gutters or downspouts are proposed.
- The design and materials of the proposed ancillary structures and buildings including a new detached garage, pool deck, gates, and walls are consistent with the main residence and complement the design.
- The location and design of the proposed light fixtures are appropriate to the overall design and concept.

Recommendation / Draft Record of Decision

Based on the above analysis, staff recommends **Approval with Conditions**.

1. Obtain required permits from the Maintenance Services Division (Urban Forestry) to protect the existing Oak tree on the site.

Attachments

1. Project's Plans for Current Proposal
2. Applicant's Statement for Current Proposal
3. Record of Decision, Staff Report, and Reduced Plans for DRB Hearing on August 22, 2024 (First Submittal)
4. Photos of Existing Property
5. Location Map
6. Neighborhood Survey
7. Geotechnical Report, dated January 12, 2018