



CITY OF GLENDALE, CA
REPORT TO THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
DESIGN REVIEW STAFF REPORT – SINGLE FAMILY

July 18, 2024

Hearing Date

1916 Niodrara Drive

Address

Historic Preservation Commission

Review Type

5614-019-039

APN

PDR-002878-2024

Case Number

Amanda Dillin

Applicant

Milca Toledo

Case Planner

Sean Spillane

Owner

Project Summary

The applicant is proposing site improvements to the rear yard of the 14,389 square-foot (SF) property that is developed with a three-story, 3,012 SF single-family house and attached 547 SF garage (built in 1941). The property is a contributor to the Niodrara Drive Historic District on the east side of Niodrara Drive between Hillside Drive and Fernbrook Place. The rear façade and yard of the house front onto Niodrara Drive and the front façade abuts the alley to the east. The existing historic stone retaining walls and all existing trees in the rear yard will be preserved, with repairs being made to the stone walls as needed. The flagstone entry walk along the south side of the lot will also remain.

The following site improvements are proposed at the rear yard:

- Remove the existing three-foot high chain link fence located within the City's public right-of-way and install a new, six-foot high wrought iron fence with an entry gate, set back five feet from the street front property line and spanning the entire width of the property along Niodrara Drive. A setback variance was approved for the new fence/gate under Variance case no. PVAR 2200992. The City's Urban Forestry staff reviewed the project and provided comments (Exhibit 7). In summary, they support the request provided that the applicant complies with Urban Forestry conditions as noted in their memo.
- Infill the existing concrete-and-stone dry streambed and ponds with soil and plants, creating a vegetated rain garden infiltration bedding area. The existing concrete bottom will remain with French drains. The existing rocks that outline the perimeter of these features will be preserved in their current form, providing a decorative stone edge around the rain garden.
- Remove two existing wood bridges – one bridge on the property's north side will be replaced with man-made slab and reconstructed with river rock cobble, and the

other bridge on the south side will be removed and replaced with a new, custom wooden bridge with metal railing across the stream bed/ new rain garden.

- Construct a new swimming pool (29 ft., 8-inch by 18', 4-inch at the flat area between the streambed and the house, featuring a stone edge coping and new flagstone decking around the new swimming pool area.
- Construct a five-foot high, pool equipment enclosure with a wood finish along the south side of the lot.
- New drought tolerant planting, turf, etc., will be installed throughout the rear yard. All existing trees will be retained, including the protected oaks and sycamores.
- A new pedestrian path featuring stepping stones and gravel will be added along the north side of the property.
- Construct a new, eight-foot high (10 ft. by 15 ft.) free-standing metal pergola in the garden area near the south interior property line, featuring a canvas shade attached to the pergola's overhead cross beams.
- Keep the existing flagstone walkway along the south side of the yard leading from the existing entry gate to the streambed.
- Remove and replace the existing flagstone walkways immediately around the house with new flagstone of similar appearance, and proposing a new flagstone walk/pathway leading from the new entry gate (facing Niodrara Drive) on the north side, continuing towards the center of the lot. This area has limited visibility from the street.
- Install a seasonal rain garden, featuring gravel and river rock boulders at the north end of the streambed.

Environmental Review

The project is exempt from CEQA review as a Class 31 "Historic Restoration or Rehabilitation" pursuant to Section 15331 of the State CEQA Guidelines because the fence and proposed changes to the rear yard, if approved by HPC, would not have an adverse impact on the subject property's ongoing status as a contributor to the Niodrara Drive historic district. The project is also exempt from CEQA review as a Class 3 "New Construction or Conversion of Small structures" exemption pursuant to Section 15303 of the State CEQA Guidelines because it involves the construction of a new six-foot high wrought iron fence, a free-standing pergola, a new swimming pool, and changes to the exterior rear yard of the property.

Existing Property/Background

The 14,389 SF irregular shaped lot is relatively flat but has sloping terrain along its sides, particularly at the north. The lot has approximately 66 feet of frontage along the west property line facing Niodrara Drive and 80 feet of frontage along the east property line facing the alley. The property features a three-story, 3,012 SF single-family house with an attached 547 SF garage (built in 1941). The front façade, which includes the primary entry and the attached garage, faces onto the alley to the east. The rear façade and the backyard face Niodrara Drive, with a setback of 121 ft., 5-inches from the street.

The property is located in the Niodrara Drive Historic District on the east side of Niodrara Drive between Hillside Drive and Fernbrook Place. The neighborhood is notable for its density of oaks and sycamores, along with hardscape features associated with the stream that once ran alongside Niodrara Drive. These features include stone-outlined concrete streambeds and pools found at numerous properties, including the subject site, stone

bridges that carry public streets over the streambed, and various stone walls and curbs found on both private and public property.

The subject site has several character-defining features including several protected oak trees along the Niodrara frontage and a large California Sycamore tree at the northeast side of the property. An arborist report was prepared for the project by Fleur Nooyen and Associated, LLC (dated September 29, 2021 (Exhibit 6). The City's Urban Forestry staff has reviewed the report and provided comments (Exhibit 7). Hardscape features include the concrete-and-stone dry streambed and ponds spanning the width of the lot toward the middle of the property, several stone retaining walls at the north side of the lot, a stone curb along Niodrara, and a stone foot path leading to stone and concrete steps at the south side of the property. The site does not contain any blue line stream or primary/secondary ridgelines. The property is surrounded by residential lots to the north, south, east (across the alley) and west.

Staff Recommendation

Approve with Conditions

Last Date Reviewed / Decision

First time submittal for final review.

Zone: RI FAR District: I HD (Historic District)

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

On July 27, 2022, the Planning Hearing Officer (PHO) reviewed and conditionally approved the owners' request for a variance to allow the construction of a metal fence to be set back from the property line by five feet. An appeal of this decision was filed by the Verdugo Woodlands West Homeowners Association and, on June 7, 2023, the Planning Commission voted to sustain the PHO's decision to allow the removal of the existing unpermitted chain link fence and installation of a new six-foot high iron fence located five feet from the west property line where a minimum 25-foot street front setback is required in the R1 zone.

Site Slope and Grading

The site topography consists of relatively flat terrain but has sloping terrain along its sides, particularly at the north side where there is a four-foot grade difference. Grading is proposed in conjunction with the construction of the new swimming pool. The amount of grading is to be determined by the pool contractor in the future (under a separate permit). There are no blue line streams, or primary/ secondary ridgelines located on the subject lot. There are protected oak and sycamore trees on the property.

DESIGN ANALYSIS

The following analysis is specific to the proposed site-improvements to the rear yard and modifications to existing features on the site, facing Niodrara Drive.

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

Garage Location and Driveway

☐ **yes** ☒ **n/a** ☐ **no**

If "no" select from below and explain:

- ☐ Predominant pattern on block
- ☐ 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
- ☐ 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

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 plan reflects the lot's current topographical features. No changes are proposed to the existing building footprint, existing stone walls, existing perimeter fences along the north and south sides, protected trees, dry stream bed, or walkways. These existing character-defining features will remain in their current form, though the streambed and ponds will be infilled with soil and landscaping, appropriately respecting the historic nature of the site.
 - The new fence and entry gate are proposed five feet away from the street front property line (facing Niodrara Dr.), appropriately located on the flat portion of the property and separating the areas of grade change from the street. This placement also avoids disturbing the existing protected oak trees and the stone retaining walls at the northwest portion of the property.
 - A new entry gate and flagstone-paved walkway are proposed along the northwest side of the property, providing access from the street (Niodrara Dr.) to the rear yard.
 - Placement of the pergola towards the center, south side of the property and placing the new swimming pool towards the center, flat open space portion of the lot, significantly away from the street and the existing dry stream bed, provide desired amenities for the owners while also preserving existing historic features and overall character of the property.
 - New drought tolerant landscaping ranging from moderate to very low water usage is proposed throughout the rear yard, and all existing trees on site, including but not limited to, the existing protected oak and sycamore trees will be preserved.
 - The new vegetated rain garden will fill the existing dry stream bed and ponds, retaining their shape and grade-level stone perimeter. This streambed infill could be removed if the Niodrara stream ever returns in the future. Other plantings will also complement the property and neighborhood's rich landscape palette.
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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
- ☐ Relates to predominant pattern
- ☐ 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:

- Placement of the pergola, the fence and the swimming pool on portions of the lot that are open and flat, appropriately relates to the site's topography, the existing house and the neighborhood.
 - The proposed metal pergola and canvas shade cover integrates well with the site, the existing house and the neighborhood. The open structure and eight-foot height will not compromise views toward the house from the street.
 - The new six-foot high fence and entry gate are proposed on the flat portion of the lot, setback five feet away from the street front property line. As proposed, the location of the new fence and gate properly address the site's topography, avoiding any conflict with the existing historic stone walls. The new fence is designed to be highly transparent, featuring narrow vertical wrought iron pickets, avoiding solid materials which could potentially emphasize its mass and block views from the street.
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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

The ornamental design of the entry gate facing Niodrara Drive appropriately resembles and complements the existing railing on the house. However, the simplicity of the fence’s vertical pickets lacks interest and detail. To better enhance the design and look of the new fence, staff suggest a condition to introduce some minor ornamental detail, such as an additional horizontal member and fewer vertical pickets to create a course running along the top of the fence, in order to provide a more customized appearance while maintaining the simplicity of the proposed design.

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

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

Site lighting is not clearly identified on the site/landscaping plan. A condition is included to identify all site lighting throughout the property, appropriately located on the site, avoiding spillover and excessive lighting in the rear yard. And submit a cut sheet of all proposed light fixtures associated with site and/or landscape lighting including the new pergola for staff review and approval.

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 new six-foot high fence is designed with simple, straight ($\frac{3}{4}$ " by $\frac{3}{4}$ ") vertical iron pickets. The steel entry gate features a custom ornamental design, appropriately matching the existing steel railings on the house. However, the entry (pedestrian) gate features a perforated metal mesh behind the ornamental steel design. To better enhance the simple design of the new fence, staff suggest a condition to introduce minor ornamental details, which complements the ornamentation/design of the new gate and existing balcony railings on the house. The new fence and gate will be painted black to match existing railings currently on the house and minimize its visibility.
- The simple, steel shade structure, featuring an earthtone color canvas awning appropriately integrates with the new landscaping, overall site improvements and the

neighborhood. Its metal columns and cross beams will be painted black to match the new fence/gate on the west side (facing Niodrara) as well as existing railings on the house.

- The new pool equipment is proposed to be adequately screened with a new five-foot high wood enclosure. Additional, new landscaping is proposed on and around the new enclosure, providing appropriately screening from the street and adjoining properties.
 - Staff suggests that all proposed site lighting throughout the property be clearly depicted on the site and landscape plans. Lighting should avoid spillover and excessive lighting in the rear yard. Also, a staff suggests a condition to submit a cut sheet of all proposed site lighting fixtures, including lighting on the new pergola for staff review and approval.
 - The new flagstone pavers proposed on the new pool deck, on and around the pergola area, and on the new walkway along the north side of the property, appropriately complement the site and the existing flagstone-paved walkway on the property's south side. Overall, the new hardscape (design, color and finish) integrates well with existing and proposed site improvements and the new planting.
 - Overall, the design of the new swimming pool and pool deck finish as well as the new vegetated garden within the existing dry stream bed, all complement and appropriately enhance the site and the neighborhood.
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Historic District Design Guidelines and Rehabilitation Standards Analysis

Glendale Historic District Design Guidelines Analysis

The district design guidelines do not provide much guidance for most of the work in the current proposal. Character-defining hardscape and landscape features are recommended for retention but there is no discussion of items such as fences, swimming pools, or garden structures such as the proposed pergola. The following character defining features of the rear yard identified on the DPR form are discussed individually:

- *Coast live oaks (rear yard) and one California sycamore (north side of property)*
Per the owner's arborist report, as supported by the city's Urban Forester, the placement of the new fenceposts will avoid any impact to the oak trees at the west (street) edge of the property. The stepping stones and gravel proposed for the area at the north side of the house, under the sycamore tree, will allow aeration and water permeability and the arborist's report indicates that a new wood fence proposed at this area (not visible from the street) will not affect the tree's root system.
- *Stone streambed and stone ponds (4)*
The streambed and ponds are actually lined with concrete, rather than stone, with the stone being featured only at the upper portion of these features. The proposal will retain these materials in their existing locations and configuration, except for the removal of some concrete at the bottom of the streambed to allow for water percolation. The dry streambed will, however, be infilled with soil, drainage infrastructure, and plants. The current owners do not wish to maintain a decorative recirculating water feature or have the currently dry streambed span the width of the rear yard. Staff supports the infill proposal because the work is reversible and

will allow a future owner to restore the water feature with its original configuration and materials intact.

- **Wood footbridges (2)**
Two wood bridges span the streambed. A long, relatively flat bridge crosses the wide pond area to the north and a short, slightly arched bridge crosses the streambed closer to the south property line. Staff believes that these bridges, which are deteriorated, are not original features and supports their removal. A new flat, grade-level wood bridge will be added at the location of the current south bridge and is not expected to be visible from the street.
- ***Stone retaining wall and stone curb***
The retaining wall, which is near the northwest corner of the house, and the stone curb, which is in the public right-of-way, will be retained. A new flagstone stair and pathway will replace the current plain concrete pathway. The historic district survey team did not identify the stone retaining walls near the northwest portion of the rear yard, likely because the walls' orientation makes them somewhat less visible from some angles. The flagstone footpath at the south side of the lot was identified on DPR as a hardscape feature but not as character defining. Staff believes these are also historic features of the property and the proposal calls for them to remain in place.

Staff believes that other portions of the proposal are appropriate to the property and the district. It is rare for a rear yard to face a street, as is the case with 1916 Niodrara, and features such as the swimming pool and pergola will have some visibility. Nonetheless, these will have a minimal visual impact due to their distance from the street and their integration into the proposed landscape design.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation Analysis

Staff believes the proposed work can comply with the Rehabilitation Standards if the recommended conditions are imposed, as follows:

1. A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.

The property was developed as a single-family residence and will remain a single-family residence. The house was built with its large rear yard facing Niodrara Drive and the current proposal retains that use.

2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.

The Niodrara streambed and associated stonework is a key feature of this district. Though now dry, visible remains exist at a number of properties along Niodrara Drive. At 1916 Niodrara, the streambed spans the width of the property with its key feature, the perimeter stonework, being primarily visible at or above grade level. The proposal calls for retaining all of the stone and most of the (non-visible) concrete, though the bed itself will be filled with soil and plants. While this does alter this feature, the work is completely reversible and is proposed to address the owners' keeping the open streambed, which is dry most of

the year but is occasionally partially filled with stagnant rainwater. Staff supports the proposal because of its reversibility.

3. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.

No conjectural features are proposed. Flagstone paving is proposed for the new walkway at the north side of the yard and the deck around the pool, with this material chosen to reflect the original use of flagstone at other portions of the property, including the walkway at the south side of the yard that will be retained.

4. Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.

The two wood bridges currently in place do not appear to be original and nothing about them suggests that they have gained historic significance.

5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved.

All historic features will be retained as

6. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.

No deteriorated features are proposed for replacement.

7. Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.

Not applicable.

8. Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.

Not applicable.

9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.

The proposed work will not destroy any character-defining features or materials. New work, such as the pool and pergola, will be of a simple, contemporary design that will be compatible with the clean lines and simple volumes of the house.

10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

None of the new work will impact the form or integrity of the house and, as discussed above regarding the infilling of the streambed, all other proposed work will also be easily removed in the future.

Recommendation / Draft Record of Decision

Based on the above analysis, staff recommends **Approval with Conditions**. This determination is based on the implementation of the following recommended conditions:

Conditions

1. Redesign the fence to introduce a simple design element that will help it avoid the proposed “off-the-shelf” appearance while also having a straightforward, unobtrusive design.
 2. The gate and fence shall maintain a sense of transparency and no perforated metal mesh, as proposed for the gate, or other materials shall be incorporated that would limit or obscure visibility through the gate and/or fence.
 3. That all site lighting throughout the property be clearly depicted on the site and landscape plans, appropriately located on the site, avoiding spillover and excessive lighting in the rear yard. Also, submit a cut sheet for all proposed site lighting on the property including lighting for the pergola for staff review and approval.
 4. Comply with all Urban Forestry conditions regarding construction of the fence as outlined in July 24 memo.
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Attachments

1. Reduced Plans
2. Photos of Existing Property
3. Location Map
4. Photos of the Neighborhood
5. Copy of Planning Commission’s Variance Motion (PVAR 2200992), approving the location of the new fence
6. Arborist Report
7. Urban Forestry Comments dated July 2024
8. DPR Form: 1916 Niodrara Drive