



## CITY OF GLENDALE, CA

### DESIGN REVIEW STAFF REPORT – HILLSIDE SINGLE FAMILY

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|--|---|
| <b>January 12, 2023</b><br><i>Hearing Date</i>         | <b>1766 Cielito Drive, Glendale, CA 91207</b><br><i>Address</i> |
| <b>Design Review Board (DRB)</b><br><i>Review Type</i> | <b>5648-029-015</b><br><i>APN</i>                               |
| <b>PDR 2113521-B</b><br><i>Case Number</i>             | <b>Aram Alajajian</b><br><i>Applicant</i>                       |
| <b>Vista Ezzati, Planner</b><br><i>Case Planner</i>    | <b>Jack Demirchian &amp; Souseh Babomian</b><br><i>Owner</i>    |

#### Project Summary

The applicant is proposing to demolish the existing 1-story, 3,246 square-foot (SF) single-family dwelling with attached, 2-car garage (originally built in 1961) and to construct a new 2-story, 4,855 square-foot single-family dwelling with an attached, subterranean, three-car garage on a 23,620 square-foot, double-frontage lot located in the R1R (FAR District II) Zone. This is a second submittal for Final Review; on May 26, 2022, the DRB voted to "Return for Redesign".

The proposed work also includes:

- A new expanded outdoor deck and new pool at the rear of the house and facing lower Cielito Drive.
- 1,450 cubic yards (CY) of grading which includes 1,129 CY of cut, 321 CY of fill, and the remaining 808 CY will be exported.

#### 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 of the State CEQA Guidelines because the project involves the development of one single-family residence.

#### Existing Property/Background

The project site is a 23,620 square-foot, irregularly shaped, double-frontage lot with frontage on Cielito Drive to the north ("upper Cielito"), and to the south ("lower Cielito"). Upper Cielito Drive slopes down from north to south, and the subject hillside lot features an average current slope (ACS) of approximately 39.5%. Originally developed in 1961, the site currently features a one-story, 3,246 square-foot single-family dwelling with an attached two-car garage, swimming pool, and outdoor deck at the rear. The existing house sits on a flat pad that is oriented towards, and sitting approximately ten feet lower than, upper Cielito Drive. Oriented towards lower Cielito Drive, the rear of the house steeply

slopes down from the existing pool and deck area down to the street below. The southeasterly portion of the property is located in a landslide hazard potential zone and will remain undeveloped. The applicant has submitted a Preliminary Geologic and Geotechnical Engineering Investigation that is included as Attachment #8 to this report. The project site is accessed via an existing driveway along upper Cielito Drive which will be maintained as part of the proposal.

A Historic Resource Evaluation was prepared for the property by Kaplan Chen Kaplan, dated March 24, 2022 (Attachment #9). The evaluation concluded that the existing building does not meet any criteria for designation at the national, state, or local level. The evaluation also concluded that the existing building is not a distinctive or exemplary representative of its architectural style, type, or period, and no evidence was found indicating the site is associated with important events or people in history. Therefore, the property is not considered a historic resource under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

For the DRB hearing on May 26, 2022, the Glendale Historical Society (TGHS) submitted comments (Attachment #10) disputing the findings of the Kaplan Chen Kaplan evaluation. The TGHS comments state that the property should be considered a historic resource because it retains character-defining features of the Mid-Century Modern style, and because it is directly associated with individuals that contributed to the history of the city. Architecturally, the house has a few interesting features, including limited areas of stone cladding, a rock roof, rounded bay windows at a side facade, and an irregular footprint. In combination, however, these features do not suggest the property to be an exemplary specimen of the Modern architectural style or its mid-century sub-variants. The original owners of this property are Tom and Wanda Bistagne who are associated with the Bistagne Brothers Auto Shop located at 1400 East Chevy Chase Drive, which began operating in 1946. This building, which retains a great deal of its original appearance and has a strong connection with the Bistagne Brothers automotive work was found to not be a historic resource in the 2019 South Glendale Historic Resource Survey and the research provided in the TGHS report that goes beyond the survey's purview improperly concludes there is significance under Glendale Register Criterion 2 based primarily on a few anecdotal references in a journal for car enthusiasts. A close reading of the comments indicates that even the commenters felt there was not enough information available to make a full assessment of the company's role in the car culture of the Los Angeles area. The comments also cite the couple's involvement in civic groups and philanthropy, which was common among some business owners and a finding of significance in these areas would require more information than that provided by TGHS.

To conclude, staff has reviewed the information submitted by TGHS and finds that its determination regarding the eligibility of the property is unsupported by the evidence provided. Additionally, staff supports the Kaplan Chen Kaplan report's conclusion that the property should not be considered as a historic resource. On June 23, 1960, the Glendale City Council adopted Ordinance No. 3214 that established a 20-foot special setback line along both upper and lower Cielito Drive. Additionally, there are also city easements located adjacent to the front property lines at both upper and lower Cielito Drive.

**Staff Recommendation**  
Approve with Conditions

**Last Date Reviewed / Decision**

This project was last reviewed by the DRB on May 26, 2022. Decision: Return for Redesign with conditions. Vote: 5-0. The Record of Decision and project plans are included with this report as Attachment #3.

**Zone: RIR FAR District: II**

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**

Less than 50% current average slope and less than 1500 cubic yards of earth movement (cut and/or fill); no additional review required.

**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          | 14,530 sq. ft.   | 10,300 sq. ft. – 23,620 sq. ft.                                | 23,620 sq. ft.                             |
| Setback           | 22'-0"   | 10'-0" – 55'-0"  | 20'-0" from upper Cielito                  |
| House size        | 2,972 sq. ft.  | 2,140 sq. ft. – 3,695 sq. ft.                                  | 4,855 sq. ft.                              |
| Floor Area Ratio  | 0.21   | 0.12 – 0.32  | 0.20                                       |
| Number of stories | All 11 homes surveyed are 1-story                                | 1-story  | 2-stories plus a subterranean 3-car garage |

**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 to the site and its surroundings for the following reasons:

- The proposed site planning addresses various zoning regulations, including the 20'-0" special street-front setback, parking, lot coverage, and landscaping.

- Based on the DRB conditions from the first hearing, the size of the new house was reduced by 482 square-feet, and the building was moved closer to the street. This has resulted in an increased setback from the downhill portion of the lot oriented towards “lower Cielito” and the building and deck areas being sited primarily on the existing pad. The deck cantilevers have been minimized, and portions of the deck step down approximately two to four feet.
- The subterranean 3-car garage has been reoriented so that it is parallel with the street and relocated below the house. While the proposed subterranean garage is not consistent with the predominant neighborhood pattern, at the first hearing, the DRB did not cite any concerns aside from its location on the site. The current siting of the garage was based on the DRB conditions of approval and the deliberation at the hearing.
- The width of the driveway has been reduced by four feet for the majority of its length. However, at the driveway apron and in the street-front setback, the driveway width is unchanged. Staff is recommending a condition of approval that the driveway in this area be reduced to minimize the amount of paving in the front setback.
- The project will maintain 9,826 square-feet (42%) of the lot as ungraded open space. The usable outdoor spaces for this project includes a new outdoor deck located at the rear of the house, and at the front there will be new drought tolerant landscaping and water features adjacent to the walkways.
- The project includes new drought tolerant landscaping throughout the site that will complement the building design. The rooftop also features landscaping, potted cactus plants. This is a unique design feature that is not typically proposed on this type of development, and staff will defer to the DRB for direction on this feature.
- The project will maintain some of the existing retaining walls, primarily at the front of the new house, parallel to upper Cielito Drive. New retaining walls are also proposed along the driveway and at the outdoor deck areas at the rear.

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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
- ☐ 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 landform 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, to the site and its surroundings for the following reasons:

- The immediate neighborhood surrounding the subject property (300 lineal feet of site) features one-story homes, with a few 2-story homes located at the end of the road and outside the immediate neighborhood. While the proposal to construct a new 2-story house over a subterranean 3-car garage differs from the neighborhood context, the DRB did not cite any major concerns with this at the first hearing and did not impose any conditions with the redesign requiring the subterranean garage to be omitted from the design or a reduction in the number of stories.
- Based on the conditions placed on the redesign of the project that were related to the size of the house and reductions in the overall sense of mass and scale, the livable area was reduced from 5,337 square-feet to 4,855 square-feet.
- The massing is broken up through the use of varied building volumes that articulate the facades, balconies, and changes in the façade planes.
- The overall height of the new house with the subterranean garage remains at 32'-0" which is the maximum permitted by code. While the height remains the same, the project has been redesigned so that the building pad is lowered by four feet, thereby minimizing the appearance of the height from the public right-of-way.
- The project features a flat roof design, which is consistent with the modern design concept of the new house.

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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

### **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

The project does feature an outdoor deck at the ground floor as well as new balconies and a terrace at the second floor which could potentially have a privacy impact with adjacent neighbors, but there is a considerable distance between the residences as well as a difference in building pad elevations that could mitigate this issue.

### **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:

- Overall, the consistency in the use of materials and colors throughout the project helps to reinforce the proposed modern style of the new house. Overall, the selected style fits within the neighborhood which features a mix of architectural styles, include modern style homes.
- The design of the entryway is similar to the original proposal, with a canopy at the first floor breaking up the 2-story volume. The entryway and entry doors have been designed to be appropriately integrated into the overall design.
- The new doors and windows will be clear anodized, black aluminum, and the windows will be an appropriate combination of fixed and casement.
- The proposed materials for the house include smooth finish plaster, natural limestone masonry veneer, and horizontal wood siding. The materials are high quality, reinforce the design concept, and the color palette is appropriate to the hillside area.
- The design of the new light fixtures is appropriate to the modern design concept, and are appropriately located on the exterior building façades and outdoor areas.
- The trash storage and mechanical equipment are appropriately located along the southerly elevation and will not be visible from the street.



## **Recommendation / Draft Record of Decision**

The following analysis relates to the revisions made to the proposed project since the last DRB meeting.

### **Conditions from DRB meeting on May 26, 2022 (Case No. PDR 2113521)**

- 1. Lower the overall height of the project by a minimum of three to four feet and rotate the livable space from the east to the west.**

The overall height of the house remains at 32'-0", however, the building pad has been lowered by four feet. At the first and second floors, the floor-to-floor heights remain the same, at 12 and 10 feet respectively. The floor-to-floor height of the subterranean garage has been reduced by one foot. During the last hearing, suggestions were made by the board that were more prescriptive, including a 10-foot floor-to-floor-height at the ground floor, and an 8'-6" height at the second floor. These suggestions were not incorporated into the project design. Having said that, lowering the building pad four-feet does minimize the visual impact of the house as seen from "upper Cielito". To better address this condition, the board can consider a further reduction in the overall height by reducing the floor-to-floor heights at the first and second floors. The southerly portion of the house has shifted from east to west, thereby bringing the house closer to the street at this elevation with the street-front setback ranging from 20 feet to 35'-8", measured to the building wall.

- 2. Re-design the project to better follow the topography and terrace with the hillside in accordance with the Hillside Design Guidelines. This may include reducing the overall size and projections of the southern cantilevered decks and relocating the master bedroom.**

As noted above, the siting of the house has shifted to bring the southerly portion closer to the street resulting in an increased setback from the steep downhill condition on the portion of the lot oriented towards "lower Cielito". This redesign also results in more of the building and deck areas being sited on the existing flat pad portion of the lot, which also minimizes the projections of the cantilevered decks. The cantilevers for the outdoor deck have been reduced, but with the reduction in the building footprint, the size of the deck area increased.

- 3. Explore other alternatives related to the garage location that would minimize the amount of grading required for this project, and reduce the size of the driveway area.**

The subterranean 3-car garage has been reoriented so that it is parallel with the street and relocated below the house where in the original proposal the garage was perpendicular to the street and below the deck areas. The reorientation of the garage in its current location was based on the conditions of approval and suggestions made by the board during the deliberation portion of the hearing. The width of the driveway has been reduced from 19 feet to 15 feet, with the exception of the portion of the driveway at the entrance, which remains relatively unchanged. Staff is recommending a condition of approval that the width and hardscape at this area be reduced as well to be consistent. The reorientation of the garage requires less grading, but the necessary adjustments to the driveway for access to the

garage will increase the overall amount of grading required for the project. The table below illustrates the changes to the amount of grading required.

|                 | <b>Original Proposal</b>                  | <b>Current Proposal</b>                  |
|-----------------|---|--|
| <b>Driveway</b> | 533 CY<br>(225 CY of fill, 308 CY of cut) | 880 CY<br>(790 CY of cut, 90 CY of fill) |
| <b>Garage</b>   | 438 CY of cut                             | 339 CY of cut                            |

- 4. Reduce the overall mass and size of the project, such as a minimum 15% reduction in size of the livable square footage, and provide a concept that is compatible with the neighborhood conditions.**

The size of the livable area has been reduced by approximately nine percent, from 5,337 square-feet to 4,855 square-feet. The table below illustrates the changes, with the most significant reduction being at the ground floor. The garage is excluded from the calculation of livable area in single-family zones it is provided for reference only and is not included in the total.

|                             | <b>Original Proposal</b> | <b>Current Proposal</b> |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Garage</b>               | 626 sq. ft.              | 680 sq.ft.              |
| <b>Basement</b>             | 254 sq. ft.              | 150 sq. ft.             |
| <b>1<sup>st</sup> Floor</b> | 3,055 sq. ft.            | 2,700 sq. ft.           |
| <b>2<sup>nd</sup> Floor</b> | 2,028 sq. ft.            | 2,005 sq. ft.           |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                | 5,337 sq. ft.            | 4,855 sq. ft.           |

- 5. Reduce the overall amount of lighting proposed for the exterior building façades and the outdoor areas of the site.**

The lighting plan features a combination of floor and ground lighting, with building façade light fixtures. The applicant has submitted a revised lighting plan showing the reduction in the amount of lighting on-site and has reduced the number of light fixtures significantly. The original proposal featured a total of 56 light fixtures throughout the site and building, and the current proposal has been reduced to feature 25 fixtures.

- 6. Replace the proposed roofing material with a rock roof.**

The new roofing material will be a rock roof as required by the DRB. At the rooftop, the applicant has also incorporated cactus plants throughout. Introducing the landscaping at the rooftop does raise issues related to access for maintenance, as well as irrigation. This is not a typical feature for single-family development and staff will defer to the board's recommendation regarding this area.

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

**Condition**

1. That the width of the driveway entrance in the front setback be reduced to minimize the amount of hardscape.

**Consideration**

1. That the overall building height be reduced by reducing the floor-to-floor heights at the first and second floors.

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**Attachments**

1. Reduced Plans for Current Proposal
2. Applicant's Write-Up for Current Proposal
3. Record of Decision and Reduced Plans – May 26, 2022 DRB Meeting  
*The staff report and exhibits are available online, Item 6b:*  
<https://glendaleca.primegov.com/Portal/Meeting?meetingTemplateId=33030>
4. Photos of Existing Property
5. Location Map
6. Neighborhood Survey
7. Interdepartmental Comments
8. Geotechnical Report, dated August 2, 2021
9. Historic Resource Evaluation, dated March 24, 2022
10. Correspondence