

SILVER LAKE NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL
URBAN DESIGN AND PRESERVATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES (DRAFT)

Wednesday, September 12, 2018

6:30pm

Silver Lake Recreation Center
1850 West Silver Lake Drive
Los Angeles, CA

1. CALL TO ORDER

Attending Committee Members:

Scott Plante, Co-Chair
Joe Ferrell, Co-Chair (arrived late)
Anne-Marie Johnson
Georgene Smith-Goodin
Christine Kantner
Liza Temple (arrived late)
Carole Cetrone
Douglas Reed

The meeting began at 6:35pm.

2. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Anne-Marie Johnson:

The Committee member and Co-Chair of the Silver Lake Neighborhood Council mentioned a new development on Rowena.

Carol Cetrone:

The Committee member spoke about demolitions and an eased approval process that makes it easier to avoid proper notification and community input. She found out last week that there is a new motion in City Council that was bundled with several things that were passed. If you have a demolition request and a discretionary approval for an application, then that becomes your demolition approval. So it basically bypasses the 30-day posting notice. This is yet another way that they are trying to bypass notification for demolition. It's very disturbing and disconcerting. She is trying to contact Council Member Mitch O'Farrell's office about this.

(Note: Co-Chair Joe Ferrell arrived about 6:38pm.)

Christine Kantner:

The Committee member said that on September 18 there will be a City Council PLUM (Planning and Land Use Management) about a gas station in Silver Lake Village. It's been approved as a cultural landmark. Now there is someone willing to buy it and restore it. The owner wants to relocate it. However, this type of building will disintegrate. If it's moved it will rip apart the fabric of the community. There is lots of community support for that landmark. If you can't attend the meeting, contact City Council and let them know that it's important that this type of architecture not be demolished.

Anne-Marie Johnson:

The Committee member and Co-Chair of the Silver Lake Neighborhood Council announced that tomorrow PLUM will hear about proposed regulations on short term rentals. They published their draft regulations so they are having a hearing tomorrow afternoon.

Co-Chair Scott Plante asked whether anyone is here representing the Fargo Street project? No one responded. They may not show up, he said.

Plante explained what the Urban Design and Preservation Committee is and does and explained the scope of the committee's and the advisory meaning of its recommendations.

3. MOTIONS & RESOLUTIONS – Discussion and Possible Action

- a. 2919-2923 Waverly Mordoch
Case Number TBD NC Region 6 12 condominiums.

Ron Mordoch, the developer, Integrated Development, integrated.la:

Mordoch said that they are proposing a 16-unit project on Waverly Drive close to Auburn Street.

A base density of 19 units is allowed. We propose 16 units. This is not a small lot development. The key idea is to create some form of community, some form of clustered residences with a pedestrian orientation.

He doesn't believe that small lot developments are accessible. We rejected the idea of using this as a density bonus project. That would have been a 26 unit project with affordable housing. It would have been a box. I didn't believe in that, he said.

This is a condominium subdivision model with multiple units, a series of clustered homes organized around a center walk street. We will hide parking underneath to prioritize pedestrian access. That also brings down the scale of the building.

There are no interior corridors. This allows a much broader range of housing types. The project is not asking for any variances. However, two adjustments are sought, for height and open space.

We are very sensitive to not make this building appear massive for the street. We will sink the project in to reduce the height and manage the hillside. This is to be built at the same height as the neighboring house. That will provide more light.

We are asking for a height adjustment. Along the front, 75% of the 3rd floor is completely set back from the street. The effective height of the building is 21 feet. That's lower than the 30 foot height allowed. It is a nicer building with modulation.

There is an interior courtyard, this open spaces adjustment is for better design. It's open to the sky. We didn't want the project to have a condominium language, a clustered effect.

Asking for open space adjust that is simply a better design. We have P\private open spaces. They encroach into the 15 feet that's required to be counted as common open space. We can solve that by moving these lines back. We just feel that in doing that you don't have a nicely modulated court. Instead, you'd have relentless straight lines. It would detract from the quality of the spaces inside.

If we move the 6 foot high walls back, we'd be completely compliant but we feel the design would be relentless.

(Note: Liza Temple arrived at about 6:50pm).

One of the biggest impacts is related to the Bureau of Engineering protocol to widen the street. The landscaping zone that we want would be obliterated. The area would be widened by 7-8 feet. There would be a sidewalk with more concrete. Waverly would benefit most by keeping the continuity of the existing street line. Everyone is in favor of this. Waverly is a beautiful street. We want to commit to mature landscaping.

Those are our major points.

Committee member Liza Temple stated that the City Attorney said that she has a conflict of interest as she lives within 500 ft. She will speak as a community member and then recuse herself per California Code of Regulations section 18702.4(b)(1)(A).

Liza Temple said we already have 9 units of new construction on the street. This would be another 16 units. So there would be more than 20 units on our block plus another 20-30 units on adjacent blocks. As a neighbor do I want these things? No.

That said, she said that she appreciates the massive amount of community outreach. This is the type of development that I'd like to see. He's gone to great length to create a unique project. She appreciates the smaller units. This has some one bedroom units which will increase diversity in the neighborhood. I'm in favor of this project, concluded Temple.

Plante said that the Committee received 4 letters of support for the project.

Ms. Moore said that she lives on Waverly Drive. A 1930s building was knocked down. I did like what you had to say. I appreciate the landscaping. But, Waverly Drive is been such a small street. There are a couple of pretty family homes on adjacent lots. I'm opposed to the project.

A Man who said that he lives nearby noted that there is a housing crisis in Los Angeles. Therefore, he is in support of the development.

A Woman who lives near the project noted that it will be almost invisible from the street.

Georgine Smith-Goodin said this is the right type of project for the community. It's also more affordable for the community.

Christine Kantner said that she appreciates the project's sensitivity and more evolved design sense. I can't believe this. I'm in support of this. I wish we would have more development that was sensitive to our neighborhood.

Carol Cetrone thanked him for respecting neighbors. Where is the little house from the project? Are these for sale or rent? Mordoch said the units would be for sale. We really like the smaller units, said Cetrone. It's nice that you incorporated green space.

She also noted that the architecture seemed kind of cold and sugar cube-ish. Mordoch said the renderings of the project are brick, not stucco. There are variations of surface that affect the light. The front walls are thick. There are recessed large windows. This is not a stucco box.

Cetrone asked about the third story. There are no roofdecks on front facing properties. Mordoch explained that there are open space terraces. There are trellises.

Anne-Marie Johnson said I'm loath to support you but you did it the right way. This is the right way to do it for our community. There is a shortage of affordable units. There is not a shortage of housing. We need diversity, economic diversity. Single bedroom units will help. I congratulate you. This is the way to proceed with this community. This Committee has a horrible reputation but we say no to crap.

Joe Ferrell said that he wanted to echo what Christine Kantner said. I'm shocked that it's not a small lot development. It's thoughtfully designed. This project is the real deal. I like that you excavated as much as you did.

In terms of design, I don't like the trellises on the third story. It reduces mass but you're cancelling that out with the framework. He said that he prefers something less harsh. It does look like a sugar cube, he opined. This is a well thought out project, he added.

Douglas Reed asked about the type of brick to be used. Mordoch said they are looking at various options. How did you decide to hire the firm that you did and why, asked Reed. Mordoch said he likes their work. Good design doesn't require words. They've worked together before. It was this firm that put in a ton of work. They also did the design work on the Silver Lake Triangle Plaza. That is one of most unique spaces in Silver Lake. We're losing contact with our neighbors. This is something that does belong in Silver Lake.

Scott Plante said that this is a well designed project. It's very well composed on site. It's not cheap to do this. I appreciate the brick and landscaping. It will be a great addition to the community.

Joe Ferrell asked how many truckloads would be required for excavation? The representative said that it depends but probably 11,000-12,000 cubic yards. That's about 1,000 trucks.

Cetrone asked where is the parking access? Mordoch said the driveway will be on Waverly. We want to gently taper that in.

Scott Plante made the motion to approve the project. Georgene Smith-Goodin seconded.

VOTE
7-0-0-1
PASSED

Yes Votes:
Scott Plante
Joe Ferrell
Anne-Marie Johnson
Georgene Smith-Goodin
Christine Kantner
Carole Cetrone
Douglas Reed

No Votes:
None

Present, Not Voting:
None

Recusal:
Liza Temple

b. 2220 Fargo Street Eden
Case Number ZA-2014-2764-CU-ZV-ZAA NC Region 7 Legalize
previously built structure at rear of church, add to and remodel structure.

There is no one here for this project.

c. 1758 Griffith Park Boulevard Russo
Case Number VTT-82275-SL NC Region 6 12 small lot homes.

Mr. Tony Russo, Mauricio, the architect, and Alice Whitehead:

Mr. Russo said that the existing project has 3 units with a separate structure. We are proposing to demolish this and create a 12 unit small lot subdivision where the units can be as large as 2,800 sq ft. maximum. The maximum height is about 40 feet. With regard to the neighbors: There is a 3 story apartment building to the North. Our neighbors to the South sought 7 unit small lot project that's similar to our project. They sought approval from you earlier this year.

Mauricio, the project architect, said we want lots of parking. There will be two car parking spaces for each unit. There will be 2 guest parking spaces too. We are excavating at least 10 feet back. A garage is underground. The main level has an open patio. Neighbors can enjoy open space to walk dogs.

We are trying modulation to make it more user friendly. There are balconies with great views to the Griffith Park Observatory. They are pretty similar. These look like wood. We are recessing the entrances to make them more modern.

There will be one guest parking space for each 4 units. There is a building line along this street that the majority of these structures obey. That building line is 5 feet. We will be set back 5 feet from existing vegetation. There is also a five foot side yard setback. There is also a 22.11 setback from the rear.

Regarding grading this is a fairly sloped lot. We are trying to tier each of the three sections.

Mark Killing, who lives across the street, said there are trees there now. You chopped down the oak trees right away. This is a monstrosity. It's horrendous and an eye sore. It's ludicrous that you're naming it The Eagle's Nest but have no trees. I don't see how you can build 12 units here. The lots are made for one house. Do you want the whole neighborhood to become 12 units. Is that what we're going for?

Mr. Russo replied that we can develop the landscaping a little bit more. It needs to be more specific. Regarding parking, the existing structure versus what we propose is a dramatic difference. But what we propose fits code with 2 parking spaces per unit. Mauricio added that we can modulate it to show more green space.

A Man named Mark said that the lack of trees is ruining Silver Lake. This is the most generic characterless thing that I've seen in a long time. They are popping up everywhere. They couldn't be more cookie cutter. You have the chance to design something really cool. Put forth something that you're proud of, not just something for profit.

A Woman asked about owner. She lives next door. I have never met this gentleman. This person doesn't come to present it. He's hiding. It's really irresponsible, more than irresponsible. It's offensive that he does not want to interact with the people on the block, she said.

Mr. Russo responded that he's not trying to hide. If he needs to come to a meeting, we can accommodate that. These meetings are for design tweaks and changes. This is an opportunity to present the project before the community. The Woman commented that the owners of the project at 2919-2923 Waverly Drive (which was discussed earlier in the meeting) came to the community months ago and heard our concerns.

Mark commented that parking is going to be crazy. Referring to the unit size, he said that 2,800 sq ft homes, that's families. They may need more than parking for 2 cars. Can there be a guest parking spot in front of each garage? Mauricio said we'll tell the developer to come next time to meet you.

A Woman noted that most of the properties in that neighborhood have an environmental element. They mingle. There used to be a redwood tree there. It's like a thief in the night ripped that tree out.

Plante asked is that a 5 bedroom apartment? The representative answered that it is four bedrooms. What's the market for that? He said that he also wants to know how the site interacts with landscaping. It looks very layered and pancake like.

Liza Temple said we want to see the reduction or elimination of the roof deck. We also want more green space. Maybe remove a unit? We don't need more large units. She also wants a reduction of the side yard. You need greater setback. She added that we want to see more outreach to neighbors in terms of design and mingling with neighborhood and getting mature trees.

Joe Ferrell said that he's glad that this project presentation came after the first one. This is the embodiment of what we hate about small lot projects. It's maxing out. There is no thoughtful design. They all look the same. There is nothing thoughtful about this. He wants the side setbacks increased. He also wants one story less. Now there are up to 4 stories plus dog house in each unit. Some of units have bedrooms on second floor.

This whole project needs to be changed, said Ferrell. This is not what the neighborhood wants. Then when you add in the back story of the owner then this screams max out, make a buck, and get out of town.

Anne-Marie Johnson said we don't allow this. We have to do our best to try to preserve what's here. It is unfortunate that the first act got a cameo. You're being asked to come back.

This smells of an Air BnB. You'll come back to us several times. The owner must assure us that this is not for Air BnB. This is so grand. This is Santa Clarita, not Silver Lake. I have faith that you'll come back with something more delicious. You'll return probably many times before we find common ground

Mauricio said that the owner goes by name of Bob. I have met him a few times. Cetrone asked who is owner? Where does he live? This does look like Santa Clarita. If you wanted to design a project to offend this Committee, you couldn't have done better. Did you look at our guidelines become coming here? I don't see any neighboring buildings in context. It's hard to judge the project without that.

This looks like a four layered jello bowl where you put mango on top of pineapple on top of whipped cream or something. This smacks of profiteering. For me it's very offensive. This is never going to get my support, said Cetrone.

Christine Kantner said this is not cohesive. Have you done a site visit? Mauricio said no. Kantner continued, saying that it's just fake wood. Build as cheaply as possible. The community is starting to fight new projects. The neighbors are galvanizing and getthign together. They have more power than you think. It's really insulting to have neighbors subjected to this sort of fracking.

I think the developer needs to come and show his face. It's like an RV into a tent camping zone. You should read the guidelines. If the developer wants to profit on Silver Lake she said that he should approach projects like 2919-2923 Waverly Drive as an example. I can't support this, however, I do sympathize with you guys. We understand that density is coming, lamented Kantner, but there is no way that we can accept this.

Russo said we understand that this project needs more presentation. We wanted this meeting to gather input so that we can propose something that can incorporate your comments.

Georgene Smith-Goodin asked have you filed with the City yet? Mauricio said yes. Smith-Goodin mentioned a tree study and said there are allegations that trees have already been cut. The elephant in the room is that you need a tract map. We need to see a proper tract map. The fact that you've already applied and begun this process yet all documentation is not included in your presentation is inexcuseable.

She said that this project shows an utter disregard for our community guidelines. Even if the ideal project (2919-2923 Waverly) hadn't come before you, our comments would be the same. Look at our guidelines on our website. Provide the Committee with all materials needed, she urged.

Liza Temple asked do you have a hearing date? Russo said no. Mark commented that Silver Lake does need four bedroom units but that doesn't mean 2,800 square foot units. That would bring a lot of diversity.

A Man said I'm really happy that there's a Board like this in Silver Lake. You're us! I feel good about that. A Woman commented that she agrees with all the comments made here.

Plante made a motion to postpone approval. Johnson seconded.

Ferrell summarized that the Committee wants to see increased landscaping, reduced height and the elimination of doghouses (rooftops and exterior staircases). Some of the them are completely above 45 feet. Also, we'd like a push in for the top decks, an increase in setbacks, more thoughtful innovative design, and a reduction in the number of units. Plante added that he also wants more modulation in the plan, play with colors, he suggested.

4. ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

a. Review and Adoption of Minutes

Johnson made the motion to approve the minutes. Temple seconded, however, she offered a correction on page 10.

VOTE for amended July minutes

8-0-0

PASSED

Yes Votes:

Scott Plante

Joe Ferrell

Anne-Marie Johnson

Georgene Smith-Goodin

Christine Kantner

Carole Cetrone

Douglas Reed

Liza Temple

No Votes:

None

Present, Not Voting:

None

b. Committee Business

Temple expressed concern about the number of units coming into the Silver Lake area and how that is leading to overcrowding in local schools. For the first time ever, Ivanhoe had to refuse new students. Ferrell said the school area boundary has been moved up from Riverside to exclude some apartment complexes.

Kids are no longer guaranteed a spot in local public schools. We don't have anything to do with the Los Angeles Unified School District but can we brainstorm on something to be a liaison between the developers and the schools, asked Temple.

Johnson said that if that's not doable, then we will have to tell the developers to disclose that kids won't be able to attend local schools. That's a selling point. Temple asked can we incentivize builders to help solve the schools problem? Johnson noted that Ivanhoe Elementary School has exceeded capacity. It's no longer a guarantee that your kids can attend Ivanhoe.

c. Update: Hawthorne

Plante said that Christopher Hawthorne, the City's new Chief of Design, may speak at the neighborhood council. The Mayor's Office will get him here. However, they want an agenda. Johnson said that she'd been in a debate with Hawthorne at Occidental College where he referred to the Silver Lake Reservoir as a "cement tub".

5. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting ended at about 8pm.