

September 4, 2020

Dear Members of the Planning Commission,

I am writing about the concerns held by myself and my neighbors regarding the proposed hillside development permit for the construction of a new tri-level, 3,125 square-foot family residence, including a Tree Removal Permit for the removal of one tree located at 804 Valley View Road. We are disturbed by the over-development of our neighborhood, located in the south area of the city.

The properties at 800 and 804 Valley View Road have listed by South Pasadena as "Historic Resources". This should mean that it falls under the auspices of Ordinance 2315, the Cultural Heritage Ordinance:

1. To preserve, maintain, and safeguard the City's heritage and character as embodied and reflected in the Sites, structures, and neighborhoods that serve as significant reminders of the city's social, educational, cultural and architectural history;
  2. To foster civic and neighborhood pride, a sense of identity based on the recognition and use of Cultural Resources, and continuity of the city's historic character, scale, and small town atmosphere in all future construction; and
  3. To encourage Maintenance and Preservation of areas that are associated with a historic event, activity, or persons that contribute to the historic character of districts, neighborhoods, Landmarks, historic structures, and artifacts.
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1. To preserve diverse and harmonious architectural styles, reflecting phases of the City's history and to encourage complementary contemporary design and construction;
  2. To identify as early as possible, and resolve conflicts between the Preservation of Cultural Resources and alternative uses of the subject property; and
  3. To conserve valuable material and energy resources by ongoing historic or adaptive new use and;

The architectural renderings of 804 Valley View, 808 Valley View and 728 Bonita Drive depict large, tri-level modern architectural style homes, wholly incongruous and inappropriate to the unique and charming dwellings of South Pasadena. As you are aware, the Valley View Heights District, is of an older era and this modern design is disruptive per the Cultural Heritage Ordinance.

Additionally, the construction will have potential significant impacts on Air Quality, Geology and Soils, Historical Resources, Noise/ Vibration, and Traffic. Since 2014, we have endured a consistent disruption to our quality of life due to the never-ending construction mishaps on Oneonta Drive. Noise, debris, dust, pollution, contractors working with expired licenses, cement spillage on the street and on cars, parking problems, and numerous complaints to the City.

We are extremely concerned about the audacious plan on 804 Valley View. Due to COVID 19, many more residents are working from home, and are sensitive to air pollution and noise. We also question the environmental impact of this project.

The vacant property at 808 Valley View and the vacant lot on 804 Valley View are directly behind my home. So close, in fact, I can touch the detached garage at 808 from my backyard. Several mature, majestic and huge trees canvas the vacant lot, yet a permit exists to remove only one. I have enjoyed the natural landscape and views from my backyard for the past 13 years. Besides providing shade, noise reduction, shelter to wildlife and contributing to cleaner air (we experience substantial poor-quality air days, according to the AQMD), I am perplexed by the ability to construct such a large home while leaving these protected trees intact. South Pasadena is known for our award-winning school district and our trees. What is interesting is that in 2015, the Parks & Recreation Commission passed a motion not to purchase 804 Valley View Road because of its incontinent position on a hill. The positioning of the property has not changed, yet the City once again ignored the advice of their own Commissioners and forged ahead with negotiations.

The City has made numerous statements about its commitment to use CalTrans properties for affordable housing units, that could be made available to first time home buyers. The projects under consideration by the Planning Commission on September 8, 2020 are incongruent with this commitment.

It is important that you understand some of the issues which have plagued our neighborhood. Due to our proximity to El Sereno and the explosion of homelessness, Bonita Drive was the target of a proposed takeover on April 6, 2020 when two masked men gained illegal entry of two unoccupied CalTrans properties. For the next month, many of us were involved in lobbying local politicians, law enforcement and CalTrans. We ultimately prevailed and curtailed homeless or other members of society from claiming squatters' rights. This was accomplished without assistance from the City. It appears City management intervenes when there is a benefit to developers, rather than to residents. Our area in District 2 has been neglected due to the fight over the 710 Freeway, and woefully under represented by former South Pasadena Mayor and resigned councilperson, Marina Khubersian.

Thank you for your consideration to our formidable concerns regarding the proposed development at 804 Valley View Drive, and other hardships experienced for the past several years. We urge you to not approve the plans submitted by the developers for this project. It is incongruent with the historical significance of the Valley View Heights District, and threatens the environmental stability of the land.

Sincerely,

Linda Esposito  
809 Bonita Drive