

[EXCERPT]

CITY OF LAFAYETTE
DESIGN REVIEW COMMISSION
Minutes

LAFAYETTE COMMUNITY CENTER
500 St. Mary's Road, Lafayette, CA

August 10, 2004
7:00 p.m.

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m.
2. Commissioners present: Commission Chair Ken Hertel, Vice Chair Julie Turjoman and Commissioners Tim Ward and Tom Lee.
3. Excused: Commissioner Larry Blodgett
Staff: Lindy Coburn, Assistant Planner, Mike Rivera, Assistant Planner, and Glenda Warmoth, Assistant Planner.
4. **ADOPTION OF AGENDA:** Commissioner Lee moved to approve the agenda. Commissioner Ward seconded the motion, which carried unanimously (4-0-0).
5. **PUBLIC COMMENT:** None.
6. **STUDY SESSION:**

A. **SS22-04 LORI AND ERIK STRAND (APPLICANTS & OWNERS), LR-10 ZONING:**

Request for study session with the Design Review Commission to discuss development of a one-story house located at an unaddressed parcel on Burton Ridge, accessed via Glenside Drive. APN 238-080-035
Project Planner: Greg Wolff

Ms. Coburn spoke in Greg Wolff's absence. Ms Coburn reported that the applicant seeks direction for the construction of a new single-family residence on a vacant site. She suggested that although architectural drawings were presented, the applicant has not yet submitted a sites constraints analysis and the building site has not yet been determined. Ms. Coburn asked the Commission to address site location as part of its discussion.

Eric Strand, owner, introduced the subject application including reasons for siting in the given location and design elements to minimize offsite visibility. Chair Hertel questioned the ability to use the road behind the St. Anselm's Church to access the building site. Mr. Strand stated that this is not an option.

Chair Hertel asked staff about the history of the lot and its current configuration. Ms. Coburn responded that the Zoning Administrator approved a lot line adjustment in 2001 at this site, which expanded an existing non-conforming 1 acre site into a 5 acre site at its current configuration. The approval of the lot line adjustment stated that the resultant lot did not guarantee building site approval, which would require Design Review Commission consideration.

Commissioner Lee asked about improvements needed for the driveway. Mr. Strand responded that little grading is required but that it will need to be paved with a grooved concrete with curb and gutter to meet requirements. No lighting is proposed for the roadway.

Chair Hertel asked whether the roadway may be partially paved with asphalt and with concrete. Mr. Strand responded in the affirmative. Chair Hertel noted that the proposed location offered little existing vegetation to conceal the proposal. Mr. Strand confirmed this observation.

Commissioner Lee if whether geotechnical studies had been prepared. It appeared in the aerial photos that there area traces of past slide activities. Mr. Strand stated that borings are being dug onsite and have resulted in bedrock. No slides are within the area of the proposed building site; however there was past slide activity at the bottom of the hill where the road turns.

Commissioner Ward commented that the visibility of the proposal will be heavily scrutinized and the applicant was urged to keep the appearance of the house as low and unpretentious as possible. He noted that a trophy house design would be a problem in the approval process. He added that the landscaping must help conceal the residence but cannot look unnatural, especially during the dry seasons. The applicant should propose the planting of trees that is natural to the area. With regard to

1 grading, padding the lot may not be acceptable and applicants need to know they may not be able to
2 have a house that is all flat. Commissioner Ward recommended considering a solution that does not
3 place the pool and outdoor living space in front of the house and at the nose of the hill. The applicant
4 needs to make the house appear like it is not there through the use of dark colors, minimal exterior
5 lighting and minimal amount of windows. Commissioner Ward recommended the application be referred
6 to the Planning Commission for approval of siting before continuing the design review process.

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8 Commissioner Turjoman concurred with Commissioner Ward's comments. She reiterated the need for
9 the darkest colors possible. She appreciated the applicant's efforts to keep the house low, but noted that
10 if the outdoor living spaces faced down into the valley there would be a tremendous amount of light bleed,
11 noise and activity levels. Similarly, a lot of windows facing in that direction create an issue with the offsite
12 visibility of interior lighting that would need to be addressed and mitigated .

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14 Commissioner Lee thought that the study session might be a little premature given the lack of information
15 about the slope and soils conditions. He noted that any comments provided by the Commission might be
16 nullified or revised at a later time depending on recommendations provided in a subsequent soils report
17 about the site. Commissioner Lee advised the applicants that the Fire District would require a 16-foot
18 wide paved driveway, capable of holding the load of a fire truck, which may cause widening the road,
19 additional retaining walls and drainage issues. He also thought the Fire District might require pullouts and
20 passing areas in the access road. Screening of the road will also be an important design issue.

21 Commissioner Lee recommended that the applicant look at the siting to ascertain whether the siting is the
22 best choice from the City's perspective in terms of being the least obvious and obtrusive. He referred to
23 photo #12 that showed an area downslope that might be considered in siting the house. Commissioner
24 Lee commented that even with a slope that was half of what it is, there would be severe problems with a
25 house that takes the pool deck that tries to meet the floor line extending out in front or downhill of the
26 house. Without some serious breaks or steps, it would be taking a flat plane that extends out from the
27 front door and stretching out 100 feet, which creates problems with the resulting retaining wall. What is
28 desired is for the house and its entire development to be bunkered into the slope of the hill so that it
29 doesn't become a horizontal stripe on the hillside. He also supported Commissioner Ward's comments
30 about color, recommending that the trim colors be kept in the same value range as the body color. He
31 cautioned about the use of light or frosted glazed skylights that tend to create lanterns on the hillside.
32 Clear glazed skylights would be the preferred product. With regard to siting, Commissioner Lee felt a
33 more appropriate site was in the area lower down on the west property line because it would site the
34 house lower on the hill. He welcomed the applicant to graphically demonstrate any technical difficulties
35 that would discourage or prevent siting the house in that lower area. He noted, however, that solutions
36 should not only be dictated by civil or soils engineers. Similarly, an engineered solution would not be
37 considered an excuse for a poor architecture.

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39 Commission Chair Hertel supported the comments provided and added that, in looking at the overall site
40 development and the open-wing design of the house, it didn't seem to respond tightly enough to the
41 topography. He felt the development is leaking over the knoll. Commission Chair Hertel referred to
42 comments made about excavating and tucking the house closer into the hillside and suggested making a
43 photo inventory of where and how the house can be seen from offsite using the Viewing Evaluations Map
44 as a guide. He noted that the public scrutiny of the application would be intense. Commission Chair
45 Hertel recommended a thorough site analysis and noted that the true impact of the development goes
46 beyond the square footage of the floor area to include the lawn, detached garage, patios, etc. He stated
47 that historically a successful grading approach has been to redevelop and strengthen the knoll that,
48 although unnatural, can allow them to reinforce the screening value of the knoll. Commission Chair
49 Hertel recommended hunkering down the house as much as possible. In terms of landscaping and
50 roadway, he commented that the applicant needed to be judicious about groupings of oak trees and
51 minimizing the remainder of landscape in order for it to blend with the natural setting. Commission Chair
52 Hertel commented that the grading and screening of the roadway would be as important an issue as the
53 house because of its impact on the hillside. He would prefer not to see rock wall back cuts or block walls,
54 preferring instead a steep grade utilizing the natural rock faces on the hill.

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56 Commissioner Ward suggested the applicant review the house design approved for a property off Bacon
57 Way, noting that some of the design features used to blend the house into the hillside were very well
58 done.

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→ END ←