



DESIGN REVIEW BOARD RECORD OF DECISION

Meeting Date September 14, 2017 DRB Case No. PDR 1709740
 Address 2941 St. Gregory Road
 Applicant Georgie Kajer

PROPOSAL: To construct a new three-story, 2,548 SF single family residence and an attached two-car garage on a 8,713 SF hillside lot, zoned R1R (FAR District II). The lot features an average current slope of 56.7% and the project involves a total of 69 cubic yards of grading (27 CY of cut and 41 CY of fill).

DESIGN REVIEW

Board Member	Motion	Second	Yes	No	Absent	Abstain
Arzoumanian			X			
Benlian	X		X			
Charchian		X	X			
Malekian			X			
Simonian			X			
Totals			5			
DRB Decision		Approve with conditions.				

CONDITIONS:

1. Provide greater consistency in application of decorative ironwork at all proposed locations.
2. Provide the design of the scored/saw cut decorative driveway (grid finished with a water-wash or acid-washed finish) for review and approval by staff.

CONSIDERATIONS:

1. Consider realigning the window at the upper-level balcony at the west façade to be centered on the balcony.
2. Consider realigning the two stacked windows at the garage and upper level of the south facade to be centered on the wall.
3. Consider redesigning the curved building wall below the driveway bridge to be more in keeping with the hybrid Mediterranean/Spanish architectural style of the project.

ANALYSIS:

Site Planning: The proposed site planning is appropriate to the site and its surroundings, as modified by any conditions, for the following reasons:

- The configuration of the irregularly-shaped, down-sloped hillside lot, the narrowness of the lot at the street, and the R1R zoning standards limit the development of the property and the site plan for the new house.
- The proposed residence and attached two-car garage are setback over 22-feet from St. Gregory Road, greater than the minimum 18-foot driveway length and the minimum 15-foot street front setback in the R1R zone, all of which are compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.
- The narrowness of the existing lot width along Saint Gregory Road prohibits any development in compliance with the minimum 10-foot interior setbacks on both sides and minimum 20-foot interior garage width, unless entrance to the house for the residents and visitors is through the garage door. Because such a configuration is not desirable or practical, the proposed house design is set further back from the street to allow a front facing two-car garage and a cantilevered walkway that leads around the garage to the front door at the side of the house. An Administrative Exception was approved to allow for a 19-foot garage width (instead of not less than 20 feet wide) and a two-foot projection of the cantilevered walkway into the interior setback.
- The two habitable stories of the new residence are located below the street-facing two-car garage, and access to the rear yard below is provided via stairs on grade along the southerly (interior) side of the house. The project features a substantial rear yard setback - over 60 feet deep from the interior, westerly property line.
- The grading for the current project is minimal when compared to other hillside residential development. The proposed grading involves 27 cubic yards (CY) of cut at the lower floor, 23 CU of fill at the crawl space, and 18 CY of fill at the side yard stairs, for a total of 68 CY (cut and fill). This appropriately addresses the topography of the lot.
- Unlike other hillside residential projects that use significant retaining walls to create outdoor patios and open space areas, contrary to the Hillside Design Guidelines, this project provides outdoor space in the form of balcony terraces. One 9'-6" by 15'-0" balcony is located in the corner between the kitchen and living room on the second floor, and a balcony of the same size is located below and can be accessed from the two bedrooms on the lower level. Except for these useable open space areas, the building footprint, and the driveway, the hillside lot will be left ungraded and/or landscaped.

Mass and Scale: The proposed mass and scale are appropriate to the site and its surroundings, as modified by any conditions, for the following reasons:

- The overall mass and scale of the three-story, 2,548 SF residence has been designed to comply with the R1R development standards on the narrow lot, as well as to address the Hillside Design Guidelines and to follow the existing contours of the down-sloped lot as much as possible.
- The massing of the easterly half of the north façade deviates from the guidelines, primarily because of its unbroken verticality. This is the result of the narrowness of the lot in relation to the required 10-foot interior setbacks and the designer's successful effort to articulate the other facades.
- The overall height of the building is 35 feet, which is the maximum permitted height for a pitched roof design in the R1R zone. The staggered roof design from the upper garage level to main living space on the second floor diminishes the bulk and perceived massing of the project. As evident in the submitted cross-section drawings, the height and massing of the proposed residence appropriately reflects the down-sloped lot and fits within its hillside context.
- The proposed driveway slopes down into the two car garage, rather than slightly sloping up and horizontally across from the street. By sinking the south-east corner of the house lower into the hillside, less of the first floor massing is visible from St. Gregory Road and the residence has less visual impact on the street. The lowering of the residence also reduces the need for taller retaining walls at the rear/south.

- The social/public rooms of the three-story residence are located on the middle/second floor (below the garage and front entry with direct access from the street), while two bedrooms are on the lower, 1st floor. The stacked massing of the two habitable levels of the residence is slightly pulled in along the northerly, interior elevation, appropriately further away from the neighbor to the north (2955 St. Gregory Road); this is reflected in the floor plans. The organization of rooms within the two-story house is reflected on the exterior elevations in a more cohesive, understandable fashion, while greater fenestration at the rear help soften the overall massing oriented towards the canyon below.
- The south, east and west façades are modulated to break up the mass into smaller volumes, while the gabled roof forms and design elements of the hybrid Mediterranean/Spanish architectural style help reduce the scale and sense of mass.

Building Design and Detailing: The proposed building design and detailing are appropriate to the site, as modified by any conditions, and its surroundings for the following reasons:

- The hybrid Mediterranean/Spanish architectural style of the proposed residence is appropriate for the Chevy Chase Canyon neighborhood context and is compatible with the various designs of the surrounding houses.
- The project features high quality materials: smooth finish cement plaster walls, true two-piece roof tiles, recessed fiberglass clad wood casement windows in “Hampton Sage”, wood doors and semi-custom wood panel roll-up garage door, 12-inch wood rafter tails, decorative wrought iron railing, decorative clay tile eave vents, and decorative concrete driveway. The casement windows are set within punched openings with sills and trim board headers. Such design elements are appropriate to the style and the window design is uniform throughout the project.
- The house appears to have two front entries: one from the cantilevered walkway next to the garage leading to the interior elevator, and the main front entry accessed from the exterior stairs on grading leading directly into the public spaces on the second floor. Both of these entries are appropriately integrated into the overall design of the project and are not monumental.
- The curved building wall below the driveway bridge closest to the residence could be redesigned to be more in keeping with the hybrid Mediterranean/Spanish architectural style of the project.
- Given the narrowness of the front portion of the lot and required setbacks, the trash area is located below the garage outside of the required setbacks, accessible from the exterior stairs on grade, and will not be visible from neighbors or the public right-of-way.
- The gutters and downspouts are identified and appropriately located on the elevation plans.
- The high-quality materials and neutral-toned color palette are appropriate for the chosen style and are complementary to the hillside neighborhood.

The Design Review Board approves the design of projects only. Approval of a project by the Design Review Board does not constitute an approval of compliance with the Zoning Code and/or Building Code requirements.

If an appeal is not filed within the 15-day appeal period of the Design Review Board decision, plans may be submitted for Building and Safety Division plan check. **Prior** to Building and Safety Division plan check submittal, Design Review Board approved plans must be stamped approved by Design Review Board staff. **Any** changes to the approved plans may constitute returning to the Design Review Board for approval. **Prior** to Building and Safety Division plan check submittal, **all** changes in substantial conformance with approved plans by the Design Review Board must be on file with the Planning Division.

Please make an appointment with the case planner for DRB stamp/sign-off prior to submitting for Building plan check.

DRB Staff Member Vilia Zemaitaitis, AICP, Senior Planner