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**CITY OF SIERRA MADRE
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
Regular Meeting of
Thursday, June 21, 2018 at 7:00 p.m.
City Council Chambers, 232 W. Sierra Madre Blvd.**

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CALL TO ORDER

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Chair Spears called the meeting to order at. 7:03 p.m.

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ROLL CALL

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Present: Chair Spears, Vice Chair Hutt, Commissioners Catalano, Desai, Frierman-Hunt, Pevsner
Absent: Commissioner Denison
Staff: Vincent Gonzalez, Director of Planning and Community Preservation
Jennifer Peterson, Administrative Analyst
Clare Lin, Assistant Planner
Theresa Highsmith, City Attorney

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APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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Commissioner Catalano moved to approve the agenda. Commissioner Hutt seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

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APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF MAY 17, 2018

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Commissioner Catalano abstained due to his absence. Commissioner Hutt moved to approve the minutes. Commissioner Frierman-Hunt seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

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AUDIENCE COMMENTS

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None.

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PUBLIC HEARING

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1. DESIGN REVIEW PERMIT (DRP 18-01); ADMINISTRATIVE DESIGN REVIEW PERMIT (ADRP 18-01)

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Address: 325 W. Grandview Avenue

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Applicant: Tzyh-Der Sun

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Assistant Planner Lin delivered the Staff Report and Power Point presentation.

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48 Cliff Sun
49 Architect/homeowner
50 Mr. Sun thanked the Planning Director and staff for their hard work. He explained the
51 reasoning for choices in design, based on slope of the site and maintaining the existing
52 gradient around the oak trees to preserve them in place. Mr. Sun also explained the
53 choice regarding the use of a subterranean garage. He stated that there were sacrifices
54 made in terms of flow of floor plan to accommodate the slope and oak trees.
55
56 Commissioner Hutt shared his design concerns, stating that the entry canopy may give
57 the appearance of heaviness and undue massing and requested the applicant to
58 elaborate on this design feature.
59 Mr. Sun stated that properties in Sierra Madre seem to have a patio or porch to
60 designate a sense of entry. He stated that this design feature is intended to define the
61 entry court. He stated that the model shows the roof as solid, but that the final design
62 will be an open trellis allowing the feature to appear more transparent.
63 Commissioner Hutt pointed out that the applicant is losing the opportunity to incorporate
64 more windows on the west elevation of the guest room.
65 Mr. Sun stated that he was considering a sliding door along with west elevation, and if
66 the Commission is aggregable he will reintroduce this element into the design.
67 Commissioner Hutt noted that the water retention systems in the front yard are so close
68 to one another, so why not join them?
69 Mr. Sun stated that the elevation change and driveway angle presented a challenge.
70 He also explained the rainwater collection systems.
71 Commissioner Hutt also inquired about the driveway/curb cut in context with the eastern
72 neighbor indicating that there will be two rather narrow driveways in close proximity
73 divided by an elevated chunk of dirt supported by retaining walls/systems.
74 Commissioner Hutt indicated that it would be cleaner and more functional with the
75 neighbor's permission, if the project's driveway went to the property line and combined it
76 with the neighbor's.
77
78 Commissioner Desai inquired how the elevation/grade of the partial basement was
79 established.
80 Mr. Sun replied that the 1% grade of the partial basement is established from the
81 elevation of the street.
82 Commissioner Desai inquired if it could go lower.
83 Mr. Sun stated that there is only one elevation change. He stated that the first floor
84 elevation is 21" lower than existing grade. If you lower the grade further, the finished
85 floor of the master bedroom above will be below the courtyard level.
86 Commissioner Desai stated that from the street, the butterfly roof of the second floor
87 appears to pronounce the front elevation—making the massing appear higher.
88
89 Commissioner Catalano inquired about the impact to the neighbor to the West.
90 Mr. Sun indicated that a letter of support from the neighbor to the west of the project
91 was submitted to the Commission.
92

93 Public Comment.
94 Herman Rundie
95 Monte Vista
96 Family owns adjacent property.
97 Spoke against project.
98

99 Neighbor
100 W. Grandview
101 Spoke against the project.
102

103 Edward Lopez
104 Woodland Dr.
105 Spoke against the project.
106

107 Neighbor
108 319 W Grandview
109 Voiced concerns about the maintenance of the property and concerns about the
110 protected trees.
111 Spoke against the project.
112 Design doesn't fit.
113

114 **Discussion**

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116 Commissioner Catalano inquired as to the status of trees.
117 Director Gonzalez deferred to Arborist report wherein stated that oak trees are in good
118 health.
119

120 Commissioner Catalano feels that the project has a street presence which will be
121 minimal compared to the overall lot. He feels that there is no prevalent architectural
122 style on Grandview. Sierra Madre has many styles of architecture. He stated that
123 preserving the oak trees is a good move and indicated that the upper story windows on
124 the east elevation are minimal and well staggered and would not impact privacy of the
125 neighbor to the east and that the house is nicely designed.
126

127 Commissioner Pevsner stated that he likes the eclectic style in Sierra Madre along
128 Grandview. He felt that the existing property was dilapidated and commended the
129 architect on the creative design and retaining the trees.
130

131 Commissioner Frierman-Hunt requested clarification on the partial basement
132 calculations.
133

134 Commissioner Desai felt that most architects would have deferred to the more efficient
135 floor plan, but this project favors the site, which is commendable. He pointed out that
136 the front entry court helps set the street elevation. Commissioner Desai stated that he
137 is struggling with the second-story roofline, but liked that the second story mass is

138 pushed so far back (79 feet). He felt that overall, the project was sited well and fits the
139 site, and that it does not read as a 2,700 square foot house.

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141 Commissioner Catalano indicated that the house is built per zoning requirements and
142 that houses vary in size in Sierra Madre.

143
144 Commissioner Hutt stated that even though this is an innovative design, it is not an
145 automatic approval. He felt that while the project has a lot of positive merit, it is still big.
146 He stated that he was struggling with a couple of findings. He stated that he could
147 agree with neighbors on size, but not style, but pointed out that the Planning
148 Commission does not regulate style, we evaluate how a building fits on the site. He
149 referenced the neighborhood comparison chart of the 55 noticed houses, revealing one
150 standard deviation above the mean, therefore revealing that the size of the house does
151 not overpower the neighborhood. Commissioner referenced finding #8 as a guideline,
152 that the house is a superior project with exceptional design.

153
154 Chair Spears stated that he is familiar with site and that it has been a vacant eyesore.
155 He noted the challenges with the slope, the narrow lot size, and the existing trees that
156 are in an irregular pattern. Chair Spears noted that the native plants are oaks, and they
157 are doing well. He indicated that while he desires that the building would be lower, it
158 conforms to grade and the second-story is setback 79 feet from the front property line.
159 The Commission does not review architectural style. Chair Spears stated that the
160 project has good documentation, the building is not out of character for the
161 neighborhood and cannot find reason to oppose.

162
163 Commissioner Frierman-Hunt indicated that the Commission is not in the business of
164 regulating style and that neighborhood compatibility is mixed.

165
166 Commissioner Catalano indicated that style vs. design allows for eclecticism.

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168 Commissioner Desai indicated that it is a big thing to preserve the oaks and the mature
169 Carrotwood tree. He can support and make the findings and does not have a strong
170 conviction regarding the second-story butterfly roof. Expressed that a stark white
171 building color would be problematic.

172
173 Commissioner Hutt indicated that the Commission should give the applicant flexibility to
174 address the second story roof, west façade fenestration (guest room), and the driveway
175 wall to the east.

176
177 **Action: Commissioner Hutt moved to approve Planning Commission Resolution**
178 **18-05, with noted areas of flexibility with substantial conformance.**
179 **Commissioner Desai seconded. Motion carried unanimously.**

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181 **Oral Communication**

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183 **Audience**

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None.

Planning Commission

Commissioner Hutt stated that he had visited the open house at 86 N. Lima. He reminded the Commission that this is a good example to approve the project, not the applicant. He stated that it is a nice house, but regrets loss of street trees.

Staff

Director Gonzalez stated that the next meeting will be held on July 5, 2018 at which the Commission will consider two items and will also meet beforehand for a closed session.

Chair Spears adjourned the meeting at 8:52 pm


Secretary to the Planning Commission
Vincent Gonzalez, Director of Planning & Community Preservation

