

January 5, 2021

Mr. Paul Novak
Hearing Officer
City of Pasadena Planning
175 Garfield Avenue
Pasadena, CA 91101

Dear Mr. Novak:

RE: Item 2A: HDP #6837: 801 S. SAN RAFAEL AVENUE

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on this item, and ask for your thorough evaluation of the multiple inconsistencies and irregularities. From its inception, this project seems to have been handled in a more disparate manner than most.

Due to the complexity and fragmentation of this project, we are urging that a Stop Work Order be established and full environmental review initiated.

Since mid-2019, there have been a series of permits issued for this property for a combination of remodeling/rehabilitation/new construction. We are not aware that there was a coherent and consolidated plan for evaluating the property as a whole at its inception, but rather multiple permits granted, piecemealing various changes, new construction, alterations and demolition. Cumulatively, these multiple permits issued within the past year ought to have triggered Hillside Overlay hearings long before today. It is absurd to believe that the project was initiated without an overall rehabilitation plan and a systematic work course-of-action. One may reach the conclusion that this type of serial permitting was employed to evade public hearings and scrutiny.

Various plans and the staff report show a variety of square footage measurements for the main residence and the aggregate accessory structures. For example, the L A County assessor lists the main house as 3310 square feet. Schematics submitted with the HDP application in June of 2020 show the “existing San Rafael residence” at 3,776 square feet. The current staff report indicates that the site is developed “with a two-story 4,760 square foot main residence and 600 foot garage,” when these are still under construction. What is the baseline? What figures should be accepted?

The existing guest house, which has a breezeway-walkway to it from the main house, is being presented in the staff report as part of the main dwelling, and not as the separate detached structure that it is—a converted garage—to which additional square footage was added in the past. Façades of this guest house are being represented as being the façades of the main residence. This representation is misleading and equivocal. Is this to elude a broader HDP review of the changes wrought to the South façade of the main house?

Regarding façades, there needs to be additional study to determine whether more than 50% of the main house facades have been altered and character defining features removed or changed. Visual inspection seems to indicate this, and photographs taken in July of 2019 show the extent of the demolition and alterations to the façades of the main house at that time.

John Van de Kamp, a memorable and eminent Pasadenan, lived in this house for 32 years. In December of 2019, City Staff from the Historic Preservation section of the Planning Department indicated, "*house appears eligible for landmark designation. No Exterior Changes to front or side elevations shown on plans.*" The current staff report inaccurately asserts that the home is not historic. Under the circumstances, how was the alteration of the façade permitted to the extent that they have been? It also appears that demolition of the house interiors was done without permits. Additionally, the new three-car garage obscures the front of the house. Is not altering or obscuring historic fabric *visible from the public-right-of way* proscribed for designated and eligible resources?

In conclusion, the current staff report completely dismisses all the serial additions and changes occurring to this property in the past year and a half, and neglects to acknowledge that since the summer of 2019, all work done on this property should have been considered under a single project umbrella. To allow continuous incremental additions, changes, and new construction circumvents the extent and true nature of the project.

We ask that prior to proceeding further, work be halted to ***establish and disclose the totality of this project***, and determine its implications on the neighborhood, the structure itself, and its compliance with current code and practices.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

Claire Bogaard

Claire Bogaard
Pasadena

Mic Hansen

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cc: Mayor Victor Gordo
David Reyes, Director of Planning and Community Development
Steve Madison, Councilmember, District 6
Takako Suzuki, Field Deputy, District 6
Jennifer Driver, Planner
Dan Beal, President, WPRA
Sue Mossman, Executive Director, Pasadena Heritage
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