Applicant Written Statement
July 20th, 2020

Thank you Design Review Board members for reviewing this project and for meeting for this specially scheduled hearing. My name is Steve Dahl and I am the architect for this project representing Jack and Mary Ross and their two daughters. We have also provided a powerpoint/video presentation with images and references – but we want to provide additional information and context that we didn't have time to cover in our presentation. We look forward to hearing your comments and feedback during the hearing stream.

We have been following the City's Design Guidelines and Zoning Code during our lengthy design process to make sure that what we have proposed is allowed and compatible with the neighborhood and character of residential homes in the City. The section in the zoning code describing the process for Design Review applications says:

> "These procedures are not intended to restrict imagination, innovation, or variety in design, but rather to focus on design issues and solutions that will have the greatest effect on community character and aesthetics, to encourage imaginative solutions and high-quality urban design" (SPMC 36.410.040(A)).

Jack and Mary purchased this home last Fall after researching the site's zoning requirements, historic eligibility, and everything else they needed to know about remodeling and expanding the existing home. They really wanted to find a home in South Pasadena because of the community and one of the best school systems in the area. This location is perfect for them as it is right next to the Marengo Elementary School and within walking distance to the Middle School and High School.

The home is not listed on the historic inventory list, nor is the neighborhood listed as a historic district. Eligible or potential historic districts are described in the Citywide Historic Context Statement,

but they are not mentioned anywhere in the zoning code or anywhere else in the South Pasadena Municipal Code other than a single non-relevant mention regarding parking for ADUs.

The code specifically defines historic districts as areas that have been specifically designated as such by the City Council – this is not the case for this neighborhood.

However, due to the relative amount of demolition of the existing home required to build our proposed 2-story addition, Staff required a Historic Resource Evaluation (HRE) Report to determine any historic value of the home and what procedure to follow.

This HRE report determined that the home was not historic or eligible to be historic by any metric used. However, it continued to criticize and offer design recommendations that are not relevant to this specific project and instead are focused on maintaining the integrity of the neighborhood as a potential historic district. This should not be applicable to this project as this home does not contribute to the historic fabric of the neighborhood. Any changes made to this home do not change the historic-ness of the surrounding homes or district, as this home already has no impact on the historic fabric of the neighborhood. Instead, this project should only be evaluated using normal neighborhood compatibility and how the addition compares to adjacent structures and other recent projects in the area.

This traditional cottage or bungalow style home is already an outlier compared to the surrounding homes. It uses a steep 9 to 12 pitch on a hipped roof. Most (but not all) of the surrounding homes are Craftsman and use more typical 2 to 12 or 3 to 12 roof pitches. Almost all of these homes used to be single-story, but in recent years, many have added 2-story rear additions similar to what we are proposing. Further, many of these use flat roofs on the additions to minimize the height and the visual impact from the street. Besides the Craftsman majority, there are also Traditional,

Mediterranean, Spanish colonial, Tudor, English revival, and Modern homes in this neighborhood. There are even examples of modern additions on homes with originally non-modern styles.

Our challenge, while designing this project, was to create a new addition that fit in with that range of architectural styles and also with the existing home and its style and features. We first looked into options for a single-story addition to the rear of the existing home. But, this approach would have involved the removal of an approximately 50' tall pine tree in the middle of the back yard and then would have left only a small amount of backyard area which is important for this young family to have private outdoor space. Further, with young children, it's important to group the bedrooms together and not have them on different levels or different areas – other than a guest bedroom. Looking around the neighborhood and the adjacent homes, there are many others that have added 2-story additions onto originally 1-story homes. The HRE report claims that "One of the district's character-defining features is its predominantly single-story residential character and Craftsman/period-revival architectural styles, dating primarily to the 1910s and 1920s" (HRE Report pg. 1). This home was built in 1945 and is not craftsman nor any type of period-revival. The HRE goes on to describe how that character defining feature has evolved in recent years due to many other 2 story additions. Five of the fifteen homes in the 1300 block of Stratford have added 2-story additions recently and it appears that 33% figure is the same throughout the eligible district. Further, many of those additions were on contributing historic properties including the immediate neighbor to the north and another across the street that is currently under construction. The "cumulative adverse impacts" outlined in the HRE report are not relevant to this project as the existing home already has no impact on what makes this district eligible to be historic. Based on the determination in the HRE report that this home is not contributing to the district and not individually eligible by any metric, another option would have been to demolish the existing home and to build a new home which would be subject to the Design Guidelines for new homes which say, "new residences can have a distinctly modern aesthetic. However, these more modern elements within older

neighborhoods should follow the neighborhood setbacks, scale, and overall massing" (Design Guidelines [DGs] pg. 61). Further:

> "Contemporary design generated with an understanding for the character of a historic neighborhood can enrich the architectural variety and contribute to the continuity of quality within the neighborhood. This can be achieved by careful consideration to height, form, massing, proportion, size, scale, and roof form and with careful attention to quality workmanship, compatible to that found in the surrounding neighborhoods. New residences can embrace modern detailing and materials, but should take into consideration the overall streetscape into which the new building will be inserted" (DGs pg. 62).

We found the final sentence of that section to be especially illuminating in how we chose to approach this project. Rather than demolishing the home and beginning again with a new modern building, we thought it would be beneficial to our design and to the surrounding streetscape to keep the existing home mostly intact with modern elements to compliment and contrast with the original home. The Design Guidelines also encourage creativity in the design process and outline how projects should be reviewed case-by-case: "However, these guidelines are not meant to dictate specific design solutions or stifle creative design. The guidelines do not substitute for case-specific analysis and thoughtful input from designers, project sponsors, city employees and volunteer design review participants" (DGs pg. 4).

Before settling on the proposed 2-story design that we submitted for your review, we first looked into other options to match more closely with the traditional style and architectural features. We tried using a matching 9 to 12 hipped roof on the addition, but the result was about 30' tall and visually, the front elevation would be almost entirely roof. With the existing hipped roof to remain, another hipped roof behind and above was overwhelming in massing and visually problematic with the

two large portions of front facing asphalt shingles. Further, this design transformed the existing home from an addition to a small traditional cottage to some other style entirely.

We then tried gabled options and even dropping the 2nd floor plate height to about 2' above the floor to minimize the height of the addition – but these resulted in overly complex roof shapes and large side dormers to allow a functional interior ceiling height. Again these designs were too complex and distracted from the original home which largely remains untouched in the front.

In order to make the 2-story addition work, we needed to either reconfigure or demolish large portions of the original home, or create a complimentary addition that does not try to match the existing. We did try an option which removed the existing hipped roof and front facing gable and replaced them with flat roofs to match the addition. This design would result in a greater visual impact on the streetscape as the entire 2nd floor would be visible without the existing roof to obscure it. Further, the design was less interesting without the original home to provide contextual visual information to contrast the modern design features.

The design philosophy of our proposed design is to keep the existing home mostly intact and use it to provide contrast to the modern style of the addition. Instead of stretching the original small cottage design into a cohesive but bloated 2 story home, this new design is intentionally different from the original. If we increased the scale and massing of the cottage/bungalow, it would no longer have the same style and appearance. Instead, the original home with its traditional style would now remain as a contrast to the modern massing and roof forms of the addition. The streetscape retains its single story character and the new addition does not overwhelm the scale of the home or its neighbors – the maximum height of the new roof above the existing ridge is less than 3'-0".

One change to the original home is a large flat roof dormer that projects from the back towards the front forward facing pitch of the existing hipped roof. This dormer has several purposes. First,

because most of the 2nd story is located entirely behind the existing home footprint, the hipped roof slopes back down towards the new addition area. The dormer intersects that slope and ties the addition to the existing. Further, the dormer contributes to the range of roof heights seen throughout the addition and the existing. From the front and sides, you can see staggered increases in the massing and height of the roof from front to back. This lessens the impact of the addition by not suddenly increasing the height and changing the style at once. The dormer allows better interaction between the existing and new and between the existing and new styles.

As the dormer brings the 2-story massing and modern style into the area of the existing home, we are also proposing to use horizontal siding to match that of the original home throughout the addition. Further, we are proposing a roof skirt that continues the roof overhang and materials around the sides and back of the addition. The roof skirt breaks up the vertical plane of the 2-story addition and also gives the impression of the new addition projecting upwards from within the existing roof. The use of these materials in the new addition brings some of the traditional style features of the original home into the addition and creates a better connection and interaction throughout the whole home.

We really think this proposed design is the best option for this home and is good example of how to approach additions to small older homes. The proposed design is compatible with the existing home by remaining mostly intact as a contextual compliment to the modern addition. This project is also compatible with the neighborhood by minimizing the height and visual impact of the addition from the street.

We also want to specifically address the staff report and the recommended conditions of approval:

- P8: Landscape and irrigation plans

- Per SPMC Section 35.50, this project does not require compliance with the Efficient Landscape Ordinance. That section applies to new construction and projects rehabilitating more than 2,500 sq. ft. of landscaping. This project is only modifying 763 sq. ft. of existing landscaping – only in the areas of the new addition and the relocated garage slab. Following the Efficient Landscape Ordinance would require removing and replacing all landscaping on site including existing landscaping.

- P9: Design changes
  - These proposed changes are not well thought out and would result in a totally changed design – these are not adjustments or modifications. It is hard to understand why the staff would recommend approving this project with this condition as following it would result in a different design than what would be considered and approved at the hearing. We propose removal of the entirety of this condition. We are willing to work with a subcommittee to refine the design, but not if this condition is included and enforced during those subcommittee meetings.

A. Eliminate Dormer
   - As described elsewhere in this statement, the dormer is an important feature for the function and design of the home. The dormer helps to stagger the increasing height from front to back, hides the stairs and east facing slope of the hipped roof where it intersects the new addition, and helps to bring some of the modern style into the plane of the original home to create a better connection throughout the home.

B. Revise floorplan so 2nd floor is entirely outside footprint of existing home and avoid demolishing pitched roofs
   - The bedroom in question (#2 on the floorplan) is the only part of the addition that is above the original home. But, it is still setback from the front and adds another element

to the front-to-back staggering which is important for minimizing the impact of 2nd story additions on the streetscape. Further, the bedroom location is vital to the interior floorplan and the function of the second floor and landing.

C. Show a proportional relationship of length, width, and height.

- The proposed design does have this characteristic. The home is generally rectangular and increases in height from front to back. The proportion of the dimensions is similar to the original, but with a small increase in height because of the increased length.

D. Lower the floor plates and ceiling heights

- There is no basis for this recommendation. The new addition at its highest point will be about 3'-0" taller than the existing ridge. From the sidewalk, the tallest point will not be visible behind the existing roof ridge.

E. Avoid building walls that would be visible above existing structure

- This recommendation is not in keeping with the other recent 2-story additions in the neighborhood. Many of these homes have fully visible 2nd levels that are entirely above the existing roofs. Our proposed design will have less visual impact than those others because of the minimal increase in height.

F. Acceptable roof forms are hipped/gable styles

- The design guidelines call for roof forms and shapes that are compatible with adjacent structures. While this roof design is compatible with the existing structure – as explained thoroughly in this statement – it is also matching the existing garage, the existing front porch cover, existing side porch cover, and the existing flat roof cover of the rear patio.

G. Use similar vertical fenestration

    - Vertical fenestration is not appropriate for the addition and modern styled areas. The proposed windows on the sides offer privacy to and from the neighbors and are compatible with the massing and forms in those areas.

- B7 Garage Surveying
    - This is unnecessary as the garage is being moved only to the east. The side setback is not changing, we are using the same side setback for the new location.
- PW5 Drainage Plan
    - There is no alteration to the drainage path, hiring a civil engineer to calculate existing drainage is unnecessary.
- PW6 LID and SUSMP
    - The scale and scope of this project is way under the threshold required by SPMC for LID and SUSMP requirements
- PW8 Sanitation Fees
    - The sewer connection is existing, there will be no new sewer connection or any need to pay an LA County Sanitation District fee. (Both of these Public Works conditions seem to be assuming that this project is for a new home).

While we specifically object to the previous conditions, we think all building department and public works conditions should be removed. This application is for design review, not a conditional use permit. The zoning code states:

> "The Review Authority [DRB] may approve or disapprove an application. Application approval may be subject to conditions as may be deemed reasonable and necessary to ensure that the findings required by Subsection (I) (Required findings), and all City development standards are met" (SPMC 36.410.040(H)(1).)

The building department and public works department conditions go above and beyond what is required by code for a project of this size. We will still be subject to plan check review for each of those departments later, and they can enforce applicable requirements of the code at that time.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We are available to answer any questions or provide more commentary about the design or other features of the project.