



**City of South Pasadena  
Planning and Community  
Development Department**

# Memo

**Date:** September 8, 2020

**To:** Chair and Members of the Planning Commission

**From:** Joanna Hankamer, Planning and Community Development Director  
Kanika Kith, Planning Manager

**Prepared By:** Nick Pergakes, Contract Planner  
Malinda Lim, Associate Planner

**Re:** Item No. 1 September 8, 2020 Planning Commission Meeting –  
Additional Document No. 1 - Public Comments for 804 Valley View  
Road (Project No. 2298-DRX/HDP/TRP)

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After posting of the staff report, public comments were received from five people in opposition to the project. Comments were received from the following people:

- Linda Esposito
- Billy Reed
- Glen Duncan
- SMART Families (Delaine W. Shane and Susan L. Sulsky)

These comments are included as **Attachment 1**.

Verbal comments were also received from three people. Two are in opposition and one in support of the project. These comments are included as **Attachment 2** and will be played during the meeting.

**Attachments:**

1. Public Comments Received After Posting of the Staff Report
2. [Audio Comments Received After Posting of the Staff Report \(click here\)](#)

**ATTACHMENT 1**  
**Public Comments Received After**  
**Posting of the Staff Report**

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**From:** L Esposito <lindae99@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, September 4, 2020 10:43 AM  
**To:** AskPlanning <AskPlanning@southpasadenaca.gov>; PlanningComments <PlanningComments@southpasadenaca.gov>  
**Cc:** Richard D. Schneider <rschneider@southpasadenaca.gov>; Kanika Kith <kkith@southpasadenaca.gov>  
**Subject:** Opposition to 804 Valley View Road proposed development

**CAUTION:** This email originated from outside of the City of South Pasadena. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Good morning,

Please see attached letter regarding the over-development concerns for Design Review and Hillside Development Permit for 804 Valley View Road.

Thank you,  
—Linda Esposito

September 4, 2020

Dear Members of the Planning Commission,

I am writing about the concerns held by myself and my neighbors regarding the proposed hill-side development permit for the construction of a new tri-level, 3,125 square-foot family residence, including a Tree Removal Permit for the removal of one tree located at 804 Valley View Road. We are disturbed by the over-development of our neighborhood, located in the south area of the city.

The properties at 800 and 804 Valley View Road have listed by South Pasadena as "Historic Resources". This should mean that it falls under the auspices of Ordinance 2315, the Cultural Heritage Ordinance:

1. To preserve, maintain, and safeguard the City's heritage and character as embodied and reflected in the Sites, structures, and neighborhoods that serve as significant reminders of the city's social, educational, cultural and architectural history;
  2. To foster civic and neighborhood pride, a sense of identity based on the recognition and use of Cultural Resources, and continuity of the city's historic character, scale, and small town atmosphere in all future construction; and
  3. To encourage Maintenance and Preservation of areas that are associated with a historic event, activity, or persons that contribute to the historic character of districts, neighborhoods, Landmarks, historic structures, and artifacts.
- 
1. To preserve diverse and harmonious architectural styles, reflecting phases of the City's history and to encourage complementary contemporary design and construction;
  2. To identify as early as possible, and resolve conflicts between the Preservation of Cultural Resources and alternative uses of the subject property; and
  3. To conserve valuable material and energy resources by ongoing historic or adaptive new use and;

The architectural renderings of 804 Valley View, 808 Valley View and 728 Bonita Drive depict large, tri-level modern architectural style homes, wholly incongruous and inappropriate to the unique and charming dwellings of South Pasadena. As you are aware, the Valley View Heights District, is of an older era and this modern design is disruptive per the Cultural Heritage Ordinance.

Additionally, the construction will have potential significant impacts on Air Quality, Geology and Soils, Historical Resources, Noise/ Vibration, and Traffic. Since 2014, we have endured a consistent disruption to our quality of life due to the never-ending construction mishaps on Oneonta Drive. Noise, debris, dust, pollution, contractors working with expired licenses, cement spillage on the street and on cars, parking problems, and numerous complaints to the City.

We are extremely concerned about the audacious plan on 804 Valley View. Due to COVID 19, many more residents are working from home, and are sensitive to air pollution and noise. We also question the environmental impact of this project.

The vacant property at 808 Valley View and the vacant lot on 804 Valley View are directly behind my home. So close, in fact, I can touch the detached garage at 808 from my backyard. Several mature, majestic and huge trees canvas the vacant lot, yet a permit exists to remove only one. I have enjoyed the natural landscape and views from my backyard for the past 13 years. Besides providing shade, noise reduction, shelter to wildlife and contributing to cleaner air (we experience substantial poor-quality air days, according to the AQMD), I am perplexed by the ability to construct such a large home while leaving these protected trees intact. South Pasadena is known for our award-winning school district and our trees. What is interesting is that in 2015, the Parks & Recreation Commission passed a motion not to purchase 804 Valley View Road because of its incontinent position on a hill. The positioning of the property has not changed, yet the City once again ignored the advice of their own Commissioners and forged ahead with negotiations.

The City has made numerous statements about its commitment to use CalTrans properties for affordable housing units, that could be made available to first time home buyers. The projects under consideration by the Planning Commission on September 8, 2020 are incongruent with this commitment.

It is important that you understand some of the issues which have plagued our neighborhood. Due to our proximity to El Sereno and the explosion of homelessness, Bonita Drive was the target of a proposed takeover on April 6, 2020 when two masked men gained illegal entry of two unoccupied CalTrans properties. For the next month, many of us were involved in lobbying local politicians, law enforcement and CalTrans. We ultimately prevailed and curtailed homeless or other members of society from claiming squatters' rights. This was accomplished without assistance from the City. It appears City management intervenes when there is a benefit to developers, rather than to residents. Our area in District 2 has been neglected due to the fight over the 710 Freeway, and woefully under represented by former South Pasadena Mayor and resigned councilperson, Marina Khubersian.

Thank you for your consideration to our formidable concerns regarding the proposed development at 804 Valley View Drive, and other hardships experienced for the past several years. We urge you to not approve the plans submitted by the developers for this project. It is incongruent with the historical significance of the Valley View Heights District, and threatens the environmental stability of the land.

Sincerely,

Linda Esposito  
809 Bonita Drive

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**From:** L Esposito [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, September 7, 2020 2:28 PM  
**To:** AskPlanning <AskPlanning@southpasadenaca.gov>; PlanningComments <PlanningComments@southpasadenaca.gov>  
**Cc:** Richard D. Schneider <rschneider@southpasadenaca.gov>; Kanika Kith <kkith@southpasadenaca.gov>; [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Re: Opposition to 804 Valley View Road proposed development

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Please note the amended letter dated September 7th, 2020 which includes a list of neighbors who oppose the Hillside Development Permit for 804 Valley View Road, and other over-development in District 2. See attached photos of trees shown from my property.

*I copied newly elected District 2 councilperson Steve Rossi, but am unaware if he has a City email address yet.*

I left a 3-minute voice recording this afternoon.

Thank you,

Linda Esposito

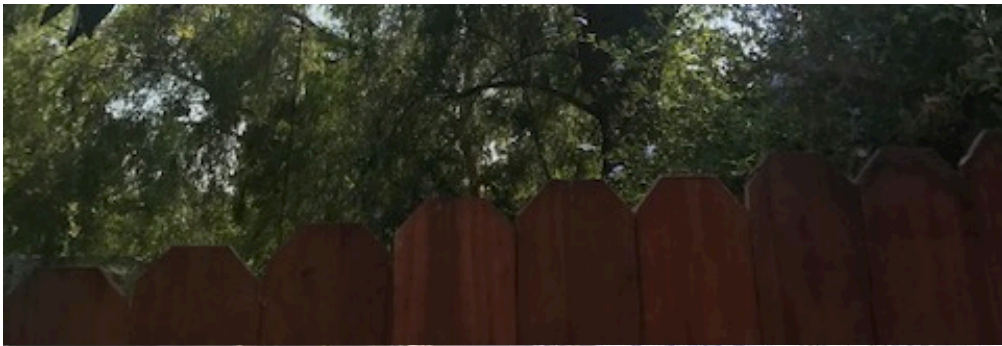
On Friday, September 4, 2020, 10:42:51 AM PDT, L Esposito [REDACTED] wrote:

Good morning,

Please see attached letter regarding the over-development concerns for Design Review and Hillside Development Permit for 804 Valley View Road.

Thank you,  
—Linda Esposito











September 4, 2020 (amended on September 7, 2020)

Dear Members of the Planning Commission,

I am writing about the concerns held by myself and my neighbors regarding the proposed hillside development permit for the construction of a new tri-level, 3,125 square-foot family residence, including a Tree Removal Permit for the removal of one tree located at 804 Valley View Road. We are disturbed by the over-development of our neighborhood, located in the south area of the city.

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It is important that you understand some of the issues which have plagued our neighborhood. Due to our proximity to El Sereno and the explosion of homelessness, Bonita Drive was the target of a proposed takeover on April 6, 2020 when two masked men gained illegal entry of two unoccupied CalTrans properties. For the next month, many of us were involved in lobbying local politicians, law enforcement and CalTrans. We ultimately prevailed and curtailed homeless or other members of society from claiming squatters' rights. This was accomplished without assistance from the City. It appears City management intervenes when there is a benefit to developers, rather than to residents. Our area in District 2 has been neglected due to the fight over the 710 Freeway, and woefully under represented by former South Pasadena Mayor and resigned councilperson, Marina Khubersian.

Thank you for your consideration to our formidable concerns regarding the proposed development at 804 Valley View Drive, and other hardships experienced for the past several years. We urge you to not approve the plans submitted by the developers for this project. It is incongruent with the historical significance of the Valley View Heights District, and threatens the environmental stability of the land.

Sincerely,

Linda Esposito  
809 Bonita Drive

**South Pasadena Neighbors opposing 804 Valley View Road Hillside Development  
Project and Tree Removal and other over-development concerns, as of September 7th,  
2020:**

Barry Kleinman 752 Bonita Drive  
Mr and Mrs. Chris Bachman 739 Bonita Drive  
Greg and Suzy Campeau 1900 Meridian Avenue  
Susan Sulsky 2021 Meridian Avenue  
Delaine Shane 20003 Meridian Avenue  
Emma and Edward Pinto 2020 Meridian Avenue  
Barbara Sutton 740 Bonita Drive  
Philip and Emily Beaghan 760 Bonita Drive  
Sheri Chrisman Gomez 801 Bonita Drive  
Sally Takeda and Sean Teer 712 Bonita Drive  
Dawn and David Tull 872 Oneonta Drive

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**From:** Billy Reed <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, September 8, 2020 11:17 AM  
**To:** PlanningComments <PlanningComments@southpasadenaca.gov>; Richard D. Schneider <rschneider@southpasadenaca.gov>; Kanika Kith <kkith@southpasadenaca.gov>; AskPlanning <AskPlanning@southpasadenaca.gov>  
**Subject:** Letter opposing 804 Valley View Hillside Permit

**CAUTION:** This email originated from outside of the City of South Pasadena. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Good morning,

Please see my attached letter, and palm tree photo regarding Project: 2298-DRX/HDP/TRP for tonight's public hearing.

Thank you,

Billy Reed



804 Valley View  
air quality.pdf





September 8, 2020

Dear Members of the Planning Commission,

My name is Billy Reed, and I live at 809 Bonita Drive. I am a recent student-athlete graduate of South Pasadena High School. Due to the pandemic I will be staying home to study as a college student for at least this academic year. We live directly behind the proposed tri-level modern structure at 804 Valley View Road. This pertains to Agenda Item-1, Project number: 2298-DRX/HDP/TRP.

I am mostly worried about the health concerns of my mom, Linda Esposito as she is immuno-compromised. This is medically documented. Two neighbors who live next door are elderly and have compromised immune systems, as well. I do not feel comfortable sharing their names or addresses due to confidentiality.

Because we were not notified of the public hearing until August 29, there are a lot of unanswered questions about the environmental review documents. I am trying to understand them best I can. One concern is there is nothing about the air quality that analyzed the impacts to the Bonita/Valley View houses.

For example: No. 13 is the South Coast Air Quality Handbook for calculating air quality. I see no evidence that they actually calculated the levels of estimated pollutants from the construction machinery. It looks like they said it was short-term. What does that mean? The two trilevel modern homes on Oneonta Drive have been under construction since 2014, and 883 is no where near completed. We were not aware of the 2017 hearing, apparently because it was a closed-meeting. Thankfully, the review is being amended. Please report on the closeness of the surrounding houses on Bonita Drive and include analysis on noise and air pollution.

I had to look up the meaning of “sensitive receptor.” This is what I found:

Sensitive receptors include, but are not limited to, hospitals, schools, daycare facilities, elderly housing and convalescent facilities. These are areas where the occupants are more susceptible to the adverse effects of exposure to toxic chemicals, pesticides, and other pollutants. Extra care must be taken when dealing with contaminants and pollutants in close proximity to areas recognized as sensitive receptors.

Source: <https://www3.epa.gov/region1/eco/uep/sensitivereceptors.html>

I don't know if Tinker Tots Preschool is possibly affected, but we have many elderly residents on Bonita Drive.

Lastly, I hope the Commission recognizes all the disruptions to our daily lives due to the fact that construction crews enter and exit Bonita Drive in order to access Oneonta and other streets. Now we face possible years-long disruptions at the south end of our home as three lots have sold. Literally, in our backyard. And how can the Planning Commission and Public Works justify cutting down mature, native and historically protected trees? I included a photo taken this morning of the palm tree in front of 804 Valley View.



Thank you for considering the health hazards, especially with regard to air quality. I just read that scientists are predicting the fire season may extend through Thanksgiving. This is largely due to climate change and increasing temperatures. One neighbor on Oneonta Drive has not opened her windows in years due to the constant noise, pollution, dust and debris from the hillside projects. Having my mom and other neighbors, many in fragile health due to age, should not be subject to additional environmental and physical stressors in the name of over-development.

Sincerely,

Billy Reed

From: jglenduncan <[REDACTED]>  
Sent: Friday, September 4, 2020 3:54 PM  
To: Kanika Kith <kkith@southpasadenaca.gov>  
Cc: [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; Joanne Nuckols  
<[REDACTED]>; John Vandercook <[REDACTED]>  
Subject: Re: 804 Valley View Road development/NEIGHBOR NEEDS OUR HELP!  
**CAUTION:** This email originated from outside of the City of South Pasadena. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Kanika,

The Los Terrados Hotel was located on 800 and 804 Valley View Road in 1908. ( I believe there are supporting articles in local paper and the LA Times). I have a photo of the hotel and other supporting info somewhere in my files. I understand that developers of the Sierra Vista neighborhood used the hotel as their base of operations. Mabel Packard lived there while her house at 2031 Berkshire Ave was being built in 1914. The Packard home is South Pasadena landmark #39 and where I have lived since 1990. South Pas Cultural Heritage Commissioner from 1993-2008.

My understanding is that the hotel was used as a convalescent home until the early- to mid 1930s. when it burned down. The cobblestone wall along the sidewalk in front of the property and the attractive specimen palm tree (Canary Island?) are character-defining features of the Valley View Heights neighborhood and should be protected. The Valley View Heights/Sierra Vista neighborhood extends from Valley View Road in South Pasadena down across Kendall Avenue in Los Angeles (the LA portion has been determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places). The cobblestone wall should be photo documented, disassembled, and rebuilt to match the original. The specimen palm tree at front center of the 804 property absolutely should not be demolished or moved. Proposed plans available on Zillow exhibit no concern whatsoever for character-defining features of the property and should be redesigned to preserve historic features detailed above.

I have no objection to a modern design; the neighborhood exhibits little design consistency as it now stands. In fact, the house directly across the street has been referred to as strongly influenced by Irving Gill modernism. Please call if you have any questions or suggestions.

Thanks

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**From:** jglenduncan <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, September 8, 2020 12:20 PM  
**To:** Kanika Kith <[kkith@southpasadenaca.gov](mailto:kkith@southpasadenaca.gov)>  
**Subject:** Proposed 804 Valley View Rd development

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South Pasadena Planning Commission and  
Kanika Kith, Interim Director of Planning and Building  
City of South Pasadena  
1414 Mission Street, South Pasadena, CA 91030

**Re: Request for mitigation re proposed development at 804 Valley View Road**

Dear Kanika and Planning Commission,

**Please help preserve a site that gave birth to and anchored a historic South Pasadena/El Sereno neighborhood by protecting a historic arroyo stone retaining wall and mature trees that have survived many years of neglect by Caltrans.**

Just last week I became aware that a residential development project has been proposed on the property identified on Google Earth as 800 Valley View Road. Because of its commanding influence on neighborhood appeal, residents have long been concerned about its future and most everyone is delighted that attractive housing might be built on land Caltrans had turned into an eyesore. The site, however, is the surviving buildable remnant on the hillside where the beautiful Los Terrados hotel was built over a century ago. The hotel not only anchored the Sierra Vista neighborhood, but also was where its development originated

- **The low cobblestone retaining wall built in 1908 should be photo-documented prior to disassembly and rebuilt to retain as much of the original Los Terrados character as possible.**
- **There are several mature trees on the property should be protected, most importantly the attractive specimen Canary Island palm must not be demolished or moved. It is a character-defining feature of the Valley View Heights neighborhood\*. The cobblestone wall should be photo documented, disassembled, and rebuilt to match the original. The specimen palm tree at front center of the 804 property absolutely should not be demolished or moved.**

Sincerely,

**Glen**

Glen Duncan

\*The Sierra Vista/Valley View Heights neighborhood extends south from Valley View Rd in South Pasadena and across Kendall Ave. The LA portion has been determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

## Malinda Lim

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**From:** D.W. Shane <SMART-Families@outlook.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 7, 2020 5:48 PM  
**To:** Kanika Kith; PlanningComments  
**Cc:** Janet Braun; Joanna Hankamer; Malinda Lim; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; Kim Hughes; [REDACTED]; John E. Fisher; Shahid Abbas; Kristine Courdy; Leaonna Dewitt; Maria Ayala; Robert Joe; Diana Mahmud; Dr. Richard Schneider - Personal; Michael Cacciotti; Stephen Rossi; Tamara Binns; Margaret Lin; Ben Tansey  
**Subject:** Public Comment: Planning Commission Meeting on September 8 2020: Agenda No. 1: 804 Valley View Road Project No. 2298 - DRX/HDP/TRP  
**Attachments:** Planning Commission Meeting Sept 8 2020 Agenda Item 1 Comments.pdf  
**Importance:** High

**CAUTION:** This email originated from outside of the City of South Pasadena. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Ms. Kith:

Enclosed please find our comment letter on Agenda Item No. 1 for the Planning Commission meeting scheduled for September 8, 2020.

This letter is provided to you as part of the administrative record related to the proposed development on 804 Valley View Road. **SMART Families** will also be leaving a brief voicemail to be replayed at the Commission's meeting. Our major concerns are focused on potential transportation and related environmental impacts both on Valley View Road and Meridian Avenue, and at the intersection of those two streets that appear not to be discussed in the two environmental documents.

We are surprised that given the extreme steepness of the slope on the property and the proximity to the intersection of Valley View Road and Meridian Avenue (a dangerous roadway due to excessive speeding by cut through drivers) that a mitigated negative declaration with a mitigation monitoring and reporting program were not prepared for the entire development, even if it phased over time (i.e., luxury homes being built on 800, 804, and 808 Valley View Drive) to comply with the California Environmental Quality Act. We are not against development, though affordable housing developments need to be encouraged by the City. However, we are concerned about the lack of well-defined mitigations related to our concerns that need to be included in the Planning Commission's permit conditions.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on this project and request that further electronic notifications and documentation concerning this project and the other developments on Valley View Road be sent to our attention at [smart-families@outlook.com](mailto:smart-families@outlook.com).

Thank you.

Sincerely,

**SMART Families**



PUBLIC COMMENTS SUBMITTED BY SMART FAMILIES

September 7, 2020

City of South Pasadena  
Planning Commission  
1414 Mission Street  
South Pasadena, CA 91030  
Attention: Kanika Kith, Planning Manager

Dear Honorable Planning Chair and Commissioners:

Save **Meridian Avenue** for its **Residents Together** or **SMART Families** is a collective voice of South Pasadena residents who either live in the Meridian Avenue corridor or are community-wide supporters. Our goal is to encourage the City to correct dangerous traffic conditions on Meridian Avenue and to move beyond the 710 Freeway issues that have long afflicted our neighborhood.

It has come to our attention that the first of possibly three new luxury homes will be built on the 800 block of Valley View Road (800, 804, and 808). Our group is not against housing development; however, we do have concerns with respect to:

- Piecemealing environmental analysis regarding homes to be built on the same block.
- Lack of information on construction in the environmental review documents.
- Construction site maintenance practices.
- Geotechnical recommendations and the need for highly technical engineering and construction/contractor expertise when dealing with excessive steep slopes.

Piecemealing

It is not clear why all three lots were not examined together as one whole project from an environmental review perspective. By not doing so, it has the appearance of piecemealing under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) by not looking at the full spectrum of potential impacts, including cumulative impacts. At least two of the lots (800 and 804) are owned by the same individual and presumed to be developed shortly and in fact, in 2017, were submitted to the Planning Commission at the same time, albeit as separate projects.

Lack of Information during the Construction Phase

The original negative declaration and addendum for 804 Valley View Road project failed to disclose the estimated numbers of vehicle trips during construction, including heavy-duty hauling trucks, mobile construction equipment, vendor trucks, water trucks, and construction workers' vehicles, as well as the length of time construction and location(s) of the staging area/construction office site.

Valley View Road is a local street that leads to Meridian Avenue, a residential collector road (two lanes [one northbound, one southbound] and at times, just 36 feet wide). Meridian Avenue

PUBLIC COMMENTS SUBMITTED BY SMART FAMILIES

already has almost 10,000 Average Daily Trips (ADT) from cars and at times, illegally, large trucks. Signage at Kendall Avenue and Meridian Avenue warns drivers that trucks over three tons are not permitted on Meridian Avenue. Unfortunately, the City has not deemed it a priority to add another sign similar in content on Meridian Avenue at Monterey Road, or at local streets that are connected to both Meridian and Huntington Drive, such as at Maple Street.

Additionally, the truck haul route is also absent from both CEQA documents. Will vehicles be entering through the City of Los Angeles or through South Pasadena? **SMART Families** is concerned about the access to the project site to/from Valley View Road via Meridian Avenue. While Valley View Avenue has a stop sign, there are none on Meridian Avenue. As mentioned recently in the *South Pasadenan.com*, in the past five years, the entire stretch of Meridian Avenue has had 53 collisions: <https://southpasadenan.com/meridian-ave-traffic-issues-addressed-transportation-commission-forwards-recommendation/>. In fact, just a couple of weeks ago, yet another collision occurred at Meridian and Bonita Drive, being the third one in that intersection in less than 12 months and just one block north of Meridian/Valley View. Bonita Drive has a stop sign, but Meridian Avenue at that intersection has none. Although Meridian has a posted speed limit of 25 mph, this residential street is plagued by speeding vehicles all the time.

Therefore, **SMART Families** requests that the truck haul route either avoid Meridian Avenue or be heavily restricted while on Meridian Avenue. There are four reasons for this:

1. Meridian Avenue's pavement is among the worst in the City as stated by Public Works Director Shahid Abbas. Potholes and large cracks are frequently being filled in lieu of repaving the approximately one-mile stretch between Monterey Road to the north and Kendall Avenue to the south. We understand it would cost nearly one million dollars to fix our street and there is no funding for it at this time. More heavy-duty truck traffic, especially bringing in construction equipment like pile drivers and dozers will accelerate the deterioration even further. More importantly, with such destruction of our pavement and further soil compaction by the sheer weight of such vehicles, underground utility pipelines and cables both public and private could ultimately be damaged. This will be an unknown cost to us taxpayers and to the City while the applicant is not being held accountable.
2. Meridian Avenue is not safe for pedestrians crossing or for drivers making turns. Through the use of mobile digital speed monitors placed from time to time by the Police Department, vehicles have been routinely observed to be traveling in the high 30s to high 40s mph by the time they pass Maple Street and travel south past Bonita Drive, continue to pass Valley View Road, prior to coming to a complete stop at Kendall Avenue (the City's southern boundary). Truck drivers may be cautious in turning from Valley View onto Meridian, but unfortunately speeding drivers may not be able to react in time.
3. Valley View Road is the "backdoor" approach taken by parents in this part of South Pasadena to drive their children to Monterey Hills Elementary School. They can still travel north on Meridian, turn left onto Monterey, and then left again onto Via del Rey;



PUBLIC COMMENTS SUBMITTED BY SMART FAMILIES

however, no traffic analysis was done in the CEQA documents to know if this would further impact Meridian/Monterey, which is already at level of service (LOS) D, as well as accounting for the increase in vehicle miles traveled (VMT). We also learned that with the eventual implementation of the Seven Patios Project, up to 400 ADT would be added to the congestion at the Meridian/Monterey intersection. In turn, that additional traffic would continue to travel south on Meridian Avenue. During morning peak hours, this could be quite problematic if not a potentially significant impact if not mitigated or appropriate permit conditions are not added.

4. Street blockage and restricted parking could be problematic for residents. There are many neighbors who do not have sufficient onsite residential parking and require on-street parking. While parking itself is not a CEQA issue per se, increasing VMT (i.e., driving around) to find parking spaces is an issue that was not addressed in the two CEQA documents prepared by the City.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM **SMART FAMILIES**:

- Please ensure that **SMART Families** and potentially affected neighbors adjacent to the project site receive a map of the approved truck route with a contact phone number for complaints and follow up enforcement actions.
- We ask that you condition this project by having construction workers carpool whenever possible and that qualified flag technicians are present at the intersection of Meridian/Valley View if trucks are permitted to arrive or leave via this intersection (i.e., revise Condition P.11).
- If the second bullet item above is not possible, then we request a temporary three-way stop signage for that intersection for the protection of our residents and of drivers who mostly use our street as cut throughs to other cities. The Police Department has informed us that 90% of speeding citations issued to drivers on Meridian Avenue live outside of South Pasadena and have no incentives, other than through law enforcement, to obey the posted 25 mph speed limit.

Site Maintenance Practices

Current and previous residential construction activities around the Oneonta Drive-Bonita Drive-Summit Drive-Gillette Crescent area have been disappointing to the residents for the last few years in many respects, including site maintenance and cleanup practices. We are concerned that solid waste materials may come onto Meridian Avenue and be a road hazard and/or a public health issue.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM **SMART FAMILIES**:

- Please revise Condition P. 7 to ensure that cleanup of debris is done *at all times*, i.e., construction debris at the site and trash generated by construction workers need to be **swept up and free of such solid waste on streets, sidewalks, and the construction site at all times.**

PUBLIC COMMENTS SUBMITTED BY SMART FAMILIES

Geotechnical Recommendations and the Need for Highly Technical Expertise

Lastly, the geotechnical report makes several recommendations. The permit conditions appear to be flexible and left to the City's [contract or developer-selected] engineer to determine, based on the report's recommendations, what will be required during the design and construction of a home on a slope that is on average 38% steep, but at some places is a maximum of 74% steep.

*Groundwater Concerns*

If the piles are to be driven down to 12 feet (according to the original application), why were soil borings/test pits done to just 6.5 feet? It is our understanding that excessively steep slopes with grades of over 40%, or even moderate slopes, are most vulnerable to failure when affected by impervious soil layers, runoff, springs, seeping groundwater, or past movement. In addition, there are Bonita Drive properties on the other side of Valley View Road that are at higher elevations than the project and may be additional factors influencing the existing drainage patterns, stormwater runoff, and irrigation to the project site.

QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS RAISED BY **SMART FAMILIES**:

- Were other sources of literature reviewed or possibly other soil samples taken to ensure that groundwater does not exist beyond 7 feet? If not, why not do the sampling to the full depth of 12 feet (or whatever the length of the piles will be)?
- Did the technical report cover the possibility of some stormwater runoff movement from above the project site, along with irrigation water that might also move through the soils and travel down the hill on the Valley View side rather than solely traversing down Bonita Drive?
- Is there a possibility that runoff coming from the Bonita Drive area will place additional pressures on the project's retaining walls and foundations adding to slope instability?

*Specific Knowledge and Expertise in Excessively Steep Hillside Development Concerns*

The report states there would be no impacts to surrounding homes so long as "...reasonable precautions are taken."

- Shouldn't the residents of Valley View Road, Bonita Drive, and Meridian Avenue have better assurances than that? Assuming "reasonable precautions are taken?" That provides little comfort to our neighbors.

The old, but still valid General Plan states: "19.9: Prohibit grading of slopes in excess of 30%." The CEQA documents did not indicate that the proposed project was inconsistent with the approved General Plan.

From our research, we now understand that due to changes in the South Pasadena Municipal Code via Ordinance 2346 passed by the City Council on May 6, 2020, grading on slopes in excess of 30% is now permitted as stated: "Grading on slopes over 30 percent shall be permitted

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when sufficient technical information has been provided to support the determination that such development would have no negative impacts on the subject property, adjacent properties, or on the safety and welfare of the public.”

QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS RAISED BY **SMART FAMILIES**:

- The key question here is does the Planning Commission have “sufficient technical information” that the recommendations (whatever they may be) will have **NO NEGATIVE IMPACTS** on the subject property, adjacent properties, or on the safety and welfare of the public? From the CEQA perspective, a mitigated negative declaration should have been prepared. It is imperative that stringent measures in the design and construction of this home be included in the permit conditions to protect our neighbors and the potential liability to the City.
- Does the Planning Commission have confidence that a contract engineer (or the developer’s paid engineer) will review such documentation to such a degree that they can fully support no negative impacts, especially to the surrounding properties?

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM **SMART FAMILIES**:

- Because of the extremely excessive slope, **SMART Families** recommend that the City requires that this project with its complex engineered foundation and related retaining walls be designed by qualified engineers and installed by qualified contractors who are specialists in hillside work with solid residential credentials and experience. Identifying what those qualified licenses and credentials must be should be part of the Planning Commission’s conditions package.

Improper design and/or poorly executed construction work could have ramifications for the hillside on both Valley View Road and Bonita Drive. We are concerned about the harm to our neighbors’ homes and to their personal safety. Furthermore, any subsequent repair work would result in even more heavy-duty equipment, heavy trucks, and street closures that would further impact our local streets and our collector road, Meridian Avenue.

*Removal of Mature Trees*

Given that the reports by the arborist and geotechnical engineer were just posted online (interested neighbors were not aware of the original project in 2017), we did not have time to review these documents in detail.

QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS RAISED BY **SMART FAMILIES**:

- Were the following risk factors considered in the removal of the four trees such as how such removal may impact the other trees on the property, along with the likelihood of potential problems, such as increased soil erosion (with the decaying of the removed trees’ roots deep within the soils), changes in water runoff (both stormwater and irrigation), changes to the existing drainage patterns onsite, how the trees’ roots have

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affected the sedimentary rock, and overall safety concerns on the subject property and on adjoining property?

In summary, we would appreciate additional information regarding the issues raised in this letter and assurances on safety with the planning, construction, and ultimately the property owner's use of the project, along with the subsequent hillside developments that will be sought through the Planning Commission as located on the 800 block of Valley View Road.

Please direct any future planning and transportation documentation on this project to **SMART Families** at [smart-families@outlook.com](mailto:smart-families@outlook.com).

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this project.

Sincerely,

*Delaine W. Shane      Susan L. Sulsky*

Delaine W. Shane                      Susan L. Sulsky  
2003 Meridian Avenue              2013 Meridian Avenue

On Behalf of **SMART Families**



cc:      City Council  
         City Clerk  
         MTIC Commission  
         Planning Department  
         Public Works Department

**ATTACHMENT 2**  
**Audio Comments by the Public Received**  
**After Posting of the Staff Report**