

Planning Commission Staff Report

February 24, 2010
Item 6.a.

SUBJECT: PAP-140 (Case No. PDR-887)
PAP-141 (Case No. PDR-886)
PAP-142 (Case No. PDR-885)
PAP-143 (Case No. PDR-884)
PAP-144 (Case No. PDR-883)

APPELLANTS: Phil Benzel, Robert Miller, and Todd Briggs

APPLICANT: Ponderosa Homes

PROPERTY OWNER: Heartwood Communities

PURPOSE: Appeal of the Zoning Administrator's Design Review approvals to construct five single family homes.

LOCATIONS: 6120 Sanctuary Lane
6136 Sanctuary Lane
6168 Sanctuary Lane
6184 Sanctuary Lane
6139 Sanctuary Lane

GENERAL PLAN: Happy Valley Specific Plan Area

SPECIFIC PLAN: The Happy Valley Specific Plan Land Use Designation is PUD-SRDR (Planned Unit Development – Semi-Rural Density Residential)

ZONING: PUD-SRDR (Planned Unit Development – Semi-Rural Density Residential) District.

ATTACHMENTS: Exhibit A1 – A5: Conditions of Approval
Exhibit B: Proposals from Proposed Homes as Approved by the Zoning Administrator
Exhibit C: Appeal (sent via email)
Exhibit D: Neighbors' Comments (Emails)
Exhibit E: Alternative Proposals
Exhibit F: Location Map
Exhibit G: Notification Map

BACKGROUND

On December 5, 2006, the City Council approved the design guidelines for “Serenity at Callippe Preserve”. The design guidelines¹ allow four different architectural styles to be constructed in this 12-lot development. Since the approval of the design guidelines, planning staff has approved four design review applications. To date, one home has been constructed and is occupied at 6324 Inspiration Terrace (Lot 7).

In December 2009, Ponderosa Homes applied for design review approvals to construct five single-family homes on five of the lots. On December 18, 2009, the Zoning Administrator determined that the proposals were in compliance with applicable regulations and approved the applications (PDR-883 through PDR-887), subject to conditions of approval (Exhibit A1 through A5).

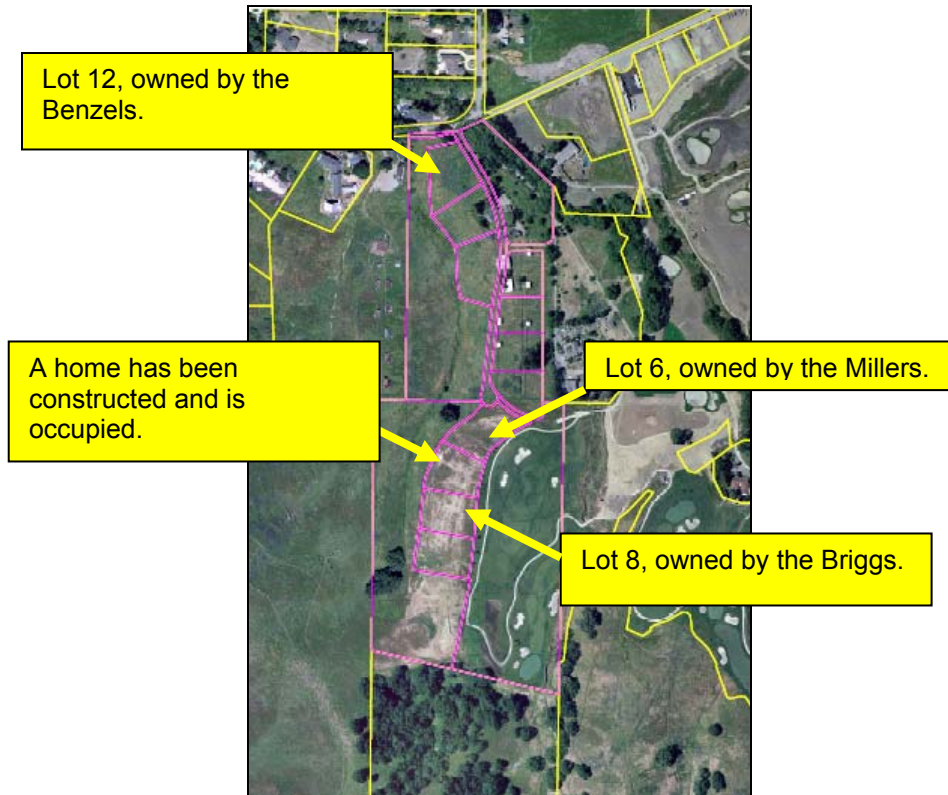
On December 29, 2009, Phil Benzel, owner of Lot 12 (6107 Sanctuary Lane) at Serenity at Callippe Preserve, contacted staff and raised concerns about the home designs. Subsequently, Robert Miller (owner of Lot 6, 6308 Inspiration Terrace) and Todd Briggs (owner of Lot 8, 6340 Inspiration Terrace), registered their concerns with staff via emails (Exhibit E). On January 4, 2010, staff held a meeting with the lot owners and a representative from Ponderosa Homes to discuss the situation. Issues discussed included: home size; architectural detailing; positioning of the homes on the lots; and floor plans. The applicant indicated that some of the changes in terms of roof line changes and repositioning of the homes may be possible. Before the applicant was able to submit revisions, Phil Benzel, Robert Miller and Todd Brigg jointly filed appeals of the Zoning Administrator’s approvals of the five homes.

Section 18.144.040 of the Pleasanton Municipal Code – Public Hearing on Appeal requires that at least one public hearing shall be held within 40 days of the date the appeal was filed. The applicant voluntarily extended the hearing date so that additional time would be given to the appellants to review the projects.

SITE DESCRIPTION

Serenity at Callippe Preserve (formerly known as the TTK Property) is located on the south side of Happy Valley Road at the junction of Happy Valley Road and Alisal Street. It abuts the Callippe Preserve Golf Course to the east and to the south. The development consists of one interior street, Sanctuary Lane serving Lots 1-5 and Lots 10-12. A private road, Inspiration Terrace, extends south from the public street, providing access to Lots 6-9.

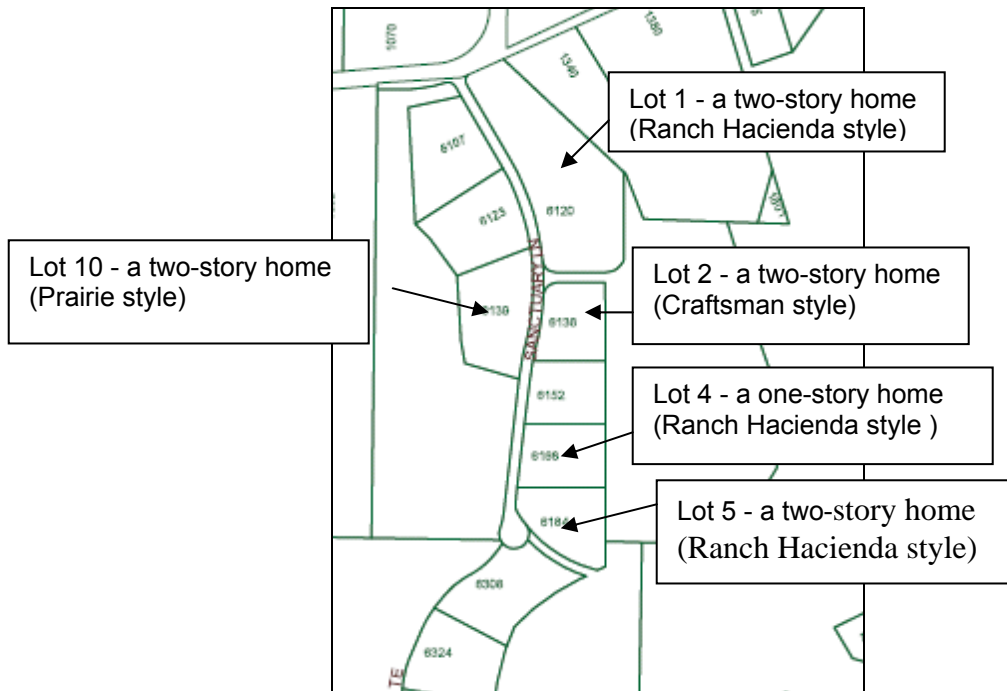
¹A copy of the Design Guidelines is available in the Planning Division.



PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant proposes to construct the following homes:

- (1) PDR-883/ A two-story single family home (Ranch Hacienda style) of approximately 4,610 square feet at 6120 Sanctuary Lane
- (2) PDR-884/A two-story single family home (Craftsman style) of approximately 4,680 square feet at 6136 Sanctuary Lane
- (3) PDR-885/ A one-story single family home (Ranch Hacienda style) of approximately 3,606 square feet at 6168 Sanctuary Lane
- (4) PDR-886/A two-story single family home (Rancho Hacienda style) of approximately 4,680 square feet at 6184 Sanctuary Lane.
- (5) PDR-887/A two-story single family home (Prairie style) of approximately 4,610 square feet at 6139 Sanctuary Lane



ANALYSIS

Meeting with the Lot Owners

On January 4, 2010, Phil Benzel and Robert Miller met with staff and Ms. Pam Hardy from Ponderosa Homes. Todd Briggs joined the discussion via conference call.

While the appellants do not oppose Ponderosa constructing homes in the neighborhood, they raised the following concerns:

- The proposed homes lack architectural detailing; and that each should have a unique floor plan;
- The proposed homes should be set back further from the street and the orientation of the home on Lot 1 should be adjusted to avoid the garage entrance being in direct view from the neighboring properties and being visible to traffic entering the development;
- The proposed homes are too small in area when compared to the existing home in the development¹ and the future homes that the appellants intend to construct;
- The review time given is inadequate.

Pam Hardy of Ponderosa Homes, the applicant, responded that in addition to the architectural details that are already been shown on the proposal, the conditions of approval also require

¹ The existing home, 6324 Inspiration Terrace, is 7420 sq.ft., with a 1221 sq.ft garage on a 35,818-square-foot lot.

additional stone wainscot, corbel details and window modifications, in order to further enhance the appearance of the homes. She was also willing to explore roofline changes, re-plotting or reorienting the homes on the lots if feasible, and incorporating more enhancements to the design of the homes. However, she believes that the proposed home size is more in line with market demand than a larger home.

The floor areas of the proposed homes ranges from 3,606 square feet to 4,680 square feet. The appellants felt that these homes are too small when compared to the homes they are going to construct, which would be approximately 6,000 – 7,000 square feet, not including the garages. The applicant believed that the proposed house sizes are appropriate for the Happy Valley neighborhood.

The appellants also indicated that they either did not receive the notice for the projects or the notice arrived too late, therefore affording them little or no time to review the projects.

The notices were generated using the owners' information obtained from the Alameda County Assessor's Office. Unless the City is specifically informed of the ownership changes, it is possible that the information obtained from the County may not have included the current owners if they were recent purchasers. Additionally, the Pleasanton Municipal Code requires a seven-day notice period for this type of application. The notices concerning the subject projects were sent in compliance with the municipal code, and based on the most current available information.

Appeal

While Ponderosa Homes is internally reviewing and responding to the concerns from the neighbors, Phil Benzel, Robert Miller and Todd Briggs jointly filed these appeals. Their appeals state the following concerns:

1. The proposed homes do not comply with the requirements of the Serenity design guidelines;
2. The proposed homes do not comply with the requirements of the conditions, covenants and restrictions (CC&Rs) for Serenity;
3. The proposed homes do not comply with the requirements of the Happy Valley Specific Plan;
4. The proposed homes would have a negative impact on the unique character of the area; and
5. The proposed homes would have a negative impact on property values.

Design Guidelines Requirements

The design criteria contained in the Serenity design guidelines require detailing architectural elements, such as dormers, shutters, bay windows, roofline, etc.¹

¹ Since only one home has been built at Serenity, a point of reference can be the newly constructed golf course homes [Mariposa Ranch], where the design guidelines are similar to Serenity.

The Zoning Administrator's review of the proposed homes found that they included the required elements specified in the design guidelines for the applicable architectural style. For example, the homes on Lot 1, Lot 3 and Lot 5 are proposed as Ranch Hacienda style homes. The design guidelines require the following architectural elements on the Ranch Hacienda style homes:

- clay barrel tile roof, a signature of Ranch Hacienda style homes;
- smooth stucco exterior walls combined with a stone base;
- squared or rectilinear windows with divided lights
- recessed doors and windows;
- exposed wood rafters and corbels.



The proposed homes, as shown on the above elevations, include the required architectural elements. For the elements that are not adequately represented in the design review drawings, such as recessed windows, wood corbels, and stone wainscot, the conditions of approval from the Zoning Administrator's approvals require that such features be included on the construction drawings submitted for building permit (see Condition No. 16 of PDR-883, Condition No. 14 of PDR-885, and Condition No.14 of PDR-886). With these conditions, the Zoning Administrator determined that the proposed Ranch Hacienda style homes met the design guidelines.

The home on Lot 2 is proposed as a Craftsman style home. The design guidelines require gable roofs, exposed rafters, beams and brackets, large pillars, lap or batten sidings, square or rectilinear windows with divided lites, etc. The Zoning Administrator determined that the proposed elevations met design requirements of the design guideline as conditioned. The conditions of approval require the emphasis of some of the elements, such as stone wainscot and recessed windows so that the craftsman style home is adequately presented (see Condition No.14 of PDR-884).



The home on Lot 10 is proposed as a Prairie style home. The Zoning Administrator determined that the proposed home includes the following architectural elements required in the design guidelines: deep, protective overhangs, flat tile roof, stucco walls with a stone wainscot base, and square or rectilinear windows. The Zoning Administrator's conditions of approval require that these architectural elements be either repeated on other building elevation or to be emphasized so that they are better exhibited (see Condition No.14 of PDR-887).



In all, the Zoning Administrator determined that the proposed homes, as conditioned, met the requirements of the Serenity design guidelines.

Covenants, Conditions, and Restrictions (CC&Rs)¹

CC&Rs are governing documents which dictate how the homeowners' association operates and what rules home owners must obey. It is a private document that the City does not enforce.

While the CC&Rs discuss an Architectural Committee, none has been formed at this time due to five of 12 lots still being owned or controlled by the developer, Heartwood, and that only one home has been constructed and occupied. However, the design guidelines require all

¹ A copy is available at Planning Division.

architectural designs be first reviewed and approved by the development architect's office. Terry Townsend is the development review architect, and has reviewed and approved the five homes with specific recommendations. These recommendations have been reflected in the Zoning Administrator's conditions of approval.

Happy Valley Specific Plan¹

The subject lots are located within the Happy Valley Specific Plan (HVSP) area. Specifically, they are located in the PUD-SRDR (Planned Unit Development – Semi Rural Density Residential) district of the specific plan. HVSP requires homes in the PUD-SRDR district be designed so as to minimize the visual prominence of homes, and to maintain the open-space feeling between adjacent homes and other structures (see page 31 of the HVSP). The Specific Plan also states that the new houses should be sited to minimize impacts on the neighboring properties (see page 32 of the HVSP).

With smaller building footprints of 3,606 square feet to 4,680 square feet, the proposed homes are able to provide adequate yard area on the lots so as to create openness for the building occupants and the adjacent neighbors.

The smaller house size would also make the proposed homes more compatible with the Happy Valley neighborhood. For example, the existing older homes across the street on Happy Valley Road are 2,320 square feet; the existing home at 1070 Alisal Street is 3,980 square feet. at 976 Happy Valley Road. Both lots are one acre in size. With less building massing, the proposed homes would have a less dominate appearance, thus, would better fit into this semi rural residential neighborhood.

Staff believes that the proposed homes are designed in a manner that is in conformance to the Happy Valley Specific Plan.

Unique Character of the Area

The Happy Valley area is known for its ranchettes, grassland, and wildlife habitat. The municipal golf course and open space adds a valuable amenity to the area. With the Serenity design guidelines similar to that of Mariposa Ranch, the proposed homes would be compatible in design styles with those new homes surrounding the golf course. Additionally, with a smaller home size, the proposed homes would be "nested" well in the area, therefore, maintaining the unique character of the Happy Valley area.

¹ A copy of the Happy Valley Specific Plan is available at Planning Division as well as the city's website: www.ci.pleasanton.ca.us.

Property Value

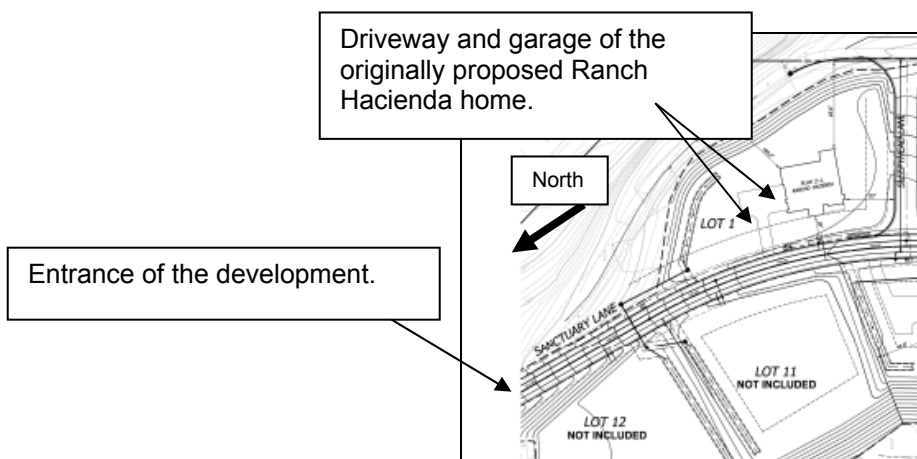
The appellants are concerned that the size of the proposed homes will adversely affect the value of their future homes. The Serenity at Callippe Preserve Design Guidelines do not specify minimum or preferred home sizes. Staff believes the proposed homes are of a quality consistent with neighboring properties and that the impact of the proposed homes on neighboring homes prices is unknown at this time.

ALTERNATIVES (Exhibit E)

In response to appellants' concerns raised at the January 4, 2010 meeting, the applicant has submitted the following revisions. Staff has informed the appellants of the revised plans. At the time this report is being prepared, staff has not received any comments from the appellants. Staff will update the Commission at the meeting.

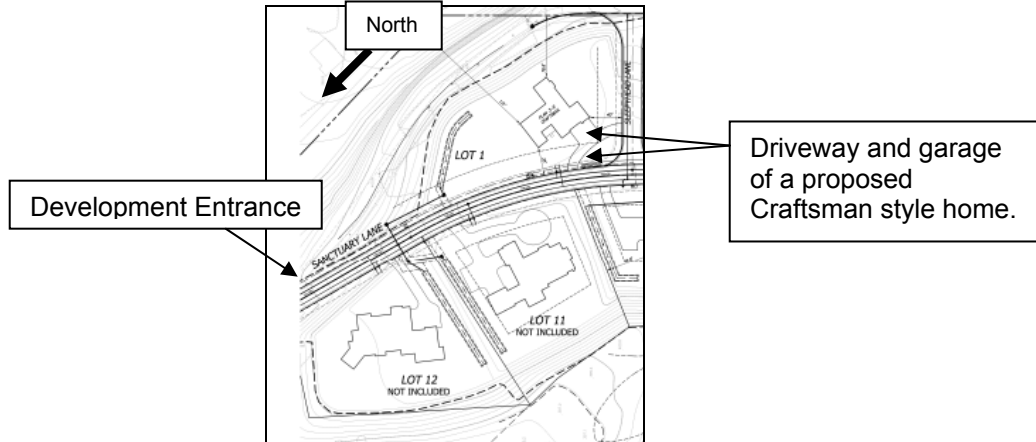
Lot 1 – Architectural Style and Plot Plan

A Ranch Hacienda style home was originally proposed on Lot 1. This Ranch Hacienda home was oriented with the garage located on the north elevation (see plot below). Although this north elevation would be screened by existing trees when viewed from Happy Valley Road, this elevation would be most visible for traffic entering the development. Phil Benzel, owner of Lot 12, has asked that the garage be oriented towards the street (Sanctuary Lane) in order to minimize its visibility from the development entrance.



In response, the applicant is now proposing a Craftsman style home instead of the Ranch Hacienda style home. The Craftsman style home would be angled to orient the garage toward the street with an enhanced "Hollywood" driveway. This change maximizes the views to the northeast toward the riparian corridor from the main bedroom and retreat as well as the living and dining rooms. With this change in mind, a non-garage side of the house would be seen

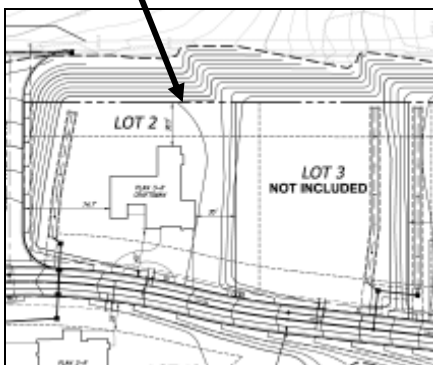
from the development entrance. To further enhance the elevation of this side, the applicant will extend the stone wainscot from the den to the corner of Bedroom 5 with a slight corner wrap. Please see Exhibit A-1, Condition No.14g.



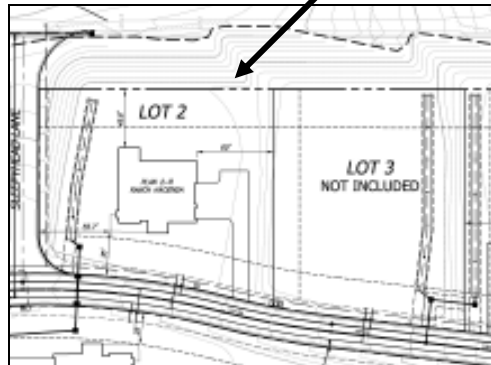
Lot 2 – Architectural Style and Plot Plan

As a result of proposed revisions on Lot 1, a Ranch Hacienda style home would be sited on this lot (instead of the Craftsman) in order to provide architectural variety and to achieve a more pleasing streetscape. To comply with the Happy Valley Specific Plan of providing adequate open space, the home on Lot 2 would be positioned so that the setback from the south property line, shared with the undeveloped Lot 3 would be increased from the originally proposed 35 feet to 60 feet. This change would add additional buffer between the two homes and will improve privacy for the future home owner.

The Zoning Administrator approved plot plan.



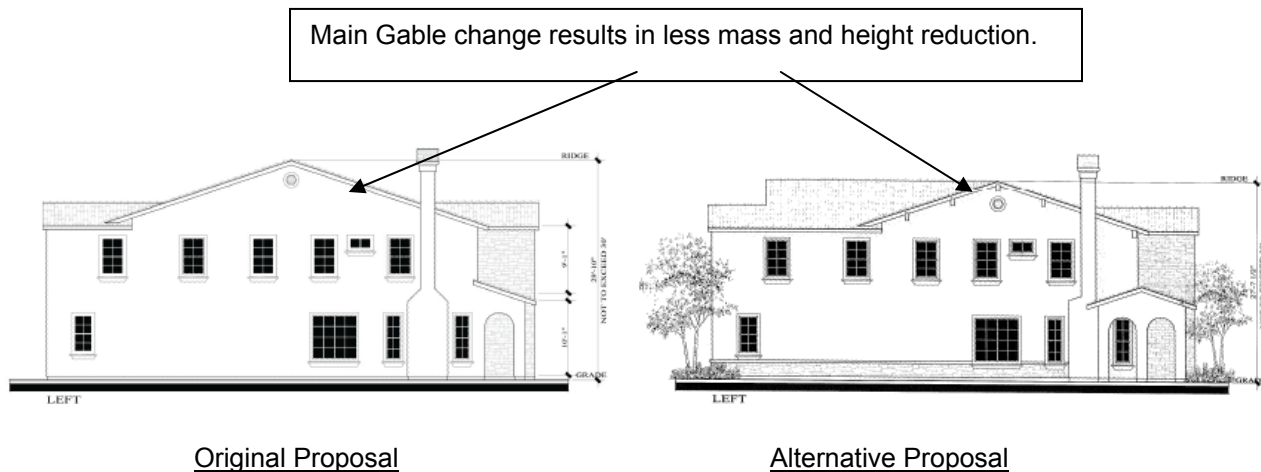
The alternative plot plan.



The repositioning of the home on Lot 2 has made the left-side of the home (north) more prominent as seen from the corner of Sanctuary Lane and Sleepyhead Lane. Subsequently, the elevation of this Ranch Hacienda has been redesigned, in that a wrapped covered porch would be built around the front left corner of the building. In addition, the main gable roof has been modified in order to reduce the mass and apparent height as seen along the left and right walls. This modification would help to visually break the roof planes creating "less" visible roof.



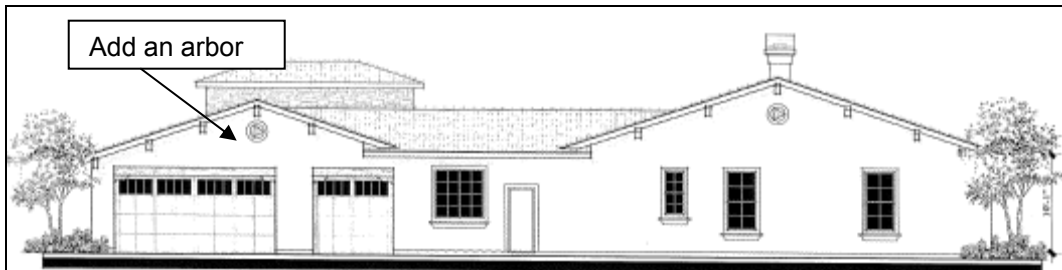
Roof forms and variations were among the concerns the appellants raised. The applicant restudied the roof forms and made modifications in response to reduce mass (see comparison below).



Lot 4 – Additional Architectural Element

The house proposed on this lot is a one-story Ranch Hacienda style home. The garage is proposed on the north elevation, which would be in direct view from Lot 10. To enhance the elevation, the applicant will add an arbor element above the garage door. This additional feature would make the garage portion of the north elevation more aesthetically pleasing.

A condition of approval has been added to address this item (see Condition No. 14 of Exhibit A-3)



Lot 5 – Plot Plan

Lot 5 is a corner lot (at the corner of Sanctuary Lane and the golf course emergency vehicle access (EVA)). The repositioning of the Craftsman style home on this lot would remain essentially unchanged, except that the homesite has been adjusted further away from the street corner. This alternative location is in response to the comments made by Robert Miller, owner of Lot 6, to increase the front setback. As a result, the front setback would be increased from 53.4 to 58.4 feet, measured from Serenity Lane, where only a 30-foot front yard setback is required by the design guidelines and zoning.

In conclusion, the applicant has made efforts to respond to the appellants' concerns by changing home styles for Lots 1 and 2, repositioning of the home on Lot 5, and changing the roof form on Lot 2, as well as adding architectural details. The proposed alternatives meet the requirements of the design guidelines and the purposes of the Happy Valley Specific Plan, as described above.

Lot 10 – Porch and Stone Wainscot

The proposed home on this lot will remain a Prairie style home. The alternation plan (front elevation) shows a wrap-around front porch. Additionally, to enhance the appearance from the neighboring property, the applicant will add stone wainscot across the left side elevation. Please see Exhibit A-5, Condition No. 14h.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notices of the Planning Commission's public hearing on this item were mailed to the property owners and tenants located within 1,000 feet of the subject properties, including homes surrounding the Callippe Preserve Golf Course. Staff has not received any verbal or written comments pertaining to this notice as of the time the staff report was written.

On February 10, 2010, the applicant requested a meeting with the appellants to review the revisions. Staff will update the Commission regarding the meeting, if it occurs.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The proposed residences are categorically exempt from the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) by Guidelines Section 15303, Class 3 (New Construction of Small Structures). Additionally, an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was prepared and certified for the Happy Valley Specific Plan. The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) specifies that residential development projects (including residential planned unit developments) that are prepared pursuant to the requirements of an adopted specific plan, for which an EIR has been prepared and certified, are exempt from additional environmental review. Therefore, no new environmental document accompanies this report, as the Serenity project and Happy Valley Specific Plan were subject to prior environmental review.

CONCLUSION

The homes, as originally proposed and conditioned were found by the Zoning Administrator to be consistent with the Happy Valley Specific Plan and the requirements of the Serenity design guidelines. The design alternatives proposed in response to appellants' concerns also comply with these regulations and the prior approval. Staff recommends that the Planning Commission approve the proposed alternatives to further enhance the design of the homes.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission deny the appeal and approve the design review of the five single family homes subject to the conditions of approval stated in Exhibit A1 through Exhibit A5.

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