

## Planning Commission Staff Report

June 25, 2008

Item 5.a.

**SUBJECT:** PDR-693

**APPLICANT/  
OWNER:** Brad and Ann Walker

**PURPOSE:** Design review approval to allow the construction of an approximately 3,520-square-foot, two-story custom home with an attached two-car garage on an approximately 18,285-square-foot vacant property.

**GENERAL  
PLAN:** North Sycamore Specific Plan – Low Density Residential (< 2.0 du/ac)

**ZONING:** PUD - LDR (Planned Unit Development – Low Density Residential) District.

**LOCATION:** 6069 Sycamore Terrace (Lot #2 of PUD-42).

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Exhibit "A", dated "Received October 25, 2007", including Topographic Survey, Site Plan, Building Floor Plans and Elevations, Landscape Plan and Irrigation Plan.
2. Exhibit "B", Draft Conditions of Approval, dated June 25, 2008.
3. Exhibit "C", Location Map.
4. Exhibit "D", Ordinance No. 1914
5. Exhibit "E", PUD-42 adopted design guidelines
6. Exhibit "F", Public comment.

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### I. BACKGROUND

#### Background Summary

The applicants, Brad and Ann Walker, propose to construct their new home on an 18,285-square-foot (0.42-acre) site in the Sycamore Terrace development off the north side of Sycamore Creek Road.

On March 15, 2005, the City Council introduced Ordinance 1914 approving PUD-42, a four-lot custom home development – three new homes plus one existing home – on 1.82 acres of land in conformance to the North Sycamore Specific Plan. The location

and grade elevation of the entire PUD-42 property relative to the Greene property on its west side concerned the Greene family related to the impact of the development of the PUD-42 lots to their views and privacy. In reply, the City Council established a series of lot-specific development standards and design guidelines on the size, height, and location of the homes on these lots to address the Greene's concerns.

### **Factors Affecting the Development of the Site**

A summary of the factors affecting the design and construction of the house on this site follow:

- The site is an infill property surrounded on three sides by planned and existing single-family homes and on its fourth side – the west side – by property belonging to the Greene family with a house, barn, and pastures. The Greene family currently grazes two horses in these pastures.
- The development of the PUD-42 properties relative to the Greene property has raised their concerns related to the impacts to their views and privacy.
- The development standards for the site are specific to this property and are intended to minimize the impacts of the development of this site to the adjoining neighbor on the west side of the property. However, the subject property is not covered by view shed easements.
- Sycamore Creek is an ephemeral creek entirely on the subject property forming its northerly side. The Specific Plan and the PUD development plan stipulated a minimum setback of 10 feet from the creek bank's top-of-edge or 25 feet from the creek channel's centerline, whichever is greater.
- The PUD development plan requires the home designs in this development be reviewed by the Planning Commission.

## **II. SUBJECT PROPERTY**

The subject property is a flat vacant site surrounded on its north, east, and south sides by vacant and developed residential properties. Access to the site is from Sycamore Terrace, a private street connecting to Sycamore Creek Way.

The site is relatively flat and gently slopes downward from elevation 372 feet at Sycamore Terrace to 369 feet to 370 feet at the west property line, and from 372 feet at the south property line to 369 feet at the south top-of-bank of Sycamore Creek.

Figure 1, on the following page, is an aerial photograph/location map of the site and surrounding area. This 2005 aerial predates the subdivision approval and construction and therefore does not show the new home on the east side of Sycamore Terrace. There were several accessory buildings on the property that have been removed.

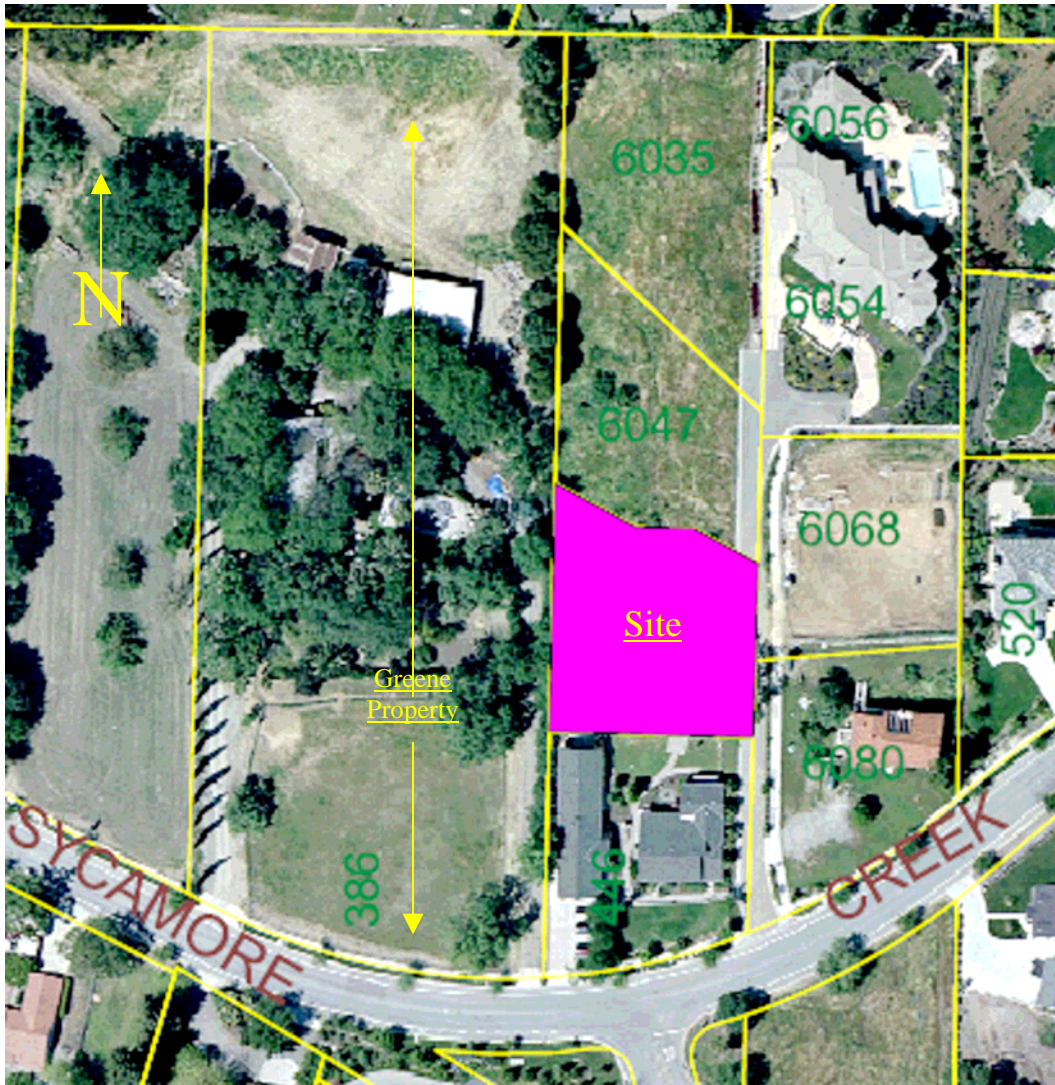


Figure 1: Aerial Photograph/Location Map of the Site and Surrounding Properties

Figures 2 through 4 on the following pages are photographs of the site and Sycamore Creek.





**Figure 2: South side of the project site from Sycamore Terrace.**



**Figure 3: West side of the project site, looking towards the Greene property, from Sycamore Terrace.**



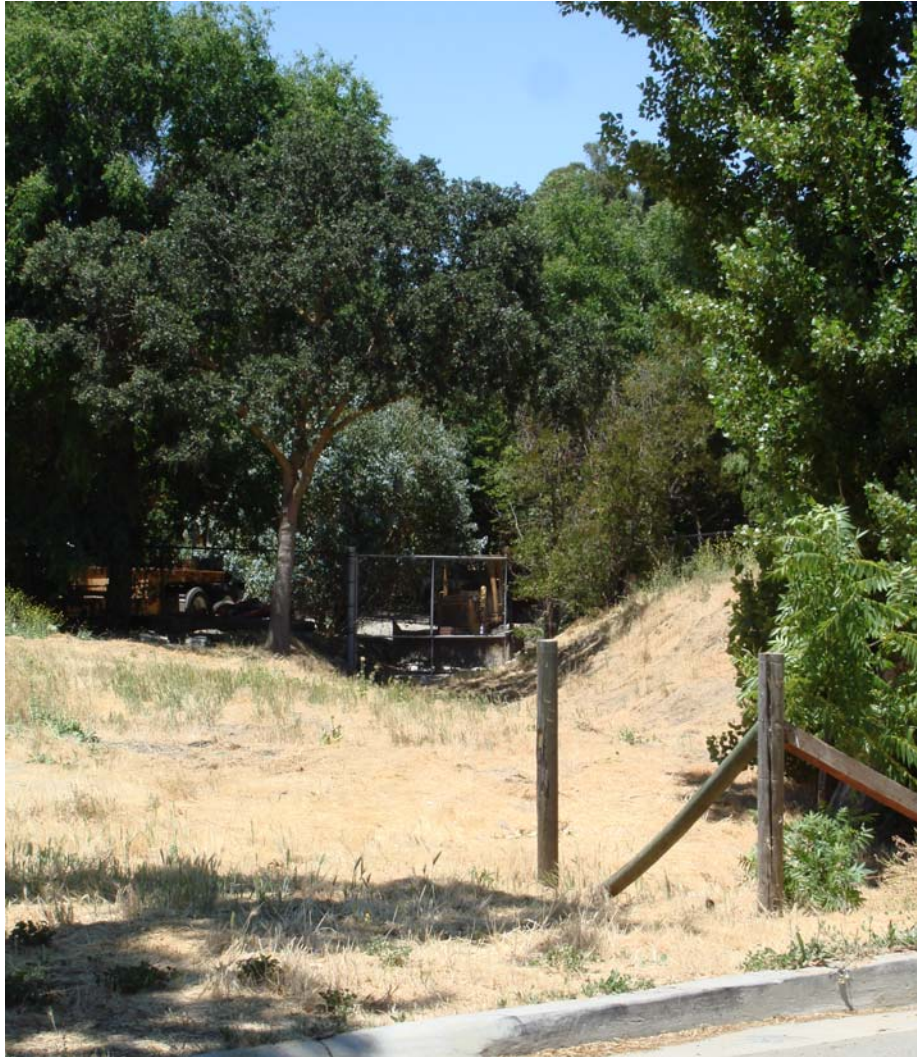


Figure 4: Close up view of Sycamore Creek on the project site's northerly side from Sycamore Terrace.

### III. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

#### Building Design

The applicants' proposal includes the following:

- Construction of an approximately 3,520-square-foot, two-story home with an attached 850-square-foot, two-car garage. The entire second floor faces the east property line and is designed to be set back from the neighbor towards the front property line (Sycamore Terrace) of the site to preserve the Greene family's privacy. All second floor windows would face north, east, and south.
- Two guest parking spaces would be provided on the driveway apron.
- The proposed height of the two-story portion would be 26 feet, 6 inches. The one-story portion facing the Greene family would be 20 feet, 0 inches. All building heights are measured from the lowest to highest points.

- The project has been designed to meet the Green Building Ordinance for new residential construction and its 62 estimated 'LEED' points exceeds the City's minimum 50-point requirement.
- Landscaping will feature drought-tolerant plant species to reduce water consumption and incorporate several existing trees.
- The site will require only minimal grading to accommodate the proposed home, outdoor patio areas, and driveway.
- A 5/12-roof pitch would be used to reduce the roof profile and slab-on-grade construction would be utilized to minimize the overall building height.

The proposed building design follows a "neo-Mediterranean" architectural style. Colors and building materials would include Navaho-white-colored stucco walls and medium-red concrete roof tiles. Garage doors, entry doors, windows, eave/gutters, and wood trim would be painted dark brown.

#### **IV. DISCUSSION**

##### **Greene Family**

##### View Analyses

The PUD development plan recommended view analyses and site lines from these properties to determine the impact if any to the Greene property. Staff did not consider such analyses necessary for this site for the following reasons:

- The proposed home is predominantly a one-story design with limited second floor area.
- The second floor area of the proposed home would be located towards Sycamore Road.
- The second-floor windows of the proposed home would only face the north, east, and south property lines of this site, and would not face the Greene property.
- There are significant existing trees on the Greene property along the common Greene/Walker property line, at an estimated height by staff varying from 18 feet to 30+ feet, which would be augmented by the proposed planting on the Walker property. The combined planting on the two properties would serve to buffer the view of the proposed home from the Greene property.

##### Lighting

To further address the concerns of the Greene family on the development of this property regarding light and glare, staff has conditioned the site development to shield all exterior lighting including landscape lighting directing it downward and away from the west property line so as not to shine onto the Greene property, and to only use low luminosity accent lighting. Staff will review a lighting plan with the building permit to verify the implementation of these requirements.

## Building Design

Building heights and façades are nicely articulated and varied. Wall façades are detailed and textured with stone, wrought-iron style trim and detailing, wood door and window trim. Additional trim elements include a decorative metal chimney cap and divided light windows. Roof elements, trim detailing, and window/door detailing are continued from the front elevation to the side and rear building elevations. In staff's opinion, the applicant has achieved a "four-sided" architectural design concept for the proposed structure.

## Site Design and Development Standards

The home on this site is governed by the site-specific development standards of the PUD development plan. Figure 5, on the following page, compares the proposed development standards to the required by the PUD development plan.

**Figure 5: Comparison of the Proposed Development Standards to the Development Standards of PUD-42**

	Requirement	Proposal
<b>Front Yard Setback:</b>	25 feet	Garage – 25 feet Dwelling – 40 feet to 43 feet
<b>North Side Yard Setback<sup>1</sup>:</b>	15 feet from the north property line. 10 feet from the top-of-bank or 25 feet from the centerline of Sycamore Creek, whichever is greater.	57 feet from the north property line. 12 feet to 23 feet from the top-of-bank of Sycamore Creek. 28 feet to 33 feet from the centerline of Sycamore Creek.
<b>South Side Yard Setback:</b>	15 feet from the south property line.	15 feet from the south property line.
<b>Rear Yard Setback:</b>	25 feet from the west property line.	25 feet from the west property line to the first floor. 50 to 78 feet from the west property line to the second floor.
<b>Maximum Building Height</b>	30 feet for a two-story house measured from grade to the highest ridge.	26 feet, 6 inches measured from grade to the highest ridge
<b>Floor Area Ratio<sup>2</sup>:</b>	30% of 18,285 square feet not to exceed 5,451 square feet. Up to 600 square feet of garage floor area is exempt from the floor area calculation.	20.6% for 3,520 square feet of building floor area for the dwelling and 250 square feet of the non-exempt garage floor area.

<sup>1</sup> For this site, there shall be a minimum 10-foot setback from the top-edge of the bank of Sycamore Creek or a 25-foot setback from the centerline of the creek, whichever is greater. The minimum front yard and/or side yard setbacks shall be measured from the rolled-curb on Sycamore Terrace.

<sup>2</sup> The Floor Area Ratio (FAR) includes primary and accessory structures but excludes up to 600 square feet of garage area. Portions of garage floor area over 600 square feet would be included in the FAR calculation.

The proposal conforms to the applicable development standards established by PUD-42 for this site.

## Existing Trees

The applicants propose to remove the existing black walnut tree in the front yard to construct the driveway apron to their home. The three other trees on the property – one tree in Sycamore Creek and the other two trees along the rear property line – would remain. Figure 6, below, is a photograph of the walnut tree.



**Figure 6: Existing walnut tree proposed to be removed.**

In reply to a courtesy notice that was sent to nearby and adjoining neighbors, Esther and Arend Verweij (6080 Sycamore Terrace) e-mailed their concerns regarding the proposed removal of this tree. The Verweij's believe the tree should be retained for its appearance and for its ability to screen the views from the proposed home to their rear yard which is visible to Sycamore Terrace. (Their play structure is located between the fence line and the Sycamore Creek channel on their property.) The Verweij's also commented on the pruning that has been done to the tree.



Figure 7, below, is a photograph of the Verweij's rear yard with the play structure from Sycamore Terrace.



**Figure 7: Verweij rear yard with play equipment from Sycamore Terrace.**

The walnut tree is a heritage-size tree, and was inspected by the City's Landscape Architect. Based upon the inspection, the tree appears to have been in a state of decline for several years as the canopy has thinned significantly from that of a mature fruit-bearing tree, numerous branches have been removed indicating a condition of decline, and there's a fairly significant rotted cavity where the branches merge at the main trunk. The condition is considered to be "structurally unsound" as the branches are weakly attached to one another. Failure of one or more of the branches is a distinct possibility due to the rotted wood at the juncture.

The pruning on the walnut tree appears to have been done properly and in accord with the I.S.A. guidelines that the City embraces. Typically, pruning is an "invigorating process" that for trees vigorous and in good health and would lead to more foliage, not less. The tree's appearance is indicative of its decline – walnut trees do not often transition gracefully past their maturity.

Staff also reviewed the "screening" potential of this tree. Because the walnut tree's canopy is thin and its life expectancy is short, it is a poor candidate to provide some sort of "privacy" to neighboring homeowners. Staff notes that the applicants would plant two new trees in their front yard, flanking the second story portion of their home, including a 24-inch box-size olive species and a 24-inch box-size coast live oak species. The olive

is a very slow growing tree. Staff recommends changing the olive to another coast live oak species and has included the applicable condition.

By their nature, black walnut trees do not accept changes to their root environment and are, therefore, considered to be one of the least tolerant species of construction activities. Due to the tree's poor structure, its ongoing decline, and its inherent sensitivity to construction impacts, staff concludes that the walnut tree would be a poor candidate for preservation and, therefore, should be allowed to be removed. Because of its condition, the walnut tree was appraised at a dollar value of \$1,500, which the applicants would be required to pay to the City's Urban Forestry Fund before it is removed.

The Verweijs have stated to staff their support of the above-analysis and the draft condition of approval.

### **Landscaping**

The proposed landscape plan is composed primarily of native species for planting as a water efficient landscape concept. The proposed non-native species, e.g., laceleaf Japanese maple, etc., are drought tolerant. There would be minimal turf area to reduce water usage for landscaping and pervious paving to reduce storm water runoff. The proposed plan was reviewed and accepted by the City's landscape architect and is consistent with the development standards adopted.

### **Grading, Drainage, and Urban Storm water Runoff**

The proposed dwelling would be located on the existing, flat portion of the site thereby minimizing grading. Staff anticipates the runoff from landscape irrigation would be negligible based upon the applicant's use of low-water requiring planting and pervious paving.

The applicants would be required to install a bio-retention swale along the site's south or west sides to pretreat the storm water runoff before entering Sycamore Creek. Storm water runoff from the structure and from the driveway would be conveyed to the swale. The storm water runoff measures will be reviewed in detail when the building permit plans are reviewed.

### **Green Building Measures**

The applicants have submitted a preliminary green building analysis indicating 62 points for the proposed home whereas only 50 of the points need to be met. As conditioned, the applicants will submit a revised list of green building measures with the building permit plans and application.

## **V. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

The proposal is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality ACT (CEQA) under Section 15302, Replacement or Reconstruction, Section 15303(a) (e), New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures, and Section 15332, In-Fill Development Projects, of the CEQA Guidelines. The Class 3 exemption covers the construc-

tion and location of up to three single-family residences in an urbanized area. Therefore, no new environmental document accompanies this staff report.

## **VI. PUBLIC NOTICE AND COMENTS**

Staff sent a courtesy notice of the proposed to all residents to a distance of 1,000 feet of the project site to establish early-on the neighbor and community sensitivity to the proposal. In the notice, staff stated that the second-floor portion of the proposed home would be set towards the front property line adjoining Sycamore Terrace. Staff has also sent reduced copies of the project plans to the Greene family.

The June 25<sup>th</sup> public hearing was noticed to all residents to a distance of 1,000 feet from the site. Public comments are attached. As of the writing of the staff report, staff has not received any written or verbal communications regarding the proposed home. Any letters and/or emails received after the staff report is published will be forwarded to the Planning Commission.

## **VII. CONCLUSION**

The proposed home is well designed, architecturally attractive, relates well to surrounding properties, and implements the applicable design standards of the underlying PUD development plan. Because of its design – the second floor was moved towards the front of the house and away from the Greene property line, the relatively low building height facing the Greene property, the second floor windows facing north, east, and south, low-level and shielded building and rear yard lighting – staff believed that story poles, etc., were not necessary. Overall, staff believes that the proposed project merits a favorable action by the Planning Commission.

## **VIII. STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends the Planning Commission approve design review Case PDR-693 for a new one- and two-story, single-family home with 3,520 square feet of living area and an 850-square-foot attached garage on an approximately 18,285-square-foot parcel subject to Exhibit “B”, Draft Conditions of Approval.

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