

## Planning Commission Staff Report

---

July 27, 2011  
Item 5.a.

- SUBJECT:** PDR-963
- APPLICANT:** Sam Roham
- PROPERTY OWNER:** Sam Roham
- PURPOSE:** Application for Design Review approval to allow construction of a two-story, approximately 4,027-square-foot custom home with an attached garage and an approximately 13-foot tall detached shade structure in the rear yard.
- GENERAL PLAN:** North Sycamore Specific Plan – Low Density Residential (< 2.0 du/ac)
- ZONING:** PUD - LDR (Planned Unit Development – Low Density Residential) District (PUD-42).
- LOCATION:** 6059 Sycamore Terrace (Lot #2).
- EXHIBITS:**
- A. Draft Conditions of Approval, dated July 27, 2011.
  - B. Project Plans dated “Received May 19, 2011”, including Colors and Materials Board, Green Building Checklist, Site Plan, Building Floor Plans and Elevations, Landscape Plan and Irrigation Plan, and Roof Plan.
  - C. Ordinance No. 1914 for PUD-42 with Final Development Standards and Guidelines.
  - D. Approved Plans for PDR-693.
  - E. Approved Plans for PDR-717.
  - F. Public comment.
  - G. Location Map.
  - H. Notification Area
-

## **I. BACKGROUND**

### **Proposal**

The applicant proposes to construct a custom single-family home on an 18,285-square-foot (0.42-acre) site located on 6059 Sycamore Terrace (Lot 2 of PUD-42 and Parcel Map 8735) in the North Sycamore Specific Plan. This will be the second design review application proposed for this property.

### **Background**

#### PDR-693

On June 25, 2008, the Planning Commission approved PDR-693 for an approximately 3,520-square-foot, two-story home on the subject property. Exhibit D is the approved design for PDR-693. Building permit plans were not submitted for the approved home within the one-year time-limit of the Commission's approval and the design approval expired.

#### PUD-42/Parcel Map-8763

On March 15, 2005, the City Council introduced Ordinance 1914 approving PUD-42, a four-lot custom home development, with three new homes plus one existing home, on a 1.84-acre property located on Sycamore Terrace in the North Sycamore Specific Plan area. The PUD approval created design guidelines for the custom homes and required the house designs for these lots be submitted to the Planning Commission for review and approval at a public hearing. Exhibit C is a copy of the PUD ordinance and design guidelines for the development. The property was then subdivided into four lots with Parcel Map 8735 approved on July 22, 2005 by the Zoning Administrator.

Of the four lots approved by this development plan and created by the parcel map, Lot 1 on 466 Sycamore Road contained an existing single-family home and detached accessory structures. The Planning Commission approved custom home designs on the three remaining lots:

- 6035 Sycamore Terrace, PDR-793 for Jeff and Megan Tarpley – constructed and occupied.
- 6047 Sycamore Terrace, PDR-717 for Tarlochan Sidhu – not constructed, extended twice, and about to expire. (Mr. Sidhu has stated to staff that his intention is to submit a new design review application for the previously approved design plans.)
- 6059 Sycamore Terrace, PDR-693 for Brad and Ann Walker – not constructed and expired.

Exhibit E is the approved design for PDR-717.

## II. SUBJECT PROPERTY

### Subject Property

The subject property is vacant. It gently slopes downward from an elevation of 372 feet at Sycamore Terrace to 369 feet at the west property line, and from 372 feet at the south property line to 369 feet at the top-of-bank on the south side of Sycamore Creek. From the north side of Sycamore Creek, the site then slopes upward to the property on 6047 Sycamore Terrace at a 3-to-1 grade.

Sycamore Terrace is a private street providing access to the subject property and six other Sycamore Terrace properties out to Sycamore Road and Sycamore Creek Way. Figure 1, below, is a copy of the 2010 aerial photograph and location map of the site and surrounding area. Since this aerial photograph was taken, there has been no substantial change to the area and surrounding properties.

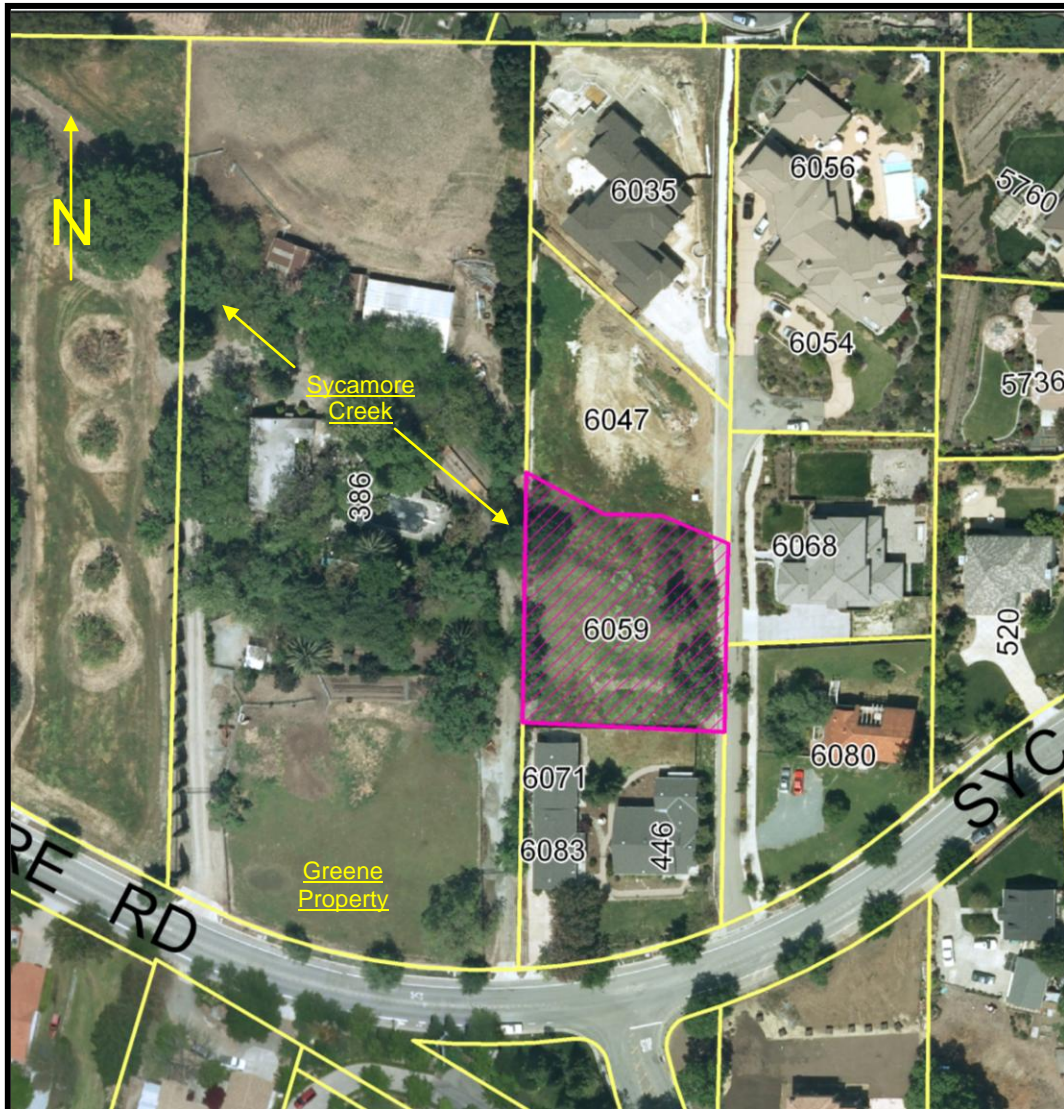


Figure 1: 2010 Aerial Photograph/Location Map of the Site and Surrounding Properties

## Surrounding Uses

Figure 2, “Excerpt from Parcel Map 8735 with Lot 2 and Surrounding Properties” on the following page, shows the subject property, topography, and portions of the surrounding public and private streets and properties.

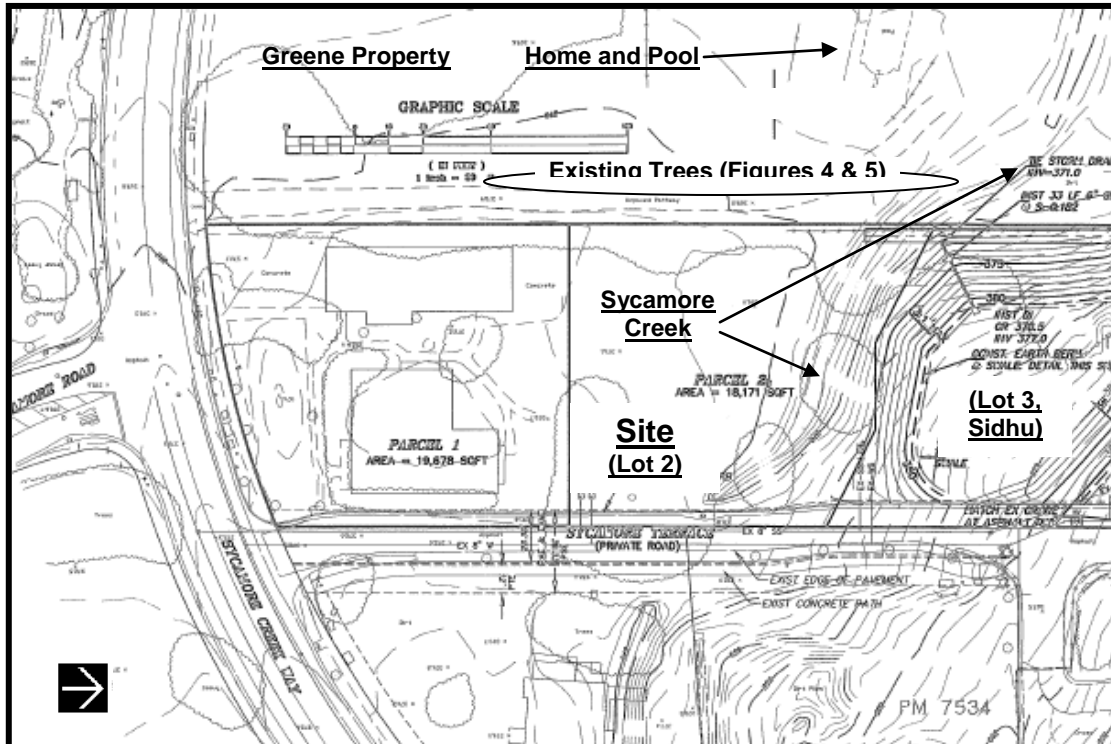


Figure 2: Excerpt from Parcel Map 8735 with Lot 2 and Surrounding Properties.

The subject property is surrounded on its north, east, and south sides by vacant and developed residential properties and on its west side by property belonging to the Greene family with a single-family home, barn and several accessory structures, and two pastures, which the Greene family uses to graze one to two horses. The open channel of Sycamore Creek crosses the northerly section of the site.

Sycamore Terrace is a private street divided and owned by the seven properties with frontage on Sycamore Terrace. Access across Sycamore Terrace and the walkways on the east side of the Tarpley property and on the private properties on the east side of Sycamore Terrace is provided by reciprocal cross-access easements. Sycamore Terrace and the walkways are maintained by a shared maintenance agreement.

Figures 3 through 7, on the following pages are photographs of the site and surrounding homes. Figure 3 shows the existing black walnut tree that was allowed to be removed with the previous design approval and is proposed to be removed with this proposal. Figure 4 shows the existing trees on the Greene property planted along the common Greene/Roham property line. Figure 5 shows the walnut trees and almond trees on the Roham property by the Greene/Roham property line.



**Figure 3: South side of the project site from Sycamore Terrace.**



**Figure 4: West side of project site, towards the Greene property, from Sycamore Terrace.**



**Figure 5: Walnut and almond trees on the west property line by the Greene property.**



**Figure 6: Existing homes at the north end of Sycamore Terrace.**



**Figure 7: Existing home on the east side of Sycamore Terrace.**

### **III. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The proposal is a two-story home (28-feet, 7-inches in height) with a 2,132-square-foot first floor, a 1,895-square-foot second floor, and a 748-square-foot four-car garage (with tandem-style parking spaces). Two guest parking spaces are provided on the driveway apron.

The proposed building design follows a “neo-Mediterranean” architectural style, consistent with the PUD design guidelines and surrounding homes. The building’s color palette includes medium-gray stucco walls and concrete roof tiles; dark taupe garage and entry doors, windows, and trim; Navaho-white gutters; and light-brown stone trim material. The proposed project’s materials and colors board will be provided to the Planning Commission at the public hearing.

The site will require only minimal grading to accommodate the proposed home, outdoor patio areas, and driveway. The project is designed to meet the City’s Green Building Ordinance for new residential construction and its 64 estimated GreenPoints exceeds the City’s minimum 50-point requirement.

#### IV. DISCUSSION

##### Site Design and Development Standards

Figure 7, "Proposed Site Plan" below, is a copy of the proposed site plan.

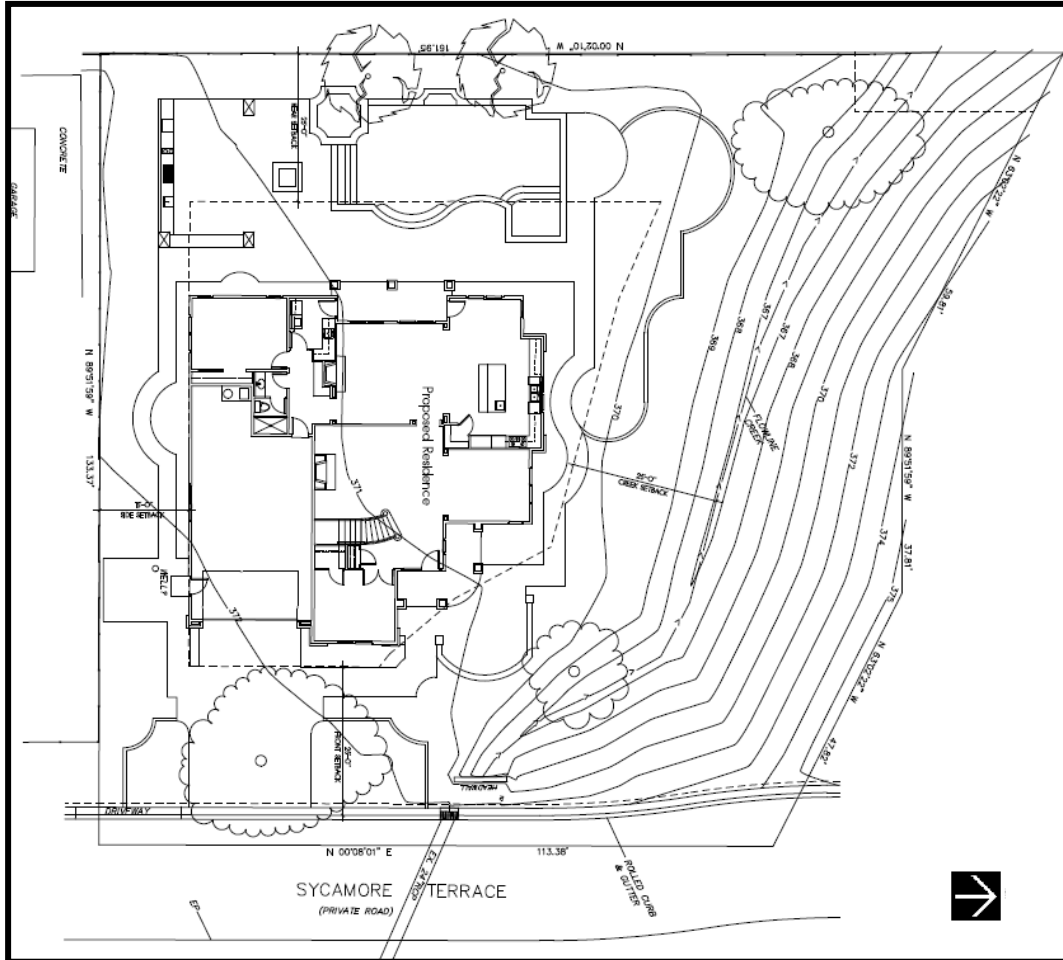


Figure 7: Proposed Site Plan

Sycamore Creek is an ephemeral creek located on the northerly section of the subject property. The Sycamore Road 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.

Table 1, "Comparison of the Proposed Development Standards to the Development Standards of PUD-42", on the following page, demonstrates the proposed project's conformance to the design standards specified for Lot 3 by the PUD development plan and design guidelines. (Several dimensions were measured from the drawings by staff.)



**Table 1: Comparison of the Proposed Development Standards to the Development Standards of PUD-42**

<b>Primary Structure</b>		
	<b>Requirement</b>	<b>Proposal</b>
<b>Front Yard (East) Setback:</b>	25 feet from the edge of the rolled curb on Sycamore Terrace.	Garage – 31 feet, 6 inches <sup>1</sup> Dwelling – Steps back from 29 feet minimum <sup>1</sup>
<b>North Side Yard Setback:</b>	10 feet from the top-of-bank or 25 feet from the centerline of Sycamore Creek, whichever is greater.	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 (West) Setback:</b>	25 feet from the west property line.	38 feet to 40 feet to the first floor. 42 to 44 feet to the second floor. (Portions of the second floor steps back further from the rear property line.)
<b>Maximum Building Height</b>	30 feet for a two-story house measured from grade to the highest ridge.	28 feet, 7 inches measured from grade to the highest ridge
<b>Floor Area Ratio<sup>2</sup>:</b>	30% of the 18,285 square-foot lot area not to exceed 5,451 square feet.	20.7% for 3,520 square feet of building floor area for the dwelling and 250 square feet of non-exempt garage floor area – a total of 3,770 square feet.
<b>Accessory Structure</b>		
	<b>Requirement</b>	<b>Proposal</b>
<b>North Side Yard Setback:</b>	10 feet from the top-of-bank or 25 feet from the centerline of Sycamore Creek, whichever is greater.	17 feet to 22 feet, 6 inches for the swimming pool from the top-of-bank of Sycamore Creek. 38 feet to 46 feet for the swimming pool from the centerline of Sycamore Creek.
<b>South Side Yard Setback:</b>	5 feet <sup>3</sup> from the south property line.	10 feet from the south property line.
<b>Rear Yard (West) Setback:</b>	5 feet <sup>3</sup> from the west property line.	7 feet from the west property line to the spa and to the patio cover.
<b>Maximum Building Height</b>	15 feet	13 feet, 9 inches.

<sup>1</sup> The PUD development plan stipulated that the building setbacks from Sycamore Terrace were to be measured from the edge of the rolled curb. The front property lines on the west side of Sycamore Terrace project approximately five feet into Sycamore Terrace from the rolled curb.

<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.

<sup>3</sup> The California Building Code now requires a minimum building setback of five feet from the property line for non-sprinklered structures that is more restrictive than the three-foot requirement of the PUD development plan.

The proposal conforms to the applicable development standards established by PUD-42 for this site. The 30-foot long driveway apron will park two guest vehicles.

### Building Design

Figure 9, below, is the front building elevation for the proposed residence. The rear and side building elevations have the same design and detailing.

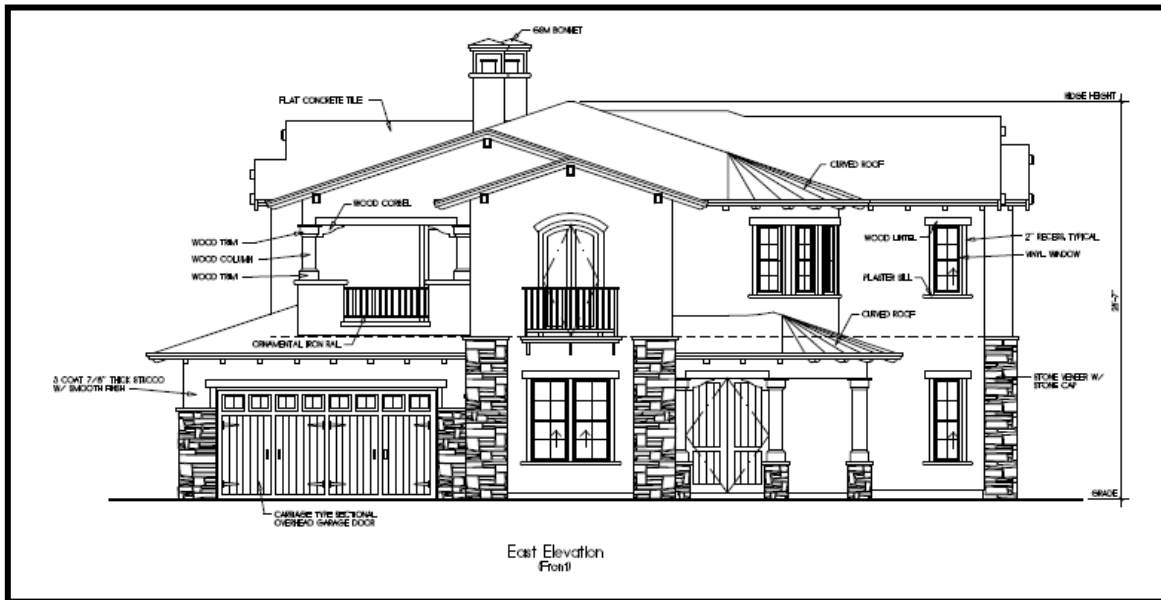


Figure 9: Front Building Elevation

The proposed design features traditional style architecture with stucco wall finishes, stone accent material on portions of the building elevations, and warm-toned colors. Wall colors are gray, door and window colors are taupe, and the trim is Navaho white. A rustic gray/brown stone material is used. The roof material is flat concrete tile, gray in color. As shown on the proposed site plan, the building's footprint is significantly varied and articulated which the architect carried through to its appearance. Architecture elements include wood trim around all doors and windows, covered front and rear porches and a master bedroom balcony, vertically hung windows with quarter-grids, steel-paneled garage doors, and a decorative metal chimney cap.

Staff considers the proposed building design including materials, colors, and detailing to be consistent with the requirements of the design guidelines for varied building forms that achieve visual interest and that complement the appearance of the nearby neighborhood. The proposed home is consistent with the materials and colors and design detailing used on the surrounding homes.

## **Greene Family**

### View Analyses

The City Council established lot-specific development standards and design guidelines for the PUD-42 lots to minimize their impact to the adjoining Greene property, and required view analyses and sight lines to determine the impacts, if any, of the proposed homes on these lots to the Greene property. Story poles were installed on 6047 Sycamore Terrace (Sidhu) and on 6059 Sycamore Terrace (Tarpley) to represent the building heights and selected building corners for the proposed buildings on these lots.

Staff did not consider such analyses necessary for this site (including the previous approval for Walker) for the following reasons:

- The significant existing trees including oak trees planted on the Greene property between the Greene home and the common property line separating the Greene and Roham properties provides a substantial visual barrier between the two sites. The City Landscape Architect estimated the height of the trees to vary from 25 to 30 feet or greater. The trees on the Greene property are augmented by the proposed planting on the Roham property including bronze loquat and smoke tree species and by the two existing almond trees and the four existing walnut trees which are conditioned to remain.
- The proposed building is set back 40 feet from the west property line exceeding the minimum 25-foot rear property line setback by 15 feet. (The Walker house was setback 25 feet from the rear property line.)
- The second floor balcony is located on the front building elevation facing Sycamore Terrace. No second floor balconies face the Greene property.

Staff sent copies of the proposed drawings to the Greene family and then hand-delivered a copy of the design plans to Mary Greene personally before noticing the public hearing. The applicant and staff contacted Mary Greene by telephone for her comments. Mary Greene stated to staff that she discussed the proposed project with the applicant by telephone, supports the proposed building height, and found the proposed design to be acceptable. She also stated that a view analysis including story poles was not necessary.

Mary Greene's written comments on the proposal are attached. Ms. Greene requests that the construction hours be limited to Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., reflecting the construction hours of PUD-42. Staff verbally assured Ms. Greene that the construction hours match the City Council's approval.

### Lighting

To further address the concerns of the Greene family on the development of this property regarding light and glare, staff 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 use only low

luminosity accent lighting. Staff will review a lighting plan with the building permit to verify the implementation of these requirements.

**Existing Trees**

The applicant proposes to remove the existing black walnut tree in the front yard to construct the driveway apron to their home. The existing trees in the Sycamore Creek channel and the along the north property line by the Sidhu property and along the west property line by the Greene property are conditioned to remain. Figure 10, below, is a photograph of the walnut tree taken with the previous project.



**Figure 10: Existing walnut tree proposed to be removed.**

The City must allow the black walnut tree to be removed for the proposed house to be constructed in its location on the property. The black walnut tree was inspected by the City’s Landscape Architect with the previous application to evaluate its condition and was inspected again with the proposed application to determine if a tree analysis would be required to be prepared.

Based upon the previous inspection, the City's Landscape Architect stated that the tree appeared to have been in a state of decline for several years (prior to the submittal of the Walker application) as the canopy has experienced "die-back" from that of a mature fruit-bearing tree; numerous branches had been removed indicating a condition of decline; and that there was a developing rot in the cavity where the branches merge at the base of the main trunk. The condition was considered to be structurally unsound as the branches are weakly attached to one another. Failure of one or more of the branches – for example, due to a string wind or gust – is a distinct possibility due to the decay at the juncture.

Walnut trees do not transition gracefully past their maturity. By their nature, black walnut trees do not accept changes to their root environment and are considered to be one of the least tolerant tree species of construction activities. Due to the tree's poor structure, its ongoing decline, and its inherent sensitivity to construction impacts, staff had concluded that the walnut tree would be a poor candidate for preservation and, therefore, recommended its removal with the Walker application.

The City's Landscape Architect re-inspected the tree with this proposal and, while its health has improved, its structural defects still make it an unlikely candidate for preservation. The staff recommendation to remove this tree considered its condition and the new trees that the applicant will plant with the home's construction including 24-inch box size and 15-gallon size coast live oak, smoke tree, and western redbud species. Because of its condition, the City Landscape Architect appraises the dollar value of the walnut tree at \$1,500, which the applicant will be required to pay to the City's Urban Forestry Fund before it is removed.

### **Landscaping**

The proposed landscape plan includes a list of planting species that are attractive and appropriate for the site, including a mix of native and non-native plant species emphasizing low water use, and that group trees and shrubs in a series of randomly-spaced clusters. There will be minimal turf area to reduce water usage for landscaping and pervious paving to reduce storm water runoff. As conditioned, the landscape/irrigation plan is required to conform to the California State Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance. Staff supports the proposed landscape plan except for the proposed tree and shrub planting in Sycamore Creek and along the north property line.

Table 2, Existing Trees in Sycamore Creek, below, lists the trees based on an inspection by the City’s Landscape Architect.

**Table 2: Existing Trees in Sycamore Creek.**

Primary Structure		
Species	Size (Diameter)	Condition
<b>Poplar</b>	Heritage size	Fair to Good
<b>California Pepper</b>	Four, 9-inch diameter trees One, 4-inch diameter tree	Good Good
<b>Chinaberry</b>	Three, 4-inch diameter multi-stem tree	Good
<b>Valley Oak</b>	One, 14-inch diameter tree	Good
<b>Blackwood Acacia</b>	One, 6-inch diameter tree	Good

A draft condition requires these trees be preserved and protected from construction damage by fencing the tree or the tree groups. The applicant concurs with this requirement. Figure 11 and Figure 12, below, are photographs of the trees in the Sycamore Creek channel and along the north property line.



**Figure 11: Existing trees in the east section of Sycamore Creek.**



**Figure 12: Existing trees in the west section of Sycamore Creek.**

Staff discussed the applicant's proposed planting for this area of the development towards preserving the existing trees and accommodating the applicant's request to "fill-in" the more sparsely planted sections to screen the applicant's rear yard area from the views of the homes shown in Figure 12, and on the adjacent Sidhu property. As conditioned, the applicant will be allowed limited tree planting along the north property line to fill in only the sparse areas shown in Figure 12, on the previous page. The result will be a significant reduction in the amount of planting now shown on the proposed landscape plan in Sycamore Creek by Sycamore Terrace and along the north property line. The applicant concurs with this requirement and will review the planting plan at the building permit stage.

### **Fencing**

The existing fencing includes a six-foot tall, solid board fence on the common property line between the site and Lot 1 to the south that was installed with the subdivision and a six-foot tall chain-link fence on the common property line between the site and the Greene property to the west that was installed by the Greenbrier Company with the construction of the North Sycamore Specific Plan improvements. (The existing west and south property line fences will be retained.)

The applicant proposes a six-foot tall solid board good neighbor fence on the north property line between the subject property and the Sidhu property (Lot 3), and a five-foot tall wrought-iron style fence along the top-of-bank of Sycamore Creek to enclose the rear yard and pool. Staff supports the applicant's request. The design guidelines allow both fence styles including solid board fencing on the side property lines for rear and side yard privacy. A final fence plan will be submitted with the building permit.

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

The proposed building is located on the relatively flat portion of the site between Sycamore Creek and the south property line. The site was rough-graded with the subdivision so that it slopes approximately three-feet downward from Sycamore Terrace to the rear property line. The proposed grading plan reflects the existing slope of the site in that a system of area drains and pipes will drain the stormwater runoff from the hard surfaces to the rear of the property and then to a swale towards Sycamore Creek. As conditioned, roof and hardscape areas will drain to the yard landscape areas to pre-filter the storm water runoff. As conditioned, an erosion control plan will be provided to the Planning Division for review and approval prior to the issuance of a building permit. The applicant concurs with these requirements.

### **Green Building Measures**

All new residential homes are required to include green building measures in their design, utilizing the Alameda County Waste Management Authority's (ACWMA) Green Points guide to determine the specific green building measures to be designed into the home. The attached Green Building checklist shows that the proposed development will achieve 64 points thereby exceeding the 50 point minimum identified by the City ordinance.

As conditioned, the final Green Building measures and score will be determined with the review of the building permit application. The State of California's Green Building Standards Code, "CALGreen", shall also apply to the design and construction of the proposed house. Draft conditions are included that require a minimum of one appliance or system that meets Energy Star standards and a minimum of one water conservation device such as low-flow faucets, toilets, shower fixtures, etc., shall be installed as part of the project.

## **V. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

The proposal is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality ACT (CEQA) under Class 3 Categorical Exemption, Section 15303(a), New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures, of the CEQA Guidelines. The Class 3 exemption covers the construction or conversion of up to three single-family residences in an urbanized area. Therefore, no new environmental document accompanies this staff report.

## **VI. PUBLIC NOTICE**

Public notices were sent to the property owners and tenants within a 1,000-foot radius of the property. Exhibit H is the notification area. Exhibit F is the letter from Mary Greene. Staff has not received any other written or verbal comments on the proposed project. Staff will forward comments to the Planning Commission as they are received.



## **VII. CONCLUSION**

The proposed home is an attractive addition to the Sycamore Terrace neighborhood and is designed or conditioned to conform to the PUD development plan and design guidelines. 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 deep rear yard and the large existing trees along the rear property, view analyses or story poles were not necessary. Overall, the proposed project merits a favorable action by the Planning Commission.

## **VIII. STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends the Planning Commission approve PDR-963 subject to the draft conditions of approval listed in Exhibit A.

*Staff Planner: Marion Pavan, 925.931.5610, or mpavan@ci.pleasanton.ca.us*