



City of Santa Barbara California

PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

REPORT DATE: March 9, 2006
AGENDA DATE: March 16, 2006
PROJECT ADDRESS: 1318 N. Ontare Road (MST2003-00296)
TO: Planning Commission
FROM: Planning Division, (805) 564-5470
 Jan Hubbell, AICP, Senior Planner
 Steve Foley, Project Planner

I. INTRODUCTION

The applicant is requesting the Planning Commission's conceptual review and comments regarding the proposal to divide the property at 1318 N. Ontare Road into two parcels. The purpose of the staff report is to provide a brief summary of the proposal and a discussion of the related issues, and recommend that the Planning Commission provide direction to the applicant whether further processing of an application is warranted. Positive comments by the Commission are important to the applicant to continue with the project. Staff requests that the Planning Commission comment on the conceptual plans as submitted.

If the Planning Commission responds positively to the subdivision, City staff will continue to process the project upon formal application, including environmental review, prior to further Planning Commission hearings.

II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION/REQUIRED APPLICATIONS

The project consists of a two-lot subdivision of an 8-acre lot in the A-1 zone and Hillside Design District. The resulting lots would have a net area of 4.23 (parcel 1) and 3.77 acres (parcel 2), with average slopes of 32.53% and 36.16%, respectively. A 14,728 square foot building envelope is proposed on parcel 2 to accommodate the development of a new residence accessed by a proposed driveway approximately 340 feet in length. The grading for driveway access involves the preliminary estimate of 2,700 cubic yards of grading, of which 1,300 cubic yards results from cut and fill, and 1,400 cubic yards of soil exported from the site. No native trees are proposed for removal. A trail easement is offered for dedication in favor of the City of Santa Barbara across the property between the Ontare Hills Lane property to the west and the County owned property to the east.

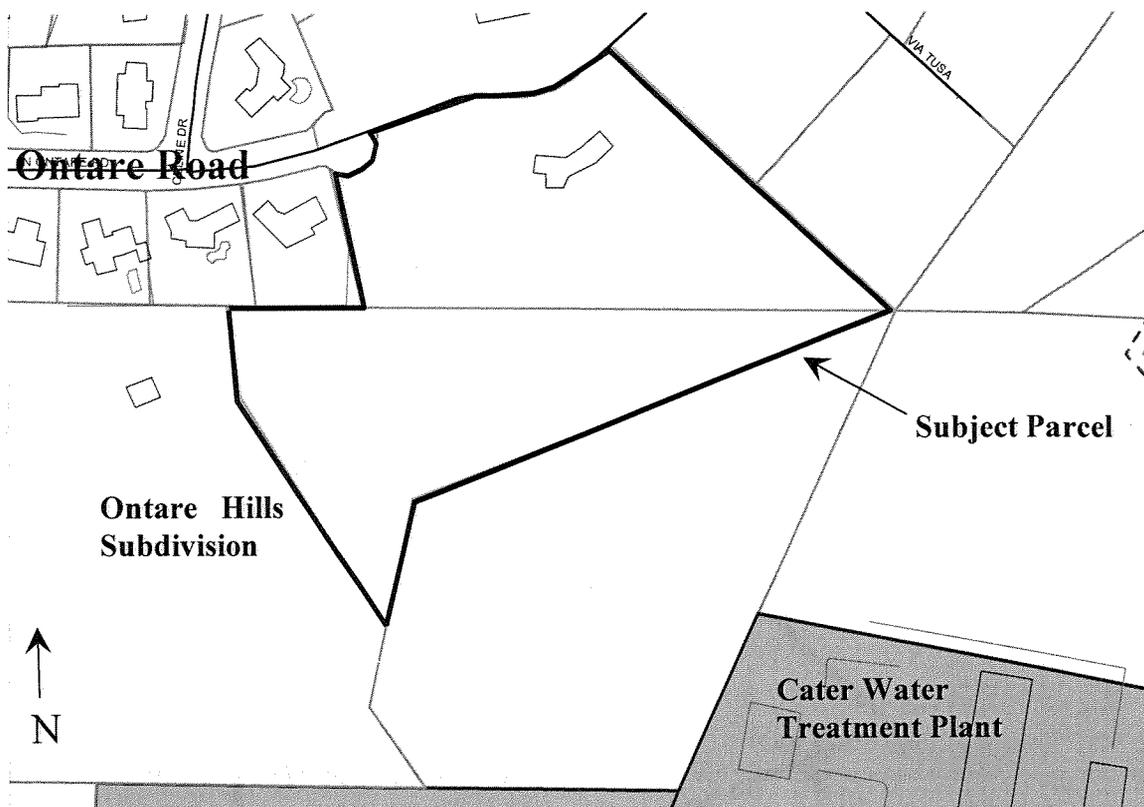
The discretionary applications required for this project are:

A Tentative Subdivision Map would be required to divide the commercial/office spaces and residential units into condominiums (SBMC §27.07); and

Neighborhood Preservation Ordinance findings to allow an excess of 500 cubic yards of grading in the Hillside District (SBMC §22.68.060, §22.68.070.A.3).

No action on this project will be taken at this time, nor will any determination be made regarding environmental review of the proposed project.

Vicinity Map



improvements and building pad preparation would require approximately 2,700 cubic yards of grading. The project proposal offers a dedication of a trail easement in favor of the City to connect the trails between Stevens Park and the easement dedication received through the Ontare Hills subdivision.

The Pre-application Review Team (PRT) reviewed the project in January 2006. Planning staff identified conflicts with the following general plan policies and directional language:

Development, which necessitates grading on hillsides with slopes greater than 30%, should not be permitted. and

Development on hillsides shall not significantly modify the natural topography and vegetation.

The Land Use Element provides the following language:

Densities as low as one dwelling unit for every ten or more acres may be appropriate in some of the steeper hillside areas.

However, staff also recognized the potential public benefit from the owner's offer to provide the trail easement linking the Ontare neighborhood to the Arroyo Burro/Jesusita trail system and Stevens Park. Given the conflict between the development, policies, site constraints, and the ability for the City to acquire a desired recreational resource, the applicant and staff seek guidance regarding the supportability of the project proposal.

Staff would like direction from the Commission on the following issues:

- Supportability of subdivision with offer of the easement dedication
- Building envelope location
- Visual impacts
- Site access

V. **RECOMMENDATION/FINDINGS**

- Staff requests that the Planning Commission provide support or opposition of the proposal based upon the above issues.

This request does not imply any approval of, or formal position on a future proposed project other than acknowledging that the proposed subdivision can proceed for further study and environmental review.

Exhibits:

- A. Site Plan
- B. Applicant's letter, dated March 16, 2006

March 16, 2006

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**CITY OF SANTA BARBARA
PLANNING DIVISION**

City of Santa Barbara Planning Commission
c/o City of Santa Barbara Planning Division
630 Garden Street P.O. Box 1990
Santa Barbara, CA 93102-1990

Dear Commissioners:

On behalf of Tom Swiggum, property owner, we are requesting Planning Commission Concept Review of a tentative subdivision map to subdivide the property at 1318 North Ontare Road into two parcels, create a building envelope to allow for the development of one new residence, and construct related improvements to provide vehicular access to the proposed building site.

Our objective in pursuing a Planning Commission Concept Review is to receive direction on the level of support for the proposed new parcel, building site and access, and to discuss any concerns the Commission may have regarding the proposed project. This process will allow the property owner to make an informed decision on whether to formally pursue project approval and embark on the Development Application Review Team (DART) process. We look forward to discussing the proposed project with your Commission and are confident that by seeking your input early on in the process, a project can be developed that satisfies the goals of both the property owner and the City.

Property Description:

The subject property is located on North Ontare Road just north of Celine Drive. The Assessor's Parcel Number (APN) is 055-160-023. The parcel is adjacent to the recently approved Ontare Hills subdivision. The site is 8.01 gross acres in size and is developed with an existing residence and attached garage. Access is provided to the existing residence via a driveway from Ontare Road.

The existing Santa Terresita residential neighborhood is adjacent to and northwest of the project site. Properties in the southern half of this neighborhood are generally less than 1 acre in size. The north half of the neighborhood contains properties between 1 and two acres in size. Immediately to the northwest of the site, lot sizes range from about three to six acres. To the south of the site lot sizes range widely from as small as one acre to as large as 14 acres.

Most of the lots in the surrounding area are smaller than the two lots proposed with this project. The proposed parcel sizes of 3.77 acres and 4.23 acres exceed the three acre lot size requirement dictated by the slope density ordinance.

EXHIBIT B

These two lots would contain single family residences on large lots that would serve as a infill development between the more densely developed neighborhood to the west and the semi-rural neighborhood further north on Ontare Road.

Slopes on the property are similar in nature to those found on many other developed lots in the vicinity. Proposed Parcel 1 would be 4.23 acres (4.06 acres net) in size and would contain the existing residence. The average slope of proposed Parcel 1 would be approximately 32.5% to which no changes are proposed. Proposed Parcel 2 would be 3.77 acres (3.63 acres net) with an average slope of approximately 36%. However the proposed development envelope would be approximately 29%.

Driveway Access

Driveway access is available to serve the proposed lot on the north side of the existing lot via Ontare Road. A second access option at the southwest portion of the lot through the Ontare Hills subdivision was explored but determined to be infeasible. As such, Ontare Road provides the only access option.

The design objectives for driveway access to the proposed building pad are to allow for a suitable building pad, meet emergency access standards, minimize earthwork to the extent feasible and minimize the visibility of the driveway. The proposal provides a solution to achieve all four objectives.

By following the existing contours, grading cut and fill is minimized. Flowers and Associates have preliminarily determined that the total amount of cut would be approximately 2,700 cubic yards with total amount of fill of 1,300 cubic yards resulting in 1,400 cubic yards of export.

No native specimen trees would be removed as a result of the driveway or home construction for either option. The driveway as proposed meets the Fire Department requirements for slope and provides an adequate turnaround area.

Building Area

The proposed building site affords a location for a residence that minimizes impacts to neighboring properties by respecting the view corridor enjoyed by neighboring properties, minimizing grading to the extent feasible, terracing the home to the hillside and minimizing vegetation removal.

The building pad location was partially driven by the need for the driveway to follow the existing contours as much as possible. Building sites closer to Ontare Road were studied but found infeasible because providing vehicular access that meets the driveway slope requirements could not be achieved.

The building pad is located on a sloped portion of the lot. To minimize visual impacts the home would be terraced to follow the general form of the slope. This approach is shown in conceptual form on Sheet 2 of the enclosed plans. Visibility of the home is further minimized by locating the building pad lower on the hillside as opposed to locating the home higher on the hill making it more visible from public viewing areas. The design review process would further refine the proposed home and further minimize any visual impacts.

Water, sewer and utility service would be provided from existing services in Ontare Road. No native trees would be removed to create the proposed building area. There is not a significant amount of brush on this area of the lot so vegetation removal will be minimal.

Protection of Resources

The project would not result in the removal of any specimen oak or sycamore trees. The parcel contains mainly citrus trees and avocado trees. There are a small number of oaks on the site but the proposed development area has been sited to avoid impacts to these trees. In the PRT review, staff requested that a biological study be prepared to examine potential impacts to resources on the site. This report would be completed prior to the Development Application Review Team (DART) application review process.

Trail Easement

Although not required, the Swiggum's are offering to dedicate an easement in favor of the City of Santa Barbara to allow the continuation of the trail easement the City recently acquired through the Ontare Hills subdivision through the subject property. This would complete this portion of the trail allowing trail users from the north to reach Stevens Park. We understand through discussions with City staff and with the developers of Ontare Hills that completion of the trail to Steven's Park is a priority. The Swiggum's have generously offered to complete this trail connection through their property.

Tentative Map Requirements

The map submitted is intended to be preliminary in nature until such time as the Planning Commission has conceptually reviewed the project. Based on the direction given, the tentative map submitted with the future DART application will meet all of the map requirements as specified in Section 27.07.030 Tentative Map Requirements

Subdivision Findings:

The following are the findings required for new subdivisions and following each finding is a brief discussion on how this project is in compliance with each:

- **The design or improvement of the proposed development is consistent with applicable general and specific plans.**

The General Plan policies applicable to the project those regarding grading in areas designated Major Hillside. In particular the Open Space Element seeks to “restrict the density and manner of future development in a way that would leave these foothills essentially open and unscarred.” It goes on to state “the location of development should be controlled in a manner that will preserve the natural characteristics of the terrain and the native vegetation.” Language in the Land Use Element for the Foothill neighborhood states that “even though these areas remain in an A-1 zoning category, it is advisable to rezone them to a more restrictive density at a later date.”

By creating parcels substantially greater than required, following hillside residential development standards, retaining the majority of the 8.01 acre lot are undeveloped, avoiding extension of public infrastructure, minimizing the amount of grading and its visual impact, retaining an open and semi rural feel and providing a significant public benefit through the dedication of a public trail easement, the project in its preliminary stages can be found to be consistent with General Plan policies.

- **The site is physically suitable for the type of development**

A soils report from Pacific Materials Laboratory was prepared for the existing residence. A site specific report for the proposed residence has not been prepared. This report will be prepared and submitted at the time of the DART application. Based on the results of the report for the existing residence, there is every reason to believe that the proposed site is suitable for development.

- **The site is physically suitable for the proposed density of development**

The project is in compliance with the Slope Density Ordinance which specifies increased minimum lot sizes based for sloped parcels and as a result is in compliance with the General Plan density designation of 1 unit per acre. The density of this project would be slightly greater than 1 unit per 4 acres. The density of the resulting subdivision will be compatible with the surrounding levels of density in adjacent neighborhoods. Lot sizes are also comparable and in many cases significantly larger than neighboring lots in the area.

- **The design of the development or the type of improvement is not likely to cause serious public health problems.**

The proposed development would create only one new residential lot with the potential for only one new residence. The future development will not result in any offensive land uses, noise, odors, or any other activities that would jeopardize the public health and safety. The residence would be served by City water and sewer services that are available within Ontare Road.

- **The design of the development or the type of improvement will conflict with easements acquired by the public at large, for access through or use of property within the proposed development; provided however, approval may be granted if it is found that alternative easements, for access of or use, will be provided, and that they will be substantially equivalent to the ones previously acquired by the public.**

The proposed development will not conflict with any existing public easements through the property. In fact, a new public trail easement is proposed as a part of the project. By providing the final connection between the existing trail easement and Stevens Park, this easement dedication would complete this portion of the trail and represents a very significant public benefit.

The project as presented represents an approach to infill development in existing residential hillside areas that is consistent with General Plan policy direction. The resulting lots are large and substantially in excess of the required minimums per the Slope Density Ordinance. The grading required for provision of access has been minimized to the degree possible and designed to avoid visibility of the resulting vehicular access. We look forward to discussing the project and receiving your comments at our conceptual review hearing.

Summary

The proposed project achieves neighborhood compatibility and consistency with City policies for hillside development by proposing a development that is sensitive to the existing community in which it is located. The City has indicated via the General Plan that the Foothill neighborhood should seek to retain its semi rural feel by encouraging development to provide large lots and to discourage higher residential density. The City's response to this goal was development of the Slope Density Ordinance which requires steep lots to have a much greater minimum lot size. This project goes one step further by proposing lots that are in excess of the Slope Density Ordinance requires.

The enclosed subdivision map demonstrates that a significant amount of the proposed parcels will remain in open space. Development is restricted to areas closest to existing residential development and close to the existing access provided by Ontare Road. This results in a very large contiguous area of open space created by the southern half of the Swiggum's lots the County Flood Control Basin facility and Stevens Park.

Sheet 3 of 3 of the enclosed plans shows the topography and lot lines for residential development in the neighborhood. The map shows that to the north, east and south there is a pattern of neighborhood development that is much more dense than the proposed project. The lots immediately adjacent to the subject site provide the best comparisons. To the east are four lots that are substantially smaller in size than were created via a tentative parcel map approved in the late 1990's. Immediately to the west is the recently

approved Ontare Hills subdivision. With the exception of one lot, all of the parcels in that development are significantly smaller than the lots proposed with this project.

Further examination of the neighborhood shows that this project is an infill project. No extension of public infrastructure is needed to serve the site with water and sewer services and the lots are located between two recently approved subdivisions.

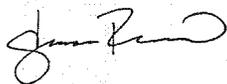
Grading will be required for provision of access to the building envelope and for creation of a suitable building area since the alternative access options explored were not feasible. The goal behind the grading plan was to provide suitable access while minimizing the visual impact of the grading. The access as proposed will mostly be screened from view. From public vantage points the driveway would not be visible because it would be screened by a combination of the natural topography and vegetation. The majority of the driveway runs from north to south and the public view sheds are directly to the south. Where the driveway can be seen from the east looking west, existing and potentially new vegetation would screen the driveway from view. The ABR review of the residence will ensure that the new residence is sensitive to the hillside condition and avoids unnecessary alteration of the topography.

Scarring of the hillside is avoided by utilizing an existing bench in the topography for the driveway access. This has the effect of minimizing the amount of earthwork needed to create the driveway. With the exception of the required emergency turnaround for fire vehicle access, the majority of the grading within the building envelope will take place under the building footprint. By stepping the house up the hillside, the project achieves consistency with the required hillside residential development standards.

The project is in compliance with the policy direction of the General Plan because the proposed lots provide substantially more lot area than required by ordinance or than other neighboring developments, only one net new residential unit is proposed, approximately 75%-80% of the 8.01 acre site will remain in a natural state, and the project avoids the need to extend public infrastructure for vehicular access, sewer or water because the project is essentially a neighborhood infill proposal.

Sincerely,

SUZANNE ELLEDGE
PLANNING & PERMITTING SERVICES, INC.



Isaac Romero
Associate Planner