



City of Burlingame

BURLINGAME CITY HALL
501 PRIMROSE ROAD
BURLINGAME, CA 94010

Meeting Minutes Planning Commission

Monday, May 8, 2023

7:00 PM

Council Chambers/Online

1. CALL TO ORDER - 7:00 p.m. - Council Chambers/Online

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. Staff in attendance: Community Development Director Kevin Gardiner, Planning Manager Ruben Hurin, Assistant Planner Brittany Xiao, and Assistant City Attorney Scott Spansail.

2. ROLL CALL

Present 6 - Horan, Lowenthal, Pfaff, Schmid, Shores, and Tse

Absent 1 - Comaroto

a. Rotation of Officers

Planning Manager Hurin announced the following rotation of officers:

Chair: Jennifer Pfaff

Vice Chair: Sean Lowenthal

Secretary: Chris Horan

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Shores noted that he was not present at the April 24, 2023 meeting, but watched the meeting video and read the meeting minutes and feels comfortable participating in the vote.

a. Draft April 24, 2023 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

Attachments: [Draft April 24, 2023 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes](#)

Commissioner Horan made a motion, seconded by Vice Chair Lowenthal, to approve the meeting minutes. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 6 - Horan, Lowenthal, Pfaff, Schmid, Shores, and Tse

Absent: 1 - Comaroto

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

There were no changes to the agenda.

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS, NON-AGENDA

There were no Public Comments.

6. STUDY ITEMS

There were no Study Items.

7. CONSENT CALENDAR

There were no Consent Calendar Items.

8. REGULAR ACTION ITEMS

There were no Regular Action Items.

9. DESIGN REVIEW STUDY

- a. 1601 Hillside Drive, zoned R-1 - Application for Design Review and Special Permit for plate height for a new, two-story single-unit dwelling (existing detached garage to remain). (Ayesha Sikandar, MA Dimensions Inc., applicant and architect; Leandron Koo, property owner) (63 noticed) Staff Contact: Catherine Keylon

Attachments: [1601 Hillside Dr - Staff Report](#)
[1601 Hillside Dr - Attachments](#)
[1601 Hillside Dr - Plans](#)

All Commissioners have visited the project site. Planning Manager Hurin provided an overview of the staff report.

Chair Pfaff opened the public hearing.

Ayesha Sikandar, designer and Leandron Koo, property owner represented the applicant regarding the application.

Public Comments:

> There were no public comments.

Chair Pfaff closed the public hearing.

Commission Discussion/Direction:

- > There are window style variations; some are double hung, then some doors and windows have mullions while others don't. Reconsider the design to have a more cohesive look.*
- > The trim band in between the stacked windows on the Hillside Drive elevation seems a little wide, consider reducing size.*
- > The rendering does not match the Hillside Drive elevation. It shows the windows having a different header height than what was noted on the elevation. Please provide a more accurate drawing.*
- > The primary bedroom's window sill height looks like it is less than 2'-0" and the header is over 30" high based on the proposed 9'-0" plate height. Consider raising the window as the sill is low for a primary bedroom looking out on a main street.*
- > Fix drafting errors on the elevations showing change of materials if vertical siding was intended to stay the same all the way.*
- > I do not see the need for the 9'-0" ceiling height on the second floor. It would help the scale of this project if the ceiling height were lower because it makes it look heavy on top. That's the reason we have this guideline and over the years we've found that it tends to work better. The double-hung windows on Hillside Drive just make it look tall as well. Everything looks tall and that's even more pronounced because of the steep roof pitches.*
- > Suggests lowering the horizontal band on the second floor elevations because it will be more in line with how that band is traditionally done in most houses. The continuation of the board and batten above*

the band is curious, we usually see a material change with the band. I'm not seeing how that's working architecturally.

> Regarding light fixtures in general, please make sure that all wall sconces fit within our criteria so that the light isn't bright and shining outward; that they're going down and not out. Provide a shielded light fixture by the door located on the rear elevation to prevent light from going into the neighbors' windows.

> Please provide updated renderings and window details. We're having more difficulties with the scale and head heights because the drawing set is not coordinated, so it's making it harder for us to make an easy decision.

> There are a lot of good things about this design. I like the farmhouse, it's got some great potential. It needs some refinement of details in order for this to make it go through for its final approval.

> I agree with what my fellow commissioner. I can't see the justification of the second story plate height, considering the steep roof pitch and the roof design. There's a lot of volume underneath the roof that could give you additional height in some of your spaces. It's important to keep in mind the sizes of the rooms. Some of these rooms are a kid's bedroom; pushing for almost a 12-foot ceiling height can really feel out of scale for a smaller bedroom. It's important to keep the proportions in mind. If you can work with the volume immediately underneath the roof, that would help get some of the height that you're looking for.

> I like the balance I see on the Hillside Drive elevation, even though I do want to see that second story come down a little bit; feel less looming like a tall building on that street corner which can feel commercial-like when it's so tall and big. Some of that modification on the second story height could help. There's certainly a lot of dimensions between 8'-0" and a 9'-1" plate height, you don't have to choose one or the other. It could be an 8'-3" or an 8'-4" ceiling height, that would still give you a little bit more than a standard 8'-0" plate height, if height is important to you.

> Since this is a corner property, the Balboa Avenue side is also a very important elevation to be considered. Though the garage in elevation looks like it's helping to balance out the stacking of the house, with a garage set way back in the corner, the house really looks stacked on top of the other on Balboa Avenue. This side needs a little attention as well as one of the other main elevations for this property, especially on a big street like Hillside Drive where one would probably see the Balboa Avenue side first. Otherwise, I do like the style and design of the house.

> With regards to the earlier comments about the grids on the windows on the first floor, if you do want to stick with single double-hung windows on the first floor, then you can change your grid pattern to reflect more of what we see on the second floor. In other words, the top half of the window doesn't have to be a two-by-two grid. You can take the entire single double-hung window and apply that two-by-two grid on the whole window. Then they will have a better scale in relationship to the upper floor as well.

> It's a clever project the way they changed the driveway to create some yard space. I personally don't have an issue with plate heights in general. They did a pretty good job with the roof line so that the house doesn't look top heavy. Maybe I'm looking at a different view than the rest of my colleagues, I don't think that the roof is that steeply pitched. I like the project as it's been presented.

> Overall, it's a really nice-looking house. It certainly fits our Burlingame aesthetic, at least in the last 10 to 15 years. It'll be a lovely house on the block. The plate height doesn't bother me as much either, except for when I'm looking at the Balboa Avenue elevation because you really do see that second story massing. On the front, I don't think it's top-heavy at all, it looks really nice. I feel the same on the east elevation. The Balboa Avenue elevation is the one I'm most concerned about. I really do agree with my fellow commissioner, there needs to be a little bit more thought on that Balboa Avenue elevation, because it is going to look like two very large boxes on top of each other and I know that's not the intention.

> About the windows and the horizontal bands, I agree with what my fellow commissioner said that if you're going to have a belly band, you should probably look at some sort of change. Maybe put the shiplap above the band.

> I also think this looks really great. I'm very pleased to see general symmetry in some of the massing. It does really well on the Hillside Drive elevation. I agree with most of the comments of my fellow commissioners. Some of the confusion might come from the rendering because some of the height of the roof looks very different than the elevations. I also understand the concern about the Balboa Avenue elevation. If possible, please provide two renderings; one from Hillside Drive and one from Balboa Avenue; it would go a long way to helping everyone see the project properly. I also like the use of the

different materials on different depths as well. I think that does a lot.

> I would like to be consistent. We've seen a lot of the farmhouse style in the last 5 or 10 years. Unless there's a really good reason, which I don't see here, it's best to treat this style evenly and people fairly. I understand there may be certain styles which lead to that, but I haven't seen one in a while. I would not personally be in favor of the Special Permit for plate height. Otherwise, I also concur with my colleagues about the changing materials. I've seen some of the farmhouse style, even with shingles on a portion, and it looks really beautiful. I appreciate the very thorough job that the architect did on the landscaping. It's a very clear plan. Everything matches; you can find things and the diagrams are great.

Vice Chair Lowenthal made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Tse, to place on the item on the Regular Action Calendar when plans have been revised as directed. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 6 - Horan, Lowenthal, Pfaff, Schmid, Shores, and Tse

Absent: 1 - Comaroto

- b.** 1345 Columbus Avenue, zoned R-1 - Application for Design Review and Special Permit for second story balcony for a new two-story single-unit dwelling (Insite Design Inc., applicant and designer; Rudolf Thun and Sonali Arurkar, property owners) (59 noticed) Staff Contact: Brittany Xiao

Attachments: [1345 Columbus Ave - Staff Report](#)
[1345 Columbus Ave - Attachments](#)
[1345 Columbus Ave - Plans](#)

All Commissioners have visited the project site. Commissioner Tse was recused from this item because her firm prepared the plans. Assistant Planner Xiao provided an overview of the staff report.

Chair Pfaff opened the public hearing.

Lauren Lee, designer, and Sonali Arrukar and Rudolf Thun, property owners, represented the applicant regarding the application.

Public Comments:

> There were no public comments.

Chair Pfaff closed the public hearing.

Commission Discussion/Direction:

- > Provide window details on the plans.*
- > Make sure all specified exterior lighting complies with code requirements.*
- > I like the architecture. The stucco version looks nice. The window on the stairwell is rather large; it's wide, tall and seems to be looking at the neighbors to the left side. Suggest paring it down a little bit. Otherwise, it is a good job.*
- > It's a good-looking project. I like stucco better than board and batten.*
- > I agree with my fellow commissioners. I don't see why we wouldn't move this forward to Regular Action. Would love to see a detail of how the stone veneer siding interacts with the stucco, specifically on the right side which stops at the gate but wants to know how it transitions. Otherwise, it looks good.*
- > I agree with all the comments. Consider revisiting the large window on the stairwell and the issue with the stone veneer transition. It looks really nice. I completely understand the Special Permit for height, seems reasonable. I love that they've retained the rocky garden and a lot of the plants. It's just really attractive.*

Commissioner Schmid made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Horan, to place on the item on the Regular Action Calendar when plans have been revised as directed. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 5 - Horan, Lowenthal, Pfaff, Schmid, and Shores

Absent: 1 - Comaroto

Recused: 1 - Tse

- c. 5 Rio Court, zoned R-1 - Application for Design Review and Hillside Area Construction Permit for a first and second story addition to an existing single-unit dwelling. (Audrey Tse, Insite Design Inc., applicant and architect; Angela and Sandy Yee, property owners) (46 noticed) Staff Contact: Fazia Ali

Attachments: [5 Rio Ct - Staff Report](#)

[5 Rio Ct - Attachments](#)

[5 Rio Ct - Plans](#)

All Commissioners have visited the project site. Commissioner Tse was recused from this item because her firm prepared the plans. Planning Manager Hurin provided an overview of the staff report.

Chair Pfaff opened the public hearing.

Lauren Lee, designer, represented the applicant regarding the application.

Public Comments:

> *Lawrence and Joanne Barulich, 1821 Loyola Drive: We've lived here since 1988, so it's been 35 years. We've been here a long time. We would like to oppose a second story to the 5 Rio Court addition. Our neighborhood has already experienced an attempt to build a second floor at 3 Rio Court, which is probably why the owner at 3 Rio Court is supporting this project. If anything, this project is even more intrusive than 3 Rio Court. To quote the comments from the Commission at that time, Planning Commissioner Terrones said that "if this were a precedent, there would be a number of houses that could then pop up into view." Another quote from Commissioner Deal, "It's the view blockage that's driving this one. There's a definite view blockage." And in closing, Chairman Brownrigg suggested that 3 Rio Court, "is out of keeping with the neighborhood. I would be very pleased if the applicant could come back with a one-story addition to give themselves the additional space. I think that would be an improvement for the neighborhood." That's just a few, but I have tapes. This went on for weeks with 3 Rio Court. The second story addition at 3 Rio Court was declined by the previous Commission and they appealed to the City Council. The City Council voted 6-0 to concur with the Planning Commission. So, 3 Rio Court is one story now and everybody was happy with that. If you've all been down Rio Court, you will find that the area is just not set up for a second story. There are questions of soils, which the person that lived at 5 Rio Court submitted in his protest for 3 Rio Court. He has some engineering and soils report which said it's all landfill. That whole Rio Court is landfill. There are issues that need to be addressed. There are parking issues. I heard it stated that you can park in the driveway. I'm not even sure a car can park in the driveway without blocking the sidewalk. It's limited. That's not in keeping with the neighborhood. That's one of the main reasons along with my views that the previous Commission voted it down because it just didn't belong with the neighborhood. Then there was an obstruction of views. So personally, the view blockage to our home would be devastating. Our home was custom built. We bought it when it was about eight years old. The whole house is built lengthwise, so every room has windows to a view. Over the years, we've lost about half of our views. The only view we have now is literally over those houses on the court. If you could see the pictures, and the pictures don't show the actual devastation this would cause us. Everyone has their right to improve their property, but it shouldn't be at the expense of others. I know this Commission is going to make their own*

determinations, but I hope you'll concur with the precedence that was set by a previous Commission that there should be no second stories in that neighborhood and not set a new precedent that second story homes are welcome. To which I think Rio Court might really enjoy because then he could put his second story on. Thank you very much for your time. I appreciate you listening to me. I would like to see some story poles go up. I would encourage all the Planning Commissioners to go down there and see what the impact it would have on the neighborhood. And I invite you to our home to see how it would really affect our views, that had a big impact on the other Commissioners who needed that. Thank you very much.

> Public comments sent via email by Jasmine and Armen Berjikly, 1813 Loyola Drive: I received a postcard regarding 5 Rio Court's first and second story additions scheduled for May 8th. We are the owners across the street facing the cul-de-sac. We are a family of five kids under nine years old, purchased this home in 2022 and have enjoyed the home so far. All the homes on this side of the street are single level and is a unique attribute of the homes in Mills Estates. We oppose the plan as it changes the neighborhood's characteristics on Loyola Drive and will completely block our view from our dining room window, our only front facing window besides private bedroom windows. 5 Rio Court is the main home directly across from our home because our home has no other view at a similar elevation from across the street. We think this impedes our view immensely as well. We will not see much else other than the building itself.

> Public comments sent via email by Atif Qasim and Saeher Muzaffar, 2 Rio Court: We are a family of four with school aged children who have lived here since 2015. We have reviewed the new plans but have several concerns to be addressed. The proposed structure is significantly larger in square footage than the existing structure with several additional bedrooms, adding a second floor and having an ADU, but having only the same size garage. This will mean additional traffic in the cul-de-sac and limited parking in an area impacting where many of our kids play. This property would be the only property in the cul-de-sac which will be two stories, changing the aesthetics and ambience of the area significantly. It would also set a precedent for other homes in the area for adding a second story. We and our neighbors value our privacy and having our backyards, pools, patios, places that can't easily be seen by neighboring properties. The second floor of this proposed structure will have a view onto the yards of the neighboring properties, including part of our backyard. Moreover, it will obstruct the view of the bay for some of the houses on the Loyola Drive side. In reviewing the history of the neighborhood, similar concerns were raised with 3 Rio Court and the owners of that property were not allowed to add a second floor, but instead expanded their first floor plan. Additional questions at the time were raised about the foundation being able to withstand a two-story building without sinking, which could also impact the neighboring properties foundations as well. That discussion should be reviewed, and this question also investigated by the current architects. There are many families with young kids living in this neighborhood, which we value as a safe and quiet place. We would want the City to be mindful of the concerns raised here as everyone decides what is best.

> Public comments sent via email by Saeher Muzaffar, 2 Rio Court: I am writing to express concern regarding the proposed construction at 5 Rio Court. I would like to add to the comments submitted by my spouse, Atif Qasim. Given the potential safety issues associated with the ability of the foundation to support a second story, potentially affecting neighboring homes, I would like the potential environmental impact to be reviewed under the California Environmental Quality Act. In addition, I am concerned about potential release of asbestos during renovation, which may cause long-term health consequences, particularly for young children who play in the cul-de-sac. Any major construction would entail appropriate abatement of asbestos-containing material, which is likely present given the age of the home. This project will entail an extended period of significant noise and dust pollution, again, especially impacting young children. Construction of a second-story home amidst single-story homes will alter the quality and character of the neighborhood. Natural light, which many long-standing homeowners cherish will be diminished in the setting of the looming structure nearby. The presence of a neighboring two-story home may also adversely affect the property and resale value of existing one-story homes. Thank you for considering these concerns.

> George Kao, 1817 Castenada Drive: I'm a resident since 2000. We actually were the victims of 3 Rio Court encroaching on the hillside, illegally building down their backyard to expand the property. Our

concern with 5 Rio Court is that when you build two-stories, they basically can look down at our property 24/7, and our room are all facing towards the backyard. So that's a major concern. We oppose this two-story expansion of the property for what the lot was originally designed to do. Thank you.

> Victoria Terry, 1809 Loyola Drive: I live across from the cul-de-sac and I also have a daughter that enjoys playing. The reason I'm calling and concerned about this project is I am worried about the infrastructure, the soil, and the environmental impact this will have. I'm not sure if any testing has been done or if any other measures have been taken to see what could happen. I do have a severe concern that there might be an impact that we're not looking at. The second issue is views. Bay views will be impacted here on Loyola Drive as a result of a second story. My front window that looks out to the cul-de-sac would be impacted in views, thereby potentially impacting my property value in the future. Another concern is parking. When we expand homes, we make bigger homes, we put ADUs, which means more people. Where are these people going to park their vehicles? I'm not thoroughly convinced that the parking has completely been thought through and been addressed. Because if you physically go out there and look, it's going to be tight, and it is tight as it is with some of our other neighbors and their vehicles. Those are my three major concerns. Another major concern we have coming down the pipeline, when I look at it now, does this really fit in with our neighborhood that we've become accustomed to? Most of our homes are one story, not two story here. We do enjoy the privacy that some of our other neighbors have mentioned. So that's another concern that I hope you'll take into consideration. At this point, safety is also an issue. I know that other neighbors had mentioned that. When we have parking issues with more people involved, that creates safety and traffic issues, but more so regarding traffic, that might be a bigger issue in that quiet little cul-de-sac. I hope we can still see a wonderful remodel with that house, but perhaps with some adjustments and more thought on how that will look like and how that will impact the neighbors, the environment, and the future of the soil and all the greenery and trees around us. Thank you very much.

Chair Pfaff closed the public hearing.

Commission Discussion/Direction:

> I appreciate the public coming out, speaking upon this, and sharing their views. One of the things that the applicant would need to do if they're going to move forward with this at all, is to install story poles. They are going to be a necessary part of being able to communicate with the public. The photos were helpful, and I appreciate receiving them. However, most of them don't qualify as a distant view the way that we read in the Hillside Overlay. From that standpoint, I understand it will impact people, it always does. Every second story impacts somebody, but it's not going to impact everybody. We would need the story poles to see the actual views impacted. Your home is actually situated much higher. Most of your view would be the actual short term of the neighbors down the hill. On the other hand, I do agree that a second story on this street is out of character and out of scale for this area. I find it hard to want to support that given how much higher it's going to be than the others. I didn't mind the design itself, but it's the location. Not being in the backyards of the neighbors downhill, they're going to be impacted as well from a much taller structure. I find it hard to support this project without some significant changes, in my understanding, of what the story poles are going to tell me for this particular location. I can appreciate the fact that we actually had this discussion 10 years ago on the other project. I don't know that much has changed since then.

> I tend to agree with my fellow commissioner. I do want to break it down a little bit just to reassure some folks. I know there's been talk about soils. That's certainly not in the purview of the Planning Commission, but as a contractor we are held to the standard to build something that's not going to fall. Engineers put their licenses and their insurance on the line for that reason. So, no matter what gets approved or not, if you build a structural building, you must get a structural engineer who also must rely on a soils engineer. So, you can rest your head on the fact that it will not be constructed if it's going to be unsafe. I would also say the same thing to people who are curious about construction abatement, asbestos, and lead. We are also held to a very high legal standard by the EPA that we must deal with those materials in a very succinct and specific way. If we don't, we can be sued, thrown in jail, or lose our license. It's very serious. So just remember that those things are in place to protect you.

> I concur with our previous Commissions that the views are pretty much the important part here, so story poles must be installed. To echo what my fellow commissioner said about neighborhood, this cul-de-sac has no other second stories. It doesn't quite fit. The design of it is lovely. I like the design, but it unfortunately doesn't quite coincide with what we're seeing on the same cul-de-sac. The move forward plan would certainly be to install story poles and then re-evaluate.

> I concur with my fellow commissioners. The story poles are necessary for something like this. The photos provided by the public were helpful. It's not impossible to add a second story in a neighborhood that is predominantly one story. It just needs to be done with a lot of care and with some creativity in some places. A more contextually sensitive design might alleviate some of the concerns about the neighborhood character.

> I concur with what's been said. I look forward to accepting the neighbor's invitation to come over and see the story poles firsthand because photographs sometimes are difficult to really see.

> Without the story poles being in place, we're not going to get much to evaluate, and I don't know if we will have a solution that's going to be positive. It behooves the applicant to come back for another study session once that's in place.

Commissioner Schmid made a motion, seconded by Chair Pfaff, to bring this item back as a Design Review Study Item when story poles have been installed. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 5 - Horan, Lowenthal, Pfaff, Schmid, and Shores

Absent: 1 - Comaroto

Recused: 1 - Tse

10. COMMISSIONER'S REPORTS

There were no Commissioner's Reports.

11. DIRECTOR REPORTS

Community Development Director Gardiner noted that the City Council is interested in a short-term street closure during the summer for downtown Burlingame Avenue. The idea is it would be similar to the fun atmosphere that we had during the street closures during the pandemic, but without the pandemic restrictions. It will come back for further discussion at the next Council meeting. Assistant City Attorney Spansail noted that Spin, a bike sharing/rental company, will be launching in Burlingame this week. You will see orange bikes placed in designated areas throughout the city.

12. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

No Future Agenda Items were suggested.

13. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Notice: Any individuals who require special assistance or a disability-related modification or accommodation to participate in this meeting, or who have a disability and wish to request an alternative format for the agenda, meeting notice, agenda packet or other writings that may be distributed at the meeting, should contact Ruben Hurin, Planning Manager, by 10:00 a.m. on Monday, May 8, 2023 at rhurin@burlingame.org or 650-558-7256. Notification in advance of the meeting will enable the City to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to this meeting, the materials related to it, and your ability to comment.

Any writings or documents provided to a majority of the Planning Commission regarding any item on this agenda will be made available for inspection via www.burlingame.org/planningcommission/agenda or by emailing the Planning Manager at rhurin@burlingame.org. If you are unable to obtain information via the City's website or through email, contact the Planning Manager at 650-558-7256.

An action by the Planning Commission is appealable to the City Council within 10 days of the Planning Commission's action on May 8, 2023. If the Planning Commission's action has not been appealed or called up for review by the Council by 5:00 p.m. on May 18, 2023, the action becomes final. In order to be effective, appeals must be in writing to the City Clerk and must be accompanied by an appeal fee of \$745.00, which includes noticing costs.