

## FINDINGS

### A. General Plan/Charter Findings

1. **General Plan Land Use Designation.** The subject property is located within the Mission Hills – Panorama City – North Hills Community Plan, last updated and adopted by the City Council on June 9, 1999. The Community Plan designates the subject lot as Low Medium I Residential with the corresponding zone(s) of R2, RD3, RD4, RD5, RD6, RZ3, RZ4, RU and RW1. The proposed Zone Change to (T)(Q)RD3-1 will make the zone consistent with the land use designation on the plan map, and therefore in substantial conformance with the purposes, intent, and provisions of the General Plan, as reflected in the adopted Community Plan.
2. **General Plan Text.** The recommended Zone Change to (T)(Q)RD3-1 conforms to the following objective and policies of the Citywide General Plan Framework Element as follows:

*Objective 4.1: Plan the capacity for and development incentives to encourage production of an adequate supply of housing units of various types within each City subregion to meet the projected housing needs by income level of the future population.*

*Policy 4.1.5: Monitor the growth of housing developments and the forecast of housing needs to achieve a distribution of housing resources to all portions of the City and all income segments of the City's residents.*

Given the surrounding land uses, which include condominium and apartment residences, the neighborhood would be well served by changing the zone from the current RA Zone designation. A change in zone, as requested by the applicant, would further the policies of the General Plan Framework Element by increasing the supply of housing in the Mission Hills – Panorama City – North Hills Community Plan area where the land is designated for Low Medium I Residential (corresponding to the R2, RD3, RD4, RD5, RD6, RZ3, RZ4, RU and RW1 zones). The provision of Small Lot single-family homes would further implement the policies of the Framework Element by allowing for the housing needs of varying income levels of the population.

Furthermore, the Citywide General Plan Framework Element states:

*Policy 4.1.4: Reduce overcrowded housing conditions by providing incentives to encourage development of family-size units.*

*Policy 4.1.7: Establish incentives for the development of housing units appropriate for families with children and larger families.*

The provision of single-family homes in the Small Lot Subdivision configuration allows for housing that serves the needs of families with children and larger families. The plans submitted by the applicant (see “**Exhibit A**”) shows a three-bedroom and den or four-bedroom configuration, thereby encouraging the development of units appropriate for families with children and larger families.

The Citywide General Plan Framework Element includes text that addresses project design as follows:

*Policy 5.5.3: Formulate and adopt building and site design standards and guidelines to raise the quality of design Citywide.*

*Policy 5.9.1: Facilitate observation and natural surveillance through improved development standards which provide for common areas, adequate lighting, clear definition of outdoor spaces, attractive fencing, use of landscaping as a natural barrier, secure storage areas, good visual connections between residential, commercial, or public environments and grouping activity functions such as child care or recreation areas.*

Additionally, the Citywide Residential Design Guidelines recommendations include the following text:

*Alternate different textures, colors, materials, and distinctive architectural treatments to add visual interest while avoiding dull and repetitive facades.*

*Utilize windows and doors as character-defining features to reflect an architectural style or theme...incorporate well designed trims and details.*

The proposed Small Lot Subdivision addresses these design standard by including arched windows with trim at the front elevation, a porch and recessed doorway at the front entryway of each unit, and tile roofing, smooth stucco walls, and complementary colors.

Additionally, the Mission Hills – Panorama City – North Hills Community Plan includes the following text and policies:

*Policy 1-2.1: Located higher residential densities near commercial centers and major bus routes where public service facilities, utilities, and topography will accommodate this development.*

*Policy 1-3.2: Consider factors such as neighborhood character and identity, compatibility of land uses, impact on livability, impacts on services and public facilities, and impacts on traffic levels when changes in residential densities are proposed.*

The proposed 8 single-family homes are sited in proximity to a shopping center located on Nordhoff Street between Van Nuys Boulevard and Wakefield Avenue. The proposed project is an infill development within a Transit Priority Area in the City of Los Angeles (ZL-2452), and Nordhoff Street is on the route of two (2) Metro Local and Limited bus lines (166 and 364). Both the proximal location of the shopping center and public transit offer opportunities for pedestrian activity and public transit usage.

The Mission Hills – Panorama City – North Hills Community Plan, including Chapter V, Urban Design, incorporates the following residential design guidelines:

*Policy 1-1.4: Protect the quality of the residential environment through attention to the appearance of communities, including attention to building and site design.*

*Utilizing complementary building materials on building facades.*

*Screening all roof top equipment and building appurtenances from adjacent properties.*

The proposed Small Lot Subdivision addresses these design standard by including arched windows with trim at the front elevation, a porch and recessed doorway at the front entryway of each unit, and tile roofing, smooth stucco walls, and complementary colors. The project is conditioned to fully screen from view any structures on the roof, such as air conditioning units and other equipment, that abut properties with single-family dwellings.

Therefore, as conditioned, the recommended development meets the objectives of the General Plan Framework Element, the Community Plan, is permitted in the RD3-1 Zone, and is consistent with the General Plan land use designation.

## **B. Entitlement Findings**

- 1. Vesting Zone Change, Section 12.32 Q of the LAMC: That the vesting zone change is conditioned as deemed necessary to protect the best interest of and assure a development more compatible with the surrounding property or neighborhood; to secure an appropriate development in harmony with the objectives of the General Plan; to prevent or mitigate potential adverse environmental effects of the zone change; or that the public necessity, convenience, or general welfare require that provision be made for the orderly arrangement of the property concerned into lots and/or that provisions be made for adequate streets, drainage facilities, grading, sewers, utilities and other public dedications or improvements:**

The proposed (T)(Q)RD3-1 Zone is consistent with the General Plan Low Medium I Residential land use designation, which allows for corresponding zones of R2, RD3, RD4, RD5, RD6, RZ3, RZ4, RU, and RW1. As such, the proposed Zone Change will allow for consistency with the Low Medium I Residential land use designation. The project site is an infill development within the City's Transit Priority Area (ZI-2452), and is conveniently located in close proximity to commercial retail uses and public transit lines. As such, the proposed development will have adequate access to existing City services and infrastructure. There is a necessity for housing at all income levels and housing types, and the project will create more opportunity for home ownership of relatively affordable dwellings for all family types in the vicinity. Properties in the immediate neighborhood primarily consist of single- and multi-family residential buildings. A zone change from RA-1 to RD3-1 and the construction of a two-story, eight dwelling units in a Small Lot Subdivision configuration would be compatible with the use and size of existing adjacent residential developments. To of the north of the project site, properties are zoned RA-1 and are improved with a church and single- and multi-family residential uses. To the east, properties are zoned (T)(Q)RD3-1 and (Q)RD3-1 and are improved with single- and multi-family and residential uses. To the west of the project site, properties are zoned [Q]R3-1VL, RD2-1, and [T][Q]C2-1VL and are improved with multiple-family residential uses and a gas station. To the south of the project site on the northerly side of Nordhoff Street, properties are zoned R1-1 and are improved with single-family residential uses. Therefore, the zone change furthers the public necessity and convenience and will contribute to the general welfare of the neighborhood. The recommended zone change is consistent with good zoning practice by providing a harmonious, infill density and land use activity in the existing neighborhood.

**2. Building Line Removal, Section 12.32 R.2 of the LAMC: The recommended building line removal is consistent with the General Plan and in conformance with the public necessity, convenience, general welfare or good zoning practice in that:**

City records show that on January 22, 1952, a 25-foot building line was established by Ordinance No. 99,671 on portions of both sides of Nordhoff Street between Osborne Street and Topanga Canyon Street. A 17-foot building line was established by Ordinance No. 116,872 along Wakefield Avenue on Lots 30 and 31, Tract 11458 under Case No. CPC-10744-BL.

The proposed removal of a 25-foot building line along Nordhoff Street and removal of a 17-foot building line along Wakefield Avenue will allow for the site to be developed in a manner consistent with other properties in the vicinity. For example, pursuant to Ordinance No. 180,221, on November 16, 2008, under Case No. APCNV-2008-513-ZC-BL, the City Council removed the building line established by Ordinance No. 99,671 at 14421 – 14431 West Nordhoff Street.

The removal of the 25-foot building line and the 17-foot building line will not impact the improvement of Nordhoff Street or Wakefield Avenue. Nordhoff Street is fully improved at the project site with curb, gutter, and concrete sidewalk. Improvement is required at Wakefield Avenue; however, the applicant is requesting a waiver of dedication to Avenue II standards, as discussed herein.

Removal of the building lines allows additional square footage upon which to construct much needed housing in the City and the Mission Hills – Panorama City – North Hills Community Plan area. Without removal of the building lines, the applicant would not have sufficient lot area to construct eight (8) single-family homes as proposed.

A condition of approval herein requires the applicant to submit a revised tract map to the satisfaction of the Advisory Agency. Under that approval, all yard requirements would be met per the Los Angeles Municipal Code for the RD3 Zone to provide sufficient open space, light, air, and setbacks from Wakefield Avenue and Nordhoff Street. Furthermore, the project is conditioned herein to allow ample setbacks along Wakefield Avenue and Nordhoff Street.

The action, as recommended, has been made contingent upon compliance with the conditions of approval imposed herein. Such limitations are necessary to protect the best interests of, and to assure developments and improvements more compatible with, the surrounding properties, to secure an appropriate development in harmony with the General Plan, and to prevent or mitigate the potential adverse environmental effects of the subject recommended action.

As such, removal of the building lines is consistent with the General Plan and in conformance with the public necessity, convenience, general welfare and good zoning practice.

**3. Waiver of Dedication, Section 12.37 I.3 of the LAMC: The dedication or improvement is not necessary to meet the City's mobility needs for the next 20 years based on guidelines the Streets Standards Committee has established in that:**

The subject site is designated Avenue II under Mobility Plan 2035. As such, the Bureau of Engineering letter dated July 14, 2016 has recommended disapproval of the map because the map omits the 13-foot wide dedication along Wakefield Avenue adjoining the tract to satisfy Avenue II standards (See Bureau of Engineering Condition No. 1). Within the Public-Right-of-Way under Avenue II, an 86-foot wide street including the sidewalk is required. The sidewalk is required to be 15 feet wide on each side. As required, Wakefield Avenue would have a 15-foot sidewalk abutting Wakefield Avenue to the west, a 56-foot wide roadway, and a 15-foot sidewalk abutting Wakefield Avenue at the project site for a total of an 86-foot wide Public-Right-of-Way.

However, staff visited the property on July 19, 2017 and observed that Wakefield Avenue north of Terra Bella Street is presently improved as a Collector Street with a 66-foot Public-Right-of-Way including an existing 13-foot sidewalk. The portion of Wakefield Avenue abutting the project site south of Terra Bella Street is designated Avenue II with an existing 10-foot sidewalk improvement. Staff observed that Wakefield Avenue functions as a Collector Street rather than an Avenue II, because the surrounding land uses on Wakefield Avenue are single- and multiple-family which are in scale with a Collector Street and not an Avenue II. Furthermore, Wakefield Avenue is classified by Mobility Plan 2035 as a Collector northbound at Terra Bella Street where it is improved with single- and multi-family residential uses, and then dead ends at the Tupper Street "T" intersection. A new increase in traffic from the north is not anticipated as Wakefield Avenue dead ends at Tupper Street. To the south, across Nordhoff Street, Wakefield Avenue is classified by Mobility Plan 2035 as a Local Street-Standard and is improved with single-family residential dwellings. From a holistic standpoint, given surrounding residential land uses and the designations of Wakefield Avenue to the north and south of the subject site, it does not seem justifiable to classify Wakefield Avenue at the project site as an Avenue II.

The applicant has submitted a report prepared by RTPG – the Rifkin Transportation Planning Group dated April 18, 2016. The report cites the ITE Trip Generation handbook, 9<sup>th</sup> Edition, to estimate vehicle trips per day as a result of the proposed 8 small lot single-family subdivision. According to the data, the 8 small lot single family subdivision would add 80 vehicle trips per day to Wakefield Avenue and 8 vehicle trips during the peak hour. As such, the report states that the number of vehicle trips does not justify dedication to the standards of Avenue II.

Additionally, the project site is located within a designated Transit Priority Area under ZI 2452 and State SB 743. Aesthetics and parking are not considered as significant impacts under CEQA in designated Transit Priority Areas. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that street widening is not necessary to accommodate parking along Wakefield Avenue at this site.

Map B of the Mobility Plan 2035 shows that Nordhoff Street at the project site is designated as Moderately Transit Enhanced. However, Wakefield Avenue is not prioritized for Transit. Map D2 of the Mobility Plan 2035 shows Nordhoff Street and Terra Bella Avenue as part of the Bicycle Lane Network. However, Wakefield Avenue, where the applicant is proposing to waive the 13-foot dedication, is not part of the Bicycle Lane Network. Map E shows Nordhoff Street as part of the Vehicle Enhanced Network, but does not include Wakefield Avenue. Also, Map F of Mobility Plan shows Nordhoff Street at the project site and the intersection of Terra Bella Avenue and Nordhoff Street west of the project site to be part of the Pedestrian Enhanced Network. Wakefield Avenue is not part of the Pedestrian Enhanced Network. Therefore, waiving the Avenue II dedication will not

detract from the functional use of Wakefield Avenue and will not negatively affect build out of the Mobility Plan's enhanced network.

A Collector street is 66 feet at full dedication, and the property fronts on a segment of Wakefield Avenue that has a 75-foot width that exceeds what is typically required for a Collector street. Based on staff investigation of the area, a 3-foot dedication, in lieu of the required 13-foot dedication for an Avenue II, is more appropriate to create a uniform roadway and sidewalk continuity for this particular section of Wakefield Avenue. Requiring a 3-foot dedication will allow the sidewalk fronting at the subject site to be improved from the existing 10-foot width to 13 feet consistent with the segment of Wakefield Avenue north of Terra Bella Street, which already has an existing 13-foot sidewalk consistent with Collector Street standards.

Although the Mobility Plan has designed this particular 430 foot section of Wakefield Avenue between Nordhoff Street and Terra Bella Street as Avenue II, the Mobility Plan's policy is to avoid any unnecessary street widening that seems errant or out of context with the prevailing dimension of the existing street conditions. Therefore, the dedication of Wakefield Avenue to Avenue II standards at this particular site is not necessary to meet the City's mobility needs for the next 20 years based on guidelines the Streets Standards Committee has established.

**4. Determination for Relief from Section 12.22 C.20 Pursuant to Section 12.24 X.7 of the LAMC:**

Pursuant to LAMC Section 12.24 X.7, the applicant is requesting relief from Section 12.22 C.20 to construct a 6-foot in height masonry block wall in the required front and side yards on Nordhoff Street and Wakefield Avenue.

In order for the applicant's request to be granted, the decision-maker must make the following findings:

- a. That the project will enhance the built environment in the surrounding neighborhood or will perform a function or provide a service that is essential or beneficial to the community, city, or region.

According to the applicant, the purpose of the fence is to deter crime and to provide security and privacy, aesthetic appeal, and cleanliness, particularly for the two (2) single-family homes with side yards facing Nordhoff Street and four (4) single-family homes with rear yards facing Wakefield Avenue. In total, five (5) of the eight (8) single-family homes would be impacted, as one of the homes is located at the corner of Wakefield Avenue and Nordhoff Street. According to the applicant, the proposed 6-foot high masonry block wall will afford the development the appearance of a private gated community. The applicant believes that the wall will not adversely impact light, air, ventilation, views, or visibility.

The proposed 6-foot high masonry block wall does not comply with the Citywide Framework Element, which is a strategy for long-term growth and defines citywide policies. The Framework Element includes the following text:

*Policy 5.9.1: Facilitate observation and natural surveillance through improved development standards which provide for common areas, adequate lighting, clear*

*definition of outdoor spaces, attractive fencing, use of landscaping as a natural barrier, secure storage areas, good visual connections between residential, commercial, or public environments and grouping activity functions such as child care or recreation areas.*

The proposed 6-foot high masonry block wall on Nordhoff Street and Wakefield Avenue would neither enhance the built environment in the surrounding neighborhood nor perform a function or service that is beneficial to the community, city, or region. A 6-foot in height masonry block wall does not achieve a good visual connection between neighboring residential properties and does not enhance a transition to the street and adjacent uses. As proposed, a 6-foot in height masonry wall would not encourage pedestrian use along Wakefield Avenue or Nordhoff Street. Therefore, a 6-foot masonry block wall, as proposed, would not enhance the built environment or perform a beneficial function or service that could not be otherwise provided through site design, lighting, attractive fencing, landscaping, and good visual connections.

- b. That the project's location, size, height, operations and other significant features will be compatible with and will not adversely affect or further degrade adjacent properties, the surrounding neighborhood or the public health, welfare and safety.

As proposed, a 6-foot in height masonry block wall located along Nordhoff Street and Wakefield Avenue would adversely affect and further degrade adjacent properties. A 6-foot in height masonry block wall does not achieve a good visual connection between neighboring residential properties and does not enhance a transition to the street and adjacent uses. As proposed, a 6-foot in height masonry wall would not encourage pedestrian use. As such, a 6-foot high solid masonry wall along Nordhoff Street and Wakefield Avenue would adversely affect and degrade adjacent properties.

- c. That the project substantially conforms with the purpose, intent, and provisions of the General Plan, the applicable community plan and any applicable specific plan.

The Framework Element of the General Plan includes the following policy:

*Policy 5.5.3: Formulate and adopt building and site design standards and guidelines to raise the quality of design Citywide.*

In compliance with the Framework Element, safety and security measures could be implemented via site design and development standards, adequate lighting, attractive fencing, and the use of landscaping as a natural barrier rather than utilizing a masonry block wall. A 6-foot in height masonry block wall does not achieve a good visual connection between neighboring residential properties and does not enhance a transition to the street and adjacent uses. As proposed, a 6-foot in height masonry wall would not encourage pedestrian use. As such, the proposed 6-foot in height masonry wall would not enhance the built environment in the surrounding neighborhood. Staff recommends improving the site design by reorienting the four single-family dwellings that abut Wakefield Avenue to front on Wakefield Avenue, thereby allowing for rear yard privacy and connectivity with the surrounding neighborhood.

- d. Additionally, the decision-maker is required to consider the environmental effects and appropriateness of materials, design and location of any proposed fence or wall;

including any detrimental effects on the view which may be enjoyed by the occupants of the adjoining properties; and security to the subject property which the fence or wall would provide.

The Framework Element includes the following text:

*Long expanses of fences should incorporate openings, changes in materials, texture, and/or landscaping. Avoid materials such as chain link, wrought iron spears, and barbed wire.*

In compliance with the Framework Element, Citywide Design Guidelines call for decorative walls that include a change in color, material, and texture to create visual interest while screening the property.

Illustrations in the Citywide Design Guidelines show a combination of wall and wrought iron and landscaped planters that eliminate the need for security doors. Fences with combined materials and landscaped planters promote pedestrian activity and create a visual connection, which is particularly important in an area that encourages transit use. Staff recommends an improved landscape design along Nordhoff Street to achieve a sense of community connectivity and to encourage pedestrian activity.

Therefore, the proposed 6-foot in height masonry wall will not enhance the built environment in the surrounding neighborhood or perform a function or provide a service that is essential or beneficial to the community, city, or region. The proposed wall will not be compatible with and will adversely affect and further degrade adjacent properties, the surrounding neighborhood and/or the public health, welfare and safety. Finally, the proposed 6-foot in height masonry wall does not substantially conform with the purpose, intent, and provisions of the General Plan, the applicable community plan and any applicable specific plan.

### **C. CEQA Findings**

Based on the independent judgment of the decision-maker (Deputy Advisory Agency), after consideration of the whole of the administrative record, the project was assessed in Mitigated Negative Declaration, No. ENV-2016-1805-MND, adopted on September 11, 2017; and pursuant to CEQA Guidelines, Sections 15162 and 15164, as supported by the Addendum dated January 17, 2018, no major revisions are required to the Mitigated Negative Declaration; and no subsequent EIR or negative declaration is required for approval of the project. Impacts were identified in the areas of biological resources, cultural resources, and noise. With the implementation of mitigation measures, impacts are expected to be reduced to a less than significant level.