

Midcoast Community Council

An elected Municipal Advisory Council to the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors

Serving 12,000 coastal residents

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<http://mcc.sanmateo.org>

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April 11, 2011

Planning Commission

County Government Center

455 County Center, 2nd Floor, Mail Drop PLN122

Redwood City, CA 94063

Subject: Agenda Item 5 & 6 – Menasco Birch St Projects (PLN 2001-00837 – PLN 2001-00838)

Honorable Commissioners,

The above referenced project comes to the Midcoast Community Council (MCC) as a third, entirely new design proposal for this property.

In this design the streetscape of the proposed residences on Birch are most troubling because the end result will be a façade dominated by a flat roof (“box like”) 4-car garage, with a large expanse of garage doors and non-landscaped areas 50 ft across (to serve those garage bays), as well as, two additional open uncovered parking spaces. This type of façade, site layout, and design will alter the character of the neighborhood and be in direct conflict with design review standards.

The MCC generally does not comment on Design Review matters. Design Review is an enforceable requirement of the planning and building process and needs to be incorporated in the review of any new project proposal. In instances such as the current the projects which have the potential to set dangerous precedents and where the requirement for Design Review has not been followed, the MCC is compelled to comment.

Taking this new design proposal through the Midcoast Design Review was required explicitly by the Board of Supervisors which stated that the applicant: "...ensure public review and participation [of the project]." This has not happened and we ask that the Commission ensure that the project go through Design Review at which point precedent setting design features will receive appropriate scrutiny. The MCC presents the following specifics:

1. The projects basically provides for a quadra-plex in a single-family dwelling neighborhood. The 0 ft setback of the “two garages” is unprecedented in the Midcoast residential neighborhood context. The MCC opposes projects with key features incompatible with the Midcoast residential neighborhood context.
2. This project will increase the potential of future privacy conflicts and its negative impact on neighborhood street parking.
3. The installations of story poles representing the structures are intermixed with an older set of story poles, all which are collapsing or leaning at various angles. It is impossible to actually see from the street the outline of all the buildings’ heights and lengths.

There are other unaddressed issues which make this project problematic:

- Drainage – The property slopes down to Cedar St where it levels off. The addition of “hard surfaces” will increase the potential of flooding of existing neighboring residents. In effect, the design makes it implausible that an appropriate drainage plan can be developed.
- Second Units – The LCP has a limited number of second unit permit possibilities as the total build out number for the area and since the county, at present does not keep very good count of second units, how does this one project rate two? Can all single dwelling units in the Midcoast get approval for second units?
- Water & Sewer Connections – Again allowing for two units with one connection per parcel without proper tracking has taxed our Midcoast infrastructure to the breaking point.

To reiterate: The MCC requests that the Planning Commission provide direction to the planning staff to work with the applicant on changes consistent with these requests and a proper public review which will be accomplished by remanding the projects back to Design Review.

[SIGNED]

Len Erickson
Chair, Midcoast Community Council

cc:
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Midcoast Community Council