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Re: Letter of intent for design waivers for 1050 Stillwater Dr.

Members of the Design Review Board,

We represent 1050 Stillwater LLC, the owner who is applying for the following design waivers:

Design waiver 1: Waiver from the required 70% ratio of physical volume of the second floor compared to the first floor. The waiver is for 16% above the requirement.

Design Waiver 2: Waiver to exceed the twenty-four foot height limitation for the architectural feature wall and equipment screens.

Design Waiver 3: Waiver for grade of the east side yard open space to exceed 30" above the adjusted grade.

Design Waiver 4: Waiver for grade of the West side yard open space to exceed 30" above the adjusted grade.

Discussion of Design Waiver 1:

The intent of the code is to create a pleasing and diverse volumetric composition so the adjacent property owners do not see long, tall unbroken walls. The step down effect on portions of the North, South and West facades accomplish the intent of the code by reducing the massing. Considerable effort was made to reduce the building mass and minimize the amount of the request.

Discussion of Design Waiver 2:

There are two components in this waiver: The architectural feature wall and the equipment screens. We will address them individually.

The feature wall: Beauty in our environment is often times the presence of something which has no benefit other to enhance our experience. For example a piece of sculpture enhances our lives through its pleasing appearance. It seldom serves no other functional purpose. The feature wall on this façade is a sculptural element which breaks down the massing of the building. It does this by dividing the mass with an element that is slightly taller, articulated darker and of a different finish. Its sole function is to enhance the appearance of the house from the street.

The equipment screens: It is always preferable when creating a new structure to be considerate of the adjacent properties. Equipment generates some amount of noise. We are seeking to minimize this by putting much of the equipment on the roof, farther from the neighboring properties. The waiver is needed to visually screen the units and deflect equipment sound away from the adjacent properties.

Discussion of Design Waivers 3 and 4 (consolidated as the points are the same):

It is reasonable for the subject property owner to have access to the open areas on the sides from within the house. A seven inch step from the house onto the landscape/open area is a normal step height. The elevation of the house is set by flood plain requirements. Based on this, the waiver is the least needed to allow access to the side open space from within the house. There are two reasons to justify the waiver:

The first reason is that the grade of the proposed design is below a neighbor's line of sight. Using the average height of a person at five feet five, an adjacent neighbor's eye level at grade is around about five feet. The lowest grade (5.7 feet) of either property in this area puts eye level at 10.7 feet. The height of the lawn area is 9.5 feet so the grade is below the neighbor's eye level by more than a foot.

The second more compelling reason is that the landscaping along the property lines will obscure the portion of the area where the waiver is requested. The slender weavers bamboo hedge proposed at the property line will be at a height of over sixteen feet. This dense and tall hedge will thoroughly screen the adjacent properties and obscure the lawn areas in the waiver.

For these two reasons, the proposed design will provide the visual relief and comply with the intent of the code.

Conclusion:

The owner and the design team have made a thoughtful effort to create a house that fits the context and enhances the neighborhood. Even elements that are often more mundane such as garage doors are glass to create a more attractive streetscape. Because of the quality of the design and the reasons outlined above, we request approval of the four waivers. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



David B. Lawrence
Principal/Architect
C: file

