



**CITY OF NOVATO**  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

**DESIGN REVIEW COMMISSION**

**Meeting Minutes**

NOVATO CITY HALL  
901 SHERMAN AVENUE  
NOVATO, CA 94945

**Wednesday, May 3, 2023 - 7:00 PM**

**A. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**

The Design Review Commission meeting began at 7:00 PM.

**Commission Present:** Commissioners Joe Farrell, Kevin Jacobs, Mark Schatz

**Commission Absent:** Commissioner Michael Barber

**Staff Present:** Planning Manager Steve Marshall, Senior Planner Kaitlin Zitelli

**B. APPROVAL OF FINAL AGENDA**

**COMMISSION ACTION:** Upon motion by Commissioner Jacobs and seconded by Commissioner Farrell, the Design Review Commission voted 3-0-0-1 via roll call to approve the final agenda.

**AYES:** Commissioners Farrell, Jacobs, Schatz

**NOES:** None

**ABSTAIN:** None

**ABSENT:** Commissioner Barber

Motion carried.

**C. PUBLIC COMMENT - None**

**D. CONSENT ITEMS – None**

**E. CONTINUED ITEMS**

**F. PUBLIC HEARING**

**F.1. MOGHADDASI RESIDENCE**

**P2022-071; DESIGN REVIEW  
CEQA CATEGORICALLY EXEMPT – SECTION 15303  
APN 160-335-02; NO ASSIGNED ADDRESS (BURNING TREE DRIVE)**

Senior Planner Zitelli presented the staff report and summarized the changes made to the project since first presented to DRC in November 2022.

Chair Schatz asked staff to clarify why they were supporting making the additional finding for a home size over 4,500 square feet (sq. ft.) on a hillside lot.

Senior Planner Zitelli summarized staff's reasoning for supporting the larger home size, as stated in the staff report. In particular, the majority of the home is not visible from off-site locations.

Mr. Ali Moghaddasi, the applicant and property owner, introduced the revised project including a description of the surrounding neighborhood and changes made to the project since the November 2022 hearing.

Pete Pedersen, landscape architect, discussed the proposed landscaping for the project and how the landscape plan addresses the challenge of growing trees at the site, including backfilling soil into planting pockets created from dry stacked rock retaining walls. He noted the location of landscape lighting and indicated lights will be downward directed and would not spill light off the site.

Chair Schatz asked about the slope of the standing seam roof, and what size the trees would be at time of planting.

Mr. Moghaddasi answered that the roof would be a 3:1 slope, and Mr. Pedersen responded that the trees would be 24-inch box trees, with a 5-meter projected size at maturity.

Chair Schatz opened the public comment period and acknowledged receiving a public comment letter via email that morning and speaking to a member of the public while he visited the project site. There were no members of the public wishing to speak. The public comment period was closed.

Chair Schatz returned the matter to the Commission for comments.

Commissioner Jacobs said the landscaping plan was nice, and that he does not believe a 30-sq. ft. reduction in the home size addressed the Commission's concerns regarding the overall project size as expressed at the November 2022 hearing. He said he liked the building articulation (upper floor step back) and the exterior lights proposed are good, he was familiar with those particular light fixtures and they should not cause any adverse issues. He said he expected the revised colors to be more earth-tones, however he liked the colors on the applicant's color and materials board. He believed story poles should be installed for the benefit of the neighbors.

Commissioner Farrell said that all major issues identified at the November 2022 hearing had been resolved, and that the applicant had made efforts to address the

massing and added articulation on the western elevation. He said the landscaping plan looked great but that it is a challenging site and hopefully the trees will grow on the slopes. He said the colors and materials shown on the board brought to the meeting were a definite improvement. He believed the public deserves the opportunity to see story poles of the revised design installed at the site, and if that were done, he was in support of the project.

Chair Schatz said he was not at the November meeting, however he went to the site and agreed that the changes to the plans were an improvement. He commented on the roof design noting there are three different roof expressions, suggesting that the sloped roof would not be visible from the street, and that a flat roof would reduce the height of the building, however this was just an opinion. He said his main concern was the overall size of the home and he did not see why 350 sq. ft. could not be removed to meet the 4,500 sq. ft. size limit. He commented that 24-inch box trees were small and would like to up the size of the trees, and that the new colors and materials on the sample board were an improvement. He said story poles should be installed, and he asked why all the windows on the western elevation had been removed.

Mr. Moghaddasi responded that after receiving a letter from the residents of 20 Burning Tree Dr. stating privacy concerns, he removed the windows from the western elevation, and this was the only reason windows were no longer proposed.

Chair Schatz said it was a loss not to have the windows but he did not want to cause a fight between neighbors by requiring the windows. He reiterated that the overall size of the home needed to be smaller.

Mr. Moghaddasi said many homes in the neighborhood were over 4,500 sq. ft., and that the excess area of his home could be reduced by removing one bay of the garage.

Commissioner Farrell said this would not be the biggest house on the street, and that the second story over the garage and the garage portions of the home were hidden by the front of the house.

Chair Schatz said he could not make either additional finding for the larger home size as it was not minimally visible, nor was it exemplary architecture, however he said if the other two commissioners were okay with the size he would go along with it.

Commissioner Farrell said making a concession on the size is a good idea. If the applicant lowered the size and installed story poles, the project could be approved.

Commissioner Jacobs concurred that he would like the size reduced to 4,500 sq. ft. and story poles put up.

Planning Manager Marshall said that the staff report suggested removal of the bedroom above the garage if the Commission could not make the findings for the larger home size. However if story poles were going to be installed, the

commissioners might want to indicate where they would like to see the home reduced in size.

Mr. Moghaddasi said he would appreciate some sort of resolution to the project tonight. He believed that story poles would not help anyone, and the general public would not fully be able to understand what they were looking at with the story poles.

Commissioner Jacobs noted that nobody spoke on the project during the public comment period, so perhaps they could skip the story poles and move the project along with a reduction in the project size.

Commissioner Farrell added it would be acceptable to retain the articulation at the front of the home when considering a reduction in size.

Mr. Moghaddasi said he was happy with the home design but he wanted to move forward so he would remove some area of the garage to meet the size limit.

Chair Schatz said the area to be removed needs to come from the house not the garage, and that the room size on the second floor could be reduced.

Planning Manager Marshall asked the Commissioners to clarify that they would like the footprint of the building to remain static and the massing in the front of the home should remain as currently presented, meaning that the reduction in floor area would likely come from the upper floor that is over the garage.

**COMMISSION ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Farrell and seconded by Commissioner Jacobs, the Design Review Commission voted 3-0-0-1 via roll call to approve to approve the project with the condition that the size of the home be reduced to no more than 4,500 sq. ft. and the footprint and general massing of the home remain the same, and the approved colors and materials be those on the sample board that the applicant brought to the meeting.**

**AYES: Commissioners Farrell, Jacobs, Schatz**  
**NOES: None**  
**ABSTAIN: None**  
**ABSENT: Commissioner Barber**

**Motion carried.**

## **G. WORKSHOPS - None**

## **H. GENERAL BUSINESS**

Planning Manager Marshall briefly spoke about the next DRC meeting and what items would be on the agenda. Chair Schatz asked if the vacant seat on the DRC had been filled and Planning Manager Marshall said the City Council did not fill the vacant seat.

## **I. ADJOURNMENT**

The Design Review Commission adjourned the meeting at 8:10 pm.

**I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing minutes were duly adopted at the Design Review Commission meeting of September 6, 2023.**

**/Steve Marshall/**

**Steve Marshall, Planning Manager**