

To: Mayor and Ross Town Council
From: Elise Semonian, Senior Planner
Re: Lanphier, Design Review, 8 Southwood Avenue, File 1820
Date: June 7, 2012

I. Project Summary

Owner: Cam and Edward Lanphier
Location: 8 Southwood Avenue
A.P. Number: 73-151-25
Zoning: R-1:B-20 (Single Family Residence, 20,000 sq. ft. min. lot size)
General Plan: Low Density (1 - 3 units per acre)
Flood Zone: area outside of creek Zone X (outside 1-percent annual chance floodplain), creek is in a special flood hazard area

II. Project Description:

Town Council consideration of the adequacy of the landscape screening for a design review project approved on March 11, 2011, for design review for a new 532 square foot pool house/garden house with an unfinished understory storage and mechanical area, and associated landscape work. Fence height variance for a new wood and wire fence above the creek retaining wall which, measured in combination with the creek wall, exceeds the 6-foot fence height limit.

Lot Area	42,366 square feet
Existing Floor Area Ratio	14.8%
Proposed Floor Area Ratio	14.9% (15% permitted)
Existing Lot Coverage	9.1%
Proposed Lot Coverage	9.2% (15% permitted)
Existing Impervious Areas	12.3%
Proposed Impervious Areas	13.6%

III. Discussion

The applicants received Town Council design review approval to construct the new pool house building and landscape improvements in March 2011. The structures have been finished and the applicants have requested a final inspection.

The conditions of project approval required new evergreen shrubs to be installed between 8 Southwood and 11 Norwood to provide more dense screening between the sites to screen the structure. The applicants installed new English Laurels, which are evergreen shrubs, along the fence that separates the sites. The plants are intended to screen below the redwood tree canopy. The new plants are at a lower elevation than the lawn and new building. The landscape architect indicates that the new irrigation control boxes preclude installation of screening plants at the lawn level.

The applicants landscape plan indicated that an ivy-covered fence above a concrete and ivy covered creek bank would remain (see “before” photos attached). During the project, the fence and ivy were removed since it created a home for rodents. The applicants have replaced the fence with a transparent wood and wire fence so that they may view the creek and their property, which extends across the creek. Eight five-gallon creek-friendly evergreen vines *Lonicera Hispidula* (California Honeysuckle) have been planted on the creek bank where the ivy was removed, to screen the concrete-covered bank. A variety of smaller plants have been planted on the applicants’ side of the fence.

Conditions of project approval included the following, standard, conditions related to landscaping:

7. Lighting shall be shielded and directed downward. Exterior lighting of landscaping by any means shall not be permitted if it creates glare or annoyance for adjacent property owners. Lighting expressly designed to light the pool house deck, exterior walls or fences that is visible from adjacent properties or public right-of-ways is prohibited.
11. Except as otherwise noted in these conditions, landscaping shall be installed in conformance with the approved landscape plan prior to project final. Prior to project final, the applicants shall submit written evidence to planning department staff that confirms the landscaping complies with the current Marin Municipal Water District water conserving landscape ordinance, or is exempt from their requirements.
14. The Town Council reserves the right to require additional landscape screening for up to three (3) years from project final.

The Town’s Design Review criteria includes guidance on landscaping:

(j) Landscaping.

(1) Attractive, fire-resistant, native species are preferred. Landscaping should be integrated into the architectural scheme to accent and enhance the appearance of the development. Trees on the site, along public or private streets and within twenty feet of common property lines, should be protected and preserved in site planning. Replacement trees should be provided for trees removed or affected by development. Native trees should be replaced with the same or similar species. Landscaping should include planting of additional street trees as necessary.

(2) Landscaping should include appropriate plantings to soften or screen the appearance of structures as seen from off-site locations and to screen architectural and mechanical elements such as foundations, retaining walls, condensers and transformers.

(3) Landscape plans should include appropriate plantings to repair, reseed and/or replant disturbed areas to prevent erosion.

(m) Privacy. Building placement and window size and placement should be selected with consideration given to protecting the privacy of

surrounding properties. Decks, balconies and other outdoor areas should be sited to minimize noise to protect the privacy and quietude of surrounding properties. Landscaping should be provided to protect privacy between properties.

A determination of what screening is appropriate is subjective and includes consideration of such things as existing landscaping, the size and growth rate of proposed landscaping, available planting space and the distance between properties. The design review guidelines do not specify required plant sizes and do not require instant screening.

In staff's opinion, the plants installed at the site will "soften and screen the appearance of structures as seen from off-site locations". It would have been preferable to plant the English Laurel at the lawn elevation. However, the plants will grow to screen under the canopy of the redwood trees. Staff does not have a concern with the new wood and wire fence considering that the applicants own the property beyond the fence and it allows them to enjoy the natural creek setting. Plants have been installed to replace the non-native creek bank screening with creek-friendly screening.

IV. Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Council view the landscaping from 8 Southwood and 11 Norwood (contact information for 11 Norwood is on the letter, attached).

Staff recommends approval of the screening landscaping as installed, based upon the original conditions of approval that require additional screening landscaping if found to be necessary within 3 years of project final. Staff recommends an additional condition to require all of the lighting in the raised planter area to remain on a timer so that they are not illuminating the garden during the night.

The Council may require additional screening to be installed between the sites.