



County of Monterey Planning Commission

Agenda Item No.4

Legistar File Number: PC 25-041

Item No.4

Board of Supervisors
Chambers
168 W. Alisal St., 1st Floor
Salinas, CA 93901

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PLN240077 - SIGNAL HILL LLC

Public hearing to consider design approval for the construction of an approximately 8,290 square foot two-story single family dwelling with an attached three car garage with light brown stucco exterior, black metal clad wood accents, and a gravel roof, an approximately 180 square foot stairwell, and approximately 695 square feet of terrace (identified as the "Reduced Project," Alternative 6 in the Final EIR) and the relocation of three Monterey Cypress trees.

Project Location: 1170 Signal Hill Road, Pebble Beach.

Proposed CEQA Action: Consider the previously certified Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) (SCH#2015021054) for the Signal Hill LLC project and find the project consistent with the FEIR which does not warrant additional environmental review pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15162.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Planning Commission:

1. Consider the previously certified Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) (SCH#2015021054) for the Signal Hill LLC project, and find that the project is consistent with Alternative 6 of the FEIR and does not warrant additional environmental review pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15162; and
2. Approve a Design Approval to allow construction of an approximately 8,290 square foot two-story single-family dwelling inclusive of a three car garage with colors and materials consisting of light brown stucco exterior, black metal clad wood accents, and a gravel roof, an approximately 180 square foot stairwell, and approximately 695 square feet of terraces (identified as the "Reduced Project," Alternative 6 in the Final EIR); and a Coastal Development Permit to allow the relocation of three Cypress trees (22, 16 and 4 inches in diameter).

A draft resolution, including findings and evidence, is attached for consideration (**Exhibit B**). Staff recommends approval subject to 8 conditions of approval.

PROJECT INFORMATION:

Property Owner: Signal Hill LLC (Massy Mehdipour)

Agent: None

APN: 008-261-007-000

Zoning: Low Density Residential, 1.5 acres per unit with Design Control Overlay (Coastal Zone)

Flagged and Staked: Yes

Project Planner: Mary Israel, israelm@countyofmonterey.gov, (831)755-5183

SUMMARY/DISCUSSION:

The subject property is located at 1170 Signal Hill Road, Pebble Beach. The 2.2-acre property is zoned for low-density single-family residential uses in the Coastal Zone. The original project (HCD-Planning File No. PLN100338) involved the demolition of an existing 4,124 square-foot single-family dwelling and the construction of a nearly 12,000 square foot single family dwelling and associated site improvements including a new driveway, approximately 1,700 cubic-yards of grading (1,200 cubic yards cut/500 cubic yards fill), restoration of approximately 1.67 acres of native dune habitat, and the relocation of three Monterey Cypress trees.

During staff's review of the original project, staff identified potentially significant impacts to historic resources, biological resources, visual resources, archaeological resources, and development on slopes. An Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was prepared for PLN100338. The EIR identified significant unmitigable impacts on the subject property's historic resource, the Richard Neutra designed Connell House. The original project was reviewed in duly noticed public hearings by the Planning Commission on December 7, 2022 and January 25, 2023. In a decision on January 25, 2023, the Planning Commission voted six to two, with two members absent, to find that demolition of the Connell House could be supported with a Statement of Overriding Consideration, but did not support the original project's replacement single-family dwelling. Instead, the Planning Commission's action supported the scope of work outlined in Alternative 9 of the EIR, known as the "Reduced Height Alternative." The Alternatives Chapter of the EIR included Alternative 9's design and the Planning Commission considered and supported this design as presented. Additionally, at the January 25, 2023 hearing, the Planning Commission certified the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) prepared for PLN100338.

The Planning Commission's decision was appealed to the Board of Supervisors, who considered the project in *de novo* hearings on May 9, 2023, and June 27, 2023. Through adoption of Resolution No. 23-237 (**Exhibit D**), the Board of Supervisors upheld the appeals made by Raymond Neutra, Samuel Reeves, and the Alliance of Monterey Area Preservationists. However, the Board did not deny the Project outright, approving a Combined Development Permit considering Alternative 6's design ("Reduced Project") of the Final EIR and adopting a Statement of Overriding Considerations (Resolution No. 23-236 and 23-237, **Exhibits C and D**). In the Board's decision, the motion that was passed (4 aye, 1 no) included the "stipulation that the construction [of Alternative 6] is in the footprint of the Connell House as it was" (minute 3:41 of June 27, 2023 Board hearing). The Connell House was nonconforming as to Title 20's required front setback. The Board's decision to support, in concept, the construction of Alternative 6 in the Connell House footprint did not specify that the development footprint should be shifted out of the front setback. A project fully within the Connell House footprint, in concept, would not necessitate removal of any trees, so a Coastal Development Permit for removal of Cypress trees was not included in the entitlements of Resolution 23-237. Since the Board of Supervisors only approved Alternative 6's conceptual design, a Design Approval is required to consider the final design. The proposed design would require tree removals (Cypress trees of 22, 16, and 4 inches in diameter). The project Arborist proposes the relocation of the three trees onsite, rather than cutting them down and planting saplings. All other project entitlements for development on slopes in excess of 30%, within 100 feet of environmentally sensitive habitat areas, and 750 feet of known archaeological resources were granted through Board of Supervisors Resolution No. 23-237.

Staff received an application request for Design Approval for the construction of Alternative 6 on March 22, 2024. After several submittal reviews, the complete Design Approval application is now before the Planning Commission for consideration.

After review of the proposed design and consideration of the Final EIR's Reduced Project alternative (Alternative 6), as well as the Board of Supervisor's direction that the footprint remains unchanged, staff recommends the Planning Commission approve the design presented in the project plans for PLN240077 (Attachment 2 of **Exhibit A**). Board's direction that the replacement residence be within the "footprint of the Connell House as it was" was stated after reviewing a PowerPoint slide with a graphical representation of the Connell House perimeter under a sketch of a proposed Alternative project. In the graphical representation, the structural footprint, overhangs, and the upper-level deck were included, and that representation can be understood to have directly informed the Board's direction. As proposed, the replacement residence is within the previous footprint (structural footprint, roof overhangs, and the upper-level deck), as illustrated in **Exhibit B** (Building Footprint Comparison). The "Existing Building Footprint" is a cross-hatched area that includes the roof overhangs and upper-level deck (and also some hardscape, which was not specifically proposed to be part of the house footprint by the Board of Supervisors). Furthermore, the proposed design is consistent with the conceptual Reduced Project alternative described in the Final EIR, in which the total building footprint area of the original Connell House was estimated to be approximately 0.11 acres, or approximately 4,790 square feet (0.16 acres minus 0.05 acres of hardscape, **Exhibit C**). This size (4,790 square feet) is larger than the staff estimate of the floor area for the project description of PLN100338, which described "the demolition of an existing 4,124 square-foot single-family dwelling." Therefore, it is reasonable to presume that the EIR included structural footprint, overhangs, and upper-level deck in its estimated building footprint. As these elements have been contemplated as building footprint in the history of the Project, staff recommends that the measurement of the original residence's footprint include these building elements. Measurements made by Whitson Engineers for the applicant in the preparation of **Exhibit B** arrived at a previous footprint of 4,630 square feet.

As proposed, the project is consistent with the Coastal Zoning Ordinance (Title 20), the Del Monte Forest Land Use Plan (DMF LUP), and Coastal Implementation Plan (Part 5), except for the small area of proposed development within the front setback. The EIR Alternatives Chapter described the Reduced Project as follows:

"This alternative would include completely demolishing the Connell House but would reduce the size of the proposed single-family residence to stay within the existing developed footprint and to avoid building heights that extend above the ridgeline. The remainder of the parcel would be restored to native dune habitat."

Part of the Planning Commission's decision is to determine if the scope of the PLN240077 Design Approval is consistent with the Final EIR's description of the Reduced Project, Alternative 6. For the sake of the clarity in this discussion, this Design Approval (PLN240077) is referred to as the "PLN240077 design" below, whereas the scope of work originally considered by the Planning Commission (PLN100338) is referred to as the "original project." The proposed project's

consistency with Final EIR's description of the Reduced Project alternative is supported by following facts:

- The original project consisted of a two-story 11,933 square feet (sq. ft.) single family dwelling with 1,950 sq. ft. of paved areas, and a total impervious lot coverage of 10.6 percent.
- The PLN240077 design consists of a two-story 8,290 sq. ft. single family dwelling with a 693 sq. ft. of terrace and a 180 sq. ft. stairwell resulting in a total impervious lot coverage of 7.87 percent.
- The PLN240077 design lessens the original project's building site coverage from 8,058 sq. ft. (8.5 percent) to 4,857 sq. ft. (5.2 percent).
- The PLN240077 design lessens the original project's floor area ratio from 11,933 sq. ft. (12.6 percent) to 8,290 sq. ft. (8.8 percent).
- The PLN240077 design decreases the pervious and impervious combined coverage of the original project by approximately 21 percent (from 10,008 sq. ft. to approximately 7,900 square feet).
- The PLN240077 design reduces the original project's maximum height from Average Natural Grade (ANG) by 4.5 feet (total height of 30 feet from ANG to 25.5 from ANG).

The Board of Supervisors directed the applicant to return to the Planning Commission with a design consistent with the Reduced Project alternative (Alternative 6 of the Final EIR) in the footprint of the Connell House as it was. Consistency with the Board's direction is supported by the following facts:

- The building site of the Connell House, as measured by Whitson Engineers, was 4,630 square feet. However, the Connell House included indoor/outdoor living spaces such as a patio surrounded on three sides, which included an outdoor kitchen area and a ground-level hardscape extension of the lower quarters; these areas totaled 911 square feet. Therefore, the total functional footprint of the Connell House was larger (5,541 square feet) and that area is re-utilized by the proposed new single-family dwelling.
- The proposed project sites the majority of the replacement residence within the Connell House's footprint. The proposed structure does not mimic the U-shape of the Connell House and instead proposes to fill in the remainder of the former courtyard. The Connell House's footprint vs. the proposed project's footprint is illustrated on **Exhibit B**. As proposed, the new building footprint within the courtyard area is roughly equal in size to a hardscaped area outside the Connell House on the northwest corner, which will no longer be developed within the implementation this project. This proposed equal exchange is reasonable in order to allow a different architectural design to be followed and property owner rights to be respected, while respecting the Board's direction. Staff notes that, through the proposed design, overall developed coverage of sand dune is less, and development is less spread out.
- A portion of the Connell House was developed into the front setback. Consequently, by maintaining the existing residence's rear façade, the proposed replacement structure also encroaches into the required 30-foot front setback. No variance is required here, as the Board of Supervisors directed that the replacement residence be sited in the original Connell House footprint.

On April 2, 2025, the applicant provided staff with a sketch proposing to expand the footprint in the Northeast corner to accommodate a full bath in the Master Bedroom. This sketch is provided in **Exhibit E**. It was not part of the plan set that staff found best adheres to the direction from the Board of Supervisors, but it is the preference of the applicant to have the additional approximately 50 square feet of development footprint. Per the applicant, this 50 square foot expansion is justified because the area is roughly equivalent to the roof overhang of the Connell House that the proposed project does not re-cover with the building footprint (See **Exhibit E**). However, this expansion outside of the outer limit of the Connell House footprint does not align with the Board of Supervisors' direction, and thus, staff does not recommend the Planning Commission approve this design alternative.

During staff report preparation, the applicant included proposed "decking" in areas on sand dune in front of the proposed house (due west) on **Exhibit B**. Per the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan approved with Resolution No. 23-237, there shall not be hardscape added to that area, and it will, instead, be landscaped with a naturalistic array of sand dune species that require full sun. Therefore, no additional decking will be allowed in the construction of the project, as indicated in Condition No. 8.

The draft resolution includes a finding that, based on the plans, shown in **Exhibit A**, the Board's direction to maintain the existing residence's footprint has effectively been met.

Tree Removal

The Board's action did not include approving tree removal or relocation, although tree removal was contemplated in the Final EIR. Therefore, the relocation of Cypress trees is proposed as part of the proposed project and shall be considered by the Planning Commission. The finding that the project produces the minimum impact to trees required for the project is supported by the following evidence:

- the project arborist finds they can be effectively relocated onsite without significant harm to the trees;
- the project site was found by the EIR to be outside of the native Cypress forest area and the existing trees were planted by previous owners, therefore there is no impact to the native Cypress forest that is recognized as ESHA elsewhere in the Del Monte Forest;
- the project also conforms to development standards regarding ESHA because the Cypress trees will be replanted near the proposed dwelling and/or other existing Cypress trees and not in the sand dune area required to be restored as sand dune habitat pursuant to Mitigation Measures required for the related development entitlements
- the project conforms to development standards regarding scenic visual resources because the two larger trees proposed for replanting are behind the Connell House footprint and their new locations would be behind the proposed house, thereby altering the viewshed only slightly;
- the project also conforms to development standards regarding scenic visual resources because the smaller one of the trees proposed for replanting is to the south of the Connell House footprint and the new location would be less than 20 feet farther away from the house footprint, thereby altering the viewshed only slightly;
- the justification for removal of trees within the proposed development area is that infill of the Connell House courtyard allows a different architectural design to be followed and property owner rights to be respected, while respecting the Board's direction (see above discussion).

The proposed structure does not mimic the U-shape of the Connell House and instead proposes to fill in the remainder of the former courtyard. This proposed equal exchange is reasonable and necessitates moving one Cypress tree from the courtyard area which would become the garage and a second from immediately next to it, where a driveway is proposed to approach the garage; and

- the justification for relocation of trees outside of the developed area is to accommodate the construction work area.

Design Review

The site is in a Design Control (D) Zoning District. The purpose of the Design Control Zoning District is to provide a district that regulates the location, size, configuration, materials, and colors of structures and fences in those areas of the County where design review of structures is appropriate to assure protection of the public viewshed, neighborhood character, and the visual integrity of certain developments without imposing undue restrictions on private property.

The Signal Hill LLC proposed project design has been reviewed including colors, materials, height, neighborhood character, and viewshed impacts. The subject site is in an identified public view area from 17 Mile Drive, as shown on Figure 3 of the LUP (Visual Resources map). It is also in the viewshed of public vantage points along the shoreline of Fanshell Beach. The scenic and visual resources policy guidance statement of the LUP states that it is the plan is intended to “protect the area’s magnificent scenic and visual resources, to avoid incompatible development, and to encourage improvements and facilities which complement the natural scenic assets...” LUP Policy 51 requires buildings developed on residential lots in the Visual Resources area to be “situated to allow the highest potential for screening from view” and LUP Policy 56 urges design and siting of structures in scenic areas should not detract from scenic values and should be subordinate to, and blended into, the environment. Staff visited the site on August 5, 2024 to inspect the staking and flagging and found there is no potential ridgeline effect. Proposed colors and materials consist of light brown stucco, light brown stone cladding, gray gravel roofing, and black metal door and window frames. Per Staff’s review of the 3D renderings (**Exhibit A**, Attachment 2), the proposed design is consistent with these viewshed policies because of its natural colors and materials, and flat roof, all of which reduce its prominence in the public viewshed and complement the natural scenic assets. Although reducing the size of the residence could better comply with applicable visual resource policies and result in a project that may be more subordinate to the environment, the proposed size is not in direct conflict with the DMF LUP. To further address viewshed policies, Tree Planting and Protection was applied to PLN100338 (Condition No.16). A 48-inch Cypress tree shall be planted in a location near the house (shown to the north of the proposed house in **Exhibit A**) to increase the quality of screening of existing trees onsite.

The project is in an area where there are several large custom-built homes visible among the sand dunes off 17 Mile Drive. Within the Signal Hill Road enclave, the size of residential structures ranges from 4,534 square feet to 8,106 square feet with a mean floor area of 6,716 square feet. The proposed two-story 8,290 square foot single family dwelling is larger than any other residence in the area and 1,574 square feet larger than the average floor area for the Signal Hill area. During application reviews, staff advised the applicant to consider the perceived bulk of the structure as

viewed from 17 Mile Drive in redesign. The applicant expressed that the Legorreta architectural vision was already hampered by the requirement to proceed with the “Reduced Project” alternative of the EIR, and no more reductions to the façade can be made to this architectural design. The inclusion of this development will change the character of the neighborhood by adding a new notable architectural firm with a moderately prominent front façade to an area built with custom eclectic homes. However, in staff’s opinion, these changes in character will not be significant because the proposed project avoids a building height that extends above the tree canopied ridge behind it and as mitigated by the measures identified by the EIR for aesthetics, the project will not significantly impact the viewshed.

Mitigation for aesthetics included AES/MM-3.1, an exterior lighting plan, which is Condition No. 9 of PLN100338, and BIO/MM-2.1 and BIO/MM-3.2, which will result in the restoration of a 1.67-acre area of the property to native sand dune habitat.

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA):

Pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21083 and CEQA Guidelines sections 15081, 15161, and 15200 *et seq.*, the County of Monterey as Lead Agency prepared an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the original project, which consisted of (1) demolition of the existing 4,125-square-foot, two-story, single-family residence, and removal of the approximately 2,825 square feet of asphalt driveway and concrete patios; (2) construction of a new 11,933-square-foot, two-story (over basement), single-family residence and construction of approximately 1,950 square feet of paved areas; (3) restoration of approximately 1.67 acres to native dune habitat within 750 feet of a known archaeological resource; and (4) the removal of three Cypress trees. In addition to the original project scope, this EIR also considered and analyzed eight alternative project scopes, as required by CEQA Guidelines section 15162.6. The Draft EIR identified potentially significant impacts to Aesthetics, Archaeological Resources, Air Quality and Greenhouse Gases, Biological Resources, Geology, Seismicity, and Soils, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Historic Resources, Hydrology and Water Quality, and Noise.

The EIR proposed mitigation measures to reduce all but one of the identified impacts to a level of less than significant. Demolition of the existing historic house was identified as a potentially significant impact that could not be mitigated to a less-than-significant level. The Draft EIR was circulated for public review and comment from August 24 to October 12, 2018 (SCH No. 2015021054). Per Resolution No. 23-236 and 23-237, the Board of Supervisors certified this EIR and adopted a written Statement of Overriding Considerations relative to the project’s unavoidable impact on a historical resource. As described above, the Board of Supervisors also approved, in concept, Final EIR Alternative 6. The certified Final EIR contemplated this as one of 9 alternatives to the Proposed Project.

The proposed Design Approval and Coastal Development Permit for relocation of three Cypress trees (PLN240077) involves the construction of Alternative 6, the Reduced Project, which was approved in concept on June 27, 2023, when the Final EIR was certified by Board of Supervisors Resolution No. 23-036. The proposed project, consisting of the construction of an approximately 8,290 square foot two-story single family dwelling inclusive of a three car garage with colors and materials of light brown stucco body and black metal clad wood accents and a gravel roof, with an approximately 180 square foot stair well and 695 square feet of terrace, represents a smaller dwelling of less height and bulk in

the same location as the original project analyzed in the EIR. Three Cypress trees were considered as part of the EIR's original project. The proposed project is consistent with Alternative 6 of the Alternatives Chapter in the certified Final EIR (see above discussion).

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15162, when an EIR has been certified, no subsequent EIR or negative declaration shall be prepared for the project unless the agency determines that substantial changes are proposed, or substantial changes occur with respect to the circumstances under which the project is undertaken. Here, no new information has been presented, no new circumstances exist, and no substantial changes to the EIR's scope of work (which considered nine alternative projects) are proposed that warrant further environmental review. The EIR contemplated residential development of the lot, including removal of trees and up to 10,008 square feet of structural and hardscape improvements. The project includes 7,900 square feet of structural and hardscape improvements. The EIR contemplated eight alternatives and one "no project" alternative to the original project and evaluated them separately for potential impacts. The proposed project conforms to the Reduced Project alternative, Alternative 6. There has been no change in the project alternative and no indication during review of the project, or in testimony from the public, that circumstances have changed since the EIR was certified. Circumstances of the conditions of the sand dune environment of Signal Hill, the historical status of the Connell House, and the conditions of the Signal Hill neighborhood's buildout within the context of the Pebble Beach planned residential and recreational uses remain the same. Therefore, none of the conditions described in CEQA Guidelines section 15162 that would trigger the need for either a subsequent EIR or negative declaration have occurred.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

The following agencies have reviewed the project, have comments, and/or have recommended conditions:

Environmental Health Bureau
Environmental Services
Engineering Services

LUAC:

PLN240077 was referred to the Del Monte Forest Land Use Advisory Committee pursuant to Board of Supervisors adopted LUAC Guidelines, at which the LUAC on August 1, 2024 voted 8 yeas, 0 noes to support the project as proposed (**Exhibit F**). Changes have been made to the design since that review, but they are sufficiently minor to not require additional LUAC review.

Prepared by: Mary Israel, Supervising Planner, 755-5183, israelm@countyofmonterey.gov
Reviewed and Approved by: Fionna Jensen, Principal Planner

The following attachments are on file with HCD:

Exhibit A - Draft Resolution, including:

- Conditions of Approval
- Project Plans

Exhibit B - Building Footprint Comparison

Exhibit C - Board Resolution No. 23-236, certifying the Final EIR

- [Link to FEIR](#)

Exhibit D - Board of Supervisors Resolution No. 23-237, approval of Project Alternative 6

Exhibit E - Sketch of Applicant Requested Design Alternative

Exhibit F - Del Monte Forest LUAC minutes for August 1, 2024

Exhibit G - Vicinity Map

cc: Front Counter Copy; California Coastal Commission; Fionna Jensen, Principal Planner; Mary Israel, Project Planner; Engineering Services; Environmental Health Bureau; Environmental Services; Cypress Fire Protection District; Massy Mehdipour, Applicant/Owner; The Open Monterey Project (Molly Erickson); LandWatch (Director); Interested Parties; Project File PLN240077.