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February 6, 2007

Attn: Santa Barbara City Council
City of Santa Barbara
630 Garden Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93102

Re: Schechter Residence, 1575 La Vista Del Oceano
Appeal Hearing

Dear Santa Barbara City Council Members:

My office has spent the better part of the past year working with property owner Gene Schechter to develop a house design which complements the qualities of this hillside property and neighborhood. Our current design addresses specific concerns of the City Planning Commission regarding a previously-submitted design for this property developed by another architect. It has been gratifying to earn the unanimous approval for this project from the Planning Commission, as well as the positive and constructive comments from the Architectural Board of Review during our various presentations before them. I'd like to summarize some of the features of our design which specifically address the stated concerns and challenges inherent in this site:

- The current design is a 2-story, split-level organization, in contrast with the previously submitted 3-story structure, thereby minimizing the overall vertical massing.
- A narrower footprint for the building has been developed, to conform to the narrow aspect of the site. The terraces and landscaping on the east side create a strong connection with the site as it extends lengthwise in that direction.
- Over one-half of the structure was lowered five feet in response to a suggestion by the ABR.
- Site retaining walls are low or moderate in height, and relate to the structure and landscape concept in form and materials.
- Low-slope hipped roofs are employed for their horizontal profile, and create a terracing effect in the building's massing.
- The house is divided horizontally with a band of stone finish at the lower level, in order to break down its vertical aspect.
- A landscape concept has been developed which employs numerous canopy trees, which will complement the form and scale of the residence.

In his letter to the City Council of December 26, appellant Matthew Edwards has outlined the reasons for his current appeal of the Planning Commission's approval of our project. I will summarize his points and address them as follows:

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SANTA BARBARA, CA

1.A. Requests for modifications are excessive.

The Santa Barbara City Planning Commission found that the requested modifications were appropriate for this project on this site, after carefully evaluating their necessity and any potential impact.

1.B. The property's E1 zoning would require for development a ¾ acre parcel for a newly created lot.

The appellant is referring to newly-created lots. As an existing lot, this project is not required to meet this standard per the Zoning Ordinance. Additionally, most properties in the neighborhood, including the appellant's property, do not meet this minimum lot size for development based on current standards.

2.A. The project's design does not appear to conform with the city's hillside design guidelines.

A review of the City of Santa Barbara's 9-category "Single-Family Residence Guidelines Checklist Hillside Design Techniques" will confirm that our project is in substantial conformance with each category listed. Furthermore, both the City Planning Commission and the Architectural Board of Review have reviewed the design within the context of these guidelines, and found it to be in conformance.

2.B. Access to the parcel occurs at the highest elevation of La Vista Del Oceano. The south building elevation appears very tall with little stepping into the hillside.

The tallest portion of the building falls within the 30' height limitation as specified by the Zoning Ordinance. As a result of various alternate studies, it was determined that the upper access was a preferable way to situate a project on this site. The highest portion of the site also happens to be the deepest portion, allowing the taller portion to have more hillside and landscape buffer between it and the lower roadway. The design intent is to locate landscape elements such as the specified canopy trees in this zone, thereby minimizing the apparent verticality of the house in this area. The roof portion to which the appellant refers is a full 40 feet set back from the lower roadway and is completely outside of the front yard setback on this, the south side of the property. Only a portion of the garage roof extends into the front yard setback on the north side.

A comparison of this project with others in the neighborhood will confirm that the south elevation is not overly tall. Massing is stepped and broken down vertically wherever possible on this narrow parcel. More of this terracing occurs in the west-east direction, conforming to the upper roadway's profile.

2.C. The submitted building elevation drawings do not show the proposed site retaining walls.

All site retaining walls which are connected to the house are shown on all four elevations. It is due to these walls appearing to be closely linked to the house's design that they are not extremely apparent. All of the freestanding site walls are shown on the site plan, with top-of-wall elevations indicated. These walls are also indicated on the building / site sections submitted, with their heights consistently called out. Additionally, a drawing of the entire south elevation, covering the two parcels, was presented at the City Planning Commission. This drawing illustrated all of the site walls as well as the landscaping.

The site retaining walls, both attached and freestanding, have been submitted and presented in elevation at several of the Architectural Board of Review hearings we've attended. There has been ongoing discussion regarding forms and materials at these reviews, with the result being positive comments regarding the walls' conceptual design. We anticipate continuing to work with the ABR to achieve a final design for these site walls which complements the nature of the site and the residence.

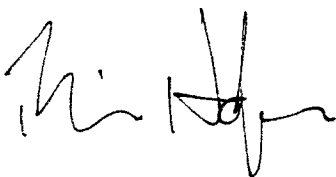
2.C. The location of the building on the west edge of the elongated east-west site appears awkward.

The westerly proposed building parcel is an irregular shape. The western edge of this parcel is over 82 feet long, while the eastern property line is 42 feet. It is this site geometry which generated the location of the residence at the western setback line. As has been demonstrated by our alternate studies, moving the building any amount to the east creates less-than-satisfactory proximity with the north and south property lines. With the appellant's project set back from this common westerly property line a minimum of 10 feet, a buffer zone of 20 feet will exist between structures. This is the intended degree of separation between buildings specified by the Zoning Ordinance.

Additionally, per direction of the City Planning Commission, we are studying options to shorten the length of the garage storage area. This revision would effectively decrease the building mass slightly at the western end of the property. We will be presenting these options to the ABR at the next opportunity.

It remains our intent to produce a project that will be an asset to the neighborhood. We will continue to work with and satisfy any concerns expressed by the reviewing agencies, and we look forward to addressing any questions the Council may have during our upcoming hearing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian Hofer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "B" and "H".

Brian Hofer

cc: Gene Schechter