

News from DRC Public Hearing 7/12/05

The recommendations of the Design Review Public Hearing last Tuesday night 7/12/05 were well worth the wait! Again, we thank the many people who took precious time out of their evening to attend the hearing – over 30 neighbors, friends and family crowded in a small room. Our collective presence, testimonies, and numerous petitions and letters most certainly made an impact on the Commission.

The Design Review Commission conceded that the Planning Commission was not provided with all the pertinent information to make a proper decision about the suitability of site F for development. In fact, an early staff report (June 3, 2004) incorrectly stated that the proposed building site would be *clustered with the existing neighborhood*, would be *screened through existing vegetation*, and that *access would be obtained onsite or with an easement verbally granted from the neighbor* at 140 Peaceful Lane. These statements were clearly incorrect, as we have shown. These and other misrepresentations by the applicant might have been overlooked had it not been for the watchfulness of our group. The DRC acknowledged that the road cut would be horrendous. No-one realized it would require a 34 foot high excavation into the hillside and that the driveway would be so long. So rather than spending more time on design review of the plans themselves, the Commission plans to regroup with the Planning Commission and made the following recommendations:

1. Current proposal for site F is not approvable without serious revision.
2. Re-explore the possibility of site D which appears to have better topography.
3. Consider a new site – code name “site Berkeley”, which could be placed immediately next door to 141 Peaceful Lane, the very last house on that street, right off of the East Bay MUD access road.

This is a small victory in a longer fight ahead. The Save Acalanes Ridge Committee is made up of SVHA Board members, SVHA homeowners and friends. We have a diversely talented volunteer group, which includes attorneys, engineers, real estate professional, psychologists and others. We welcome more participation. If there are any architects, environmental biologists and geologists among you, we would appreciate hearing from you.

Thank you for your support. We will continue to keep you informed.