CITY OF GLENDALE, CALIFORNIA
Community Development
Planning

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July 29, 2025

Emmy Mnatsakanian
3411 East Chevy Chase Drive
Glendale, CA 91206

RE: 3411 EAST CHEVY CHASE DRIVE
VARIANCE CASE NO. PVAR-004061-2024

Dear Applicant:

On July 9, 2025, the Planning Hearing Officer conducted and closed a public hearing, pursuant to the provisions of the Glendale Municipal Code, Title 30, Chapter 30.43 (GMC §30.43), on your application for a Variance requesting approval to maintain an existing unpermitted 12-foot-high wall and fence and nine-foot-high driveway gate within the required 15-foot street front setback on an approximate 16,480 square-foot lot. The property is located at **3411 East Chevy Chase Drive**, in the R1R-III (Restricted Residential, Floor Area Ratio District III) Zone, described as Lot 4, Tract 22757, as per map recorded in Book 612, Pages 38-39 of Maps in the Office of County Recorder of the County of Los Angeles.

CODE REQUIRES
In the R1R zone, retaining walls are limited to a maximum height of 18-inches above the ground surface existing at the time of construction in the 15-foot street front setback area. A non-retaining wall, fence or gate are not permitted within the required street front setback (GMC §30.11.070).

APPLICANT'S PROPOSAL
To maintain an existing unpermitted 12-foot-high wall and fence and a nine-foot-high driveway gate within the required 15-foot street front setback area.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW
Pursuant to §15270 of California Code of Regulations, Title 14, CEQA does not apply to projects which are disapproved.

REQUIRED/MANDATED FINDINGS
After thorough consideration of the evidence presented with respect to this application, the plans submitted therewith, the report by the Community Development Department staff, and the statements made at the public hearing with respect to this application, the Planning Hearing Officer was not able to make the necessary findings and has **DENIED** the variance request, based on the following findings:

A. The strict application of the provisions of any such ordinance would result in practical difficulties or unnecessary hardship inconsistent with the general purposes and intent of the ordinance

The strict application of the provisions of the ordinance would not result in practical difficulties or unnecessary hardship inconsistent with the general purposes and intent of the ordinance. The ordinance requires walls, fences and gates to be located outside of the front setback; other than a retaining wall no higher than 18" above natural grade. The house was originally built in 1958 and maintained until approximately 2003 (per historical aerial photos) without the wall, fence, gate and front yard topographical alteration to increase the grade level. The front yard grade level was increased above the natural grade level, per testimony and evidence provided by neighbors for the 2004 Zoning Administrator public hearing for Variance Case No. 10639-S, and as apparent in the plans submitted with that case, and in current and historical photos of the front yard which show the grade suddenly jumping up several feet in contrast to the natural slope of the subject and surrounding properties. There appears to be no evidence that site conditions cannot be restored (or a code-complying retaining wall be built) without practical difficulties or unnecessary hardship. There is no evidence that restoration of original site conditions will impact the indigenous protected trees located on site, nor result in traffic or other safety issues.

An initial inquiry with the City Arborist indicates that it appears the grading, wall, fence and gate can be restored to original conditions without damaging the indigenous protected trees. The applicant stated they did not consult with a professional arborist regarding the matter.

The road is designed to pull traffic away from the subject property, not toward it, in both directions (uphill and downhill). The road also widens at each curve in both directions to create space between the house and any vehicles traveling on Chevy Chase Drive. Further, a guardrail is featured to safely guide any potential errant vehicles back onto the road; a wall would never be used for this purpose. The existing guardrail appears to show no evidence of cars having hit it, and there are no reports on file of traffic accidents at the subject site. The applicant stated they did not consult with a traffic engineer or other qualified professional regarding the matter.

Moreover, Variance Case Number 10639-S (October 27, 2004) for the wall and fence was denied by the Zoning Administrator; therefore, the wall and fence should have been removed. Instead, the wall remained, and the height was later increased.

B. There are exceptional circumstances or conditions applicable to the property involved or to the intended use or development of the property that do not apply generally to other property in the same zone or neighborhood

There are not exceptional circumstances or conditions applicable to the property involved or to the intended use or development of the property that do not apply generally to other property in the same zone or neighborhood. Although the subject property is located on a sloped site adjacent to a sharply curved street, and features protected indigenous trees, these conditions are not unusual in the neighborhood. The site conditions do not justify, more than any other site in the neighborhood, the walls, fences and gate within the front setback.

The protected indigenous trees on site appear to have existed prior to the grading changes and wall, fence and gate being built, and there appears to be no reason the fill soil, wall, fence and gate cannot be removed without damaging the trees.

Although the subject site is on a sharply curved street, there are other houses in the neighborhood also located on a sharply curved street; more importantly, the sharply curved street does not appear to result in any condition that would warrant a wall and gate within the setback. The road is designed to pull traffic away from the subject property, not toward it, in both directions. The road also widens at each curve (downhill and uphill) to create space between the house and any vehicles traveling on Chevy Chase Drive. A guardrail is also featured to safely guide any potential errant vehicles back onto the road; a wall would never be used for this purpose. The existing guardrail appears to show no evidence of cars having hit it, and there are no reports on file of traffic accidents at the subject site.

C. The granting of the variance will not be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to the property or improvements in such zone or neighborhood in which the property is located

The granting of the variance will be materially detrimental to the public welfare and will be injurious to the property or improvements in such zone or neighborhood where the property is located. A 12-foot-high wall and fence, and nine-foot-high gate within the front setback conflict with the Hillside Development Review Policy (GMC §30.11.040(A); namely they: A) Are not compatible with the surrounding neighborhood in terms of size, scale, bulk/mass, setbacks and site layout, B) Do not preserve native vegetation and open space in a manner compatible with the surrounding neighborhood, nor minimize alteration of terrain necessary for development, and C) Do not take into account visual impact on surrounding properties.

Although some properties within the Chevy Chase canyon feature walls adjacent to the street, the walls generally appear to comply with code or appear to be quite old and likely non-conforming ("non-conforming," means a building, structure or portion thereof, or use of a building or land which lawfully existed and was not unlawfully used on the effective date of the zoning restriction and the existence and use continued since such time in nonconformance to the ordinance. GMC §30.70.150). There do not appear to be any properties in the neighborhood that feature a wall within the front setback of the magnitude proposed with this application. Instead, front yards are open to the street with landscaping and/or hedges used to provide screening. Natural front yard topography within the neighborhood appears to be preserved.

D. The granting of the variance will not be contrary to the objectives of the ordinance

The granting of the variance will be contrary to the objectives of the ordinance. Zoning Code objectives include conserving and enhancing the value of property, maximizing the quality of the environment, and providing adequate open spaces for light and air (GMC §30.01.020). The Development Standards for the R1R zone are intended to preserve valuable open space, physical features and scenic resources while at the same time, permitting a substantial and *reasonable* (italics added) beneficial use of such property (GMC §30.11.010(B)). The Hillside Development Standards call for neighborhood compatibility, preservation of natural features, minimization of terrain alteration and appropriate visual impact on surrounding properties (GMC §30.11.040(A).

Granting the variance for the 12-foot-high wall and fence, and nine-foot-high gate within the front setback that is incompatible with the surrounding neighborhood and does not appear to be warranted based on physical conditions of the subject property would conflict with the objectives of the ordinances as listed above.

APPEAL PERIOD

Under the provisions of the GMC §30.62, any person affected by the above decision has the right to appeal said decision to the Planning Commission, if it is believed that the decision is in error or that procedural errors have occurred, or if there is substantial new evidence which could not have been reasonably presented. It is strongly advised that appeals be filed early during the appeal period so that imperfections/incompleteness may be corrected before the appeal period expires.

All appeals must be filed using the City's online permit portal: www.glendaleca.gov/Permits. Create an account, click "Apply," "Planning/Zoning." Any appeal must be filed within fifteen (15) days following the actual date of the

decision with the prescribed fee prior to the expiration of the 15-day appeal period, on or before August 13, 2025.

Information regarding appeals and appeals and fees may be obtained by calling the Community Development Department staff at 818.548.2115, or contacting the case planner, Milca Toledo at MiToledo@glendaleca.gov or 818-937-8181.

NOTICE – subsequent contacts with this office

The Applicant is further advised that all subsequent contacts with this office regarding this determination must be with the Case Planner first and then, the Hearing Officer who acted on this case. This would include clarification, verification of condition compliance and plans or building permit applications, etc., and shall be accomplished By Appointment Only, in order to assure that you receive service with a minimum amount of waiting. You should advise any consultant representing you of this requirement as well.

You may contact the case planner, Milca Toledo, during normal business hours at (818) 937-8181 or via e-mail at MiToledo@glendaleca.gov.

Sincerely,

Bradley Calvert
Director of Community Development

Cassandra Pruett, AICP
Senior Planner

CP:MT:sm

CC: City Clerk (S.Elias); Police Dept. (J. Wofford/Z. Avila); City Attorney's Dept. (G. Van Muyden/Y. Neukian); Fire Prevention Engineering Section-(J. Diaz/S. Partamian/D. Stimson); Traffic & Transportation Section (P. Casanova/T. Chow/A. Harmandayan); General Manager for Glendale Water and Power (S. Mellon); Glendale Water & Power--Water Section (S. Boghosian/E. Hakoupiani/ /K. Runzer); Glendale Water & Power--Electric Section (C. Babakhanlou/S. Boghosian/E. Hakoupiani); Community Services and Parks (T. Aleksanian/J. De La Cruz); Neighborhood Services Division (J. Sada); Integrated Waste Management Admin. (D. Hardgrove); Maintenance Services/Street and Field/Urban Forester (J. Avalos/L. Klick/, C. Linares/ O. Urquidez); Engineering and Land Development (S. Sheikhlar/R. Villaluna); M.Berger; V.&Dr. G.B. Berriman; C.Calderon; A.Hermogeno; J.F. Moore; K.Schneider; Chevy Chase Estates Association-G.Whifler; and case planner- Milca Toledo.