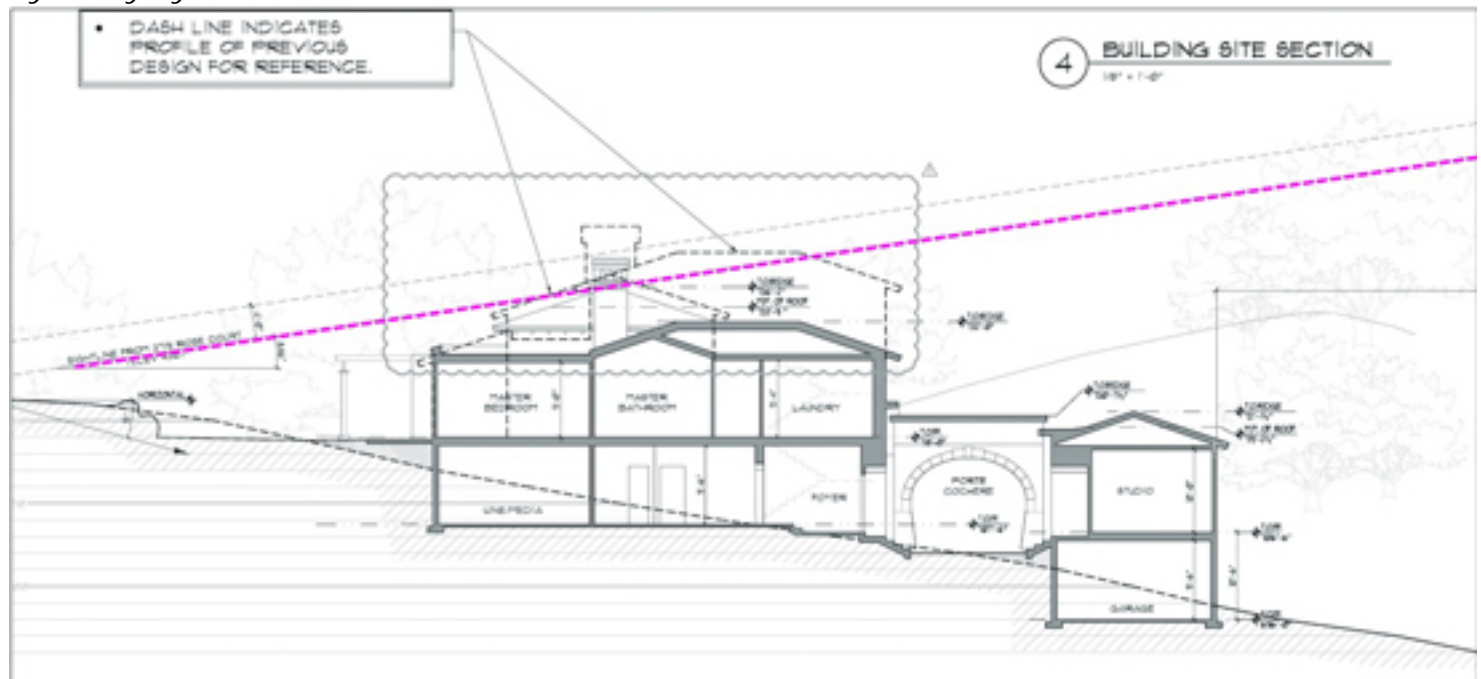


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Slight Ridgeline Silhouette Rejected by Commission

By Cathy Tyson



Drawing by Resort Design Architects of the proposed home on Monticello Road. Dashed line indicates profile of previous design to illustrate changes in the size of the structure, diagonal dashed lines shows the view from Rose Court.

A visible sliver of house along a ridgeline is not okay with the Lafayette Planning Commission. A proposed 9,643 square foot home that is almost entirely hidden was not reduced in height enough to garner a hillside development permit.

Although attorney David Bowie argued that the Monticello Road home does "not have a significant visual impact," and "views are intermittent," Planning Commissioners saw it differently. At last week's meeting, the applicants made no changes to the design or site plan, but proposed planting five large oak trees to screen the house from a smattering of homes in Happy Valley, roughly a third of a mile away. Previous downsizing to the project included eliminating the third floor office, changing the gable roof, and shrinking the gross square footage by 745 square feet.

"It's important to preserve hillsides for everyone, rather than just a few. I can't support putting a swimming pool on top of a ridgeline," said Commissioner Karen Maggio. Having to move a significant amount of soil was also a concern, grading 3,000 cubic yards just for the structure seemed excessive to Commissioners. In addition, some grading would be necessary to complete the widening of the 130 foot long driveway to meet Fire District requirements.

Back in 2008, the same owners proposed a home on the thirteen acre site with a different architect. That project was smaller and a different style; it was approved by the Planning Commission. Bowie pointed out that there is less visibility with the current iteration, than the original version - and that there's no requirement that a project be entirely concealed within the Hillside Overlay District. The Commissioners were not persuaded.

Reach the reporter at: cathy@lamorindaweekly.com

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