

# ***Over-Development and Endless Construction*** in East Hills

**Are you tired of seeing Oversized, Gaudy new houses going up, beautiful Healthy Trees cut down, Endless Construction activity on our streets, and Loss of Greenery and Privacy-buffers around your house?**

The unexpected re-hearing of a building permit for **37 Laurel Lane** in **Norgate** – a tidy charming old house in **East Hills' oldest neighborhood** -- gives residents a chance to speak up about and create a **Test Case** for better protection in several areas: (1) **Architectural design approval**; (2) **Construction regulation**; and (3) **Preservation of trees and open space**. (See *details about 37 Laurel and 80 Fairfield Lane below.*)

There will be two good forums to participate: the **Village Board, February 29th (Weds) at 8 PM** and the **Architectural Review Board (ARB), March 5th (Monday) at 8 PM** (*both subject to change!!*)<sup>1</sup>. Please see **Contact & Web information at bottom on reverse!**



Proposed 37 Laurel Lane



Proposed 80 Fairfield Lane

## **Key Issues**

1. The **Architectural Review Board (ARB)** is meant to “**Preserve the prevailing aesthetic character of the neighborhood**” (*EH Vill. Code, Sect. 271-186 “Legislative Intent”*). But lacking **written, established design-baselines, standards based on neighbors' own preferences, and professional expertise or counsel**, it blatantly fails to achieve that.
2. Residents have **no realistic opportunity** to testify about **demolitions, new home plans, and tree destruction** because there is **no notice or public speaking** period at the **ARB**.
3. **Zoning rules are too lax** to prevent hulking, overbearing, inappropriate and overcrowded new constructions and renovations. The rules permit houses that are **Just Too Big**.
4. Builders typically receive permission to remove **almost ALL trees** when re-building! This is a **very disturbing trend**. Laws to protect healthy **trees must be given new priority**.
5. Construction and renovation activities are **allowed to drag on for months and months** subjecting neighbors to noise, debris, and disruptive activity seemingly endlessly in cases.
6. **Construction hours start too early**, especially for work with jackhammers, electric saws, and nail-guns. Workers typically arrive early, slamming vehicle doors and unloading trucks well before the legal workday begins. *This compounds the issue of endless construction.*

<sup>1</sup> Note the ARB often changes its meetings at the last minute. Please check with us or the Village at 621-5600.

## Ineffective Review Procedures on Display re 37 Laurel Lane & 80 Fairfield Lane

*(Note: 37 Laurel Lane will be up for Re-Review, possibly March 5th!)*

(1) **37 Laurel Lane** is charming traditional Norgate home surrounded by healthy old trees. A developer recently got authorization -- with **no neighbor input** -- to **DEMOLISH** the house, cut down two healthy trees, and re-locate the driveway.

The proposed house looks like a **beached pirate sloop**, and features a **long protruding porch** and eaves. In contrast, houses up and down the block are in classic **New England** and **Tudor styles, with flush facades** and the occasional bay window.

Except for another **unannounced** renovation across the street from **37 Laurel**, also featuring a **protruding porch** bordered by a **picket-fence**, all houses on the street lined up evenly, creating a clean line-of-sight along the block, and enhancing a sense of **open space**. The **Board** has now inexplicably repeated its **failure** to preserve that **beneficial design principle**.

At **37 Laurel** the developer also got permission to build a new driveway **right under a neighbor's windows** -- despite the fact the existing driveway is well-buffered on the opposite side of the house.<sup>2</sup>

Post-approval, the developer has requested to **remove almost ALL** of the beautiful old trees. But the **Buildings Dept.** is forcing him to **return to the ARB for permission**. *In a way this is **good news for neighbors and others who had no advance notice to participate the first time!***<sup>3</sup>

(2) At **80 Fairfield Lane** a builder was just permitted to demolish and replace the original house and remove **FIVE** mature trees. Similar to **37 Laurel Lane**, it has a "**pirate ship**" design, which was opposed by one **Architecture Board** member as "**overstated**" "**presumptuous**" and "**Swiss Family Robinson**" It was opposed by the chairman as well. And objections were also raised against the plan to cut down the **trees**.

But instead of debating the merits of the design, one member abruptly tossed out a minor change and proposed a snap vote.<sup>4</sup> The discussion became disorganized, and attention turned to replacing the lost trees. An appeal was made from the floor to "**slow down!**", avoid rushing to a **hasty compromise**, and allow **Fairfield neighbors** to voice their opinions.

But discussion was cut off and the whole sloppy package was approved 4-2. None of those supporting the application explained their votes, and **three of the four** barely participated in the discussions.<sup>5</sup> *Clearly the rules must be improved to better protect our neighborhoods!*

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**PLEASE add YOUR ideas. See Facebook "East Hills Environment",  
See photos and info at [www.planet-in-peril.org/easthills.html](http://www.planet-in-peril.org/easthills.html) (in process),  
call **Richard Brummel (516) 669-1741**, email [r\\_brummel@att.net](mailto:r_brummel@att.net).  
**Please attend the meetings and tell your neighbors. THANK YOU!****

<sup>2</sup> We FOIL requested records of the meeting where 37 Laurel was approved but have yet to receive anything.

<sup>3</sup> We formally requested in January that the Architecture Board allow neighbors to weigh in on the demolition and design of 37 Laurel even before the tree issue arose. Chairman Spencer Kanis said he would consider it.

<sup>4</sup> Member Steven Krieger, who arrived late, interrupted the brief discussion to press for a vote with a minor modification to the objectionable "Swiss Family Robinson" design. Member Brett Rosenfeld tried to block the approval, joined by Chairman Spencer Kanis, but they failed -- on unexplained votes of the 4 others.

<sup>5</sup> The five mature trees are to be replaced by much smaller young trees, but the current trees are modest ones.