



## ARIZONA RESIDENTIAL ARCHITECTS

**April 23, 2018**

**Re: Town of Paradise Valley Proposed Hillside Ordinance Updates**

Dear Town Council of Paradise Valley, Arizona

Arizona Residential Architects (ARA) is an organization of 15 leading architectural firms and over 130 Trade Partners dedicated to the pursuit of helping the public achieve the best in luxury living through best practices in both design and construction of custom homes. As such we share the Town Council's desire to preserve the natural beauty of our mountains for all residents to enjoy. For this reason, we support the effort and much of the proposed language updates to the Paradise Valley Hillside Ordinance. We would like however to state our concern with a few proposed changes as, after meeting as a group to give these changes careful study and consideration, we believe they will inevitably end up causing the opposite effect for which they aspire to avoid, that being the betterment and or protection of our hillside views. We also believe that several of these updates will have an unfairly imposed punitive impact on non-improved hillside property causing a loss in value for their property owners.

Our issue is with the proposed language changes to Driveway Disturbance Area Credits and Cantilevers.

**Driveway Disturbance Area Credit:**

We believe the proposed language will render all future driveway designs on previously undisturbed lots to be counted 100% as disturbed area. In discussions with both civil engineers and Town staff as well as taking into consideration our combined extensive experience designing on hillside properties we know that it is virtually impossible to properly design a driveway with less than an 18" variance from natural grade and maintain proper slopes to accommodate domestic and emergency vehicles on a hillside site. The unintended consequence of this language will result in architects having to locate homes closer to the street, thus placing the structure more in view of the public, when in many cases placing the home further back where it can be more sensitively nestled into the hillside form would result in a design that is more appealing to occupants and more sensitive to neighbors while preserving better views from the public way. The other unintended consequence of the

proposed language if passed is that it will force more guest and service vehicles to park on the public streets since there will not be enough allowable disturbed area available to provide guest parking as well as even a modest size home and typical amenities. To demonstrate this point, we are submitting Exhibits 1a-1d. These exhibits show a recently approved hillside home on Mummy Mountain that wished to preserve a significant land form between it and the public street. By placing the home towards the back setback, the home achieves privacy for its occupants and leaves the view of the property from the public way almost as it is today. These exhibits also show how the proposed ordinance language would change the design, forcing the home to be placed as close as possible to the street, up against the setback where visibility of the home from the neighbors and public way are greatly increased. The guest parking, currently located close to the home where it will be screened from public view by landscape and the natural formations on the site, has to be removed, forcing guest and service vehicles on to the street, as without doing this there will not be enough allowable disturbed area to accommodate this 6000 sf. home and pool. It is important to note that undeveloped lots are already burdened by a significantly lower available disturbed area than their pre-developed counterparts. This already reduces the potential size of home and site improvements that can be made. We believe taking away the enhanced driveway disturbed area credit will unfairly burden these properties further causing a significant reduction in their value.

### **Cantilevers:**

After attempts with Town Staff to clarify the intent of the proposed language change regarding cantilever design we can only surmise that some on the Town Council simply do not like the appearance of cantilevers. We can find no examples of cantilever designs in Paradise Valley where we believe reducing the amount of cantilever to 4' horizontal and 8' above natural grade will result in a more attractive design solution.

In our opinion few natural landforms lend themselves better to cantilever designs than mountain hillsides, where there is a desire to limit a buildings footprint and impact on the earth while preserving the ability to maximize natural landscape form and vegetation. The alternative is to cut deep pads into the hillside which are decidedly less attractive, less structurally stable in many cases, and present greater challenges to proper drainage design and erosion prevention than designs which employ cantilevers and smaller footprints.

Imagine if Frank Lloyd Wright was limited to 4' horizontal cantilevers 8' above natural grade when he designed Fallingwater, considered by many to be America's most impressive example of domestic architecture (See Exhibit 2). Why would the Town wish to severely limit creative and talented architects from aspiring to design homes that are both sensitive to and expressive of their natural environment?

Should the proposed language be implemented we believe the resulting impact will be home designs that are less attractive due to the addition of columns and piers and or more

massive support walls blocking the ability to roll natural materials such as boulders and vegetation underneath the projecting elements of the home. See Exhibits 3a and 3b. This exhibit shows a recently approved hillside home on Camelback Mountain that implements cantilever design to the full extent currently allowed. Exhibit 3b shows this same design under the proposed language, which would require the masonry support wall to be brought to within 4' of the deck it supports, rendering views of the home to appear bulkier and less sensitive to the site.

So it is with a sincere desire to maximize the beauty of our mountains, treat private property fairly, maximize property values and allow talented and creative architects to do their best work within the Town of Paradise Valley, that the undersigned request the proposed language updates outlined above not be included in the final ordinance update.

Sincerely,

**Brent Kendle, AIA, LEED AP, Kendle Design Collaborative**

**Nick Tsontakis, AIA, NCARB, MRAIC, Tsontakis Architecture**

**Michael Higgins, Higgins Architects**

**Jon Bernhard, AIA, Swaback Architects and Planners**

**Mark Sever, AIA, Sever Design Group Architects**

**Clint Miller, AIA, Clint Miller Architect**

**Mark Candelaria, AIA, Candelaria Design**

**Dale Gardon, AIA, LEED AP, Dale Gardon Design**

**Andrew Carson III, Carson Architecture and Design**

**Ron Brissette, RA, NCARB, Brissette Architecture**

**Jeff Kamtz., Brissette Architecture**

**James Hann, AIA, James Hann Design, AIA**

**Lee Hutchison, AIA, Urban Design Associates**

**Jessica Hutchison Rough, AIA, LEED AP, Urban Design Associates**

**Christy Wareing, AIA, Christy and Company Architecture**

**Craig Wickersham, AIA, Craig Wickersham Architect**

**Eddie Jones, AIA, Jones Studio**

**Fred E. Fleet, PE, F, ASCE, Coe and Van Loo Consultants, Inc.**

**Nick Prodanov, PE, PMP - Land Design Group**

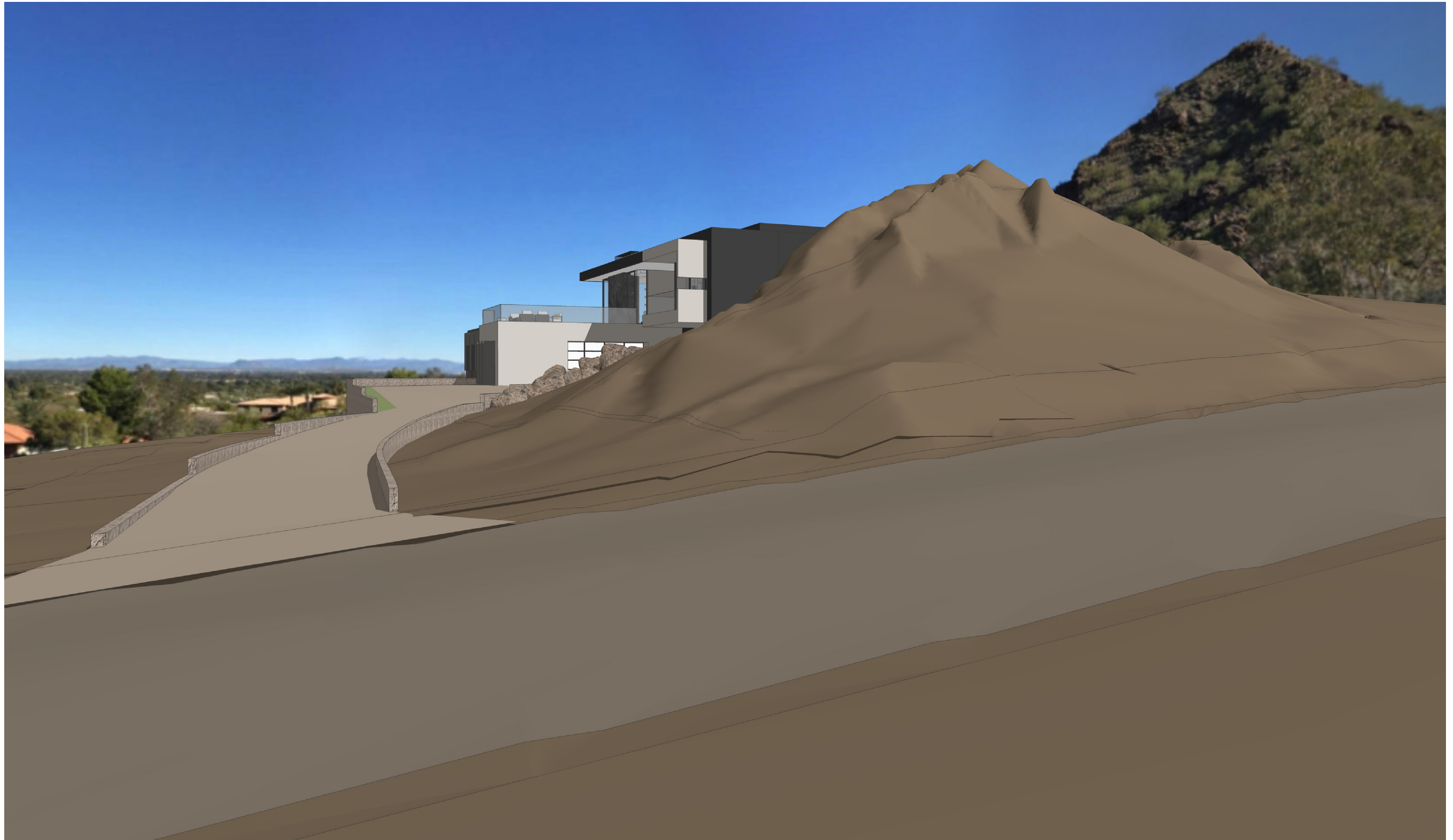


Driveway Disturbance Credit

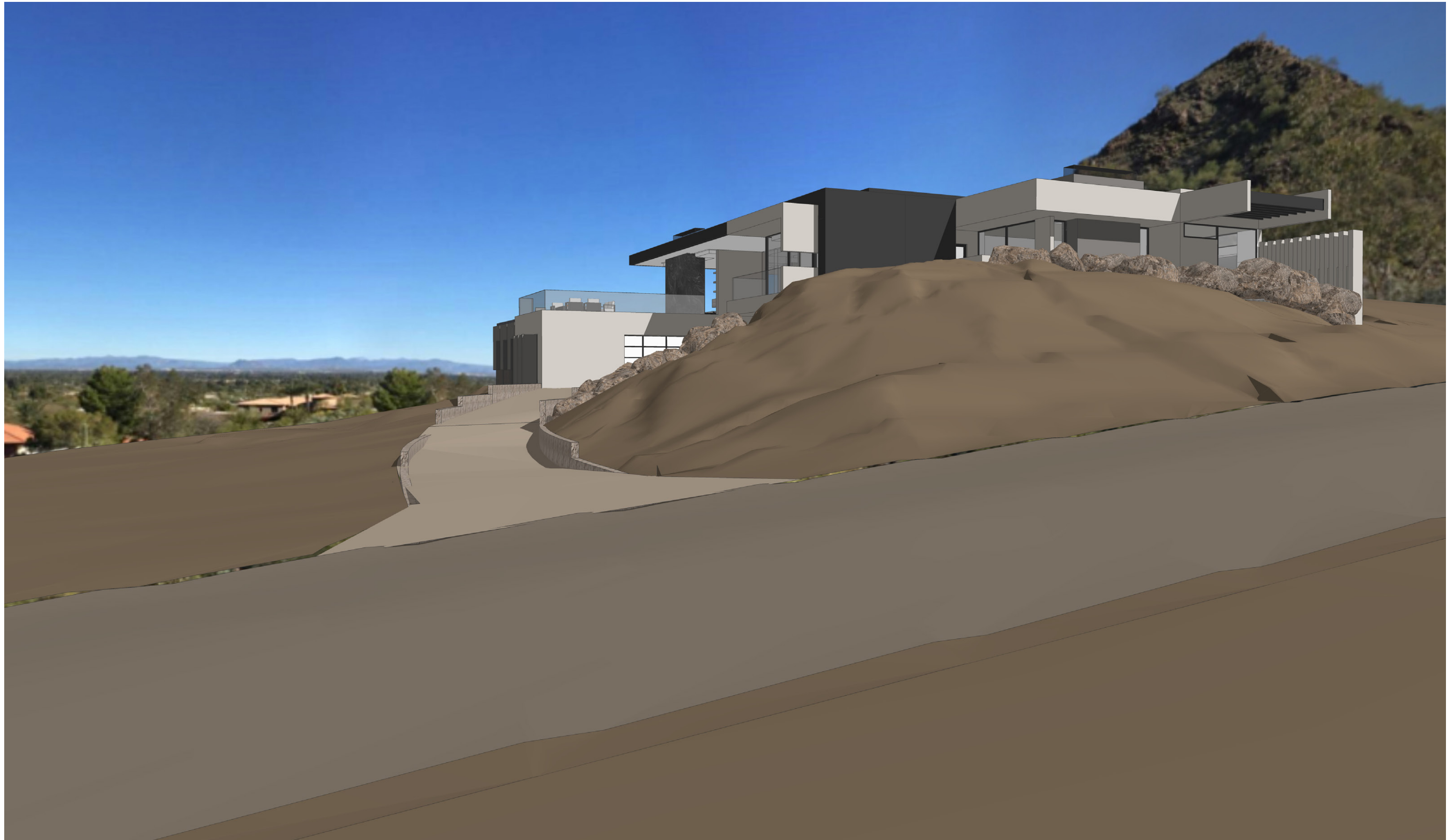


Driveway Disturbance-No Credit





Driveway Disturbance Credit



Driveway Disturbance-No Credit





Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater

Exhibit2





16' Cantilever Max Allowed

**Exhibit3a**  
Current Ordinance





4' Cantilever Max Allowed