



City of Sunnyvale

Agenda Item-No Attachments (PDF)

File #: 22-0787, Version: 1

REPORT TO PLANNING COMMISSION

SUBJECT

Proposed Project:

DESIGN REVIEW: To allow construction of a 390 square-foot first-floor addition and a 285 square-foot second-floor addition to an existing two-story single-family home, resulting in 2,717 square feet gross floor area (2,129 square-foot living area, 511 square-foot garage, and 77 square-foot covered balcony), and 52.3% Floor Area Ratio (FAR).

Location: 388 Stowell Avenue (APN: 204-34-061)

File #: 2021-7415

Zoning: R-0

Applicant / Owner: Raumfabrik Architecture + Interiors (applicant) / John Julian Chocholak and Margarita Novosyad (owner)

Environmental Review: Class 1 Categorical Exemption relieves this project from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) provisions.

Project Planner: Aastha Vashist, (408) 730-7458, avashist@sunnyvale.ca.gov

REPORT IN BRIEF

General Plan: Low Density Residential

Existing Site Conditions: Two-story single-family home

Surrounding Land Uses

North: One-story single-family home

South: One-story single-family home

East: One-story single-family home

West: One and two-story single-family homes across Stowell Avenue

Issues: Neighborhood compatibility and compliance with the Single-Family Home Design Techniques

Staff Recommendation: Approve the Design Review with recommended conditions in Attachment 4.

BACKGROUND

Description of Proposed Project

The applicant proposes a 752-square-foot addition to an existing 2,445-square-foot, two-story residence resulting in 2,717 square feet gross floor area with 52% FAR on a 5,200-square-foot interior lot. The application also includes the demolition of an existing 364-square-foot covered patio and 116-square-foot shed.

A Design Review permit is required for the construction of an addition to evaluate compliance with development standards and the City's Single-Family Home Design Techniques. Planning Commission review is required for homes exceeding 45% FAR or 3,600 square feet of gross floor area.

See Attachment 1 for a map of the vicinity and mailing area for notices and Attachment 2 for the project data table.

Previous Actions on the Site

A Variance (file no.1968-0214) for the side yard setback requirements was approved in 1968. There are no active Neighborhood Preservation complaints for the subject property.

EXISTING POLICY

Applicable Design Guidelines: The proposed addition is consistent with the adopted Single-Family Home Design Techniques since the proposed design has compatible scale, mass, and height with the two-story homes in the neighborhood. Staff has included findings for the Single-Family Home Design Techniques in Attachment 3.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

A Class 1 Categorical Exemption (CEQA Guidelines, Section 15301) relieves this project from the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act, which covers minor alterations or additions to an existing single-family home involving negligible or no expansion of the existing use.

DISCUSSION

Architecture and Site Layout

The existing neighborhood is comprised of a mix of one and two-story single-family homes originally built in 1940s. The property is in a neighborhood with an eclectic mix of Ranch, Modern and Spanish-style architecture. Additions and improvements have been made to several neighboring homes over the years.

The existing home can be categorized as Ranch-style with a simple roof design and rectilinear form. The proposed first-floor addition is along the front and rear of the property and will consist of a new tandem garage, living room, kitchen, dining room, and entry porch. The second-floor addition will include a new bedroom, office, bathroom, and balcony. The existing second floor has legally non-confirming five-foot side yard setbacks, where seven feet is the minimum required on one side and 16 feet is the minimum combined setback. The proposed addition will not result in any modifications to the existing second-floor walls along the side yards and, therefore, will not increase the legal non-conformity.

Consistent with the existing house design, most of the second-floor area is integrated within the roof form. The applicant proposes a low-pitched shed roof sloping up towards the street for the second-floor addition. The existing one-car garage will be updated to a tandem garage to meet the two covered parking space requirement, and no protected trees are proposed for removal. The applicant has also proposed exterior modifications to the building facade, including replacement of asphalt roof shingles with standing seam metal roofing; color changes; replacement of existing lap siding with a combination of cedar wood siding and stucco; new windows and trim; new entry door; and garage door.

The proposed architectural style can be categorized as Modern Ranch Style with the use of a combination of stucco and cedar v-groove wood siding, standing metal seam roofing, metal garage

door with frosted glass openings, and aluminum clad windows with bronze finish. All exterior materials and finishes work together as a palette of green and auburn colors. The pop of color on the green entry door and integrated planter box on the second floor further adds visual interest to the streetscape and complements the design.

Overall, staff finds the proposed modifications, architectural style, and building materials compatible with the character of the existing building and adjacent buildings. See Attachment 5, Site and Architectural Plans and Attachment 7, Letter from the applicant.

Floor Area and Floor Area Ratio (FAR)

The existing house has an FAR of 47%. The proposed 52% FAR requires Planning Commission review since the proposed addition further increases the house size past the 45% FAR threshold. The existing floor area and FAR of the single-family homes in the neighborhood range from 790 square feet to 3,153 square feet (1,504 square feet average) and 16% to 61% FAR (29% FAR average). See Attachment 6 for neighborhood area comparison. The proposed FAR is well within the existing range in the neighborhood.

The City's Single-Family Home Design Techniques recommends a maximum of 35% second-to-first floor ratio for the predominantly one-story neighborhood. The project proposes a 53% first to second-floor ratio. Although most of the neighboring homes are single-story, the existing two-story homes have a high first-to second-floor ratios. Design Review permits (file nos. 2015-7417 and 1999-0711) were approved with over 35% second-to-first-floor ratios for the neighboring homes at 395 and 399 Stowell Avenue (46% and 53%, respectively).

The mass and bulk of the proposed addition are consistent with the existing home and neighboring two-story homes. The proposed second-floor area is mostly contained within the roof form, which helps in minimizing the exposed second-floor walls. The location of the second-floor addition, preservation of the existing second-floor side yard walls, and use of high-quality materials further minimizes the visual bulk of the second floor from the street. Therefore, staff finds the proposed second-to-first-floor ratio to be reasonable.

Neighborhood Impacts and Compatibility

The proposed project is consistent with the site layout and character of the surrounding neighborhood. The addition will maintain the existing setbacks of the house along the side and front yard, and the second floor is set back more than 44 feet from the rear property line, where 20 feet minimum is required. The proposed overall height of 23'-10" is also comparable to the heights of the surrounding two-story homes including 395 Stowell Avenue (25'-9"), 399 Stowell Avenue (25'), and 362 Stowell Avenue (21'-5").

Integration of the second floor within the roof form further minimizes the visual bulk of the proposed house. The proposed second-floor balcony is setback nine feet from the side and 44 feet from the rear property line. There are no new second-floor windows proposed along the side yards. The applicant also provided letter of support from three neighbors, which are included in Attachment 8.

The proposed addition addresses neighbor privacy, solar access requirements, scale, and architectural design compatibility. The proposed exterior modification will further complement the neighborhood character and enhance the existing streetscape.

Development Standards

The proposed project complies with all the applicable development standards as set forth in the Sunnyvale Municipal Code, such as lot coverage, parking, height, and setbacks. The Project Data Table is in Attachment 2.

Solar Access

Sunnyvale Municipal Code (SMC) section 19.56.020 states that no permit may be issued for any construction which would interfere with solar access by shading more than 10% of the roof of any structure on a nearby property. The project plans demonstrate that the second floor will shade more than 10% of the neighboring property's roof on December 21st at 3 p.m. (17% shading). Since the solar shading analysis shows a conflict with solar access greater than ten percent, the applicant provided an additional analysis which calculates the extent to which the proposed construction will shade adjacent rooftops and solar collectors between nine a.m. to three p.m. throughout the entire 365-day solar cycle. The analysis shows a cumulative shadowing effect of 3% total over the course of the 365-day solar cycle. Therefore, the project complies with the solar access requirements.

FISCAL IMPACT

No fiscal impacts other than normal fees and taxes are expected.

PUBLIC CONTACT

Notice of Public Hearing

- Published in the Sun newspaper
- Posted on the site
- 64 notices mailed to property owners and residents within 300 feet of the project site

Staff Report

- Posted on the City of Sunnyvale's website Agenda
- Posted on the City's official notice bulletin board

As of the date of staff report preparation, staff has not received any public comments.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Approve the Design Review with the Conditions of Approval in Attachment 4.
2. Approve the Design Review with modified conditions.
3. Deny the Design Review and provide direction to staff and the applicant where changes should be made.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Alternative 1: Approve the Design Review with the Conditions of Approval in Attachment 4.

Prepared by: Aastha Vashist, Senior Planner

Approved by: George Schroeder, Principal Planner

ATTACHMENTS

1. Vicinity and Noticing Map
2. Project Data Table

3. Recommended Findings
4. Recommended Conditions of Approval
5. Site and Architectural Plans
6. Neighborhood floor area and FAR information
7. Letter from the applicant
8. Letters from the neighbors