



City of Sunnyvale

Agenda Item

15-0814

Agenda Date: 9/14/2015

REPORT TO PLANNING COMMISSION

SUBJECT

File #: 2015-7411

Location: 1464 Ramon Drive (APN: 313-14-005)

Zoning: R-1

Proposed Project:

Appeal of a staff-level decision to deny an application for a Design Review to allow for modifications to a single-family home, including construction of tandem parking, a 963 square-foot addition (including 815 square-foot garage), and a 400 square-foot detached accessory structure.

Applicant / Owner: Tamir Reshef (applicant/owner)

Environmental Review: A Class 1 Categorical Exemption (modification to existing structures) relieves this project from California Environmental Quality Act provisions and City Guidelines.

Project Planner: Timothy Maier, (408) 730-7257, tmaier@sunnyvale.ca.gov

REPORT IN BRIEF

General Plan: Residential Low-Density

Existing Site Conditions: Single-family home

Surrounding Land Uses

North: Single-family home

South: Single-family home

East: Single-family home

West: Single-family home

Issues: Compliance with Municipal Code

Staff Recommendation: Deny the appeal

BACKGROUND

A Design Review application was filed, requesting modifications to an existing home comprised of an addition of 963 square feet, including an 815 square-foot tandem garage; two bathrooms of 60 square feet and 88 additional square feet, respectively; and a detached habitable space of 400 square feet.

Staff denied the application for Design Review on grounds that the request for inclusion of a tandem garage failed to satisfy the criteria specified by the City of Sunnyvale Municipal Code. The applicant has appealed staff's decision to deny the project.

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Description of Proposed Project

The applicant filed an application for Design Review (File 2015-7411) on May 19, 2015. The scope of the proposal includes reconfiguration to the interior of the home, addition of two bathrooms, and construction of a new tandem garage, as well as placement of a new 400 square-foot detached habitable structure in the rear yard of the property. Changes visible from the street include addition of the proposed tandem garage and an 88 square-foot master bath. The existing side yard setback will also be modified to comply with existing code on the garage side (Attachment 5). The area of the existing garage would be replaced by the proposed new tandem garage.

City of Sunnyvale Municipal Code Section 19.46.050 states that any modification to an existing home which exceeds 1,800 square feet gross floor area, excluding garages and carports, include a minimum of two covered and two uncovered parking spaces. Per Code, covered parking intended to accommodate two cars side-by-side must be minimally 400 square feet gross floor area, with minimum interior unobstructed dimensions of 17 feet width by 18 feet depth. The existing home has a substandard garage of 377 square feet in size, located on the left-hand side of the home and set back significantly from the street, which functionally accommodates only a single car. The garage door can accommodate only one vehicle. Therefore, the applicant is required to address covered parking for two cars.

Appeal

Staff denied the applicant's tandem parking plan and on July 14, 2015, the applicant filed an appeal. To support the appeal, the applicant provided documentation describing motivation for modification to the layout of the existing home. The applicant's letter discusses accommodation of a growing family and the need to offset excessive expense involved with construction of a side-by-side garage configuration (Attachment 8). The applicant has also expressed concerns about the hardships involved with conformance to current code requirements, given the home's angled placement relative to surrounding property lines.

Previous Actions on the Site

The applicant applied for and obtained approval of a staff-level Design Review (File 2014-8076) which involved modification to the home with a side-by-side garage (Attachment 6).

Prior to the two Design Review applications discussed in this report, the applicant had applied for a Variance (File 2014-7982) from covered parking requirements. With the requested Variance, the applicant proposed to add living space and retain a one-car garage; the applicant later withdrew the application.

ANALYSIS

Neighborhood Context

The existing streetscape and surrounding neighborhood is comprised predominantly of one-story homes, with a mixture of forms, including ranch- and craftsman-style residences, and those with architecture reminiscent of the mid-century Eichler style. Surrounding homes are primarily single-story, although several have undergone modification and feature second-story additions. The

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neighborhood includes homes with a variety of garage designs, including residences with no garage, and those with one-, two-, and three-car garages. No single garage style or size characterizes the neighborhood.

Tandem Parking Consideration

Recently adopted, SMC 19.46.050 amended the City of Sunnyvale parking standards and allows staff to consider a two-car tandem parking design in-lieu of two side-by-side covered parking spaces for a single-family home. The code requires compliance with at least one of two criteria to consider tandem parking:

Without a variance, an approving authority, as part of any discretionary permit or, if no discretionary permit would be otherwise required, a miscellaneous plan permit, may allow a tandem parking garage or carport to satisfy the two covered space requirement ... if the approving authority makes one or more of the following findings:

(A) The width of the subject lot is less than fifty-seven feet; or

(B) Significant structural modifications are required to expand the existing covered parking area into the living area to meet the minimum size and dimensions for two covered spaces.

The subject property is a 9,300 square-foot lot located in Raynor Park (a large-lot R-1 neighborhood). The site exceeds the minimum 8,000 square-foot minimum lot size required of properties located in the R-1 zoning district. The lot is 75 feet in width. Although a 76 foot lot width is required in the R-1 zoning district the lot is significantly wider than 57 feet so Criterion A does not apply to this project.

In addressing Criterion B staff assessed whether the scope of the applicant's proposed improvements necessitate significant structural modifications to the living area of the home in order to accommodate two standard side-by-side parking spaces.

Prior to filing the application for this Design Review, the applicant applied for and obtained approval of a staff-level Design Review (File 2014-8076) which involved modification to the home with a side-by-side garage (Attachment 6). The approved design demonstrated that a side-by-side two car garage could be accommodated. That first Design Review was similar in building footprint to the current project, but included a larger living room, the addition of a family room, and incorporated a garage of greater width than is shown in the current project. That plan showed that construction of a side-by-side, two-car garage could be accommodated with removal of a portion of two existing dining room walls. This reduced the size and likely usability of the dining room. (Attachment 6).

The applicant subsequently changed the direction of the project and applied for a Design Review with tandem parking design. The applicant has provided documentation describing his motivation for the modification to the project and detailed the changes to the plan (Attachment 8).

For the tandem parking project under consideration a comparison between the existing floor plan and proposed floor plans reveals the extent of alterations proposed (Attachment 5). The chimney would be removed and the portion of the existing garage that encroaches into the required left-side setback by 2.5 feet would be eliminated. The tandem garage would generally replace the existing garage and

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would occupy the space adjacent to the existing left side of the home. Placement of the proposed tandem garage would involve removal of the room located between the living room and garage. The tandem garage would meet side setback requirements on the left side (Attachment 5).

The applicant's current tandem parking plans would prompt fewer structural modifications to the home than would be involved in the previously approved Design Review which incorporated side-by-side parking. The exterior walls would remain virtually intact. Overall, placement of a tandem garage avoids alterations to structurally supportive portions of the living area of the home triggered by construction of a side-by-side garage.

In order to evaluate Criterion B for tandem parking staff took compared the applicant's previously proposed plan for a side-by-side garage and evaluated if it demonstrated significant structural modifications into the living area.

The tandem parking ordinance was adopted in response to situations in which demolition of large portions of the living space of single-family homes was necessary to accommodate two covered parking spaces. In this case, although construction of a two-car, side-by-side detached garage would involve demolitions of portions of two structurally supportive walls, staff considered such changes to not rise to the level of "significant structural modifications" as intended by the new code.

Staff considers removal of portions of two walls to be relatively minor and does not constitute "significant structural modifications ... into the living area" of the home as intended by Criterion B above. Staff believes the original plan demonstrated that side-by-side parking is reasonable feasible. Also, the subject property is large and wide, providing opportunities for alternative site design which would accommodate two covered parking spaces.

Since the tandem parking code was adopted in May 2015, staff has considered four applications for tandem parking. Three have been approved by staff where the criterion for tandem parking could be met. Although in this case placement of a tandem garage does avoid structural alterations to the living area of the home, staff considered these structural changes for a side-by-side garage to be reasonable and could not support Criterion B to support tandem parking. Lack of conformance with either tandem parking criterion resulted in staff's denial of this application (Attachment 8).

Design Review

The present Design Review application ordinarily would not require Planning Commission review, as neither Floor Area Ratio (FAR) nor gross floor area requested would exceed thresholds allowable for staff-level review. However, the Planning Commission may review the proposed home design, taking into account the proposed architecture, existing neighborhood context, and adopted Single Family Home Design Techniques. The following analysis provides information for the Planning Commission's consideration.

Floor Area Ratio

The existing home has a FAR of approximately 21%, while the proposed design results in a home of approximately 30% FAR. The proposed Floor Area Ratio of the home does not exceed the 45% threshold that typically triggers Planning Commission review; however, the architectural design of the project is subject to the Commission's approval as part of the appeal.

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Architecture

Design Principle 2.2 of the City of Sunnyvale Single Family Home Design Techniques states, "Buildings should be sympathetic to the predominant building forms and scale of their neighborhoods, including but not limited to height, bulk, character, [and] building form." The Design Guidelines define "neighborhood" as "both block faces within the same and immediately adjacent block."

Staff finds the architecture proposed to be compatible to that of both the existing home and those within the surrounding neighborhood.

The current architecture of the home at the subject property recalls the Eichler style, similar to that of several surrounding homes. The residence features a low profile, with a nearly flat roof, several large windows visible in the front façade, a shallow front porch, a front pergola, and a garage set back significantly from the street. A rear-yard solid patio cover (absent from submitted plans) is currently situated adjacent to and immediately south of the existing living room, and would be removed as part of this project (Attachment 5).

Proposed modifications would include a master bath and garage, both of which would project beyond the existing face of the home at an angle, and whose façade would be positioned parallel to the front property line. The areas of the proposed addition would match the height of the existing home.

CONCLUSION

Findings and General Plan Goals: Staff was able to make the required Findings regarding general architectural style proposed.

Staff was unable to make the required Findings for conformance with SMC 19.46.050, allowing for consideration of tandem parking. Staff recommends that the appeal be denied and that the applicant pursue modifications to the home for a side-by-side garage based on the previously approved Design Review.

Recommended Findings and General Plan Goals are located in Attachment 3.

Conditions of Approval: Recommended Conditions of Approval are located in Attachment 4.

FISCAL IMPACT

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

PUBLIC CONTACT

As of the time of preparation of this staff report, staff has received no correspondence related to the proposed project.

Notice of Public Hearing:

- Posted on the site
- 134 notices mailed to property owners and residents within 300 feet of the project site
- Posted on the City's official notice bulletin board

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- Posted on the City of Sunnyvale's Web site
- Provided at the Reference Section of the City of Sunnyvale's Public Library

ALTERNATIVES

1. Deny the appeal and uphold the decision of staff to deny the Design Review that includes tandem parking.
2. Grant the appeal and approve the project with tandem parking, subject to recommended conditions in Attachment 4.
3. Grant the appeal and approve the project with tandem parking and with modified Conditions of Approval.

RECOMMENDATION

Recommend Alternative 1 to the Planning Commission: Deny the appeal and uphold the decision of staff to deny the Design Review that includes tandem parking.

Prepared by: Timothy Maier, Project Planner
Reviewed by: Gerri Caruso, Principal Planner
Approved by: Trudi Ryan, Planning Officer

ATTACHMENTS

1. Vicinity and Noticing Map
2. Project Data Table
3. Recommended Findings
4. Recommended Conditions of Approval
5. Site and Architectural Plans (Denied, Subject of Appeal)
6. Site and Architectural Plans (Approved Design Review)
7. Denial Letter
8. Appeal Letter