



Teresa Zarrin <tzarrin@sunnyvale.ca.gov>

Upcoming planning commission agenda

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To: Teresa Zarrin <tzarrin@sunnyvale.ca.gov>

Tue, Jan 19, 2016 at 10:21 PM

Hi Teresa:

Here's my official comment on the proposal. Please forward on to the Commission and any other interested parties. Thanks!

—Othar

To the Planning Commission, Sunnyvale

My wife and I live at 881 Markham Terrace, directly behind the proposed remodel at 882 McKinley Avenue. I am very concerned about this project for a number of reasons, and have a few requests for the commission's consideration.

1* MODIFY THE WINDOWS OF THE PROPOSED DESIGN

The houses in this neighborhood are already very close together, but at least the builder designed them to have minimal windows on the zero-lot-line side of each house. That contributes to a sense of privacy, and minimizes sight lines over fence lines (including from first-floor windows to second-floor windows). Because left-side and right-side setbacks are much shorter, it's important to stick to these principles to ensure privacy and reduce noise issues.

A better design would have understood the original site plan and eliminated windows along the wall that extends from the garage. I suggest the plan be changed to achieve that.

Two good design examples: 1. The recent proposal for 865 Markham (with 60% FAR) doesn't add windows along the garage wall, and as a corner lot, the remodel adds a bedroom that essentially "faces" the street instead of the neighbors. 2. Our neighbors at 877 Markham have a beautiful remodel with a 57% FAR: they don't have side windows, and they use skylights for natural light.

2* RECONSIDER THE SIZE OF THE PROPOSED DESIGN

The size of this project is 60+% FAR, well above what makes sense. To consider previous projects as precedents, you need to take into account the special circumstances of each project's approval. For example, the house at 866 Markham has a large FAR (63.1%) but doesn't have a rear neighbor (the house backs onto the school district's parking lot). The house at 865 Markham (60% FAR) is a corner lot, and as mentioned above, is thoughtful about window placement. Other projects have been below 60% FAR (more in 53-57% range). Don't let precedent lead to automatic approval of all these large projects.

In addition to physical size, I'm concerned about adding bedrooms to these houses. If approved, this will be a 5-

bedroom house. Five bedrooms! Adding a bedroom in each of the large houses in our neighborhood would change the density of the neighborhood, with lots of resulting problems (noise, parking, etc.). Each of these houses already has a downstairs bath, family room, living room and dining room: more than enough space to repurpose to create a temporary bedroom and full bath.

3* SET SOME GUIDELINES FOR FUTURE PROJECTS

You've seen a lot of requests for Special Development Permits from our neighborhood. They're so common that it's hard to call them "special", and I predict they'll increase in frequency.

I ask the commission to consider studying the issues to develop some advisory guidelines to safeguard the beauty and design of our neighborhood. We just can't expect a coherent approach from dozens of homeowners, each working with different architects. Some things to think about in such a study: maximum number of bedrooms, window placement, FAR guidelines, etc.

I'd also suggest that future large developments in Sunnyvale should include some thought around aging-in-place and other remodel needs, at the time of original approval (e.g., ensure that new construction includes accessible features and supports future modifications such as grab bars, elevators and/or stair elevators).

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