



City of Sunnyvale

Agenda Item-No Attachments (PDF)

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REPORT TO PLANNING COMMISSION

SUBJECT

File #: 2015-7266

Location: 825 Tamarack Lane (APN: 213-29-053)

Zoning: R0

Proposed Project:

DESIGN REVIEW: To allow a new two-story single-family home resulting in 3,117 square feet (2,717 square feet of living area and a 400 square-foot two-car garage) and 56% floor area ratio. The existing 1,374 square foot one-story single-family home will be demolished.

Applicant / Owner: Arsen Avagyan

Environmental Review: Categorical Exemption, Class 3

Project Planner: George Schroeder, (408) 730-7443, gschroeder@sunnyvale.ca.gov

REPORT IN BRIEF

General Plan: Residential Low Density

Existing Site Conditions: Single-Family Residence

Surrounding Land Uses

North: Single-Family Residence

South: Single-Family Residence

East: Single-Family Residence

West: Single-Family Residence

Issues: Floor Area Ratio, Neighborhood Compatibility

Staff Recommendation: Approve the Design Review permit with conditions

BACKGROUND

Description of Proposed Project: The applicant proposes to demolish an existing 1,374 square-foot one-story, single-family residence built in 1955 on a 5,529 square-foot lot and construct a new two-story, single-family residence. The proposed building size would total 3,117 square feet including a 400 square foot garage with a resulting floor area ratio (FAR) of 56%. A Design Review permit is required for construction of a new residence to evaluate compliance with development standards and with the Single Family Home Design Techniques. Planning Commission review is required for homes that exceed 45% FAR.

See Attachment 1 for a map of the vicinity and mailing area for notices and Attachment 2 for the Data

Table of the project.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

A Class 3 Categorical Exemption relieves this project from the California Environmental Quality Act provisions. Class 3 Categorical Exemptions include new construction or conversion of small structures.

DISCUSSION

Architecture: The existing neighborhood is comprised mostly of one-story, single-family residences, which are Postwar Minimal with simple rectilinear forms. Newer homes at the northern end of the neighborhood are designed in the Mediterranean style. The existing neighborhood was developed in the early 1950s and the majority of the homes on Tamarack Lane have two-car garages. The project site is located on the west side of Tamarack Lane near Myrtle Drive. The proposed design is Mediterranean in nature that includes a composite shingle roof with moderate pitches, stucco walls with a stone veneer along the base of the house, aligned windows, and hip and gable roof forms.

The 1,942 square-foot first floor consists of a two-car garage, a bedroom, one-and-a-half bathrooms, a kitchen, and family, living, and dining rooms. The 1,175 square-foot second floor consists of four bedrooms and two bathrooms.

Floor Area Ratio: The neighborhood contains mostly one-story homes with six other two-story residences on the block. The gross floor area of the neighboring residences range from 1,383 to 3,183 square feet (23% to 52% FAR) with an average of 1,834 square feet (31% FAR). See Attachment 3 for a gross floor area and FAR comparison. The proposed gross floor area would make the home the second largest on the block, behind a 3,183 square-foot two-story home at 813 Tamarack built in 2000.

See below for a data table on the existing two-story homes in the neighborhood:

Address	FAR	2 nd to 1 st Floor Ratio	Plate Heights	Total Height	Year Built
805 Tamarack	45% (3,029/6,755)	54% (1,068/1,961)	1 st - 10' 2 nd - 9'	26'10"	2014
809 Tamarack	45% (2,841/6,313)	45% (880/1,961)	1 st - 10' 2 nd - 9'	26'9"	2014
808 Tamarack	51% (3,046/5,915)	50% (1,012/2,034)	1 st - 9' 2 nd - 8'6"	23'10"	2015
813 Tamarack	52% (3,183/6,109)	30% (739/2,444 approx.)	Unknown	Unknown	2000
817 Tamarack	35% (1,932/5,454)	39% (546/1,386 approx.)	Unknown	Unknown	1955 - original 1993 - 2 nd st.

845 Tamarack	41% (2,257/5,454)	43% (684/1,573)	Unknown	Unknown	1955 - original 1980 - 2 nd story
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The applicant notes in the project description letter (Attachment 4) that the proposed house size is consistent with other recently completed two-story homes in the 51-lot Toll Brothers' neighborhood (Estates at Sunnyvale), located approximately 600 feet to the northeast of the project site at the corner of Lily Avenue and Timberpine Avenue. Per the Single-Family Home Design Techniques, this subdivision is not considered part of the immediate neighborhood context for the project, but the applicant considers that it provides context to justify the proposed square footage and 56% FAR. As shown in Attachment 3, the Toll Brothers' neighborhood consists of all two-story homes with gross floor areas ranging from 3,516 to 3,573 square feet (average of 3,536 square feet) and floor area ratios ranging from 50 to 59% FAR (average of 58% FAR). Staff notes that these homes were developed all at the same time with a planned development zoning overlay that did not necessarily follow the same considerations as with standalone single-family residential zoning in the surrounding older neighborhood.

The proposed 56% FAR requires Planning Commission review since it is in excess of the 45% FAR threshold. The design uses measures to reduce the mass and bulk of the home through varied setbacks, second floor wall offsets, a lower pitch second floor roof, and first floor rooflines to visually delineate the first and second floor in key locations. However, in staff's opinion, the proposed measures are inadequate to remedy the visual bulk and scale of the home or to justify the proposed 56% FAR. The proposed FAR significantly exceeds the neighborhood FAR pattern and is beyond what the Planning Commission has typically approved for other recent two-story single-family residential projects in the City. Staff recommends that the applicant work with staff to reduce the total project FAR to 50% or less, consistent with the FAR of several recently constructed two-story homes at the northern end of Tamarack Lane (Condition PS-1).

Second Floor Area: The City's Single Family Design Techniques suggest a second floor massing of up to 35% of the first floor when a neighborhood is predominantly single-story. The proposed project includes a second floor area of 1,175 square feet, which constitutes approximately 61% of the 1,942 square-foot first floor area, including the garage. The size of the proposed second floor is significantly larger than other second stories in the neighborhood which average 822 square feet. Other two-story homes in the neighborhood also average a second to first floor ratio of 44%. In addition to reducing the total project FAR to 50% or less, staff recommends that the applicant work with staff to reduce the second to first floor ratio to 50% or less, consistent with the size of recently constructed two-story homes at the northern end of Tamarack Lane (Condition PS-2).

While the location of space to be reduced on the second floor is at the applicant's discretion, staff suggests that the high volume space above the dining room be considered, as it would help accomplish the purpose of reducing second floor area, mass and bulk, and would break up a two-story tall wall on the front elevation. Doing so would reduce the second to first floor ratio to approximately 51% and the overall FAR to 55%. Other areas of the home would also need to be adjusted or reduced to meet the recommended 50% total FAR and 50% second to first floor ratio.

Other Recommended Design Modifications: Overall, staff feels that the project's architecture is

well-balanced and consistent with the style of other new homes in the neighborhood. Moreover, the recommended floor area reductions would reduce the mass and bulk of the project to be consistent with other homes in the neighborhood. Even if the floor area is reduced as recommended by staff, staff also recommends the following additional design modifications in accordance with the Single-Family Home Design Techniques (SFHDT) to make the project design more compatible with the neighborhood:

- **First and Second Floor Plate Heights (SFHDT 3.4H and 3.5E)** - The currently proposed plate heights are consistent with two recently constructed two-story homes adjacent to one another at the northern end of the neighborhood and the Toll Brothers development beyond the immediate neighborhood. However, given that the project is situated between one-story homes with lower floor plates and proposes side yard setbacks in close proximity to these neighboring homes, staff recommends a condition (Condition PS-3) that the first floor plate height be reduced from 10' to 9' and the second floor plate height be reduced from 9' to 8' in order to reduce taller exterior wall heights and be more compatible with neighboring properties.
- **Living Room Roofline (SFHDT 3.3D)** - The high-volume living room with tall windows at the front of the proposed home, next to the main entry feature, includes a gable roofline that is one and a half stories tall, and approximately 19 feet at its peak. The height of this feature is out of scale with the neighborhood pattern and the separate gable roof detracts from the otherwise balanced nature of the front and side elevations. Staff recommends a condition (Condition PS-4) that this roof feature is lowered to better align with the main first floor eaveline, and the gable roof be deleted, as it competes visually with the main entry feature on the front elevation.
- **Site Grading/Total Height from Curb (SFHDT 3.6G)** - The applicant notes that the site would be re-graded to a lower elevation to be flush with the street curb elevation. Staff notes that this is not allowed by the California Building Code, as the building pad would need to be at a higher elevation than the curb in order to allow for drainage away from the structure. Staff recommends a condition (Condition PS-5) for the applicant to work with staff to ensure that the pad is designed in accordance with building code requirements and that the total building height from the top of curb elevation not exceed 26 feet as currently shown on the plans, in order to be consistent with other two story homes in the neighborhood. The recommended condition also specifies that the finished first floor elevation shall be the minimum required by the building code and consistent with the neighborhood character to minimize privacy impacts on adjacent properties.

Privacy: Second-story windows may present potential privacy impacts to adjacent properties. The project proposes three windows on the second floor rear elevation (master bedroom, master bathroom, and uninhabitable high volume dining room area), three windows on the second floor left elevation (bedroom, bathroom, and master bathroom), and two windows on the second floor right elevation (master bedroom and uninhabitable high volume dining room area).

The applicant is currently not proposing to plant any privacy trees or shrubs to screen the line of sight from second story windows with views to adjacent properties. At the time of staff report production, staff has not received any public comments related to privacy mitigation measures.

Staff has included a condition of approval (Condition PS-6) to require high sill windows for second

story bedrooms (when egress is not required) and for second story bathroom windows to be obscure style glass.

Solar Access: The 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 proposed second story is situated toward the middle of the home to minimize shadowing on the adjacent north and south properties. The project plans demonstrate shading would not exceed the maximum level permitted, thereby complying with current solar access standards.

Landscaping: The project is subject to the City's water-efficient landscaping requirements (Chapter 19.37 of the SMC) since the project is a new house with more than 1,000 square feet of new landscaping area. At this time, the applicant proposes to meet the landscaping requirements by limiting turf to no more than 25% of the landscaped area and planting at least 80% of the non-turf area with native, low water, or no water use plants. There is an existing protected 20-inch diameter tree in the front yard that will be retained. No trees are proposed for removal.

Applicable Design Guidelines and Policy Documents: With the recommended conditions in place to reduce the second to first story ratio to 50% and overall FAR to 50%, staff would consider the proposed home to be consistent with the adopted Single-Family Home Design Techniques since the proposed design incorporates prevailing Mediterranean-style design elements from the other two-story homes in the neighborhood. It would be consistent with the overall size and second floor area of other two-story homes, and positively adds to the streetscape. Staff has included findings for the Single-Family Home Design Techniques in Attachment 5.

Development Standards: The proposed project complies with the applicable Development Standards as set forth in the Sunnyvale Municipal Code, such as lot coverage, parking, height and setbacks.

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

Notice of Public Hearing, Staff Report and Agenda

- Published in the *Sun* newspaper
- Posted on the site
- 62 notices mailed to property owners and residents within 300 feet of the project site
- Posted on the City of Sunnyvale's Website
- Provided at the Reference Section of the City of Sunnyvale's Public Library
- Agenda Posted on the City's official notice bulletin board

Public Contact: Staff received a comment from a neighboring property owner noting concerns with retaining the existing private 20-inch diameter front yard tree in the project design (Attachment 6). The neighbor claims that the tree's roots have caused damage to the sewer line and has uprooted the front yard area. The neighbor requested that the tree be removed as part of the project. The applicant is willing to consider the neighbor's request and will work with them on the details. A separate Tree Removal Permit would be needed if the tree is proposed for removal.

Conclusion

With the recommended conditions in place, staff was able to make the required Findings for the Design Review. The recommended Conditions of Approval are located in Attachment 7. Recommended Findings are located in Attachment 5.

Alternatives

1. Approve the Design Review with the conditions in Attachment 7.
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.

Recommendation

Recommend Alternative 1 in accordance with the Findings in Attachment 5 and Conditions of Approval in Attachment 7.

Prepared by: George Schroeder, Associate Planner

Approved by: Gerri Caruso, Principal Planner

ATTACHMENTS

1. Vicinity Map
2. Project Data Table
3. Gross Floor Area/FAR Comparison
4. Applicant's Description Letter
5. Recommended Findings
6. Neighbor's Email
7. Recommended Conditions of Approval
8. Site and Architectural Plans