



City of Sunnyvale

Agenda Item-No Attachments (PDF)

File #: 15-0949, Version: 1

REPORT TO PLANNING COMMISSION

SUBJECT

File #: 2015-7872

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

Zoning: R0

Proposed Project:

DESIGN REVIEW: For a new two-story single-family home of 3,026 square feet (2,626 square foot living area and 400 square foot garage) and 55% FAR. The existing 1,374 square foot one-story single-family home will be demolished. This project supersedes the previous project (2015-7266) that was denied by the Planning Commission.

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

Previous Planning Commission Action: On July 13, 2015, the Planning Commission reviewed the applicant's previous Design Review permit proposal (2015-7266) at this address for a new 3,117 square foot, two-story single-family residence that included a 175 square foot high-volume first floor living room area and 60% FAR. Due to concerns with mass and bulk and neighborhood compatibility, the Planning Commission denied the project on a 6-0 vote and directed the applicant to make the following revisions to the design:

- Reduce the total floor area ratio (FAR) to 50% or less
- Reduce the size of the second floor to 50% of the first floor
- Reduce the first floor plate height to 9 feet and the second floor plate height to 8 feet

- Lower the living room roof feature to better align with the main first floor eaveline and delete its gable roof feature
- Ensure the total height from the top of curb elevation does not exceed 26 feet
- Revise the following second floor windows (not required for egress) to have high sills for privacy mitigation - master bedroom window on the right side elevation and two bathroom windows on the left side elevation

The meeting minutes and previous plans presented at the July 13, 2015 hearing can be found in Attachments 3 and 4, respectively. The applicant filed an appeal of the Planning Commission's decision on July 28, 2015, but the City Council appeal hearing has been put on hold due to the currently proposed design revisions. A new Design Review application (2015-7872) was filed by the applicant on October 7, 2015. A discussion on how the project addresses the Planning Commission's direction is found later in this report.

Revisions since the July 13, 2015 Planning Commission hearing: The applicant has made the following changes to the plan with this application:

- Reduced total floor area by 91 square feet (all on the second floor)
- Eliminated the 175-square foot high-volume area above the first floor living room and its associated bulk on the second floor
- Increased second floor setbacks (one foot on the rear; 7'9" on the right side)
- Increased variation in second floor wall line setbacks along the side elevations
- Eliminated two-story high walls through wall offsets and roof elements
- Revised all second floor roof pitches to be 3:12 instead of a mix of 3:12 and 4:12
- Reduced second floor plate height from 9 feet to 8'6" and first floor plate height from 10 feet to 9 feet
- Eliminated the gable entry roof element in lieu of a simplified shed roof element in line with the predominant first floor front elevation roofline
- Lowered the living room gable roof height by approximately 3.5 feet
- Revised non-egress second floor windows (with the exception of the rear elevation and the right side stairwell window) to high sill or obscured glass
- Added a high-sill window on the second floor left elevation
- Clarified the difference between the finished grade elevation and top of curb elevation

In staff's opinion, the most substantial visual changes are the reduction of floor area, the elimination of the high-volume first floor area, reduction of plate heights, and revisions to heights and roof elements on the front elevation. The total FAR has been reduced from 60% to 55% and the second to first floor ratio has been reduced from 61% to 56%.

Description of Proposed Project (2015-7872): The applicant still proposes to demolish the 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 3,026 square feet including a 400 square foot garage with a resulting floor area ratio (FAR) of 55%. 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 project site is located on the west side of Tamarack Lane near Myrtle Drive. The existing neighborhood is comprised mostly of one-story, single-family residences, which are Postwar Minimal with simple rectilinear forms. Recent 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 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 1,084 square-foot second floor consists of four bedrooms and two bathrooms.

Neighborhood Floor Area Ratio Context: The Single-Family Design Techniques note that for the purposes of assessing neighborhood character and scale, "neighborhood" is defined as both block faces within the same (containing the subject property) and immediately adjacent blocks. Based on this definition, the immediate neighborhood (Tamarack Lane, between Lily Avenue and Poinciana Drive) 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 5 for a gross floor area and FAR comparison. The proposed gross floor area would make the home the fourth largest on the block. The largest home on the block is a 3,183 square-foot two-story home located at 813 Tamarack built in 2000.

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

Address	FAR (s.f./lot size)	2 nd to 1 st Floor Ratio	Year Built
805 Tamarack	45% (3,029/6,755)	54% (1,068/1,961)	2014
809 Tamarack	45% (2,841/6,313)	45% (880/1,961)	2014
808 Tamarack	51% (3,046/5,915)	50% (1,012/2,034)	2015
813 Tamarack	52% (3,183/6,109)	30% (739/2,444 approx.)	2000
817 Tamarack	35% (1,932/5,454)	39% (546/1,386 approx.)	1955 - original 1993 - 2 nd story

845 Tamarack	41% (2,257/5,454)	43% (684/1,573)	1955 - original 1980 - 2 nd story
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Beyond the immediate neighborhood/block (but within the Ponderosa Park neighborhood), there are some examples of two-story homes with floor area ratios greater than 45%. These homes are also listed in Attachment 5. The majority of these homes are within the recently completed 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. 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). These numbers are not inclusive of units with rear yard patio covers, which further increase the FAR. While these homes provide context to support the applicant's proposal, staff notes that these homes were developed all at the same time with a planned development zoning overlay.

There are five recent examples of standalone two-story projects beyond the immediate neighborhood with floor area ratios greater than 45%. The gross floor areas of these homes range from 2,770 to 3,788 square feet (average of 3,188 square feet) and floor area ratios range from 50 to 58% FAR (average of 54% FAR). The closest project is 1114 Myrtle Drive, located approximately 240 feet to the east of the project site, which was approved in 2004 at 52% FAR. The next closest project is 1124 Lily Avenue, located approximately 450 feet to the northeast of the project site, near the Toll Brothers' neighborhood, which was approved in 2014 at 55% FAR. These examples provide additional context of standalone single-family development greater than 45% FAR within the general vicinity of the project site.

Proposed Floor Area Ratio/Second Floor Area: The proposed 55% FAR requires Planning Commission review since it is in excess of the 45% FAR threshold. Based on the prior design, the Planning Commission directed the applicant to reduce the total FAR to 50% since the previous design was considered visually bulky and out of scale with the neighborhood. While the applicant has proposed an FAR higher than the Planning Commission's direction, the most significant design concerns with the previous proposal have since been addressed. The mass and bulk of the home has been reduced to a point where the proposed design is now in scale with the neighborhood pattern of recently constructed two-story homes.

The Planning Commission also previously directed the applicant to reduce the second to first floor ratio to 50% to ensure better visual proportion. The applicant reduced area from the second floor and also eliminated a high volume area which added considerable bulk on the second floor. The proposed project includes a second floor area of 1,084 square feet, which constitutes 56% of the 1,942 square-foot first floor area, including the garage. While the applicant is proposing a ratio higher than the Planning Commission's previous direction, revisions have been made to the second floor to minimize visual proportion concerns. Additionally, the size of the proposed second floor is consistent with the two recently constructed homes at the corner of Tamarack Lane and Lily Avenue approximately 300 feet to the north.

Project's Consistency with the Planning Commission's Direction: The revised design considers the Planning Commission's direction at the July 13, 2015 hearing as follows:

- Reduce the total floor area ratio (FAR) to 50% or less - The applicant has reduced the total

FAR from 60% to 55%. Although the FAR has not been reduced to 50% or less, the applicant has addressed the Commission's direction through visual reductions in the appearance of mass and bulk. The proposed FAR would be the highest in the immediate neighborhood, and comparable to other examples of standalone and planned single-family development with similar or higher floor area ratios within close proximity to the immediate neighborhood.

- Reduce the size of the second floor to 50% of the first floor -The Planning Commission directed the applicant to reduce the first to second floor ratio to 50%. The applicant responded by reducing it from 61% to 56%. The applicant has reduced the square footage on the second floor by 91 square feet, eliminated a 175-square foot high volume first floor area with bulk on the second floor, and increased the wall line setbacks. The size of the second floor is also similar to other recently constructed two-story homes in the immediate neighborhood.
- Reduce the first floor plate height to 9 feet and the second floor plate height to 8 feet - The first floor plate height has been revised to 9' and the second floor plate height has been reduced by six inches to 8'6".
- Lower the living room roof feature to better align with the main first floor eaveline and delete its gable roof feature - The tall, vertical living room roof feature has been lowered by approximately 3.5 feet, and it is now within two feet of the main first floor eaveline, consistent with the Single-Family Home Design Techniques. The gable roof on the living room feature has been retained and the main entry's gable roof has been simplified, improving balance on the front elevation.
- Ensure the total height from the top of curb elevation does not exceed 26 feet - The plans have been clarified to accurately show the top of curb elevation with respect to the finished grade elevation. The plans demonstrate that the total height from the top of the curb elevation is 26 feet.
- Revise the following second floor windows (not required for egress) to have high sills for privacy mitigation - master bedroom window on the right side elevation and two bathroom windows on the left side elevation - The master bedroom window on the right side elevation has been revised to have a high sill, and the two bathroom windows on the left side elevation have been revised to have obscured glass.

Privacy: As stated above, the applicant has addressed the privacy issues from second story windows as directed by the Planning Commission.

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.

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. The applicant's preliminary plan meets 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. A final landscape plan will be reviewed prior to issuance of Building Permits.

Applicable Design Guidelines and Policy Documents: Staff considers the revised home design to be consistent with the adopted Single-Family Home Design Techniques since the proposed design incorporates elements to visually reduce mass and bulk, and positively adds to the streetscape. Staff has included findings for the Single-Family Home Design Techniques in Attachment 6.

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. The Project Data Table is located in Attachment 2.

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
- 67 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 did not receive any public comments at the time of staff report production. The applicant previously provided a petition from neighbors in support of the project and presented it to the Planning Commission at the July 13, 2015 hearing.

Conclusion

The applicant has made changes to the original plans in order to address the direction previously given by the Planning Commission. Although the applicant has still included higher overall FAR and second to first floor ratio than directed, the current plan minimizes design concerns and is consistent with other recently built homes in the neighborhood. 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 6.

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 6 and Conditions of Approval in Attachment 7.

Prepared by: George Schroeder, Associate Planner
Approved by: Gerri Caruso, Principal Planner

ATTACHMENTS

1. Noticing and Vicinity Map
2. Project Data Table
3. Planning Commission Minutes of July 13, 2015
4. Previous Site and Architectural Plans - July 13, 2015
5. Gross Floor Area/FAR Comparison
6. Recommended Findings
7. Recommended Conditions of Approval
8. Site and Architectural Plans