



City of Sunnyvale

Agenda Item-No Attachments (PDF)

File #: 18-0578, Version: 1

REPORT TO HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION

SUBJECT

Proposed Project:

RESOURCE ALTERATION PERMIT: to allow modification to the front facade of the main residence, including a new 6-foot tall gate; and

VARIANCE: to allow an increase of the existing height of the legal and nonconforming detached garage with insufficient side and rear setbacks in the rear yard.

Location: 559 S Taaffe Street (APN: 209-29-043)

File #: 2018-7120

Zoning: R-0/HH

Applicant / Owner: Rob Mayer (applicant) / Sonal Gupta and Apurva P Samudra (owner)

Environmental Review: A Class 1 Categorical Exemption relieves this project from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) provisions that include minor additions to an existing single-family residence (CEQA Section 15301).

Project Planner: Kelly Cha, (408) 730-7408, kcha@sunnyvale.ca.gov

REPORT IN BRIEF

General Plan: Low Density Residential

Existing Site Conditions: Single-story Single-family Residence

Surrounding Land Uses

North: Single-story Single-family Residence

South: Two-story Single-family Residence

East: Two-story Multi-family Residence

West: Single-story Single-family Residence

Issues: Increase in nonconformity

Staff Recommendation: Approve the Resource Alteration Permit and the Variance with recommended conditions in Attachment 3.

BACKGROUND

Description of Proposed Project: The project site is 5,000 square feet in size and is currently a single-story single-family home with a detached garage in the rear yard. The project site is located within the Taaffe-Frances Heritage District.

The applicant proposes to replace the existing 367-square foot detached garage in the rear yard with the same size garage in the same location, but with an increased overall height. The existing garage is dilapidated and lacks flooring and a foundation. A Variance is requested due to the increase in nonconformity resulted from the height increase of an existing nonconforming structure.

In addition, the applicant requests a Resource Alteration Permit to modify the front façade of the existing residence with a smaller front window, and construct a new driveway gate and side fence.

Per Sunnyvale Municipal Code (SMC) Chapter 19.96, the Heritage Preservation Commission review is required through a Resource Alteration Permit for any exterior appearance changes on a heritage resource or heritage resource district.

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: An application for a Resource Alteration Permit and Design Review for a second-story addition was submitted in 2006. The Heritage Preservation Commission requested a historical evaluation to be completed to evaluate the impact to the heritage designation. The applicant did not continue further with the process. There are no other Planning permit applications, and there are no active Neighborhood Preservation cases on this property.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

A Class 1 Categorical Exemption relieves this project from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) provisions that include minor additions to an existing single-family residence (CEQA Section 15301).

DISCUSSION

Site Layout: The project site is located mid-block on the east side of South Taaffe Street between West El Camino Real and West Olive Avenue. The surrounding uses are single-family residences to the north, south, and east. Multi-family residences are located to the west of the property. The existing residence is an early twentieth-century design home, constructed in 1935. The existing residence is 1,200 square feet and the detached garage is 367 square feet. The detached garage was built with substandard side and rear yard setbacks and is, therefore, considered to be legal non-conforming.

The applicant proposes to replace the detached garage in the same location and footprint. The existing detached garage has no ceiling in the back half of its structure, and has remained dilapidated for a long period. The proposed detached garage would replace the existing flat roof with a gabled roof, which would make the detached garage more consistent with the existing residence, but would result in increasing the detached garage's overall height. Legal non-conforming structures can be replaced in the same location, so long as the non-conformity is not increased. The proposed increase in the building height is considered to be an increase in the non-conformity.

Variance: The existing detached garage is 8 feet 6 inches in height and has remained dilapidated for a long period. The garage does not have a ceiling for back half of its structure, and there is no foundation. The existing garage was built with substandard setbacks. The garage is located 3 feet 6 inches from the right side property line, where 4 feet minimum is currently required. In addition, the garage is located 6 feet 10 inches from the rear property line, where a minimum of 10 feet is required.

Due to the dilapidated condition of the garage, substantial upgrades are required to allow for usability and to comply with the current California Building Code. Required upgrades include a new foundation and an increased ceiling height. The applicant also proposes to modify the roof form from a flat roof to a standard gable that would match the existing house. With required upgrades and change in roof, the replacement garage would result in a height of 12 feet (increase of 3 feet 6 inches). The applicant proposes to maintain the existing substandard side and rear setbacks.

The purpose and intent of a Variance is to allow for deviations from current zoning requirements due to a physical hardship or unusual circumstances making it difficult for the property owner to comply with the zoning development standards or prevents the property owner from enjoying the same privileges as other property owners in the same vicinity. Staff finds that the proposed increase in height of the legal and nonconforming replaced garage would meet the purpose and intent of a Variance because the height increase is inevitable to make substantial upgrades needed for the dilapidated garage and to comply with the California Building Code. In addition, the replacement garage will maintain the existing substandard side and rear setbacks, minimizing further increase in nonconformity. The proposed roof form of the replacement garage will conform to the existing residence's roof style, making the project site more consistent and compatible with the neighborhood. Recommended Findings for this Variance can be found in Attachment 3.

Architecture: The existing single-family residence has an early twentieth-century design with a detached garage in the back. The existing residence mainly has a cross-gabled roof with a relatively steep central gable roof in the front. Unlike the existing residence, the detached garage has a flat roof with parapet walls and horizontal wood siding. A portal arch connects the existing garage to the main house.

The proposed replacement garage includes a gabled roof and stucco walls. The proposed architectural changes would be more consistent and compatible with the existing residence in front. The portal arch is being maintained, with a reduced height to accommodate the proposed eaves for the detached garage.

The applicant also proposes to replace the existing steel windows along the front and side elevations with smaller single-hung windows. The existing steel windows are not original windows but have a similar design as the original ones. A new 6-foot tall driveway gate is also proposed

The following project-specific conditions have been added to ensure compliance with the Taaffe-Frances Heritage Neighborhood Design Guidelines and allow for a functional driveway that can access the detached garage in the rear yard:

- The replacement windows on the main house should be redesigned to be divided light windows, in keeping with the existing windows to be retained.
- The new landscaping strip shall be flushed with the existing driveway to prevent obstruction for driveway access.

A historical evaluation was completed by Archives & Architecture LLC. The study finds that the garage and window replacement are consistent with the U.S. Department of Interior Standards and will not be detrimental to the Heritage District designation. As conditioned by staff, the proposed project is consistent with the Taaffe-Frances Heritage Neighborhood Design Guidelines.

Neighborhood Compatibility: The common development pattern in the heritage district is characterized by properties with detached garages or accessory structures encroaching into currently required side and rear setbacks, including garages and accessory structures constructed at or near property lines. The single-family residences immediately to the north and south of the project site has a detached garage with similar setbacks, as does single-family residences on South Taaffe street across from the project site.

FISCAL IMPACT

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

PUBLIC CONTACT

As of the date of staff report preparation, staff has received no comments from the neighbors.

Notice of Public Hearing:

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

Staff Report:

- Posted on the City's website
- Provided at the Reference Section of the City's Public Library

Agenda:

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

ALTERNATIVES

1. Approve the Resource Alteration Permit and the Variance with recommended conditions in Attachment 3.
2. Approve the Resource Alteration Permit and the Variance with modifications.
3. Deny the Resource Alteration Permit and the Variance and provide direction to staff and the applicant where changes should be made.

RECOMMENDATION

Alternative 1: Approve the Resource Alteration Permit and the Variance with recommended conditions in Attachment 3.

Prepared by: Kelly Cha, Associate Planner

Reviewed by: Noren Caliva-Lepe, Senior Planner

RECOMMENDATION

1. Vicinity and Noticing Map
2. Project Data Table
3. Recommended Findings
4. Recommended Conditions of Approval
5. Site and Architectural Plans
6. Applicant's Project Description Letter, including support letters from neighbors
7. Applicant's Variance Justification Form
8. Historical Evaluation Report prepared by Archive & Architecture LLC