

ITEM 9-A

PLANNING BOARD STAFF REPORT

DATE: February 8, 2010

TO: Honorable President and Members of the
Planning Board

FROM: Jon Biggs, Planning Services Manager
510.747.6884
jbiggs@ci.alameda.ca.us

APPLICATION: PLN05-0132 – 3295 Adams Street – Applicant– Forrest Reed

ZONING DISTRICT: R-1 – One Family Residence District Zoning

GENERAL PLAN: Low Density Residential

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Planning Board is considering a major design review application for a new two-story single-family dwelling at 3295 Adams Street, a vacant corner lot at the intersection of Adams Street and Fernside Boulevard. A two-car attached garage is an element of the dwelling and access to the garage will be by a curb cut and driveway from Adams Street.

The Planning Board considered the design of a two-story single-family dwelling on this site at its meetings of May 11, 2009 and October 26, 2009. The item has been continued on several occasions to allow the property owner the time to revise the design of the house. Plans for the house have been revised and the Planning Board is again taking up consideration of the major design review application. Like all the previous proposals, the front door to the home faces Fernside Boulevard and the garage doors face Adams Street.

BACKGROUND

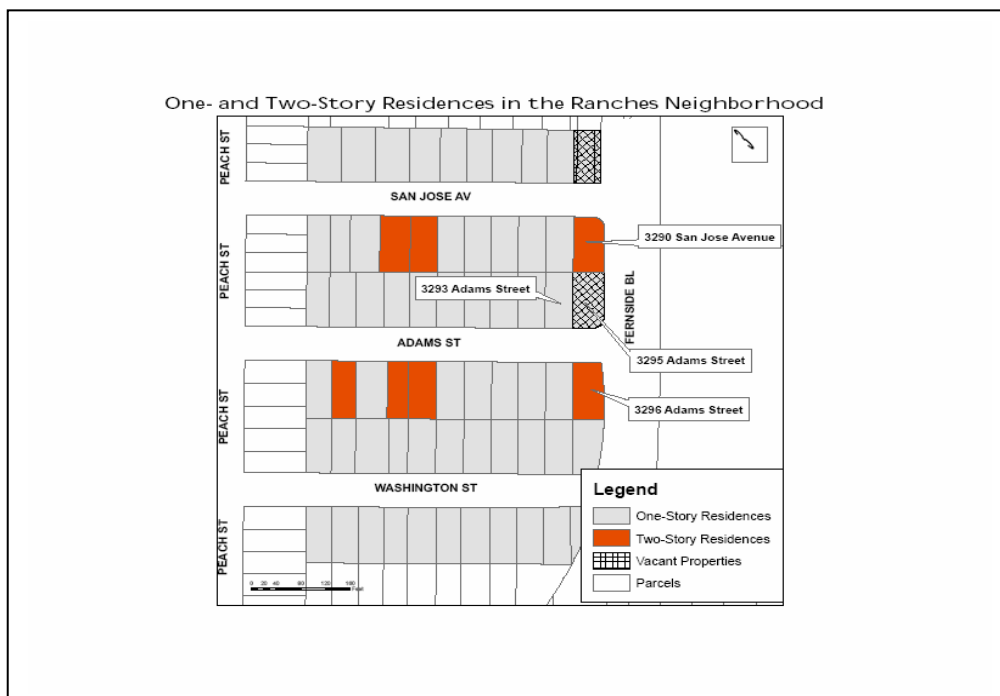
In December 2005, the applicant submitted a major design review application for a two-story single-family dwelling on a vacant lot, located on the corner of Adams Street and Fernside Boulevard. In 2007, a group of residents in the area submitted a petition to the City requesting the establishment of a zoning overlay district that would limit the height of buildings to 20 feet, the floor area of second stories to no more than 800 square feet, and limit a second story to the rear half of a building in order to establish a regulatory

process that would make two-story homes and second-story additions compatible with the character of the neighborhood. In response to the community's concerns and proposals, the property owner and applicant for this project – Mr. Forrest Reed - agreed to delay processing of this design review application, to allow the City time to hold community meetings, develop a regulatory scheme, and take it through the review and approval process. Mr. Reed attended the community meetings and made changes to the initial design of the home based upon information he gathered at these community meetings.

Existing Conditions

The subject project is located at 3295 Adams Street, a vacant 5,172 square foot corner lot at the intersection of Adams Street and Fernside Boulevard. The property is zoned R-1 (One-Family Residence District). Lots surrounding the subject site are developed with single-family residences. The site abutting the rear of the subject property and the site located across Adams Street are developed with two-story buildings that have attached garages. On Adams Street, the site directly adjacent to the project is developed with a one-story single-family dwelling as are most of the homes in this area as can be seen on the following neighborhood map. Lincoln Middle School is located across Fernside Boulevard from the project site.

Project Location and Surrounding Properties



The following photographs provide a view of the project site and houses that are adjacent to or across the street from the project site.

3295 Adams Street – Project Site



3293 Adams Street - Adjacent to
Project Site



3290 San Jose Avenue– Behind Project Site



3292 & 3296 Adams Street, Across
Street from Project Site



As can be seen from the above photograph of the subject property, there are no trees on the site, but there are street trees in the planter strips at Adams Street and Fernside Boulevard.

ANALYSIS

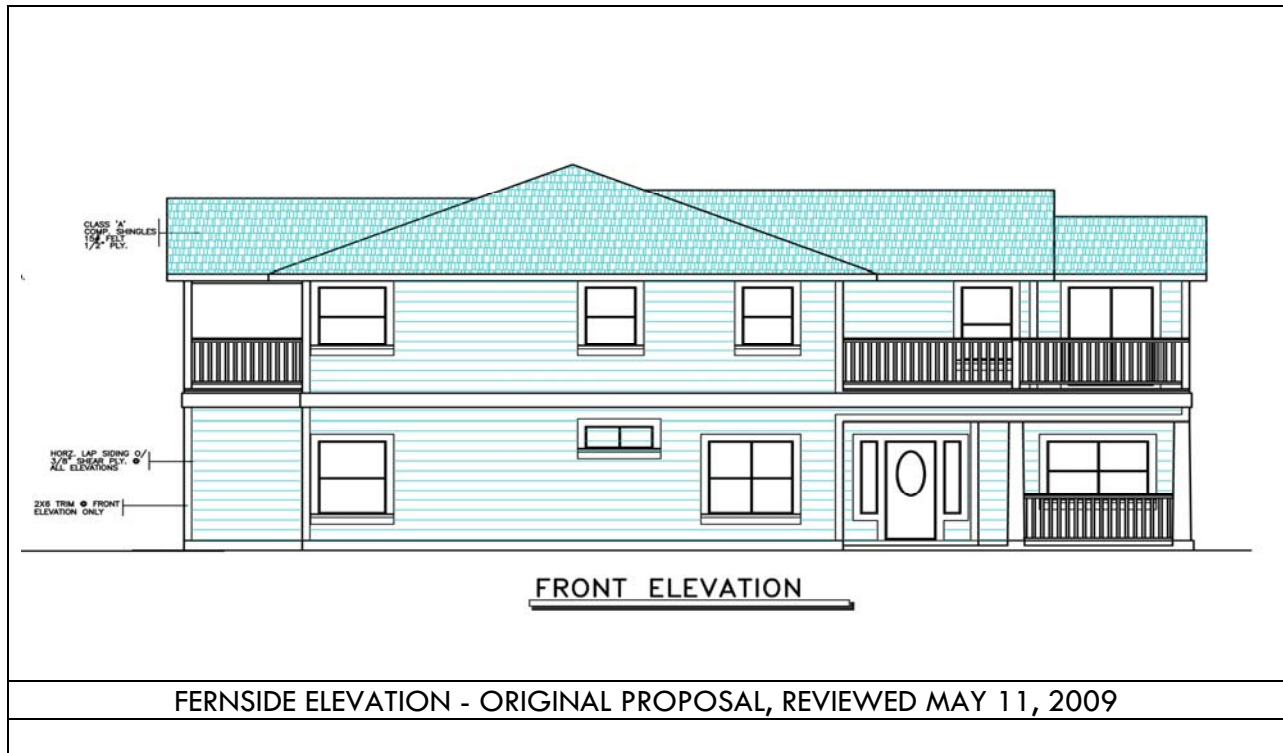
Current Regulations and Design

The proposed project complies with the R-1 Zoning requirements as shown in the following table:

	City Standard	Project	Compliance
--	---------------	---------	------------

Setbacks			
Side (interior)	5' Minimum	7.5	Complies
Side (street)	10' Minimum	11.5'	Complies
Rear	20' Minimum	20'	Complies
Front	20' Minimum	20'	Complies
Lot Coverage	48% Maximum	35% +/-	Complies
Building Height	30' Maximum	27'	Complies

Following is a series of architectural elevations of the front of the house, which faces Fernside Boulevard. They start with the drawing reviewed by the planning board on May 11, 2009 and are followed by the elevation reviewed on October 26, 2009 and conclude with the current proposal.





FERNSIDE ELEVATION - FIRST REVISION, REVIEWED OCTOBER 26, 2009



FERNSIDE ELEVATION – CURRENT PROPOSAL, FEBRUARY 8, 2010

Included with the Planning Board packet for this project are reductions of all the revised elevations for the proposed house, plus the site plan, and floor plans. There has been a significant change to the appearance of the proposed house since the first submittal that was reviewed by the Planning Board in May of 2009. The applicant has incorporated a mix of siding materials, trim elements, and architectural features that assist in softening

the vertical elements of the building. The tower element included in the last proposal has been eliminated and the second-story deck has been reduced and becomes a feature that helps define the Fernside Avenue entrance to the dwelling. The size of the second story has also been reduced and is now further away from the rear property line than the proposal last reviewed by the Planning Board.

As with the design last reviewed by the Planning Board, the current proposal includes a substantial number of changes to the original proposal, as can be seen by comparing the above elevations. The original proposal included horizontal siding on both the lower and upper floors. This has been changed to a mix of exterior siding materials, stucco on the first level and horizontal siding on the upper level with a 2 x 12 belly band separating the two materials. A similar belly band also separates the wall area material from that in gable end treatments, which include louvered attic vents provide that add interest. Most of the windows in the home are double hung in appearance, which lends to the architectural style of the building. Trim around windows, doors, and detailing on the fascia boards of the eaves have been refined and will reflect a higher level of craftsmanship in the overall appearance of the home. They will also provide shadow lines that visually modulate flat surfaces and introduce depth and interest to the building. On the front elevation (Fernside Avenue frontage), the applicant has cantilevered a portion of the second story and has shown it supported with decorative corbels that softens the vertical appearance of this side of the building. Like wise, on the opposite side of the building a two-story element with a gable roof has been introduced that interrupts wall planes and makes for smaller wall elements. The eave along the side of the garage has also been run down this side of the building and extends beyond the recessed alcove area on the first floor, which helps the appearance of this elevation. The attached two-car garage has also been modified and two single-car garage doors that are off set have been introduced. To further break up the mass at the garage elevation, the roof over the garage door closest to the street is a gable that runs back to meet the hip roof over the remaining portion of the garage. This minimizes and makes the garage less dominate than a garage with one two-car garage door.

Neighbor Concerns

Staff has met with the owners of 3286 San Jose Avenue, which shares a rear corner with the subject property. These owners expressed concern with the height of the proposed addition, loss of privacy, shading impacts, loss of views towards the open space at Lincoln Middle School, and how the proposed design of the dwelling is not in keeping with the single-story character of the neighborhood. The proposed project will be visible from 3286 San Jose Avenue and it will affect the views these property owners currently enjoy, especially with respect to their view towards the open space of Lincoln Middle School. However, the current design will have less of an impact than the last proposal because the second story has been pulled back from the rear property line and the majority of the second story deck has been eliminated. If approved, the proposed house will be the second two-story house in close proximity to their home, there is another located next door at 3290 San Jose Avenue.

A shade study was prepared for the plans reviewed by the Planning Board at its meeting in May. Its analysis and conclusions can be used to evaluate the revised design because the footprint and height of the structure are similar. It should be noted that the street grid in this neighborhood is not a true north-south orientation. Consequently, the sun passes diagonally across the property. Effects on neighbors will be minimal due to the corner lot configuration and north-south orientation. There is an existing 6 foot high wooden fence separating the subject property from neighboring properties. The shade study models potential shading effects on neighboring properties on both the summer solstice and winter solstice. The dates when the sun would appear the furthest to the north and south respectively. Thus, the study shows the "worst case" times of year. The shade study findings may be summarized as follows:

- Summer Solstice Morning: No effect on properties to rear (San Jose Ave.) and minimal shading of the northeast wall of the house next door on Adams St.
- Summer Solstice Afternoon: No effect on any neighboring properties
- Winter Solstice Morning: No effect on properties to rear (San Jose Ave.). Increased shading of northeast wall of the house next door, with shadow extending into the rear yard.
- Winter Solstice Afternoon: No effect on the house next door, on Adams Street. Minimal shading of the southwest wall and rear yard of property directly behind the project, on San Jose. The Shade Study does not account for existing trees in the rear yard of the San Jose property. Consequently, the potential effect may be overstated.

The primary effect will be on the house located immediately adjacent to the property at 3293 Adams Street. When compared to the shadow created by the existing fence the increase will be minimal. In addition, by examining the scope of shading caused by existing single-story buildings included in the Shade Study, it is clear that construction of any size home on this vacant lot would have a similar effect on neighboring properties.

Analysis

Following the Planning Board meeting of October 26, 2009, the applicant, in consultation with staff revised the plans for the proposed house. The applicant did enlist the services of a design professional that assisted in this process and the evolution of the building's design has been in a positive direction. The applicant has minimized the mass of the building and vertical aspects by stepping back second story walls, adding architectural elements, such as cantilevering a portion of the second story, introducing a variety of roof forms, and including a mix of siding materials. Although the appearance of the structure has improved, this is still a two-story house in a neighborhood principally made up of single-story homes, and such changes are dramatic, even when the proposed house complies with zoning regulations. A potential change to the zoning regulations for this neighborhood was recently been explored. However, it was determined that design guidelines for mid century or ranch style homes was the better regulatory process for the review and consideration of two-story homes and those guidelines have yet to be adopted. Lacking alternative guidelines, staff must rely on the

current Guide to Residential Design. Given these guidelines, staff is recommending approval of the major design review application and suggests the following finding in support of its recommendation:

Design Review Findings

Alameda Municipal Code Section 30-37.5(a) requires the following finding for projects subject to Design Review approval:

The proposed project is compatible with the site, adjacent or neighboring buildings and surroundings, and promotes harmonious transitions in scale and character between designated land uses.

Alameda Municipal Code Section 30-37.5(c) provides that compliance with this requirement may be determined by reviewing the project for consistency with the principles and standards as articulated in the City of Alameda Guide to Residential Design. The project has been determined to be consistent with the City of Alameda Guide to Residential Design on the following basis:

1. City of Alameda Guide to Residential Design - Guiding Parameters

First Parameter: The range of possibilities is established by the neighborhood context.

The project consists of a two-story contemporary design that incorporates building materials that are consistent with those used throughout the neighborhood. Of the nine developed corner lots between Encinal Avenue and Otis Drive, five contain two-story buildings. Three corner lots are vacant. The corner lot directly behind the subject property and the corner lot opposite Adams Street are both developed with two-story buildings. The proposed project is consistent with this pattern of existing development.

Second Parameter: As buildings fit into neighborhoods, additions fit into buildings.

This Guiding Parameter applies to additions to existing buildings. In this case, the project consists of new construction on a vacant lot. Consequently, this guideline parameter does not apply.

Third Parameter: Valued original architectural character is maintained by the preservation and restoration of the original fabric.

This Guiding Parameter applies the restoration and preservation of existing historic buildings. In this case, the project consists of new construction on a vacant lot. Consequently, this guideline parameter does not apply.

2. City of Alameda Guide to Residential Design Section 1 – Additions

This section applies to additions to existing buildings and is not applicable to this project. However, proponents of the Ranch Neighborhood Overlay Zoning District cited compliance with specific criteria contained in this section of the Guidelines as an area of concern. The cited sections contain broadly applicable design principles. Consequently, it may be appropriate to consider project consistency with these criteria.

- **The new building mass must not loom over the street or neighboring yards. This can be achieved by building setbacks and by “stepping back” the new second story. This is particularly true for craftsman and contemporary buildings.**

The project incorporates greater setbacks, is shorter and occupies less lot area than the maximum permitted in this zoning district. The design incorporates numerous architectural features to break up the visual mass of the structure. The second story is stepped back, and incorporates a variety of horizontal and vertical planes that reduce the visual mass of the building. A shade study has been prepared for this project which shows that the project will only have minimal effects on neighboring properties and that reducing the height of the building or limiting the second story to the rear of the building would not substantially reduce shading effects.

- **New second-story windows should be located to minimize the loss of the neighbors’ privacy. Techniques include off-setting new windows relative to existing ones, using obscure glass and clerestory windows when appropriate. For new windows overlooking adjacent yards, landscaping can assist in minimizing privacy intrusion.**

The project design places most of the larger windows on street facing facades and most of those on the second floor have sills that are higher above the finished floor than other windows in the building. The properties to the rear of the project have mature trees that enhance privacy and reduce potential project related shading impacts.

- **Unless the building has strong vertical proportions such as a Victorian style building or is in a context where vertical buildings are prevalent, the verticality of the new second story should generally be minimized by the architectural forms that echo the horizontal elements of the neighboring buildings. For example, the use of hipped roof forms may often be more appropriate than gables to minimize the addition’s visual bulk and maximize solar access of adjacent buildings.**

The project is located in a residential neighborhood. Within the broader neighborhood context, single-story homes are the most common. However, over 10 percent of the homes in the neighborhood are two-story structures and the majority of nearby corner lots have been developed with two-story buildings. The project includes a mix of gable and hip roof forms and other design elements that minimize the visual mass of the building.

- **The form, mass and style of the second-story addition must relate to both that of the existing building and those of the surrounding neighborhood.**

The project consists of a new two-story single-family residence. It provides a cohesive design that incorporates building materials commonly found throughout the neighborhood. The design incorporates numerous architectural features to break up the visual mass of the structure. The second story is stepped back, and incorporates a variety of horizontal and vertical planes. It incorporates numerous design elements that accentuate the horizontal features of the building. The project incorporates greater setbacks, is shorter, and occupies less lot area than the maximum permitted in this zoning district.

- **For non-historic buildings, a concurrent remodel of the entire building, into a different “style” is often a viable option to achieve a cohesive design. And while such new “style” need not match the surrounding non-historic buildings (e. g., a “new” Mediterranean revival may be introduced into a neighborhood of 1950’s ranch buildings) the scale and massing should not clash with the dominant verticality of the neighborhood.**

The project entails construction of a new house in an existing neighborhood that does not include properties identified by the City as important historic resources. The project design is contemporary as are the other two story homes located directly behind it and across the street. The design incorporates numerous architectural features to break up the visual mass of the structure. The second story is stepped back, and incorporates a variety of horizontal and vertical planes. It incorporates numerous design elements that accentuate the horizontal features of the building. The project incorporates greater setbacks, is shorter and occupies less lot area than is permitted in this zoning district.

3. City of Alameda Guide to Residential Design Section IV – New Construction

The Guide notes that the intent of this section is to ensure that new infill development complements the pattern and character of the City’s historic neighborhoods. The Guide provides a number of criteria that should be considered in evaluating site plans and architectural elements of new construction. Applicable criteria are summarized below.

Site Plans: New construction should continue the functional, on-site relationships of the surrounding neighborhood including: setbacks and building spacing.

Project setbacks are consistent with neighboring properties. Lot coverage is less than permitted under zoning regulations. This preserves the development pattern associated with post-war residential projects that typically include large yards and consistent spacing of buildings along the block.

Architectural Design: Infill projects should incorporate the distinctive architectural characteristics of development in the surrounding neighborhood

including: window and door spacing / rhythm, building materials, roof style and pitch, finished floor height, and porches.

The project consists of a two story contemporary design that incorporates building materials that are consistent with those used throughout the neighborhood. The corner lot directly behind the subject property and the lot on the opposite corner of Adams are both two-story buildings. The proposed project is consistent with this pattern of existing development. Window and door spacing is consistent with that found on nearby homes. The relatively low pitch roof design is consistent with that found throughout the neighborhood. The project incorporates a covered front porch and two-car garage that is consistent with the pattern found throughout the neighborhood.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The project consists of the construction of a new single-family residence on an existing vacant lot, located in a developed urban area where all public services and utilities are available. Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15303, the project is exempt from further environmental review.

PUBLIC NOTICE

A notice for this hearing was mailed to property owners and residents within 300 feet of this site, published in the Alameda Journal and posted at the subject property. Staff has been contacted by one property owner regarding this project.

RECOMMENDATION

Approve Major Design Review DR05-0132, permitting the construction of a new two-story single-family residence at 3295 Adams Street.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED BY:

JON BIGGS
PLANNING SERVICES MANAGER

Attachments:

1. Resolution
2. Shade Study
3. Revised Project Plans
4. Plans reviewed by Planning Board on May 11, 2009
5. Plans reviewed by the Planning Board on October 26, 2009
6. Letters received from the Public