

**CITY OF ALBANY
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA
STAFF REPORT**

Prepared Date: 11/14/05
Agenda Date: 11/21/05
Reviewed By: _____

TO: City Council

FROM: Billy Gross, Associate Planner

SUBJECT: Appeal of Planning and Zoning Commission approval Planning Application 05-037, Design Review for a two-story addition to existing single-family residence at 824 Ramona Avenue.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the City Council uphold the Planning and Zoning Commission's decision to approve the application to allow the two-story addition to the single-family residence at 824 Ramona Avenue.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant requested approval to build a 981 square foot, two-story addition at the rear of the existing 450 square foot house, resulting in a total area of 1,431 square feet. The total building height would increase from 15 feet to 24 feet 6 inches. Two off-street parking spaces are proposed to be located in the rear and side yards on the south side of the property.

BACKGROUND

The Planning and Zoning Commission originally heard this item on June 28, 2005, and again on September 27, 2005. Public testimony was given, and concerns discussed included bulk and massing of the addition, the location of the addition at the rear of the existing house, blockage of sunlight, and impacts to adjacent residences. After discussion among the Commission members at the September 27th meeting, the Commission approved the application for Design Review by a vote of 4-1.

This approval is being appealed to the City Council by Rick Zawalski, property owner to the direct north, and Bernard Knapp, property owner to the rear, on the basis of:

- The mass and scale of the long and narrow design overwhelms the lot and is out of character for the neighborhood.
- The design of the addition unnecessarily covers a large portion of the yard and will block sunlight to neighboring structures.

REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

The subject property is zoned R-1 (Residential Low Density Single-Family). Single-family residences are allowed in the R-1 Zoning District, subject to conformance with the Development Regulations per section 20.24 of the Albany Municipal Code (AMC) and subject to Design Review approval per section 20.100.050 of the AMC. Four general findings are required to be made to grant Design Review approval to a project.

1. *The project conforms to the General Plan, any applicable specific plan, applicable design guidelines adopted by the City of Albany, and all applicable provisions of this Chapter.*
2. *Approval of project design is consistent with the purpose and intent of this section.*
3. *Approval of the project is in the interest of the public health, safety and general welfare.*
4. *The project is in substantial compliance with applicable general and specific Standards for Review stated in Subsection 20.100.050.D.*

The Standards for Review ask for adherence to the following General Standards; General Plan, Design Guidelines, Site planning, Access, Architecture, Landscape Design, Natural features, Signs, Coordination of design details, Retention and maintenance of buildings, Solid waste, and Privacy. In addition to the standards listed above, three additional standards for a Single-Family Residential Addition are also listed.

- a. *The addition is consistent with the scale, massing and other architectural features of the existing structure. Factors such as roofline, trim details, window type and placement and other design elements which affect exterior appearance will ensure compatibility with the structure to which the addition will be made. The mass of the resulting building has been considered in relation to the visual impact from the street, lot size and the placement on the lot, as well as compatibility of the project with adjacent structures and integration with the surrounding neighborhood.*
- b. *The bulk of the project is appropriate to the site and its surroundings, in that the ratio of gross square footage to site area is consistent with criteria set forth for the R-1 District in Table 2.A., Site Regulations by District (Residential), Subsection 20.24.020.*
- c. *Off-street parking spaces are provided to the property to account for the increased living area as required by Subsection 20.32.020 A.*

ANALYSIS OF APPEAL

As stated above, the appellant’s first basis for appealing the Planning and Zoning Commission’s decision is that the mass and scale of the long and narrow design overwhelms the lot and is out of character for the neighborhood.

Staff has included below a “Site Analysis” table that shows how the proposed project will meet the Development Regulation requirements.

Site Analysis

	Existing	Proposed	Requirement
Setbacks			
Front (east)	14’-5.5”	No change	15’
Side (north)	9”	3’ (addition)	3’
Side (south)	7’-4.5”	5’-4.5”	3’
Rear (west)	59’-1”	23’	20’

	Existing	Proposed	Requirement
Area			
Lot Size	2,500 sq. ft.	--	--
Floor Area			
First Floor	450 sq. ft.	959 sq. ft.	--
Second Floor	n/a	535 sq. ft.	
Total Counted	450 sq. ft.	1,494 sq. ft.	--
Floor Area Ratio	18%	59.7%	60%
Lot Coverage	18%	38.4 %	50%
Rear Yard Coverage	0%	0%	30% max.
Maximum Height	15'	26'	28' max.

The development regulation that is most closely tied to the mass of a project is the Floor Area Ratio (FAR). Normally, the maximum FAR allowed for a single-family residence is 0.55. However, footnote 5 in Table 2.A states instances when an FAR of up to 0.60 could be allowed. The first instance is when

- a. *The site is of such size that application of the .55 floor/area ratio would result in a gross square footage of less than one thousand five hundred (1,500) square feet.*

The subject lot is 2,500 square feet in total size, so the application of the .55 FAR would result in a gross area of 1,375 square feet. Therefore, this subject lot is allowed a maximum FAR of 0.60, subject to Design Review approval.

As stated in the June 28, 2005 staff report to the Planning and Zoning Commission, the proposed configuration of the addition was influenced by the narrowness of the lot, which is only 25 feet, and by providing two conforming parking spaces in the existing driveway on the south side of the lot. With these constraints, the widest portion of the new addition on the second floor will be 15 feet 6 inches, while the narrowest portion of the addition on the ground floor will only be 11 feet 2 inches alongside the area where parking is proposed. The Commission asked the applicant about the possibility of moving a portion of the addition forward over the existing house. The applicant stated that they were attempting not to make any structural changes to the existing house.

Based on the fact that the addition will meet all of the development regulations for the R-1 zoning district, including side- and rear-yard setbacks, total height, lot coverage, and floor area ratio, the Planning and Zoning Commission found that the proposed residence was not too large for the lot and that the design was compatible with other residences in the neighborhood.

The appellant's second basis for appeal is that the design of the addition unnecessarily covers a large portion of the yard and will block sunlight to neighboring structures.

The City of Albany does not have specific "Daylight Protection" regulations. Rather, the existing Development Regulations were established with these type of characteristics in mind. Specifically, subsection 20.24.010 states:

“The purpose of this section is to establish regulations relating to characteristics of the physical development of property, including lot area, width and coverage; yard setbacks; and building height. These regulations are established for purposes of allowing for light, air, privacy, and safety from fire hazards, and to ensure that property development contributes to a high quality environment for living and working, consistent with General Plan policies.”

As shown above in the “Site Analysis” table, the proposed two-story addition will meet all of the applicable site regulations, and therefore would not have more significant impacts to light and air than those allowed to other residences in the R-1 Zoning District. The table also shows that the total footprint of the building will result in a lot coverage of 38.4%, which is less than the maximum allowable lot coverage of 50%. The Planning and Zoning Commission found that the proposal is in scale and harmony with the existing development near the site.

SUMMARY

The Planning and Zoning Commission determined that the proposed two-story addition to a single family residence was suitable for the proposed location and made the required findings to support approval of the Design Review applications, as stated in the September 27, 2005 Notice of Action.

Therefore, staff recommends that the City Council uphold the Planning and Zoning Commission’s decision to approve the application to allow the two-story addition to the single family residence at 824 Ramona Avenue..

ATTACHMENTS

- 1- Appeal Application
- 2- Project Plans (not to scale)
- 3- September 27, 2005 Planning and Zoning Commission Notice of Action
- 4- September 27, 2005 Staff Report
- 5 – September 27, 2005 P&Z Commission Minutes
- 6 – June 28, 2005 P&Z Commission Minutes