



Agenda Report

22-894

Agenda Date: 8/3/2022

REPORT TO PLANNING COMMISSION

SUBJECT

Action on a Variance to Maintain a One-Car Garage with a 589 Square Foot Second-Story Addition to a Single-Family Residence at 2663 Sonoma Place

BACKGROUND

On April 3, 2022, the applicant, Ramin Zohoor, filed an application for a Variance to construct a 589 square foot second story addition to an existing single-family residence and maintain an attached one-car garage. The City's Zoning Code requires that a single-family residence be provided with two covered parking spaces. The City's historic practice was to require that a non-conforming single-family residence be brought into conformance with the parking requirement when there is an addition of 500 square feet or more. However, the Zoning Code does not currently specify any exceptions to the general requirement that structures be brought into full conformance when they are expanded.

The subject site is located in a residential development tract that was originally constructed with one-car garages. Many of the homes in this neighborhood have requested Variances to retain a one-car garage for additions over 500 square feet.

DISCUSSION

The applicant is requesting a Variance to allow a 589 square foot addition to an existing 1,481 square foot single-story residence with three bedrooms, two bathrooms, and an attached one-car garage. The Variance is required to allow the applicant to maintain the existing one-car garage where two covered parking spaces are required for a single-family residence and an addition to the property otherwise requires that the project be brought into conformance with the Zoning Code. The applicant has provided a statement of justification for the proposed Variance attached to this staff report as Attachment 1 for review.

The project site is located in an older neighborhood with lot widths narrower than typical. While the required minimum lot width in the R1-6L zone is 60 feet, the subject property is 40 feet in width. The substandard 40-foot width of the lot and the existing layout of the home would require a significant demolition of the existing structure to accommodate the required dimension for two covered parking spaces of 20 feet depth by 20 feet width.

Prior to 2014, the City's General Plan included a policy that additions not exceeding 500 square feet (and less than four bedrooms) could be constructed without having to meet the Zoning Code parking requirements. As this Policy is not currently in the General Plan and further because the proposed addition would exceed 500 square feet, the proposal is subject to the parking requirements of the Zoning Code, unless a Variance is granted by the Planning Commission.

Zoning

The proposed project does not comply with the R1-6L parking requirement for the attached garage per SCCC Section 18.12.120(a). Pursuant to SCCC Section 18.108.010, where practical difficulties, unnecessary hardships and effects, inconsistent with the general purposes of the Zoning Code may result from the strict application of certain provisions, Variances may be granted. The location of the house on the 40-foot wide lot and the existing house configuration preclude the construction of a detached garage in the rear yard or expansion of the existing garage. For these reasons, and the findings in the Resolution attached to this staff report, there is sufficient evidence to support the Variance request.

Conclusion

The proposed Variance would allow the property owner to reasonably use the property without incurring the substantial burden of reconstructing the house to accommodate a two-car garage. The owner's intent is to optimize the use of the property and meet personal family needs. The design of the garage is consistent with the type and location of covered parking in the surrounding neighborhood. Additional on-site parking is provided on the paved driveway in front of the garage. Approval of the proposal would allow the property owners to submit the requisite plans to the City to obtain building permits.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The proposed project is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) per CEQA Guidelines Section 15301(e)(1), additions to existing facilities. By adding 589 square feet to a 1,481 square foot house, the Project would make an addition to an existing structure that is less than 50 percent of the floor area of the structures before the addition and less than 2,500 square feet.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no impact to the City for processing the requested application other than administrative staff time and expense typically covered by processing fees paid by the applicant.

COORDINATION

This report has been coordinated with the City Attorney's Office.

PUBLIC CONTACT

On July 22, 2022, a notice of public hearing of this item was posted in at least three conspicuous locations within 300 feet of the project site and mailed to property owners within 300 feet of the project site. Planning Staff has not received public comments for this application during the preparation of this report.

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a resolution to approve the Variance to allow a 589 square foot second story addition to a single-family residence and maintain an attached one-car garage, subject to conditions of approval.

Prepared by: Meha Patel, Assistant Planner

Reviewed by: Alexander Abbe, Assistant City Attorney

Approved by: Lesley Xavier, Planning Manager

ATTACHMENTS

1. Statement of Justification

2. Project Data
3. Resolution Approving the Variance
4. Conditions of Approval
5. Development Plan