



**Planning Commission  
Staff Report**

August 13, 2014  
Item 6.a.

**SUBJECT:** P14-0829

**APPLICANT:** Greg Munn

**PROPERTY OWNER:** George Schmitt

**PURPOSE:** Application for Administrative Design Review approval to undertake the following to the existing dwelling located at 554 Hamilton Way: (1) construct a 781-square-foot single-story addition to the rear of the house; (2) construct an 88-square-foot, 13-foot, 6-inch tall covered front porch; (3) construct a 614-square-foot second-story addition with an approximately 177-square-foot second-floor deck; and (4) change the overall roof pitch of the home including raising the height of the ridge line and peaks by 1 foot, 9 inches to 7 feet, 4 inches.

**LOCATION:** 554 Hamilton Way

**ZONING:** R-1-6,500 (One-Family Residential) District

**EXHIBITS:**

- A. Original Letters of Opposition
- B. Proposed Plans
- C. Section 18.20.030 of the Pleasanton Municipal Code
- D. Photos from the rear yard of 568 Hamilton Way
- E. Neighborhood Map
- F. Letters of Opposition received after the Planning Commission Notice
- G. Location and Noticing Maps

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**I. BACKGROUND**

On May 9, 2014, the applicant submitted an Administrative Design Review (ADR) application to construct single- and second-story additions to the existing single-family home located at 554 Hamilton Way. After the ADR public notice was sent, two

neighbors contacted staff and indicated that they were opposed to the proposed addition: Dolores Bengtson at 568 Hamilton Way and John Toms at 575 Hamilton Way. Mrs. Bengtson, directly adjacent to the subject property to the east, had concerns regarding the potential loss of views of the Pleasanton Ridge from both her front yard and backyard. Mr. Toms was concerned that the second-story addition would be out of character with the Rosepointe neighborhood. After staff discussed the issues with the applicant and the neighbors, the applicant offered to install story poles to demonstrate the impact of the proposed addition. Once the story poles were installed, two additional neighbors contacted staff: Christine Steiner at 596 Hamilton Way and Michael and Janis O'Rourke at 6536 Hanover Court. In general, these neighbors also indicated that the second-story addition would be out of character with the Rosepointe neighborhood. After further discussing the issues with the applicant, homeowner, and the neighbors, staff determined that the differences could not be resolved at the Zoning Administrator level and, thus, referred the application directly to the Planning Commission for review. All original letters of opposition can be referenced within Exhibit A.

## **II. SITE DESCRIPTION**

The subject site is an irregularly-shaped lot on the north side of Hamilton Way in the Rosepointe neighborhood. The approximately 14,619-square-foot lot has an approximately 2,303-square-foot single-story residence and a 529-square-foot attached, two-car garage. The aesthetics of the ranch-style home are characterized by exterior features including vertical board-and-batten siding brick veneer along the front of the home, and a composition shingled roof.

Additional single-family residences in the Rosepointe neighborhood are located to the west, east, and south of the subject site. Single-family residences along Diamond Court and Sycamore Road, zoned Planned Unit Development – Medium Density Residential (PUD-MDR), are located immediately north of the lot. There are no two-story homes on Hamilton Way. The closest two-story homes are located towards the entry of the neighborhood on Arlington Drive and Arlington Court.

## **III. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The applicant has applied to construct a 781-square-foot single-story addition to the rear of the house, an 88-square-foot, 13-foot, 6-inch tall front porch entry, and a 614-square-foot second-story addition with an approximately 177-square-foot second-floor deck. In addition to the proposed additions, the applicant is proposing to redesign the front elevation and architectural style of the home as well as increase the overall roof pitch of the home, including raising the height of the ridge line and peaks by 1-foot, 9-inches to 7-feet, 4-inches.

The first floor will be remodeled to expand the existing master bedroom and bathroom, expand the existing living room, change the layout of the kitchen and family room, and add a new dining room. The second-story addition would consist of a new loft/multi-purpose room, storage and bathroom with an outdoor deck facing the rear of

the property. The second-story addition does not include any second-story windows on the front or side. Figure 1 shows the proposed front elevation.



**Figure 1 – Proposed Front Elevation**

On the rear elevation, there would be one second-story window and a sliding glass door that provides access to the outdoor deck that is semi-enclosed on three sides by the roof as shown below in Figure 2. As proposed, the existing ranch style home will be renovated to include a new 88-square-foot gabled front entry with stone veneer columns and a decorative cap and base. The existing support posts of the front porch would be replaced with new posts with matching stone veneer bases and decorative knee braces. These materials/features would also be added to the south (front) elevation of the garage.



**Figure 2 – Proposed Rear Elevation**

#### IV. ANALYSIS

The ADR process is intended to preserve and enhance the City's aesthetic values and to ensure the preservation of the public health, safety, and general welfare. The ADR process applies to projects that include additions to single-family residences over ten feet in height. Administrative Design Review applications are typically reviewed at the Zoning Administrator level. Projects which are judged by the Zoning Administrator to have complex design issues or to be sensitive or controversial in nature, may be referred directly to the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission is empowered to approve, conditionally approve, or deny applications for ADR.

#### Land Use

The subject site has a General Plan designation of Medium Density Residential and is zoned One-Family Residential (R-1-6,500) District. The current zoning allows for second story additions up to 30 feet in height. The proposed addition is subject to ADR approval.

#### Site Development Standards

The table below compares the proposed project with the applicable site development standards of the R-1-6,500 Zoning District.

Development Standard	Requirement	Proposed
Front Yard Setback	Minimum 23 feet	25 feet
Side Yard Setbacks	Minimum 5 feet on One Side and a Minimum Combined Total of 12 ft.	5 feet on One Side and Combined Total of 13 feet
Rear Yard Setback	Minimum 20 feet	28 feet
Height	Maximum 30 feet	15 feet, 6 inches
Floor Area Ratio (FAR)	Maximum 40%	25.3% based on a total floor area of 3,698 square feet

As shown above, the proposed addition would meet all of the development standards of the R-1-6,500 zoning district. The 15 feet, 6 inch height is based on the Municipal Code definition and is measured from grade to the mean height between the main roof ridge and the eaves. The height as measured from the lowest grade at the front of the home to the main roof ridge would be approximately 23 feet, 4 inches. The finished grade at the rear of the home is approximately one-foot above the front of the home. The 25.3% FAR is also based on the Municipal Code definition and includes the floor area of the existing house, the proposed addition, and the enclosed accessory structures.

## Scope of Design Review – Criteria

Pleasanton Municipal Code Section 18.20.030 (attached as Exhibit C) indicates that the Planning Commission or Zoning Administrator shall review site plans, landscape plans, building architecture, and other such plans as may be required to preserve and enhance the City's aesthetic values and to ensure the preservation of the public health, safety, and general welfare. Staff notes that even though a proposed structure may comply with the development standards of the applicable zoning district, through the design review process the Municipal Code allows the reviewing body to approve conditions which may be more restrictive than normal Code standards to ensure that the public health, safety, or general welfare is preserved. As outlined in Section 18.20.030, the Planning Commission's or Zoning Administrator's scope of review of project plans shall include (but not be limited to) the following design criteria:

- Appropriate relationship of the proposed building to its site, including transition with streetscape, public views of the buildings, and the scale of the buildings within its site and adjoining buildings.
- Appropriate relationship of the proposed building and its site to adjoining areas, including compatibility of architectural styles, harmony in adjoining buildings, attractive landscape transitions, and consistency with neighbor character.
- Preservation of views enjoyed by residents, workers within the City, and passerby through the community.
- Architectural style, as a function of its quality of design and relationship to its surrounding; the relationship of building components to one another and the building's color and materials.

Staff feels that the addition has been designed to meet all of the R-1-6,500 site development standards and provides appropriate architecture and materials in relationship to the existing neighborhood. Staff also believes that the addition has been designed to minimize privacy impacts on the adjacent neighbors and the addition would not result in a design that is dissimilar to the other homes in the Rosepointe neighborhood that currently have a second floor. However, as discussed below, staff feels that the application would not preserve the views enjoyed by other residents, specifically, the resident in the adjacent home located at 568 Hamilton Way.

The view to the west of Pleasanton Ridge from the adjacent property over the applicant's existing home is filtered along the front and rear of the property by the existing landscaping, but remains unobstructed within the center of the property. The current view with story poles indicating the location of the proposed addition as seen from outside of the neighbor's bedroom window is shown in Figure 3 on the next page.



**Figure 3 – View from 568 Hamilton Way**

Additional photos from various locations within the neighbor's yard are attached for reference within Exhibit D. The amount of obstruction varies depending on the view angle and the proximity to the property line. As shown, the proposed addition would obstruct the majority of the existing view of the Pleasanton Ridge when standing away from the property line. Views from the neighbor's patio and pool edge currently have limited visibility of the ridge due to screening provided by the existing home at 554 amilton Way and existing vegetation. Weighing the competing interest of the applicant's right to construct an addition and protection of the neighbors' existing views can be very difficult. In this case, staff believes that the overall view impact is substantial and that the applicant could redesign the addition to reduce the view impact. The Planning Commission may consider these options should it consider the view impact to be significant.

Staff has met with the property owner and applicant to discuss the proposed massing of the addition and home and the view impacts to the neighbor at 568 Hamilton Way, as well as other neighbor concerns. The owner has indicated that he has lived in the neighborhood since the 1970's and is aware of concerns regarding second-story additions. The property owner feels that the proposed addition is a compromise between the neighborhood sentiment and his need for additional living area and wishes to move forward with the project as proposed.

## **Neighbor Concerns**

Attached are the letters that staff has received from surrounding property owners concerning the proposed addition. In general, there are two main concerns that have been expressed. The first concern relates directly to the adjacent neighbor located at 568 Hamilton Way and the loss of views created by the second-story addition as described previously. The other concern shared by the remaining neighbors in opposition to the project is that a second-story addition would result in a house design that is out of character with the Rosepointe neighborhood.

### Second-Story Additions

Typically, when neighbors express opposition to a proposed addition, staff tries to work with all of the concerned parties in an effort to reach a mutually acceptable consensus on the issues, which typically involves modifying some design elements while retaining the essential project proposed by the applicant. However, after talking with the concerned neighbors in this particular case, staff understands that a redesign of the proposed second-story addition, short of eliminating it, would not address their concerns. The question of whether any second-story addition should be allowed in this neighborhood is an issue that is outside the scope of what is normally addressed through the ADR process and, as such, the application was referred to the Planning Commission for its consideration.

Currently, a total of five of the 53 lots in the Rosepointe neighborhood have residences with second stories. Because this is an older neighborhood created in 1965, it is unclear how many of these homes were originally built with two stories. However, based on a review of the City's records, at least two of these homes had second stories added after their initial construction. There were nine additional lots created in 1970 between Arlington Drive and Sunol Boulevard, west of the original Rosepointe subdivision. These lots are also zoned R-1-6,500; the homes are visually similar to the original Rosepointe homes, and these nine lots appear to be part of the Rosepointe neighborhood. There are four additional two-story homes in this cluster of lots. In addition, most of the existing lots in the Carriage Garden subdivision located immediately to the south of the subject neighborhood have two-story homes. Please refer to Exhibit E for a neighborhood map identifying existing two-story homes.

Although neighbors have informed staff that the private conditions, covenants, and restrictions (CC&R's) in the Rosepointe neighborhood at one time prohibited second-story additions, the R-1-6,500 zoning district does not contain a single-story restriction for either new homes or additions. The original CC&R's prohibition on second-story additions has expired. This issue was previously considered in 1999 and again in 2003 when the City Council reviewed appeals of second-story additions to existing single-story homes in the neighborhood. The appropriateness of a second-story addition in the Rosepointe neighborhood was identified as an issue in both staff reports. At both times, staff stated that the appropriate way to prohibit future second-story additions

would be for the City to initiate a zoning change. While the City Council did not initiate a zoning change for the Rosepointe neighborhood to prohibit new second-story additions, the Council in both cases continued the items indefinitely to give the applicants and the neighbors additional time to try to work out the issues themselves. No consensus was ever reached between the applicant and neighbors in 1999 and no new plans were submitted. The 2003 applicant withdrew the two-story addition application and later obtained approval to construct only a single-story addition.

The property owner, having lived at the subject property during both the 1999 and 2003 appeals, understands the neighborhood concerns regarding second story additions. In an attempt to be sensitive to the neighborhood concerns, the property owner indicated that he tried to design a second-story addition with a single roof line and no windows on the front elevation of the home in an attempt to integrate the second-story addition within the new roof line. In order to integrate the second story addition into the new roof line, the proposal required the overall existing roof pitch and height to be raised as shown in Figure 4 below. The increased roof pitch however, contributed to an increase in massing that has impacted the views of Pleasanton Ridge from the adjacent property at 568 Hamilton Way.



**Figure 4 – Front View, 554 Hamilton Way**

Staff believes that the addition is typical of many of the two-story ADR applications that have been submitted to the City in the past. The second floor is located within the center of the home which creates a stepped back or “wedding cake” type transition from the first to the second floor that is normally desired to reduce massing. However, due to the proposed design, the roof line and raised roof pitch have contributed to the large

massing of the second-story addition and associated impacts to views from 568 Hamilton Way.

### **Planning Commission Options**

The Planning Commission has the option of approving the application, denying it, or approving it with modifications. Staff believes that in the subject case there are no design options, short of removing the second-story addition, which would satisfactorily address the majority of the neighbors' concerns. Because the addition meets all of the Code requirements, including height, and is typical of second-story additions approved in other areas of the City, staff does not believe that it is appropriate to deny the application just because it is a second story addition. However, the Planning Commission could deny the application if it finds that the design fails to meet the applicable design criteria identified in the Municipal Code. Staff believes that the submitted proposal does not meet the applicable design criteria in that it does not preserve the views enjoyed by the adjacent resident. Staff notes that almost every second-story addition has some impacts; in considering these criteria, the Commission should determine if the impacts related to this addition would be more substantial than with other second-story additions approved in this neighborhood and throughout the City.

If the Planning Commission believes that a second-story addition is appropriate, but that design changes should be made to reduce the height or overall mass, it may wish to discuss certain design modifications to the proposed addition or direct that the applicant consider additional design options. These changes may lessen the overall visual presence of the proposed second-story addition. Additionally, the Planning Commission may wish to continue the item indefinitely to give the applicant and the neighbor additional time to try to work out the view obstruction issue.

### **Notification of Surrounding Property Owners**

During the initial ADR public notification, only the neighbors that are in close proximity to the site were informed of the application, as stipulated by the Municipal Code. However, because this application has been referred to the Planning Commission, public hearing notices were mailed to all property owners within 1,000 feet of the subject site prior to the Planning Commission hearing. Staff has received additional comments from Dolores Bengtson at 568 Hamilton Way, as well as two additional neighbors in opposition of the proposed addition. New letters of opposition are attached within Exhibit F for reference. The location and noticing maps are included as Exhibit G and included the entire Rosepointe neighborhood.

## **V. CONCLUSION**

Rosepointe is a neighborhood predominantly consisting of single-story residences; however, the current zoning designation allows for second-story additions and there are five homes in the original Rosepointe subdivision that have second stories. The

proposed addition meets all of the site development standards of the R-1-6,500 zoning district, including height. The architecture and materials of the addition and remodeled home are compatible with the surrounding neighborhood, and a reasonable amount of effort has been made by the applicant to minimize the appearance of the second story from the front elevation. Weighing the competing interests of the applicant's right to construct an addition while preserving existing neighbors' views can be very difficult. However, due to loss of views enjoyed by the neighbor, staff is recommending that the Planning Commission direct the applicant to redesign the project to attempt to reduce the view impacts on the property located at 568 Hamilton Way, or deny the application.

## **VI. ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

Projects of this nature are categorically exempt from the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Therefore, no environmental document accompanies this report.

## **VII. STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission either: 1) continue the item and direct the applicant to make modifications to the proposed plan to mitigate view impacts on the adjacent neighbor at 568 Hamilton Way; or 2) deny the application.

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