



# Town of Yountville

6550 Yount Street  
Yountville, CA 94599

## Staff Report

Item #: 2

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## Zoning and Design Review Board Staff Report

**DATE:** March 9, 2021  
**TO:** Board Members  
**FROM:** Sandra Liston, Planning & Building Director  
**Applicant:** Richard Slie, Architect  
**Owner:** Stephanie Garcia-Colace  
**Location:** 8 Forrester Lane/APN 036-463-004  
**Land Use Classification:** MR Mixed Residential

### **SUBJECT:**

Design Review for exterior modifications to an existing single-family dwelling, including new door and window fenestration, and a new second floor balcony spanning the length of the north elevation.

### **PROJECT SITE**

The project site is part of a 90-lot subdivision. It is located on the north side of Forrester Lane in the Mixed Residential zoning district. The subject parcel is one of four parcels featuring an interior lot location and receiving access from a driveway easement off of Forrester Lane. The north property line is shared with Forrester Park.

The parcel is a 5,537 square foot lot developed with a 1,876 square foot two-story residence and a detached 441 square foot garage. The house is setback 12 feet from the north side property line and 25'-6" from the south side property line.

### **DISCUSSION/BACKGROUND**

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION.** The applicant's project is primarily an interior remodel. It includes some floor plan and circulation changes that result in exterior modifications that trigger Design Review. Proposed exterior modifications are described as follows:

1. **North (side) elevation, facing park:** On the ground floor replace one window with a glass door and install a second glass door. On the second floor, replace one window with a glass door, replace two smaller windows with a larger four panel Nana-door (8' x 12'), and construct a new approximately 263 square foot balcony (7' x 37½') that spans the length of the elevation. The balcony will be supported by posts, and the balcony barrier will be glass. The house is currently setback 12 feet from the north side property line and the seven-foot-wide balcony will reduce the setback to five feet.

2. **East (front) elevation:** Relocate the front door from the west edge of the entry porch to the south edge to improve functionality of the living room (circulation and furniture layout), install a new double-hung window in the location of the former front door, and remove a second-floor window above the entry porch.

3. South (side) elevation: Replace the existing window (5' x 4') at the stairwell and replace it with a larger window (5' x 10½') and roughly double the size of the window in the second-floor master bath.

4. West (rear) elevation: On the ground floor, replace two windows and a sliding glass door with a four panel Nana-door (8' x 12'), and replace the kitchen window. On the second floor, reduce the size of the master bedroom and master bathroom windows and situate at eye level.

**ANALYSIS.** Design review approval is required for physical improvements and exterior modifications, including those that have the potential to impact adjoining neighbor's privacy. In this case, the residences within the subdivision have a common design theme. They are over 20 years old, and over the years, owners have made exterior modifications to buildings and landscaping that impart their personal design style.

The Design Ordinance provides that the choice, detailing, and application of materials should be carefully considered for the appropriateness of the design and that window and door styles should be compatible with the overall building design. Staff believes these standards have been met for most of the exterior modifications and that it is consistent with the existing design aesthetic of the neighborhood, with two possible exceptions, noted below.

**NORTH ELEVATION BALCONY AND NANA-DOORS.** Staff's concerns with these two elements are that they have the potential to intrude upon the privacy of the adjoining neighbors to the east and west, as well as having potential negative impacts to the adjacent Forrester Park open space.

On the one hand, the Town's Floor Area Ratio (FAR) rules (that establish a maximum permitted area for all structures on a parcel) encourage architectural features like balconies by exempting them from FAR because they contribute building diversity, both in terms of architectural style and massing. On the other hand, however, the privacy impacts of balconies and whether they impact designated view corridors must be considered.

Here, the proposed balcony is located off the family room and, at approximately 263 square feet, is expected to be actively used. The proposed Nana-door is significantly larger than the existing window, increasing the size of the opening to 8' x 12'. This large amount of window transparency and the proposed glass balcony barrier will allow views into the adjacent park, and potentially the backyard across the park, even when the deck is not being used. It is noted that the residence across the park has a lower degree of privacy because their backyard fence, where it abuts the park, is limited by Code to a height of four feet (less than the standard of six feet). Given the elevated location of the balcony, the amount of window and balcony barrier transparency, and the proximity to the adjoining backyard to the west, and the park and residence to the north, this project will impact the existing degree of privacy and the expectation of reasonable enjoyment in these spaces.

The Yountville Municipal Code addresses privacy in several ways. First, the Zoning Ordinance provides that "*changes to an existing structure...that intrude upon the privacy of adjacent lots*" are subject to Design Review. This process gives the ZDRB the ability to evaluate projects for impacts and apply their discretion.

Second, the Town's requirements for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), while not triggered by this application, are informative as to the Town's policies regarding privacy. The ADU chapter provides "*that any (second story) window, door, or deck (of an ADU)...shall be located and designed utilizing techniques that lessen the impacts on the privacy of adjacent properties. These techniques shall include one or more of the following: use of obscured glazing, window placement above eye level, orientation of windows, doors, and decks toward the existing on-site residence or screening techniques.*" This provision is a recent update to the Zoning Ordinance and expresses the Town Council's clear intent on mitigating second story privacy impacts.

Third, the Zoning and Design Ordinances, last comprehensively updated nearly 30 years ago (ca. 1992), are undergoing a comprehensive update, are currently being updated. As part of this process, a new design standard has been recommended by the Ad Hoc Committee: "*Where adjacent to single-family development, windows, balconies and similar openings should be oriented so as not to have a direct line-of-sight into*

*adjacent homes or onto private backyards abutting the property line. This can be accomplished through window placement, stepbacks of upper stories, use of clerestory windows, glass block or opaque glass, or mature landscaping within the rear or side setback areas.”*

In this case, the balcony is oriented in a way that allows direct views into the private backyard of 6 Redwood Drive. This neighbor, along with two others, have submitted letters of public comment (attached), raising the concerns of privacy, light intrusion, noise impact and obstruction of views.

It is important to note that the subdivision includes three approved view corridors that must be maintained. One view corridor is along Lande Way, one is along Forrester Lane, and another is along the Mount Street extension. The Mount Street view corridor extends through Forrester Park, but it is bounded by the property line of the subject parcel and does not extend into it. Therefore, the balcony is not a concern in terms of view corridors since it will not block any of them.

Staff notes that the project at 10 Redwood, directly north of the subject parcel across the park, can be distinguished from this proposed balcony. That project, which included a new 106 square foot balcony facing the street, was approved by the ZDRB on August 9, 2016. The staff report noted that *“one of the principal objectives of the Design Ordinance is to ensure that the streets of Yountville remain animated by structures and activities (so that they) do not become lifeless blocks of blank walls...the balcony contributes to this objective. It gives a domestic scale to the street. At the same time, however, impacts to adjoining properties should be considered. In this case, since the balcony faces the street and the adjoining park, it does not introduce privacy impacts to adjacent residences. The location of the property makes it somewhat unique in this regard and the addition of a second-floor balcony may not be appropriate in all instances in the neighborhood. Impacts must be considered on a case-by-case basis.”*

Given the Code requirements regarding privacy and the letters of public comment, staff believes that the balcony and Nana-door are contrary to the Code provisions that seek to minimize or eliminate second story privacy impacts. A condition of approval is proposed that eliminates the balcony and requires that the Nana-door be replaced with a window consistent with existing.

**SOUTH ELEVATION STAIRWELL WINDOW.** Staff’s other concern, although less than the one noted above, is the increased size of the new window at the stairwell due to the goal in the Code of mitigating privacy impacts. This window is increased in size from 20 square feet to 53 square feet. Given its location on the second floor, there is the potential for privacy intrusion.

On the one hand, the window is visible from adjoining property to the south and Forrester Lane. On the other hand, it features a deep setback of over 25 feet to the south side property line, it does not face a rear yard, and is located at the stairwell, which is expected to have fewer privacy impacts than in room in which people gather. Furthermore, the Town has not received any letters of opposition concerning this window. In staff’s opinion, the balance of factors weighs in favor of allowing the proposed window.

**DESIGN REVIEW FINDINGS.** The Zoning Ordinance provides that Design Review approval shall only be granted to development that is designed and located in a manner that best satisfies the following criteria:

(1) *It will properly and adequately perform or satisfy its functional requirements without being unsightly or creating substantial disharmony with its locale and surroundings;*

As conditioned, the changes to window and door fenestration comply with the Design Ordinance standards that require careful consideration for the appropriateness of design details and the compatibility of the window and door styles to the overall building design. Elimination of the balcony and Nana-door from the north elevation complies with the Town’s requirements related to privacy.

(2) *It will not impair or interfere with the development, use, or enjoyment of other property in the vicinity, nor with the orderly and pleasing development of the neighborhood as a whole, including public lands and rights-of-way;*

The window and door fenestration is typical of residential structures in the neighborhood and complies with the Design Ordinance standards. Removal of the balcony and the Nana-door from the north elevation results in a

project that will not impair/interfere with the development, use, or enjoyment of surrounding properties, both private and public. It is not expected to adversely impact other properties in the vicinity.

*(3) It will not directly, or in a cumulative fashion, impair, inhibit, or limit further investment or improvements in the vicinity, on the same or other properties;*

See response to No. 2 above.

*(4). It will minimize or eliminate adverse physical or visual effects, which might otherwise result from unplanned or inappropriate development, design, or juxtaposition. Such adverse effects may include, but are not limited to those produced by the design, location and characteristics of the following:*

*(a) Areas, paths, and rights-of-way for the containment, movement or general circulation of persons and vehicles;* The proposal will not negatively impact the right-of-way or the existing on-street parking supply. Parking demand triggered by the development is all accommodated onsite.

*(b) Other developments or improvements that may result in a diminution or elimination of sun and light exposure, views, vistas, and privacy;*

See response to No. 2 above.

*(5) When possible all existing trees shall be protected.*

No trees will be removed.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

Categorically Exempt per California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guideline; Class 1, Existing Facilities

## **STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL**

Is item Identified in Strategic Plan? Yes

If yes, Identify Strategic Goal and Objective. **Quality of Life:** The Town enhances the livability of Yountville by providing well-maintained public facilities, parks, and trails, and quality programs and events.

Briefly Explain Relationship to Strategic Plan Goal and Objective. The Design Review process ensures that projects comply with the Yountville Municipal Code, will maintain the Yountville aesthetic, and will not result in adverse impacts for neighbors.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Receive staff report and direct questions to staff.

Receive the applicant's presentation.

Conduct public hearing and receive testimony.

Conduct ZDRB discussion on Design Review for exterior modifications.

Motion and second to approve the Design Review application with the conditions proposed by staff.