



Town of Yountville

6550 Yount Street
Yountville, CA 94599

Staff Report

Item #: 3

Zoning and Design Review Board Staff Report

DATE: March 9, 2021
TO: Mayor and Town Council
FROM: Daniel Gordon, Planning Manager
Applicant: Jason Blackmore, JJAB Design LLC
Owner: Gisela Campagne
Location: 1905 Colombard Way; APN 036-430-001
Land Use Classification: MPR Master-Planned Residential

SUBJECT:

Variance request for increased Floor Area Ratio (FAR) at 1905 Colombard Way

PROJECT SITE

The project site is single-family residence at 1905 Colombard Way in the Vintage HOA development. There are a total of 60 single-family homes and 39 townhomes in the development as a whole.

DISCUSSION/BACKGROUND

Project Description. The applicant is seeking approval of a Variance to exceed the allowable Floor Area Ratio (FAR) for the Master Planned Residential district by enclosing an approximately 54 square foot outdoor alcove. The alcove feature is part of the original design of this model and there are a total of 13 houses that feature this same design element. The applicant's request to enclose the atrium is to remedy what they describe as a space that is not desirable, not functional, and potentially a safety concern.

The subject parcel is a 5,549 square foot lot developed with a 1,284 square foot single-family residence and an attached 441 square foot garage. At a total area of 1,725 square feet, existing FAR is 0.31. Increasing the residence's square footage by 54 would increase site FAR from 0.31 to 0.32.

Chapter 18.36.020 of the Yountville Municipal Code (YMC) states that:

The maximum floor area ratio shall be as set forth in the applicable Master Plan. Where the Master Plan does not specify a maximum FAR or building footprint for a lot, the maximum FAR is 0.25.

The Vintage HOA development does not list a maximum FAR on the approved Master Plan, and so the maximum FAR for this development defaults back to 0.25 even though, as built, it has a higher FAR.

The 54 square feet in question is an alcove-like space located along the south side of the residence, setback three feet from the side property line, and surrounded by the residence on the remaining three sides. Access to the alcove is provided from two separate rooms in the residence. Windows look out upon the alcove and are intended to provide more light to the interior rooms that face it. However, due to the close proximity of homes created by the reduced setbacks approved for this development, this alcove is dark, damp, and does not achieve its intended function. Residents of this model of home report that mold is a constant problem in this alcove area. Residents have also reported that this dark alcove, at night, could potentially prove to be a safety concern as it could easily shield a prowler or burglar from view from the street.

Staff Interpretation of Open Space. The Vintage HOA development includes over four acres of open space, as follows:

- 2.77 acres of central open space abutting the townhomes,
- 1.4 acres of smaller landscaped open space off of Colombard Way, Vintner Court, Carignan Way, and Hopper Way.

In 2001, the then-acting Planning Director issued an opinion (attached) that allotted an equal portion of the 2.77-acre central open space to each of the 39 townhome parcels that abut the open space, resulting in an extra 55.75 square feet of FAR for each of these townhomes. The Planning Director's opinion provided the justification for allowing a de minimus addition to each of the townhomes. It was necessary because the townhome parcels are small (averaging about 2,000 square feet) and feature an average FAR of approximately 0.7. The allocation of this open space to the townhomes reduced their theoretical FAR to .24, allowing for small additions to the townhomes of approximately 55 square feet over the years.

The remaining approximately 1.4 acres of open space has not been allotted to any of the homes within the development. The Planning Director's opinion from 2001 does not include an analysis that sheds light on why a portion of the 2.77-acre central open space was allocated to the townhomes or why the remaining 1.4 acres was not allocated at all. However, even if remaining open space were to be allocated to each of the single-family homes, it would fall below the 54 square feet needed to approve this application without a variance.

Analysis. The 54 square feet proposed for enclosure under this application increases FAR by just 0.01, representing a de minimis addition not just to this individual parcel but to the overall development footprint of the Vintage HOA development. Furthermore, this small enclosure of an otherwise unusable space that exhibits nuisance conditions could correct an unintended suboptimal circumstance.

To assist the ZDRB in conducting this discussion, staff is sharing a set of draft findings that may support approval of the variance. Depending on the direction this discussion takes, these findings may need to be modified.

Criteria for a variance:

The findings for a variance are difficult to make and are intended to apply to exceptional or unique property constraints that are not created by an owner. The required findings are as follows:

- A. There are exceptional or extraordinary circumstances applying to the property involved or to the intended use of the property that do not apply generally to other property or uses in the same class of district;

There are only 13 "model 3" homes in the Vintage HOA that have this alcove as part of their design. Other homes in the Vintage HOA do not face the same safety and upkeep concerns.

- B. Due to exceptional or extraordinary circumstances not created or attributable to the applicant or owner of the property, the literal enforcement of the provisions of this title would result in practical difficulty or unnecessary hardship;

Contending with a space that creates mold and potential safety concerns because of a design

flaw is an unnecessary hardship.

- C. This variance will not constitute a grant of special privilege that is inconsistent with limitations imposed on similarly zoned properties;

This variance will constitute a grant of special privilege for this model of home in the Vintage HOA Development; however, this is consistent with limitations imposed on similarly zoned properties.

- D. This variance is necessary for the preservation and enjoyment of the right of property, the same that is possessed by other property in the same land use designation;

This variance will eliminate a suboptimal space that is causing higher levels of upkeep and concern than other homes of different models within the HOA.

- E. This variance will not be materially detrimental to the public welfare or materially injurious to the property or improvements in the vicinity; and

There will be no negative impact on public welfare, property, or improvements in the vicinity.

- F. The granting of such variance will be in harmony with the general purposes and intent of this title and will not adversely affect the General Plan.

This variance would be in harmony with the general purposes and intent of this title and would not adversely affect the General Plan.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

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

STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL

Is item Identified in Strategic Plan? No

If yes, Identify Strategic Goal and Objective. N/A

Briefly Explain Relationship to Strategic Plan Goal and Objective. N/A

RECOMMENDATION

Receive staff report and direct questions to staff.

Receive the applicant's presentation.

Conduct public hearing and receive testimony.

Conduct ZDRB discussion on the variance request for increased Floor Area Ratio (FAR) at 1905 Colombard Way.

Take action on the variance request for increased Floor Area Ratio (FAR) at 1905 Colombard Way.