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DATE: July 20, 2023

**STAFF REPORT**

AGENDA ITEM NO. 6.2

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TO: FOSTER CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

PREPARED BY: KEVIN MCGILL, ASSISTANT PLANNER

CASE NO.: UP2023-0091, AR2023-0012

OWNER: RALF RUCKELSHAUSEN

PROJECT LOCATION: 780 WIDGEON STREET (NEIGHBORHOOD 2)

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**REQUESTED ACTION/PURPOSE**

Requesting approval to allow a reduction of the required front yard setback from 14' – 9" to 10' – 9" in order to construct an 83 square foot garage expansion addition to the front elevation of the single-story single-family home located at 780 Widgeon Street in Neighborhood 2.

**RECOMMENDATION**

That the Planning Commission adopt the attached Resolution approving 1) a Use Permit to allow a reduction of the required front yard setback to 10' – 9" (UP2023-0091) and 2) an Architectural Review request to approve a 83 square foot garage addition to the front elevation of an existing single-story single-family home located at 780 Widgeon Street (St.) subject to the Conditions of Approval in Exhibit A (Attachment 1) and finding that the project is categorically exempt under California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Section 15301.

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

GENERAL PLAN DESIGNATION: Single-Family

ZONING DISTRICT: R-1 (Single-Family Residence) Zoning District

ZONING HISTORY: None

SURROUNDING LAND USE: North: Single Family Residences at 779 & 785 Widgeon St.  
South: Single Family Residence at 224 Surfbird Isle  
East: Single Family Residence at 786 Widgeon St.  
West: Single Family Residence at 774 Widgeon St.

LOT SIZE: 6,050 SF

**PUBLIC NOTICING**

In order to inform the most immediately affected property owners, the neighborhood and the general public, the Public Hearing was noticed in the following ways:

- Published in the Islander on July 5, 2023
- Displayed on FCTV/Channel 27 on July 6, 2023 through July 20, 2023

- Emailed out to the Planning Listserv on June 29, 2023
- A Public Notice was mailed to residents within 500 feet radius on June 30, 2023
- Posted on the Foster City website at [www.fostercity.org](http://www.fostercity.org) on June 29, 2023
- Posted on-site and at all of the City's official posting locations on June 29, 2023
- Electronic marquee at Leo Ryan Park on July 6, 2023 through July 20, 2023

### Neighbor Notifications

Consistent with the Use Permit and Architectural Review processes and procedures, the applicant is required to provide neighborhood notification to the immediately adjacent properties of the proposed project site. The intent of the Neighbor Notification Form is to inform potential interested parties of the proposal on site and encourage neighbors to submit any questions or concerns about the proposal. Neighbor Notification Forms were provided to the four (4) adjacent properties of 780 Widgeon St. (774, 779, 785 and 786 Widgeon St. Below is a summary of the Neighbor Notification Forms:

- **774 Widgeon St. – Adjacent Property to the West:** Neighbor Notification Form was returned and indicated the property owner(s) have no objection.
- **786 Widgeon St. – Adjacent Property to the East:** Neighbor Notification Form was returned and indicated the property owner(s) have no objection.
- **779 & 785 Widgeon St. – Adjacent Properties to the North:** Neighbor Notification Forms were returned and indicated the property owner(s) have no objection.
- **224 Surfbird Isle – Adjacent Property to the South:** Neighbor Notification Form was not provided to this address as the addition would not impact this property in any significant way. The property owner(s) were included on the notification for this public hearing.

In addition to the neighbor notification forms provided by the applicant to the adjacent property owners, a Public Hearing notice was sent to the adjacent property owners informing them of the 07/20/2023, Planning Commission Meeting.

### **CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA)**

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), includes a list of classes of projects which have been determined not to have a significant effect on the environment, and therefore, are exempt from the provisions of CEQA. The project would be a small garage addition to expand the existing garage of a single-family home. The site would continue to be a single-family home and therefore, the proposed project would qualify for CEQA Guidelines Section 15301(l)(1).

### **BACKGROUND**

#### Project Site & Location

The existing one-story house is located on an approximately 6,050 SF waterfront lot at 780 Widgeon St. The existing home, built in 1966, features three (3) bedrooms and 1,790 SF of living space. The subject property is surrounded by an existing two-story house to the east, two-story house to the south, a single-story house to the west, and a two single-story houses to the north (Figure 1). Houses in the neighborhood are one and two stories and include a mix of Mediterranean, Ranch Style, and Eichler homes.

The existing house is located on the waterfront side of Widgeon St. The structure includes a single-story home with a side-facing garage with an existing front yard setback of 14' – 9" and a side yard setback of 7' – 2". The existing house features a crossed gable roof with a double-pitched gable roof over the garage on the front elevation. The front façade consists of board and batten siding with an accent stone façade on the

garage wall. No windows, doors, or other architectural features are included in the area of work. (Figure 2).



Figure 1: Vicinity Map; Source: Nearmap.com (June 14, 2023)



Figure 2: Front Elevation (Existing); Source: GoogleMaps (June 14, 2023)

## Project Proposal

On March 3, 2023, staff received the initial submittal for the garage expansion addition that may result in an encroachment into the required front yard setback. On April 5, 2023, an incompleteness letter outlining unfulfilled submittal requirements (including average front yard setbacks for properties in the block) and design comments were sent to the applicant/homeowner. Staff continued to work with the applicant and the architect to address design concerns, mainly regarding the front yard setback requirements for the subject property and neighboring properties. On April 24, 2023, revised plans and supplemental materials confirmed that the proposed addition would encroach into the required front yard setback per Section 17.54.070 of the Foster City Municipal Code. Consistent with Chapter 17.54.080.A of the Municipal Code, the project may proceed with a front yard reduction to not less than 5' under a Use Permit application and the proposal would require Planning Commission's approval.

Staff determined the application to be complete on April 24, 2023, when all revised plans and supplemental materials were resubmitted and scheduled the project for a Planning Commission Public Meeting. The completed plans are available in Attachment 3.

The final project proposal consists of a front yard setback reduction from 14' – 9" to 10' – 9", leaving more than 10' of front yard landscaping, in order to construct an 83 SF first floor addition to accommodate a new workbench. The proposed addition will include materials and colors that are consistent with the existing home. Materials will consist of composition shingles, wood rafters, vertical board and batten wood siding panels, and natural stone wall siding façade to match the looks and style of the existing home. All material colors will match to form a seamless transition.

## **ANALYSIS**

### Use Permit - Front Yard Setback Reduction (UP2023-0091)

The subject property is located in the R-1 Single-Family Residence zoning district and is subject to the City's adopted Municipal Codes, Citywide Policies, and [Architectural & Solar Guidelines](#). Staff has evaluated the proposed design for compatibility with the neighborhood, code requirements, and architecture of the existing house and others in the surrounding neighborhood, as well as with the zoning requirements.

The proposed project must comply with the standards of the R-1 zoning district related to setbacks, height, lot coverage, minimum lot size, minimum floor area, and all other relevant development standards. Table 1 identifies the applicable standards of the R-1 zoning district, including the property's compliance with development standards as existing and proposed and any exceptions that are approvable with Planning Commission's approval.

Table 1. R-1 District Development Standards

	CODE REQUIREMENTS	PLANNING COMMISSION EXCEPTION***	EXISTING	Proposed
Height*	Average 25'-0" max.	Not Applicable	13' – 9"	Same
Front Yard Setback	20' Minimum****	5' – 0"	14' – 9"	10' – 9"
Rear Yard Setback	20' Minimum (10' for Waterfront Properties)	Not Applicable	20' – 0"	Same
Left Side Yard Setback	5' Minimum	Not Applicable	7' – 2"	Same
Right Side Yard Setback	5' Minimum	Not Applicable	25' – 9" (To Garage)	Same
Lot** Coverage	50% max.	Not Applicable	43%	44%



\*Section 17.04.240, Definitions, Height of building, of the Foster City Municipal Code defines building height as the average height of a sloped roof.

\*\*Coverage includes the land area covered by all buildings on a lot, including all projections except eaves.

\*\*\*Section 17.54.080, Setback reductions and encroachments.

\*\*\*\* Existing front yard setback is 14'-9" per provisions of section 17.54.070 of Municipal Code

Municipal Code Section 17.54.070 Setback in previously developed areas includes that *"In any "R" district, where four or more lots in a block have been improved with buildings at the time of the passage of the ordinance codified in this title (not including accessory buildings), the minimum required front setback shall be the average of the improved lots, if the setback is less than the stated requirements of the districts."*

It is noted that the older neighborhoods, such as Neighborhoods 1 and 2, have smaller front setbacks for garages and the subject property is located in Neighborhood #2. Thus, staff requested the applicant to provide measurements of the properties located in the block to determine the front yard setback for the subject property. Upon review, it was found that the average front yard setback was 14' – 9". For detailed report see Sheet A.05 of proposed plans in Attachment #3.

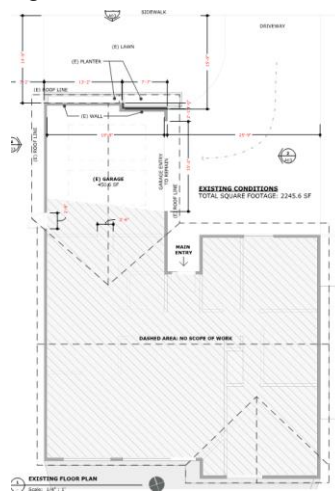


Overall Average Setback		
Street	Inches	Feet
Widgeon South	188.44	15.7
Widgeon North	157.65	13.1
Gull	191.91	16.0
avg	179.33	14.9

Figure 3: Existing & Proposed Site Plans  
Source: Applicant Submittal (June 14, 2023)

The applicant is proposing an 84 SF addition to the garage that would result in the front yard setback being reduced from 14'-9" to 10'-9". Section 15.54.080.A Setback reductions and encroachments of the Municipal Code provides for the Planning Commission to approve a reduction of the front yard setback to not less than 5' through a Use Permit application.

Existing Site Plan



Proposed Site Plan

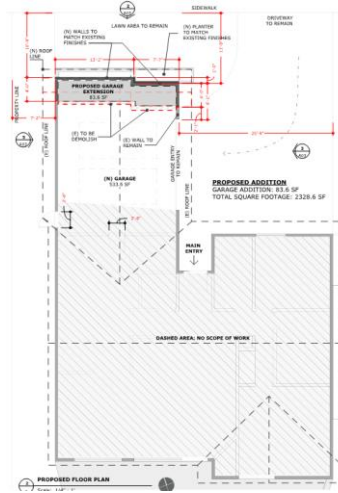


Figure 4: Existing & Proposed Site Plans  
Source: Applicant Submittal (June 14, 2023)

Per Section 17.06.070 Use Permit- Grant or denial of the Municipal Code, *the Planning Commission shall determine whether or not the establishment, maintenance or cooperation of the use applied for will, under the circumstances of the particular case, be detrimental to the health, safety, morals, comfort and general welfare of the persons residing or working in the neighborhood of such proposed use, or whether it will be injurious or detrimental to property and improvements in the neighborhood or the general welfare of the city.*

Based on the analysis, staff determined that the project is consistent with the required R-1 Zoning requirements. The reduced setback would allow for improvements for the use and enjoyment of the garage while also being consistent with other properties setbacks in the neighborhood. Staff has not received any concerns from the directly adjacent properties through the Neighbor Notification process and feels the reduced setback would not create any adverse effects to the adjacent neighbors and surrounding neighborhood.

#### Architectural Review – Garage Addition (AR2023-0012)

Staff reviewed the proposed addition for the requirements pertaining to Chapter 17.58 Architectural Control and Supervision of the Municipal Code as included below, separate from the front yard setback reduction request.

#### **Front Elevation**

- The garage expansion addition will encroach a total of 4' in the front yard setback.
- The proposed front setback will be 10' – 9" from front property line.
- The proposed siding on the garage addition will incorporate board & batten style wood siding that will be painted gray to be consistent with the existing structure.
- The proposed front elevation will include a stone accent to simulate the character of the existing house.
- The proposed roof material over the addition will use GAF Timberline Composition Shingles in the Charcoal color to be consistent with the existing roof material.
- The roof over the garage addition will continue the same double gable roof design with a 5:12 roof slope.



Figure 4: Front Elevation Rendering  
Source: Plans Submitted by Applicant, Sheet A.03

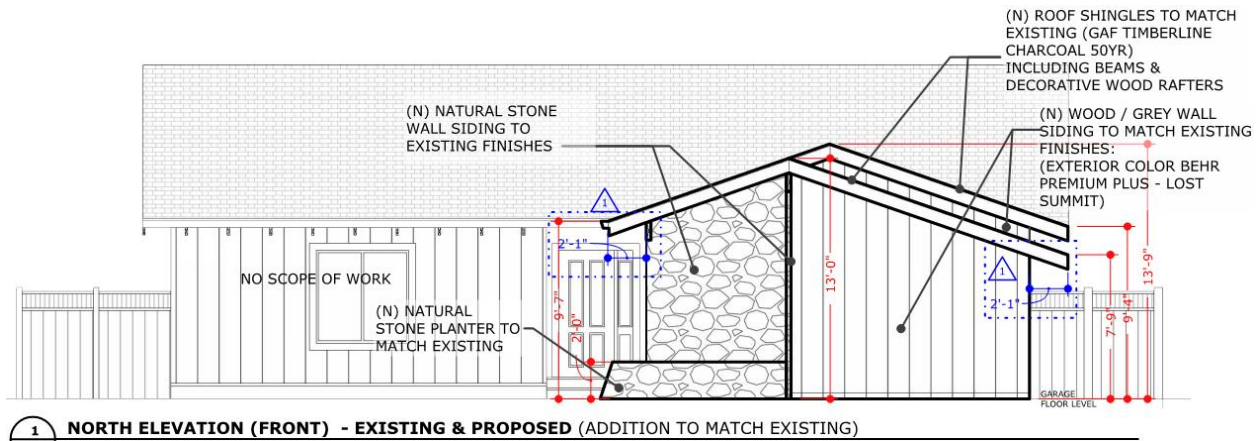


Figure 5: Front Elevation (Proposed)  
Source: Plans Submitted by Applicant, Sheet A.03

Table 2. Exterior Construction

	EXISTING COLORS AND MATERIALS	PROPOSED COLORS AND MATERIALS
<b>Exterior Wall Finish</b>	Board & Batten Siding - Gray Stone Accent – Natural Color	Same
<b>Trim</b>	Wood trim – White	Same
<b>Roof</b>	Composition Shingles – Charcoal	Same

#### Left Elevation

- Garage to expand 4' on the front elevation towards the adjacent street and sidewalk.
- Addition exterior would continue the use of board and batten wood siding painted gray with wood trim painted white, Timberline Composition Shingles in Charcoal color, and a stone accent wall to match the existing.
- Roof line will continue the use of the same dual pitched gable design and 5:12 roof pitch.

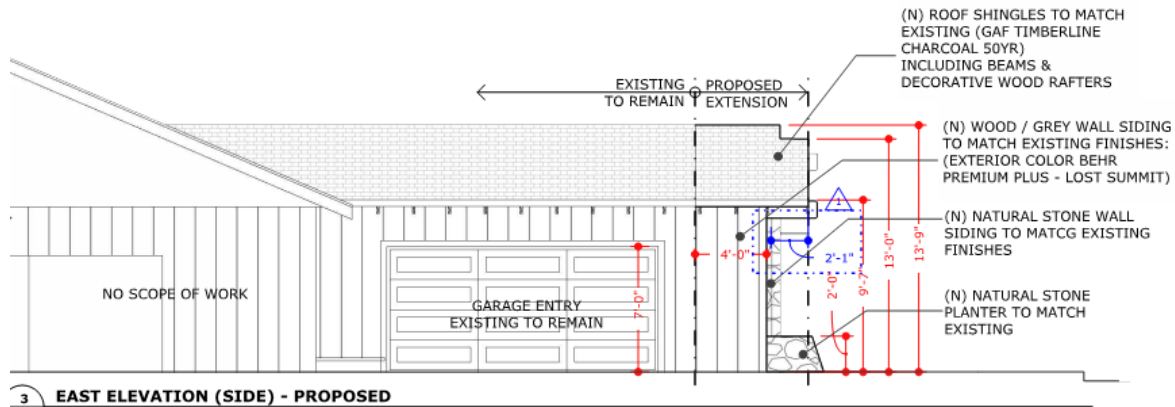


Figure 6: Left Elevation (Proposed)  
Source: Plans Submitted by Applicant, Sheet A.03

### Right Elevation

- The garage to expand 4' on the front elevation towards the adjacent street and sidewalk.
- Addition exterior would continue the use of board and batten wood siding painted gray with wood trim painted white, Timberline Composition Shingles in Charcoal color, and a stone accent wall to match the existing.
- Roof line will continue the use of the same dual pitched gable design and 5:12 roof pitch.

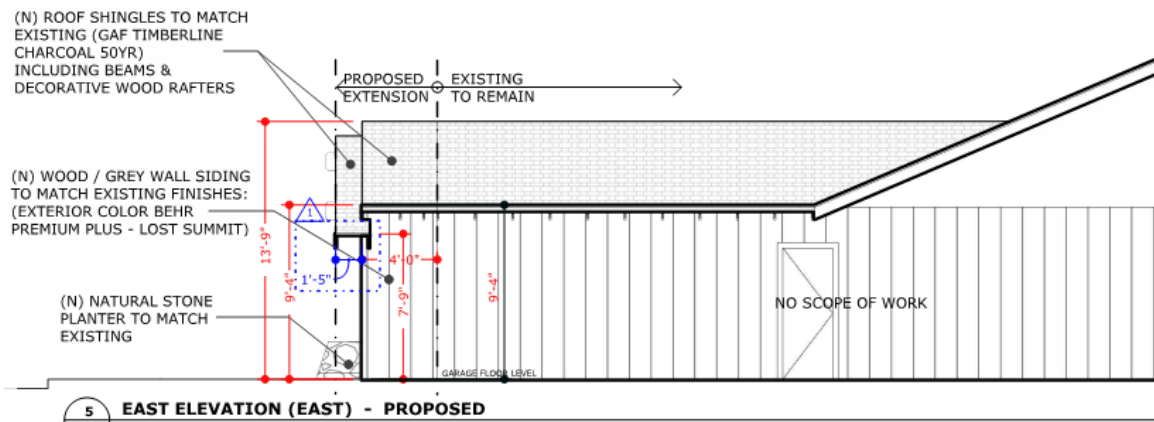


Figure 7: Right Elevation (Proposed)  
Source: Plans Submitted by Applicant, Sheet A.03

### Rear Elevation

- No modifications to the rear elevation.

Staff has surveyed the properties in the immediate vicinity and believes that the proposed garage expansion and front yard setback reduction would be consistent with the other houses in the neighborhood as several properties on Widgeon St, Surfbird Isle, and Gull Avenue have properties with a portion of the building located within 10' of the property line. The garage will remain a side facing garage with the front wall of the dwelling setback more than 20' to allow depth and soften the massing of the house while still providing a front yard consistent with other properties in the neighborhood.



## **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Consistent with the findings stated in the Resolution (Attachment 1), the proposal is consistent with Title 17 (Zoning), Chapter 2.28 (Planning) of the Foster City Municipal Code, the General Plan's goals and policies, Architectural and Solar Guidelines, and applicable Planning Commission Policies. For these reasons, staff recommend the project be approved as proposed.

## **CONCLUSION**

The property owner/applicant is requesting approval for a reduced front yard setback from 14' – 9" to 10' – 9" to facilitate a garage addition of 83 SF to the front elevation of the building. The proposal will not overwhelm the existing house and will be harmonious with the surrounding neighborhood. The building setbacks, proportions and massing of the proposed second story are sympathetic to the architectural style and character of the existing house and are consistent with other single-family homes in the neighborhood.

Overall, the garage addition is in scale with surrounding residential homes, incorporates matching materials, colors and roof forms that complement the neighborhood and will be harmonious with its surroundings. Therefore, staff recommends approval of the reduced front yard setback and proposed garage addition, subject to the Conditions of Approval in Exhibit A of Attachment 1.

## **NEXT STEPS**

The Planning Commission's action on the proposal is final unless appealed to the City Council. There is an appeal period of ten (10) calendar days following any action of the Planning Commission.

## **INDIVIDUALS, ORGANIZATIONS, AND DOCUMENTS CONSULTED**

Ralf Ruckerlshausen, Homeowner, Applicant and Designer  
City of Foster City General Plan  
[City of Foster City Zoning Ordinance](#)  
[City's adopted Architectural and Solar Guidelines](#)  
[Reroofing Policy P-18-19](#)

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1 – Resolution Approving UP2023-0091 and AR2023-0012  
Attachment 2 – Neighborhood Notification Report  
Attachment 3 – Plans Received, April 24, 2023