

Date: July 14, 2008

To: Sunnyvale Planning Commission  
From: Steve Schweizer and Colleen Yamada, 1035 Daisy Ct.  
RE: File #2007-1302, application for second story addition

We have reviewed Design Staff's report, and we have only one exception with the conditions stated in Attachment B of the report. We strenuously object to the condition outlined in Section 3, subsection A requesting an FAR below 50%. We are opposed to this condition and instead request that the plan be approved in its present 56.8% FAR form.

We have no problem with the other conditions outlined in the report.

The amount of square footage that would have to be removed from the existing plan to meet this 50% FAR condition is approximately 400 square feet. This is roughly the hatched area in Fig 17, which amounts to two of four bedrooms. We feel that reducing the present 56.8% FAR design to meet the requested 50% condition is a request for radical redesign which cannot meet our objectives. Quite frankly, approval of this project with the 50% FAR condition is not really an approval. It is a polite way of requesting comprehensive redesign. We have already worked with staff and reduced our planned square footage from an initial figure of 3845 down to its present 3507.

We have worked with the staff to modify our design to make it more acceptable and to address staff's concerns regarding the appearance of bulk and continuity with the prevalent design themes of the neighborhood. This is reflected in numerous places in the staff report.

We have also worked closely with our neighbors to make sure that the plans we have created are appealing to them as well.

Inspection of our attachments to the Staff report reveals that we have obtained signatures from each of the Daisy Court residents endorsing our proposed 56.8% FAR plan. Not one of our neighbors expressed any concern about the appearance of bulk in our proposed design. Nor did any neighbors express concern that the 56.8% FAR design created any sort of neighborhood visual discontinuity. They endorse this plan and encourage our efforts to build this addition. The only concern that our neighbors shared with us was that the approval process seems unnecessarily onerous and time consuming.

Listed below are additional specific comments relevant to the discussion above.

1. Our second story would be 61% (1326/2180) of the first floor area. Existing 5-bedroom homes in our neighborhood have second stories nominally 65% of the first floor area. By this metric, our second story addition is actually slightly less bulky than the existing 5 bedroom houses on Daisy Court.

Agenda item  
2007-1302  
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2. The 35% second story design guideline mentioned in the staff report is not particularly relevant to the Daisy Court neighborhood as it is predominately two-story homes. We seek only to add another two-story home to a court that already is majority two-story.
3. Regarding the perceived "bulk" of the second story, we do not see a significant difference in appearance of bulk versus other two-story homes in our neighborhood (Fig 7, 8, 9). Our home is also obscured by many large trees (Fig 5, 14) and is hard to see from most angles. None of our neighbors finds our design to appear any more "bulky" than any of Daisy Court's existing two-story homes.
4. Comparing the elevation of our proposal and the existing 5BR homes (Fig 7, 8, 9), the recommendation to move the side walls inwards in order to achieve a 50% FAR is inconsistent with the prevailing style. This suggestion seems like an odd approach that would create a look dissimilar to any of the existing homes on Daisy Court. In general, this request just seems like a scorched earth approach to meeting a 50% FAR requirement.
5. While our plan's 56.8% FAR exceeds that of neighboring homes, it is important to point out that a full second story addition to a single story home almost always results in a higher FAR when compared to homes designed initially with two stories. A single story home almost always has more first story square footage than the first floor of a home designed as a two story. Thus, when a second story is added to a one-story home, the result is a larger two-story home.
6. The 50% FAR number is a poor metric and does not have a strong correlation to excessive bulk or awkwardness in appearance. Despite this, FAR seems to play a heavy hand in making Planning decisions because it is a convenient and easily calculated metric. In 2000, FAR was a metric of little importance. Later in 2001, the threshold was 60%. Now the FAR threshold for review is 45%. However, there are no codes setting an actual maximum FAR. If the goal is homes that meet design guidelines and blend in well with the neighborhood, we have met that goal. This is reflected in several places in the Staff report and this has been affirmed in writing by the neighbors directly impacted by this proposed construction.
7. We understand concerns that Design Staff and the Planning Commission may have about approving plans with FAR values higher than the existing homes and precedents that may be set if large FAR plans are approved. We are aware that overly large and awkward developments inconsistent with existing neighborhood design themes are a cause for concern. We believe that the best approach for mitigating these concerns is working closely with our neighbors and involving them as plans are drafted. If the planning commission is overly concerned about approving plans with FAR beyond than 50%, perhaps the planning department should insist upon applicants getting the support of the neighbors in writing as we have done. We see this approach as one which more directly and efficiently addresses neighborhood concerns.

Sincerely, Steve Schweizer and Colleen Yamada

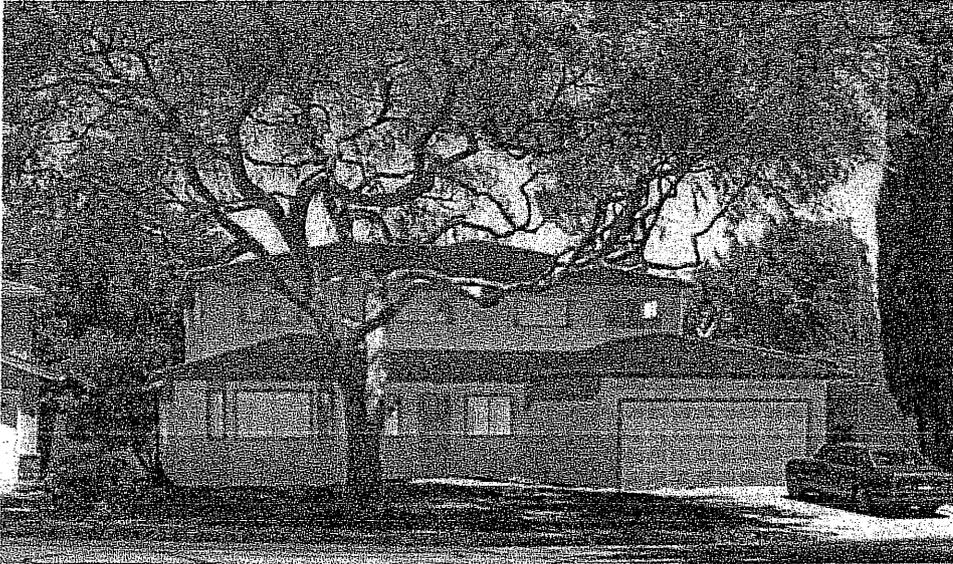


Fig 5 - Our proposed addition

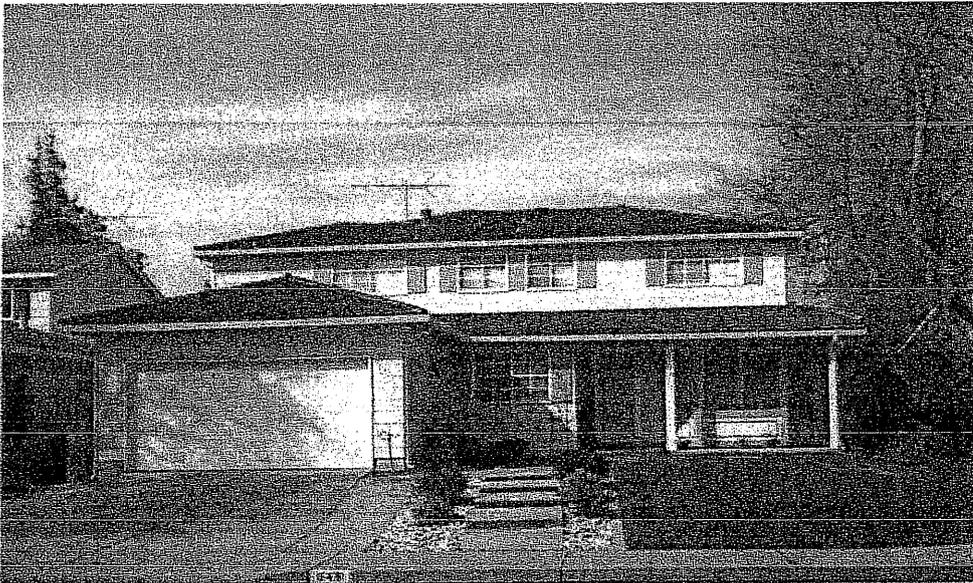


Fig 6 - 5BR home across the street.



Fig 7 - 5BR home across the street



Fig 8 - Typical 5BR original floorplan



Fig 9 - Our proposed home

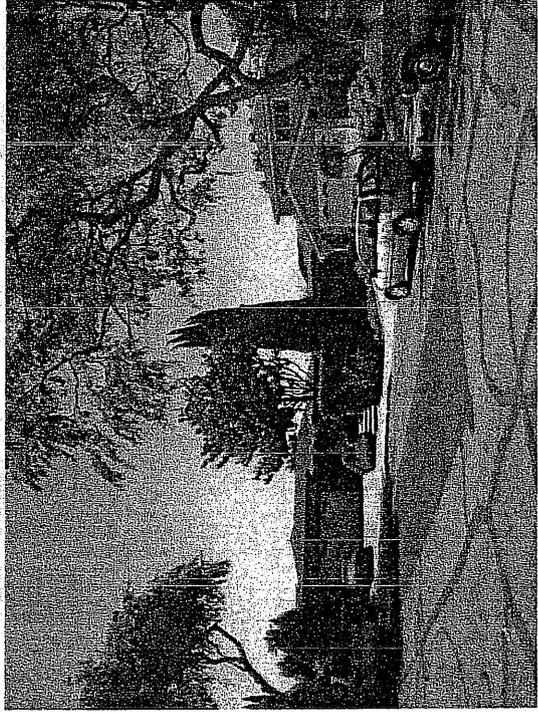
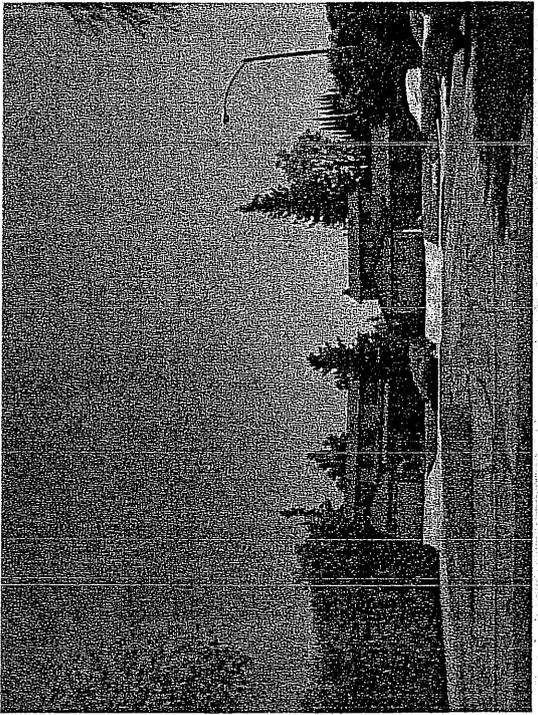
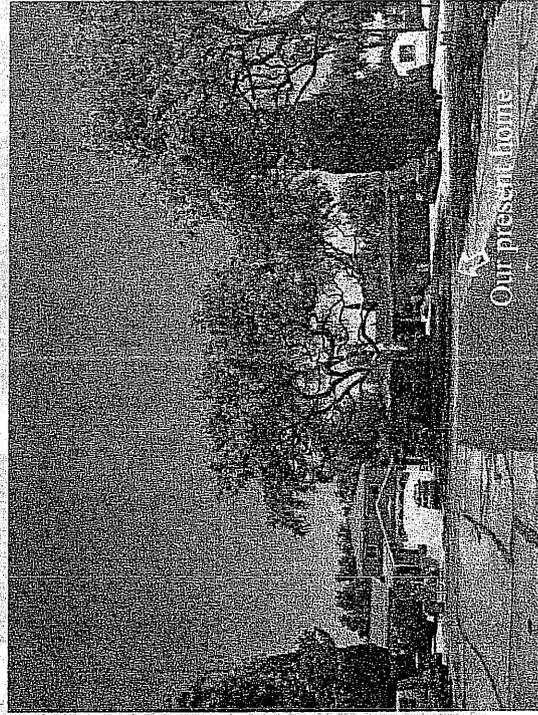
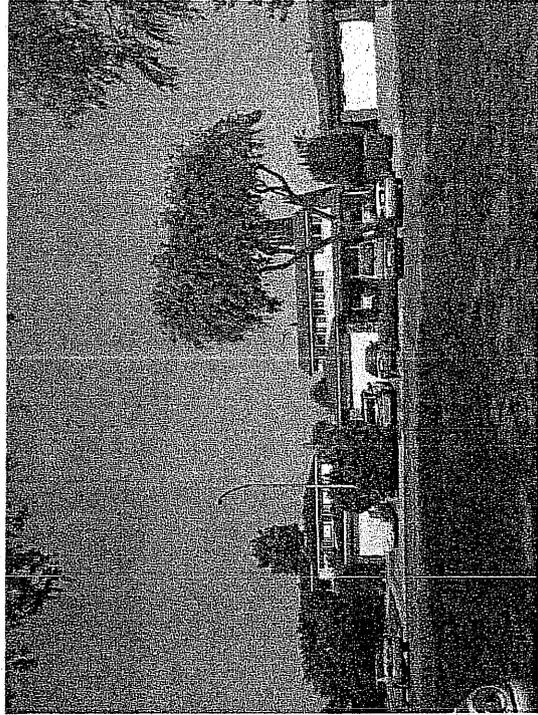


Fig 10-13 - Various views of Daisy Ct.

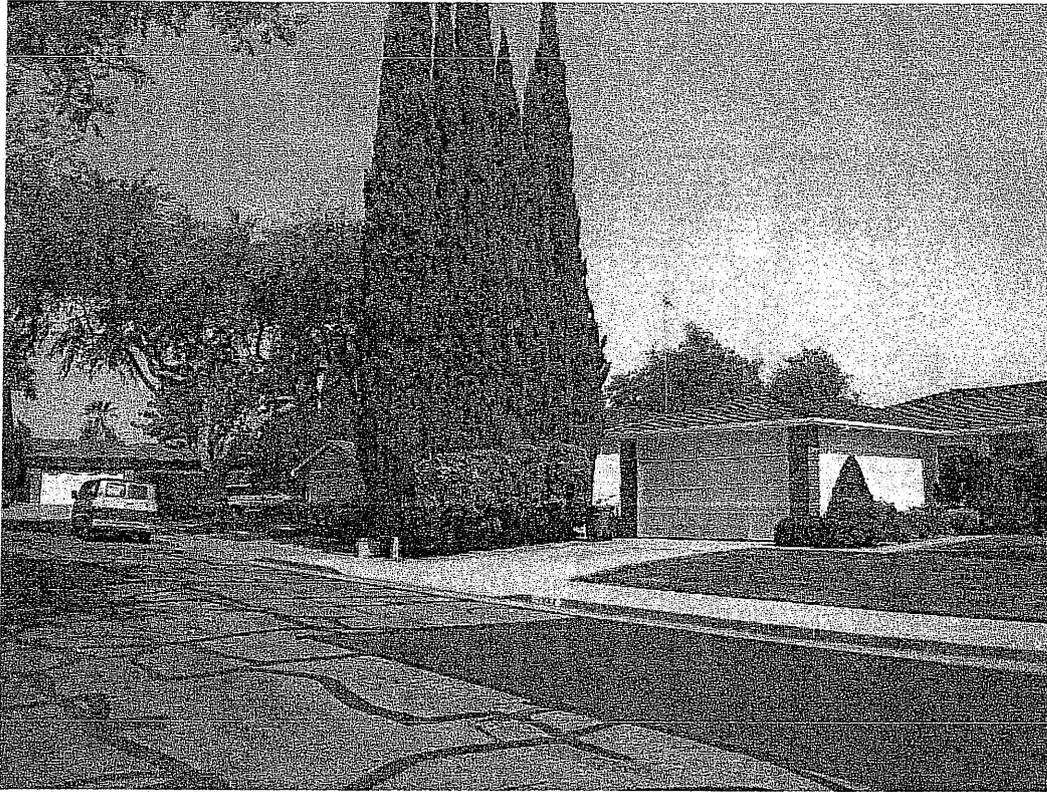


Fig 14 - View from cross street. Our home is almost completely obscured

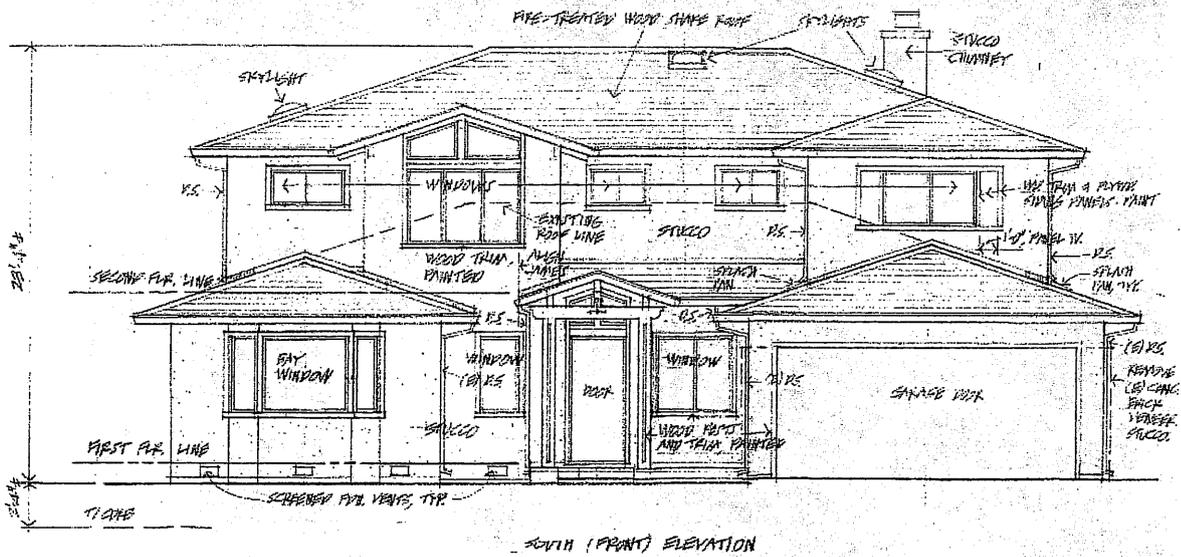


Fig 15 - Elevation approved in August 2001

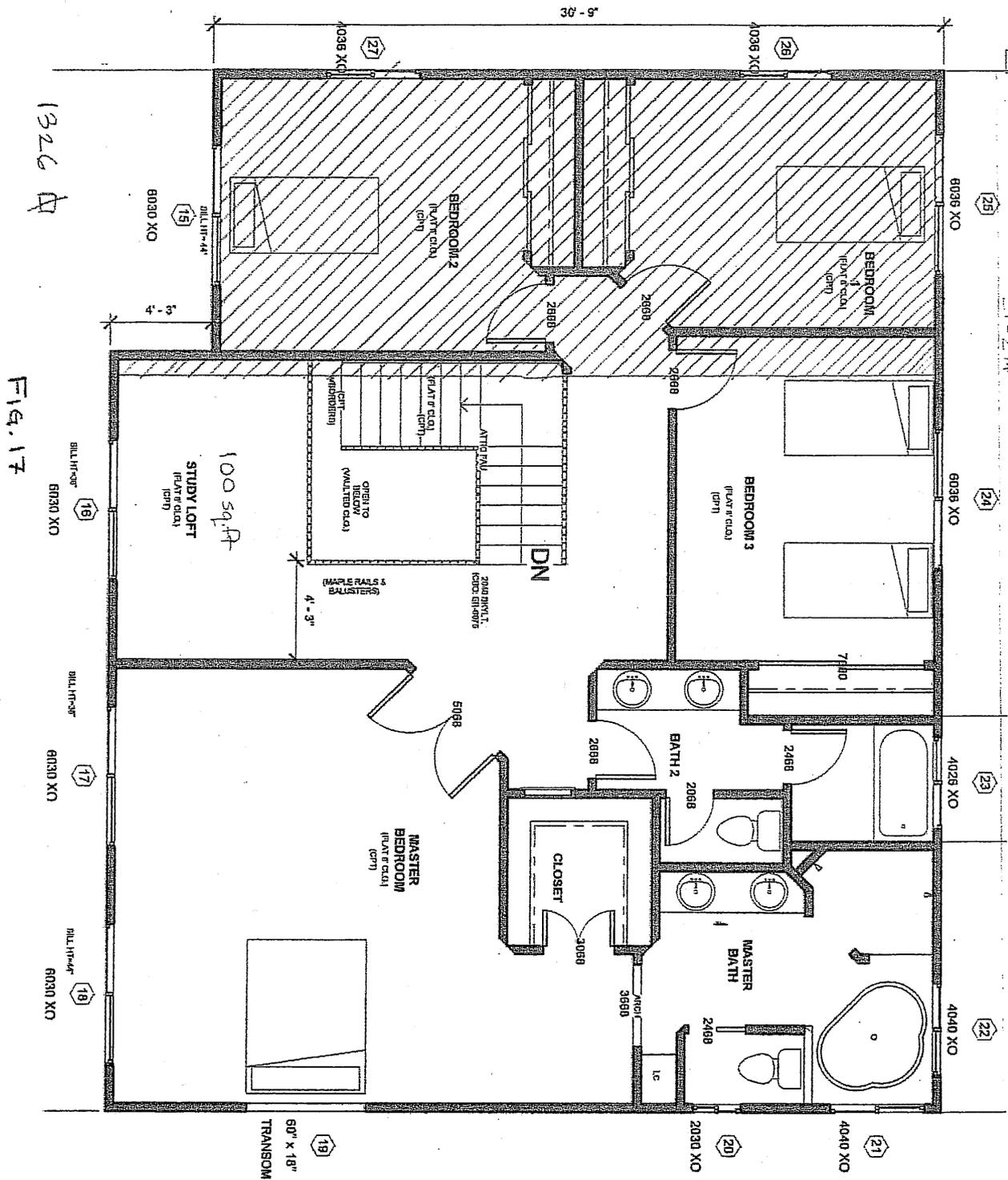


Fig 17 – Second story with 400 sq ft crosshatched