



Administrative Report

J.2., File # PC26-0642

Meeting Date: 5/21/2026

To: PLANNING COMMISSION
From: STEVEN GIANG, SENIOR PLANNER

TITLE

DISCUSSION, CONSIDERATION, AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON AN EXEMPTION DECLARATION AND VARIANCE FOR A REDUCED FRONT YARD SETBACK, SIDE YARD SETBACK, REAR YARD SETBACK, AND REDUCED OUTDOOR LIVING SPACE FOR FIRST AND SECOND-STORY ADDITIONS TO AN EXISTING SINGLE-STORY SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENCE ON PROPERTY LOCATED WITHIN A LOW-DENSITY MULTIPLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL (R-2) ZONE

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Open public hearing, receive and file all documents and correspondence on the proposed project;
2. Accept all testimony from staff, applicant, and the public and deliberate;
3. Close public hearing;
4. Adopt a Resolution by title only approving an Exemption Declaration and granting a Variance for a reduced front yard setback, side yard setback, rear yard setback and reduced outdoor living space for first and second-story additions to an existing single-story single-family residence on property located within a Low-Density Multiple-Family Residential (R-2) Zone.

BACKGROUND:

The subject property is located at 2606 Green Lane, between Graham Avenue and Gates Avenue. The subject lot was created in its current configuration in the early 1900s. The lot is approximately 2,850 square feet in size with lot dimensions of 57 feet in width and 50 feet in depth. The zoning of the subject property is Low Density, Multi-family Residential (R-2) as is the zoning of all the properties surrounding the subject property.

The property is currently developed with a single-story single-family residence which is approximately 1,251 square feet in size with an attached two-car garage that was built in 1958. The site currently has a legal non-conforming front yard setback, rear yard setback, and north side yard setback. The 8 feet south side setback meets the current development standards for the R-2 zoning district. Development in the immediate vicinity consists of a mixture of single-family and multi-family developments ranging between 1-4 dwelling units.

DISCUSSION:

The applicant proposes to remodel the existing single-family residence and construct a new second-

story addition, first-floor additions, garage modifications, and exterior improvements. The proposed project includes a 776 square foot second-story addition, a 104.8 square foot first-floor addition in the garage area, a 65 square foot conversion of existing garage area to habitable space for the master suite/master bath, a 135 square foot first-floor addition at the rear of the residence (master suite/master bath), a new front balcony of approximately 12.75 square feet, and a new rear deck of approximately 387 square feet. The total size of the proposed residence will be 2,325 square feet.

The proposed first-floor work includes expanding the garage area westward by approximately 5 feet 4 inches. Although the project includes a 104.8-square-foot addition in the garage area, approximately 65 square feet of the existing garage will be converted to habitable space for the master suite/master bath, resulting in a proposed garage area of approximately 441 square feet. The project also includes a 135-square-foot rear addition to accommodate the proposed master bedroom area.

The proposed second-story addition consists of two bedrooms, two bathrooms, a sitting room, and a small front-facing balcony of approximately 12.75 square feet. The second story is proposed above the existing residence and is designed to generally align with portions of the existing first-floor building footprint.

The applicant is requesting variances to allow reduced setbacks and a reduction in required outdoor living space. The existing residence is legally nonconforming with respect to the front, north side, and rear yard setbacks. The existing front yard setback is approximately 5.8 feet, where 15 feet is required; the existing north side yard setback is less than 1 foot, where 5 feet is required; and the existing rear yard setback is approximately 4.5 feet, where 10 feet is required. The requested variances would allow the proposed improvements to maintain or align with the existing nonconforming building walls and setbacks.

On the first floor, the applicant requests a reduced north side yard setback to allow the 104.8 square foot garage addition to align with the existing north building wall. The applicant also requests a reduced rear yard setback to allow the proposed 135 square foot rear/master bedroom addition to maintain the existing rear setback condition. On the second floor, the applicant requests a reduced front yard setback to allow the second-story addition to align with the existing front façade of the residence. The 12.75 square feet balcony projects a total of 30 inches into the front yard and therefore is considered an architectural projection (allowances up to 30 inches) and does not require a variance for approval.

The applicant is also requesting a variance from the outdoor living space requirement. The existing residence provides approximately 848 square feet of outdoor living/open space area. The proposed project would reduce the outdoor living/open space area to approximately 713 square feet, which is below the required 800 square feet. Therefore, a variance is required to allow the proposed reduction in outdoor living space.

The exterior of the residence is proposed to be remodeled with contemporary Craftsman-style architectural elements, including stone veneer, cement-board lap siding, stucco, updated windows and doors, and related exterior finishes.

ANALYSIS

Variance

Section 10-2.2510 of the Zoning Ordinance permits the Planning Commission to grant variances from development standards contained within the Ordinance in those instances where it is demonstrated that there are special circumstances applicable to the property including the size, shape, topography, location, or surroundings such that the strict application of the zoning provisions deprives such property of privileges enjoyed by other property in the vicinity and under identical zone designation; and where the variance does not constitute a grant of special privileges.

In this instance, a Variance is being requested to allow the reduction in the front and side yard setback and the outdoor living space requirement where there are a number of special circumstances applicable to the project property including the following:

- The property is substandard in size and shape, typically lots require a minimum size of 5,000 square feet in the R-2 zoning district but this lot was created at 2,850 square feet.
- The depth of the lot is significantly less than many standard R-2 zoned properties in the surrounding neighborhood. R-2 lots are required to be created with lot depths of at least 100 feet however this lot was created with a 50 feet lot length.
- Due to the substandard lot size and lot depth, the opportunity for outdoor living space is diminished.

More specifically, the size and depth of the property makes it difficult to develop the subject property according to the development standards for properties within the R-2 zone. As per the Zoning Ordinance, if the applicant were to maintain the required 15-foot front yard setback, 5 feet side yard setback, 10 feet rear yard setback, and 800 square feet required outdoor living space, it would decrease the buildable area of the lot significantly and make it difficult to design a house with a practical or reasonable floor plan.

Examples of two-story homes and their sizes in the surrounding neighborhood with the same R-2 zone are presented in the following table:

Address	Number of Stories	Size (not including garage)
2606 Green Lane (Subject)	2	1,864 square feet
2002 Graham Ave #A	2	2,908 square feet
2002 Graham Ave #B	2	2,923 square feet
1934 Graham Ave	2	2,771 square feet
2607 Green Lane	2	2,750 square feet
1935 Gates Ave	2	2,901 square feet

As demonstrated in the Table above the proposed additions result in a structure that is generally more consistent with the existing residential neighborhood.

For approval of the project, the Planning Commission must make the following findings in the affirmative. The following italicized text is the specific response to the individual criteria:

- a) There are special circumstances applicable to the property, including size, shape, topography, location, or surroundings, such that the strict application of the zoning provisions deprives

such property of privileges enjoyed by other property in the vicinity and under identical zone designation

The subject lot's irregular shape and substandard size (2,850 ft² versus the 5,000 ft² minimum) and depth (50 ft versus the 100 ft minimum) create unique development constraints not faced by other R-2 parcels in the surrounding neighborhood. Because the existing single-story home already encroaches into the front, rear, and northern side setbacks, strict adherence to the 15-ft front setback, 5-ft side setback, 10-ft rear setback, and 800 sf outdoor living space would eliminate nearly all buildable area and render the site undevelopable to a scale consistent with neighborhood character. These physical hardships justify relief from the standard yard and open-space requirements to afford the property the same development privileges as nearby conforming lots with the same zoning designation.

- b) The Variance granted shall be subject to such conditions as will assure that the adjustment thereby authorized shall not constitute a grant of special privileges inconsistent with the limitations upon other properties in the vicinity and zone in which such property is situated.

To ensure equitable treatment with surrounding R-2 parcels, approval of this variance shall be conditioned upon: (1) strict matching of the second-story addition's front and side setbacks to the existing nonconforming dimensions; and (2) construction per the approved site plan and elevations. These conditions guarantee that no future enlargement beyond the existing building footprint or further encroachment into required yards will be permitted. Additionally, even with the granting of the Variance the resulting project is lesser in area than most nearby properties in the vicinity and with the same Zoning.

- c) The granting of a Variance shall not be contrary to the objectives of the Comprehensive General Plan.

Granting this variance supports the General Plan's objectives of preserving and enhancing the city's established residential neighborhoods (Policy LU-4.3) and encouraging infill development that is compatible in scale and design (Policy LU-4.5). By allowing modest additions that generally maintain the existing building envelope the project furthers the goals of healthy, sustainable housing without adversely impacting neighborhood character or public welfare. Thus, the variance aligns with, and does not conflict with the Comprehensive General Plan.

Based on a review of the plans by the Planning Division, approval of the project is recommended.

ENVIRONMENTAL STATUS

Staff has determined that the proposed project is Categorically Exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), under Article 19, Section 15301 (Existing Facilities) of the California Guidelines for Implementation of the CEQA. Specifically, the project includes an expansion of the existing residence.

CONCLUSION

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission approve the Exemption Declaration and grant the

Variance subject to the findings and conditions contained within the attached draft resolution.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - Draft Resolution

Attachment B - Architectural Drawings

Attachment C - CEQA Exemption Declaration