



June 12, 2016

(By Electronic Transmission)  
City of Alameda  
Planning Board  
2263 Santa Clara Avenue  
Alameda, CA. 94501

**Subject: PLN16-0039 Proposed alterations to 3244 Sterling Avenue (Item 7-A on Planning Board's 6-13-16 agenda)**

Dear Boardmembers,

The Alameda Architectural Preservation Society appreciates the applicants' efforts to reduce the shading impact on the residence to the west through the latest design revisions. However, the revisions do very little to address the impact of the new second-story on the very important streetscape of predominantly one-story bungalows, as discussed in our March 14, 2016 and April 24, 2016 letters (attached).

Staff's explanation that provision of a two-story front elevation chimney preempts a further setback of the second floor is not persuasive. Although the chimney is an attractive design element, it is not essential to a successful front elevation design and is overridden by the far more important objective of maintaining the one story character of the streetscape.

In addition, we can find no discussion in the Guide to Residential Design that "chimney towers should be a prominent vertical element of Craftsman style homes" as stated in the staff report. In any case, the need to set the second floor 10' back from the chimney as stated in the staff report would be consistent with the need to deemphasize the visual prominence of the second floor.

We reiterate the need to assess the feasibility of a 1 1/2 story design as described in our April 24, 2016 letter. Staff has still not provided a convincing explanation of why this is not possible due to "small square-shaped lots on Sterling Avenue" as stated in the April 24, 2016 staff report.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. Please contact me at (510)523-0411 or [cbuckleyaicp@att.net](mailto:cbuckleyaicp@att.net) if you would like to discuss these comments.

Sincerely,

Christopher Buckley, President  
Alameda Architectural Preservation Society

Attachments: AAPS March 14, 2016 and April 24, 2016 letters

By Electronic Transmission:

cc: Mayor and City Council

Debbie Potter, Andrew Thomas, Allen Tai and Linda Barrera, Alameda Community Development  
Department

AAPS Board and Preservation Action Committee



April 24, 2016

(By Electronic Transmission)

City of Alameda  
Planning Board  
2263 Santa Clara Avenue  
Alameda, CA. 94501

**Subject: PLN16-0039 Proposed alterations to 3244 Sterling Avenue (Item 7-A on Planning Board's 4-25-16 agenda)**

Dear Boardmembers,

As noted in our attached March 14, 2016 letter to staff, the Alameda Architectural Preservation Society (AAPS) opposes the project as currently designed, because the second story is inconsistent with the predominately one story early 20th century bungalows that define Sterling Avenue's architecturally important streetscape and is also inconsistent with several provisions in the Guide to Residential Design.

The proposal is also inconsistent with the Guide to Residential Design's "Statement of Values" on Page 4, which reads:

In the building and remodeling of individual buildings, the community wishes to maintain its continuity with its past. All of Alameda's neighborhoods have **a valued context that is defined by buildings sharing qualities of mass, height and character, and any potential changes must blend into this context.** In addition, many individual buildings have historic or architectural value above and beyond their neighborhood contexts. A key objective of the *Guide to Residential Design* is to maintain the defining characteristics, including the details and materials of these buildings, **as well as the overall character of a neighborhood.** (Emphasis added.)

To achieve the needed consistency with the streetscape and the Guide, the proposed second-story should either be:

1. Set back sufficiently from the first floor façade so that the visibility of the second story is minimized (a setback distance of about 15 feet with appropriate, well-integrated roof transitions from the first floor would probably accomplish this); see figure IV-3 on Page 51, third bullet on Page 52 and right illustration on Page 21 of the Guide to Residential Design; or
2. Incorporated into a roof envelope sloping away from the street, typically with a side facing gable and front dormers; see left illustration on Page 21 of the Guide.

Although the Planning Board staff report considers provision of a second story addition behind the existing house to be impracticable, the report only indirectly discusses Strategy 1 above. Strategy 2 is referred to in the staff report as a 1½ story addition under “Appellant Concern #3”, Item 5, and is described as not possible "due to the small, square-shaped lots on Sterling Avenue". However, it is not clear to us why the lot configuration precludes a 1 1/2 story design. We do not agree with the staff conclusion and believe that a 1 1/2 story design is indeed possible. In addition, such a design could be two stories at the rear, since the rear elevation design would not significantly impact the overall streetscape.

Moreover, the staff report’s conclusion that the lot’s relatively short 57.66’ depth justifies the proposed second-story with a minimal setback from the first floor façade, suggests that staff considers any constraints on building size imposed by the Guide to be trumped by an applicant’s desire to build a larger house. Interpreting the Guide’s criteria in this manner renders the Guide’s building mass provisions effectively inoperative and sets a bad precedent, opening the door to the elimination of Alameda’s historic one-story neighborhoods to allow full second story structures.

Although staff helpfully attached the Guide’s sections for second story additions on pages 18–22 and 52, the attachment omitted the key provisions on pages 4–6 and page 51 discussed above. We have therefore attached these pages, along with page 52, whose key provision in Bullet 3 is reflected in the left illustration on page 51.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. Please contact me at (510)523-0411 or [cbuckleyaicp@att.net](mailto:cbuckleyaicp@att.net) if you would like to discuss these comments.

Sincerely,

Christopher Buckley, President  
Alameda Architectural Preservation Society

Attachments: AAPS March 14, 2016 letter  
Excerpts from the Guide to Residential Design

By Electronic Transmission:

cc: Mayor and City Council  
Debbie Potter, Andrew Thomas, Allen Tai and Linda Barrera, Alameda Community Development  
Department  
AAPS Board and Preservation Action Committee



March 14, 2016

(By Electronic Transmission)

Ms. Linda Barrera  
City of Alameda Community Development Department  
2263 Santa Clara Avenue  
Alameda, CA. 94501

**Subject: PLN16-0039 Proposed alterations to 3244 Sterling Avenue**

Dear Ms. Barrera:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the design of the proposed remodel and addition to the residence at 3244 Sterling Avenue . The design makes a clear and well intentioned attempt to integrate a new second story addition with the California Bungalow architectural style of the existing first floor residence.

However, the proposed design is not consistent with the following provisions of the Guide to Residential Design section of the City's Design Review Manual.

1. **Guiding Parameter 1 (Page 5 of the Guide).** This parameter requires that in neighborhoods of "cohesive style", such as Sterling Avenue and other similar areas such as Burbank Street, projects follow the established style of that neighborhood. This parameter is further informed by the provisions in the Guide's new construction section that require in predominately one-story neighborhoods, such as Sterling Avenue, second stories be set back sufficiently to maintain the one story look of the streetscape. See Figure IV-3 on page 51 and Bullet 3 on page 52. Although the subject project is not entirely new construction, the impacts of the second-story addition are the same as those addressed on pages 51 and 52 of the Guide and the clear intent of the Guide is to preserve existing strong one story neighborhood character, especially within architecturally distinctive streetscapes such as Sterling Avenue.
2. **Provisions for adding second stories to bungalows pages 20–22.** These provisions of the Guide clearly specify that any second-story addition to a bungalow either be:
  - a) designed as a new half-story within an expanded roof envelope with side facing gables as part of a 1 1/2 story structure, or
  - b) constructed at the back of house with the new additional space being built over a low slab on grade foundation system and with the floor to ceiling heights of both new first and second floors of the addition being kept to a minimum so that the visually apparent

portions of the addition do not dominant the appearance of the existing house from the street.

The proposed project uses neither of these approaches with its design and proposes to cover the entire existing first floor with a new second floor.

Although the house next door has previously been remodeled and a full second floor added over the entire existing first floor, it was a reaction to this type of project and other similar projects in this neighborhood that led to the development of the Guide. The existing historically important neighborhoods on Sterling Avenue, Liberty Avenue and much of Garfield Avenue are predominately single story homes in the California Bungalow style. When residents first started altering these houses and adding second floors the adjacent neighbors objected and the City developed the Guide so that subsequent new alterations and additions would not compromise the overall character of this area of Alameda. The Guide remains in effect today and is an important way for the City to preserve the architectural character of historically noteworthy neighborhoods.

Approval of the project as proposed will set a bad precedent by encouraging construction of second-story additions within one story Bungalow neighborhoods with no effort to maintain a one-story streetscape using the techniques set forth on pages 20–22 and page 51 of the Guide.

**The Alameda Architectural Preservation Society (AAPS) requests that the design of this project not be permitted as proposed and that the applicant be asked to develop a new design that is in conformance with the Guide to Residential Design.**

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment. Please contact me at (510)523-0411 or [cbuckleyaicp@att.net](mailto:cbuckleyaicp@att.net) if you would like to discuss these comments.

Sincerely,

Christopher Buckley, President  
Alameda Architectural Preservation Society

By Electronic Transmission:

cc: Mayor and City Council  
Alameda Planning Board  
Debbie Potter, Andrew Thomas and Allen Tai, Alameda Community Development Department  
AAPS Board and Preservation Action Committee

# GUIDE TO RESIDENTIAL DESIGN EXCERPTS

## **STATEMENT OF VALUES**

The City of Alameda and its residents take great pride in the architectural quality of Alameda's established neighborhoods and historic identity. In the building and remodeling of individual buildings, the community wishes to maintain its continuity with its past. All of Alameda's neighborhoods have a valued context that is defined by buildings sharing qualities of mass, height and character, and any potential changes must blend into this context. In addition, many individual buildings have historic or architectural value above and beyond their neighborhood contexts. A key objective of the *Guide to Residential Design* is to maintain the defining characteristics, including the details and materials of these buildings, as well as the overall character of a neighborhood.

## **APPLICABILITY AND RELATION TO THE DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS**

The *Guide to Residential Design* applies to all residential projects requiring Design Review approval pursuant to Chapter 30, Development Regulations, and will be used as a basis for determining whether to grant such approval. For residential projects, the *Guide to Residential Design* constitutes the Design Review Manual referred to in subsections 30-37.5 and 30-38.5 of the Development Regulations.

## GUIDING PARAMETERS

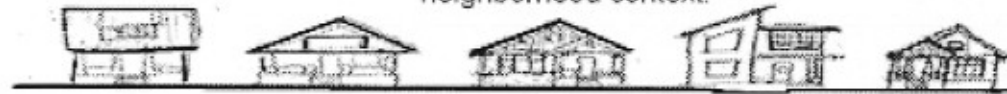
The City of Alameda's Design Review process attempts to balance a project sponsor's development objectives and/or creative desires with the community's desire to preserve and enhance its architectural quality and historic identity. The following three guiding parameters are intended to provide guidance to design professionals, property owners, and the Design Review decision makers in establishing this balance of individual and community interests which is to be found through the design review process.

The following three Guiding Parameters establish the basis for the *Guide to Residential Design's* more detailed provisions which follow. In order for a design review application to be approved, a finding must be made that the project conforms to the *Guide to Residential Design*. However, exceptions to the *Guide's* detailed provisions can be made if the City's Design Review staff determines that the project conforms to the Guiding Parameters. In these cases, staff, must identify the provisions with which the project does not conform as part of the findings and with which Guiding Parameters the project does conform.

FIRST PARAMETER: The range of possibilities is established by the neighborhood context. One of the most cherished qualities of Alameda's historic neighborhoods is the wide variety of character between the neighborhoods and the historic architectural styles found within the neighborhoods. Many neighborhoods in Alameda have no one dominant style and, therefore, can accommodate a more eclectic range of architectural design. Other Alameda neighborhoods contain buildings of cohesive styles that cannot accommodate an overly eclectic range of architectural design. Some especially cohesive areas, such as the bungalows on Burbank Street, require that any new construction closely follow the established style of that neighborhood. Generally, the "neighborhood" for this parameter is defined as that immediate area within visual range of the subject site - which is often the subject site and opposite block face.

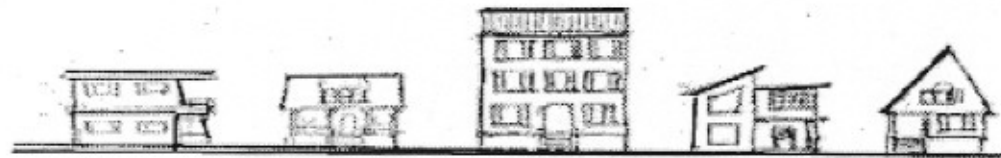


**FIRST PARAMETER:** The range of possibilities is established by the neighborhood context.



*Some neighborhoods require a constant architectural style.*

*Inconsistent with prevailing architectural style.*



*While others can allow for a greater degree of variety.*

**SECOND PARAMETER:** As buildings fit into neighborhoods, additions fit into buildings. Just as the neighborhood context establishes the parameters of appropriate design for an individual building - the massing and style of the existing building will establish the parameters of appropriate design for an individual addition or remodel. The massing, style, fenestration and design elements of the addition or remodel should appear as integral elements of the existing building. Design elements should be architecturally compatible to those of the existing building.

### FIGURE IV-3: INFILL CONSTRUCTION -- HEIGHT

*In this predominantly one story neighborhood, set back second stories, if consistent with the building's architectural style.*



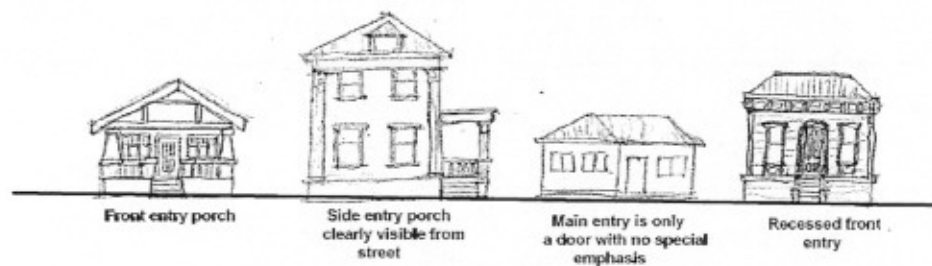
two story building out of  
scale with neighborhood.



stepped back  
second story

### FIGURE IV - A: INFILL CONSTRUCTION -- PEDESTRIAN ENTRIES

Emphasize main pedestrian entries with porches or similar treatments and make these clearly visible from the street.



DO NOT DO THIS

## **Architectural Considerations**

- Infill projects should incorporate the distinctive architectural characteristics of development in the surrounding neighborhood. For example: window and door spacing/rhythm, building materials, roof style and pitch, finished-floor height, porches, and the like.
- Similarity of architectural detail may be accomplished by the use of cornices, lintels, braces, arches, decorative woodwork, chimneys, stairs, etc. This similarity of detail is extremely important in ensuring a compatible appearance in new construction.
- The height of new infill projects must be considered within the context of their surroundings. Buildings with greater height should consider setbacks at the second story to reduce impacts on adjacent buildings.
- The incorporation of balconies and porches within the building form is encouraged for both practical and aesthetic value. These elements should be integrated to break up large front facades and add human scale to buildings.
- Emphasize main pedestrian entries with porches or similar treatments and make these clearly visible from the street.
- A variety of materials, when properly used, can reinforce the distinctiveness of the neighborhood. Common materials are brick, stone, wood, and stucco. Used properly, materials can enhance desired neighborhood qualities (i.e., compatibility, continuity, similarity, harmony, etc.) The design of infill projects should incorporate an appropriate mixture of the predominant materials in the area whenever possible.

June 1, 2016

Planning Board  
City of Alameda  
2263 Santa Clara Avenue  
Alameda, CA 94501

Re: **Letter in Support of Design Review Application No. PLN-0039**

Dear Honorable President and Members of the Planning Board:

My name is Pam Conway and my husband, Jose (Fernando) Burke, and I live with our family at 3200 Sterling Avenue. We purchased our original split-level home in October of 1993. We have lived on this Sterling Avenue corner for 23 years. We have raised our family here, participated in our son's school and community sports activities, and will continue to reside on Sterling Avenue well into the future. The Fobian's proposal was first brought to our attention with a letter from Anne and Ted Rogers; 3240 Sterling Avenue, who are appealing the design application for the home belonging to Jarred and Catrina Fobian; 3244 Sterling Avenue.

We are highly supportive of the Fobian's architectural plan to expand their home and find it to be an excellent example of dedication to architectural integrity and consideration of their Sterling Avenue neighbors. We are in awe of their dedication to remaining in our neighborhood and raising their family. All of us work hard to keep our homes, and having such invested neighbors, who want the same, is truly the icing on the cake".

During the years we have lived here, there have been a variety of neighbors who have come and gone. Neighbors who were contributing, and supportive,, and those, who were not. We all have little room to expand. This is a situation we live with daily, and one that we **chose**, by moving to this street. We are not a gated community. We do not pay home owner dues. We have no historical plaque placed outside our home. We are fortunate to live in an East End neighborhood, next to working families who care in general, about our home's appearance, making improvements, and cherishing neighbors who want the same. **We support the look and feel of this neighborhood.** We don't require statistics, historic rules and unsolicited letters from individuals who have an "ax to grind" for their own purposes. We all live in each other's home's shadows, experience annual lighting changes, parking problems, privacy issues, noise from High Street, drive through speeders, and the desire to enhance our property's value, while adding comfort for our families. These issues are no different than any other Alameda community. We want neighbors, who want to be in this street community. We encourage a feeling of cohesion, not animosity.

After reviewing the online information provided by the City of Alameda Planning Department and their recommendations, and by talking with Jarred and Catrina Fobian themselves, we are convinced that this growing family is intent on being able to stay in our neighborhood, contributing to our street community, has taken into consideration the appearance and sensitivity of the 1920 Bungalow style, and has gone to great lengths and expense to conform to all required planning categories.

**We strongly support the Fobian Family's proposed project** and welcome and appreciate having a family this interested in our street's community. We urge you to listen to staff's recommended approval, and allow this family the room to stay and enhance our street.

Sincerely,

*Pam Conway and Jose Fernando Burke*

Pam Conway and Jose Fernando Burke  
3200 Sterling Avenue  
Alameda, CA 94501

Planning Board  
City of Alameda  
City Hall  
2263 Santa Clara Ave. Alameda, CA 94501

**In Support of Fobian Family Proposed Addition**

Dear Planning Board,

My name is Loretta Carroll and I live at 3292 Sterling Avenue. I wrote in support of the Fobians on April 19<sup>th</sup> and continue to support the Fobian Family's planned home addition. I have seen the revisions to the proposed plans and wonder why it is has not already been approved. It appears to me that the project is designed to be both compatible with their house and our neighborhood. It also, according, to City staff, is in compliance with the City's laws.

I stand behind the Fobian Family and their efforts to design an attractive addition to their home that will serve their family's needs. I hope that, despite the appeal, you will support your staff's continued approval and allow the Fobian Family to proceed with a project that will certainly contribute to the value of the neighborhood as a whole.

With thanks,

Loretta Mitchell-Carroll

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Loretta Mitchell-Carroll". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with large, connected letters.



## Linda Barrera

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**From:** Laura Lake <laurainalameda@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Saturday, June 04, 2016 10:08 AM  
**To:** Linda Barrera  
**Subject:** Re: 3244 Sterling Avenue Revised Plans

Linda- sorry for the delay in getting back to you. I wanted to really absorb the plans and get my temper under control.

It looks as though the homeowners at 3244 have not absorbed what the planning board recommended to them. The front elevation is completely unchanged, and the second story does not appear to be subordinate to the first story. I do see a slight change on the side to the west

This demonstrates a complete disregard to the friendly, measured advice the planning board offered the homeowners, as well as the conciliatory, open stance the neighborhood adopted. It is clear these homeowners have no sense of stewardship for the beautiful house they occupy, nor for the block on which it stands or the unique, historic city of Alameda.

Although we could drive through town looking for horrible examples of mangled historic houses, wrought before people were aware of the damage they were doing, that would be a false errand. What we are trying to do now is preserve the historic riches of our city. If something as tone deaf as this addition is allowed, it opens the door for Alameda to lose its beauty and unique value as a city of historic homes. An attitude of stewardship, cognisant that we are preserving living history for the future generations, is what is required

I urge the planning board to reject these plans, and to persevere in their original recommendations.  
Laura Lake, homeowners 3235 Sterling Ave

On May 25, 2016 11:42, "Linda Barrera" <[LBarrera@alamedaca.gov](mailto:LBarrera@alamedaca.gov)> wrote:

Hello Mrs. Lake,

I am reaching out to inform you that Catrina and Jarred Fobian have submitted revisions for their second story addition at 3244 Sterling Avenue. Attached is a copy of the revised plans. I would be happy to discuss the revisions with you and get your feedback on the revised project. Please feel free to contact me at your convenience via phone or email.

The Planning Board will hold a public hearing to consider the revised design on Monday, June 13, 2016 at City Hall 2263 Santa Clara Avenue, Council Chambers at 7:00 p.m. You are invited to attend and participate in the hearing.

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully,

Linda Barrera

Planner I

City of Alameda, Permit Center

[\(510\) 747-6870](tel:(510)747-6870)

[LBarrera@alamedaca.gov](mailto:LBarrera@alamedaca.gov)