

Jeff and Alison Speckels  
1117 Versailles Ave.  
Alameda, CA 94501

March 12, 2018

David Sablan, Project Planner, City of Alameda  
Community Development Department  
2263 Santa Clara Avenue, Room 190  
Alameda, CA 94501-4477

Dear Mr. Sablan,

As the owner of property near the proposed room addition and remodel of 1123 Versailles Ave., we want to express the following comments, concerns, and questions regarding this project:

1) The addition and remodel increases the square footage of the existing home from 974 sq. feet to 2546 sq. feet. This is an increase of 1572 sq. feet, or 2.61 times the original size of the home. ***This is an increase of 161 %*** or the equivalent of building another home as an “addition.”

2) The home being remodeled is a Craftsman home built in 1921 (<https://www.redfin.com/CA/Alameda/1123-Versailles-Ave-94501/home/720840>). It is part of a row of historical single-family Craftsman homes on Versailles Avenue with the same/similar designs and footprints (data gathered from Redfin on 3/12/18):

Address:	Year Built:	Home Size (sq. ft):	Bed/Bath #:	Lot Size (sq. ft):
1109	1921	1097 sq. ft.	3/1	4080 sq. ft.
1113	1922	1095 sq. ft.	3/1	4200 sq. ft.
1117	1918	1065 sq. ft.	2/1	4320 sq. ft.
1121	1921	928 sq. ft.	2/1	4320 sq. ft.
<b>1123</b>	<b>1921</b>	<b>974 sq. ft.</b>	<b>2/1</b>	<b>4320 sq. ft.</b>
1125	1925	1096 sq. ft.	2/1	6000 sq. ft.
1129	1925	922 sq. ft.	2/1	4320 sq. ft.

The average home size of these properties is 1025 square feet. As such, the proposed addition to the home as 1123 Versailles will dwarf comparable homes around it by ***2.48 times (148%)***. It will change a 2/1 home into a 5/3 home. This change is extraordinary in scope and impact. It changes a single-family home into a multigenerational home. This was not what the neighborhood was designed for. According to the Public Notice for Design Review dated 3/8/18, the “General Plan” for 1123 Versailles Ave is considered “Low-Density Residential,” with “Zoning: R-1

(One-Family Residential) Zoning District.” Changing this home in the proposed manner challenges this “General Plan” and “Zoning District.”

3) The proposed addition to 1123 Versailles extends the back of the home by a length of 27 feet and a height of 22 feet. (This home will therefore be roughly 27 feet longer than the homes next to it). This means that the windows on the second story of the proposed addition will look down directly into the backyards of, in particular, 1121 and 1125 Versailles (the yards of other homes will be visible as well, but these are the homes that will be most significantly impacted). This effectively eliminates backyard **privacy** for residents of these homes. Though the residents of these homes may be able to plant foliage to obscure some visibility, these plants would take time to grow and would be at cost to the residents of these homes.

4) Homes on this side of Versailles face south. Therefore, the sun moves east to west over the proposed addition. As such, **morning sunlight** will be blocked for 1121 and **afternoon/evening sunlight** will be blocked for 1125 Versailles. Plant life on these two properties will be impacted by the addition as will the residents’ ability to experience morning/evening light in their backyards. I am requesting that a shadow study be conducted so that an understanding of the addition’s affect on sunlight in adjacent properties can be fully realized.

5) While the remodel increases the home’s size by 161%, by adding three additional bedrooms to the home, it does not increase the size of the driveway or create a garage (there is currently **no garage** on the lot as, presumably, the historical garage was removed at some point—see more on this below). This means **most** parking for vehicles associated with this home will be parking on the street. Competition for street parking in the neighborhood is already challenging. The following information is useful for considering the impact that cars from this home could have on street parking:

a) According to the Census Bureau statistics for 2015, the average household in California owns **2 cars**  
<https://datausa.io/profile/geo/california/#demographics>. If the average size of a California household is 2.90 people  
([https://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/2010\\_census/cb11-cn137.html](https://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/2010_census/cb11-cn137.html)), this home (which will have the potential house at least 6 people—or as many as 10 people) will likely have **at least 4 or as many as 6 cars associated with it**. This is an unfair allotment of limited street parking, especially given the lack of attention to this issue given in the proposed addition and remodel.

On October 19, 2017 the Planning Permit Application was deemed the application incomplete and asked for information including the following, “The location of existing parking space(s).” Given concerns about adequate parking, what information was given to resolve this concern? Did this concern related to limited neighborhood parking or some other matter?

6) One further point regarding garages: All of the Craftsman homes referenced in point 2 (above) have detached garages set behind them **except** for 1123 Versailles. Most (if not all) of these garages are historical structures, built before 1942. (As the Public Notice for Design Review dated 1/25/18 states, 1123 Versailles is in a historical area of Alameda and “is located on the Historical Building Study List with a “B” designation.”) According to Alameda Municipal Code, “Any building that was constructed prior to 1942 shall not be demolished or removed without the approval of a certificate of approval issued by the Historical Advisory Board” (Ordinance 13-21.7).

The reason why this information is important is that the proposed addition (in it’s current incarnation) is only possible because there is **no garage** on the property—it extends the back of the original home by 27 feet and widens the footprint by two feet. Should other home owners in this row of Craftsmen houses feel compelled to follow the model set forth by the proposed addition to 1123 Versailles, they would not be able to do so without asking for permission to demolish or remove their garages—**historical structures**. (It would not be surprising or unreasonable if other current or future homeowners would be compelled to add large additions to their homes so that their homes would be comparable in size to 1123 Versailles.) Historical structures such as these garages are part of what gives Alameda its historical character. In fact, this historical character is one of the reasons **why** our family—and many others—moved to Alameda in the first place. We are deeply concerned that allowing for this addition would set a precedent that could endanger the preserved historical legacy and character of Alameda’s homes.

7) On the Planning Permit Application dated “received” on 9/20/17, home owner Shirley Xie provided the following project description: “Cover [sic] the exiting [sic] front bedroom to family room. Remodel the kitchen and existing bathroom. Adding two bedroom [sic] at rear of the existing building, and adding second stories at the rear of the existing building” (see attached document). Though elements of the final design of the room addition and remodel are evident on the paperwork, this description makes it seem that only two bedrooms would be added to the back of the home and that a “family room” would be created in the front of the home. The most recent plans are **very different** from this proposal, **changing the “family room” to a “living room,” adding four bedrooms instead of two, and adding an additional family room, office, and two bathrooms.**

Further, on the Public Notice for Design Review dated 1/25/18 (see attached document) the following was the description of the application:

**1123 Versailles Ave** - PLN17-0484 (Action Date 2-5-18) DESIGN REVIEW - The project consists of the construction of a two story addition at the rear of an existing one-story single family home. The existing home has a raised foundation and the story addition will have a slab on grade foundation. The addition siding, roof form and trim will match the existing residence. The property is located on the Historical Building Study List with a “B” designation. General Plan: Low-Density Residential

Zoning: R-1 (One-Family Residence) Zoning District. Environmental Determination: Exempt, Section 15301 - Existing Facilities. Project Planner: David Sablan, (510) 747-6873, [dsablan@alamedaca.gov](mailto:dsablan@alamedaca.gov)

On the Public Notice for Design Review dated 3/8/18 (see attached documents) the following was an updated description of the application. Highlighted are important pieces of information **previously unavailable to the public** and therefore not possible to respond to until this notice:

1123 Versailles Avenue - PLN17-0484 DESIGN REVIEW - The project consists of a two story addition at the rear of an existing split level single family residence. **The proposed addition will add approximately 1,572 square feet to an existing 974 square foot residence, will increase the overall height from 17' to 22'.** The addition is designed to integrate into the existing home using materials that match the existing house. General Plan: Low-Density Residential Zoning: R-1 (One-Family Residential) Zoning District. Environmental Determination: Exempt, Section 15301 - Existing Facilities. Project Planner: David Sablan, (510) 747-6873, [dsablan@alamedaca.gov](mailto:dsablan@alamedaca.gov)

This most recent Public Notice for Design Review reveals the full extent of the addition. Without seeing the highlighted information, and consulting floor plans (posted on the City of Alameda website on 3/7/18), it has been difficult to provide specific public comments before receiving the most recent notification. Further, the final proposal for the addition and remodel are far more extensive and impactful to neighboring properties than the original Planning Permit Application, and the previous Public Notice for Design Review suggest. As a result, it is likely that many residents of properties that will be impacted by this addition and remodel did not (and do not) have full awareness of the scope of this project and the impact it will have on them and their property.

8) According to the City of Alameda website, Design Review is “a program to conserve the value of property by encouraging construction of buildings that are compatible and harmonious, and discourage ***the construction of buildings that will have harmful effect upon surrounding properties***” (Staff Presentation on Design Review and Certificate of Approval Processes (Feb 5, 2015)). According to Alameda Municipal Code, this means that the changes to properties shall not adversely affect, “the desirability of other properties within the vicinity for their classified land uses” (Ordinance 30-35.2). Certainly, the definition of harmful is open to interpretation. However, the description of Design Review is specific regarding what is harmful in their “general criteria for all second story additions.” These criteria state, “The new building mass must not ‘loom’ over the street or neighboring yards” (Staff Presentation). Given the height and proximity of the proposed second story addition to neighboring property lines and backyards, this “new building mass” clearly “looms” and has a “harmful effect” on the properties adjacent to it by affecting their “desirability.”

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The Craftsman homes on the 1100 block of Versailles Ave are small single-family homes. Certainly, given the financial ability, the owners of these homes may like to

make additions and add square footage. This letter is not in opposition to making additions such as additional bedrooms, etc. The extent of this addition, however, crosses the line from "addition" to "re-creation." Though the front of the home may look the same from the street, the home itself will be vastly different from the homes around it. These changes will have a harmful, deleterious impact on neighboring properties. Approving this design will create a precedent for future addition and remodeling plans. **Please do not approve this design and pull it for review so that we can speak on it to the Design Review Board.**

Thank you for your time.

All the best,

Jeff and Alison Speckels  
1117 Versailles Ave.  
Alameda, CA 94501  
650-823-8835

Robert & Edith Tocchini

1121 Versailles Ave

Alameda, CA 94501

March 17, 2018

David Sablan, Project Planner, City of Alameda

Community Development Department

2263 Santa Clara Avenue, Room 190

Alameda, CA 94501-4477

Dear Mr. Sablan,

We are the homeowners living immediately adjacent to the property located at 1123 Versailles Ave that have proposed an addition and remodel of that home. We would like to express our concern and displeasure with the proposal.

When we originally heard about the remodel and addition from the owners we were pleased that they would be fixing a current eyesore in our neighborhood. As it was explained to us earlier, they wanted to add about 6-700 sq. ft. to their existing home. This is completely understandable and acceptable as it is also something we have dreamed about; adding another bathroom and bedroom would accommodate our family better.

We received the latest plans Saturday March 10, 2018, showing an addition/remodel of almost 1600 sq. ft. Converting a current 2 BR/1BA into a 5/3 with an "office" is not congruous with our area. This is NOT an addition; it is a remaking of a charming vintage craftsman home into a hulking behemoth that does not fit on our street. There are no other homes of this proposed size anywhere on our street. Allowing an addition of this size would set an unsettling precedent to convert current small homes into large multi-generational dwellings capable of housing 10 or more people. This would be destroying the tight knit community feeling we have here on our street in Alameda. As there is no garage on the property, they only have the driveway to park vehicles off our already crowded street. With the ability to house that many people, it is possible that they will be adding 3-4 cars fighting for the limited resource of parking spaces.

Taking a closer look at the plans, we would also like to express our concern over the length, height and width of the addition. Extending the home back 27 feet consumes much of their yard, which is none of our business. But, the addition will loom over our backyard at 22 feet high with windows looking

directly into our once private yard. This addition will also be blocking all the morning sunlight into our yard inhibiting our plants and garden. Our East facing windows from our bedroom will also be blocked from morning sun and they will be able to look directly in without window coverings.

This proposed addition does not sit well with us and we are emphatically against and willing to protest the size of the addition. We think that this is a gross violation of what is normal for our neighborhood and does not fit in with the standards of the community. The proposed addition is not compatible nor harmonious with surrounding properties. We are vehemently opposed to the outrageous size of this re-making of a home on our street.

We would like to encourage a discussion between the neighborhood and the owners so that all parties can come to a compromise on this situation.

Thank you very much for your time

Robert & Edith Tocchini

**David Sablan**

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**From:** Bonnie Calestini <b.callie@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 20, 2018 5:29 AM  
**To:** David Sablan  
**Subject:** 1123 Versailles Avenue - PLN17-0484

I have owned my home since 1977, and the plans for the above home are way out Of range for this neighborhood....the plans would shade our home, our back yard And effect our driveway as well. This sounds more like an apartment house. Please rethink these plans as they do effect our whole neighborhood. Not to mention our Parking....

Thank you for your consideration

Sincerely,  
Bonnie L. Calestini  
1125 Versailles Avenue  
Phone 510-522-5296