



CITY OF BURLINGAME PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

Agenda Item: 8c	Hearing Date: August 11, 2025
Project No.	DSR25-0004
Location	121 Pepper Avenue APN: 028-274-210
Applicant	John Phillips, A&E Design
Property Owner	Colin Mistele and Katherine Rafanelli
Staff	Erika Lewit, Senior Planner
General Plan Designation	Low Density Residential
Zoning	R-1 (Low Density Residential)
Lot Area	32,580 SF

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Review of an application for Major Design Review and Special Permits for plate height and attached garage for a new, one-story single-unit dwelling and attached garage in the R-1 (Low Density Residential) zoning district.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Planning Commission, by resolution, approve Major Design Review and Special Permits as conditioned.

BACKGROUND

The subject property is located within the Burlingame Park No. 3 subdivision. Based upon documents that were submitted to the Planning Division by a Burlingame property owner in 2009, it was indicated that the entire Burlingame Park No. 2, Burlingame Park No. 3, Burlingame Heights, and Glenwood Park subdivisions may have historical characteristics that would indicate that properties within this area could be potentially eligible for listing on the National or California Register of Historical Places. Therefore, for any property located within these subdivisions, a Historic Resource Evaluation must be prepared prior to any significant development project being proposed to assess whether the existing structure(s) could be potentially eligible for listing on the National or California Register of Historical Places.

A Historic Resource Evaluation was prepared for this property by Page & Turnbull, Inc., dated May 28, 2024. The results of the evaluation concluded that 121 Pepper Avenue does not appear to be individually eligible for listing in the National or California Registers under any criteria.

The subject property is an interior lot and currently contains a two-story single-unit dwelling, a detached two-car garage, and a detached pool house. The applicant proposes demolishing all existing structures on the site and building a new, one-story single-unit dwelling with an attached two-car garage. The total proposed floor area would be 11,389 SF (0.35 FAR), where 11,526 SF (0.35 FAR) is the maximum allowed (includes additional floor area for ceiling heights greater than 12 feet, and basement and covered front porch exemptions).

The applicant is requesting a Special Permit for first floor plate heights of 10'-0" on the outer portions of the dwelling and 15'-0" for the middle portion, where 9'-0" is the maximum allowed. The proposed truss construction for most of the building creates a 10-foot plate and ceiling height, but there is an

added 2-foot tall energy heel for the truss which brings the exterior appearance of the plate to 12'-0". A Special Permit is also requested to construct a new attached garage. The attached garage is setback 61'-0" from the front property, where 55'-0" is required based on the block average.

The proposed dwelling contains nine rooms that meet the code definition of a bedroom, although two potential bedrooms are labeled on the floor plan for use as offices and one is labeled for use as an exercise room. Three parking spaces, two of which must be covered, are required on site for the number of proposed bedrooms. The attached garage provides two covered parking spaces (24'-9" x 28'-0" clear interior dimensions) and one uncovered parking space (9' x 18') is provided in the driveway. The proposed project is in compliance with off-street parking requirements.

An Arborist Reported, dated April 7, 2025, was prepared by Kielty Arborist Services to evaluate the existing trees on the site with respect to the proposed project (attached). The existing site contains a total of 55 trees, three of which are protected size. A total of 46 trees, including one protected size (41.7-inch diameter Deodar cedar), are proposed to be removed as they are in decline or conflict with the proposed construction. The Parks Division reviewed the Arborist Report and has no objection to the proposed tree removal, however notes that a Protected Tree Removal Permit will be required. Based on the proposed floor area, nine landscape trees are required on-site. As part of this project, 31 new trees are proposed, including eight olive trees, 13 Crepe Myrtle trees, one Camphor tree in the rear yard, and nine Madrone trees along the right and left sides of the property; these species have been accepted by the Parks Division. With the 31 proposed trees and the five trees (Tree # 1, 2, 4, 6 and 7 from the Arborist Report) to be retained on site, the project complies with the Urban Reforestation and Tree Protection Ordinance. There are no existing or proposed street trees along the parcel frontage.

The applicant is requesting the following application:

- Major Design Review for a new, one-story single-unit dwelling and attached garage (C.S. 25.68.020.C.1.a. and C.S. 25.68.020.C.1.f.);
- Special Permit for first floor plate heights of 10'-0", 12'-0", and 15'-0" where 9'-0" is the maximum allowed (C.S. 25.10.035.6.); and
- Special Permit for construction of a new garage attached to a single-unit dwelling (C.S. 25.10.035.1.).

ANALYSIS

The proposed project has been designed in accordance with the Residential Design Guidelines and R-1 zoning district development standards. While the proposed modern architectural style is not prevalent in the neighborhood, there are two examples of existing modern architecture at 133 and 149 Pepper Avenue. Therefore the proposed single-unit dwelling is complimentary to the context of the other homes on the block both in overall style and in that with the modern design repeats some traditional elements, such as a recessed covered front porch, hip roofs, articulated massing, and proportional fenestration throughout. The proposed design is compatible with the mixed style of homes on this block because of the use of high quality materials. The proposed attached garage respects the parking patterns in the neighborhood in that there several other dwellings with attached garages on this block and the site design mimics the existing car court in front of the subject site and on several of the larger properties in the neighborhood. Staff does not have any suggested changes for the Planning Commission to consider.

June 9, 2025 Planning Commission Meeting

At the Planning Commission study meeting on June 9, 2025, the Commission had several suggestions regarding this project and voted to place this item on the Action Calendar when all information has been submitted and reviewed by the Planning Division.

The applicant submitted revised plans, date stamped July 24, 2025, to address the Planning Commission's comments. Below is a summary of the Commission's comments and changes made to the project.

1. Provide additional attention to the siding choices with more horizontal details to accentuate the home.

- The applicant reduced vertical elements or added horizontal design elements with the following revisions: Chimney at the left side of the dwelling was eliminated; the main roof ridge at the center of the dwelling was reduced in width by three feet; the garage door panels are aligned horizontally instead of vertically; and a 645 SF trellis with a horizontal timber beam was added as a horizontal element across the full length of the front dwelling facade. To maintain continuity of design, the same beam and steel trellis elements have been added at the rear loggia. Please refer to the revised building elevations and renderings.

2. Reconfigure the front façade and garage for a better interaction between the street and the house.

- The previously proposed low wall enclosing the front courtyard (aligned with the front walls of the dwelling) has been setback an additional 10'-4" to allow for more landscaping to be visible from the street.

A 645 SF attached trellis with a stained wood horizontal beam, steel trellis members, and six stained wood vertical support columns with a 10'-0" plate height has been added across the width of the front of the dwelling; this trellis will be planted with a Wisteria vine as detailed on Landscape Sheet L100.

3. Enhance the landscaping by softening some of the hardscape at the front of the house.

- The applicant has reconfigured the front setback area to reduce paving and add approximately 240 SF of extra landscaped area located between the front property line and the front setback for the dwelling.

The addition of the trellis at the front façade and the greenery growing atop the trellis provides a vertical landscaping to soften front façade.

4. Concerned about the house going to the full width of the property, to the minimum required side setbacks.

- The footprint has been adjusted to increase the setback at the right, front side of the property from 8'-7" to 12'-6", and the majority of the side setback on that side has been increased from 8'-7" to 9'-0".

5. Add more welcoming finish materials and exterior design details to create interest and warmth.

- Refer to the revisions outlined in #1-3 above.

6. Address shading on the south-facing wall to reduce sun exposure and heat gain.

- The applicant and owner feel the proposed shrubs along the left side property line and the existing landscaping on surrounding properties sufficiently addresses these concerns.

Table 1: Project Information

Table 1 below compares the proposed project to the development standards for a single-unit dwelling based on the R-1 zoning district.

	PROPOSED	ALLOWED/REQ'D
Front Setback (1st flr): Attached Garage:	61'-0" 61'-0"	55'-0" (block average) 35'-0"
Side Setback (left): (right):	7'-2" to 7'-11" 7'-11" to 12'-6"	7'-0" 7'-0"
Rear Setback (1st flr):	44'-7"	15'-0"
Lot Coverage:	10,102 SF 31%	13,032 SF 40%
FAR:	11,389 SF 0.35 FAR	11,526 SF ¹ 0.35 FAR
Off-Street Parking:	2 covered (24'-9" x 28'-0" clear interior) 1 uncovered (9' x 18')	2 covered (20' x 18' clear interior) 1 uncovered (9' x 18')
Building Height:	24'-6"	30'-0"
Plate Height (1st flr):	10'-0", 12'-0", and 15'-0" ²	9'-0"
DH Envelope:	n/a	C.S. 25.10.055 A.1.

¹ (0.32 x 32,580 SF) + 1,100 SF = 11,526 SF (0.35 FAR).

² For the majority of the dwelling, the bottom of the truss has a 10-foot plate height, which is also the ceiling height. However the truss also has an energy heel that is 2-feet tall and aligns with the top of parapet at 12 feet. The center of the structure has a 15-foot plate height.

Summary of Proposed Exterior Materials

- **Windows:** aluminum clad wood with simulated true divided lites
- **Doors:** stained wood front door and horizontal plank stained wood garage doors
- **Siding:** 1'-0" tongue and groove or stained shiplap vertical wood siding
- **Roof:** standing seam metal
- **Other:** front trellis with stained wood horizontal beam, steel cross members, and support columns with vertical stained white wood

Design Review Criteria

The criteria for design review as established in Ordinance No. 2000 adopted by the City Council on December 6, 2021 are outlined as follows:

1. Consistency with any applicable design guidelines;
2. Compatibility of the architectural style with that of the existing character of the neighborhood;
3. Respect for the parking and garage patterns in the neighborhood;
4. Architectural style and consistency and mass and bulk of structures, including accessory structures;
5. Interface of the proposed structure with the structures on adjacent properties;
6. Landscaping and its proportion to mass and bulk of structural components; and
7. In the case of an addition, compatibility with the architectural style and character of the existing structure as remodeled.

Environmental Review

The project is Categorically Exempt from review pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), per Section 15303 (a) of the CEQA Guidelines, which states that construction of a limited number of new, small facilities or structures, including one single-family residence, or a second dwelling unit in a residential zone, is exempt from environmental review. In urbanized areas, this exemption may be applied to the construction or conversion of up to three (3) single-family residences as part of a project.

Attachments:

Area Map
Public Comment Emails
Historical Resource Evaluation, dated May 28, 2024
Arborist Report, dated January 9, 2025 and revised April 7, 2025
Resolution
Proposed Plans dated July 24, 2025
Previous Plans dated May 13, 2025