



CITY OF BURLINGAME PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

Agenda Item: 7a	Hearing Date: October 14, 2025
Project No.	AMEND25-0005
Location	1033 Cortez Avenue APN: 026-166-040
Applicant and Architect	Elaine Lee, Elaine Lee Design
Property Owners	VS Investments LLC
Staff	Erika Lewit, Senior Planner
General Plan Designation	Low Density Residential
Zoning	R-1 (Low Density Residential)
Lot Area	6,000 SF

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Review of an application for Amendment to Major Design Review for changes to a previously approved new, two-story single-unit dwelling in the R-1 (Low Density Residential) zoning district.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Planning Commission, by resolution, approve the Amendment to Major Design Review as conditioned.

Originally Approved Project

An application for Major Design Review and Special Permits for second floor plate height, second floor deck, and side setback to a detached garage for a new, two-story single-unit dwelling was approved by the Planning Commission on November 12, 2024.

The subject property is an interior lot that abuts Sanchez Creek along the left side property line and then crosses the property at the rear, left corner. The originally approved project was for a new, two-story dwelling and detached garage with a floor area of 3,304 SF (0.55 FAR) where 3,304 SF (0.55 FAR) is the maximum allowed (including 87 SF covered front porch exemption).

In November 2024 the applicant submitted an Accessory Dwelling Unit application to convert the approved, not-yet built garage to an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) and this application received ministerial approval on January 6, 2025. The building permit for the new dwelling and detached ADU was issued on August 8, 2025.

Proposed Project

Proposed changes to the original approval include revised window trim throughout the dwelling, changes to several window and door sizes, reconfiguration of the stairs at the rear deck, and a minor increase to the lot coverage. The proposed revisions are detailed as follows:

All Elevations

- Decorative wood lintels previously approved for several windows at the front, left, and side elevations have been added to most of the windows and doors on all elevations.

- Approved windows and French doors were black aluminum clad wood and are proposed to be black fiberglass clad wood; previously approved and proposed windows both have simulated true divided lites with muntins on the exterior and interior of the windows and spacer bars between the glass.

Front Elevation

- Front porch columns have been simplified in design and the width has been increased to 14 inches square.

Rear Elevation

- Lower floor game room doors increased in height and decreased in width. Door under stairs to deck crawlspace area was eliminated.
- First and second floor doors and windows have been reconfigured.
- Rear uncovered deck, which is both first story and second story due to the slope on the lot, will be reconfigured so that the stairs extend directly into the rear yard instead of extending from the deck towards the side yard; the size of the second story portion of the deck will remain the same (61 SF approved where 75 SF is the maximum) and the first floor deck lot coverage will increase by 78 SF.

Left Elevation

- Lower level window in the game room increased in height by four inches (32 SF of window area increased to 35 SF of window area), first and second floor stair windows increased in height by 1'-6" (17.5 SF each window area approved, 25 SF each window area proposed); upper floor bedroom 1 windows reconfigured.

Right Elevation

- First floor pantry door increased in height.

The size of the approved second floor deck remains the same. The proposed changes to the approved plans extend the footprint of the proposed first story deck addition further into the rear yard so that the lot coverage on the site increases by 78 SF, from 2,067 SF (34.5%) to 2,145 SF (36%), where 2,400 SF (40%) is the maximum allowed. The approved FAR for the main dwelling remains the same with the proposed revisions.

The following application is requested for this project:

- Amendment to Major Design Review for changes to a previously approved new, two-story single-unit dwelling (Code Sections 25.68.020.C.1.a.).

ANALYSIS

Staff finds that the proposed changes are consistent with the previously approved design of the dwelling that was supported by the Planning Commission. Staff planner notes that the increased window sizes at the left side of the dwelling abut Sanchez Creek and the vegetation along the creek, and that the windows are located at least 26 feet from the structures on the adjacent lot to the left of the subject site.

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.

	ORIGINAL APPROVAL (10/22/24 plans)	PROPOSED (09/12/25 plans)	ALLOWED/REQ'D
Front Setback (1st flr): (2nd flr):	18'-10" 24'-4"	no change	18'-10" (block average) 20'-0"
Side Setback (left): (right):	4'-10" 10'-0"	no change	4'-0" 4'-0"
Rear Setback (1st flr): (2nd flr):	53'-8" 51'-8"	no change no change	15'-0" 20'-0"
Lot Coverage:	2,067 SF 34.5%	2,145 SF 36%	2,400 SF 40%
FAR:	3,304 SF ¹ 0.55 FAR 2,904 SF 0.49 FAR ²	no change for main dwelling	3,020 SF ³ 0.50 FAR
Off-Street Parking:	0 covered (detached 284 SF garage converted to ADU) 1 uncovered (9' x 18')	no change	0 covered 1 uncovered (9' x 18')
Building Height:	29'-0"	no change	30'-0"
Plate Height (1st flr): (2nd flr):	9'-0" 8'-7" ⁴	no change	9'-0" 8'-0"
DH Envelope:	complies	no change	C.S. 25.10.035.2
Second Floor Balcony:	61 SF ⁵	no change	75 SF

¹ (0.32 x 6,000 SF) + 1,100 SF + 284 (detached garage) = 3,304 SF (0.55 FAR).

² Reduction in approved FAR due to the conversion of the detached garage to an ADU that is exempt from floor area.

³ (0.32 x 6,000 SF) + 1,100 SF = 3,020 SF (0.50 FAR).

⁴ Special Permit previously approved for second floor plate height.

⁵ Special Permit previously approved for second floor deck.

Summary of Proposed Exterior Materials:

- **Windows:** fiberglass clad wood simulated true divided lites and spacer bars between (original approval was for aluminum clad wood)
- **Door and Window Trim:** wood sill and lentil
- **Doors:** wood entry door, fiberglass clad wood French doors
- **Siding:** wood shiplap and stucco siding
- **Roof:** composition shingles
- **Other:** steal railing, wood band board and frieze trim, wood corner trim and fascia

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), 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, up to three single-family residences may be constructed or converted under this exemption.

Attachments:

Area Map
Resolution
Proposed Plans, dated September 12, 2025
Previous Plans, dated October 22, 2024