



## Historic Resources Board

### Staff Report

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**Date:** August 15, 2007

**To:** Historic Resources Board

**From:** Dennis Backlund  
Historic Preservation Planner

**Department:** Planning and  
Community Environment

**Subject:** **1245 Waverley Street [07PLN-00199]:** Application for Historic Resources Board review and recommendation regarding a proposal to add two large new dormers and additional second-story floor area to a contributing residence in the Professorville Historic District. The project is located in the R-1(10,000) zone district and would require a Home Improvement Exception.

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the Historic Resources Board recommend approval of (a) the left façade dormer, (b) Design Option 2 for the street-facing dormer with the double-hung windows installed on the dormer wall without a projecting bay, and (c) the proposed new windows on the rear elevation, as acceptable under the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation regarding preservation of the overall character of the bungalow, and regarding the compatibility and differentiation of the proposed new construction with the historic house, the site, and the Professorville Historic District.

### **REVIEW PROVISIONS OF THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION ORDINANCE**

All applications for a building permit for alterations and new construction in a historic district shall be reviewed by the Historic Resources Board as provided by the Historic Preservation Ordinance in Municipal Code 16.49.050 (a). Compliance of the property owner with the recommendations of the Board shall be voluntary, not mandatory, as set forth in Municipal Code 16.49.050 (a)(1)(B). However, under the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act, the requested discretionary Home Improvement Exception can only be granted if the City finds that the overall project is acceptable under the Secretary's Standards for Rehabilitation.

## **THE HISTORIC HOUSE**

This is a one-and-one-half story hipped roof eclectic bungalow with some Colonial Revival, Prairie, and Craftsman references. Tax accessor records indicate that it was originally constructed in 1902, but this is incorrect because the bungalow is shown on the August 1901 Sanborn Map (the earliest Sanborn Map that covers this part of Waverley Street). The bungalow is designated as a “P” contributor to the Professorville Historic District but it is not individually designated to the Historic Inventory with a Category number. The house may have been built for A.C. Von Noe, a professor at Stanford whose residency is cited in the 1903 City Directory. By 1904 the house was occupied by G.H. Rowe, professor of electrical engineering at Stanford, and in 1906 a Mrs. J.H. Hoskins and her daughter had moved in. Board Member Beth Bunnenberg submitted a packet of information for the Board’s consideration regarding architectural aspects of the property, including Sanborn Maps, an early historic photo of Waverley Street showing the bungalow, and a 1990 Sunset Magazine article that shows the front of the bungalow in its present form before it was obscured by vegetation (Attachment A). Staff has enlarged this photo for the Board (see Attachment B). The photo reveals the following characteristics of the existing house:

- Horizontal orientation of the massing;
- Simplicity of form and ornamentation
- A dominant first floor and a subordinate half-story above.

Alterations to the house over the decades have generally preserved these characteristics, and additional alterations should take these characteristics into consideration to the maximum degree feasible in behalf of the continuing architectural unity of the house as it evolves (see Attachment C).

## **PERMIT HISTORY**

The permit history of the house includes the following items:

- 1961: Permit for a \$4000. remodel (not described).
- 1963: Development of two bedrooms and a bath in the attic.
- 1963: Permit for residential repair valued at \$1500.
- 1973: Plumbing permit for a water heater.
- 1984: Roofing permit for a tar and cap sheet (granulated) roof valued at \$550.
- 1987: A modern-style curved ribbon-window bay added to the street-facing façade. A contemporary Victorian-style front door and single sidelight added. A pair of awning casement windows installed in the small historic street-facing dormer. On the right façade: a large hipped dormer added with a band of four casement windows. A contemporary wood chimney added.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND STAFF COMMENTS**

The proposed project is presented by the applicant in Attachments D and E. The project goals are consistent with two essential expansion goals found throughout Palo Alto: to provide additional bedrooms and bathrooms for growing families. In the case of 1245 Waverley Street, the project is confined to the upper floor where two new large dormers allow the expansion goals to be met. The left elevation dormer allows an expanded master bath and the street-facing façade dormer allows an adequate bedroom with egress-compliant windows, and a small new laundry (a 1990 ground-level floor plan suggests that the current laundry opens directly into the family room which is not ideal).

Staff concludes that the proposed left elevation dormer complies with the Secretary's Standards for Rehabilitation (a) because it is located towards the rear of a secondary elevation, (b) because its very simple form makes it subordinate in character to the historic portion of the house, and (c) because the modestly scaled windows help the dormer to appear smaller than it actually is.

The street-facing dormer includes ornamental detailing (a projecting window bay, a sunburst, soffit returns, and brackets) which emphasizes the dormer as a decorative feature (the decoration is not in itself incompatible with the bungalow), but which also inadvertently increases the apparent size of the dormer to some degree. However it is the proposed 4-foot, nine-inch height of the windows in all three design options in the Plan Set that increases the apparent size of the dormer to the point that it could appear to overpower the design of the first floor and to change the orientation of the front façade from horizontal to vertical (thus changing the character of the house). Design Option 2 may be the most feasible because the design of the window grouping seems less vertically oriented. Staff concludes that the other design options would only be acceptable if the height of the windows were reduced.

Staff consulted with the Building Division regarding the minimum dimensions for bedroom windows, and understood the information given by the Division as follows: When an egress window is vertically oriented, the window opening needs to be a minimum of 20 inches wide and of a height (near to 3 feet) so that the total square footage of the opening is at least 5.7 square feet. When an egress window opening is horizontally oriented, then the height needs to be at least 20 inches and the width near to 3 feet so that the square footage of the open window area is a minimum of 5.7 square feet. Staff concluded that the most compatible window designs for the front dormer in the Plan Set are Options 1 (if the window height were reduced) and 2 on Sheet A5.a. The double-hung window (Option 2) opening is around 6 square feet. But the tall casement windows in Option 1 appear to each have an open window area of about 9.8 square feet. Therefore, if the Board recommends Option 1, staff would recommend the window height be reduced (this would reduce the available light in the interior, however). If the Board recommends Option 2, the window height could not be reduced, but this is

mitigated by the fact that the design in Option 2 appears to be more horizontally oriented, and it does not include brackets (which would increase the apparent height of the window grouping).

**KEY DECISIONS TO BE MADE BY THE HRB**

- Whether the proposed second-story street-facing dormer would conform to the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation regarding preservation of the historic character of the house, the site, and the Professorville Historic District.
- Whether the decorative details of the street-facing dormer are compatible from the standpoint of the apparent size and scale of the dormer.
- Whether the HRB should recommend conditions of approval for the project. Staff did not include conditions in its recommendation of Design Option 2 to the HRB.

**ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A: Packet of Architectural Information regarding 1245 Waverley Street. submitted by Board Member Bunnenberg.

Attachment B: Enlarged Photo of 1245 Waverley Street in 1990.

Attachment C: Current Photos of 1245 Waverley Street.

Attachment D: Project Description Letter submitted by the Applicant.

Attachment E: Project Plan Set (HRB Members Only).

**COURTESY COPIES**

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