

March 2, 2022

Arden Hills Planning Commission
City of Arden Hills
1245 West Highway 96
Arden Hills, MN 55112

Dear Planning Commission Members:

This letter will provide you with the building details of our proposed project. In addition to the details of the project we will provide the information that will hopefully result in the approval for a variance. A variance in this case is required for four reasons. They are: 1. Side Yard Setback, 2. Minimum Landscaped Area, 3. Maximum Structure Coverage and 4. Floor Area Ratio (FAR).

Before we address these standards I would like to give a short historical perspective relating to Hunters Park Addition. In the early 70's the City of Arden Hills approved a Planned Unit Development. The plans called for 68 homes along with common areas and common roadways. The common areas, or green space, was required to approve the small size of the lots. By the nature of the lot sizes the homes were built quite close together and in many instances were non-conforming with setbacks and other normal requirements. Whether the developers anticipated future additions to the homes no one knows, but given the configuration there most likely could be none without applying for a variance. Even faced with this, the city has approved 6 additions to homes in Hunters Park. We have no way of knowing which of these required a variance, but it seems likely that some, if not all, did.

According to the Hunters Park Home Owners Association bylaws any addition to a home must be approved by the Architectural and Environment Committee. We have received said approval and an email to that effect is included in our packet.

Details of the Project

Included with this letter will be copies of the land survey and architectural drawings that detail the dimensions as well as exterior view of the addition.

Currently, our home has a 20X12 deck on the rear (west side) of the house. We propose to remove that deck in its entirety and replace it with a two level 14X14 foot addition. The plans also include a 14X12 foot deck off of the north side of the addition. There will be a foundation laid and 2X6 walls will be built to frame in the addition. The lower level will have an 8 foot ceiling and the upper level will have 8 foot sidewalls with a vaulted ceiling. The exterior of both levels will be "batten board on sheeting" to conform with the current siding of the home. The roof of the addition will have two foot eaves on each side and in the peak. I refer you to the plans for the window and door placements along with the size. The current home has slider windows as will the addition. There will be a 14X8 concrete slab on the north side of the lower level. The upper level deck will have composite decking with aluminum railing. The roof will be gabled into the existing roof at a right angle. It will consist of standard architectural shingles matching the existing roof. The roof will be a 6/12 pitch. The addition on both levels will be electrically wired as per code. The upper level will be heated and cooled using a heat pump duplex system. The lower level will have electric heat.

Variance Details

- Side yard setback:** A variance is needed because the distance between our home and the neighbor to the north is 11.6 feet and not the required 15 feet. This is an existing non-conforming issue and is not exacerbated by the plans for this addition. All other set backs conform to city ordinance.
- Minimum Landscaped Area:** The minimum landscaped area allowed without a variance is 65% or 3900 square feet. The existing landscaped area is 3925 square feet or 65%. After the addition I calculated 3729 square feet which is 62% and would require a variance.

3. **Maximum Structure Coverage:** The maximum allowed structure coverage without a variance is 25% or 1500 square feet. The existing structure coverage is 1626 square feet or 27 %. I calculated 1822 square feet after the addition which is 30% and would require a variance. It should be noted that without the addition the house is currently non-conforming.
4. **Floor Area Ratio:** The maximum allowed FAR for R-3 without a variance is 0.3 which would be 1800 square feet. The existing floor area is 1837 square feet with an FAR of .31. I calculated 2188 square feet after the addition for an FAR of .36 and would require a variance.

Request for Variance

1. The property in question cannot be put to a reasonable use if used under conditions allowed by the official controls:

Not only is the home currently non-conforming, the requirements stated above would always preclude an improvement to the house without granting a variance. Wanting to improve the home would seem to be a reasonable pursuit and without a variance that cannot proceed.

2. The plight of the landowner is due to circumstances unique to the property not created by the landowner:

The purpose of the approved Planned Unit Development was to allow more homes in a smaller area creating permanent non-conforming issues. This was mitigated by requiring common green-space. This action created a situation that was clearly beyond our control for future improvements to the house.

3. The deviation from the Ordinance with any attached conditions will still be in keeping with the spirit and intent of the Ordinance:

The ordinance is likely meant to prevent over building and crowding within a neighborhood. We do not believe this type and size of addition in anyway creates an over-crowding or objectionable use. With the exception of the legal/non-conforming set back issue on the north side the plans do not require building beyond set backs currently in place. As such this addition is not causing additional crowding in the neighborhood.

4. The variance will not create a land use not permitted in the zone:

The addition is in an R-3 zone which is residential. If granted, these variance requests will result in further residential use.

5. The variance will not alter the essential character of the City:

This proposed addition is relatively small in the scheme of things. By and large, most homes in Arden Hills are one or two level structures with many of them having this type of addition. By maintaining the look of the existing house this addition should have no impact on the character of the city.

6. The variance is not for economic reasons alone:

There are no economic reasons for this variance request.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. I look forward to meeting with you and answering any questions you might have.

Sincerely,

William and Adrienne Guelker
651-503-8745 email: guelk001@comcast.net