DESIGN REVIEW BOARD STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: **January 25, 2010** REPORT WRITTEN: January 14, 2010

ITEM NUMBER: V. A. – DESIGN REVIEW

FILE NUMBER: **DRB 01-10 – AnaMaria and Roland Blaj (Applicant and Owners) 3 Woodford Drive** Application for approval of a porte-cochere (drive-through carport) structure over the existing driveway at the west side of a 2,141 square foot single story home at 3 Woodford Drive. APN 256-021-001

ZONING: Zoning: 3-DUA (Three dwelling units per acre)

CEQA STATUS: Categorically Exempt per Guidelines Section 15303(e) New Construction of accessory structures including garages, carports, patios, swimming pools, and fences.

APPLICATION SUMMARY:
Design Review Board approval is required for this application because the home at 3 Woodford Drive is a corner lot with an exterior side yard on Moraga Road. Moraga Municipal Code (MMC) Section 8.132.040 requires that the Board review all applications for buildings that can be seen from a designated scenic corridor road. Contra Costa County building records confirm that a 494 square foot garage was constructed on the property when the house was built in 1958. Apparently, this garage was converted to living space by a previous owner without a building permit. The new owners of the home are proposing additional modifications to the home with conversion of a large "family room" to bedrooms, a bathroom and a den. It is believed by staff that the "family room" was originally the garage for the home. MMC Section 8.76.100-A requires at least two covered off-street parking spaces for each single family residence. Since work had already started on some of the interior remodeling work, staff has placed a "hold" on the final inspection and occupancy for the new bedrooms, bathroom and den until the two required covered parking spaces are built.

PUBLIC NOTICE AND MAILING LIST:
In accordance with MMC Section 8.72.130(A)(1), written notice of the application for design review was mailed to all property owners and residents within three hundred (300) feet of the project site on Friday, January 15, 2010. A copy of the area of notice map, the mailing address list and the Public Notice are attached as **EXHIBIT A**. At the time the staff report was written, no correspondence has been received. If correspondence is received prior to the meeting, it will be sent separately or brought to the meeting.

DESIGN DESCRIPTION:
The proposed porte-cochere would be 11-feet wide by 40-feet long and 8-feet high. The structure has a flat roof with a minimum 2% slope and would be built over the existing circular driveway that connects Woodford Drive at the south side of the lot with Moraga Road at the north side of the lot. The structure would allow two cars to park in tandem under the roof.

The location of the property in relation to the adjacent homes on Woodford Drive and to Campolindo High School across Moraga Road is shown on the GIS aerial photo map below:

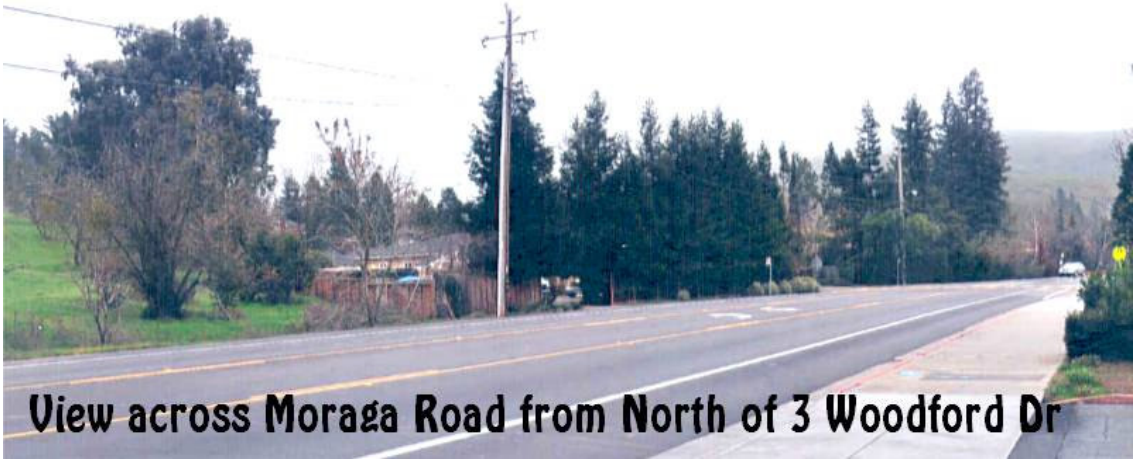
DESIGN ASPECTS TO BE CONSIDERED:

EXHIBIT B includes a discussion of the design aspects from Planning Commission Resolution 16-01. The proposed porte-cochere complies with the lot coverage, building setbacks and building height limitations for the 3-DUA zoning district. If the location of the property line along Moraga Road is plotted correctly on the applicant's plans, the southwest corner of the porte-cochere is located at the minimum 15-foot exterior side yard setback along Moraga Road. The building department will require a surveyor to verify that the posts are 15-feet from the west property line along Moraga Road. Since the home was originally built prior to the incorporation of the Town, the building setback can be measured to the posts of the porte-cochere and the roof may overhang into the setback. The proposed 8-foot height under the roof of the structure would not allow enough room for higher vehicles to pass through the porte-cochere, such as big pick-up trucks with camper shells or larger vans with higher roofs. Staff would recommend a 9 or 10 foot height to allow a greater number of vehicles to pass through. Compliance with the Scenic Corridor Ordinance is also discussed in **EXHIBIT B**. Although the project is within 500 feet of Moraga Road, the thick "hedge" of trees along the west side between the existing driveway and Moraga Road substantially obscures the view of the structure from Moraga Road (see photos on pages 3 and 4).

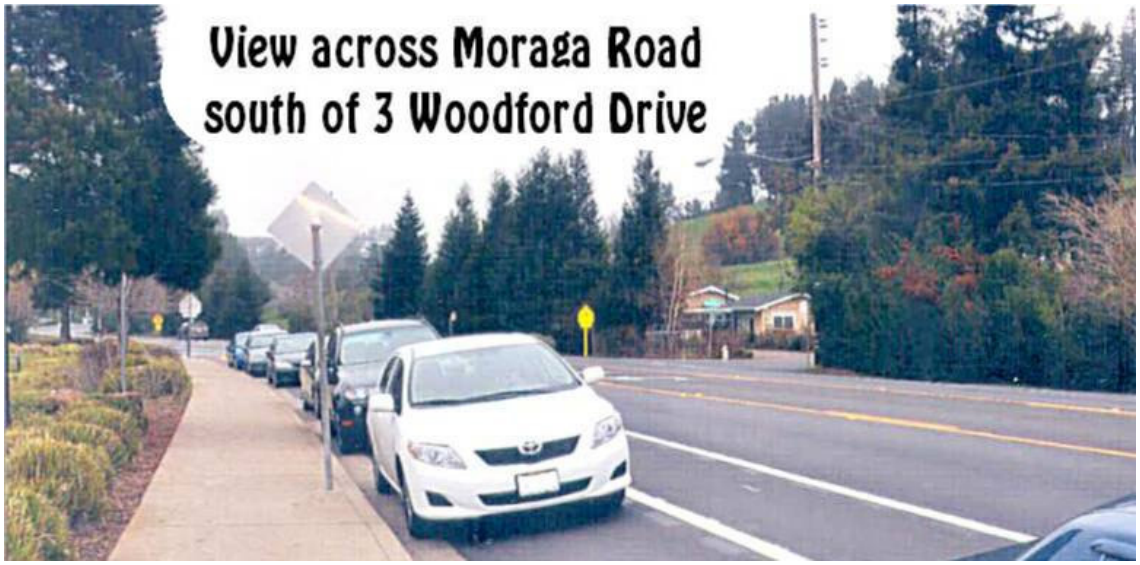
General Plan policy LU1.1 (Neighborhood Preservation) states that additions to existing structures should not have adverse impacts on existing residential neighborhoods. The home at 2 Woodford Drive has one window at the east side of the house that would have a view of the south end of the proposed porte-cochere, as shown in the photo on the next page.

View of south end of driveway taken from 2 Woodford Drive

The roof of the home at 3 Woodford Drive would block the view of the porte-cochere from the adjacent home at 5 Woodford Drive. The adjacent land north of 3 Woodford Drive is vacant.



View across Moraga Road from North of 3 Woodford Dr



View across Moraga Road south of 3 Woodford Drive

The new performing arts building at Campolindo High School is located directly across Moraga Road from the property.

View of 3 Woodford Drive from Campolindo High School

General Plan policy CD4.3 states that new residential development in existing neighborhoods should reflect the size, scale, height, setbacks, and character of existing development and should not detract from the overall neighborhood character. The proposed porte-cochere at 3 Woodford Drive will not contribute to the overall floor area for the property because covered porches and other structures that are not enclosed by walls are not counted as "floor area". Even if the 440 square foot structure was enclosed as a garage in the future, it would not exceed the maximum allowable floor area under the Town's FAR guidelines. The existing home has 2,141 square feet of total floor area and the maximum allowed for the 11,400 square foot lot would be 3,602 square feet.

APPLICABLE TOWN DESIGN GUIDELINES:

The applicable design guidelines have been listed in **EXHIBIT C** with staff discussion of each guideline. The following design guidelines are the basis for some of the recommended conditions for approval of the project:

SRC7, SC1 and SC6: Some additional drought tolerant native shrubs would improve and soften the appearance of the existing 6-foot fence across the frontage of the property on Moraga Road.

L2.3, ID12.5 and SFR2.14: Drain pipes from the roof of the new porte-cochere must be routed to landscaped areas for bio-filtration prior to discharge to any storm drainage inlets.

SC3: The total "greenbelt" is about 20-feet between the edge of pavement on Moraga Road and the existing driveway on the property. The applicant's site plan shows the property line along Moraga Road further to the west than the property line overlay on the GIS aerial photo map. The Contra Costa County Building Department will require that a surveyor verifies that the new porte-cochere will have the required 15-foot setback to the property line.

SC8: It will be important for the existing landscaping to be maintained and the owner should replace any plants that may die with new plants so that the screening of the circular driveway and porte-cochere is preserved in the future.

SC10: The existing landscaping does not block the street sign or stop sign; however, the crosswalk across Moraga Road at Woodford Drive is scheduled for a major upgrade this summer. Pedestrian-activated flashing beacons and high visibility paint shall be installed at this crosswalk.

SC11: With regard to undergrounding of existing overhead lines, the Town Council decided to keep the phrase "when substantial redevelopment is proposed" when they considered the amendments to the Design Guidelines on January 13, 2010. However, the Council did accept the language from the DRB to include public and private roads. The Town Council agreed that under-grounding of existing power lines is the ideal we want to have, but it is only practical when enough property along a power line is involved to be able to justify the enormous cost. Elimination of one power pole at a time was considered to be a very inefficient way to convert overhead lines to underground conduits.

ID2: Since the roof of the porte-cochere has a minimum slope of 2%, composite shingles may not be acceptable to the building department. Generally, very flat roofs have a built-up tar and gravel surface or foam roofing.

ID6: No new exterior lighting is proposed. If the applicant decides in the future to have some lights in the soffit under the porte-cochere, then these lights should be mounted and designed so that no light spills onto adjacent properties.

ID9.1: There would be approximately 440 square feet of additional lot coverage by the roof of the porte-cochere, but the structure is built over an existing asphalt driveway, so that there would be no increase in net impervious surface area on the lot.

ID12.1: The existing home and proposed porte-cochere would cover 22.6% of the lot area.

SFR1.5 and SFR2.1: The proposed design of the porte-cochere is very straight forward and functional. If the structure was designed with a gable roof or some siding to match the home, it could become more conspicuous. However, if the property line along Moraga Road is determined by a surveyor to be further to the east than depicted on the plans, then an alternative design could be considered with a side-by-side carport west of the former "family room". Only the westerly parking space would be a drive-through space on the alternative design. A side-by-side carport would eliminate the long tunnel-like look of the proposed porte-cochere.

SFR2.3: The applicant needs to submit a color and materials pallet for the new porte-cochere.

REQUIRED FINDINGS FOR DESIGN REVIEW APPROVAL:

Planning Commission Resolution 16-01 lists four findings that need to be made in order for the Design Review Board to approve an application within a single-family residential district. These findings are listed in bold italic print below. Staff comments with regard to each finding follow. To disapprove an application, a finding must be made as to why one or more of the standards below have not been satisfied.

1. ***The proposed improvements conform with good design as set forth in the Town of Moraga Design Guidelines, and in general contributes to the character and image of the town as a place of beauty, spaciousness, balance, taste, fitness, broad vistas, and high quality.***
   The proposed drive through carport structure conforms to the Town's building setback and height requirements and will also comply with the Town's off-street parking requirements. The

design of the porte-cochere is very simple and functional. The structure does not attempt to match the "ranch" style of the home and this may be the best design approach in this case because the structure will be unobtrusive and blocked from view by the existing landscaping. Architectural embellishments or a gable roof could attract too much attention to the structure. If the porte-cochere did not have a wall of trees along the west side, the addition of a decorative wood lattice wall along the Moraga Road side would probably be appropriate.

2 ***The proposed improvement will not have a substantial adverse affect on neighboring properties or the community due to poor planning; neglect of proper design standards; or the existence of building and structures unsuitable to and incompatible with the character of the neighborhood and the character of the community.***

At the time this staff report was prepared, the planning staff has not received any comments from the neighbors regarding potential adverse impacts. One problem with carports is that vehicles are still visible when they are parked in the carport. However, many people use their enclosed garages for storage so that their cars are parked in their driveway. The Town does not require a garage, even though the vast majority of homes in Moraga have a garage. The use of a porte-cochere to comply with the requirement for two covered off-street parking spaces will not be unique to the home at 3 Woodford Drive. The home at 329 Birchwood Drive in the Rheem Valley Manor subdivision originally had a porte-cochere used as a carport. The owners of that property eventually obtained a variance to build a garage, but they continue to use the porte-cochere too. One home on Merrill Circle North has a porte-cochere, but it also has a three car garage.

3 ***The proposed improvement will not lower property values; discourage the maintenance and improvement of surrounding properties; or preclude the most appropriate development of other properties in the vicinity.***

At the present time the property is non-conforming to the Town's Municipal Code. There are several alternatives that could be pursued in order to provide the two covered off-street parking spaces. The existing family room could be converted back into a garage, but since the current property owner did not do the conversion to a family room, the cost of restoring the original garage should be paid by the previous owner of the home that made the conversion without a permit. Such a requirement would most likely end up in court and become a messy legal battle. Another option would be to build a two car (side-by-side) garage or carport attached to the home at the west side of the family room (former garage). The tandem porte-cochere is probably the least costly solution, but it does look somewhat like a tunnel at the side of the house. A fourth alternative would be a side-by-side carport located west of the family room, where the west side parking space could be a drive through or partial porte-cochere. If the required covered off-street parking can be provided, then two additional bedrooms, a den and a bathroom will be added in the former family room space. There will be a total of six bedrooms, including the four existing bedrooms at the north end of the home. It appears from the plans that all the bedrooms in the home will be built to comply with ADA access requirements, with very wide doors and hall ways. If the intended use of the home is for a residential care facility for the elderly, it could be used as a home for a maximum of six adults provided that the owner obtains the necessary license from the State. No use permit is required from the Town as long as the size of the "family" is not larger than six adult individuals. Other than the new "carport" structure and a handicap ramp at the back of the home, there are no other exterior changes to the existing home. The proposed improvements would probably have no effect on the value of surrounding properties.

4 ***The proposed improvement will not impair the public health, safety or welfare.***

If the project is approved, the building plans will be reviewed by the Lamorinda Building Department and the proposed porte-cochere would then be built in accordance with the California Building Code. The completed project would not be expected to have any adverse

health or safety impacts on the community; however, there could be some existing problems with moisture rising up from the slab of the former garage and measures should probably be taken to insure good ventilation to prevent any mold issues in the rooms above the slab floor. There could be some temporary noise impacts that are normally expected during the construction of any building project. The construction noise will be mitigated to some extent by the proposed conditions of approval.

PERMIT STREAMLINING ACT:

The Permit Streamlining Act requires a decision on the project within 60 calendar days after a project has been found to be exempt from CEQA or a negative declaration is adopted for the project. The staff report was written on January 14, 2010 at which time the project was determined to be exempt from CEQA. Therefore, the application must either be approved or disapproved by March 15, 2010 unless both the Town and the applicant agree to a one time 90-day extension.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff believes that the findings required by Planning Commission Resolution 16-01 can be made for this project. Staff has prepared a draft action memorandum (**EXHIBIT D**), listing the findings and conditions for approval of the application.

Prepared By Richard Chamberlain, Senior Planner

EXHIBITS:

A – Notice Area Map, Project Mailing List and Public Notice
B – Design Aspects to be considered for 3 Woodford Drive
C – Applicable Town Design Guidelines for 3 Woodford Drive
D – Draft Action Memorandum
E – Applicant's Plans