

April 18, 2006

**Honorable Mayor and Members of the
Hermosa Beach City Council**

**Regular Meeting of
April 25, 2006**

SUBJECT: CODE AMENDMENT TO ADDRESS VARIANCE ISSUES ON R-1 SMALL LOTS

Recommendation:

That the City Council initiate an amendment to the R-1 small lot special exception standards to:

1. Increase lot coverage.
2. Allow the required front yard to contribute to the open space requirement; and
3. Refer the matter to the Planning Commission for report and recommendation.

Background

The City Council previously directed staff to review the current residential development standards for small lots in the City and recommend changes in order to reduce the number of Variance applications related to such lots. This report outlines possible changes to development standards for a Zone Code amendment.

Analysis

Most small lots are located in the Shakespeare Tract are 30' x 70' although there are even smaller parcels of 30' x 40' located throughout the City. A small lot exception for open space in the R-1 zone was added to the code in 1988 and amended in 1997 to deal with the hardship of building on small lots. The exception allows a break on the open space requirement for lots of 2,100 square feet or less in the R-1 zone. Though the exception provides some relief, additional changes are necessary to accommodate development of larger homes with conventional floor plans on smaller lots.¹

Conventional vs. Non-conventional Floor Plans

Many property owners prefer conventional floor plans with the main living area (living room/den and kitchen) on the ground floor and bedrooms above. The living room or den may then be directly connected with the yard space. The maximum size home on a small lot with a conventional floor plan is approximately 1,800 square feet. The less desired option is to locate the main living area on the second floor with bedrooms below. The maximum size home on a small lot with a non-conventional floor plan is approximately 1,900. When a homeowner wants more floor area the non-traditional plan is the only alternative on a small lot since open space, garage and driveway parking consume significant amounts of the lot area. Many homeowners seek a Variance from development standards in order to build a larger home with a conventional plan. Some homeowners also opt to construct full basements that require significant excavation and shoring in order to add floor area.


Staff has summarized the type and frequency of Variance requests for small lots on the attached table. The summary table shows that most Variances were requested for side and rear yard setbacks, lot coverage and garage depth. Front yard setback and open space Variances were requested less frequently.

Based upon frequency of Variance requests, staff suggests consideration of amendments to the following development standards for the R-1 zone:

- **Increase lot coverage.** *An increase to 70% adds approximately 105 square feet to the potential second floor area for a typical 30' x 70' lot. This additional floor area allows enough room for a 2nd bedroom or master bath and storage area.*
- **Allow front yard to count towards open space.** *This would increase floor area by 180 square feet or more, and allow a conventional floor plan to increase by 180 square feet on the ground floor. This is similar to the current exception on the Strand 'through' lots which allows the Strand frontage to be considered towards open space.)*

Staff does not recommend reducing the already small side and rear setback requirements because of the direct impact upon neighboring homes and the potential conflict with minimum property line clearance requirements of the Building Code. Nor is it recommended that garage or parking related standards be amended.

In summary, staff suggests that the Council authorize initiation of an amendment to the small lot special exception standards to include increased lot coverage and allow the front yard to contribute to the open space requirement and refer the matter to the Planning Commission for report and recommendation.



Sol Blumenfeld, Director
Community Development Department

Concur:



Stephen R. Birkrell,
City Manager

Notes

1. The following development standards apply to small lots in the R-1:

- 25-foot height limit
- Two standard parking spaces plus one guest (for alley garages typically 20x20 garage, with 9-foot garage setback to allow guest parking in parallel and 19-foot turning radius. For street fronting garages 17x20 garage with 17-foot setback required.)
- 65% maximum lot coverage
- 10% front setback (7 feet)
- 10% side setback (3 feet)
- 3-foot rear setback (1-foot on second floor)
- 300 sq. ft. of open space with 60% adjacent to primary living area.

Attachments: 1. Table Summarizing Variances on Small Lots
2. Exhibit of Conventional Plan

SUMMARY OF SMALL LOT VARIANCE REQUESTS R-1 & R-2 LOTS

No.	Address	Front Setback	Side/Rear Setback	Lot Coverage	Open Space	Parking Turning Radius	Garage Depth	Required Parking	Garage Setback	Height	Notes
1	316 29TH ST										Approved
2	250 30TH ST		X				X				"
3	345 30TH ST					X					"
4	205 31ST ST			X							"
5	209 31ST ST			X							"
6	216 31ST ST		X								"
7	221 31ST ST	X	X		X						"
8	226 31ST ST					X					"
9	237 31ST ST	X	X								"
10	244 31ST ST			X							"
11	248 31ST ST			X							"
12	259 31ST ST	X	X	X	X	X					"
13	259 31ST ST			X							"
14	301 31ST ST			X	X	X					"
15	302 31ST ST	X									"
16	335 31ST ST	X									"
17	314-316 33RD ST			X				X			"
18	225 34TH ST	X	X				X				"
19	2650 Hermosa Av		X				X				"
20	2650 Hermosa Av		X				X				"
21	3104 Ingleside Dr				X		X				"
22	3220 Morningside						X				"
23	3323 The Strand				X			X			"
24	3410 Hermosa Av		X								
25	3104 Ingleside Dr								(X)		Denied
26	3133 The Strand						(X)				Denied
27	3515 Manhattan Av								(X)	(X)	Denied
28	354 Longfellow		(X)				(X)				Denied
29	501 & 507 29TH ST										Sub-division
	TOTAL	6	10	8	5	4	8	2	2	1	