

12/19/2023
APN 036-142-12
605 Escalona Drive

To Whom it May Concern,

In this variance application, we are asking for what we consider to be a very modest allowance. Most importantly, we are not asking to build something new that doesn't comply with a zoning ordinance; we are asking for an existing wall to remain in place despite the fact that it is inches over a setback. The encroachment is so small that it is only a couple inches away from being considered a minor exception, in which case it would not even require a variance. Although these factors are not principally explored by the questions in the variance application, they deserve serious consideration in our opinion.

The position of our garage wall does not grant the property an inherent advantage. It just allows us to continue to utilize approximately 80% of the lot width, which is the maximum allowed for almost all R-1 properties in the area. We require a variance not because the dwelling is too wide, but because it is shifted; if it were positioned centrally, no variance would be required.

If we were forced to push the wall in, we could still get back to 80% by pushing out the opposite side of the dwelling. Therefore, we would just be saving costs, not gaining an inherent advantage from this variance. Ultimately, the variance allows us to keep the same width of the house without the extreme, unnecessary expenditure of shifting everything over. We hope that the planning commission considers the unprecedented, astronomical building costs of the current climate in determining whether to approve this variance. The cost of moving the wall would be significant (quoted between \$15K-\$25K) and the effect would be minimal (inches).

Another point to demonstrate the modesty of the encroachment, and to illustrate how the dwelling's off-center position does not provide a special privilege: the side of the dwelling that cuts into the setback (24 ft long) is much shorter than the side of the dwelling that has room to spare (60ft).

When considering conformity and harmonizing with the rest of the neighborhood, we feel the variance is appropriate for the following reasons.

1. On disproportionately narrow lots like ours, modest side-setback encroachments are more understandable, in our opinion, than front/rear setback encroachments (or side setback encroachments on wider lots). It is more important to maximize the width of narrow lots in order to construct more uniform and functional homes without extra long hallways.
2. Most lots in the neighborhood have side setback requirements less than or equal to 4 feet. Many of these properties have structures that butt up against the setback or even extend into it. The distance between our non-conforming wall and our property line is greater than 4 feet and is not abnormal whatsoever for the neighborhood.

3. We currently utilize far less (%) of our lot than most other properties in the neighborhood. This project, in its entirety, will bring us closer toward what is typical for the neighborhood without oversizing. 2,237 sq ft of living space is far from overwhelming for a 6,300+ sq ft lot.

Lastly, the following may not hold any water with the planning commission, but we would like to share it in order to illustrate why this variance is critical for us:

We feel our property needs significant updating, as very little has changed since it was constructed in 1964. With this project, we hope to build a home that is worthy of a 6,000 sq ft lot in this neighborhood. Because we recently invested so much in acquiring the property, we would have preferred to wait a few years until we could better afford such an undertaking. Unfortunately, the current condition of the house won't allow that; the roof, the plumbing, and other elements are on borrowed time, in need of imminent repair. We're hoping to solve those issues through the remodel process, as it would be financially untenable to complete a remodel a few years after paying for a brand new roof and replacing the plumbing. So we are pushed to stretch ourselves beyond our limit, earlier than we had hoped.

Without a variance, having to pay \$20,000 to shrink the garage a few inches would further exacerbate the financial equation, and would be conceptually difficult to accept as the garage is the only element of the primary structure that we consider worthy of preservation in a remodel. Last year, I built a storage shelf system with a library ladder across the entire wall in question. As I am a complete novice, it took me a few weekends. Having to remove that system in order to move the wall would further compound our misery.