

**CITY OF ST. HELENS PLANNING DEPARTMENT  
STAFF REPORT  
Variance V.5.25**

**DATE:** October 6, 2025  
**TO:** Planning Commission  
**FROM:** Jacob A. Graichen, AICP, City Planner

**APPLICANT:** David & Karen Natale  
**OWNER:** same as applicant

**ZONING:** Moderate Residential, R7  
**LOCATION:** 130 Ivy Lane  
**PROPOSAL:** Reduced rear yard (setback) for new patio cover structure (building addition)

**SITE INFORMATION / BACKGROUND**

The subject property is Lot 5 of the Ivy Lane Subdivision. It includes half of a 15' wide utility easement along its west property line.

There is a wetland tract owned by the City of St. Helens abutting the rear lot line of the subject property. This is Tract "A" of the Isabella's Glen subdivision platted in 2006. This tract contains wetland MI-3, a "city significant" wetland which is a "type II" wetland per Chapter 17.40 of the St. Helens Development Code. This wetland has a 50' upland protection zone, the area of which is protected as a wetland itself. Reviewing the Isabella Glen file, it appears that the wetland is at least 50 feet from the subject property, thus, sensitive land considerations are not needed.

**PUBLIC HEARING & NOTICE**

**Public hearing** before the Planning Commission: October 14, 2025

**Notice** of this proposal was sent to surrounding property owners within 100 feet of the subject property(ies) on September 25, 2025 via first class mail. Notice was sent to agencies by mail or e-mail on the same date.

**Notice** was published on October 3, 2025 in Columbia County Spotlight newspaper.

**AGENCY REFERRALS & COMMENTS**

**CRFR:** The Fire District has no issues or objections to this project as purposed.

## APPLICABLE CRITERIA, ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

### DISCUSSION:

The rear yard of the R7 zone is 20 feet. The applicant wants a patio cover that is closer to the rear property line.

### CRITERIA:

#### SHMC 17.108.050 (1) – Criteria for granting a Variance

- (a) The proposed variance will not be significantly detrimental in its consequence to the overall purposes of this code, be in conflict with the applicable policies of the comprehensive plan, to any other applicable policies and standards of this code, and be significantly detrimental in its consequence to other properties in the same zoning district or vicinity;
- (b) There are special circumstances that exist which are peculiar to the lot size or shape, topography or other circumstances over which the applicant has no control, and which are not applicable to other properties in the same zoning district;
- (c) The use proposed will be the same as permitted under this code and city standards will be maintained to the greatest extent that is reasonably possible while permitting some economic use of the land;
- (d) Existing physical and natural systems, such as but not limited to traffic, drainage, dramatic landforms, or parks, will not be adversely affected any more than would occur if the development were located as specified in the code; and
- (e) The hardship is not self-imposed and the variance requested is the minimum variance which would alleviate the hardship.

The Commission needs to find all these criteria (a) – (e) are met in order to approve the variance

### FINDINGS:

#### (a) This criterion requires a finding that the variance will not be detrimental.

- Staff comment(s): The purpose of yard requirements (setbacks) is to preserve air light and space. In this case, the rear yard is adjacent to a 3.18-acre wetland preservation tract, not another residential lot. Also, the subject area is presumed to be more than 50' from an actual wetland boundary (i.e., the requisite protection zone distance).

#### (b) The criterion requires a finding that there are special and unique circumstances.

- Staff comment(s): Most properties don't abut open space tracts that due to wetland laws, are anticipated to remain undeveloped.

#### (c) This criterion prohibits a use variance and requires a finding that the applicable standards are maintained to the greatest extent that is reasonably possible.

- Staff comment(s): Applicant is proposing an approximate 13' rear yard.

**(d) This criterion requires a finding that existing physical and natural systems will not be adversely affected as a result of the requested Variance.**

**(e) This criterion requires a finding that the variance issue is not self-imposed and that the variance is the minimum necessary to alleviate the hardship.**

- Staff comment(s): The request is based on an error. A building permit was submitted and staff identified the issue.
- The rear lot line is larger than typical, at about 130 feet wide. The normal lot width in the R7 zone is 60 feet, so it is more than twice as large as the minimum. The cover is just over 32 feet wide. 32 feet is about 25% of lot's the rear yard.

The Commission needs to find all these criteria **(a) – (e)** are met in order to approve the variances. If you think one of these is not met, we'll need to address why.

#### **CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION**

**Based upon the facts and findings herein, staff recommends approval of this Variance with the following conditions:**

1. This Variance approval is valid for a limited time pursuant to SHMC 17.108.040.
2. This Variance is specific to the 24' x 32'41/2" attached patio cover as proposed on the west portion of the rear side of the detached single-family dwelling.
3. Owner/applicant and their successors are still responsible to comply with the City Development Code (SHMC Title 17), except for the Variance(s) granted herein.

**Attachment(s):** The wetlands plan (before the developed formally named Isabella Glen) with the subject property identified.

Applicant narrative

Plans



This information is to respond to the specific criteria listed for a variance.

Section 1

- a) This variance is not detrimental to the surrounding properties or zoning because it is intended to remove an aging existing patio cover and replace it with one that is larger, sturdier and constructed using current building codes.
- b) The size and shape of our lot is substantially larger than others in our neighborhood, and abuts a wetland area that will not be impacted by our construction or proposed patio cover. We have a 14' easement on the west of our property that creates a wider-than-usual open area between our neighbor's home and ours; our side yard to the east is very deep and large and is the space that borders other homes. In summary, due to the easement to the west and approximately 75' yard on the east, our neighbors will remain unaffected by the larger cover.
- c) The use of the covered space will remain the same as it is currently used; there is no change to property usage
- d) There is no change to physical and natural systems; the patio cover will have gutters that return rainwater to the existing house drainage. Any property surrounding ours is unaffected
- e) There is no hardship present.

Section 2 refers to Access, Egress and Circulation and is not applicable.

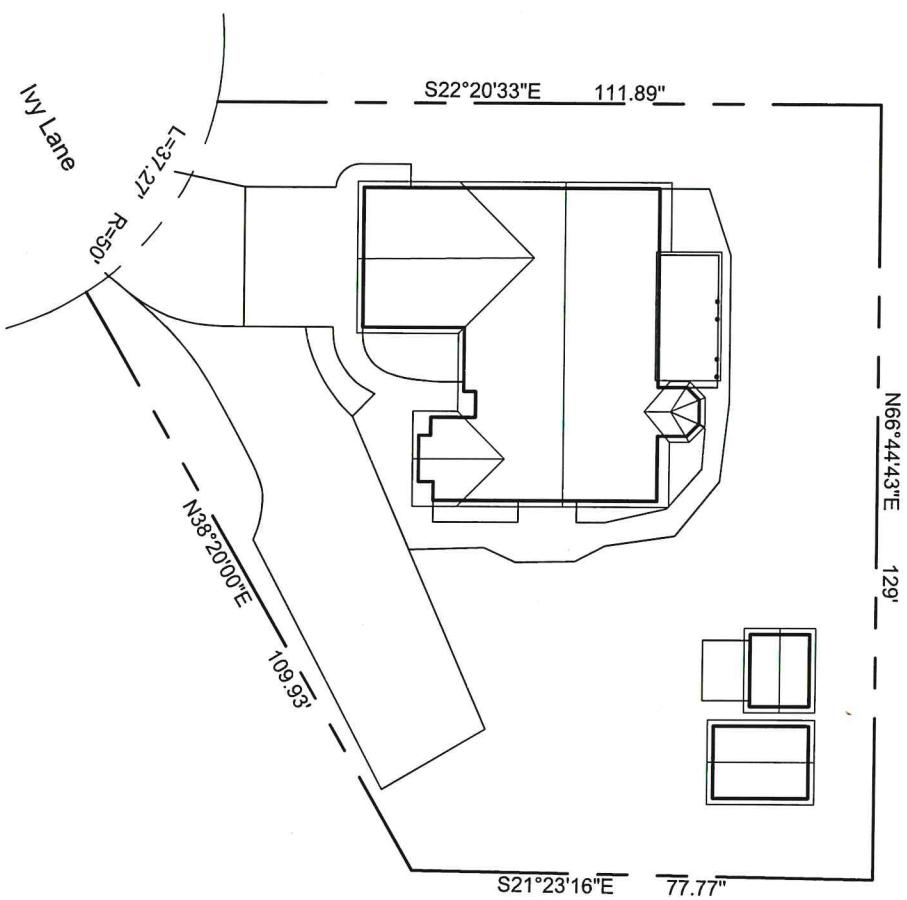
Section 3 refers to Land Divisions and is not applicable.

Section 4

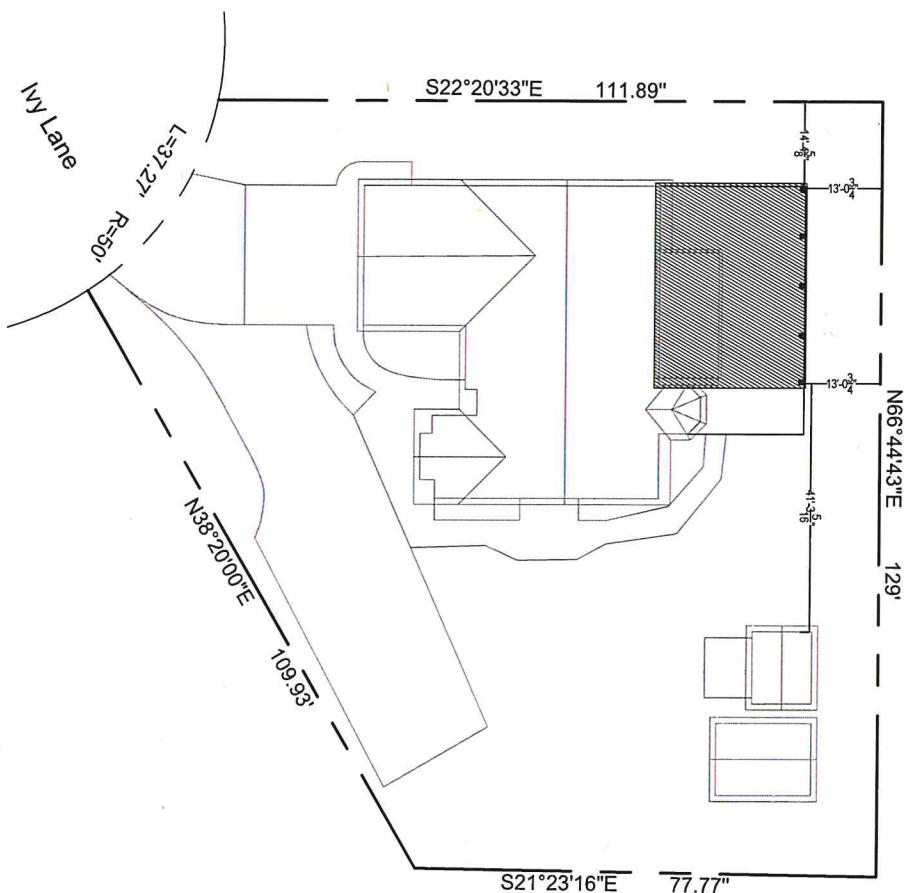
- a) This standard is met because there is an existing principal building
- b) This standard is met because the principal building is more than 5 years old
- c) This standard refers to garages and is not applicable.
- d) This standard refers to interior yards and is not applicable on the side and may not be applicable against a greenspace.
- e) This standard refers to driveways and is not applicable.
- f) This standard will not be affected by the variance.
- g) This standard can be met with buffering landscaping, but it unnecessary due to the greenspace. We ask that it be waived.
- h) This standard will not be affected by the variance.
- i) This standard is not applicable.

## existing site plan

scale: 1" = 20' 0"  
lot size: 13,777 sf.



<p style="text-align: right;">E. 1 of 3</p> <p><b>Project</b> <b>IvyLaneCover</b></p> <p><i>custom home design</i></p> <p>date: 09/23/2025</p>	
<b>SITE LOCATION</b>	<p>a new cover for home located at 130 Ivy Lane St. Helens OR, 97051</p> <p><b>NS Designs</b> </p> <p>(541) 390-4211 <a href="mailto:saarinen.nic@gmail.com">saarinen.nic@gmail.com</a> 33787 NE Kern Ct. Scappoose OR, 97056</p>



1,500 sf. existing living	1,098 sf. existing garage/shop
716 sf. existing porches/patios total	3,314 sf. existing total
1,627 sf. proposed porches/patios total	3,843 sf. proposed total
cover high point 12' 4-1/16"	
cover low point 9' 9-9/16"	
house floor line elev. 1' 6"	



scale: 1" = 20' 0"  
lot size: 13,777 sf.

## proposed site plan

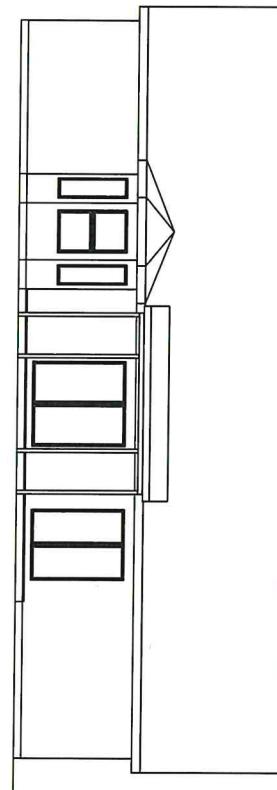
SITE LOCATION	NS Designs (541) 390-4211 saarinen.nic@gmail.com 33787 NE Kern Ct. Scappoose OR, 97056	1 of 5 Project IvyLaneCover custom home design date: 09/23/2025
130 Ivy Lane Columbia, county St. Helens, Oregon		

E.2  
of  
3

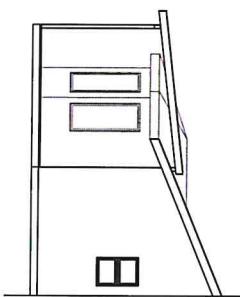
Project #  
WheelerCover

Custom home Design

date: 09/21/2025

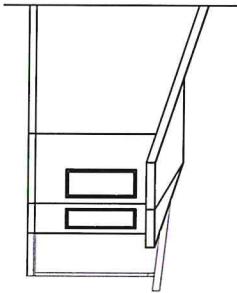


existing rear (north) elevation



existing left (west) elevation

existing right (east) elevation



1/4"=10'

1/4"=10'

1/4"=10'

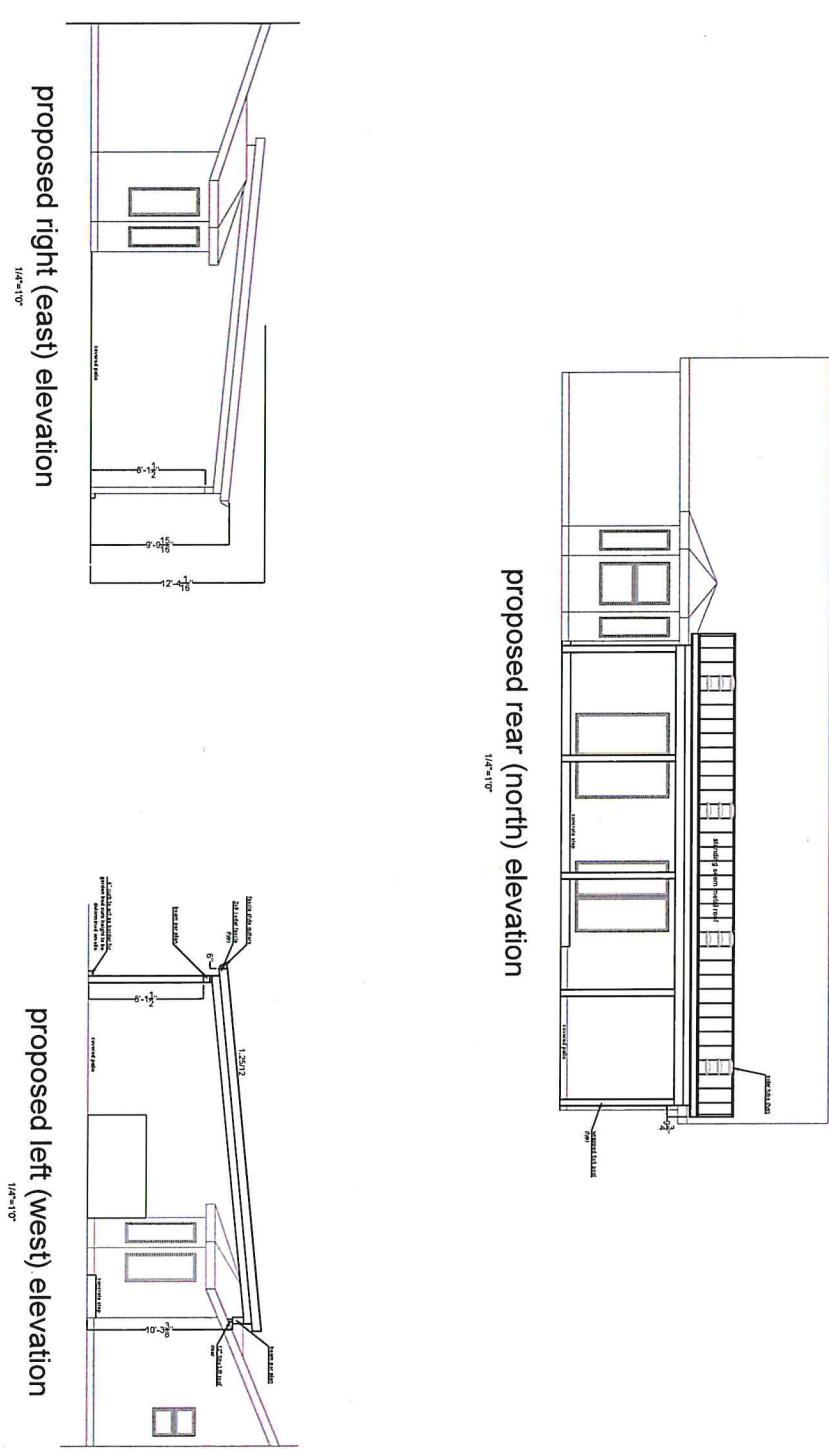
a new cover for home located  
at  
130 Ivy Lane  
St. Helens OR, 97051

NS Designs

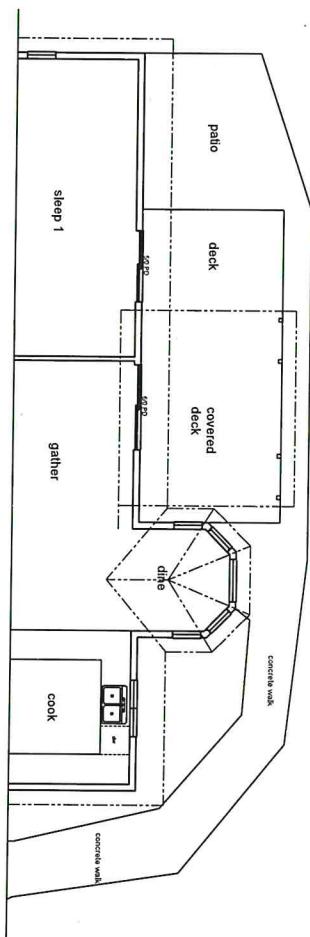


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existing deck cover



114° 41' 10"

SITE LOCATION
130 Ivy Lane St. Helens, Oregon

a new cover for home located  
at  
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St. Helens OR, 97051

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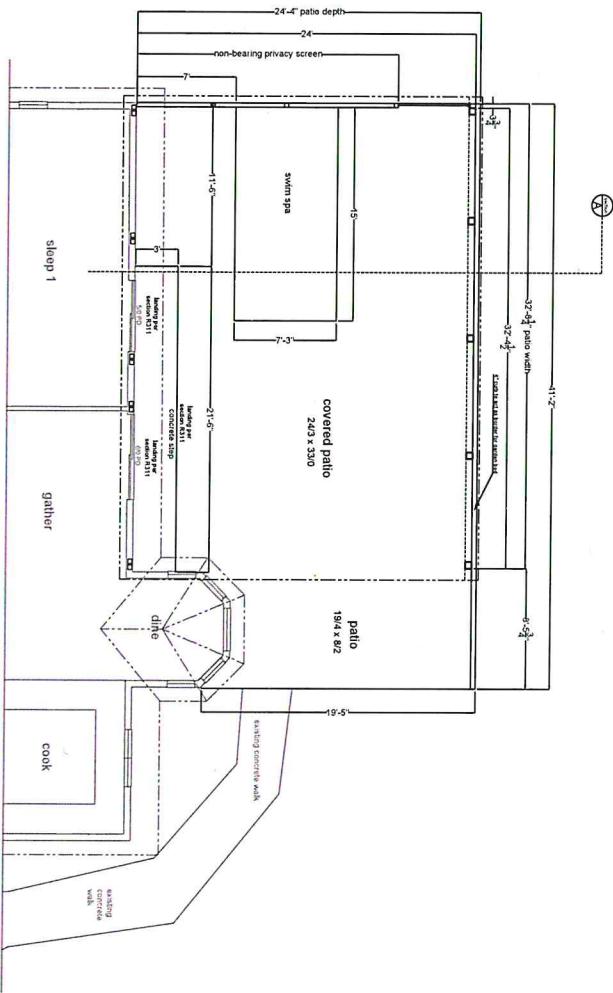
(541) 390-4211  
email: saarinen.nic@gmail.com  
33787 NE Kern Ct. Scappoose OR, 97056

Custom home Design

date: 08/21/2025

Project # [InlandCover](http://InlandCover)

E.3  
of  
3



1,500 sf. existing living  
 716 sf. existing garage/shop  
 1,098 sf. existing porches/patios total  
 3,314 sf. existing total  
 1,627 sf. proposed porches/patios total  
 3,843 sf. proposed total

**proposed patio cover**



SITE LOCATION
130 Ivy Lane St. Helens OR, 97051

a new cover for home located  
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Custom home Design  
 date: 04/22/2015

Project # 3 of 5  
 04/22/2015