



Administrative Report

J.1., File # PC25-0920

Meeting Date: 6/19/2025

TO: PLANNING COMMISSION
FROM: STEVEN GIAN, SENIOR PLANNER

TITLE

DISCUSSION, CONSIDERATION, AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON AN EXEMPTION DECLARATION AND VARIANCE FOR A REDUCED FRONT YARD SETBACK, REDUCED SIDE YARD SETBACK, AND REDUCED OUTDOOR LIVING SPACE FOR FIRST AND SECOND-STORY ADDITIONS TO AN EXISTING TWO-STORY SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENCE ON PROPERTY LOCATED AT 811 SPENCER STREET IN A LOW-DENSITY MULTIPLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL (R-3) ZONE.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Open public hearing, receive and file all documents and correspondence on the proposed project;
2. Accept all testimony from staff, applicant, and the public and deliberate;
3. Close public hearing;
4. Adopt a Resolution by title only approving an Exemption Declaration and granting a Variance for a reduced front yard setback, reduced side yard setback, and reduced outdoor living space for first and second-story additions to an existing two-story single-family residence on property located within a Low-Density Multiple-Family Residential (R-3) Zone:

A RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF REDONDO BEACH APPROVING AN EXEMPTION DECLARATION AND VARIANCE FOR A REDUCED FRONT YARD SETBACK, REDUCED SIDE YARD SETBACK, AND REDUCED OUTDOOR LIVING SPACE FOR FIRST AND SECOND-STORY ADDITIONS TO AN EXISTING TWO-STORY SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENCE ON PROPERTY LOCATED AT 811 SPENCER STREET IN A LOW-DENSITY MULTIPLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL (R-3) ZONE. (CASE NO. 20250105)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The applicant is requesting approval of a Variance to allow first and second story additions that would otherwise conflict with current front yard (9.1' existing vs. 15' required) and northern side yard (4.8' existing vs. 5' required) setbacks, as well as the 800 ft² outdoor living space requirement. The proposal would expand the second story over the existing two-car garage by 482 ft², add a 78 ft²-first floor entry and reorient the garage for direct driveway access, and include a new 107 ft² balcony and 78 ft² front porch; demolition of two rear sheds would increase open space from 210 ft² to approximately 583 ft². Special circumstances such as the lot's irregular 2,980 ft² size and substandard depth justify the Variance without granting undue privileges.

BACKGROUND

The subject property is located at 811 Spencer Street, between North Irena Avenue and El Redondo. The subject lot was created when the lot at 213 North Irena and the subject lot was subdivided into two lots. This subdivision created the irregular shaped lot where the proposed project is located. The lot is approximately 2,980 square feet in size with approximate lot dimensions of 55 feet at the front property line, 50 feet at the rear property line, 72 feet at the northern side property line, and 48 feet at the southern side property line. The zoning of the subject property is Low Density, Multi-family Residential (R-3) as is the zoning of all the properties surrounding the subject property.

The property is currently developed with a two-story single-family residence which is approximately 2,058 square feet in size with an attached two-car garage that was built in 1963. The site currently has a legal non-conforming rear yard setback, front yard setback, and north side setback. The 5 feet south side setback meets the current development standards for the R-3 zoning district. Development in the immediate vicinity consists of a mixture of single-family and multi-family developments containing up to 30 dwelling units.

The applicant proposes to remodel the existing single-family residence to expand the existing second story over the existing two car garage as a second-floor addition (482 ft²), construct a first-floor addition (78 ft²), changing the orientation and approach of the existing two-car garage, adding a new balcony (107 ft²), and new front porch (78 ft²). Additionally, the applicant is proposing to demolish 2 existing sheds that are located at the rear and side (south) of the property for the purposes of creating more outdoor living space.

As per the proposed floor plans, the first story addition will consist of a new entryway from the proposed porch and changing the orientation of the existing garage so that the indirect access driveway can become a direct access driveway. The garage will have its doors moved from the southern side to the western side of the garage so that a new driveway approach can be added that accesses the garage directly. A new 78 ft² front porch is also proposed. The 482 ft² second story addition will consist of a new master bedroom, laundry room, study/nook, and a 107 ft² balcony.

The owners are seeking a variance to allow reduced front and side yard setbacks and a reduction in the outdoor living space requirement. The existing structure's front setback is approximately 9.1 feet (required 15 feet) and the existing structure's northern side yard setback is approximately 4.8 feet (required 5 feet). The applicant seeks to maintain the existing northern side yard setback for the proposed second-floor addition to match the existing residence and reduce the second story front setback for the proposed second-floor. Lastly, the existing residences does not have the required outdoor living space area (800 square feet) to be compliant with the zoning code and the applicant is requesting a variance to allow for a diminished outdoor living space requirement. The existing residence has approximately 210 square feet of open living space area. If the sheds are removed, the residence would result in an open space area of approximately 583 square feet.

ANALYSIS**Variance**

Section 10-2.2510 of the Zoning Ordinance permits the Planning Commission to grant variances from development standards contained within the Ordinance in those instances where it is demonstrated that there are special circumstances applicable to the property including the size, shape, topography, location, or surroundings such that the strict application of the zoning provisions deprives such property of privileges enjoyed by other property in the vicinity and under identical zone designation; and where the variance does not constitute a grant of special privileges.

In this instance, a Variance is being requested to allow the reduction in the front and side yard setback and the outdoor living space requirement where there are a number of special circumstances applicable to the project property including the following:

- The property is substandard in size and shape, typically lots require a minimum size of 5,000 square feet in the R-3 zoning district but this lot was created at 2,980 square feet.
- The depth of the lot is significantly less than many standard R-3 zoned properties in the surrounding neighborhood. R-3 lots are required to be created with lot depths of at least 100 feet however this lot was created with a 72 feet lot length on the northern side and a 48 feet lot length on the southern side.
- Due to the substandard lot size and lot depth, the opportunity for outdoor living space is diminished.

More specifically, the size and depth of the property makes it difficult to develop the subject property according to the development standards for properties within the R-3 zone. As per the Zoning Ordinance, if the applicant were to maintain the required 18-foot front yard setback, 5 feet side yard setback, 15 feet rear yard setback, and 800 square feet required outdoor living space, it would decrease the buildable area of the lot significantly and make it difficult to design a house with a practical or reasonable floor plan.

Additionally, in an effort to decrease the non-conforming status of the outdoor living space, the applicant is proposing to remove two existing sheds at the rear and side of the property which will expand the existing outdoor living area of this lot by 283 ft².

For approval of the project, the Planning Commission must make the following findings in the affirmative. The following italicized text is the specific response to the individual criteria:

- a) There are special circumstances applicable to the property, including size, shape, topography, location, or surroundings, such that the strict application of the zoning provisions deprives such property of privileges enjoyed by other property in the vicinity and under identical zone designation

The subject lot's irregular shape and substandard size (2,980 ft² versus the 5,000 ft² minimum) and depth (72 ft/48 ft versus the 100 ft minimum) create unique development constraints not faced by other R-3 parcels in the surrounding neighborhood. Because the existing two-story home already encroaches into the front and northern side setbacks and lacks the required outdoor living area, strict adherence to the 18-ft front setback, 5-ft side setback, and 800 sf outdoor living space would eliminate nearly all buildable area and render the site undevelopable to a scale consistent with neighborhood character. These physical hardships justify relief from the standard yard and open-space requirements to afford the property the same development privileges as conforming lots.

- b) The Variance granted shall be subject to such conditions as will assure that the adjustment thereby authorized shall not constitute a grant of special privileges inconsistent with the limitations upon other properties in the vicinity and zone in which such property is situated.

To ensure equitable treatment with surrounding R-3 parcels, approval of this variance shall be conditioned upon: (1) strict matching of the second-story addition's front and side setbacks to the existing nonconforming dimensions; (2) removal of the two rear/south sheds to increase usable outdoor area by 283 sf; and (3) construction per the approved site plan and elevations. These conditions guarantee that no future enlargement beyond the existing building footprint or further encroachment into required yards will be permitted.

- c) The granting of a Variance shall not be contrary to the objectives of the Comprehensive General Plan.

Granting this variance supports the General Plan's objectives of preserving and enhancing the city's established residential neighborhoods (Policy LU-4.3) and encouraging infill development that is compatible in scale and design (Policy LU-4.5). By allowing modest additions that maintain the existing building envelope and by improving on-site open space through the removal of the sheds, the project furthers the goals of healthy, sustainable housing without adversely impacting neighborhood character or public welfare. Thus, the variance aligns with, and does not conflict with the Comprehensive General Plan.

ENVIRONMENTAL STATUS

Staff has determined that the proposed project is Categorically Exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), under Article 19, Section 15301 (Existing Facilities) of the California Guidelines for Implementation of the CEQA. Specifically, the project includes a negligible expansion of the existing residence.

CONCLUSION

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission approve the Exemption Declaration and grant the Variance subject to the findings and conditions contained within the attached draft resolution.

Prepared by:

Approved by:

Steven Giang
Senior Planner

Sean Scully
Planning Manager

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - Draft Resolution

Attachment B - Architectural Drawings

Attachment C - Variance Application

Attachment D - CEQA Exemption Declaration