

November 6, 2024

To: Brian Averill, President  
Venice Neighborhood Council

From: Naomi Nightingale, Chair  
Community Planning/Local Coastal Planning Ad Hoc Committee

Subject: Follow-up Recommendations from Community Planning Review

There were several related issues that my Committee was not able to address this past spring. In September and October, therefore, the Ad Hoc Committee held several public meetings to address them. Below are those issues with both the Committee's recommendations and an explanation for its decisions.

### **1. Recommendation on Roof Access Structures:**

- Access to roof decks must be by outside stairs from top floor located inside the exterior walls. Roof access structures are not allowed.

The Preference Survey indicated that, while roof decks were acceptable, 57% of responses were opposed to roof access structures. They add unnecessary visual mass above the main structure. A more acceptable design for roof access is simply to have outside stairs from the top floor. This design also negates the need to heat/cool a stairwell space that is rarely used.

### **2. Recommendation on Roof Decks:**

- No roof decks are allowed on structures three-stories or taller.
- No roof decks are allowed in the front third of the structure.
- Roof decks railings must be at least 6' from side and back edges of the structure.
- Access to roof decks must be by outside stairs from top floor located inside the exterior walls. Roof access structures are not allowed.

The Preference Survey showed that 82% of responders were okay with roof decks. Roof decks are a fairly recent addition to Venice architectural landscape and not characteristic of Venice older homes and neighborhoods. Developers often use them to justify larger homes that minimize backyard space. They often lead to additions such as frameworks for lighting, canvas shading and/or heat lamps – all prohibited by code. They also make adding solar panels more difficult to install and less efficient.

Without opposing roof decks, the Committee feels that limits should be placed on them to limit their negative effects. Roof decks railings should be no closer than 6 feet from the edge of the structure to limit direct views down into their immediate neighbors' yards. (The limit is now 3 feet.) They should be no closer to the front

façade than one-third the structure's depth to lessen their visual intrusion from the street. (The limit is now 3 feet.) And because the higher they are the farther someone on them can see into surrounding yards, the Committee feels they should not be allowed on structures 3 stories or more. (There are no present height limits.)

### **3. Recommendation on Roof Styles:**

- The following term "Sloped Roof" shall be added to any List of Definitions in the Venice Community Plan and Land Use Plan:

*Sloped – A roof composed of several low-pitched, sloped planes meeting either at ridgeline(s) or point(s). Sloped roofs are the traditional style of Venice roofs and are encouraged.*

Presently the only definitions in the Venice Specific Plan and Land Use Plan for roof types are for "Flat Roofs" and "Varied Roofline." The Land Use Plan also includes "Stepped-back Roofline." Yet the sloped roof is the traditional roof style of Venice and still characterizes most of Venice's residential structures. Sloped roofs also allow for easier and more effective installation of solar panels. The Committee feels that a definition of sloped roofs should be included in Venice planning documents, and should be encouraged.

### **4. Front Yard Walls, Fencing, and Hedges:**

- Low walls, fencing and landscaping, as required by City codes, shall be specifically encouraged in the Community Plan and Land Use Plan document updates.

City Codes require that front walls, fences, and hedges be no higher than 42" (LAMC 12.22.C.20 – Regarding yards). Obviously, this requirement is not being enforced. Results of the Preference Survey were almost evenly split between responses that favored low walls, fences and hedges (or none at all) and those that favored tall walls, fences, and hedges (or even taller hedges).

The Committee feels that low walls, fences and hedges, as required by City codes, should simply be encouraged in the Venice Community Plan and Local Coastal Program.