

**Preliminary Information Report
5-21-2008**

LUPC MEETING SCHEDULED: Wednesday, May 28, 2008 at 7:00 PM

NOTICE: The information contained within this Report is based upon Architectural Drawings received 5-8-08. The applicant is currently reviewing design revisions to mitigate neighborhood concerns raised at the Neighborhood Meeting of May 14, 2008. This report will be updated upon receipt of new drawings.

Submittal: Complete

Project Address: 720 Brooks Avenue

Zone: RD1.5

Lot Size: 40'x 130'

Number of Units: 2

Number of Parking Spaces: 6

Case Number: AA-2007-4143-PMLA-SL

Pending Application Submitted: 10-15-2007
ZAA-2007-4161-CDP-ZAA

Entitlements Requested:

- 1) Parcel Map - Small Lot
Subdivision and Side Yard Reduction
- 2) CDP-COASTAL DEVELOPMENT
PERMIT ZAA-YARD, AND BUILDING LINE
ADJMNTS < 20% (SLIGHT MODIFICATIONS)

Project Description: Small Lot Subdivision - construct two single family dwellings, demo existing single family dwelling.

Discretionary Action:

- 1) Parcel Map/Small Lot - Side Yard Variance both side yards 4' from 5' Advisory Agency - Subdivisions
- 2) Yard Variances - Front yard, rear yard, Zoning Administrators Office - Planning
Zone Variances- (12' passageway and separation between buildings is required so that construction can commence prior to the recordation of the tract map otherwise these two variance would not be required)
Zoning Administrators Office - Planning

Specific Plan Compliance: Yes
DIR-2006-9484-VSO 7-18-2007
Director of Planning Sign-off

Height Variance: No

Parcel Map - SL
Side Yard Variances Requested: Yes - Reduction in side yard from 5' to 4' both sideyards (5' sideyards are a Small Lot subdivision requirement)

ZA Variance Requested: Yes - Brooks front yard, San Miguel front yard.

Proposed Density: Two single family dwellings per original lot.

Prior Approvals: Director of Planning Sign-off
DIR-2006-9484-VSO 7-18-2007

Neighborhood Meeting: 5-14-08 5:30 - 7:30
24 people attended

VNC-LUPC Hearing: 5-28-08

City of LA
Subdivision Hearing Parcel Map/SL: Public Hearings tentative date June 11, 2008 - mailing not sent.

Building Permit Time Line:
Plan Check Submittal Date: 2-8-2008
Permit Date: not issued

Building Design Description: The proposed building envelope complies with the Venice Coastal Zone Specific Plan (VCZSP) but does not comply with the Small Lot Subdivision Ordinance because yard variances are requested. The architectural plans (as submitted) describe the project as (2)- 2 story plus mezzanine single family dwellings with garage. The existing lot is 40' x 130' and is proposed to be subdivided into two - 20 feet by 125' lots with a 5' street dedication along Brooks. The project fronts two streets - Brooks Ave. and San Miguel Ave. San Miguel is 25' wide. San Miguel Ave functions as an alley between 7th Ave. and midblock, providing access to parking but is defined as a street for yard purposes. Each proposed residence has been designed as two structures connected with a bridge at the mezzanine levels and upper floor. Each unit has a 252 sq.ft. roof deck fronting Brooks Ave. Each unit measures 16' wide x 110' long with a 15.5' x 12.5' courtyard carved into building mass along both side yards. The building varies in height, flat portions do not exceed 25' (excluding handrails and roof stair penthouse) and sloped or varied rooflines do not exceed 30'. This application includes yard variances at Brooks Ave. San Miguel and both side yards.

The current setback along Brooks Ave. is 15', adjacent structures have a setback of approximately 15'. The Bureau of Engineering and Department of Transportation are requesting a 5' street dedication along Brooks Ave. . The Brooks Ave front yard variance request is to allow the proposed building to align with the adjacent structures - 15' from the original property line and 10' from the new property line.

The San Miguel Ave. yard variance is required because the "San Miguel" roadway is defined as a street and not an alley. An alley is considered a rear yard, San Miguel is considered a front yard. This property is defined as a "through lot" having frontage on two streets and no rear yard. The San Miguel Ave front yard variance request is to permit a 5' front yard in lieu of 15' front yard treating San Miguel as an alley and not a street.

Side yard variances are required because 4' side yards are requested in lieu of 5' side yards (this is a Small Lot Subdivision requirement) . The governing code sections are as follows: 12.22C27. (*Added by Ord. No. 176,354, Eff. 1/31/05.*) *Small Lot Subdivision in the R2, RD, R3, R4, R5, RAS and the P and C zones pursuant to an approved subdivision tract or parcel map.*

(e) *No front, side, or rear yard shall be required between lots within an approved small lot subdivision. However, a five-foot setback shall be provided where a lot abuts a lot that is not created pursuant to this subdivision.*

Summary of arguments against the project: There is considerable opposition to the project from neighbors. There was discussion as to whether a "by right" project, a box without variances was more appropriate than the proposed project. Numerous comments were made regarding the number of yard variances requested, a possible depreciation in property values and the scale of the project within the neighborhood context. The neighbors contend the 25' and -30' height (plus roof appurtenances), and proposed building envelope with reduced sideyards create a visually out of scale building not in keeping the character of the neighborhood. The side yard reductions have no benefit to either adjacent neighbor, further reduce the privacy, light, air and ventilation and are inconsistent with the SLO and the City of Los Angeles Small Lot Design Guidelines. The computer generated model of the project depicts a huge project. This project represents change for the neighborhood in that numerous buildings that front Brooks are 1 story. The neighbors contend there has been no attempt to blend in the project or transition the height of the project to be more compatible with the adjacent neighbors and neighborhood. The 36" handrails at the Brooks building elevation make the project even taller. The roof deck stair penthouse could have been reduced in mass by sloping the roof. Consensus from the neighbors was that the project should be designed without requesting variances. Comments were made regarding architectural style, specifically whether or not a "modern" building would fit into the neighborhood.

Summary of arguments for the project: Arguments for the project were presented by the property owner and the project architect. There was considerable debate regarding a homeowners property rights and developing in accordance with the VCZSP. Scale and mass are relative; the project is two stories fronting Brooks. The applicant contends a two story structure is consistent with the character and scale of the surrounding neighborhood which includes 1, 2 and 3 story structures. The architect stressed the fact that the design criteria used for this project with regard to density, parking, height, setbacks and building envelope was the VCZSP. The Brooks and San Miguel yard variances have merit because the proposed setbacks are consistent with existing development along Brooks and San Miguel. Furthermore almost every other property owner has had the benefit of a 15' setback along Brooks and 5' setback along San Miguel. The City of Los Angeles Small Lot Design Guidelines provides; *"along residential streets with a range of setbacks, align small lot dwellings with the furthest protruding building"* The front yard variances enables the building to maintain prevailing building line along both streets. A courtyard has been created, 15.5' at each sideyard to increase the open space and break up the mass along both sideyards. This courtyard open space benefits both the adjacent neighbors and future residents of the project. If the front yard variances were not approved then both courtyards would be deleted resulting in a continuous building mass of 94'-6" long adjacent to both neighbors. The sideyard variance allows the same setbacks as otherwise would be required for a two story building in this Oakwood subarea and RD1.5 zone. By designing each single family dwelling as two structures connected with bridges the building mass is decreased. The proposed architectural design does not "max out" the allowable building envelope. The architect contends a by right alternative project would have a larger building envelope, a single structure 32' x 100' with no courtyard and no variances required. The roof deck for each unit was designed to front Brooks Ave and not overlook the either adjacent neighbors rear yards. The modern architectural style is consistent with the eclectic nature of Venice. Over 75% of the project has been designed with a flat roof within the 25' flat roof height limit. Less than 675 sq.ft. of roof area has been designed with a varied roof line that slopes north to south (low point of sloped roof to high point) which decreases the shadows cast on the property to the north.

Project Analysis:

There are different yard requirements for a "by right" development project in conformance with the VCZSP and a Small Lot Subdivision project. This is not a "by right" project. The number of Yard Variances requested for this project (all yards) raises several issues for; the community, the neighborhood, adjacent neighbors, and Small Lot Subdivision development in general within the VCZSP.

720 Brooks Avenue is a 5,200 sq.ft. RD1.5 multifamily zoned property located between 7th Ave. and Lincoln Blvd. Two single family dwelling are proposed pursuant to the allowable zoning and Small Lot Subdivision Ordinance. The neighborhood includes single family dwellings, 2 - single family dwellings on a lot, duplexes, and triplexes. This mixture of building types adds to the diversity of the neighborhood context. Review of the building records along this block indicate over 60% of the buildings were constructed in the 1920's the balance were

constructed between the 1930's to 1950's Within this block there are also 20- 2,200 sq.ft. lots created in the early 1900's (Tract 2357, lots 1-20). Ten of these lots front Brooks, ten lots front San Miguel, I presume this early tract map is one of the reasons San Miguel is designated a street and not an alley. The project fully complies with the VZCSP with regard to density, height, and parking. The project design incorporates both flat and varied roof lines. The project visually appears tall because of the narrowness of the units in comparison to the height - 16' wide x 25' height, (combined two units - 32' wide x 25'tall. The "through lot" definition (lot fronting two streets)of this property make this property different from other Small Lot Subdivisions in Venice. Review of arial photos and a site visit confirms Brooks and San Miguel have been developed with 15' setback along Brooks and 5'setback along San Miguel.

End of report - prepared by John Reed