



253 MARKET STREET
VENICE, CALIFORNIA 90291
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■ 24 November 2007

Re: Request to Construct a 6-Foot High Fence
251 Market Street
Venice, CA 90291
APN: 4238012019
Zone: RDL5-1-0

Attached please find an application and supporting documents applying for a variance to construct a fence to 6-feet tall in the front yard setback of the above referenced property.

1.00 Existing Conditions:

The property is one of the original 30' x 95' canal lots of the Venice of America tract located on Market Street between Main & Riviera Ave. A 24'-0" (w) x 50'-0" (d) one-story duplex structure was constructed with detached garage under a building permit issued in May 1953. At that time the front yard setback was 12-feet, the side yard setbacks were 3-feet. The stucco finished structure is composed of two one-bedroom units, each approximately 600 sf and built back-to-back. The front unit faces the street and is accessed with a front door facing Market Street. The rear is accessed by a walk down the side yard with a front door facing the alley. Three parking spaces are provided, two covered, one non-covered.

Each unit is provided with a small patio and planter area directly in front of their unit. The patio for the front entry is some 12-feet deep and provides access to the front door as well as a pair of French doors opening off the living room. The concrete patio is currently buffered at the street with a landscape planter and a 4-foot high painted board fence at the sidewalk. A malallaca tree, approximately 8-inch caliper, occupies a planter directly outside the dining room window.

The current owners have owned the property since 1989.

2.00 Variance Request:

This request is to allow for the construction of a 6-foot high fence in the front yard setback in lieu of the current 4-foot high fence allowed. Applicant wishes to construct a reinforced, concrete block wall with plaster finish approx. 10-inches inside the front property line along Market Street. The proposed, 6-foot high wall would extend along the sidewalk in front and return to the residential structure at the building ends. The proposed fence is considered a landscaped wall and will be set in a planter to allow for climbing vegetation. A gate would be provided at the sidewalk entry.

3.00 Environmental effects and appropriateness of materials, design and location of any proposed fence or wall:

3.01 Environmental Effects:

The construction of the fence will not remove any significant areas of current vegetation. The existing fence foot print will remain unchanged. The new fence will be of more durable, long term materials. The new stucco wall will replace the wood fence which required periodic applications of environmentally poor paint coatings to resist the ocean air in this area.

3.02 Appropriateness of Material:

The proposed fence is to be finished with plaster which will be consistent with the overall stucco appearance of the residential structure.

3.03 Design and Location:

This property faces Market Street, at 60-feet is one of the widest of the original canal streets. The increase in wall height requested is appropriate for both the view of the house from the street and the privacy of the occupants. The exceptional width of the street allows for a slight increase in scale of the fence without obscuring the main house beyond.

Although the street is wide, the lots along Market are all 30-feet x 95-feet. The narrow and fairly minimal lot size makes every bit of space special and any additional privacy precious. If the fence at the street is raised to the 6-foot level the added level of privacy allows the front yard to act as an outdoor room for the occupants.

Finally, because the street is so wide, it becomes the avenue of choice by cars navigating the old byways of Venice. With the increased traffic comes noise and rowdiness. When the fence is raised from 4-feet to 6-feet much of that noise and car headlights are obscured.

4.00 Detrimental effects of a fence, wall or hedge on the view which may be enjoyed by the occupants of adjoining properties:

The proposed fence will not block or minimize any views currently enjoyed by the occupants of adjoining properties. The property to the east, 255 Market Street has a first floor level at approximately 4-feet above the street grade. The property to the west, 245 Market Street, currently has a fence at about 7-feet high and cannot see the proposed fence.

- 5.00 *Security to the subject property that the fence would provide:*
- 5.01 Security is one of the most important benefits of the added height of the proposed fence. Market Street is very close to the beach and during the summer months can experience a very heavy pattern of traffic from other parts of the City. Day visitors to the beach stay late into the night with the activities of Venice Beach and can be noisy and somewhat rowdy when the day traffickers return to their parking in the evening. With the raised height of the fence, people don't look inside the houses and the feeling of overall security is enhanced.
- 5.02 A second problem with the neighborhood relates to the homeless problem of Venice. The police had to be called last year when a woman in the rear unit was attacked by a deranged woman sleeping in her car in front of the house. On other occasions, we have had people jump the low fence and defecate in the front yard. It is not possible to say whether a higher fence will preclude events such as these, but the residents of the property believe that security is a real issue to deal with in Venice and a higher fence will add to that sense of security.
- 5.03 Theft is a big issue in this neighborhood. A 4-foot high fence does nothing to add any security to the residential units. Although a 6-foot high fence is not an impenetrable barrier, it does make crime more difficult and perhaps the perception that it is more difficult is the most important factor.
- 6.00 *The proposed fence, wall or hedge is in conformity with the public necessity, convenience, general welfare and good zoning practice:*
- 6.01 Fences are extremely common in this area. Whether it is a result of the small lots, the increased foot traffic, or desire for security, residents of Venice have long utilized fencing to provide a separation from the public domain and to increase the level of privacy in these cheek-by-jowl residential areas.
- 6.02 As indicated above the lots in this area, the increased traffic from outsiders, and a higher level of crime has contributed to a desire to increase the security and privacy by separating the public areas from private areas. This added sense of security a slightly higher wall brings, is more than added convenience, it contributes to the sense of well-being and safety for the community.
- 7.00 *The proposed fence, wall or hedge is in substantial conformance with the various elements and objectives of the General Plan*
- Fences are allowed in this area but only to a height of 4-feet in the front yard. As indicated above, the special circumstances of Venice argue for a more distinct separation of the public from the private domains. The proposal to raise the height to 6-feet does not degrade the elements and objectives of the General Plan. It's not so tall that with the wide street and broader vistas, we still experience the fabric of the houses and the architectural quality of the neighborhood.
- One of the key aspects of the plan is to provide for the public safety and welfare. The added fence will provide an enhanced level of security.

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RW&A

If you have any questions or comments, or if we can provide any other supporting documentation, please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Sincerely,

Robert Ward & Associates, Inc.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'RW' with a large loop and a vertical line extending downwards.

Robert Ward
President

RTW:cdr