



# Venice Neighborhood Council

P. O. Box 550, Venice, CA 90294

[www.VeniceNC.org](http://www.VeniceNC.org)



## Land Use & Planning Committee (LUPC)

### STAFF REPORT

May 7, 2025

City Case No: DIR-2025-5042-CDP-ADJ-MEL-HCA

CEQA Case No: ENV-2025-5043-CE

Related City Case No: ADM-2025-5669-VS0

Address of Project: 635 E. California Ave. (Lot 21)

Applicant/Property Owner: Nikolai Gieschen

Applicant's Representative: Lucia Bartholomew / Electric Bowery Architects

Standards of Review:

- Coastal Act with
- Certified Venice Land Use Plan (LUP) as guidance for Coastal Development Permits (CDP)
- Los Angeles Municipal Code (LAMC)

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Coastal Zone: Single Permit Jurisdiction

Venice Coastal Zone: Oakwood Subarea (LUP Exhibit 6a)

City Hearing: May 18, 2026

Email for City Planner: [luis.c.lopez@lacity.org](mailto:luis.c.lopez@lacity.org)

LUPC Staff assigned: Jenesa Kurland

#### I. Project Description

Demolition of existing 1920's 820 SF one-story SFR for construction of a contemporary 4,298 SF two-story SFR with attached two-car garage on a 5,055 GSF lot with typical landscape and hardscape improvements.

## II. Proposed Motion

The Venice Neighborhood Council recommends that the City's **approval** of the new construction project at 635 E. California Avenue with **requested reduction in required 4'-0" side yard setbacks on both sides to 3'-2.375" provided:**

1. Los Angeles Fire Department approves this reduced access, and
2. Façade glazing at dining room near west property line meets LADBS fire-rating and fire protection requirements, and
3. Project's double swing doors opening over west property line be changed to sliding doors, and
4. Landscape plans are changed to: incorporate as many native trees and plants as possible, landscape the parkway, and remove as much concrete as possible from the side yard, next to the garage, and
5. Water capture infrastructure from the roof into storage of some kind is incorporated to mitigate the lack of stormwater absorption resulting from reduced open soil.

Moved by Mark Mack, seconded by Jenesa Kurland, and  
approved by the Committee 9-0-0

## III. Project Pros & Cons

**Positive** aspects of project:

- Project replaces an unoccupied home and degenerate yard with a livable home and manicured yard.

**Negative** aspects of project:

- Project requests over-building in width.
- Proposed solid steel property line fence along City sidewalk does not fit with the warm, charming bungalow aesthetic of Oakwood-Milwood-SE Venice neighborhood.

## IV. Neighborhood Outreach & Summary of Community Input

LUPC provided 100 EA flyers to Applicant for hand distribution to neighbors within 300-ft from property lines. LACP has drafted similar notice for 300-ft radius distribution by mail for the City Public Hearing.

Concerns expressed by Neighbors:       None to-date.

Suggestions from Neighbors:           None to-date.

## V. Findings

### A. Coastal Act

#### **Section 30250(a) Cumulative Effect**

Coastal Act section 30250 (a) states: *New residential, commercial, or industrial development, except as otherwise provided in this division, shall be located within, contiguous with, or in close proximity to, existing developed areas able to accommodate it or, where such areas are not able to accommodate it, in other areas with adequate public services and where it will not have significant adverse effects, either individually or cumulatively, on coastal resources...*

Project is likely to create an adverse cumulative effect or an adverse precedent for other similar projects. Project requests to set a precedent for side yard reduction; and thereby, street-facing massing would likely increase along with corollary reduction of open space between neighboring buildings.

Primary street-facing elevation provided by Applicant and used on City's neighbor outreach notification does not depict side adjacent neighbor buildings nor accurately convey actual distance to side yard property lines.

Project neighborhood is classified as 'medium residential'. Applicant compiled a matrix of 22 neighboring properties highlighting 14 with reduced side yard setbacks. However, only two of these were built in the last century. Justifying today's design on buildings before the Los Angeles Department of Building & Safety was established (in 1933) is not substantiating precedence.

#### **Section 30251 Scenic and visual qualities**

Coastal Act Section 30251 states: *The scenic and visual qualities of coastal areas shall be considered and protected as a resource of public importance. Permitted development shall be sited and designed to protect views to and along the ocean and scenic coastal areas, to minimize the alteration of natural land forms, to be visually compatible with the character of surrounding areas, and, where feasible, to restore and enhance visual quality in visually degraded areas.*

Project conforms with the Coastal Act and LUP policies for Scenic and Visual Qualities because it does not exceed allowable building height.

#### **Section 30253 Protection of Special Coastal Communities**

Coastal Act section 30253(e) states: *New development shall do all of the following...(e) Where appropriate, protect special communities and neighborhoods that, because of their unique characteristics, are popular visitor destination points for recreational uses.*

In Applicant's Findings, variance is necessitated due to "substandard" lot with varied width. LUPC is unclear to what "substandard" refers. Related to width, Applicant is revising Site Plan A1.101 wall depiction on Property's side of east property line to actual conditions with a small jog to match Pacific Land Consultant survey. According to Applicant, proposed wall on Property is 7" w. Thus, 3'-2.375" proposed side yard setback - 7" wall = 2'-7.375" clear. This width seems to be tight for firefighting; however, LUPC defers to LAFD for their approval or denial.

Applicant's setback diagrams do not address side yard dimensions at the north/alley of the Site. This clearance differs from dimensions cited at Site's south/street end. However, north/alley side yard setbacks appear to be either in compliance (at west) or no more out of compliance (at east) as what is dimensioned at the south/street end. Front and rear yard setbacks are compliant.

Eleven mature trees would be removed based on Pacific Land Consultants' Survey dated 11/28/22. However, according to GoogleMaps dating back to September 2025, those trees were already felled. Presumably proposed landscape species are drought-tolerant with water-efficient irrigation.

Applicant's intent for improvement City sidewalk &/or parkway between Lot's property lines is not addressed. Only in-filling existing driveway is "restored" per Site Plan A1.001. LUPC suggests replanting Project's parkway.

## **B. Certified Land Use Plan (LUP)**

### ***Policy I.A.1 ~ Residential Development***

#### ***a. Roof Access Structures***

None. Therefore, Project is compliant.

#### ***b. Residential Lot Consolidations***

According to Grant for Deed, Project is Lot 21 and western adjacent is Lot 22. Both Lots were purchased together by Applicant. Applicant's 9/2/25 response to LAMC CP13-7781 Specialized Requirements question 1 confirm these lots are currently under the same ownership. Intent of Lot 22 is not addressed in submission for Lot 21. Lot 22 is identified "under construction" on Mello Act Coastal Development Permit by GC Mapping Service dated 6/17/25 as well as verified in field visit.

According to Pacific Land Consultants' Survey dated 11/28/22 and Existing/Demo Site Plan A1.000, there is an existing building spanning across 633-635 E Venice Avenue (Lots 22 & 21, respectively). Applicant is in the process of obtaining clearance to demolish this building. Removing existing a single structure spanning two separate lots eliminates physical consolidation of these lots.

However, Owner definitely designed Lots 21 & 22 to flow together and Project's Landscape Plan L1.0 depicts a single line of pavers along on both sides of Lots' shared property line. (Refer to Exhibit D.1 circled **pink**.)

LUPC requested that Project's double swing doors opening over shared property line be moved to the north wall of that room or changed to sliding doors. (Refer to Exhibit D.1 circled **red**.)

### ***Policy I. A. 2 ~ Preserve Stable, Single-Family Residential Neighborhoods.***

*Ensure the character and scale of existing single-family neighborhoods.*

Project is a SFR without (J)ADU.

**Policy I. E. 1 ~ General.**

*Venice's unique social and architectural diversity should be protected as a Special Coastal Community pursuant to Chapter 3 of the California Coastal Act of 1976.*

Project does *not* convey Venice unique character; however, style is in line with typical new SFR in the area.

**Policy I. E. 2. ~ Scale.**

*New development within the Venice Coastal Zone shall respect the scale and character of community development. Buildings which are of a scale compatible with the community (with respect to bulk, height, buffer and setback) shall be encouraged. All new development and renovations should respect the scale, massing, and landscape of existing residential neighborhoods. Lot consolidations shall be restricted to protect the scale of existing neighborhoods. Roof access structures shall be limited to the minimum size necessary to reduce visual impacts while providing access for fire safety. In visually sensitive areas, roof access structures shall be set back from public recreation areas, public walkways, and all water areas so that the roof access structure does not result in a visible increase in bulk or height of the roof line as seen from a public recreation area, public walkway, or water area. No roof access structure shall exceed the height limit by more than 10-feet.*

Although building narrows side yard setbacks, only a portion of building on both sides does so; most of the building sides are within compliant setback. Front and rear yard setbacks are compliant.

Roof height of 24'-0" complies with 25'-0" limit. Project does *not* have structure above its roof line.

Project is *not* in a visually sensitive area.

**Policy I. E. 3 ~ Architecture.**

*Varied styles of architecture are encouraged with building facades which incorporate varied planes and textures while maintaining the neighborhood scale and massing.*

Building planes and texture are varied. Building massing fits other two-story buildings nearby, though most buildings are one-story. Building is similar to other newer buildings in the area.

**Policy II. A. 3 ~ Parking Requirements.**

Project provides covered garage parking for two cars as required per II.A.3 table. Garage access is off Santa Clara Ct (alley) between California and Santa Clara Avenues.

**C. Mello Act (MEL):**

March 25, 2020 Mello Act Determination letter concludes that Project does not need to provide future affordable housing.

**D. Housing Crisis Act (HCA):**

Existing house has been vacant for over six months, and therefore its tenancy complies with SB 330 RPO.

**VI. Visual Exhibits**

**A. Existing structure & front yard:**

Green construction fence to west encroaches over Project's property line; therefore, existing west side yard is not visible.



**B. Proposed Street Elevation with Fence:**

Note side yards are depicted wider than actual.



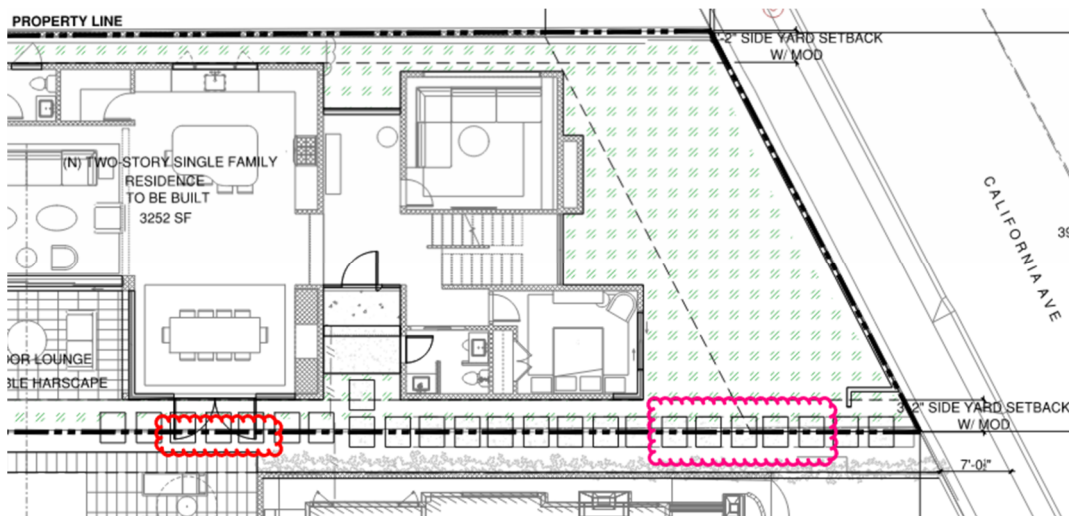
**C. Project in content of adjacent Neighbors:**

Note side yards are depicted wider than actual.  
Proposed

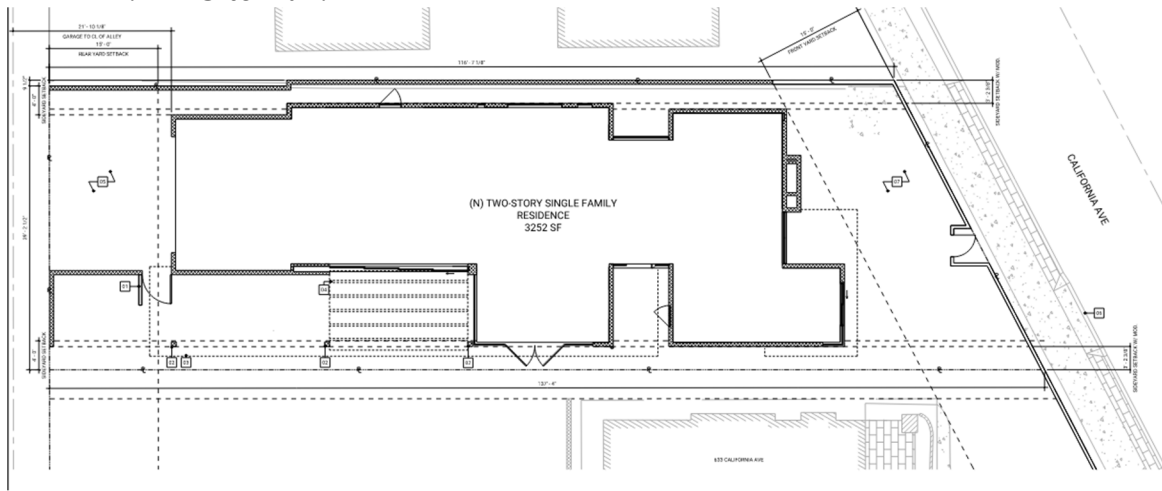


**D. Floor Plans**

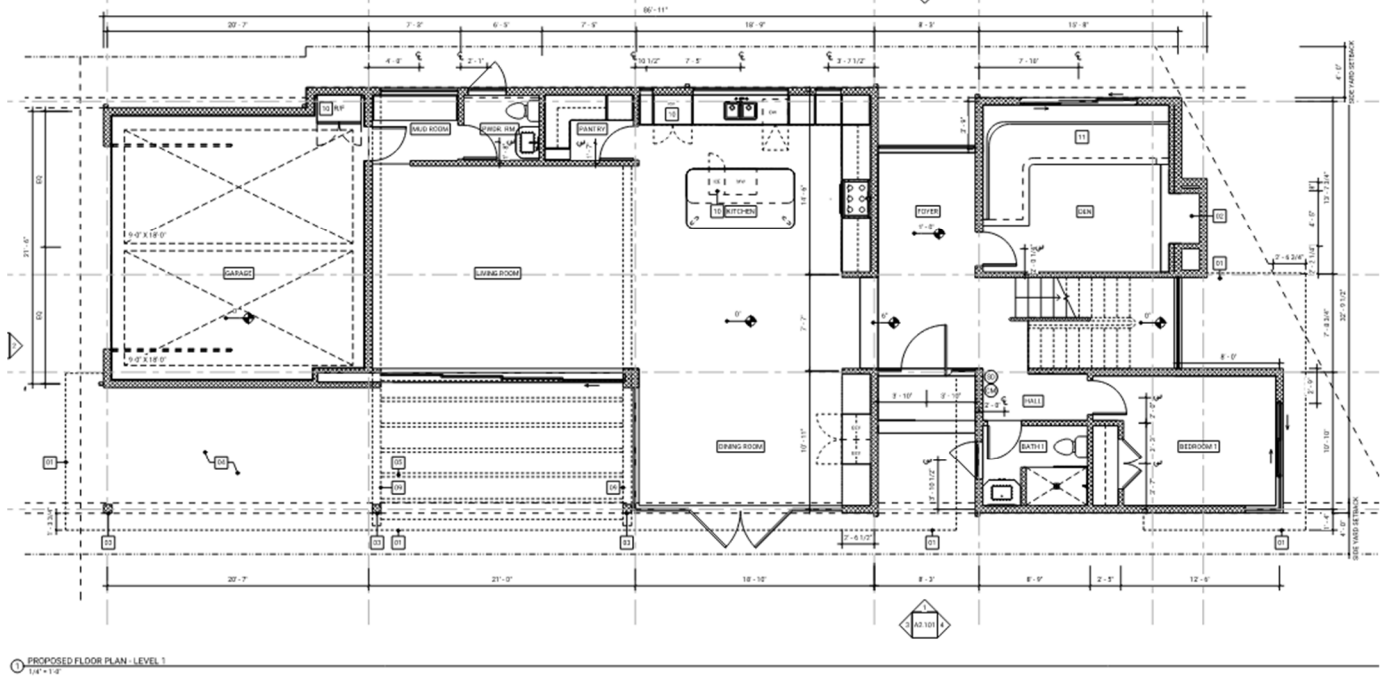
**D.1 Enlarged Ground Floor Plan:**



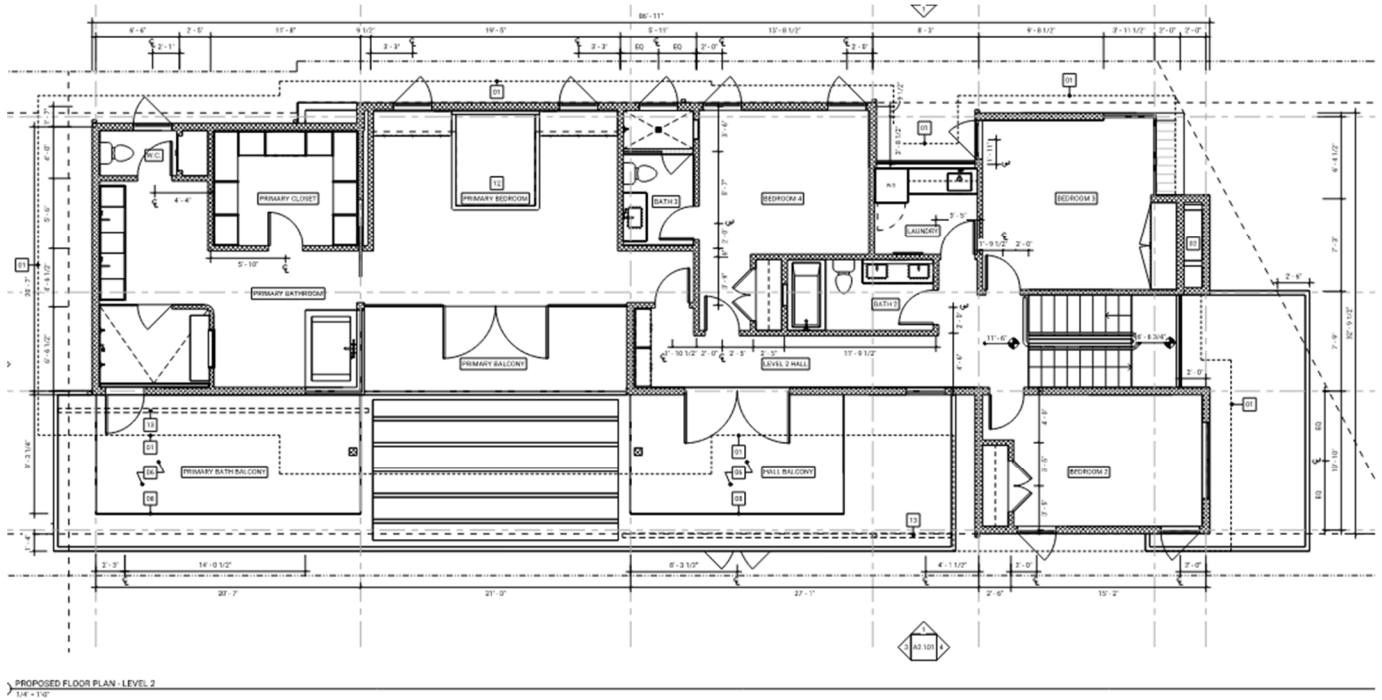
**D.2 Site Plan:**



### D.3 Grund Floor Plan:



### D.4 Second Floor Plan



# D.5 Roof Plan

