

**FINAL LUPC STAFF REPORT
1212-1222 Electric
Oakwood Milwood Sub-Area
April 19, 2014**

LUPC Approved Motion for VNC Board:

1212-1222 Electric, Venice, 90291

CASE NUMBER: ZA-2013-4078-CDP-ZAA-MEL, AA-2013-4076-PMLA, ENV-2013-4077-EAF

Project description: Demolish existing duplex, which re-establishes 2 separate original lots, and construct 3-story, 2-unit condo & 3-story SFD, both w/reduced front yard setbacks to 5 feet, and 2-unit condo w/reduced south side yard setback & reduced rear yard setback (both $\leq 20\%$).

LUPC Staff: Robin Rudisill

MOTION: The Venice Neighborhood Council supports this project as proposed, based on the following:

- We feel that it meets the character, mass and scale of the surrounding neighborhood.
- It meets the code (including VSP) for parking requirements.
- The reduced front yard setback observes the prevailing front yard setback along Electric Ave.
- The minor ($\leq 20\%$) south side yard and rear yard setback adjustments for the 2-unit condo are justified because of the challenging shape of the lot.
- A commercial zone is across the street/adjacent.

LUPC Motion made by Robin Rudisill, Seconded by Jake Kaufman

LUPC Motion APPROVED 4-0-1

(In favor: JK, RR, RA, MM; Abstain: JR)

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Summary/Conclusion:

The project should be approved as presented.

Although concern has been expressed by neighbors that they do not want lots “maxing out,” with the associated concern regarding the detrimental cumulative impact of such projects on the neighborhood, which concern I share, in review of

this project's facts, as well as in lengthy observation of the project site and surrounding area, my opinion is that this project fits the character of the neighborhood on Electric Ave. and the surrounding area, and that with this project these two lots would not be "maxed out" such that they could or would, along with other similar projects, result in a cumulative impact that would be harmful to the neighborhood.

It should be noted that there has been an ongoing issue with getting an accurate Project Description on the City Planning system for this proposed project. Therefore, please read the Project Description that is used on the various reports for this project with caution, and be sure to read the detailed project facts in order to avoid confusion and misleading the Public or the City officials approving the various aspects of the project.

Applicant is requested to remain very aware of this recurring problem and potential issue through the remainder of this project's City Planning and Building and Safety processes, and to be certain that this project is ACCURATELY DESCRIBED for purposes of all City Planning approvals and all Building and Safety Building Permit clearance approvals.

Project Description and Justification:

The property is located on Electric Avenue, between San Juan Avenue and Santa Clara Avenue, in the Oakwood Milwood Sub-Area of Venice. The project begins with demo of the existing 1-story duplex and re-establishment of the current lot, known as 1212 & 1222 Electric Avenue (which is an irregular lot, as further described in the application) as two separate lots.

The lots were cut in 1937 and they are distinct lots, with separate APN's. The duplex structure currently built on the two lots ties them by use, but once it is demolished they are completely separate lots.

On lot 29 Arb. 1, 1222 Electric, a new 3-story Single Family Dwelling will be constructed, with a proposed front yard setback of 5 feet, reduced from the 15 feet required. A 1-foot additional setback is noted for the third floor.

On lot 29 Arb. 2, 1212 Electric, a new 2-unit condominium will be constructed (and parcel map recorded), also with proposed reduced front yard setback of 5 feet. The application also requests Zoning Administrator Adjustments for the 2-unit condo to have a rear yard setback of 12 feet, reduced from 15 feet required (20%) and a side yard setback of 3 feet 4 inches (south side only), reduced from 4'-1 3/4" (10% lot width) required (20%). A 1-foot additional setback is noted for the third floor. These adjustments are considered relatively minor and are of very minimal impact to the neighborhood.

As noted above, the application requests a Zoning Administrator Adjustment for both the Single Family Dwelling structure and the 2-unit condo structure to have a front yard setback of 5 feet, reduced from the 15 feet required. The Applicant has provided a finding that shows that the prevailing setback on their side of Electric is 5 feet or less for 81% of the homes between Broadway and California Ave. There appears to be a long-established, prevailing setback very close to the property line in this area and thus the project fits within the mass and scale of the neighboring structures with respect to this front yard adjustment, which is the most significant adjustment being requested. Also, the front yard setback adjustment allows for design flexibility in giving relief to the front façade, using balconies, planters, and courtyards, and only 20% of the frontage along Electric includes building mass at the 5-foot setback line, while the remainder is comprised of open decks, planters, and courtyards, or is open to above. The façade is thus varied and more in keeping with the surrounding neighborhood, as opposed to projects that appear as big white boxes and are not compatible with the character of the neighborhood.

It should be noted that both lots are substandard, and thus smaller than the typical lot for which the setback restrictions are based, and therefore it is difficult to plan the lots based on the guidelines for the RD1.5 zone as those guidelines are based on larger lots. Several of the surrounding neighbors have signed the Master Land Use Permit Application “signature sheets,” in support of the project.

The exterior of the building incorporates natural materials, and landscape will be integrated into the building plan, maximizing permeable/green surfaces where possible. The development will be completed in accordance with the LA Green Building Code.

As per the Venice Specific Plan, each of the two condos (which are adjacent to an alley and 35+ feet in width) have two dedicated parking spaces (1 standard and 1 compact), and there is a guest parking spot that is shared. For the Single Family Dwelling (lot < 40 feet in width), 2 parking spaces are required and provided, and as there is no alley access a curb cut is required on Electric, which is as per LADBS Parking Bulletin (where the driveway is for a Single Family Dwelling and the driveway access is to a local street, i.e. “other than a major or secondary highway”). Although the cut required is kept to a minimum of one space width by providing tandem parking, the cut will eliminate one full parking space on Electric (see DOT review of parking issue, below). Covered parking is not required in the RD1.5 zone. Also, electric gates will be utilized for access to the parking areas, which will facilitate use of the off-street parking. All fences and gates shown are 3 ½ feet in height.

Certified arborist Ann Burroughs provided the Applicant a letter stating “there are no protected trees, located either on the site or off-site, within the vicinity of construction.”

The project also includes applications for a Coastal Development Permit and for recordation of a Preliminary Parcel Map for condominium purposes, as per the Parcel Map General Provision.

The steps have been taken to request a Mello Act determination letter from LAHD, which the architects have stated will show that “no affordable units” exist on the property.

The property has been sold but closing is being held open awaiting the City’s approval of the entitlements and permits requested, which will be in the current owner’s name. The sale will then close and the building permit will be approved in the new owner’s name.

Community Outreach Meeting:

The Community Outreach Meeting for the proposed development was held on Saturday March 8th, between 10am and noon, at 1112 Electric Ave. The meeting was held at the personal home of one of the architects, one block from the proposed site. The architects had prepared an informational booklet to describe the project scope, modifications and adjustments being requested, as well as findings and justifications supporting the proposed development. Several photo-realistic renderings were produced to present the proposed new development to the community, as well as a full set of plans for community members to review and comment on.

A few neighbors attended the meeting, and the general response to the look and scale of the design was positive, including comments such as: “It’s a cool project.” and “It’s a creative solution for this irregular lot.” One of the main concerns was that the proposed parking for the new Single Family Dwelling would eliminate street parking from Electric Ave due to the addition of a new curb cut. This lot does not have alley access, and thus as per DOT a curb cut is required to allow for ingress to the two off-street parking spaces. In order to minimize the size of the curb cut, tandem parking is used. The community concern stemmed from the fact that street parking will be eliminated due to the curb cut, and safety arose as a concern as the driveway would exit into the irregular intersection at Electric and Santa Clara Avenue.

Concerns mentioned included comments to the effect:

- I like the aesthetics of the project, but as a community member I have concerns about the density and the parking.
- With reduced setbacks on all sides (for the 2-unit condo), how is the “quality of life” affected by having less landscaping (open site area), more inhabitants, and more vehicles all crammed onto a tight site?
- (There is a safety concern) to have vehicles blindly backing across a public sidewalk and into a 4-way intersection.

DOT Review of Parking Issues:

The architects took note of these parking-related concerns voiced at the Community Outreach Meeting, and soon after the meeting, at the strong encouragement of LUPC Staff, they requested a meeting, with Mo Blorfroshan and Pedro Ayala at the Department of Transportation, to review the plans and the driveway access to the Single Family Dwelling from the irregular intersection. Mo and Pedro reviewed the site and indicated that all street parking within the irregular intersection should technically be painted out red, and that the safest, best location for the proposed curb cut is in its currently proposed location. Situating the curb cut more centrally on the site to allow for a parking space between the proposed curb cut and the neighboring property's curb cut would be a bigger safety concern, as it would create sightline issues when pulling into and out of the driveway. In addition, it was confirmed that because Electric Avenue is a local street and the proposed development at 1222 Electric is a Single Family Dwelling, it is allowed by code for the curb cut to exist within the intersection.

It was also brought to the architects' attention that there may be potential to restore some parking for the neighborhood across the street from the 1212-1222 Electric site - as much as potentially three parking spaces that are currently painted out red. At first glance, Mo and Pedro could see no reason why the curb was red in that particular location, beginning 25 feet from the stop sign. The architects submitted a Request for Investigation (Service Request #15768) on the Department of Transportation website, which is the first step in potentially restoring this parking.

As for the 1212 Electric site for the proposed 2-unit condominium development, the required number of parking spaces is provided - 2 for each unit plus 1 shared guest parking spot, for a total of 5 spaces - and thus the Department of Transportation has no issues with the currently proposed layout of parking on this site.