

RESIDENTIAL BUILDING GUIDELINES PROPOSAL FOR L.I.P.
IN THE VENICE AREA

BY DON DOYLE

7.1 Density

I do not believe in the proposed use of F.A.R. (Floor area Ratio) or Cubic Square Footage in determining the current and future square footage of residential housing in Venice. I feel that building sizes have already been severely restricted by the General Plan Zoning Consistency Plan now being implemented by the City. All of the buildings people are objecting to as being too massive were built under the old zoning code before the I.C.O. None of these structures could be duplicated today. Under the new proposed 30 ft. height limit and downzoning being set in place by the General Plan change you may not build this type of structure today. Yet we continually hear a few residents requesting more zoning changes so that our future neighborhoods will match in scale the height & density of 50 year old single family structures with no parking. No current zoning regulation is threatening these older structures, yet they want to severely restrict the building size and lifestyle their neighbors may want to enjoy.

Here is an example of using a 1.2 F.A.R. on a 30 x90 lot where the building may not exceed this ratio:

1. Total square footage of lot $2700 \times 1.2 = 3240$ sq. ft. of Bldg.
2. Your required garage is $38 \times 24 = 912$ sq. ft.
3. Required interior halls & stairwells approx. 600 sq. ft.
4. Total non livable square footage is 1512
5. Total livable space 1728

If you were to want to build a duplex under these guidelines you would have 2 units of 864 sq. ft. each. In mosts homes you have approximately 300 sq.ft. for hallways, closets and baths, so that leaves only about 564 sq.ft. of livable space or a room of 20 X 25.

Now lets say that you do not include the non-livable space in your buidable calculation and you want to have 2 units of 1500 sq.ft. each. This is still at the low end of what people are looking for in todays market. The livable square footage would be 3000 ft. plus the non-livable of 1512 sq. ft. means your total building size is 4512 sq. ft. Under the current guidelines of the I.C.O. you are allowed a 3 story 30' high structure which may contain 5040 sq. ft. This means the 1.2 criteria in the first example reduces that allowed size by 1800 sq. ft. and example 2 reduces the size by 500 sq. ft. My question is: Why do we need to reduce square footage in new buildings?

Current market economics have to be considered at this point since we are discussing square footage. I know that most of the proponents of reducing building size and height do not want to discuss the cost of land or building costs, but they are have a direct impact on housing in Venice.

In today's market you have to pay \$200,000. and up for a vacant lot, and \$300,000. plus for most old homes. This cost alone will prevent many from not living or building in Venice. Someone paying

this much for property, who wants to build a new building, will, in most cases, need to generate enough square footage to make their investment affordable. If we reduce the size any more, we are precluding a whole segment of current and future owners from living in Venice. If the only new structure you can build with reasonable square footage is a single family home, then, that is what will be built now and in the future. Duplexes or other units will not be as attractive because of their reduced size. If the purpose of the L.C.P. is to make Venice housing very expensive single family units, this is a good first step toward that goal.

We need to keep a mix of housing options available for both rental & sales in the community. We must not close out future housing options by further restricting building capability. Multiple units can provide a potential for affordable housing for senior citizens as well as others.

There is a very simple factor in economics: When you make an investment in real estate, the more people who can help pay for your investment, the more affordable, attractive and available the real estate option becomes. I dare say that people who have purchased in Venice in the last 10 years would have a difficult time buying the same property in today's market; yet, they are willing to shut down these options to others who may want to buy or live in Venice.

People talk about preserving the period character of the neighborhood. What period are we going to preserve 1910-1930-1950-1980? Who's to say what period we should lock future growth and development into? Why are we letting a select few roll the density of our community back to the 1920's. I do not agree with these recommendations.

7.2 Height

Parking regulations now in effect lead to taller buildings in order to allow for 2 units on these small lots. 70% of the ground floor is used for parking, halls and stairwells, this leaves the 2nd & 3rd floors for livable space. If you decide to make the 500 sq.ft. of storage on the ground floor livable space, you create the following problem. Currently the building with only garages and storage on the ground floor and built up planters around 50% of the exterior is categorized as a 2 story structure with no living space on the ground floor. Once you put livable space on the ground floor it is rated a 3 story building and you need to add an additional staircase. If this could be done design wise, you would lose another 500 sq.ft. of livable space with this addition. As you can see it is already quite difficult to build a duplex on these small lots.

If your concern is a proliferation of the so called inarticulate boxes then you should look at what makes these buildings in the first place. I would say that about 90% of all buildings are boxes of some kind because of the following reasons: a. most lots are square or rectangular in shape, b. Rooms are also square or rectangular, and when you are asked to build a decent sized duplex on a small lot,

with such limited space & height it will look like a box. Now what are the architectural changes that can be made to take away the box like appearance? They are varied roof line, different window treatment and exterior treatment of the building. I do not feel that most people have a problem with a 30' height limit on current or future buildings. But if you are concerned with the box like appearance of these buildings at 30', then you should allow the owners or builders an additional 10' so that they may create some interesting and different roof lines on these buildings.

7.3.1 Front Yard Setback

I feel that the current front yard setback of 15' on all new buildings is adequate and provides plenty of open space in the front yard area. Also the current side & rear yard setbacks are adequate.

7.3.4 Architectural Projections

Current code is adequate on these matters and I feel further definition will only serve to inhibit architectural expression.

7.5 Parking & Access Guidelines

I feel that all older structures without adequate on-site parking should be required to provide this parking where possible. Also any building where an addition is being applied for should be required to provide adequate parking for the entire project. The current parking requirements for all new buildings should remain the same. If a lot consolidation of three lots or more is applied for then the developer should be required to provide additional guest parking within his project. On the small lots an increase in the rear yard setback should be encouraged so that one additional guest space may be created across the rear of the lot.

7.9 Lot Consolidation

Over the last 50 years in Venice, there has not been a lot of residential lot consolidations. Because of the current high market price of land and the current height & density restrictions; there is very little economic benefit or incentive to consolidate residential lots. Lot consolidation is not the problem it is the architectural design of the large building that some find objectionable. A possible solution might be to request additional open space and architectural building breaks on larger projects. For example on a single lot you are required to have approx. 30% open space on the ground floor. If you combine 2 lots 30% open space would still be the requirement, but when 3 or more are combined the requirement should be 40% open space on the ground floor. I picked this number because that is the percentage of open space on most of the older homes built in the area. That way you will have similar open space on a larger project. By not letting the front facade of a building run longer than 60 feet without a break you can cut down the overall size of the structure. By allowing additional height for a varied roof line you will take away the box like appearance. Again I do not feel that lot consolidation is a bad concept and should

be prohibited.

7.12 Demolition

Demolition is the necessary removal of older housing stock so that new development may take its place. Property owners should have the right to demolish their property if they choose without the interference of neighbors or City officials unless they are prepared to reimburse the owner for the taking of his property rights. If they want to preserve a structure they should be allowed to purchase it and move it to some other location at the City's or the buyers expense.

Venice Development

We do not have uncontrolled development in Venice as some people would like others to believe. In fact we have more controls on building in our community than anywhere else in Los Angeles, or the State of California for that matter. An owner has to pay close to \$17,000. in fees to the City to build a duplex in Venice today, only 5 years ago the fees were \$4,000. a duplex. You can now understand what has happened to the affordability of housing today. The City has a big job ahead of it to make sure that there are sufficient housing opportunities available to the residents of the Venice community, and the L.C.P. process now underway had better not be used by a few selfish individuals to take away future housing options in our community.