

Project Description
Venice Way
303-305 E. Venice Way

Summary of Project

The Proposed Project is a 3-unit subdivision pursuant to the Small Lot Subdivision (Townhome) Ordinance. The Site upon which the Proposed Project is to be located is an RD 1.5-zoned lot located at 303-305 East Venice Way in the Venice Specific Plan area of the City of Los Angeles. The Proposed Project will need a Parcel Map, a Venice Specific Plan Adjustment, and a Coastal Development Permit.

Background

The Proposed Project is a 3-unit subdivision located at 303-305 E. Venice Way in the Venice Specific Plan area of the City of Los Angeles ("Site"). The Site is comprised of two lots totaling 4,088 s.f. in size (4,588. s.f. including half the adjacent rear alley) and zoned RD 1.5. The Site is located in the North Venice subarea of the Venice Specific Plan ("VSP"), a short walk from the Venice Ocean Front Walk, the Canals, and the numerous shops and restaurants along Main Street and Abbot Kinney. Currently, there is a dilapidated owner-occupied duplex on the Site which straddles the two small lots comprising the Site.

The Site is owned by the Espinoza-Ruano family, which emigrated from El Salvador to the United States several decades ago. The Espinoza-family purchased the duplex in 1997 and has lived in the duplex since that time. Mr. Maury Ruano, the co-owner who lives in the front unit, is also the Principal of the ADMB Group, which is the single asset entity owner-Applicant for the Proposed Project ("Applicant").

The Espinoza-Ruano family enjoys living near the beach and wishes to remain in the area. At the same time, they would like to upgrade their living spaces and take advantage of the revitalization that has taken place in Venice since they purchased the property. The Owners' proposal for development of the Site is informed in part by these considerations.

Configuration of the Proposed Project

The Applicant proposes to subdivide the site into 3 asymmetrical lots. The largest of these lots will be 1,881 s.f. in size and will be developed with a 3-story, 2,396 s.f. townhome ("Unit A"). Unit "A" will have two enclosed parking spaces which will be accessed from the 20-foot-wide alley immediately behind the Site and parallel to Venice Way. Unit "A" will also have a pedestrian entrance through its Venice Way-facing front yard. The Applicant intends to retain Unit "A" as well as Unit "B" for owner occupancy but make Unit "C" available for sale.

Unit "B" will smaller than Unit "A" at 1,589 s.f. in size and will be located on a 1,356 s.f. alley-facing lot. Unit "B" will have a pedestrian entrance to Venice Way from the unit's main entrance on the east-facing side of the lot through an easement upon Unit "C"'s lot. Unit "B"'s garage will have space for two cars parked in tandem and entering from the alley behind the Site.

The other Venice Way-facing unit, Unit "C", will be smaller than Unit "A" but bigger than Unit "B" at 2,162 s.f. on a 1,352 s.f. lot. Unit "C" will have a front yard facing Venice Way and a small walkway

for pedestrian access to the alley immediately to the west of the unit's garage. The garage for Unit "C" will provide 2 alley-accessed tandem spaces which will be located over an easement upon the Lot "B". Unit "C" will contain living space on each floor as well as in its basement.

All of the units will have roof decks and will vary from 30-35' in height with sloped roofs, in compliance with the applicable VSP height limitations. The setback between the sidewalk and the Venice Way-facing front of Units A and B will vary from 11'-9" at the west end to 12'-11" at the east end. There will be a 3-foot side yard setback between the units and the neighboring properties to the east and west of the units, and a 4'-5" passageway between Unit A and Units B and C. There will be a 6'-8" rear-yard setback between the entrances to the garages and the alley.

Although the total square footage of the Site is 4,088 s.f., the Los Angeles Municipal Code ("Code") §12.22 C 16 permits the Applicant to use half the width of the alley along the rear of the Site in determining the maximum permitted density. The alley is 20' wide and the rearage of the Site is 50 feet long. Thus, the total square footage for purposes of determining the permitted density on the Site is 4,588 s.f., and the Site may therefore be developed with 3 units at an average density of 1,500 s.f. per lot.

However, the Applicant proposes that the lots be irregular sizes, at 1,881, 1,352, and 1,356 s.f. per lot. The proposed configuration is asymmetrical for several reasons. First, the Owners wish to remain at the Site and the differing sizes of the units are triggered by the Owners' desire to develop the Site with units that meet their current needs while also building a unit which will be available for sale. Second, the requirement in §10.F.5(a) of the VSP that the parking on the Proposed Project be accessed via the rear alley for all three units also influenced the configuration of the Proposed Project. Finally, these concerns along with a variety of building code, fire code, and subdivision requirements trigger the configuration of the Proposed Project.

Each unit will have 2 on-site parking spaces in enclosed garages. The parking spaces for Units "B" and "C" will be in tandem (2 deep); Unit "A"'s parking spaces will be side by side. Code §12.21.A.4(a), as revised per the Townhome Ordinance, states that two parking spaces are required for each single family dwelling, and between 1-2 spaces are to be required for "all other dwelling units." These statements make it clear that townhomes constructed pursuant to the Townhome Ordinance are to be considered single-family dwellings for purposes of calculating parking requirements. No guest spaces are required under the Townhome Ordinance for developments of fewer than 10 units.

The VSP states that each single family dwelling on a lot less than 35' wide when adjacent to an alley must provide 2 spaces per unit. Guest spaces are not required for single family homes pursuant to VSP §13.D. Thus, a total of 6 spaces are required for the Proposed Project under the VSP provisions pertaining to guest parking. In addition, the Proposed Project is located in the Beach Impact Zone ("BIZ"). Pursuant to VSP §13 E 2, one BIZ space is required for each 1,000 s.f. of ground floor area for multiple dwelling Venice Coastal Development Projects of 3 units or more. It is not clear whether this provision applies to the Proposed Project because it is not technically a "multiple dwelling" project. However, if City Staff determine that the BIZ requirements apply here, that one additional space (based upon the Proposed Project's 1,249 s.f. of ground floor space, excluding square footage allocated to parking and access) can be provided by the Applicant's payment of an in-lieu fee, as permitted under the VSP.

Description of the Proposed Project

The Proposed Project has been distinctively designed by a young Italian architecture firm, Barnes + Galuppo Architetti, which has designed the units within the Proposed Project to be warm and inviting but still highly minimalist contemporary-style residential spaces. Each airy, light-filled unit will have a two-car garage and a roof deck, and two of the units will have a private front yard facing Venice Way. The distinctive design of the Proposed Project has already been recognized by the City, and a rendering of the Proposed Project is featured in the City's brochure on the Small Lot Subdivision Ordinance, which will be discussed in more detail below. ([Please also see attached brochure.](#))

Environmental sustainability is important to the Applicant; as a result, the Proposed Project will incorporate "green" building features when feasible. Such features will include tankless water heaters, bamboo flooring, low E/dual glazing, high efficiency mechanical units, recycled acoustical installation, low VOC paints, energy star appliances, recycled structural steel, use of local materials when possible, "green" landscaping (drought-tolerant native plantings and water efficient drip irrigation system), and high efficiency lighting. The Applicant is looking into working with a salvage company so that as much of the existing building as possible can be reused and recycled so as to reduce the amount of waste that will be sent to the landfill.

Entitlements for the Proposed Project

A. Parcel Map Pursuant to the Small Lot Subdivision Ordinance.

The Applicant's request to the Advisory Agency to subdivide the parcel into 3 lots is being made through the City's Small Lot Subdivision Ordinance, Ordinance #176,354, which became effective on January 31, 2005 ("Townhome Ordinance"). The purpose of the Townhome Ordinance is to facilitate the production of housing by giving property owners additional ways to approach development of a particular site at a variety of affordability levels. The Townhome Ordinance contains a variety of features intended to facilitate the construction of additional ownership units in the City of Los Angeles at a price point which will typically be below that of single-family houses. At the same time, the Townhome Ordinance contains certain features which may make townhomes more desirable than condominiums as well as more feasible in some cases.

Specifically, while the Townhome Ordinance does not permit a net increase in density, it does allow for reduced lot sizes, reduced lot frontages, and reduced setbacks, and does give builders more flexibility as to the configuration of lots on a given parcel. The Proposed Project takes advantage of these provisions by providing reduced rear and side yard setbacks and by subdividing the Site into three separate ground-up parcels. The requirements in this respect in the Townhome Ordinance and the manner in which the Proposed Project will be complying with these requirements are set forth in [Table A](#), which is attached to this Project Description. In addition, the Townhome Ordinance creates "fee simple" lots rather than "airspace lots," as required for condominiums. Thus, approval of the parcel map which the Applicant has submitted for the Proposed Project will create 3 separate single-family lots, two of which will be slightly smaller than the otherwise permissible minimum lot size for physical (as opposed to air space) lots, and will do so without increasing the density of the Site above that which is otherwise permissible.

B. Venice Specific Plan Compliance

The Proposed Project is in the North Venice subarea of the VSP. The Proposed Project has been designed to be in full compliance with the height, setback, access, density, and parking requirements of the VSP and the Code. However, the Proposed Project will require a VSP Adjustment pursuant to Code §11.5.7E based upon the fact that the lots for Units B and C are both slightly smaller than the minimum lot size of 1,500 s.f. per lot. Pursuant to §10F of the VSP, the minimum lot area per dwelling unit in the North Venice subarea is 2 dwelling units per lot. The duplex currently on the Site straddles two existing lots. Thus, four dwelling units would be permitted on the Site based upon the number of record lots. However, because the minimum permitted density per dwelling units is 1,500 s.f. per lot on RD1.5-zoned lots, the Site is only large enough for three units.

As discussed above, the total square footage of the Site, counting half the alley, as permitted pursuant to Code §12.22 C 16, is 4,588 s.f., which is sufficient size for three lots in the RD 1.5 zone. However, as also noted above, the constraints upon the configuration of the lots brought about by the Applicant's intended use of the Site as well as due to parking, access, and other constraints, means that two of the three lots will be smaller than 1,500 s.f. in size. (Unit "B" will be 1,356 and Unit "C" will be 1,352, including half the alley width.) Therefore, the Applicant is requesting a VSP Adjustment. The overall density of the Proposed Project will be consistent with VSP and Code limitations; no adjustment is needed for the Proposed Project as a whole but simply for the internal configuration of the lots.

C. Coastal Development Permit

The Proposed Project will require a Coastal Development Permit ("CDP") based upon the fact that it is a "subdivision" located in the Coastal Zone and therefore a "development" for purposes of the Coastal Act. A CDP is required for developments in the Coastal Zone (Code §12.20.2 C). The Proposed Project has been designed to comply with the height, density, and other requirements of the Venice Land Use Plan ("Coastal Plan").

D. California Environmental Quality Act Compliance

The Proposed Project is Categorically Exempt pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA"). The Proposed Project is consistent with various exemptions stated in the City of Los Angeles CEQA Guidelines, including Article III, Class 1 (includes certain demolitions) and Class 3, par. c.7 (New Construction of up to 3 single-family structures in Urbanized Areas).

Table A

	Townhome Ordinance	Venice Specific Plan/Venice Coastal Plan	Proposed Project
Min. lot size	600 s.f.	1500 s.f.	1352 s.f.
Min. lot size per dwelling unit	1500 s.f.	1500 s.f.	1500 s.f.
Min. lot frontage	16'	n/a	Lot "A" 20'-7" Lot "B" 25'-0" Lot "C" 29'-5"
Front yard setbacks	0'	5'	12' (Unit "A") 0" (Unit "B") 12'-7" (Unit "C")
Side yard	3'	n/a	3' (sides adjoining non-project lot lines)
Rear yard	0'	n/a	6'-8"
Height	n/a	30-35' with varied roofline	30-35' with varied roofline
Parking	2 per unit = 6	2 per unit for each s.f. dwelling on a lot less than 35' wide when adjacent to alley = 6 spaces, + 1 "BIZ" space	2 per unit = 6