CITY OF MANHATTAN BEACH COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT STAFF REPORT

TO:

Planning Commission

FROM:

Richard Thompson, Director of Community Development

BY:

Daniel A. Moreno, Associate Planner

DATE:

February 28, 2007

SUBJECT:

Consideration of a Coastal Development Permit and Variance Requesting Approval to Exceed the Maximum Allowable Balcony Area in a Required Front Yard, in Conjunction with the Construction of a New Single Family

Residence at 124-12th Place (Djie)

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission CONDUCT THE PUBLIC HEARING, CONSIDER the request, and DIRECT Staff as determined to be appropriate.

APPLICANTS/OWNERS

Frank and Carlyn Djie 3115 Warwood Road Lakewood, Ca. 90712

BACKGROUND

On November 1, 2006, the applicants submitted a Variance application seeking approval to allow balcony projections into a required setback area to exceed the maximum allowable area. The application is part of a proposal to build a new single family residence which is currently under construction.

Manhattan Beach Municipal Code Section 10.60.040 (F) 5a states the following:

F. Balcony and Bay Windows

5. a Exceptions for RM and RH districts: Balcony projections are allowed in both the required front and rear yard for each dwelling unit to provide private open space. The aggregate area of all balcony projections for the entire lot within required yards shall not exceed three (3) times one-half (1/2) of the buildable width of the lot if all balcony projections are located in either the front and rear yard, and three (3) times two-thirds (2/3) the buildable width of the lot if balconies are located in both the front and rear yards.

The subject property is located at 124-12th Place, zoned RH (Residential High Density) and is located in Area District III. On May 16, 2006 the applicant received Coastal approval to demolish an existing nonconforming two-story single family residence constructed in 1935, and replace it with a new single family residence. Subsequently, on September 11, 2006, the applicants received a building permit (05-04048) to construct a three story single family residence with an attached 2-car garage. The permit was issued based on submitted plans that comply with all current zoning regulations including building height, allowable Buildable Floor Area, usable open space, parking, setbacks and permitted projections.

Before construction is completed the applicants are considering a revision to the approved plans which would increase the area of the balcony. Because MBMC Section 10.60.040 (F) 5a of the Manhattan Beach Municipal Code restricts the area of balcony projects into a required yard, a Variance application is required for relief from current code requirements.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

LOCATION

<u>Location</u>: 124-12th Place between Manhattan Avenue

and Ocean Drive (See Site Location Map).

<u>Legal Description</u>: Portion of Lot 9, Block 14, Manhattan

Beach Division #2.

Area District:

LAND USE

General Plan: High Density Residential

Zoning: RH, Residential High Density

Land Use: Existing Proposed

904 sq. ft. SFR No Change

Neighboring Land Uses:

North, across 12th Place
South,

3-story SFR (full-lot), 122-13th Street
3-story SFR (half-lot), 125-12 Street

East, 2-story SFR (half-lot), 128-12th Place

West, 3-story Duplex (full-lot), 121-12 St./120-12th Place

PROJECT DETAILS

Parcel Size: 1,350 sq. ft. (30' x 45')

Building Area: 1,687 sq. ft.

Building Height: 30 feet (3-stories)

Parking: 418 sq. ft. (enclosed 2-car garage)

Vehicle Access: 12th Place

Building Setbacks:

Front (north) 5 ft.
Sides (east/west) 3 ft.
Rear (south) 5 ft.

DISCUSSION

The approved building plans show a three story 1,687 square foot building with an attached two-car enclosed area. The plans also show two conforming balcony projections in the front setback area at the second and third levels of the building (see floor and elevation plans). Each balcony projection is 1.5' in depth and 12 feet in width for a total square foot area of 36 square feet.

Per MBMC Section 10.60.040 (F) 5a, balcony projections are allowed in a required front or rear yard to provide private open space. The aggregate area of all proposed balcony projections for the entire lot within required yards shall not exceed three (3) times one-half (1/2) of the buildable width of the lot if all balcony projections are located in either the front or rear yard. The subject property is 30 feet in width and therefore provides 24 feet of buildable width (30 feet of width minus both required side yards of 3 feet). One half of this buildable width is 12 feet multiplied by 3 (maximum balcony projection) which equals 36 square feet (12' x 3' = 36 sq. ft.) total balcony area.

The subject property is a substandard lot area and fronts on 12th Place. Like many portions of lots in Area District III and IV which front on an alley, 12th Place is considered the front of the property and therefore must conform to current projection restrictions into the required 5-foot front yard setback area.

The applicant is seeking relief from MBMC Section 10.60.040 (F) 5a, requesting approval to double the balcony area to 72 square feet. This would be accomplished by extending both approved front balcony projections an additional 1.5 feet for a total of 3 feet into the required setback (3' wide x 12' long x 2 (both levels) = 72 square feet.

In order to grant a Variance request, Section 10.84.060 (B) of the zoning code requires that the Planning Commission must make required findings as follows:

1. Because of special circumstances or conditions applicable to the subject property, including narrowness and hollowness or shape, exceptional topography, or the extraordinary or exceptional situations or conditions, strict application of the requirements of this title would result in peculiar and exceptional difficulties to, or exceptional and/or undue hardship upon, the owner of the property.

- 2. The relief may be granted without substantial detriment to the public good; without substantial impairment of affected natural resources; and would not be detrimental or injurious to property or improvements in the vicinity of the development site, or to the public health, safety or general welfare.
- 3. Granting the application is consistent with the purposes of this title and will not constitute granting of a special privilege inconsistent with limitations on other properties in the vicinity and in the same zoning district and area district.

MBMC Section 10.84.010, Purpose of a Variance, states that Variances may be granted for "yards" (setbacks), as well as other development standards. Additionally, this Code Section gives the Planning Commission authority to approve, conditionally approve, or disapprove findings for Use Permits and Variances provided that the project meets the required findings.

The applicant's attached material (Exhibit B – Applicant's Findings) states that variance approval is appropriate for the following reasons:

- 1. Hardship has been created due to misapplied regulations on the subject half lot amongst through lots.
- 2. Adjacent structures located on full lots dwarf the subject half lot resulting in a "close-in" effect.
- 3. The code requirement has affected their ability to find suitable outdoor balcony space.
- 4. The neighbor's buildings have blocked all prevailing winds, sunshine and any view of the ocean.
- 5. The inconsistent setback requirement along 12th Place creates greater setback and massing requirements for smaller lots.
- 6. Where is the logic to the code and how it relates to specific unique properties? The balcony extension is not a life safety issue.
- 7. The subject half lot is unique in that there are only two half lots in the area and are oddities and cannot be compared fairly to half lots in other areas of town such as the El Porto area where most of the lots are half lots.

Staff Comments

While the subject property is not a full size lot and nonconforming for minimum lot area, it is not unique as there are many portions of lots located in Area District III and IV. Structures which front on a street (or alley) have projection restrictions that apply to all residential properties throughout the city including the larger lots in Area District I and II. In 1990, with the adoption of the current code requirements (Z.O.R.P), all projections including fireplaces, architectural features, bay windows, eaves, covered porches and decks, canopies and entry covers, were restricted to reduce the appearance of buildings designed closer to the required setbacks. When the code was adopted there was no distinction as to the size of property or area district. Since the adoption of the code requirements in 1990 no permits have been issued that allow excess balcony area. The balcony area restriction of 36 square feet applies to all lots in Area District III and IV and has not been misapplied as the applicant has indicated because had the subject property

been a full size lot the same balcony area restriction of 36 square feet would also apply. The applicants have stated that they desire to have a balcony project that preserves their view of the ocean. Staff points out that the city does not guarantee views as there is no view ordinance to enforce. Staff suggests that if the applicant feels that by extending the balcony an additional 1.5 feet preserves their view to the ocean they have the option to extend the upper level balcony to within 2 feet of the property line. However this would mean that that the mid-level balcony must remain within the building envelope away from the setback area to comply with current code requirements. Additionally, they can create additional "suitable" open area within the building envelope by reducing the proposed habitable area. The property owners must decide whether they want more building area or open area, which is a common issue with portions of lots.

The Planning Commission has previously reviewed Variance applications requesting additional living area projections on half lots that front on an alley. In those cases the Commission has approved habitable area in these setback areas finding that the size of those parcels are small and constituted a hardship and special circumstance and that the projections would not be detrimental to the public good due to similar projections from surrounding properties and the request did not grant a special privilege, since all full size lots are allowed rear yard projections onto an alley.

While the subject application and those Variances approved by the Commission deal with setback projections, they are different in nature. Living area projections are a "setback issue" and are only permitted on through lots with an alley condition in Area Districts III and IV. A balcony area into a setback is a "projection" issues because it is only permitted in a front or rear yard and applies throughout the city.

Public Input:

A public notice for the project was mailed to the property owners within 500 feet of the site and published in the Beach Reporter newspaper. At the writing of this report, staff had not received any phone calls or correspondence regarding the subject applications. However the applicant submitted a petition of signatures (attached, Exhibit D) gathered from property owners living adjacent to the site, in support of the applicants Variance application.

CONCLUSION

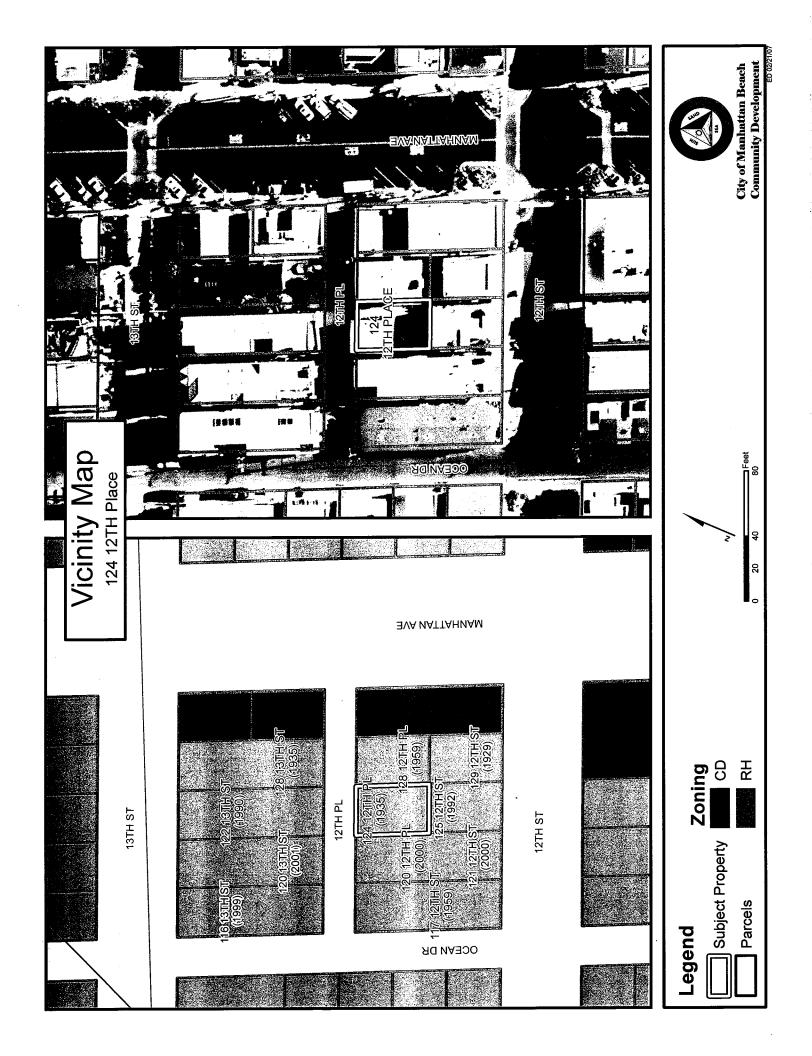
Staff recommends that the Planning Commission conduct the public hearing, consider the information presented, and direct staff as determined to be appropriate. Specific determinations suggested to be made for the application include the following:

- 1. Determine whether the subject proposal meets the required findings per MBMC Section 10.84.060 (B), specifically if a hardship and special circumstance exists and would not be granting a special privilege to the property owners.
- 2. Determine if there are other alternatives to obtain suitable outdoor space as desired by the applicant.

Attachments:

Exhibit A Site Location Map
Exhibit B Applicants Narrative and Findings
Exhibit C Applicant's Petition of Signatures
Exhibit D Architectural Plans
Exhibit E Applicants Photo's/Site Plan

cc: Frank and Carlyn Djie, Applicants Peter De Maria, Project Architect



ARCHITECTURE

DE MARIA DESIGN

941MANHAITAN BEACH BLVD.

MANHAITAN BEACH, CA 90266

PHONE: 310. 802.1270

FAX: 310. 802.1260

info @demarkadesian.com

Date:

January 25, 2007

Project Address:

124 12th Place

Manhattan Beach, CA 90266

Owners:

Frank Djie & Carlyn Kinneson Djie

124 12th Place

Manhattan Beach, CA 90266

To:

Manhattan Beach Planning Commissioners

Attached you will find our Required Findings and additional support information related to our Variance application. Please feel free to contact our office at 310 802-1270 for any clarifications.

Required Findings

1. Because of special circumstances and conditions to the subject property, strict application of the requirements of this title would result in peculiar and exceptional difficulties to, or exceptional and/or hardships upon, the owner of the property.

The hardship that has been created on this property is due to the misapplied regulations on this half lot amongst through lots. The hardship here has been created by the development of adjacent structures that have now dwarfed this half-lot in a neighborhood of through lots and commercial buildings. The resultant "closed in" effect that has been created by neighboring structures affords our client only the ability to encroach upon the front setback to find any suitable outdoor balcony space. We have already integrated open area along the side of the property at each of the upper floors. The neighboring residence to the west is approximately 6' away and it projects out towards 12th Place, well beyond our front setback line. That neighboring house blocks all prevailing winds, afternoon sunshine, and any alley views of the ocean that once existed for our client. Our proposed expanded balconies create an opportunity for the homeowners to capture the late afternoon sun, a potential view of the ocean and the ocean breezes. None of this is possible in the side or rear yard as those "open areas" are surrounded by neighboring bathrooms or bedrooms. The inconsistent setbacks requirements along 12th Place create greater setback and massing requirements for homeowners on smaller lots.

Of the other seven homes on the 12th Place, all of them are closer to the property line than we are proposing. Upon further and a more detailed inspection, we have found that balcony and fireplace setbacks on these adjacent buildings are as little as 1'-9" on up to 5'-0" away from the property line. Two houses on the block have 1'-9" set backs to their balconies, another home has a 2'-0" setback, another is at 2'-6", and another is at 3'-0. (See attached)



2. The relief may be granted without substantial detriment to the public good; without substantial impairment of affected natural resources: and not be detrimental or injurious to property or improvements in the vicinity of the development site, or to the public health, safety or general welfare.

We have met and corresponded with representatives from the Planning Dept. on a few occasions to discuss this project. Our Planning Dept. here in Manhattan Beach is excellent and their explanation of the code was clearly communicated to us. As a team, we analyzed the relevant code sections and tried to apply some logic to the code and how it relates to our specific and unique property. The question that continuously resurfaced when we encountered this regulation that ran counter to existing neighborhood conditions was, "...what is the intent of this section of the code?" The code usually focuses on safety issues first; for example, dictating the setbacks that enable firefighters to access properties and to prevent the potential spreading of a fire from property to property. Beyond safety, we have found that Manhattan Beach Planning is deeply committed to the prevention on "mansionization" projects. The regulation of building size, setbacks, massing and bulk are major issues. The expansion of these balconies does not encroach upon any neighboring property views. In addition, neither unsafe conditions nor increased bulk results from the proposed design and thus no part of the application is in any way detrimental to the public good. The proposed balcony expansion does it substantially impair any natural resources, neither does it create any conditions that are detrimental or injurious to property or improvements in the vicinity of the development site, or to the public health, safety or general welfare.

3. Granting the application is consistent with the purposes of this title and will not constitute a grant of special privilege inconsistent with limitations on other properties in the vicinity and in the same zoning district and area district.

The project is a single-family residence that is zoned RH in District III. We can understand the need for different setbacks for half lots such in other RH zones in town. The majority of homes in those districts are on half lots, however only our home and the house next door are on half lots on 12th Place. These homes are surrounded by large through lot homes and commercial buildings and thus our property is much different than a half lot located let's say, in the El Porto area. The City of Manhattan Beach no longer approves the creation of these half lots and the presence of these two lots surrounded by through lots is rare in this area. The approval of this variance is not setting precedence for setbacks on all half lots such as those located in El Porto. The half lots like those in El Porto, while they may be classified with the same zoning designation as this property on 12th Place, are surrounded by context that is just the opposite of 12th Place. Approval of this variance does not constitute a grant of special privilege inconsistent with limitation on other properties in the vicinity and in the same zoning district and area district. We have surveyed the Planning Dept. Map at the Public Counter and we have found that only two half lots, (ours and the lot next door), exist from as far south as 8th Place all the way up to south side of 15th Street. These seven city blocks, bound by Highland Avenue to the east and the Strand to the west contain well over 100 residences and commercial buildings. Basically our property and the property next door are oddities and cannot be compared fairly to half lots in other areas of town. The Planning Dept. has confirmed that in the past no variances such as the small balcony expansion in the required setback we are proposing have been approved on half lots. Planning also confirmed that in the past, variances to allow enclosed habitable space within the front yard setback on similar lots and within the front yard setback have been approved.

Additional Supporting Information/Statement

The Variance Request:

The project is a single-family residence that is zoned RH in District III. The home is currently under construction and is already permitted. We are requesting that a variance be approved for an increase of balcony area in the front yard setback regulated by Manhattan Beach Planning and Zoning Code, Section 10.60.040 F5(a):

a. <u>Exceptions for RM and RH Districts</u>. Balcony projections are allowed in both the required front and rear yard for each dwelling unit to provide private open space. The aggregate area of all balcony projections for the entire lot within required yards shall not exceed 3 times one-half of the buildable width of the lot if all balcony projections are located in either the front or rear yard, and 3 times two-thirds the buildable width of the lot if balconies are located in both the front and rear yards.

This section of the code limits 30' wide lots (24' buildable) to an aggregate balcony area of 3 times one half of the buildable width (12'). That amounts to 36 sq. ft. of balcony area in the front yard setback. Our variance requests that the Planning Commission allow the current and code compliant balcony design to be expanded at the upper two floors for to total of 72 sq. ft., not the required 36 sq. ft. The expansion of these balconies is required because of the "closed in" effect that has been created by neighboring structures. The proposed balconies comply with all other regulations governing balconies and will be 2'-0" clear of the front property line. The requested overall area of the encroachment is 1'-6"deep x 12'-0" wide at each floor and will not impact any of the neighboring properties.

The Hardship, the History of the Site and Design Solution

The property owners have had this piece of land in their family since the 1930's. The owners did not purchase the property knowing that the lot was small and that the surrounding large structures were just part of the context. The Kinneson's house was the first on the block. Carlyn can tell you how as a child she remembers nothing but sand between the original house on this site and where the waves broke. These homeowners did not buy into a potential headache having their lot dwarfed by other larger lots, the headache was created long after they owned the property and it consumed the entire neighborhood. The original home that was on the property was a two-story structure. The bottom floor was within 1'-8" from the front property line. The cantilevered 2nd floor was on the property line with <u>no</u> setback. We had detailed discussions regarding whether to keep the original house and maintain the 2nd floor which enabled the house to peek out from the neighboring structures on the east and west sides. Ironically, although the 2^{nd} floor wall of the original house was on the property line, the current code allowed us to keep it if we so desired. My clients decided that a new house should be more properly scaled back and the original solid front wall be replaced by an open-air balcony and glass. Our proposed design finds the partial balconies set back 2'-0" from the property line as opposed to the original solid wall which was on the property line. The wall at the front of the new house is located at least 5'-6" from the front property line. The allowable front setback is 5'-0" and we are set back an additional 6" to help minimize the bulk of the building. The entire front of the building, with the exception of the lower garage, is transparent glass, reducing the bulk and massiveness of a more solid material such as stucco, wood siding, brick, etc.

Half Lot Setbacks vs. Through Lot Setbacks

Please note that although our home is located in a RH zone in District III, the property is classified as a "half-lot". Only two of the eight houses on the block are half lots, all the others are through lots. Even though they are side by side, half lots and through lots have different setback requirements. Herein lies the portion of the code that is misdirected and thus is the primary reason why my clients suffer a hardship with regard to setbacks and open area requirements.

By code the "through lot" rear yard faces 12th Place. The setbacks for these rear yards has resulted in habitable space/solid walls to be located as close as 2'-6" from the rear property line and balconies as close as 1'-9" from the rear property line. Our property is a half-lot and the minimum set back from the same 12th Place property line is 5'-0". Our building on the half lot, is forced to be located at least 2'-6" further back from the same property line as a through lot. With this in mind, these rules make no sense when it comes to regulating bulk and reducing the mass of a building at the street. While a strong argument could be made that the half lot is entitled to have a setback that is consistent with that of the through-lot, we are not seeking to increase habitable floor area or the massiveness and bulk of the building but merely asking that we be able to project our open rail balcony an additional 18" beyond what has been approved. The balcony would still be further away from the property line than the balconies on at least three other houses on 12th Place.

The neighboring structures project out and closer to the street than this home is allowed to. While they are not Planners or Architects, Frank and Carlyn feel that it simply isn't fair that every other home on the block is allowed to be closer to the property line than they are, especially when there home has been dwarfed by the adjacent structures. There new proposed home can actually be made larger, with more square footage and thus command a larger deck area, yet they made the decision to demolish the original house and follow the true spirit of the code by pushing the bulk of their project well behind the setback line and reducing the allowable size.

Important Notes Regarding the Project Design

- The proposed building size is smaller than the allowed square footage.
- We demolished the original home that clearly violated our current zoning regulations but could have been left intact via grandfather clause.
- We have mitigated massing/bulk issues for our proposed project by setting the front wall of the habitable structure back 5'-6" from the front property line with only open rail balconies projecting into the front yard setback. A setback of 5'-0" is required for habitable space for our site, but nearly all of our neighbors can project a 3'-0" balcony into the required 5'-0" setback. The neighboring structure directly to the west has legally projected 2'-6" of habitable area into the 5'-0" setback.
- By design, our open rail balconies along with the glass facade creates a project that is light open and airy as opposed to a bulky solid stucco, wood, or brick wall.

Neighbor Support

Our design has been discussed with, and supported by, the neighbors on 12th Place and the surrounding streets (see attached letter). Our design decisions have supported the reduction of habitable space, and in turn reduced massing and bulk. Such actions show the clear intention and good will of these property owners. Frank and Carlyn visited each home on the block with their set of drawings, the house model and a drafted "Letter of Support" for the neighbors. Eight neighbors have positively endorsed the letter, everyone they met with voiced only support for their variance request.

Conclusion

In light of:

- 1) the removal of the original building which was located on the property line,
- 2) the design of the new home and its habitable space set back at least 6" beyond the required 5'-0" setback and
- 3) the neighboring structures surrounding the project all with habitable and balcony space as close as 1'-9" from the property 12th Place property lines, that results in our building with a cramped/squeezed side, front and rear yard,

we believe that our proposed application is not asking for any type of benefit but only that we are treated equitably on 12th Place.

In addition, any denial of this variance request sends a message that provides incentive to other homeowners to keep non-complying "grandfather clause" conditions that run counter to citywide massing and bulk concerns.

This project is unique and deserves to be treated as such. We respectfully ask for the Planning Commission to grant an approval of this variance application. Both the Djie Family and I thank you for your time, assistance and consideration of this important issue.

Kindest Regards,

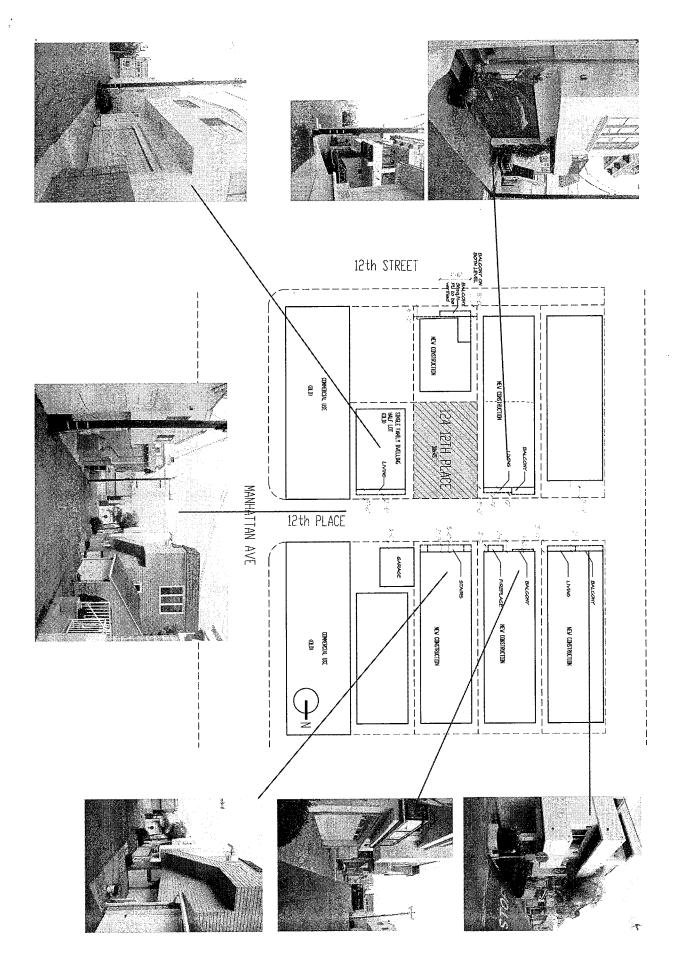
Peter DeMaria AIA Architect

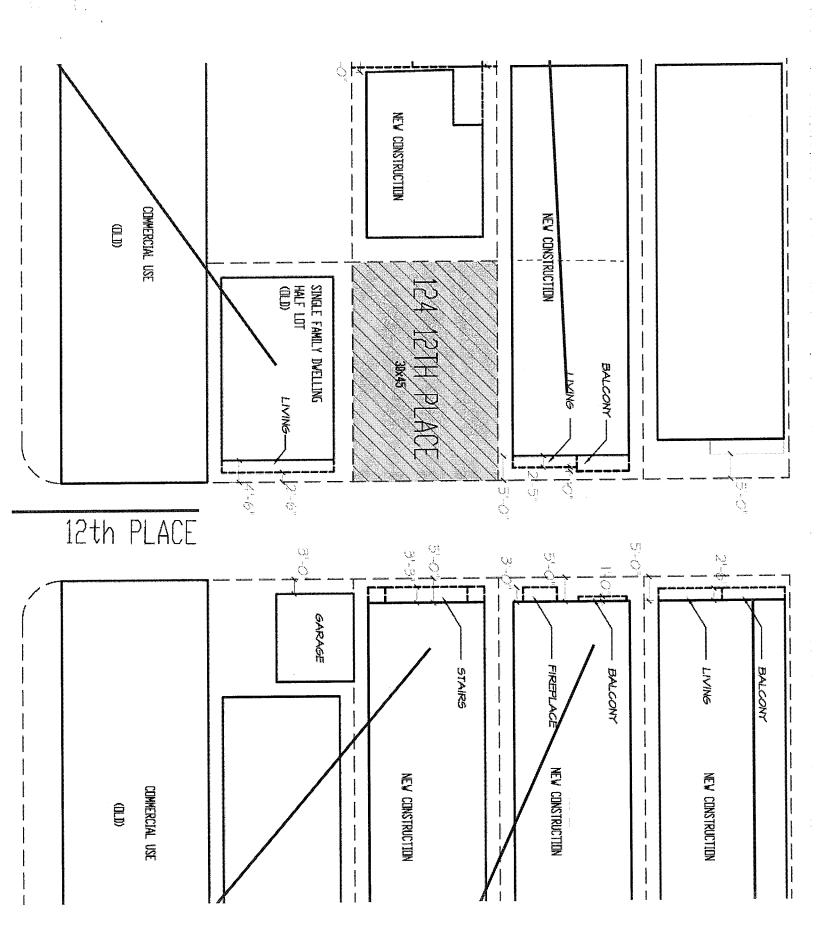
attachments:

12th Place block plan

neighbor support letter

Main





Hi Neighbors,

Our home at 124 12th Place is progressing; however, we have applied for a variance to conform to our existing neighbors' overhangs and set-backs, having asked for nothing else.

We need your support to get our variance approved. Please call us anytime with your questions and concerns At (562) 429-1345 or Peter, architect at (310)802-1270.

Thank you in advance for your help and concern regarding our wonderful neighborhood.

Sincerely, Frank and Carlyn

Please sign, print your name and address, and return in the self addressed envelope.

Jank Stepper Julia K. Govella 120 13th St. MB. 90266 Jant Nute JANET NIZTON 122 - 13th St. MB 90266 Delstood Neil Leventhan John Law 128 Manha St. MB 90266 Min Carry 1268 Manha Har Ave MB 90266

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Chef Green GREG & MELANTE ZWEZNEMANN

120 12TH PLACE

MANHATTAN BEACH, CH 90266

MIKE BULLS

116 13TH ST NS 90266

VORCE BIRNBAUM.

1209 HANHATTAN AVE.
1209 HANHATTAN BCH. CA 90266.

Kate Cliebe
1200 12Th Place
Manhatan Beach, CA 90266

JOE REITHEIST

MANHATTAN BEACH, CA 90266



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May Eyocom Mandal Male Male Apl GREG & MELANTE ZWERNEMANN

120 12TH PLACE

MANHATTAN BEACH, CH 90266

MINE BULLS

11C 13TH ST 18, 90266

NORGE BIRNBAUM.

1209 MANHATTAN ANE:
1209 MANHATTAN BCH. CA 90266.

Kate Cliebe
1200 12th Place
Manhathan Beach, CA 90266

JOE REITMEIGN

120 12TH PLACE

MANHATTAN BEACH, CA 90266

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Jant Hute Janet Hilton
120 13th St. MB. 90266

Mant Hute JANET HILTON
122 - 13th St. MB 90266

Della Wall Leventhan
John Lang 128 Manhallan Are
MB 90266