

A NEW TWO STORY PLUS BASEMENT SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENCE:

# A NEW RESIDENCE

3411 THE STRAND  
HERMOSA BEACH, CA 90254



SROUR & ASSOCIATES  
Real Estate Development Services Group, Inc.  
1001 Sixth Street, Suite 110, Manhattan Beach, CA 90266  
email address: brandon@esrour.com  
310/372-8433 • FAX 310/372-8894

---

August 15, 2019

TO: Community Development Department, Planning Division

SUBJECT: 3411 The Strand – Small Lot Exception

**Background:**

GENERAL PLAN:	Low Density Residential
ZONING:	Single-Family Residential (R-1)
LOT SIZE:	2,275 square feet
PROPOSED LIVING SQUARE FOOTAGE:	3,850 square feet
PROPOSED LOT COVERAGE:	68.39%
PROPOSED PARKING:	2 Standard/1 Guest (2 Standard/1 Guest required)

The applicant seeks a Planning Commission determination that the lot at 3411 The Strand may be considered a small lot for purposes of compliance with certain Hermosa Beach Municipal Code (HBMC) requirements governing open space and lot coverage in the R-1 zone.

**Proposed Residence**

The subject lot is 2,275 square feet and located on The Strand between 34<sup>th</sup> Street and 35<sup>th</sup> Street. The lot is 35.04' wide and 65.89' deep. Currently on site is a 93-year-old legal non-conforming duplex. The applicant proposes to demolish the existing duplex to construct a new residence for his household of seven. The new home will be two stories over a basement, to include 3,850 square feet of living area. The proposed development will cure substantial nonconforming aspects of the current use of the property, including: 1) its inclusion of two dwelling units; 2) non-compliant setbacks; 3) excessive building height; and 4) insufficient parking.

**Small Lot Discretionary Standard**

Pursuant to HBMC Section 17.08.040 (Development Standards for Small Lots), a lot that is 2,100 square feet or less is considered a "small lot" by right and is subject to R-1 development standards except for certain modified open space and lot coverage requirements. Lots within ten percent (10%) of the 2100 square-foot threshold (i.e., lots ranging from 2,101 to 2,310 square feet) are eligible to use the lot coverage and open

space standards for small lots at the discretion of the Planning Commission, upon a finding of any one of four objectives set forth in the Code.

The subject lot sits at the north tip of The Strand at the intersection of 34<sup>th</sup> Street and Hermosa Avenue. Due to the convergence of The Strand and Hermosa Avenue as those rights of way extend north, The Strand lots taper at the north end of The Strand. There are five Strand lots to the north of 3411. Two are small lots by right. The remaining three lots would be small lots by right or within the discretionary range, but for the fact that they have been combined in some manner with adjacent lots. At 2,275 square feet, the applicant's lot is within the discretionary range for small lot consideration.

Under PLAN Hermosa, the future vision for this lot and the Character Area in which it is located includes retaining the form, scale, and orientation of buildings in the area by designing buildings that take advantage of the opportunities for outdoor living. The applicant's design maintains consistent form, scale, orientation, and open space of homes in the Character Area, within the confines of one of the smallest lots on The Strand. The design also has innovative elements that take advantage of the unique outdoor living opportunities of homes on The Strand.

#### Application of the Small Lot Objectives to 3411 The Strand

There are certain aspects of the lot configuration, immediate neighborhood, and innovative design elements of the project, each of which justifies a small lot designation for the subject lot, in satisfaction of three of the Code's objectives.

1. *To achieve a consistent and comparable amount of indoor living space with existing dwelling units in the immediate neighborhood.*

The applicant's proposed design incorporates 3,850 square feet of indoor living area, which is comparable to approximately half of the single-family residences in the immediate neighborhood.

The attached map shows the indoor living spaces for the 66 single-family residences in the immediate neighborhood. Of these, 48% exceed 3,800 square feet. Notably, all the single-family homes built in the immediate neighborhood within the last 10 years (16) have over 3,800 square feet of living area. Of those, 13 have over 4,000 square feet of living area. Without the flexibility of the requested small lot accommodations, the applicant will not be able to build a home with an indoor living area comparable existing single-family homes in the neighborhood and homes that will be built in the near future.

At its June meeting two months ago, the Commission approved a small lot designation where the applicant's proposed home had a comparable living area to only 18% of the homes in the immediate neighborhood.

In the present case 48% of the homes in the immediate neighborhood have living areas comparable to or greater than the applicant's.

In sum, the Commission has set a precedent that an applicant's home need have comparable living area to only 18% of the homes in the neighborhood in order to meet the requirements of this finding.

In the present case, the applicant far exceeds this threshold.

2. *To address unusual lot configurations or topography, as compared with surrounding lot and development patterns.*

#### Lot Configuration

The general open space requirement for R-1 lots is 400 square feet, with at least 300 square feet at grade level. The proposed design meets this requirement with a 300 square-foot open space on-grade and leading from primary living area. The open space will function as an outdoor living and eating area.

To meet the 300-square-feet-on-grade requirement, the applicant has set back the structure an additional distance ranging from 1.25' to 2.9' beyond the 6.5' required setback on the Strand side of the lot. However, due to the irregular configuration of the lot, the on-grade open space is irregular in shape. Because the lot line on The Strand is not squared to the rest of the lot, the open space runs 35' along The Strand, starting at a width of 7.75' at the north lot line, and widening to 9.4' at the south lot line. These dimensions are short of the general R-1 requirement (10'), but would be allowed for a small lot, which can have a minimum dimension of 7' for open space. While it is true that a number of lots on this stretch of The Strand have a similar tapered configuration, most lots in the immediate neighborhood have rectangular shapes. Moreover, the effect of the tapering lot line is amplified as the lots get smaller on the 3400-block stretch.

The irregular shape of the open space also results in a lot coverage that exceeds the general R-1 requirement by 3.39%. To reduce this excess, the applicant could re-orient the west facade to align with the west lot line, but this would be inconsistent with all the other adjacent structures and contrary to PLAN Hermosa. Consistent orientation of buildings is one of the goals of PLAN Hermosa for the Walk Street Neighborhood that encompasses The Strand. Allowing the small lot standard of 70% coverage would facilitate consistent building orientation for this site and conformity to PLAN Hermosa.

#### Lot Topography

The lots at the north end of The Strand, such as the subject lot, slope down, back to front. Because the only vehicle access is from the rear at the first-floor level of the

home, a large portion of the first floor must be used as a garage. For the large lots to the south, this is not a substantial limiting factor, because the proportion of the first floor taken up by garage space is smaller. When factored into the small size of the subject lot, however, this topographical characteristic has a unique impact on building design, which can be alleviated by the small lot flexibilities built into the Code.

In sum, the minor deviations from the general R-1 standards discussed above are precisely the type that the discretionary small lot provision was intended to accommodate. The applicant has worked within the constraints of the small lot size to meet the R-1 total open space requirement. However, the combination of the lot configuration, topography, and small size call for the flexibility of the small lot standards for minimum open space dimensions and lot coverage. An alternative configuration of the open space with 10' minimum dimensions would be infeasible. Specifically, it would require a 10' by 30' side yard, which would reduce the building width to 18 feet, due to side setbacks. This would result in a structure that is inconsistent with the form, scale, and orientation of the homes in this Character Area and PLAN Hermosa.

3. *To allow an innovative design which otherwise is consistent with the goals and intent of the open space and development standards for the R-1 zone.*

The proposed design incorporates elements to reduce massing and provide visual interest for those viewing the home from The Strand and the beach. The west side of the home has an articulated roof line and a façade with a staggered set-back. On the top level, windows have been used as a corner element to create openness in the design and further moderate the massing of the building. To achieve this combination of design elements and meet the R-1 total open space standard, the applicant needs the flexibility to use the 7' minimum open space dimension for small lots.

Were the applicant to meet the 10' dimension standard, the building would have to be set back 10' from The Strand, and the shallow depth of the lot (65') would leave a buildable area of approximately 55' by 28'. To incorporate a reasonable amount of indoor living area, the resulting structure would need a box-like design with a flat faced façade on The Strand and no balconies. This type of design would not meet the objectives of PLAN Hermosa to retain the form, scale, and orientation of buildings in the area or to design buildings that take advantage of the opportunities for outdoor living. Applying the small lot standard for open space dimensions and lot coverage, however, would allow the applicant to meet these objectives within the constraints of one of The Strand's smallest lots.

### Prior Planning Commission Decisions (2002 to 2019)

The Planning Commission has heard six small lot applications since 2002, all of which it approved. Those applications presented similar considerations as 3411 The Strand.

In 2002, the Planning Commission approved a small lot designation for a 2,240 square foot lot at 1110 2<sup>nd</sup> St., finding that application of the small lot standard would allow a somewhat comparable amount of indoor living space with existing two-story dwelling units in the immediate neighborhood.

In 2006, the Planning Commission approved a small lot designation for a 2,237 square foot lot at 1206 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, taking into account that indoor habitable space would be substantially reduced in order to meet the general R-1 requirements. In that case, the proposal included no on-grade open space, and above-grade open space with dimensions of less than 10'.

In 2006 the Planning Commission also approved a small lot designation for 2,247 square foot lot at 1222 2<sup>nd</sup> Street. That case was a conversion of a non-conforming duplex to a single-family residence, with a request to use the minimum 7' dimension for open space, including open space on grade. Again, the Planning Commission took into account the substantial reduction in habitable space that would be required by compliance with the general R-1 open space requirements. As in that case, the applicant here is eliminating a non-conforming duplex, but is also providing required parking. In the case of 1222 2<sup>nd</sup> St., that project was allowed to use the small lot exception while maintaining nonconforming parking (no guest space).

In 2008, the Planning Commission approved a small lot designation for a 2,250 square foot lot at 1135 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, allowing less than 300 square feet of open space on grade, while maintaining non-conforming parking.

In June of this year the Planning Commission approved a small lot designation for a 2,217 square foot lot at 1122 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, allowing the project to forgo the minimum at-grade and dimension requirements of the R-1 zone. In that case, the Planning Commission considered, among other things, the consistency of the design and building orientation of the proposal, compared to existing homes in the immediate neighborhood.

The Commission also considered the placement of living area on the top floor as an innovative design. If a living-area-on-top design qualifies as innovative, notwithstanding that it is a common feature of many homes in the City, certainly the truly innovative elements of 3411 The Strand support a small lot designation.

In the current case, the applicant is requesting lesser accommodations than in the cases previously approved by the Planning Commission, and the applicant is bringing the lot into full conformity with current zoning requirements. Approval of the small lot designation would therefore be consistent with the Planning Commission's decisions over the last 17 years.

### Conclusion

For the foregoing reasons, the applicant requests that the Planning Commission find sufficient grounds to allow the application of the small-lot open space dimension and lot coverage standards discussed above. By curing existing non-conformities, the proposed development will further the goals of the General Plan, and the proposed design is consistent with the future vision of its Character Area under PLAN Hermosa.

Below is the contrast and comparison between the standard R-1, R-1 "Small Lot", and the proposed single-family residence.

	Standard R-1	R-1 Small Lot	Proposed 3411 The Strand
Lot Coverage	Maximum 65%	Maximum 70%	68.39%
Total Open Space	Minimum 400 s.f.	Minimum 300 s.f.	400 s.f.
Open Space on Grade	Minimum 300 s.f.	N/A	300 s.f.
Dimensions of Open Space	Minimum 10'	Minimum 7'	7.75' x 9.4' (on grade) 10' x 10' (roof deck)
Open Space Accessible to Primary Living Areas	N/A	Minimum 60%	75%
Open Space on decks/ balconies	Maximum 100 s.f.	N/A	100 s.f.