

Appeal of PLN2025-00005: 305 Haight Street

Seeking Proportionate and Compatible Development

Agenda Item K1 | Staff Report #26-120-CC

City Council Hearing: July 14, 2026

Appellants: Siva Raja Sekhar Reddy Yeruva & Naveena Ganta (935 Laurel Avenue)

305 Haight Street Compatibility Study

Key Takeaway: We support building a home on this site, but it must be proportionate to the substandard lot to ensure public safety and neighborhood compatibility.

Currently, **standard residential properties** surround this block. The proposed 21-foot-wide, flat-roofed two-story box is highly incompatible with the established neighborhood character.

Rather than fitting the logical constraints of the lot, this design shifts the burden of **six simultaneous variances** onto a **single neighbor**.

We seek a **cooperative solution** that respects local planning guidelines and guarantees long-term public safety and architectural compatibility.

2,064 SF

Substandard Lot Size

Less than 30% of the 5,000 SF R-1-U minimum

6

Variances

Simultaneous Requests

Shifting development burdens onto one neighbor

305 Haight Street - History

- The property was acquired by the current owner approximately two years ago.
- The lot's pre-existing constraints and development limitations were matters of public record and knowable at the time of purchase.
- The Planning Commission's approval appears to have been influenced by references to SB-9, despite the fact that the project does not qualify for SB-9 provisions, particularly those concerning lot splits.
- A key requirement for lot splits under SB-9 is a signed affidavit from the applicant attesting to their intent to occupy one of the units as a principal residence for at least three years. This condition doesn't exist for this project although being approved based on SB-9 reference.

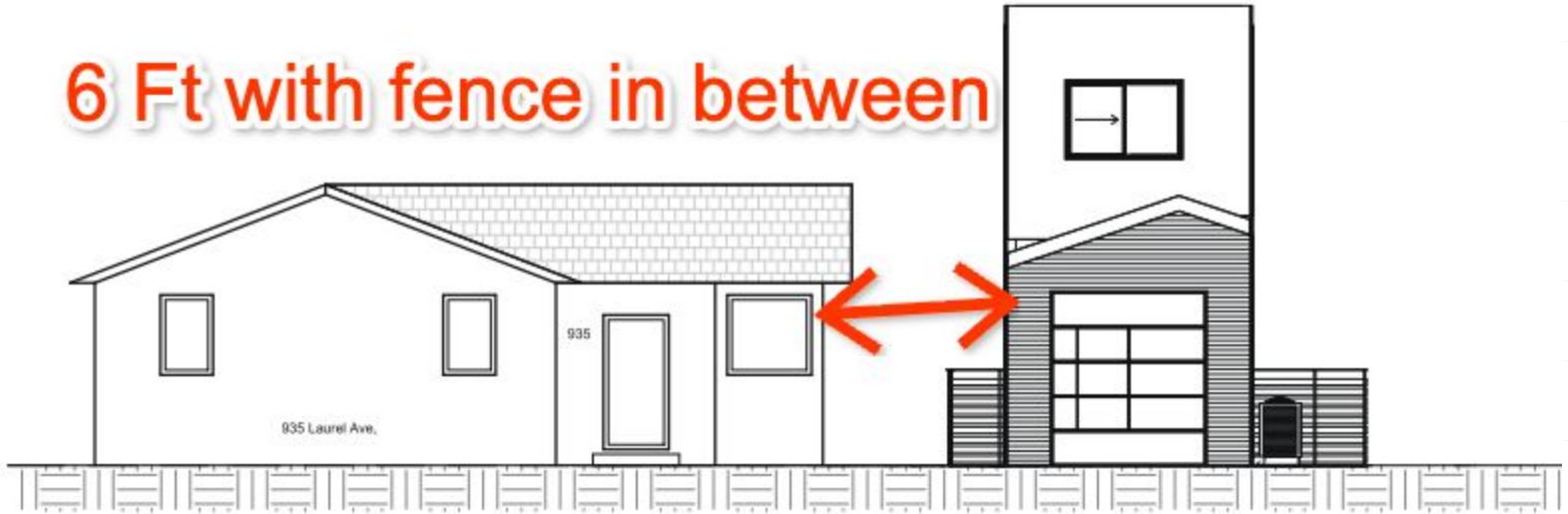
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305 Haight Street - 6 Variances

1. Reduce the interior side setback from 5 feet to 3 feet;
2. Reduce the corner side setback from 12 feet to 6 feet;
3. Reduce the rear setback 20 feet to 13 feet;
4. Reduce the number of required off-street parking spaces from two compliant spaces to one compliant covered space;
5. Exceed the maximum building coverage of 722 square feet with a total of 729.4 square feet; and
6. Increase the height of the daylight plane from 19 feet, six inches to 23 feet, 11 inches.

305 Haight Street - Current design

6 Ft with fence in between



General Plan Consistency & Neighborhood Character

Menlo Park's General Plan directs the City Council to protect **residential character** and ensure strict **neighborhood compatibility**.

The Willows neighborhood boasts a **75-year heritage** of homes with conventional proportions, pitched roofs, and standard setbacks. In contrast, the proposed **two-story, flat-roofed box** rises nearly 24 feet at a mere 3-foot property line, rendering it completely out of scale and incompatible with the existing housing stock.

"Protect the character, variety, and stability of established residential neighborhoods."

— Menlo Park General Plan | Goal LU-2 & Policy LU-2.1

Cumulative Impact: Concentrated Variance Requests

Six simultaneous variances on a single property line create severe, disproportionate impacts

6

Simultaneous Variances

64.6%

Floor Area Ratio (FAR)

40%

Side Setback Cut (5' to 3')

Key Takeaway: Over-concentrating variances results in an outsized 64.6% FAR footprint (1,333.1 sq ft FAL), far exceeding the 40-56% FAR allowed for conforming lots.

-50%

Corner Side Setback

-35%

Rear Setback
Reduction

-50%

Off-Street Parking Cut

+22%

Daylight Plane
Envelope

35.3%

Exceeded Building Coverage

Zoning Standard: Self-Created Hardship

Menlo Park Municipal Code

Explicitly **excludes** "loss of prospective profits" as a qualifying hardship for obtaining a variance.

Planning Commission Record

"The buyer could have known that the zoning code wouldn't guarantee anything to be built on this lot."

— Commissioner Sillen

Voluntary Investment Risk

A variance requires a hardship **not created by the owner**. Under established standards, the loss of prospective profit does not qualify as a hardship.

The applicant **voluntarily purchased** this known-substandard investment lot approximately two years ago, with all development constraints fully recorded in public databases.

SB9 Ineligibility & Public Safety Analysis



Fire Access & Public Safety

California Fire Code Section 503 apparatus access is distinct from wall fire ratings. With only 5–6 feet of clearance, written MPFPD verification is required.



No Variances Under SB9

The SB9 context does not legally support or permit variances. Actual, physical fire apparatus access must be verified on-site rather than bypassed.

Legislative & Dimensional Rules

Lot Split Mathematically Ineligible

- This 2,064 sq ft lot cannot be split under SB9. A split would create parcels of 1,032 sq ft, which is **168 sq ft below** the statutory 1,200 sq ft floor.

Mandatory SB9 Setbacks

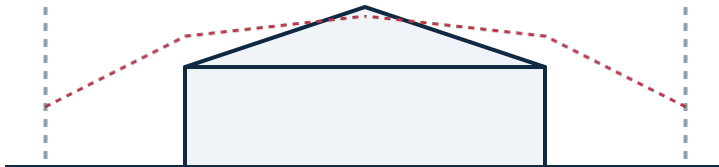
- SB9 explicitly requires a **4-foot setback**. This statutory mandate is more generous and restrictive than the currently approved 3-foot setback.

Two Code-Compliant Paths for Development

Appellants offer two reasonable, code-compliant paths that allow development while protecting adjacent properties.

✓ Option A: Preferred Single-Story

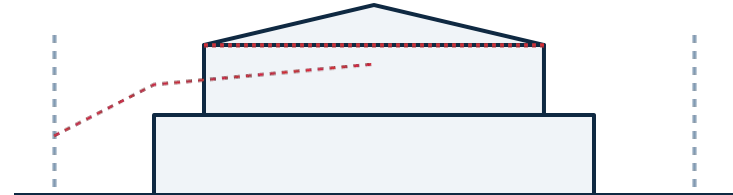
A single-story alternative allowed under code at **40% coverage (825 sq ft footprint)**. This functional home requires no variances, creating zero second-story impact or daylight plane issues.



Preferred Path: 40% Coverage | No Second-Story Impact

✓ Option B: Two-Story Compromise

If a two-story is approved, requires restoring the **5-foot interior side setback**, a 2-foot second-floor stepback, capping the daylight plane at 21 feet, and mandating a certified shadow study alongside MPFPD access documentation.



Compromise Path: 5' Setback + 2' Stepback + 21' Height Cap

Thank You

We Appreciate Your Time and
Consideration

Build on this lot — but build proportionately, safely, and in a way that respects the 75-year character of the Willows neighborhood and the one neighbor who bears the full weight of these variances.

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