

MIDCOAST COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Serving the Communities of
Princeton, El Granada, Moss Beach, Montara and Miramar

March 12, 1992

Sky Dalton
Department of Environmental Management
County Government Center
401 Marshall Street
Redwood City, CA 94063

Dear Mr. Dalton:

Thank you again for your presentation on substandard lot policies on February 26, 1992. At our meeting of March 11, 1992, the MidCoast Community Council considered the issues related to development of substandard lots. We believe that development of substandard lots offer opportunities for young families to purchase or construct less expensive housing, but feel strongly that adequate design controls are necessary to protect surrounding properties.

Our recommendations are as follows:

Side Setbacks

1. **First floor setbacks should be a minimum of 3 feet on one side and 5 feet on the other side. Architectural projections (chimneys, greenhouse or bay windows, etc.) should not be allowed to intrude into the side setbacks.**

Retention of a 5 foot setback on at least one side of the dwelling is necessary to allow fire fighting access to the rear of the structure, and is recommended by all local fire districts. Allowing a 3 foot setback on one side would provide a more reasonable building width (17 feet).

2. **Second story side setbacks should be a minimum of 5 feet on both sides.**

Five foot second story setbacks are critical to provide some visual separation and limit privacy impacts on adjacent properties. A setback reduced to three feet for a two story structure would create an unacceptable impact on an adjoining property. Two five foot setbacks would still constitute a 6 foot reduction from normally required setbacks.

Parking

3. **One of the two required parking spaces should be an uncovered tandem space located behind the covered space. The maximum curb cut and driveway width should be limited to 10 feet.**

A front facade consisting of two garage doors or a garage space and adjacent carport (19 foot parking width on a 25 foot wide lot) with the dwelling behind is a terrible design solution for the substandard lot and the neighborhood. The design of the house is dominated by parking and virtually the entire front yard is paved for the double-wide driveway. In addition, a 19 or 20 foot curb cut for a 25 foot wide lot eliminates the potential for an on-street parking space.

While tandem spaces are less than ideal, and should not be allowed on standard lots for which alternatives exist, they should be found acceptable for substandard lots. Please note that your slide presentation on better designed homes on substandard lots showed only single car garages and 10 foot wide driveways.

Front Setback

4. **A maximum five foot projection of ground floor habitable space should be allowed into the front setback, with a maximum width of ten feet.**

In another attempt to reduce the visual dominance of the garage, and increase the prominence of the home's entry, a five foot intrusion into the front setback would allow a porch, front entry or living room closer to the street than the garage.

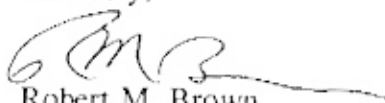
We concur with your recommendation for a 35 foot front setback for second stories.

An issue which we weren't able to resolve is our desire that vacant, adjacent substandard lots be combined to create a standard, buildable lot. We discussed restricting development of substandard lots to single story construction, or requiring minimum setbacks between structures along common property lines to 8 or feet, either of which would encourage merger of substandard lots where feasible to obtain a standard lot with fewer development constraints. Although we could not recommend a good solution, we believe that additional thought should be given to the possibility of creating different standards for single vs. multiple substandard lots.

Discussion was also raised regarding zero lot line regulations to increase the remaining side setbacks, but the majority of the Council felt that this would accentuate the differences between substandard and standard sized lots and create structures which appear like duplexes.

Once again, thank you and the Planning Commission for soliciting our input on this important land use issue.

Sincerely,


Robert M. Brown
Land Use Subcommittee