



REPORT to the LA MESA PLANNING COMMISSION

DATE: April 2, 2025

SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF PROJECT NUMBER 2024-1619 BY THE CITY OF LA MESA PLANNING COMMISSION OF A VARIANCE TO REDUCE THE FRONT YARD SETBACK TO 10 FEET TO EXPAND AN EXISTING DECK AND ASSOCIATED STAIRS AT 4736 GLEN STREET, APN 494-492-03-00 IN THE R1S-P (SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL/SCENIC PRESERVATION OVERLAY) ZONE.

ISSUING DEPARTMENT: Community Development

SUMMARY:

Issue(s):

1. Should the Planning Commission approve a variance to reduce the front yard setback to 10 ft. to allow the expansion of an existing deck and stairs in the front yard setback area.

Recommendation:

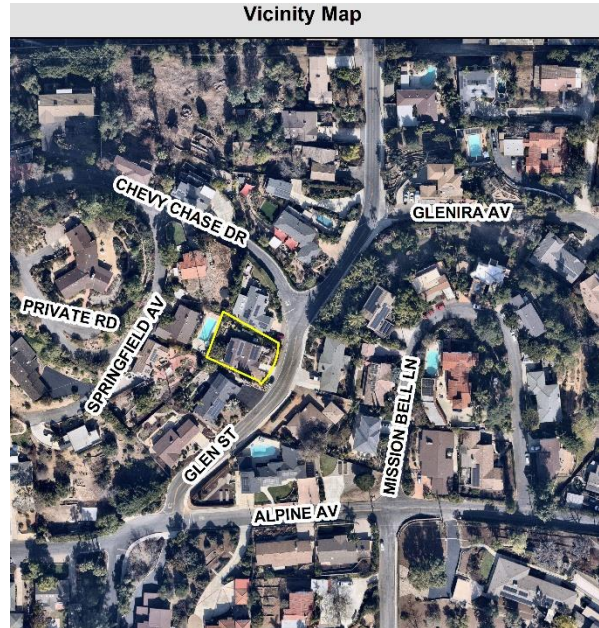
1. Staff recommends that the planning commission adopt the resolution approving Project number 2024-1619, subject to conditions of approval.
2. Staff recommends that the Planning Commission finds that the proposed project is exempt from CEQA per Government Code Section 15303.

Environmental Review:

The project is exempt from environmental review in accordance with California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15301. Section 15301, Existing Facilities, allows minor additions to existing structures involving negligible or no expansion of use. The project meets all the conditions necessary to qualify for the exemption and none of the exceptions listed in Section 15300.2 apply.

BACKGROUND:

The subject property is located at 4736 Glen Street on a legal non-conforming lot, which is improved with a 2,309, square-foot two-story residence, on a raised foundation, over a one-car garage. The 6,970 square-foot parcel slopes uphill from the street with an average slope of about 15% and a curved front yard. At the rear, the living space sits at grade and a nearby retaining wall cuts into the uphill slope to create a small rear yard. The applicant is proposing to further improve the front of the residence by extending of an existing front yard deck. The proposed project is to add 330 square feet of deck area to the existing 250 sq. ft. deck and relocate the stairs within the front setback.



The legal non-conforming dwelling unit was constructed in 1955 under R1, Urban Residential, zoning with the property and surrounding area subsequently rezoned in 1979 to R1S, Suburban Residential, zoning. The surrounding properties vary in size and many were developed under the R1S zoning development standards therefore surrounding parcel are typically larger lots with greater setbacks than the subject property.

The development standards for the R1 and R1S zones are provided Table 1 below. Table 2 include variances from development standards approved on February 18, 2004. Table 3 provides information on a subsequent variance for a design change.

R1 (Urban Residential)		R1S (Suburban Residential)	
Minimum Lot Size	6,000 square feet	Minimum Lot Size	10,000 square feet
Front Yard Setback	15 feet*	Front Yard Setback	20 feet
Side Yard Setback	5 feet	Side Yard Setback	10 feet
Rear Yard Setback	15 feet	Rear Yard Setback	30 feet
Lot Width	60 feet	Lot Width	80 feet

*The subject property was originally constructed 20 feet from the property line.

Additionally, the subject property is located within the Scenic Preservation Overlay however the project does not propose to alter the surface of the land in a way that would

Report to Planning Commission

Date:

Page: 3 of 7

remove trees, alter water courses, or create earth banks exceeding three feet in height, and therefore a Site Development Plan is not applicable and no further action related to the Scenic Preservation Overlay is necessary for the variance request.

In residential zones, variances are subject to approval by the Planning Commission with a public hearing. To date the subject property has received two variances to allow for additions to the dwelling unit that would otherwise not legally conform due to site constraints. An overview of the variances from development standards approved (February 18, 2004) are provided in Table 2 and Table 3 for standards approved on July 20, 2005 further described in **Attachments 2 and 3**. This variance request would allow for a 314 square foot addition to the existing 250 square foot deck (**Attachment 4**). The variance request is to reduce the front setback an additional 5 feet resulting in a remaining distance of 10 feet from the property line.

DISCUSSION:

The subject 6,970 square foot lot is smaller than the minimum 10,000 square foot lot minimum and the lot width is 15 feet less than the 80-foot minimum required under the R1S zoning.

On February 18, 2004, the Planning Commission approved a variance for the existing 250 square foot deck to encroach 5 feet into the into the 20-foot required front yard setback and 3 ½ feet into the required 5 foot side yard setback (to the north).

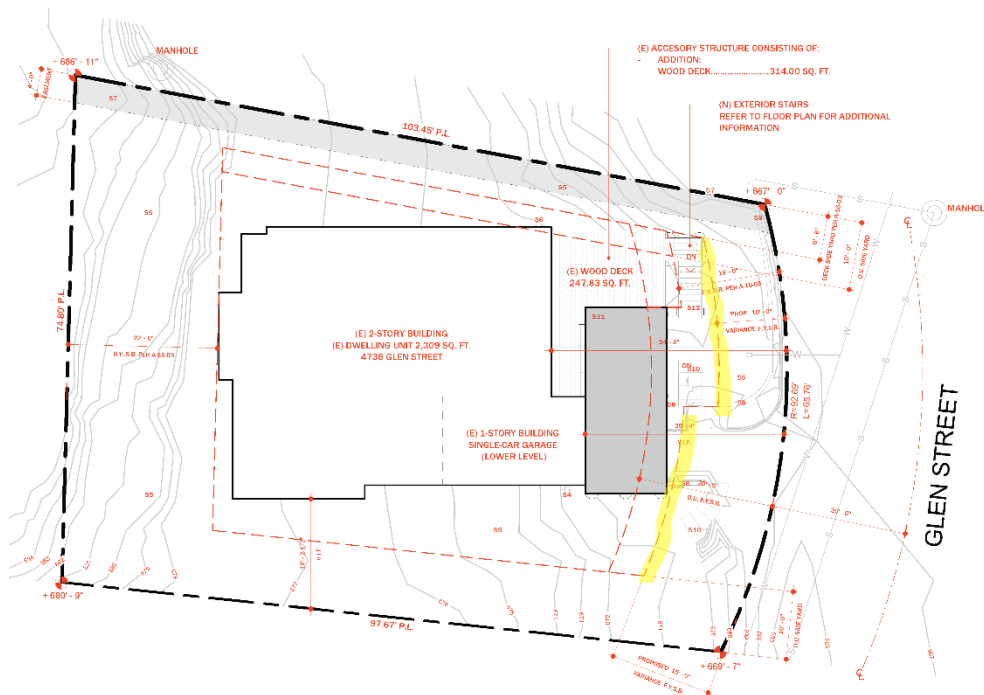
A second variance was approved on July 20, 2005 to address design changes made to the windows of the residence, while maintaining the existing approved requests (**Attachment 2 and 3**). This variance request is to further reduce the front yard setback to allow for an extension of the existing deck and stairs an additional 5 feet into the front yard setback.

Standard Category	Standard	Request	Result
Front Yard Setback	20 feet	5 foot reduction	Approved 5 foot setback reduction resulting in a 15 foot front setback.
Side Yard Setback	10 feet	3.5 foot reduction	Approved 3.5 foot setback reduction resulting in a 6.5 foot side yard setback.
Rear Yard Setback	30 feet	8 foot reduction	Remaining 22 foot setback.
Height	20 feet	4.25 foot increase	24.25 feet height max.

Table 3: Overview of Approved July 20, 2005 Variance Requests			
Standard Category	Standard	Request	Result
Front Yard Setback	20 feet	No change	Variance was updated to address design change in windows. No other requests were made.
Side Yard Setback	10 feet	No change	
Rear Yard Setback	30 feet	No change	
Height	20 feet	No change	

As mentioned, the existing deck is currently set 5 feet into the 20-foot required front setback. This variance request is to extend an additional 5 feet into the front yard setback resulting in a remaining distance of 10 feet from the property line.

As shown in Table 2, in 2004 a variance was approved, that allowed for the front yard



setback to be reduced from 20 feet to 15 feet to allow for the existing 250 square foot deck. The proposed project includes expansion of the deck over the garage and relocation of the entry stairs. To accomplish this, the applicant requests to further reduce

Report to Planning Commission

Date:

Page: 5 of 7

the front setback by an additional 5 feet, resulting in a 10-foot front setback. Unenclosed porches or decks up to three feet in height, with stairs, may extend one-third the distance into the setback by-right, but due to a six-foot raised foundation, the proposed stairs are more than three feet high.

The proposed variance request to further reduce the front yard setback aligns with other variances approved in the surrounding area. Due to the variation in lot size of properties within this R1S zone, variances have allowed the subject property and surrounding properties in the area to expand their existing footprints.

FINDINGS:

Variances may be authorized by Planning Commission to reduce, modify, or waive development standards when because of special circumstances applicable to the property, the strict application of the zoning ordinance deprives the property of privileges enjoyed by other properties in the same zone and vicinity. The applicant is requesting a variance to further reduce the front setback along Glen Street by 5 feet to allow for the expansion of the existing deck and new stairs. The Planning Commission may approve the proposed variance when findings of fact are made. Pursuant to the La Mesa Municipal Code Section 24.02.040 the following findings shall be made:

- A) The strict application of the development standard(s) for which the variance is requested would deprive the building site of a development privilege enjoyed by other properties in the same zone and vicinity.

The proposed project site is located on a sloped hillside with a curved front yard and was originally constructed with less restrictive development standards. The lot does not conform to the existing development standards and due to its smaller size, current standards limit the ability to develop the site. Many properties around the project site have semi-flat topography. Many of the surrounding properties are able to maximize the use of the underlying development standards. The project site is deprived of utilizing most of the front yard due to the steep slope. Allowing the property to expand the deck would allow the property owner to better utilize and enjoy the front yard. The stairs are necessary to access the dwelling because the house is located at a higher elevation than the street and require a reduced setback for construction.

- B) There are special circumstances such as size, shape, topography, location or surroundings which affect the building site and cause the deprivation of development privilege.

Report to Planning Commission

Date:

Page: 6 of 7

Due to a change in the underlying zoning the lot does not meet the existing development standards and the approximately 65 foot wide lot is 15 feet less than the underlying 80 foot minimum lot width. Further, the 6,970 square foot lot is significantly smaller than the 10,000 minimum lot area for the zone. Further, the residence is built into a slope and is situated well above the street, requiring a raised foundation. The finish floor elevation of the main level of the house sits 9 feet above street level and 5.5 feet above the front yard, necessitating stairs and a landing for access. The narrow front yard and width of the house across most of the lot further limits the area available to place those improvements.

- C) Granting the variance would not constitute a grant of special privileges inconsistent with the limitations upon other properties in the same vicinity and zone.

Granting a reduction in the front yard setback would not constitute a granting of special privileges given the surrounding development pattern. The Zoning Ordinance setback provisions are intended to generally allow for the construction of two-story residences in the City. Therefore due to the existing site's lot size and topographic conditions, granting the variance would not confer a special privilege.

CONCLUSION:

The proposed project is consistent with the requirements of the La Mesa Municipal code. Staff recommends that the Planning Commission adopt a resolution (**Attachment 1**) approving Project 2026-1619, subject to conditions.

Respectfully submitted by:



Patrick Macpherson
Assistant Planner

Reviewed by:



Jared Chavez
Assistant Director of Community Development



Lynnette Santos
Director of Community Development

Report to Planning Commission

Date:

Page: 7 of 7

Attachments:

1. Draft Planning Commission Resolution
2. Variance A-16-03
3. Variance A-09-05
4. Project Plans