

Rod and Melissa Spiegel
615 23rd Street
Manhattan Beach, CA 90266

May 6, 2026

Planning Commission

City of Manhattan Beach
Community Development Department
1400 Highland Avenue
Manhattan Beach, CA 90266

Re: Objection to Variance Request – 620 25th Street

Dear Planning Commission,

We are nearby property owners at 615 23rd Street and will be directly impacted by the proposed development at 620 25th Street. We respectfully submit this objection to the applicant's request for a variance to reduce the required front setback from 20 feet to 10 feet.

Under the Municipal Code, a variance may only be granted if specific findings can be made, including the existence of special circumstances creating an undue hardship, the absence of detriment to surrounding properties, and that the variance does not confer a special privilege inconsistent with limitations on other properties.

Based on the information currently available, these required findings cannot be made.

First, the request is not driven by a true hardship. Based on our calculations, a substantial home of approximately 2,300 square feet can be constructed without a variance (the planned basement adds even more square footage). The requested reduction in the front setback would instead allow the applicant to significantly increase the size of the home to approximately 3,150 square feet, before even including the basement area. This indicates that the variance is being sought to maximize building size and square footage, rather than to enable reasonable use of the property.

Second, the lot shape alone does not constitute the type of exceptional circumstance required to justify a variance. The subject property remains capable of being developed in compliance with applicable setback requirements.

Third, granting a reduction of the front setback by 50 percent would constitute a special privilege. Other properties in the vicinity are subject to the same 20-foot setback requirement, and allowing such a substantial deviation would create an inconsistency in the application of zoning standards.

In addition, the proposed reduction in setback will result in increased mass and scale relative to what is permitted under the current zoning standards, resulting in real impacts to neighboring properties. By allowing a significantly larger oversized structure to be pushed closer to the street, the variance alters the established spatial pattern of development along the block. This forward placement of increased building mass disrupts the visual rhythm and openness created by consistent setbacks, resulting in a structure that appears more prominent and out of character with the surrounding streetscape. A code-compliant structure would much better align with existing development standards, whereas the requested variance

allows a larger and more impactful building configuration, resulting in a negative impact on the surrounding neighborhood.

It is also important to note that the existing structure on the site is proposed to be demolished. As such, the project must be evaluated as new construction and should not rely on any prior nonconforming conditions to justify a deviation from current zoning standards.

For all of these reasons, and based on the current available information, we respectfully request that the Planning Commission carefully evaluate and determine that the required findings for a variance cannot be made in this case.

We intend to review the staff report when it becomes available and may submit additional comments at that time.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Rod and Melissa Spiegel

5/6 Written Submission Against 620 25th Requested Variance

Dear Members of the Manhattan Beach Planning Commission,

We are writing to respectfully request your consideration regarding the variance application for 620 25th Street, as the request seems to miss the standards for approval.

My husband, Dirk, and I have owned and lived in our home at 612 25th Street, immediately adjacent to the subject property, for over 20 years. We care deeply about maintaining the character, safety, and livability of our neighborhood, and we appreciate the Commission's role in upholding these values.

We would like to share the following concerns for your consideration:

1. Consistency with Municipal Code Intent

Municipal Code Section 10.12.010(H) is intended to preserve the scale and character of smaller homes in Manhattan Beach. The proposed structure is significantly larger in mass and bulk than surrounding homes. The proposal does not align with this intent and particularly do not align with the Tree section which has resisted the "canyonization" experienced elsewhere in Manhattan Beach.

2. Reduction in Setback and Spatial Buffer

The proposed plans would reduce the distance between our home and the new structure from 21 feet to approximately 11.4 feet—a reduction of 45.7%. This change could meaningfully impact light, air, privacy, and overall livability.

3. Streetscape Compatibility

The proposed front setback does not appear consistent with the established pattern along 25th Street, which may affect the visual continuity of the block.

4. Potential Structural and Seismic Considerations

The inclusion of a basement, elevator lift, and subterranean garage raises questions about soil stability and seismic considerations, particularly given the proximity to neighboring homes.

5. Construction and Ongoing Noise Impacts

The scale of the proposed construction—including excavation and vertical expansion—would likely result in significant and prolonged noise disruption. In addition, a three-car garage may introduce ongoing noise impacts. These factors are of particular concern as we both work from home during daytime hours and we've already had to endure the year of renovations the owner recently completed.

6. Nature of the Variance Request

We understand that variances are typically granted in limited circumstances, often where impacts to neighboring properties are minimal. In this case, the property is surrounded by existing homes, and the potential effects are substantial.

7. Awareness of Property Constraints

We also note that the property was purchased with knowledge of its existing limitations and the owner spent months making improvements, including interior and exterior renovations. These renovations were disruptive and this raises questions as to whether a variance is necessary to achieve reasonable use of the property.

We offer these comments with respect for both the property owner's goals and the Commission's responsibilities. Our hope is to preserve the balance and character of the neighborhood while ensuring that any new development is consistent with established standards.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,
Heather & Dirk de Roos

Homeowners, 612 25th Street