

**CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION**

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Staff: CP-LB  
Staff Report: 3/11/99  
Hearing Date: April 13-16, 1999  
Commission Action:

**RECORD PACKET COPY****STAFF REPORT: CONSENT CALENDAR**

**APPLICATION NUMBER:** 5-99-081

**APPLICANT:** Ron Robinson

**AGENT:** Damien Le Mons

**PROJECT LOCATION:** 403 Sherman Canal, Venice, City of Los Angeles,  
Los Angeles County.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION:** Demolition of existing one-story, 636 square foot single family residence, and conversion of existing detached garage/recreation room to a two-story, 30 foot high, 1,330 square foot single family residence with a two-car garage on the ground floor.

Lot Area	2,850 square feet
Building Coverage	863 square feet (approx.)
Pavement Coverage	807 square feet (approx.)
Landscape Coverage	1,180 square feet (approx.)
Parking Spaces	2
Zoning	RW-1
Plan Designation	Single Family - Waterway
Ht above final grade	30 feet

**LOCAL APPROVAL:** City of Los Angeles Approval in Concept #99-023, 2/19/99.

**SUMMARY OF STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff is recommending that the Commission grant a Coastal Development Permit for the proposed development with special conditions relating to pervious yard areas, water quality, parking, height, drainage, and removal of the old single family residence. The applicant agrees with the recommendation.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

The staff recommends that the Commission adopt the following resolution:

**I. Approval with Conditions**

The Commission hereby grants, subject to the conditions below, a permit for the proposed development on the grounds that the development, as conditioned, will be in conformity with the provisions of Chapter 3 of the California Coastal Act of 1976, will not prejudice the ability of the local government having jurisdiction over the area to prepare a Local Coastal Program conforming to the provisions of Chapter 3 of the Coastal Act, is located between the sea and first public road nearest the shoreline and is in conformance with the public access and public recreation policies of Chapter 3 of the Coastal Act, and will not have any significant adverse impacts on the environment within the meaning of the California Environmental Quality Act.

**II. Standard Conditions**

1. Notice of Receipt and Acknowledgment. The permit is not valid and development shall not commence until a copy of the permit, signed by the permittee or authorized agent, acknowledging receipt of the permit and acceptance of the terms and conditions, is returned to the Commission office.
2. Expiration. If development has not commenced, the permit will expire two years from the date this permit is reported to the Commission. Development shall be pursued in a diligent manner and completed in a reasonable period of time. Application for extension of the permit must be made prior to the expiration date.
3. Compliance. All development must occur in strict compliance with the proposal as set forth in the application for permit, subject to any special conditions set forth below. Any deviation from the approved plans must be reviewed and approved by the staff and may require Commission approval.
4. Interpretation. Any questions of intent or interpretation of any condition will be resolved by the Executive Director or the Commission.
5. Inspections. The Commission staff shall be allowed to inspect the site and the project during its development, subject to 24-hour advance notice.
6. Assignment. The permit may be assigned to any qualified person, provided assignee files with the Commission an affidavit accepting all terms and conditions of the permit.
7. Terms and Conditions Run with the Land. These terms and conditions shall be perpetual, and it is the intention of the Commission and the permittee to bind all future owners and possessors of the subject property to the terms and conditions.

### III. Special Conditions

#### 1. Pervious Yard Area

In order to provide a setback for access, visual quality, and to protect the water quality and biological productivity of the canals, an uncovered and pervious yard area totaling no less than 450 square feet shall be maintained in the front yard area between the front of the structure and the front (canal) property line. No fill or building extensions shall be placed in or over the 450 square foot pervious front yard area with the exception of fences or permeable decks at grade. Fences in front yard areas shall not exceed 42 inches in height.

#### 2. Deed Restriction

Prior to issuance of the Coastal Development Permit, the applicant shall submit a deed restriction for recording, subject to the review and approval of the Executive Director, which shall provide for the maintenance of not less than 450 square feet of uncovered and pervious yard area in the front yard adjacent to the canal property line in order to maintain an access corridor, preserve water quality, and protect the biological productivity of the canals. Uncovered means that no fill nor building extensions shall be placed in or over the pervious yard area with the exception of fences or permeable decks at grade. Fences in front yard area shall not exceed 42 inches in height. The deed restriction shall run with the land, binding all successors and assigns, and shall be recorded free of prior liens that the Executive Director determines may affect the enforceability of the restriction. This deed restriction shall not be removed or changed without a Coastal Commission approved amendment to this Coastal Development Permit unless the Executive Director determines that no amendment is required.

#### 3. Parking

A minimum of two parking spaces shall be provided and maintained on the site.

#### 4. Height

The maximum height of the structure shall not exceed thirty feet above the elevation of the centerline of the canal walkway.

#### 5. Drainage

Prior to issuance of the Coastal Development Permit, the applicant shall submit for the review and approval of the Executive Director a plan for a one hundred cubic foot french drain on the project site. The applicant shall construct and maintain the one hundred cubic foot french drain as shown on the final approved plans.

6. Demolition

The use of two residential units on the subject site is not permitted. Therefore, the existing single family residence on the subject site shall be demolished within ninety days of the receipt of the Certificate of Occupancy for the new single family residence approved under this Coastal Development Permit. The applicant shall notify Commission staff when the Certificate of Occupancy is issued by the City of Los Angeles for the new single family residence. A site inspection by Commission staff shall verify compliance with this condition of approval. The applicant shall maintain the site with only one single family residence as shown on the final approved plans.

IV. Findings and Declarations

The Commission hereby finds and declares:

A. Area History and Project Description

The applicant proposes to demolish the existing one-story single family residence on the site, then improve the existing detached garage/recreation room for use as a single family residence. The existing detached garage/recreation room will be substantially remodeled and enlarged in order to make it habitable. The completion of the proposed project will result in a two-story, 30-foot high, 1,330 square foot single family residence with a two-car garage on the ground floor. The area currently occupied by the single family residence proposed to be demolished will be landscaped as part of a large front yard area (Exhibit #3).

The project site is a 2,850 square foot lot on the north bank of Sherman Canal in the Venice Canals residential area (Exhibit #2). The neighborhood is comprised of both old and new one, two and three-story single family residences, and a few non-conforming duplexes.

The Commission has recognized in both prior permit and appeal decisions that the canals area of Venice is a coastal neighborhood of unique character. In 1975, the Commission developed a set of building standards for the Venice Canals area through hearing and voting on various permits. These standards reflect conditions imposed in a series of permits heard prior to that time. Since then, a set of special conditions, which are periodically updated, have been routinely applied to Coastal Development Permits in the Venice Canals area to address the Coastal Act issues of public access, habitat protection, preservation of community character, and scale of development. The conditions imposed on the Coastal Development Permits ensure that the projects are consistent with the Coastal Act. In order to mitigate the identified impacts, the appropriate special conditions have also been applied to this permit.

**B. Habitat Protection**

The Commission has found that Ballona Lagoon and the Venice Canals are sensitive habitat areas that must be protected from negative impacts associated with development.

Section 30240 of the Coastal Act states:

- (a) Environmentally sensitive habitat areas shall be protected against any significant disruption of habitat values, and only uses dependent on such resources shall be allowed within such areas.
- (b) Development in areas adjacent to environmentally sensitive habitat areas and parks and recreation areas shall be sited and designed to prevent impacts which would significantly degrade such areas, and shall be compatible with the continuance of such habitat areas.

The Venice Canals are located up stream from Ballona Lagoon, within the Ballona Wetlands system. The introduction of urban runoff, including pesticides, garden fertilizers, and runoff from impervious surfaces, can reduce the water quality of the canals which directly impacts the biological productivity of the system. The Ballona Wetlands system is habitat for many species of marine biota, including the state and federally listed endangered least tern.

In order to protect the biological productivity of the Venice Canals and Ballona Lagoon, the Commission has consistently conditioned projects along the waterways to provide and maintain front yard setbacks, pervious yard areas, and drainage devices to absorb and filter rainwater and site drainage before it enters the canals. The Commission's requirements are consistent with the recommendations of the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Project Action Plan to reduce non-point source pollutants.

The Commission has consistently conditioned projects in the Venice Canals to provide and maintain a large pervious front yard as a setback from the canal to enhance public access, to provide an area for percolation to protect the water quality and biological productivity of the canals, and to protect community character by maintaining a comparable scale between buildings in the area. No fill nor building extensions may be placed in or over the required pervious front yard area with the exception of fences or permeable decks at grade.

The amount of the Commission's required pervious front yard area for the subject site is 450 square feet. The figure of 450 square feet is based on an average setback of fifteen feet across the thirty-foot width of the subject lot. The Commission's front yard setback requirement is defined in square footage rather than an absolute lineal measurement to allow for changes in plane which can add architectural interest. A minimum ten-foot front yard setback, with a required fifteen-foot setback average, can provide the required 450 square foot pervious front yard area and a front yard setback which is consistent with the other residences in the area.

In this case, the proposed project will provide more than the required 450 square foot pervious front yard area by removing the existing single family residence from the front portion of the lot. After the proposed demolition of the existing single family residence, the proposed project will provide a 52-foot setback from the canal property line (Exhibit #3). As required, no fill or building extensions are proposed to be placed in or over the required 450 square feet of pervious front yard area (Exhibit #4). A condition of approval requires that the old single family residence be removed from the front of the lot within ninety days of the receipt of the Certificate of Occupancy for the new single family residence approved under this coastal development permit.

The Commission has consistently required that applicants record the pervious yard area requirement on the property deeds to ensure continuous and ongoing protection of coastal resources and compliance with the requirement. Therefore, the Commission finds that prior to issuance of the permit, the applicant shall record a deed restriction which provides for the maintenance of not less than 450 square feet of pervious yard area in the front yard area adjacent the canal property line. Uncovered means that no fill nor building extensions shall be placed in or over the pervious yard area with the exception of fences or permeable decks at grade. Fences in front yard area shall not exceed 42 inches in height.

The deed restriction shall run with the land, binding all successors and assigns, and shall be recorded free of prior liens that the Executive Director determines may affect the enforceability of the restriction. The deed restriction shall not be removed or changed without a Coastal Commission approved amendment to this Coastal Development Permit unless the Executive Director determines that no amendment is required.

In order to mitigate the impacts on the habitat caused by surface drainage and drainage from residential areas, the Commission has consistently required the provision of a one hundred cubic foot french drain in order to filter urban runoff before it enters the canals. A condition is routinely placed on permits for development in the canals area which requires that plans be submitted which depict the location and design of the required french drain. In this case, the applicant is required to submit a plan depicting the location and design of the required french drain. The applicant is also required to provide the french drain as shown on the final approved plans.

The Commission finds that, only as conditioned to provide a french drain and 450 square feet of pervious yard area to mitigate impacts on biological productivity caused by surface runoff into the canals, is the proposed project consistent with the Section 30240 of the Coastal Act.

### **C. Public Access/Parking**

The Commission has consistently found that a direct relationship exists between residential density, the provision of adequate parking, and the availability of public access to the coast. Section 30252 requires that new development should maintain and enhance public access to the coast by providing adequate parking facilities.

Section 30252 of the Coastal Act states, in part:

The location and amount of new development should maintain and enhance public access to the coast by... (4) providing adequate parking facilities....

Many of the older developments in the Venice Canals area do not provide adequate on-site parking. As a result, there is a parking shortage in the area and public access has been negatively impacted. The small amount of parking area that may be available for the general public on the surrounding streets is being used by guests and residents of the area.

To mitigate this problem, the Commission has consistently conditioned new development within the canals to provide a rear setback of at least nine feet for guest parking or to make other provisions for guest parking. The required rear setback for guest parking is in addition to the Commission's other parking standards.

In this case, the proposed project will maintain the existing detached two-car garage at the rear of the property. The existing two-car garage has a five-foot setback (Exhibit #3). Because the proposed project is a remodel and addition that will not reduce the current number of on-site parking spaces, the applicant may maintain the non-conforming five-foot rear setback in lieu of the required nine-foot rear setback. If, however, the applicant proposes to demolish the existing two-car garage, a larger rear setback for guest parking may be required.

In regards to density, the Commission has limited the density in the Venice Canals neighborhood to single family residences consistent with the City's density limit. The applicant proposes to maintain only one single family residence on the site. However, the site currently contains one existing single family residence which may not be demolished until the new proposed single family residence is completed over the existing garage. Therefore, there may be two residential units on the subject site for a short time. Only one single family residence is permitted by this coastal development permit. Because the on-site parking supply is only adequate to serve one residential unit, and because the Commission has not approved the use of two residential units on the site, the older residence must be demolished within ninety days of the issuance of the Certificate of Occupancy by the City of Los Angeles for the proposed new residence. The use of two residential units on the site with only two on-site parking spaces would negatively impact the public's ability to access the coast and would not be consistent with Section 32052 of the Coastal Act.

As conditioned to allow only one single family residence with two on-site parking spaces, the proposed project is in substantial conformance with the Commission's parking standards for the Venice Canals area. The Commission finds that, only as conditioned to maintain the existing two on-site parking spaces and to demolish the old single family residence as proposed, is the project consistent with the public access policies of the Coastal Act.

**D. Scale of Development**

The Commission has also consistently conditioned projects in the Venice Canals area to protect the community character. The area is comprised of both old and new one, two and three-story single family residences and a few remaining duplexes. The majority of the structures in the area do not exceed thirty feet in height. In order to protect the existing scale and character of the neighborhood, and in order to protect the visual corridor along the canal's public walkways, the Commission has consistently limited new development in the canal area to a height of thirty feet, which is consistent with the general height of the area. The Commission has, however, allowed portions of some structures to exceed the thirty-foot height limit by up to ten feet if the scenic and visual qualities of the area are not negatively impacted.

In this case, the proposed single family residence is thirty feet high (Exhibit #5). No portion of the proposed structure exceeds the thirty-foot height limit. The City of Los Angeles Venice Interim Control Ordinance (ICO) also limits building heights in the area to thirty feet. In order to ensure that the proposed project is constructed as approved, the approval is conditioned to limit the height of the proposed structure to thirty feet above the elevation of the centerline of the canal walkway. Only as conditioned is the proposed project consistent with the Coastal Act's visual resource policies.

The Commission has also limited building extensions within the front yard setback area, except for ground level permeable decks. No building extensions, other than a permeable wood deck, may encroach into the required 450 square feet of pervious area in the 15-foot front yard setback (Exhibit #4).

**E. Local Coastal Program**

Section 30604(a) of the Coastal Act provides that the Commission shall issue a Coastal Permit only if the project will not prejudice the ability of the local government having jurisdiction to prepare a Local Coastal Program which conforms with Chapter 3 policies of the Coastal Act:

- (a) Prior to certification of the Local Coastal Program, a Coastal Development Permit shall be issued if the issuing agency, or the commission on appeal, finds that the proposed development is in conformity with the provisions of Chapter 3 (commencing with Section 30200) of this division and that the permitted development will not prejudice the ability of the local government to prepare a Local Coastal Program that is in conformity with the provisions of Chapter 3 (commencing with Section 30200). A denial of a Coastal Development Permit on grounds it would prejudice the ability of the local government to prepare a Local Coastal Program that is in conformity with the provisions of Chapter 3 (commencing with Section 30200) shall be accompanied by a specific finding which sets forth the basis for such conclusion.

The Venice area of the City of Los Angeles does not have a certified Local Coastal Program. The proposed project, only as conditioned, is consistent with the habitat, coastal access, and recreation policies of the Coastal Act. Therefore, the Commission finds that approval of the proposed development, as conditioned, will not prejudice the City's ability to prepare a Local Coastal Program consistent with the policies of Chapter 3 of the Coastal Act, as required by Section 30604(a).

**F. California Environmental Quality Act**

Section 13096 of the California Code of Regulations requires Commission approval of Coastal Development Permit application to be supported by a finding showing the application, as conditioned by any conditions of approval, to be consistent with any applicable requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Section 21080.5(d)(2)(A) of CEQA prohibits a proposed development from being approved if there are feasible alternatives or feasible mitigation measures available which would substantially lessen any significant adverse effect which the activity may have on the environment.

The proposed project, only as conditioned, is consistent with the habitat and coastal access policies of the Coastal Act. Therefore, the Commission finds that the proposed project, as conditioned to mitigate the identified impacts, is the least environmentally damaging feasible alternative and can be found consistent with the requirements of the Coastal Act to conform to CEQA.

End/cp



Site

COASTAL COMMISSION

5-99-081

EXHIBIT # 1

PAGE 1 OF 1

M.B. 7-126-127

SHORT LINE BEACH VENICE CANAL  
SUBDIVISION NO. 1

FOR PREV. ASSMNT SEE  
76-21



Site  
Lot No. 2

RECEIVED  
South Coast Region

FEB 28 1999

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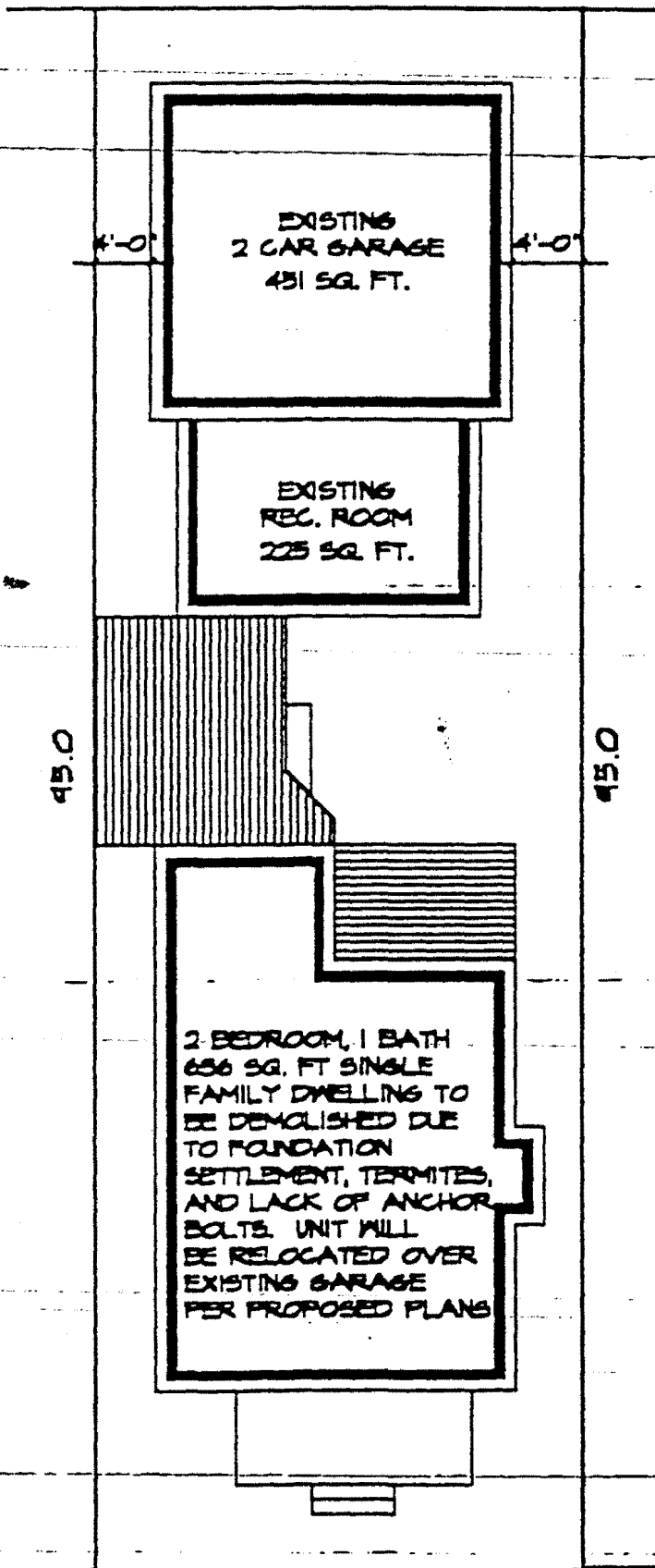
EXHIBIT # 2081

PAGE 1 OF 1

4227 12

1997

Howland Court (Alley)



EXISTING  
2 CAR GARAGE  
431 SQ. FT.

EXISTING  
REC. ROOM  
225 SQ. FT.

2 BEDROOM, 1 BATH  
656 SQ. FT SINGLE  
FAMILY DWELLING TO  
BE DEMOLISHED DUE  
TO FOUNDATION  
SETTLEMENT, TERMITES,  
AND LACK OF ANCHOR  
BOLTS. UNIT WILL  
BE RELOCATED OVER  
EXISTING GARAGE  
PER PROPOSED PLANS

Existing  
Structures

COASTAL COMMISSION

5-99-081

EXHIBIT # 3

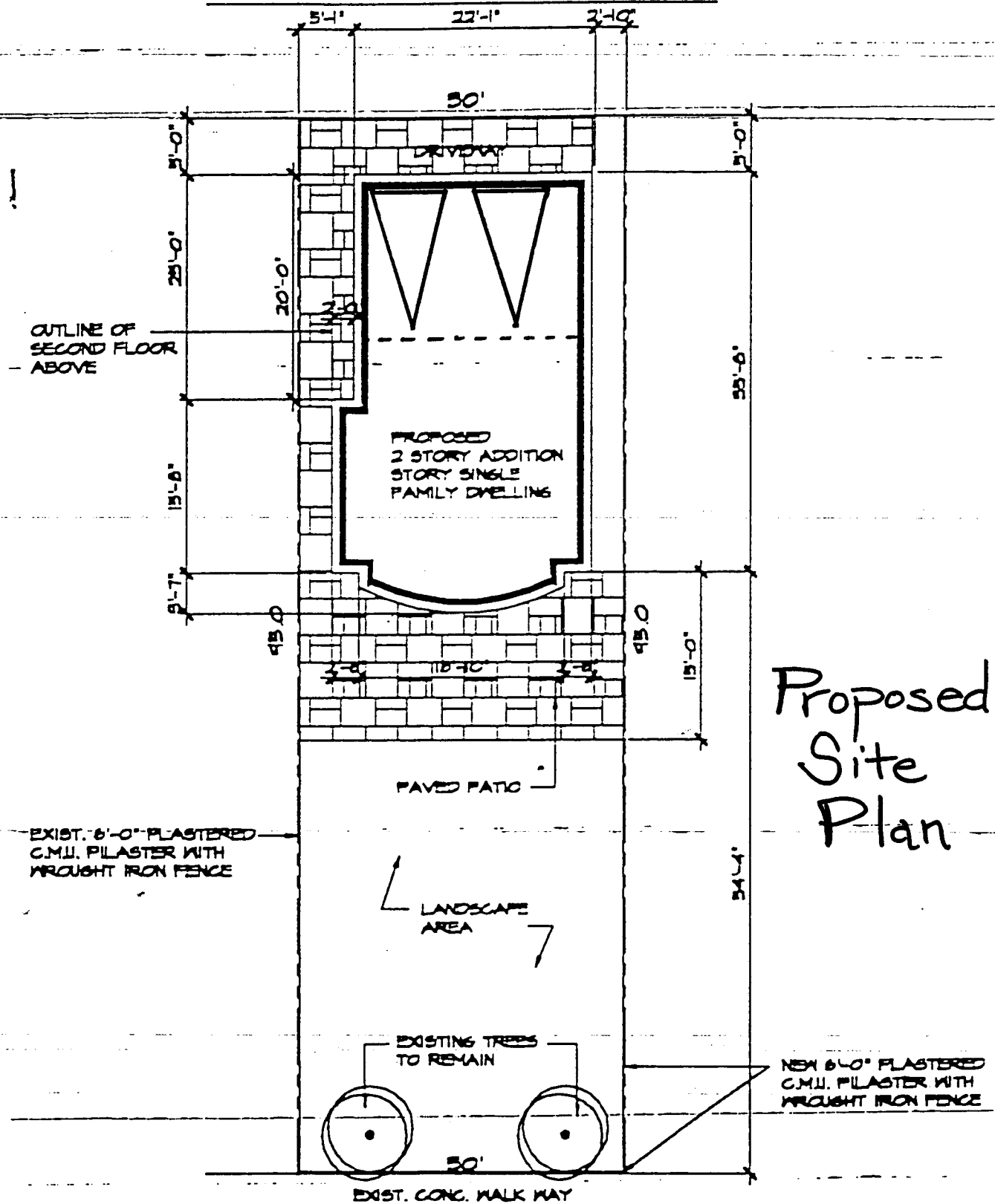
PAGE 1 OF 1

← Public 30.0 Sidewalk →

Sherman Canal

10'

# HOWLAND COURT



Proposed  
Site  
Plan

Sherman Canal

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5-99-081

EXHIBIT # 4

PAGE 1 OF 1

# COASTAL COMMISSION

EXHIBIT # 5

PAGE 1 OF 1

30'

HIGH ROOF LF  
EL. 100'-0"

TOP OF PARAPET  
EL. 100'-0"

LOW ROOF  
EL. 100'-0"

SECOND  
EL. 100'-0"

FIRST  
SPACE  
EL. 98'-0"

EAST ELEVATION

SCALE 1/8"=1'-0"

30'

HIGH ROOF LF  
EL. 100'-0"

TOP OF PARAPET  
EL. 100'-0"

LOW ROOF  
EL. 100'-0"

SECOND  
EL. 100'-0"

FIRST  
SPACE  
EL. 98'-0"

SOUTH ELEVATION

SCALE 1/8"=1'-0"

WEST ELEVATION

SCALE 1/8"=1'-0"

30'

HIGH ROOF LF  
EL. 100'-0"

TOP OF PARAPET  
EL. 100'-0"

LOW ROOF  
EL. 100'-0"

SECOND  
EL. 100'-0"

FIRST  
SPACE  
EL. 98'-0"

NORTH ELEVATION

SCALE 1/8"=1'-0"