

Letter of Intent

Installation of a Spiral Stair as a second means of egress from the rooftop

The initial and permitted plan for our single-family home included both an elevator and an interior spiral stair to the rooftop. However, as a construction expert warned us about foreseeable problems with water intrusion through the open spiral stair to our second floor we saw no other chance than to revise the plan and eliminate the stair.

This revision got accepted and permitted by the Building Department / see attachments.

Only upon the final field inspection it became apparent that a second means of egress from the rooftop is now missing and the permit got revoked.

For many weeks we tried together with the various city departments in vain to find a solution. E.g. a stair on the side of the house, a ship ladder, a step out on the second floor and then a stair to the roof, etc. In the meantime we even installed a caged ladder, but it got only accepted as a service access and not as a means of egress for elderly people and children.

Finally it was the recommendation from the city officials themselves to apply for a variance and install it at the side of the house. The remaining setback to the neighboring lot would be 3 feet.

Theoretically it could be also installed at the backyard/ poolside , leading up to the lower roof and from there with another stair to the upper roof. But the hardship is multiple: Most importantly the lower roof is – unlike the upper roof - not built out to support a roof top. The walkability is less guaranteed and the installation of railings poses a risk with water intrusion. Furthermore existing stairs would have to be removed and the pool deck to be modified and retiled.

We are convinced that we found a nice design with solid railings (see attached photo) that is visually appealing for the neighborhood and blends in nicely with the house. The quite recently installed landscaping will over time further soften the visual impact. Also the unsightly caged ladder can be removed once we have the spiral stair!

We also assume that it will never be used. It does not connect any living space or outdoor space and is quite far away from the pool. The elevator will be by far more convenient and central for every day use. The spiral stair will be exclusively the admittedly needed second means of egress in case of fire or elevator.

Given the very unfortunate history we are convinced to offer a more than acceptable solution with the utmost consideration for the entire neighborhood.

Thomas and Karin Reuther

Attachments: initial plans, revised plans, pictures