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- Mayor and Council Members,
 - My name is Bryan Mekechuk and I live at 17509 Via Sereno.
 - I would like City Council to set a policy that interprets a City ordinance explicitly to allow light wells to extend into a setback.
 - This issue is important to me personally, as my wife and I are building a basement under our existing house. In addition, this issue is important to the citizens of Monte Sereno because more people are putting in basements.
 - Let me give you some background for context.
 - On July 16, the Site and Architecture Commission granted a Site Development Permit to me to remodel my existing house and put a basement under the house.
 - On August 11, I applied for a Building Permit.
 - Then, on August 27, the Plan Check was completed and I received a notice that my proposed emergency egress and light wells for bedrooms in the basement projected into the front and corner lot setbacks, so the light wells would have to be relocated.
 - Our ordinances are being interpreted such that light wells are included under the definition of ‘structures’.
 - Consequently, the light wells cannot extend into a setback.
 - However, other jurisdictions in the State of California do not interpret light wells as ‘structures’ because they are open to the air above.
 - Certain jurisdictions with small lot areas, similar to Monte Sereno’s smallest zone, R-1-8, which is the zone that I live in, set policies explicitly to allow light wells in setbacks knowing that this is required due to the small size of the lots.
 - In fact, many jurisdictions in the State of California are encouraging homeowners to build basements.
 - They are doing this to reduce energy consumption and to increase living space while not increasing the bulk and mass of buildings.
 - You may find it interesting that some of these jurisdictions are allowing more basement area than main floor area. Some up to 130%

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- Through my site development plan, I intend to construct low-energy consumption house and to reduce my water consumption while preserving the architectural design of my existing Eichler house.
 - An important component of reducing my energy consumption and preserving the architectural design is to have a basement with bedrooms on the south facing side of my house.
 - In order to have bedrooms in the basement, there must be emergency egress through the light wells.
 - The light wells reduce energy consumption by allowing natural daylight into the basement, reducing the need for lights. In addition, energy for heating and cooling is reduced by natural air circulation.
 - I would like City Council to set a policy that interprets our ordinances explicitly to allow light wells to extend into the setback.
 - Clarifying this ordinance through a policy will benefit the citizens of Monte Sereno.
 - As I mentioned earlier, I believe that there is a trend in the City of Monte Sereno where our citizens are building more basements.
 - This trend, which may be more advanced in other jurisdictions, such as Atherton, Hillsborough, Los Altos, Menlo Park, Palo Alto and Portola Valley, is due to the increased desire of people to reduce energy consumption, and to put additional living space below grade where the size and bulk of that living space is hidden.
 - Given the trend towards basements, interpreting the ordinance for the citizens of Monte Sereno will reduce confusion and uncertainty regarding what is allowed in the City of Monte Sereno.
 - And it may even help the City of Monte Sereno to reduce our carbon footprint and address climate change.
 - Thank you.