



Los Angeles County  
Department of Regional Planning

*Planning for the Challenges Ahead*



Richard J. Bruckner  
Director

December 6, 2012

TO: Curt Pedersen, Chair  
David W. Louie, Vice Chair  
Harold V. Helsley, Commissioner  
Pat Modugno, Commissioner  
Esther L. Valadez, Commissioner

FROM: Connie Chung, AICP, Supervising Regional Planner  
General Plan Development/Housing Section

**SUBJECT: DECEMBER 19 MEETING – AGENDA ITEM # 9  
SMALL LOT SUBDIVISION ORDINANCE DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE  
ACTION  
R2009-00966/RADV 201200008**

At your meeting on December 19, 2012, the General Plan Development/Housing Section staff will provide you with an overview of the concept of small lot subdivisions, and will recommend that you take action to initiate the preparation of ordinance amendments to allow small lot subdivisions in the unincorporated areas.

**BACKGROUND**

The 2008-2014 Los Angeles County Housing Element, which outlines programs and strategies to encourage a diversity of housing types to meet the diverse housing needs in the unincorporated areas, commits the County to evaluating the feasibility of a small lot subdivision program within the unincorporated areas, and if feasible, pursuing Zoning Ordinance amendments to allow for small lot subdivisions (Program 12). The intent of the program is to promote affordable homeownership through the allowance of smaller, fee simple lots. On October 1, 2009, the Department submitted the feasibility study to the Board of Supervisors. The study concludes that it is feasible to establish a small lot subdivision program for the unincorporated areas, and recommends that the County move forward with ordinance amendments. The feasibility study is attached to this memo for your reference.

**SMALL LOT SUBDIVISIONS: THE CONCEPT**

A “small lot subdivision” is a land division that creates single-family residential lots with an area of less than 5,000 square feet. These small lots are generally less than 50 feet wide, with modifications to other development standards including but not limited to setback, street frontage, and access requirements. At your meeting on December 19, 2012, the staff will present examples of existing small lot subdivision projects.

### **POTENTIAL BENEFITS**

By allowing greater flexibility in lot sizes and widths, small lot subdivisions is a tool to promote affordable homeownership opportunities. Reducing the amount of land required for new residences could potentially result in a significant reduction in the price of a new house because of the high cost of land in the County. Lower home prices allow more residents to own their homes, while increased homeownership opportunities in turn contribute to neighborhood stability. Furthermore, small lot subdivisions could also ease overcrowding by allowing a greater variety in lot sizes, promote urban infill on vacant and underutilized parcels, and add flexibility in design to promote a diversity of housing types.

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS**

As the current provisions of the County's Subdivision and Zoning Ordinances, Titles 21 and 22 of the County Code, do not allow for the creation of lots of less than 5,000 square feet and 50 feet in width in most instances, amendments to the code are necessary in order to implement the small lot subdivision concept in the unincorporated areas.

Based on the feasibility study, the staff makes the following recommendations:

- Instruct the Department of Regional Planning to prepare an ordinance to modify certain provisions in Title 21 (Subdivision Ordinance) and Title 22 (Zoning Ordinance) of the Los Angeles County Code to permit small lot subdivisions in the unincorporated areas; and
- Instruct the Department of Regional Planning to coordinate with other County departments and agencies, including but not limited to the Department of Public Works and the Fire Department, to create and implement a streamlined entitlements procedure for all stages of the development process of small lot subdivisions.

### **NEXT STEPS**

In preparation of the ordinance, the staff will take the following actions:

- Convene a committee of staff representatives from the Department of Public Works, the Fire Department, and other County departments and agencies, to create and implement a streamlined entitlements procedure for all stages of the development process of small lot subdivisions;
- Identify geographic areas where small lot subdivisions would be appropriate;
- Develop design guidelines to facilitate the implementation of the ordinance; and
- Convene a focus group of private developers, builders and architects to advise the staff on the development of the ordinance and design guidelines.

Should you have any questions about this memo, please contact Tina Fung of the General Plan Development/Housing Section at [tfung@planning.lacounty.gov](mailto:tfung@planning.lacounty.gov) or (213) 974-6417.

**RECOMMENDED MOTION**

I move that the Regional Planning Commission instruct the Department of Regional Planning to prepare an ordinance to modify certain provisions in Title 21 (Subdivision Ordinance) and Title 22 (Zoning Ordinance) of the Los Angeles County Code to permit small lot subdivisions in the unincorporated areas.

I also move that the Regional Planning Commission instruct the Department of Regional Planning to coordinate with other County departments and agencies, including but not limited to the Department of Public Works and the Fire Department, to create and implement a streamlined entitlements procedure for all stages of the development process of small lot subdivisions.

JS:CC:TF

Attachment:

Los Angeles County Small Lot Subdivision Program Feasibility Study, 2009



Los Angeles County  
Department of Regional Planning



*Planning for the Challenges Ahead*

October 1, 2009

Jon Sanabria  
Acting Director of Planning

TO: Supervisor Don Knabe, Chair  
Supervisor Gloria Molina  
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas  
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky  
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

FROM: Jon Sanabria  
Acting Director of Planning

SUBJECT: **RESPONSE TO BOARD MOTION TO INITIATE PROGRAM 10:  
INCLUSIONARY HOUSING PROGRAM, AND PROGRAM 12: SMALL  
LOT SUBDIVISIONS, OF THE HOUSING ELEMENT (AUGUST 5, 2008,  
ITEM #68)**

At the public hearing for the Los Angeles County Housing Element on August 5, 2008, the Board instructed the Department of Regional Planning (DRP) to initiate the required feasibility studies for establishing a program for small lot subdivisions and an inclusionary housing policy, and report back to the Board within a year.

**Program 10: Inclusionary Housing Program**

The intent of Program 10 of the Housing Element is to consider the feasibility of establishing an inclusionary housing program for the unincorporated areas.

Over the course of the year, the DRP staff prepared an extensive literature review of research on inclusionary housing, distributed and analyzed a stakeholder survey, and met with numerous stakeholders, including but not limited to planners from other local jurisdictions, building industry representatives, housing advocates, researchers and housing developers to discuss the pros and cons of inclusionary housing. The DRP staff also worked closely with CDC staff and the Housing Advisory Committee to identify key issues.

The DRP staff is currently finalizing the study, but will need additional time to ensure that all stakeholder comments are accurately represented. In addition, the staff needs time to further explore the implications of a recent court decision on *Palmer/Sixth Street Properties v. City of Los Angeles*, which could have major impacts on some inclusionary housing policies. Furthermore, the staff plans to provide briefings to the Board office planning deputies, CEO and the Regional Planning Commission prior to submitting the report to the Board. The Department will provide another status report no later than December 1, 2009.

**Program 12: Small Lot Subdivisions**

The intent of Program 12 of the Housing Element is to consider the feasibility of establishing a small lot subdivision program for the unincorporated areas.

The Department has finalized the study, which is attached to this memo.

If you have any questions regarding these studies, please contact Connie Chung at (213) 974-6417 or [cchung@planning.lacounty.gov](mailto:cchung@planning.lacounty.gov).

JS:RCH:CC

c: Chief Executive Office, Attn. Lari Sheehan  
County Counsel  
Executive Office  
Department of Public Works  
Community Development Commission

Attachment:

Los Angeles County Small Lot Subdivision Program Feasibility Study

# Los Angeles County Small Lot Subdivision Program Feasibility Study



Housing/General Plan  
Section

Department of  
Regional Planning

October 2009

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## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to determine the feasibility of establishing a small lot subdivision program for the unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County. Based on the research and analyses in this report, this study concludes that it is feasible to establish a small lot subdivision program in the County.

The need for a small lot subdivision feasibility study was identified in the Los Angeles County Housing Element, which outlines programs and strategies to encourage a diversity of housing types to meet the diverse housing needs in the unincorporated areas. Program 12 of the Housing Element commits the County to evaluating the feasibility of establishing a small lot subdivision program within the unincorporated areas. On August 5, 2008, the Board of Supervisors instructed the Department of Regional Planning to conduct the feasibility study and to report back to the Board within a year (see Appendix A: Board Motion).

This feasibility study includes the following information:

- **Background:** Defines small lot subdivisions and outlines the potential benefits of a small lot subdivision program.
- **Policy Analyses:** Provide a comprehensive review of policies that relate to small lot subdivisions.
- **Special Considerations:** Provides an overview of special considerations for the County when developing a small lot subdivision program for the unincorporated areas.
- **Survey of Other Local Jurisdictions:** Provides an overview of small lot subdivision programs in other local jurisdictions.
- **Conclusion and Recommendation**

## BACKGROUND

A small lot subdivision is a land division that creates smaller fee-simple, single-family residential lots. In the case of the unincorporated areas of the County, this means the allowance of a single-family residential lot that is less than the minimum area of 5,000 square feet and minimum lot width of 50 feet, with additional modifications for setbacks and access requirements as needed.

Small lot subdivision programs have been shown to provide a variety of benefits, including:

- **Flexibility:** Small lot subdivisions allow greater flexibility in lot sizes and other development standards, and increases housing options;
- **Space and Economic Efficiency:** Small lot subdivisions allow fee-simple lot development on smaller lots, which provides a space-efficient and economical alternative to traditional single-family lot developments, and condominium developments, which are

subject to homeowner's association fees, construction defect liability insurance and other related costs.

- **Smart Growth:** Small lot subdivisions is a land use strategy that can promote infill development on underutilized or vacant parcels, which works toward reducing Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) and fulfilling regional climate change goals; and,
- **Affordability:** Small lot subdivisions provide increased affordable homeownership opportunities, which can help promote intergenerational neighborhoods and contribute to neighborhood stability.

## **POLICY ANALYSES**

To study the feasibility of creating a small lot subdivision program in the County, the staff conducted a comprehensive review of the County's General Plan and County Code provisions to identify policy and regulation areas that would be affected by a small lot subdivision program.

### **Review of County Policies**

- **General Plan and Community-Based Plan Analysis**

#### *Countywide General Plan*

The Los Angeles County General Plan, adopted in 1980, provides overall land use planning guidance for the County. The General Plan Land Use Element has a direct relationship to small lot subdivisions because the Element and the County's land use map establish densities for each residential land use category. This is important because many small lot subdivision programs adhere to the existing residential density limits as defined by the land use category.

The General Plan is silent on the specific topic of small lot subdivisions. However, it does provide policy guidance that supports the concept of a small lot subdivision program:

- General Plan General Policies
  - 6. Housing Development
    - #43. Promote a balanced mix of dwelling unit types to meet present and future needs, with emphasis on family owned and moderate density dwelling units....
    - #47. Promote the provision of an adequate supply of housing by location, type, and price.
- Land Use Element Policy Statements
  - 1. Use Land More Efficiently
    - #2. Encourage development of well-designed twinhomes, townhouses and garden apartments, particularly on by-passed parcels within existing urban communities.

The General Plan is currently being updated. The Draft General Plan includes policies that support mixed-income, affordable, and rental housing through various types and densities, and implementation actions to explore the feasibility and creation of a small lot subdivision program.

*Community-Based Plans*

Los Angeles County has 14 community-based plans that are part of the Countywide General Plan, but supplement General Plan policy and provide more localized land use direction. The County’s community-based plans do not specifically mention the small lot feasibility concept. Due to low density residential ranges or environmental and safety hazards, some areas in the County with a community-based plan may not be suitable for small lot subdivisions. Table 1 provides a list of the goals and policies from the County’s community-based plans that have policies that support the small lot subdivision concept.

**Table 1: Community-Based Plans Policy Support**

Community-Based Plan	Relevant Policy Support
Altadena Community Plan	<p>Land Use Policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• #3. Allow the intensification of land uses only as it does not adversely impact existing uses, neighborhoods, and the prevailing low density character of the Altadena community.</li> <li>• #6. Promote accessibility to housing opportunities by all households, regardless of income ....</li> <li>• #9. Permit developers to utilize innovative residential construction and siting techniques, provided that they maintain physical safety and health and are compatible with existing land use and the environmental setting.</li> </ul>

**Community-  
Based Plan**

**Relevant Policy Support**

<p>Antelope Valley Area Plan</p>	<p>Land Use Policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• #8. Encourage a mix of housing types in the primary urban areas.</li> <li>• #17. In urban areas, institute measures to mitigate the impacts of environmental hazards, as feasible, to facilitate infilling development consistent with the attainment of community goals and with the maintenance of public health and welfare.</li> <li>• #43. Promote and support efforts by public and private agencies and citizen groups to provide the opportunity of a choice of living, working, recreational, and cultural pursuits for all ages, incomes and ethnic groups. This choice should include a variety of housing densities, types, prices, rents, configurations, and sizes ....</li> <li>• #44. Promote and support efforts by public and private agencies and citizen groups to provide all residents with the opportunity to satisfy their needs for housing, employment, and physical and social services.</li> </ul> <p>Housing Policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• #48. Promote and support efforts by public and private agencies and citizen groups to provide sufficient housing in all price ranges to enable persons employed in a community to obtain housing in that community.</li> <li>• #49. Promote and support efforts by public and private agencies and citizen groups to eliminate unreasonable obstacles to the supply of low and moderate-cost housing.</li> <li>• #51. Promote and support efforts by public and private agencies and citizen groups to provide equal opportunity for low and moderate-income persons and minority group members to occupy suitable housing.</li> <li>• #52. Encourage the development of socially and economically diverse communities.</li> </ul>
<p>East Los Angeles Community Plan</p>	<p>Physical Environment Goals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To retain the single-family residential life style of the community.</li> <li>• To meet housing demand, both present and future, especially for low- and moderate-income families.</li> <li>• To encourage high standards of development and improve the aesthetic qualities of the community.</li> </ul> <p>Land Use Policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New development should be managed, discouraging crowding and encouraging single-family detached homes, twin homes, and townhomes for households, and townhouses and apartments for senior citizens.</li> <li>• Provide increased opportunities for a variety of residential densities (i.e. two single-family homes on one lot), concentrating on development at low medium and medium densities.</li> </ul>

Community-Based Plan	Relevant Policy Support
Hacienda Heights Community Plan	<p>Housing Policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• #2. Maintain a variety of housing prices and lot sizes.</li> <li>• #5. Distribute low and moderate income units equitably throughout the community.</li> </ul>
Rowland Heights Community Plan	<p>Housing Policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• #1. Encourage the equitable distribution of housing for low and moderate income individuals and households throughout the community and the region.</li> </ul>
Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan	<p>Land Use Element Policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1.4: Promote a balanced, autonomous community with a full range of public and commercial services and a wide variety of housing and employment opportunities....</li> <li>• 2.7: Encourage and support a mix of housing types in the urban areas.</li> <li>• 12.1: Promote and support efforts by public and private agencies and citizen groups to provide the opportunity for a choice of living, working, recreation, and cultural pursuits for all ages, incomes, and ethnic groups. This variety of choice includes: housing densities, types, prices, rents, configurations, and sizes ....</li> </ul> <p>Housing Element Policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1.2: Evaluate changes in policies, subdivision standards and building procedures based on their cost effectiveness and impact upon the cost of housing.</li> <li>• 2.1: Promote and support efforts by public and private agencies and citizen groups to provide sufficient housing in all price ranges to enable persons employed in a community to obtain housing in that community.</li> <li>• 2.2: Promote and support efforts by public and private agencies and citizen groups to eliminate unreasonable obstacles to the supply of low and moderate-cost housing.</li> <li>• 2.5: Promote and support efforts by public and private agencies and citizen groups to provide equal opportunity for low and moderate-income persons and minority members to occupy suitable housing.</li> <li>• 2.6: Encourage the development of socially and economically communities.</li> </ul>
Walnut Park Neighborhood Plan	<p>Housing Policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage the preservation and maintenance of existing homes while permitting new development in appropriate areas.</li> <li>• Encourage the provision of moderate income and senior citizen/handicapped housing.</li> </ul>
West Athens – Westmont Community Plan	<p>Land Use Policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow for the development of residential, commercial, recreational, public and supportive land uses, at varying densities and intensities.</li> <li>• Encourage infill of vacant parcels in residential areas.</li> </ul> <p>Housing Policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To encourage infill and help improve the community form and appearance.</li> </ul>

*Housing Element*

The fourth revision of the Housing Element, which was adopted by the Board of Supervisors in 2008, contains numerous provisions related to the need for more housing of all types and income levels. The Housing Element specifically addresses small lot subdivisions in Program 12, which acknowledges that by allowing the creation of smaller, fee-simple lots without the need to establish a homeowners association, more affordable home ownership opportunities in the County can be created. Program 12 calls for a study on the creation of a small lot subdivision program, and, if found to be feasible, the preparation of necessary amendments to the County Code. Table 2 lists further policies from the Housing Element that support the small lot subdivision concept.

**Table 2: Housing Element Policy Support for Small Lot Subdivisions**

<p>Housing Availability</p>	<p>Goal 1: A wide range of housing types in sufficient supply to meet the need of current and future residents, particularly persons with special needs, including but not limited to low income households, seniors, persons with disabilities, single-parent households, the homeless and at-risk homeless, and farmworkers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy 1.2: Mitigate the impacts of governmental regulations and policies that constrain the provision and preservation of affordable housing and housing for persons with special needs.</li> <li>• Policy 1.3: Coordinate with the private sector in the development of affordable and special needs housing for both rental and homeownership. Where appropriate, promote such development through incentives.</li> </ul>
<p>Housing Affordability</p>	<p>Goal 3: A housing supply that ranges broadly in housing costs to enable all households, regardless of income, to secure adequate housing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy 3.1: Promote mixed income neighborhoods and a diversity of housing types throughout the unincorporated areas to increase housing choices for all economic segments of the population.</li> <li>• Policy 3.2: Incorporate advances in energy-saving technologies into housing design, construction, operation, and maintenance.</li> </ul>
<p>Implementation and Monitoring</p>	<p>Goal 9: Planning for and monitoring the long-term affordability of sound, quality housing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy 9.1: Ensure collaboration among various County departments in the delivery of housing and related services.</li> </ul>

- **County Code Analysis**

Careful consideration over how smaller lots can meet County requirements, such as those outlined in the green building program, will be an important part of developing a small lot subdivision program. However, as a land division, a small lot subdivision program is primarily affected by Title 21: Subdivisions and Title 22: Planning and Zoning of the Los Angeles County Code.

*Subdivision Code (Title 21)*

Table 3 highlights some of the key provisions in Title 21 that affect the feasibility of small lot subdivisions. Modifications to these provisions may be needed to allow and accommodate small lot subdivisions.

**Table 3: Title 21 Provisions that Affect Small Lot Subdivision Feasibility**

Provision	Section
Lot area and width	Section 21.24.240: In general, where the Zoning Ordinance does not establish area or width standards, each new lot must be 5,000 square feet in area and 50 feet in width.
Flag lots	Section 21.24.320: The creation of flag lots may be denied if it is not justified by topographic conditions or the size and shape of the land division, or if the design is in conflict with the neighborhood development. The width of the access strips is set at 10 feet for multiple contiguous strips and 15 feet for individual strips.
Street frontage	Section 21.24.290: Newly created lots must front on a street. Section 21.24.300: Depending on the lot orientation, lot frontage shall be 1) at least 40 feet, or 2) equal to or greater than the average lot width.
Street width and improvements	Section 21.24.090: The right-of-way and improvement (i.e. paved roadway) widths of all new streets in a land division are determined based on their function, location and connectivity. For residential streets, right-of-way and improvement widths vary from a 48 foot right-of-way with a 34 foot paved roadway for a service road to a 64 foot right-of-way with a 40 foot paved roadway for an entrance street. These widths may be modified for a variety of reasons but in no case can the right-of-way be less than 40 feet.

*Zoning Code (Title 22)*

The County’s Zoning Code (Title 22) contains a number of development standards, including both Countywide and community-specific standards, which affect land divisions in the unincorporated County. Table 4 highlights some of the key provisions in Title 22 that affects the feasibility of small lot subdivisions. Modifications to these provisions may be needed to allow and accommodate small lot subdivisions.

**Table 4: Title 22 Provisions that Affect Small Lot Subdivision Feasibility**

Provision	Section
Required lot width	Section 22.52.030: Lots which have a required area of 7,000 square feet or less must have an average width of 50 feet.
Required lot area	Section 22.52.100: Unless specified by the zoning designation, lots in Zones R-1, R-2, R-3, R-4, R-A and RPD must have an area of 5,000 square feet. Section 22.52.100: Required area shall not include the access strip of a flag lot extending from the main portion of the lot or parcel of land to the adjoining parkway, highway or street.
Side yard setback	Section 22.48.100: A lot having less than 50 feet in width may have interior side yards equal to 10% of the average lot width, but in no event less than three feet in width.
Rear yard setback	Section 22.48.110: Lots having less than 75 feet in depth may have a rear yard equal to 20% of the average depth, but in no event less than 10 feet in depth.
Front yard setback	Section 22.20.120 (R-1): 20 feet Section 22.20.220 (R-2): 20 feet Section 22.20.320 (R-3): 15 feet Section 22.20.380 (R-4): 15 feet Section 22.20.450 (R-A): 20 feet Section 22.24.110 (A-1): 20 feet

*Community Standards Districts (Chapter 22.44 of Title 22)*

In addition to the general provisions of the Zoning Ordinance, there are 24 community standards districts (CSDs) in Los Angeles County that establish special development standards and, in some cases, provide unique procedural requirements for development within their boundaries. As shown in Appendix B, many CSDs include provisions that can potentially affect the feasibility of a small lot subdivision program to varying degrees, from minimum lot size requirements to height and setbacks.

## **SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

This section provides an overview of special considerations for the County when developing a small lot subdivision program for the unincorporated areas. The special considerations were informed by a series of discussions with County staff including the Community Development Commission, Department of Public Works, and the County Fire Department, private developers and designers, and other stakeholders to identify potential issues and opportunities for a small lot subdivision program for the unincorporated areas (see Appendix C: Summary of Outreach Meetings).

### **Land Suitability**

As a potential land use strategy for promoting infill development, small lot subdivisions are most suitable in communities with established infrastructure and services, such as domestic water and sewerage service, and areas that are not limited by environmental or safety constraints, such as very high fire hazard severity zones or flood zones.

### **Density and Minimum Lot Size**

Residential density ranges and minimum lot sizes are the most important considerations in establishing a small lot subdivision program. One policy option is to limit small lot subdivisions to multi-family residential areas where no changes to underlying allowable densities are needed. With this approach, the required lot area in Title 22 could be amended to correspond to the allowable densities in the underlying multi-family zones. For example, the minimum lot size for Zone R-3 could be 1,452 square feet, based on the permitted density of 30 du/ac.

Another policy option is to also allow small lot subdivisions in single-family zones. As this would result in an increase in density, small lot subdivisions in single-family zones may be most effective as a "transitional" use between less compatible uses, such as commercial and lower density single-family uses. The concept of a "transitional use" can be found in both the County Code and the City of Los Angeles Municipal Code. For instance, Title 22 of the County Code includes a provision to allow parking lots as a transitional use in portions of single family zones, if located within 100 feet of a commercial or industrial zone (Section 22.20.090). In the City of Los Angeles, small lot subdivisions are allowed as a transitional use in the R-2 zone on lots that are adjoining a commercial or industrial zone (Section 12.09 of the Los Angeles Municipal Code).

### **Design**

Small lot design and layout is fundamentally a site planning challenge in promoting a high-quality environment while addressing practical spatial requirements, such as parking and vehicle access, small lot sizes and awkward lot configurations, adequate access to air and light, and outdoor space and privacy. In addition, as small lot subdivisions could be a policy tool to promote infill development on vacant and underutilized parcels in existing developed communities, the project's relationship with surrounding existing developments in the

neighborhood and with other public areas, such as streets and sidewalks, also plays a critical role in shaping the lot layout and building design.

Design guidelines are needed as part of a small lot subdivision program to address various challenges that are unique to small lot subdivisions. The design guidelines for small lot subdivisions should encourage developers and designers to not only consider the design elements of each lot and unit, but also the project's compatibility with the surrounding existing developments, and how it enhances the overall neighborhood character and vitality of the street and sidewalk. Unlike development standards, design guidelines provide the flexibility to address specific planning issues on a case-by-case basis. For an example of small lot subdivision guidelines, please see Appendix D: City of Los Angeles Small Lot Subdivision Ordinance Guidelines.

During an outreach meeting held in May 2009, many designers and developers agreed that the unincorporated communities are diverse and architectural features and styles should be flexible and based upon neighborhood compatibility. However, it is important to note that while some flexibility is necessary when addressing issues such as architectural styles, the meeting participants also expressed a need for some certainty in the planning process. They believe that certain aspects of a project that govern the lot and building layout, such as setbacks, access, sewer and utility hookups, parking, and open space should be subject to well-established development standards and mandatory requirements.

### **Street Design**

The issue of street design is also important in small lot subdivision projects. There may be potential for designing public streets in small lot subdivisions with cross-sections that are narrower than the current County standard. However, various factors such as the capacity of the road, its connection with other roads, and the width and size of street sweeping equipment must be considered to determine the adequate width.

### **Fee Simple Lots**

The allowance of smaller, fee-simple lots could eliminate the need for a homeowner's association (HOA). An HOA may still be needed if a small lot subdivision project contains common areas, such as common driveways, which puts the burden of repair and maintenance on the property owners. A maintenance agreement may be sufficient in ensuring that the common driveways will be maintained and repaired by the property owners if the small lot subdivision project is of a smaller scale, and if the common driveways are built to rigorous standards (e.g., 6" paving rather than 4") so that the improvements can last longer.

### **Access**

Providing appropriate width access (e.g., driveways, fire lanes, streets) in small lot subdivision projects is an important factor for fire safety. Driveways need to be paved full-width with all-weather access. The use of alleys for access to off-street parking, and a clear system of establishing street addresses for emergency services should also be considered in a small lot subdivision program.

The number of driveways on a parcel also affects the amount of street parking that is available. An indirect driveway (one that has a 90 degree turn to the garage) allows for more on-site parking than a direct driveway. Driveway location should be considered during the land division/conditional use permit process, and driveways should be considered “fire lanes.”

### **Flag Lots**

Certain small lot subdivision projects in the County would need to utilize flag lot designs, which in some cases may not be feasible if the access strip of a flag lot cannot be included in the “required area” of a lot, as specified in Title 22 (Sections 22.08.180 and 22.52.100 C.2).

In addition, a flag lot design may not be feasible due to neighborhood compatibility concerns. Title 21 (Section 21.24.320) states in part: “The advisory agency may disapprove the platting of flag lots where the design is not justified by topographic conditions or the size and shape of the division of land, or where this design is in conflict with the pattern of neighborhood development.” Placing new residences in the rear portions of lots can expectedly cause concern by the adjoining neighbors whose privacy, light, and air could be substantially altered. If flag lot designs are allowed as part of a small lot subdivision program, specific design guidelines for structures on flag lots should be established to ensure neighborhood compatibility. These guidelines can be implemented through a conditional use permit processed concurrently with the land division.

### **Parking**

Parking is a big factor in the cost of a development and is an important component of a small lot subdivision program. Smaller lot sizes and other space constraints for small lot projects require flexibility in parking standards. Also, while private driveway systems can eliminate on-street parking altogether, they can also create an enforcement problem if cars are parked in the fire lanes. It is also important to consider off-street parking options and proximity to transit when designing small lot subdivision projects.

### **Setbacks and Open Space**

Most small lot subdivision projects need flexibility in setback and open space requirements. It is important to balance the need for flexibility in these areas with neighborhood compatibility, existing neighborhood yard sizes, and the provision of adequate open space areas for landscaping and shade trees. A small lot subdivision program should consider flexibility in lot lines to allow for more useable yard areas. Another consideration is the impact of having

private rather than common open space, and flexibility in the type of open space that is allowed, such as balconies and rooftops. Furthermore, another consideration is that small lot subdivisions may be problematic in sloping terrain, due to slope setback requirements.

### **Permitting Procedure**

The final consideration for a small lot subdivision program is the procedure for reviewing small lot subdivisions through a “streamlined” or a “one-stop” process for small lot subdivision projects. Currently, there is no mechanism for addressing specific design and neighborhood compatibility issues in the land division process. Requiring a land division to be processed concurrently with a conditional use permit provides a mechanism to ensure neighborhood compatibility through public input and design guidelines. However, the conditional use permit has the potential to make the entitlement procedure more complicated and costly, and the County may consider other mechanisms, such as a minor conditional use permit or reduced permit fee.

## **SURVEY OF OTHER LOCAL JURISDICTIONS**

Many local jurisdictions have adopted small lot subdivision regulations that allow greater flexibility in lot sizes and widths. While some local jurisdictions establish zones specifically for smaller lot developments, others allow modification to lot sizes and widths in various residential zones through a discretionary review process. In some local jurisdictions, the small lot policies include basic development standards, such as setbacks, building height and parking, while other local jurisdictions emphasize the importance of visual quality and consistency with neighborhood characteristics. Most of these local jurisdictions have adopted detailed guidelines for architectural design with pictures and illustrations to demonstrate design elements that are encouraged or discouraged in a small lot development. Table 5 provides highlights of ordinances and code provisions adopted by local jurisdictions to regulate small lot subdivision developments.

**Table 5: Summary of Small Lot Subdivision Programs in Other Local Jurisdictions**

Local Jurisdiction	Summary of Small Lot Subdivision Program
Los Angeles, CA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allowed in multi-family and commercially-zoned properties.</li> <li>• Lots can be as small as 600 sq. ft. with a minimum width of 16 ft.; structures may cover up to 80% of the lot area.</li> <li>• Design guidelines address site layout, building design and materials, but the City has no mechanism to enforce them since it does not require any discretionary review (i.e., conditional use permit) as part of the approval process.</li> </ul>
Marysville, CA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allows large lots to be subdivided into 3,000 sq. ft. lots in designated areas. Developments must be at least the same or greater size as the majority of the existing residentially-zoned lots within a 200 ft. radius.</li> </ul>
Merced, CA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allowed in Planned Development zones.</li> <li>• Two sets of design guidelines for lots based on width and area.</li> <li>• 60% lot coverage; 10% open space; minimum lot areas of 1,950 to 3,000 sq. ft.</li> <li>• Uses a discretionary development plan review or a conditional use permit.</li> </ul>
Modesto, CA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allowed in Specific Plan areas and in Planned Development zones.</li> <li>• Establishes separate guidelines for lots from 3,000 to 5,000 sq. ft., and less than 3,000 sq. ft.</li> <li>• Uses a discretionary review process to evaluate compliance with guidelines.</li> </ul>
Napa, CA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Permitted in all residential zones that allow single-family residences or duplexes.</li> <li>• Does not place a limit on lot size and width.</li> <li>• Requires a use permit to ensure that the proposed subdivision is compatible with existing neighborhood development patterns and to control building size.</li> </ul>
Oakland, CA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allows a minimum lot area of 4,000 sq. ft. and a lot width of 25 ft. in certain zones.</li> <li>• The maximum building height, minimum yard, lot area, width, and frontage requirements may be waived or modified in residential and commercial zones.</li> <li>• A conditional use permit is required.</li> </ul>
Santa Rosa, CA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allowed in single-family and multi-family zones.</li> <li>• Allows minimum lot size of 2,000 sq. ft. and a density of 18 units per acre.</li> <li>• Requires a conditional use permit with the land division map.</li> </ul>
Portland, OR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New narrow lots may be created in single-dwelling zones if certain development standards (e.g., access, parking and landscaping) are met.</li> <li>• Additional modifications are allowed with a planned development review application.</li> </ul>
Seattle, WA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Residential Small Lot (RSL) zone was created specifically to allow detached single-family homes on 2,500 sq. ft. lots</li> <li>• Lots that are less than 5,000 sq. ft. in size can only have lot coverage equivalent to 1,000 sq. ft. plus 15% of the lot area.</li> </ul>

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study concludes that it is feasible to establish a program for small lot subdivisions in the County unincorporated areas. There is policy support for the creation of innovative programs to increase housing development and home ownership opportunities in the County's General Plan and community-based plans. The following list summarizes the special considerations for developing and implementing a small lot subdivision program for the unincorporated areas:

- The establishment of a small lot subdivision program requires modifications to development standards that affect land divisions in Title 21: Subdivision and Title 22: Planning and Zoning of the Los Angeles County Code.
- Design guidelines are an integral component of a small lot subdivision program. Detailed design guidelines should provide helpful tips and suggestions on site layout, building design and materials, and architectural features, illustrated with pictures and diagrams. The design guidelines should also clearly convey the goals and intent.
- In conjunction with the subdivision application, a conditional use permit should be required for all small lot subdivision projects in order to evaluate projects on a case-by-case basis in accordance with design guidelines.
- The development of a small lot subdivision program requires careful consideration of minimum lot area, setbacks, access width, sewer and utility hookups, parking, open space and other related requirements and development standards.
- A small lot subdivision program would be most widely used in more urbanized unincorporated communities that have higher numbers of multi-family residential zones and land use categories, have established infrastructure and services, and are not limited by environmental and safety land use constraints.
- Collaboration with other County departments, agencies and major stakeholders, including the Department of Public Works, the Community Development Commission, and the Los Angeles County Fire Department, is critical in developing and maintaining a successful small lot subdivision program for the County.

Based on the conclusion of this study, the staff makes the following recommendation:

- Instruct the Department of Regional Planning to prepare a Countywide ordinance to permit small lot subdivisions projects in the County, in coordination with other County departments and agencies, and address the issues and opportunities that are outlined in this feasibility study.

**APPENDICES**

**Appendix A: Board Motion, August 5, 2008**

**Appendix B: CSD Analysis**

**Appendix C: Summary of Outreach Meetings**

**Appendix D: City of Los Angeles Small Lot Subdivision Ordinance Guidelines.**

**Appendix A: Board Motion, August 5, 2008**



MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES, STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Sachi A. Hamai, Executive Officer-  
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors  
383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration  
Los Angeles, California 90012

At its meeting held August 5, 2008, the Board took the following action:

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At the time and place regularly set, notice having been duly given, the following item was called up:

Hearing to update the Housing Element consisting of technical revisions to address the Regional Housing Needs Assessment for the County; revisions to reflect recent changes in the State Housing Element Law; updated analyses; new programs to meet the County's housing development goals; adopt a resolution approving the 2008-14 Draft Housing Element and determine that the Draft Housing Element is compatible with and supports the goals and policies of the Los Angeles County General Plan; repeal the Board's action of October 23, 2001 (Board Order 32) relating to the Housing Element for the 1998-2005 planning period; and approval of the Negative Declaration (ND) and determination that the project will not have a significant effect on the environment and that the ND reflects the independent judgment and analysis of the County, as further described in the attached letter dated June 18, 2008 from the Director of Planning.

All persons wishing to testify were sworn in by the Executive Officer of the Board. Connie Chung, representing the Department of Regional Planning testified. Opportunity was given for interested persons to address the Board. Arnold Sachs, Sandy Chu, Paul Zimmerman and others addressed the Board. Written correspondence was presented.

(Continued on Page 2)

The following statement was entered into the record for Supervisors Molina and Yaroslavsky:

“The housing crisis continues to loom over Los Angeles County, affecting our residents in profound ways. The Housing Element Update provides an opportunity for the County to comprehensively assess and adjust its goals, policies and programs to address the effects of the evolving housing crisis on the unincorporated communities of the County. It emphasizes the provision of housing opportunities for a variety of incomes and needs through a number of housing types. The Housing Element includes a number of new programs designed to maintain and increase the supply of housing, especially affordable housing. These programs will play a vital role in the County’s ability to foster healthy communities by providing access to a broad spectrum of housing.”

Therefore, on motion of Supervisor Molina, seconded by Supervisor Yaroslavsky, unanimously carried; the Board closed the hearing and took the following actions:

1. Considered and adopted the attached Negative Declaration (ND) and made a finding that there is no substantial evidence that the project will have a significant effect on the environment and that the ND reflects the independent judgment and analysis of the County;
2. Adopted a resolution approving the recommendation of the Regional Planning Commission as reflected in the attached 2008-2014 Draft Housing Element and determined that it is compatible with and supportive of the goals and policies of the Los Angeles County General Plan;
3. Repealed the Housing Element for the 1998-2005 planning period, which was adopted by the Board on October 23, 2001, upon effect of the attached 2008-2014 Draft Housing Element;
4. Instructed the Department of Regional Planning to submit the adopted resolution and adopted Housing Element to the State Department of Housing and Community Development for certification review;

(Continued on Page 3)

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5. Instructed the Department of Regional Planning to immediately initiate the required feasibility studies for establishing a program for small lot subdivisions and an inclusionary housing policy and report back to the Board within a year; and
6. Instructed all County Departments identified in the Housing Element to initiate the implementation of the remaining programs identified in the Housing Element.

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#### Attachments

#### Copies distributed:

Each Supervisor  
Chief Executive Officer  
County Counsel  
Director of Planning

**Appendix B: Community Standards Districts (CSD) Analysis**

**Table 6: CSD Provisions that Affect Small Lot Subdivision Feasibility**

CSD	Provision	Section
East Compton (22.44.112)	Front yard setback	The front yard shall be at least 10 feet in depth.
	Height limit	The total floor area in all the buildings on any one parcel of land shall not exceed 13 times the buildable area of such parcel of land.
Agua Dulce (22.44.113)	Required area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each residential lot or parcel shall contain a net area of not less than two acres.</li> <li>• Residential parcels containing a net area of less than two acres may be created only within projects located in hillside management areas (areas over 25 percent slope) when it is found that such a design will result in both reduced grading and service system impacts and a better project design....                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Each lot or parcel of land shall have a required width of not less than 165 feet and a required length of not less than 165 feet.</li> <li>b. Each lot or parcel of land shall have a required front yard of not less than 50 feet.</li> <li>c. Each lot or parcel of land shall have required side yards of not less than 25 feet.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Walnut Park (22.44.114)	Height limit	25 feet maximum building height in Zone R-1, R-2 and R-3.
	Setbacks	For parcels less than 40,000 square feet, setback requirements in Zone R-3-NR are more restrictive than the Countywide Zone R-3 setback requirements since Zone R-3-NR in this CSD is subject to the same development standards as Zone R-2.
East Los Angeles (22.44.118)	Height limit	Zone R-1: 25 feet Zone R-2: 35 feet Zone R-3: 35 feet
	Landscaping requirement	In Zone R-1, R-2 and R-3, the required front yard shall contain a minimum of 50% landscaping.
	Lot Consolidation	Lot consolidation of smaller lots in Zone R-3 is highly encouraged.
Topanga Canyon (22.44.119)	Gross Structural Area	Construction of residential units on smaller lots created by certain old tract maps, Records of Survey and Licensed Surveyor's Maps is subject to the maximum allowable gross structural area, which is determined by a special slope intensity formula due to the hilly terrain in the area.
	Setbacks	The Countywide provision on reduced front yard setback on sloping terrain (22.48.080) does NOT apply to this area.
West Athens-Westmont (22.44.120)	Height limit	Zone R-1: 35 feet and two stories Zone R-2: 35 feet Zone R-3: 35 feet
	Landscaping requirement	In Zone R-1, R-2 and R-3, the required front yard shall contain a minimum of 50% landscaping.

CSD	Provision	Section
Twin Lakes (22.44.121)	On-site and Off-site Improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All roads or access easements on site, as well as segments of all roads abutting the parcel must be improved with a minimum of 20 foot width of paving, to be approved by the County Department of Public Works.</li> <li>Fire hydrants must be accessible to the site, and comply with current standards of the county forester and fire warden.</li> <li>Sewage disposal facilities must be sized to serve the requested use, based on current county department of health standards.</li> </ul>
	Gross Structural Area	Construction of residential units on smaller lots created by certain Records of Survey is subject to the maximum allowable gross structural area, which is determined by a special slope intensity formula due to the hilly terrain in the area.
	Setbacks	The Countywide provision on reduced front yard setback on sloping terrain (22.48.080) does NOT apply to this area.
Leona Valley (22.44.122)	Required area	Standard residential lots or parcels shall contain a gross area of not less than two and one-half acres. Clustering and density transfer shall be permitted in accordance with the provisions of the Antelope Valley Area Plan, provided that no lots contain less than one and one-half gross acres. Clustering is allowed only within projects located in hillside management areas (areas over 25 percent slope) and must satisfy findings of the Hillside Management Ordinance.
Malibou Lake (22.44.123)	Lot coverage	Building and structures shall cover no more than 25% of the lot area, provided that regardless of lot size a residence of at least 800 square feet of floor area is allowed.
	Off-street parking	Each dwelling unit shall have two standard covered parking spaces and two standard uncovered parking spaces.
	Setbacks	The Countywide provisions on reduced front yard setback on sloping terrain (22.48.080), reduced side yard setbacks on narrow lots (22.48.100), reduced rear yard setback on shallow lots (22.48.110), and projections into yards (22.48.120) do NOT apply to this area.
Willowbrook (22.44.125)	Height limit	Zone R-1: 35 feet and two stories Zone R-2: 35 feet and two stories Zone R-3: 35 feet and two stories
	Floor area	The minimum floor area of a new single-family residence shall be 1,200 square feet.
	Lot coverage	The maximum lot coverage by structures of any type in Zone R-3 shall be 50 percent.
	Landscaping	In Zone R-3, a minimum of 20% of the lot shall be landscaped or hardscaped, with open, usable outdoor space.
	Residential building type	New residential structures within Zone R-3 shall only include single-family or duplex dwellings. Three or more attached dwelling units within one structure are not permitted, unless a conditional use permit is approved.

CSD	Provision	Section
Acton (22.44.126)	Minimum lot area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New residential lots located in areas designated as Nonurban 1 in the Antelope Valley Area Plan shall contain a gross area of not less than two acres and a net area of not less than 40,000 square feet. Lot sizes may be clustered in accordance with the Antelope Valley Area Plan, provided that no lot contains less than one acre of gross area and 40,000 square feet of net area, and provided the average gross area of all lots in a project is not less than two acres.</li> <li>• New residential lots located in areas designated as Nonurban 1 in the Antelope Valley Area Plan shall contain a gross area of not less than one acre and a net area of not less than 40,000 square feet. Clustering is prohibited.</li> </ul>
	Minimum lot width and length	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nonurban 1: New residential lots shall contain an area which is at least 165 feet in width and at least 165 feet in length (depth). This area shall begin no farther than 50 feet from the street right-of-way line and shall include the entire building pad.</li> <li>• Nonurban 2: New residential lots shall contain an area which is at least 130 feet in width and at least 130 feet in length (depth). This area shall begin no farther than 35 feet from the street right-of-way line and shall include the entire building pad.</li> </ul>
	Setbacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nonurban 1: Residential lots shall have required front and rear yards of not less than 50 feet from the property line. Side yards shall be a minimum of 35 feet from the property line.</li> <li>• Nonurban 2: Residential lots of sufficient size shall have required front and rear yards of not less than 35 feet from the property line. Side yards shall be a minimum of 25 feet from the property line.</li> </ul>

CSD	Provision	Section
Altadena (22.44.127)	Setbacks and building height	<p>Zone R-1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Front yard setback: Average depth of all of the front yards on the same side of the street on the same block; but no less than 20 feet.</li> <li>• Side yard setback: No less than 10% of the average width of the lot, but in no case less than 5 feet for interior and corner side yards and 10 feet for reverse corner side yards.</li> <li>• Each required yard shall not be less than 15 feet where any portion of a residence or other structure within that yard exceeds 23 feet in height.</li> <li>• The maximum number of stories above grade shall be two.</li> </ul> <p>Zone R-2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On lots with a size of 20,000 square feet or less, the maximum building height shall be 30 feet.</li> </ul> <p>Zone R-3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The maximum height of the structure at the inside boundary of the interior side yard adjoining the single-family or two-family residentially-zoned parcel shall be 25 feet, and any portion of the structure exceeding 25 feet in height shall be set back an additional foot from the inside boundary of said interior side yard for every two feet in height; and</li> <li>• The maximum height of the structure at the inside boundary of the rear yard adjoining the single-family or two-family residentially-zoned parcel shall be 25 feet, and any portion of the structure exceeding 25 feet in height shall be set back an additional foot from the inside boundary of said rear yard for every foot in height.</li> </ul>
	Gross structural area, floor area and lot coverage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In Zone R-1, residences are subject to the maximum gross structural area and the maximum lot coverage determined by a formula.</li> <li>• In Zone R-2, the floor area of any story above the first story shall be at least 20% less than the floor area of the first story</li> </ul>
	Landscaping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In Zone R-2, at least 50% of any required front yard shall be landscaped.</li> <li>• In R-3, any required interior side yard that adjoins a single-family or two-family residentially-zoned parcel shall be landscaped, which landscaping shall include shrubbery and/or trees to shield the adjoining property. Driveway is not allowed in any required interior side yard that adjoins a single-family or two-family residentially-zoned parcel.</li> <li>• In R-3, rear yards that adjoin a single-family or two-family residentially-zoned parcel, shall include a landscaped area with a minimum depth of 10 feet measured from the rear property line. Such landscaped area shall include shrubbery and/or trees to shield the adjoining property. At least one tree, with a minimum size of 15 gallons, shall be provided for every 250 square feet of landscaped area.</li> </ul>

CSD	Provision	Section
West Rancho Dominguez-Victoria (22.44.130)	Landscaping	In Zone R-1 and R-2, the required front yard shall contain a minimum of 50 percent landscaping.
South San Gabriel (22.44.131)	Landscaping	In Zone R-1, R-2, R-3, R-A and A-1, the required front yard shall contain a minimum of 50 percent landscaping.
	Setbacks and building height	<p>Zone R-1, R-A and A-1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Front yard setback: Average depth of all of the front yards on the same side of the street on the same block; but no less than 20 feet.</li> <li>• Side yard setback: No less than 10% of the average width of the lot, but in no case less than 5 feet for interior and corner side yards and 10 feet for reverse corner side yards.</li> <li>• Each required side yard shall not be less than 10 feet where any portion of a residence or other structure exceeds 20 feet in height.</li> <li>• Each required rear yard shall not be less than 20 feet where any portion of a residence or other structure exceeds 20 feet in height.</li> <li>• The maximum number of stories above grade shall be two.</li> </ul> <p>Zone R-2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Front yard setback: Average depth of all of the front yards on the same side of the street on the same block; but no less than 20 feet.</li> </ul>
	Gross structural area, floor area and lot coverage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In Zone R-1, R-A and A-1, residences are subject to the maximum gross structural area and the maximum lot coverage determined by a formula.</li> </ul>
Rowland Heights (22.44.132)	Landscaping	In Zones A-1, A-2, R-1, and R-A, a minimum of 50% of the required front yard area shall contain landscaping consisting of grass, shrubs, trees, and other similar plant materials.

CSD	Provision	Section
<p>Santa Monica Mountains North Area (22.44.133)</p>	<p>Antiquated Subdivision Area Specific Development Standards</p>	<p>The antiquated subdivision area is established to protect resources contained in certain hillside areas, located outside the Topanga Canyon and Malibou Lake areas, from incompatible cumulative development of small lots which may result in or have the potential for environmental degradation and/or destruction of life or property.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hillside CUP is required for the construction of a single-family residence on any lot within the antiquated subdivision area that has a gross area of less than one-half acre and contains any area with a natural slope of 25 percent or greater</li> </ul>
	<p>Topanga Canyon Area Specific Development Standards</p>	<p>The Topanga Canyon area is established to implement certain policies related to small lot subdivision development contained in the Santa Monica Mountains North Area Plan. The area-specific development standards are intended to mitigate the impacts of development on small lots in hillside and other areas that lack adequate infrastructure or are subject to the potential hazards of fire, flood, or geologic instability, and to preserve important ecological resources and scenic features found in this area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small lots created by certain old tract maps, Records of Survey and Licensed Surveyor’s Maps are subject to the maximum allowable gross structural area, which is determined by a special slope intensity formula due to the hilly terrain in the area.</li> </ul>
	<p>Malibou Lake Area Specific Development Standards</p>	<p>The Malibou Lake area establishes development standards to help mitigate the impacts of cumulative residential development on existing historical lots with limited street access in a high fire hazard area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buildings and structures shall cover no more than 25% of the lot area, except to the extent necessary to allow a residence of up to 800 square feet of floor area, in which case the residence shall be permitted to cover more than 25% of the lot area only to the extent that it otherwise complies with all other zoning provisions.</li> <li>• The Countywide provisions on reduced front yard setback on sloping terrain (22.48.080), reduced side yard setbacks on narrow lots (22.48.100), reduced rear yard setback on shallow lots (22.48.110), and projections into yards (22.48.120) do NOT apply to this area.</li> </ul>

CSD	Provision	Section
East Pasadena- San Gabriel (22.44.135)	Street frontage and lot width	Zone R-1, R-2, R-A and A-1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The minimum street frontage shall be at least 60 feet.</li> <li>• The minimum average lot width shall be at least 60 feet.</li> </ul>
	Height limit	Zone R-1, R-2, R-A and A-1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 30 feet on lot less than 13,000 square feet.</li> <li>• The maximum number of stories above grade shall be two.</li> </ul> Zone R-3: 35 feet
	Setbacks and building height	Zone R-1, R-2, R-A and A-1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Front yard setback: Average depth of all of the front yards on the same side of the street on the same block. On undeveloped blocks, the minimum front yard depth shall be 20 feet.</li> <li>• Side yard setback: No less than 10% of the average width of the lot, but in no case less than 5 feet for a lot with an average lot width less than 50 feet.</li> <li>• Reverse corner side yard setback: 10 feet</li> <li>• Rear yard setback: 25 feet on lot less than 13,000 square feet</li> <li>• For structures that exceed 17 feet in height and are located on a lot or parcel of land adjacent to a single-family residential zone, the maximum height of the structure:                             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. At five feet from the side property line adjacent to the single-family residential zone shall be 10 feet and any portion of the structure that exceeds 10 feet in height shall be set back an additional foot for every additional foot in height.</li> <li>2. At 20 feet from the front property line shall be 20 feet and any portion of the structure that exceeds 20 feet in height shall be set back an additional foot for every additional foot in height.</li> </ol> </li> </ul> Zone R-3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Front yard setback: Average depth of all of the front yards on the same side of the street on the same block. On undeveloped blocks, the minimum front yard depth shall be 20 feet.</li> <li>• Side yard setback: 5 feet</li> <li>• Reverse corner side yard setback: 10 feet</li> <li>• Rear yard setback: 15 feet</li> <li>• For structures that exceed 17 feet in height and are located on a lot or parcel of land adjacent to a single-family residential zone, the maximum height of the structure at five feet from the property line adjacent to the single-family residential zone shall be 10 feet and any portion of the structure that exceeds 10 feet in height shall be set back an additional foot for every additional foot in height.</li> </ul>
	Landscaping	Zone R-1, R-2, R-A and A-1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimum 50% of required front yard shall be landscaped.</li> </ul> Zone R-3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimum 20% of required front yard shall be landscaped.</li> </ul>
	Maximum floor area and lot coverage	Zone R-1, R-2, R-A and A-1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subject to the maximum gross structural area and the maximum lot coverage determined by a formula.</li> </ul> Zone R-3: 75% of net lot area

CSD	Provision	Section
Avocado Heights (22.44.136)	Landscaping	In Zones R-1, R-A, and A-1, for lots less than 40 feet in width, front yards shall have a minimum of 25 percent landscaping. For all other lots, front yards shall have a minimum of 50 percent landscaping.
	Maximum lot coverage	In Zone R-1, R-A and A-1, buildings are subject to the maximum lot coverage determined by a formula.
	Setbacks	Zone R-1, R-A and A-1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Front yard setback: Average depth of all of the front yards on the same side of the street on the same block. On undeveloped blocks, the minimum front yard depth shall be 20 feet.</li> <li>• Rear yard setback: 25 feet on lot less than 13,000 square feet</li> </ul>
Castaic (22.44.137)	Lot size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hasley Canyon and Violin Canyon: Single-family residential lots created by a land division shall contain a minimum gross area of two acres and a minimum net area of 40,000 square feet.</li> <li>• Other areas: A minimum area of 7,000 square feet; and have an average lot size of at least 10,000 square feet for the subdivision or have an average lot size determined by a special formula, which put open space area and slope intensity into consideration.</li> </ul>
Florence-Firestone (22.44.138)	Landscaping	In Zone R-2, R-3 and R-4, for lots less than 40 feet in width, front yards shall have a minimum of 25 percent landscaping. For all other lots, front yards shall have a minimum of 50 percent landscaping.
	Height limit	35 feet in Zone R-4
	Residential use in commercial zone	In Zone C-2 and C-3, residential and mixed residential/commercial uses shall be permitted with a director’s review and approval. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Density: 30 du/net acre in Zone C-2 and 50 du/net acre in Zone C-3.</li> <li>• Height limit: 45 feet in Zone C-2 and 50 feet</li> </ul>

CSD	Provision	Section
La Crescenta-Montrose (22.44.139)	Landscaping	<p>Zone R-3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least 50 percent of the required front yard shall be landscaped and such landscaping shall include at least one minimum 15-gallon tree.</li> <li>• Interior side yards that are adjoining a single-family or two-family residentially-zoned property in any jurisdiction shall be landscaped and such landscaping shall include shrubbery and/or trees to provide shielding from that adjacent property.</li> <li>• Rear yards that are adjoining a single-family or two-family residentially-zoned property in any jurisdiction shall include a landscaped area with a minimum depth of 10 feet as measured from the rear property line. Such landscaped area shall include shrubbery and/or trees to provide shielding from the adjacent zone. At least one minimum 15-gallon tree shall be provided for every 250 square feet of landscaped area.</li> </ul>
	Driveway width	<p>In R-3, where a lot or parcel of land is not more than 100 feet in average width, only one driveway shall be permitted in the required front yard and such driveway shall not exceed 26 feet in width.</p>
	Setbacks and building height	<p>Zone R-3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where a lot or parcel of land is 50 feet or less in average width, such lot or parcel of land shall have interior side yards each of not less than five feet. Where a lot or parcel of land is more than 50 feet in average width but not more than 100 feet in average width, such lot or parcel of land shall have interior side yards each equal to 10 percent of the average width of such lot or parcel of land.</li> <li>• For structures that exceed 25 feet in height and are located on a lot or parcel of land adjoining a single-family or two-family residentially-zoned property in any jurisdiction: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. At the inside boundary of an interior side yard adjoining a single-family or two-family residentially-zoned property in any jurisdiction, the maximum height of the structure shall be 25 feet and any portion of the structure that exceeds 25 feet in height shall be set back an additional foot for every two feet in height; and</li> <li>ii. At the inside boundary of a rear yard adjoining a single-family or two-family residentially-zoned property in any jurisdiction, the maximum height of the structure shall be 25 feet and any portion of the structure that exceeds 25 feet in height shall be set back an additional foot for every two feet in height.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Juniper Hills (22.44.140)	Lot size	<p>Each new lot or parcel of land created by a land division shall contain a gross area of not less than five acres.</p>
	Minimum lot width and length	<p>Each new lot or parcel of land created by a land division shall have a required width of not less than 330 feet and a required depth of not less than 330 feet.</p>
	Setbacks	<p>Required front, side, and rear yards shall have a minimum depth of not less than 30 feet.</p>

CSD	Provision	Section
Southeast Antelope Valley (22.44.141)	Lot size	In all residential and agricultural zones, each new lot or parcel of land created by a land division shall contain a gross area of not less than one acre.
Baldwin Hills (22.44.142)	Residential use	The Baldwin Hills CSD intends to impose additional regulations on an active oil field which is not suited for residential development.
Elizabeth Lake and Lake Hughes (22.44.143)	Lot size	In all residential and agricultural zones, each new lot or parcel of land created by a land division shall contain a minimum net area of two and one-half (2 1/2) acres.
	Setbacks	Front yard setback: 20 feet Side yard setback: 7 feet on lot with an average width of less than fifty (50) feet; 10 feet on lot with an average width of fifty (50) feet or greater. Rear yard setback: 20 feet

**Appendix C: Summary of Outreach Meetings**

During the preparation of this study, Department of Regional Planning staff met with a number of County departments, committees and other stakeholders to discuss the small lot subdivision concept. These discussions resulted in many comments and identified a number of issues that would need to be considered when developing a small lot subdivision program.

Table 7 provides a summary of the issues and comments that were provided through staff outreach activities.

**Table 7: Issues and Opportunities as Identified Through Stakeholder Outreach Efforts**

Issue	Comments
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offers a great method of providing additional housing.</li> <li>• Could be useful for the CDC Infill Sites Program.</li> <li>• Encouraging additional housing in existing neighborhoods may tax infrastructure systems and increase maintenance costs.</li> <li>• Allowing small lot subdivision projects with a greater density than the surrounding area could cause a neighborhood compatibility problem.</li> </ul>
Fee-Simple Lots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allowing individually owned lots can eliminate the need for and associated costs of having a homeowner’s association (HOA).</li> <li>• Maintenance agreements may be used in-lieu of HOAs in smaller projects to address common areas.</li> <li>• Allowing private streets puts the burden of repair and maintenance on the property owners and HOA rather than being a County responsibility.</li> <li>• Common driveways and other improvements that will be subject to a maintenance agreement should be subject to high standards.</li> <li>• Fee lot projects are generally more marketable than condo projects.</li> <li>• Questions over what will be the smallest lot area allowed; the City of Los Angeles allows 600 square foot lots.</li> <li>• Will fee-simple lots be reserved for just home owners?</li> <li>• The design and location of easements are very important.</li> </ul>
Flexibility (Design Guidelines) vs. Inflexibility (Development Standards)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain as much flexibility as possible because of the County’s geographic diversity.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Architectural features should be flexible, and architectural styles should look at neighborhood compatibility.</li> <li>○ Too much flexibility can lead to too much uncertainty and risk.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Certain aspects of a project, such as setbacks, massing, access width, sewer/utility hookups, parking, trash collection, open space, etc. should be subject to well-established development standards rather than design guidelines, since design guidelines often provide more flexibility on a case-by-case basis.</li> </ul>

Issue	Summary of Outreach Meetings
Street Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is potential for designing public streets in small lot subdivisions with cross-sections that are narrower than the standard. However, any new cross-sections have to consider the capacity of the road, its connection with other roads, street sweeping equipment, and if the road is single (houses on one side) or double (houses on both sides) loaded.</li> <li>• The alternate cross-section may pose some problems if the garage has a direct access to the street and is not set back far enough from the sidewalk, which could lead to cars parked in short driveways and blocking part of the sidewalk.</li> <li>• The alternate cross-section puts the sidewalk at the curb, which can create some aesthetic and ADA concerns.</li> <li>• Utilities should be undergrounded, where possible.</li> </ul>
Driveways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The number of driveways on a parcel affects the amount of available street parking.</li> <li>• An indirect driveway (one that has a 90 degree turn to the garage) allows for more on-site parking than a direct driveway.</li> <li>• Driveway location should be considered during the land division/conditional use permit process.</li> <li>• Driveways are considered “fire lanes” and allow no parking on them.</li> </ul>
Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing appropriate width access (e.g. driveways, fire lanes, streets, etc.) is an important factor for fire safety.</li> <li>• Driveways need to be paved full-width with all-weather access.</li> <li>• A turn-around should be provided for long driveways.</li> <li>• The use of alleys for access to off-street parking should be encouraged.</li> <li>• Traffic impacts from increased development should be considered.</li> <li>• Pedestrian use of access-ways should be considered.</li> <li>• A clear system of establishing street addresses is important for emergency services.</li> </ul>
Flag Lots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flag lot development has raised concerns in the past.</li> <li>• For flag lot developments, there should be a maximum height limit established for fire safety purposes.</li> <li>• The use of flag lots allows service connections (e.g. water and sewers) to be located on the same property as the building.</li> </ul>
Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parking can be a big factor in the cost of a development.</li> <li>• Allow flexible parking standards that take transit availability into account</li> <li>• Private driveway systems can eliminate on-street parking or create an enforcement problem if cars are parked in the fire lanes.</li> <li>• Many garages are not used for automobile storage and can create an on-street parking problem.</li> <li>• Guest parking or off-street parking areas should be considered.</li> </ul>

Issue	Summary of Outreach Meetings
Building Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The distance between buildings and building heights need to be carefully reviewed to prevent overcrowding and to ensure neighborhood compatibility.</li> <li>• Architectural features and design are important for privacy and compatibility considerations.</li> <li>• Compatibility with the neighborhood pattern is important.</li> <li>• Consider manufactured housing and other innovative housing options.</li> <li>• Constructing two-story buildings can provide greater design flexibility and allow more open space area in a project.</li> <li>• Small lot areas, narrow widths and reduced setbacks may cause Building Code concerns relating to the “fire rating” of walls and the types of openings that are allowed.</li> <li>• There must be a specified width of egress from buildings to a public street.</li> <li>• Light and ventilation standards require a certain amount of openings in exterior walls. This may be more of an issue with “zero lot line” developments.</li> <li>• Providing space for and access to trash containers is important.</li> <li>• Multi-generational housing, multiple units and senior citizen residences should be given some consideration.</li> </ul>
Front Yards, Setbacks and Open Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A graded slope has special setbacks from the property line and there is a requirement that any structure has to be set back from the top of the slope, making small lot subdivision projects problematic on sloping terrain.</li> <li>• Front yards should be similar to those common in the neighborhood.</li> <li>• Adequate open areas for landscaping are very important, especially shade trees.</li> <li>• Flexibility in lot lines (e.g., “zero setback”) should be considered to allow for more useable yard areas.</li> <li>• Open space should be: private rather than common; flexible in the type of space used (e.g. balconies, roof-tops); a minimum additional amount beyond required yard areas; and able to be in small areas rather than one contiguous area.</li> </ul>
Drainage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impervious areas should be minimized so that drainage can be handled on-site.</li> <li>• Drainage devices might be required.</li> <li>• Low Impact Development (LID) Standards need to be followed.</li> </ul>
Water Supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development must have adequate water for fire safety requirements.</li> <li>• Fire sprinklers in buildings can be used in certain situations to provide additional fire protection.</li> <li>• Fire flows and fire hydrant spacing should meet fire safety standards.</li> <li>• Some cases, an on-site hydrant must be installed for fire requirements.</li> <li>• The impact of increased water usage needs to be evaluated.</li> </ul>

Issue	Summary of Outreach Meetings
Sewers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing the amount of development through the small lot subdivisions could create sewage capacity issues.</li> <li>• A proposed small lot subdivision may have to conduct a “sewer area study” to determine if there is sufficient capacity in the sewer lines.</li> <li>• There are some areas in the County that are already at capacity.</li> <li>• An “area study” would be required during the land division process to evaluate the adequacy of sewage capacity from the development to the trunk line.</li> </ul>
Procedure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some consideration may be given to creating a “streamlined” or a “one-stop” process for small lot subdivision projects. “Fast-tracking” creates some fairness issues.</li> <li>• A development that has a small lot subdivision component should be processed in the standard fashion.</li> <li>• Requiring a small lot subdivision land division to be processed concurrently with a conditional use permit would provide a good mechanism to ensure neighborhood compatibility through public input and design standards; however, the conditional use permit process also makes the entitlement procedure more complicated and costly. The “Revised Exhibit A” process has time and cost implications.</li> <li>• If a conditional use permit is processed concurrently with a land division, there would be a more involvement by the reviewing agencies, even if the review is more conceptual than one with actual building plans.</li> <li>• The minor conditional use permit may be suitable for the small lot subdivision process.</li> <li>• Any conditional use permit for a small lot subdivision should not expire.</li> <li>• The timing of the construction of buildings relative to the recording of the land division maps should be considered.</li> </ul>

The following groups were consulted on the dates noted below:

Housing Advisory Committee	September 25, 2008
Regional Planning Commission	October 22, 2008 & July 22, 2009
Community Development Commission (CDC)	October 22, 2008 & February 5, 2009
Development Review Committee	November 18, 2008 & May 12, 2009
City of Los Angeles – planning staff	December 2, 2008
Department of Public Works – sewer and water staff	December 11, 2008
Subdivision Committee	January 26, 2009
Developer/Designer Focus Group/CDC	May 26, 2009

**Appendix D: City of Los Angeles Small Lot Subdivision Ordinance Guidelines.**



CITY OF LOS ANGELES  
SMALL LOT DESIGN  
GUIDELINES

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# 1 | INTRODUCTION

THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES has enacted the Small Lot Ordinance (No. 17354) to allow the construction of fee-simple, infill housing on small lots in multi-family zones. The housing can take the form of single-family homes, duplexes, or triplexes. Small lot developments can offer a space-efficient and economically attractive alternative to the traditional condominium development.

Additionally, the ordinance offers a welcomed smart-growth alternative to the suburban single-family home. However, it brings a new set of spatial complexities. Lots may be both small and awkwardly shaped. Driveways and parking can take up much of an already limited lot size. Adjacent structures and neighborhood context may effectively limit building heights above two stories. In short, these spatial constraints and complexities require innovative design solutions.

This handbook provides design guidelines and suggestions both for addressing these complexities, and for ensuring that each small lot development benefits both its residents and the neighborhood.

## LOOKING AT SMALL LOT DESIGN FROM THREE LEVELS

Constructing infill housing offers a unique set of design challenges not simply on the parcel level, but also on the neighborhood level and within the public realm. Developers and architects must therefore consider both the design elements of each townhouse and how these designs will enhance the overall neighborhood character and vitality of the street and sidewalk.

### PARCEL

Small lot design and layout is fundamentally a site planning challenge. It requires simultaneously addressing practical spatial requirements while creating high-quality living environments. Those practical requirements include: parking and automobile access; small lot sizes and awkward configurations; adequate access to air, light, and ventilation; outdoor space and privacy. Developers must address these issues in ways that ultimately enhance the living environment of each dwelling unit. Additionally, each home must exhibit a high level of design quality: well-articulated entries and facades, proportionate windows, quality building materials, contextual landscaping.



**NEIGHBORHOOD**

By its very nature, infill development occurs in neighborhoods with preexisting development and preexisting characteristics. In some cases, the neighborhood will be predominantly residential; in others, the neighborhood might be predominantly commercial. Whatever the case, the design should enhance the overall quality of the neighborhood. At this scale, developers and architects must consider not simply the aesthetic nature of each townhouse, but the three-dimensional nature of the entire development: height, massing, siting and orientation. These characteristics must relate to the surrounding built form, respecting the overall neighborhood character and existing topography.

**PUBLIC REALM**

Each infill project, however small, must add to a vital and coherent public realm—streets and sidewalks that are pleasant, interesting, and comfortable to walk down. To do so, one must consider the three-dimensional relationship between the infill project and the street and sidewalk. Key variables to consider are: building siting and orientation, height and massing; articulation of facades and entryways; placement and type of street trees; landscaping and transitional spaces; and location of driveways and garages.

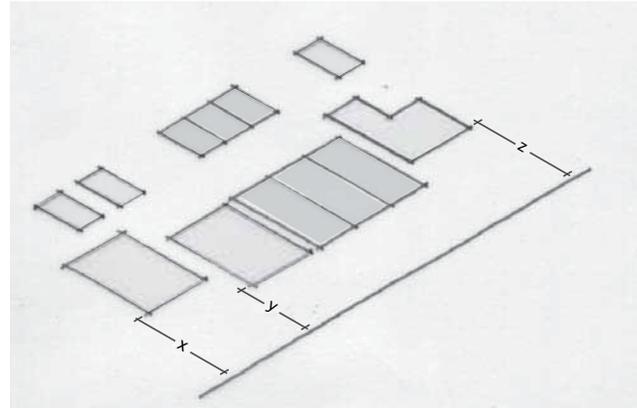
**COMPREHENSIVE GOALS:**

- Create high-quality indoor and outdoor living environments for all residents
- Design and configure housing to mesh well within the existing neighborhood context
- Enhance the public realm
- Provide fee-simple home ownership opportunities for greater numbers of people, of a range of income levels
- Consolidate service and access areas (parking, driveways, garbage) to minimize their adverse effects on both the public and private realms
- Create high-quality public spaces or common areas (i.e. shared driveways, landscaped areas)

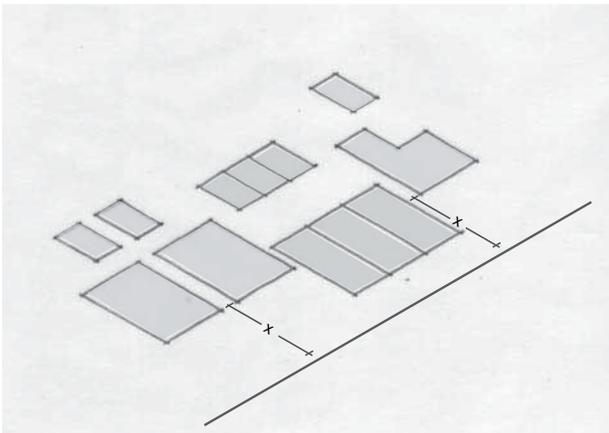
## 2 | SITE ORGANIZATION AND URBAN FORM

### 2.1 SETBACKS AND SIDEYARDS

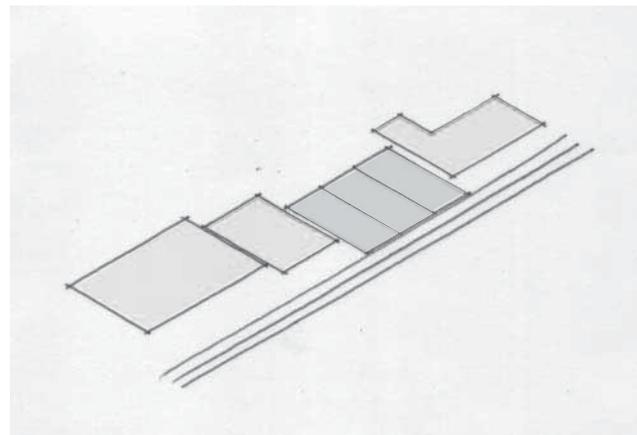
No setbacks are required; however, neighborhood context should provide direction for setting buildings further back from the street. On commercial streets, which have a more urban character, minimal setbacks are appropriate - simply enough room for a small front stoop, and some landscaping to delineate the public and private realms (however, dwellings with ground-floor retail require no setbacks). On residential streets, preexisting setbacks will guide how far a small lot development is set back.



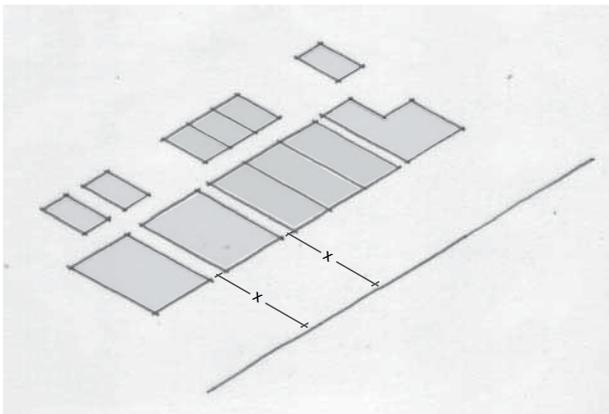
On residential streets with a range of setbacks, align small lot dwellings with the furthest protruding building.



In residential neighborhoods, AVOID configurations that ignore existing setbacks.



On commercial streets with a range of setbacks, small lot developments should nearly abut the sidewalk, allowing some room for an entry, front stoop, and some transitional landscaping. However, dwellings with ground-floor retail do not require such elements.



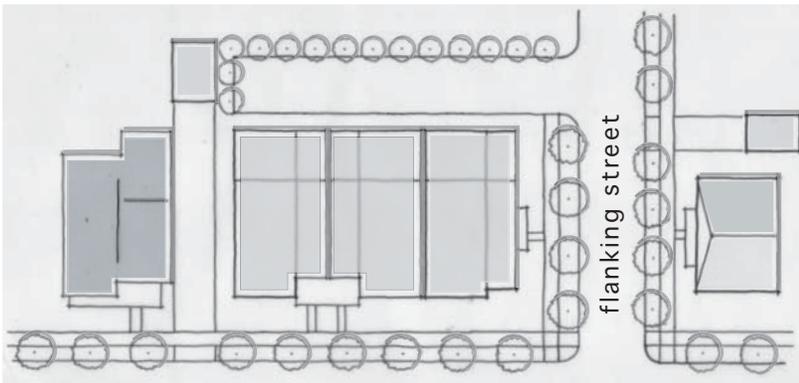
Where a uniform neighborhood setback exists, align the small lot development with this setback. Slight deviations from the setback are acceptable.

#### SETBACK GUIDELINES

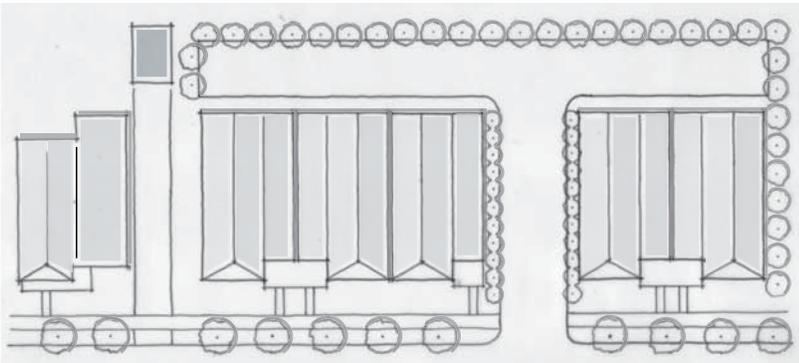
- For both commercial and residential streets, provide space for an entry, front landing, and transitional landscaping between the public sidewalk and the private entryway.
- Match existing setbacks to the extent possible.
- On streets with varying setbacks, align small lot dwellings with the furthest protruding dwelling.

## 2.2 SITE LAYOUT AND DESIGN

Numerous spatial constraints – parking and driveways, adequate indoor and outdoor living space, and small lot size – require spatially innovative solutions. Builders and designers should ask such questions as: Can I provide outdoor space not only at ground level, but also on balconies and rooftops? Is there an alternate configuration that might take advantage of existing topography to provide more open space? How might adjacent structures and street characteristics affect the development’s overall form and orientation? Builders and designers should explore as many spatial avenues as possible, ultimately striking a balance between practical spatial requirements (i.e. parking, adequate interior space) and the provision of amenities (i.e. private outdoor space).

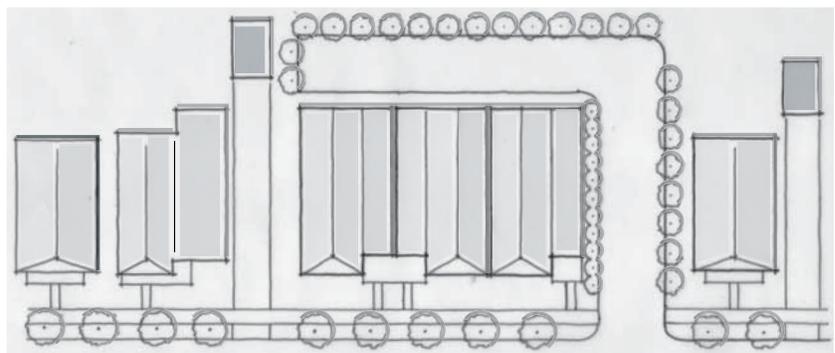


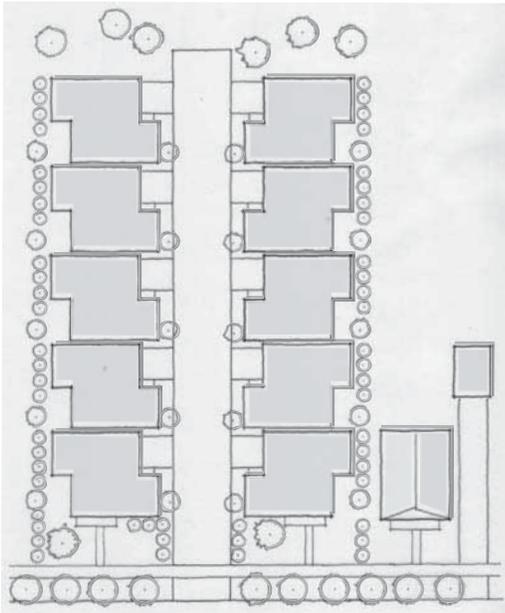
Rear driveway off flanking street



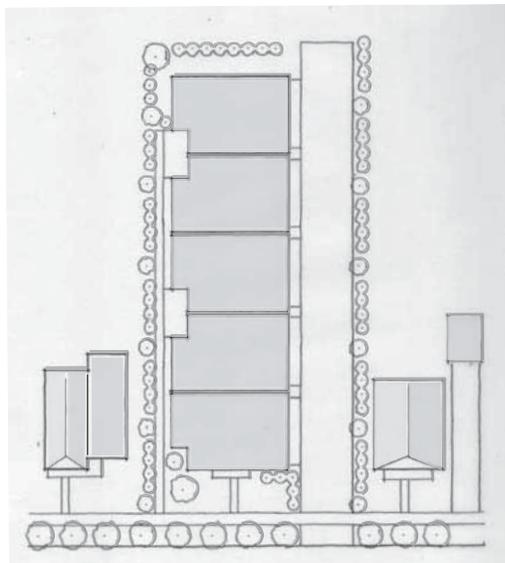
T-driveway off front street

L-driveway off front street



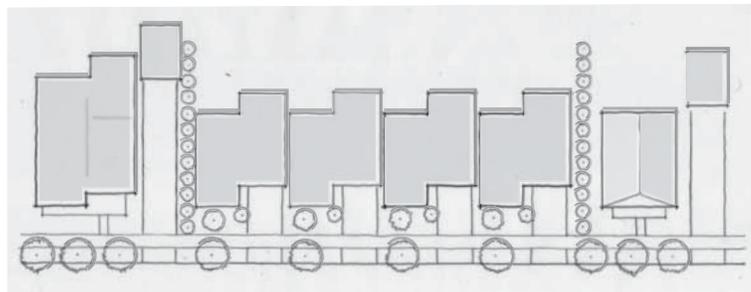


Townhouses with a center access driveway can enhance the public realm when front townhouses are accessible from the sidewalk.

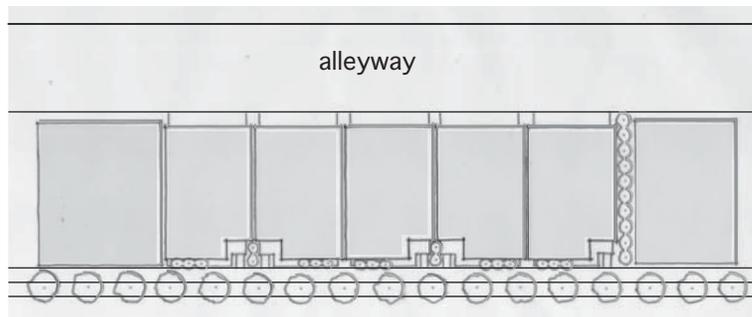


Small lot developments with a side access driveway should configure front townhouses to be accessible from the sidewalk. Interior townhouses should be accessed from both the driveway and a private walkway at the front of the homes.

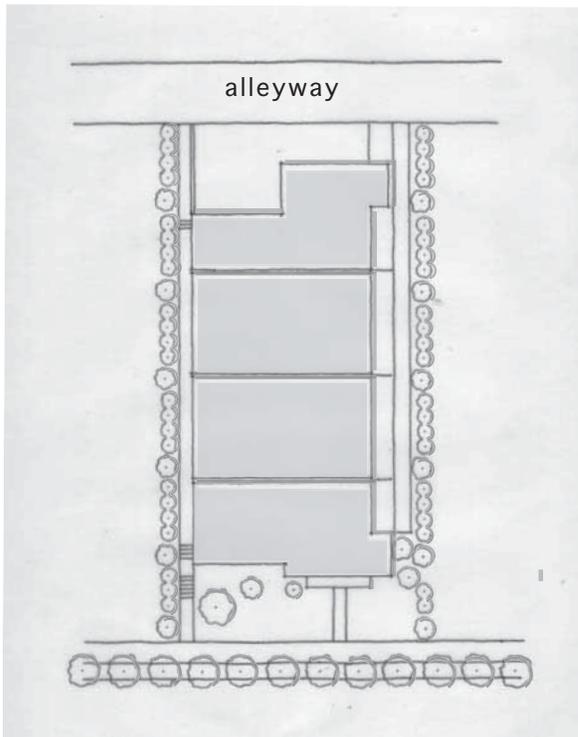
Configurations should also engage the street, sidewalk and public realm. Streets serve not only as space for vehicular movement, but also as public space for pedestrian activity and casual social interaction. When designed well, small lot developments can enhance the pre-existing character of a good street, or improve a fragmented one. To do so, infill housing should embrace rather than ignore the street.



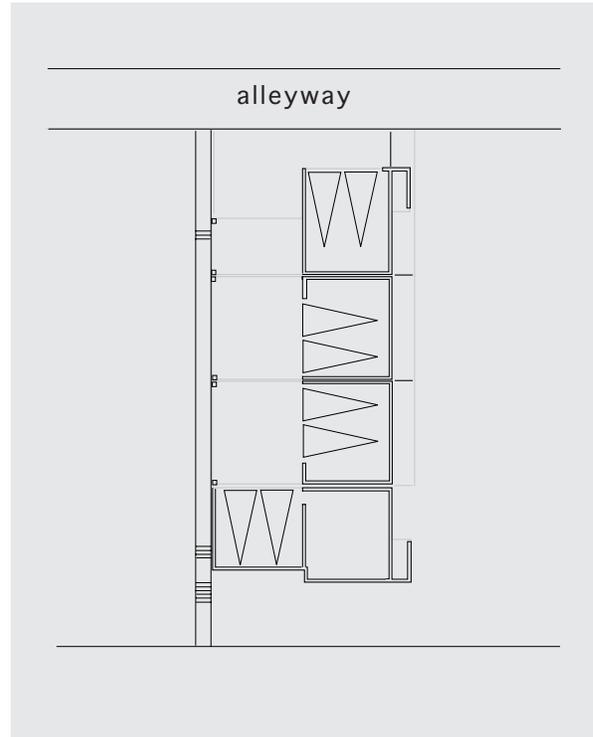
Rowhouses with integral front garages can adequately engage the street if garages are not allowed to dominate the facade. Tandem parking can minimize how much facade space is allocated to parking. One might also consider stacked parking with the aid of lifts.



Rowhouses on commercial streets with rear alleyway access can eliminate integral front driveways and minimize setbacks to enhance the urban nature of the street.

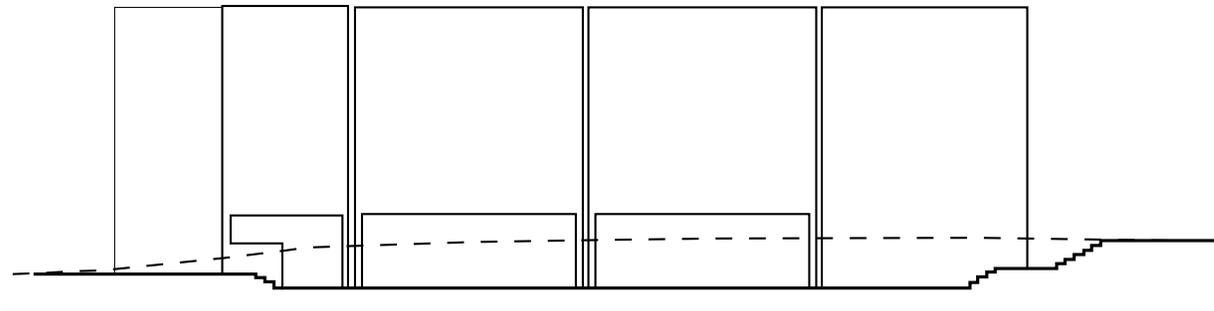


Plan view



Parking-level floor plan

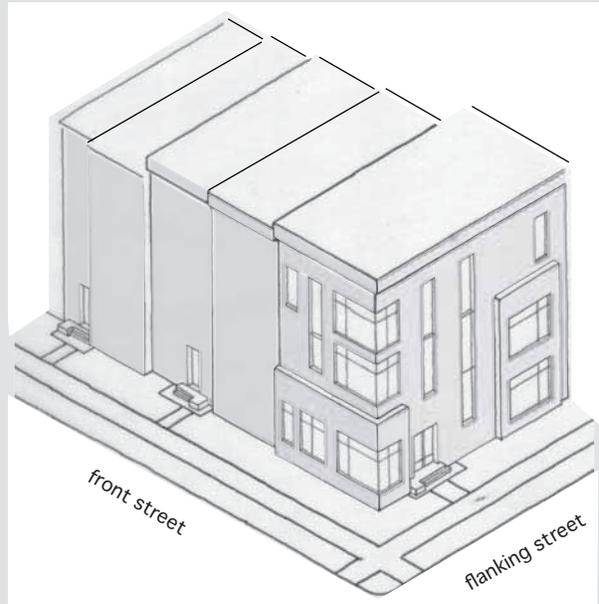
It is possible to locate parking beneath dwellings. In this particular layout, residents access parking from the alleyway and use a community driveway to reach their own parking stall. Notice in the above righthand illustration how the dwellings are still structurally independent.



As shown in this side elevation, the parking is not technically subterranean. The site is excavated so that the buildings sit below the average natural grade (indicated with a dashed line) and can be accessed from the side staircase and walkway as well as from the community driveway.

**SITE LAYOUT GUIDELINES:**

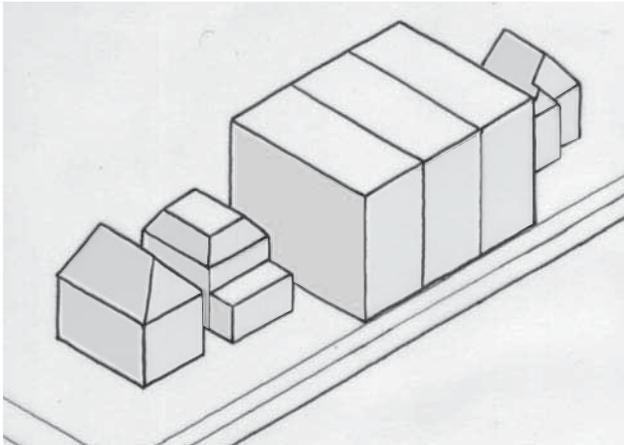
- To the extent possible, configure townhouses to front streets and open spaces, not driveways.
- For townhouses not immediately adjacent to the street, provide a private walkway from the sidewalk to them.
- Minimize the total amount of driveway space and maximize green space.
- Where possible, utilize alleyways for access.
- Take advantage of existing topography and natural features (i.e. existing trees).
- Small lot developments that occupy a corner lot must have the corner townhouse entrance front the flanking street.



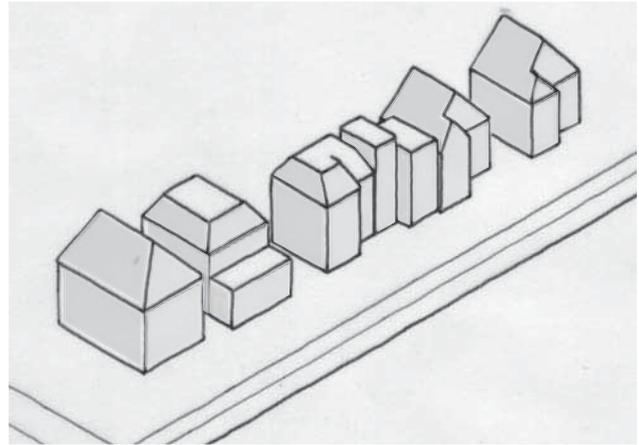
Small lot developments that occupy a corner must have the corner townhouse entrance and main facade front the flanking street.

### 2.3 HEIGHT AND MASSING

Massing refers to how a building's volume is broken up and articulated. A building envelope is the maximum built volume allowed under the code. Well-designed buildings tend not to max out the building envelope but rather employ volumetric variations (i.e. height, massing, rhythm, texture) to create visual interest. These variations serve dual functions: they help small lot developments mesh with their surroundings, and they enhance the overall quality of the street and public realm by providing visual interest for pedestrians.



Small-lot developments that max out the building envelope rarely blend well into existing single-family neighborhoods.



Variations in height and massing, borrowing various forms from adjacent structures, can help small-lot developments blend better into the neighborhood.

#### HEIGHT AND MASSING GUIDELINES

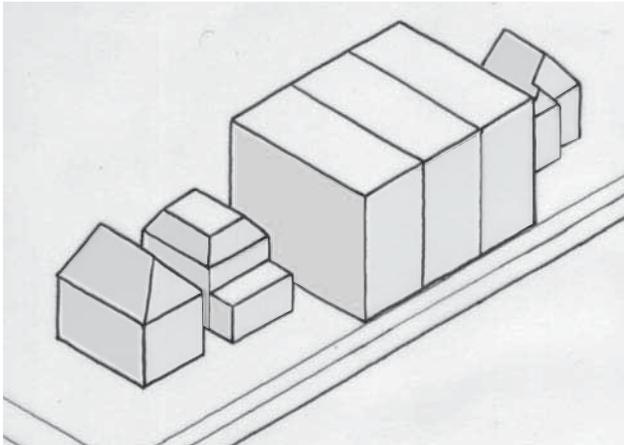
- Use surrounding built context to inform variations in height and massing.
- Avoid excessive differences in height between the new development and adjacent buildings.
- On streets with a more urban character, ensure adequate massing and facade variation at street level.



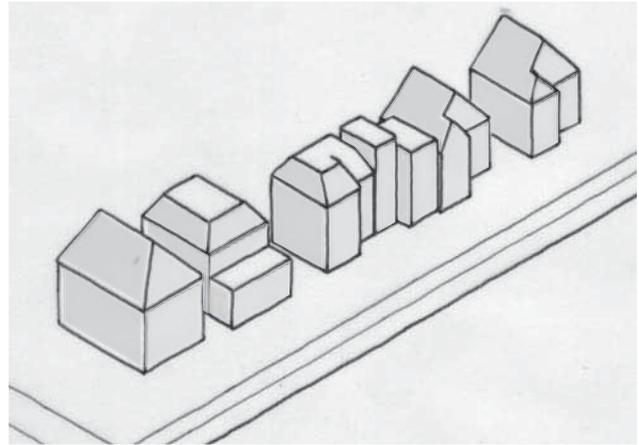
On streets with a more urban character, small-lot developments should still employ variations in massing (particularly at street level) to enhance the pedestrian realm.

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#### HEIGHT AND MASSING GUIDELINES

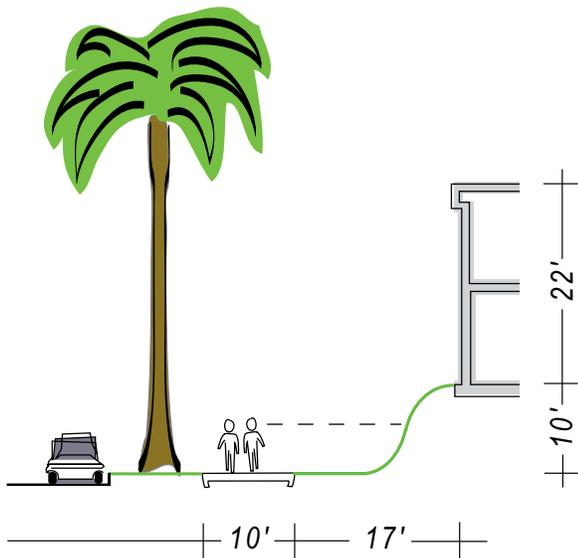
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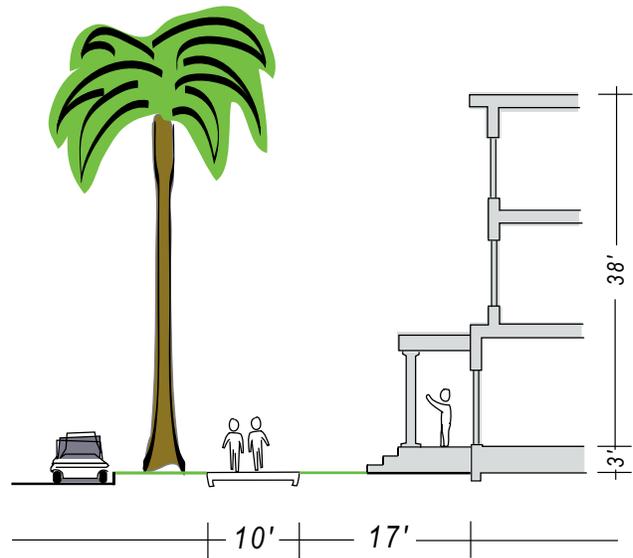
On streets with a more urban character, small-lot developments should still employ variations in massing (particularly at street level) to enhance the pedestrian realm.

## 2.4 GRADE LEVEL

A common concern of infill townhouses is their excessive height in relation to surrounding structures. Appropriate grade levels consistent with those of surrounding structures can help to offset the potentially negative effects of increased building height. Designers and builders should avoid designs with excessive artificial grading. Resulting buildings ultimately appear taller than what they may be, and their facades tend to tower above the sidewalk, creating an unsightly and inhospitable environment for pedestrians and neighbors. On the other hand, subtle changes in grade can create a key transitional zone between the public and private realms, as well as additional privacy for townhouse inhabitants.



Small lot developments with excessive grading tend to tower above the neighborhood as well as the sidewalk. The healthy interaction between the public and private realms is compromised.



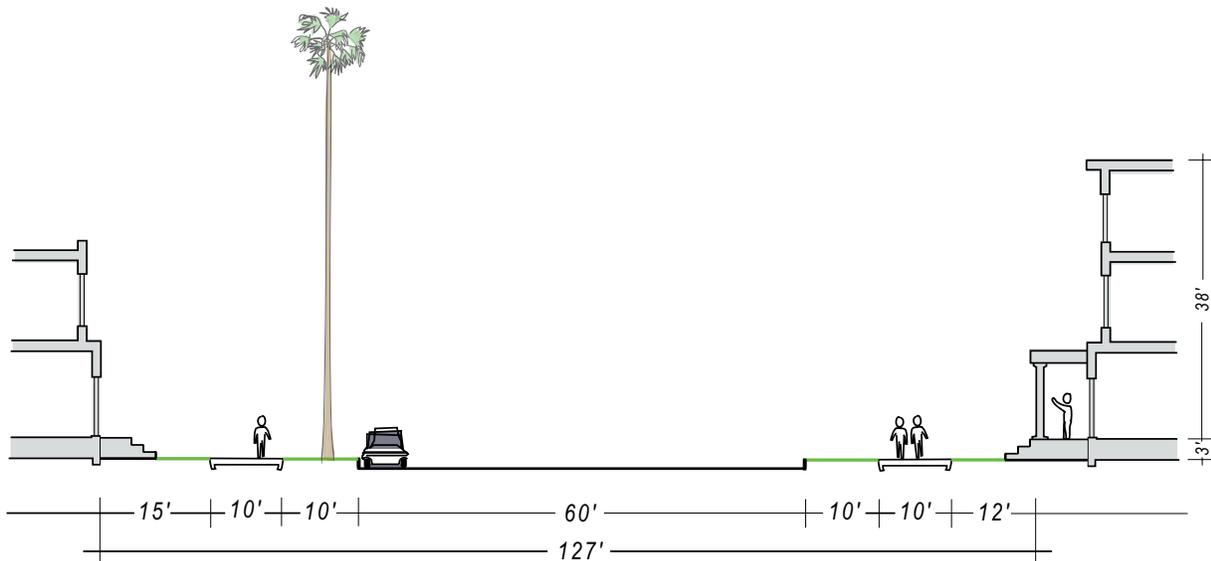
Subtle grade changes (here, three feet) clearly delineate the public and private realms while still maintaining a comfortable relationship between these realms and their users.

### GRADE LEVEL GUIDELINES

- Entrances should be three to five steps above grade or consistent with the average grade of existing structures.
- Use “theoretical grade” as opposed to “average natural grade” when siting the development. “Theoretical grade” is defined by “an imaginary line from the midpoint of the parcel on the front property line to the midpoint of the parcel on the rear property line.”
- Townhouses whose entrances front commercial boulevards should sit three to five steps above sidewalk level to allow room for a stoop and entryway and ideally some landscaped area. However, live-work or ground-floor commercial arrangements whose work spaces front the boulevard do not require a grade separation.

### 2.5 BUILDING-TO-STREET PROPORTION

Building-to-street proportion refers to the relationship between the height of buildings on each side of the street, to the width between those buildings. Ideal proportions create a public realm that is pleasant for both the street’s residents and passers-by. In essence, this means thinking of the street and sidewalk as a potential “outdoor room.” These are the kinds of outdoor spaces humans tend to most enjoy being in and walking through. Through setbacks, appropriate heights, and landscaping, small lot developments can help contribute to the creation of these outdoor rooms.



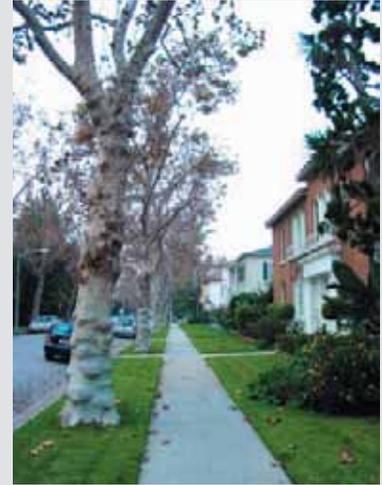
With a height of 41 feet, the small lot development creates a height-width ratio of approximately 1:3. While this ratio is sufficient for creating the semblance of an outdoor room, the street could benefit from landscape interventions within the public and private realms adjacent to the small lot development.



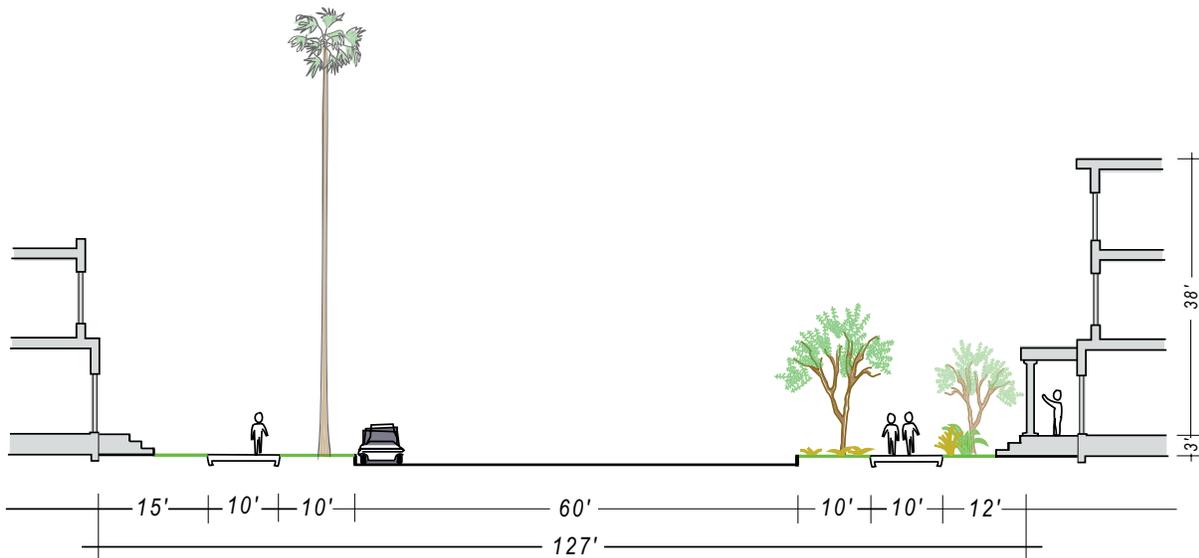
Many Los Angeles streets have skewed height-width ratios: low-rise buildings about narrow sidewalks and extremely wide streets. Shown at left: Hollywood Boulevard near the 101 Freeway, looking west.

While there is no magic number, the “walls,” or building heights, should extend upwards at least one-quarter the width of the “floor,” or the width between buildings on opposite sides of the street. Widths exceeding four times the height of buildings tend to eliminate any sense of enclosure for the pedestrian.

In some cases, neighborhood context may preclude increased building heights. In this case, one can add street trees within the public right-of-way, and trees and landscaping within the front yard area, to add further definition to the public realm. The effect is to create clearly defined, shady spaces



The simple addition of shade trees along the parkway (here, above right, Sycamores) can greatly enhance the sense of enclosure and comfort for pedestrians and residents.



Landscaping within the public, transitional, and private realms heightens the semblance of an outdoor room. Use canopy-creating shade trees in the public and private realms. Groundcovers and low-growing plants (not higher than 4') can further enhance the understory of the public and transitional realms without creating wall-like barriers.

**BUILDING-TO-STREET PROPORTION GUIDELINES**

- Attempt to achieve a building + grade height of at least 1/4 the width of the space between buildings on opposite sides of the street.
- Define the public right of way through the planting of shade trees (see landscaping section for suggested species) and low-growing vegetation.
- Plant shade trees and ornamental plants within the private realm, to add increased definition and visual interest to both the public and private realms. However, avoid landscape schemes that call for 4'+ shrubs or other plants immediately adjacent to the sidewalk.



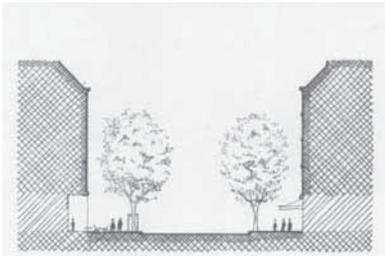
Normandie Boulevard, Koreatown  
 Street width: 50'  
 Width, building face to building face: 78'  
 Building heights: 65-80'  
 Height-width ratio: 1:1



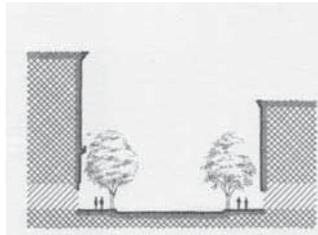
Dunsmuir Avenue, Miracle Mile  
 Street width: 40'  
 Width, building face to building face: 86'  
 Building heights: 24'  
 Ratio: 1:3



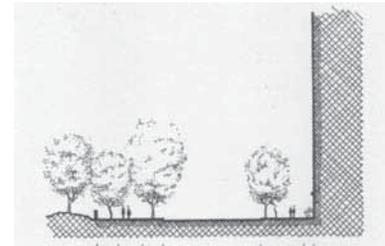
Larchmont Boulevard, Larchmont Village  
 Street width: 70'  
 Width, building face to building face: 101'  
 Building heights: 13-26'  
 Ratio: 1:4



Boulevard Saint-Michel, Paris  
 Street width: 50'  
 Width, building face to building face: 98'  
 Building heights: 80'  
 Height-width ratio: 1:1.2



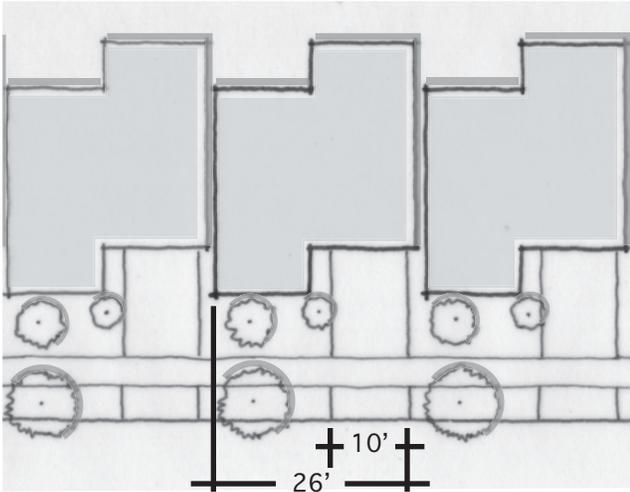
Via Cola di Rienzo, Rome  
 Street width: 50'  
 Width, building face to building face: 82'  
 Building heights: 50-70'  
 Ratio: 1:1.4



Fifth Avenue, New York  
 Street width: 45'  
 Width, building face to park edge: 100'  
 Building heights: 60-300+  
 Ratio: 1:2 to 3:1+

Street drawings and dimensions taken from Jacobs, Allan B. *Great Streets*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993.

## 3 | PARKING AND DRIVEWAYS



If an integral front driveway configuration is the only option for a small lot development, ensure that the building width allows for landscaping and a front entryway.



Avoid designs in which the garage dominates the dwelling's facade.

### PARKING AND DRIVEWAYS

The design of small-lot developments must strike a particular spatial balance: simultaneously accommodate for the automobile but maintain high-quality public and private living environments. Often, small-lot configurations allow parking, driveways, and garages to dominate the landscape. These kinds of configurations both create conflicts for pedestrians and decrease the overall aesthetic quality of the development. Frequent curb cuts and driveways jeopardize pedestrian safety and eliminate space for street trees and on-street parking. Parking improperly placed at the front of townhouses can transform their facades into large, unsightly garages. Ideally, designs should locate parking behind dwellings, accessed from alleys where present. If driveways are necessary, designs should minimize their number.

#### 3.1 NUMBER OF SPACES

The small lot ordinance requires the provision of two parking spaces per unit. Tandem parking is perfectly acceptable, space permitting. One space can be for a compact car.

For small lot developments under 10 units, guest parking is not required. For developments between 10 and 100 units, .25 spaces should be provided per unit. For developments larger than this, .5 spaces should be provided per unit.

#### 3.2 DIMENSIONS

The small lot ordinance stipulates the following dimensions for parking spaces:

8'8" x 18' for standard-size cars;

7'6" x 15' for compact cars.

Driveway width depends on lot depth and building configuration. Integral front driveways should be 10'. In these configurations, the building width should adequately allow for integral front parking plus some yard and porch or landing space. Access driveways will vary in width depending on lot size, depth, and building height. Please consult the Fire Department.

### 3.3 DESIRABLE CONFIGURATIONS

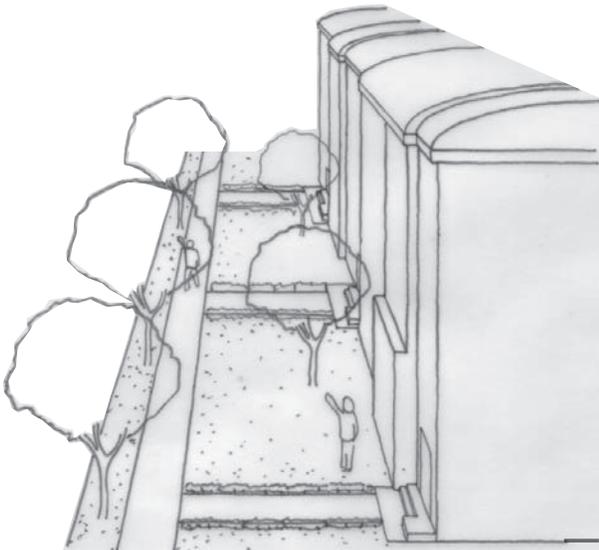
See section 2.2 for configurations.

### 3.4 DRIVEWAY MATERIALS

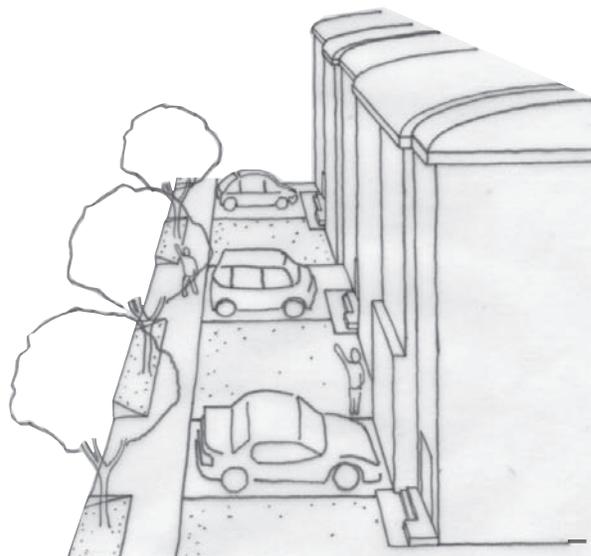
Currently semi-pervious driveway materials are not allowed under the code. However, one can use stamped concrete to create a more aesthetically pleasing alternative to the black asphalt driveway.

#### PARKING GUIDELINES

- Favor townhouse configurations that locate parking to the rear of dwellings
- Where available, use alleyways as access to off-street parking
- If integral front driveways must be used, the building width should allow for the driveway plus an ample amount of landscaping space and a front entryway, porch, or landing.



When driveways are located to the rear of dwellings, the streetscape can become a comfortable outdoor space for residents and passers-by.



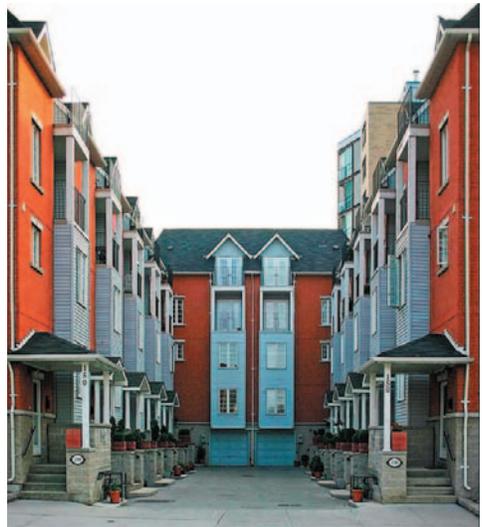
Integral front driveway configurations tend to disrupt the continuity of the sidewalk and public realm, and eliminate space for street trees and on-street parking.

## 4.1 FENESTRATION

Effectively placed and articulated windows serve several practical and aesthetic functions: access to light and air; a transparent bridge between the public and private realms; rhythm and visual interest. Because Los Angeles architecture runs the gamut of styles, it is difficult to suggest one particular window style for townhouse developments. However, some general rules of thumb exist for ensuring that window placement and design enhance the overall quality of the project.

### FENESTRATION GUIDELINES

- Placement should follow some consistent rhythm, to create visual clarity as well as to help avoid the creation of blank walls.
- Windows need not all be horizontally or vertically proportioned but rather their placement and orientation should take cues from the building's overall style and configuration.



Regardless of architectural style, window placement should follow some consistent rhythm. Note that rhythm is not necessarily synonymous with symmetry.





#### 4.2 ARTICULATION OF ENTRYWAYS

Entryways serve as the gateway between the public and private realms. When designed well, and clearly defined, they simultaneously welcome visitors and clearly delineate the boundaries of the private realm. They may also offer habitable outdoor space in the form of a small front porch or patio.

##### ENTRYWAY GUIDELINES

- Entryways should be clearly identifiable. This can be achieved through stepping up the entryway, adding awnings, creating a landing area or front porch, and the addition of design details.
- Those townhouses fronting a street should always have their primary entryway accessible from the street.
- In the case of corner townhouses, the entryway should open onto the flanking street.
- Entryways should sit at a grade comparable to those of the surrounding structures but should never tower above the street.
- Garages should not take the place of the main entryway.



#### 4.3 BUILDING MATERIALS

Because Los Angeles architecture varies in style – oftentimes within neighborhoods – these guidelines do not prescribe particular building materials. However, neighborhood context and the surrounding structures should inform one’s choice of materials. Generally, one should choose durable, high-quality materials, considering how the materials will effect the overall look and feel of the small lot development

#### 4.4 ROOF LINES

Roof lines should offer some variation in form, both vertically and horizontally. However, less is often more. While townhouses should exhibit some individuality, excessively varied and multi-pitched and gabled roofs tend to create a visual chaos that is undesirable and unnecessary. The key is to consider the effect the building’s design elements (i.e. height and massing, entryways, balconies, roof lines) will have on the overall look and form of the dwelling.



Excessively varied and multi-pitched and gabled roofs risk creating a visual chaos.



Roof lines can create subtle variations in form while still allowing room for individuality.

### LANDSCAPING AND SMALL LOTS

Two types of landscape areas exist when designing small lots: those adjacent to the public right of way, and those located within the site. Each fulfills a dual but somewhat separate role. Those adjacent to the public right of way are not simply assets to their owners, but also to the neighborhood, the public realm, and to passers-by. These landscapes help to create a sort of outdoor living room. Those landscapes located within the site are assets not simply to the residents of the small-lot development, but also to the individual owners of that landscape. They provide much-needed private outdoor space and some territory to treat as their own.

#### 5.1 LANDSCAPING ADJACENT TO THE PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY

Front yard space serves a dual function, and thus deserves particular attention. It acts as both habitable outdoor space for its owners, and as a proverbial shared living room of the neighborhood. That is, while strangers may not walk into the space, the yard is still a visual amenity to the neighborhood and passers-by. Additionally, it serves as a semi-transparent bridge between the private interior of the townhouse, and the public realm of the sidewalk and street.

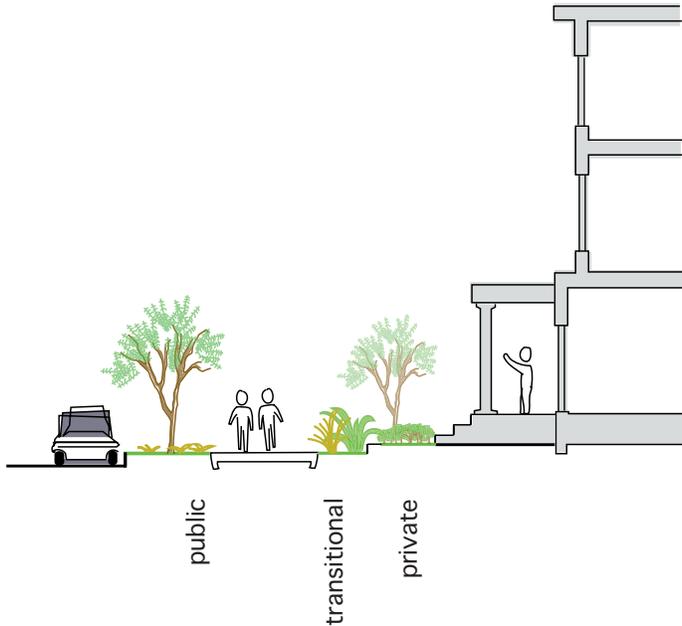
Typical but inappropriate landscaping comes in the form of turf grass along the parkway and no street trees; 7'-tall shrubs or fencing in the transitional zone, or just turf grass; and turf grass in the private realm, with a few shrubs abutting the building. The effect is a bland environment that offers little visual interest, but that requires much water to maintain. This kind of landscaping views the space as an afterthought.



Transitional planting of Senecio (ground cover), Silver Jade (foreground), Fox Tail Agave (center), Toothless Sotol (upper), and olive trees.



This landscape of turf grass and few trees is visually bland, requires extensive irrigation, and fails to enhance or define both the public and private outdoor realms.



Subtle variations in grade and drought-tolerant plant materials gracefully define transitions between the public and private realms.

A better approach is to view the landscape as three interlocking but separate zones: the public realm (the street, parkway, and sidewalk); the transitional zone near the lot line; and the private realm beyond the lot line. When landscaping for these zones, a general rule of thumb is to strike a balance between privacy and transparency, visual interest and order. One can delineate the three zones through subtle but defined grade separations, which step up to the private realm of the home. Within each zone one can plant a different set of plant materials, to add further definition. The addition of shade trees, both within the public and private realms, can complete the outdoor room.

This approach accomplishes several goals:

- Clearly delineates zones without creating walls
- Maintains visual interest through variations in plant materials, grades, and limited hardscape
- Minimizes water consumption and maximizes contributions to local flora and fauna
- Enhances the living environment of both the public and private realms

#### LANDSCAPING AND PUBLIC RIGHT-OF-WAY GUIDELINES

- Use a range of low-water and drought-tolerant plant materials to provide visual interest.
- Employ subtle variations in grade to delineate transitions. Avoid the use of tall fencing (over 4') and shrubbery immediately adjacent to the sidewalk.
- Avoid water-thirsty turf grass. Use low-water and drought-tolerant ground covers instead (see suggested species list).
- Plant shade trees within the public realm, ideally spaced between 15' and 20' apart.

## 5.2 LANDSCAPING WITHIN THE SITE

Whenever possible, small lot designs should designate some fully private outdoor space for each dwelling. This can take the form of small interior yards, balconies, and roof decks. For these spaces, the emphasis should be placed on flexibility, rather than a sense of completion. For yard space, plant materials need not be too varied, so that residents may easily modify them to make them their own. For balconies and roof decks, size should be generous enough to create usable spaces.

## 5.3 PLANT MATERIALS

Ultimately the landscape should in some way enhance the natural environment of the neighborhood. Additionally it should be relatively low-maintenance. Drought-tolerant and native species satisfy both of these criteria. Requiring little maintenance once established, these kinds of plants can create visually appealing and ecologically sound landscapes. The following website offers suggested species, as well as sample landscapes to show possible groupings of plants: [www.bewaterwise.com/Gardensoft/garden\\_gallery.aspx](http://www.bewaterwise.com/Gardensoft/garden_gallery.aspx).

### PLANTING GUIDELINES

- Apply mulch in between and around plants, both to conserve moisture and to eliminate bare earth, which can look unsightly and give the landscape a barren feel.
- Use low-water ground covers instead of high-water turf grass. However, avoid invasive ground covers such as English Ivy and Ice Plant. See above website for suggested species.
- Plant in groupings according to water needs.
- Maximize soft landscaping
- Incorporate existing natural features and topography



Groundcovers of Shrimp Pink Aloe and Senecio enhance and define the public realm without creating walls or barriers.



A boulevard planting of Deer Grass, Fescue, and low-water shade trees.



Narrow sideyards can pose problems of privacy and often fail to provide adequate access to air, light, and ventilation.

### 6.1 PRIVACY

With small lot developments come issues of privacy – not only for residents of the new townhouses, but also for those of neighboring properties. Improperly designed developments create situations in which balconies overlook neighboring yards or face other balconies, and windows face directly onto neighboring windows. Small lot designs should maximize access to private outdoor space, light, and views, while ensuring an adequate level of privacy of all residents. This will require particular attention to the orientation and spatial form of the development, distances between walls, and the location of windows and balconies.

#### PRIVACY GUIDELINES

- Windows and balconies should not face or overlook each other.
- When possible, minimize the number of windows overlooking into neighboring interior private yards. Otherwise use translucent glass and/or screen the windows with landscaping.

### 6.2 AIR, LIGHT, AND VENTILATION

The small lot ordinance minimizes the size of side, rear, and front yards in order to make townhouse construction feasible. While allowing for increased density, the reductions make providing access to air, light, and ventilation more complicated. Thus, architects and builders must take full advantage of three-dimensional space to create environments that are livable. Key criteria for natural light and ventilation are that the building's orientation and configuration, and the placement of windows allow for:

- daylight to reach all living space for part of the day, to the extent possible;
- adequate cross ventilation from cross breezes when windows are open.

Certain configurations lend themselves better than others to meeting these criteria. In general, one should avoid configurations that rely on narrow sideyards (less than 6 feet from building

face to building face) for access to air and light. Look to provide courts, niches, alcoves and other spaces to allow for access to air, light, and ventilation.

### 6.3 SERVICES

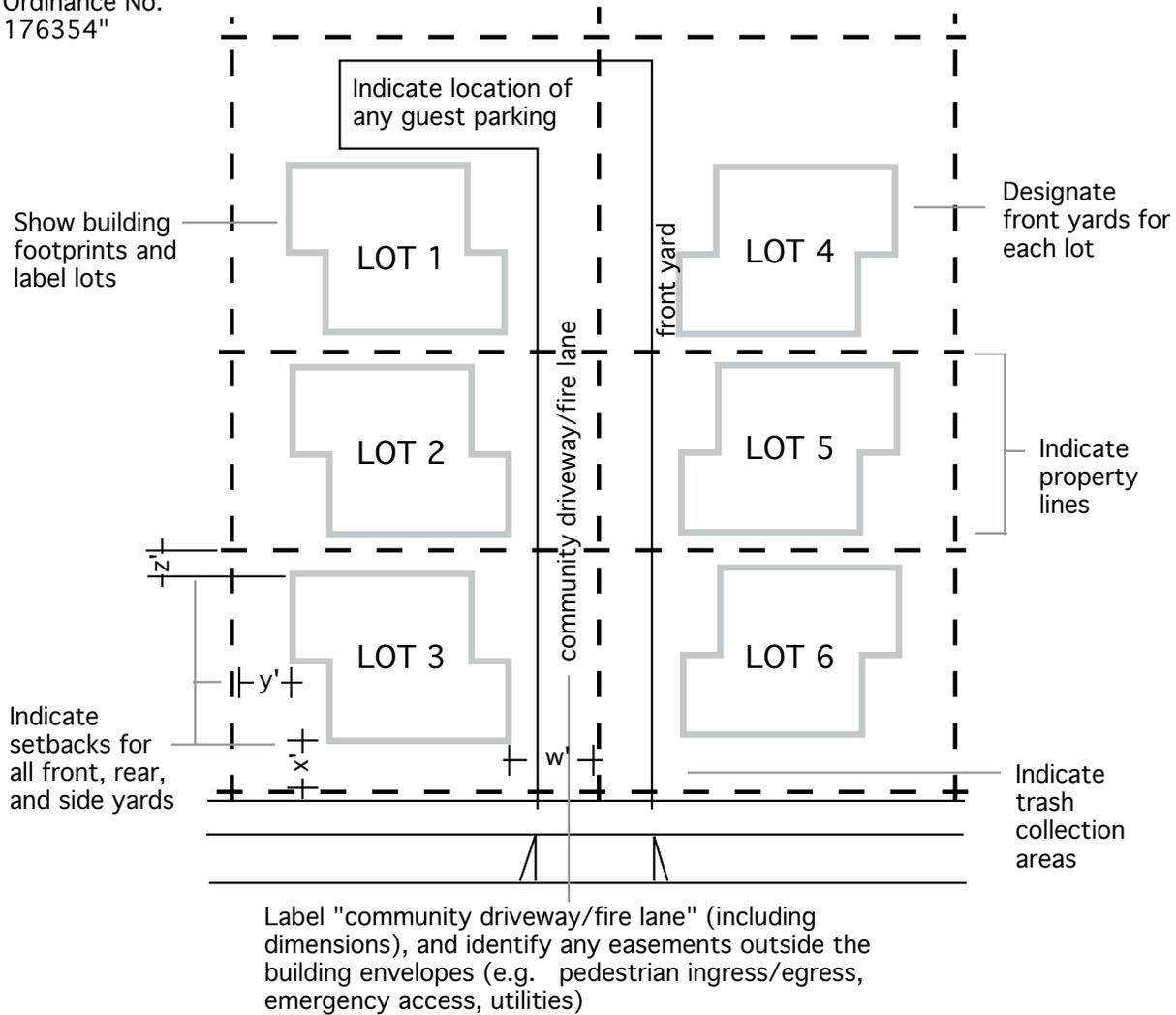
With small lot developments come a concentration of service and utility facilities – garbage storage, vents, meters and transformers. To minimize impact on adjacent dwellings and the surrounding neighborhood, small lot designs should attempt to locate these facilities in areas that are unobtrusive, and in ways that integrate them into the surroundings. Ideally, locations for service should be consolidated.

#### SERVICE GUIDELINES

- Whenever possible, consolidate servicing areas (i.e. trash) where they are easily accessible but do not adversely impact adjacent residences
- Screen trash pickup areas with landscaping so that they blend into the surroundings as much as possible
- Locate transformers, utility meters and HVAC equipment to the rear of dwellings whenever possible. If this is not possible, ensure that they are not visible from the public right of way.

VESTING TENTATIVE  
TRACT MAP for SMALL LOT  
SUBDIVISION PURPOSES<sup>1</sup>

Include in Notes  
Section:  
"Note: Small  
Lot Single Family  
Subdivision in  
the \_\_\_ Zone,  
pursuant to  
Ordinance No.  
176354"



1. All other information required by Sec. 17.00 for filing is also required but is not shown in this example.