



Small Lot Subdivision Information Packet

About This Packet

This packet contains three useful documents from the City of Los Angeles pertaining to the Small Lot Subdivision Ordinance. Modative has combined these three separate documents into one package for your convenient use.

About Modative

[Modative](#) is an architectural firm located in Los Angeles that specializes in Small Lot Subdivision Projects. If you have an interest in small lot and are looking for or have a property in mind, please feel free to [contact modative](#) for a free consultation.

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Pages	Document	Description
pages 1-23	Small Lot Design Guidelines	An informative document about the purpose, goals, and guidelines for small lot
pages 25-29	Division of Land Memo	A memo outlining some of the city requirements for small lot projects
pages 30-35	Ordinance No.176354	The actual small lot ordinance

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.

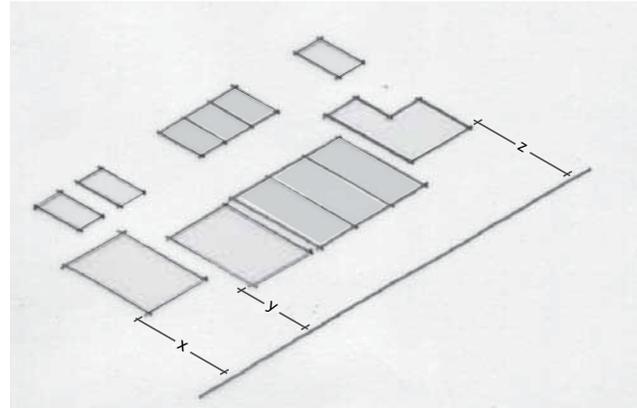
COMPREHENSIVE GOALS:

- 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)

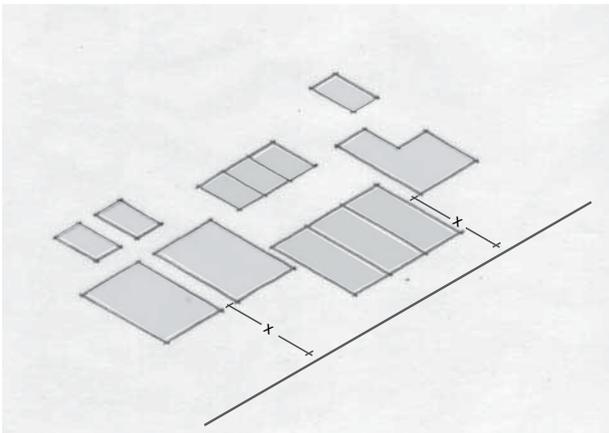
2 | SITE ORGANIZATION AND URBAN FORM

2.1 SETBACKS AND SIDEYARDS

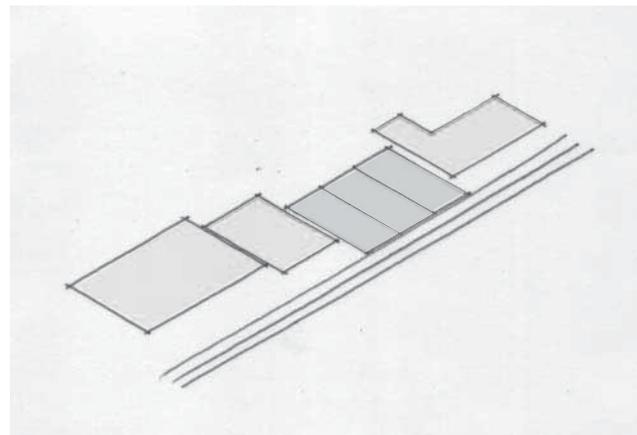
No setbacks are required; however, neighborhood context should provide direction for setting buildings further back from the street. On commercial streets, which have a more urban character, minimal setbacks are appropriate - simply enough room for a small front stoop, and some landscaping to delineate 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.



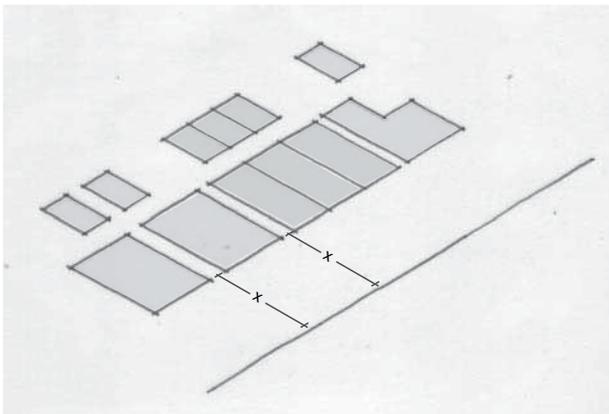
On residential streets with a range of setbacks, align small lot dwellings with the furthest protruding building.



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.



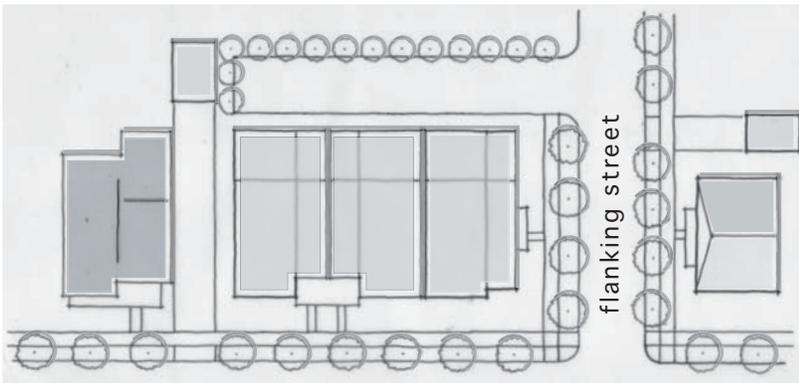
Where a uniform neighborhood setback exists, align the small lot development with this setback. Slight deviations from the setback are acceptable.

SETBACK GUIDELINES

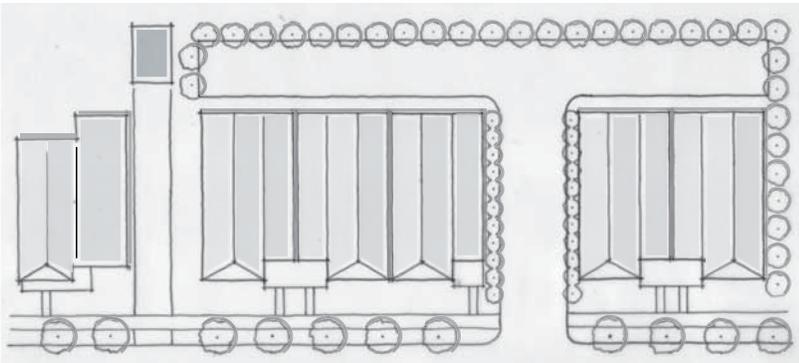
- For both commercial and residential streets, provide space for an entry, front landing, and transitional landscaping between the public sidewalk and the private entryway.
- Match existing setbacks to the extent possible.
- On streets with varying setbacks, align small lot dwellings with the furthest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

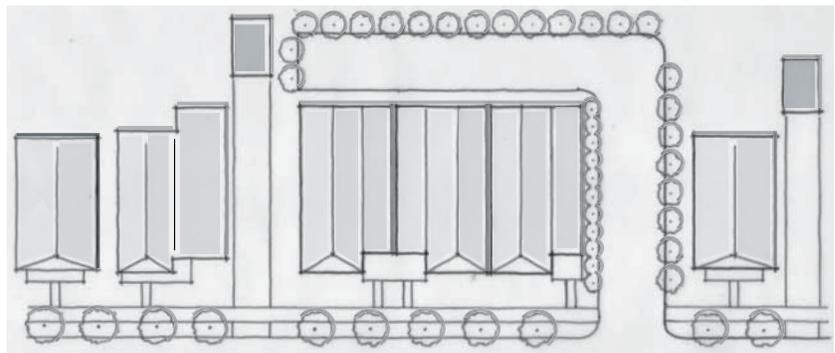


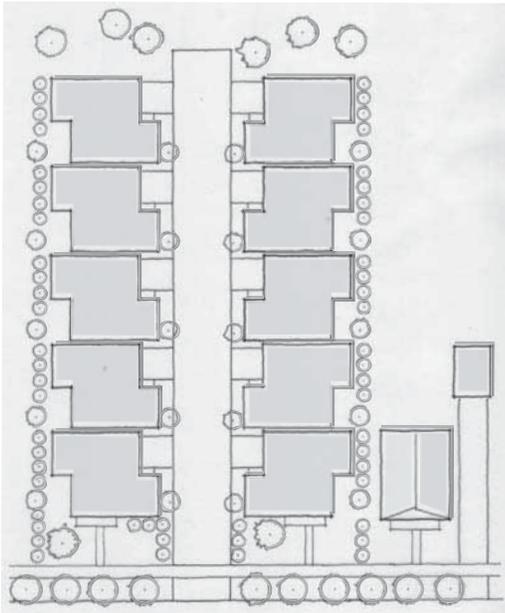
Rear driveway off flanking street



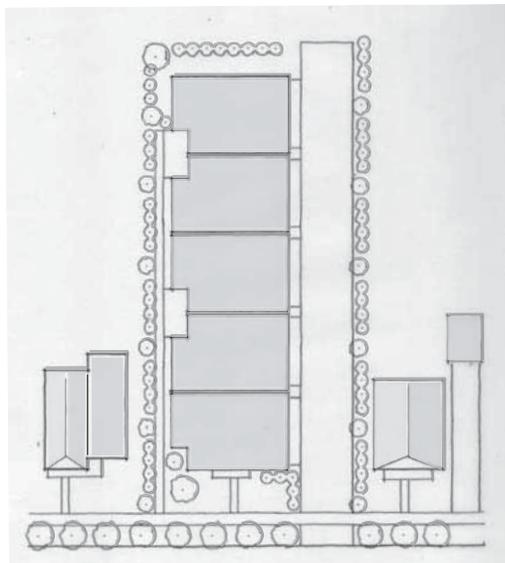
T-driveway off front street

L-driveway off front street



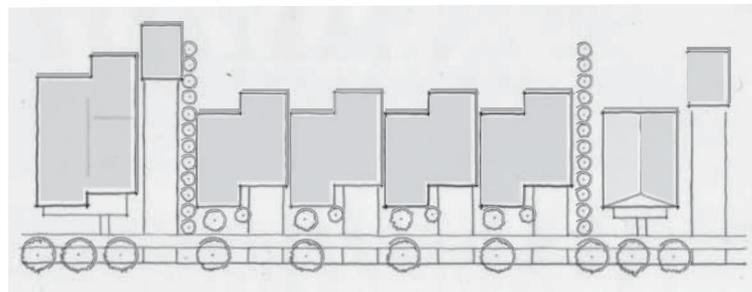


Townhouses with a center access driveway can enhance the public realm when front townhouses are accessible from the sidewalk.

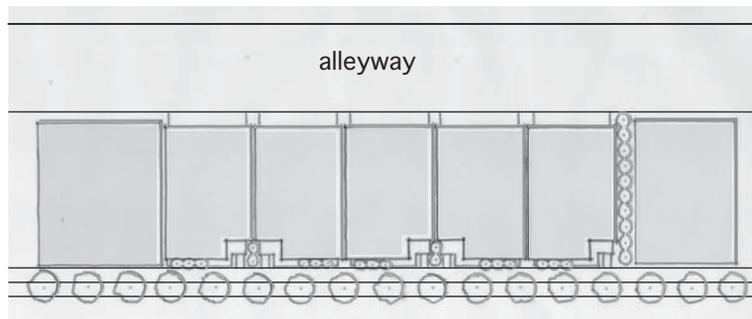


Small lot developments with a side access driveway should configure front townhouses to be accessible from the sidewalk. Interior townhouses should be accessed from both the driveway and a private walkway at the front of the homes.

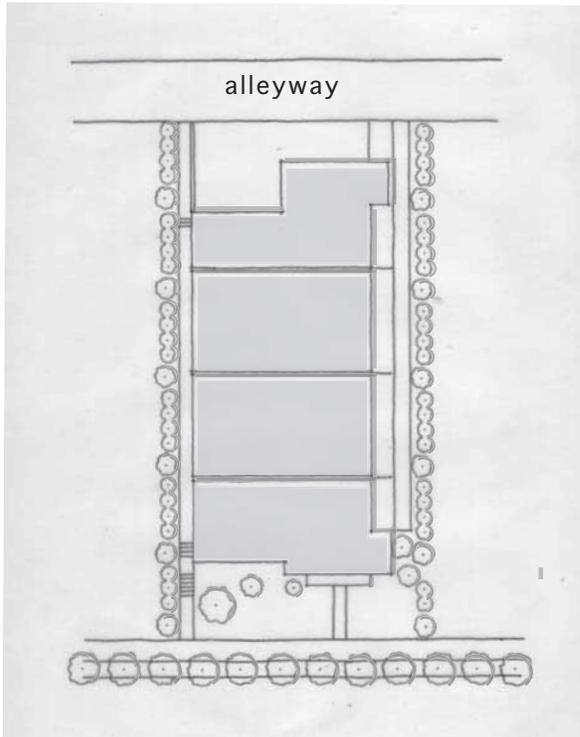
Configurations should also engage the street, sidewalk and public realm. Streets serve not only as space for vehicular movement, but also as public space for pedestrian activity and casual social interaction. When designed well, small lot developments can enhance the pre-existing character of a good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



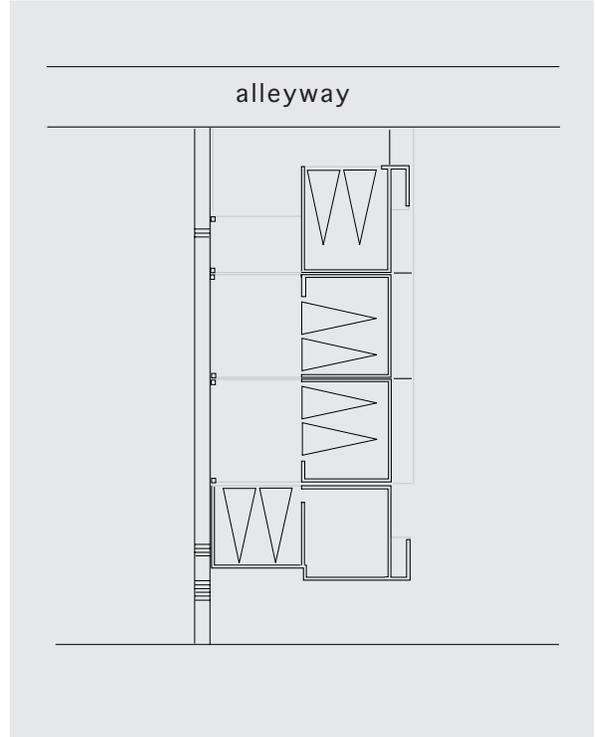
Rowhouses with integral front garages can adequately engage the street if garages are not allowed to dominate the facade. Tandem parking can minimize how much facade space is allocated to parking. One might also consider stacked parking with the aid of lifts.



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

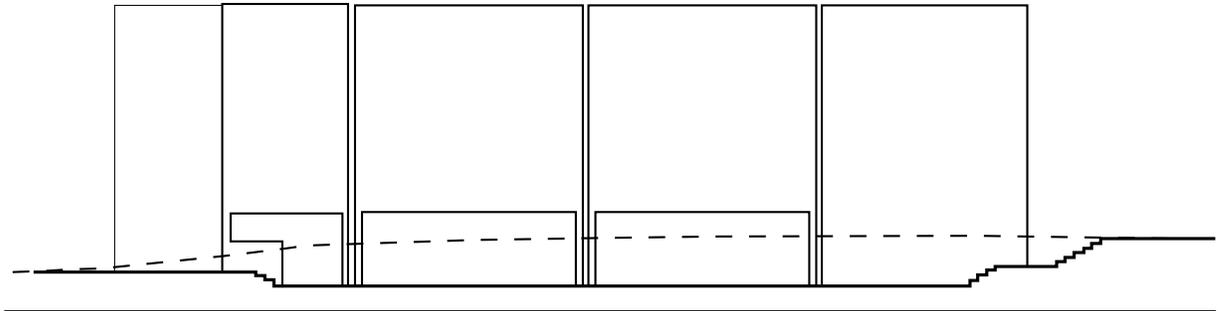


Plan view



Parking-level floor plan

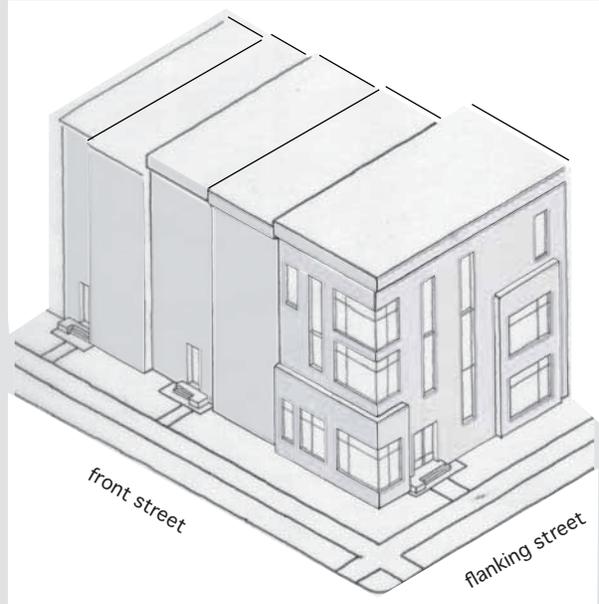
It is possible to locate parking beneath dwellings. In this particular layout, residents access parking from the alleyway and use a community driveway to reach their own parking stall. Notice in the above righthand illustration how the dwellings are still structurally independent.



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:

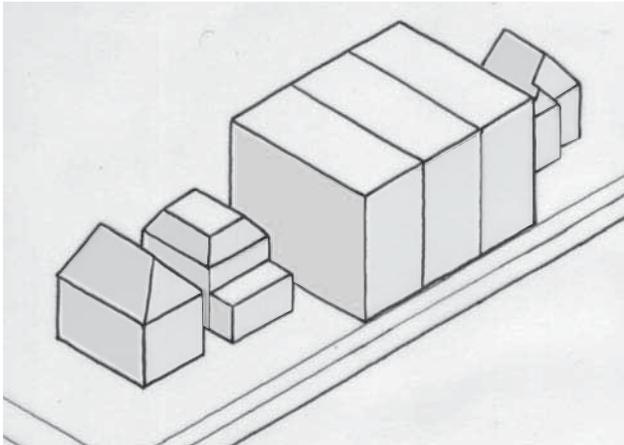
- To the extent possible, configure townhouses to front streets and open spaces, not driveways.
- For townhouses not immediately adjacent to the street, provide a private walkway from the sidewalk to them.
- Minimize the total amount of driveway space and maximize green space.
- Where possible, utilize 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.



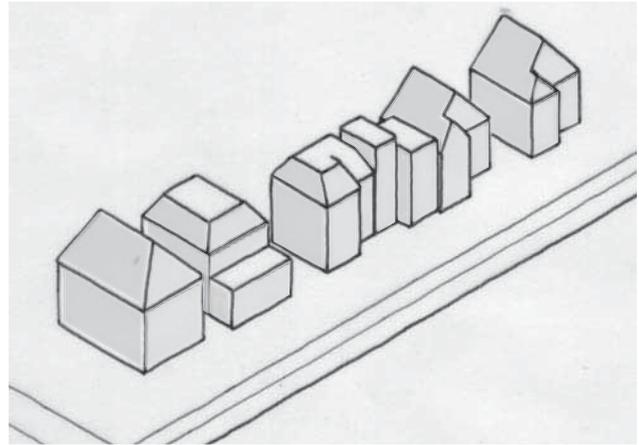
Small lot developments that occupy a corner must have the corner townhouse entrance and main facade front the flanking street.

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.



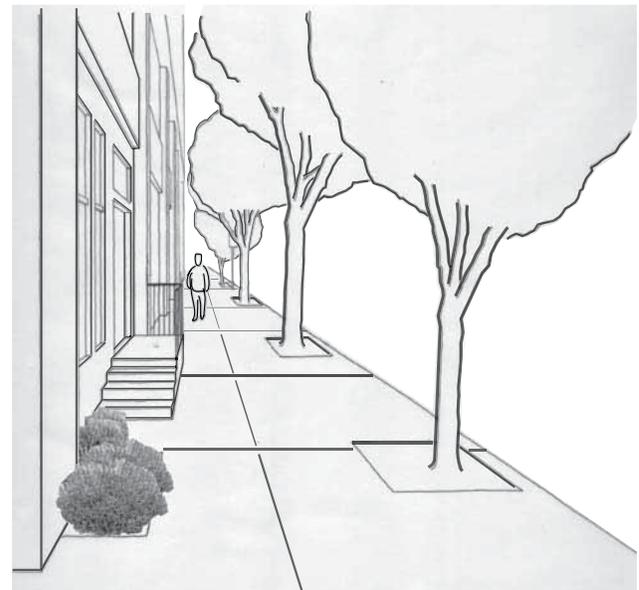
Small-lot developments that max out the building envelope rarely blend well into existing single-family neighborhoods.



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

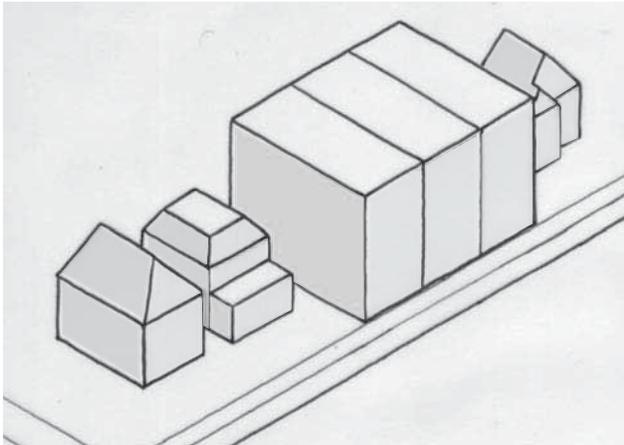
- Use surrounding built context to inform variations in height and massing.
- Avoid excessive differences in height between the new development and adjacent buildings.
- On streets with a more urban character, ensure adequate massing and facade variation at street level.



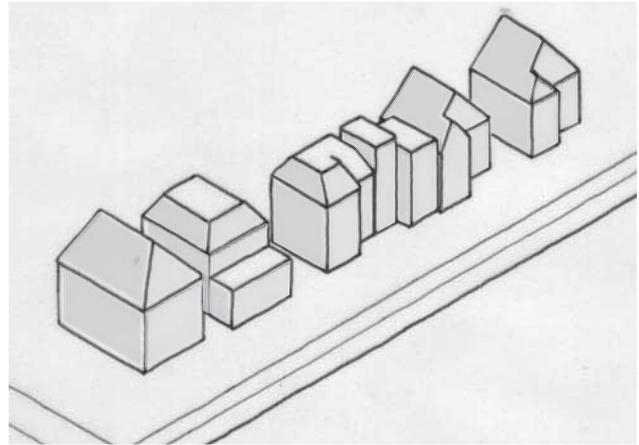
On streets with a more urban character, small-lot developments should still employ variations in massing (particularly at street level) to enhance the pedestrian realm.

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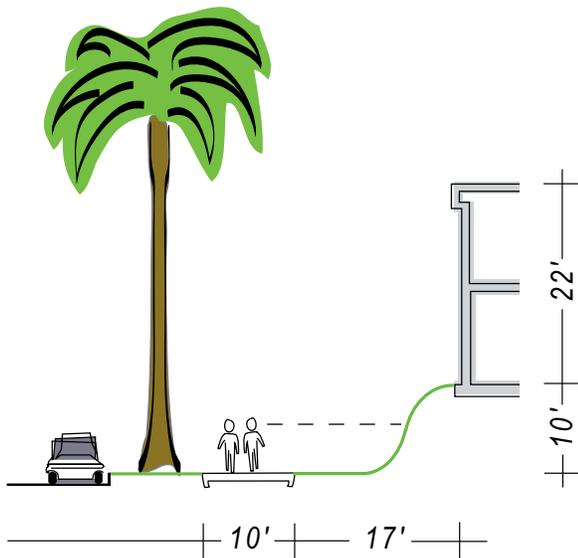
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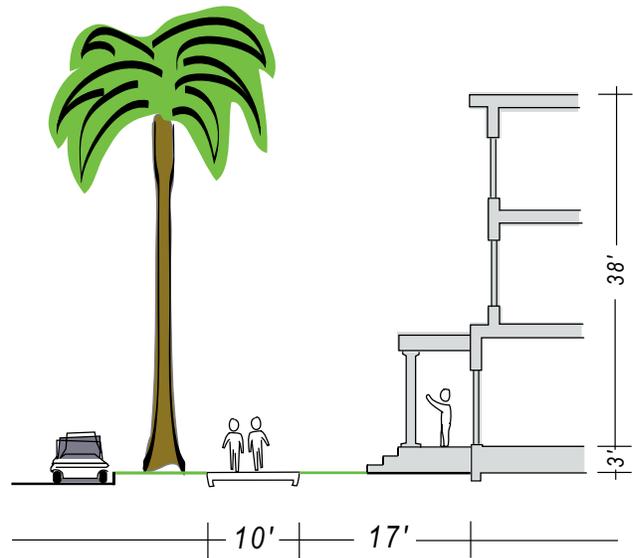
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2.4 GRADE LEVEL

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.



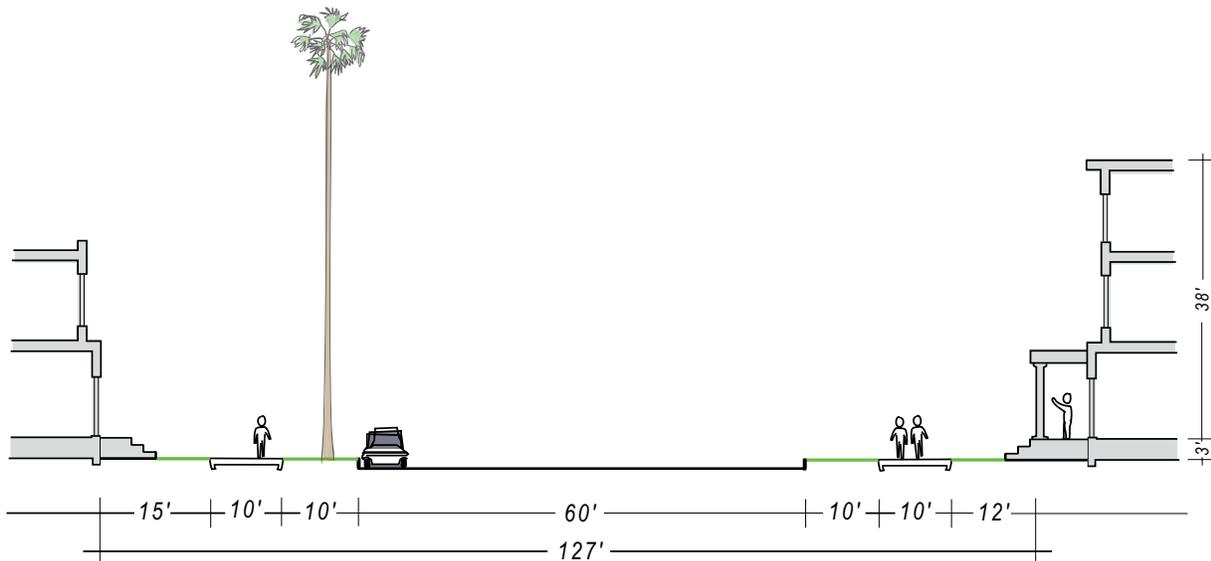
Subtle grade changes (here, three feet) clearly delineate the public and private realms while still maintaining a comfortable relationship between these realms and their users.

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.



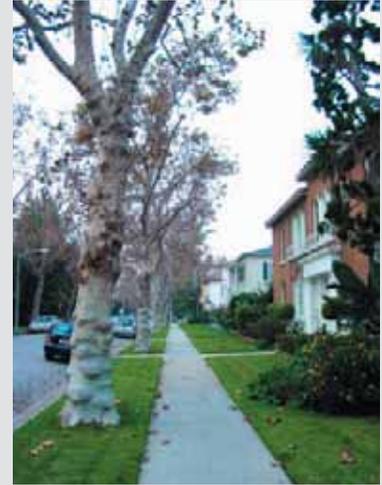
With a height of 41 feet, the small lot development creates a height-width ratio of approximately 1:3. While this ratio is sufficient for creating the semblance of an outdoor room, the street could benefit from landscape interventions within the public and private realms adjacent to the small lot development.



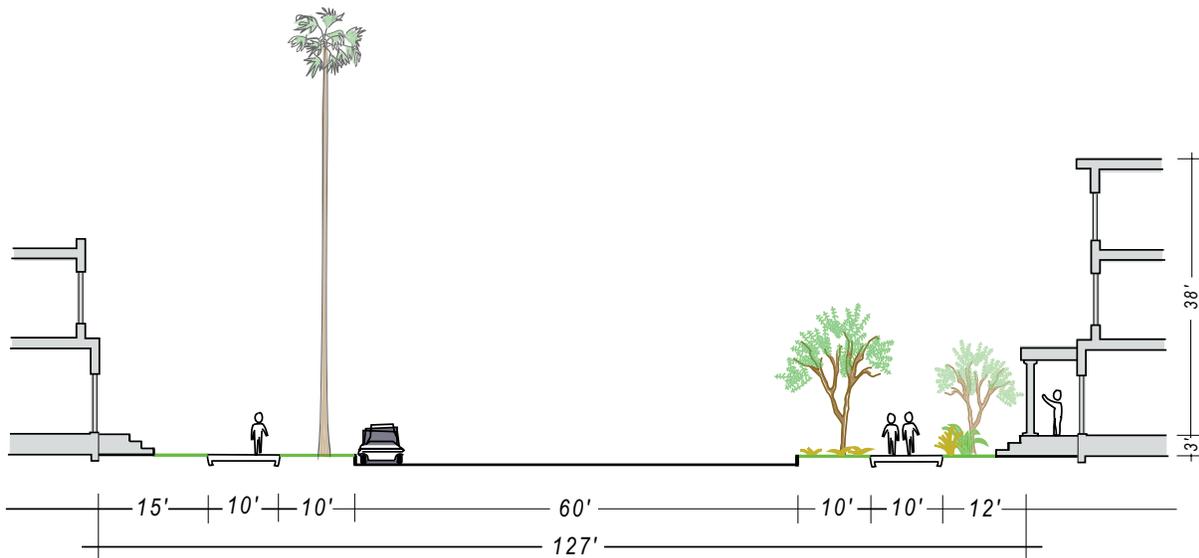
Many Los Angeles streets have skewed height-width ratios: low-rise buildings about narrow sidewalks and extremely wide streets. Shown at left: Hollywood Boulevard near the 101 Freeway, looking west.

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.



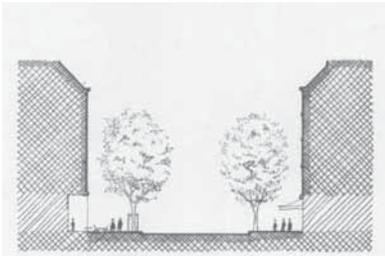
Normandie Boulevard, Koreatown
 Street width: 50'
 Width, building face to building face: 78'
 Building heights: 65-80'
 Height-width ratio: 1:1



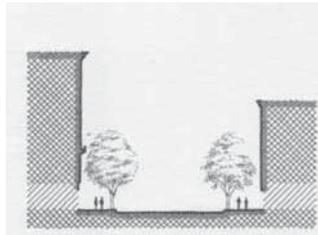
Dunsmuir Avenue, Miracle Mile
 Street width: 40'
 Width, building face to building face: 86'
 Building heights: 24'
 Ratio: 1:3



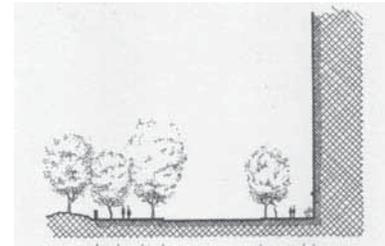
Larchmont Boulevard, Larchmont Village
 Street width: 70'
 Width, building face to building face: 101'
 Building heights: 13-26'
 Ratio: 1:4



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



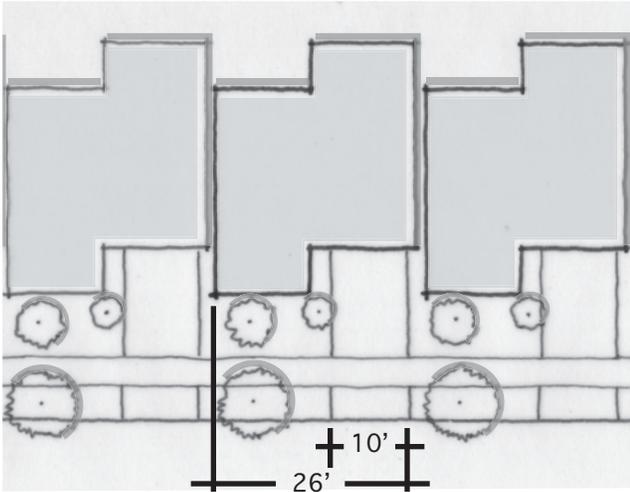
Via Cola di Rienzo, Rome
 Street width: 50'
 Width, building face to building face: 82'
 Building heights: 50-70'
 Ratio: 1:1.4



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

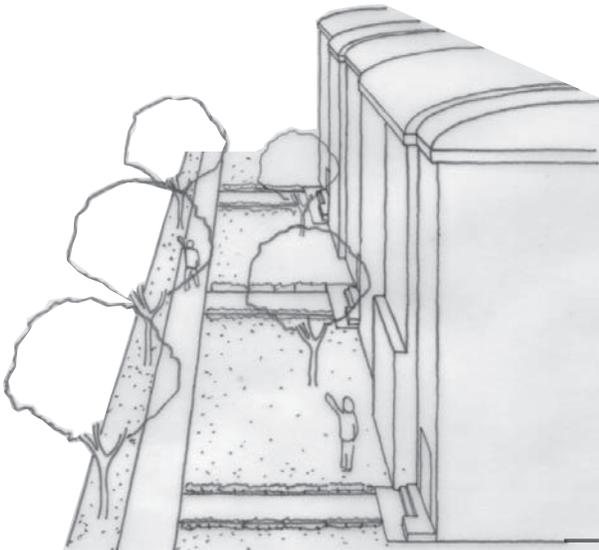
See section 2.2 for configurations.

3.4 DRIVEWAY MATERIALS

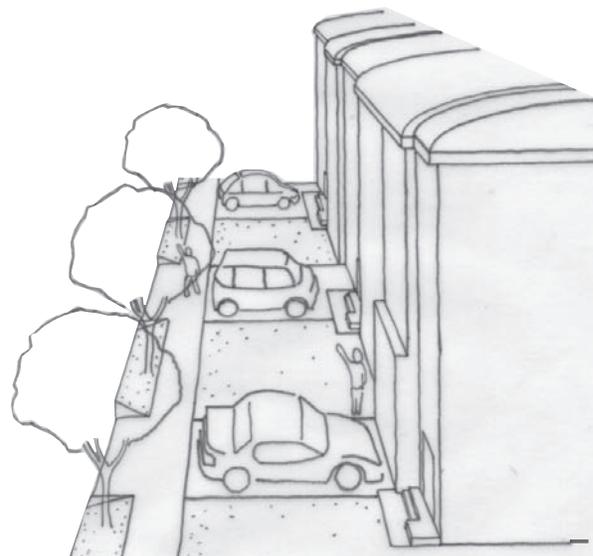
Currently semi-pervious driveway materials are not allowed under the code. However, one can use stamped concrete to create a more aesthetically pleasing alternative to the black asphalt driveway.

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.



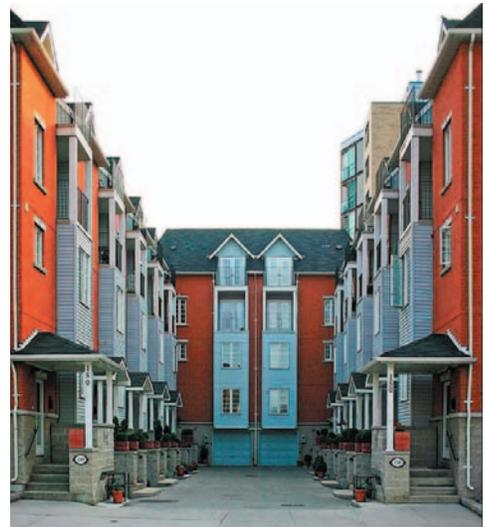
Integral front driveway configurations tend to disrupt the continuity of the sidewalk and public realm, and eliminate space for street trees and on-street parking.

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.

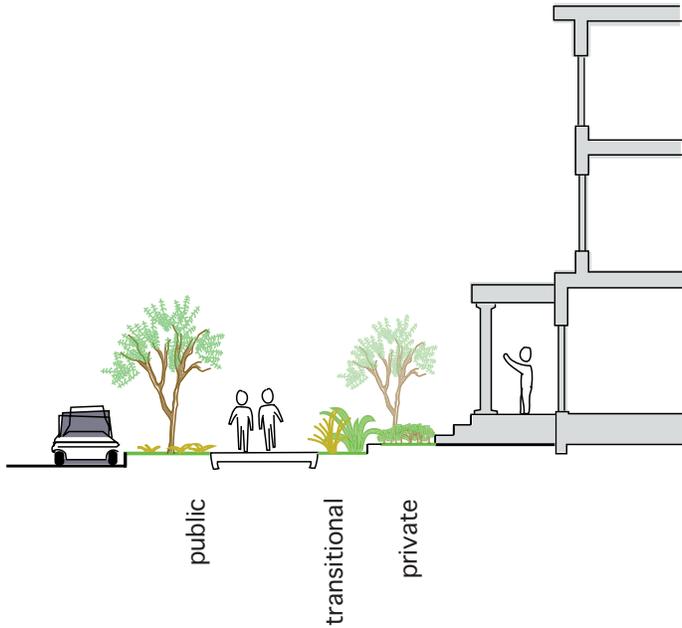
Typical but inappropriate landscaping comes in the form of turf grass along the parkway and no street trees; 7'-tall shrubs or fencing in the transitional zone, or just turf grass; and turf grass in the private realm, with a few shrubs abutting the building. The effect is a bland environment that offers 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.

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

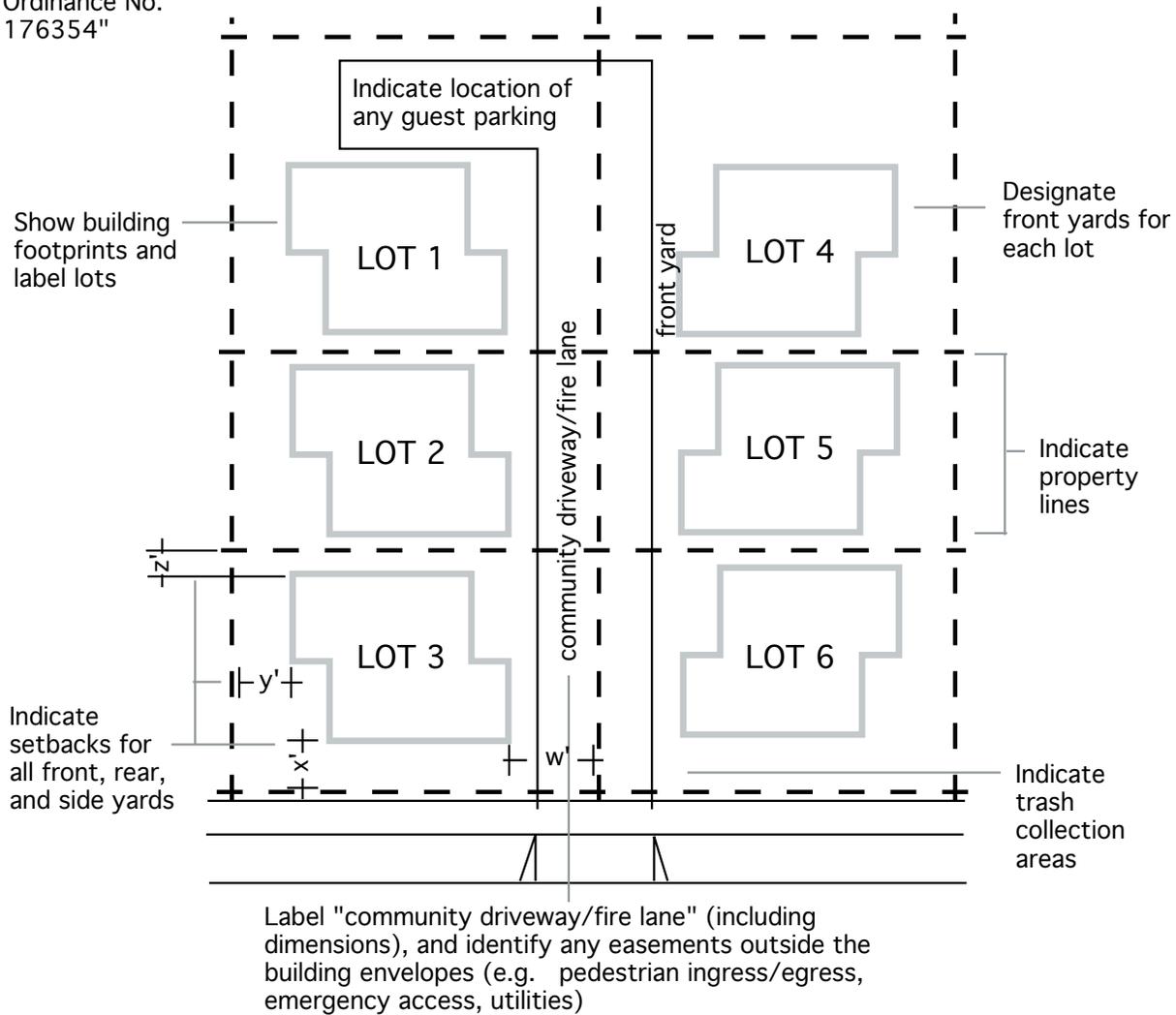
With small lot developments come a concentration of service and utility facilities – garbage storage, vents, meters and transformers. To minimize impact on adjacent dwellings and the surrounding neighborhood, small lot designs should attempt to locate these facilities in areas that are unobtrusive, and 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 PURPOSES¹

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.



DIVISION OF LAND

City Hall • 200 N. Spring Street, Room 750 • Los Angeles, CA 90012



Date: January 10, 2006

To: Licensed Engineers, Surveyors and Subdivision Consultants

From: Emily Gabel Luddy 
Deputy Advisory Agency

Subject: ADVISORY AGENCY POLICY NO. 2006-1
SMALL LOT SUBDIVISION (TOWNHOME) ORDINANCE

Introduction

On January 31, 2005 Ordinance No. 176,354 became effective. It is also known as the "Small Lot Subdivision (Townhome) Ordinance". The new ordinance is posted on the web at <http://cityplanning.lacity.org>, under Housing Initiatives.

The ordinance permits the subdivision of multi-family and commercially zoned properties into small single family or townhome style lots by reducing the minimum lot size and side yard requirements, and eliminating requirements for conventional street frontage. The ordinance does NOT apply to single family zones.

The Small Lot Ordinance applies only to projects involving divisions of land applications for: Tracts (5 dwelling units or lots or more) or Parcel maps (4 or less dwelling units or lots). The dwelling units can be townhome, patio, bungalow courtyard style or other configurations, as long as each structure, from the foundation to the roof, is separate and independent on its own.

The Department of Building and Safety will only accept construction drawings for Plan Check, after the effective date of the Advisory Agency approval under the Small Lot Ordinance of a subdivision for the division of land (Tract or Parcel Map applications)

The purpose of the Small Lot ordinance is to enable ownership of fee simple single family homes. Because this new type of subdivision requires the analysis and recommendations of several City agencies, the following items must be addressed through the clear depiction of the proposed subdivision.

Filing Documents for Your Small Lot Subdivision

In addition to the routine documents filed with new subdivision/parcel applications, a Small Lot subdivision/parcel map filing must contain additional specific items:

1. A Tract Map is required to create 5 or more lots. The Tract must be filed as a “Vesting Tentative Tract Map for Small Lot Subdivision Purposes,” and accompanied by illustrative site plan, buildings elevation(s) and other illustrative information.

A Site Plan Layout shall be superimposed over the proposed lot lines.

2. A Parcel Map is required to create 4 or less lots. The Parcel Map must be filed as a “Preliminary Parcel Map for Small Lot Subdivision Purposes,” and accompanied by similar illustrative plans.

A Site Plan layout shall be superimposed over the proposed lot lines.

3. Each tentative or preliminary map shall include in the Notes Section of the map: “Note: Small Lot Single Family Subdivision in the ___ Zone, pursuant to Ordinance No. 176,354. “

4. A Site Plan superimposed on the proposed Small Lot tentative or preliminary map shall denote the following items:

- a. Any easement(s) outside of the building envelopes for vehicular and pedestrian ingress/egress; emergency access, utilities and infrastructure purposes. These easements must be identified as either public easements (for public utility purposes, for example); or private reciprocal easements (crossing lot lines for vehicular and pedestrian access and/or cross lot surface drainage, common landscape areas, for example).
- b. Building footprint(s).
- c. Identification of front, side and rear lot lines for each internal lot.
- d. Identification of setbacks – from adjoining properties; from front, rear and side yards within the proposed Small Lot subdivision. A matrix may also be used to identify setbacks, but should be placed on the Site Plan for ease of analysis (a sample matrix will be available online on the small lot website). A setback of 3 feet is allowed within the Venice Coastal Specific Plan Ord. No. 172,897 from adjoining properties on the side yard.
- e. Identification of Driveway Easement(s), location and width. Label “community driveway/fire lane” for clarity.
- f. Identification of vehicular back up space consistent with the requirements of the Zoning Code and the Department of Building and Safety.
- g. Identification of trash collection areas.

- h. All public and private easements will be shown on the Final Map.
- i. The Final Map must be labeled: “Final Vesting Tract Map for Small Lot Subdivision Purposes” OR “Final Parcel Map for Small Lot Subdivision Purposes”
- j. Accessory structures shall be shown on the tentative and Final Map and shall not be located in the required setback area.

Other Requirements for a Small Lot Subdivision

- 1. A Maintenance Association will be required, composed of all property owners, to maintain all common areas such as trees, landscaping, trash, parking, community driveway, walkways, monthly service for private fire hydrant (if required), etc. Each owner and future property owners shall automatically become members of the association and shall be subject to a proportionate share of the maintenance.
- 2. Recorded Covenant and Agreement(s) will be required for all reciprocal private easements.
- 3. The minimum driveway/fire lane width will be 20 feet; any back up space (vehicles leaving garages) must comply with the Zoning Code and the Department of Building and Safety requirements.
- 4. Light courts or wells shall be a minimum of 3 feet in width for up to two-story buildings and 4 feet in width for three-story buildings when it is next to exterior openings providing natural light and ventilation. LAMC 91.1203.4.1.
- 5. Emergency access and egress windows at bedrooms shall be so located that they are accessible by the Fire Department. LAMC 91-1203.

The following Departments have standard requirements. In the event, a subdivider has an alternative proposal to these, then s/he must meet and get approval from relevant department prior to the Advisory Agency hearing.

- 6. Los Angeles Fire Department Requirements:
 - a. The entrance or exit of all ground dwelling units shall not be more than 150 feet from the edge of a roadway of an improved street, access road, or designated fire lane. If it exceeds 150 feet, a turnaround is required.
 - b. The Fire Department will require additional vehicular access (community driveway/fire lane width of 28 feet) where buildings exceed 28 feet in height at the edge of the roof. If they exceed 28 feet, a minimum 5-foot stepback is required – or other alternative to the satisfaction of the Fire Department. The

- subdivider must secure tentative approval from the Fire Department prior to the Advisory Agency hearing.
- c. No building or portion of a building shall be constructed more than 300 feet from an approved fire hydrant. Distance shall be computed along path of travel. Exception: Dwelling unit travel distance shall be computed to front door of unit.
 - d. That all Small Lot Subdivisions are required to be fully fire sprinklered.
7. Bureau of Sanitation (BOS) Solid Resource Collection Division - If the subdivider elects to utilize a City of LA waste collection service, the following are required:
- a. In order for BOS to provide “community driveway” collection, a LAFD turnaround area is required. Otherwise, the residents will be required to place their containers on the City street for collection.
 - b. BOS requires the driveway serving the small lot to be no less than 15 feet in width. If parking is allowed, the vehicle travel area, with cars parked cannot be less than 15 feet wide at any point.
 - c. If the property is gated, the gate opening must be a minimum of 20 feet wide and the gates must remain open on trash collection day from 6 am to 6 pm.
 - d. Prior to making collection on a “community driveway” the BOS must have a signed waiver releasing them from any damage to the road that may occur due to the weight or hydraulic system in their trucks.
 - e. There must be 20 feet of clearance directly above the curb. It must be clear of any trees or other obstacles.
 - f. All collection Rules and Regulations would apply.

A Word About Specific Plan Regulations and Small Lot Proposals

Adopted specific plans may contain detailed regulations for multi-family zones, including restrictions on parking, guest parking, building heights and open space. **READ THE PLAN CAREFULLY.** It is likely that a small lot subdivision will be evaluated against the multi-family regulations of any adopted specific plan. In the event a deviation is sought from a specific plan, the Advisory Agency recommends that any such deviation fall within the boundaries of a Project Permit Adjustment (PPA) described in Section 11.5.7-E,2 of the Municipal Code, as these are minor deviations; and a PPA will be processed concurrently with the subdivision. If a Specific Plan Exception is required, that application must be processed separately through a Commission Hearing Examiner.

Other Handy References: Small Lot Guidelines

The Planning Department website also posts Small Lot Subdivision Guidelines to provide visual examples and some of the “do’s and don’ts” of this innovative ordinance. Please consult the guide for good ideas.

Departments Participating in Preparation of the Policy

This policy has been issued with concurrence of the most affected departments: Building and Safety, Bureau of Engineering, Bureau of Sanitation, Transportation and Fire. Subdividers are always encouraged to discuss individual site circumstances with all departments prior to the Advisory Agency public hearing.

This Policy will be reviewed on July 1, 2006.

EGL:dl

ORDINANCE NO. 176354

An ordinance amending Sections 12.03, 12.09, 12.12.1, 12.21 and 12.22 of the Los Angeles Municipal Code to permit detached for-sale small lot subdivisions in commercial and multifamily residential zones.

**THE PEOPLE OF THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES
DO ORDAIN AS FOLLOWS:**

Section 1. Section 12.03 of the Los Angeles Municipal Code is amended by revising the definition of "lot" to read:

LOT. A parcel of land occupied or to be occupied by a use, building or unit group of buildings and accessory buildings and uses, together with the yards, open spaces, lot width and lot area as are required by this chapter and fronting for a distance of at least 20 feet upon a street as defined here, or upon a private street as defined in Article 8 of this chapter. The width of an access-strip portion of a lot shall not be less than 20 feet at any point. In a residential planned development or an approved small lot subdivision a lot need have only the street frontage or access as is provided on the recorded subdivision tract or parcel map for the development.

Sec. 2. Subdivision 3 of Subsection A of Section 12.09 of the Los Angeles Municipal Code is amended to read:

3. Apartment houses, boarding or rooming houses, dwelling units in a small lot subdivision, or multiple dwellings on lots having a side lot line adjoining a lot in a commercial or industrial zone, provided that:

(a) The use, including the accessory buildings and uses and required yards, does not extend more than 65 feet from the boundary of the less restrictive zone which it adjoins; and

(b) The lot area per dwelling unit or guest room regulations of the RD1.5 zone shall apply to these uses.

Sec. 3. Subsection A of Section 12.12.1 is amended by adding a new subdivision 8 to read.

8. Dwelling unit or units constructed on a lot in a small lot subdivision and approved by the Advisory Agency, pursuant to Article 7 of this Chapter in conformity with the provision of 12.22 C 27 of this Code.

Sec. 4. The first paragraph of Paragraph (a) of Subdivision 4 of Subsection A of Section 12.21 of the Los Angeles Municipal Code is amended to read:

(a) For Dwelling Units. In all zones, there shall be at least two automobile parking spaces on the same lot with each one-family dwelling thereon, and in any RW Zone there shall be at least two automobile parking spaces per dwelling unit which shall be upon the same lot with the dwelling unit. However, for small lot subdivisions approved pursuant to Article 7 of this Chapter in conformity with the provisions of Section 12.22 C 27 of this Code, the required parking spaces shall not be required to be located on the same lot with each dwelling unit, but shall be provided within the boundaries of the parcel or tract map. The ratio of parking spaces required for all other dwelling units shall be at least one parking space for each dwelling unit of less than three habitable rooms, one and one-half parking spaces for each dwelling unit of three habitable rooms, and two parking spaces for each dwelling unit of more than three habitable rooms. Where the lot is located in an RA, RE, RS, R1, RU, RZ, RMP, or RW Zone, the required parking spaces shall be provided within a private garage. Where the lot is located in an R2 Zone, at least one of the required parking spaces per dwelling unit shall be provided within a private garage. Any door or doors installed at the automobile entry to a garage serving a one or two-family dwelling where one or more required parking spaces is located shall be of conventional design constructed so as to permit the simultaneous entry of automobiles into each required parking space without damaging the door or door frame and constructed so as to permit the flow of air through the automobile entry when the door is in the fully closed position.

Sec. 5. Paragraph (h) of Subdivision 5 of Subsection A of Section 12.21 of the Los Angeles Municipal Code is amended by adding a new subparagraph numbered (4) to read:

(4) In a private garage or parking area serving an approved small lot subdivision, where the tandem parking is not more than two cars in depth, and provided that at least one parking stall per dwelling unit and all of the parking stalls required for any guest rooms are individually and easily accessible..

Sec. 6. Subsection C of Section 12.22 of the Los Angeles Municipal Code is amended by adding a new subdivision 27 to read:

27. Small Lot Subdivision in the R2, RD, R3, R4, R5, RAS and the P and C zones pursuant to an approved subdivision tract or parcel map.

Notwithstanding any provisions of this Code relating to minimum lot area to the contrary, in the R2, RD, R3, R4, R5, RAS and the P and C zones, parcels of land may be subdivided into lots which may contain one, two or three dwelling units, provided that the density of the subdivision complies with the minimum lot area per dwelling unit requirement established for each zone, or in the case of a P zone, the density of the subdivision shall comply with the minimum lot area per dwelling unit of the least restrictive abutting commercial or multi-family residential zone(s).

(a) A parcel map or tract map, pursuant to Section 17.00 *et seq.* of this Code shall be required for the creation of a small lot subdivision.

(b) The minimum lot width shall be 16 feet and the minimum lot area shall be 600 square feet. The Advisory Agency shall designate the location of front yards in the subdivision tract or parcel map approval.

(c) Vehicular access may be provided to either a lot containing a dwelling unit or to its required parking spaces by way of street or alley frontage, driveway access or similar access to a street.

(d) All structures on a lot which includes one or more dwelling units, may, taken together, occupy no more than 80% of the lot area, unless the tract or parcel map provides common open space equivalent to 20% of the lot area of each lot not meeting this provision.

(e) No front, side, or rear yard shall be required between lots within an approved small lot subdivision. However, a five-foot setback shall be provided where a lot abuts a lot that is not created pursuant to this subdivision.

(f) No passageway pursuant to Section 12.21 C 2 of this Code shall be required.

(g) In a P zone, lots may be developed as a small lot subdivision, provided that the General Plan land use designation of the lot is "commercial" or "multiple family residential."

(h) In an R2 zone, a lot may be developed as a small lot subdivision provided that the lot meets the requirements of Section 12.09 A 3 of the Code.

(i) A dwelling unit in a small lot subdivision shall not be required to comply with Paragraphs (a), (b), (f) and (g) of Section 12.21 A 17 of this Code.

(j) Fences and walls within five feet of the front lot line shall be no more than three and one-half feet in height. Fences and walls within five feet of the side and rear lot lines shall be no more than six feet in height.

(105208)

Sec. 7. The City Clerk shall certify to the passage of this ordinance and have it published in accordance with Council policy, either in a daily newspaper circulated in the City of Los Angeles or by posting for ten days in three public places in the City of Los Angeles: one copy on the bulletin board located in the Main Street lobby to the City Hall; one copy on the bulletin board located at the ground level at the Los Angeles Street entrance to the Los Angeles Police Department; and one copy on the bulletin board located at the Temple Street entrance to the Los Angeles County Hall of Records.

I hereby certify that this ordinance was passed by the Council of the City of Los Angeles, at its meeting of DEC 14 2004.

FRANK T. MARTINEZ, City Clerk

By *Maria Hernandez*
Deputy

DEC 16 2004

Approved _____

James Hahn
Mayor

Approved as to Form and Legality

Rockard J. Delgadillo, City Attorney

By *Sharon Siedorf Cardenas* *SSC*
SHARON SIEDORF CARDENAS
Assistant City Attorney

Pursuant to Charter Section 559, I approve this ordinance on behalf of the City Planning Commission and recommend it be adopted

December 3, 2004

see attached report.

Con Howe
CON HOWE
Director of Planning

Date DEC 03 2004

File No. CF 04-1546; CPC 2004-3334-CA

DECLARATION OF POSTING ORDINANCE

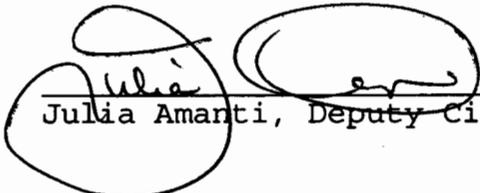
I, JULIA AMANTI, state as follows: I am, and was at all times hereinafter mentioned, a resident of the State of California, over the age of eighteen years, and a Deputy City Clerk of the City of Los Angeles, California.

Ordinance No. 176354 - Amending Sections 12.03, 12.09, 12.12.1, 12.21 and 12.22 of the L.A.M.C. re: To Permit Detached For-Sale Lot Subdivisions in Commercial & Multifamily Residential Zones - a copy of which is hereto attached, was finally adopted by the Los Angeles City Council on Dec. 14, 2004, and under the direction of said City Council and the City Clerk, pursuant to Section 251 of the Charter of the City of Los Angeles and Ordinance No. 172959, on Dec. 22, 2004, I posted a true copy of said ordinance at each of three public places located in the City of Los Angeles, California, as follows: 1) One copy on the bulletin board at the Main Street entrance to Los Angeles City Hall; 2) one copy on the bulletin board at the ground level Los Angeles Street entrance to the Los Angeles Police Department; and 3) one copy on the bulletin board at the Temple Street entrance to the Hall of Records of the County of Los Angeles.

Copies of said ordinance were posted conspicuously beginning on Dec. 22, 2004 and will be continuously posted for ten or more days.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Signed this 22nd day of Dec. 2004 at Los Angeles, California.


Julia Amanti, Deputy City Clerk

Ordinance Effective Date: Jan. 31, 2005 Council File No. 04-1546



Small Lot Subdivision Information Packet

Thanks

Thank you for taking the time to review the small lot subdivision packet. If you have an interest in small lot and are looking for or have a property in mind, please feel free to [contact modative](#) for a free consultation.

[Modative](#) is an architectural firm located in Los Angeles that specializes in Small Lot Subdivision Projects. If you would like to see some of our small lot project, please visit the [small lot portion of our web site](#).

modative, inc.
2633 Lincoln Blvd. #610
Santa Monica, CA 90405

P: 310.526.7826
E: info@modative.com
W: www.modative.com