

SMALL LOT SUBDIVISION

CODE AMENDMENT AND POLICY UPDATE

SUMMARY SHEET – Revised October 14, 2016



INTRODUCTION

In 2005, the City of Los Angeles adopted a Small Lot Subdivision Ordinance (“Ordinance”) to allow the construction of homes on small lots creating a fee-simple type of ownership on lots zoned for multiple family development. Small Lots were intended as infill development and a smart growth alternative to traditional suburban style single-family subdivisions on sites zoned for apartment or condominium development. Supplemental design guidelines were created to assist in shaping this type of development with its unique complexities.

Through ten years of implementing the City’s first-ever Small Lot Ordinance, and in response to recent Council motions, project appeals and community discussion, the Department of City Planning is recommending an update to the existing regulations and procedures for small lot subdivisions. The intent is to ensure small lot projects will be more sensitive and compatible with the existing neighborhood context and zoning. The proposed Code Amendment, Design Standards, and Map Standards will limit the buildable area of the lot, require greater setbacks, guest parking and access, building entry orientation, pedestrian access, and landscaping.

PROPOSED CODE AMENDMENT & POLICY UPDATE

The Small Lot Code Amendment and Policy Update consists of multiple parts including a Small Lot Code Amendment to be adopted by the City Council and the creation of new Small Lot Design Standards to be approved by the City Planning Commission. In addition, the City Planning Department’s Advisory Agency will establish Map Standards to regulate map provisions for all small lots. Together, the Code Amendment, Design Standards, and Map Standards are intended to provide clarity for the Small Lot Subdivision review process, meanwhile enhancing the overall functionality of small lot subdivisions.

- The **Code Amendment** will require greater front and rear yard setbacks and greater setbacks when abutting single-family or more restrictive zones, restrict small lot subdivisions from R2 zones, create a division of land process for existing “bungalow court” small lot projects, and establish design standards for small lot subdivision projects with an incidental Administrative Clearance process. The Code Amendment was approved by the City Planning Commission in August 2016 and is next targeted for City Council consideration in upcoming months.
- The **Design Standards** will create specific and enforceable rules regarding design for all small lots, including building orientation, primary entryways, façade articulation, roofline variation, building modulation, pedestrian pathways, landscaping, and common open space areas. All small lot subdivisions must comply with the Design Standards through an Administrative Clearance process. A working draft of the Design Standards are being issued for test implementation, per Commission’s recommendation.
- The **Map Standards** created through the authority of the State Subdivision Map Act will update map provisions for all small lots, including common access driveways and walkways, utility easements, maintenance agreements, vehicular guest parking, on-site trash pick-up, and open space easements. The Map Standards will become effective

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by the Department of City Planning Advisory Agency memo and will be implemented alongside the Code Amendment and Design Standards.

- In addition, the existing Small Lot Design Guidelines will be consolidated with the Code Amendment, Design Standards, and Map Standards into a **Small Lot Guide** and include “best practices” and case studies. The Guide will be available on the web to illustrate strategies to shape the design of small lot subdivisions even further.

The following is a summary matrix of the Code Amendment, Design Standards, and Map Standards which will establish each of the following provisions:

| Item | Code | Policy | Policy | Design Guide |
|---------------------------------|-----------|------------------|---------------|--------------|
| | Ordinance | Design Standards | Map Standards | |
| General (All Small Lots) | | | | |
| Applicable Zones | X | | | X |
| Minimum Lot Width | X | | | X |
| Access Easement | X | | | X |
| Lot Coverage | X | | | X |
| Front, Side, Rear Yards | X | | | X |
| Fences and Walls | X | X | | X |
| Building Orientation | | X | | X |
| Primary Entryways | | X | | X |
| Façade Articulation | | X | | X |
| Varied Roofline | | X | | X |
| Roof Terraces and Decks | | X | | X |
| Building Modulation | | X | | X |
| Pedestrian Pathways | | X | | X |
| Open Area Landscaping | | X | | X |
| Front Yard Landscaping | | X | | X |
| Trash Enclosures | | X | | X |
| Common Access Driveway | | | X | X |
| Common Access Walkway | | | X | X |
| Utility Easement | | | X | X |
| Maintenance Agreement | | | X | X |
| Guest Parking | | | X | X |
| On-Site Trash Collection | | | X | X |
| Open Space Easement | | | X | X |
| Mixed Use | | | | |
| Building Orientation and Entry | | X | | X |
| Building Design | | X | | X |
| Guest Parking | | | X | X |
| Bungalow Courts | | | | |
| Alterations or Additions | X | | | X |
| New Construction | X | X | | X |
| Parking | | X | | X |
| Pedestrian Pathway | | X | | X |

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PROVIDING INPUT AND PUBLIC HEARING PROCESS

Throughout the update process, the Department of City Planning has been engaged in an extensive public outreach process for the proposed amendments to the Small Lot Ordinance. In January 2016, the draft Ordinance Amendment and Design Standards were issued for public review and comment, followed by three open houses / public hearings at various locations throughout the City to gather input from both community members and the development community. Due to the comments received during the public hearing and outreach process, the Department has taken additional time to further refine the language of both the Code Amendment and Design Standards. Later drafts were released to the public in June and August for further review and comment, and were approved by the City Planning Commission with some modifications. There will be further opportunities to participate when the proposed Small Lot Code Amendment moves on to the City Council for consideration. Changes may still be made before the City Council's final decision.

DRAFT DOCUMENTS

The draft Code Amendment was approved by the City Planning Commission, with modifications including restricting small lots from R2 zones and further refinement of the Design Standards.

Specifically, the clarifications from the existing 2005 Ordinance include:

| Topic | Existing Limitation | Proposed Change |
|--------------------|---|--|
| Applicable Zones | Allowed in all multi-family (including R2 and RDs) and commercial zones | Restricted from R2 zones, but allowed in all other multi-family and commercial zones. |
| Procedures | Applicant files for Vesting Tentative Tract Map or Parcel Map. Compliance with design guidelines is flexible. | Applicant files for Administrative Clearance in addition to Tract or Parcel Map, which requires conformance with Small Lot Design Standards. |
| Lot Width | Requires minimum 16' lot width. | Requires minimum 18' lot width. |
| Buildable Lot Area | Lot coverage limited to 80%. | Lot coverage limited to 75%. |
| Internal Yards | No yards required along interior lot lines. | (No change). |
| Perimeter Yards | | |
| Front Lot Line | No yards required along front lot line. | Requires front yard requirements per underlying zone (generally 15') along front lot line. |
| Rear Lot Line | Requires 5' yard along rear lot lines. | Requires 10' rear yard (or per underlying zone if abutting R1 or more restrictive zone). |
| Side Lot Line | Requires 5' yard along side lot lines. | Requires 5' side yard (or per underlying zone if abutting R1 or more restrictive zone). |

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|-------------------------|---|--|
| Fences and Walls | Limits to 3.5' fence height if along front lot line, and 6' if along side and rear lot lines. | Limits to 3.5' fence if within the front yard setback, and 6' if along the side and rear yard setbacks. |
| Bungalow Court Projects | No process outlined. | Alterations to existing dwellings must conform with LAMC 12.23 A and applicable Design Standards. New construction must conform with all Design Standards. |

The draft Code Amendment, Design Standards, and Map Standards are available on the Department of City Planning's website (planning.lacity.org) under "News" and "Small Lot Code Amendment and Policy Update". Updated drafts will be posted as they become available.

CONTACT

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