

Amendments to Standards for Lot Configuration and Development on Small Lots

October 6, 2011

Summary

In response to Councilmembers' questions at the September 14 Committee on the Built Environment (COBE) meeting, staff from the Department of Planning and Development (DPD) has developed sample drawings and photos that provide additional information on the proposed amendments to minimum lot configuration standards. While the standards affect all lots in the City, the standards will be most applicable to new and existing lots in residential zones.

The proposal includes three changes to existing minimum lot configuration requirements:

1. New standards for lot shape and configuration: Amend subdivision, short subdivision, and lot boundary adjustment regulations to require that newly created lots, or existing lots whose lot size is changed or reconfigured, meet the following standards:

- a. Minimum street frontage of 10 feet for lots proposed with street frontage;
- b. Minimum dimension of 10 feet in any direction, except that a lot may be narrower; than 10 feet for a distance of less than 10 feet;
- c. Maximum of 6 lot lines;
- d. Must provide alley access if original lot fronts on alley; and
- e. The standards may be waived or modified based on specific site conditions such as location of streets, structures, natural topographic features, etc.

The new standards would not apply to 1) "two house/one lot" short plats in Section 23.24.046, 2) unit lot subdivisions, and 3) new lots for live-work units in mixed use structures. The lot configuration standards could not be modified through the City's design review program.

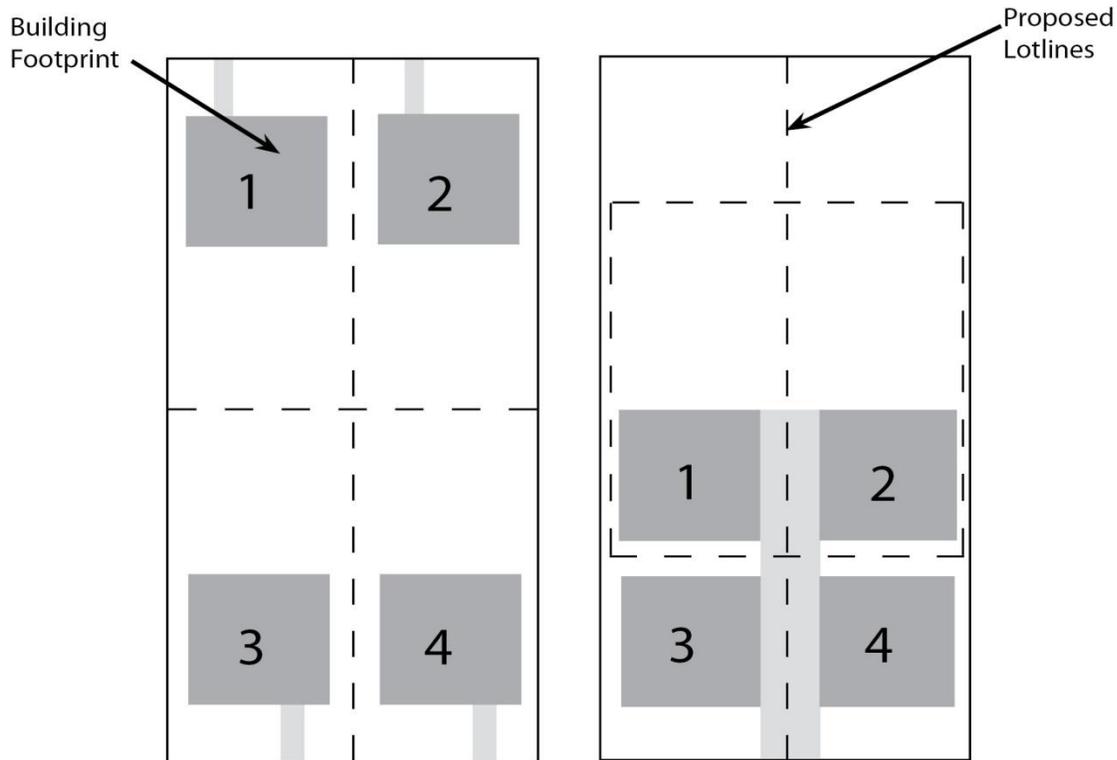
2. New lot coverage limit to make buildings more proportionate to lot size/shape: For all lots, allow only portions of lots that measure at least 10 feet in any direction to count in lot coverage calculations (lot coverage is how much of a lot can be covered by buildings). This will help address concerns from neighbors that lots have been created or reconfigured to maximize financial return, and not how these lots could be designed to fit into an existing neighborhood,

3. New standards for "undersized lots": Some existing legal lots in Single Family zones are significantly smaller than the minimum lot size requirements established by the Land Use Code – less than 2,500 square feet. These "undersized" lots can also be developed through exceptions to the minimum lot size requirements. To ensure that new structures on such lots are appropriately sized for these small lots that are less than 2,500 sq.ft, new structures must meet the following standards:

- a. Limit the maximum base height of new structures to 22 feet; and
- b. Limit the depth of new structures to: two times the width of lot, when the lot is less than 30 feet wide.

Examples

Example 1 - UNUSUALLY SHAPED LOTS - Development on unusually shaped lots can lead to houses that do not fit into existing neighborhoods. (proposal #1 addresses this situation)



The example on the left is a subdivision of one lot into four traditional rectangular lots (each 50 feet wide by 100 feet deep), each with a driveway to a street. The example on the right is one lot subdivided into four irregular lots – two four-sided lots without street frontage (numbers 1 and 2) and two with 8-sides (numbers 3 and 4), all accessed by a single driveway.

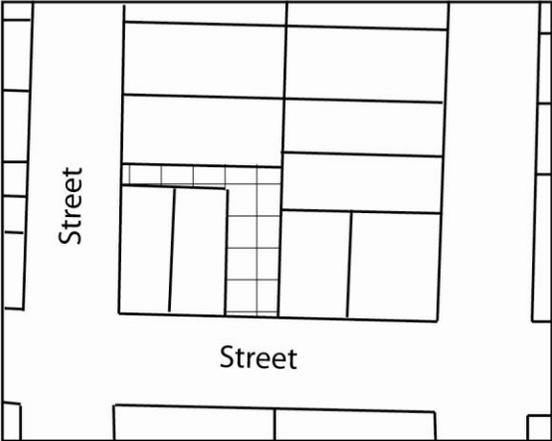
Resulting houses are shown in gray. The example on the right was achieved by platting 6 inch wide “connector” sections between the front and back sections of lots 3 and 4. Resulting housing development seems overly crowded.

The proposal would allow the example on the left and not the one on the right.

Example 2 - LOTS THAT WOULD BE PERMITTED UNDER THE PROPOSAL – (per the standards in proposal #1). Development on these lots would be subject to the standards of proposal #2.



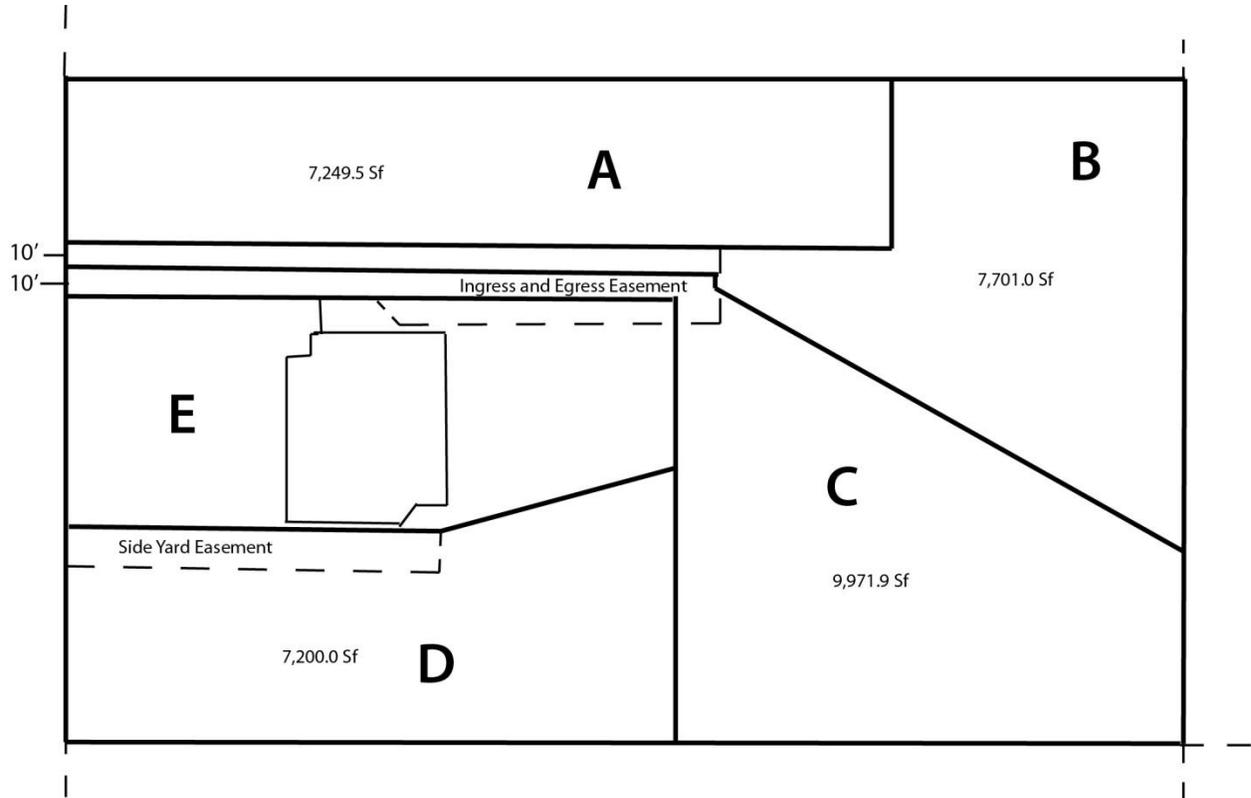
Lot #1



Lot #2

Two sample lots (shown with cross-hatching) with 6 sides in a typical “panhandle” shape.

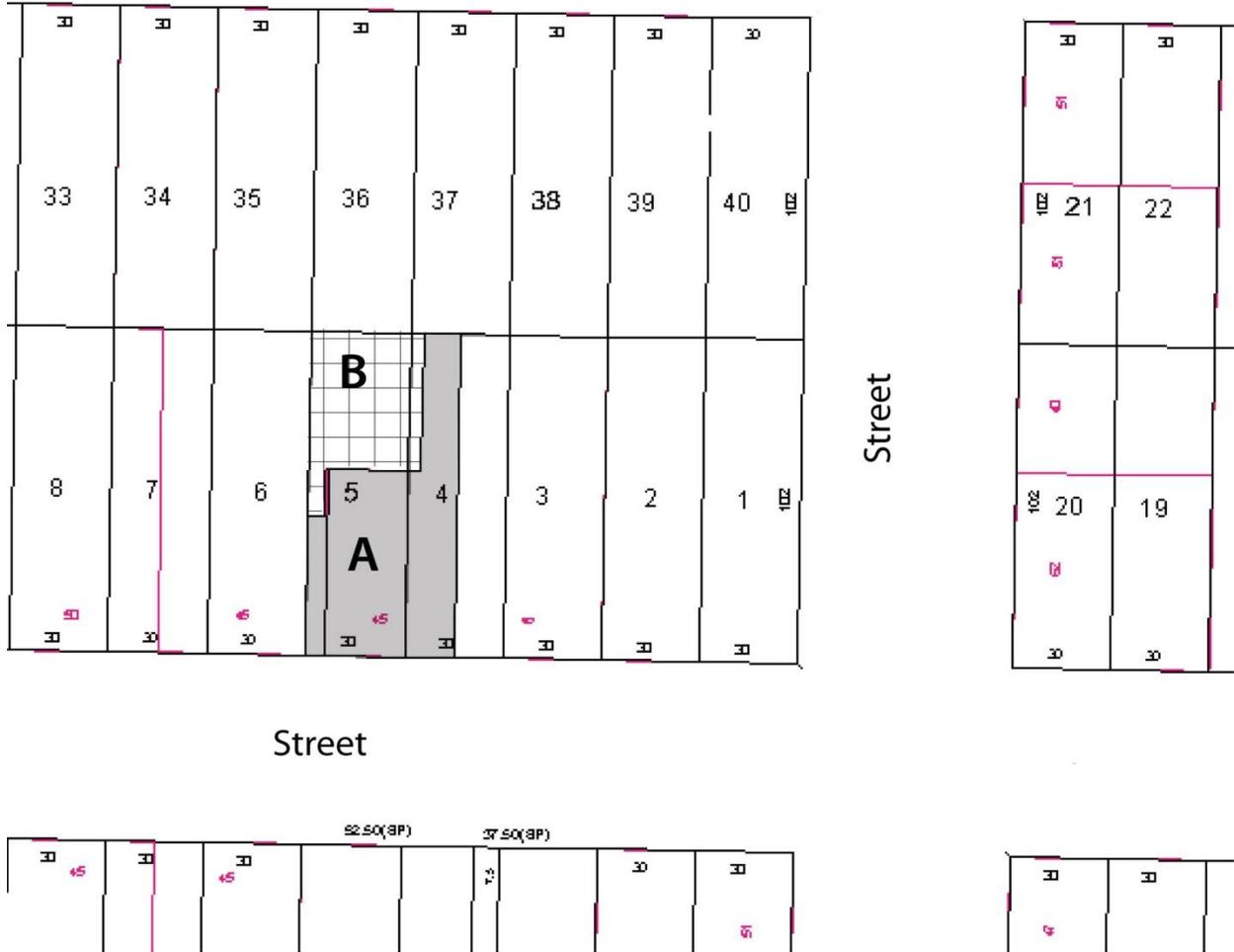
Example 3 – FLEXIBILITY WITHIN REASON – A proposed waiver process (included in proposal #1) would enable DPD to allow this plat, saving the existing house shown and promote infill housing on lots A-D.



An example of a possible subdivision under the proposed waiver and modification of the proposed platting standards intended to preserve an existing house (shown on Lot E) and allow for five lots in a Single-family 9600 zone (with a minimum lot size of 9,600 square feet*)

*Lots with areas under 9,600 are allowed pursuant to the existing 75/80 Rule.

Example 4 - HOUSES ON SMALL LOTS – Without new standards to make houses on small lots more proportionate, new development can seem crowded. (proposal #3 addresses this situation)



An example of 2 existing lots (Lots A and B) reconfigured prior to current standards. Lot B has an area of only 1,530 square feet.

The resulting houses on Lots A and B are pictured below (the older home to the left is on the adjacent Lot 6)



Under the proposal the new house to the rear on Lot B, constructed on the 1530-square-foot lot, would be lowered from 28 feet to 22 feet in height and the floor area would be reduced from 1,534 sq.ft. to 1,146 sq.ft. The house on Lot A, in front, is not changed by the proposal.

See illustration below with height limit shown:



These changes would help the new development fit in better with existing houses on neighboring lots.

Example 5 – Similar 1500-square-foot lots (Lots A and B are each 30 feet by 50 feet) with a new 25' structure constructed on Lot B, shown below. The adjacent lots are shaded for size comparison. For example, Lot 35 to the left is platted at 30 feet wide by 103 feet deep.



New structure on Lot B, with existing house on Lot A to the right. Since Lots A and B are less than 2,500 sq.ft. in area, the house on Lot B would be lowered to 22' from 25' if built under the proposal. The house has approximately 1,500 sq.ft. in area and could be reduced slightly in size under the proposal.

