

CONTINUED FROM THE MAY 16, 2006 MEETING

SUBJECT: TEXT AMENDMENT 06-1 – EXCEPTIONS FOR R-1 SMALL LOTS

INITIATED BY THE CITY COUNCIL

Recommendation:

To recommend amendment to the R-1 small lot exception standards to:

1. Allow the required front yard to contribute to the opens space requirement; and
2. Increase lot coverage from 65% to 70%.

Background:

On April 25, 2006, the City Council directed staff to prepare a Text Amendment to address small lot exceptions to the standards of the R-1 zone, and initiated an amendment to increase lot coverage and allow the front yard to contribute to the open space requirement. The matter was referred to the Planning Commission for report and recommendation. At the May 16 meeting the Planning Commission continued the matter, directing staff to notice property owners of small lots, and further examine the effect of the proposed changes on “half-lots.”

At the Commission’s request staff has provided a notice to all owners of small lots using the attached list of small lots. This report supplements the previous report and focuses on the impact of the proposed changes to half lots.

Analysis

Staff has identified over 250 lots that are considered small lots that are 2,100 square feet or less, and another 150 lots that are within 10% (i.e. up to 2,310 square feet) that may also be considered for small lot exceptions. About 70 of these lots are half lots. These parcels have been mapped to show the location of all the “small lots” in the City, which will be distributed at the Commission meeting. In the last report staff evaluated the impact of the proposed revisions on small lots in the Shakespeare Tract, noting that the modification could increase the floor area by as much as 360 square feet (see attachment 2). The total added floor area depends on whether the site fronts on a walk street or has street and alley access, or street only access, and the type of floor plan.

The modifications will also have some effect on the visual appearance and bulk of structures that may impact neighborhood compatibility. For example, by allowing this further reduction in open space, new buildings may appear slightly more bulky, and may extend closer to the front property line. Visually this is not expected to be very noticeable, especially on walk streets since the encroachment area provides a large setback from the walk street. Also, as previously noted, on vehicular streets with alley access, allowing the front setback to count as open space should encourage the use of the alley for garages rather than facing the garage toward the street. On lots which have street only access, the garage has to face the street and this change will therefore only result in slightly increased lot coverage which will have a negligible impact on appearance.

Impact on “Half Lots”

The half lots affected by the small lot exception vary in size and are located throughout the City, with the bulk of these lots ranging from about 900 square feet to approximately 1800 square feet, with the most typical sizes around 1,350-1,500 square feet (30’ wide by 45’ to 50’ feet deep). On a 1500 square foot 30’ x 50’ lot the maximum square footage of a two-story dwelling ranges

between approximately 1,120 and 1,320 square feet, or for a three-level building with minimum ceiling heights (if it can be squeezed within the 25-foot height limit) the square footage can increase to between approximately 1,970 and 2170 square feet.¹

In general, the impact of the proposed changes are much less on half-lots than on 30' x 70' lots that have both alley and street frontage. The use of the front yard for open space will have little or no effect since half-lots typically have driveways in their front yards (since the front yard provides the only possible garage access unless the lot is a corner lot). As such, the proposal to allow the front yard to contribute to the open space requirement has negligible benefit. The benefit of the increased lot coverage varies depending on the lot size and whether the lot fronts on an alley or a street, but will also have very limited effect. The higher lot coverage of 70% cannot be achieved in most cases because of the front, side, and rear yard requirements. For example on a 30' x 45' street fronting lot, the maximum amount of coverage that is possible after complying with the yard requirements is 65.7%, so the only benefit obtained with the increased coverage is 0.7% or approximately 10 square feet. The benefit for a 30' X 50' lot is approximately 33 square feet. The benefits for these half lots is more significant, however, on alley fronting lots (because of the lesser alley setback requirement), and the increase to 70% can be fully realized, equating to approximately 75 square feet (see attached half-lot exhibit)

In summary, staff believes these recommendations will allow for additional footage demanded by homeowners either remodeling or constructing new homes on 30' X 70' lots, and should reduce the need for Variances. However, these amendments have only limited effect on half lots, providing only some tangible benefit to half lots that front on alleys. As noted previously, the amendment should also increase the desirability of conventional floor plans on walk streets where the front yard open space directly connects to the open area available in the encroachment area. However, on most half-lots, a conventional floor plan is not a realistic option since such a large portion of the first floor must be for parking.

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Attachments:

1. Half-lot exhibit
2. Illustration of proposed change (on 30'x70' lots)
3. Small Lot Data Base
4. Public notice

¹ The actual square footage possible on a half-lot varies significantly depending on whether its alley or street frontage, and if street frontage whether the sidewalk is located at the property line, or located where part of the right of way can be use to satisfy the 17-foot setback requirement. The maximum on an alley fronting half lot 30'x50' is as follows: First floor 24-foot wide (30 minus two 3-foot side yards) X 36-foot depth (50 minus 9-foot for guest parking, 5-foot rear), with a 340 square foot garage: $24 \times 36 = 864$. Second floor $0.65 \times 1500 = 975$. Sum of first and second floors; $864 + 975 = 1839$ minus minimum 180 sq. ft. for open space = *1319 square feet*. . If a third floor is added it can be a maximum 855, assuming the balance of 120 sq. ft. cannot be provided on a roof deck (no room available within height limit), yielding a three story square footage of *2,174 sq.ft.* The amounts that can be built on the first floor is reduced by approximately 200 square feet for street fronting half lots because of the 17-foot garage setback requirement