

Date: March 2, 2024
To: Planning and Zoning Commission Members
From: Patrick R. Zenner, Development Services Manager
Re: Small Lot Standards Text Change

As discussed at the February 22, 2024 work session, the following dimensional standards for small and medium lots were accepted as the “baseline”.

Proposed Dimensional Standards

	Small Lot	Medium Lot
	R-1/R-2/R-MF	R-1
General Requirements		
Lot Area (Min/Max)	3000/4999	5000/6999
Lot Width (Min)	30-feet	30 feet
Front Setback	20-feet	20-feet
Side Setback	6-feet	6-feet
Rear Setback	10-feet	10-feet
Building height (Max)	35-feet	35-feet
Special Requirements		
Floor Area Ratio		
3000 to 5499 sq. ft	0.45	0.45
5500 to 5999 sq. ft		0.46
6000 to 6499 sq. ft		0.47
6500 to 6999 sq. ft		0.48
Ground Floor Sq. ft (Max)		
3000 to 3999 sq. ft	1250	
3500 to 4999 sq. ft	1450	
5000 to 5499 sq. ft		1600
5500 to 5999 sq. ft		2000
6000 to 6499 sq. ft		2400
6500 to 6999 sq. ft		2800

Several Commissioners requested that staff pursue generating a graphic representation of what this new style of development would produce. In response to that request, attached is a very rudimentary example of the differences in what the current UDC dimensional standards would produce and what the proposed dimensional standards could produce. The attached example uses lots within the recently approved Northridge Cottages development and was produced via SketchUp software.

The example imported the approved final plat and has not alter lot sizes; however, has applied the FAR calculations (foreground structures) to show the building “mass” differences between current and proposed dimensional standards. The first graphic shows two sets of buildings. The building masses in the background are maximum building envelopes based on current dimensional requirements as applied to the permitted development with Northridge Cottages, a PD-zoned development. The buildings in the foreground represent several different building types that could be construction which have had the proposed FAR and lot coverage restrictions are applied to them. The second graphic is a closeup of the foreground buildings with annotation/notes.

The example attempts to illustrate that options exist for someone to utilize the FAR allocated to a specific lot and have the ability to create block face diversity. This example does not show what would happen in a development that incorporates lots of varying width or area; however, it is safe to say that those impacts would do nothing more than assure greater construction diversity in housing types and styles. A take-away from this example is that the introduction of FAR removes the likelihood of a subdivision being created with housing that seeks to simply maximize its “buildable area” and/or “building envelope”.

While staff does not believe that additional examples are needed to illustrate the benefits of the proposed dimensional standards, there are 2 or 3 other examples of approved “cottage” development which have yet to begin construction. As part of proposing revisions to the subdivision requirements needed to accommodate small and medium lot development generally, it may be valuable to produce a visualization using them that illustrates why revisions are necessary and if made how those changes will help to facilitate this new style of development.

In further responding to Commission discussion at the February 22 work session with respect to the proposed definitions for “building area”, “building envelope” and “Floor Area Ratio (FAR)”, staff has reviewed the City Code. As noted, the UDC already has a definition of “building area” and that definition will remain unaltered. However, no definitions exist for “building envelope” and “Floor Area Ratio (FAR)”. While there was general agreement with the proposed definition of “building envelope” there was significant discussion about the definition for FAR and the need to clarify if the calculation was based on “gross” or “net” floor area.

During work session discussion, two definitions with respect to “floor area” were identified by the Commission. The first definition, within the UDC, specifically dealt with “floor area, gross” and the second was within Chapter 26 [Taxation] and referenced “total floor area”. Commissioners requested that the proposed definition for FAR be modified to match that presented in the UDC.

However, upon further review of the UDC definition for “floor area, gross”, it was determined that this definition is located within a section of the UDC that has terms only applicable to property located within regulated floodplains and the city’s floodplain overlay (FP-O) district. As such, the definition offered within Chapter 26 appears to be more appropriate to use given it is applied generally with respect to building construction. Furthermore, the definition in Chapter 26 can be easily depicted on a plot plan reviewed by the

Building and Site Development Division when issuing a building permit given it is the area within the outside perimeter walls of a dwelling – generally the footprint of the structure as shown on a plot plan.

Given this finding, staff proposes the following definition for “Floor Area Ratio (FAR)” be included within the UDC in Section 29-1.11(a) [Definitions – General]:

Floor Area Ratio (FAR). The total floor area within the **perimeter of the outside walls of the principal structure** on a lot including the basement floor area, without deduction for hallways, stairs, closets, thickness of walls, columns or other features, divided by the total area of the lot upon which the principal structure is located.

The **bold** text in the above definition is identified to emphasize the area of a future dwelling that would be included in the calculation of FAR. Staff believes the definition captures the essence of the Commission’s prior discussions in that it is a “gross” calculation of area with the area inside the “perimeter walls” of the structure defining the outside boundary to which the measurement is tied. Furthermore, this definition also makes a clear distinction that allowable FAR on the lot is tied to just the “principal structure” on that lot. This means that detached accessory structures such as a garage, storage building, or ADU (not proposed as being permitted) would not count toward the maximum buildable square footage allowed on a small or medium lot. While detached structures would not be included in the calculation of allowable FAR, their area is regulated by provisions contained within sec. 29-3.3(ii) of the UDC.

Staff continues to review the subdivision regulation to identify where revisions will be required to ensure a seamless integration of the new lot types into the built environment. Given the visualization provided, it is likely appropriate for Commissioner’s to begin to consider if there should be imposition of use-specific standards applied to developments that choose to seek platting actions that incorporate this new style of development. While general discussion has occurred on this matter and it is believed that the currently retained “central city” consultant may generate such provisions, this amendment may be ready prior to the conclusion of their efforts. As such, thinking of “general” standards that staff could research may be appropriate.

Staff looks forward to our discussion on this topic at the March 7 work session. Please contact me if you have questions.