

Date: February 18, 2024
To: Planning and Zoning Commission Members
From: Patrick R. Zenner, Development Services Manager
Re: Small Lot Standards Text Change

During the January 18, 2024 work session, discussion of this topic, Commission asked that the staff considered making changes to the proposed “ground floor” maximum structure coverages applicable to the “small” lot category. Concerns were expressed that the recommendations offer may be too prescriptive and could have the effect of reducing the type of development that is sought within this future lot category. Additionally, during discussion of the proposed dimensional standards, a question was raised as to what was meant by the term “building envelope”. It was recommended that a definition be offered that would provide clarity on what this term was intended to mean within the context of small and medium lots.

Based on these observations and requests, staff has modified the what was previously presented at the January 18, 2024 work session. The table below shows what the proposed dimensional standards would be for small and medium-sized lots within the R-1, R-2, and R-MF districts. It should be noted that this table will need to be integrated into sec. 29-4.1(a), Table 4.1-1 the UDC once the standards have been finalized.

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

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The highlighted values in the above table represent the changes offered by staff to address the concerns raised by the Commissioner during the previous work session. The first change consolidates two categories of lots (3000-3499 and 3500-3999) into a single new category and increases the allowed “ground floor” square footage of a future dwelling. The second change consolidates two categories of lots (4000-4499 and 4500-4999) into a single category; however, does not change the allowed “ground floor” square footage of a future dwelling. The rationale behind the first change was to increase the allowed “ground floor” area of a future dwelling to be slightly greater the average of all four of the lot categories originally discussed at the January 18 work session.

The increase in the amount of “ground floor” area allowed on lots ranging from 3000 sq. ft. to 3999 sq. ft. permits opportunities to construction single-story homes more consistent with the existing built environment and may reduce financial barriers encountered when a structure is forced to go vertical. The increase in “ground floor” area on a 3000 sq. ft. lot will not exceed the building envelope established by the reduced setbacks (1281 sq. ft.) or result in construction depleting the maximum area allowed when the FAR limitation is imposed (1350 sq. ft.). Similarly, as lot sizes increase, the expansion in “ground floor” area permits the opportunity for greater single-story construction to occur on the lot which will likely result in the future construction appearing similar to that within the build environment given all available building envelope cannot be covered.

Consolidation of the two categories of lots between 4000-4999 sq. ft. was done simply to remove unnecessary segregation. The maximum “ground floor” area of 1450 sq. ft. is only 150 sq. ft. less than that for a traditional R-2 lot that is subject to standard UDC setbacks. To ensure there is lot diversity and justification for allowing a 4000-4999 lot to be created, staff believes it is essential that some limitation on “ground floor” area be maintained.

Finally, with respect to the defining what “building envelope” is intended to mean in the context of these revisions staff has reviewed several definitions and concluded what is really attempting to be conveyed is more appropriately defined as “buildable area”. The UDC has a definition of this term which is as follows:

Buildable area. The area of the lot that building(s) may occupy, which includes the area of the lot behind the required building line as designated by the building form standards. The buildable area sets the limits of the building footprint now and in the future—any additions shall be within the specified buildable area.

The more conventional definition of “building envelope” from a Land Use prospective is as follows:

A building envelope is ***the maximum three-dimensional space*** on a zoning lot within which a structure can be built, as permitted by applicable height, setback and yard controls.

Inclusion of a definition similar to that shown above into the UDC in the context of this text amendment would not be impactful and may better help to convey zoning/development concepts that will be brought on-line by the introduction of FAR into the Code. The conversation surrounding this text amendment has touched on the “multi-dimensional” approach to land development addressed within the term “building envelope” and as such it likely would be best to include in the Code moving forward.

So, in summary, two new definitions “building envelope” and “Floor Area Ratio (FAR)” will need to be added as a result of this proposed regulatory revisions. The definition of these terms are as follows:

Building envelope. The maximum three-dimensional space on a lot within which a structure can be built, as permitted by applicable height, setback and yard controls.

Floor Area Ratio (FAR). The total floor area (including basements) of the building or buildings on a lot, divided by the total area of the lot upon which the building or buildings are located.

As noted, there are several additional amendments that will need to be discussed with respect to the subdivision standards contained within Article 5 to ensure integration of these new lot styles occurs seamlessly into the existing land use pattern. Furthermore, as also noted, if these regulatory changes are approved they will not grant any “by-right” privilege to a property owner to create small or medium sized-lots given such creation would constitute new development triggering a platting action. The level of platting action would be dependent on the number of lots being proposed as well as the status of the lot or lots chosen for development.

Staff looks forward to our discussion on this topic at its February 22 work session. Please contact me if you have questions.