

Westside Regional Alliance of Councils Land Use and Planning Committee

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WESTWOOD NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL

To: WRAC
Fr: Sharon Commins, Barbara Broide, Land Use and Planning Committee
Date: Nov. 5, 2017
Re: Resolution: Small Lot Subdivision Ordinance Amendment (proposed)

Resolution: LUPC voted 7-0-0 to revise the proposed Small Lot Subdivision Amendment to, and complete the on-going planning process in the near future:

1. Retain all of the setbacks for the underlying zone.
 - a. No fake grass. Green landscaping (trees) must be planted in dirt (not pots).
2. Rear setback of 10 ft. required for the 3rd floor and above. Rear setback of 15 ft. required for 3rd floor and above when abuts low-density zone (R1, R2).
3. Roof decks shall not substitute for ground-floor open space with grass in high-density zones.
 - a. Roof deck shall be set back at least 5 ft. from edge of roof to increase safety and reduce privacy intrusion on neighbors.
4. Guest parking of 1 space per 4 units (or minimum of 1 space if fewer than 4 units).

Facts and background:

1. The proposed amendment increases setbacks only for projects next to R1 zones, and not for medium- or high-density zones, even though most Small Lot Subdivision projects are adjacent to RD, R3 and R4 zones.
2. For R1 zones, the rear setback is increased only by 5 ft. from 5 ft. to 10 ft., instead of the 15 ft. as required by those R zones.
3. For other higher density R zones, the rear setback remains the same at 5 ft., instead of the 15 ft. as required in those R zones.
4. Rows of Small Lot Subdivision projects under the proposed Amendment will create neighborhoods similar to tenements, with no grassy open space available at ground level. The backyards will become concrete storage areas for trash and maintenance equipment.

Findings and justifications:

1. The intent of the SLS is to accommodate home ownership, not to change zoning or development standards. This ordinance changes zoning standards, and developers should use other available options instead:
 - a. Affordable housing incentives, i.e. provide an affordable housing unit for waivers of development standards.
 - b. Zone Variance, in which developers must make findings and justify their request, which is based mainly on problems with the site (sloped, etc.).
2. The City has provided no justification or reasoning for decreased setbacks. It is a handout to developers with no benefit to the community.

3. Near unanimous public comment by stakeholders at public hearings in 2016 protested stuffing in too many units on sites, which was accommodated by reduced setbacks. The only persons who spoke in favor of reduced setbacks were developers.
4. With 5 ft. setbacks on the side and rear, no ground-level grass play area can be provided, and no trees can be planted (see photo of Missouri/Stoner’s back yard). The city has lost 30% of its tree canopy in recent years because of mega-developments that have huge lot coverage – as is proposed in the SLS amendment.



Missouri/Stoner: 10-ft rear yard (no grassy play area) 5-ft. side yard (all concrete, no trees)



Missouri/Stoner project: Design is blocky with all stucco and no stepbacks or articulation (“logistics center” or “warehouse” school of design)

Examples of better designs that other developers build, and SLS developers can build:



2-story houses: 2116 Federal



2.5-story houses: Granville/Butler



3-story houses w/ stepbacks: Missouri/Colby



2 story houses: Missouri/Butler



Federal/La Grange: 3.5 stories