

# Memorandum

**Date:** October 8, 2009

**To:** Plan Commission

**From:** Planning Division Staff and Zoning Administrator

**Re:** Suggested Lot Size Modifications for Residential Zoning Districts

## Introduction

Staff and consultants have worked over the past several weeks to begin applying the draft zoning districts to maps of the City, which has resulted in a better understanding of how the many specific standards in the draft code will work in practice, especially with regard to the lot size requirements in residential districts.

This memorandum identifies recommended modifications to lot area standards for some of the proposed residential districts. During initial mapping exercises, staff concluded that these changes will likely allow the new zoning districts to be more effectively applied, result in a greater proportion of conforming uses and lots, and ensure protection of the existing and planned character of many areas in the city.

The attached spreadsheets and map provide data and background information for your review in conjunction with this memorandum.

**Sheet 1** shows a comparison between minimum lot sizes in current residential districts, those in the draft zoning code, and recommended modifications. In addition, this sheet includes corresponding changes in minimum lot widths. The basic reasoning for modifying lot width is similar to that for lot size.

**Sheet 2** provides a more specific breakdown of the sizes of existing residential lots within the City that are zoned R4 and R4A, and demonstrates the proportion of these that could be affected by the proposed lot size changes.

**Map 1**, for background information, summarizes statistics for *existing* residential zoning districts.

## Mapping Process Update

At the October 8 Plan Commission Working Session, staff will provide examples of the following references, which guide the mapping process:

- Land use recommendations in the Comprehensive Plan and adopted neighborhood plans
- Current zoning districts
- Existing land use
- Existing residential lot size

As expected, some *existing* zoning districts are consistent with plan recommendations and also translate easily to *proposed* districts (e.g. R1 to SRC1, R2 to SRC2, TRC1, or TRC2, R3 to SRC3 or TRC3, etc.). However, during working sessions involving near Isthmus areas, especially those zoned R4 and R4A, staff recognized that changes to the lot area standards could make the proposed districts more easily applicable to those areas. While mapping work on the Isthmus is only beginning, the changes outlined in this memorandum are recommended with the Isthmus in mind. It is possible that additional mapping experience may suggest further adjustments, but we believe these modifications will address many expected situations.

## **Impetus for Revising Minimum Lot Sizes**

Essentially, difficulty in applying appropriate bulk and use requirements in the draft zoning districts to areas close to the Isthmus (especially areas currently zoned R4 and R4A) led to the staff recommendation for new, reduced minimum lot sizes. R4 and R4A are the most diverse existing residential districts with broad application throughout the city, and include near-isthmus areas where residential development historically occurred on very small lots. Over the years, some R4 and R4A areas have become quite varied, while others have remained largely single-family in character. (Note: The R4 areas dominated by SF and 2-family homes are arguably “overzoned” today, but any addition of a new dwelling unit currently requires conditional use approval, which would not be the case in the new zoning code). Thus, rather than easily fitting into one or two new zoning districts, R4 and R4A areas will most likely fit into several, including but not limited to TRC2, TRC3, TRC4, TRV1, TRV2, SRV1, and SRV2.

When working to apply these draft districts, staff recognized that the draft lot sizes (often in conjunction with housing types allowed) often led to a mismatch with certain parts of the city near (and likely on) the Isthmus. Staff found that in order to minimize nonconforming uses and nonconforming bulk/lot size, some of the areas currently zoned R4 and R4A would have either needed to be rezoned in a very fine-grained “patchwork quilt” of districts or once again be “overzoned” to districts that would allow and encourage densities and housing types not consistent with plan recommendations.

The application of new districts will require very careful attention to existing land use and adopted plans, and necessarily will result in some nonconformities. However, the proposed revisions to required minimum lot sizes will help to minimize these nonconformities while alleviating the need to create a spot-zoned/fine-grained “patchwork quilt”, especially in the R4 and R4A districts. The increments between the revised lot sizes are also a bit more consistent and easier to present and administer.

## **Reasons for Specific Modifications**

### **TRC2 (SF only)**

*Reduce min. lot size from 4800 to 4000 sq.ft.*

The reduction in size from 4800 to 4000 allows for many more lots in predominantly SF areas to be conforming. 831 (27%) of the existing single family R4 lots and 136 (33%) of the existing SF lots in R4A are between 4000 and 4800 sq. ft.

### **TRC3 (Currently drafted as SF & 2-family)**

*Reduce min. lot size from 4800 to 4000 sq.ft. and permit 3-unit buildings on lots  $\geq$ 6000 sq. ft.*

This reduction has a similar effect. 23% of the existing 2-family R4 lots and 44% of the existing 2-family R4A lots are between 4000 and 4800 sq. ft. The addition of 3-unit buildings as a permitted use makes it easier to apply this district in areas where there is a mix of 1, 2, and some 3-unit buildings on small lots. At the same time, widespread conversion of 1 and 2 family homes to 3-unit buildings would be precluded due to insufficient lot area to allow a conversion. For the most part, the existing 3-unit buildings in these areas would now be a conforming use, but would have nonconforming bulk.

#### **TRC4 (Currently drafted as SF only)**

*Reduce min. lot size from 3500 to 3000 sq. ft., and add 2-family buildings as a permitted (or conditional) use on lots  $\geq$ 6000 sq. ft.*

Reduction from 3500 to 3000 sq. ft. allows for more conformity, especially in residential areas on and near the Isthmus. The 3000 sq. ft. minimum reflects the standards included in the 1940s zoning code, and not coincidentally, what is on the ground in many older neighborhoods. In R4, 6% of the SF lots and 3% of the 2-family lots lie within this range, and in the R4A, 9% of SF lots and 5% of 2-family lots are within this range.

The addition of 2-family as a permitted (or conditional) use in this district would allow for easier application to areas where SF and 2-family are intermixed, and the 6000 sq. ft. min. lot size for 2-family dwellings would preclude most conversions into 2-family dwellings, since most lots are quite small (only 571, or 19%, of the single-family lots in the R4 district are over 6000 square feet, and many of these would likely end up being mapped in the TRC2 district, which only permits SF homes.)

In addition, this shift would allow for smaller *new* lots than what is currently allowed in the R2Z district, so long as all other bulk requirements are met.

#### **TRV1 (SF through 4-family) and TRV2 (SF through 8-family)**

*Generally reduce lot sizes*

Similar reasoning for these shifts in lot size, but would be applied to areas with a greater diversity of housing types. No proposed change in uses.

#### **TRU1 and TRU2**

*Generally reduce lot sizes*

To date, these have not been applied during map testing or fully explored, as the downtown mapping has not yet occurred. We recognize that reduced lot sizes may need to be adjusted for many of the same reasons as noted above. The proposed shifts simplify the increments to make them easier to understand, and also allow for the development of 1 or 2 unit buildings on smaller lots.

#### **Conclusion**

As preparation of the draft maps in underway, staff have recognized that some modification to lot area standards may be beneficial, particularly for older areas currently zoned R4 and R4A. Staff anticipate further discussion on related issues at upcoming work sessions, especially related to the Isthmus and Downtown areas.

The purpose of this memorandum is to explain the reasoning behind the proposed changes to minimum lot size within several of the new districts for discussion with the Plan Commission as the mapping of the new zoning districts continues.



# Sheet 1 - October 8, 2009 Plan Commission Working Session

## CURRENT CODE Minimum Lot Sizes

	1	2Flat	Twin	3	4	5	6	7	8
R1	8000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
R2	6000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
R2S	4000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
R2T	5000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
R2Y	4000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
R2Z	3500	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
R3	6000	8000	8000	-	-	-	-	-	-
R4*	6000	6000	6000	6000	8000	10000	12000	14000	16000
R5*	6000	6000	6000	6000	6000	6500	7800	8100	9400

\*Some exceptions would allow the creation of smaller lots in these districts, and the vast majority of lots existing in these districts are now "nonconforming", <6000 sq. ft.

## DRAFT CODE Minimum Lot Sizes

	1	2Flat	Twin	3	4	5	6	7	8
SRC1	8000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
SRC2	6000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
SRC3	6000	8000	8000	-	-	-	-	-	-
SRV1	6000	8000	8000	6000	8000	10,000	12000	14000	16000
SRV2	6000	6000	8000	6000	8000	10000	12000	14000	16000
TRC1	6000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TRC2	4800	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TRC3	4800	4800	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TRC4	3500	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TRV1	6000	8000	8000	8000	-	-	-	-	-
TRV2	4800	4800	9600	9000	12000	10000	12000	14000	16000
TRU1	6000	8000	8000	3000	4000	5000	6000	7000	8000
TRU2	6000	8000	8000	2400	3600	4400	5200	6000	6800

## DRAFT CODE Minimum Lot Widths

	1	2Flat	Twin	3	4	5-8	>8
SRC1	60	-	-	-	-	-	-
SRC2	50	-	-	-	-	-	-
SRC3	50	50	50	-	-	-	-
SRV1	50	50	50	60	60	60	-
SRV2	50	50	50	60	60	60	60
TRC1	50	-	-	-	-	-	-
TRC2	40	-	-	-	-	-	-
TRC3	40	40	-	-	-	-	-
TRC4	35	-	-	-	-	-	-
TRV1	50	50	50	50	-	-	-
TRV2	40	40	40	60	60	60	-
TRU1	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
TRU2	50	50	50	50	50	50	50

## SUGGESTED Revised Min. Lot Sizes (changes red, new uses highlighted)

	1	2Flat	Twin	3	4	5	6	7	8
SRC1	8000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
SRC2	6000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
SRC3	6000	8000	8000	-	-	-	-	-	-
SRV1	6000	8000	8000	8000	8000	-	-	-	-
SRV2	6000	6000	8000	8000	8000	10000	12000	14000	16000
TRC1	6000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TRC2	4000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TRC3	4000	4000	-	6000	-	-	-	-	-
TRC4	3000	6000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TRV1	3000	4000	6000	8000	-	-	-	-	-
TRV2	3000	4000	6000	6000	8000	10000	12000	14000	16000
TRU1	3000	4000	4000	4000	4000	5000	6000	7000	8000
TRU2	3000	4000	4000	4000	4000	5000	5500	6000	6500

## SUGGESTED Revised Min. Lot Widths

	1	2Flat	Twin	3	4	5-8	>8
SRC1	60	-	-	-	-	-	-
SRC2	50	-	-	-	-	-	-
SRC3	50	50	50	-	-	-	-
SRV1	50	50	50	60	60	60	-
SRV2	50	50	50	60	60	60	60
TRC1	50	-	-	-	-	-	-
TRC2	40	-	-	-	-	-	-
TRC3	40	40	-	40	-	-	-
TRC4	30	40	-	-	-	-	-
TRV1	30	40	50	50	-	-	-
TRV2	30	40	40	50	50	60	-
TRU1	30	40	40	50	50	50	50
TRU2	30	40	40	50	50	50	50

## Sheet 2 - October 8, 2009 Plan Commission Working Session

### EXISTING R4 Residential Lots: Size by # Units, October 2009

Sq. Ft. /# Units	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	>8
<3000	187	40	4	2	1	0	0	0	0
3000-4000	431	84	13	5	2	3	1	0	1
4000-6000	1887	578	89	34	8	11	0	0	1
6000-8000	337	114	36	36	3	5	1	0	2
8000-10000	124	105	25	231	9	4	0	0	1
10000-12000	37	49	7	144	5	4	1	0	0
>12000	73	34	11	250	2	37	10	212	178
<b>Total</b>	<b>3076</b>	<b>1004</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>702</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>183</b>
<b>Total Lots</b>	<b>5469</b>								

### EXISTING R4A Residential Lots: Size by # Units, October 2009

Sq. Ft. /# Units	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	>8
<3000	48	14	4	0	0	1	0	0	0
3000-4000	260	146	25	10	4	0	1	1	0
4000-6000	65	37	20	9	4	1	0	0	2
6000-8000	17	8	4	9	2	2	0	0	0
8000-10000	4	1	0	3	1	0	0	0	1
10000-12000	1	1	2	0	0	1	0	0	1
>12000	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>407</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Total Lots</b>	<b>854</b>								

### Data Most Pertinent to the Proposed Lot Size Shift

#### R4

Sq. Ft. /# Units	1	2
3000-3500	182 (6%)	31 (3%)
4000-4800	831 (27%)	231 (23%)

#### R4A

Sq. Ft. /# Units	1	2
3000-3500	36 (9%)	12 (5%)
4000-4800	136 (33%)	96 (44%)

The shifts in lot size from 3500 to 3000 sq. ft. and 4800 to 4000 sq. ft. has a meaningful impact on the proportion of R4 and R4A lots than can be conforming in new districts, as exemplified in the tables to the left (i.e. of the 3076 single-family lots in R4, 27% are between 4000 and 4800 sq.ft.).

Map 1 EXISTING Residential Zoning District Summary		Zoning Districts										
	R1R	R1	R2	R2S	R2T	R2Y	R2Z	R3	R4	R4A	R5	R6/R6H
Total Lots	87	20900	13140	254	668	86	87	3356	5469	811	949	769
Total Units	88	20986	13413	254	668	86	87	5826	22557	1411	5915	8052
% of Citywide Units	0.1%	26.4%	16.9%	0.3%	0.8%	0.1%	0.1%	7.3%	28.4%	1.8%	7.5%	10.1%
Mean Lot Size (sqft)	52231	12739	7802	6887	8500	5168	4176	9355	13574	5156	11966	7431
Median Lot Size	44974	11129	7374	6059	7474	4820	3769	6717	5281	4773	4830	4422
Lot Size/du	51637	12687	7643	6887	8500	5168	4176	5389	3291	2964	1920	710
Acres	104	6112	2353	40	130	10	8	721	1704	96	261	131
% of Res acreage	0.9%	52.4%	20.2%	0.3%	1.1%	0.1%	0.1%	6.2%	14.6%	0.8%	2.2%	1.1%
Net Density (u/ac)	0.8	3.4	5.7	6.3	5.1	8.4	10.4	8.1	13.2	14.7	22.7	61.4
Universe = As of 10/2009, all lots in residential districts with >=1 dwelling unit (excludes PUDs, undeveloped residential lots, and nonresidential uses in Res Districts)												

