



PREPARED FOR THE PLAN COMMISSION

Proposal: Zoning Text Amendment, General Planning (Subdivision) Ordinance
Text Amendment

Legistar File ID #: [88735](#) Deep Residential "Backyard Lots"

Prepared By: Zoning and Planning Staff

[88735](#) – This code change eases some requirements to enable the development of deep residential lots, more commonly referred to as "backyard lots" or "flag lots."

Deep residential lots are lot divisions which result in new lots generally to the rear of the developed front lot, or are part of a redeveloped larger lot, with a "flagpole" strip of land to a public right of way for access and utilities. Currently, deep residential lots are a conditional use and require a 30' wide strip of land to connect the rear lot to the public right-of-way. Within the Zoning Code, this amendment removes the conditional use requirement and modifies the minimum lot width for the access to the right-of-way to 10'. The amendment also strikes some unnecessary language.

Deep residential lots are somewhat rare, primarily because the current requirement of a 30' access strip eliminates the possibility of subdivision for most lots because this strip of land must be accommodated in addition to the required minimum lot frontage for the existing lot. The proposal for a 10' access strip allows for the minimum 8' wide driveway access and the utility connections. A narrower strip connecting to the right-of-way will make the option for subdivision under the deep residential lots more possible for some lots.

The code change also includes modification of MGO 16.23, which includes standards for land subdivision. The amendment reduces the minimum lot depth for lots within certain zoning districts from 100' to 80' to standardize the minimum lot depth for lots in all residential districts at 80'. At its meeting on June 26, 2025, the Housing Policy Committee recommended an amendment to this ordinance that would further reduce this minimum lot depth to 75'. These changes also clarify that the access and utility strip part of a deep residential lot is not part of the calculation of the average lot depth.

In order to approve a deep residential lot division, both resulting lots are required to meet typical district dimensional requirements, including front/side/rear yard setbacks, minimum lot area, and minimum lot width. These requirements will result in a practical separation between the development (the home, detached accessory structures) on zoning lots, and yard areas. With the recommendation to further reduce the minimum lot depth, the Housing Policy Committee also recommended establishing a standard 15' front setback for the rear lot. This is particularly relevant when lots meeting the minimum depth are located in districts that require deeper front yard setbacks—such as 30'-- in order to maintain a buildable area of reasonable size on the rear lot.

Additional zoning code requirements, such as building forms, allowable projections into setbacks, and driveway design will continue to apply to development on deep residential lots.

The following chart identifies the current and proposed lot requirements including the changes recommended by the Housing Policy Committee on June 26:

	Current	Proposed
Minimum Lot Width	The minimum lot width for the zoning district (for the front lot) plus 30' (for the back lot's flagpole access area)	The minimum lot width for the zoning district (for the front lot) plus 10' (for the back lot's flagpole access area)
Minimum Lot Depth	100' in all districts, except Traditional Residential-Consistent (TR-C), Traditional Residential-Varied (TR-V), Traditional Residential-Urban (TR-U), and Traditional Residential-Planned (TR-P) districts, which have a minimum of 80'	Originally, proposed to be minimum of 80' in all districts. Housing Policy Committee recommended minimum of 75' in all districts. The flagpole portion of the back lot does not count towards minimum lot depth.
Minimum Lot Area	The minimum lot area for the zoning district (for the front lot) and the minimum lot area for the zoning district, not including the flagpole access area (for the back lot)	No change
Front Yard Setback	Both the front lot and the back lot must meet the front yard setback required by the zoning district (ranges from 15' to 30')	Front lot must meet the front yard setback required by the zoning district. Back lot must meet a 15' front yard setback from the rear property line of the front lot.
Plan Commission Conditional Use Approval	Required	Not Required

Staff supports this amendment.

Additional Background on Backyard Lots

The following three renderings provide a conceptual illustration for the purposes of communicating how a deep residential lot development can occur and result in a developable rear lot.



The following table includes a basic summary of prerequisite lot conditions in various zoning districts that may make a lot eligible for a deep residential lot division. This summary does not account for site-specific conditions, such as the placement of existing buildings, or factors that may constrain lot division or development on lots, such as easements or certain natural features. It is estimated that approx. 3,800 lots (approx. 7% of residential lots) in the city meet these basic prerequisites.

Zoning District(s)	Lot Depth*	Lot Size (must be at least twice the minimum lot size for the zoning district)	Lot Width at Street (must be 10' wider than the minimum lot width for the zoning district)
SR-C1	150'	16,000 sq. ft.	70'
SR-C2 or TR-C1	150'	12,000 sq. ft.	60'
SR-C3	150'	16,000 sq. ft.	60'
TR-C2 or TR-C4	150'	8,000 sq. ft.	50'
TR-C3	150'	6,000 sq. ft.	40'
TRR	150'	52,272 sq. ft.	75'

**With changes recommended by Housing Policy Committee on June 26.*