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DESIGN GUIDELINES

Site Planning



3 Site Planning



The Rock Row development in Eagle Rock features a central driveway with alternative paving.

Constructing infill housing offers a unique set of design challenges not only on the parcel level, but also on the neighborhood level and within the public realm. Developers and architects must therefore consider the design elements of each small lot home and how they will enhance the overall neighborhood character and vitality of the larger public realm.

Parcel

Small lot design is fundamentally a site planning challenge. It requires addressing practical spatial requirements while simultaneously creating high-quality living environments. These spatial requirements include: small lot sizes and awkward configurations; parking and automobile access; pedestrian circulation; adequate access to air, light, and ventilation; outdoor space and privacy; and refuse bin placement and utilities location. Developers must address these issues in ways that ultimately enhance the living environment of each dwelling unit.

Additionally, each home must exhibit a high level of design quality, including: well-articulated entries and facades to each dwelling unit, proportionate windows, quality building materials, connections to a pedestrian circulation system, and context-sensitive elements.

Neighborhood

By its very nature, infill development occurs in neighborhoods with preexisting development and characteristics, and should therefore supplement to and enhance the overall quality of the neighborhood. At this

scale, developers and architects must consider the three-dimensional nature of the entire development, including height, massing, siting, and orientation. These characteristics must relate to the surrounding built form, respecting the overall neighborhood character and existing topography.

Other considerations include building patterns, streetscape characteristics, orientation to the street, pedestrian routes, transit stops, parking arrangements, and opportunities for defensible space considerations, each of which impact a development's integration into the neighborhood context.

Public Realm

Each infill project, however small, must contribute to a vital and coherent public realm through an improved network of streets and sidewalks that is pleasant, interesting, and comfortable for pedestrian activity. To do so, each project should focus on the relationship between the proposed small lot subdivision and the public environment, with emphasis on: building siting and orientation, height and massing, articulation of facades and entry ways, building fenestration, pedestrian circulation, type and placement of street trees, landscaping and transitional spaces, and location of driveways and garages.

Objective: Design and configure housing to be consistent with applicable General and Specific Plans, be compatible with the existing neighborhood, while also striking a balance between parking, adequate common areas, and the public realm.



Through the use of courtyards and grasscrete paving, the Perlita Mews development in Atwater Village strives for livable shared spaces.



Sufficient space should be provided for an entry, landing and transitional landscaping between the sidewalk and private entryway.

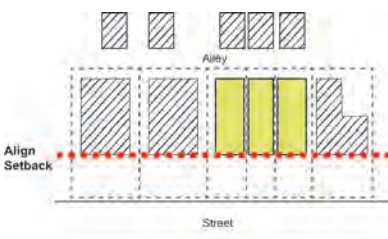
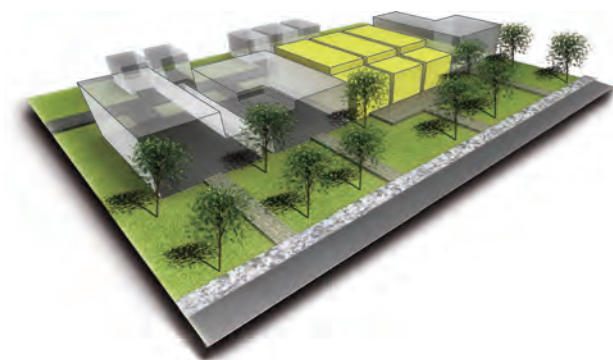
RELATIONSHIP TO THE STREET GUIDELINES

When designed well, small lot developments can enhance the preexisting character of a good street or improve a fragmented one. Therefore, small lot developments should embrace, rather than ignore, the street. Although there are no requirements for front setbacks, neighborhood context shall provide direction for setting buildings back from the street.

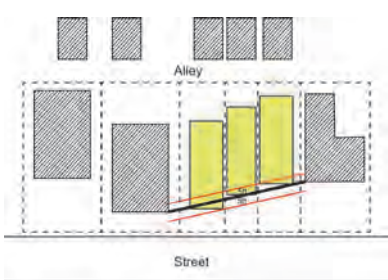
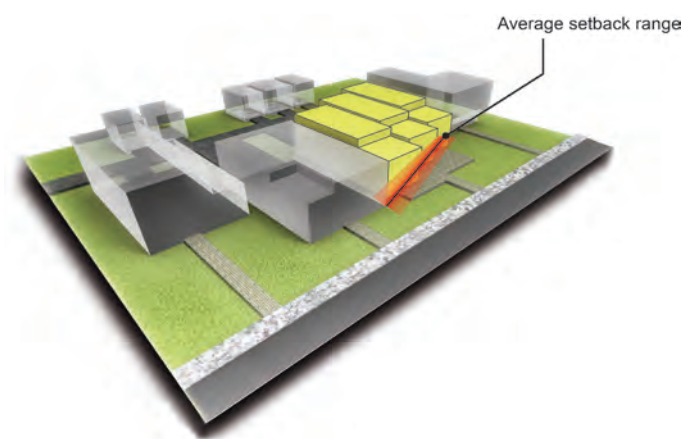
Minimal setbacks are appropriate for small lots on commercial streets. Similarly, setbacks are not required for dwelling units with ground-floor retail. On residential streets, preexisting front setbacks should guide the distance that a development is set back from the street. Moreover, a 5 foot side setback is required of any property adjacent to the perimeter of the small lot project and development.

- 1 In areas with an existing prevailing street setback, align the small lot development to be consistent with this setback and provide continuity along the street edge. Slight deviations from the setback are acceptable.
- 2 On residential streets with varying setbacks, the front yard setback should be within 5 feet of the average setback of adjacent properties.
- 3 On commercial streets with a range of setbacks, small lot developments should nearly abut the sidewalk, allowing sufficient room for entry, front stoop, and some transitional landscaping. However, this is not required for dwellings with ground floor retail.

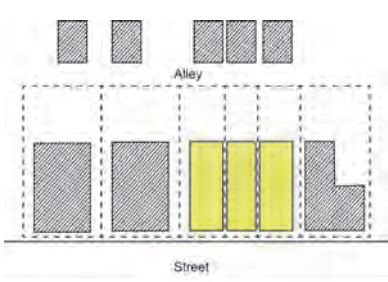
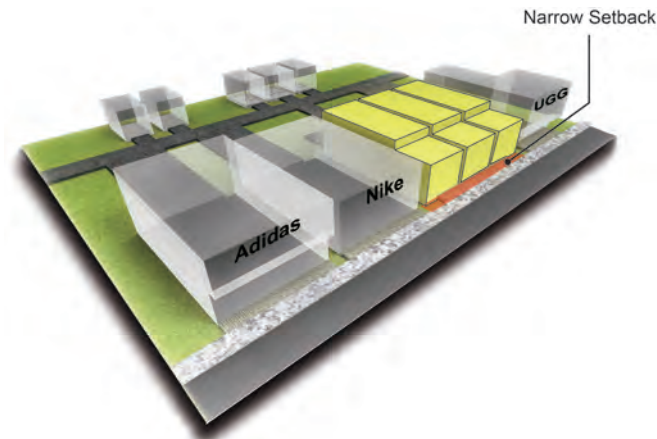
RELATIONSHIP TO THE STREET ILLUSTRATIONS



Where applicable, proposed small lot developments should align with the prevailing setback of the street.



Where applicable, the setbacks of proposed small lot developments should be within the range of setbacks of existing properties.



Where applicable, proposed small lot developments along commercial streets should nearly about the sidewalk.



Enhanced paving denotes the entryway to the Vesper Village development in Van Nuys.

SITE LAYOUT AND CIRCULATION GUIDELINES

Small lot developments are presented with numerous spatial challenges that require innovative design solutions. Regardless of spatial constraints, developments must strive for neighborhood compatibility and be able to fit all aspects, such as parking and driveways, adequate trash and utility locations, adequate indoor and outdoor living space, within the project site.

Builders and designers should consider all possible configurations that take advantage of the site topography in providing sufficient open space, and consider how characteristics of the street and adjacent structures affect the overall form and orientation of the proposed development.

- 1 Configure homes to front public streets, primary entryway, circulation walkways, and open spaces, rather than driveways.
- 2 For homes not adjacent to the public street, provide pedestrian circulation in the form of private walkways or clearly delineated paths of travel from the sidewalk to their entryway.
- 3 Maximize green space while minimizing the total amount of driveway space.
- 4 Where possible, utilize alleyways for vehicular access.
- 5 Take advantage of existing topography and natural features (i.e. existing trees) to maintain appropriate grade levels consistent with surrounding structures.
- 6 Homes fronting a public street should have the primary entrance and main windows facing the street.
- 7 Enhanced paving should mark the pedestrian and vehicular entries of complexes to provide a sense of arrival.

SITE LAYOUT AND CIRCULATION GUIDELINES (CONTINUED)

- 8 Design floor plan layouts in relation to lot shape, width, and depth to maximize usable outdoor spaces.
- 9 Provide space for entry, front landing, and transitional landscaping between the public sidewalk and private entryway.
- 10 Provide direct paths of travel for pedestrian destinations within the development. Whenever relevant, create primary entrances for pedestrians that are safe, easily accessible, and a short distance from transit stops.
- 11 When multiple units share a common driveway that is lined with individual garages, provide distinguishable pedestrian paths to connect parking areas to articulated individual entries.
- 12 Vary building placement to increase variation in facades and more articulated building edges.

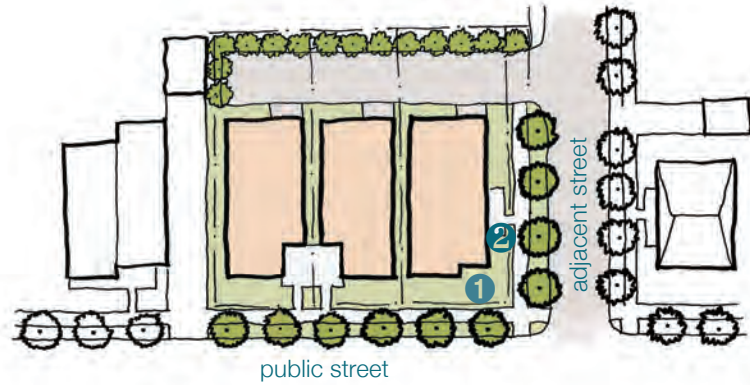


The Cullen Street development demonstrates a side access driveway with the front unit having a strong relationship to the street.

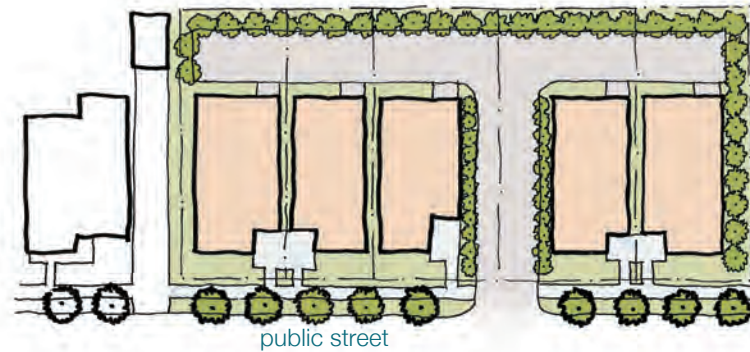
POSSIBLE CONFIGURATIONS

When rear driveways are used:

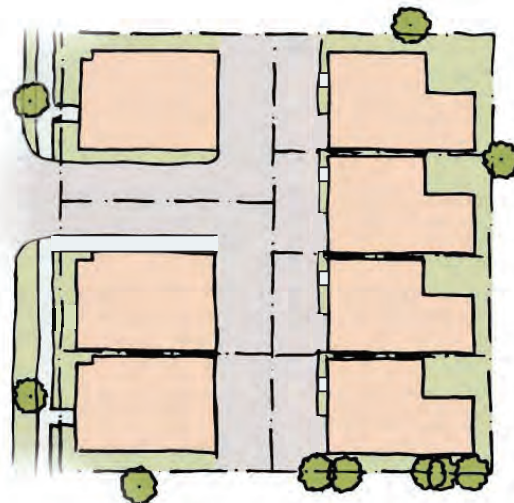
- ① The streetfront should still give the appearance of an entry.
- ② Pedestrian entrances should closely align with the entrances of adjacent dwelling units.



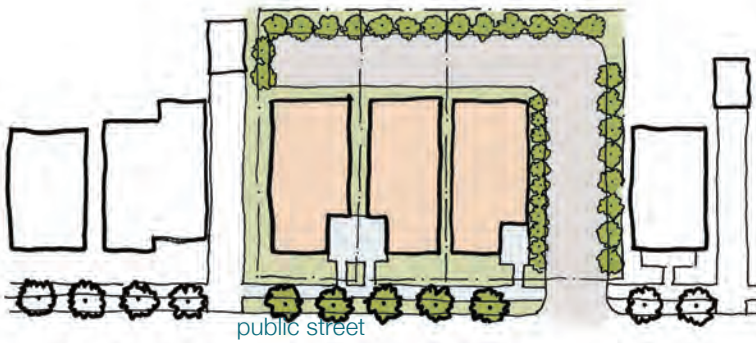
When rear T-driveways are used, all units should have direct access to the public sidewalk.



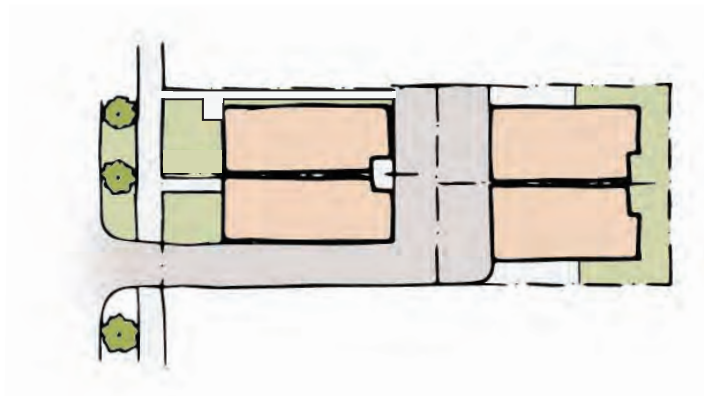
This alternative T-driveway configuration separates rear units from the public street and sidewalk.



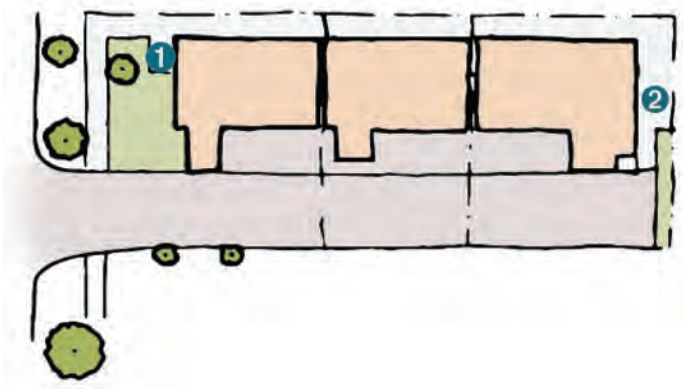
POSSIBLE CONFIGURATIONS (CONTINUED)



When rear L- driveways are used, all units front onto the public sidewalk.



When an alternative L-driveway is used, all rear units that do not front on the public sidewalk should still have a separate pedestrian path.

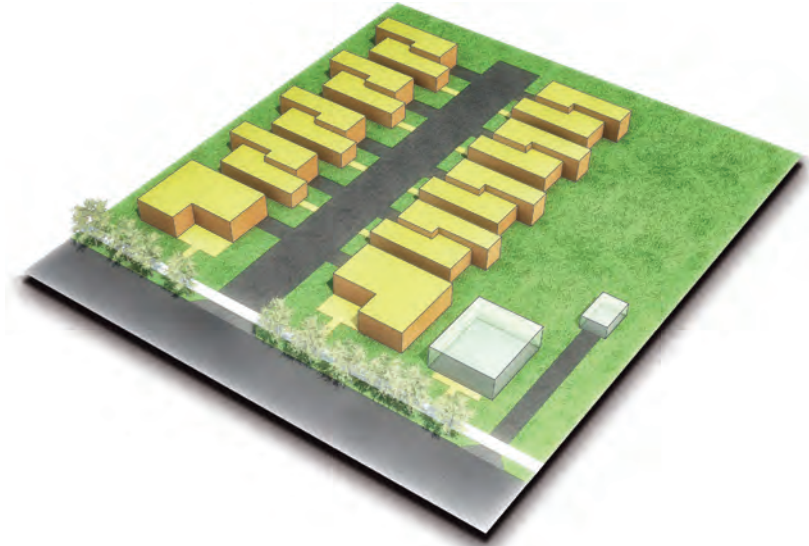


When side access driveways are used:

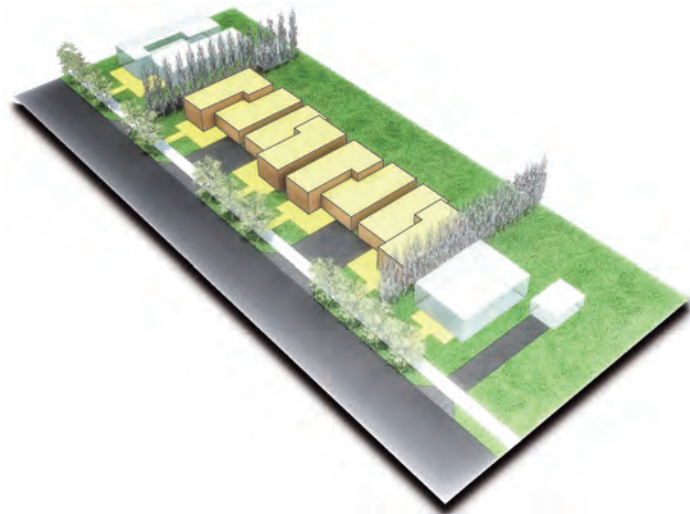
- ① Small lot developments with a side access driveway should configure front homes to be accessible from the sidewalk.
- ② Interior homes should be accessible from both the driveway and a private walkway at the front of the homes.

POSSIBLE CONFIGURATIONS (CONTINUED)

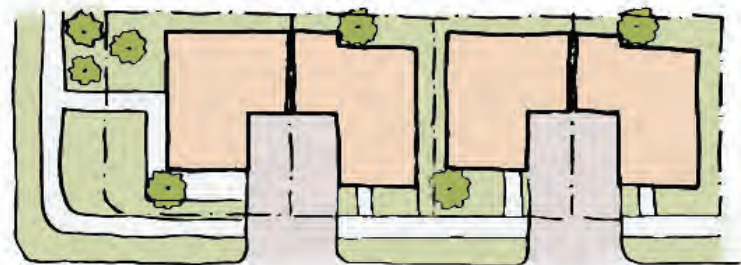
Townhouses with a central access driveway can enhance the public realm when front homes are accessible from the sidewalk.



Row houses with shared driveways enhance the streetfront by reducing the number of driveway cuts and vehicle/pedestrian conflicts. This results in enhanced and more opportunities for pedestrian entries.



The combination of tandem parking and deep garage setbacks can minimize the amount of streetfront dedicated to driveways.



BUILDING-TO-STREET PROPORTION GUIDELINES

Building-to-street proportion refers to the relationship between the height of buildings on either side of a street and the width between those buildings. An ideal proportion between these two creates a pleasant and visually interesting public realm. The public realm, therefore, may be considered as an “outdoor room” that is shaped by the “walls” of the building heights and the “floors” of the roadway. Through proper setbacks, appropriate building heights, and lush landscaping, small lot developments can help contribute to the creation of these outdoor rooms.

Outdoor rooms with excessively wide roadways or short building heights tend to eliminate any sense of enclosure for the pedestrian. Therefore, building heights should be constructed at a minimum of one-quarter of the width of the roadway.

In cases where neighborhood context may preclude increased building heights, trees may be planted along the street or front yard to help increase the sense of enclosure.

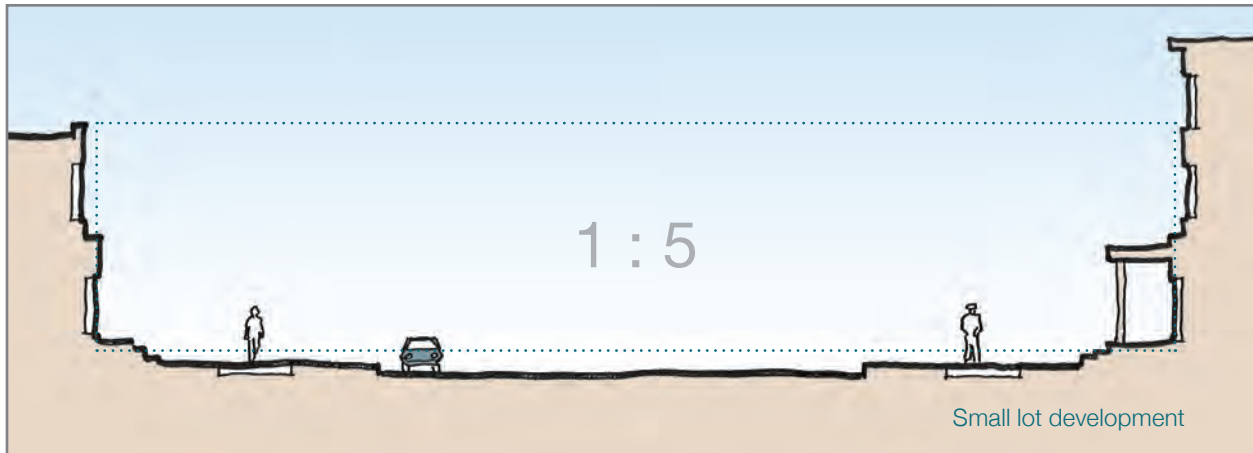
- 1 Small lots should be constructed with a building-to-height ratio of 1-to-4. In other words, buildings should have a height of at least one-quarter of the width of the roadway. For example, on a 100 foot wide street, an appropriate building height would be 25 feet.
- 2 Define the proper proportion of the public right of way through the planting of shade trees and low-growing vegetation (see Landscaping Section for further information).
- 3 Plant shade trees and ornamental plants to define the edge and increase visual interest to both the public and private realms. Avoid placing 4-foot-tall or higher shrubs immediately adjacent to the sidewalk.



Many Los Angeles streets have undesirable height-width ratios with: low-rise buildings, narrow sidewalks, and extremely wide streets.



Abbot Kinney Blvd. in Venice is an example of a more appropriate building-to-street proportion.



This small lot development creates a height-width ratio of approximately 1:5, and provides little sense of enclosure to the pedestrian. Although it may not be possible to alter the building heights, a series of landscaping interventions can enhance the semblance of an outdoor room.



Landscaping within the public, transitional, and private realms heightens the semblance of an outdoor room. Here, canopy-creating shade trees have been added to effectively reduce the width between buildings, and bringing the height-width ratio to approximately 1:2.5.

PARKING AND DRIVEWAY GUIDELINES

The design of small lot developments must strike a particular spatial balance: it must simultaneously maintain high-quality public and private living environments while also accommodating for the automobile. In poor design layouts, small lot configurations allow parking, driveways, and garages to dominate the landscape, creating conflicts for pedestrians and decreasing the overall aesthetic quality of the development. Improperly placed parking at the front of townhouses can have unsightly effects onto the streetfront. Frequent curb cuts and driveways jeopardize pedestrian safety and eliminate space for street trees and on-street parking. Ideally, designs should locate parking to be behind dwellings and accessible from alleys where present. If driveways are necessary, designs should minimize their width, number, and visual impact.

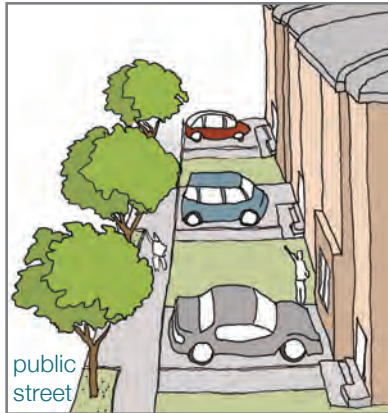
- 1 Locate parking to the rear of dwellings where homes front the public street.
- 2 Where available, use alleyways as access to off-street parking.
- 3 If individual front driveways must be used, the setback of the building should allow for an ample amount of landscaping space and a front entryway, porch, or landing.
- 4 Allow for a pedestrian access path separate from driveway whenever possible. When the driveway provides pedestrian access to individual dwellings, a distinguishable path should be provided.
- 5 Access driveways should be designed to be no wider than circulation and backup requirements, while still allowing for landscaping and a pedestrian access path on-site.
- 6 Space permitting, design the driveway area for multi-functional uses.
- 7 Structures should limit encroachment over the driveway area to not restrict the movement of trucks.



These homes have garages located in the rear of the buildings.



Rock Row uses permeable paving to provide a more hospitable pedestrian path along the driveway.



The placement of individual driveways along the streetfront can disrupt the continuity of the sidewalk and public realm, and eliminate space for street trees and on-street parking.



However, when driveways are located to the rear of dwellings, the streetscape can become a comfortable outdoor space for residents and passers-by.

Number of spaces

The Los Angeles Municipal Code lists requirements for the provision of parking spaces for residential developments.

Single-family homes are required to provide:

- 2 spaces for each home

Tandem parking is also acceptable, space permitting. One space can be dedicated for a compact car.

Duplex and triplex developments are required to provide:

- 1 space for each unit with less than 3 habitable rooms
- 1.5 spaces for each unit with 3 habitable rooms
- 2 spaces for units with more than 3 habitable rooms

Small lot developments are also required to provide guest parking based on site layout and circulation. Small lots are subject to the following guest parking requirements:

- Developments with less than 10 units: 0 spaces
- Developments with 10-100 units: 0.25 spaces per unit
- Developments with over 100 units: 0.5 spaces per unit

Locally adopted Specific Plans may require more parking. In these cases, the locally adopted plans supercede these parking requirements.

Dimensions

The Municipal Code requires the following dimensions for parking spaces:

- 8'6" x 18' for standard-size cars;
- 7'6" x 15' for compact cars.

Driveway widths depend on lot depth and building configuration. Individual front driveways should be 10 feet wide. In these instances, the building width should adequately allow for integral front parking plus some yard and porch or landing space. Access driveways will vary in width depending on lot size, depth, and building height, and are required to meet Code requirements for stall dimensions and access aisle. Please consult the Fire Department for further information.