

Attachment 5

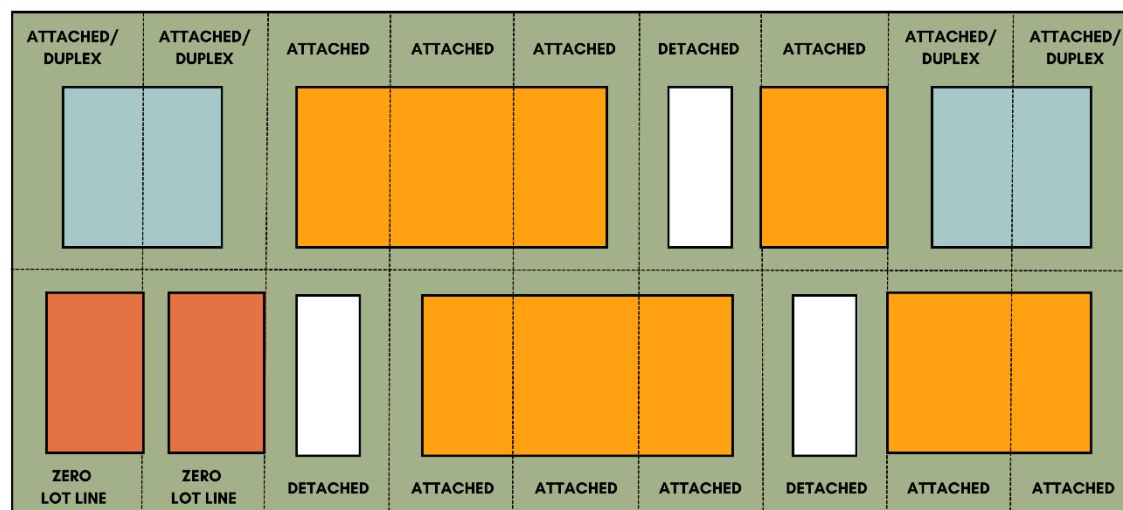
ZERO LOT LINE SUBDIVISIONS

INFORMATION & CONSIDERATIONS

What are zero lot line subdivisions?

Zero lot line subdivisions provide an approach to constructing homes whereby the units are built abutting a property line, usually a side property line. Typically, the lots are smaller than the conventional 5,000 to 8,000 square foot lots of detached single-family homes. By placing the unit on the property line, the subdivision designer can maximize indoor living space on an otherwise spatially constrained lot. Townhomes, rowhouses, garden homes, and patio homes are all common types of small lot homes that can be built in a zero lot line configuration. Zero lot line homes can be attached or detached, with two or more adjacent units sharing a common wall. Depending on site design considerations, each home site may have no yard, one yard, or two yards.

Figure 1: Zero Lot Line Lot Configurations



Source: MIG

What is the purpose of zero lot line subdivisions?

Allowing zero lot line subdivisions as an alternative to detached single-family homes serves several purposes. Building on the property line promotes housing density and encourages context-driven infill development or redevelopment in areas with smaller lots. This can help increase overall housing production and thereby help address community-wide affordable housing needs. Zero lot line developments also diversify housing choice. Overall, zero lot line subdivisions are a potential tool to innovate single-family housing options and meet a diverse set of community needs and lifestyles.

Do zero lot line subdivisions have setback requirements?

Minimum setbacks between the zero lot line subdivision and adjoining properties that are more traditionally developed are required to ensure neighborhood compatibility. However, no yard or setback requirements typically are in place along alleys or between lots **within** the subdivision. This allows homes to be built directly along or very close to the property line.

What is the ownership arrangement for zero lot line lots?

Each lot within the subdivision is owned by an individual property owner. Common lots may be created for shared open space, in which case a homeowners' association would be required for ownership and maintenance. Also, reciprocal easements may be required for access, such as a shared driveway accessing more than one unit.

Are zero lot line subdivisions allowed in single-family zones?

Whether or not zero lot line subdivisions are allowed in single-family zones (RS in San Carlos) depends upon the local jurisdiction's zoning regulations. In California, zero lot line subdivisions largely have only been permitted in areas zoned for multi-family housing or commercial uses, not in single-family zones. The intent is to create home ownership opportunities in zones that allow more dense development.

What are the benefits of zero lot line subdivisions?

- By having a wall along the property line, zero lot line homes maximize indoor living space.
- Zero lot line subdivisions can promote a sense of community and social cohesion since neighbors are physically closer to each other and may share outdoor common spaces.
- Zero lot line subdivisions are not the same as condominiums; they are fee simple, meaning that owners own both the land and the structure. This allows properties to be bought and sold like conventional single-family homes, expanding single-family home ownership choices beyond standard single-family homes or condominiums at a wider range of income levels.
- Due to their fee simple status, zero lot line developments have lower liability and insurance rates than condominiums, often making them easier to finance.
- Homeowner associations are optional. A mutual maintenance and access agreement may be required for easements for shared driveways, pedestrian walkways, and utility access points.

Are there any disadvantages?

- Due to fire code requirements, walls along the property line might not be able to have windows.
- Eave and roof treatments along the lot line need to be designed to prevent runoff onto the adjacent property.
- The close proximity of the units might create privacy concerns.
- Depending upon the lot and home sizes, homeowners may be challenged if they want to build an addition or an accessory dwelling unit.

CONSIDERATIONS

While zero lot line subdivisions can help communities achieve a wide range of goals, they can also produce numerous challenges to consider. Zero lot line developments require creative approaches to spatial complexities relating to neighborhood context, site layout, building design, and outdoor living spaces.

Neighborhood Context

Zero lot line homes should be similar in scale and form to nearby buildings to avoid feeling out of proportion with local context. Transitional design elements such as second story setbacks, varied rooflines, and massing can be used to provide scale reductions and visual relief.

Primary entryways should be oriented toward the right-of-way, or provide direct access to a pedestrian pathway, to encourage a strong relationship to the street. Primary entryways should also be clearly articulated to delineate public and private realms.

All yards of a subdivision abutting the right-of-way should include landscaping and amenities such as decorative fencing, uncovered patios, enhanced pedestrian pathways, garden walls, and seating areas to promote visual interest.

Figure 2 and 3: Street Fronting Entryways and Transitional Design



Source: KTG, 5112 Melrose (Hollywood, CA)

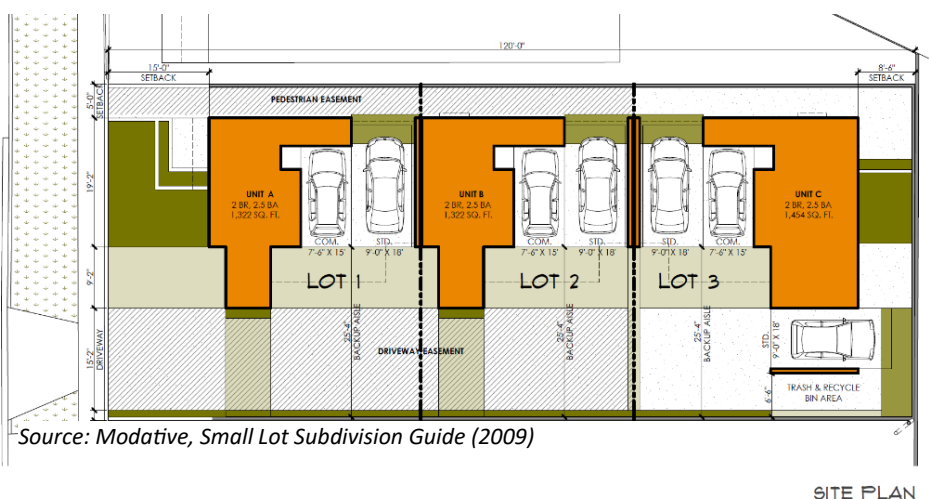


Source: Upgraded Home

Site Layout

Lot configuration and vehicle access are typically the biggest challenges of zero lot line subdivisions due to circulation and parking requirements. Rear alleys and common driveways are often used for vehicular access. For safety purposes, pedestrian pathways should be separated from driveways whenever possible to enhance pedestrian connectivity between the right-of-way, primary entryways, and common areas.

Figure 4: Zero Lot Line Development Site Plan



Building Design

Zero lot homes should be unique in design to promote visual interest, neighborhood compatibility, and exterior variation between subdivision units. Changes in dwelling orientation, primary entryways, building materials, rooflines, and façade articulation can all promote exterior individuality.

Blank wall surfaces on building façades should be avoided, especially those adjacent to a street or other public areas. This can be difficult to achieve if fire codes prohibit windows and other openings along the lot line. Textures, colors, materials, and architectural details can be used to add visual interest to the building façade.

Privacy can be enhanced by offset windows, elevated decks, and patios that do not face adjacent residences.

Figure 5: Varied Rooflines, Form and Orientation



Source: KTG, VITAE (Los Angeles)

Figure 6: Varied Building Façades



Outdoor Living Spaces

Patios and rooftop decks can provide opportunities for private outdoor space, light, and air, which might otherwise be limited. Placement may be considered to ensure privacy for all residents.

Figure 7: Front Yard Landscaping



Source: Modative, Cullen Street Art District (Los Angeles)

Figure 8: Patios and Rooftop Decks



Source: KTG, COVO (Los Angeles)

ZERO LOT LINE SUBDIVISIONS IN PRACTICE

The City of Los Angeles and Los Angeles County have both adopted small lot ordinances which allow for zero lot line homes. Both jurisdictions' regulations require each residence to have a separate foundation and walls, and the County requires alternating zero lot line provisions (see diagram below). Design guidelines and standards are used in parallel with these small lot ordinances to promote compatible architecture, attractive multi-family residential districts, context-sensitive design, and sustainable environments in small lot developments. See links to these examples below.

City of Los Angeles

[Small Lot Subdivision Ordinance](#)

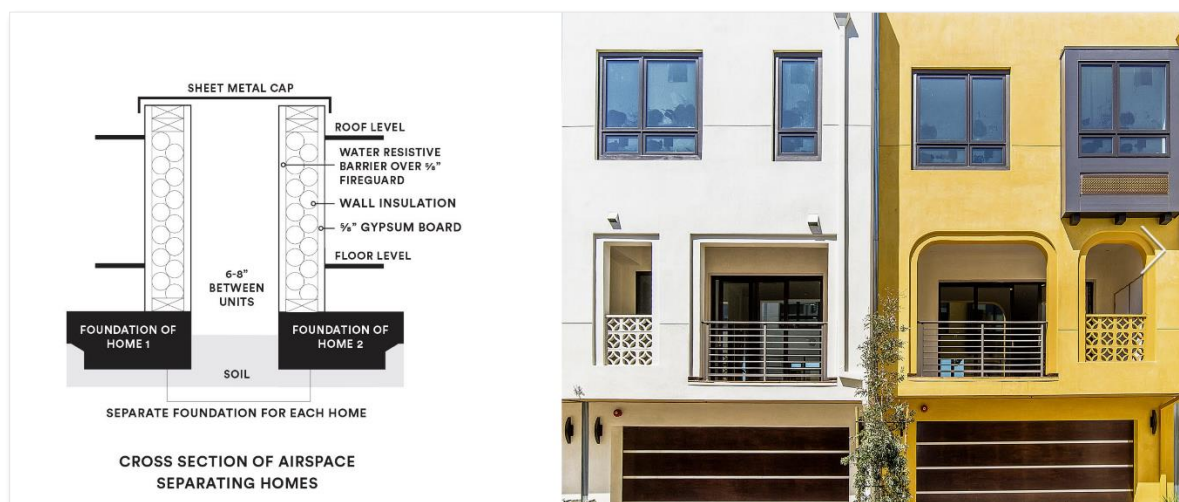
[Small Lot Subdivision Design Standards](#)

Los Angeles County

[Compact Lot Subdivision Ordinance](#)

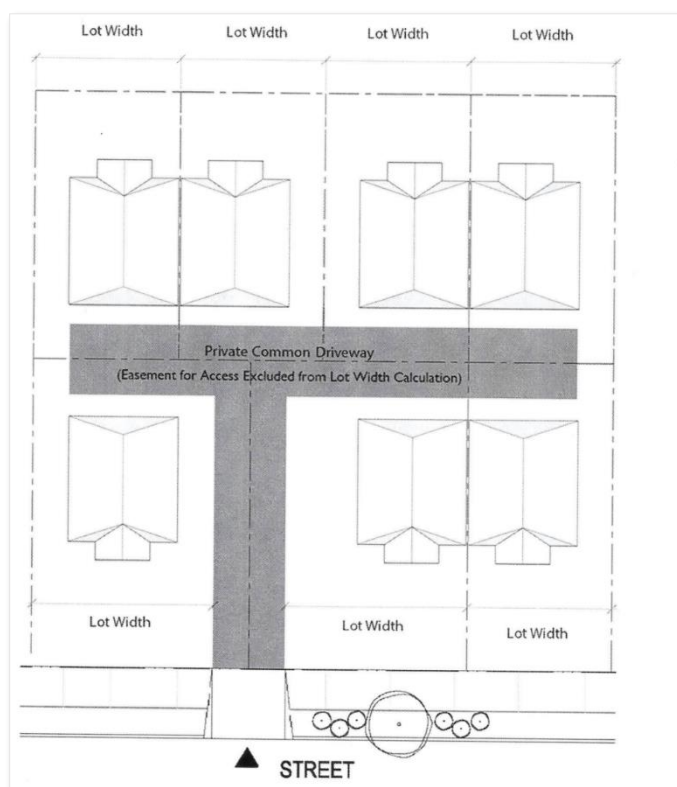
[Compact Lot Subdivision Design Guidelines](#)

Figure 9: Separate Foundation between Zero Lot Homes



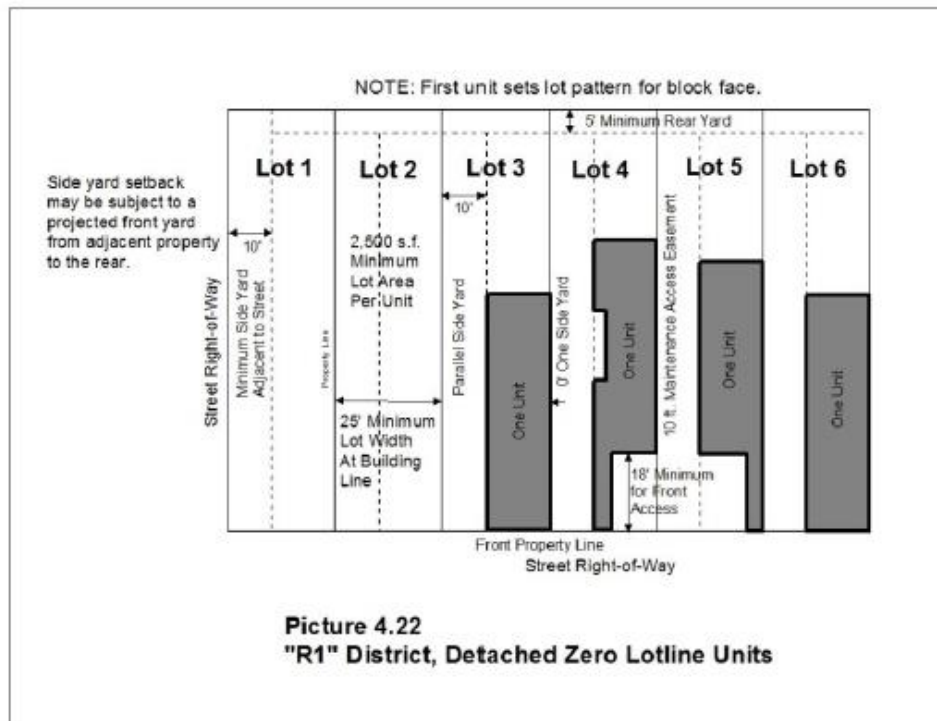
Source: KTG, June Street Collection (Los Angeles)

Figure 10: Alternating Zero Lot Subdivision



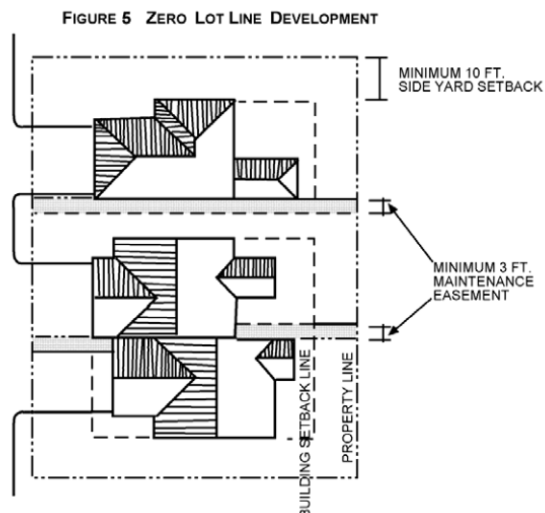
Source: Los Angeles County Ordinance 2020-0032, Figure 22.04.050.G

Figure 11 and 12: Example Configurations and Regulations



Source: Fort Worth, TX Municipal Code, Section 4.708

- a. **Zero Lot Line Development.** When zero lot line setbacks are used, the dwelling unit and garage (if provided) shall be placed on one interior side property line, with the adjacent dwelling unit set back a minimum of ten feet from the common property line. (See Figure 5 below)



Source: Las Vegas, NV Zoning Code, Section 19.08.040.C.1.a

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