




## DIVISION OF LAND

City Hall • 200 N. Spring Street, Room 750 • Los Angeles, CA 90012



Date: January 10, 2006

To: Licensed Engineers, Surveyors and Subdivision Consultants

From: Emily Gabel Luddy   
Deputy Advisory Agency

Subject: ADVISORY AGENCY POLICY NO. 2006-1  
SMALL LOT SUBDIVISION (TOWNHOME) ORDINANCE

### Introduction

On January 31, 2005 Ordinance No. 176,354 became effective. It is also known as the "Small Lot Subdivision (Townhome) Ordinance". The new ordinance is posted on the web at <http://cityplanning.lacity.org>, under Housing Initiatives.

The ordinance permits the subdivision of multi-family and commercially zoned properties into small single family or townhome style lots by reducing the minimum lot size and side yard requirements, and eliminating requirements for conventional street frontage. The ordinance does NOT apply to single family zones.

The Small Lot Ordinance applies only to projects involving divisions of land applications for: Tracts (5 dwelling units or lots or more) or Parcel maps (4 or less dwelling units or lots). The dwelling units can be townhome, patio, bungalow courtyard style or other configurations, as long as each structure, from the foundation to the roof, is separate and independent on its own.

The Department of Building and Safety will only accept construction drawings for Plan Check, after the effective date of the Advisory Agency approval under the Small Lot Ordinance of a subdivision for the division of land (Tract or Parcel Map applications)

The purpose of the Small Lot ordinance is to enable ownership of fee simple single family homes. Because this new type of subdivision requires the analysis and recommendations of several City agencies, the following items must be addressed through the clear depiction of the proposed subdivision.

### Filing Documents for Your Small Lot Subdivision

In addition to the routine documents filed with new subdivision/parcel applications, a Small Lot subdivision/parcel map filing must contain additional specific items:

1. A Tract Map is required to create 5 or more lots. The Tract must be filed as a “Vesting Tentative Tract Map for Small Lot Subdivision Purposes,” and accompanied by illustrative site plan, buildings elevation(s) and other illustrative information.

A Site Plan Layout shall be superimposed over the proposed lot lines.

2. A Parcel Map is required to create 4 or less lots. The Parcel Map must be filed as a “Preliminary Parcel Map for Small Lot Subdivision Purposes,” and accompanied by similar illustrative plans.

A Site Plan layout shall be superimposed over the proposed lot lines.

3. Each tentative or preliminary map shall include in the Notes Section of the map: “Note: Small Lot Single Family Subdivision in the \_\_\_ Zone, pursuant to Ordinance No. 176,354. “

4. A Site Plan superimposed on the proposed Small Lot tentative or preliminary map shall denote the following items:

- a. Any easement(s) outside of the building envelopes for vehicular and pedestrian ingress/egress; emergency access, utilities and infrastructure purposes. These easements must be identified as either public easements (for public utility purposes, for example); or private reciprocal easements (crossing lot lines for vehicular and pedestrian access and/or cross lot surface drainage, common landscape areas, for example).
- b. Building footprint(s).
- c. Identification of front, side and rear lot lines for each internal lot.
- d. Identification of setbacks – from adjoining properties; from front, rear and side yards within the proposed Small Lot subdivision. A matrix may also be used to identify setbacks, but should be placed on the Site Plan for ease of analysis (a sample matrix will be available online on the small lot website). A setback of 3 feet is allowed within the Venice Coastal Specific Plan Ord. No. 172,897 from adjoining properties on the side yard.
- e. Identification of Driveway Easement(s), location and width. Label “community driveway/fire lane” for clarity.
- f. Identification of vehicular back up space consistent with the requirements of the Zoning Code and the Department of Building and Safety.
- g. Identification of trash collection areas.

- h. All public and private easements will be shown on the Final Map.
- i. The Final Map must be labeled: “Final Vesting Tract Map for Small Lot Subdivision Purposes” OR “Final Parcel Map for Small Lot Subdivision Purposes”
- j. Accessory structures shall be shown on the tentative and Final Map and shall not be located in the required setback area.

### **Other Requirements for a Small Lot Subdivision**

1. A Maintenance Association will be required, composed of all property owners, to maintain all common areas such as trees, landscaping, trash, parking, community driveway, walkways, monthly service for private fire hydrant (if required), etc. Each owner and future property owners shall automatically become members of the association and shall be subject to a proportionate share of the maintenance.
2. Recorded Covenant and Agreement(s) will be required for all reciprocal private easements.
3. The minimum driveway/fire lane width will be 20 feet; any back up space (vehicles leaving garages) must comply with the Zoning Code and the Department of Building and Safety requirements.
4. Light courts or wells shall be a minimum of 3 feet in width for up to two-story buildings and 4 feet in width for three-story buildings when it is next to exterior openings providing natural light and ventilation. LAMC 91.1203.4.1.
5. Emergency access and egress windows at bedrooms shall be so located that they are accessible by the Fire Department. LAMC 91-1203.

The following Departments have standard requirements. In the event, a subdivider has an alternative proposal to these, then s/he must meet and get approval from relevant department prior to the Advisory Agency hearing.

6. Los Angeles Fire Department Requirements:
  - a. The entrance or exit of all ground dwelling units shall not be more than 150 feet from the edge of a roadway of an improved street, access road, or designated fire lane. If it exceeds 150 feet, a turnaround is required.
  - b. The Fire Department will require additional vehicular access (community driveway/fire lane width of 28 feet) where buildings exceed 28 feet in height at the edge of the roof. If they exceed 28 feet, a minimum 5-foot stepback is required – or other alternative to the satisfaction of the Fire Department. The

- subdivider must secure tentative approval from the Fire Department prior to the Advisory Agency hearing.
- c. No building or portion of a building shall be constructed more than 300 feet from an approved fire hydrant. Distance shall be computed along path of travel. Exception: Dwelling unit travel distance shall be computed to front door of unit.
  - d. That all Small Lot Subdivisions are required to be fully fire sprinklered.
7. Bureau of Sanitation (BOS) Solid Resource Collection Division - If the subdivider elects to utilize a City of LA waste collection service, the following are required:
- a. In order for BOS to provide “community driveway” collection, a LAFD turnaround area is required. Otherwise, the residents will be required to place their containers on the City street for collection.
  - b. BOS requires the driveway serving the small lot to be no less than 15 feet in width. If parking is allowed, the vehicle travel area, with cars parked cannot be less than 15 feet wide at any point.
  - c. If the property is gated, the gate opening must be a minimum of 20 feet wide and the gates must remain open on trash collection day from 6 am to 6 pm.
  - d. Prior to making collection on a “community driveway” the BOS must have a signed waiver releasing them from any damage to the road that may occur due to the weight or hydraulic system in their trucks.
  - e. There must be 20 feet of clearance directly above the curb. It must be clear of any trees or other obstacles.
  - f. All collection Rules and Regulations would apply.

### **A Word About Specific Plan Regulations and Small Lot Proposals**

Adopted specific plans may contain detailed regulations for multi-family zones, including restrictions on parking, guest parking, building heights and open space. **READ THE PLAN CAREFULLY.** It is likely that a small lot subdivision will be evaluated against the multi-family regulations of any adopted specific plan. In the event a deviation is sought from a specific plan, the Advisory Agency recommends that any such deviation fall within the boundaries of a Project Permit Adjustment (PPA) described in Section 11.5.7-E,2 of the Municipal Code, as these are minor deviations; and a PPA will be processed concurrently with the subdivision. If a Specific Plan Exception is required, that application must be processed separately through a Commission Hearing Examiner.

**Other Handy References: Small Lot Guidelines**

The Planning Department website also posts Small Lot Subdivision Guidelines to provide visual examples and some of the “do’s and don’ts” of this innovative ordinance. Please consult the guide for good ideas.

**Departments Participating in Preparation of the Policy**

This policy has been issued with concurrence of the most affected departments: Building and Safety, Bureau of Engineering, Bureau of Sanitation, Transportation and Fire. Subdividers are always encouraged to discuss individual site circumstances with all departments prior to the Advisory Agency public hearing.

This Policy will be reviewed on July 1, 2006.

EGL:dl