

Memorandum

Date: May 1, 2019
To: Sol Blumenfeld, Community Development Director, City of Culver City
 Michael Allen, Current Planning Manager, City of Culver City
 William Kavadas, Assistant Planner, City of Culver City
From: Carolyn Matsumoto, Project Manager, John Kaliski Architects
 John Kaliski, Principal, John Kaliski Architects
Re: Draft Recommendations for Culver City R-1 Single-Family Residential Neighborhood
 Development Standards and Design Review

John Kaliski Architects (JKA) and City of Culver City Planning Staff (Staff) met on October 22, 2018 to review and discuss planning means to address community meeting and online survey comments, held between June 11, 2018 and September 11, 2018, from residents of the following Culver City single-family neighborhoods: Blanco Park/Sunkist Park, Carlson Park, Culver West, McLaughlin, Park West, Studio Village, and Blair Hills/Hetzler Road (Hillside).

Key Findings

1. Residents dislike houses built to maximize the existing zoning envelope and allowable floor area ratio (FAR).

Residents from all neighborhoods surveyed consistently disliked houses that met minimum development standards and maximized the allowable zoning envelope. The average size of a characteristic Culver City tract home ranges between 0.23-0.33 FAR and based on a typical 5,000 square foot lot, houses range between 1,150-1,650 square feet. The existing 0.60 FAR standard on the same lot allows a 3,000 square foot house, twice the size of a typical tract home (see [Figure 1](#)). The size, height, and massing of houses built to maximize the allowable zoning envelope were described as “too big” and “obtrusive to neighbors” for “looming” over adjacent properties and “taking away their neighbor’s privacy” and access to “light and air”. Residents also disliked the quality of houses that met minimum development standards for being “boxy” with “poor details” and for looking more like apartment buildings than single-family residences ([Figure 2](#)).

2. Residents dislike existing side yard setback standards for not providing adequate sunlight, air, and privacy to neighboring properties.

The age of original tract developments of Culver City may be characterized by three typologies: rear yard garages (1917-1924) and front- or side-facing garages (1949-Present). A combination of each typology may be found in all neighborhoods. However, where there are lots with rear yard garages or older neighborhoods with predominant patterns of houses with rear yard garages (Carlson Park, Park West, Studio Village, Blanco Park, Culver West, and McLaughlin), residents disliked new construction that removed existing driveways (8-10 feet width) along side yards and built to the five-foot side yard setback requirement with front-facing garages. Residents disliked the closer proximity between houses for depreciating the quality of lifestyle including the loss of “privacy, sunlight, and air”. Residents noted the change of neighborhood character with dominating front-facing garages and two-story construction with minimal side yards, by describing new

construction patterns as more fitting of other cities including Manhattan Beach, Pacific Palisades, and Beverly Hills.

3. Residents consistently like second-story additions set behind the ridgeline that match the architectural style, materials, and roof forms of the original tract home.

Residents from all neighborhoods consistently preferred second-story additions set behind the ridgeline that matches the original tract home's architectural style, materials, and roof forms (Figure 3). One resident noted, "even though it's two-story, it stayed within the character of the neighborhood." Additions set in front of the ridgeline were disliked for being too large and for "looming" over neighbors. Residents of Blair Hills favored houses that were responsive to and didn't block neighbor's views.

4. Residents prefer houses that are well maintained in a comprehensive architectural style consistent with Culver City tract styles (Minimal Traditional and Minimal Ranch) with complementary landscaping but are open to modern styles that do not maximize the allowable zoning envelope and floor area ratio (FAR).

Residents consistently liked well-maintained single-story homes with a comprehensive architectural style and complementary landscaping comprised of ground cover, shrubs, and trees (Figure 4). Residents preferred homes that "fit in" with existing neighborhood compatible styles including Minimal Traditional and Minimal Ranch. Of the newly constructed homes larger than 3,000 square feet and built between 2011-2015, 37% were built as flat-roofed Modern homes (Figure 5) and 13% as sloped-roof "Modern Farmhouses", totaling 50% of all new construction for that period. Modern Farmhouses were slightly favored over flat-roofed Modern homes by the Online Survey respondents for "trying to fit the neighborhood" and having a "normal home silhouette" (Figure 6). Houses of both styles were favorable to residents if the FAR was not maximized and if the modulation and massing was responsive to preserving the privacy, light, and air of adjacent properties and fit within the overall neighborhood context.

5. The lifestyle needs of residents are affected by house size.

The majority of neighborhoods annexed to Culver City generally occurred in two phases¹: 1917-1924 and 1949-1965. The original tract developments constructed houses typical of American homes of their time and ranged in size from 1,200-1,800 square feet. The national median size of new homes is 2,426 square feet², which is an increase of 600-1,200 square feet from the tract developments of Culver City. Long-time residents expressed their preference for the lifestyle associated with smaller tract homes that allow ample space surrounding homes for privacy, sunlight, and air. Residents who preferred larger houses closer to the national median size cited the need for additional space due to changing lifestyle needs, young families, or to maintain consistency with current development trends (Figure 7).

¹ Hetzler Road neighborhood was annexed to Culver City in 1982 and 2000.

² United States Census Bureau. (2018) *Annual 2017 Characteristics of New Housing*.

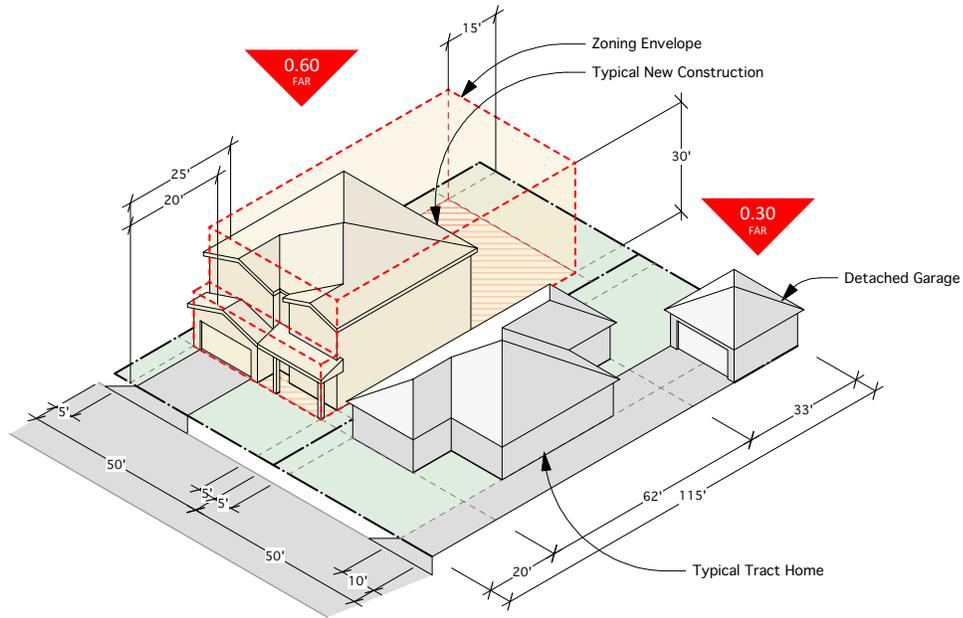
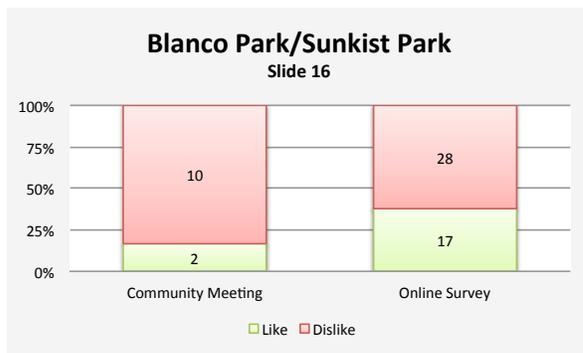


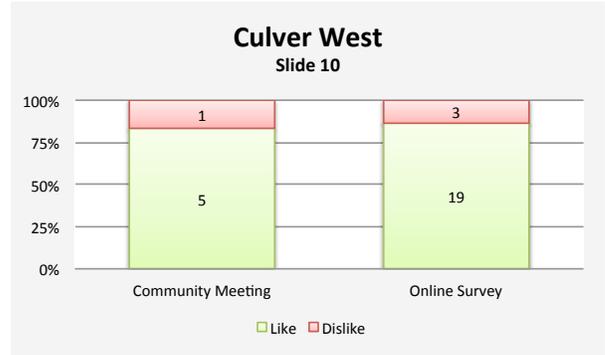
Figure 1
 Illustrative diagram of existing R1 Development Standards depicting typical new construction adjacent to the typical neighborhood context.



“looks like an apartment” “big and boxy”



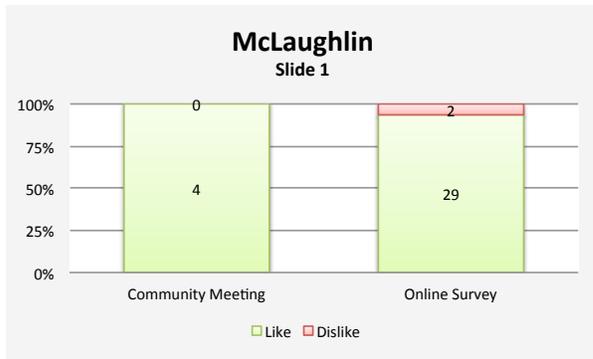
Figure 2
 Residents consistently disliked homes that met the minimum development standards and maximizes the allowable zoning envelope.



“tasteful” “not intrusive” “blends in”

Figure 3

Residents consistently like second-story additions set behind the roof ridgeline and that match the existing architectural style, roof pitch, and materials such as cladding, color, and windows.

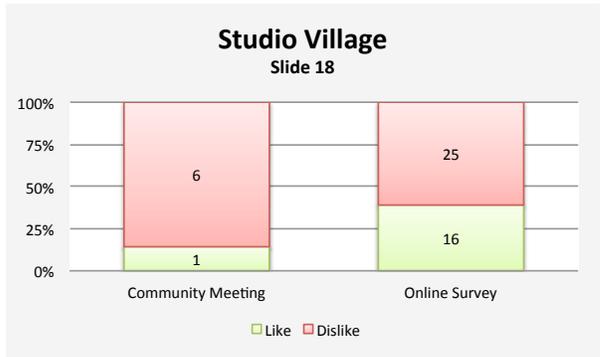


“pleasant” “nice landscaping” “driveway buffer”



Figure 4

Residents consistently liked single-story tract homes (Minimal Traditional and Minimal Ranch) that were well maintained with landscaping that enhanced the siting and architectural style of the home.

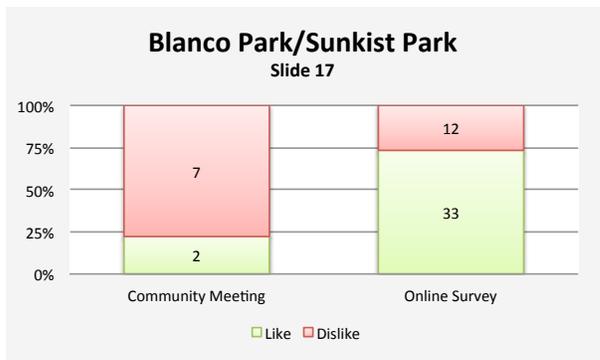


“too big and modern” “edge to edge”



Figure 5

Of the residents who voted “dislike” for modern styles, some felt the style was out of character for their neighborhood while others didn’t mind the addition of a modern style home but disliked the size and massing of homes that maximized the zoning envelope.



“too large for the lot” “normal home silhouette”



Figure 6

Voting results for Modern Farmhouses differed between residents who attended community meetings and online survey responses where residents who attended community meetings strongly disliked Modern Farmhouses for being over scaled, developer driven, and a recurrent “cookie cutter” typology across Culver City. Online survey responses noted the out of scale size of these homes but slightly favored them for “trying to fit the neighborhood”.

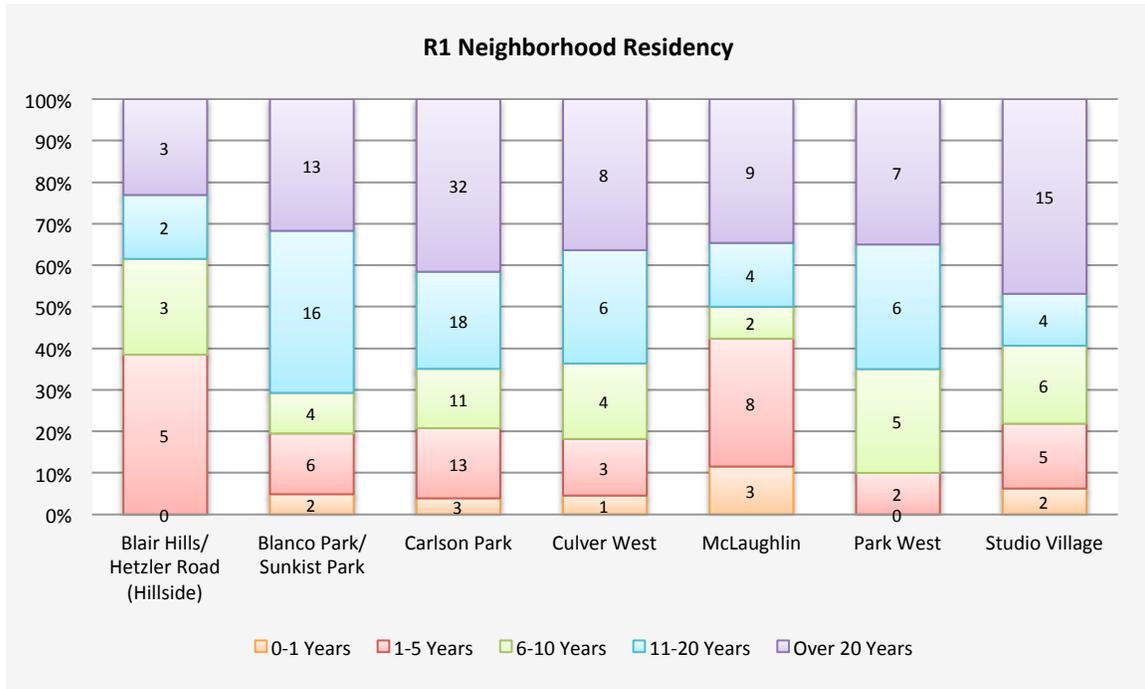


Figure 7

Residents who completed the Online Survey were asked how long they had lived in their neighborhood. The majority respondents have lived in their neighborhood for longer than 11 years, except McLaughlin and Blair Hills/Hetzler Road (Hillside).

Key Recommendations

Based upon the research, analysis, and community meetings completed, the following recommendations are proposed to promote neighborhood compatibility by maintaining the existing character and scale of Culver City’s single-family residential neighborhoods.

1. Reduce the maximum floor area ratio (FAR).

A reduced FAR of 0.45 allows for two-story construction while maintaining neighborhood consistency with existing single-story tract homes which range between 0.23-0.33 FAR (Figure 8 and Table 1). The majority of R-1 lots (52%) occur within the 5,000-5,999 square foot range (Table 2). A typical 5,000 square foot lot would yield a 2,250 square foot home, which is comparable to the 2,426 square feet national median new home size while maintaining the existing scale of neighborhoods.

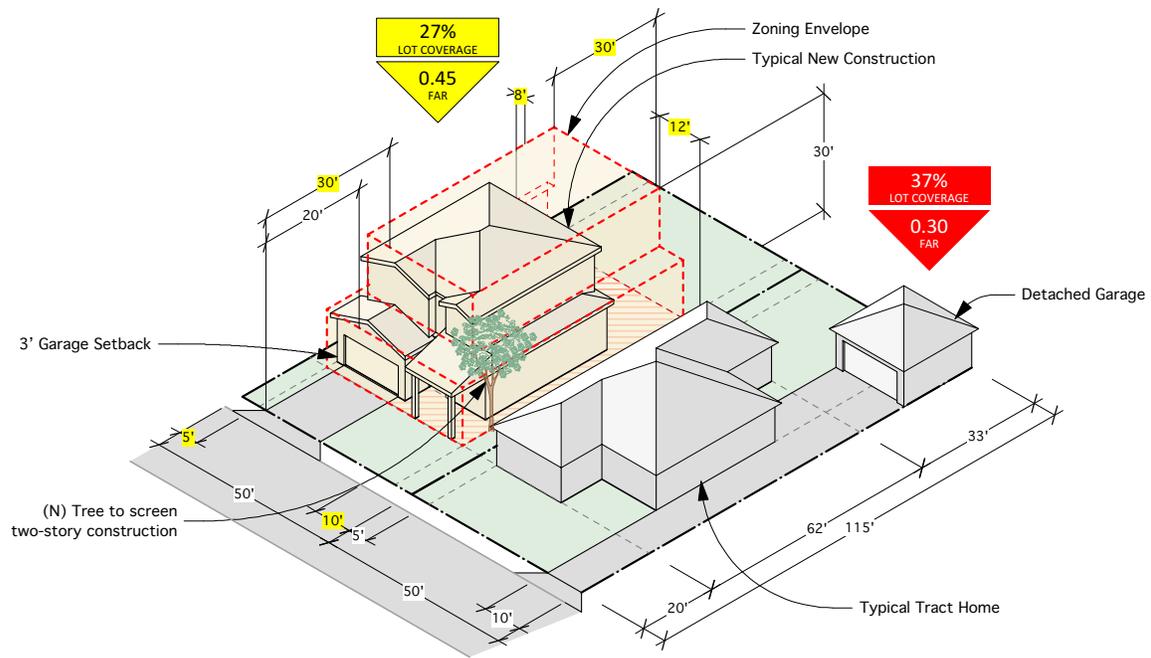


Figure 8

Illustrative diagram of proposed R1 Development Standards depicting typical new construction adjacent to the typical neighborhood context.

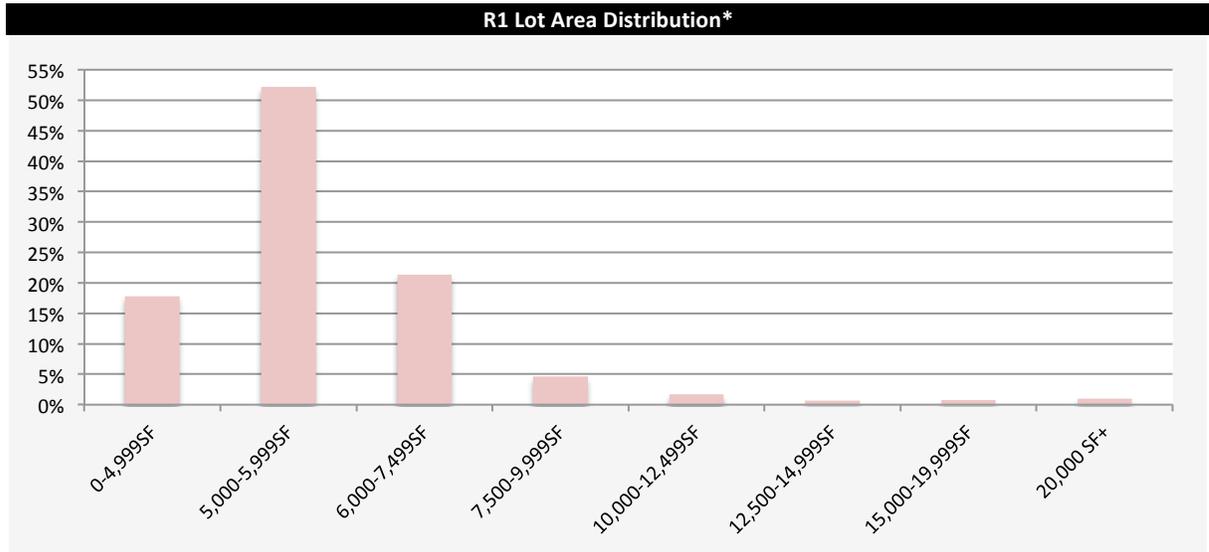
The proposed R1 Hillside FAR is adopted from the Culver Crest hillside neighborhood standards. The Blair Hills and Hetzler Road hillside neighborhoods were developed, like Culver Crest, with flat building pads and access roads. An FAR based on slope thresholds would help ensure that new development bulk and mass is better related to the existing scale of these hillside neighborhoods.

Table 1

Proposed Maximum Floor Area Ratio (FAR)			
R1		R1 Hillside	
Lot Area	FAR	Slope	FAR
5,000 SF* ≤ Lot Area < 10,000 SF	0.45	0% ≤ Slope < 15%	0.45
		15% ≤ Slope < 30%	0.40
		30% ≤ Slope < 45%	0.35
10,000 ≤ Lot Area	0.35	45% ≤ Slope < 60%	0.30
		60% ≤ Slope < 100%	0.25
		100% ≤ Slope	0.00

*For lots less than 5,000 square feet, refer to Nonconforming standards.

Table 2



*Inclusive of flat and hillside lots.

2. Increase the second-story front yard setback.

A second-story front yard setback of 30-feet is recommended to maintain the one-story scale along the front yard (Table 3). This will better relate second-story additions and new two-story construction to existing residences.

Table 3

Proposed Minimum Second-Story Front Yard Setback	
R1	R1 Hillside
30 Feet	30 Feet

3. Increase side yard setbacks.

Modifying the existing side yard setback requirements to a percentage of lot width will provide for greater variation of side yard building setbacks associated with new construction, increases in side yard setbacks related to overall and proportional property width, and more opportunities for substantive landscaping that increases privacy between homes (Table 4). The tract homes of the Blair Hills and Hetzler Road hillside neighborhoods have existing side yards that vary from five- to eight-feet in width. This wider setback is reflected in the proposed standard.

Table 4

Proposed Minimum First-Floor Side Yard Setback	
R1	R1 Hillside
10% Lot Width, but not less than 5 FT and not to exceed 10 FT	12% Lot Width, but not less than 6 FT and not to exceed 12 FT

Aligning or biasing the second-story massing of additions and new construction towards one of the two side yard setbacks will reduce the overall mass and bulk of second stories and second-story additions and better provide for a sense of light, air, and privacy (Table 5).

Table 5

Proposed Minimum Second-Story Side Yard Setback	
R1	R1 Hillside
Setback 1 (Narrower Setback) 16% Lot Width, but not less than 8 FT and not to exceed 16 FT	Setback 1 (Narrower Setback) 16% Lot Width, but not less than 8 FT and not to exceed 16 FT
Setback 2 (Wider Setback) 24% Lot Width, but not less than 12 FT and not to exceed 24 FT	Setback 2 (Wider Setback) 24% Lot Width, but not less than 12 FT and not to exceed 24 FT

4. Increase the rear yard setback.

Increasing the rear yard setback to 30-feet is recommended to maintain the existing pattern of tract development while addressing privacy concerns when additions and new construction extend past neighboring houses at the rear yard (Table 6).

Table 6

Proposed Minimum Rear Yard Setback	
R1	R1 Hillside
30 FT	30 FT

5. Introduce a maximum lot coverage standard.

Introducing a maximum lot coverage standard is recommended to create open space around buildings, minimize the ability to maximize the zoning envelope, and at the neighborhood scale, to maintain the existing ratio of built form and open space (Table 7).

Table 7

Proposed Maximum Lot Coverage	
R1	R1 Hillside
40%	40%

6. Introduce design standards for additions and new construction projects.

Simple, quantitative design standards may be utilized to maintain a baseline consistency and quality for all addition and new construction projects (Table 8 and 9).

Table 8

Proposed Design Standards	
R1	R1 Hillside
New Construction	
<p>Front Facing Garage Setback Front facing garages shall setback from the face of the façade by a minimum of 3 feet</p>	[N/A]*

*A garage setback is not recommended for the Blair Hills neighborhood as it is characterized by garages set at the front yard setback.

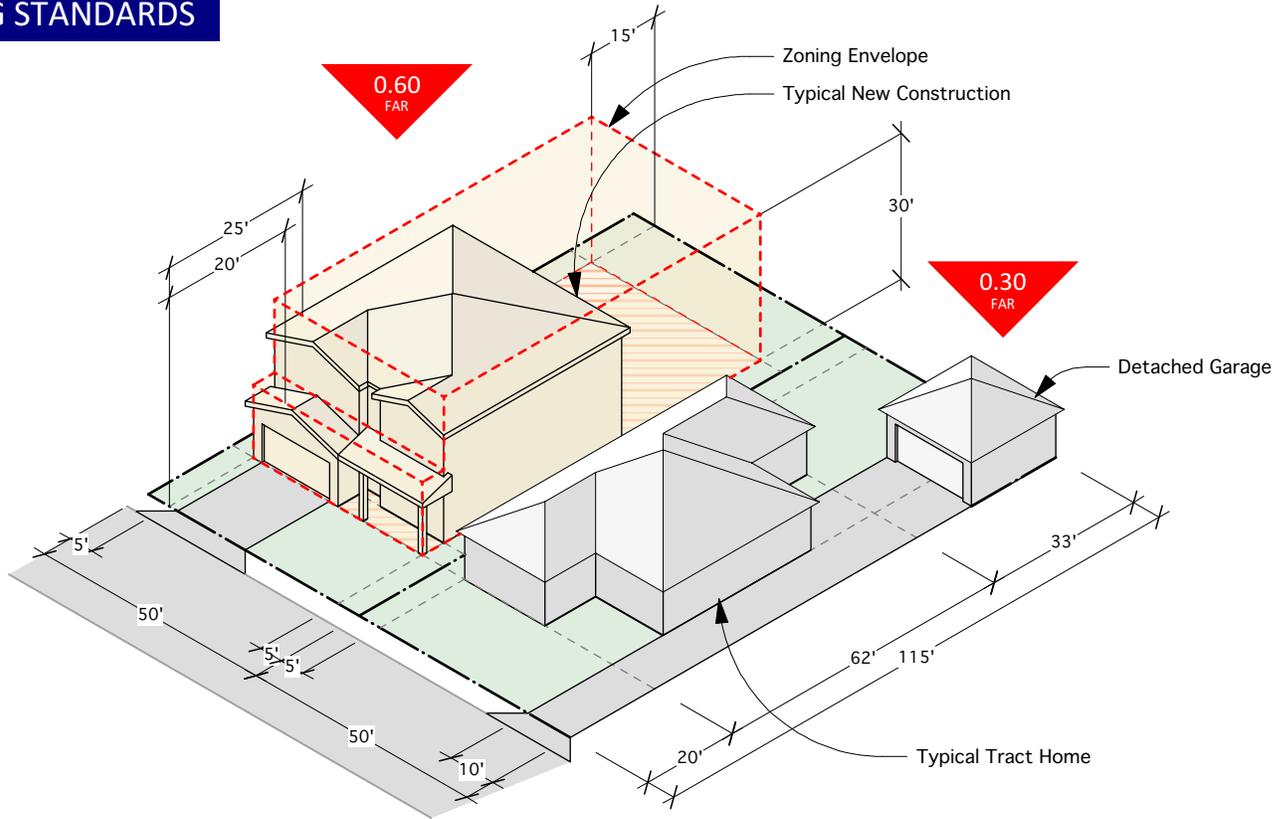
Table 9

Proposed Landscape Standards	
R1	R1 Hillside
Additions and New Construction	
<p>Second Story Landscape Screening A minimum of one new tree with a moderate to fast growth rate to 30’ of height prepared by a licensed Landscape Architect shall be planted within a front, side, or rear yard to screen new second-story additions or new two-story construction.</p>	<p>Second Story Landscape Screening A minimum of one new tree with a moderate to fast growth rate to 30’ of height prepared by a licensed Landscape Architect shall be planted within a front, side, or rear yard to screen new second-story additions or new two-story construction.</p>
<p>3-Tier Plantings All setback and open space areas not occupied by driveways, parking areas, walkways, building projections, and approved hardscape shall be planted with a combination of low ground cover to a maximum of 2’ of height, shrubs to a maximum of 4’ of height, and trees to a minimum of 30’ of height as prepared by a licensed Landscape Architect.</p>	<p>3-Tier Plantings All setback and open space areas not occupied by driveways, parking areas, walkways, building projections, and approved hardscape shall be planted with a combination of low ground cover to a maximum of 2’ of height, shrubs to a maximum of 4’ of height, and trees to a minimum of 30’ of height as prepared by a licensed Landscape Architect.</p>

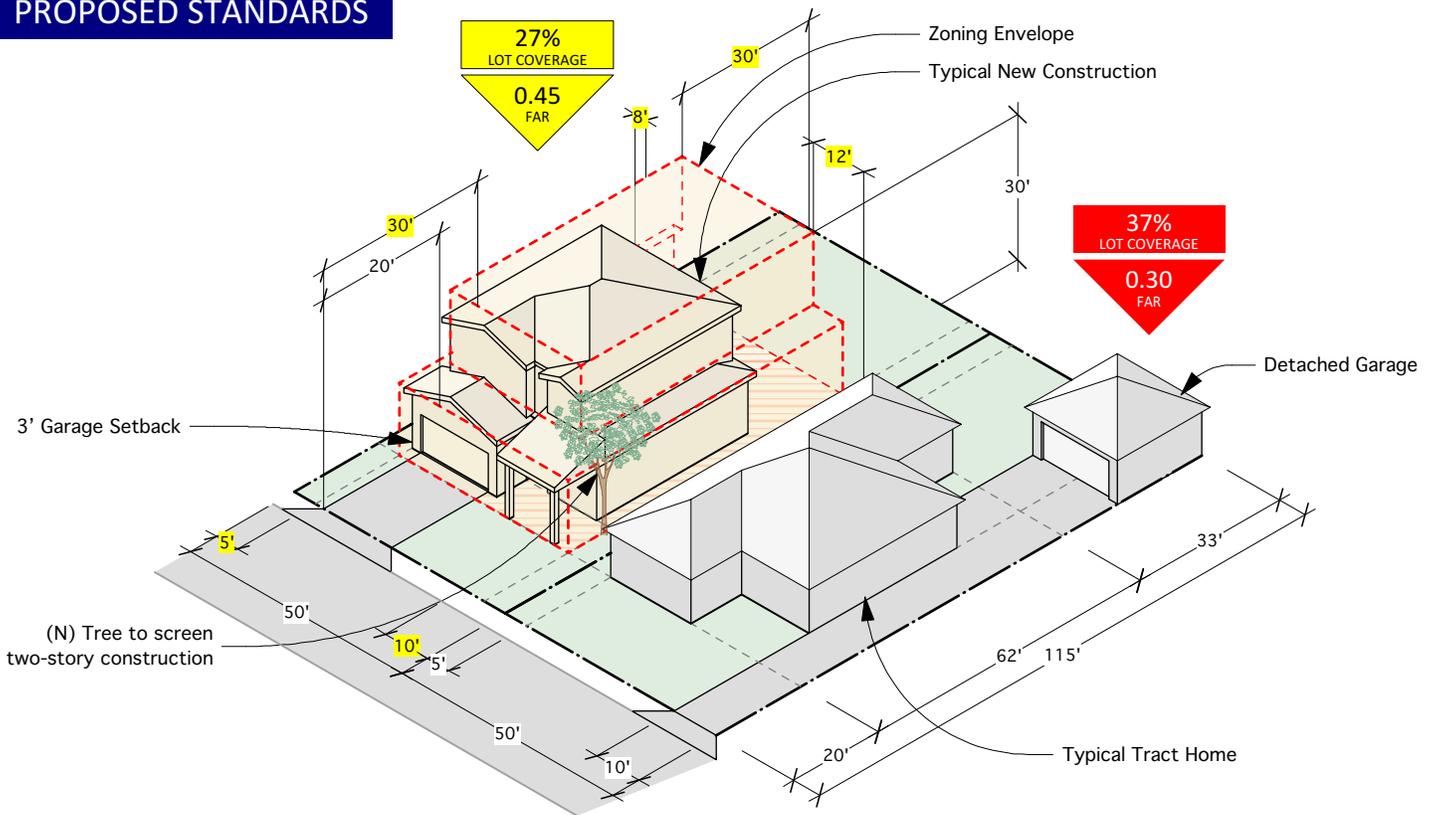
7. Consider additional design-related development standards.

JKA seeks direction from the City Council and Planning Commission regarding the incorporation of additional design-related concerns raised by residents including building orientation, privacy, garage placement, and architectural styles for both additions and new construction, which vary on a case-by-case basis depending on the age of the neighborhood (e.g. newer tracts have front yard garages with side-facing entries) and context (e.g. privacy and view corridors may incorporate more than adjacent properties in the hillside areas).

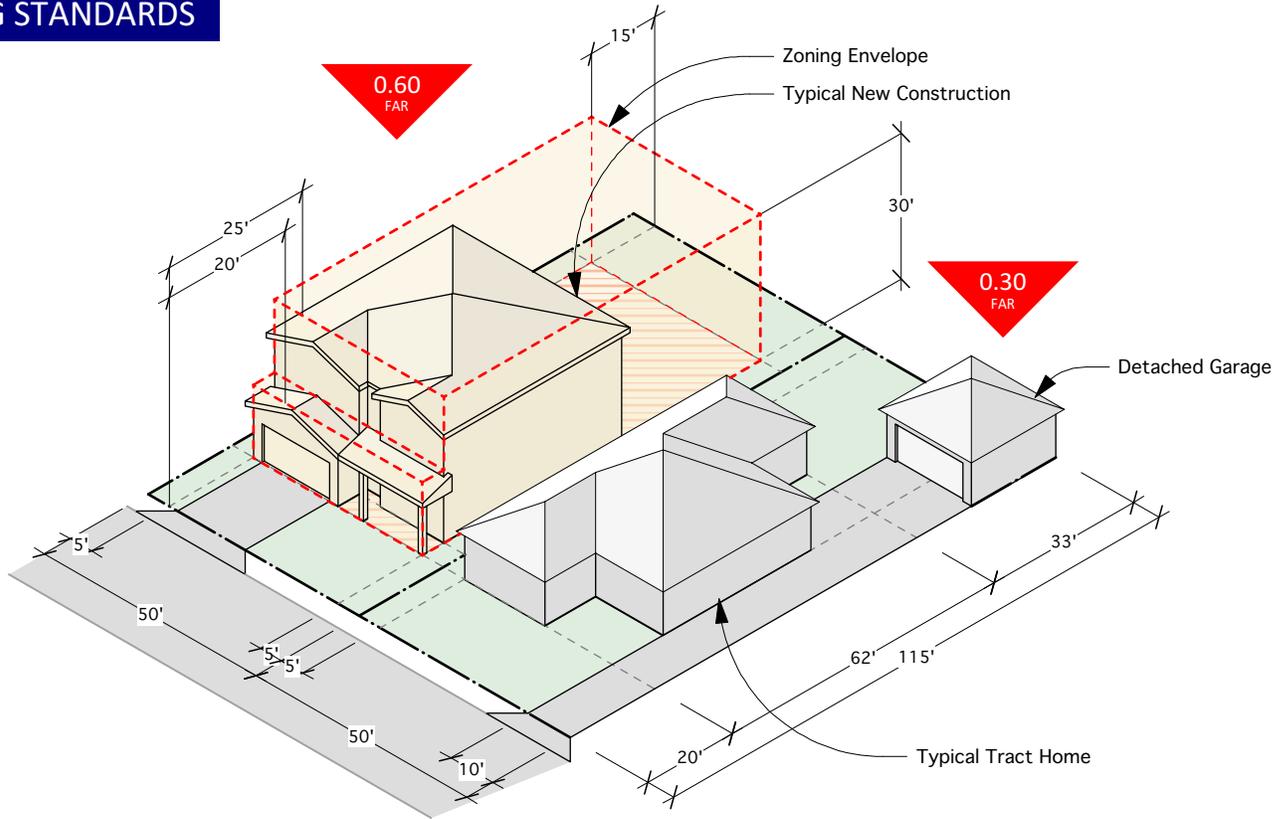
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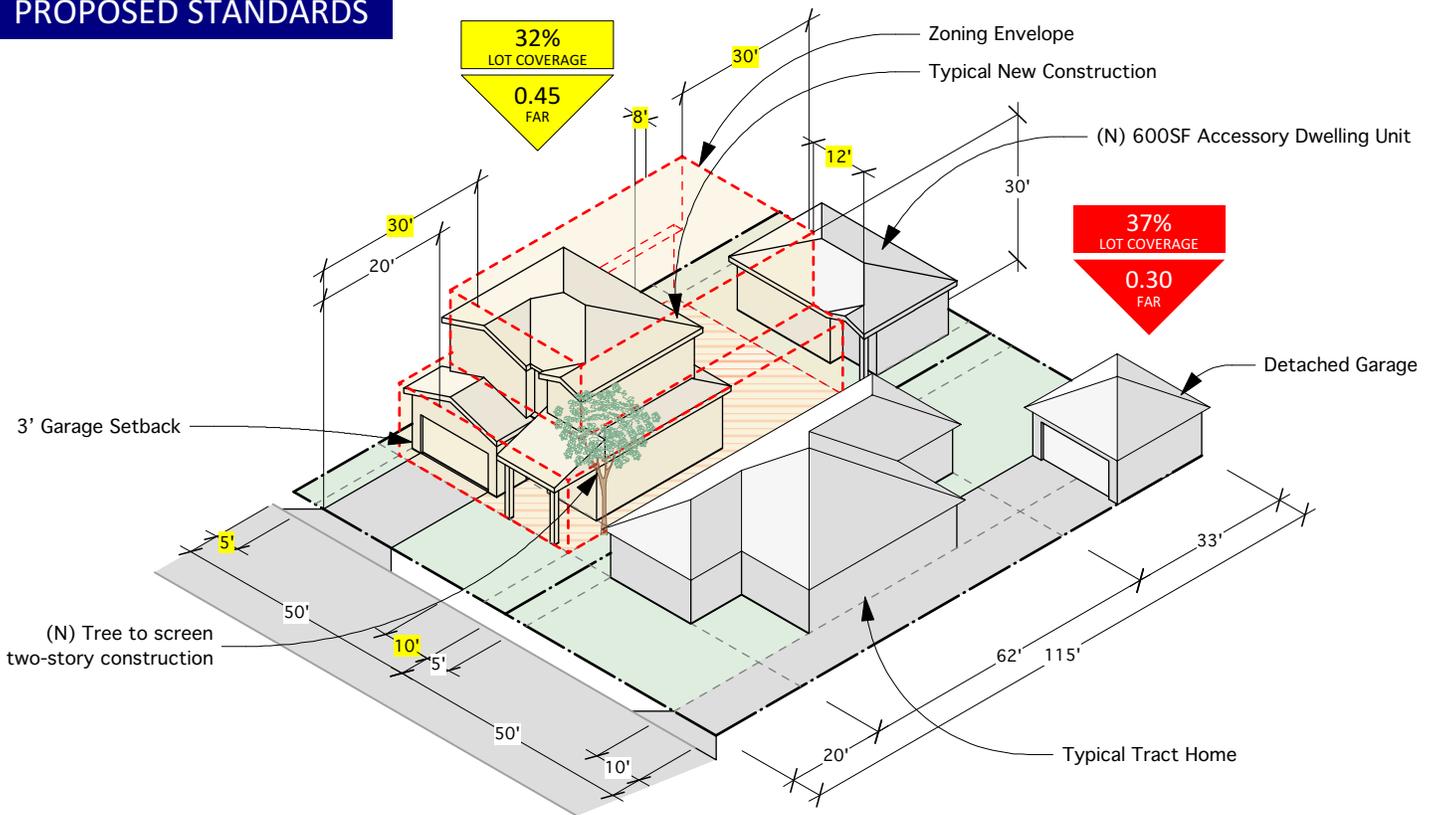
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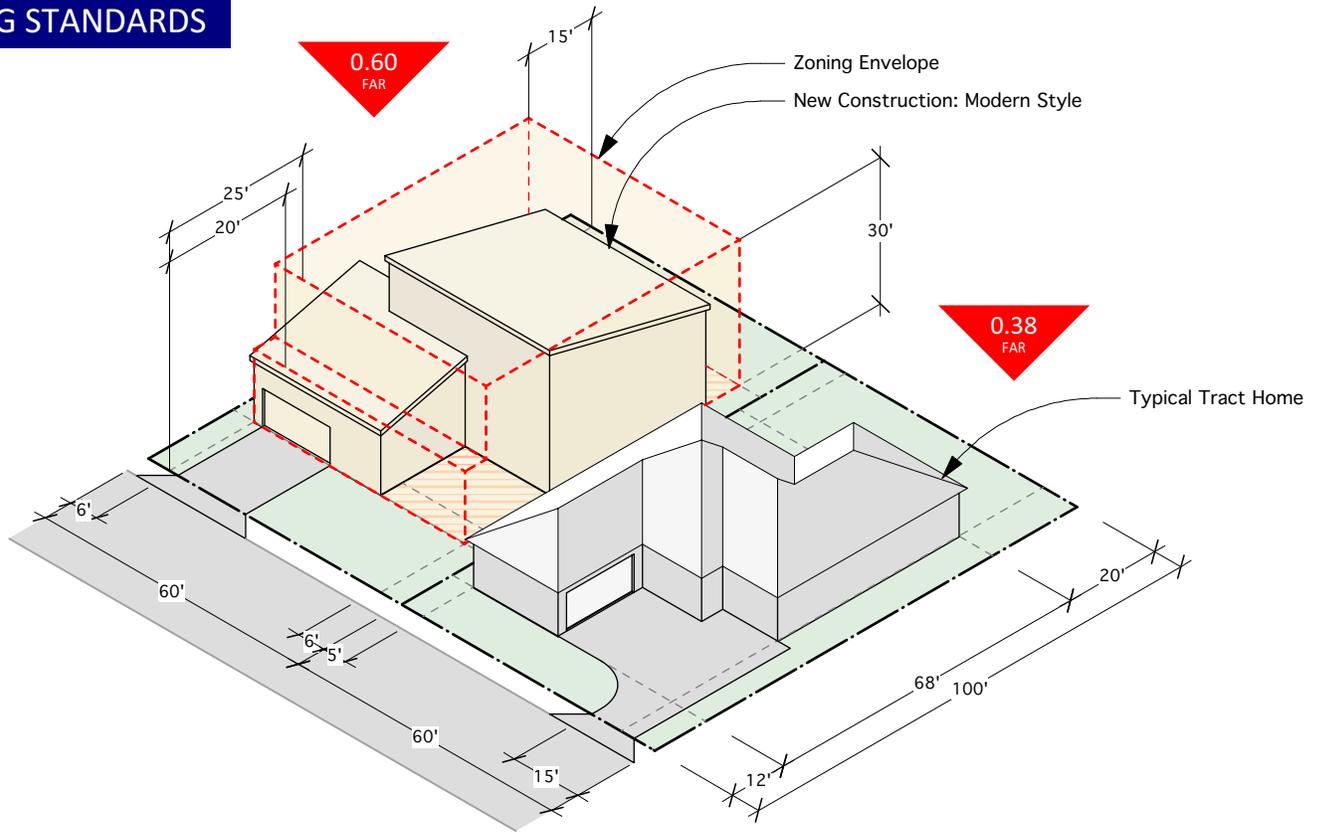
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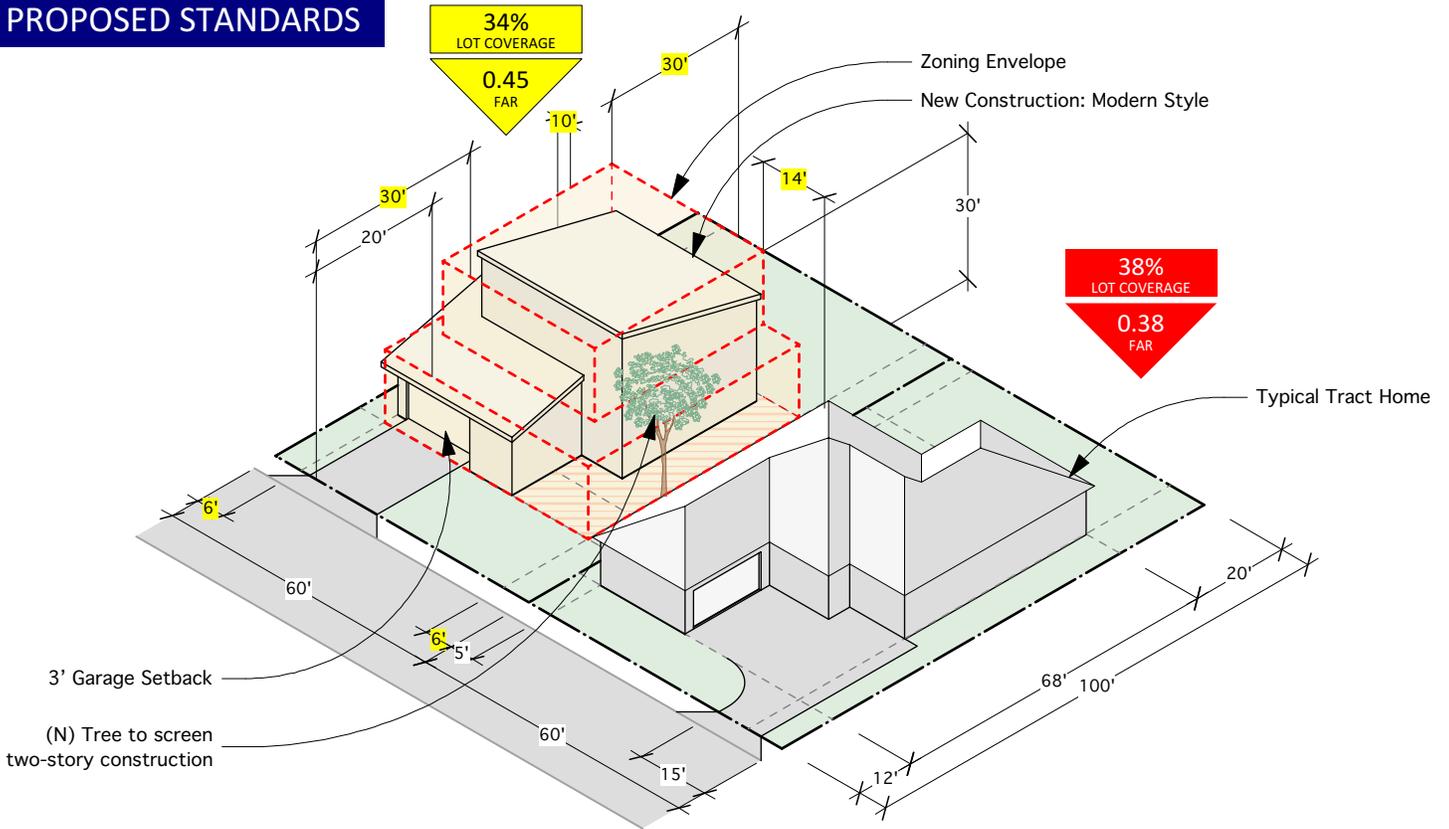
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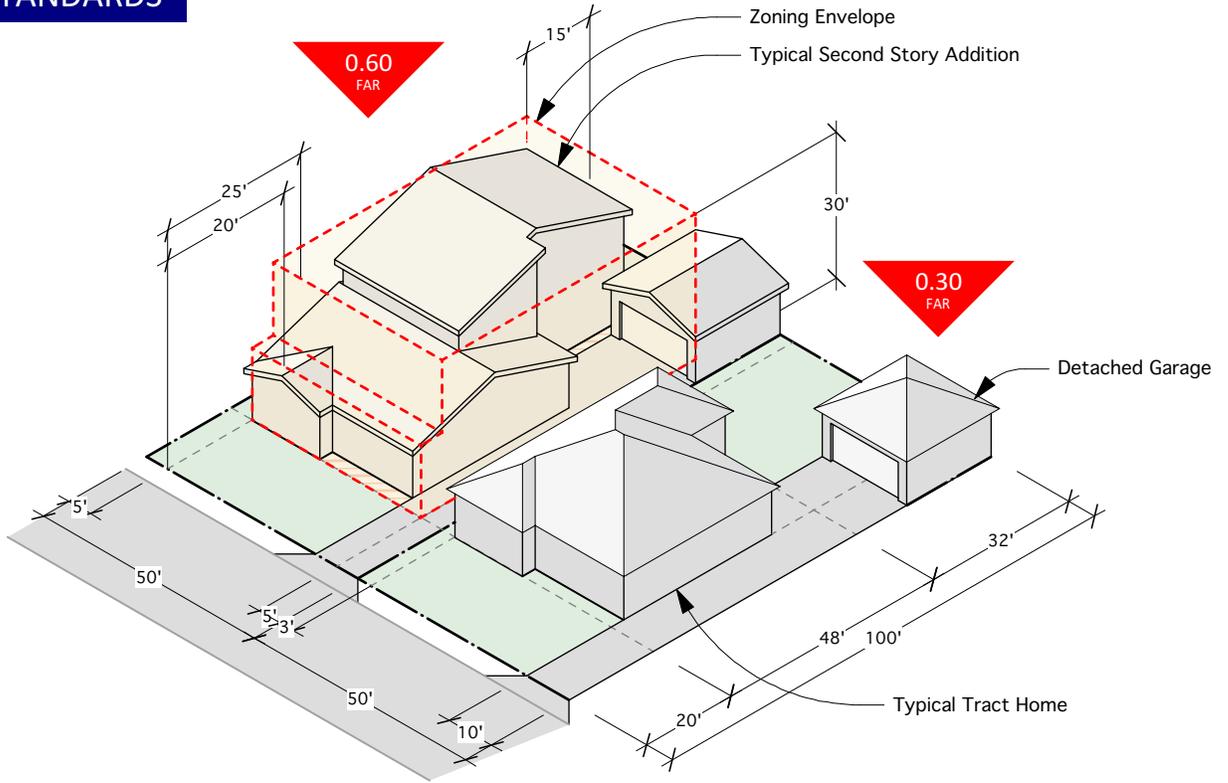
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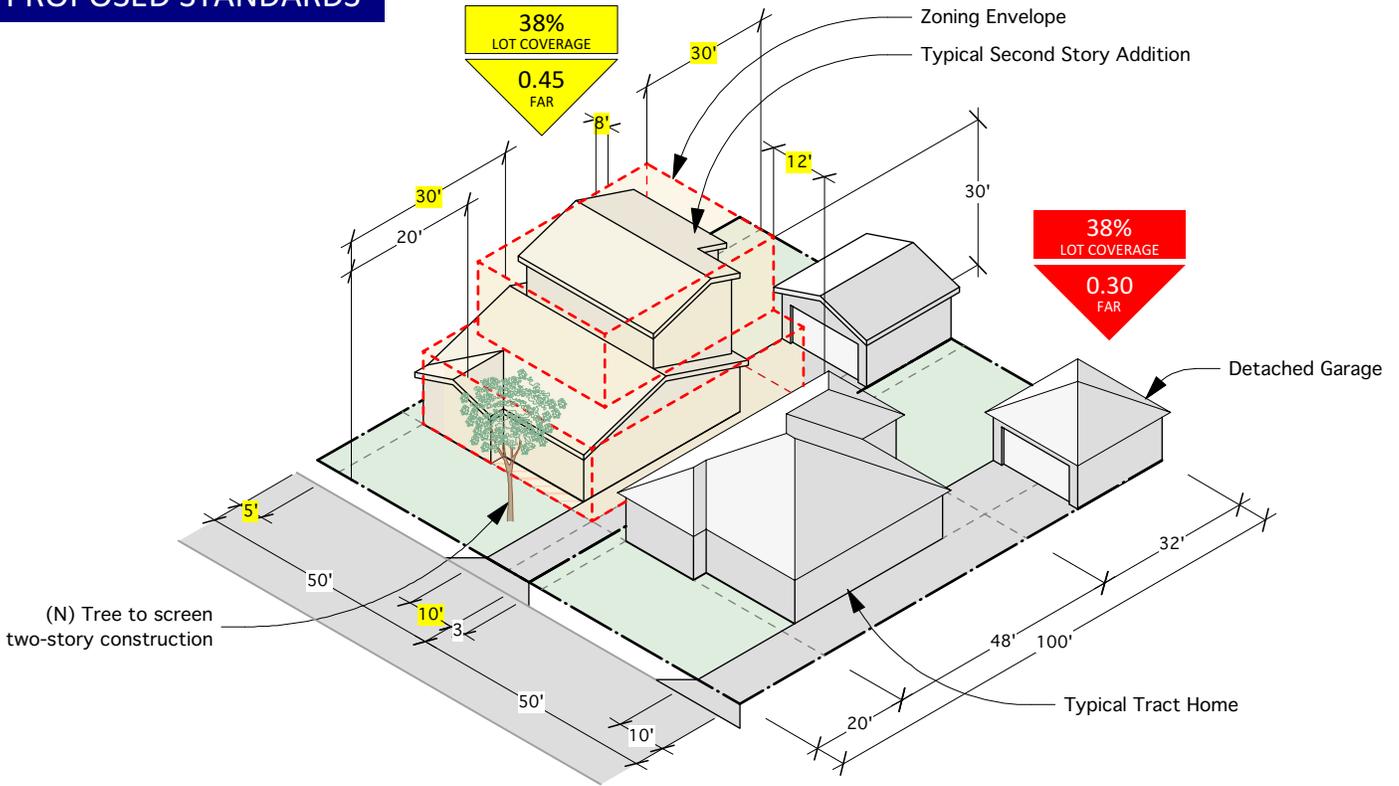
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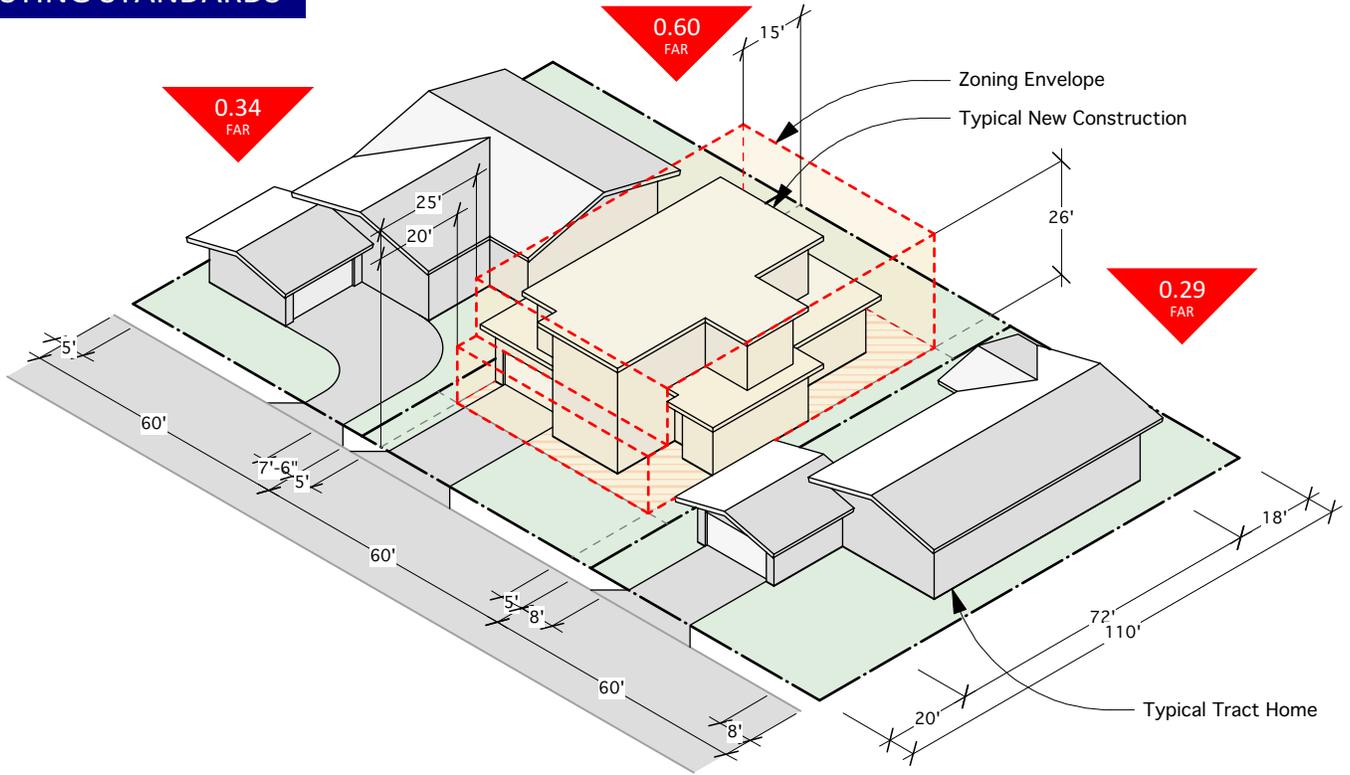
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