



JOHN KALISKI ARCHITECTS
3780 WILSHIRE BOULEVARD, SUITE 300
LOS ANGELES, CA 90010
(213) 383.7980 *ph*
www.johnkaliski.com
John Kaliski, AIA C₁₇₉₄₅

Memorandum

Date: January 10, 2020
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: John Kaliski, Principal
Wenchong Lai, Project Manager
Ariel Brenner, Urban Designer
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 November 15, 2019 to review and discuss Draft Recommendations for Culver City R-1 Single-Family Residential Neighborhood Development Standards based on the City Council and Planning Commission Joint Study Session and the Culver City single-family design study and community engagement for seven single-family residential neighborhoods: Blanco Park/Sunkist Park, Carlson Park, Culver West, McLaughlin, Park West, Studio Village, and Blair Hills/Hetzler Road.

Key Recommendations

Based upon the research, analysis, community meetings completed, and Staff input, the following recommendations are proposed to promote residential neighborhood scale and fit. These recommendations seek to promote continuity of the existing character and scale of Culver City's R-1 single-family residential neighborhoods while providing opportunities for additions and new infill residential construction.

1. Expand the Recently-Adopted Culver Crest Overlay District (-CC) into a Unified Residential Hillside Overlay District

- A. **Recommendation:** Incorporate the existing Culver Crest Overlay Standards (-CC) into one unified Residential Hillside Overlay District (-RH) that additionally includes the Blair Hills/Hetzler Road neighborhood. Define the Hillside Overlay District by the existing geographies and boundaries of the Culver Crest and Blair Hills/Hetzler Road neighborhoods.

Discussion: The purpose of combining the existing Culver Crest Overlay with Blair Hills/Hetzler Road into a Residential Hillside Overlay District and Designation (-RH) is to acknowledge the distinctive physical environmental character of their hillside topographical features, and to provide area-specific zoning regulations for incremental improvements to these hillside neighborhoods in Culver City. Blair Hills residents raised no objection to the overlay and accompanying standards presented during an additional outreach meeting conducted by JKA and Staff on October 24, 2019.

At the Joint Study Session, members of the Planning Commission and City Council requested further analysis of citywide topography. JKA undertook this analysis that indicates that the vast majority of parcels containing slopes greater than fifteen (15) percent are concentrated at the Culver Crest neighborhood and Blair Hills/Hetzler Road (see Figure 1). Figure 2 depicts the slope conditions for other R1 neighborhoods in Culver City and indicates very few areas where slopes greater than fifteen (15) percent exist. Per existing regulations in Culver City, individual lots with slopes exceeding fifteen (15) percent will nevertheless meet the grading requirements of the Building Code as administered by the Building Official.

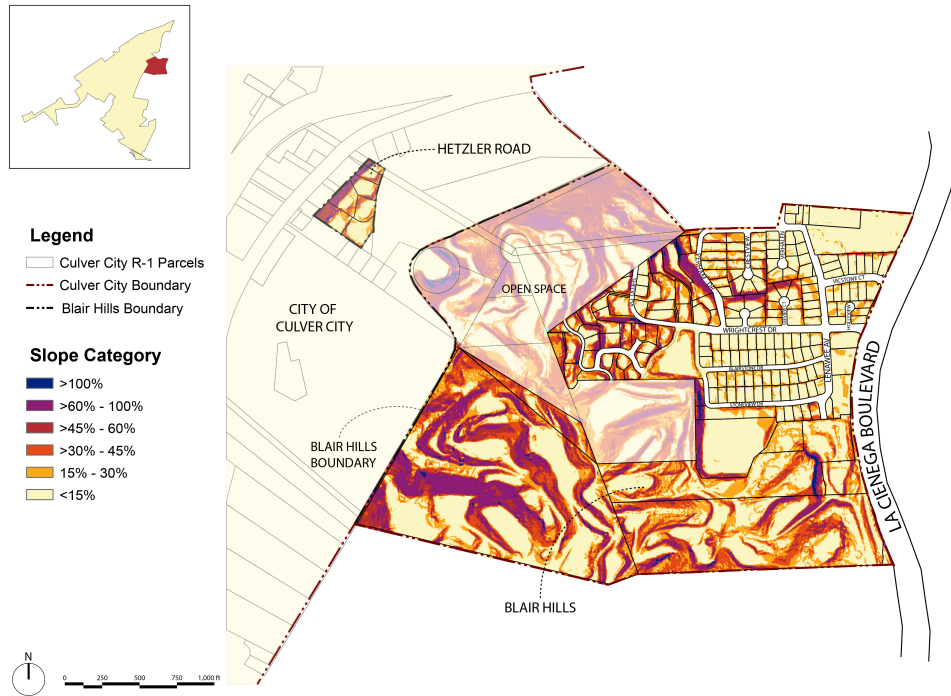


Figure 1. Existing slope conditions for the Blair Hills/Hetzler Road neighborhood. Orange, red, and purple area indicates slopes greater than fifteen (15) percent.

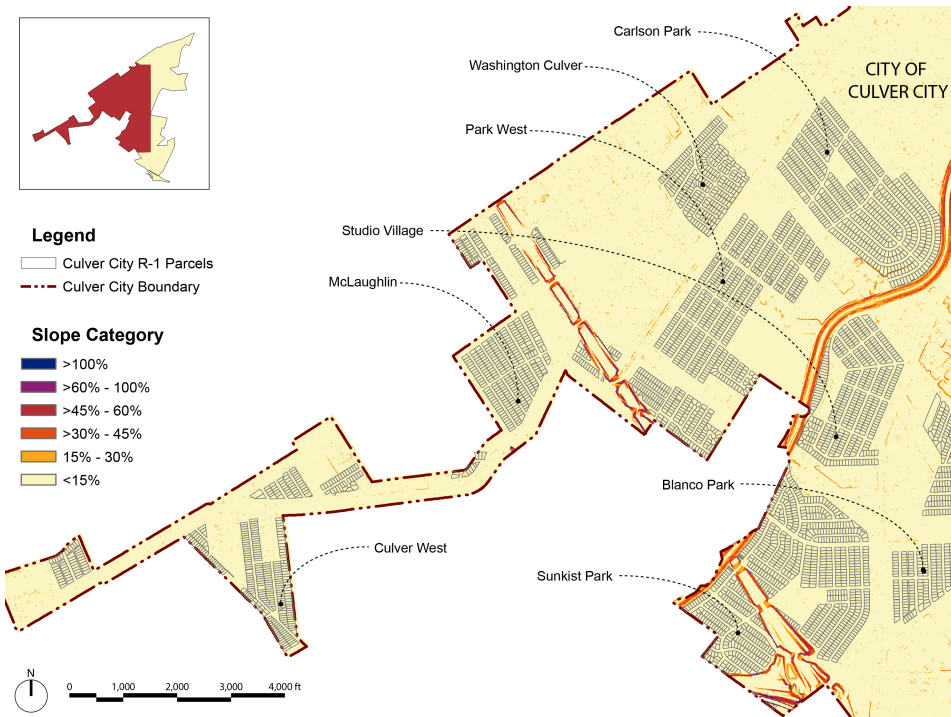


Figure 2. Existing slope conditions for non-Hillside neighborhoods in Culver City.

- B. **Recommendation:** Utilize and amend the recently adopted Culver Crest Hillside Overlay Standards (-CC) for the proposed Residential Hillside Overlay (-RH).

Recommended Zone Text Amendment to CCMC 17.260.040:

Culver Crest/Residential Hillside Overlay (-CC) (-RH).

A. Purpose. The purpose of establishing the Culver Crest/ Residential Hillside Overlay (-CC) (-RH) is to provide ~~the~~ area-specific zoning regulations necessary for the incremental improvement and sustainable development of hillside neighborhoods in Culver City.

B. Allowable Land Uses and Permit Requirements. Allowable land uses and required permits shall be established by the applicable underlying zone.

C. Definitions. The following definitions ~~will~~ relate to residential zoned property in the ~~-CC -RH~~ Overlay:

Floor Area, ~~Residential~~. Residential floor area shall include mezzanines, covered porches, covered patios, and accessory buildings in addition to any floor area, confined from exterior wall to exterior wall, within the main dwelling unit ~~but shall not include detached garages. Garages shall be included in the floor area with the exception that up to 200 square feet of attached and front-facing garages may be exempted from floor area.~~ Floor area shall be defined as the area confined from exterior wall to exterior wall. Areas within a ceiling height greater than one (1) story, as defined by this Title, will be counted twice towards floor area. Areas with a ceiling height greater than fourteen (14) feet shall be counted twice towards floor area. Areas shall be measured as the vertical projection of a portion of a ceiling and/or the underside of a roof that exceeds fourteen (14) feet but shall in no case include any interior wall. Staircases, elevator shafts, and the like, shall be counted as one (1) plane per floor.

Discussion: At present, the key development standards distinguishing the Culver Crest Overlay from the flat R1 neighborhoods are the use of slope band methodology for FAR calculation; area-specific second-story setback requirements; and the height limit of one (1) story and fourteen (14) feet for structures on slopes equal to or greater than fifty (50) percent. Because the topographical conditions of the Blair Hills/Hetzler Road neighborhood are comparable to those in the Culver Crest/Hillside Overlay, these standards will be similarly effective in constraining excess volume and providing for continuity, scale, and fit in the proposed Hillside overlay zone.

During outreach efforts with the Culver Crest and Blair Hills communities, residents suggested that encouraging rear yard garages within hillside areas was not desirable because rear garages pose the potential to block views and many rear yards are too sloped to accommodate garages. Based upon this, the recommended language for this proposed overlay district incentivizes the construction of attached and front-facing garages and maintains the prevailing condition of front-facing garages in the Hillside by exempting from the FAR area calculation 200 square feet of such garage area.

The following changes are further proposed to simplify and consolidate the relationship between the Hillside Overlay and R1 Zoning Standards:

1. Remove the following definitions listed in the Culver Crest Overlay and introduce them into the R1 Standards: "Attic," "Covered," "Dwelling unit," "Kitchen," and "Mezzanine/loft." Introduce a "Floor Area, Residential" definition in the R1 Zone but maintain a Hillside-specific definition in the Overlay, as referenced above.
2. Increase the height limit for a flat-roof structure from twenty-six (26) feet to twenty-seven (27) feet to maintain consistency with Recommendation 3 of this document.
3. Clarify that uncovered parking shall be allowed in side and rear yards of Hillside lots, as recommended for all R1 lots in Recommendation 7 of this document.

2. Amend the Single-Family Residential FAR Standards

- A. **Recommendation:** Reduce the Single-Family Residential Baseline FAR from 0.60 to 0.45.

Recommended Zone Text Amendment to CCMC 17.210.020, Table 2-3:

<i>DRAFT Table 2-3: Residential Districts Development Standards</i>	
<i>Development Feature</i>	<i>Requirement by Zoning District</i>
	<i>R1</i>
Maximum area	0.60 <u>0.45</u> Floor Area Ratio (FAR)

Discussion: The existing maximum residential FAR is 0.60 throughout Culver City R1 neighborhoods with the exception of Culver Crest where it has been reduced to 0.45. During the community outreach survey exercise with seven Culver City neighborhoods, the majority of residents expressed support for standards that would further limit the mass, bulk, and height of R1 neighborhood structures. The 0.60 FAR does not include certain accessory structures such as detached garages and other non-habitable spaces.

JKA and Staff initially proposed a 0.45 FAR based upon a regional comparative R1 zone study and received feedback from the Joint Study Session to conduct a further study considering a 0.50 FAR. Based upon additional community input, the understanding of the evolution of State of California ADU requirements, as well as further discussion with City Staff, the 0.45 FAR is again recommended. This, in combination with the other recommendations proposed, will realize construction that best fits the existing character and scale of neighborhoods that consist largely of one-story structures.

On a typical 50-foot-wide by 100-foot-deep Culver City R1 lot, a revised 0.45 FAR will provide for a maximum 2,250 square foot primary residence. As illustrated, this can be reasonably achieved through either one- or two-story construction (see Figure 3 and Figure 4). Residents may be able to realize up to 1,200 square feet of additional space dedicated toward an accessory dwelling unit¹ and/or accessory structure such as a detached garage located behind the primary structure².

¹ Per California Assembly Bill No. 68

² See Recommendation 2B of this document

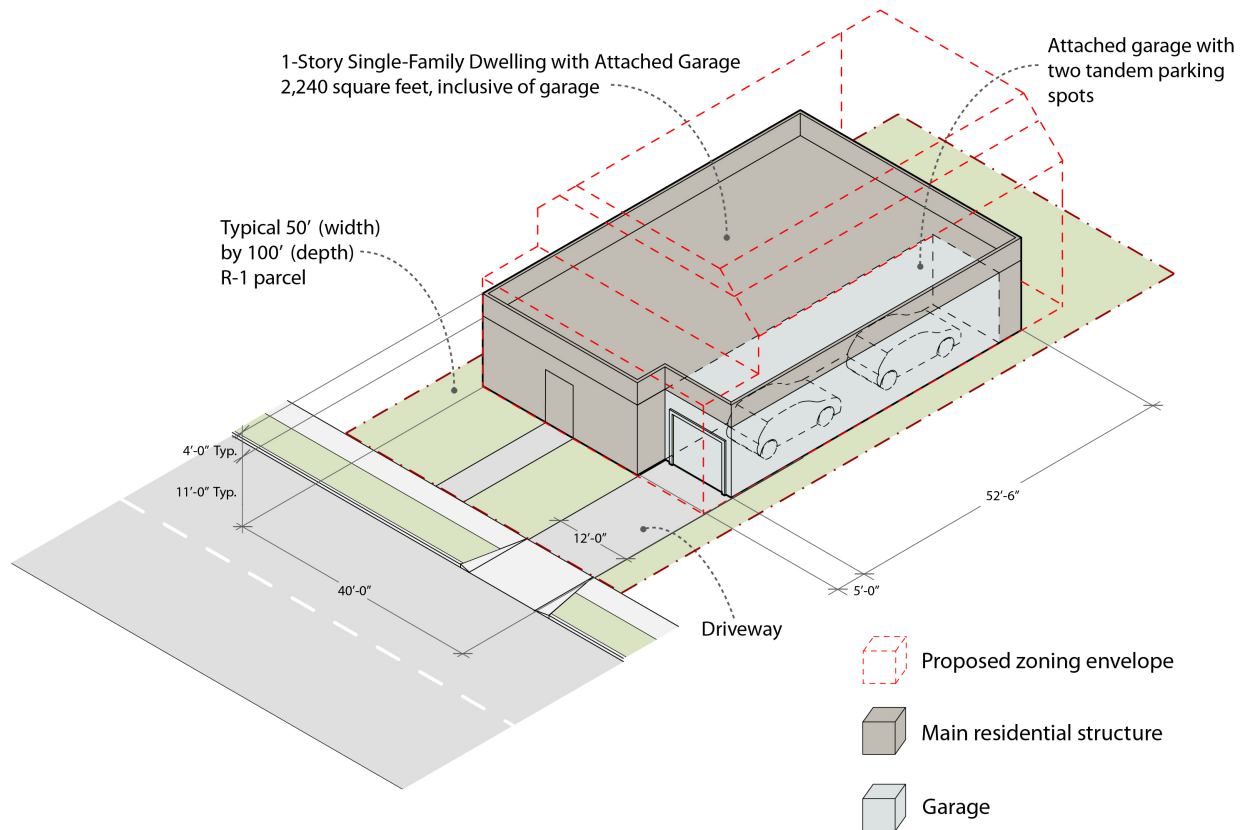


Figure 3. A one-story structure on a typical 50'-0" by 100'-0" R1 lot achieves the recommended 0.45 FAR.

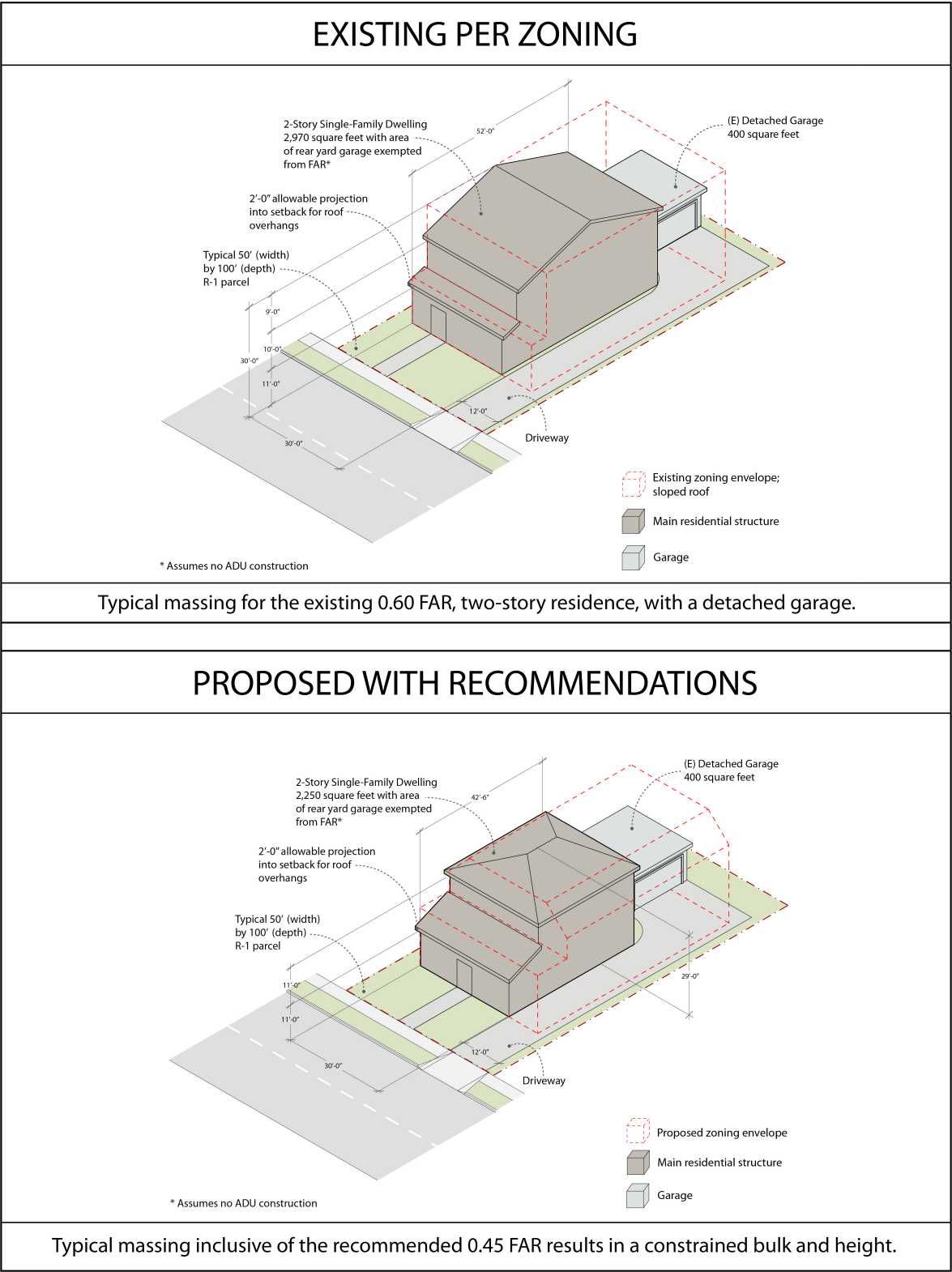


Figure 4. Typical massing for two-story construction per the existing 0.60 allowance compared with a structure at the recommended 0.45 FAR. The lower diagram illustrates the cumulative result of all recommendations noted in this document.

- B. **Recommendation:** Exempt any garage area located behind the primary dwelling structure from the FAR calculation.

Recommended Zone Text Amendment to CCMC 17.210.020, Table 2-3, Note 6: Garages attached to be primary structure shall be included in the FAR. Detached garages shall not be included in the FAR. In the R1 Zone, residential floor area shall include any floor area, confined from exterior wall to exterior wall, within the main dwelling unit, accessory structures, and garages, with the exception that garages located completely behind the primary dwelling unit shall not be counted towards FAR.

Discussion: During the community outreach process, many participants stated that Culver City should encourage rear yard parking to reduce the construction of new front-facing garages and limit the overall bulk and mass as seen from the street. Exempting area for construction in rear yards allows residents to optimize the primary structure’s use of FAR as fully habitable space and incentivizes the maintenance of the prevailing neighborhood character in areas with rear garages.

3. Reduce the Building Height

- A. **Recommendation:** Increase the maximum allowable height for flat roofs by one (1) foot to twenty-seven (27) feet and include the height of parapets within this maximum allowable height. Introduce a slope maximum of 1:1 (45°) for sloped roofs.

Recommended Zone Text Amendment to CCMC 17.210.020, Table 2-3:

DRAFT Table 2-3: Residential Districts Development Standards	
Development Feature	Requirement by Zoning District
	R1
Height limit (4)(5)(8)(9)	Flat roofs – 2 stories and 26 feet <u>27 feet</u> Sloped roof – 2 stories and 30 feet
(4) For standards for Accessory Residential Structures, see CCMC 17.400.100. (5) For standards for Height Measurement and Height Limit Exceptions, see CCMC 17.300.025 (8) Sloped roofs <u>shall be</u> equal to or greater than a 3:12 slope <u>and shall be equal to or less than a 1:1 slope</u> ; flat roofs <u>shall be</u> less than a 3:12 slope. (9) <u>Notwithstanding Subsection 17.300.025.C.3, in R1 zones, the height limit shall be inclusive of a fire or parapet wall.</u>	

Discussion: During the R1 outreach process, a majority of community members expressed a dislike for houses that maximize the existing zoning envelope. The recommended height limits would subdue mass and bulk while still allowing for the construction of two-story homes with 10-foot floor-to-ceiling heights and a 42-inch parapet (see Figure 5 and Figure 6). The recommended slope maximum for a sloped roof would reduce the bulk and height of exterior masses as well as attics and constrain attics’ uses as habitable spaces (see Figure 7). In Figure 8, typical massing for a two-story flat-roofed structure with a parapet at the proposed 27-foot height limit is compared with the existing height limit of 26-feet plus the 5-foot allowance for parapets (per CCMC 17.300.025.C.3).

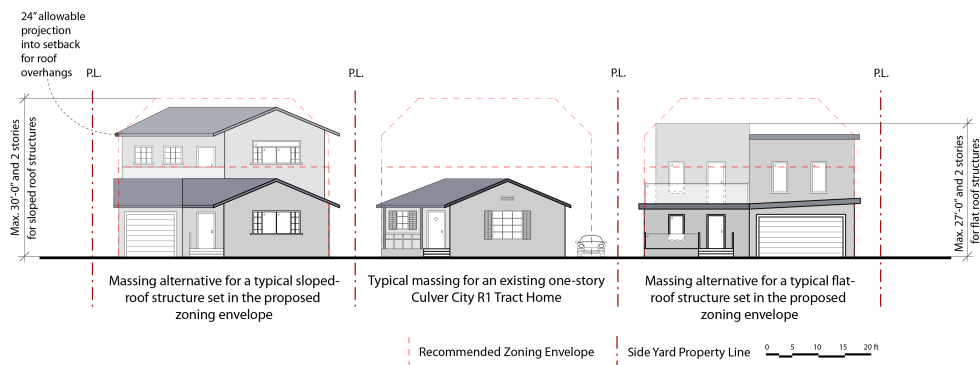


Figure 5. Massing alternatives for flat- and sloped-roof structures set within the recommended zoning envelope.

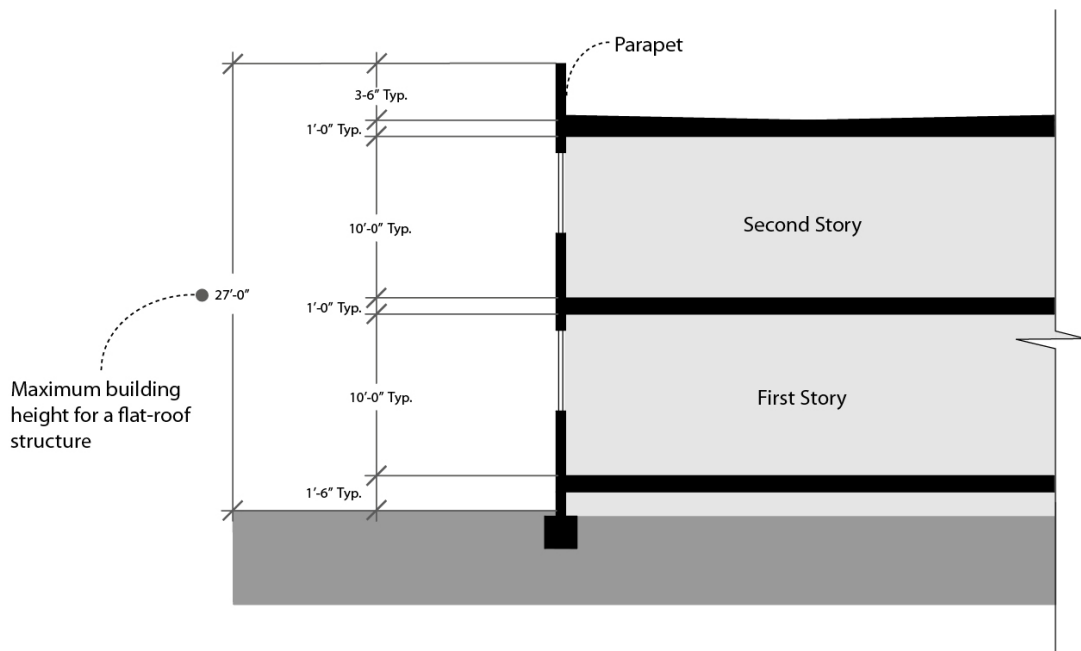


Figure 6. Sectional diagram of the recommended 27-foot height limit for a flat roof, including a 42-inch parapet.

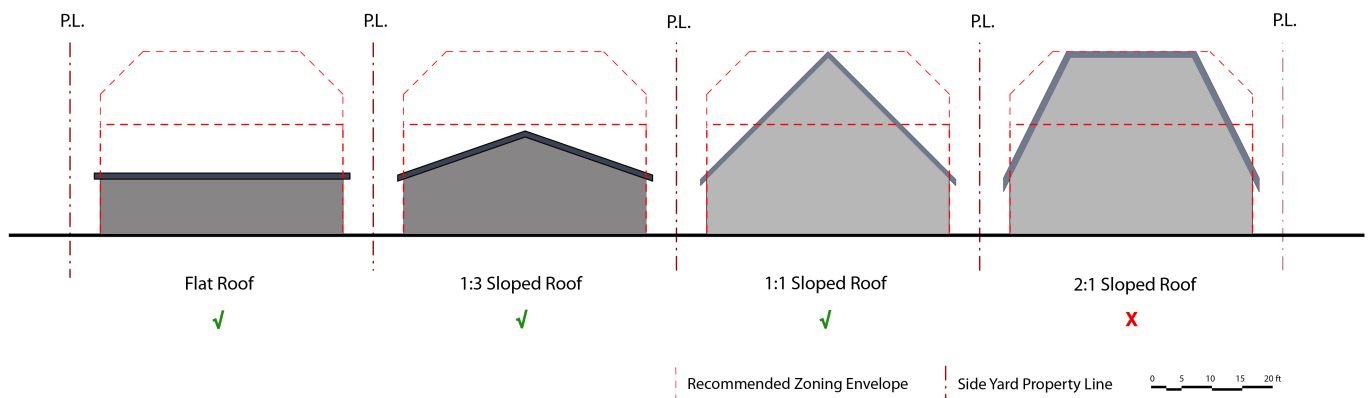


Figure 7. The pitch of sloped roofs shall not exceed 1:1 (45°).

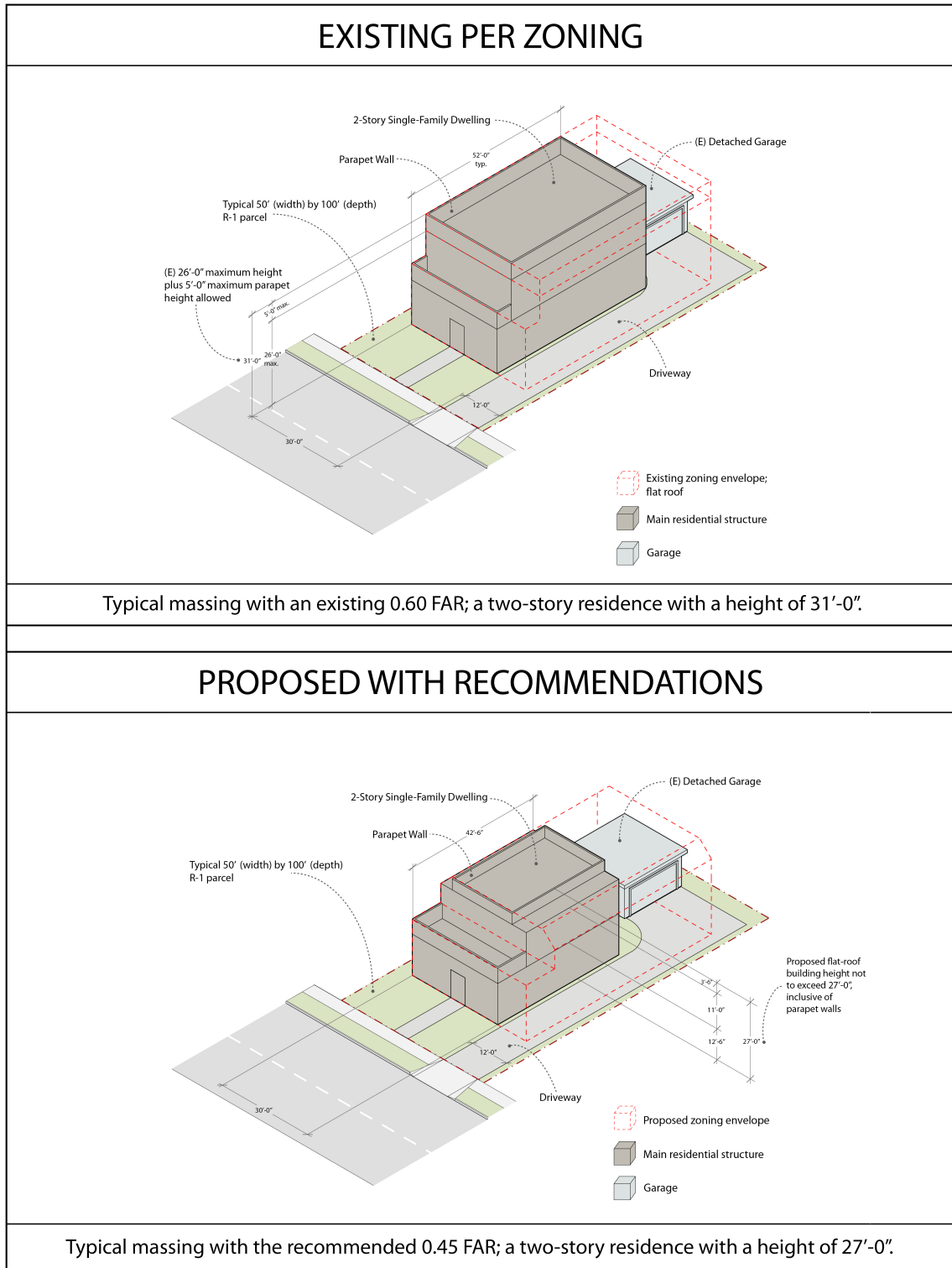


Figure 8. Typical massing of an existing, per Zoning, two-story residence with the 31'-0" height limit, compared with the recommended height limit of 27'-0", inclusive of a parapet. The lower diagram illustrates the cumulative result of all recommendations noted in this document.

4. Modify the Front Yard Setback Requirement

- A. **Recommendation:** Increase the second-story front yard setback requirement from twenty-five (25) feet to thirty (30) feet from the front property line.

Recommended Zone Text Amendment to CCMC 17.210.020, Table 2-3:

<i>DRAFT Table 2-3: Residential Districts Development Standards</i>	
<i>Development Feature</i>	<i>Requirement by Zoning District</i>
	<i>R1</i>
<i>Front</i>	<u>Single story structures – 20 feet</u> single story structures <u>Two story structures – 20 feet; two story structures; plus minimum 5 feet stepback 30 feet for second floor story, as defined by this Title, or any roof or portion of a roof, parapet wall, or front yard facing façade that exceeds a height of 18 feet.</u> 25 feet – two story structures without minimum 5 feet second floor stepback

Discussion: The community outreach process revealed that residents consistently preferred second stories that were set behind single-story roof ridgelines. Utilizing more restrictive second-story setback requirements at the front yard will better relate new construction and second-story additions to prevailing one-story residences by maintaining more consistency with the existing single-story scale at front yards. On a typical R1 lot, a structure complying with the proposed setback can still fully realize the proposed 0.45 FAR. The recommended zoning envelope and setback requirements are illustrated in Figure 9. Figure 10 portrays a sectional view of a typical mass within the proposed zoning envelope along the front yard. Massing alternatives for 0.45 FAR structures with the recommended second-story setbacks are contrasted with existing allowable conditions in Figure 11.

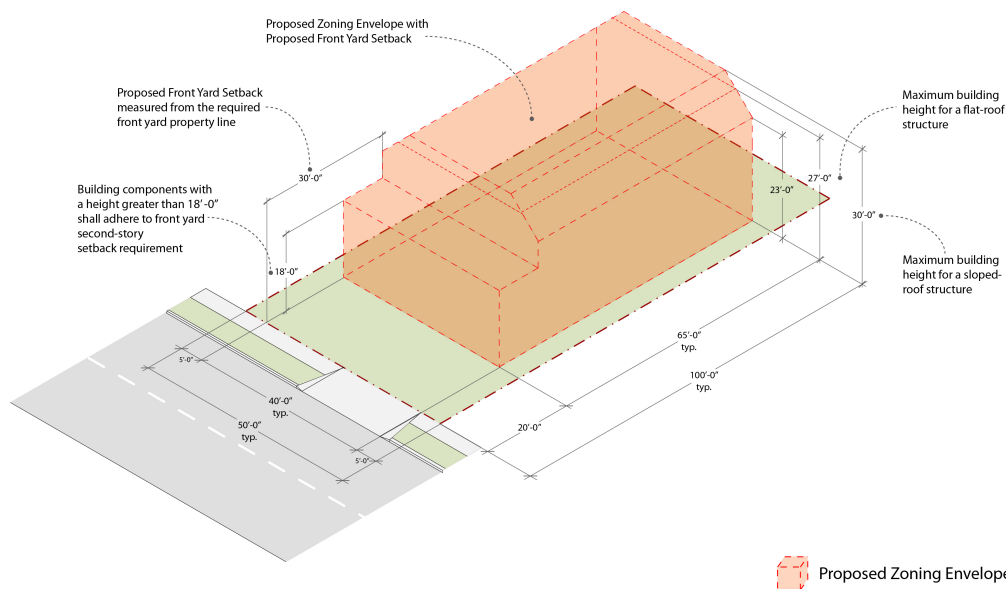


Figure 9. Proposed zoning envelope with a recommended 30'-0" second-story front yard setback.

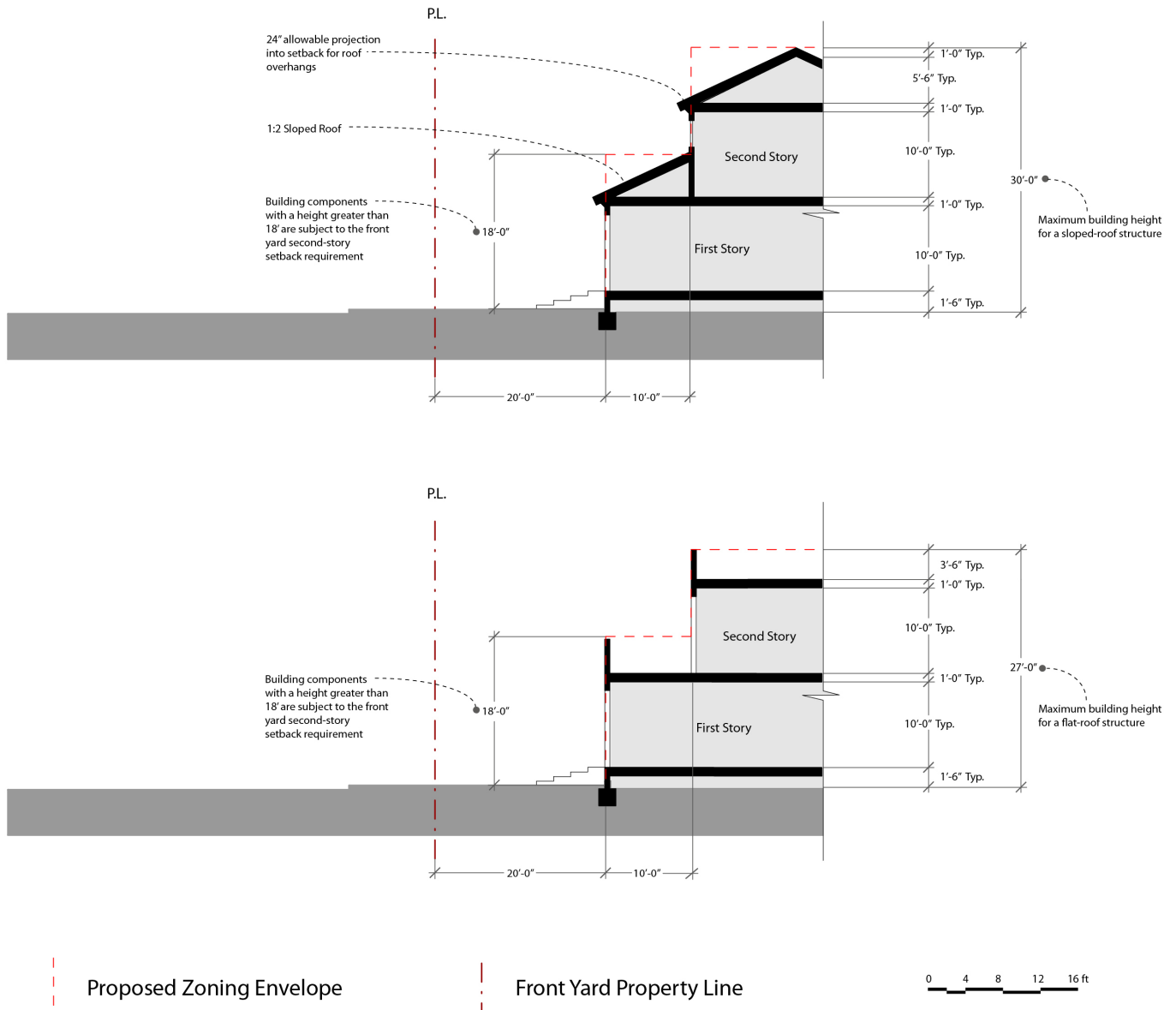


Figure 10. Sectional diagram of sloped- and flat-roof alternatives set within the recommended zoning envelope.

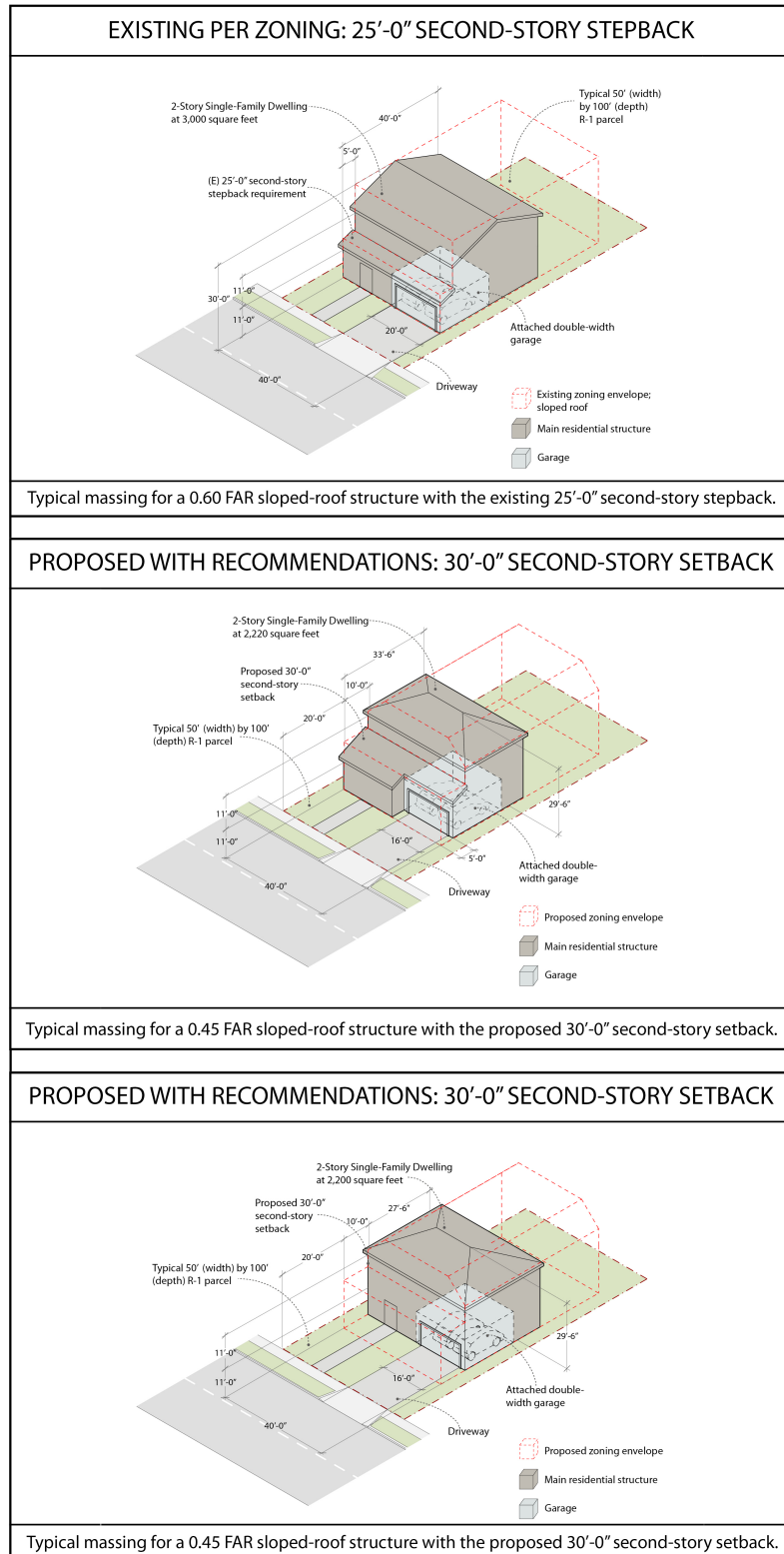


Figure 11. The existing 25'-0" second-story stepback is compared with two alternatives for the recommended 30'-0" second-story setback as illustrated for a sloped-roof structure on a typical R1 lot.

5. Modify the Side Yard Setback Requirements

- A. **Recommendation:** Introduce an encroachment plane along side yards.

Recommended Zone Text Amendment to CCMC 17.210.020, Table 2-3:

<i>DRAFT Table 2-3: Residential Districts Development Standards</i>	
<i>Development Feature</i>	<i>Requirement by Zoning District</i>
	<i>R1</i>
<i>Interior sides (each)</i>	5 feet <u>minimum (10)</u>
<i>(10) In the R1 Zone, no structure shall encroach upon a 1:1 upward- and inward-inclining setback plane starting from eighteen (18) feet above any interior side lot line.</i>	

Discussion: Community outreach participants expressed the opinion that the City’s existing side yard setback requirements allow new two-story construction to “loom” over existing one-story residences and do not provide for adequate sunlight, air, and privacy in relationship to neighboring properties. The recommended side yard encroachment plane will reduce the overall mass and bulk along side yards by requiring that volumes be set within a more restrictive envelope along interior side lot lines (Figure 12). Figure 13 illustrates the combined proposed zoning envelope incorporating the recommended front and side yard setbacks and encroachment planes. Figure 14 depicts a sectional view of a typical mass set within the proposed zoning envelope along a side yard.

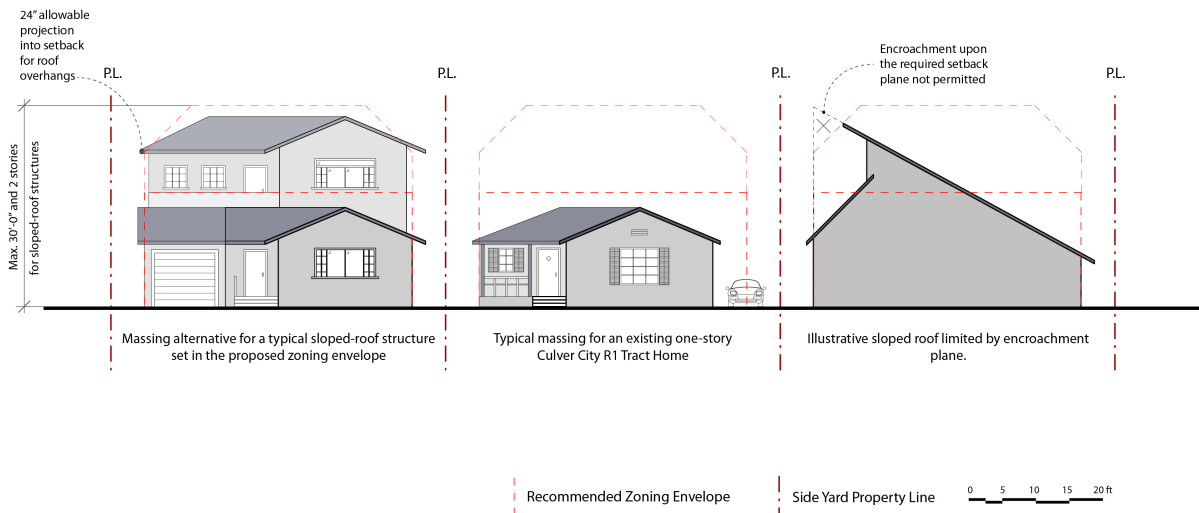


Figure 12. Massing alternatives for structures set within the recommended zoning envelope.

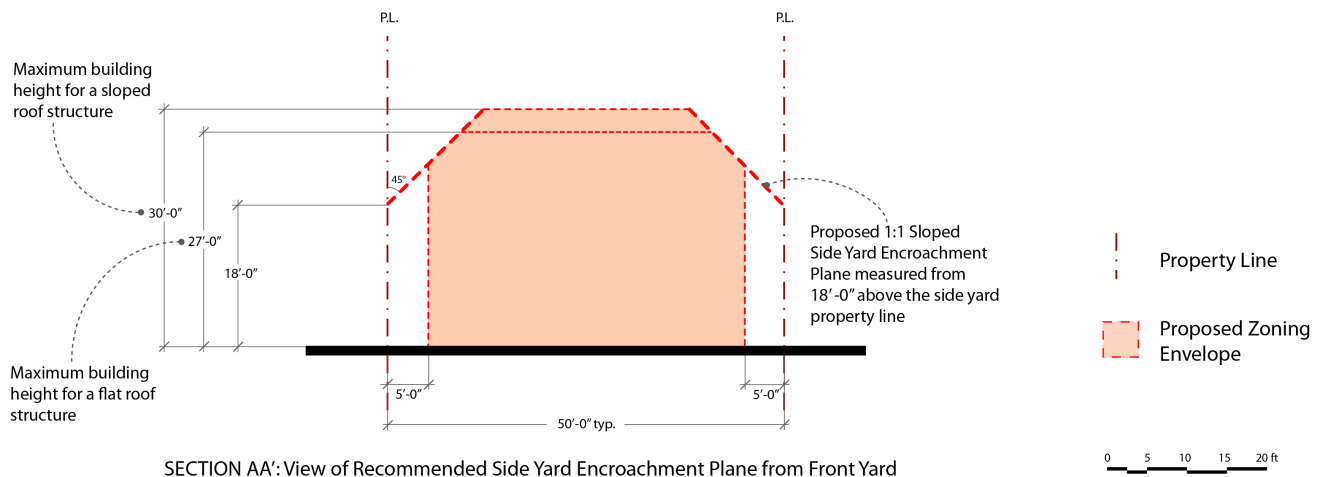
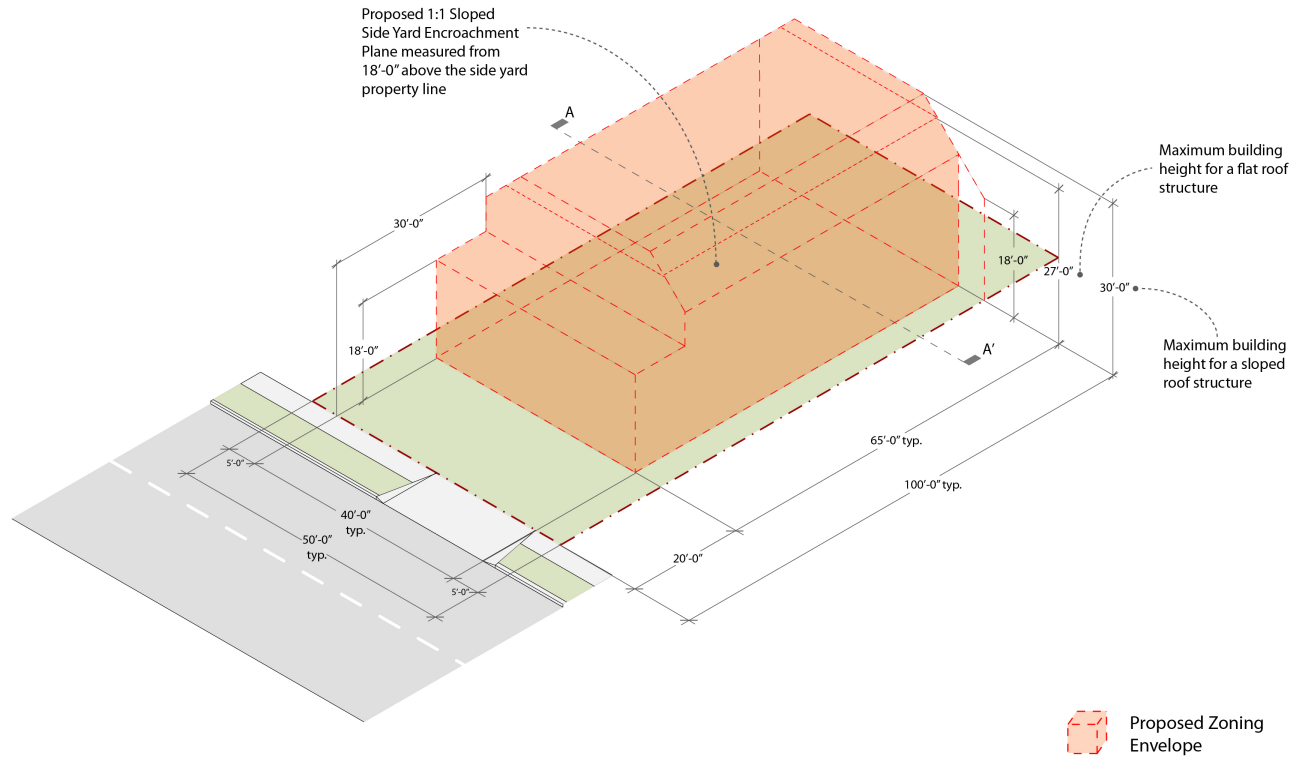


Figure 13. Recommended zoning envelope with a 1:1 (45°) sloped side yard encroachment plane.

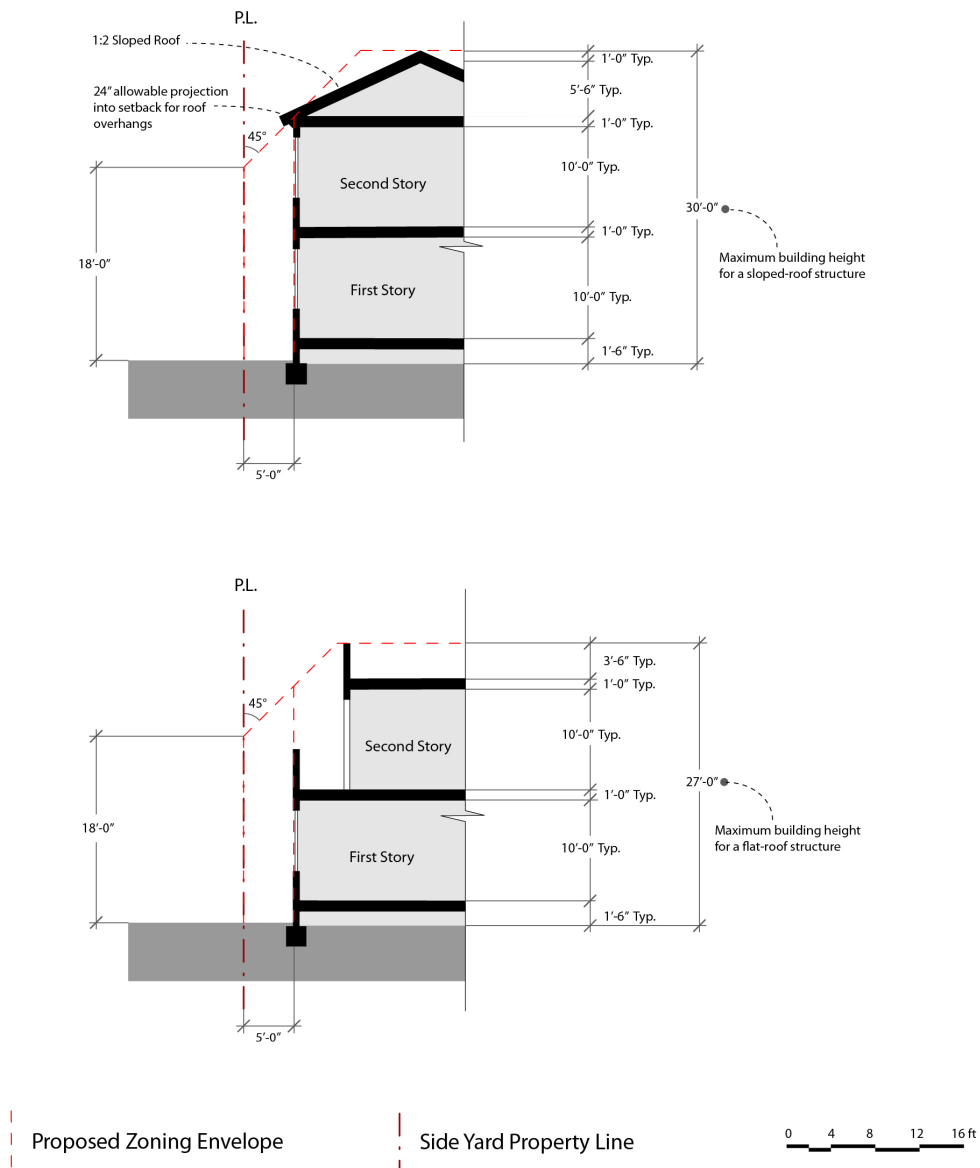


Figure 14. Sectional diagrams of flat- and sloped-roof alternatives set within the recommended side yard encroachment plane.

6. Count Double Height Volumes Twice Towards Floor Area

- A. **Recommendation:** Adopt a standard in the non-Hillside areas counting areas exceeding fourteen (14) feet in height twice towards floor area.

Recommended Zone Text Amendment to CCMC 17.210.020, Table 2-3, Note 6: ~~Garages attached to be primary structure shall be included in the FAR. Detached garages shall not be included in the FAR.~~In the R1 Zone, residential floor area shall include any floor area, confined from exterior wall to exterior wall, within the main dwelling unit, accessory structures, and garages, with the exception that garages located completely behind the primary dwelling unit shall not be counted towards FAR. Areas with a ceiling height greater than fourteen (14) feet shall be counted twice towards floor area with the exception that the first 250 square feet of such areas may be counted only once towards floor area. Areas shall be measured as the vertical projection of a portion of a ceiling and/or the underside of a roof that exceeds fourteen (14) feet but shall in no case include any interior wall. Staircases, elevator shafts, and the like, shall be counted as one (1) plane per floor.

Discussion: The proposed height of fourteen (14) feet will constrain the construction of excess mass and volume that does not relate to the prevailing character of one-story homes seen in Culver City, while maintaining the ability to accommodate tall spaces that incorporate skylights and/or clerestory windows. The first 250 square feet, which is exempt from double-FAR calculation, allows for design flexibility and may include double-height entryways, light wells, or any other space within the structure that exceeds fourteen (14) feet in height. The recommended amendment is consistent with the existing Culver Crest/Hillside Overlay standard to count areas exceeding fourteen (14) feet in height twice towards FAR.

7. Amend Parking and Garage Standards

- A. **Recommendation:** Allow uncovered and half-covered parking as well as fully covered parking on R1 lots.

Recommended Zone Text Amendment to CCMC 17.320.035.N.3, Table 3-5:

<i>DRAFT Table 3-5: Residential Covered Parking Requirements</i>				
<i>Zoning District</i>	<i>Residential Unit(s)</i>	<i>Uncovered</i>	<i>½ Covered</i>	<i>Fully Covered</i>
R1 Zone	Single family dwelling	<u>[x]</u>	<u>[x]</u>	[x]

Discussion: Uncovered parking, as an alternative to fully covered parking, reduces the cost of new housing, provides for more flexibility when designing and siting accessory structures and ADUs in rear yards, and provides more space for side and rear yard parking configurations out of view from public rights-of-way.

- B. **Recommendation:** Require that any uncovered parking space located behind the front yard setback line be placed within fifteen (15) feet of a side yard or fully screened from view of the public right-of-way by the primary structure. Further, introduce a five (5) foot setback for front-facing garages in addition to the existing twenty (20) foot front yard setback.

Recommended Zone Text Addition to CCMC 17.320.035.N.3, Table 3-5:

DRAFT Table 3-5: Residential Covered Parking Requirements				
Zoning District	Residential Unit(s)	Uncovered	½ Covered	Fully Covered
R1 Zone <u>(1)</u>	Single family dwelling	<u>[x]</u>	<u>[x]</u>	[x]
<u>(1) In the R1 Zone, any uncovered parking located behind the front yard setback line shall be placed within fifteen (15) feet of an interior side yard property line or shall be fully screened from view of the public right-of-way by the primary structure. Front yard-facing parking not located within fifteen (15) feet of a side yard property line shall be fully covered and enclosed.</u>				

Recommended Zone Text Amendment to CCMC 17.320.035.N.1: Within single-family, duplex and triplex developments, access for every required parking space shall be provided by a paved driveway not less than 20 feet in length, measured from the end of the parking space to the nearest public or private street right-of-way line from which access to parking is provided. In the R1 Zone, front-facing garages shall be set back at least 25 feet from the front property line.

Discussion: The proposed constraints on uncovered parking placement will control the visual impact that uncovered cars have on the streetscape, while still allowing such spaces to be placed in side or rear yards in lieu of a garage (see Figure 15). Figure 16 depicts an uncovered parking alternative along the side yard of a typical R1 lot.

A setback of twenty-five (25) feet for front-facing garages from the front property line will introduce additional modulation that breaks the mass, bulk, and scale of structures as seen from the street. Figure 17 illustrates the proposed twenty-five (25) foot front-facing garage setback on a typical 0.45 FAR structure.

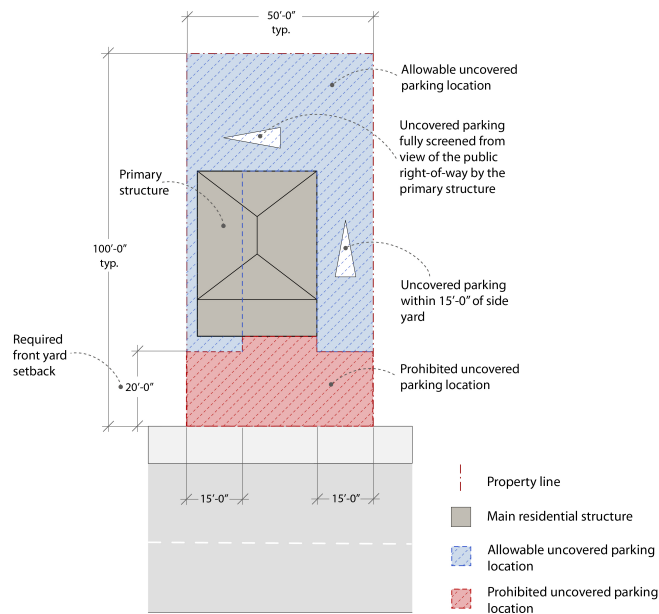


Figure 15. Uncovered parking shall be placed within 15'-0" of a side yard or shall be fully screened from view of the public right-of-way by the primary structure.

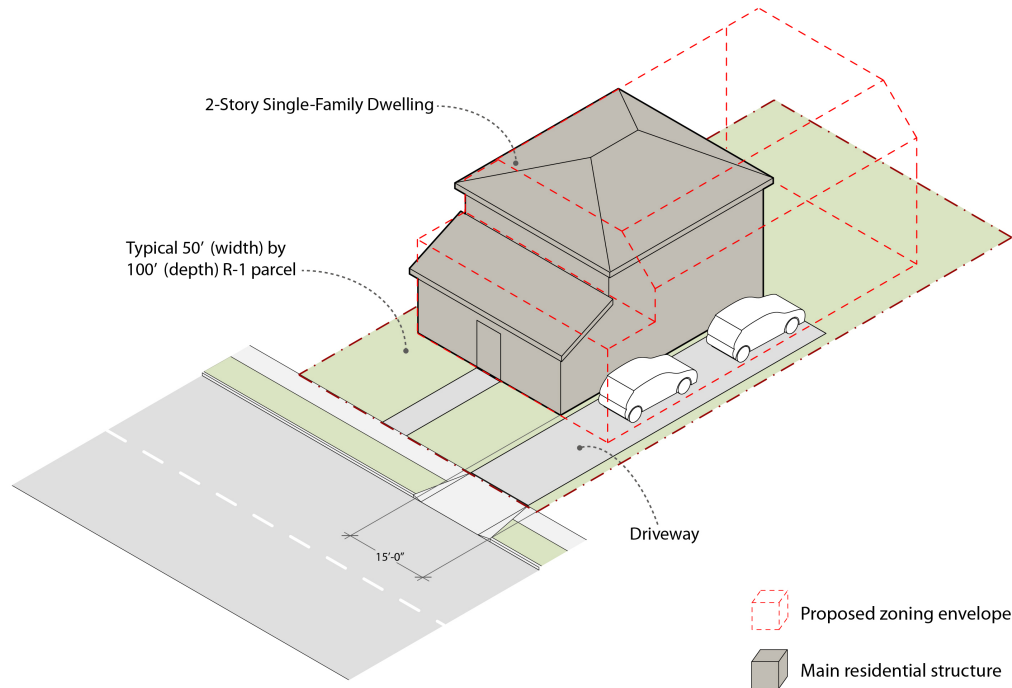


Figure 16. Uncovered parking placed within 15'-0" of a side yard.

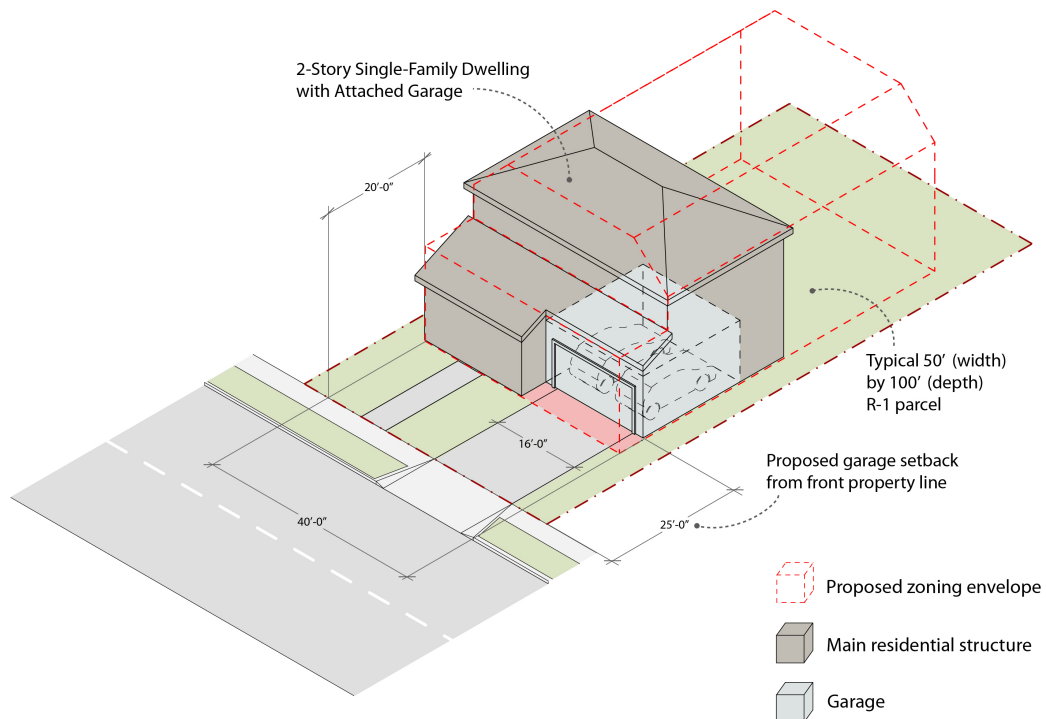


Figure 17. Typical massing for a 0.45 FAR residence with the proposed 25'-0" garage setback.

8. Amend Setback Standards for Accessory Residential Structures

- A. **Recommendation:** Adjust the setback standards for Accessory Residential Structures to be consistent with California Assembly Bill No. 68.

Recommended Zone Text Amendment to CCMC 17.400.100.A.3:

The accessory structure shall have a setback of at least 2 feet from every perimeter property line when the setback is adjacent to a commercial zone and shall have a setback of at least 4 feet from every perimeter property line when the setback is adjacent to a residential zone, except that the setback shall be the same as that required for the primary dwelling in the zoning district in which the accessory structure is located, whenever the accessory structure:

- i. Exceeds 12 feet in height ; or
- ii. Is within a setback facing a public street right-of-way.

Discussion: California Assembly Bill No. 68 establishes a maximum four (4) foot setback from side and rear lot lines for ADUs, while the Culver City residential standards apply a two (2) foot setback from all property lines for accessory structures. Applying the same four (4) foot setback to all residential accessory structures and ADUs adjacent to residential lots will simplify enforcement and provide light, space, and privacy in rear yards by utilizing the State of California’s maximum allowable separation between structures on abutting properties.

9. Introduce a Side Yard-Adjacent Roof Deck Standard

- B. **Recommendation:** Introduce a standard prohibiting the construction of side yard-adjacent roof decks.

Recommended Zone Text Addition to CCMC 17.210.020, Table 2-3:

<i>DRAFT Table 2-3: Residential Districts Development Standards</i>	
<i>Development Feature</i>	<i>Requirement by Zoning District</i>
	<i>R1</i>
<u>Roof Decks</u>	<u>Rooftop decks shall be set back five (5) feet from the building edge along side yards.</u>

Discussion: During the outreach process, community members expressed privacy concerns related to new construction along side yards. Setting roof decks away from side yard-facing building edges will reduce the impact of these areas on abutting properties. Figure 18 illustrates a roof deck with the proposed five (5) foot side-facing setbacks, located atop a residence at the proposed 0.45 FAR.

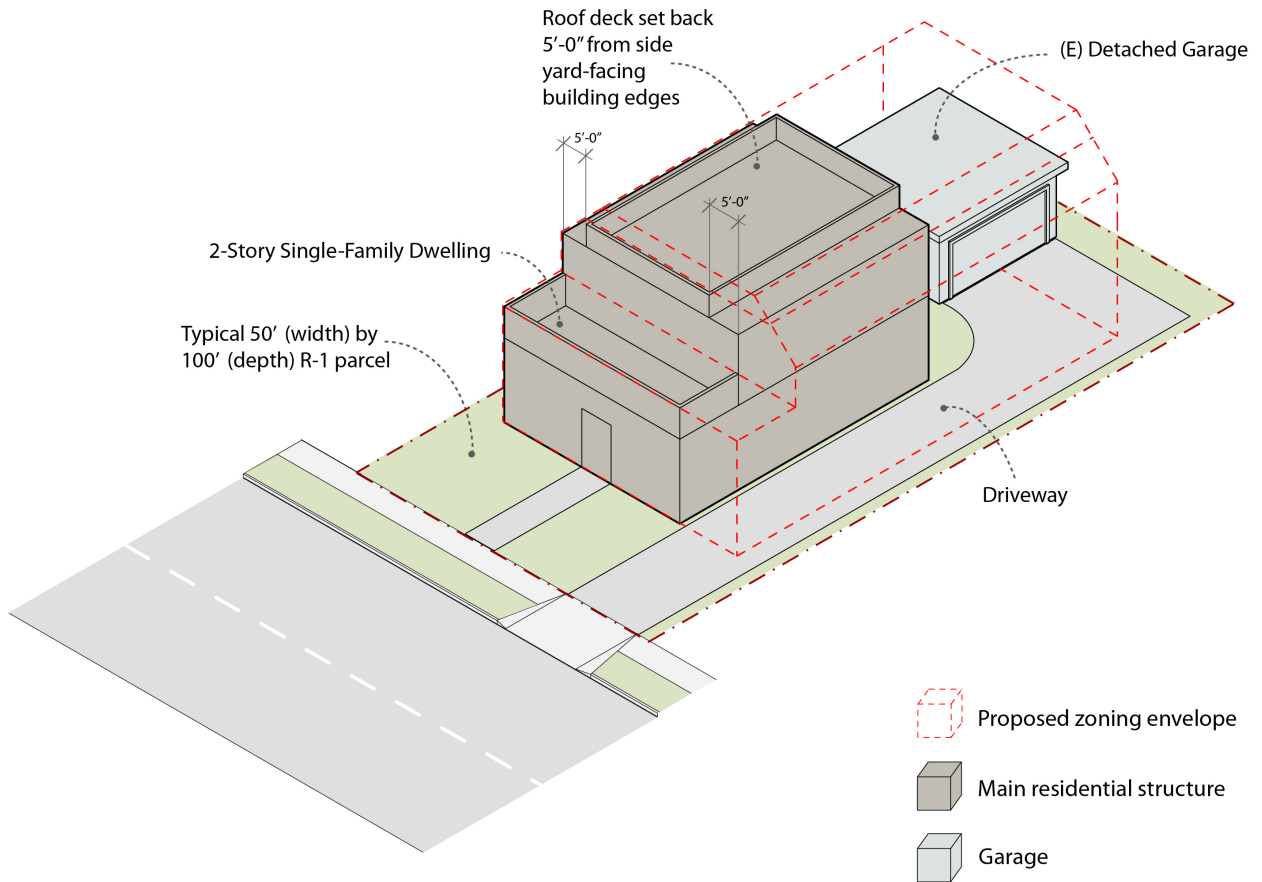


Figure 18. Roof decks shall be set back 5'-0" from side yard-facing building edges.

10. Develop Citywide, Educational, Single-Family Residential Design Guidelines and/or Informational Handout

- A. **Recommendation:** Develop a set of citywide single-family residential design guidelines and/or an informational handout based upon the City's direction. The voluntary guidelines and/or informational handout will act as a supplement to the Code, provide a graphical interpretation of the Development Standards, and will be consistent with Culver City R1 Development Standards and state laws. The guidelines and/or handout can address single-family residential development and design issues that are relevant to Culver City's R1 neighborhoods, including but not limited to mass and bulk, roofline, orientation, privacy, openings, materials, characters, styles, landscaping, and ADU placement and construction (examples are demonstrated in Figure 19, Figure 20, and Figure 21). These design guidelines and/or informational handouts may be utilized by City Staff in conversation with applicants and act as an educational tool for applicants, neighbors, and Staff to gain a better understanding of the City's character and how to fit within it.

If you have questions or need further clarification with regard to the recommendations, contact John Kaliski at (213) 383-7980, ext. 201 or jkaliski@johnkaliski.com and/or Ariel Brenner at (213) 383-7980, ext. 205 or abrenner@johnkaliski.com.

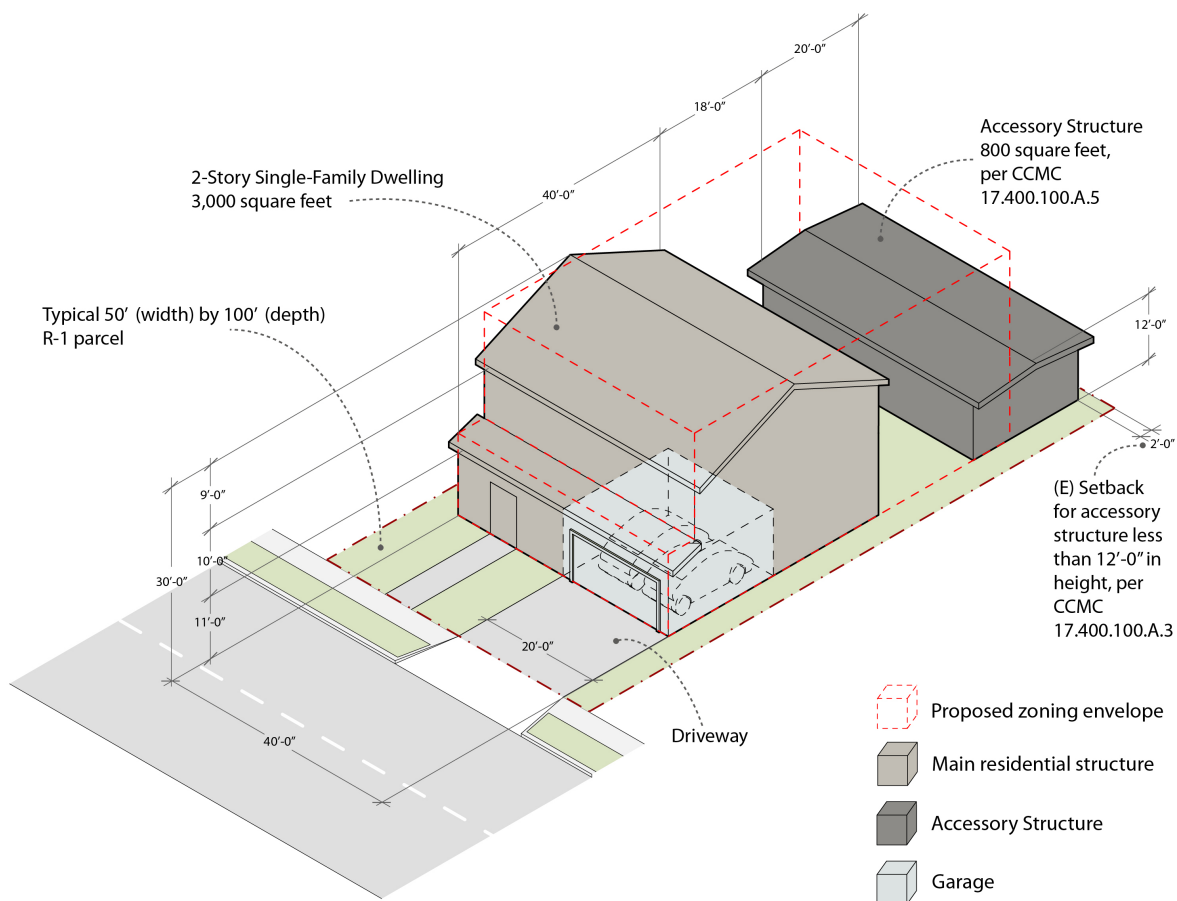


Figure 19. Typical massing for a residence at the existing 0.60 FAR, plus Culver City's existing R1 maximum of 800 square feet for an accessory structure.

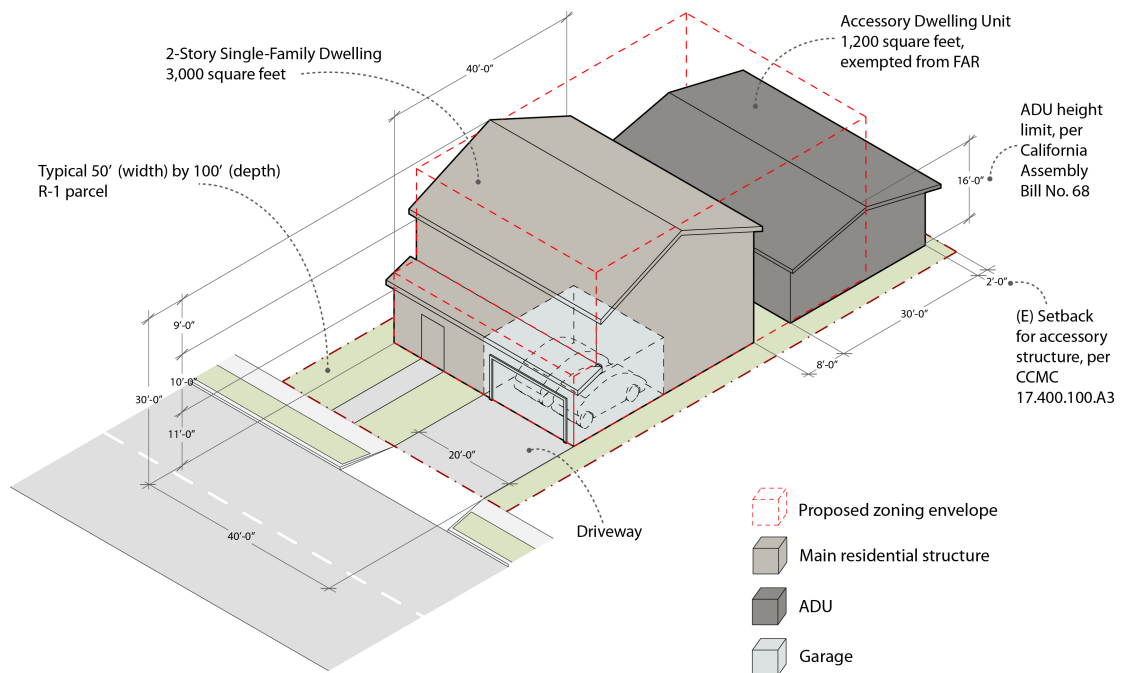


Figure 20. Typical massing for a residence at the existing 0.60 FAR, plus California's new maximum of 1,200 square feet, exempted from FAR, for an ADU.

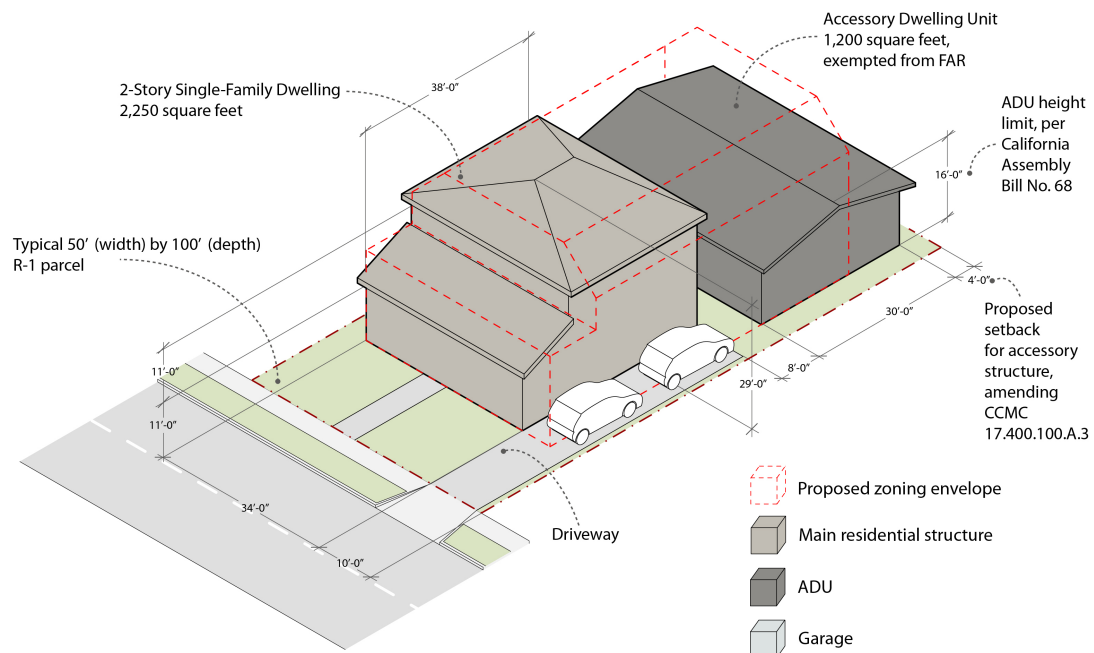


Figure 21. Typical massing for a residence at the proposed 0.45 FAR, plus California's new maximum of 1,200 square feet, exempted from FAR, for an ADU.