

CITY OF MERCED

SMALL LOT SINGLE-FAMILY HOME DESIGN GUIDELINES



Development Services Department
Planning and Permitting
Adopted August 15, 2005

SMALL LOT SINGLE FAMILY HOME GUIDELINES

A. Purpose and Applicability. The *Small Lot Single Family Home Guidelines* will be used by the City and Development Community to create site plans for small lot residential developments consistent with the *Urban Design Guidelines* of the *Merced Vision 2015 General Plan*. While the Urban Design Guidelines apply to Merced’s Urban Villages, the *Small Lot Single Family Home Guidelines* have broader applicability for use in Residential Planned Developments that are designated Village Residential as well as Low Medium Density (LMD / 6.1 to 12 units per acre). The *Small Lot Single Family Home Guidelines* are not to be used for development in the R-1 zoning districts, nor for apartment, condominium or an arrangement of detached single-family dwellings that front a private driveway or courtyard.

While Residential Planned Developments (RPD) need to be at least an acre in size [MMC 20.42.120(B)], these guidelines can be applied to any portion of the RPD.

B. Review Procedures. Same as provided for in Chapter 20.42 of the Merced Municipal Code (Planned Development), except that developments that use the PD-1-3 designation (see descriptions herein) are not required to submit a conditional use permit. To summarize, a development plan consistent with these guidelines must be approved as part of establishing or revising the RPD, which takes City Council action following a recommendation by the Planning Commission. Review and approval of detailed site plan, landscape plans and building elevations is required either concurrently or prior to review of a tentative subdivision map.

C. Overview of City Guidelines Applicable to Single Family Development. Many zoning districts provide for the development of single family homes. Each has a distinct set of development provisions. In general, larger lots have fewer provisions than smaller lots. The development guidelines for the R-1 zones (R-1-20, R-1-10, R-1-6, and R-1-5) are set-forth in the Merced Municipal Code. All these zones have established “bulk standards” (setbacks, height, lot coverage, etc.).

The R-1-6 zone has provisions that allow for a mixture of lot widths and lot sizes below the required bulk standards (MMC 20.10.065).

D. Façade Design Standards. The R-1-5 zone has additional “façade design” provisions [(MMC 20.10.065(G))] that balance the negative aesthetic impact of garages set in front of the house on narrower lots.

Table 1 - R-1-5 Zone “Façade Design” Provisions		
1	Garage Setback	Minimum 25-foot setback for ¼ of the lots.
2	Recessed Doors *	Applied to no less than 25% of those with a standard 20-foot setback
3	3-Car Garage *	Only permitted on lots greater than 5,000 square feet, unless the lot is wider than 60-feet or has lane access
4	Front Elevations *	Same elevation shall not be repeated for adjacent houses
5	Varied Front Setback *	Encouraged (except as provided in #1 above)
6	Second Story *	Encouraged
7	Trim *	Required on front elevation windows, doors and garage doors (except recessed doors, see #2 above)
8	Privacy *	Second story windows, doors and balconies allowed where not affecting privacy of off-site R-1 zoned property.
* Same as the PD / RPD Provisions (see below)		

The Planned Development Code also includes a set of “façade design standards” (MMC 20.42.070(B)) that applies to **all** single-family residential subdivisions located within a Planned Development (PD) or residential Planned Development (RPD). These standards are summarized as follows:

Table 2 - PD / RPD “Façade Design” Provisions		
1	Garage Setback	Set at least 5-feet behind the remainder of the dwelling for ¼ of the lots along a street.
2	Recessed Doors *	Applied to no less than 25% of those with a standard 20-foot setback
3	3-Car Garage *	Only permitted on lots greater than 5,000 square feet, unless the lot is wider than 60-feet or has alley access
4	Front Elevations *	Same elevation shall not be repeated for adjacent houses
5	Varied Front Setback *	Encouraged (except as provided in #1 above)
6	Second Story *	Encouraged
7	Front Porches, bays and balconies	Encouraged
8	Trim *	Required on front elevation windows, doors and garage doors (except recessed doors, see #2 above)
9	Privacy *	Second story windows, doors and balconies allowed where not affecting privacy of off-site R-1 zoned property.
10	Landscaping	Front Yard Landscaping installed prior to occupancy
* Same as the R-1-5 Provision		

NOTE: In addition to the PD / RPD Code Provisions cited above, the *Small Lot Single Family Home Guidelines* will also be used for any single-family residential using lots smaller than 50 feet wide.

E. Small Lot Single Family Home Guidelines. As can be determined from the discussion above, design provisions are a function of lot size and width. Greater attention to design is applied to smaller lots. For this reason, the *Small Lot Single Family Home Guidelines* have two sets of guidelines: one set for lots between 40-feet and 50-feet wide (PD-1-4 Designation); and a second set for lots less than 40-feet but no less than 30-feet (PD-1-3 Designation). The “façade design categories” (garage setbacks, trim, privacy, landscaping, front porches, etc.) used in the R-1-5 and PD/ RPD zones are also used in the *Small Lot Single Family Home Guidelines*.

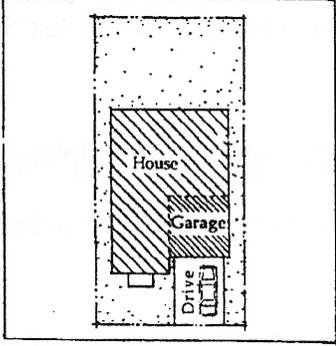
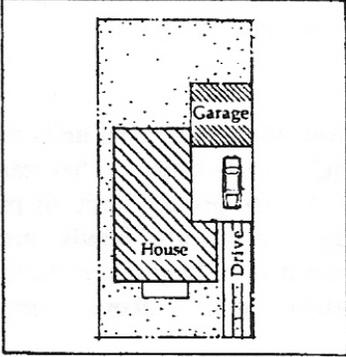
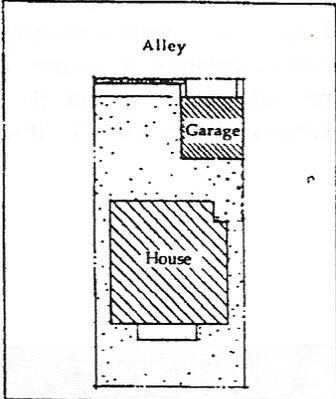
F. Plan Submittal. At time of establishing or revising a Planned Development, detailed plans as determined by the Director of Development Services showing consistency with these guidelines shall be submitted. City Staff may defer action and review on some items, however, deferred items shall be part of a tentative map application or prior to submittal of any improvement plans for the project. Deferral of resolution of certain items as conditions of map approval shall be rare and only permitted in unique circumstances.

G. Bulk Guidelines:

Table 4 - Bulk Guidelines for Small Lot Single-Family Homes		
Guidelines	PD-1-4 Designation	PD-1-3 Designation
Min. Lot Width	40'	30'
Corner Lot Min Lot Width	45'	35'
Min. Lot Depth	75'	65'
Lot Coverage	60%	60%
Height (3 stories allowed) (2)	40'	40'
Setbacks		
Side - Interior		
Zipper Lots	0' one side 6' overall	0' one side 6' overall
Detached Dwellings (1)	3' minimum	3' minimum
Attached Dwellings (maximum of 2 units)	allowed	allowed
Side – Street or Lane	8' minimum	8' minimum
Rear (no lane)	5' garage and house	<i>not applicable</i>
Rear (lane)	3' garage and house	3' garage and house
Front	see “Façade Design Guidelines”	15' house (3) 8' porch (3) 3' stairs (3)
<p>(1a) Combined yard of 6', no fencing in side-yard allowed. Separate yards and fencing allowed if adjoining required yard area is at least 5' wide.</p> <p>(1b) For buildings separated by less than 10-feet, window openings on opposing buildings need to be off-set from one another.</p> <p>(2) Conventional light-frame OK for single story structures, multi-story structures shall require engineering.</p> <p>(3) These setbacks do not pertain to corner lots, which shall be required to meet the 40-foot visual corner triangle.</p>		

H. Parking Configurations: The primary distinction between a PD-1-4 designated parcel and a PD-1-3 designated parcel is the location of required parking areas. Whereas PD-1-4 lots are wider, greater variety in location and type is allowed. Special “façade design guidelines” apply (see Table 5). PD-1-3 lots on the other hand, due to their narrowness, do not have the capacity to be mitigated by “façade design guidelines.” Placing the required parking area to the rear of PD 1-4 properties provide desirable front elevations. Additionally, by placing the parking in the rear, additional, uninterrupted on-street parking can be created. The following chart summarizes the allowed parking area configurations for these designations.

Table 3 - Parking Area Configurations

	Parking Configurations	PD-1-4 40.01 to 50-foot wide	PD-1-3 30.01 to 40 feet wide
1	<p><i>Front Loaded</i> (Garage Projects any distance in front of House)</p>	Not Permitted	Not Permitted
2	<p><i>Modified Front-Loaded</i></p>  <p>Modified Front Garage</p>	<p>Up to 75% of lots with two story or greater homes may have “modified front-loaded” parking configurations. Up to 50% of lots with one story homes can have “modified front-loaded” parking configurations. The remaining lots in both categories (single story vs. greater than one-story) shall be either “Front Loaded - Garage in Rear” or “Lane Loaded.”</p>	<p>Provided that single-wide garages are proposed up to 50% of the lots may utilize Modified Front-Loaded parking The remaining lots shall be either “Front Loaded - Garage in Rear” or “Lane Loaded.”</p>
3	<p><i>Front Loaded - Garage in Rear</i> Attached or Detached</p>  <p>Side Drive (Attached)</p>	Allowed	Allowed
4	<p><i>Lane-Loaded</i></p>  <p>Alley (Attached or Detached)</p>	Allowed	Allowed

I. Clear Vision Triangles

1. Street – Street Intersections: Compliance with the 40-foot visual corner is required for corner lots, and may result in the applicant allowing only certain house plans that can be accommodated on these lots.
2. Street – Lane Intersections: Compliances with a 20-foot visual corner is required for corner lots, and may result in the applicant allowing only certain house plans that can be accommodated on these lots.
3. Allowed Projections into Clear-Vision Triangle.
 - a. Porches may project up to 4-feet.
 - b. Fences less than 2-½ feet tall may project.
 - c. Street Improvements, such as lighting, landscaping, public utilities, etc.

J. Open Space Area Guidelines Functional open space designed for the use of residents is required as described below:

1. Private Open Space: Within the rear or side yard areas of each lot, private open space shall be a minimum of 10% of the total lot square footage and shall have a minimum width or depth of ten (10) feet. If any lot within the development is unable to meet this standard, then a common open space lot (see below) shall be provided. For each lot unable to meet the private open space area standard, its entire required open-space area shall be added to the “base size” of the common open space lot.
2. Common Open-Space: If any or all private lots do not provide the 10% area requirement, then a common open space area shall be provided, having a minimum “base size” of 10,000 square-feet. This area may be massed into one area or distributed, for example, as expansions or extensions of a pathway system. While the required public sidewalk and associated required landscaping (park-strip and minimum front-yard setback) may be a component of the pathway system, its land area may not be used to calculate area of the common open space.

K. Service Areas:

1. Garbage Containers. There shall be a concrete or paved pad located in the side or rear yard for garbage container storage. This space shall be three (3) feet by six (6) feet in size. This space may be located within the garage of the residential unit, but it shall not impede with the designated legal parking space of 10 feet by 20 feet. Garbage containers shall be hidden from public view with a material acceptable to the City (Section 8.04 of the Merced Municipal Code).
2. Public Utilities. Sewer and water utility lines shall be located on the property to minimize impact to street trees. At time of submittal of a tentative map, the applicant shall provide a site plan consistent with City Standard L-1 showing how this will be accomplished.

L. Lane (Alley) Guidelines: Where utilized, lanes shall be designed as follows:

1. A common lane-lighting system, in addition to the public street-lights and private porch or yard lights operated and maintained by the property owner of adjacent lots, shall be provided and described in the Development Plan. These lights shall

not cause glare and be designed to limit the amount of light on adjacent properties.

2. Fire Hydrants shall be placed near the intersections of the lane and public streets. Additional fire hydrants along the lane may be required by the Fire Department depending upon the length of the lane and other access considerations.
3. Lanes shall be a minimum of 20-feet wide.
4. Lanes shall be either concrete or full-depth asphalt bordered by a concrete edge or curb (can also be a rolled curb for purposes of drainage). Valley gutters are allowed, but not cross gutters. Stamped concrete is encouraged.
5. A 5-foot wide landscape border shall be provided adjacent to both sides of the lane, except where occupied with a driveway, and be planted with a minimum 15-gallon tree selected from the City's approved list for each lot. This area shall be private property that has a public easement for purposes of the City maintaining the required tree. The trees shall not be heavily pruned resulting in a "lollipop" appearance; rather, they shall be allowed to grow to provide at least a 50% canopy over the lane. No fencing is allowed within the five foot landscaped area adjacent to the lane.
6. A garage shall be able to have a minimum rear setback of 3 feet, however this does not allow for a deviation from the 5-foot landscaping strip mentioned above.
7. No parking is to be allowed in the lane; "No Parking" signs shall be posted at the entrance/exit of the lane.
8. Utilities for electric, gas, phone and cable shall be located in the lane. Water and sewer utilities shall be provided in the public street.
9. The design of the residential building adjacent to the lane shall provide for surveillance. This can be accomplished by use of fencing or walls less than 3.5 feet tall, or if taller fencing is proposed, then by placement of at least two second floor windows facing the lane.
10. Lanes are encouraged to be curved, or buildings and/or landscaping shall be sited in such a manner as to create an attractive view-shed. Lanes shall be continuous and shall not "dead-end."
11. All Private Public Utility Easements and common areas shall be owned and maintained by a Homeowners Association (HOA).

M. Parking Space Guidelines: A minimum of 5 parking spaces is required per unit. These spaces may be placed in a variety of areas, provided that the design complies with the following guidelines:

1. At least two off-street parking spaces are provided on the lot.
2. At least one space shall be covered.
3. Parking lifts are permitted.
4. Off-street parking may be placed end-to-end (tandem), however nor more than two can be placed in sequence.
5. At a minimum, there shall be at least ½ on-street parking space for each dwelling unit within the development. For example, 200 dwelling units require at least 100 on-street spaces distributed throughout the development.

6. If the minimum parking space requirement of 5 spaces per unit is not met by the provision of off-street parking and on-street parking, then parking courts and bays may be utilized. These parking bays may not have more than 6 spaces per bay and shall be evenly distributed throughout the development in areas where need is greatest. No more than 25% of the total parking spaces may be provided for by this method.
7. For projects with a Home Owners Association (HOA), where said association can “self-enforce” parking issues, a reduction in the total number of minimum required parking spaces may be reduced to 4.

N. Driveway Access:

1. Shared driveway access between two adjacent parcels that front a public street (as compared with a parking court where lots front the court) is allowed when the garages are located within the rear of the primary residential unit and recessed so the home's entry elevation retains a dominant visual appearance. The driveway width shall be at least 12 feet wide and less than 150-feet in length.
2. Driveway widths at the street, no less than 8-feet wide, are encouraged in cases where additional on-street parking can be created and where this design makes sense in designing parking areas for the subject lot. Driveways should gradually widen as they approach the parking area.
3. A garage shall not be used for storage, living, or any other type of use that interferes with parking of the resident's vehicles. For projects with CC&R's, one of the requirements shall be to prohibit the use of garages for storage, etc.

O. Fencing Guidelines:

1. No fencing is allowed in side-yard if either adjacent required yard is less than 5' wide.
2. No fencing is allowed within the required five-foot landscaped area adjacent to a lane. Decorative fencing may be placed adjacent to this area (see #3 below).
3. Decorative fencing or walls meeting the criteria below may be permitted adjacent to lanes:
 - a. Fencing or walls under 3.5-feet tall may be solid and placed up to the required five-foot landscaped area along the lane.
 - b. Fencing or walls over 3.5-feet shall be setback at least 1 foot from the building nearest the lane, and shall be an “open” style, that is, picket, lattice or other similar treatment with a spacing between material at least the same width as said material. For example, a 3-inch space is required between a picket with a width of 3-inches. Chain-link and chain-link with slats is not allowed.
 - c. High quality aesthetically pleasing materials (wood, stone, iron, pre-formed plastic fencing, etc.) shall be used.
4. Fencing is not allowed to separate a shared driveway.
5. In front yards, decorative fencing or walls under 3.5-feet may be placed up to the sidewalk. In order to qualify as a decorative fence, the following apply:

- a. Either vertical or horizontal modulation (at least 6-inches every 10-feet or as otherwise accepted by the Development Services Director), or decorative posts shall be used.
- b. High quality aesthetically pleasing materials (wood, stone, iron, pre-formed plastic fencing, etc.) shall be used.
- c. Within 10-feet of the driveway, the fence must step down to 2.5 feet high. Within the corner visual triangle, the fence must step down to 2.5 feet high.

P. Public Street Design Guidelines:

All street designs shall be consistent with City adopted policies and guidelines, except that:

1. The maximum cul-de-sac length is 500 feet;
2. Minimum turning radius is 33-feet inside, 49-feet outside;
3. Park strips are required on all streets, except the bulb portion of a cul-de-sac street;
4. Provided that the minimum parking space requirements are satisfied, on-street parking for one side of the street may be waived. This design will usually occur with Projects that use lanes;
5. All streets shall have a sidewalk that continuously runs throughout the residential subdivision on both sides of the street. However, an alternate sidewalk may be allowed by the Planning Commission if the unique circumstances of the Project warrants a different layout;
6. A fire hydrant is to be provided mid-block on each cul-de-sac and not to exceed 300 feet spacing on other streets; and
7. Minimum curb-to-curb street width is 34-feet.

Q. “Façade Design” Guidelines: The following applies to all small lot designs:

Table 5 - “Façade Design” Guidelines			
	Category	PD-1-4	PD-1-3
1	Parking Configuration	Per Table 3	Applies
2	Garage Door Design	“Modified front-loaded” parking configurations with a double-car garage shall be designed with single-car garage doors. Acceptable alternatives are the use of a double-car door that includes design features such as windows and door molds, or driveway pavement treatments such as aggregate, integral color, and stamped patterns.	Not Applicable
3	Windows and doors	The front elevation shall include the front door, and have at least one window on the first floor; if two stories, then at least three windows. Blank rear and side elevations visible from a street or lane will not be permitted. The elevation shall include functional features (windows and doors, or be adorned with attractive features in addition to landscaping.	Applies
4	Front Elevations	Same elevation shall not be repeated for adjacent houses, unless attached (two units attached maximum). Obvious differences shall be provided in at least three of the following categories (see table 3, Table 6a & 6b): number of stories, roof lines, building style (Victorian, Craftsman, Mediterranean, Colonial, etc), parking configuration, significant porch designs, roof pitches, and building facia materials (does not include, window patterns, colors, trim, setback variation).	Applies
5	Color	The color palette for houses shall be varied (at least 6 distinct sets of colors) and be consistent with the style of the house.	Applies
6	Front Setback	“Modified front-loaded garages” must be setback at least 20 feet from the property line or back of sidewalk, whichever is nearest to the building. The “living space” of the dwelling shall project in front of the garage by at least 5-feet provided that it is setback at least 15-feet from the property line or back of sidewalk, whichever is nearest to the building. Porches may extend to within 8-feet of the front property line or sidewalk, whichever is closer. Porch stairs may extend to within 3 feet of the property line.	Not Applicable
7	Front Porches, bays and balconies	Designs shall include a covered porch. The Development Services Director may permit arbors, trellises, courtyards and similar features to substitute porches in cases where a covered porch is not practical.	Applies
8	Trim	Required for windows, doors and garage doors (except recessed doors, see #3 above) on elevations adjacent to a street or lane.	Applies
9	Large eaves	Eaves shall be designed in proportion to and consistent with the architectural style of the building.	Applies
10	Privacy	Second story windows, doors and balconies allowed where not affecting privacy of off-site R-1 zoned property.	Applies
11	Landscaping	Front Yard Landscaping installed prior to occupancy. If a lane is used, landscaping in rear is also required.	Applies

R. Architectural Features (Examples):

These designs are not comprehensive and other designs may be approved.

Table 6a - Substantial Architectural Features (1st Set)

Number of Stories



Roof Lines



Building Styles



Table 6b - Substantial Architectural Features (2nd Set)

Building Facia Materials



Stucco



Brick/Stone



Wood

Significant Porch Designs



Roof Pitch

