Costa Mesa

Residential Development Information

City of Costa Mesa, Planning Division

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Costa Mesa

Are you planning a room addition or a new house? The City of Costa Mesa Planning Division has prepared this booklet to guide you through the City's permit process. This booklet contains summary information on residential zoning regulations, a complete copy of the City's residential design guidelines, and a residential development checklist. Please verify with the Planning Division regarding any additional zoning ordinance provisions that may be applicable to your project.

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SECTION ONE:

ZONING REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

In all residential zoning districts, new construction requires zoning approval. As shown in the following table, there are several types of permit processes applicable to new construction. For zoning review requirements for properties located in a Planned Development Residential Zoning District, please contact the Planning Division at (714) 754-5245.

ZONING PERMIT PROCESSES

Types of Processes

Provided below is a brief description of the types of zoning approval processes that apply to residential construction. The Planning Staff will review your proposal and determine the appropriate zoning review process.

1. **Planning Staff Approval**: Staff may approve plans at the Planning Counter provided that all applicable development standards are met.
2. **Planning Staff Approval with Notice of Zoning Approval**: Staff may approve plans at the Planning Counter provided that all applicable development standards are met. A notice of the zoning approval shall be given to all adjoining property owners.
3. **Development Review**: This process requires you to submit a formal application to the Planning Division for staff review and approval.
4. **Development Review with Notice of Zoning Approval**: This process requires you to submit a formal application to the Planning Division for staff review and approval. A notice of the zoning approval shall be given to all adjoining property owners.
5. **Minor Design Review**: This process requires you to submit a formal application to the Planning Division for Zoning Administrator review and approval. Public notification to all property owners within a 500-foot radius is also required.
6. **Design Review**: This process requires you to submit a formal application to the Planning Division for Planning Commission review and approval. Public notification to all property owners within a 500-foot radius is also required.

New Construction

Proposed Project	Number of Units	R1	R2-MD	R2-HD	R3
Single-story construction	2 or less	**Planning Staff**[1] (Exception: granny units, which are subject to **Development Review**)	**Development Review**[3] (Exception: new accessory buildings, such as garages and carports may be approved by **Planning Staff**[1])		
Two-story construction that **complies** with the Residential Design Guidelines adopted by the City Council.	2 or less	**Planning Staff with Notice of Zoning Approval**[2] (Exception: granny units, which are subject to **Development Review with Notice of Zoning Approval**)	**Development Review with Notice of Zoning Approval**[4]		
Two-story construction that **does not comply** with the Residential Design Guidelines.	2 or less	**Minor Design Review**[5]	**Minor Design Review**[5]		
Single- or two-story construction:	3 or more	Not applicable	**Design Review** [6]*		

Additions and Minor Construction

Proposed Project	R1	R2-MD	R2-HD	R3
Single-story addition and other minor construction	**Planning Staff**[1]			
Two-story addition that **complies** with the Residential Design Guidelines adopted by the City Council.	**Planning Staff with Notice of Zoning Approval**[2]	**Development Review with Notice of Zoning Approval**[4]		
Two-story addition that **does not comply** with the Residential Design Guidelines.	**Minor Design Review**[5]			

* For land subdivisions refer to CMMC, Title 13, Table 13-29(C)

SECTION TWO:

ZONING CODE SUMMARY

To maintain neighborhood stability and cohesiveness, the Zoning Code establishes development standards for residential zones. Your project must comply with the standards summarized on the following pages, unless the City approves a deviation from the standard.

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

(TABLE 13-32 of the Costa Mesa Municipal Code)

STANDARDS	R1	R2-MD	R2-HD	R3
Minimum Lot Area for newly subdivided lots	6,000 square feet (557 m^2)	12,000 square feet (1,115 m^2)		
Minimum Lot Width for newly subdivided lots	Interior lot: 50 feet (15.3 m) Corner lot: 60 feet (18.3 m) Note: All newly subdivided lots shall have frontage on a dedicated street equal to, or in excess of, the required minimum lot width. An exception to this requirement is when the existing R-1 lot (that is proposed to be subdivided) has an average depth that equals or exceeds 200 feet.	Interior lot: 100 feet (30.5m) Corner lot: 100 feet (30.5 m) Note: All newly subdivided lots shall have frontage on a dedicated street equal to, or in excess of, the required minimum lot width, with the exception of common interest developments.		
Maximum Number of Stories & Building Height	2 stories / 27 feet (8.2 m) for residential land uses. The maximum number of stories and building height tor nonresidential land uses shall be determined in conjunction with the conditional use permit review process. Note: Lofts, as defined in section 13-6 of the Zoning Code, without exterior access and having only clerestory windows will not be regarded as a story. See also Attic discussion below.			
Attics	Attics shall not be heated or cooled, nor contain any electrical outlets, or operable windows. Attics above second stories shall be an integral part of the second story roofline and not appear as a 3rd story on any building elevation. Windows in any attic space above the second story shall be incidental and limited to a dormer style.			
Maximum Density (Based on gross acreage.)	1 dwelling unit per 6,000 square feet (557 m^2) (Note: Only 1 dwelling unit is permitted per lot.)	1 dwelling unit per 3,630 square feet (337 m^2) 1 unit per 3,000 square feet (279 m^2) for legal lots existing as of March 16, 1992 that are less than 7,260 square feet (674 m^2) in area but not less than 6,000 square feet (557 m^2)	1 dwelling unit per 3,000 square feet (279 m^2)	1 dwelling unit per 2,178 square feet (202 m^2)
Minimum Open Space*	40% of total lot area	40% of total lot area		
Distance Between Buildings	10-foot (3 m) minimum between main buildings 6-foot (1.8 m) minimum between main buildings and accessory structures			
Driveway width	10-foot (3 m) minimum	Same as RI, except 16-foot (4.9 m) minimum driveway is required if the driveway serves tenants and/or guest parking for more than one dwelling unit.		
Driveway length	Straight-in driveways to garages shall have a minimum length of 19-feet (5.8 m) from the ultimate property line.			
Storage	Not applicable.	Each unit shall be provided with 200 cubic feet (5.7 m^3) of securable storage exterior to the unit. If this storage is provided within the garage or carport it shall be located so as not to obstruct the required clear dimensions of the covered parking space (per the City of Costa Mesa Parking Design Standards) at any point less than 4 feet (1.2 m) above the finished surface level of the parking stall.		
Mechanical equipment, excluding antennas and flush-mounted solar panels on roofs.	Roof-top location is prohibited on single-family dwelling units. All other locations: Screening required from public rights-of way and adjacent properties. Antennas are subject to Chapter IX, Article 2 Antennas.			

* Open space shall not include the following: driveways, parking lots; other surfaces designed or intended for vehicular travel; upper floor decks, balconies, areas under projections which are less than 8 feet above grade; or surfaces covered by more than 5 feet in depth by projections which are at least 8 feet above grade.

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

(TABLE 13-32 of the Costa Mesa Municipal Code)

STANDARDS	R1	R2-MD	R2-HD	R3
SETBACKS FOR MAIN BUILDINGS AND ACCESSORY BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES (Minimum distances given, unless otherwise noted. All setbacks from streets are measured from the ultimate property line shown on the Master Plan of Highways).				
Front	20 feet (6.1 m)			
Side	Interior property line: 5 feet (1.5 m). Note: Accessory structures that do not exceed 6 ½ feet (2 m) in height in the R1 zone or 15 feet (4.6 m) in height in the other residential zones may have a zero side setback. Property line abutting a public street: 10 feet (3 m). Note: Driveways providing straight-in access from a public street to a garage shall be at least 19 feet (5.8 m) long, as measured from the property line. Property line abutting an alley: 5 feet			
Rear (not abutting a publicly dedicated alley, street, or park)	20 feet (6.1 m) for 2 story structures. 10 feet (3 m) for 1 story structures, 15-foot (4.6 m) maximum height provided that maximum rear yard coverage is not exceeded. Note: Accessory structures that do not exceed 6 ½ feet (2 m) in height in the R1 zone or 15 feet (4.6 m) in height in the R2 zones may have a zero rear yard setback, except on corner lots in the R2 zones. Corner lots in the R2-MD, R2-HD & R3 zones: a. Where the rear property line of a corner lot adjoins the side property line of another lot, no detached accessory structure shall be allowed on the corner lot, except within the rear quarter of the corner lot farthest from the side street. b. Where the rear property line of a corner lot abuts a public or private street, accessory structures shall maintain setbacks for main structures.			15 feet (4.6 m) for 2 story structures. 10 feet (3 m) for 1 story structures - 15-foot (4.6 m) maximum height Note: Accessory structures that do not exceed 15 feet (4.6 m) in height may have a zero rear yard setback, except on corner lots (see R2-MD and R2-HD column for setbacks for corner lots).
Rear Yard Coverage (Maximum)	Rear (not abutting a publicly dedicated alley, street, or park): Main Buildings: 25% of rear yard area.* Accessory Buildings: 50% of rear yard area.* *Rear yard area equals lot width, measured from side property line to side property line, multiplied by 20 feet (6.1 m). Rear abutting a publicly dedicated alley, street, or park: Not applicable.			Not applicable
Rear Abutting a Publicly Dedicated Alley, Street, or Park	5 feet (1.5 m); however, garages may be required to setback further to ensure adequate back up distance. Rear Yard Coverage does not apply. Note: Accessory structures that do not exceed 6 ½ feet (2m) in height in the R1 zone or 15 feet (4.6m) in height in the other residential zones may have a zero rear yard setback, except on corner lots in the R2 and R3 zones where accessory structures shall maintain setbacks for main structures.			
Bluff Top Setback	No building or structure closer than 10 feet (3 m) from bluff crest (see Section 13-34 BLUFF-TOP DEVELOPMENT).			

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

(TABLE 13-32 of the Costa Mesa Municipal Code)

STANDARDS	R1	R2-MD	R2-HD	R3
PROJECTIONS (Maximum amount of projections given)				
Roof or Eaves Overhang; Awning	2 feet 6 inches (0.8 m) into required side setback or building separation area. 5 feet (1.5 m) into required front or rear setback.			
Open, unenclosed stairways.	2 feet 6 inches (0.8 m) into required setback or building separation area.			
Chimneys	2 feet (0.6 m) above maximum building height.			
Fireplaces	2 feet (0.6 m) into required setback or building separation area.			
LANDSCAPING				
Landscaping Required.	All unpaved areas visible from the public right-of-way shall be landscaped and the landscaping shall be maintained in a healthy condition, free of dying, dead, diseased, decayed, discarded, and/or overgrown vegetation.	See separate hand-out.		
In all zones except R-1, landscape parkways with a combined width of 10 feet (3 m), but not less than 3 feet (0.9 m) on one side, shall be provided along the sides of interior private streets and/ or common driveways. The parkway on the house side of private streets or common driveways shall be a minimum of 5 feet (1.5 m) in width.				
SIGNS (See separate hand-out).				
POOLS AND SPAS				
Above-ground pools and spas shall not be located in the required front yard setback from a public street and are subject to 5-foot (1.5 m) side and 10-foot (3 m) rear yard setbacks for main structures. Additional setbacks may be applicable pursuant to building code requirements.				
FENCES AND WALLS				
Fences and walls placed between the property line and required setback line for main buildings shall conform the City's walls, fences, and landscaping standards. See separate hand-out for further information.				

RESIDENTIAL OFF-STREET PARKING STANDARDS

1. R1 ZONE AND SMALL-LOT SINGLE FAMILY COMMON INTEREST DEVELOPMENTS (excluding townhouses)

Each residence shall provide off-street parking in the form of a garage and open parking as follows:

Single-Family Detached Residence with 4 Bedrooms or Fewer		
Garage Parking Spaces	**Open Parking Spaces[1]**	**Total Parking Spaces**
2	Lots without garage access from alley: 2	4
	Lots with garage access from alley: 1	3
Single-Family Detached Residence with 5 Bedrooms or More[2]		
New Construction		
Garage Parking Spaces[2]	**Open Parking Spaces[1,2]**	**Total Parking Spaces**
3	Lots without garage access from alley: 2	5
	Lots with garage access from alley: 1	4
Bedroom Additions		
Garage Parking Spaces	**Open Parking Spaces[1,2]**	**Total Parking Spaces**
2	Lots without garage access from alley: 2	4
	Lots with garage access from alley: 1	3

1. In R1 zones, required open parking may be provided in a garage or on a minimum 19-foot long, individual driveway leading to a garage. In common-interest developments, required open parking may be provided on an individual unit's driveway or within the common area. Open parking provided as tandem spaces is subject to approval of a minor conditional use permit.
2. For single-family detached residences with five bedrooms or more, tandem parking of up to two standard vehicles is permitted in the garage as it relates to new construction. Tandem garage parking shall exclusively consist of two standard parking spaces.

Each garage space shall have interior dimensions that are 10 feet (3 m) wide by 20 feet (6.1 m) long, unobstructed inside measurements.

Each residence shall have no more than 700 square feet (65 m^2) of garage area unless authorized by a minor conditional use permit approved by the Zoning Administrator.

2. OFF-STREET PARKING REQUIREMENTS FOR THE R2-MD, R2-HD AND R3 ZONES

Off-street parking requirements are shown in the following table:

UNIT SIZE	TENANT COVERED PARKING [1]	TENANT OPEN PARKING [2,3,4,5,6]	GUEST PARKING [5,6]
BACHELOR	1	.5	.5
1 BEDROOM	1	1.0	.5
2 BEDROOMS	1	1.5	.5
3 BEDROOMS OR MORE	1	2.5	.5

(1) If covered parking for apartments is provided in a parking structure and there is more than one parking space in any parking structure, then there shall be no solid walls constructed to separate individual parking spaces.

(2) Open tenant parking spaces required by this section shall be distributed throughout the project at convenient locations and shall be screened from view from any public right-of-way. Open tenant parking may be provided as covered parking.

(3) For projects with individual driveways that are at least 19 feet long and lead to a garage space(s) or a carport space(s), the driveway area may be used for satisfying tenant open parking requirements.

(4) Open parking can be reduced by .25 space per unit for one bedroom and larger units if the covered parking is provided within either a carport or a parking structure. For purposes of this section, a parking structure shall be defined as: a structure designed and constructed to provide covered automobile parking where parking spaces are located in a common area with no walls or other physical separations between spaces. Open parking requirements may be met by excess covered parking.

(5) Guest parking shall be clearly marked and permanently maintained for individuals visiting within the development. Guest parking spaces shall not be allowed on individual driveways.

Guest parking may be reduced to .25 space per unit for each unit above 50 in a large residential development.

(6) Fractions equal to or above one-half (0.5) shall be rounded up. For rounding purposes, the tenant parking requirements shall be added together; guest parking shall be rounded up separately."

3. DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS FOR OFF-STREET PARKING

Landscaping must be separated from paved areas with approved curbing.

Paving under Covered Parking- Paving under required covered parking shall be Portland cement concrete.

Wheel Stops- Approved wheel stops or continuous curbing shall be provided for each required parking space.

Driveways- Minimum drive width is 16 feet (4.9 m) if the driveway serves tenants and/or guest parking for more than one dwelling unit. Minimum drive width is 10 feet (3 m) if the driveway serves only one dwelling unit. Driveways providing straight-in access from a public street to a garage shall be at least 19 feet (5.8 m) long (as measured from the property line).

Garage Door Widths- The width of the garage door shall be 8 feet (2.4 m) for single doors and 16 feet (4.9 m) for double doors.

Compact Parking- With the exception of R-1 zones, compact parking shall be limited to a maximum of 10% for projects with more than 25 required parking spaces and is subject to approval of a minor conditional use permit.

Please see the Parking Design Standards for dimensions and other design requirements.

SECTION THREE:

RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

City of Costa Mesa, Planning Division
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www.costamesaca.gov

Adopted May 7, 2001
Amended June 18, 2001
Amended August 18, 2003
Amended March 1, 2005
Amended December 3, 2013

1. Purpose

These Residential Design Guidelines are intended to promote design excellence in new residential construction. The 2000 General Plan includes the following policies related to residential development:

- CD-7A.1 Ensure that new and remodeled structures are designed in architectural styles which reflect the City's diversity, yet are compatible, in scale and character with existing buildings and natural surroundings within residential neighborhoods. Develop and adopt design guidelines for residential development.
- CD-7A.2 Preserve the character and scale of Costa Mesa's established residential neighborhoods; where residential development or redevelopment is proposed, require as a condition of approval that it is consistent with the prevailing character of existing development in the immediate vicinity, and that it does not have a substantial adverse impact on the adjacent areas.

In view of these policies, the City of Costa Mesa encourages architectural diversity that considers the existing neighborhood character and anticipated trends and development.

It is recognized that there will be instances when these guidelines may yield an unsatisfactory design or the applicant may propose a design that meets the intent of these design guidelines but not the specific criteria. In these instances, overriding consideration will be given to meeting the intent of the Residential Design Guidelines and promoting design excellence.

These Residential Design Guidelines are intended to implement the goals, objectives, and policies of the 2000 General Plan as they relate to residential development. To achieve this, all residential construction shall be subject to the following architectural design guidelines, as appropriate, with the exception of single-story construction in an R1 zone.

It should be noted that these design guidelines are to be used in conjunction with the City of Costa Mesa Zoning Code, which provides numerous development standards that are applicable to new residential construction and additions. Please consult the Planning Division for appropriate zoning information.

2. Approval Procedures

Unless stated otherwise, deviations from these guidelines shall require the approval of a Minor Design Review. A Minor Design Review is a discretionary review process that requires approval by the Zoning Administrator. The City provides public notice in the form of a mailing to all property owners within 500 feet of your property and a posting of a notice on the property.

For residential projects that meet the criteria listed below, the Planning Division is the final review authority. For new two-story construction or additions, the Planning Division shall mail a notice of zoning approval to all owners of properties that share a common property line with the proposed project on the day zoning approval is given. An exception to this notice provision is for residential projects located on Aviemore Terrace. For Aviemore Terrace, the Planning Division shall also mail notice to owners of properties across the

street within 100 feet of the proposed project. The properties owners who receive notice shall have 7 days from the date of the notice to file an appeal of the Planning Division's decision to the Planning Commission, in accordance with Section 2-303 of the Costa Mesa Municipal Code. The Planning Division's decision will become final after 7 days if no appeal is filed. Please consult with the Planning Division for any questions regarding the review and approval process.

Planning Division Review of Residential Projects		
Zone	Number of Units	Criteria[1]
R1	2 or less	Two-story residential construction or addition that complies with these Residential Design Guidelines.
R2-MD, R2-HD, and R3		
1. A residential project that does not meet all of these criteria will require minor design review or design review approval. Please consult with the Planning Division to determine the appropriate review process.		

3. Second-Story Designs

a. Two story structures shall be designed with articulation and off-sets on all elevations to avoid a boxy appearance from the street and neighboring views. Four sided architecture should be considered by applying the same materials, finishes, and architectural treatments to all sides and not limited to only the front elevation.

b. Second-story floor areas should not exceed 100% of the first-story floor area (including garage area, if attached). Open balconies are included in the footprint area of the second floor.

4. Building Mass and Form Considerations

a. To enhance variety and interest, long, unbroken building facades should be avoided and offsets and building projections made an integral part of residential design. Providing individual and identifiable entries to units is also encouraged to add interest and variety to the street scene.

b. Variety should be accomplished through variation in building heights and forms.

c. Variation in depth of floor plans to create interesting massing is encouraged. Structures having dwelling units attached side-by-side should avoid the long-row effect by consisting of no more than 6 dwelling units. The Planning Division may approve alternative designs, which accomplish the same purpose.

d. Consideration shall be given to the effect of proposed development on the light, air, and privacy of adjacent properties.

e. Second-story construction should use additional design techniques to provide visual relief to the side yard. This includes, but is not limited to: horizontal and/or vertical plane breaks; roof plane breaks; varied roof forms; openings such as breezeways; limiting the length of the second story; and, appropriate architectural details.

Appropriate Massing and Form

Variation in rooflines and horizontal articulation of elevations creates greater architectural interest.

Variable rooflines, porches, and balconies provide relief along facades.

Combinations of hipped and gable ended roofs are appropriate.

Recesses in building plane provide visual relief.

5. Second-Story Side Setback

The second-story interior side building elevation should be set back an average of 10 feet, but shall be no closer than 5 feet from the side property line. ***Exception:*** This requirement would not apply to the following:

a. The distance between dwelling units within the same development in multiple-family residential zones; or

b. The initial development in planned development zones (subsequent additions would be subject to this requirement); or

c. Second-story construction that is consistent with the prevailing two-story design within the same residential tract; or

d. Second-story additions to existing residences with current side yard setbacks that are less than 10 feet; provided that the current width of the side yard is not further decreased. A minimum 5-foot setback shall be required; or

e. Two-story new construction with less than 2,700 square feet of living area (not including garage).

f. Two-story new construction over 2,700 square feet in area (not including garage) with up to 50 percent lot coverage as defined by Article 2 of Title 13 (Zoning Code).

6. Elevation Treatments

a. Architectural projections are encouraged to provide visual focus and emphasize some aspect of design such as an entryway or major window.

b. Elevations with stepping forms both horizontally and vertically are encouraged to soften and provide transition to second-stories.

c. With emphasis on front and street-facing elevations, building elevations should incorporate enhanced detailing, which may include articulations, projections, and use of varied building materials.

d. Elevations should incorporate multiple building planes and offsets, and may include porches and patio covers and enhancement of exterior openings (doors/windows).

Please see following photographs for examples of architectural elements.

Architectural Elements

Architectural enhancement through variation in the use of dormer elements and Palladian detailing is encouraged. Note the use of windows add interest to the front and side shutters, decorative porch supports, and stone elevations accents around the garage.

7. Roof Forms

a. Variation in roof forms, orientation and pitch are encouraged to provide visual interest.

b. Consideration of a variety of roof types and color tones provides relief from monotony and enhances the appearance of a neighborhood.

c. The maximum building height of 27 feet, as specified in the Zoning Code, will only be allowed for structures with sloped-roof designs. Structures proposed with flat roofs, for either the entire structure or a portion thereof, should be designed to be consistent with the bulk and scale of the structures in the surrounding neighborhood, and overall height of the portion of the structure where the flat roof is proposed should not exceed 22 feet.

8. Window Placement

a. Second-story windows should incorporate off-sets to minimize direct views into the windows of existing, neighboring structures.

b. The use of screen landscaping to minimize privacy impacts should also be considered.

Examples of Appropriate Materials and Architectural Details

9. Integration of Second-Story Construction

a. Second-story additions to existing residential structures should be designed to appear as though they were part of the original house construction, and should be well integrated into the design of the existing structure.

b. In both new construction and additions, the second-story floor-to-ceiling dimension should be similar to the first-story floor-to-ceiling dimension, so that the second story does not appear out of proportion or top heavy in relation to the first story.

10. Site Planning Considerations

a. The location and orientation of all buildings should be designed and arranged to preserve natural features by minimizing the disturbance to the natural environment. Natural features such as trees, groves, waterways, scenic points, historic spots or landmarks, bluffs or slopes should be delineated on the site plan and considered when planning the location and orientation of buildings, open spaces, underground services, walks, paved areas, playgrounds, parking areas and finished grade elevations.

11. Consistency in Architectural Design

a. New residential structures and additions should strive to be well crafted in their own style and detail. A consistent architectural design should be considered in choosing materials, finishes, decorative details, color and accent features (i.e., shutters, window treatment, wainscot, etc.).