

Livable Places User Guide

DECEMBER 2023



Livable Places  Houston



PLANNING &
DEVELOPMENT
DEPARTMENT

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1

Introduction

1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction to Livable Places

Houston is one of the most diverse cities in the nation. For that reason, Houstonians need a variety of housing options: homes to accommodate large families with multiple vehicles, homes with back yards and homes without, small homes for one and two people, homes at all price points to own and rent, homes for multiple generations, homes within walking distance of restaurants, grocery stores and other services, and homes close to other mobility options. Houstonians also need safe, walkable neighborhoods.

Until recently, the City's residential development standards have made it difficult for developers to provide creative solutions for housing that meets these varied needs. For decades, these standards encouraged low-density single-family neighborhoods, higher density homes that turned their backs to the street, and large-scale luxury apartment buildings. Houston is not alone. Cities across the country are grappling with similar issues and many are choosing to update their regulations to make it easier to build small, neighborhood friendly homes.



An example of courtyard-style development in Houston. Image credits: City of Houston.

Launched in Fall 2020, the Livable Places Action Committee worked to create more opportunities within Houston’s development standards to encourage housing variety and affordability without impacting existing deed restrictions. More specifically, Livable Places helps make Houston’s neighborhoods more:

Equitable—by creating more accessible, diverse, and inclusive neighborhoods with a greater housing and transportation choices;

Walkable—by encouraging safer, more walkable neighborhoods that are less car-dependent; and

Affordable—by encouraging a greater housing variety at more attainable price points for all Houstonians.

Houston City Council approved these changes on Sept. 27, 2023. The new rules benefit property owners in several ways. First, they encourage people to build smaller homes in the city where necessary infrastructure already exists. This helps people all over Houston by reducing infrastructure costs and increasing opportunities to travel to destinations without a car.

The Livable Places Action Committee was established to create more opportunities within Houston’s development standards to encourage housing variety and affordability

They also create safer, walkable neighborhoods by encouraging front doors and windows to face the street and reducing the number of times pedestrians encounter moving vehicles.

Finally, the rules allow for larger secondary dwelling units. These units could be a place to keep family members close or a way to generate income. These small units provide affordable homes for young people just starting out, empty nesters, and others who don’t want or can’t afford a large home.

1.2 Livable Places Housing Types

Livable Places’ development standards encourage people to construct small homes. These types were commonly built in Houston many years ago but became infeasible when previous, suburban style development regulations were adopted in the early 1980s. Livable Places standards ensure that these housing types create safe, walkable neighborhoods. They can be used in both urban and suburban settings but are focused on improving the outcomes of urban infill development.

Specifically, these housing types include:

Second dwelling units— an additional dwelling unit on a single-family lot that’s located above a garage or within a separate structure from the main house;

Multi-unit residential (MUR)—a triplex, multiple duplexes, a fourplex or multiplex with no more than 8 dwellings units located on an unrestricted parcel;

Small-Lot development—a single-family home located on a small lot with doors and windows facing the street and driveway configurations that preserve on-street parking; and

Courtyard-style development—a cluster of neighborhood scale single-family homes on lots located around a privately managed shared courtyard.



A house with a secondary dwelling unit



Multi-unit residential homes

SOURCE: City of Houston.

1.3 Overview of the Design Concepts

The Livable Places User Guide serves as a valuable tool for property owners to visualize the four housing types on various property configurations. It describes each type, provides photographic examples, and presents design concepts for a range of lot configurations. These concepts have been carefully put together to ensure compliance with the development standards in Chapter 42 of the Code of Ordinances.

For a more comprehensive understanding of each design concept, the guide includes a labeled site plan, 3D illustrations, and a concise summary table that highlights pertinent design features. Additionally, it offers references to the relevant municipal code standards for each concept.

Section 3 of the guide contains a user-friendly index for easy navigation, along with a glossary to aid in comprehension. It also includes information about the ADU/HOU Program and reduced parking allowed for residential uses located on Transit Oriented Development Streets.

It's important to note that this guide does not serve as a substitute for Chapter 42 of the City's Code of Ordinances but rather as a companion resource. To ensure full compliance with the standards, please make reference to Chapter 42 of the Code of Ordinances.



A narrow-lot home



Courtyard-style homes

SOURCE: City of Houston.



2

Design Concepts

2 Design Concepts

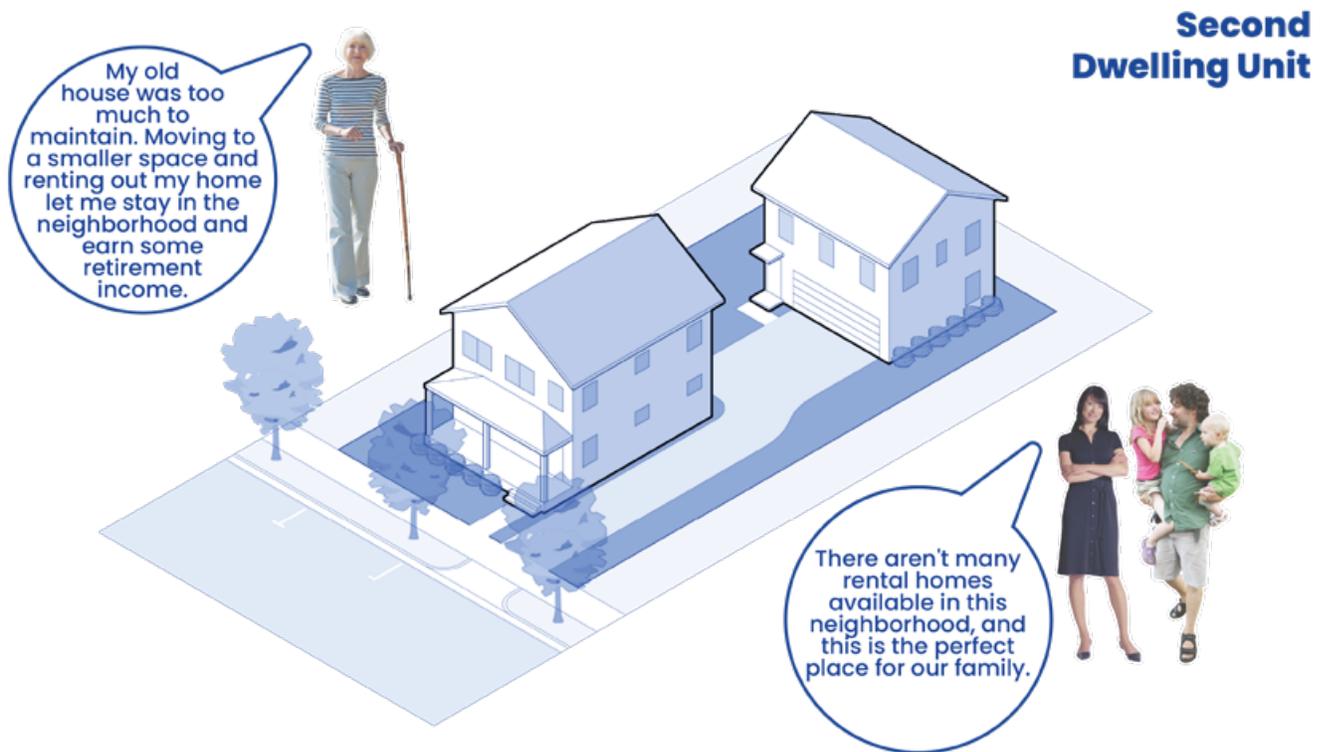
2.1 Second Dwelling Unit Concepts (§42-186, 188, 188.5)

A Second Dwelling Unit (SDU)—also known as an Accessory Dwelling Unit or ADU—is a detached unit allowed on a single-family residential lot. This type of unit is typically located above a garage or within a separate structure from the first unit, and cannot exceed 1,500 square feet in size.

Lots narrower than 33 feet are allowed up to one 12-foot driveway per street frontage with no additional driveways for SDUs. Where feasible, a SDU should take vehicular access from an alley.

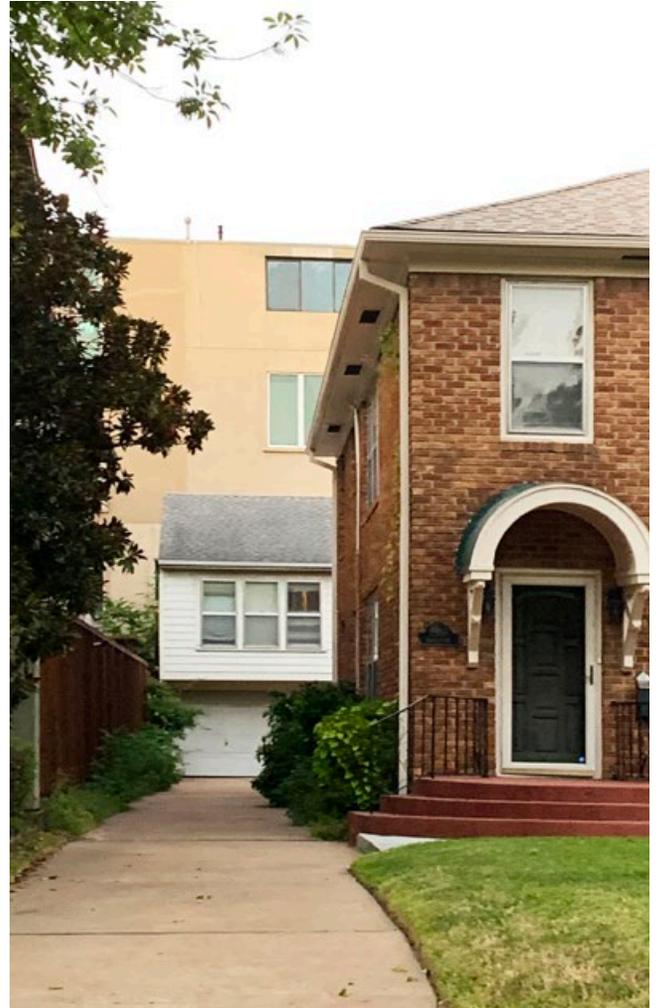
Parking requirements for SDUs are based on unit size. One additional parking space is required for a SDU if the first unit does not meet the parking requirements, or if a SDU is between 1,001 and 1,500 square feet in size.

The Planning Department’s [ADU/HOU program](#) offers resources including a free set of pre-approved building plans, a design book with 26 schematic designs and three videos explaining the benefits and basics of second dwelling units, steps to building one, and how to finance a second dwelling unit.



*Where deed restrictions allow

An informational graphic highlighting some of the benefits of Second Dwelling Units for Houstonians.



Examples of existing Second Dwelling Units in Houston today. Image credits: City of Houston.

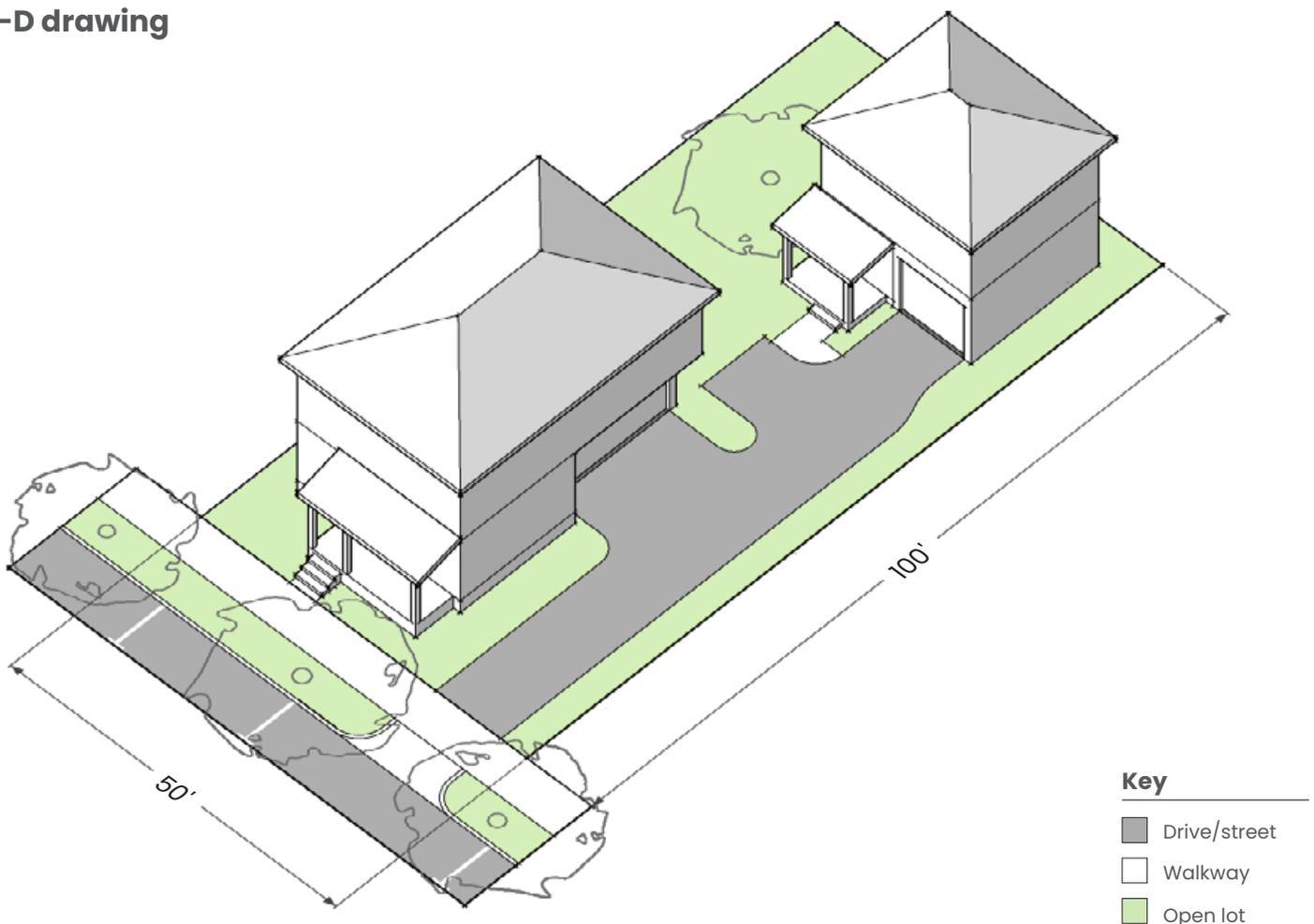
2.1.1 Second Dwelling Unit Concept 1

50' x 100' Mid Block Site without Alley

This concept demonstrates how a Second Dwelling Unit can fit above a detached garage on a single-family residential site without alley access. This site is 5,000 square feet and has ample open space at the rear.

Three off-street parking spaces are contained within attached garages, and one public space is available on-street.

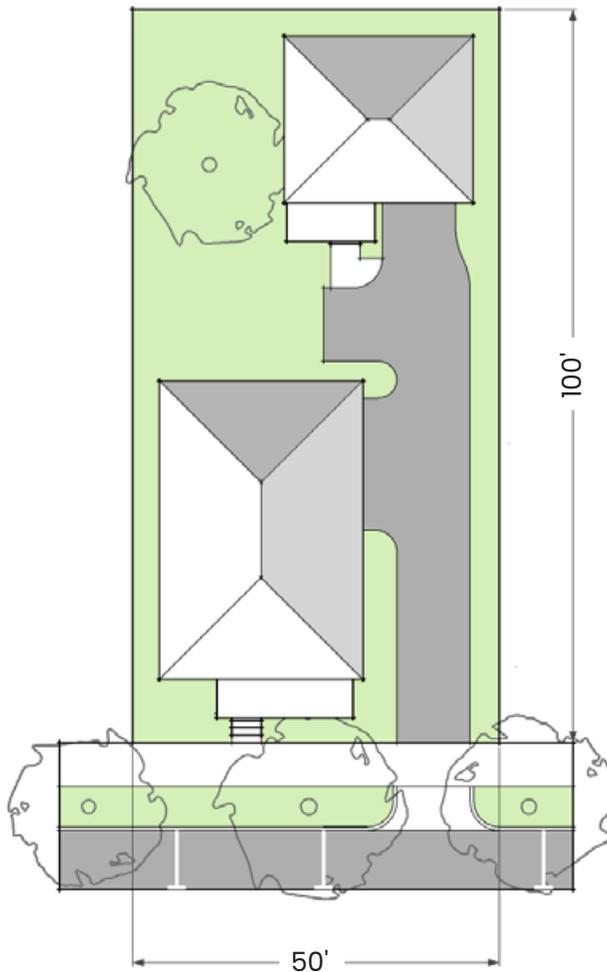
3-D drawing



Site		Density	
Area	5,000 SF	Dwelling Units/Acre	17
Dimensions	50' x 100'	Coverage	
Dwelling Units		Lot Coverage	2,588 SF
1 X Studio	680 SF	If Using Pervious Pavement	1,489 SF
1 X 3 Bedroom	1,400 SF	Green Space	2,412 SF
Total Dwellings	2		
Parking			
Access	From Street		
Off-Street Spaces	3		

Note: This exceeds the required off-street parking spaces.

Plan



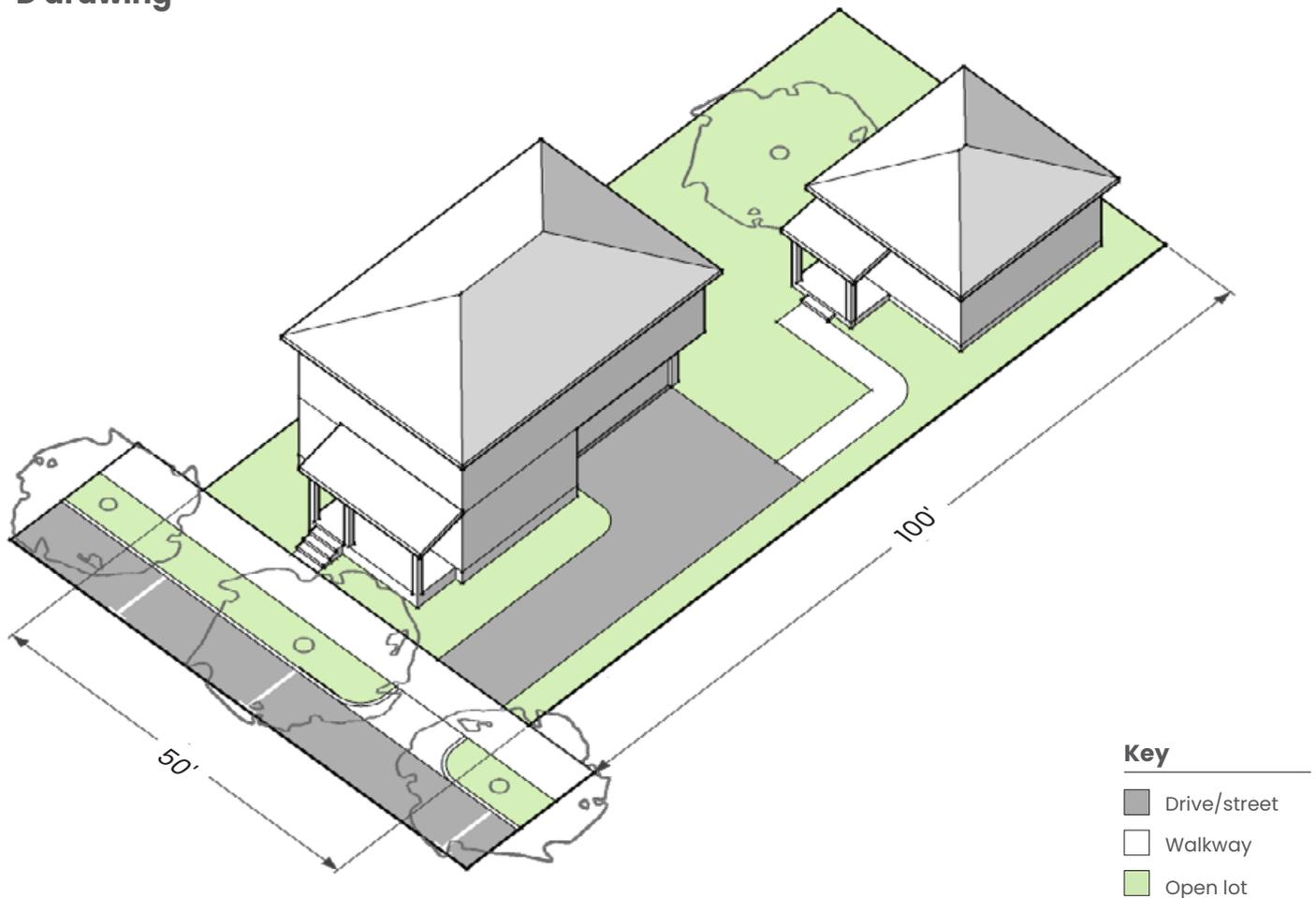
2.1.2 Second Dwelling Unit Concept 2

50' x 100' Mid Block Site without Alley

This concept shows another approach to how a Second Dwelling Unit might be added to a single-family residential site without alley access. In this scenario, the 5,000 square foot site still contains ample open space at the rear.

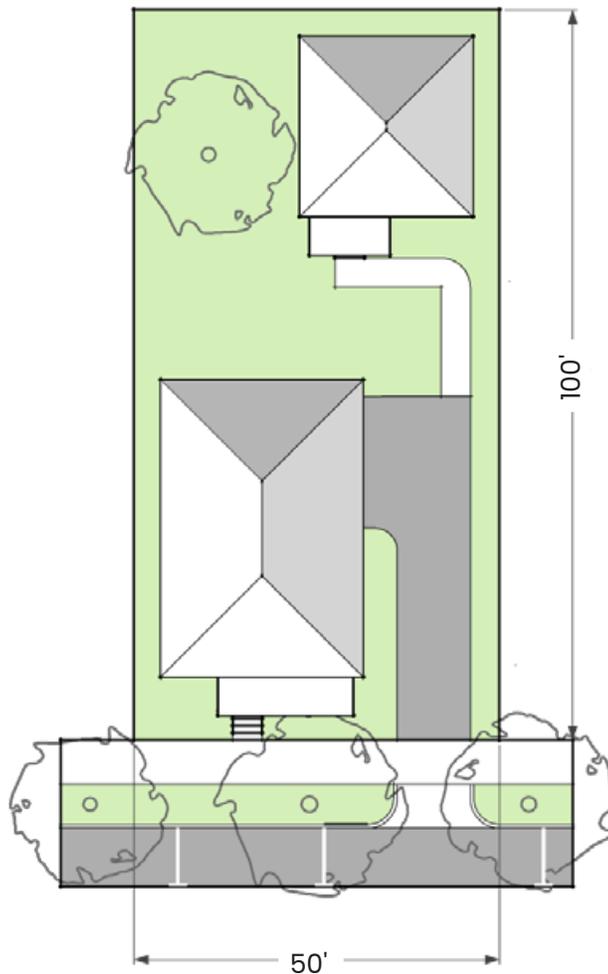
The site contains a two-car garage attached to the first house and one public space on the street.

3-D drawing



Site		Density	
Area	5,000 SF	Dwelling Units/Acre	17
Dimensions	50' x 100'	Coverage	
Dwelling Units		Lot Coverage	2,614 SF
1 X Studio	462 SF	If Using Pervious Pavement	1,485 SF
1 X 3 Bedroom	1,400 SF	Green Space	2,386 SF
Total Dwellings	2		
Parking			
Access	From Street		
Off-Street Spaces	2		

Plan



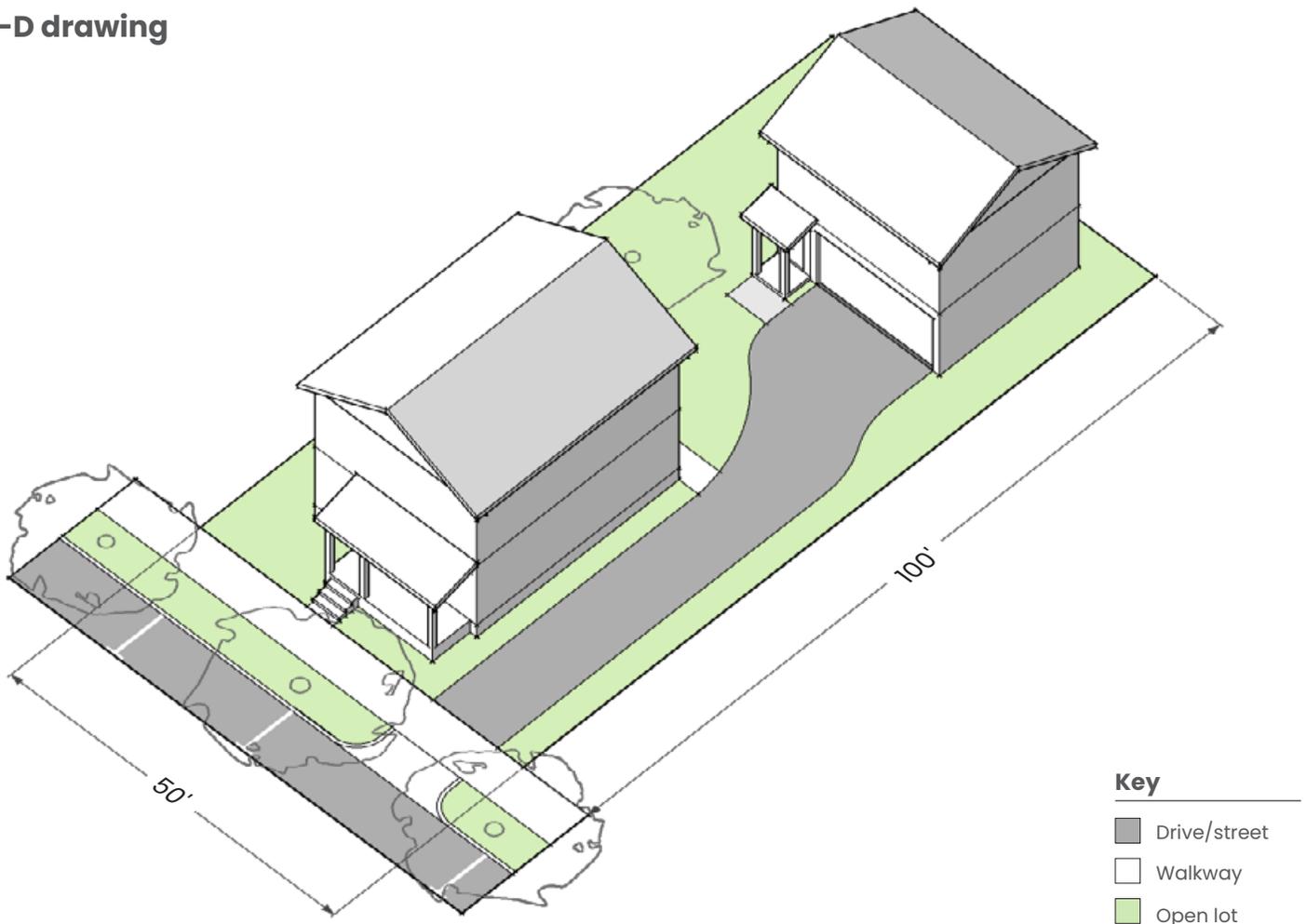
2.1.3 Second Dwelling Unit Concept 3

50' x 100' Mid Block Site without Alley

This concept demonstrates how a Second Dwelling Unit might be built on a 5,000 square foot site without alley access. The Second Dwelling Unit is located above a garage.

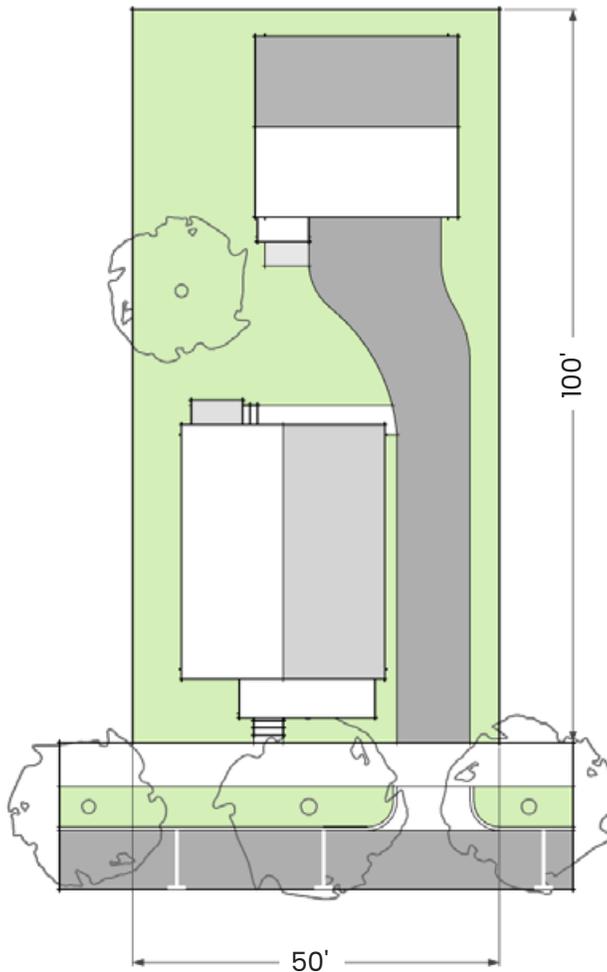
The on-site garage provides two off-street parking spaces, and one public space is available on-street.

3-D drawing



Site		Density	
Area	5,000 SF	Dwelling Units/Acre	17
Dimensions	50' x 100'	Coverage	
Dwelling Units		Lot Coverage	2,501 SF
1 X 1 Bedroom	660 SF	If Using Pervious Pavement	1,489 SF
1 X 3 Bedroom	1,600 SF	Green Space	2,499 SF
Total Dwellings	2		
Parking			
Access	From Street		
Off-Street Spaces	2		

Plan



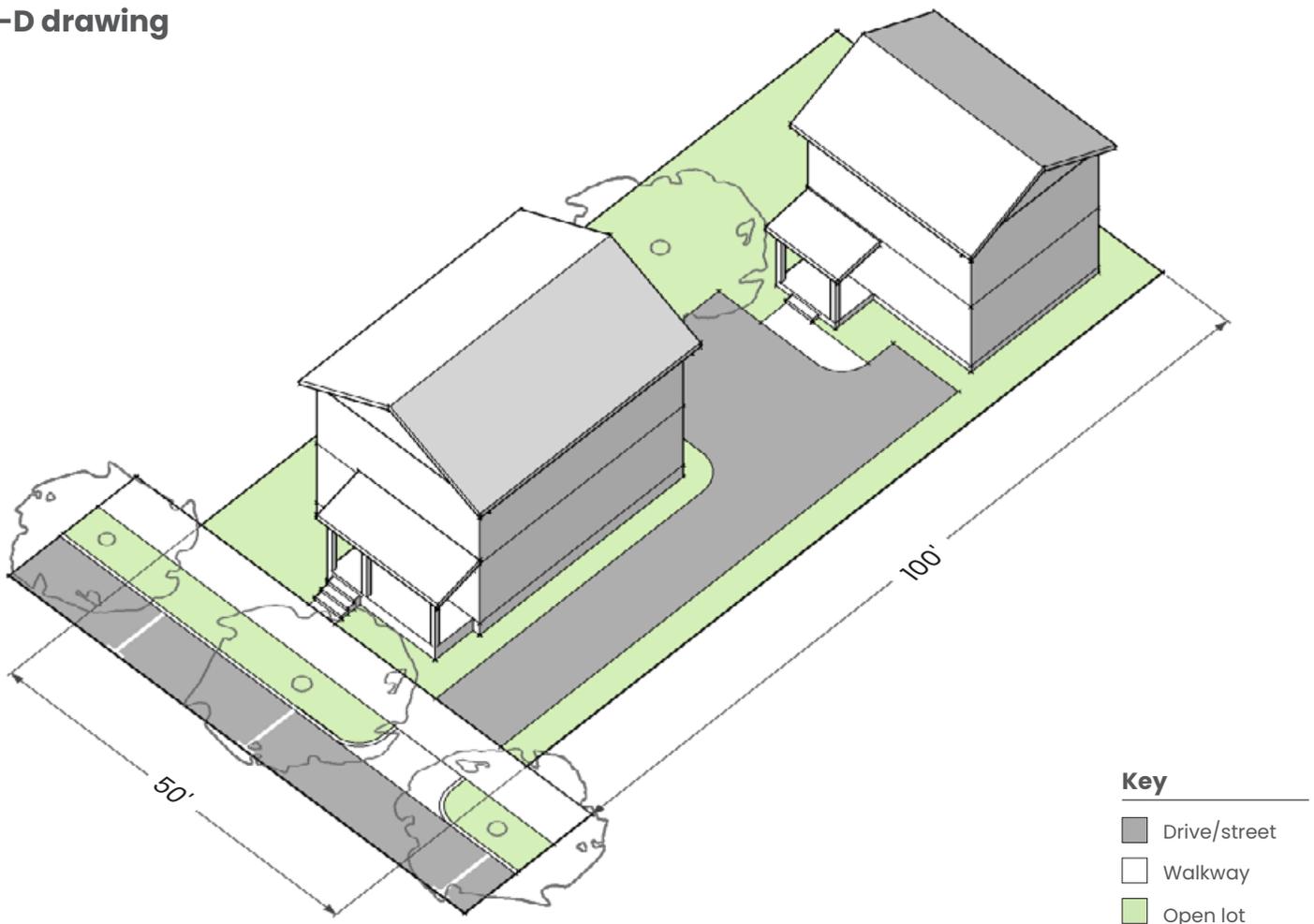
2.1.4 Second Dwelling Unit Concept 4

50' x 100' Mid Block Site without Alley

This concept shows a 5,000 square foot single-family residential site without alley access, featuring a Second Dwelling Unit in a detached structure behind a house.

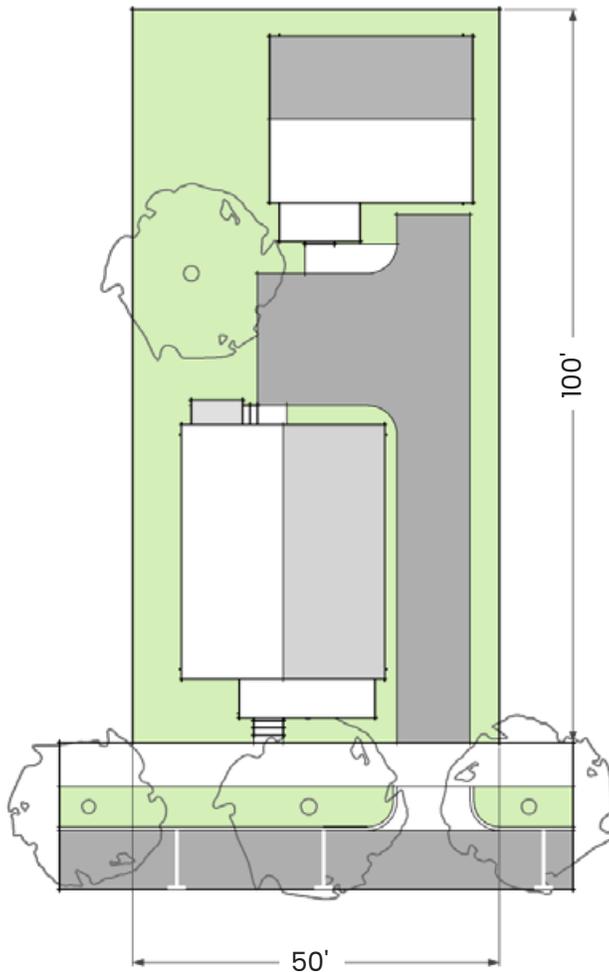
Two off-street parking spaces are provided in an on-site surface parking lot, and one public space is available on-street.

3-D drawing



Site		Density	
Area	5,000 SF	Dwelling Units/Acre	17
Dimensions	50' x 100'	Coverage	
Dwelling Units		Lot Coverage	2,637 SF
1 X 2 Bedroom	1,000 SF	If Using Pervious Pavement	1,473 SF
1 X 3 Bedroom	1,600 SF	Green Space	2,363 SF
Total Dwellings	2		
Parking			
Access	From Street		
Off-Street Spaces	2		

Plan



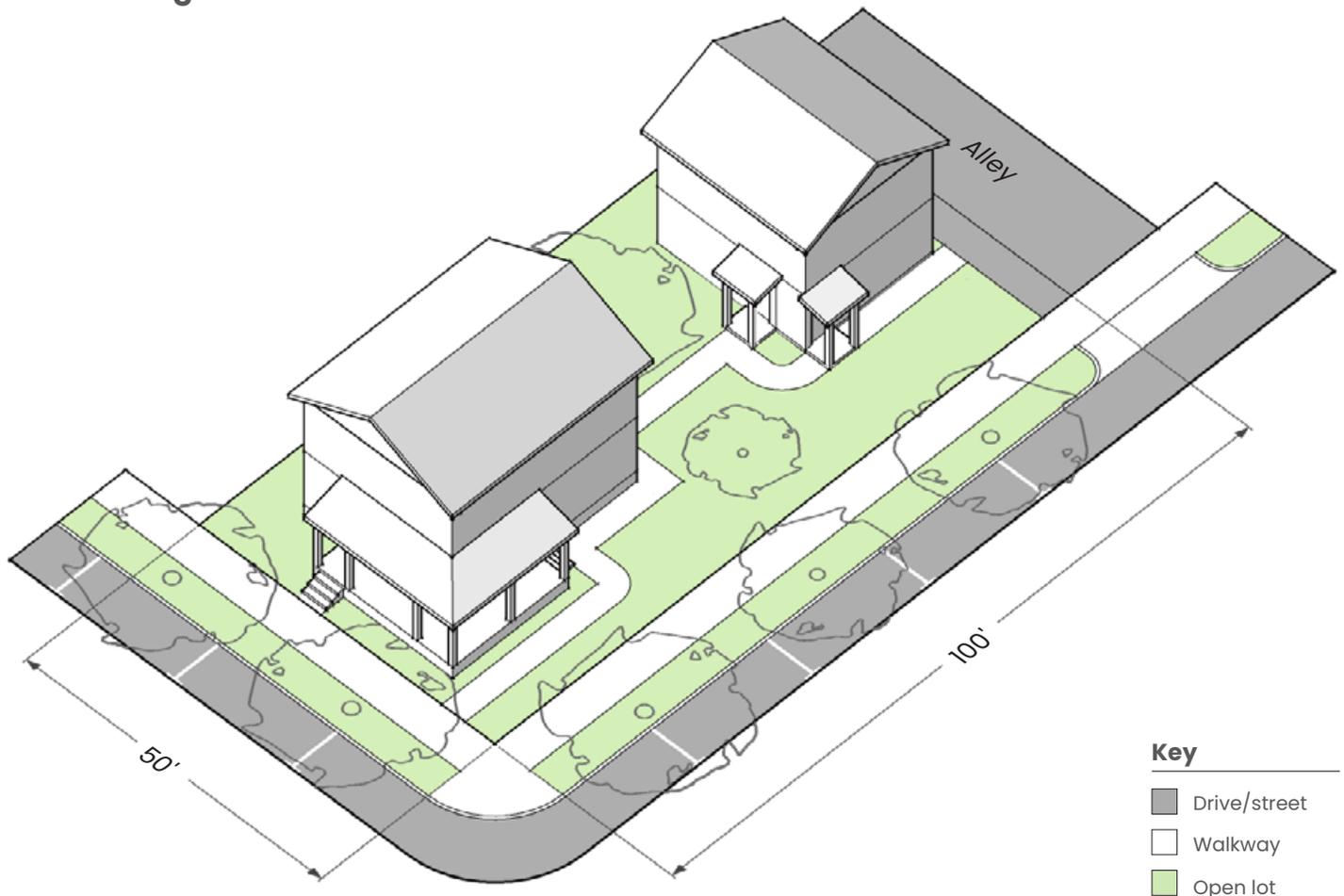
2.1.5 Second Dwelling Unit Concept 5

50' x 100' Corner Site with Alley

This concept illustrates a 5,000 square foot single-family residential corner site with alley access featuring a Second Dwelling Unit. This unit is located above a garage accessed from the alley, while the first unit is located toward the street.

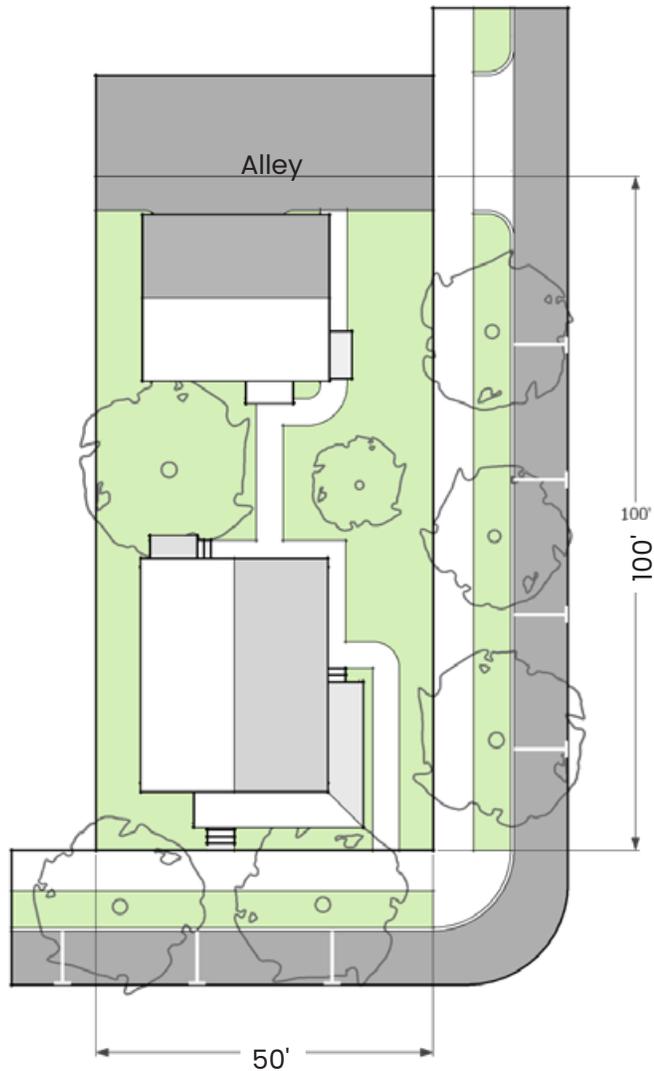
The on-site garage contains two parking spaces, and five public spaces are available on-street.

3-D drawing



Site		Density	
Area	5,000 SF	Dwelling Units/Acre	17
Dimensions	50' x 100'	Coverage	
Dwelling Units		Lot Coverage	2,421 SF
1 X 1 Bedroom	660 SF	If Using Pervious Pavement	1,635 SF
1 X 3 Bedroom	1,600 SF	Green Space	2,579 SF
Total Dwellings	2		
Parking			
Access	From Alley		
Off-Street Spaces	2		

Plan



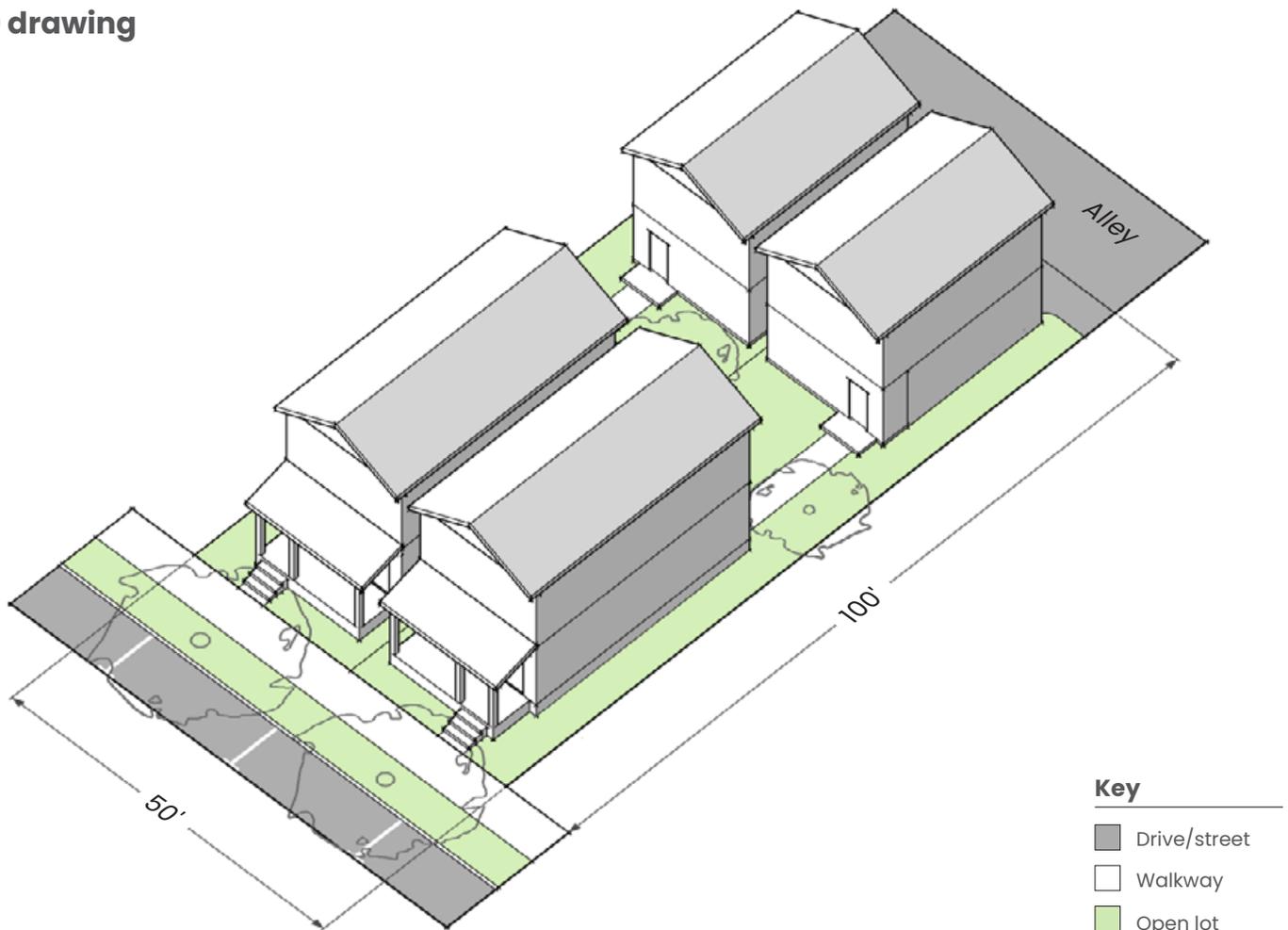
2.1.6 Second Dwelling Unit Concept 6

50' x 100' Mid Block Site with Alley

This concept illustrates a single-family residential site with alley access split into two lots, each containing a first unit and a Second Dwelling Unit. The Second Dwelling Units are located above alley-accessed garages at the rear of each lot, with open space between.

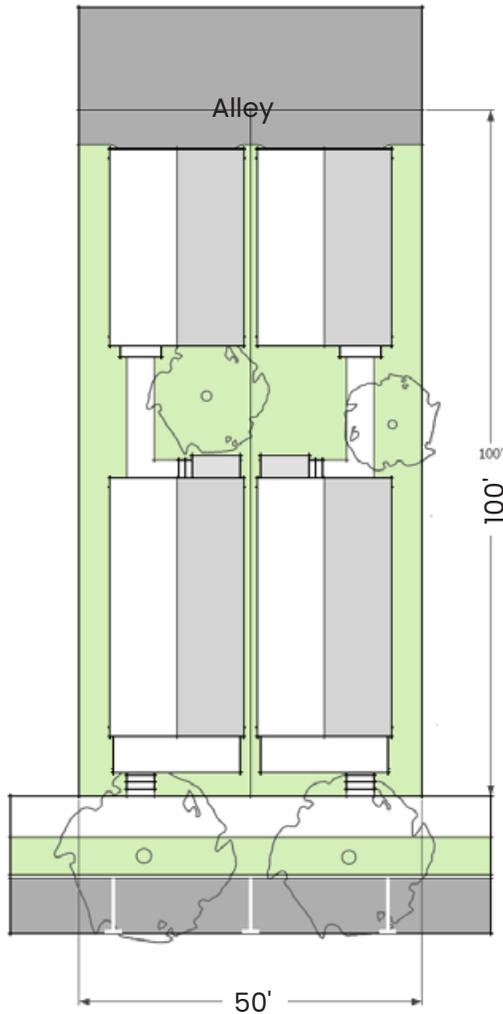
This site contains four off-street parking spaces in garages, and two public spaces are available on-street.

3-D drawing



Site		Density	
Area	5,000 SF	Dwelling Units/Acre	35
Dimensions	50' x 100'	Coverage	
Dwelling Units		Lot Coverage	3,078 SF
2 X 1 Bedroom	555 SF	If Using Pervious Pavement	2,513 SF
2 X 2 Bedroom	1,295 SF	Green Space	1,922 SF
Total Dwellings	4		
Parking			
Access	From Alley		
Off-Street Spaces	4		

Plan



2.2 Small-Lot Concepts §42-186, 188

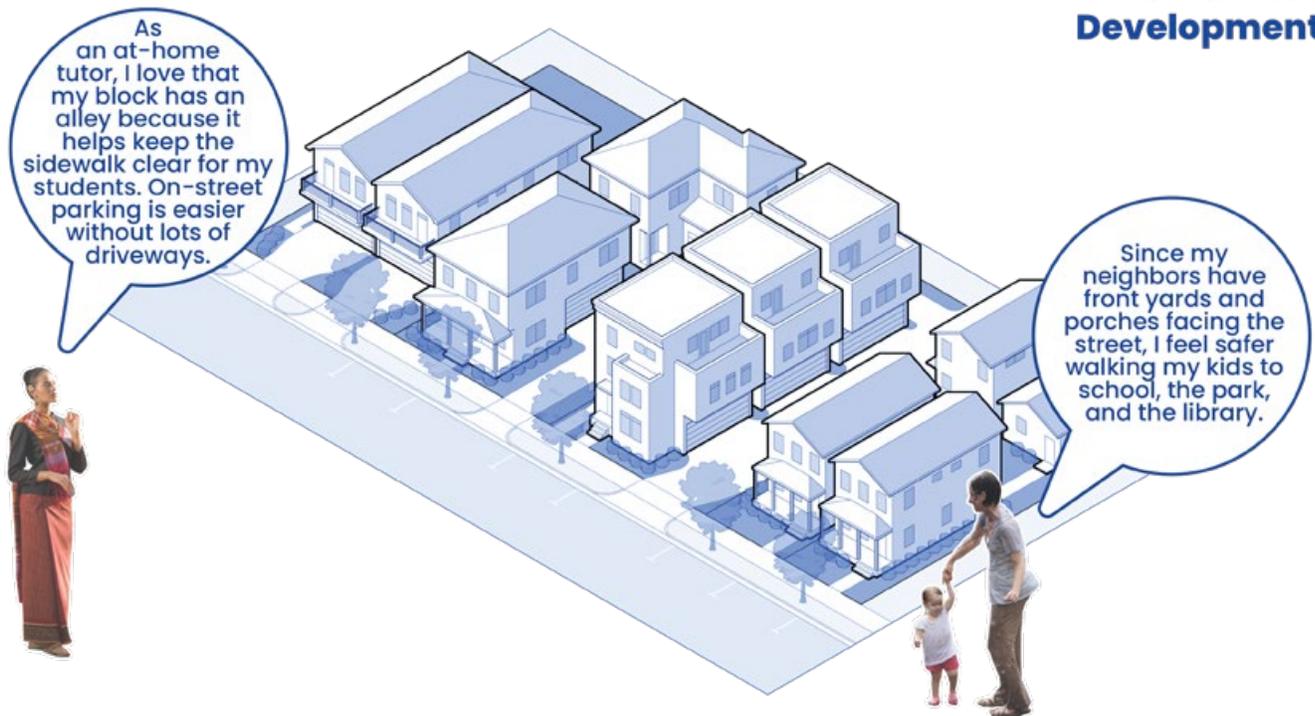
Small-Lot development refers to a type of single-family residential home development with units located on narrower-than-typical lots. This development type is limited to 27 units per acre, or 35 units per acre with alley or shared-drive access.

Lots accessed from an alley, shared drive, or access easement are allowed to have a building line of five feet or less on local streets. Lots with front-loaded garages are subject to a 10-foot

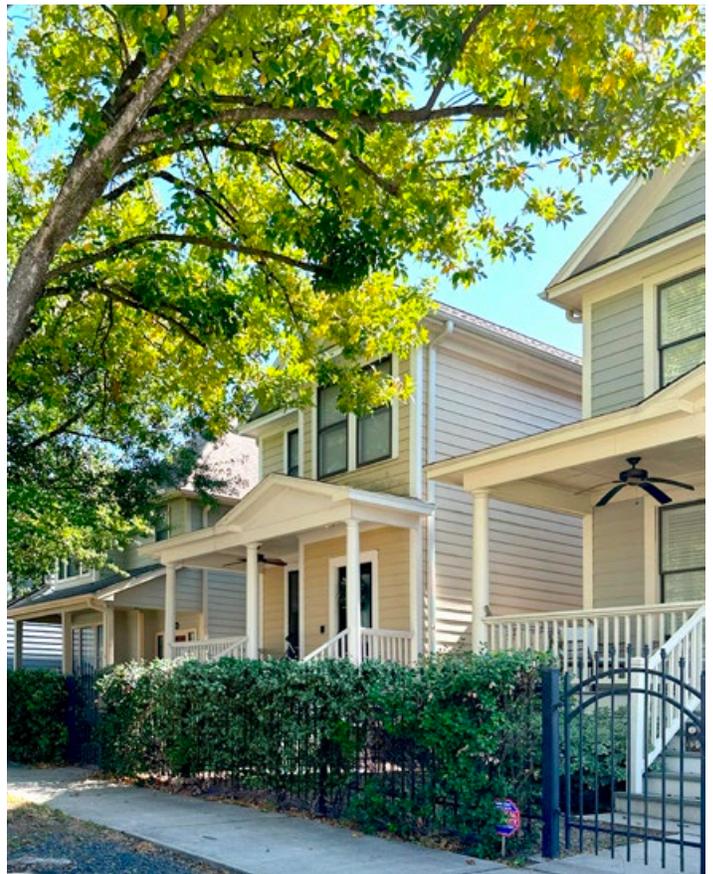
building line, with a 19-foot building line for the garage portion when certain conditions are met. Development rules allow for reduced parking of one space per unit for units less than or equal to 1,500 square feet. Small lots with 1,000 sf or smaller units and no driveway access to the street are allowed when no off-street parking is provided.

You can find visual examples of Small-Lot developments on page 82 of this document.

Small-Lot Development



*Where deed restrictions allow



Examples of existing Small-Lot developments in Houston today. Image credits: City of Houston.

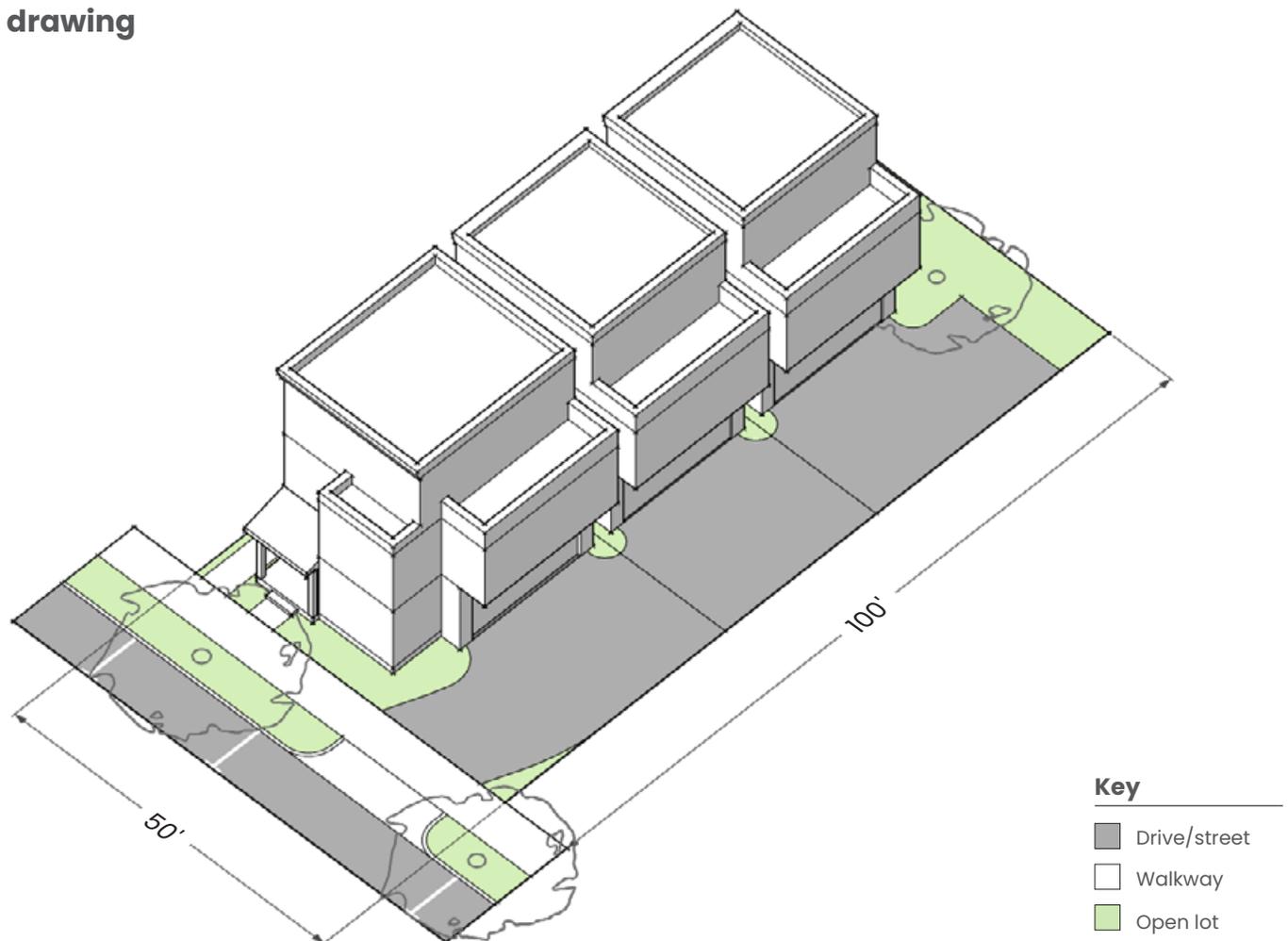
2.2.1 Small-Lot Concept 1

50' x 100' Mid Block Site Shared Driveway

This concept shows one approach to implementing a Small-Lot development on a 5,000 square foot site without alley access. This concept includes three dwelling units on a lot, with access taken from a shared driveway.

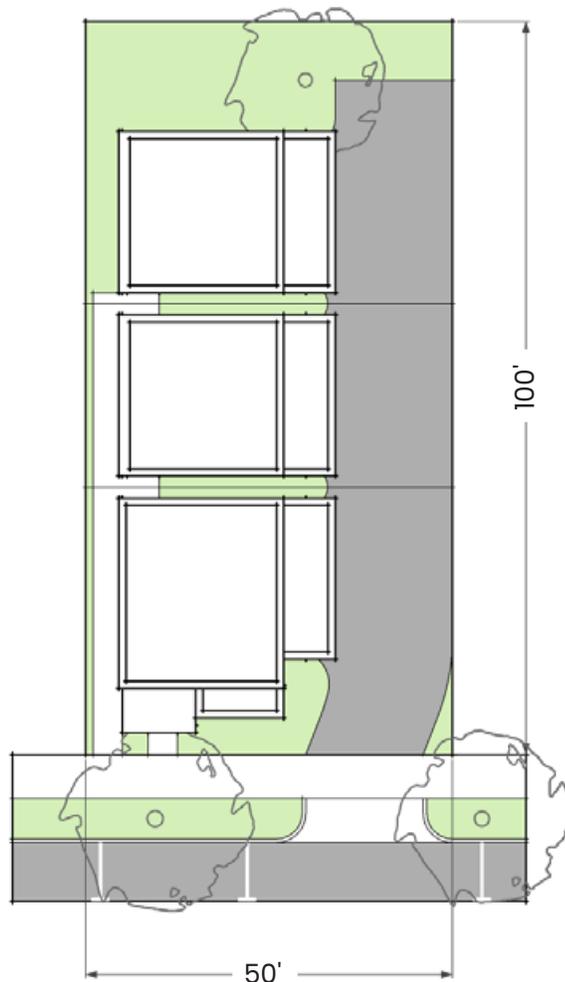
Each unit includes two parking spaces in a ground-level garage, and 1 public space on-street. The entrance for the unit along the front of the lot is oriented to the street.

3-D drawing



Site		Density	
Area	5,000 SF	Dwelling Units/Acre	26
Dimensions	50' x 100'	Coverage	
Dwelling Units		Lot Coverage	3,863 SF
2 X 2 Bedroom	1,246 SF	If Using Pervious Pavement	1,831 SF
1 X 3 Bedroom	1,637 SF	Green Space	1,137 SF
Total Dwellings	3		
Parking			
Access	From Street		
Off-Street Spaces	6		

Plan



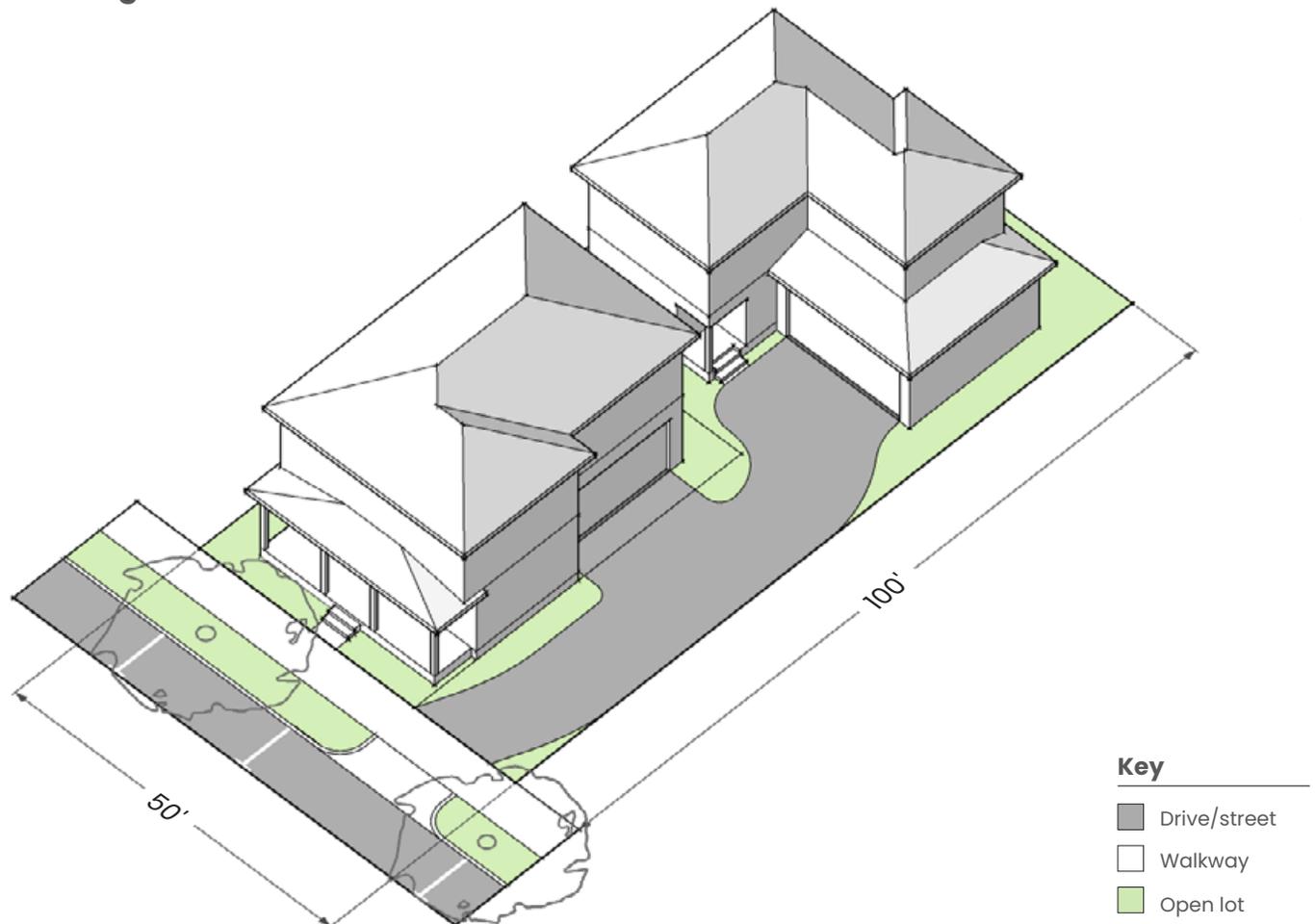
2.2.2 Small-Lot Concept 2

50' x 100' Mid Block Site Flag Lot

This concept demonstrates the Small-Lot development concept utilizing a flag lot layout on a 5,000 square foot site. The two dwelling units share a driveway located in the flag staff of the rear unit's lot.

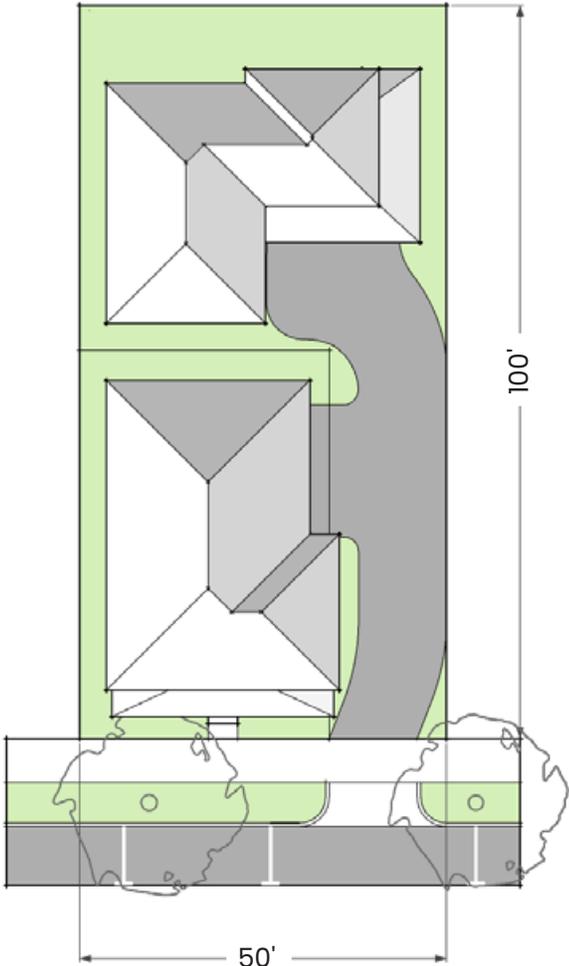
This site contains four parking spaces in attached garages, and one public parking space on-street.

3-D drawing



Site		Density	
Area	5,000 SF	Dwelling Units/Acre	17
Dimensions	50' x 100'	Coverage	
Dwelling Units		Lot Coverage	3,309 SF
1 X 3 Bedroom	1,298 SF	If Using Pervious Pavement	2,183 SF
1 X 3 Bedroom	1,540 SF	Green Space	1,691 SF
Total Dwellings	2		
Parking			
Access	From Street		
Off-Street Spaces	4		

Plan



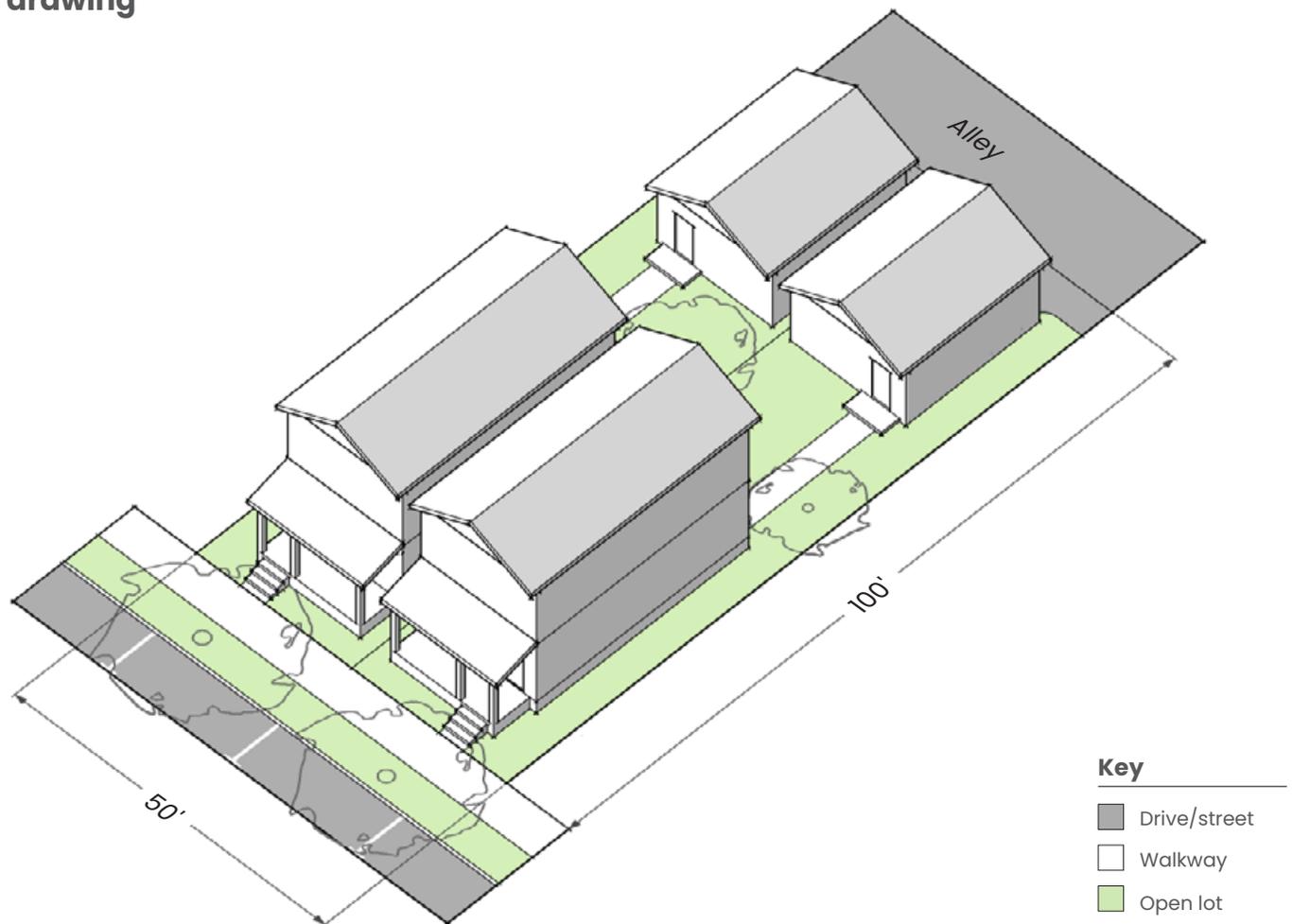
2.2.3 Small-Lot Concept 3

50' x 100' Mid Block Site with Alley

This concept illustrates a Small-Lot development on a 5,000 square foot alley-loaded site. Each dwelling unit on a Small-Lot takes access from the rear alley, with parking contained in a detached rear garage. Open space is located on each lot between the dwelling and garage.

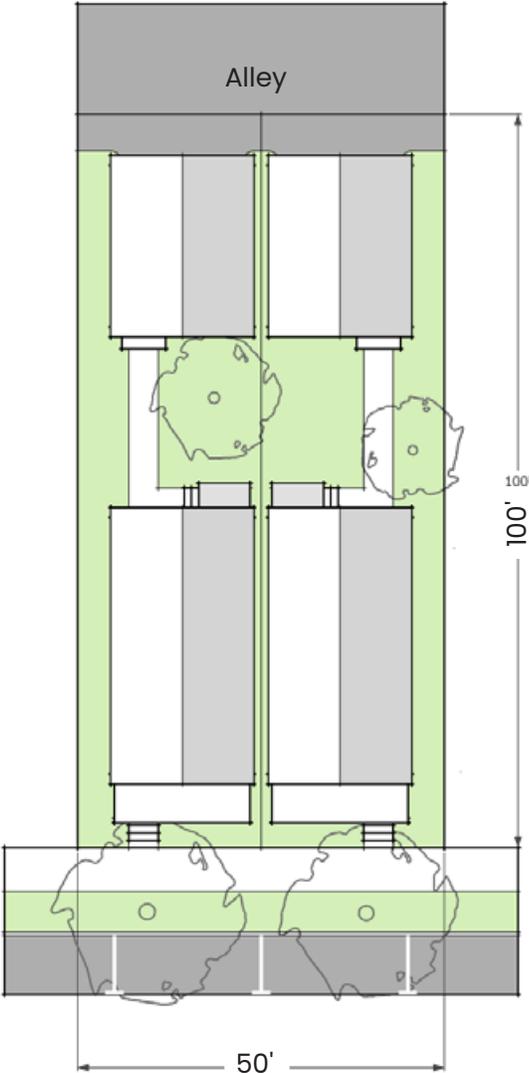
On-site garages contain a total of four parking spaces, and two public spaces are available on-street.

3-D drawing



Site		Density	
Area	5,000 SF	Dwelling Units/Acre	17
Dimensions	50' x 100'	Coverage	
Dwelling Units		Lot Coverage	2,968 SF
2 X 2 Bedroom	1,295 SF	If Using Pervious Pavement	2,383 SF
Total Dwellings	2	Green Space	2,032 SF
Parking			
Access	From Street		
Off-Street Spaces	4		

Plan



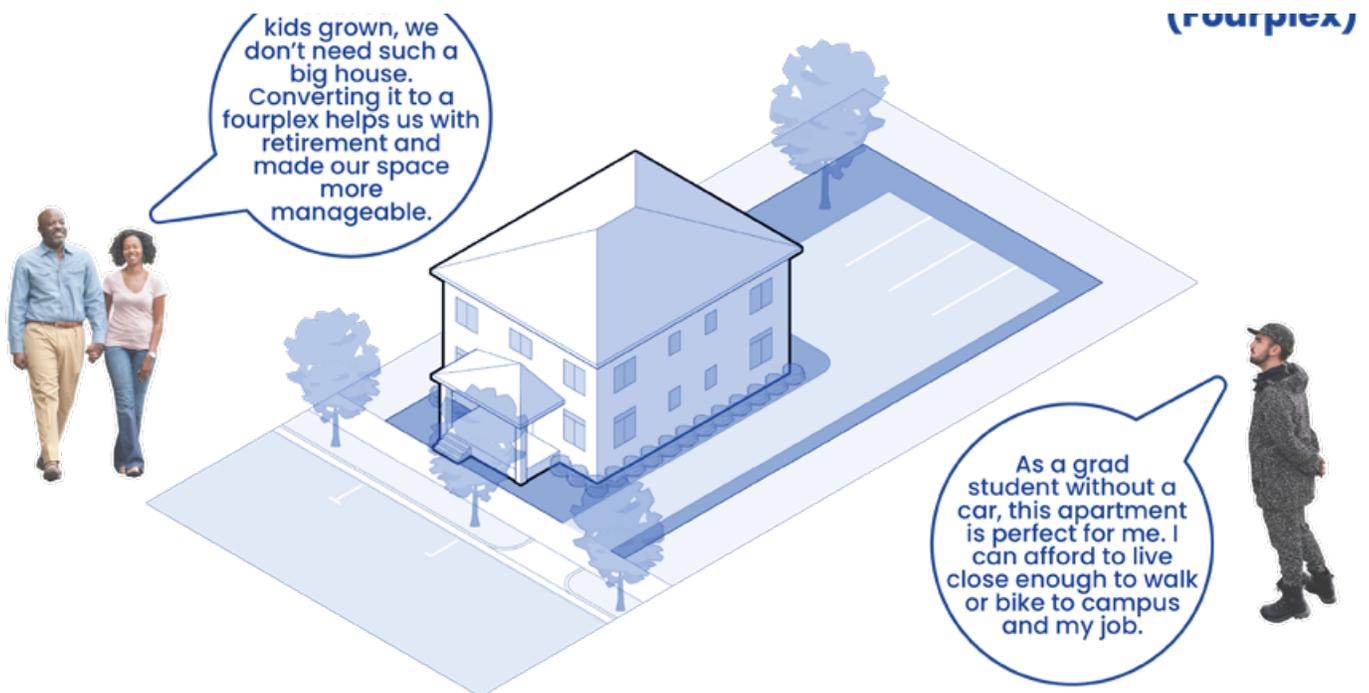
2.3 Multi-Unit Residential (MUR) Concepts §42-165, 237, 492

Multi-Unit Residential is a type of development that includes triplexes, fourplexes, multiple duplexes, or small apartment buildings. MURs are allowed on unrestricted lots or reserves—with up to four units allowed if along a local street and up to eight units if elsewhere.

MURs are not allowed on lots deeper than 150 feet from a public street, and are subject to a 30-foot building height limit. A five-foot building line is allowed on local streets when a direct pedestrian connection is provided. Units along the street must have forward-facing entries to ensure “eyes on the street”.

MURs must take vehicular access from an alley if abutting, and are otherwise limited to a 16-foot wide maximum driveway. A one-way 12-foot driveway is allowed for corner properties.

One parking space is required for each unit 1,000 square feet or less, and two parking spaces are required for each unit greater than 1,000 square feet. In addition, one guest parking space is required for every six units.



*Where deed restrictions allow



Examples of existing Multi-Unit Residential developments in Houston today. Image credits: City of Houston.

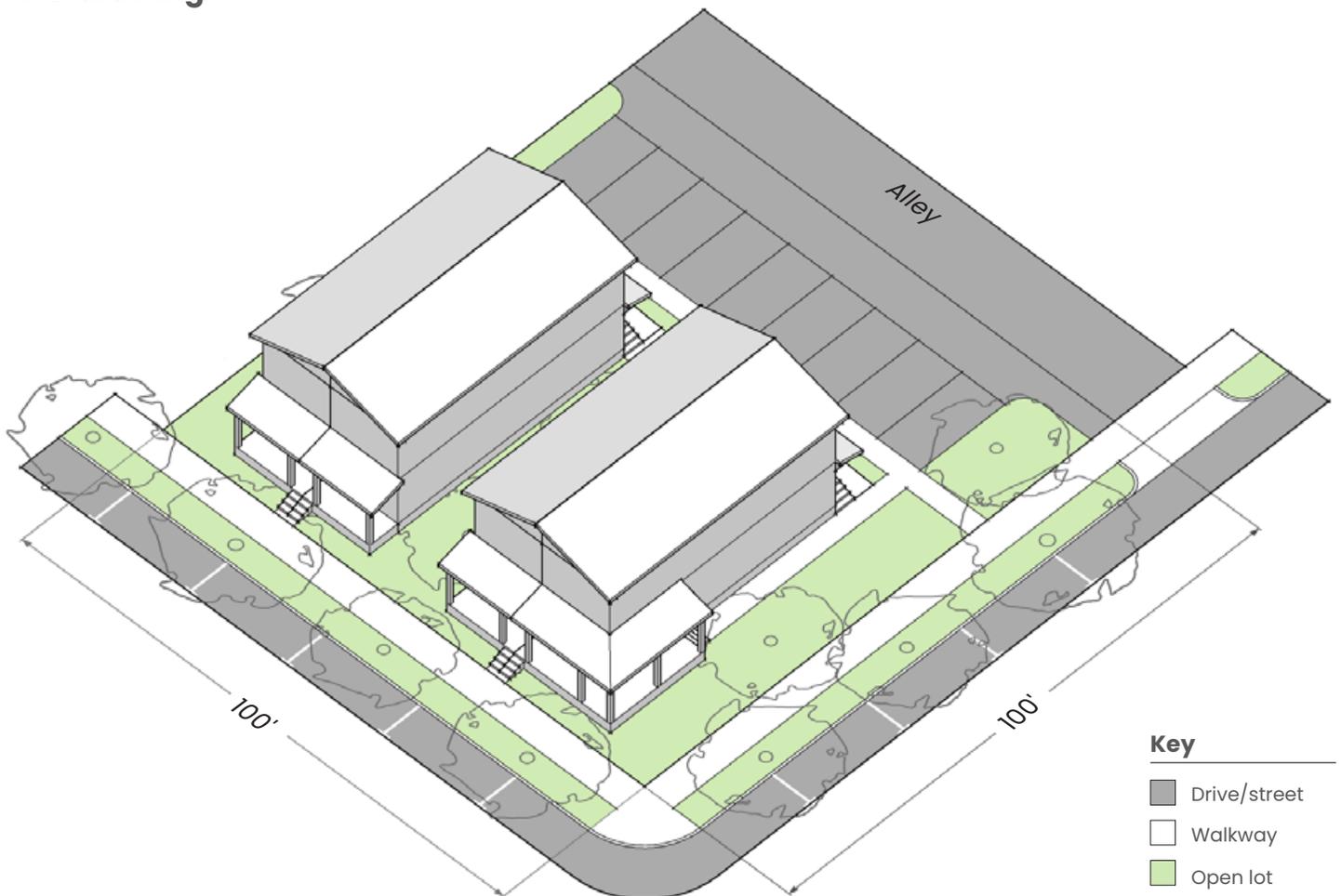
2.3.1 Multi-Unit Residential Concept 1

100' x 100' Corner Site with Alley

This concept illustrates a potential Multi-Unit Residential development scenario on a 10,000 square foot corner site with alley access. This scenario includes two four-unit buildings on the site with a shared surface parking lot in the rear. Each unit contains one Bedroom.

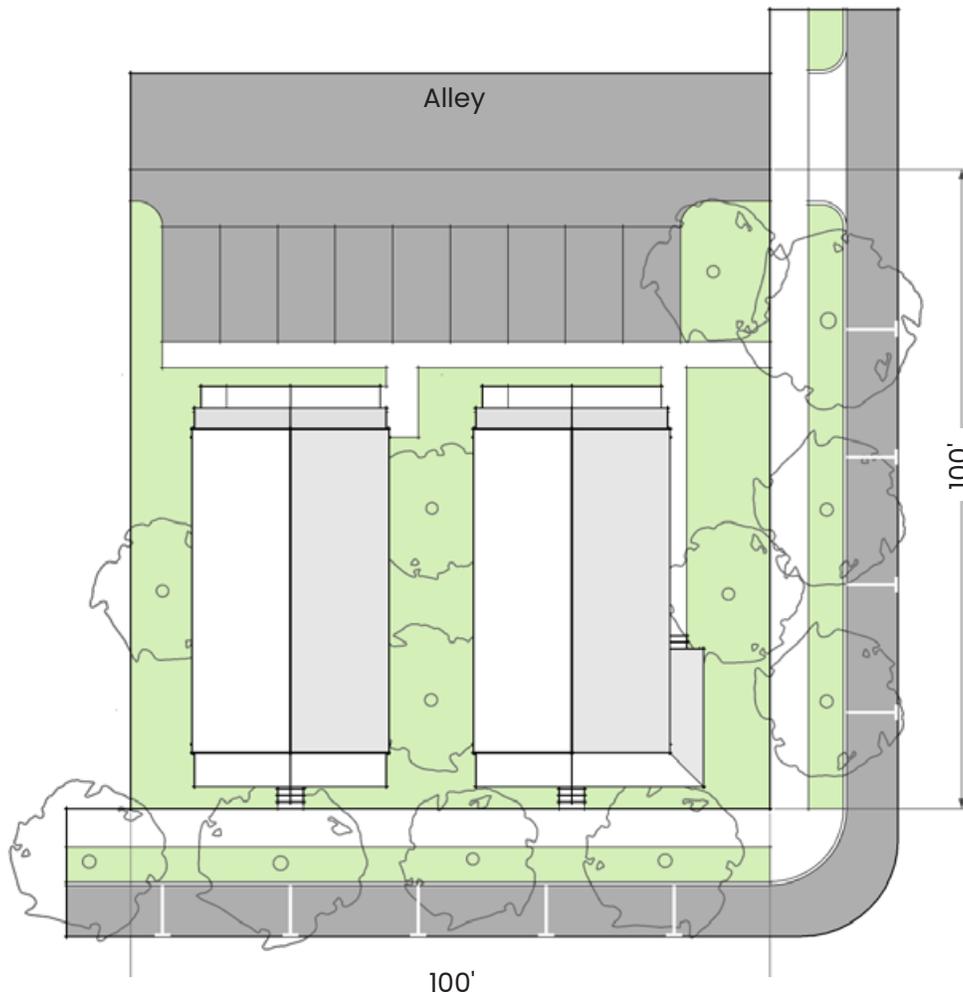
Nine off-street parking spaces are provided, and the lack of curb cuts allows for seven public parking spaces on the street.

3-D drawing



Site		Density	
Area	10,000 SF	Dwelling Units/Acre	35
Dimensions	100' x 100'	Coverage	
Dwelling Units		Lot Coverage	6,565 SF
8 X 1 Bedroom	672 SF	If Using Pervious Pavement	3,568 SF
Total Dwellings	8	Green Space	3,435 SF
Parking			
Access	From Alley		
Off-Street Spaces	9		

Plan



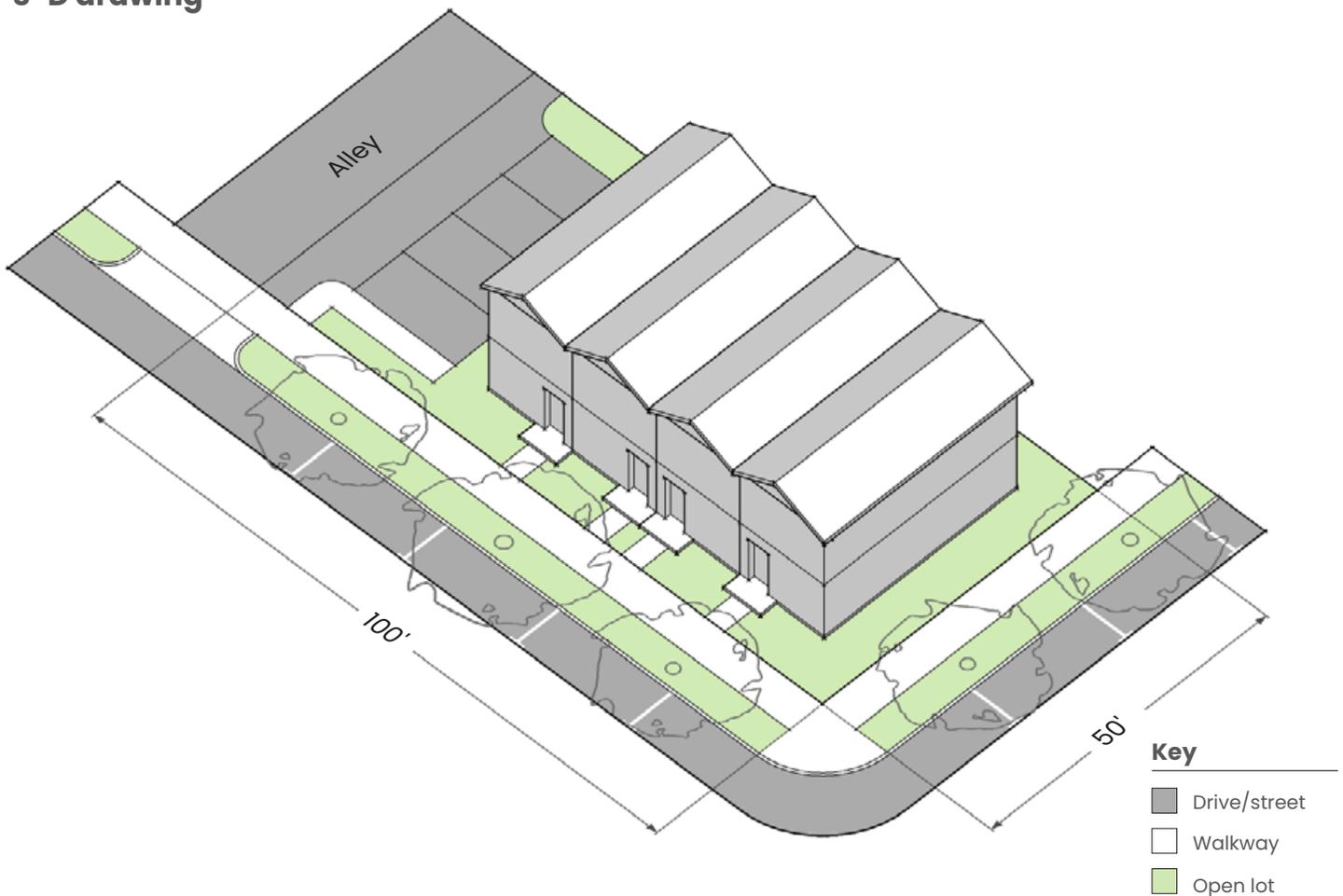
2.3.2 Multi-Unit Residential Concept 2

100' x 50' Corner Site with Alley

This concept demonstrates one potential Multi-Unit Residential development model on a 5,000 square foot corner lot with alley access. This site contains four rowhouse-style units in one structure, with fronts and entrances facing the street.

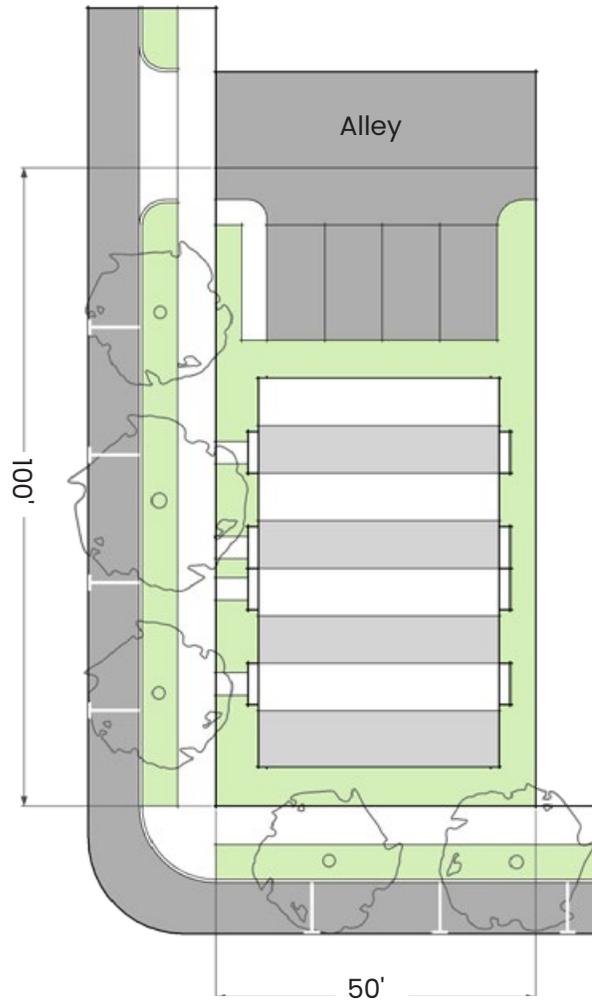
Four off-street parking spaces are provided in a shared surface parking lot, with another five public spaces available on-street.

3-D drawing



Site		Density	
Area	5,000 SF	Dwelling Units/Acre	35
Dimensions	100' x 50'	Coverage	
Dwelling Units		Lot Coverage	3,526 SF
4 X 2 Bedroom	980 SF	If Using Pervious Pavement	2,269 SF
Total Dwellings	4	Green Space	1,474 SF
Parking			
Access	From Alley		
Off-Street Spaces	4		

Plan



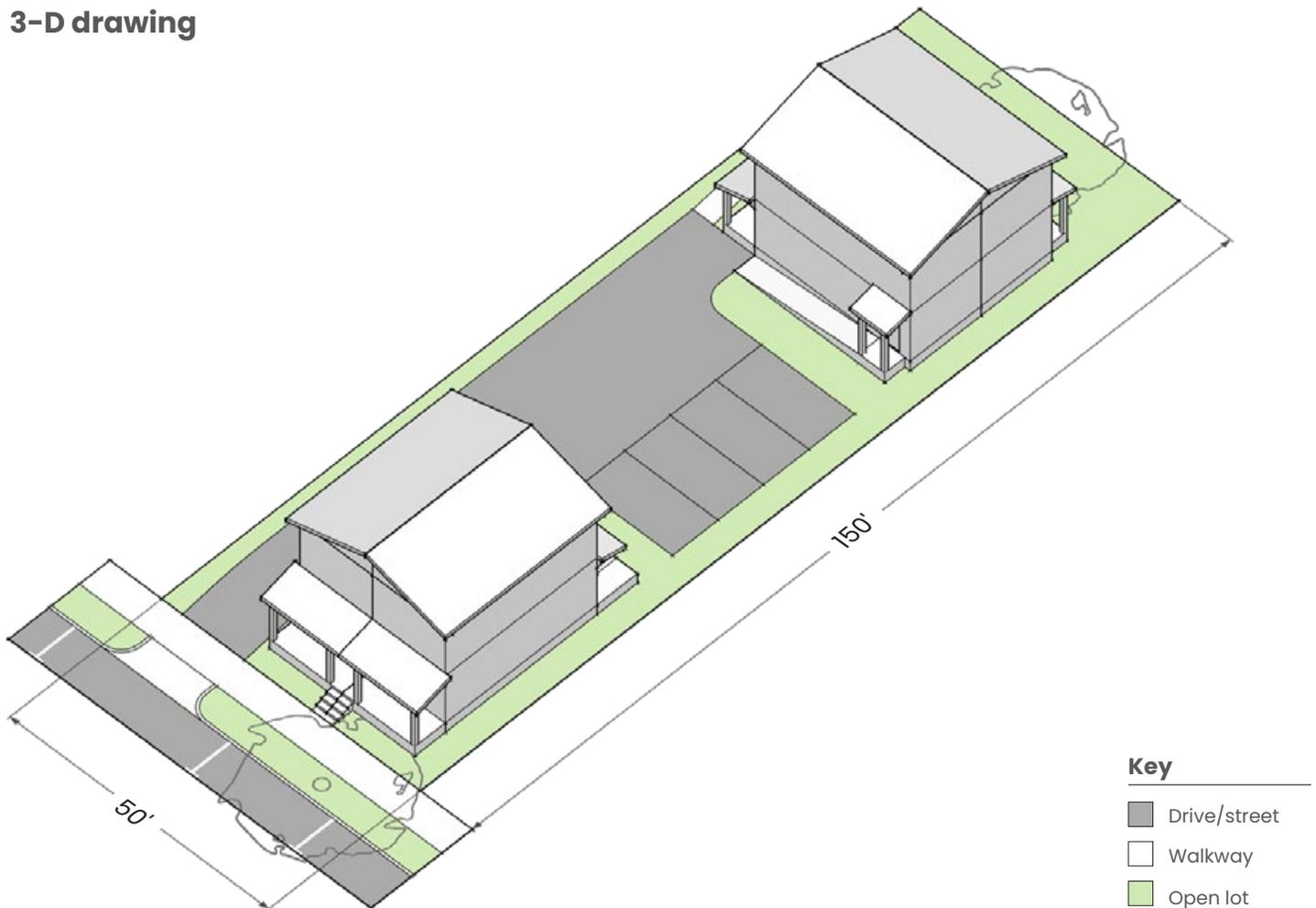
2.3.3 Multi-Unit Residential Concept 3

50' x 150' Mid Block Site without Alley

This concept illustrates a Multi-Unit Residential development scenario on a 7,500 square foot mid-block site without alley access. This scenario shows two duplexes located on the site, one front and one rear.

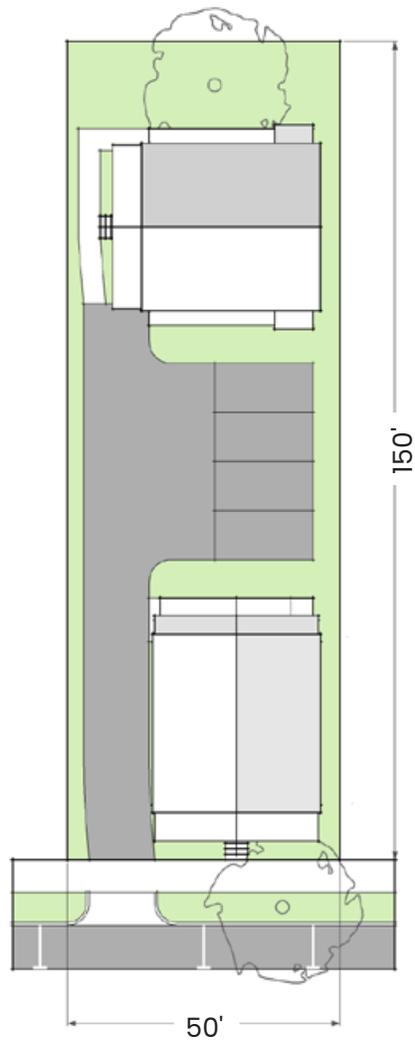
A shared surface parking lot contains four off-street parking spaces; one additional public space is available on-street. The duplex at the front of the lot has entrances oriented to the street.

3-D drawing



Site		Density	
Area	7,500 SF	Dwelling Units/Acre	23
Dimensions	50' x 150'	Coverage	
Dwelling Units		Lot Coverage	5,231 SF
4 X 1 Bedroom	840 SF	If Using Pervious Pavement	2,460 SF
Total Dwellings	4	Green Space	2,269 SF
Parking			
Access	From Street		
Off-Street Spaces	4		

Plan



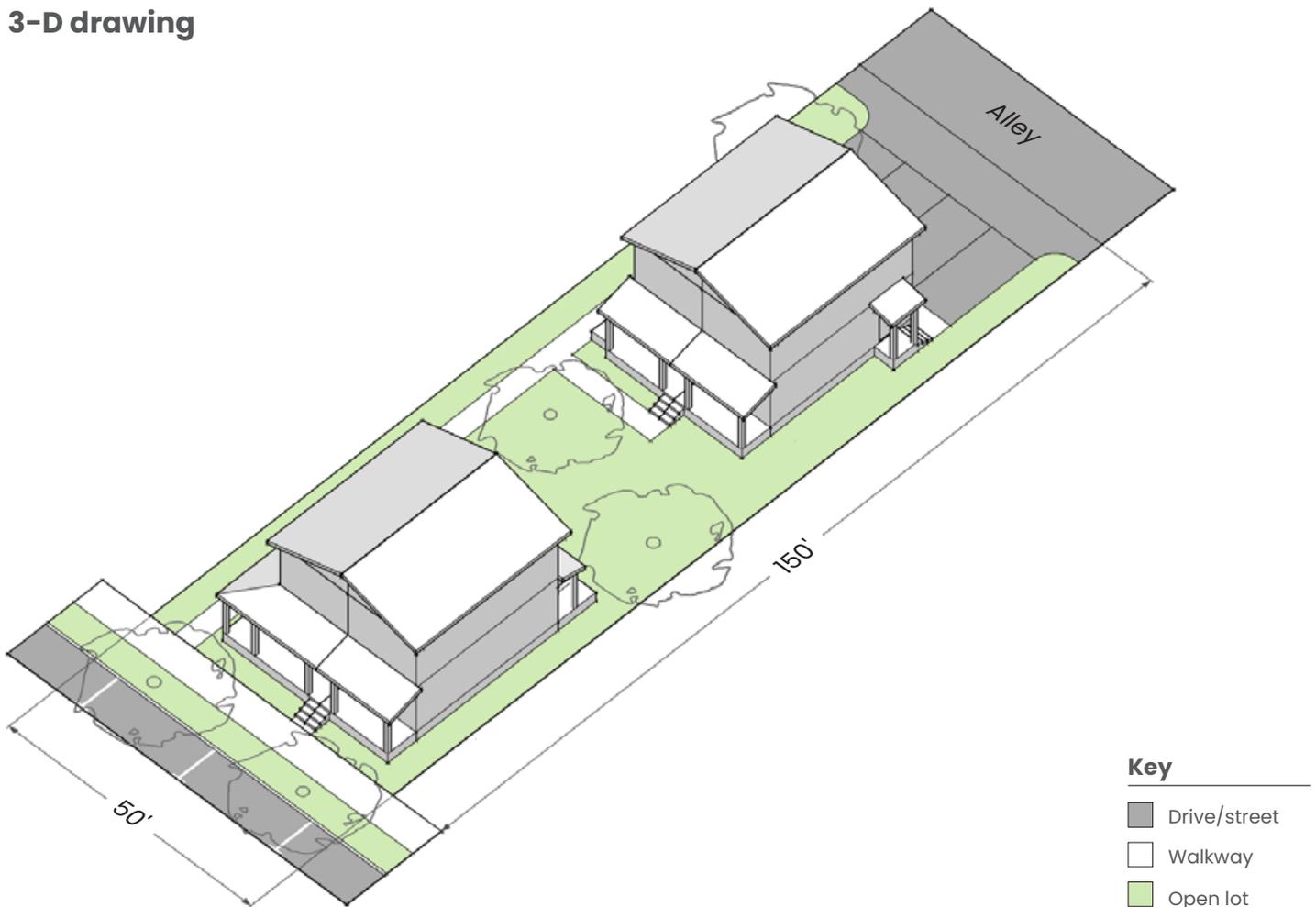
2.3.4 Multi-Unit Residential Concept 4

50' x 150' Mid Block Site with Alley

Similar to the previous concept, this concept illustrates a potential Multi-Unit Residential development scenario on a mid-block 7,500 square foot site with alley access. Here, four 840 square foot units are located in two duplex structures, one front and one rear.

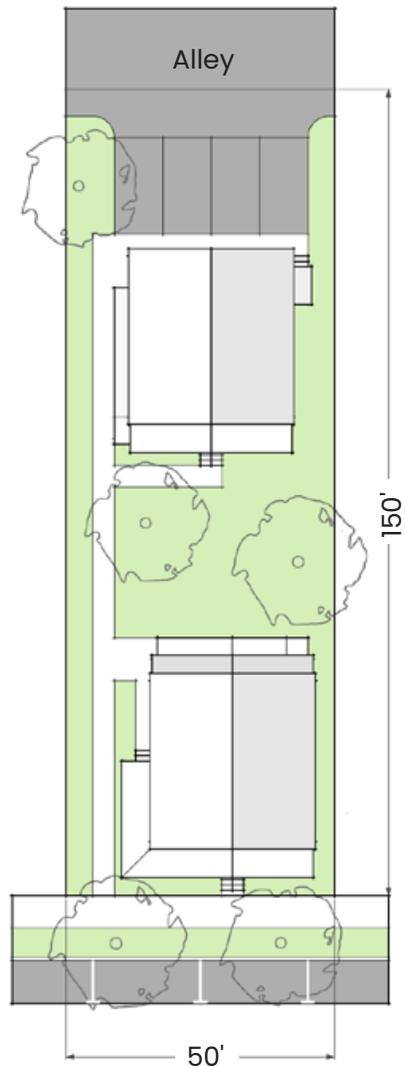
The front duplex dwellings have street-facing entrances. The site features four off-street parking spaces along the alley, as well as two public on-street spaces.

3-D drawing



Site		Density	
Area	7,500 SF	Dwelling Units/Acre	23
Dimensions	50' x 150'	Coverage	
Dwelling Units		Lot Coverage	4,563 SF
4 X 1 Bedroom	840 SF	If Using Pervious Pavement	2,480 SF
Total Dwellings	4	Green Space	2,937 SF
Parking			
Access	From Alley		
Off-Street Spaces	4		

Plan



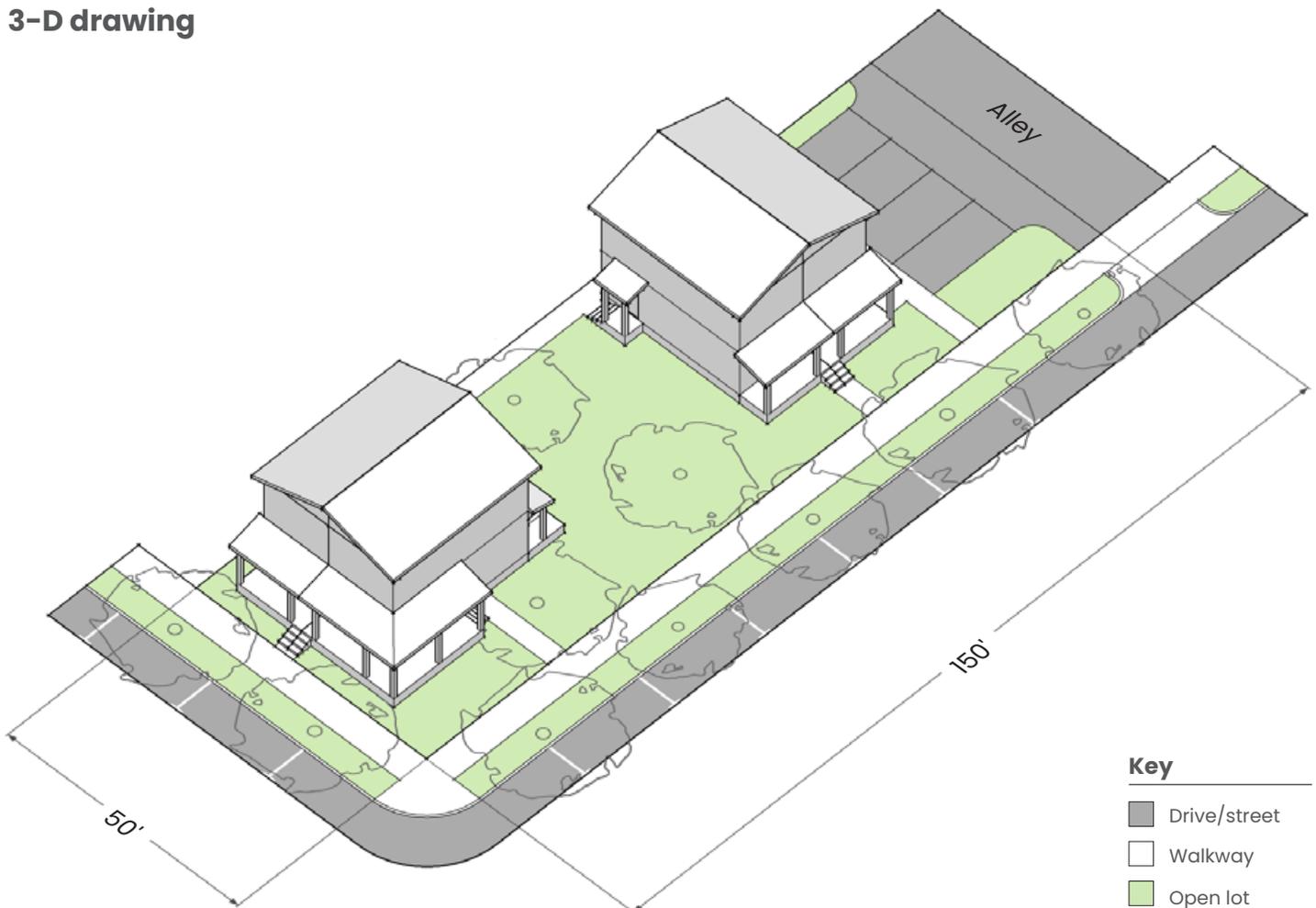
2.3.5 Multi-Unit Residential Concept 5

50' x 150' Corner Site with Alley

This concept shows a Multi-Unit Residential development scenario located on a 7,500 square foot corner site with alley access. This scenario includes two duplex structures, with all four 840 square foot dwelling units featuring street-facing entrances.

Four off-street parking spaces are located along the alley, and seven public spaces are available on-street.

3-D drawing



Site		Density	
Area	7,500 SF	Dwelling Units/Acre	23
Dimensions	50' x 150'	Coverage	
Dwelling Units		Lot Coverage	4,351 SF
4 X 1 Bedroom	840 SF	If Using Pervious Pavement	2,484 SF
Total Dwellings	4	Green Space	3,149 SF
Parking			
Access	From Alley		
Off-Street Spaces	4		

Plan



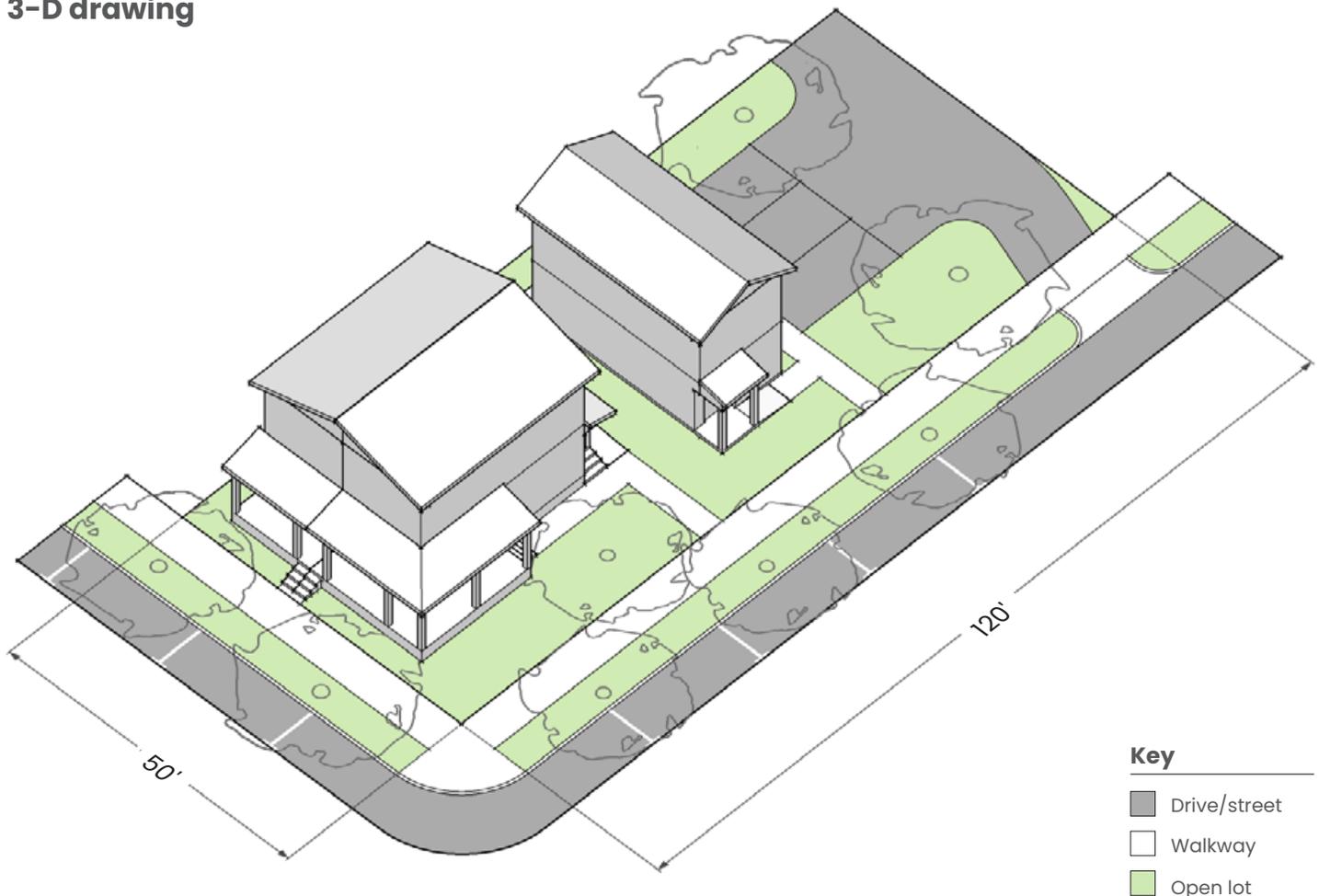
2.3.6 Multi-Unit Residential Concept 6

50' x 120' Corner Site without Alley

This concept illustrates a potential Multi-Unit Residential development on a 6,000 square foot corner site without alley access. This site contains three 840 square foot dwelling units in two structures – a duplex structure at the front, and a single detached dwelling at the rear.

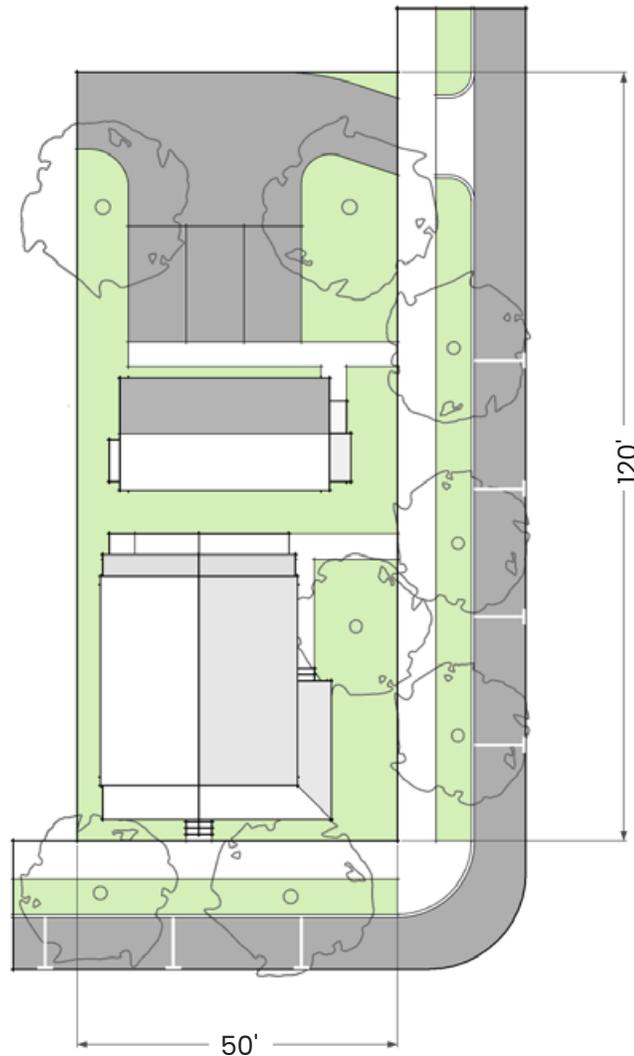
Three off-street parking spaces are provided in a shared surface parking lot at the rear, and five public spaces are located on the street.

3-D drawing



Site		Density	
Area	6,000 SF	Dwelling Units/Acre	22
Dimensions	50' x 120'	Coverage	
Dwelling Units		Lot Coverage	3,794 SF
3 X 1 Bedroom	840 SF	If Using Pervious Pavement	1,856 SF
Total Dwellings	3	Green Space	2,206 SF
Parking			
Access	From Street		
Off-Street Spaces	3		

Plan



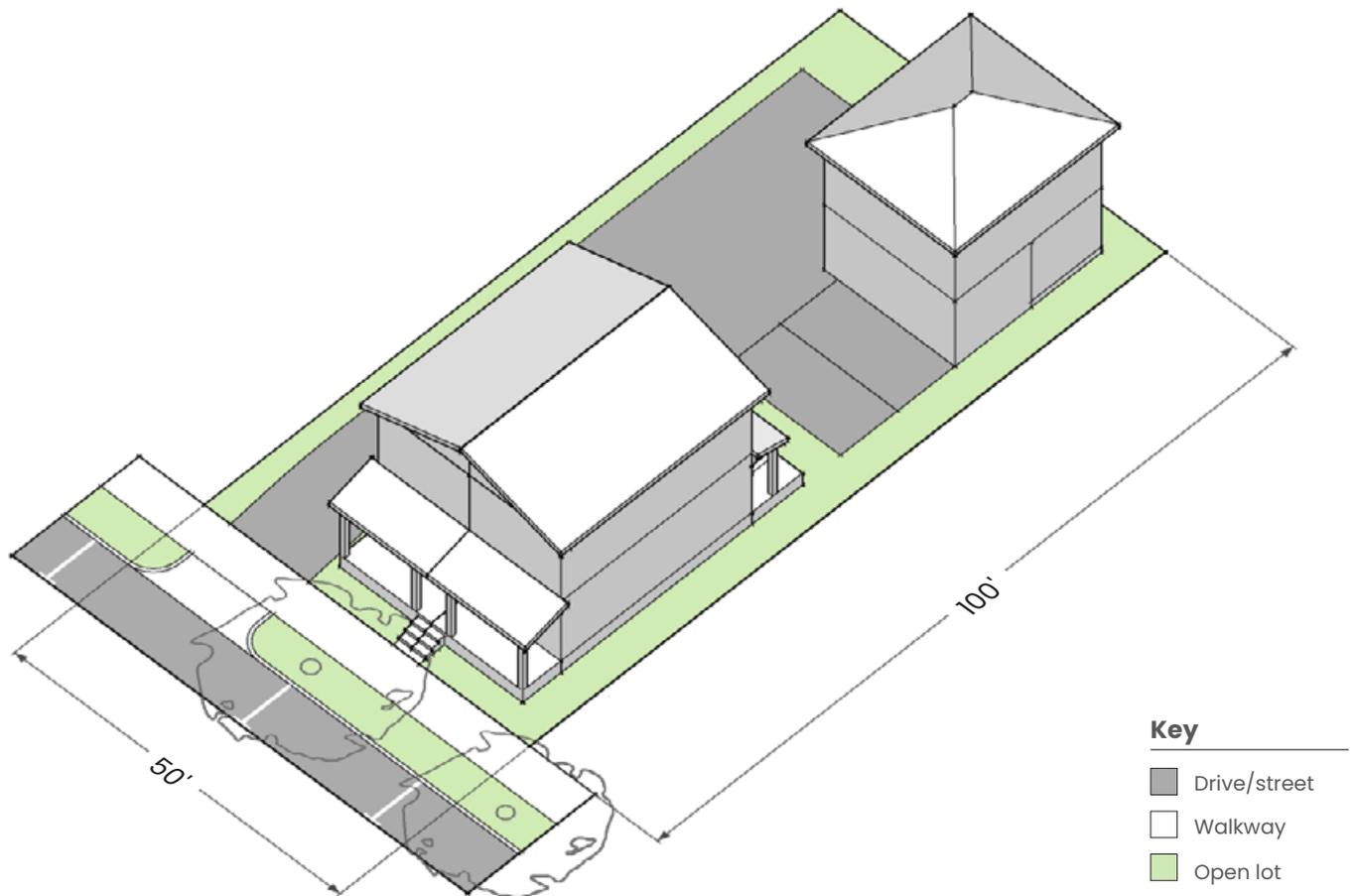
2.3.7 Multi-Unit Residential Concept 7

50' x 100' Mid Block Site without Alley

This concept shows a Multi-Unit Residential development located on a 5,000 square foot mid-block site without alley access. This site contains three dwelling units, with a duplex structure at the front and a detached dwelling located above a single-car garage at the rear.

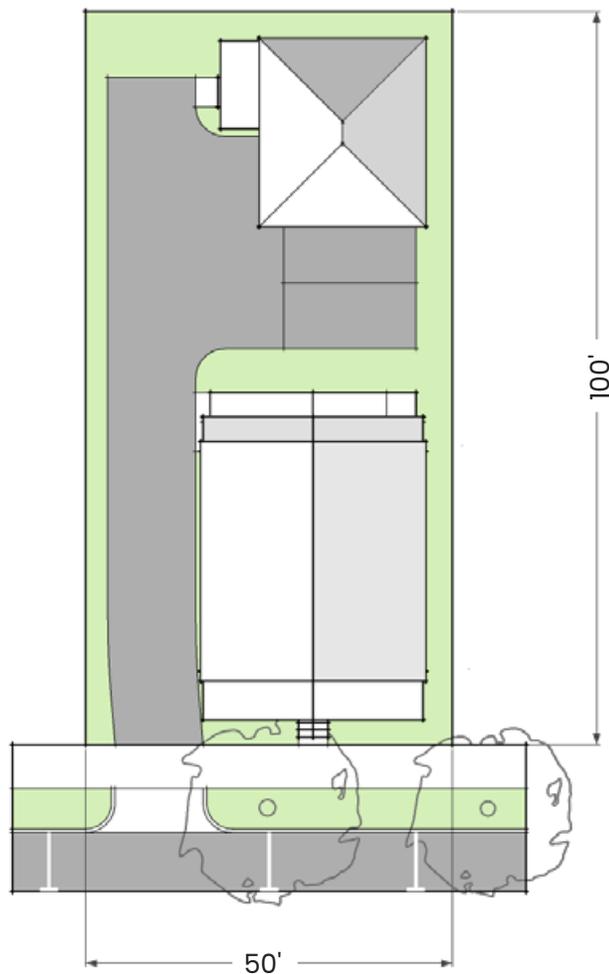
Three parking spaces are provided off-street (one garage, two surface) via private drive, and one public space is available on-street.

3-D drawing



Site		Density	
Area	5,000 SF	Dwelling Units/Acre	26
Dimensions	50' x 100'	Coverage	
Dwelling Units		Lot Coverage	3,698 SF
1 X 1 Bedroom	680 SF	If Using Pervious Pavement	1,740 SF
2 X 1 Bedroom	840 SF	Green Space	1,302 SF
Total Dwellings	3		
Parking			
Access	From Street		
Off-Street Spaces	3		

Plan



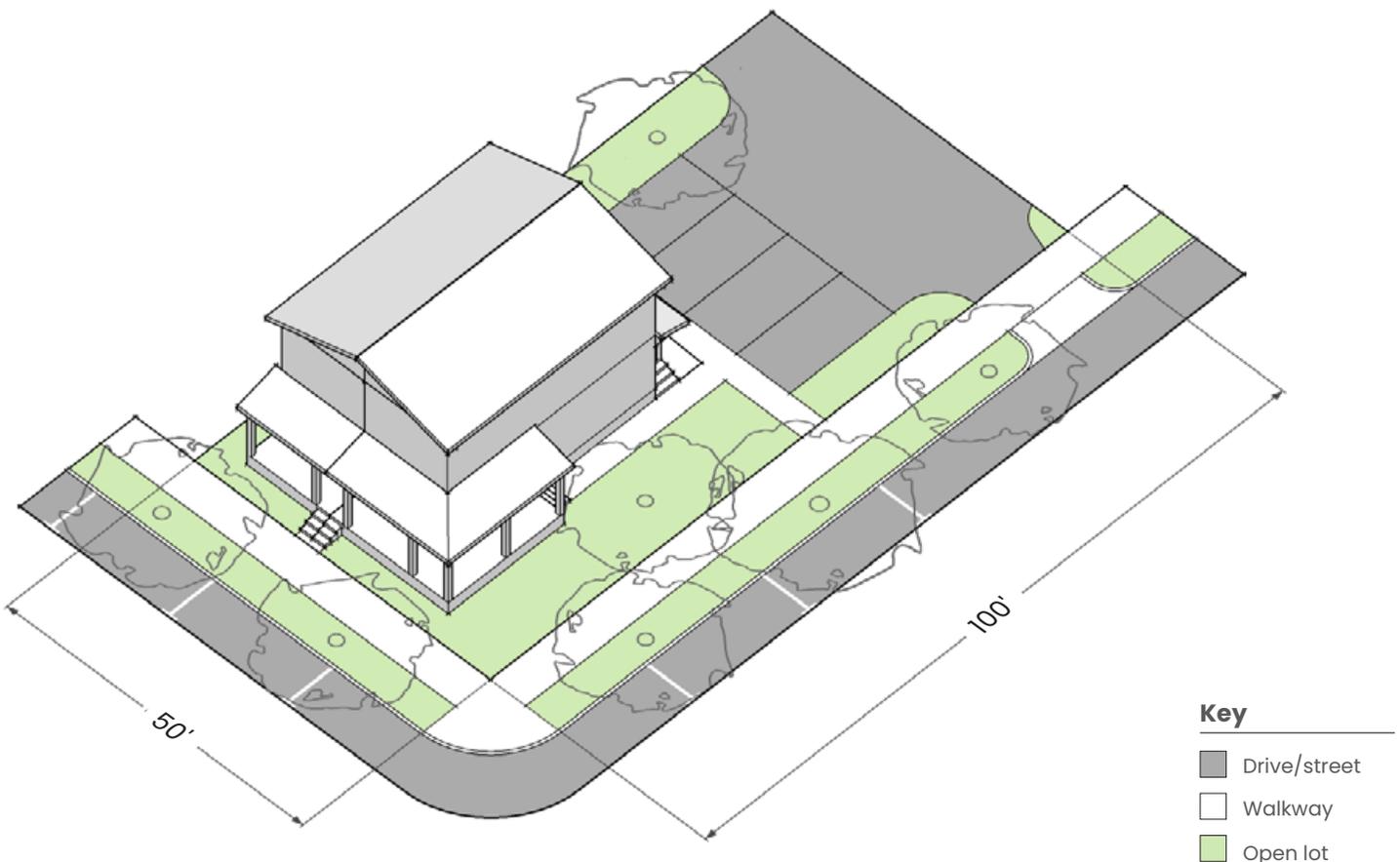
2.3.8 Multi-Unit Residential Concept 8

50' x 100' Corner Site without Alley

This concept illustrates a potential Multi-Unit Residential development on a 5,000 square foot corner site without alley access. Four 504 square foot dwelling units are located in one building, with a shared parking lot at the rear providing four spaces. Four public parking spaces are available on the street as well.

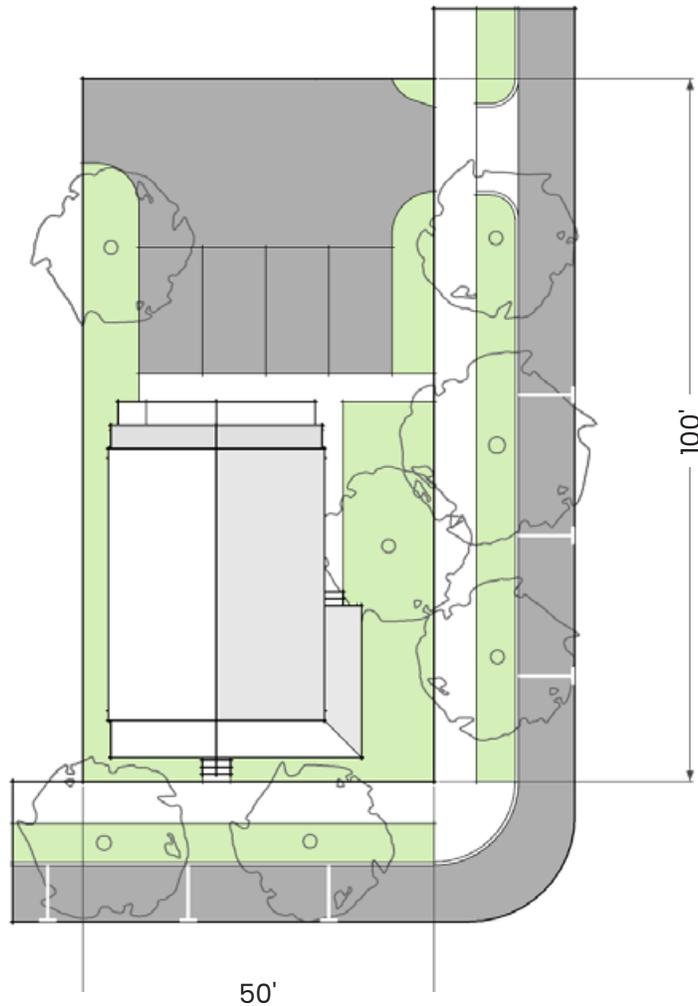
All units feature a direct pedestrian connection to the public sidewalk and parking lot.

3-D drawing



Site		Density	
Area	5,000 SF	Dwelling Units/Acre	35
Dimensions	50' x 100'	Coverage	
Dwelling Units		Lot Coverage	3,650 SF
4 X Studio	504 SF	If Using Pervious Pavement	1,508 SF
Total Dwellings	4	Green Space	1,350 SF
Parking			
Access	From Street		
Off-Street Spaces	4		

Plan



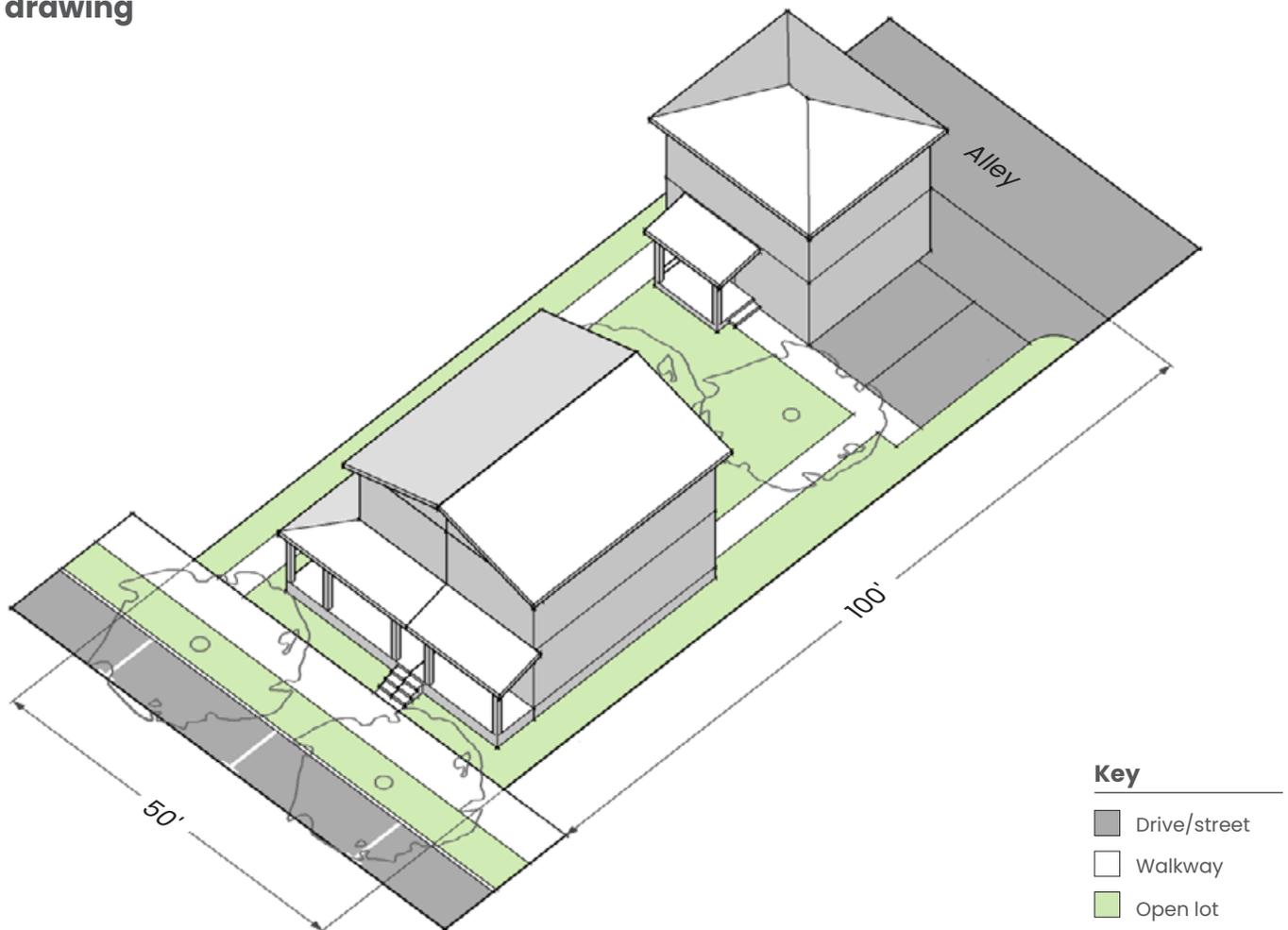
2.3.9 Multi-Unit Residential Concept 9

50' x 100' Mid Block Site with Alley

This concept illustrates another possible Multi-Unit Residential development on a 5,000 square foot mid-block site with alley access. This site contains three units - two in a duplex structure at the front, and one located on top of an alley-loaded garage.

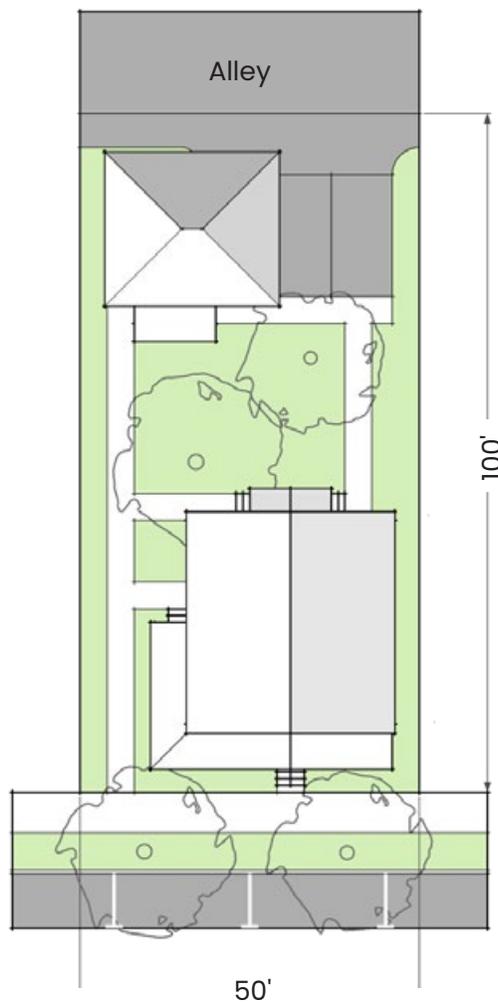
Three off-street parking spaces (two surface, one garage) are located along the alley, and two public spaces are available on the street.

3-D drawing



Site		Density	
Area	5,000 SF	Dwelling Units/Acre	26
Dimensions	50' x 100'		
Dwelling Units		Coverage	
1 X 1 Bedroom	680 SF	Lot Coverage	3,028 SF
2 X 1 Bedroom	840 SF	If Using Pervious Pavement	1,688 SF
Total Dwellings	3	Green Space	1,972 SF
Parking			
Access	From Alley		
Off-Street Spaces	3		

Plan



2.4 Courtyard-Style Development Concepts 42-157, 186, 194

Courtyard-Style Development is a development pattern with individually platted lots surrounding a shared courtyard. It requires property to be platted as lots and reserves, and is not subject to a minimum lot size, width, or density. Buildings are subject to a height limit of 30 feet and a maximum unit size of 1,500 square foot. Lots are subject to a maximum size of 3,500 square feet.

Courtyard-Style Developments are allowed to have a 5-foot building line on local streets. Units located along the street must face the street with an entry feature.

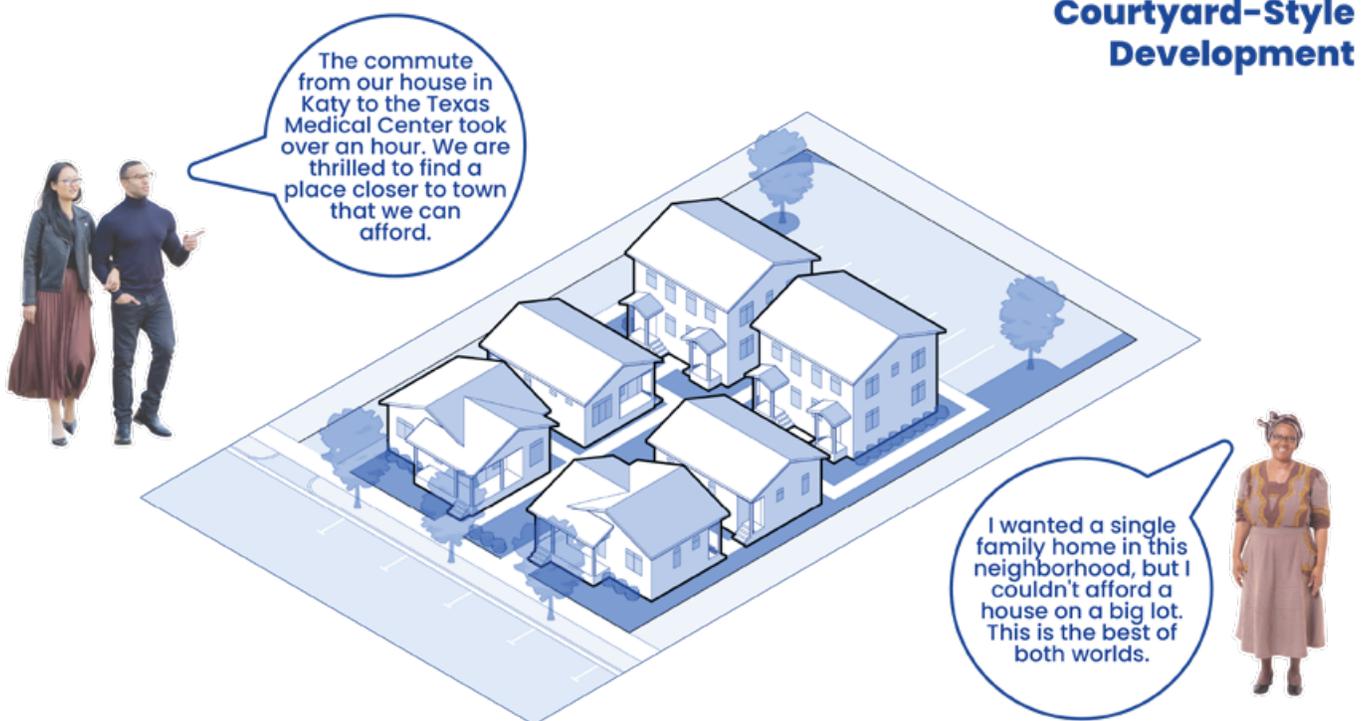
Access must be taken from an alley when available, or otherwise from a courtyard access drive or PAE. A one-way 12 foot driveway is allowed for corner properties. At least 50% of lots must face the courtyard or public street. The main

courtyard must be at least 480 square feet, and the site must contain at least 150 square feet of total courtyard space per lot.

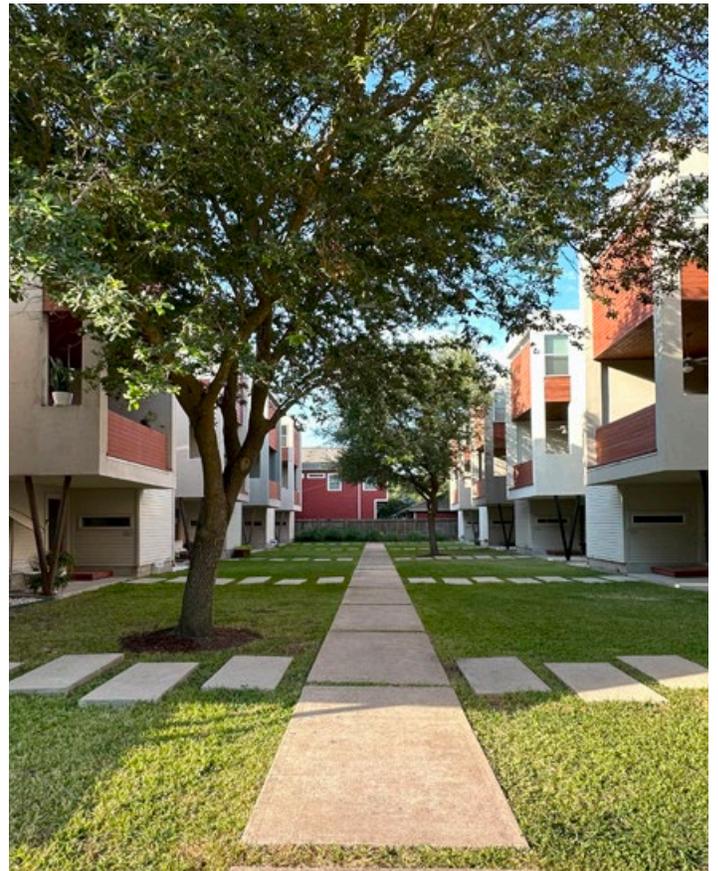
Each unit 1,000 square feet or less requires one parking space, and two spaces are required for units greater than 1,000 square feet. In addition, one guest parking space is required for every six units. If located in a market-based parking area or a Primary TOD Street, courtyard units have no minimum parking requirement. If located on a Secondary TOD Street, the units qualify for a 50% reduction in the parking minimum.

Maps of special parking areas can be found on [Houston Map Viewer](#).

In addition, the Planning Commission may grant variances for reduced parking, building line and maximum height requirements



*Where deed restrictions allow



Examples of existing developments in Houston that resemble Courtyard-Style Developments today. Image credits: City of Houston.

2.4.1 Courtyard-Style Development Concept 1

300' x 150' Full Block Site with Alley

This concept illustrates a potential Courtyard-Style Development. This concept on a 45,000 square foot site occupies an entire block, featuring 24 dwelling units arranged around two courtyards. Units face one of the three boundary streets or the courtyard depending on location.

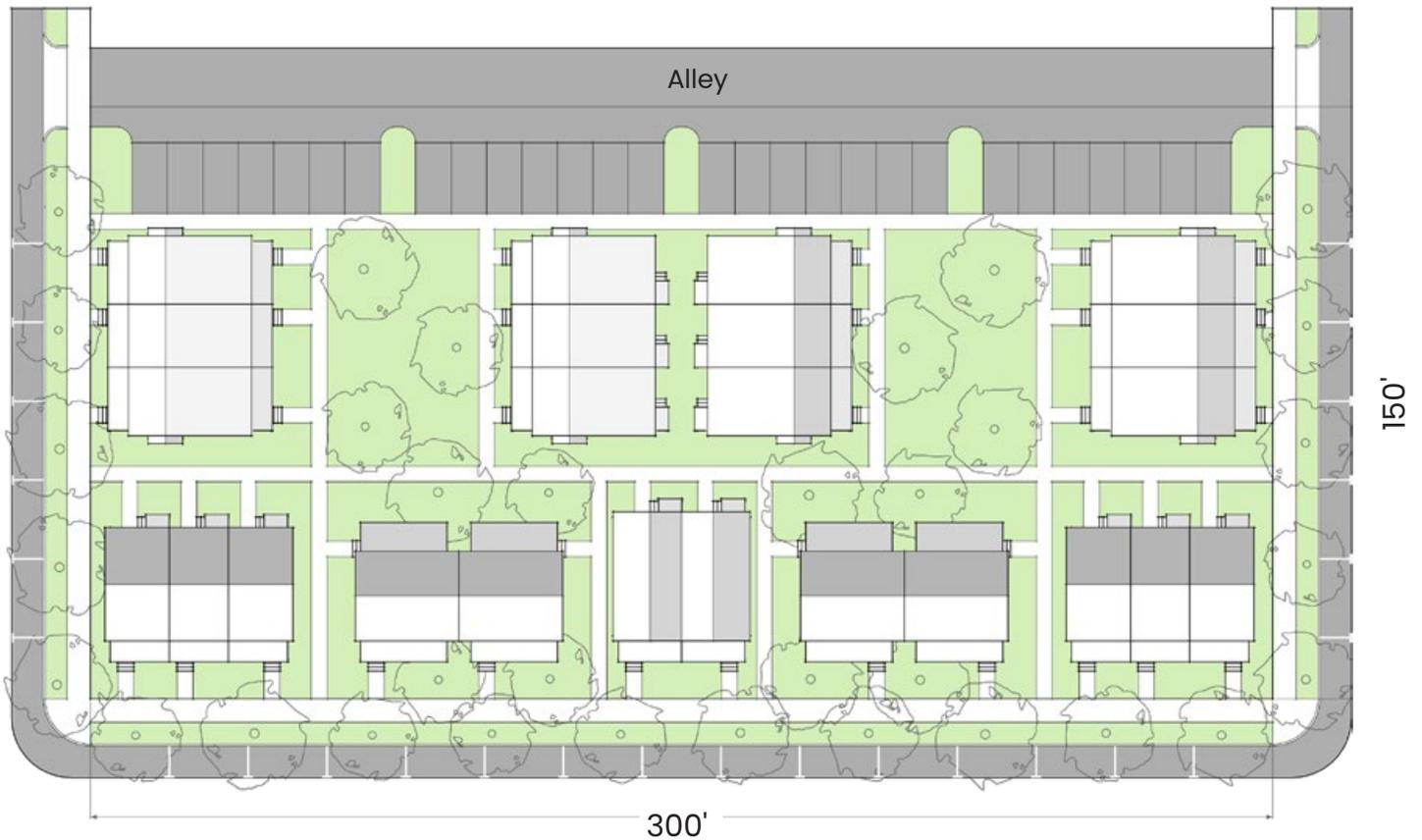
A surface parking lot along the alley contains 28 parking spaces. 23 spaces are located on the public street. Check [Houston Map Viewer](#) for opportunities to reduce parking.

3-D drawing



Site		Density	
Area	45,000 SF	Dwelling Units/Acre	23
Dimensions	300' x 150'	Coverage	
Dwelling Units		Lot Coverage	27,456 SF
6 X 1 Bedroom	780 SF	If Using Pervious Pavement	14,468 SF
2 X 2 Bedroom	912 SF	Green Space	17,544 SF
12 X 2 Bedroom	912 SF	Courtyard Space	9,769 SF
4 X 2 Bedroom	990 SF		
Total Dwellings	24		
Parking			
Access	From Alley		
Off-Street Spaces	28		

Plan



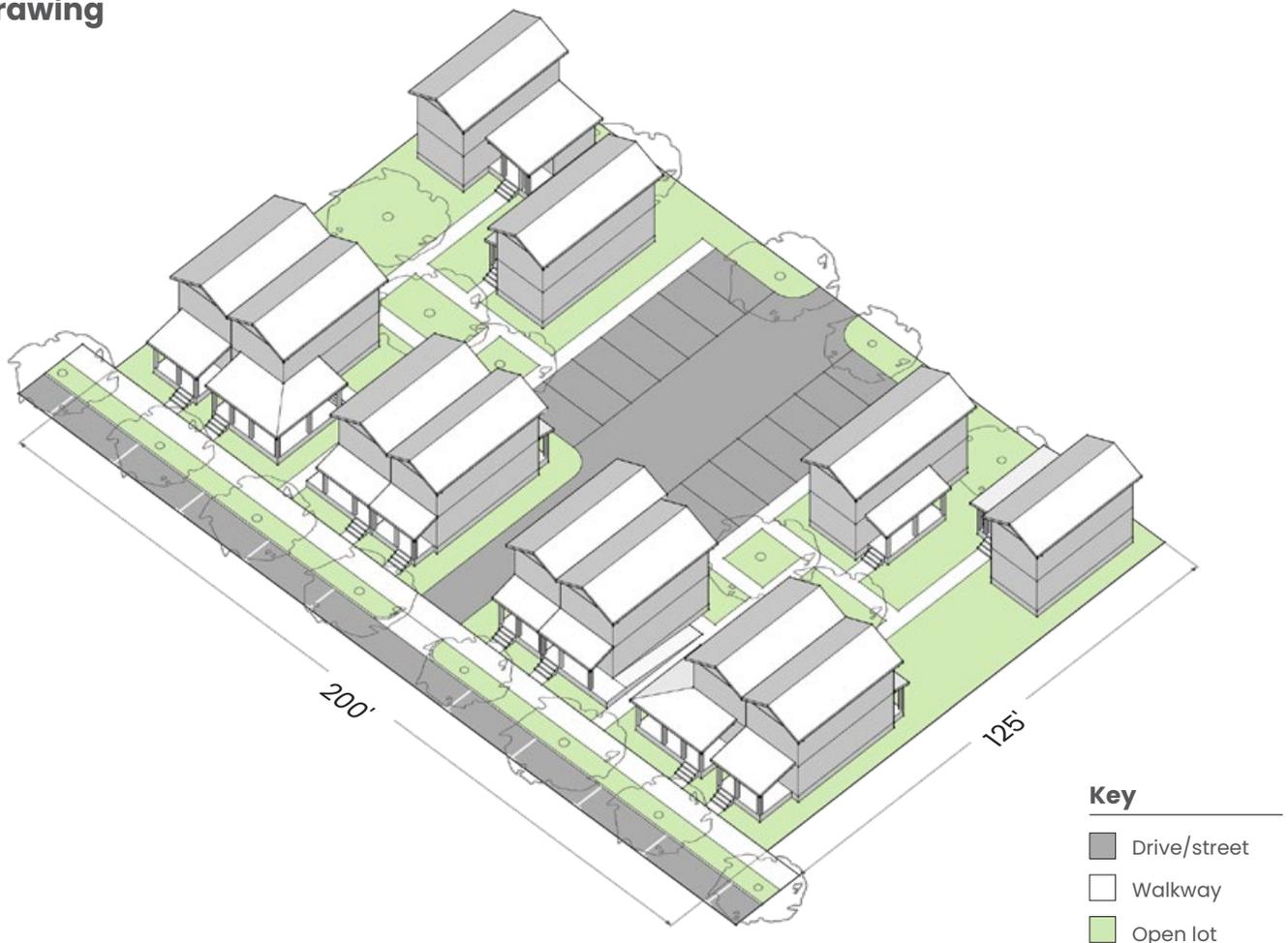
2.4.2 Courtyard-Style Development Concept 2

200' x 125' Mid Block Site without Alley

This concept shows a potential Courtyard-Style Development on a 25,000 square foot site without alley access. Twelve dwelling units are clustered around two modest courtyards, with a central parking lot.

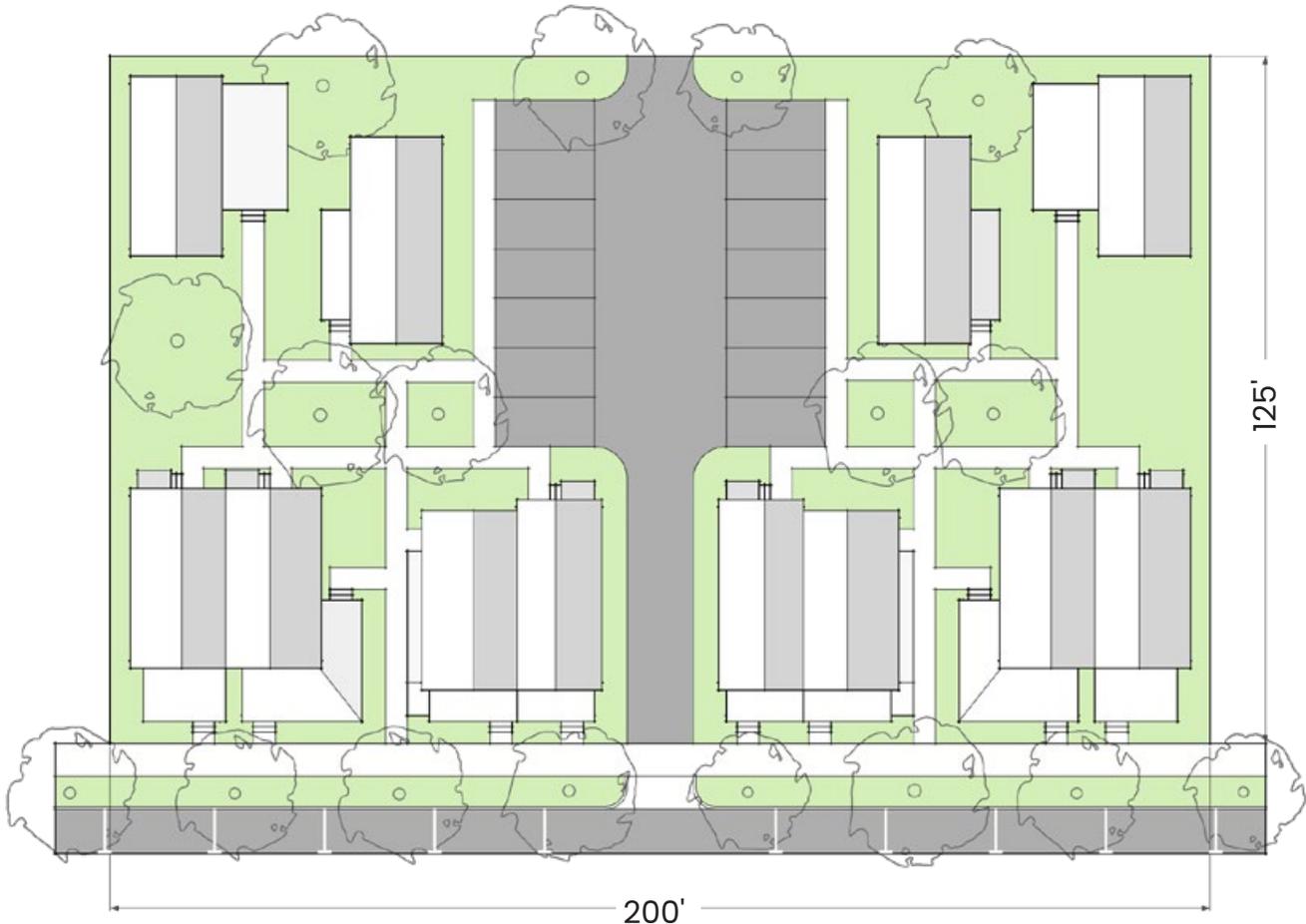
Off-street parking includes 14 spaces in a shared surface parking lot accessed by a single driveway, while eight public spaces are available on the street.

3-D drawing



Site		Density	
Area	25,000 SF	Dwelling Units/Acre	21
Dimensions	200' x 125'	Coverage	
Dwelling Units		Lot Coverage	15,135 SF
2 X 2 Bedroom	960 SF	If Using Pervious Pavement	7,820 SF
2 X 2 Bedroom	965 SF	Green Space	9,864 SF
4 X 2 Bedroom	975 SF	Courtyard Space	7,008 SF
2 X 2 Bedroom	995 SF		
2 X 2 Bedroom	998 SF		
Total Dwellings	12		
Parking			
Access	From Street		
Off-Street Spaces	14		

Plan



2.4.3 Courtyard-Style Development Concept 3

180' x 120' Mid Block Site without Alley

This concept demonstrates the Courtyard-Style Development model applied to a 21,600 square foot site without alley access. This site includes 10 dwelling units arranged around one large courtyard space.

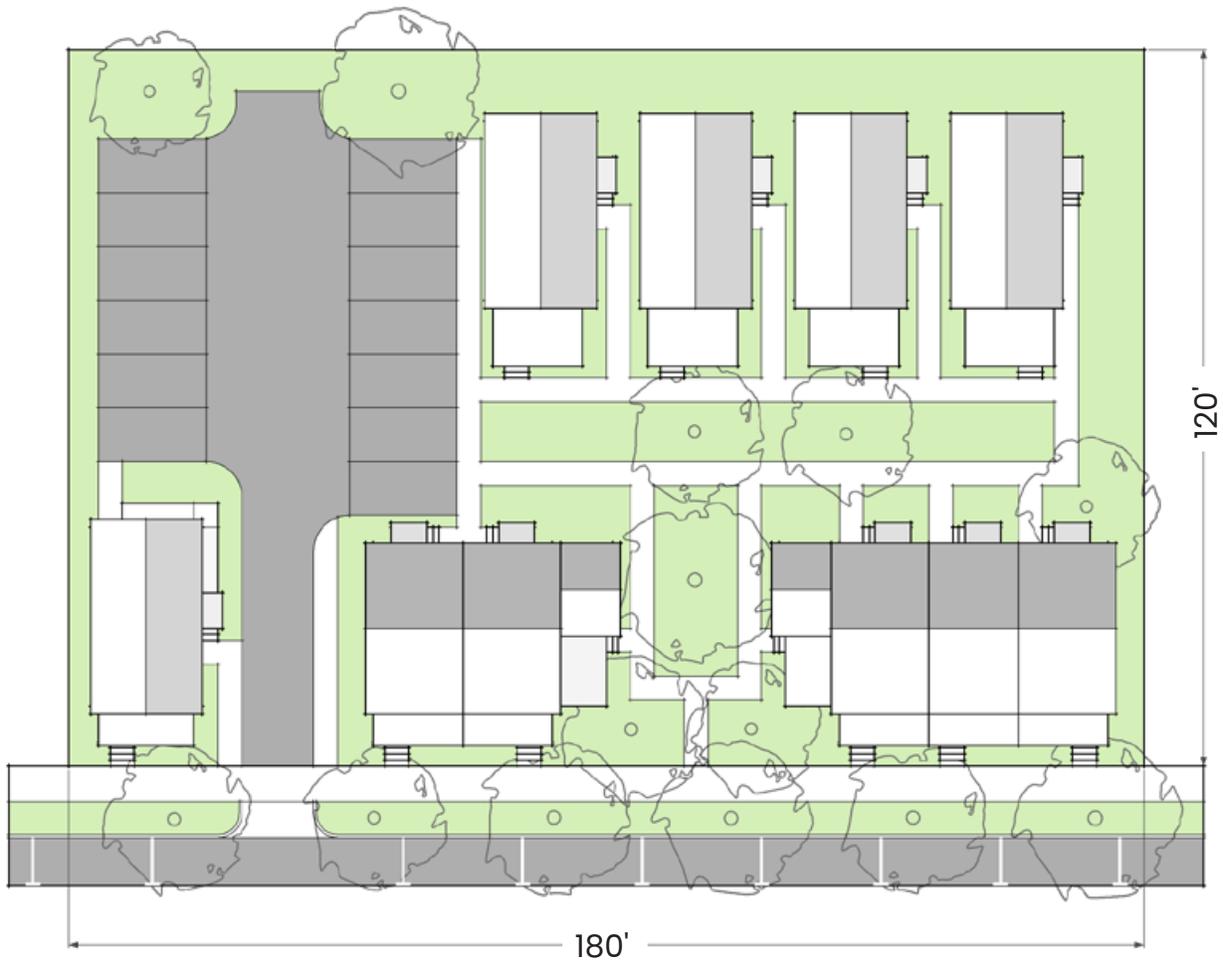
There are 13 off-street parking spaces located in a shared surface parking lot at one end of the site, and there are seven public spaces available on-street.

3-D drawing



Site		Density	
Area	21,600 SF	Dwelling Units/Acre	20
Dimensions	180' x 120'	Coverage	
Dwelling Units		Lot Coverage	13,091 SF
3 X 1 Bedroom	780 SF	If Using Pervious Pavement	6,104 SF
5 X 2 Bedroom	960 SF	Green Space	8,509 SF
2 X 3 Bedroom	1300 SF	Courtyard Space	5,838 SF
Total Dwellings	10	Parking	
Access	From Street	Off-Street Spaces	
Off-Street Spaces	13		

Plan



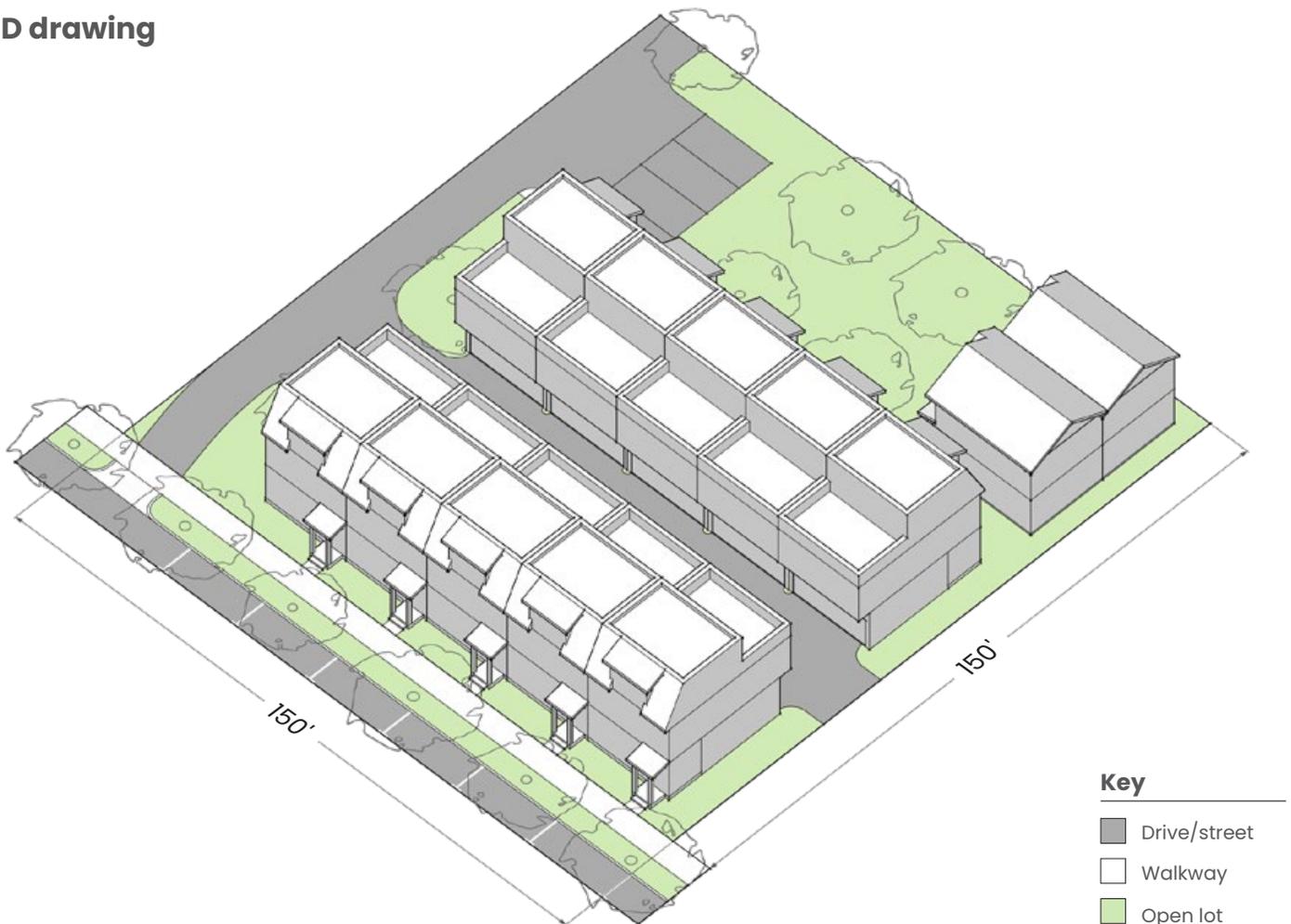
2.4.4 Courtyard-Style Development Concept 4

150' x 150' Mid Block Site with Courtyard Access Driveway

This concept shows a Courtyard-Style Development on a 22,500 square foot site, utilizing a shared drive arrangement with neighboring sites. Twelve units are arranged in a townhouse configuration, with five units facing the street and seven facing a courtyard at the rear.

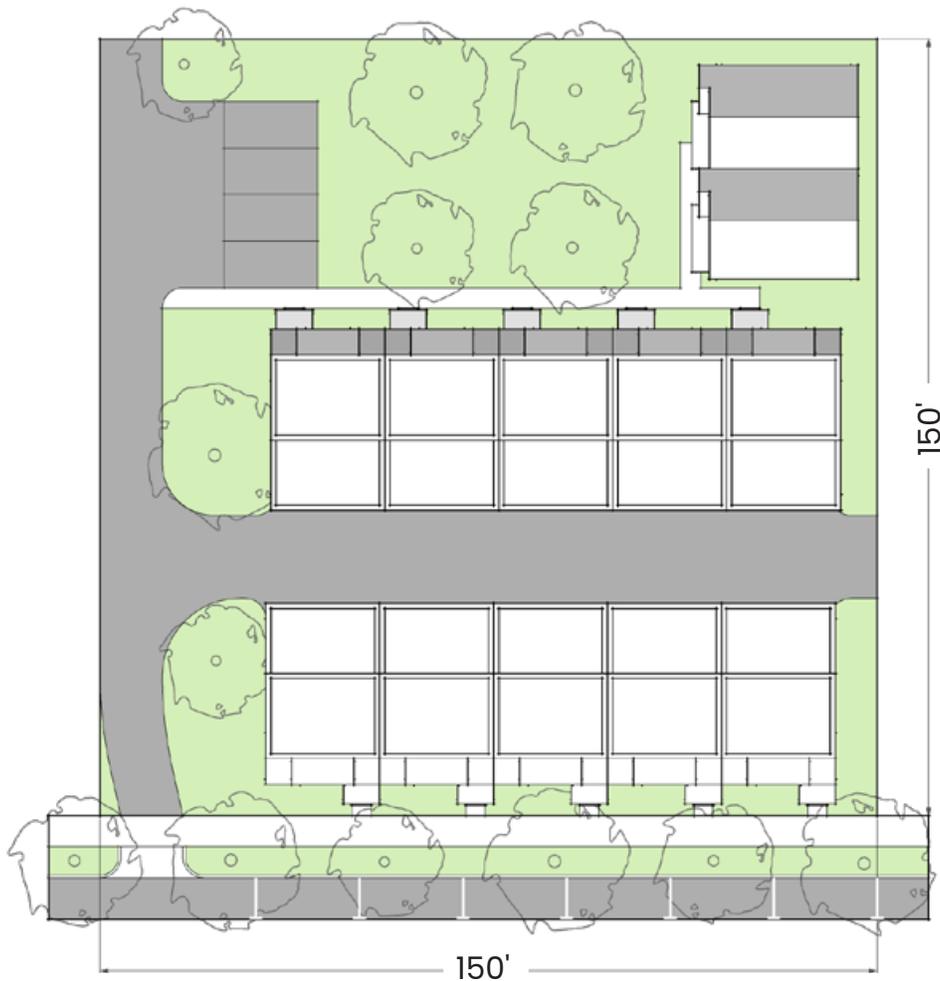
This concept includes 24 off-street parking spaces in garages and a surface parking lot, and six public spaces available on the street.

3-D drawing



Site		Density	
Area	22,500 SF	Dwelling Units/Acre	23
Dimensions	150' X 150'	Coverage	
Dwelling Units		Lot Coverage	14,720 SF
2 X 1 Bedroom	998 SF	If Using Pervious Pavement	8,151 SF
10 X 3 Bedroom	1,500 SF	Green Space	7,780 SF
Total Dwellings	12	Courtyard Space	4,275 SF
Parking			
Access	From Street		
Off-Street Spaces	24		

Plan



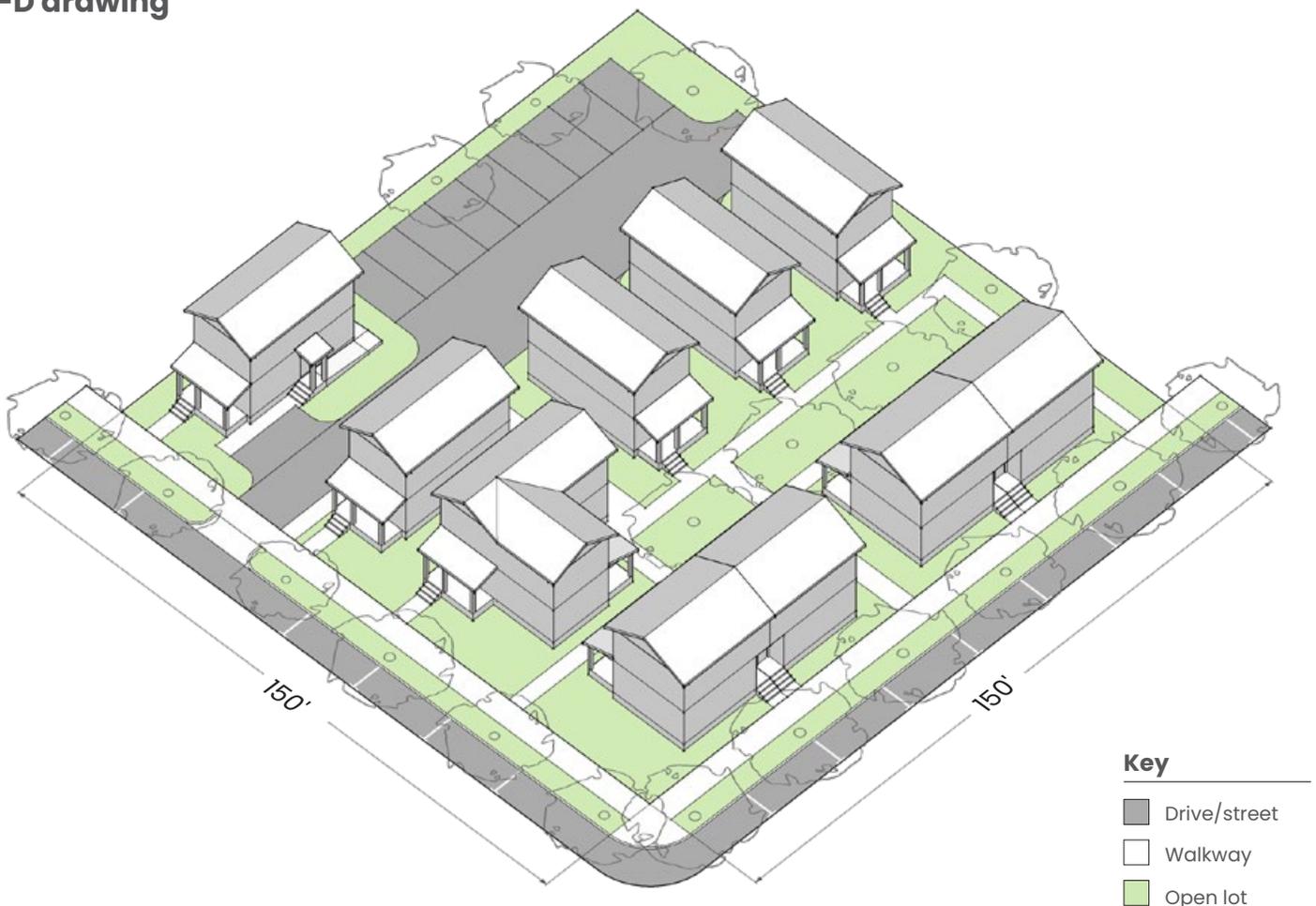
2.4.5 Courtyard-Style Development Concept 5

150' x 150' Corner Site without Alley

This concept demonstrates the Courtyard-Style Development potential of a 22,500 square foot site without alley access. Ten dwelling units are arranged around a central courtyard, with units facing the boundary streets or courtyard.

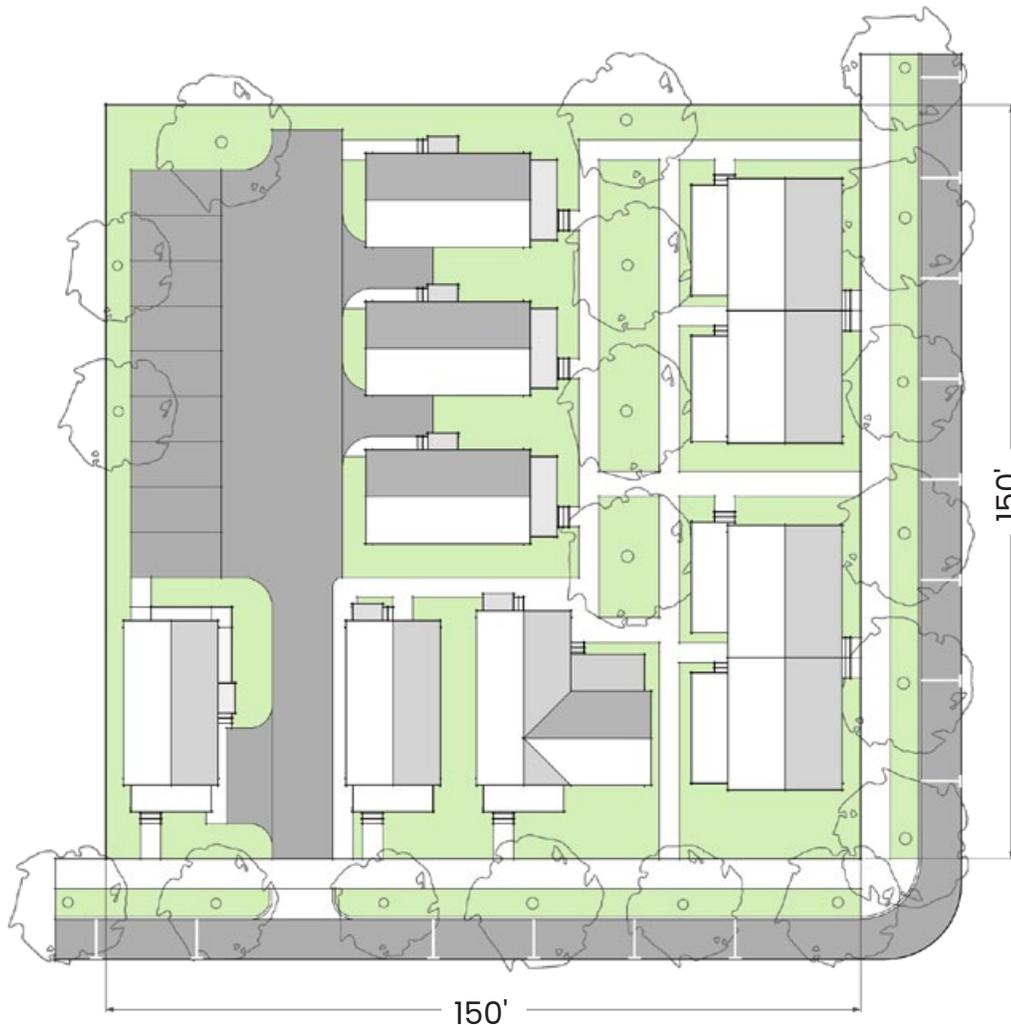
There are 12 parking spaces located off-street in a shared parking lot, and 11 public spaces available on the street.

3-D drawing



Site		Density	
Area	22,500 SF	Dwelling Units/Acre	19
Dimensions	150' X 150'	Coverage	
Dwelling Units		Lot Coverage	14,102 SF
5 X 2 Bedroom	960 SF	If Using Pervious Pavement	6,628 SF
4 X 2 Bedroom	968 SF	Green Space	8,398 SF
1 X 3 Bedroom	1,500 SF	Courtyard Space	4,760 SF
Total Dwellings	10	Parking	
Access	From Street	Off-Street Spaces	
		12	

Plan



2.4.6 Courtyard-Style Development Concept 6

150' x 100' Mid Block Site with Courtyard Access Driveway

This concept shows a Courtyard-Style Development on a 15,000 square foot site without alley access. Nine dwelling units (four under 1,000 square foot, five over 1,000 square foot) are arranged in a townhouse format, with the four inner-lot units facing a small courtyard, and the others facing the street.

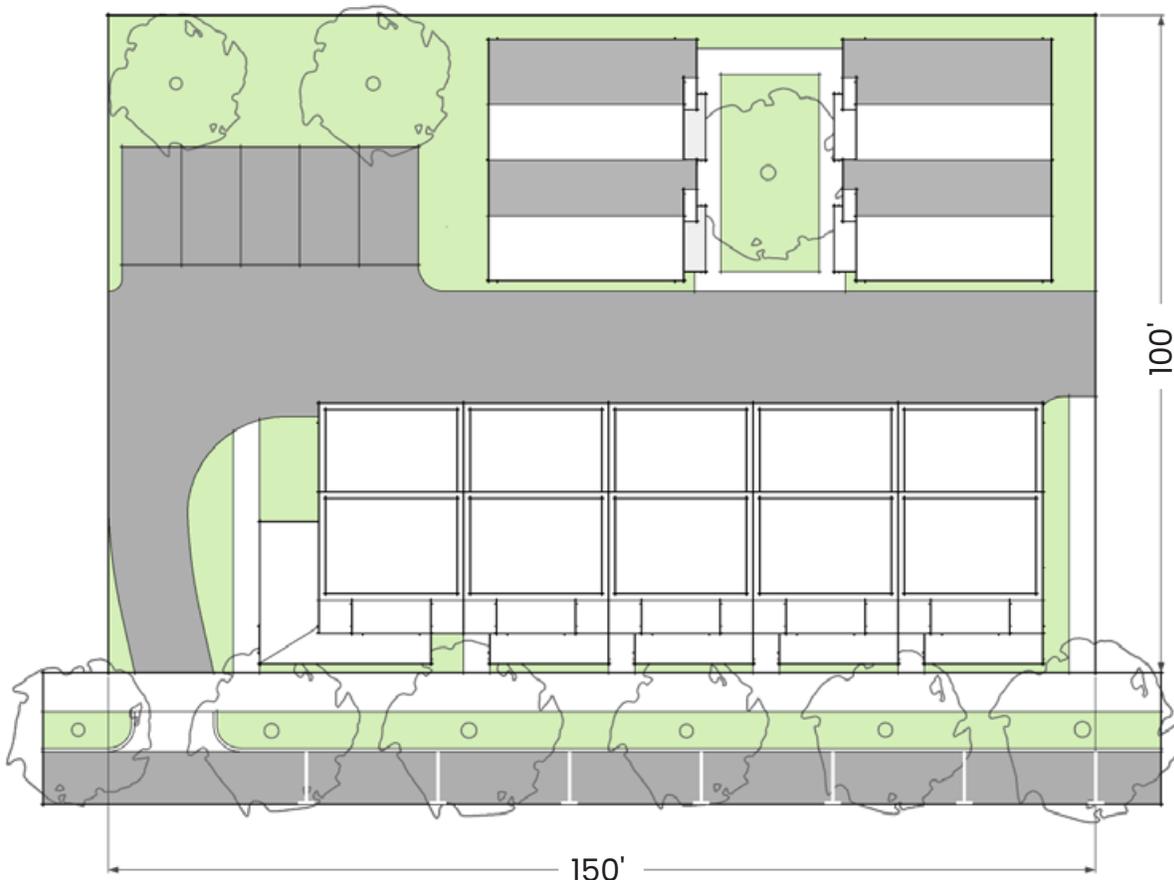
Off-street parking includes 15 spaces, provided through a combination of garages and a small shared lot, and there are six public spaces available on-street.

3-D drawing



Site		Density	
Area	15,000 SF	Dwelling Units/Acre	26
Dimensions	150' X 100'	Coverage	
Dwelling Units		Lot Coverage	11,364 SF
4 X 2 Bedroom	995 SF	If Using Pervious Pavement	5,954 SF
5 X 3 Bedroom	1,500 SF	Green Space	3,639 SF
Total Dwellings	9	Courtyard Space	1,046 SF
Parking			
Access	From Street		
Off-Street Spaces	15		

Plan



2.4.7 Courtyard-Style Development Concept 7

150' x 100' Corner Site with Alley

This concept demonstrates a Courtyard-Style Development model on a 15,000 square foot corner site with alley access. Eight units are arranged around a large central courtyard, with entries facing boundary streets or the shared space.

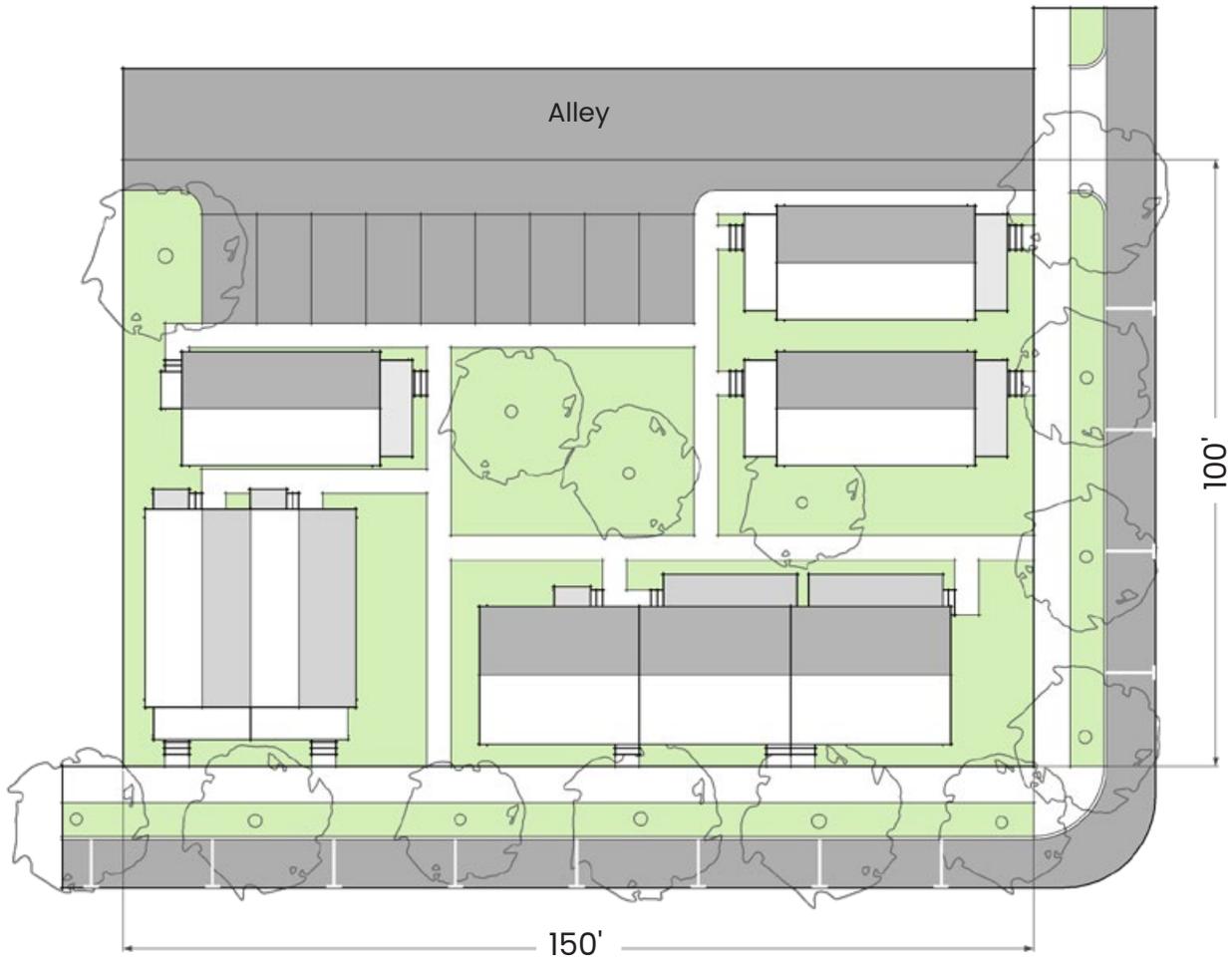
Parking is provided through an alley-adjacent surface parking lot with nine spaces, and 10 public spaces are available on-street.

3-D drawing



Site		Density	
Area	15,000 SF	Dwelling Units/Acre	23
Dimensions	150' X 100'	Coverage	
Dwelling Units		Lot Coverage	9,323 SF
5 X 2 Bedroom	960 SF	If Using Pervious Pavement	4,804 SF
3 X 2 Bedroom	968 SF	Green Space	5,677 SF
Total Dwellings	8	Courtyard Space	3,368 SF
Parking			
Access	From Alley		
Off-Street Spaces	9		

Plan



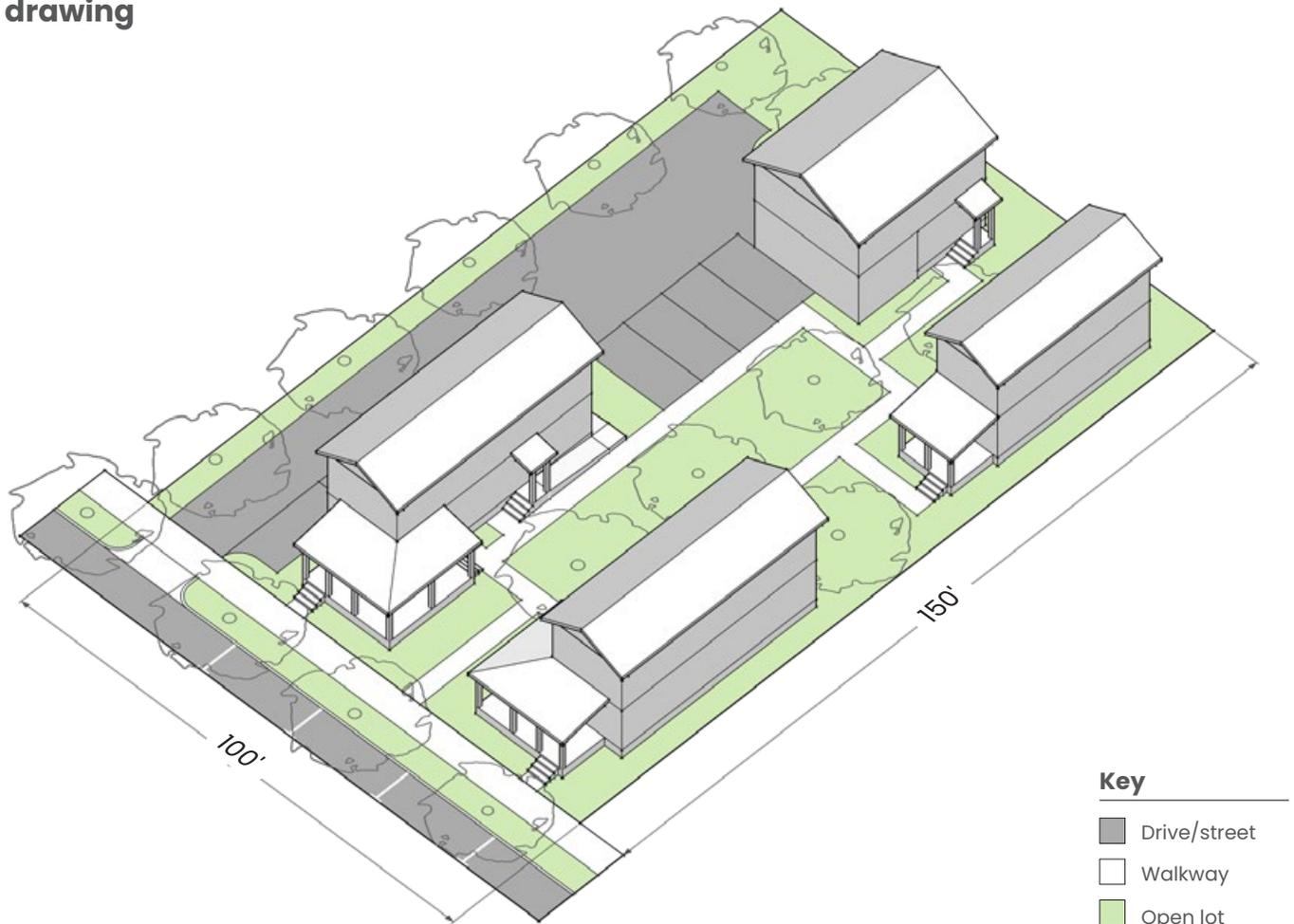
2.4.8 Courtyard-Style Development Concept 8

100' x 150' Mid Block Site without Alley

This concept provides one example of a smaller Courtyard-Style Development model. This site contains four units (all over 1,000 square feet) arranged around a central courtyard on a 15,000 square foot site without alley access.

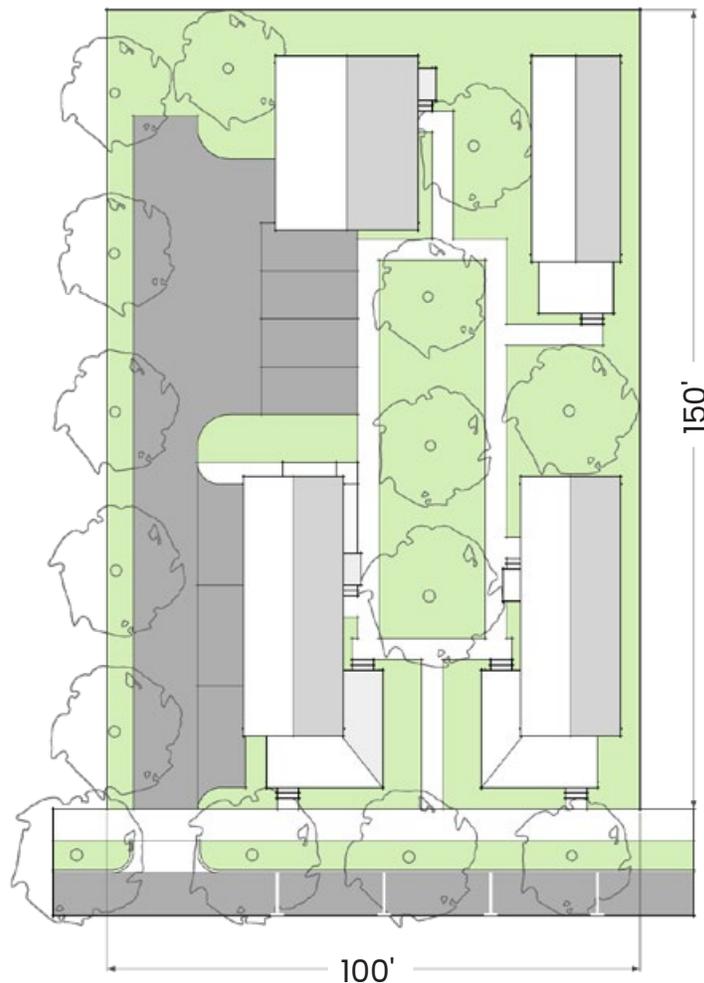
Off-street parking is provided in a shared surface parking lot with a single driveway, holding seven spaces plus a single-car garage. Another three public parking spaces are available on-street.

3-D drawing



Site		Density	
Area	15,000 SF	Dwelling Units/Acre	12
Dimensions	100' X 150'	Coverage	
Dwelling Units		Lot Coverage	8,324 SF
1 X 2 Bedroom	1,008 SF	If Using Pervious Pavement	3,536 SF
1 X 2 Bedroom	1,104 SF	Green Space	6,676 SF
2 X 3 Bedroom	1,472 SF	Courtyard Space	3,635 SF
Total Dwellings	4		
Parking			
Access	From Street		
Off-Street Spaces	8		

Plan



2.4.9 Courtyard-Style Development Concept 9

100' x 150' Corner Site without Alley

This concept applies the Courtyard-Style Development model to a 15,000 square foot corner site without alley access. Eight townhouse units are clustered around a T-shaped courtyard, with units at the outer edges of the site facing the street.

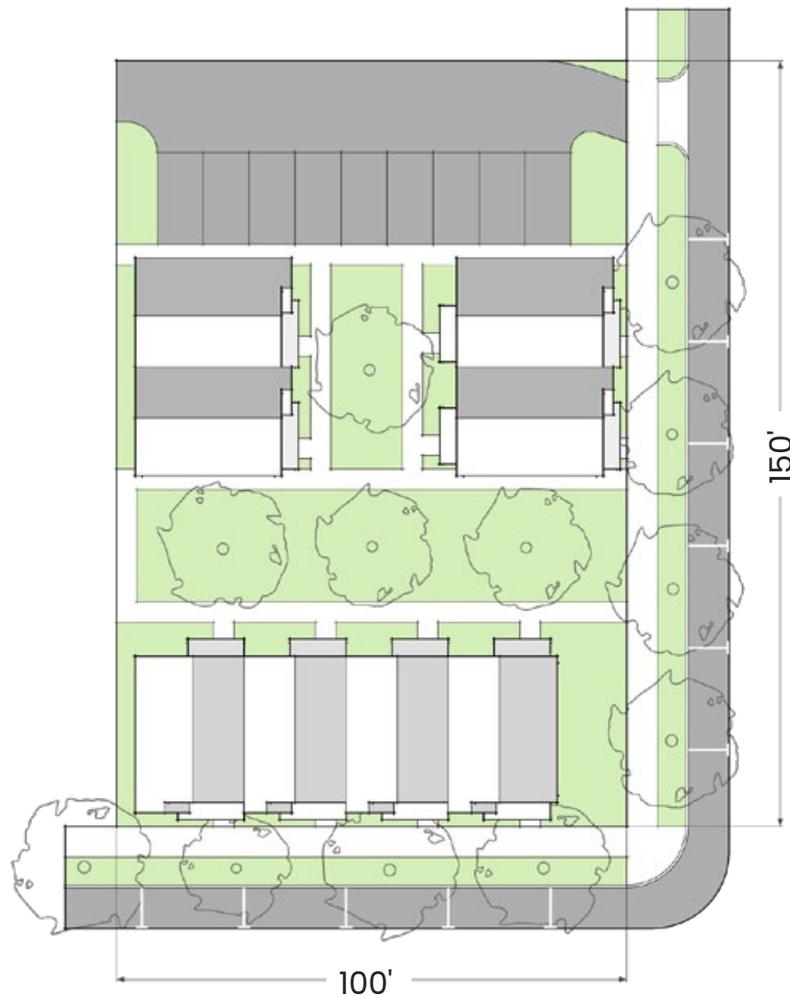
One courtyard access driveway at the rear of the site provides access to nine off-street parking spaces, while nine public spaces are available on the street.

3-D drawing



Site		Density	
Area	15,000 SF	Dwelling Units/Acre	23
Dimensions	100' X 150'	Coverage	
Dwelling Units		Lot Coverage	9,708 SF
8 X 2 Bedroom	998 SF	If Using Pervious Pavement	4,744 SF
Total Dwellings	8	Green Space	5,292 SF
Parking		Courtyard Space	5,340 SF
Access	From Street		
Off-Street Spaces	9		

Plan



2.4.10 Courtyard-Style Development Concept 10

100' x 100' Mid Block Site without Alley

This concept also illustrates a Courtyard-Style development on a 10,000 square foot site without alley access. Here, five units are arranged in a townhouse configuration around a central courtyard, with the front units facing the street.

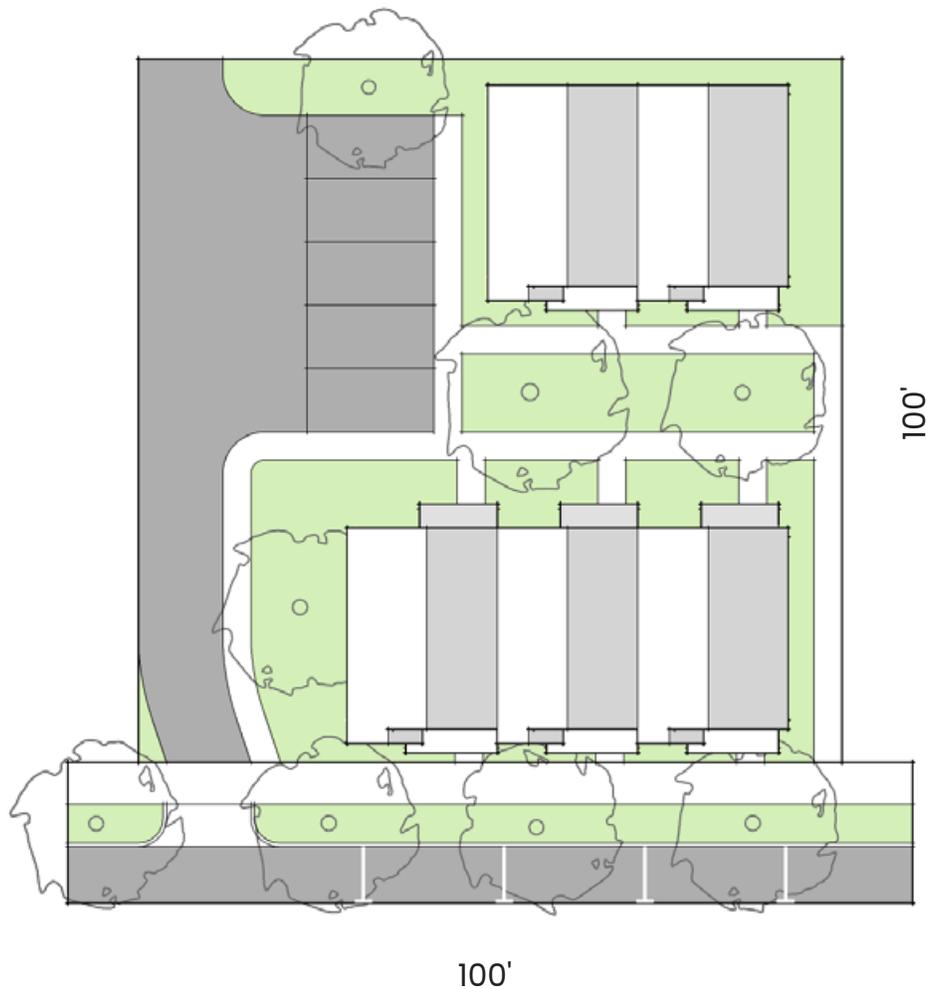
A shared surface parking lot provides five off-street parking spaces, and there are three public spaces available on the street.

3-D drawing



Site		Density	
Area	10,000 SF	Dwelling Units/Acre	22
Dimensions	100' X 100'	Coverage	
Dwelling Units		Lot Coverage	6,763 SF
5 X 2 Bedroom	998 SF	If Using Pervious Pavement	2,914 SF
Total Dwellings	5	Green Space	3,237 SF
Parking		Courtyard Space	2,030 SF
Access	From Street		
Off-Street Spaces	5		

Plan



2.4.11 Courtyard-Style Development Concept 11

100' x 100' Corner Site without Alley

This concept shows a 10,000 square foot corner site without alley access using the Courtyard-Style Development model. Here, five units are arranged in a townhouse configuration around a central courtyard. Four of the units face the shared space and a public street.

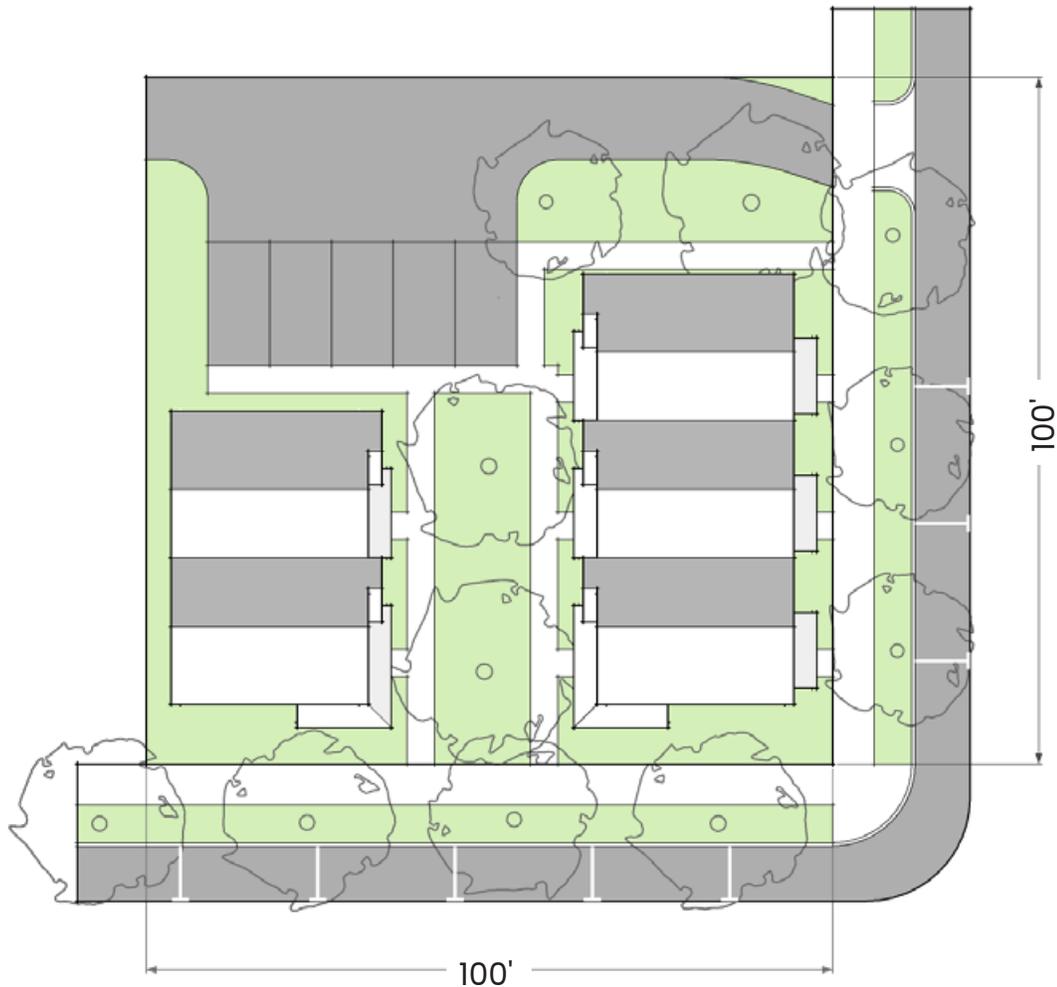
A surface parking lot at the rear of the site provides five off-street parking spaces, and six public spaces are available on-street.

3-D drawing



Site		Density	
Area	10,000 SF	Dwelling Units/Acre	22
Dimensions	100' X 100'	Coverage	
Dwelling Units		Lot Coverage	6,600 SF
5 X 2 Bedroom	998 SF	If Using Pervious Pavement	3,042 SF
Total Dwellings	5	Green Space	3,400 SF
Parking		Courtyard Space	1,856 SF
Access	From Street		
Off-Street Spaces	5		

Plan





3

Glossary, Index, and Acknowledgements

3.1 Glossary

Alley: a public or private right-of-way that is not used primarily for through traffic and that provides vehicular access to rear or side entrances to buildings or properties.

Alley-Loaded: a development site where vehicular access is taken from an alley.

Block: one or more lots, tracts or parcels of land bounded by streets, easements, rights-of-way or other physical features or a combination thereof (Houston Code of Ordinances, §42-1).

Building Line: also known as a setback. The line shown on a subdivision plat or development plat establishing the building line requirement. An area is within the building line if it lies between the building line and the property line adjacent to a street or private street and is behind the building line if it lies to the interior of the property from the building line (Houston Code of Ordinances, §42-1).

Collector Street: a public street that is not a major thoroughfare or a local street, but that distributes traffic between major thoroughfares and other streets (Houston Code of Ordinances, §42-1).

Corner Site: a building site which has two or more site boundary lines abutting a street.

Courtyard: a space, open and unobstructed to the sky, located at or above grade level on a lot or parcel and bounded on two or more sides by walls of a building (Houston Code of Ordinances, §42-1).

Courtyard Access Drive: a private drive that provides driveway access to lots and parking from the street or alley within Courtyard style development meeting the requirements of §42-194.

Courtyard-Style Development: a tract of land divided into lots, reserves, courtyard and access drives that allow for a unified development. All common and shared areas within the site must be bound by a common maintenance agreement among lot owners (Houston Code of Ordinances, §42-194).

Curb: a stone or concrete edging to a street or path.

Deed Restriction: conditions on the deed to a property or filed separately setting out certain limits or acceptable uses.

Density: the number of developed units in a specific area of land. Density is calculated as the number of dwelling units per acre.

Detached Dwelling Unit: a one-family dwelling unit that is not attached to any other dwelling by any physical means.

Development Pattern: the way buildings and human activities are arranged and organized on the landscape, as well as the underlying rules and practices that govern that arrangement.

Double Fronting Site: a site that has no rear property line and includes street frontage on its front and rear sides.

Duplex: House divided into two dwellings, with a separate entrance for each.

Dwelling Unit: a structure, or a portion of a structure, that has independent living facilities including provisions for nontransient sleeping, cooking and sanitation (**Houston Code of Ordinances, §42-1**).

Entry Feature: a special design feature applied to each pedestrian entrance that provides access from the public realm to the interior of the building (Houston Code of Ordinances, §42-165).

'Eyes on the Street': a concept coined by the urbanist, Jane Jacobs, theorizing that when more people are in the street or can easily observe street activities from buildings, streets and neighborhoods become safer due to informal surveillance.

Flag Lot: a lot whose frontage on and access to the street right-of-way is provided by a narrow driveway, access easement or other parcel of land referred to as the "flag staff" where more than one lot abutting the flag staff use it for shared vehicular access (Houston Code of Ordinances, §42-1).

Flag Staff: the narrow driveway or access easement portion of a flag lot.

Forward-Facing Entry Feature: also referred to as a Street-Facing Entry Feature or Front Entrance. The primary pedestrian doorway located on the ground floor of a building facade along a street. A garage door is not considered a front entrance.

Fourplex: a house divided into four units.

Front-Loaded: buildings with garages that face the front street and take vehicular access from the front street.

Height Limit: maximum buildable height.

Local Street: a type 1 permanent access easement and a public street that is not a major thoroughfare or collector street (Houston Code of Ordinances, §42-1).

Lot: (1) In the context of a subdivision plat, an undivided tract of land intended for single-family residential use contained within a block and designated on a subdivision plat by numerical identification; (2) in the context of a development plat, a parcel intended as an undivided unit for the purpose of development; or (3) in the context of the provisions of this chapter pertaining to special minimum building line blocks, special minimum lot size blocks, and special minimum lot size areas, contiguous land under common ownership, as shown on the most current appraisal district records, that is used or developed for any use, regardless of whether the land consists of a platted lot or a portion of a platted lot or a combination thereof (Houston Code of Ordinances, §42-1).

Lot Depth: the horizontal distance between the front and rear lot lines.

Lot Size: the square footage of a lot.

Lot Width: the horizontal distance between the side lot lines.

Mid Block Site: a building site which has no more than one property line abutting a street.

Minimum Lot Size: the smallest allowable portion of a parcel determined to be usable for the proposed construction of facilities, according to applicable development standards.

Multi-Unit Residential (MUR): one or more buildings on a single parcel designed for and containing 3 to 8 dwelling units that meets the MUR performance standards. Multi-Unit Residential includes houses, duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, apartments and condominiums (Houston Code of Ordinances, §42-237).

Narrow-Lot: a lot that has less than 44 feet of frontage on a public street or Type 1 PAE (Houston Code of Ordinances, §42-1).

Off-Street Parking: vehicle parking that is provided in a location other than in a public right-of-way (Houston Code of Ordinances, §26-2).

On-Street Parking: vehicle parking that is provided in a public right-of-way.

Open Space: also referred to as green space. Land within a development that is not covered by buildings, covered walkways, parking spaces, private streets or driveways.

Parking Requirement: the required number of parking spaces that shall be provided on-site by a use classification listed in §26-492.

Pedestrian Access: a means for a pedestrian to approach or enter a place.

Permanent Access Easement (PAE): a privately maintained and owned street easement approved by the commission that provides for vehicular access to three or more single-family residential units (Houston Code of Ordinances, §42-1).

Pervious: also referred to as permeable. A surface that allows water to pass through it and penetrate into the ground (Houston Code of Ordinances, §42-1).

Plan: a set of drawings or two-dimensional diagrams used to describe a place or object, or to communicate building or fabrication instructions.

Property Line: a legal boundary that defines where a parcel begins and ends usually described in deeds and surveys.

Public Street: a public right-of-way, however designated, dedicated or acquired, that provides access to adjacent property (Houston Code of Ordinances, §42-1).

Reserve: a parcel of land that is not a lot, but is created within a subdivision plat for other than single-family residential use and is established to accommodate some purpose for which a division into lots is not suitable or appropriate (Houston Code of Ordinances, §42-1).

Second Dwelling Unit: also referred to as an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) or garage apartment. Self-contained apartments, cottages, or small residential units, that are located on a property that has a separate main, single-family residential home, duplex, or other residential unit.

Shared Driveway: a private roadway that is not an extension of any street or private roadway and provides access to two or more single-family residential lots through appropriate cross-access easements (Houston Code of Ordinances, §42-1).

Shared Parking: the use of the same off-street parking space or spaces to satisfy the off-street parking requirements for two or more individual use classifications (Houston Code of Ordinances, §26-472).

Single-Family Residential: the use of a lot with one building designed for and containing not more than two separate units with facilities for living, sleeping, cooking and eating therein. A lot upon which is located a free-standing building containing one dwelling unit and a detached second dwelling unit of not more than 1,500 square feet also shall be considered single-family residential. A building that contains one dwelling unit on one lot that is connected by a party wall to another building containing one dwelling unit on an adjacent lot shall be single-family residential (Houston Code of Ordinances, §42-1).

Streetscape: the natural and built elements of a street that affect the way people perceive and interact with their neighborhood and the built environment around them.

Surface Parking Lot: vehicle parking which is not enclosed or created by a structure and is allocated an area 'at grade' on ground level.

Townhouse: also referred to as a rowhouse or townhome. A multi-floor home that shares a party wall with an adjacent structure but includes its own entrances.

Triplex: a house divided into three units.

Unrestricted Lot: where the intended use of a parcel has not been determined on a subdivision plat.

Vehicular Access: a means for a vehicle to approach or enter a place.

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3.3 Resources

ADU|HOU Program

The ADU|HOU Program was developed to encourage construction of secondary dwelling units (ADU). It provides resources for anyone considering constructing an ADU. It helps people visualize what a secondary unit could look like, provides a how-to guide and gives them a head start on constructing their own by providing a ready-made set of construction documents.

ADU|HOU Design Book: The design book contains 26 schematic designs developed by Houston area architects who participated in the ADU|HOU Design Competition. The book is available on-line for free. Hard copies may be purchased.

Informational workshops: Videos of three workshops are available to watch anytime. The topics cover 1) the benefits of ADUs, 2) steps to building one, and 3) the costs and financing of an ADU.

Free building plans: Double-House was the winning design in the ADU|HOU Design Competition. The complete construction drawings have preliminary approval of the Houston Public Works Department. Anyone may download the Double-House plans for free.

For more information visit:

<https://www.letstalkhouston.org/adu>

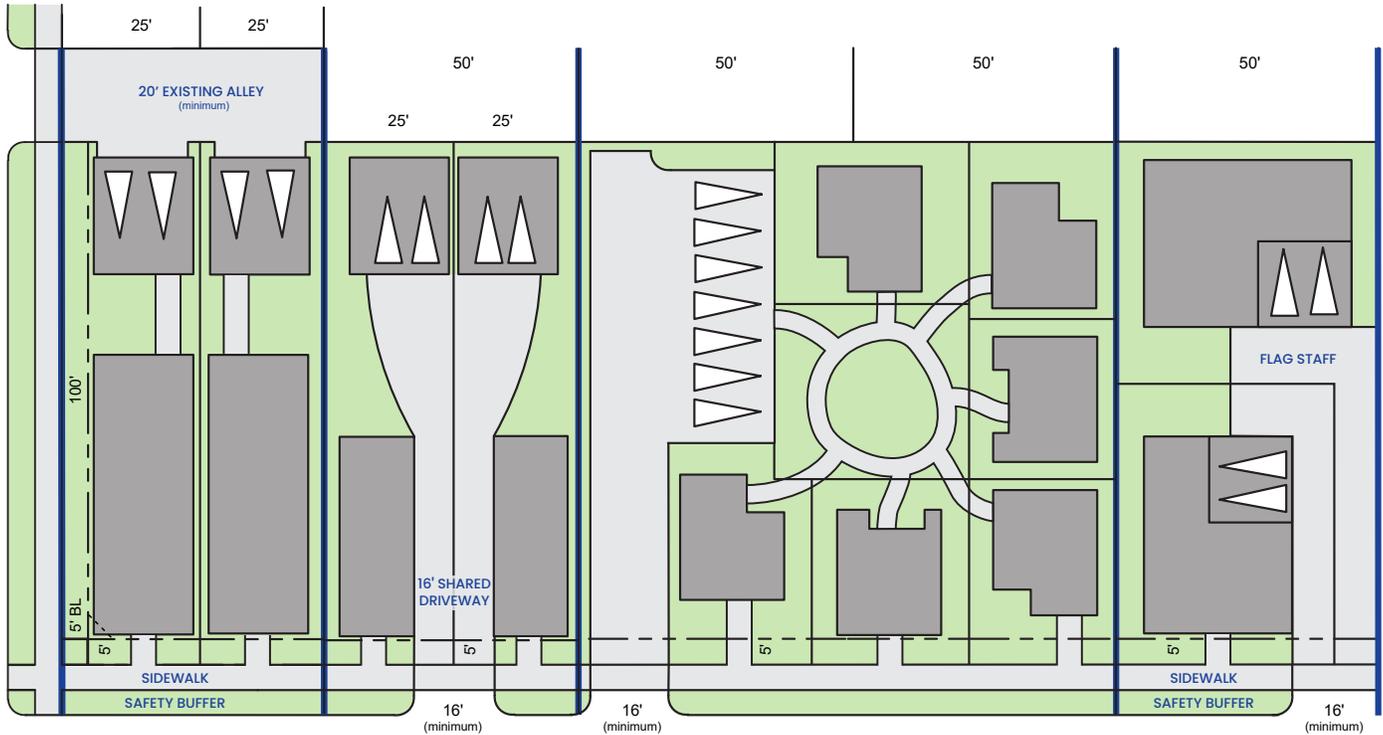
Transit Oriented Development Standards

Transit Oriented Development Standards promote transit ridership by making it easier for people to access transit reducing the need for cars. Livable Places housing types may take advantage of reduced parking incentives if located on Primary or Secondary Transit Oriented Development Streets. More information is available at <https://houstontx.gov/planning/tod-standards.html>

Houston Map Viewer

The Houston Map Viewer, found at <https://mycity.maps.arcgis.com/>, is an online geographic data tool produced by the City of Houston as a public service. Users can navigate through data layers that illustrate everything from administrative boundaries to city services. Layers under the Planning and Development tab relevant to Livable Places include transit corridor streets, market-based parking, restricted lot driveway access, school primary entrance and Complete Communities.

3.4 Small-Lot Development Examples



Alley Access (25' Lot)

Increased Incentives:

- Increased density from 27 to 35 units per acre
- Improved ability to build an ADU
- No visibility triangle above 10', resulting in more buildable area (corner lots)
- Allowance of a 65% lot coverage exemption from detention requirements
- Reduced side building line to 5' for corner lots
- No detention required for public alley when proposing alley access
- Reduced parking for units 1,500 sq. ft. or smaller
- Entry feature can be within the building line

Additional requirements:

- Enhanced front door and windows to provide better visibility onto street

Shared Drive (25' Lot)

Increased Incentives:

- Increased density from 27 to 35 units per acre
- Improved ability to build an ADU
- 65% lot coverage exemption from detention requirements
- Driveway included in lot coverage calculation and no additional detention if less than 65%
- Reduced parking for units 1,500 sq. ft. or smaller

Additional requirements:

- Enhanced front door and windows to provide better visibility onto street

Courtyard Development

New Opportunities:

- Street frontage not required for lots fronting on a shared courtyard
- No minimum lot size or maximum density with at least 150 sq. ft. of green space per lot
- 65% lot coverage exemption from detention requirements on tracts 15,000 sq. ft. or less. 9,750 sq. ft. lot coverage exemption on tracts between 15,001 sq. ft. and 1 acre.**
- No detention required for public alley when proposing alley access**
- Detention calculated for the tract as a whole and not per individual lots**
- Parking may be removed from individual lots but located within the development
- Reduced parking for units 1,000 sq. ft. or smaller
- One guest parking space for every 6 units

Requirements:

- Maximum site depth from street is 150'
- Maximum 30' tall
- Parking on the side or rear but not in the front
- Maximum lot size of 3,500 sq. ft. and a maximum unit size of 1,800 sq. ft.
- Enhanced front door and windows to provide better visibility onto street and courtyard

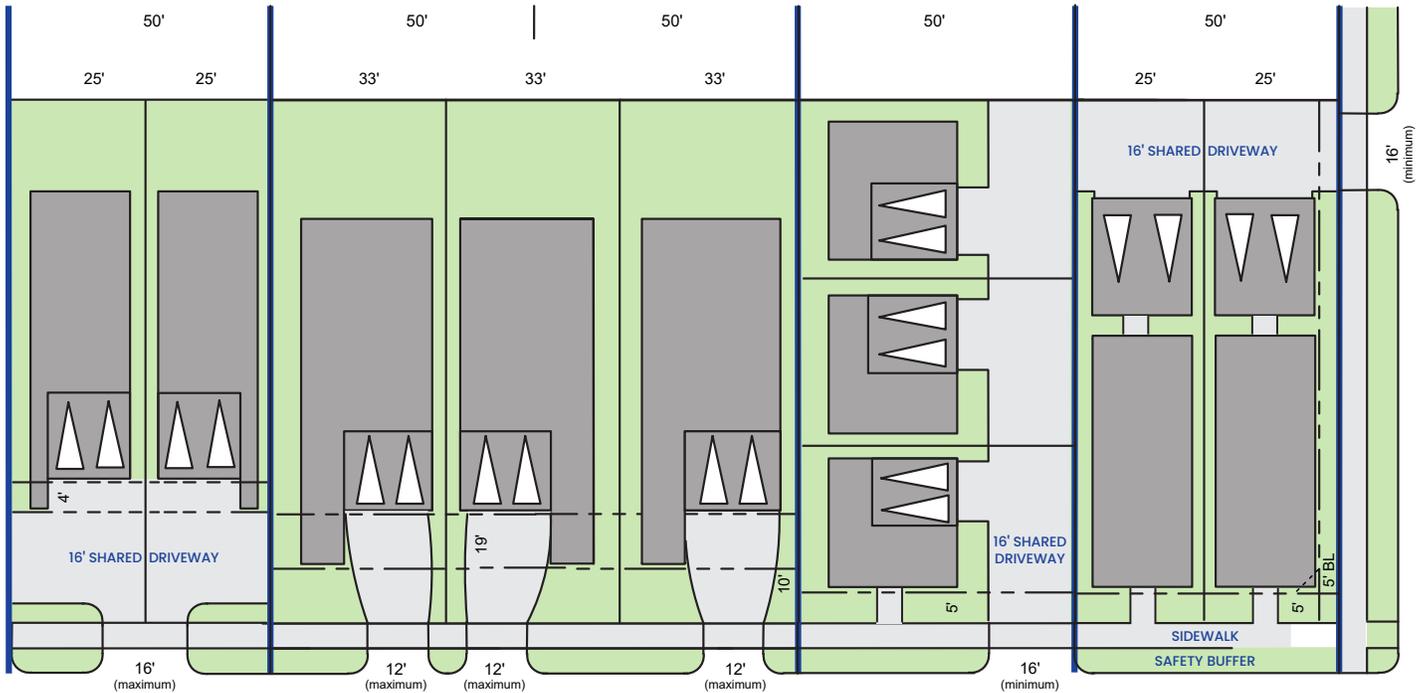
Flag Lots

Increased Incentives:

- Increased density from 27 to 35 units per acre
- Improved ability to build an ADU
- No visibility triangle above 10', resulting in more buildable area (on corner lots)
- Reduced building line of 5'
- Reduced flag staff width
- Flag staff is included in the lot coverage calculation no separate detention is required if under 65%
- Reduced parking for units 1,500 sq. ft. or smaller

Additional requirements:

- Enhanced front door and windows to provide better visibility onto street
- All newly created lots abutting the staff take access from the staff



Shared Drive (25' Lot)

Increased Incentives:

- Increased density from 27 to 35 units per acre
- Improved ability to build an ADU
- 65% lot coverage exemption from detention requirements
- Driveway included in lot coverage calculation and no additional detention if less than 65%
- Reduced parking for units 1,500 sq. ft. or smaller

Additional requirements:

- Balconies or windows to provide better visibility onto street

Front Load Individual Driveway (33' Lot)

Increased Incentives:

- Increased density from 27 to 35 units per acre
- Improved ability to build an ADU
- 65% lot coverage exemption from detention requirements
- Driveway included in lot coverage calculation and no additional detention if less than 65%
- Reduced parking for units 1,500 sq. ft. or smaller

Additional requirements:

- A maximum of 12' individual driveway per lot
- Enhanced front door and windows to provide better visibility onto street

Shared Drive (50' Lot)

Increased Incentives:

- Increased density from 27 to 35 units per acre
- Improved ability to build an ADU
- No visibility triangle above 10', resulting in more buildable area (corner lots)
- 65% lot coverage exemption from detention requirements

- Driveway included in lot coverage calculation and no additional detention if less than 65%

Additional requirements:

- Reduced parking for units 1,500 sq. ft. or smaller
- Enhanced front door and windows to provide better visibility onto street

Rear Shared Driveway (25' Lots w/ corner access)

Increased incentives:

- Increased density from 27 to 35 units per acre
- No visibility triangle above 10', resulting in more buildable area (corner lots)
- Improved ability to build an ADU
- Allowance of a 65% lot coverage exemption from detention requirements

Additional requirements:

- Enhanced front door and windows to provide better visibility onto street
- Shared vehicular access from side street unless it is a major thoroughfare

3.5 Acknowledgments

Livable Places Steering Committee

Lisa Clark, Planning Commission, Committee
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Administration and Regulatory Affairs
Solid Waste Management
Houston Fire Department

Department of Neighborhoods
Houston Parks and Recreation Department
Houston Police Department
Housing and Community Development
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