"We are a welcoming, active and business-friendly rural foothill community built on California's rich gold rush history."

Planning Commission Staff Report

Meeting Date: November 17, 2026
Prepared By: Carole Kendrick, Director of Development Services

PROJECT INFORMATION SUMMARY

Case File: Zoning Ordinance Amendment (ZOA) 26-08 – Side Yard Setbacks

Request: Consideration of a request to amend the Placerville Municipal Code via Zoning Ordinance Amendment (ZOA) 26-08, proposing an amendment to Title 10, Chapter 5, Sections 10-5-7 and 10-5-8 of the City of Placerville Municipal Code to reduce and standardize the minimum interior side yard setbacks to 5 feet and corner lot side yard setbacks to 10 feet within the Single-Family Residential (R1-6) and Single-Family Residential (R1-10) zoning districts, replacing existing restrictive percentage-of-width formulas; and a determination that the amendment is exempt from environmental review pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3).

Summary Recommendation:

Recommend that the City Council determine the project is exempt from CEQA under Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3) "Common Sense Exemption" and adopt the ordinance to amend Title 10, Chapter 5, Sections 10-5-7 and 10-5-8 to establish a uniform 5-foot interior side yard setback and 10-foot corner lot side yard setback within the Single-Family Residential (R1-6) and Single-Family Residential (R1-10) zoning districts while maintaining strict adherence to local site planning and building safety standards.

PURPOSE

Zoning Ordinance Amendment (ZOA) 26-08 was initiated to resolve long-standing regulatory burdens imposed by the City's existing lot-width formula requirements for low-to-medium-density single-family parcels. Under the current framework, standard residential developments within the R1-6 and R1-10 zones face restrictive, sliding-scale setbacks that create an unnecessary regulatory challenge for residents attempting to maximize basic, low-impact structural uses on their private property.

This amendment will provide meaningful relief for property owners trying to utilize their property who may face physical obstacles due to constrained lot sizes, steep topography, and other site-specific issues that otherwise prevent the full and reasonable utilization of their land. By

standardizing the requirement, the amendment establishes a clean, predictable spatial model that removes unnecessary barriers to home additions, renovations, and detached residential accessory options.

DISCUSSION

The core objective of ZOA 26-08 is to balance orderly property owner flexibility with necessary municipal land-use design standards. Currently, the City's Zoning Ordinance subjects single-family properties to an unpredictable sliding scale based on parcel dimensions:

- **R1-6 Zone:** Side yard setbacks are ten percent (10%) of parcel width or ten feet (10').
- **R1-10 Zone:** Side yard setbacks are ten percent (10%) of parcel width or ten feet (10'), whichever is less.

This blanket formula frequently penalizes homeowners with irregular, narrow, or historically subdivided parcels where the buildable footprint is severely restricted by natural terrain or archaic boundary lines. For instance, a citizen attempting to construct a routine single-story home addition is often forced to choose between a costly, uncertain variance process or abandoning the utilization of their land entirely.

Regional Jurisdiction Comparative Analysis

An evaluation of ten regional jurisdictions demonstrates that Placerville's variable percentage-of-width rule is a clear regulatory outlier. Neighboring jurisdictions across the region overwhelmingly utilize a flat 5-foot interior side yard setback as the baseline standard for single-family residential zones of comparable lot sizes, as shown in the table below.

Jurisdiction	Comparable Zoning District(s)	Minimum / Standard Lot Size	Interior Side Yard Setback	Street / Corner Side Setback & Exceptions
City of Placerville (Current)	R1-6 & R1-10	6,000 sq. ft. / 10,000 sq. ft.	10% of width or 10 ft	*Proposed update to uniform 5 ft interior*
Auburn	R-1 (Single-Family Residential)	Max 5,000 sq. ft.	5 ft (1-story) / 7.5 ft (2-story)	12.5 ft street side setback.
Citrus Heights	RD-1 to RD-4 RD-5 (Single-Family)	8,500 sq. ft. – 1 acre 5,000 – 6,000 sq. ft.	5 ft	15 ft corner setback (RD-1–RD-4); 12.5 ft corner setback (RD-5).

Jurisdiction	Comparable Zoning District(s)	Minimum / Standard Lot Size	Interior Side Yard Setback	Street / Corner Side Setback & Exceptions
El Dorado County	R1 (Single-Family) R20k (Single-Family)	6,000 sq. ft. 20,000 sq. ft.	5 ft (R1) 10 ft (R20k)	Subject to Fire Safe setbacks and building height limits.
Folsom	R-1-M (Small Lot) R-1-ML (Medium Lot) R-1-L (Large Lot)	6,000–7,500 sq. ft. 10,000 sq. ft. 14,500 sq. ft.	5 ft on one side / 11 ft on other (owner's choice)	Corner street side: min 20% of lot width (between 11 ft and 16 ft).
Galt	R1C (Max Density) R1B (Intermediate) R1A (Low Density)	6,500 sq. ft. 8,000 sq. ft. 10,000 sq. ft.	5 ft across all zones	Standard 5 ft minimum across single-family densities.
Lincoln	R-1 (Single-Family Residential)	6,000 sq. ft.	5 ft	Applies uniformly to both interior and corner lots.
Nevada County	R1 (Single-Family)	Up to 4 du/acre	30 ft (parcels ≥3 acres or <3 acres)	10 ft from ROW (≥50' wide) or 35 ft from C/L (<50' wide). Exceptions allow reductions under 3 acres.
Rocklin	R1-5 / R1-6 R1-7.5 R1-10	5,000 / 6,000 sq. ft. 7,500 sq. ft. 10,000 sq. ft.	5 ft (R1-5 & R1-6) 7.5 ft (R1-7.5) 10 ft (R1-10)	Corner street side: 10 ft (R1-5 to R1-7.5); 15 ft (R1-10).
South Lake Tahoe	LDR (Low-Density Residential)	6,000 sq. ft.	5 ft (parcels <80 ft wide) 10 ft (parcels >80 ft wide)	15 ft minimum street side setback.
Sutter County	R-1 (Single-Family)	6,000 sq. ft.	5 ft	10 ft street side (20 ft for garages facing street); 15 ft for public/religious buildings.

Proposed Code Text Modifications

To modernize the code and resolve these development inequities, staff proposes striking the percentage-based constraints and establishing uniform minimum spatial distances. To implement this policy, staff proposes text modifications to Title 10, Chapter 5 of the Placerville Municipal Code as follows (deletions shown in strikethrough and additions in **bold underline**):

> **Section 10-5-7(D)5.** Minimum yards: Front, twenty feet (20'); sides, ~~ten percent (10%) of parcel width or ten feet (10'), whichever is less~~ **five feet (5') for interior side yards and ten feet (10') for a side yard on a corner lot**; rear, twenty feet (20').
>
> **Section 10-5-8(D)5.** Minimum yards: Front, twenty feet (20'); sides, t~~en percent (10%) of parcel width or ten feet (10'), whichever is less~~ **five feet (5') for interior side yards and ten feet (10') for a side yard on a corner lot**; rear, twenty feet (20').

By shifting the regulatory threshold from arbitrary variable percentage widths to objective, unified 5-foot interior and 10-foot corner spatial distances, the City can provide meaningful relief to topographically constrained properties while safely aligning with standard regional land-use policies.

GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY

Zoning Ordinance Amendment (ZOA) 26-08 directly aligns with the goals, objectives, and policies of multiple elements within the City of Placerville General Plan:

- **Land Use Element (Goal C):** To ensure a well-balanced distribution of land uses that optimizes property utility while maintaining neighborhood aesthetics. The amendment provides flexibility for parcels constrained by steep Sierra foothill topography and historical lot configurations, allowing citizens the full and reasonable use of their land without seeking expensive, burdensome variances for minor, low-impact structural extensions.
- **Land Use Element (Administrative Efficiency Policies):** This amendment implements city directives to streamline code administration and building permit routing processes. By removing complex lot-width calculations for standard single-family additions, staff eliminates redundant layout calculations, focusing city resources on higher-impact structural planning.
- **Health and Safety Element (Goal G):** To protect the community from hazards while ensuring safe structural configurations. While the amendment offers spatial zoning relief, it maintains a strict regulatory backstop by requiring full compliance with California Building Code (CBC) fire separation distances and local fire district safety clearances, ensuring safety margins between adjacent single-family residences are firmly maintained.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The amendment is exempt under State CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3) (Common Sense Exemption) because standardizing interior side yard setbacks within existing residential zones, while preserving strict emergency setbacks and easement protections, ensures there is no potential for a significant physical impact on the environment.

RECOMMENDED PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION

Hold a public meeting; and,

The Planning Commission may take one of the following actions based on the analysis provided:

1. Find that Zoning Ordinance Amendment (ZOA) 26-08 is exempt from environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3), because it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the adoption of these administrative residential zoning modifications will have a significant effect on the environment, and direct staff to file a Notice of Exemption (NOE) following City Council adoption.

2. Forward a recommendation of approval to the City Council to amend Title 10, Chapter 5, Sections 10-5-7 and 10-5-8 of the City of Placerville Municipal Code to reduce and standardize the minimum interior side yard setbacks to 5 feet and corner lot side yard setbacks to 10 feet within the Single-Family Residential (R1-6) and Single-Family Residential (R1-10) zoning districts.

3. Forward a Resolution recommending approval with modifications to the City Council.

4. Forward a Resolution recommending denial to the City Council.

If adopted, the Zoning Code amendments to Title 10, Chapter 5, Section 7 (10-5-7) and Section 8 (10-5-8) of the Placerville Municipal Code become effective 30 days post-adoption by City Council per Government Code §36937. This aligns with state mandates and there are no General Plan conflicts.

ATTACHMENTS

A. Draft Ordinance
B. Draft Planning Commission Resolution 26-18
C. Proof of Publication

INCORPORATED BY REFERENCE

City of Placerville General Plan
City of Placerville Zoning Ordinance
Contents of City of Placerville Planning Department Project File for Zoning Ordinance Amendment ZOA 26-08