

# SLOT HOME STRATEGY OVERVIEW

In recent years, “slot homes” have been constructed in many neighborhoods throughout Denver, resulting in a new development pattern that can detract from the design quality and sense of community in Denver’s neighborhoods.

This document summarizes a recommended strategy to address identified problems with slot home development. It is part of a Slot Home Evaluation & Text Amendment project that has included research, analysis and public outreach to identify the problem, explore alternatives and identify tools to promote improved design outcomes in all Denver Zoning Code districts where slot homes occur. A Slot Home Task Force composed of community stakeholders is guiding the project to ensure an inclusive public process and outcomes that are:

**Effective.** Proposed solutions should promote the established vision for the neighborhood and directly address one or more elements of the problem statement summarized on [page 2](#).

**Equitable.** Proposed solutions should incorporate feedback from a wide range of stakeholders, including residents, builders and design professionals.

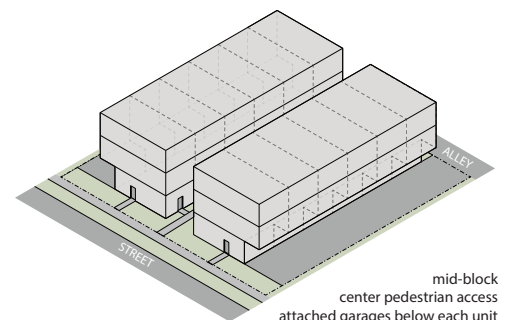
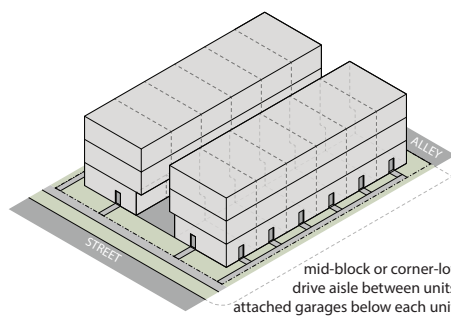
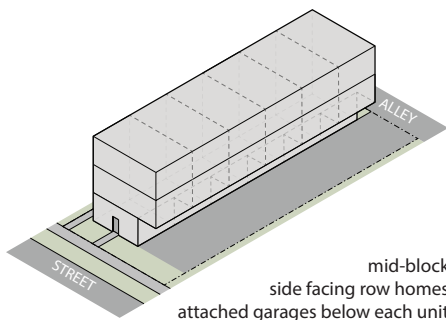
**Flexible.** Proposed solutions should promote creative designs and allow property owners and builders to adapt to changing market conditions.

**Predictable.** Proposed solutions should result in predictable, clear, outcomes for all stakeholders.

The project will culminate in proposed text amendments to the Denver Zoning Code in early 2018. See [Schedule and Next Steps](#) for more information.

## WHAT IS A SLOT HOME?

A “slot home”, or “sideways-facing town home” is a multi-unit residential structure consisting of attached dwelling units arranged side-by-side and primarily perpendicular to the street. They can be developed in a wide range of zone districts across the city. Neighborhoods where slot homes most commonly occur are West Colfax, Jefferson Park, Highland, Five Points, Sunnyside, Berkeley and Cherry Creek. Three typical slot home configurations are illustrated below.



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*This document provides a general overview of recommendations described in the Slot Home Strategy Report.*

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### SLOT HOME STRATEGY REPORT

*The full Slot Home Strategy Report provides complete documentation of the Slot Home Evaluation and Text Amendment Project. For a link to the complete Strategy Report and more information about the project, go to: [www.denver.gov.org/slothomes](http://www.denver.gov.org/slothomes)*

# PROBLEM STATEMENT

City staff, the Slot Home Task force and general public contributed to development of the following Problem Identification Statement. The recommended strategy summarized on the following pages provides solutions to address the problem statement in a variety of contexts.

***The problem is new slot home construction does not promote neighborhood objectives\* in five key respects:***

- 1. Public Realm Engagement.** *Many slot homes do not engage the street, sidewalk and semi-public frontages with street level building activities, porches, or pedestrian entrances and transparency (windows) that promote interaction with neighbors and ownership of the public realm.*
- 2. Neighborhood Context.** *The siting, setbacks and uses (residential, commercial, etc.) within slot homes sometimes do not reflect the existing character or desired future conditions\* of the street, block and neighborhood.*
- 3. Building Mass & Scale.** *Many slot homes do not incorporate Human Scale proportions, heights and design elements that could promote compatible mass and scale relationships among buildings, such as coordinated facade widths, heights in stories, window patterns or distinctions between building floors.*
- 4. Vehicle-oriented Design.** *Slot homes often incorporate visible driveways, parking areas and garage doors that negatively impact the pedestrian-oriented character of the street, sidewalk, and neighborhood.*
- 5. Impacts on Neighbors.** *Slot homes often orient their most active facade areas towards adjacent properties, rather than the street and sidewalk, or include other elements, such as rooftop decks, which may have negative visual, solar, or privacy impacts on neighbors.*

\*Note that desired future conditions and neighborhood objectives are informed by the existing zoning intent statements, small area plans and citywide plans.

# CRITERIA FOR SUCCESSFUL SOLUTIONS

Solutions to identified issues with slot home development should balance multiple community objectives. The task force and city staff used the criteria below to ensure that the recommended strategy successfully balances multiple objectives. More details are provided in [Criteria For Successful Solutions on page 37](#).

## EFFECTIVENESS

*Solutions should produce outcomes that are consistent with the established vision for the neighborhood or area and directly address one or more elements of the problem statement.*

## EQUITY

*Solutions should incorporate feedback from a wide range of stakeholders, including residents, property owners, builders and design professionals and should apply equally to similar properties in a variety of neighborhoods across the city.*

## FLEXIBILITY

*Solutions should allow property owners and builders to adapt to changing market conditions and maintain flexibility to promote creative designs that can relate to a variety of neighborhood contexts.*

## PREDICTABILITY

*Solutions should result in predictable, clear, outcomes for all stakeholders meaning that property owners should be able to predict the likely outcome of an approval process if they follow the regulations, city staff should be able to consistently interpret regulations and neighborhoods should have a reasonable understanding of the character of development that can occur.*

# SOLUTION FOR MIXED USE DISTRICTS

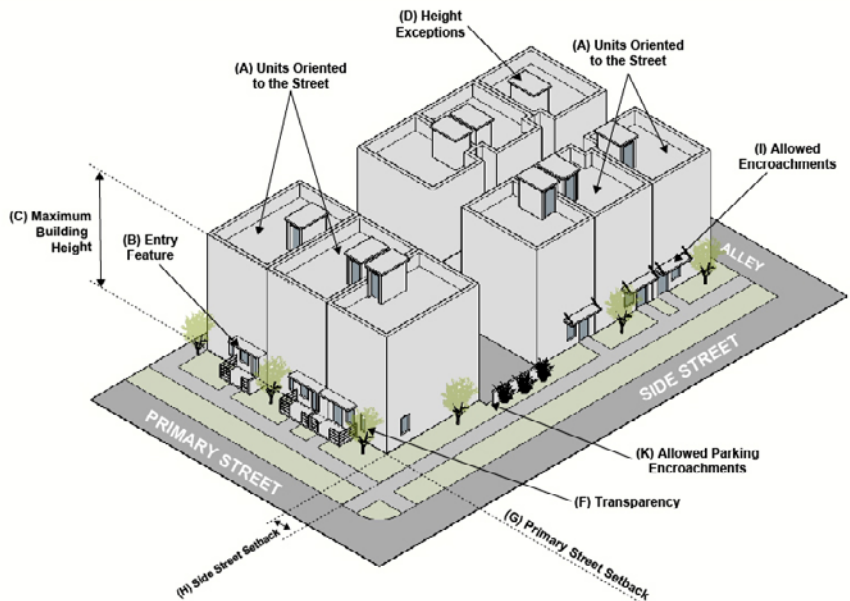
The recommended strategy includes a package of tools that would not allow 'slot home' development in mixed use districts. Instead, side-by-side residential units\* could be built that differentiate the residential frontage from commercial frontages, engage the public realm, incorporate reduced mass and scale, minimize vehicle-oriented design and limit impacts on neighbors. Refer to the [Slot Home Strategy](#) for more details and examples.

## RECOMMENDED STANDARDS FOR SIDE-BY-SIDE RESIDENTIAL IN MIXED USE (MX), RESIDENTIAL MIXED USE (RX), AND MAIN STREET (MS) ZONE DISTRICTS

BUILDING DESIGN TOOLS		BUILDING DESIGN STANDARDS	
A	<b>Require Units Oriented to the Street</b>	Any dwelling unit located within 10' of the primary street setback or side street setback shall be oriented to the corresponding street. The corner unit shall be oriented to the primary street.	
B	<b>Require Entry Features for Units Oriented to the Street</b>	Each dwelling unit oriented to the street shall have an Entrance on the street facing facade that incorporates a visually prominent porch, patio or canopy (such features are allowed to encroach into the primary street setback).	
C	<b>Reduce Maximum Building Height in Feet</b>	Maximum height for flat roofs shall be 30' in two-story districts and 38' in three-story districts. Maximum height for sloped roofs (with a minimum pitch of 6:12) shall be 35' in two-story districts and 45' in three-story districts.	
D	<b>Revise Building Height Exceptions</b>	Unoccupied stair enclosures, elevator penthouses, or mechanical equipment shall be set back 1 foot from the perimeter of the building for every 1 foot of height when exceeding maximum building height in feet or stories.	
E	<b>Limit Rooftop and Second Story Decks</b>	Prohibit rooftop and/or second story decks in the rear 35% of the zone lot depth when adjacent to a Protected District with the same standard.	
F	<b>Increase Transparency Standards</b>	Primary Street transparency standard shall be a minimum of 40%.	
SITE DESIGN TOOLS		SITE DESIGN STANDARDS	
G	<b>Increase Primary Street Setback</b>	Primary Street setback shall be a minimum of 10'.	
H	<b>Increase the Side Setbacks</b>	Side street setbacks shall be a minimum of 7.5'. Side interior setbacks shall be a minimum of 5' when providing pedestrian access.	
I	<b>Allow Setback Encroachments</b>	Porches, canopies and similar features shall be allowed to encroach into the primary street and side street setbacks in alignment with the existing Multi Unit (MU) standards.	
	<b>Revise Build-to Alternatives</b>	The Garden Wall and Pergola alternatives shall not be allowed. The Courtyard alternative shall be allowed to meet 30% of required build-to. A build-to exception for the drive way will be allowed for zone lots without alley access.	
VEHICULAR DESIGN TOOLS		VEHICULAR DESIGN STANDARDS	
J	<b>Reduce Minimum Driveway Dimensions</b>	Minimum drive-aisle width shall be 20' and minimum internal access drive width shall be 12'.	
K	<b>Allow Encroachments for Parking Areas</b>	Allow the required 5' back out space to encroach up to 2.5' into the side street when screened with landscaping and garden wall.	

\*Note that side-by-side units could also continue to be built using existing Row House and Duplex standards without side-facing units to the rear.

This graphic illustrates a design outcome using the tools described in the Mixed Use Strategy on a corner lot in a C-MX-3 zone district.



# SOLUTION FOR MULTI-UNIT DISTRICTS

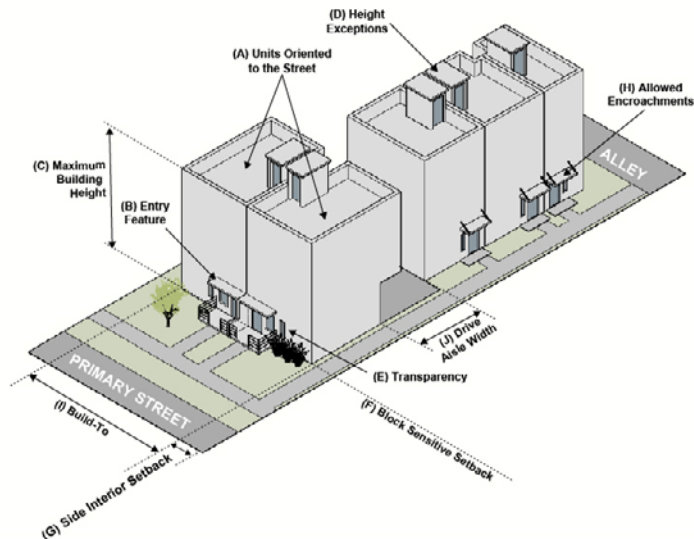
The recommended strategy includes a package of tools that would not allow 'slot home' construction in multi-unit districts. Instead, side-by-side residential units\* could be built that engage the public realm, incorporate reduced mass and scale, minimize vehicle-oriented design and limit impacts on neighbors. Refer to the [Slot Home Strategy](#) for more details and examples.

## RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS FOR SIDE-BY-SIDE RESIDENTIAL IN MULTI UNIT (MU) OR RESIDENTIAL OFFICE (RO) ZONE DISTRICTS

BUILDING DESIGN TOOLS		BUILDING DESIGN STANDARDS	
A	<b>Require Units Oriented to the Street</b>	Any dwelling unit located within 10' of the primary street setback or side street setback shall be oriented to the corresponding street. The corner unit shall be oriented to the primary street.	
B	<b>Require Entry Features for Units Oriented to the Street</b>	Each dwelling unit oriented to the street shall have an Entrance on the street facing facade that incorporates a visually prominent porch, patio or canopy (such features are allowed to encroach into the primary street setback).	
C	<b>Reduce Maximum Building Height in Feet</b>	Maximum height for flat roofs shall be 35' in three-story districts. Maximum height for sloped roofs (with a minimum pitch of 6:12) shall be 40' in three-story districts.	
D	<b>Revise Building Height Exceptions</b>	Unoccupied stair enclosures, elevator penthouses, or mechanical equipment shall be set back 1 foot from the perimeter of the building for every 1 foot of height when exceeding maximum building height in feet or stories.	
	<b>Limit Rooftop and Second Story Decks</b>	Prohibit rooftop and/or second story decks in the rear 35% of the zone lot depth when abutting a Protected District with the same standard.	
E	<b>Increase Transparency Standards</b>	The primary street transparency standard shall be a minimum of 40%.	
SITE DESIGN TOOLS		SITE DESIGN STANDARDS	
F	<b>Limit Block Sensitive Setback</b>	The maximum block-sensitive setback minimum shall be 20'.	
G	<b>Increase the Side Setbacks</b>	Side interior setbacks shall be 7.5' for units oriented to the street, all other units shall be setback 12.5' for the side interior. Side street setbacks shall be 7.5' regardless of unit orientation.	
H	<b>Allow Setback Encroachments</b>	Single story porches, canopies and similar features shall be allowed to encroach 5' into the minimum side interior setback.	
I	<b>Increase Build-to Percentage</b>	The required build-to percentage shall be a minimum of 70%.	
	<b>Revise Build-to Alternatives</b>	The Garden Wall and Pergola alternatives shall not be allowed. The Courtyard alternative shall be allowed to meet 30% of the required build-to percentage. Allow a build-to percentage exception of 12' for the drive way for zone lots without alley access.	
VEHICULAR DESIGN TOOLS		VEHICULAR DESIGN STANDARDS	
J	<b>Reduce Minimum Driveway Dimensions</b>	Minimum drive-aisle width shall be 20' and minimum internal access drive width shall be 12'.	
K	<b>Allow Encroachments for Parking Areas</b>	Allow the required 5' back out space to encroach up to 2.5' into the side street setback when screened with landscaping and garden wall. Allow for internal access drive or drive aisle to encroach up to 7.5', but at not point closer than 5' from a zone lot line.	

\*Note that side-by-side units could also continue to be built using existing Row House and Duplex standards without side-facing units to the rear.

This graphic illustrates a design outcome using the tools described in the Multi Unit Strategy on an interior lot in a G-MU-3 zone district.



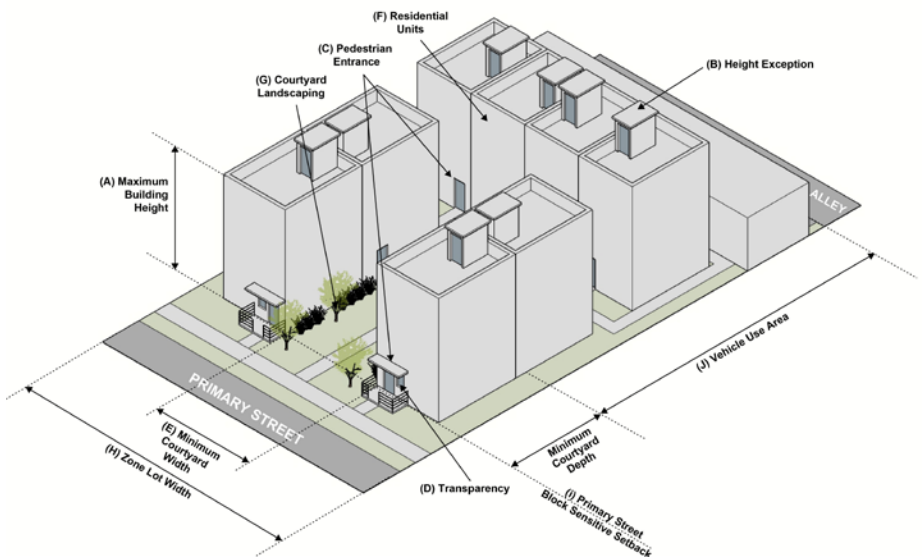
# SOLUTION FOR GARDEN COURT IN MU DISTRICTS

The Garden Court strategy in Multi Unit zone districts was a result of an evaluation of the tools described in [Section 3](#), Slot Home Task Force feedback, community review, and external testing. The Garden Court strategy described below is based on the existing Garden Court building form. Refer to the [Slot Home Strategy](#) for more details and examples.

## RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS FOR THE GARDEN COURT BUILDING FORM IN MULTI UNIT (MU) OR RESIDENTIAL OFFICE (RO) ZONE DISTRICTS

BUILDING DESIGN TOOLS		BUILDING DESIGN STANDARDS	
<b>A</b>	<b>Revise Maximum Building Height in Feet</b>	Maximum height for flat roofs shall be 35' in three-story districts Maximum height for sloped roofs (with a minimum pitch of 6:12) shall be 40' in three-story districts *No change to height in 2.5 story districts (eg. E-MU-2.5)	
<b>B</b>	<b>Revise Building Height Exceptions</b>	Unoccupied stair enclosures, elevator penthouses, or mechanical equipment shall be set back 1 foot from the perimeter of the building for every 1 foot of height when exceeding maximum building height in feet or stories (currently a set back is only required when exceeding maximum building height in feet)	
<b>C</b>	<b>Increase Pedestrian Access Standards</b>	A minimum of two units within 10' of Primary Street setback shall have an Entrance and entry feature facing Primary Street, all others shall have an Entrance facing the Primary Street or interior courtyard. Entry feature shall be a visually prominent porch, patio, or canopy.	
	<b>Limit Rooftop and Second Story Decks</b>	Prohibit rooftop and/or second story decks in the rear 35% of the zone lot depth when abutting a Protected District with the same standard.	
<b>D</b>	<b>Introduce a Transparency Standard</b>	The primary street transparency standard shall be a minimum of 30%	
COURTYARD DESIGN TOOLS		COURTYARD DESIGN STANDARDS	
<b>E</b>	<b>Increase Street Facing Courtyard Width</b>	Increase the street-facing courtyard width to a minimum of 30' or 33% of the zone lot width (which ever is greater)	
<b>F</b>	<b>Require Residential Units on Three Sides</b>	Revise the courtyard design standards to be bound on 3 sides by dwelling units (not just building facades)	
<b>G</b>	<b>Introduce a Landscaping Standard</b>	Require a minimum of 50% of the courtyard area shall be planted with live landscaping materials.	
SITE DESIGN TOOLS		SITE DESIGN STANDARDS	
<b>H</b>	<b>Increase Minimum Zone Lot Size and Width</b>	Increase the minimum zone lot width to 75' Increase the minimum zone lot size to 9,000 sf	
<b>I</b>	<b>Limit the Block Sensitive Setback</b>	The maximum block-sensitive setback minimum shall be 20'	
VEHICULAR DESIGN TOOLS		VEHICULAR DESIGN STANDARDS	
	<b>Reduce Minimum Driveway Dimensions</b>	Minimum drive-aisle width shall be 20' and minimum internal access drive width shall be 12'	
<b>J</b>	<b>Limit Vehicle Use Areas</b>	Vehicle use areas shall not be located between the primary street zone lot line and the rear of the minimum courtyard depth extended to the full width of the zone lot line. Provide an exception for zone lots without alley access.	

This graphic illustrates a design outcome using the tools described in the Multi Unit Garden Court Strategy on an interior lot in a G-MU-3 zone district.



# SOLUTION FOR ROW HOUSE/TOWN HOUSE DISTRICTS

The recommended strategy includes a package of tools that would not allow 'slot home' construction, or other development currently allowed by zoning standards for the Garden Court building form, in row house and town house districts. Instead, side-by-side residential units could be built as duplexes, row houses or townhouses where all residential units face the street to match the surrounding neighborhood context of lower-scale development (often including single-family homes and duplexes) that directly engages the street. Refer to the [Slot Home Strategy](#) for more details and examples.

## RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS FOR THE ROW HOUSE BUILDING FORM IN ROW HOUSE (RH) AND TOWN HOUSE (TH) ZONE DISTRICTS

### BUILDING DESIGN TOOLS

#### A Require Units Oriented to the Street

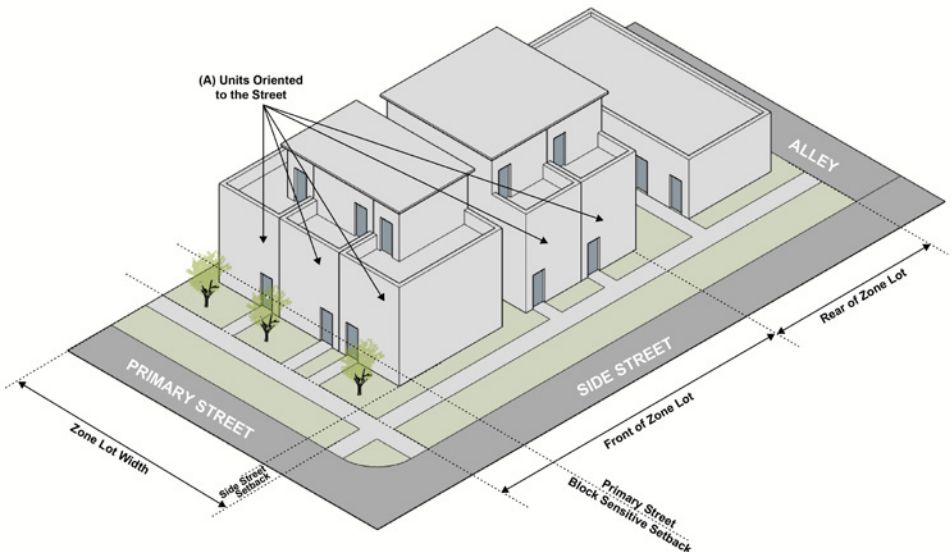
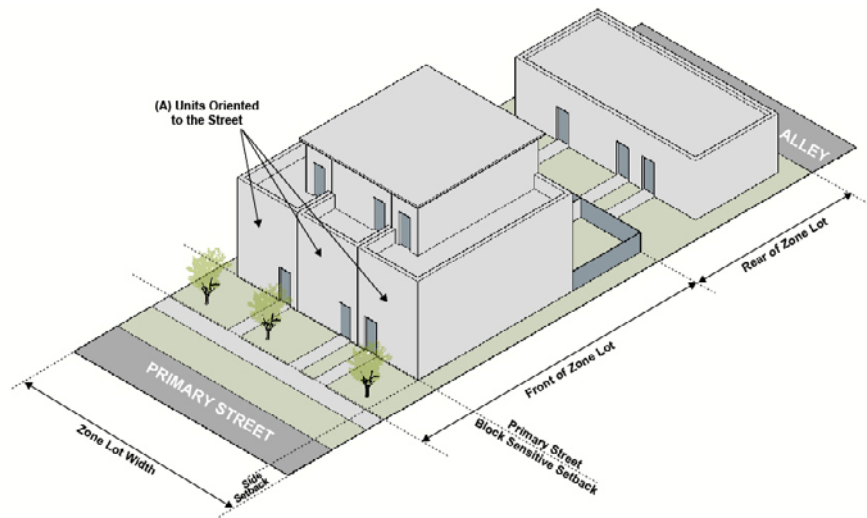
When Required: Any dwelling unit shall be oriented to the corresponding street. For the corner dwelling unit, the dwelling unit shall be oriented to the primary street. Oriented to the Street: Each unit shall be arranged side-by-side with at least one other dwelling unit with a shared wall perpendicular to the primary street. The width of each unit shall not exceed the depth.

### VEHICULAR DESIGN

#### Reduce Minimum Driveway Dimensions

Minimum drive-aisle width shall be 20' and minimum internal access drive width shall be 12'

The following graphics illustrate design outcomes using the tools described in the Row House Strategy on an interior and corner lot in a U-RH-2.5 zone district.



# SCHEDULE AND NEXT STEPS

The final strategy report has been informed by the thorough review and evaluation of Slot Home Task Force, External Testing Group, and the community. These strategies and standards will inform the drafting of the text amendment to the Denver Zoning Code (DZC). The text amendment and adoption process will include the following steps.

- **Task Force Review of Draft Text Amendment.** The Slot Home Task Force will review the Draft Text Amendment to the DZC. Any recommended changes will be made prior to the public review draft.
- **Public Review of Draft Text Amendment.** The Draft Text Amendment will be published online for the public to review and provide comments. During this time, staff will present to the Inter-Neighborhood Cooperation (INC) Zoning and Planning (ZAP) committee. Any other Registered Neighborhood Organizations (RNOs) or other interested organizations may request a staff presentation on the proposed Text Amendment.
- **Planning Board.** The Denver Planning Board will hold a public hearing on the proposed Text Amendment and consider it against the review criteria found in Section 12.4.11.4 of the DZC. The Planning Board will receive public input via written comments and public testimony, and ultimately make a recommendation to the Denver City Council.
- **Denver City Council.** The Denver City Council will also hold a public hearing on the proposed Text Amendment and consider it against the review criteria found in Section 12.4.11.4 of the DZC. The City Council will receive public input via written comments and public testimony, and then vote on whether to approve the Text Amendment.
- **Implementation.** The proposed Text Amendment is anticipated to be scheduled for City Council adoption in the second quarter of 2018. If approved, the new standards will take effect approximately three days after City Council adoption following the Mayor’s signature and publication of the ordinance. In recognition of the significant investment required for Site Development Plans (SDP), projects that have submitted a complete formal SDP application prior to the effective date may choose whether to conform to the new regulations or to continue review under the existing DZC. Any SDP not approved within 6 months after the effective date will be subject to the new regulations. Projects that have not made significant progress and therefore not submitted a complete formal SDP application before the text amendment effective date, will be subject to the new regulations proposed with the Text Amendment and described in this Strategy Report.



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