

**SANTA CRUZ COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT POLICY/ORDINANCE  
INTERPRETATION**

Interpretation No.: ALLEY-01 (Double frontage parcel with alley–parking and fence height)  
Effective Date: 5/31/11  
Revised: none

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**Questions**

- a) For a double frontage residential parcel where the front property line abuts a street and the rear property line abuts an alley, is the yard abutting the alley a front yard? If so:*
- b) What percentage of the front yard abutting the alley may be used for parking; and*
- c) What is the allowed fence height for the front yard abutting the alley?*

**Applicable Ordinance Section(s)**

**13.10.323(d)6**

**13.10.554(d)**

**13.10.700-A**

**INTERPRETATION:**

- a) For a double frontage residential parcel where the front property line abuts a street and the rear property line abuts an alley, both the yard abutting the street and the yard abutting the alley are front yards. Therefore:
- b) No more than 50% of the required front yard abutting the street may be used to meet the required parking and access. Parking in the front yard abutting the alley is unlimited.
- c) A fence in a front yard abutting an alley may be 6 feet in height, with no discretionary approval required.

**Reason**

- a) County Code Section 13.10.323(d) 6 reads in part as follows:  
Parcels With Double Frontage. When both the front and rear property lines of a parcel abut on a right-of-way to which it has legal access, the required front yards shall be measured from both rights-of-way.

According to this code section, a parcel with the front property line abutting a street and the rear property line abutting an alley to which the parcel has legal access is considered a double frontage parcel with two front yards.

- b) Section 13.10.323(d)6 states that for double frontage parcels:

Only one of the front yards shall be required to meet the off-street parking criteria described in this chapter.

Off-street parking criteria include the requirements of Code Section 13.10.554(d) limiting parking and access to 50% of any required front yard.

For double frontage parcels with the front property line abutting a street and the rear property line abutting an alley, limiting parking and access to 50% of the required front yard area abutting the street, while not limiting parking in the front yard area abutting the alley, is consistent with regulations in the Santa Cruz County Code requiring open areas in front yards along residential streets. For example, Section 13.10.321 states that a primary purpose of residential zone districts is to ensure adequate open space. Preserving open areas and landscaping within front yards facing streets, and limiting parking along the streetscape, is essential to preserving the sense of open space within a neighborhood. Front yards abutting alleys are less prominent and have less of an impact on neighborhood character, so that more intensive parking is appropriate in these yards.

c) County Code Section 13.10.525(c)2 was amended in 2008 to allow fences up to 6 feet in height in yards not abutting a street. An alley is not considered a street under the definition in 13.10.700-A. Therefore fences in yards abutting alleys may be up to 6 feet in height with no discretionary approval required.

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Kathy M. Previsich, Planning Director

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