

Lot and Block Units for Moderate Priced Homes

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It is to be assumed that in the normal case a proper layout of main streets and disposition of public grounds will permit the minor streets to be so arranged as to produce the optimum in block lengths and widths, the latter closely affecting lot depths. Lot widths on the other hand are not controlled to any large degree by other elements in the plan and may of course readily be changed at any subsequent time prior to development or actual sales without materially modifying its general relations.

The factors controlling the width of interior lots are on the one hand adequate width for the dwelling itself, light and air in its yards, and to a less degree passage for automobiles; on the other, the cost of utilities in the street, which rise rapidly as lot widths are increased and practically require the minimum adequate width to be the standard, if not the maximum as well, except as topography and other elements in the plan fix certain points and permit somewhat larger lots without increased expense. A house nearly square is the most economical, so that, except where under the spur of high land values lots have been plotted too narrow, the two room deep house is the usual type.

For detached houses 7 or 8 feet is the minimum side yard width to assure sufficient light and air at the first story as well as safety from fire. One side yard should be at least 10 feet wide to provide space to drive in an automobile. The square house is probably the widest that should normally be provided for. The six room house may be as small as 22 feet square, the 7 and 8 room types running up to 26 or 27 feet. 40 to 44 feet is the proper standard minimum lot width for detached houses. Unless 40 feet can be obtained semi-detached or row houses should be planned for.

For semi-detached houses 10 feet is none too wide a side yard for light and air as well as for the passage of automobiles. Such houses need not be over 23 ft. wide and are frequently not over 20 feet. 30 to 33 feet is the proper standard minimum lot width for semi-detached houses. In sections with moderate rentals it is proper to mix detached and semi-detached houses according to any scheme of grouping the city planner and architect may work out. Each pair of semi-detached houses requires one and a half lots of a size suitable for detached houses. In cases therefore where it is desirable to plat lots in advance of building, the 40 foot width, or better 44 feet, may be used as a standard minimum.

Three reasons prevent the advantageous mingling of row houses with the other two types: an alley is usually required behind the row houses, a considerable expense, which constitutes an unnecessary burden if incurred behind houses with side yards and therefore not dependent on alleys; the larger building units are apt to be out of scale with the other types, and in most cases the type of occupancy is different. The row of three houses placed at intersecting streets may be used with semi-detached and detached houses by adding to the rear yard of the middle house an extension 10 to 20 feet wide reaching the side street across the rear of the corner lot. The unit of three will require about two lots of the size for detached houses, and therefore fits into a scheme of 40 to 44 foot lots.

The row house attains practically its full economy with 5, 6, or 7 in a group. Above 9 the inordinate length of the row becomes unpleasant architecturally, and at the same time increase fire risk and steadily decreases ventilation in the block. Such relatively short groups obviously require special lotting. The lot widths for interior houses are controlled absolutely by the design of the house. To secure adequate light and air row houses should not be more than two rooms deep. The usual is one large room across the front and one or two smaller rooms at the back. 18 or 20 feet is the proper width for such a house. The end houses of rows may be put on lots 27 to 30 feet wide, so that two such end houses of adjacent groups require three of the lots designed for interior houses.

It is different to make a lotting scheme which will serve for both row houses and for semi-detached and detached houses. In cases where row houses are anticipated lotting should accompany the plan for grouping the dwellings instead of preceding it.

While it generally recognize that 50 feet is sufficient

distance for light and air between the fronts of small houses, and while this same distance is also a sufficient minimum between backs, in practice such shallow lots as these dimensions produce are seldom found necessary, owing to the fact that added lot depth does not correspondingly increase the cost of lots utilities. It is frontage that is expensive, and rear land must be considered to remain close to the acreage cost of raw land. This is a particularly important factor where topographical condition or irregular boundaries would involve considerable extra length of streets to produce but few more lots of standard depth, the alternative of fewer, deeper lots with much less street construction being much cheaper and involving only a slight loss in gross selling value.

On all except the main thoroughfares the needs of traffic are not sufficient to affect the distance between the fronts of houses. In detached house neighborhoods experience indicates that 20 foot front yards are not excessive. 15 feet is found suitable for semi-detached houses. For row houses 10 to 15 feet may usually be provided. A variation in set back not exceeding 5 feet usually adds to the attractiveness of the street. Unnecessary depth runs up the cost of service lines from the utilities that are placed in the street. If the street line were placed at the building line as in Washington, the utility lines might be run close to the houses, thereby saving considerable expenditure necessary under any of the present methods.

Moderate priced houses normally range from 18 to 32 feet in depth, the vast majority being from 20 to 30 feet deep, though certain designs for narrow semi-detached houses may require 34 to 35 feet. In the depth of rear yards even more variation occurs, both because their use varies and because it frequently proves to add so little to the cost to make them ample. For detached houses an ample garden space for a person working elsewhere during the day is 40 by 50 ft. If not so used this is still not too large for children's play.

On streets of ordinary width lots for detached houses should normally be planned 90 to 110 feet deep; for semi-detached houses, 80 to 100 feet, and for row houses 70 to 90 feet, including to the centre of alleys where introduced.

Where extreme land values do not preclude, a scheme of lots based on a standard minimum of 40 to 44 feet by 90 to 100 feet is proper. In extreme cases, where row houses are certain to come, lots as small as 16 to 18 feet by 70 feet may be necessary, but intermediate widths so common in most of our cities are not easily adapted to modern housing standards.

The best size for corner lots in cases where practically all the houses are to face one set of roughly parallel streets may be fixed as ranging from the same width to 5 ft. wider than corresponding interior lots, and approximately the same depth. With houses fronting on all streets, to secure the maximum salable frontage and the least interruption to the architectural motive along each street and around the corner, the corner lot is best made approximately square. It should be equal in area to the corresponding interior lots. A somewhat large square corner lot may be cut diagonally in two and a pair of semi-detached houses set across it, though this expedient is not always pleasant. It is not apt to be a good plan to attempt to crowd houses at a street intersection and still give sufficient square feet of rear yard space by violent skewing or irregularity in lot boundaries. Acute interior lot corners should be particularly avoided. Lot lines should usually be run back at least 40 feet, to a point not less than 5 feet behind the house, approximately at right angles to the street.

Block widths are normally twice lot depths, though many irregular blocks are bound to be platted, especially in layouts on rough or peculiarly shaped land, to economize in construction cost and in land used for streets.

Block lengths are controlled by the needs of traffic, both vehicular and pedestrian, and by factors of safety. Experience shows that in residential areas blocks 600 to 700 feet long cause little dissatisfaction. Shorter blocks are wasteful of land in cross streets. Blocks longer than 800 feet are found to cause undue detours in going from one side to the other. This is more noticeable in the case

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