Large House Review Study Committee

Community Meeting, June 1, 2016

Issues

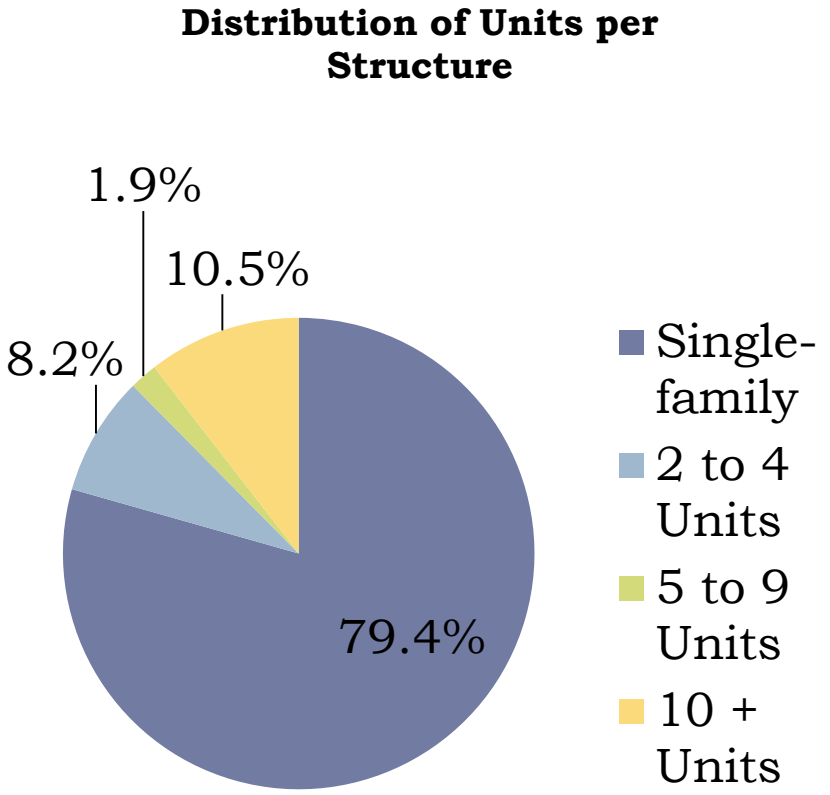
- New residential construction is often built close to the maximum size allowed determined by setback, height, and lot coverage requirements.
- Abutters are impacted by these large-scale houses when views are blocked, trees removed, shadows cast, and drainage problems arise.
- Neighborhoods lose their distinct fabric with odd scales, loss of trees, and the addition of walls or fences.
- New construction replaces more moderately-sized housing stock which erodes community diversity.
- Many residents perceive that replacement homes are “just too big”.

Study Committee Goals

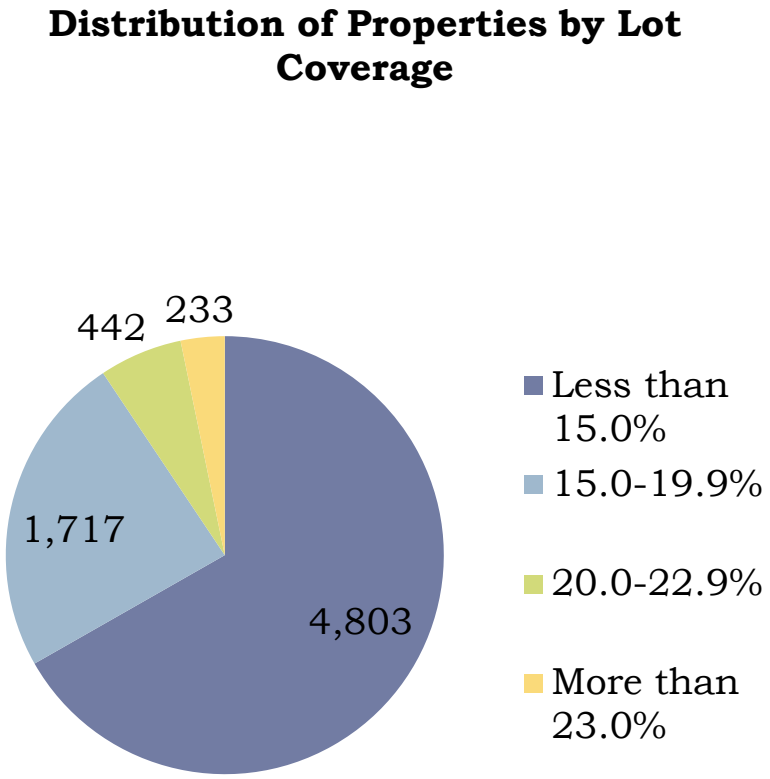
- Respond to resident concerns about the issue of teardowns and replacement housing.
- Explore the specific effects of zoning on regulating this issue.
- Investigate other communities' responses.
- Make recommendations for zoning changes to balance the rights of property owners with the preservation of collective neighborhood character.
- Reduce the negative impacts on abutters (shadows, loss of views, decrease in privacy, large massing, etc.).
- Limit house size in relation to lot size, complementing the Town's other zoning dimensional controls.
- Make zoning changes fair and easy to understand.

Needham's Housing Inventory – Types of Properties

- About 11,000 total units.
- 76% single-family detached, 3.6% attached.
- 82.5% owner-occupied.
- About 25% are nonconforming for either lot size or frontage.
- Approximately17% are nonconforming for both lot size and frontage.



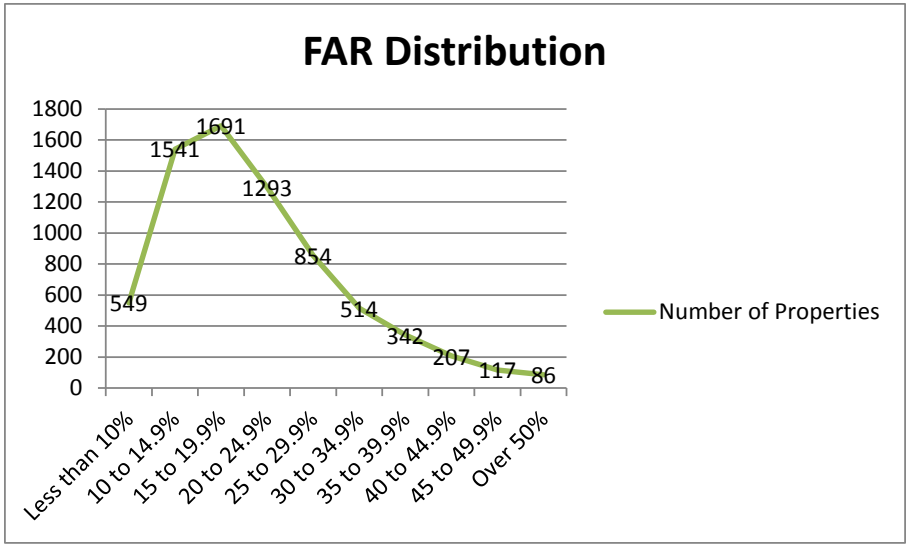
Needham's Housing Inventory – Lot Area Coverage



- (Footprint of house as a % of lot area.)
- 2/3 of properties had lot coverage percentages of less than 15%.
- Median lot coverage of 13% compared to 23% for studied replacement units.
- Only 80 properties had lot coverage of more than 25%.

Needham's Housing Inventory – Floor Area Ratio (FAR)

- (Floor area divided by the lot area.)
- Median FAR of about 20%.
- 30% of properties had an FAR above 25%.
- Only 5.6% had an FAR above 40%.



Needham's Housing Inventory – Housing Costs

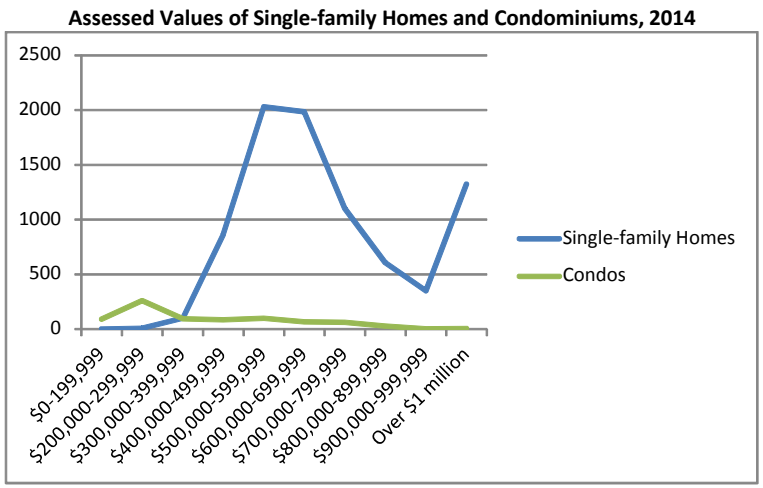
Median single-family home prices have increased by 243% since 1990.

- 1990 = $245,000
- 2000 = $436,250
- 2010 = $632,500
- 2015 = $840,000

Median rent of $1,432 based on 2014 census estimates.

Market rents for new 2-bedroom apts. above $5,000.

More than 12% of households pay more than half their income on housing costs.



Teardown Activity

Period	# New Residential Single-family Units	# Residential Units Demolished	Net New Units
2010 through 2012	203	186 92% of new units	17
2013	104	96 92% of all new units	8
2014 through 5-12-14	42	30 71% of all new units	12
5-13-14 through 3-30-15	81	55 68% of all new units	26
Total	430	367 85% of all new units	63

Teardown Activity

- Smaller homes with median size of 1,536 square feet and median value of $600,000.*
- Replacement homes had a median size of 4,830 square feet and prices well above $1 million.*
- Loss of rental units as smaller multi-family properties are being torn down and converted to high-end condos.
- Teardown properties had a median FAR of 15% compared to 45% for replacement homes.*
- * Analysis includes all finished space minus the garage for 30 teardowns and replacement properties built during about the first 5 months of 2014.

Proposed Changes to Zoning

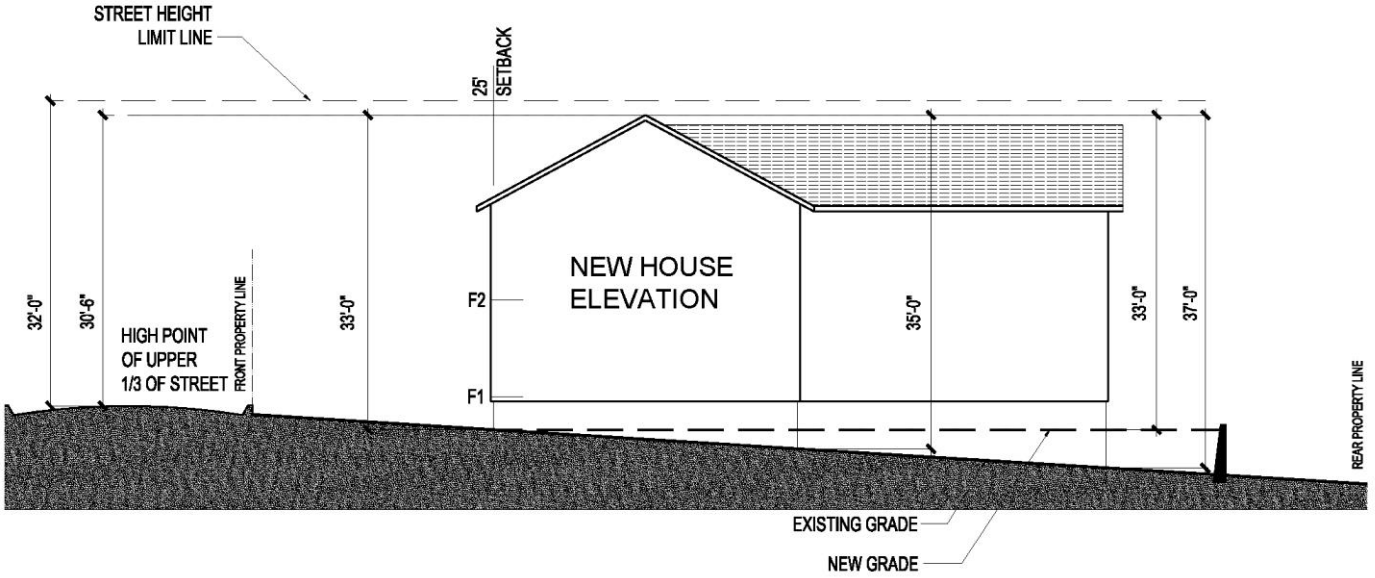
- Change building height measurement method
- Allow more building elements in setbacks
- Revise setbacks
- Increase Lot Area Coverage
- Cap house square footage by applying a Floor Area Ratio (FAR) calculation

Change Height Measurement Method

- Two options are offered
  - Measure from average existing grade or average new grade, whichever is lower. Height limit is 35 feet.
  - Measure from a single point in the street centerline as the average of the highest 1/3 of the properties' street frontage. Height limit is 32 feet.

Building Height – Downhill Lot Example

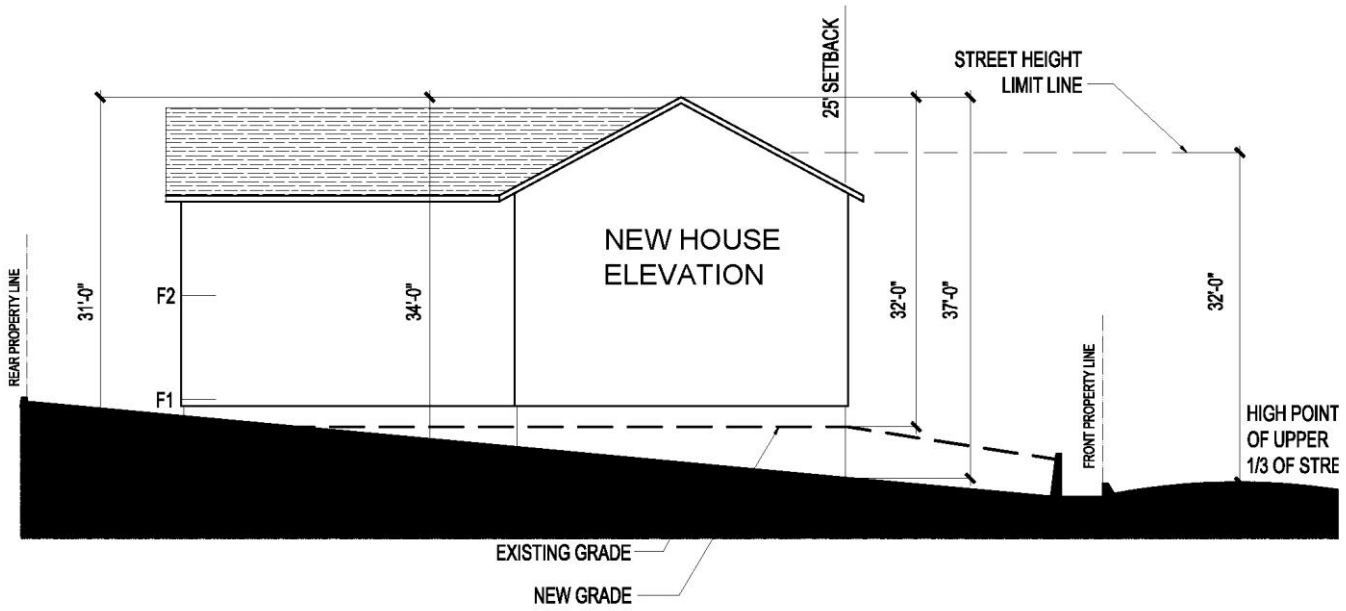
AVERAGE HEIGHT TO EXISTING GRADE: 35.5'
AVERAGE HEIGHT TO NEW GRADE: 33'
HEIGHT FROM HIGHEST 1/3 OF STREET: 31'



HEIGHT MEASUREMENT
EXAMPLE B: DOWNHILL LOT
FIRST FLOOR 1' ABOVE STREET

Building Height – Uphill Lot Example

AVERAGE HEIGHT TO EXISTING GRADE: 34'
AVERAGE HEIGHT TO NEW GRADE: 32.3'
HEIGHT FROM HIGHEST 1/3 OF STREET: 37'



HEIGHT MEASUREMENT

EXAMPLE A: UPHILL LOT

FIRST FLOOR 8' ABOVE STREET

Allow Elements in Setbacks

- Increase and encourage architectural variety by allowing various elements to be built within the front and side setbacks.

- Roof overhangs up to 18 inches.

Allow Elements in Setbacks

- Bay windows up to 8 feet long – maximum overall at 25% of that side of house.

Allow Elements in Setbacks

- Covered porches can project into setback to maximum of 50 square feet.

Change Setbacks

- Front
  - Increase from 20 to 25 feet or average of 150 feet each side of lot, whichever is greater, with maximum of 35 feet.
  - Limit 2-car garages within 35 feet to 1½ stories.
- Rear
  - Decrease to 15 feet.

- Compliant garage with proposed regulations

Change Setbacks

- Compliant garages with proposed regulations

Change Setbacks

- Non-compliant garages with proposed regulations

Change Setbacks

- Side
  - Measure to face of framing.
  - Conforming lot increase from 12.5/14 feet to 14/16 feet.
  - 32 feet of structure allowed at 14 foot setback line, the rest offset 2 feet to 16 feet.
  - Non-conforming lot (for frontage only) increase from 10 feet to 12 feet.
  - 32 feet of structure allowed at 12 foot setback line, the rest offset 2 feet to 14 feet.

Increase Lot Area Coverage

- Lot Area Coverage – Increase to 28% to allow for additional design flexibility.
- This is only in conjunction with Floor Area Ratio (FAR) calculation.

Add Floor Area Ratio (FAR)

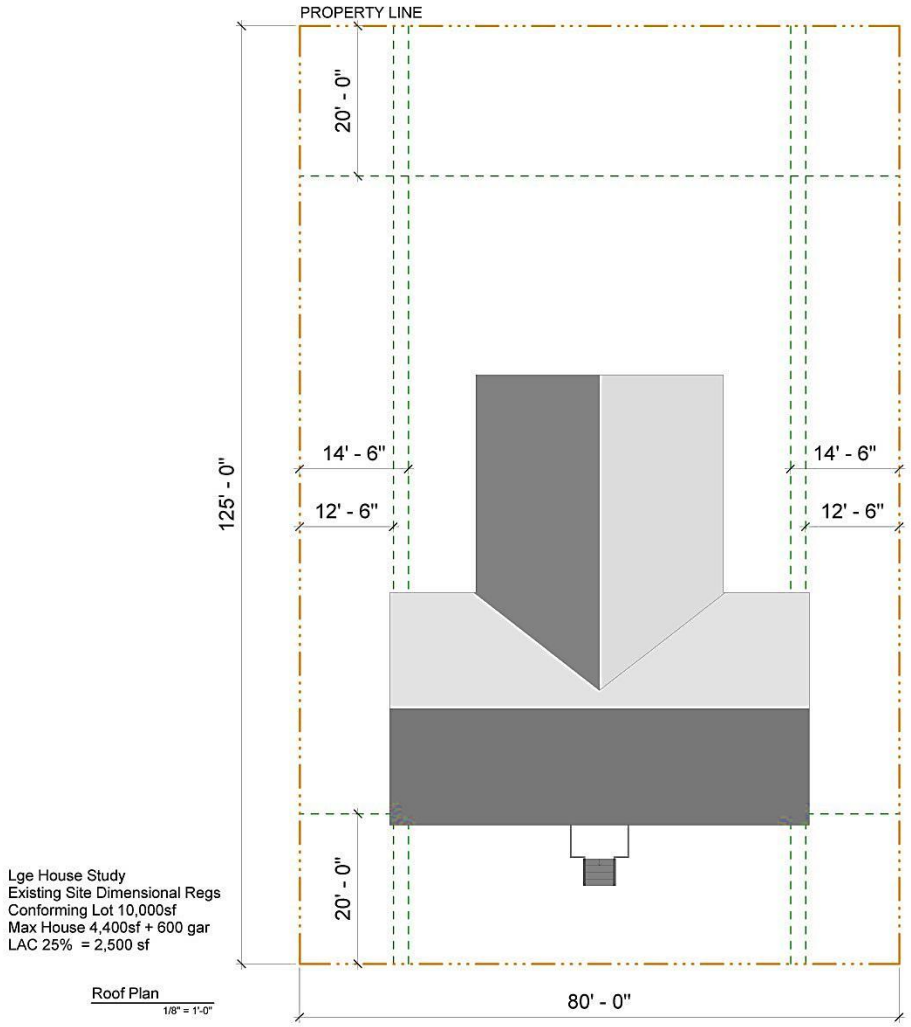
Basic Assumptions: First floor includes 2-car Garage, LR, DR, Kitchen, Family Room, Mudroom and Study. Second floor includes 4 BRs, 2-3 Baths, Laundry.

Lot Size (square feet)	FAR	Maximum House size (Does not include basement or attic. Includes a maximum 600 sf additional allowance for the garage.)
7,500 and under	.40	7,500 sf lot → 3,000 square feet
7,501 – 8,999	.38	8,500 sf lot → 3,230 square feet
9,000 – 9,999	.38	9,500 sf lot → 3,610 square feet
10,000 – 10,999	.38	10,500 sf lot → 3,990 square feet
11,000 – 11,999	.36	11,500 sf lot → 4,140 square feet
12,000 – 12,999	.35	12,500 sf lot → 4,375 square feet
13,000 – 13,999	.34	13,500 sf lot → 4,590 square feet
14,000 – 14,999	.33	14,500 sf lot → 4,785 square feet
15,000 and greater	.32	15,500 sf lot → 4,960 square feet

Comparative Examples

- Lot is 10,000 square feet
  - *Needham = 3,800 (First and second floor area plus allowance of 600 square feet for garage. Basement and attic are not counted.)*
  - Concord = 3,600 (Without basement)
  - Lexington = 5,950 (Includes basement, attic, garage and porch)
  - Newton = 3,800 (Includes attic, garages, and a portion of the basement)
  - Wellesley = 3,600 (Total living area plus garage; may include basement and attic.)

Existing Regulations: Conforming Lot



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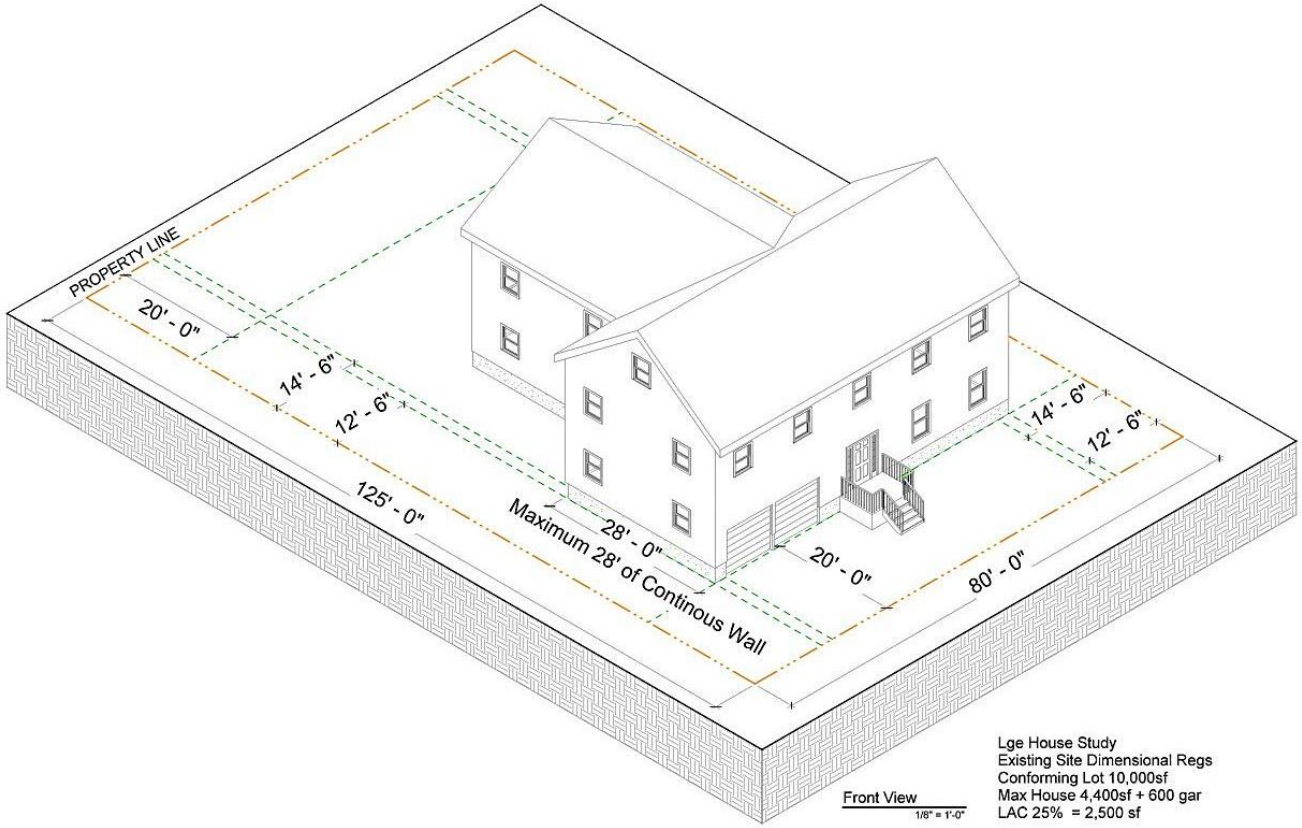
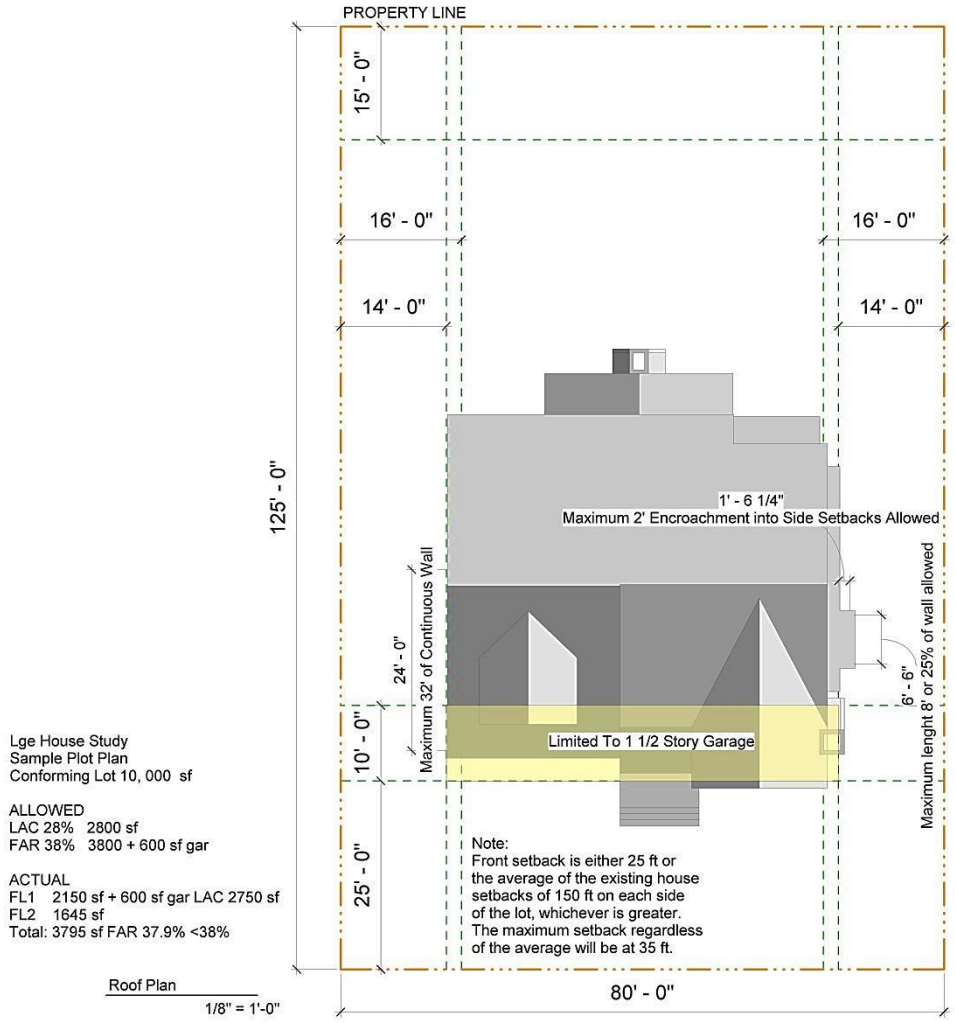


Proposed Regulations: Conforming Lot



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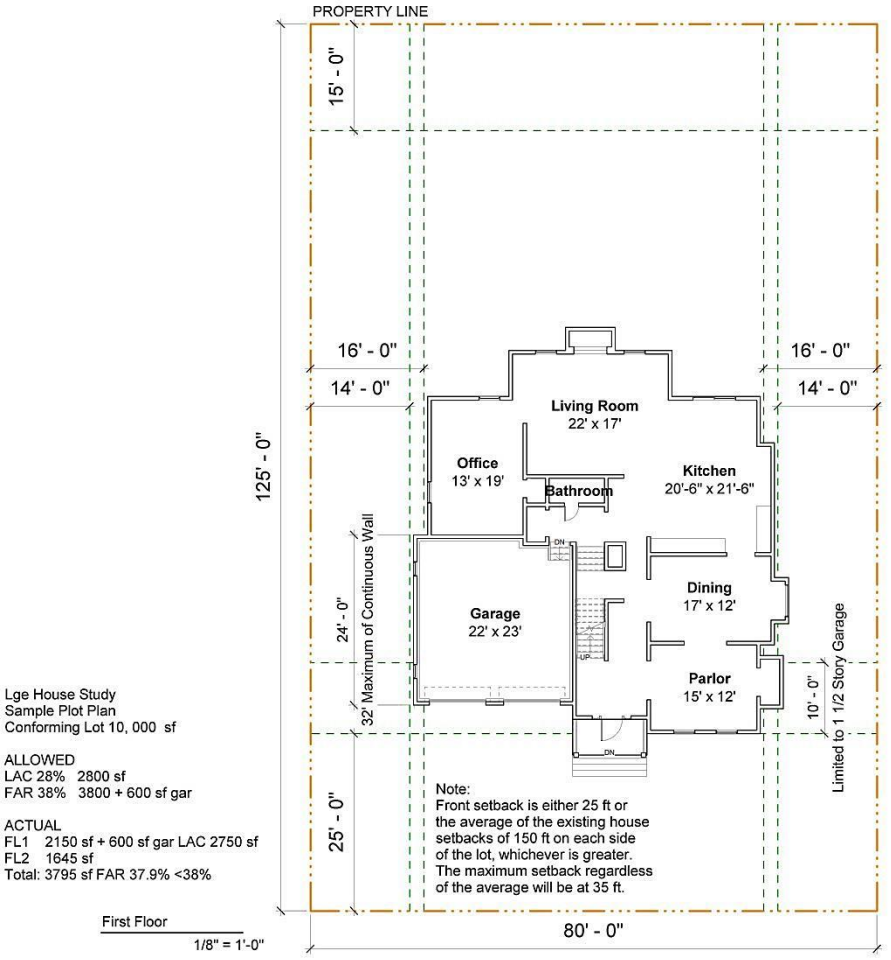
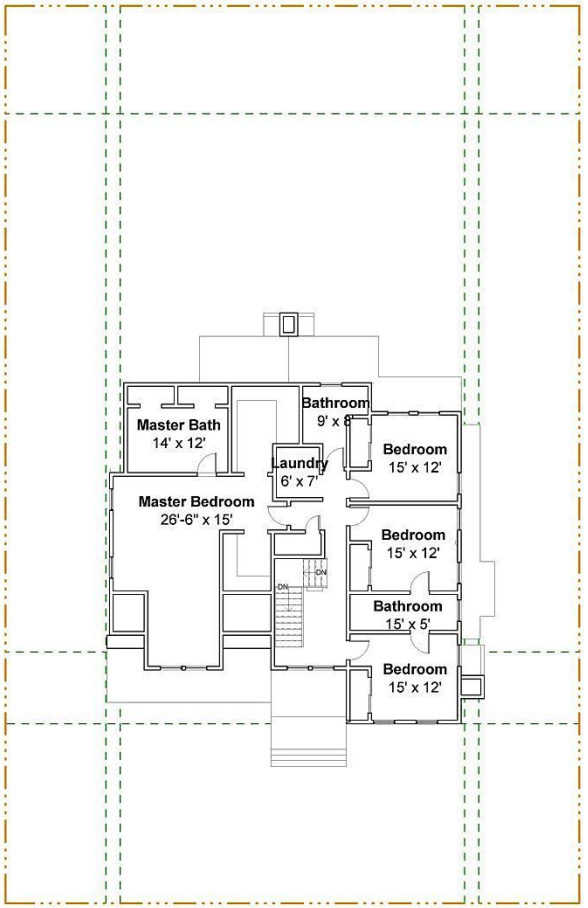


Lge House Study
Sample Plot Plan
Conforming Lot 10, 000 sf

ALLOWED
LAC 28% 2800 sf
FAR 38% 3800 + 600 sf gar

ACTUAL
FL1 2150 sf + 600 sf gar LAC 2750 sf
FL2 1645 sf
Total: 3795 sf FAR 37.9% <38%

First Floor
1/8" = 1'-0"



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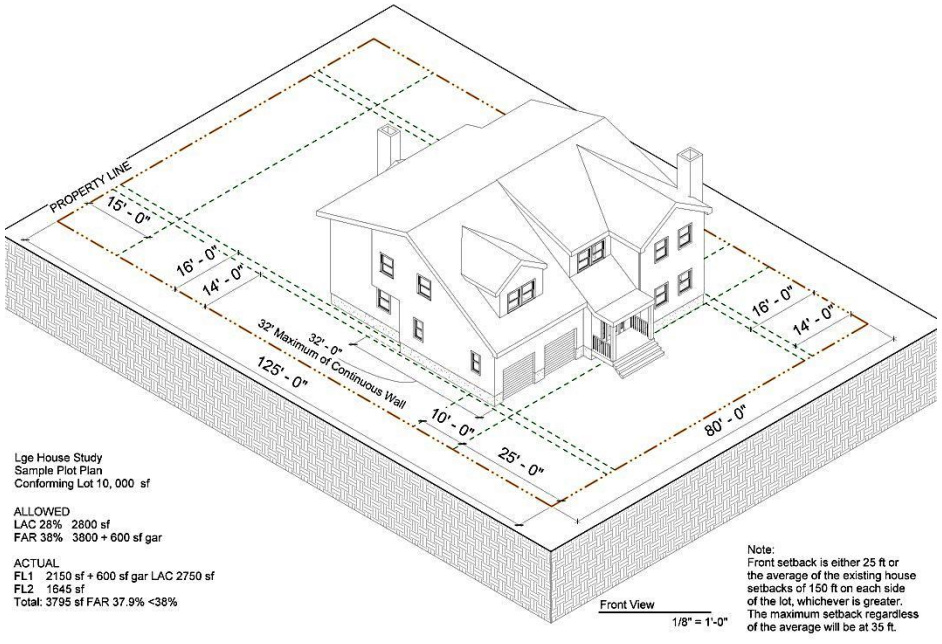
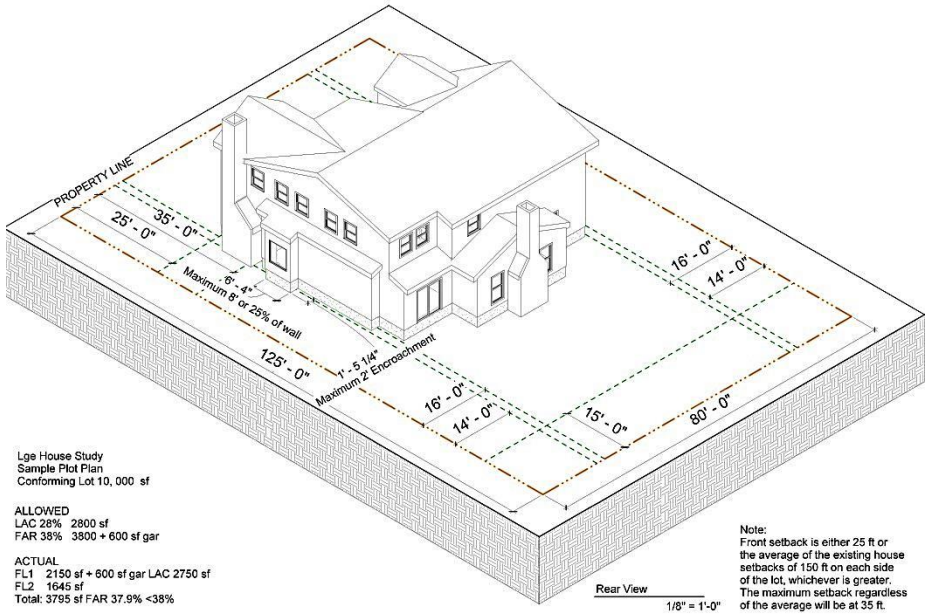
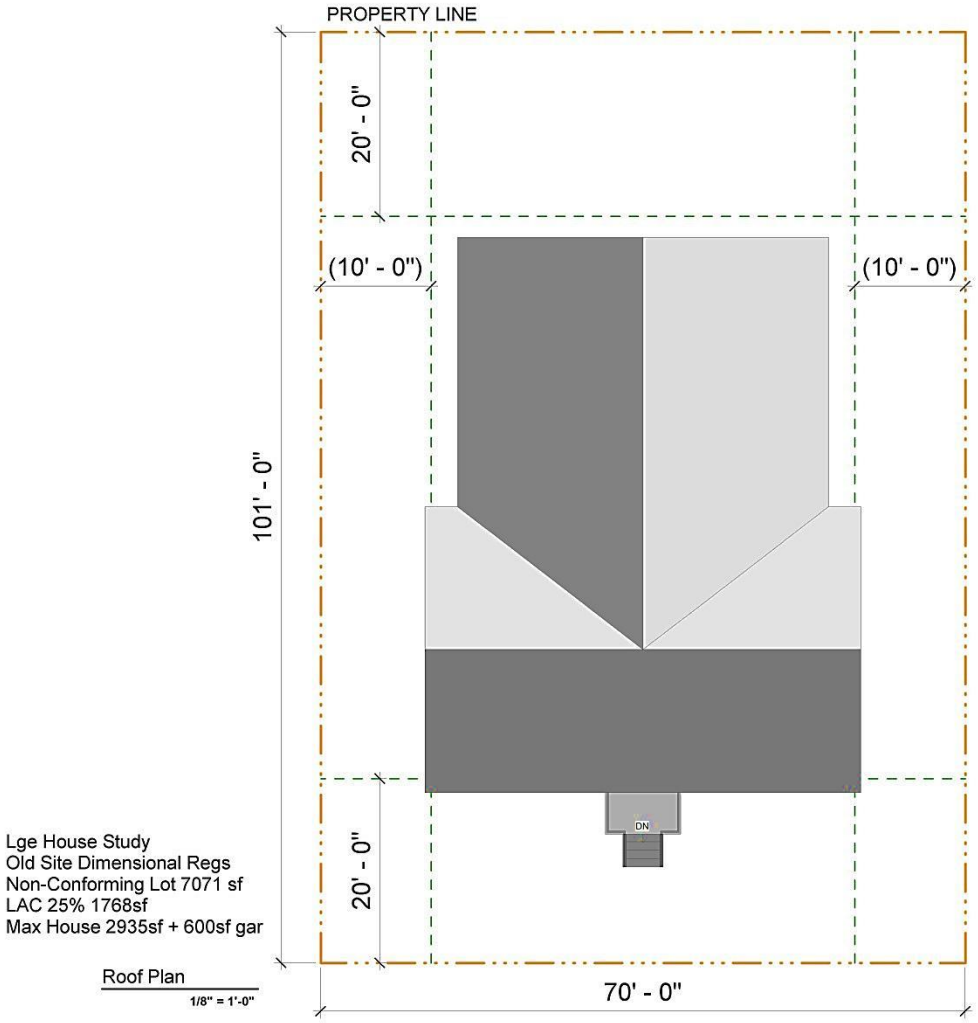
Proposed Regulations: Conforming Lot





Existing Regulations: Non-conforming Lot



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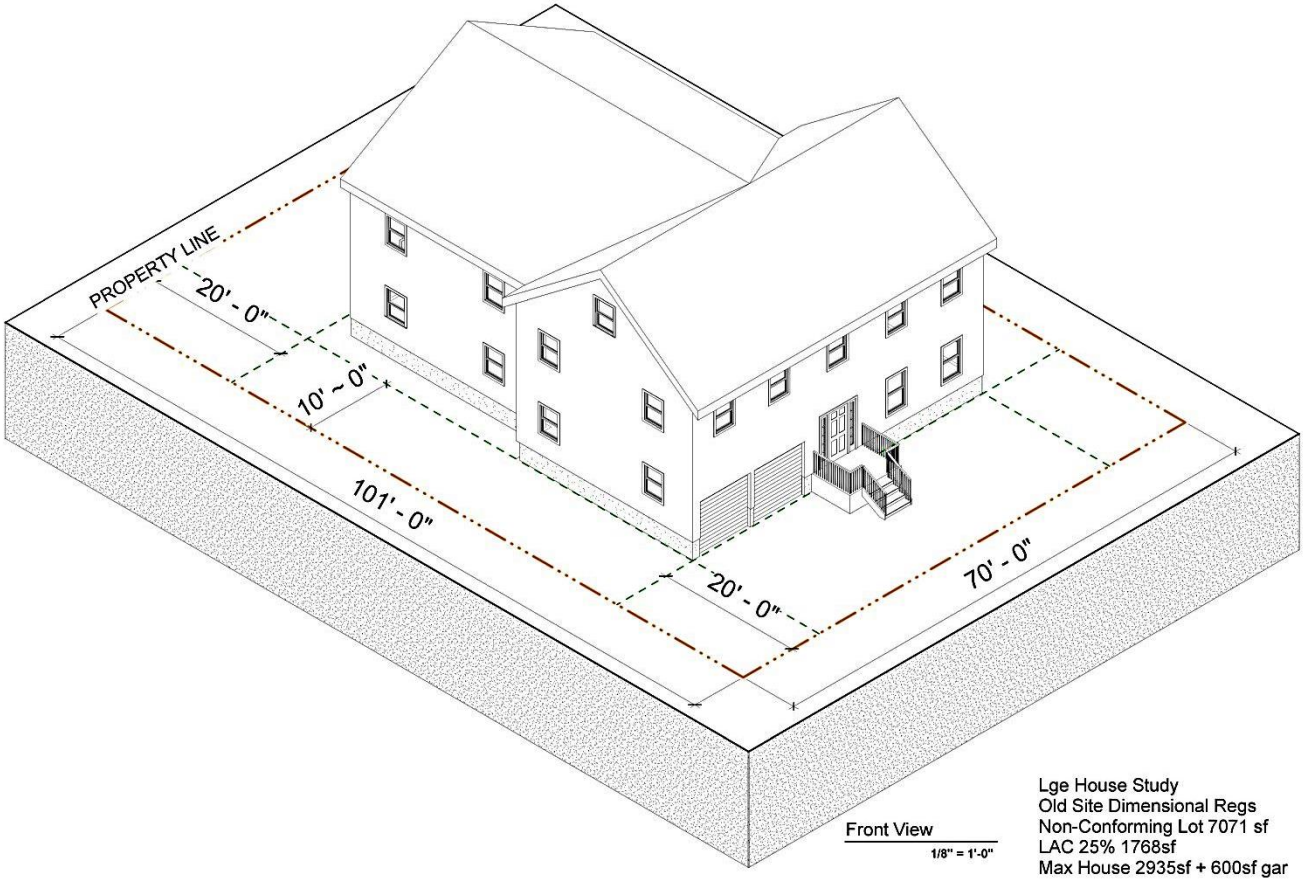

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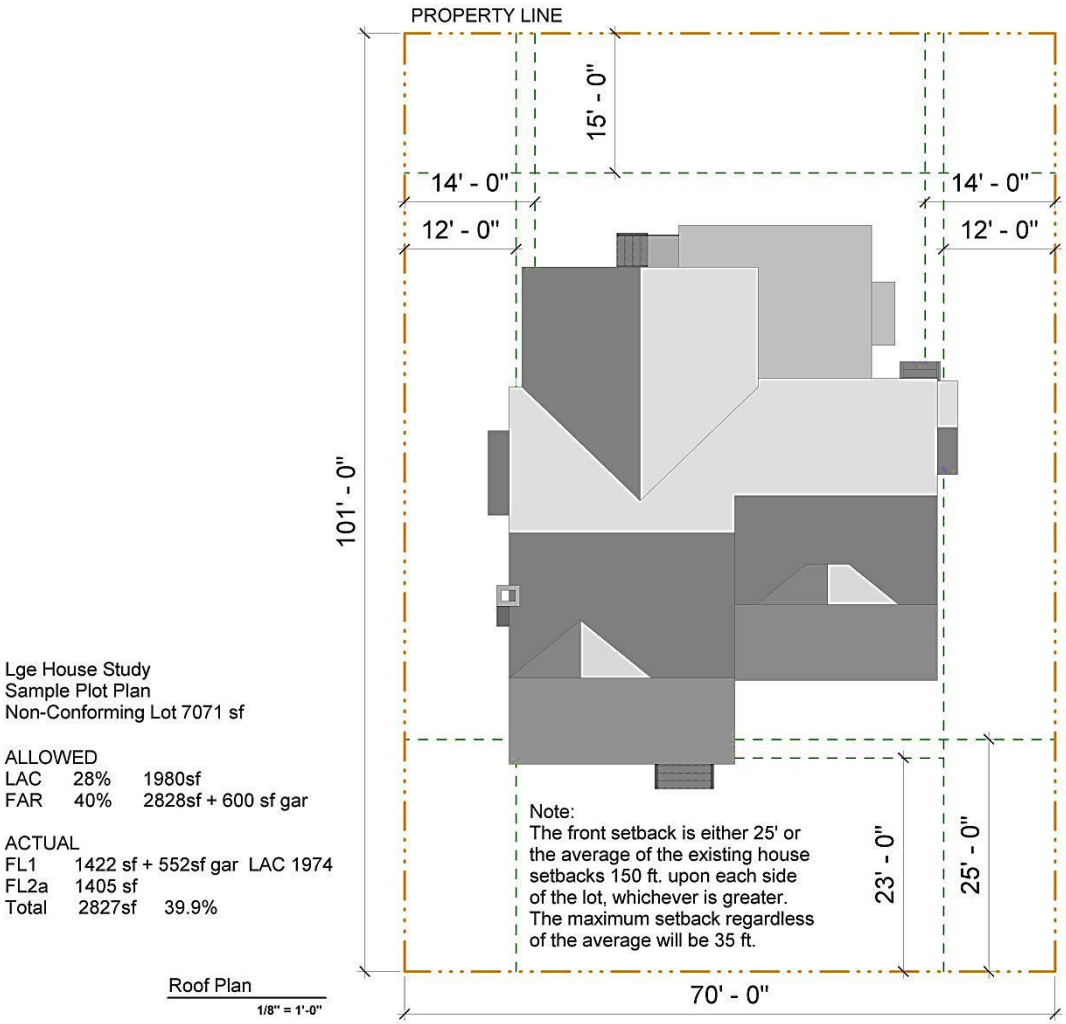

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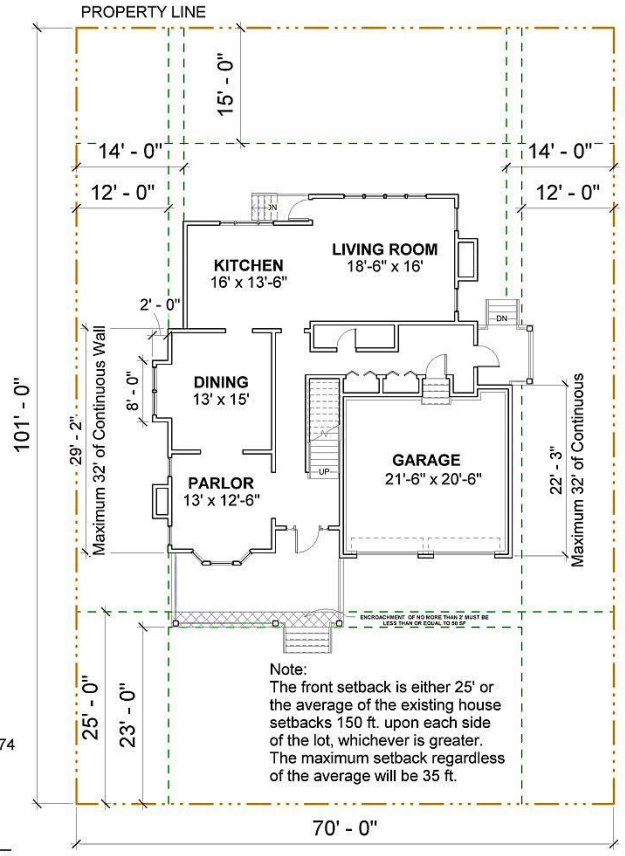
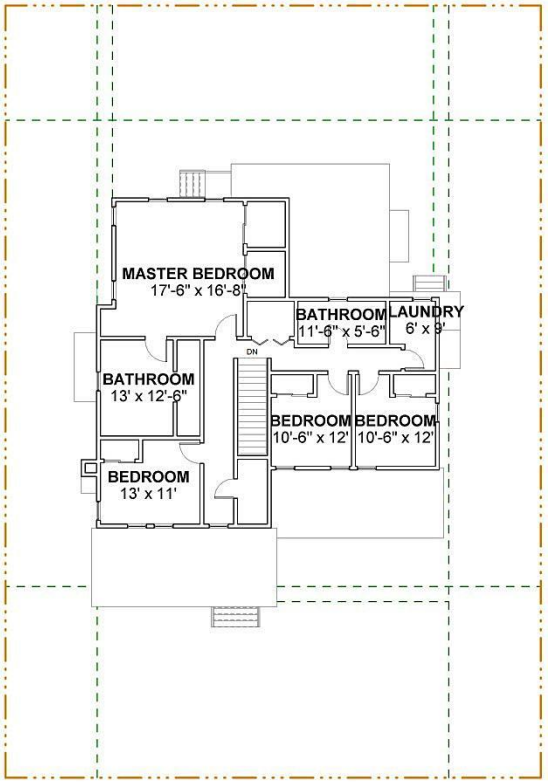


Lge House Study
Sample Plot Plan
Non-Conforming Lot 7071 sf

ALLOWED
LAC 28% 1980sf
FAR 40% 2828sf + 600 sf gar

ACTUAL
FL1 1422 sf + 552sf gar LAC 1974
FL2a 1405 sf
Total 2827sf 39.9%

First Floor
1/8" = 1'-0"



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Sample Plot Plan
Non-Conforming Lot 7071 sf

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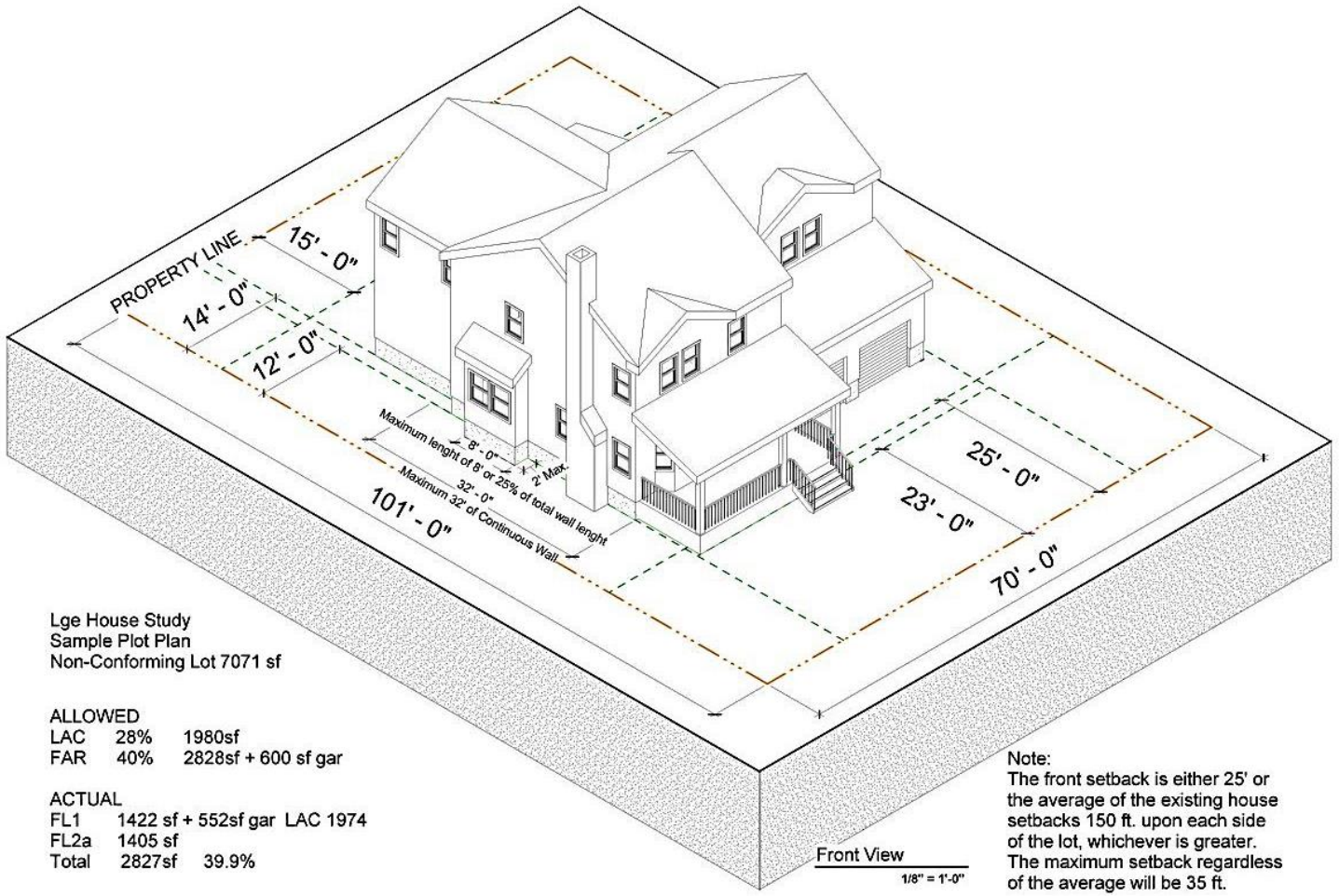
FAR 40% 2828sf + 600 sf gar

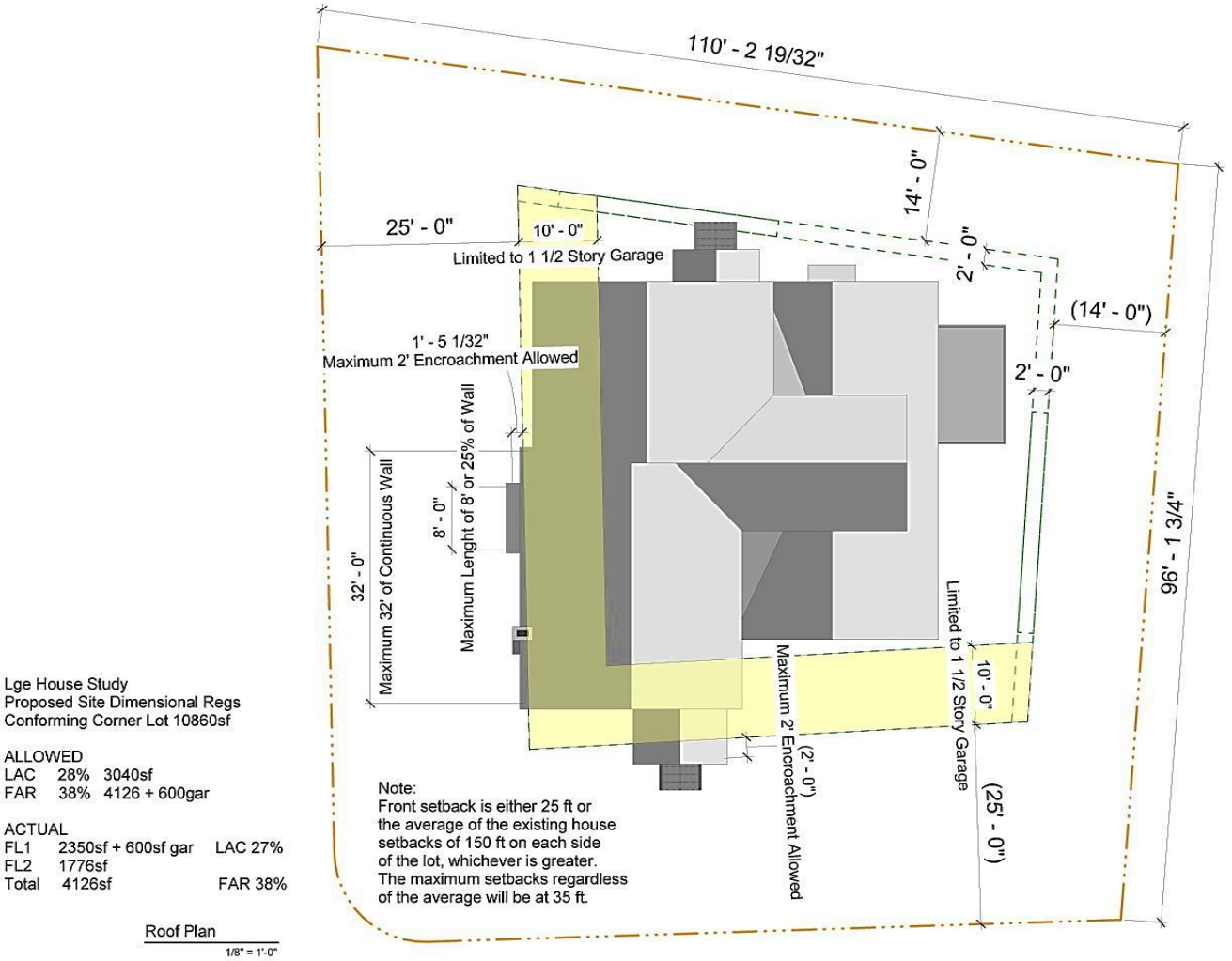
ACTUAL
FL1 1422 sf + 552sf gar LAC 1974
FL2a 1405 sf
Total 2827sf 39.9%

Second Floor
1/8" = 1'-0"

Proposed Regulations: Non-conforming Lot



Proposed Regulations: Corner Lot



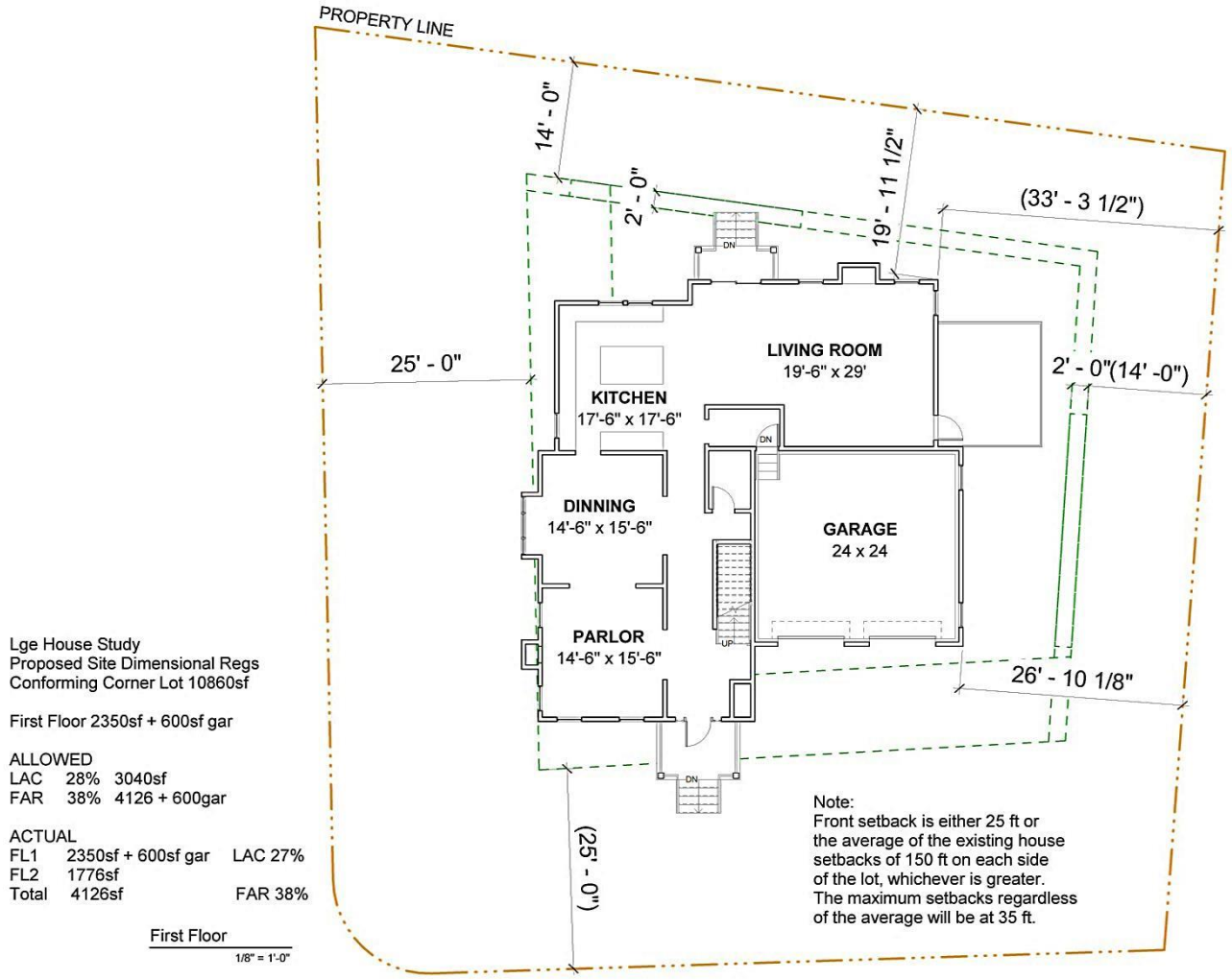
Lge House Study
Proposed Site Dimensional Regs
Conforming Corner Lot 10860sf

ALLOWED
LAC 28% 3040sf
FAR 38% 4126 + 600gar

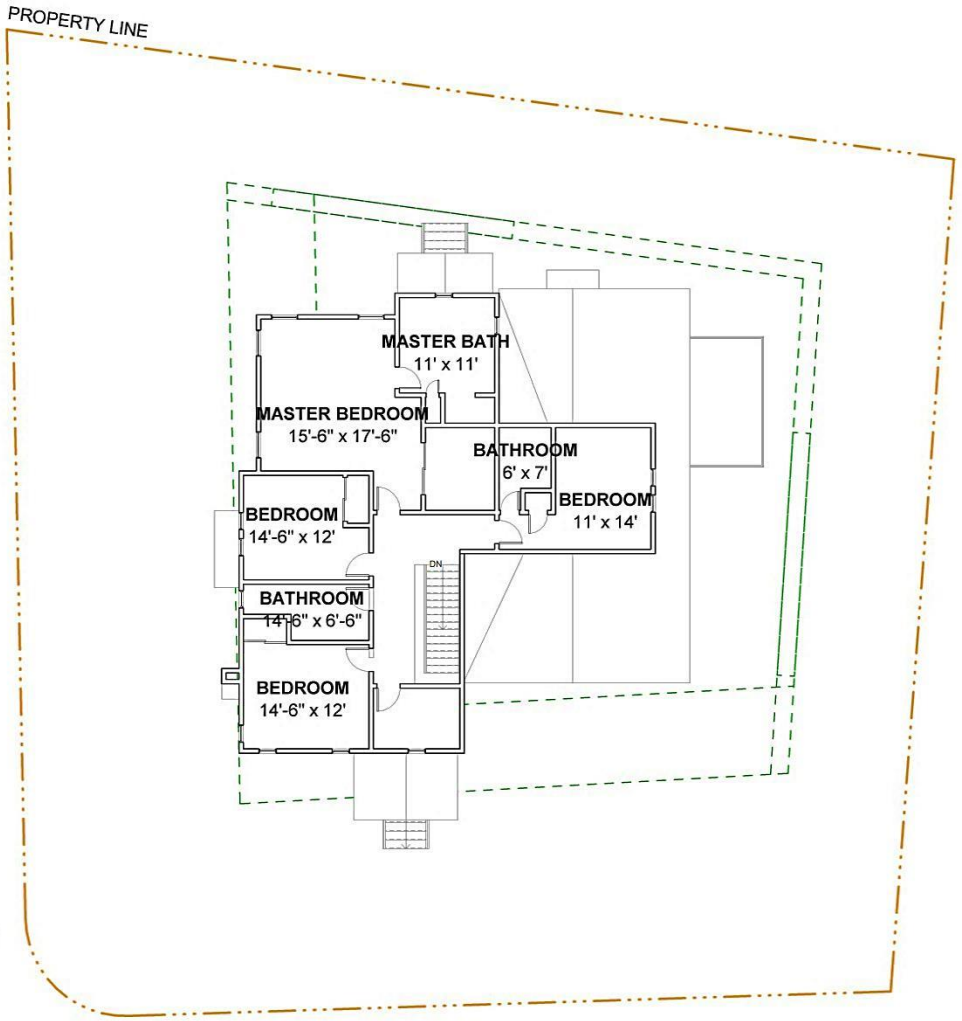
ACTUAL
FL1 2350sf + 600sf gar LAC 27%
FL2 1776sf
Total 4126sf FAR 38%

Roof Plan
1/8" = 1'-0"

Proposed Regulations: Corner Lot



Proposed Regulations: Corner Lot



Lge House Study
Proposed Site Dimensional Regs
Conforming Corner Lot 10860sf

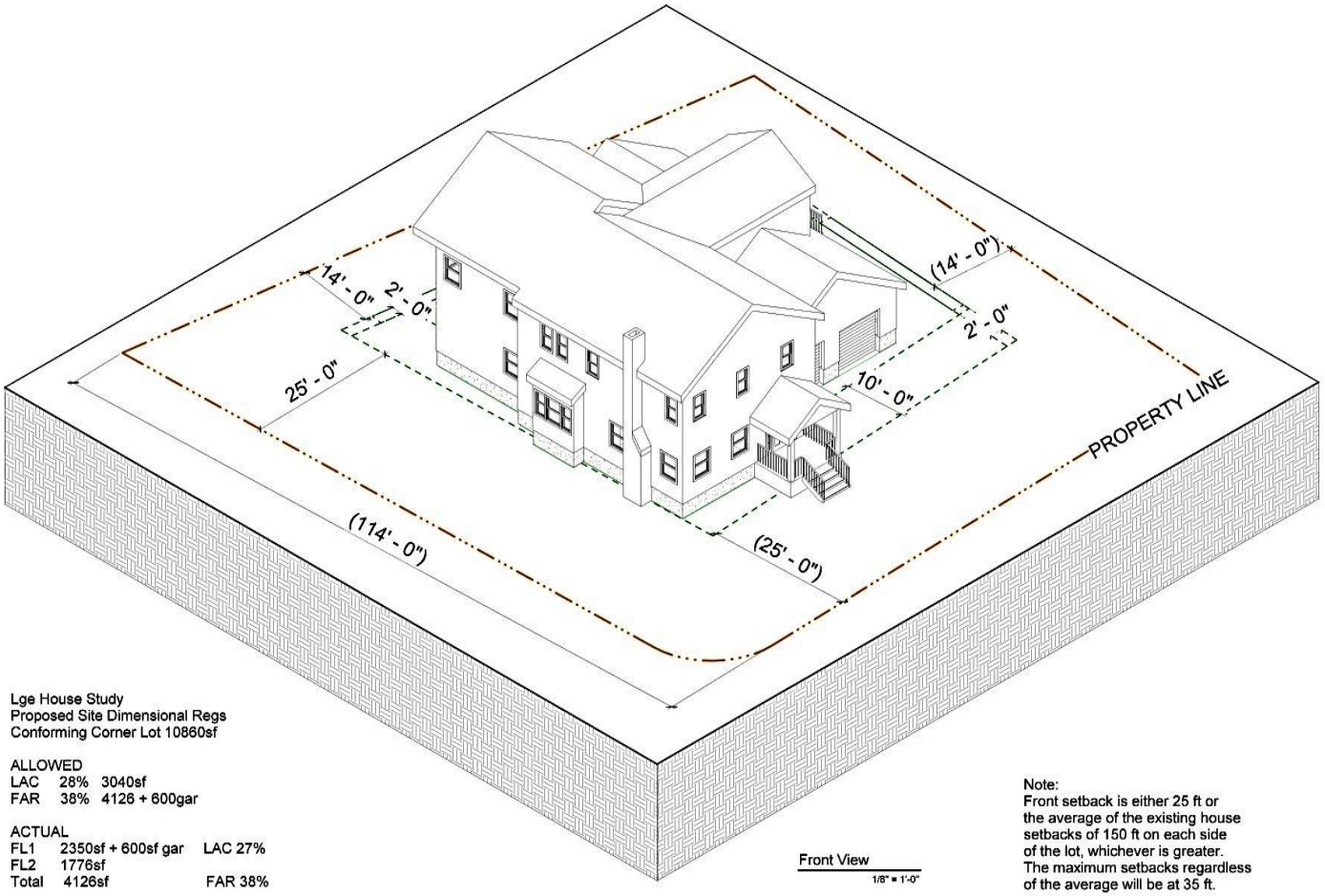
Second Floor 1770sf

ALLOWED
LAC 28% 3040sf
FAR 38% 4126 + 600gar

ACTUAL
FL1 2350sf + 600sf gar LAC 27%
FL2 1776sf
Total 4126sf FAR 38%

Second Floor
1/8" = 1'-0"

Proposed Regulations: Corner Lot



Lge House Study
Proposed Site Dimensional Regs
Conforming Corner Lot 10860sf

ALLOWED
LAC 28% 3040sf
FAR 38% 4126 + 600gar

ACTUAL
FL1 2350sf + 600sf gar LAC 27%
FL2 1776sf
Total 4126sf FAR 38%

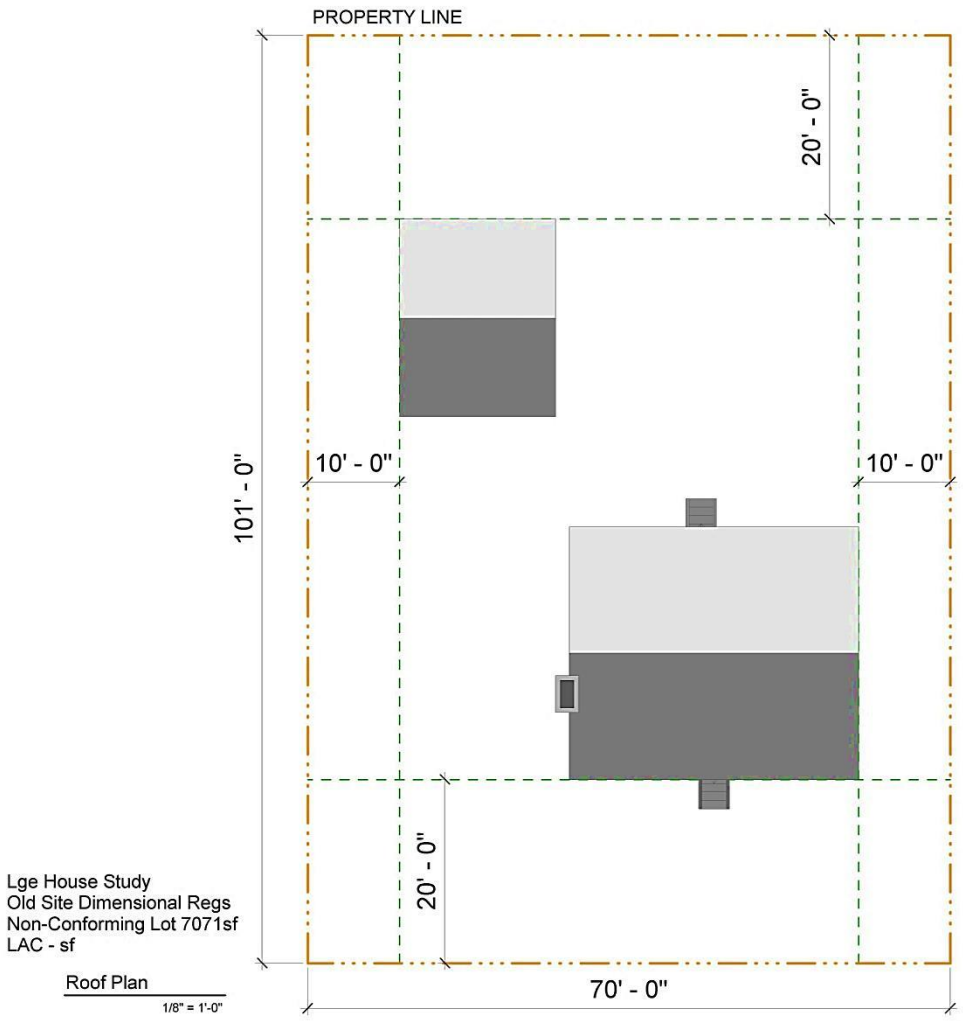
Front View
1/8" = 1'-0"

Note:
Front setback is either 25 ft or the average of the existing house setbacks of 150 ft on each side of the lot, whichever is greater. The maximum setbacks regardless of the average will be at 35 ft.

Summary of Changes

- Change building height measurement method
- Allow more building elements in setbacks
- Revise setbacks
- Increase Lot Area Coverage
- Cap house square footage by applying a Floor Area Ratio (FAR) calculation

Typical Existing Non-conforming Lot



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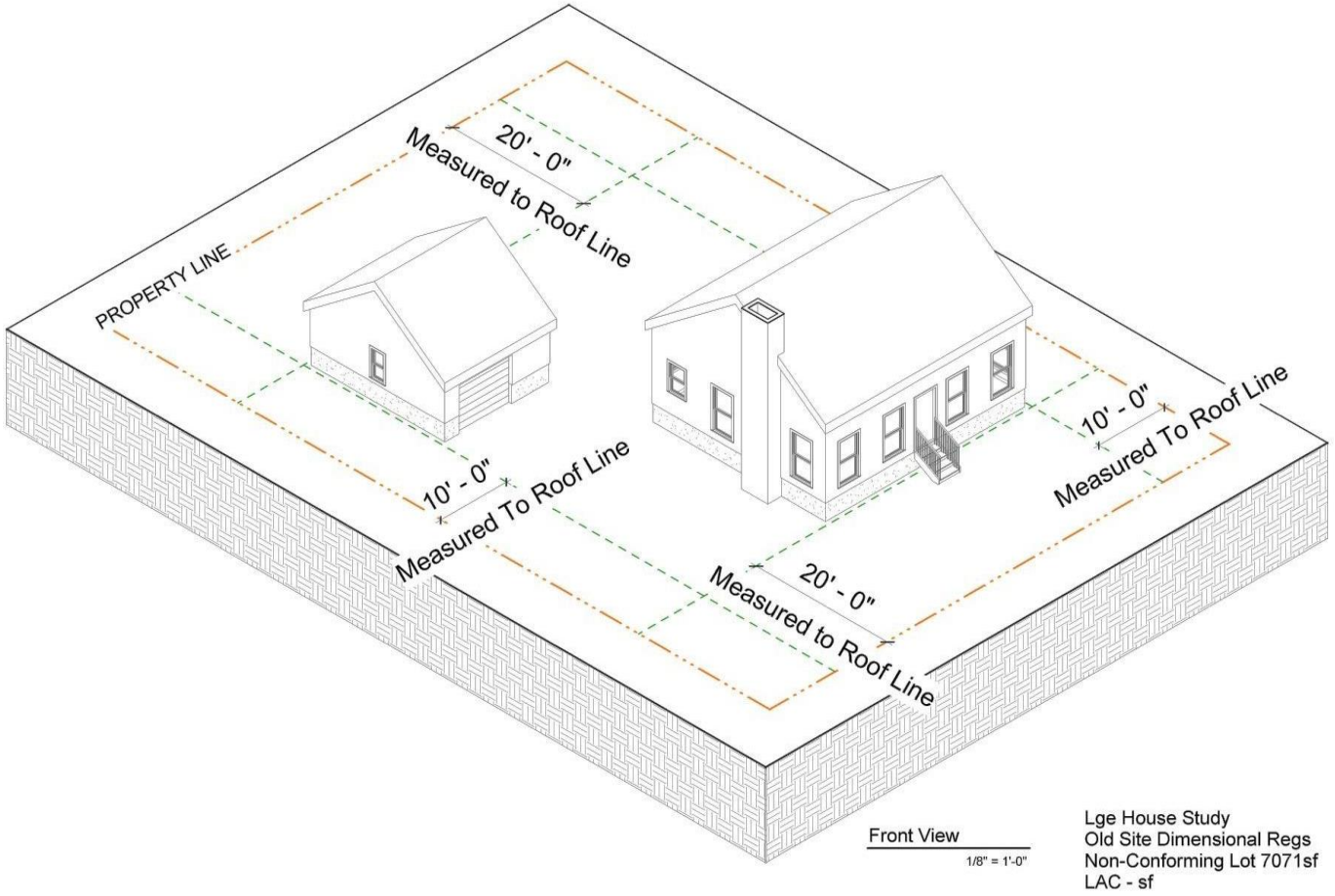
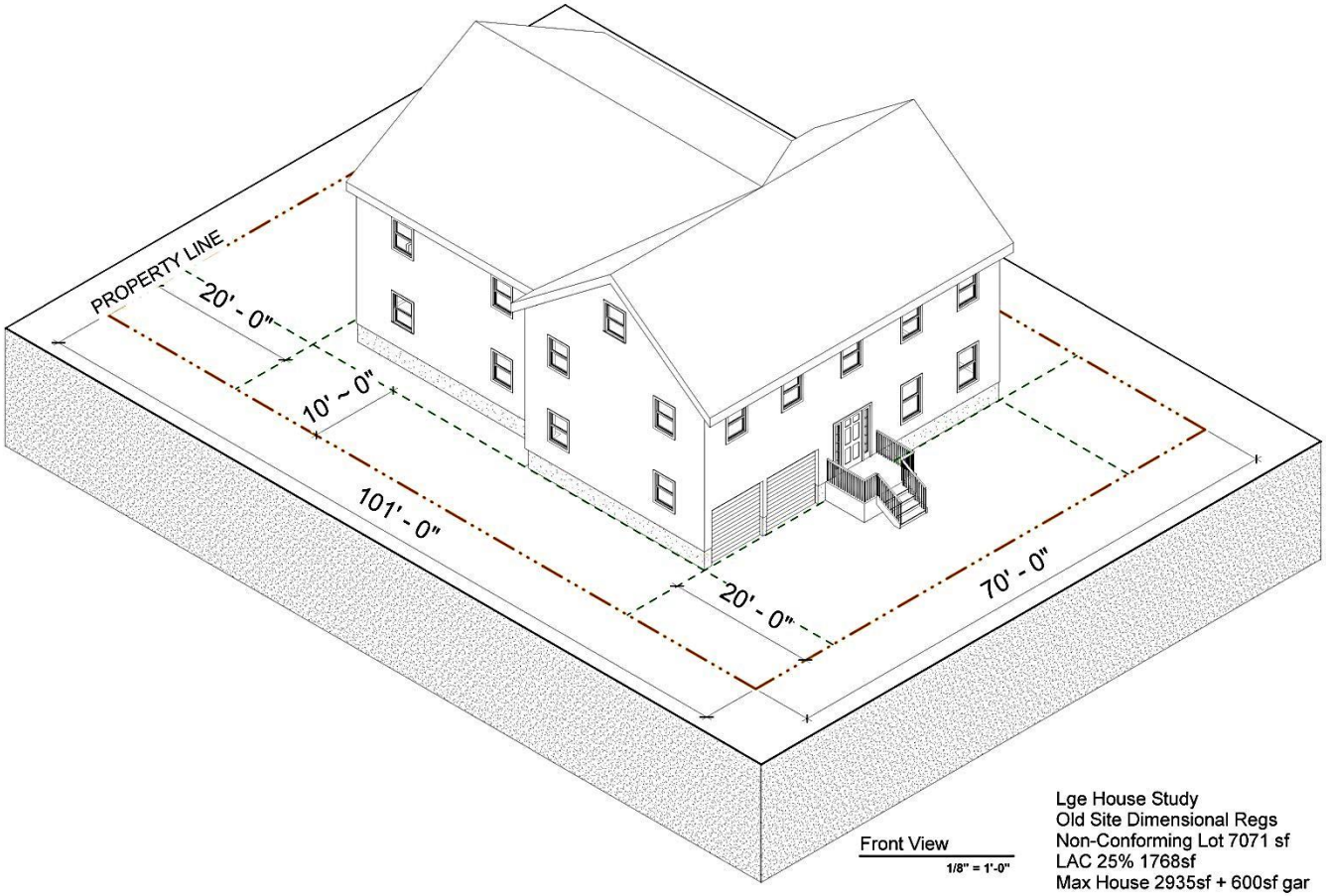
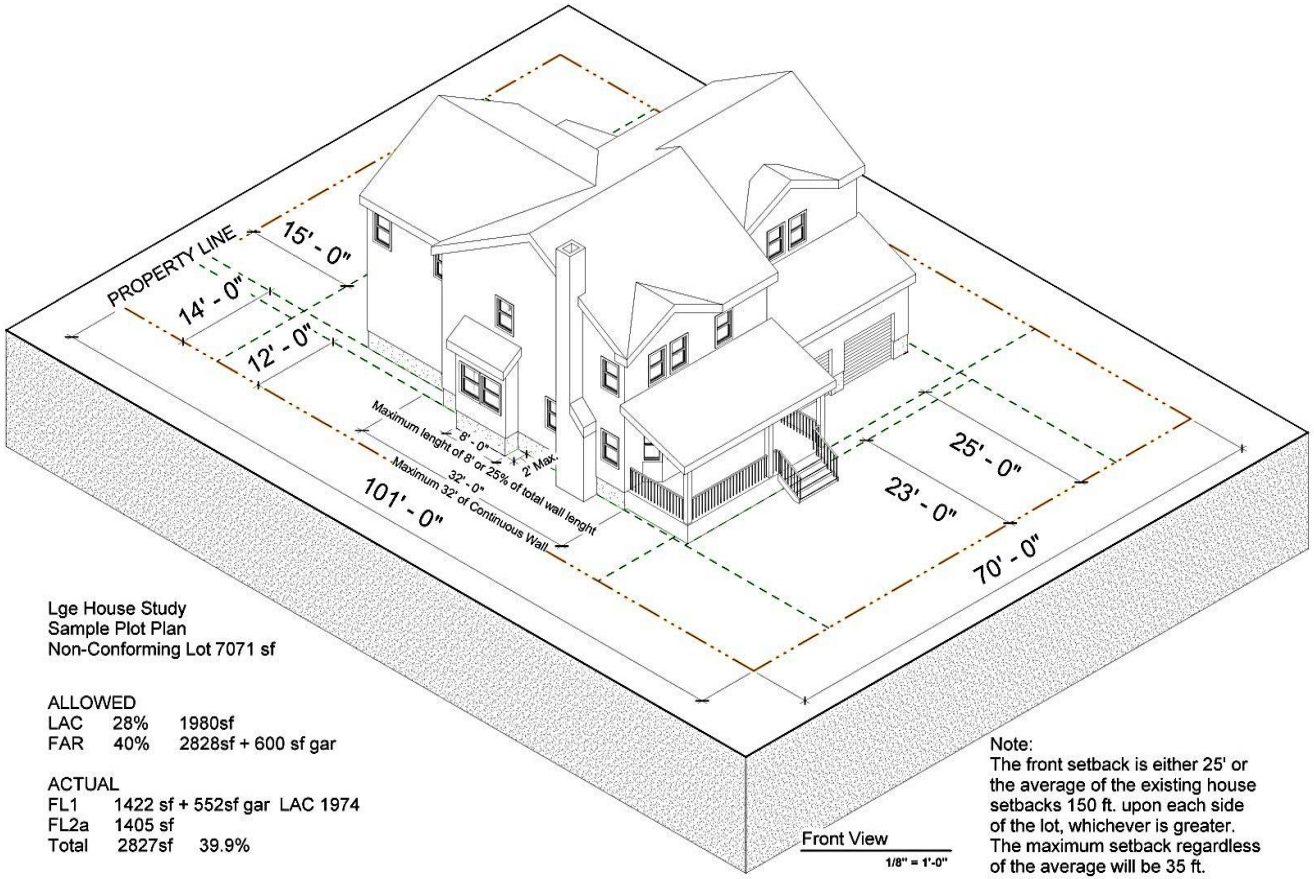


Maximum Replacement House for Non-conforming Lot under Existing Regs



Maximum Replacement House under Proposed Regs for Non-conforming Lot



Summary of Changes – Non-conforming Lot

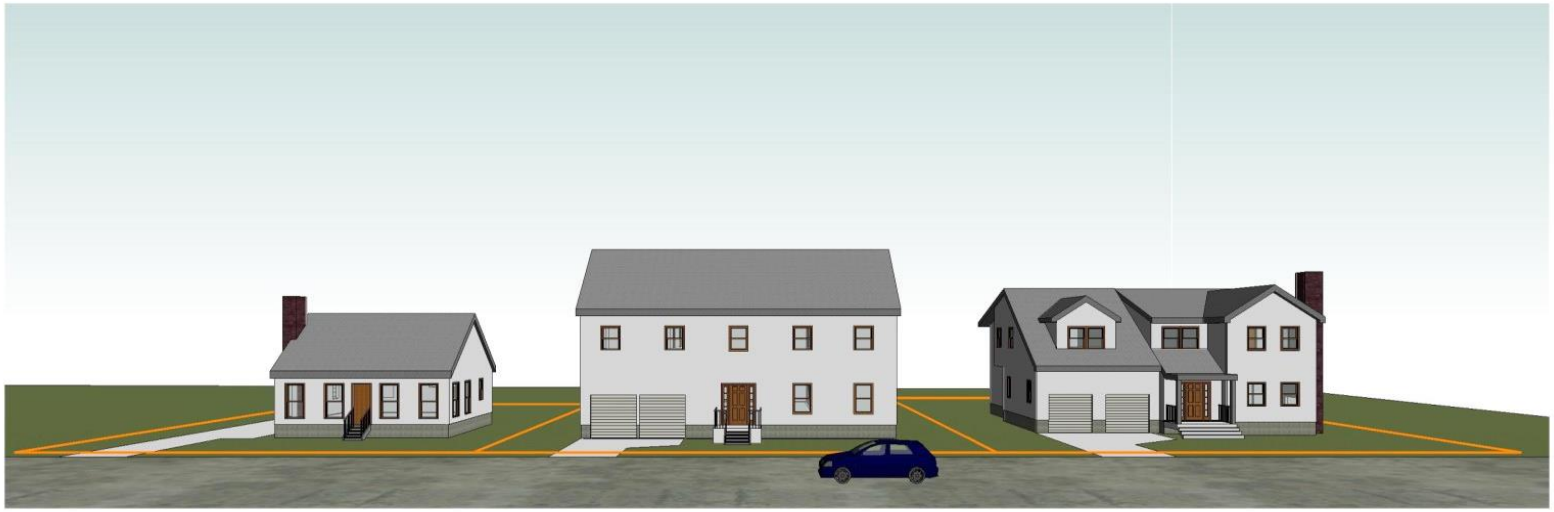
TYPICAL
EXISTING LOT
NON-COMFORMING

MAXIMUM REPLACEMENT
7170 sf Lot
LAC 25% 1768 sf
2935 + 600 sf gar

MAX REPLACEMENT
HOUSE
7170 sf Lot

LAC 28% FAR 40%
2827 sf + 600 sf gar

Summary of Changes – Conforming Lot



TYPICAL EXISTING
CONFORMING LOT

MAXIMUM REPLACEMENT
HOUSE UNDER CURRENT
REGULATIONS

10,000 sf Lot
LAC 25% 2500 sf
4,400 sf + 600 sf gar

MAX REPLACEMENT HOUSE
UNDER PROPOSED REGS

10,000 sf Lot
LAC 28% FAR 38%
3795 sf + 600 sf gar