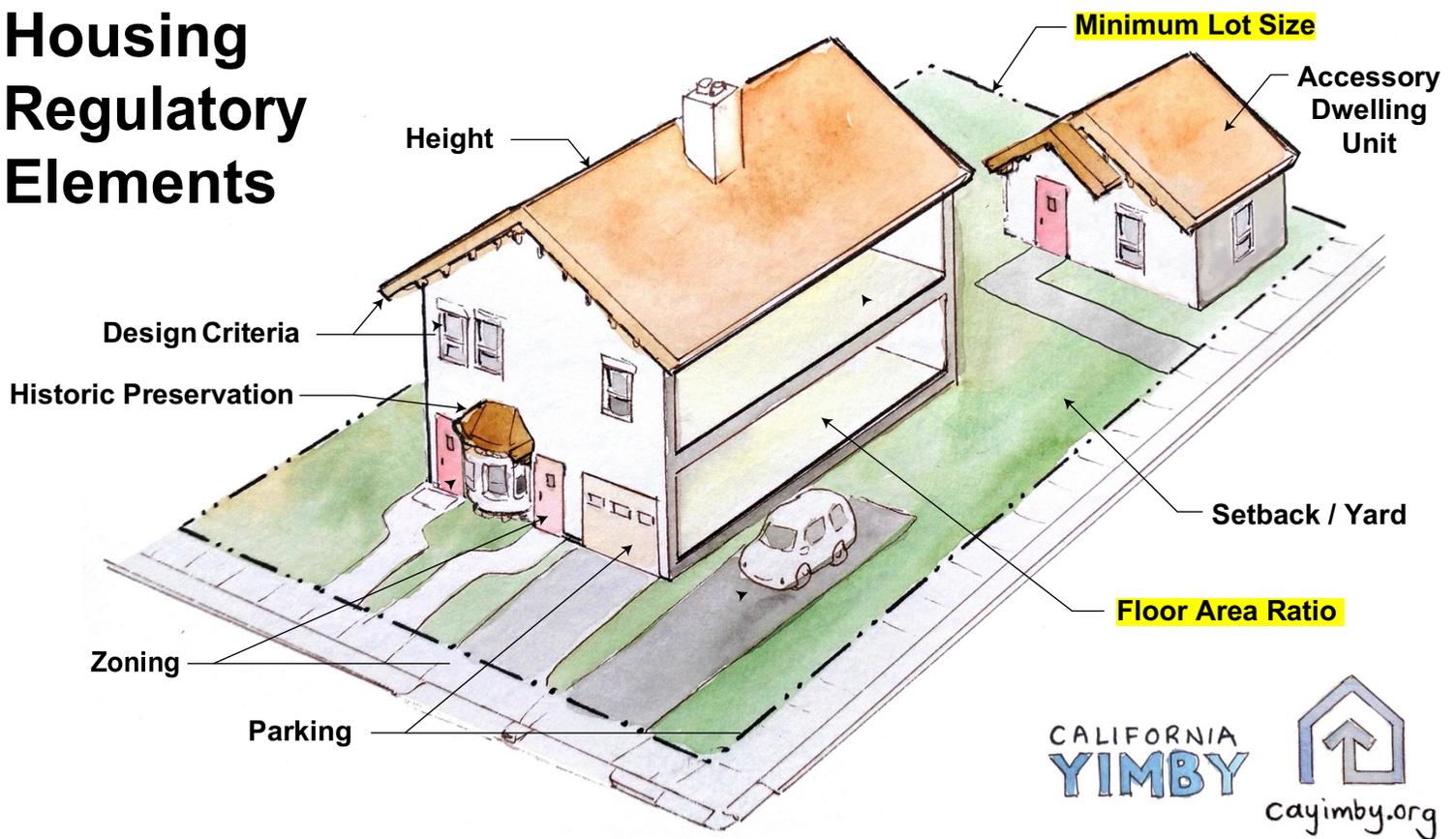


Housing Regulatory Elements



SB 478 only makes changes to the floor-area ratios and minimum lot sizes.

Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)

Homeowners can add one or two Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) on nearly every lot in California. However, cities can still impose objective standards like setbacks, height maximums, and size restrictions on these units.

Design Criteria

Regulations about how a building looks, such as roof slope, wall materials, windows, etc.

Design criteria is often a subjective standard that can become a barrier to housing production.

Floor Area Ratio (FAR)

The floor area ratio is the measurement of a building's floor area in relation to the size of the lot that the building is located on. For example, a 1-story building that covers the whole lot has a FAR of 1. A 2-story building that covers half the lot also has a FAR of 1.

Low FAR ratios can limit the number of homes that are able to be built on a lot.

Height

Distance from ground to top of roof. Chimneys, elevator shafts, and decorative features are usually excluded when calculating height. Height limits can limit the number of feasible units in the building.

Historic Preservation

Regulations that require part or all of a historic building to remain unchanged.

Historic preservation districts often require additional review and approvals on construction.

Minimum Lot Size

The smallest lot that can be created. In cities, minimum lot size of 5000 square feet (such as this illustrated example) or less are common, allowing a lot that is 50 feet wide and 100 feet deep. In some suburban areas, lot size minimums might be a half-acre (21,780 square feet) or more.

Large minimum lot sizes reduce the availability of buildable land and combined with low FAR can limit density and can increase housing prices.

Setback / Yard

The minimum distance required between a building and the edge of the property. Typically, there are different requirements for front, side, and rear yards.

Setbacks effectively limit the minimum size of buildings and can reduce density.

Parking

Space for cars, can include parking lots, carports, and garages. Typically, each parking space and the driveways to get to it take up at least 300-400 square feet.

Parking requirements increase the cost of construction and decrease the livable area of a lot.

Zoning

Regulations on what type of uses are allowed (such as residential, retail, or industrial), as well as the number of homes, size of building, etc.

By explicitly limiting the number of units allowed on a lot, zoning is a city's main tool in limiting housing production.

