

OFFICE OF BUSINESS AND EXTERNAL SERVICES  
DEPARTMENT OF SAFETY AND PERMITS  
**CITY OF NEW ORLEANS**

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Date: April 1, 2021

To: Tammie Jackson, Director, Dept. of Safety & Permits

From: Zachary Smith, Chief Building Official, Dept. of Safety & Permits

CC: Jay Dufour, Ashley Becnel, Nicholas Kindel, Eneida Alison, Jacquelyn Frick, Robert Rivers

Re: Application and Interpretation of Building Code(s) for Subdivisions, Re-subdivisions, and  
“de-bulking” of real property

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The purpose of this memo is to clarify the Departmental policy related to the requirements for consideration of building code related to subdivision, resubdivision, and “de-bulking” requests for real property.

While subdivisions and resubdivisions are currently defined via the CZO, the process of “debulking” is not. De-bulking of a site is generally the creation of several parcels from a larger parcel that may or may not be comprised of several smaller, historic lots. In reality, these smaller, historic lots have been used as one larger property. In many instances, previous development patterns have treated the historic lots as a singular lot, specifically for fire safety as part of the building code. This has created issues where a structure might actually straddle on these historic lot lines but be completely contained on a larger developed parcel.

To clarify the position of the Department, as it relates to interpretation of the building code, the following is offered:

Where a parcel is subdivided, or where a parcel is “debulked” into smaller parcels, the new lot lines and/or the new parcel boundaries shall be reviewed for fire safety purposes from this new boundary. For the purpose of this memo, the Department interprets these new boundaries, whether a newly created lot line or a new parcel boundary that was not immediately defined with the prior development, to be the point of measure to determine the “fire separation distance”.

For instance:

A parcel is measured 120'-0" deep by 60'-0" wide. The current property owner desires to split this into two separate parcels, each measuring 120'-0" deep by 30'-0". Historically, this larger (120'x60') parcel contained two smaller (120'x30') lots but has been used for a period of time as one contiguous lot. Upon review of the “debulking” request, the Building Official shall only approve the request if all existing structures comply with the fire separation distance requirements of the applicable building code provisions. If a structure is non-compliant in setback, it may be upgraded to become compliant or seek waiver of the fire separation distance requirements. (Existing structures shall be reviewed as new when a new parcel boundary or new lot line is created.

This interpretation shall apply to properties subject to either/or the International Residential Code or the International Building Code, as adopted by the City of New Orleans.

In instances where a parcel is “debulked” and the structure is non-compliant in setback, the situation shall be remedied (permits issued, upgrades completed, and inspected) prior to the approval of the “debulking” request.

For any inquiries, please contact Zachary Smith at [zsmith@nola.gov](mailto:zsmith@nola.gov) or Jay Dufour at [Jay.Dufour@nola.gov](mailto:Jay.Dufour@nola.gov).

