



CITY OF LAREDO
PLANNING & ZONING DEPARTMENT
BUILDING DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DIVISION

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Memorandum

To: Building Development Services Staff and Customers

Thru: Ms. Vanessa Guerra, Planning & Zoning Director *VG*
Mr. Rodolfo Santillan Jr, Assistant Director, Building Development Services *RS*

From: Ms. Alejandra Martinez, Building Official, Building Development Services *AM*

Date: August 22nd, 2025

Re: Discontinuation of Mirrored Plan Submittals – Effective August 25th, 2025

This memorandum formally notifies all relevant parties that **mirrored (flipped) plan submittals will no longer be accepted**, effective **August 25, 2025**.

Purpose:

Mirrored (flipped) plans frequently result in construction errors, misinterpretation in the field, and violations of applicable codes.

To ensure accurate plan review, permit processing, and code compliance, **all submitted plan sets must reflect the final, true orientation of the building or structure.**

The following list outlines the most critical code, coordination, and design issues associated with mirrored plans, particularly under the **2021 International Building Code (IBC)** and **International Residential Code (IRC)**, along with local regulations and performance-based design implications.

Risks and Considerations When Mirroring Building Plans (IBC/IRC 2021)

- 1. Incorrect Orientation of Egress Components**
 - Reversed layouts can affect **window and door locations, door swing direction, stair placement, and exit travel distances**, potentially violating **Chapter 10 (IBC) or R311 (IRC)**.
- 2. Misplacement or Disruption of Fire-Rated Wall Assemblies**
 - Mirroring may reverse **fire walls, party walls, or rated assemblies**, compromising **fire separation (IBC Chapter 7 / IRC R302)** and violating **setback or lot line requirements**, especially in **townhomes or narrow lots**.
- 3. MEP Coordination Issues**
 - Mirrored plans can result in misaligned **HVAC ducts, plumbing stacks, and electrical service entries**, causing costly field corrections and inspection delays.
- 4. Non-Compliance with Emergency Egress Windows**
 - Mirrored bedrooms may place windows where they no longer meet **minimum opening area, sill height, or access to public way requirements (IBC 1030 / IRC R310)**.

5. **Energy Code Violations Due to Orientation**
 - Mirrored designs may unintentionally change **glazing orientation, solar heat gain coefficients, and overhang shading**, impacting **IECC or IRC N1101–N1104** compliance in energy models.
6. **Disruption of Passive Design Strategies**
 - Orientation reversal can undermine strategies like **natural ventilation, daylighting, or thermal massing**, which are essential in **green, Net Zero, or Passive House** designs.
7. **Improper Reversal of Storm water Drainage or Site Grading**
 - Mirroring may invert grading slopes or **disrupt drainage flow**, violating **site development or storm water management** regulations—especially critical near property lines or easements.
8. **Fire Separation Distance & Zero-Lot-Line Conflicts**
 - Mirrored buildings may not maintain **minimum fire separation distances** from adjacent structures or lot lines, violating IBC Table 602 or IRC R302.1.
9. **Incorrect Placement of Accessibility Features**
 - Mirroring may interfere with **accessible routes, ramp slopes, or clear floor spaces** required under **IBC Chapter 11 or ICC A117.1** (note: IRC applies accessibility only when adopted or required by HUD/FHA).
10. **Inconsistency Between Plans and Field Conditions**
 - Inspectors may encounter mismatches between permitted plans and what's built, causing **confusion, inspection delays, or a correction notice**.
11. **Design Review or HOA Conflicts**
 - Mirrored façades may violate **local design guidelines**, subdivision covenants, or **neighborhood character requirements**, especially where architectural variety is mandated.
12. **Site Utility Conflicts**
 - Reversing plans may interfere with **water meter placement, sewer connections, gas/electric meter locations, or utility easements**, leading to redesigns or costly trenching changes.
13. **Stair Geometry & Headroom Issues**
 - Reversed stairs may violate **minimum headroom, rise/run ratios, or landing requirements**, especially where structural framing doesn't align.
14. **Smoke/CO Alarm Placement Errors**
 - Mirroring may displace required **alarms in sleeping areas, hallways, or floors**, leading to violations of IBC 907 or IRC R314/R315.
15. **Reduced Life Safety Performance in Mirrored Units**
 - Mirroring plans without thorough code review can reduce the effectiveness of life safety measures (e.g., protected egress paths or suppression system layouts), even if the mirrored plan is not technically noncompliant.

Action Required:

- All plan submittals must reflect the **final, intended orientation** of the building.
- Each plan must be **reviewed and submitted as a unique configuration**; mirrored plans will not be considered code-compliant by default.
- Mirrored plan sets will be **rejected during intake**, and applicants will be required to **resubmit corrected plans**, which may delay project approvals.

Thank you for your attention to this policy update and for your continued commitment to safe, high-quality, and code-compliant construction practices.