

Community LID Workgroup Issue Paper #8

Topic: Bulk & Dimensional Standards

Objective: Ensure that the scale, site coverage and configuration of buildings support onsite stormwater infiltration, where feasible.

Background/Problem: Zoning regulations typically include guidelines that limit the location and size of structures on a parcel – these include setbacks, height limits, and minimum lot widths. These standards were generally put in place for either safety reasons or aesthetic considerations. Front yard setbacks (which dictate how far houses must be from the street) can extend driveway lengths and increase impervious coverage of the lot. Side yard setbacks and wide frontages can increase total road length, and reduce flexibility on where buildings are placed in a site design. Building height limits can require larger building footprints for the same capacity. Raising height limits could reduce the amount of total impervious surface.

Analysis: Thurston County requires that commercial and residential structures over 120 square feet in floor area meet minimum yard setback requirements (*See table below*). General setback requirements are set out as follows, though they differ within specific zoning districts:

Building Type	Arterial, State Highway and RR ROW	Collector, Local and Private Roads	Side Yard	Rear Yard
a. Commercial, industrial and other nonresidential	35' from right-of-way easement or property line; 10' from right-of-way of a flanking street	25' from right-of-way easement or property line; 10' from right-of-way of a flanking street	10'	10'
b. Residential exceeding two units per structure	30'; 10' from right-of-way of a flanking street	20'; 10' from right-of-way of a flanking street	10'	10'
c. Single-family and two-family structures	30'; 10' from right-of-way of a flanking street	20'; 10' from right-of-way of a flanking street	6'	10'
d. Buildings housing animals	50'	50'	35'	35'

Thurston County's setback standards are generally in line with rural standards in other jurisdictions, although they are larger than those in some areas.

	Type of Development	Front Yard, Arterial	Front Yard, non-arterial	Side Yard	Rear Yard
Pierce County (18A.15.040)					
	Urban	20-25'	15'	0-10'	0-10'
	Rural	25'	25'	0-10'; (30 Ag, LTF)	0-30'; (30 Ag, LTF)
Kitsap County (17.382)					
	Urban Residential	10-20'	10-20'	5'	5'
	Commercial and Mixed Use	10-20'	10-20'	10'	10-20'
	Industrial	20'	20'	20'	20'
	LAMIRD	10-20'	10-20'	5'	5-15'
	Rural and Resource	20-50'	20-50'	20'	20'
	Agricultural structures	50'	50'	50'	50'
King County (21A.12.030)					
	Rural	30'	30'	5-10'	5-10'
	Residential	10-20'	10-20'	5'	5'
	Resource	30-50'	30-50'	10'; (100 for LTF)	10'; (100 for LTF)
	Commercial	10'	10'	20'	20'
	Industrial	25'	25'	20'	20'
Jefferson County (18.30)					
	Resource	35-50'	20-30'	5'	5'
	Rural Residential	35-50'	20-30'	5'	5'
	Rural Commercial	35'	20-30'	5'	5'
	Rural Industrial	35'	20-30'	10-20'	10-20'
Olympia (18.04)					
	Residential	10-20'; (5' for Ag)	10-20'; (5' Ag)	5' (10' flanking)	5' (10' flanking)
	Urban/Neighborhood Village	20'	20'	5'	15-20'
	Commercial	0-10'	0-10'	0-10'	10'
	Industrial	0'	0'	0'	0'

Lacey (16)					
	Residential	10-20'	10-20'	5'	15-20'
	Corridors	0'; (max 15')	0'; (max 15')	10'	15'
	Commercial	10-15'	10-15'	10-15'	10-20'
	Industrial	15-20'	20'	15-25'	25'
Tumwater (18.42)					
	Residential	10-25'	10-20'	5-10'	5-20'
	Commercial	0-10'	0-10'	0-5'	0-5'
	Industrial	10-20'	10-20'	0-10'	0-10'
Tenino (106.20)					
	Residential	10-20'	10-20'	5-15'	10-35'
	MultiFam and Mixed Use	15'	15'	5'	10'
	Commercial	0'	0'	0'	0'
	Industrial	0'	0'	0'	0'
Rainier (18.40)					
	Residential	10'	10'	5'	10'
	Commercial	0'	0'	0'	0'
	Industrial	10'	0'	0'	0'

Setbacks could be reduced, although front setbacks in residential districts should still be large enough that a driveway is long enough to park a car. This is a minimum of 20 feet, to match the parking standard.

Most zones have a height limit of 35 feet, with the exception of commercial districts, which have a 40-foot limit and Light Industrial, which has a 65-foot limit. Certain structures (e.g., barns, silos, chimneys) are excluded from height limits. The 35-foot limit generally allows for a 2-3 story building. This is similar to height standards in other jurisdictions.

- Pierce County: 35-40 ft. for most zones; 60 ft. for commercial centers; 70 ft. for Urban Village
- Kitsap County: 35 ft. for Urban residential (except multifamily), rural commercial, rural resource
- Snohomish County:
 - Resource = 30-45

- Rural = 35-45; RI = 50
- Other = 25-35
- Urban = 35-90

Staff considered raising height limits, particularly for Commercial or Industrial zones, however, greater height limits may not be in keeping with rural character and may not substantially change building footprints, since most development currently is able to infiltrate stormwater on site under the current building height limits. In addition, our fire chiefs raised fire safety concerns; fire trucks used in the county carry ladders that can reach 24 to 28 ft., which facilitate a rescue from a second story or (depending on grade) third story window. The only units with ladder lengths beyond these standards are the two aerial ladders operated by the Lacey and Olympia Fire Departments. These units have 105-foot aerial devices for taller building access, however, they are not typically used to respond to emergencies outside of the urban core areas. Any additions to height limits in the rural areas would need to include mandated fire escape accommodations and roof access.

Recommendations:

Setbacks

Revised Standard Front yard setbacks

Building Type	Arterial, State Highway and RR ROW	Collector, Local and Private Roads	Side Yard	Rear Yard
a. Commercial, industrial and other nonresidential	35 20' from right-of-way easement or property line; 10' from right-of-way of a flanking street	25 10' from right-of-way easement or property line; 10' from right-of-way of a flanking street	10 6'	10 6'
b. Residential exceeding two units per structure	30 25'; 10' from right-of-way of a flanking street	20'; 10' from right-of-way of a flanking street	10 6'	10 6'
c. Single-family and two-family structures	30 25'; 10' from right-of-way of a flanking street	20'; 10' from right-of-way of a flanking street	6'	10 6'
d. Buildings housing animals	50'	50'	35'	35'

- LTA, Nisqually Agricultural District, LTF, and Agritourism Overlay: maintain larger setbacks because of agricultural/resource use

- RR 1/5, RRR 1/5, R 1/20, R 1/10, RL 1/2, RL 1/1, RL 2/1, R 3-6/1, R 4-16, MGSA follow revised standard front yard setbacks
- Would be a change for RR1/5, RL 1/2, RL 1/1, RL 2/1, R 3-6/1, R 4-16, MGSA which have had specific setback requirements for single and two-family residential – these were closer to the new recommended setbacks.
- Shrink setbacks for industrial and some commercial zones (PI, LI, RRI, NC, RCC): front setback = 10 ft., except 20 ft. on arterials
- Retain larger setbacks for Arterial Commercial and Highway Commercial

Height Limits

- No proposed change to height limits, due to fire safety concerns

Community LID Workgroup Discussion:

- What do you think of the recommended setback changes? Do they aid in allowing site designs that better incorporate low-impact designs?
- Are there other dimensional standards that limit LID designs?