

# Residential Small-Lot Single-Family Zoning Regulations

This Tip Sheet may be used as a guide for zoning standards for small-lot development in Residential Districts and does not apply to pipestem lots or other zoning districts. The applicant is responsible for reviewing full code regulations listed in Sections 13.06.020 and 13.06.020.K and 13.06.100.F of the Tacoma Municipal Code (TMC).

## SMALL-LOT SIZE STANDARDS

Minimum Standard Lot requirements for lot width, lot area, and lot frontage are listed in TMC Section 13.06.020 (also [Tip Sheet L-100](#)). Parcels that do not meet these standards are considered Small Lots. Small Lots are categorized as Level 1 or Level 2. Design standards are summarized below for the creation of new small lots and development of existing small lots.

### Allowances for Computing Lot Area

**Lot Size Averaging – Infill:** To provide for consistency with pre-existing development patterns, the average size of lots along the street frontage and block (excluding the site) may be substituted for that district's Standard Lot size.

**Lot Size Averaging – Subdivisions:** Within proposed Short and Full Plats, lots in the R-1 District may be 4,500 sq ft and may be 3,000 sq ft in other districts, provided that the overall *average lot size within the Plat* meets the Standard Lot size of the zoning district. Critical areas and buffers may not be counted toward lot size averaging.

**Alley lot area credit:** In R-1, R-2, R2-SRD and HMR-SRD Districts, half of the width of abutting alleys which are utilized for vehicular access to the lot may count toward minimum lot area, up to an additional reduction equivalent to 10 percent of the Standard Lot size.

Minimum Lot Dimensions							
R-1	R-2	R-2 SRD	HMR-SRD	R-3	R-4L	R-4	R-5
Standard Lot Size (square feet)							
7,500	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000
Level 1 Small Lot Design: Lot Area (square feet)							
6,750	4,500	4,500	4,500	3,500	3,000	2,500	2,500
Level 2 Small Lot Design: Lot Area (square feet)							
4,500	3,000	3,000	3,000	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500
Standard Average Lot Width (feet)							
50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
Small Lot Average Lot Width (feet)							
45	35	35	35	30	25	25	25

## HEIGHT

Lots that have an average width of 40 feet – 50 feet have a height limitation of 30 feet, as measured per the IRC.

Lots that have an average width of less than 40 feet have a height limitation of 25 feet, as measured per the IRC.

Any main dwelling in the View-Sensitive District (VSD) has a height limitation of 25 feet, as measured by the Land Use Code definition of Building Height in the VSD.

## LEVEL 1 DESIGN STANDARDS

Applies to new single-family dwellings on new or existing lots that are smaller than the Standard Lot size.

### Clear Building Entries

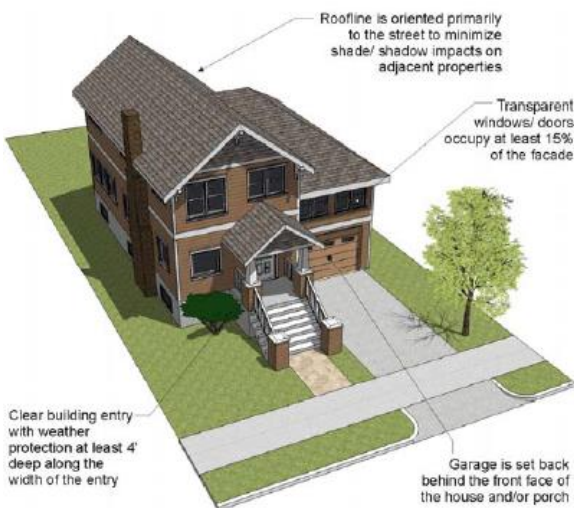
A clearly defined building entrance must be incorporated that faces the street and has weather protection that is at least 4 feet deep along the width of the building entry (porches may be used to meet this standard).

### Floor Area Ratio

Houses developed on Small Lots shall not exceed a Floor Area Ratio of 0.5. Floor Area Ratio is the ratio of the total floor area of the home compared to the lot area, not including spaces below grade and accessory structures.

### Garages

Garages may be located in the rear of the lot with rear access to the lot. Where rear access is not available, or cannot be developed, garages or carports must be set back at least 5 feet behind the front façade of the house, or from the front of a covered porch if the porch is at least 48 square feet and contains no dimension less than 6 feet. In addition, garage doors and carports shall not occupy more than 50% of the width of the front façade.



**Note:** This Tip Sheet does not substitute for codes and regulations.

The applicant is responsible for compliance with all codes and regulations, whether or not described in this document.

More information: City of Tacoma, Planning and Development Services | [www.tacomapermits.org](http://www.tacomapermits.org) (253) 591-5030

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## Façade Transparency

Houses must be oriented with the front of the home facing the street. At least 15% of any façade facing a street shall be transparent. A façade includes all vertical surfaces of the façade of a dwelling, not including exposed foundations and unfinished attic space.

## Rooflines

Primary rooflines shall be oriented towards the front of the lot, with the tallest ridgelines running perpendicular to the street frontage.

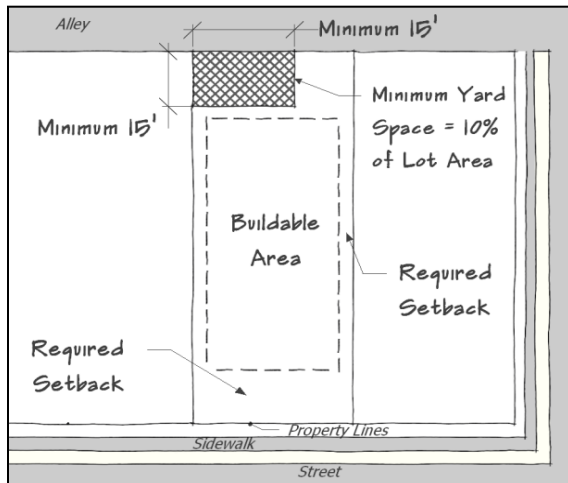
## Driveway Approaches

Maximum driveway width is 20 feet (14 feet for lots less than 45 feet wide). The driveway may not occupy more than 50% of the lot width.

## Minimum Useable Yard Space

Usable yard space cannot include structures, driveways or parking. It must be a contiguous area that is:

- located in the rear or side yard;
- equal to at least 10% of the parcel area; and
- dimensions not less than 15 feet (not less than 12 feet for parcels smaller than 3,500 sq ft).



Minimum Useable Yard Space

## Housing Style Variety

Repetitive front façade designs adjacent to neighboring houses with the same design are prohibited. A variety of façade styles is desired per TMC 13.06.100.F.2.g

## Prohibited Materials

Plywood and other similar sheet siding materials, such as T1-11 siding, may not be used for front facades or for facades facing streets. Board and batten is allowed on up to 40% of a front façade.

## Street Trees

One street tree is required per Small Lot per planting standards contained in TMC 13.06.020.K.

## LEVEL 2 DESIGN STANDARDS

In addition to meeting all Level 1 Design Standards, lots that are smaller than the Level 1 dimensions must meet additional standards as follows:

### Choose at least three Building Façade Details:

- Decorative porch or entry design
- Bay windows or balconies
- Decorative molding / framing details around all front facade windows and doors
- Decorative door design including transom and/or side lights or other distinctive feature
- Decorative roofline elements, such as brackets, multiple dormers, and chimneys
- Decorative building materials, including decorative masonry, shingle, brick, tile, and stone
- Landscaped trellises or other decorative elements that incorporate landscaping near the building entry



Porch with Architectural Details

### Choose at least one of the following:

- Meets [Built Green](#) or other equivalent environmental certification for new construction, or
- Includes a porch with a minimum area of 60 square feet and no dimension less than 6 feet

## APPLICABLE REGULATIONS

- Tacoma Municipal Code (TMC)  
[13.06.020 - Residential Districts](#), [13.06.020.K & 13.06.100.F - Small-Lot Single-Family Development District](#), [13.05.010.B - Variances](#) [2.02 - Building Code](#)



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