

SEATTLE'S SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL ZONES

IMPORTANT NOTE: Some areas have neighborhood-specific regulations that are not reflected here. Please consult the Land Use Code for individual projects.

THIS ZONING SUMMARY IS FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES ONLY

This document describes development that is generally permitted in single-family residential zones. For specific regulations and exceptions, please refer to Chapter 23.44 of the Seattle Municipal Code (SMC). If you have additional questions, you may email a Land Use Planner at <http://web6.seattle.gov/dpd/LUQnA/>, or stop in to the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) Applicant Services Center (ASC) for a free 20-minute coaching session. For more detailed or project-specific information, please call the ASC at (206) 684-8850 to arrange for a paid appointment. Due to the complexity of the code, questions cannot be answered by phone.

Regulations common to all single-family residential zones

Housing Types

Single-Family Dwelling Unit is a detached single-family structure containing one dwelling unit, commonly known as a house.

Cottage Housing includes more than one single-family dwelling unit situated around a shared open space. It may include carriage houses, which are dwelling units above an enclosed garage.

Rowhouses include more than one dwelling unit in a single structure that faces the street. Each dwelling unit shares at least one common wall with another dwelling unit. No dwelling unit is located above or beneath another, or between another dwelling unit and the street.

Townhouses include more than one dwelling unit in a single structure. Each dwelling unit shares at least one common wall with another dwelling unit and no dwelling unit is located above or below another dwelling unit.

Apartments include more than one dwelling unit in a single structure. It is not a cottage housing, rowhouse, or townhouse development. Stacked flats are included in this housing type.

Accessory Dwelling Units

An accessory dwelling unit (ADU) is a dwelling unit accessory to a principal dwelling unit (single-family house) located on the same lot. There are two types of ADUs in Seattle; attached, which are inside the principal home, or detached, which are known as backyard cottages or detached accessory dwelling units (DADUs).

There are specific development standards for both types of ADUs. For more information see Tip 116A for attached ADUs and Tip 116B for backyard cottages. Building permits are required for all ADUs.

Household Size

Households may include up to eight unrelated people or any number of related people in a single-family zone. Up to twelve unrelated people may reside on a lot with two ADUs. Some exceptions apply.

Home Occupations

Under certain circumstances, a person residing in a dwelling unit may operate a home-based business provided that the business is clearly incidental to the use of the property. Appointments, deliveries, parking, signage and other business activities may be limited in order to maintain neighborhood character.

Accessory Structures and Additions

Accessory structures and additions to existing houses are allowed in single-family residential zones subject to specific development standards. For more information on lot coverage, height and yard standards, see Tip 220.

Conditional Uses

Conditional uses are land uses that are not permitted outright by the underlying zone, but may be allowed when specific criteria are met. Institutions, such as schools, churches, and childcare centers; public facilities, such as police and fire stations; and cluster housing developments are examples of conditional uses that may be allowed in single-family residential zones.

Trees

Exceptional trees must be retained except when removal is necessary to achieve allowed development. Trees must be planted or preserved when new development is proposed. Trees may not be removed from undeveloped lots.

SF 5000, SF 7200, SF 9600 Single-Family

Areas characterized by houses, also known as detached single-family dwelling units, on lots of a compatible scale and character. The SF 5000, SF 7200, and SF 9600 zone designations correspond to the minimum lot size required for each single-family dwelling unit.

Housing Type

Single-family dwelling unit with up to two attached ADUs within the same structure or up to one attached ADU and one detached ADU.

Lot Size

Zone	Minimum area in square feet (sf)
SF 5000	5,000 sf
SF 7200	7,200 sf
SF 9600	9,600 sf

Exceptions may allow for smaller lots, typically when other existing lots on the street are also undersized.

Density

1 single-family dwelling unit per lot

Floor Area Ratio

0.5 FAR or 2,500 sf of total floor area for lots less than 5,000 sf

Lot Coverage

Maximum 35%, or 1,000 sf plus 15% of lot area for lots less than 5,000 sf



Height Limit

Lot Width	Maximum Height
Greater than 30'	30'
30' or less	25'

Small or irregularly shaped lots may be limited to 18'. Pitched roofs may exceed maximum height limit by 5' with a minimum 4:12 slope.

Yard Requirements

Yard	Dimension
Front	20' or average of front yards on either side
Rear	25' or 20% of lot depth (min. 10')
Side	5'

Under certain conditions, accessory structures, such as garages, and certain features may extend into required yards.

Parking Quantity

One parking space per dwelling unit. No parking required for ADUs. No parking is required on lots less than 3,000 sf or 30' wide.

Parking Location

Within the structure, or in the rear or side yard. Allowed in the front yard only under special circumstances. Garages and carports have specific regulations, including appearance standards.

Parking Access

From the alley where feasible. If from street, only one 10' curb cut permitted per 80' of frontage.

Tree Preservation and Planting

On lots over 3,000 sf, the total diameter of trees retained or planted must equal 2" per 1,000 sf of lot area.

RSL Residential Small Lot

Areas that allow for the development of one or more dwelling units in small-scale structures on lots in urban villages. RSL allows for a broader range of housing types through new development and conversion of existing single-family houses into multiple dwelling units. Lots can have attached or stacked principal dwelling units, which is not allowed in SF 5000, SF 7200, or SF 9600 zones.

Housing Type

Single-family dwelling unit, apartments, carriage houses, cottage housing developments, rowhouse developments and townhouse developments. Each principal unit may have one ADU within the same structure or detached in the backyard.

Lot Size

No minimum lot area

Density

1 dwelling unit per 2,000 sf

Dwelling Unit Size

Maximum 2,200 sf, with exceptions for expanding existing single-family dwelling units

Floor Area Ratio

0.75 FAR

The preservation incentive exempts 50% of the floor area in a single-family dwelling unit built prior to 1982 from counting toward the FAR limit, if preserved on site. This encourages the retention of existing homes, while allowing new construction elsewhere on site.

Lot Coverage

Maximum 50% of lot area

Height Limit

Maximum 30'; pitched roofs may exceed height limit by 5' with a minimum 4:12 slope.

Building Separation

Minimum 10'

Yard Requirements

Yard	Dimension
Front	10'
Rear	10' except when rear yard abuts an alley
Side	5' except when side yard abuts an alley

Under certain conditions, accessory structures, such as garages, and certain features may extend into required yards.

Design Standards

- Minimum of 3' wide pedestrian path between principle structures and the street
- Street-facing entries required for each dwelling unit within 40' of a street lot line
- Entry shall be marked with a covered stoop, porch or similar architectural feature

Parking Quantity

One parking space per dwelling unit. No parking required for ADUs. No minimum in urban villages within a frequent transit service area.

Parking Location

Within the structure, rear or side yards. Garages and carports have specific regulations, including appearance standards.

Parking Access

Same as SF 5000, SF 7200, and SF 9600

Tree Preservation and Planting

Point system designed to encourage preservation of existing trees, and planting of conifers and large trees. The planting of street trees is required when adding one or more principal dwelling units.

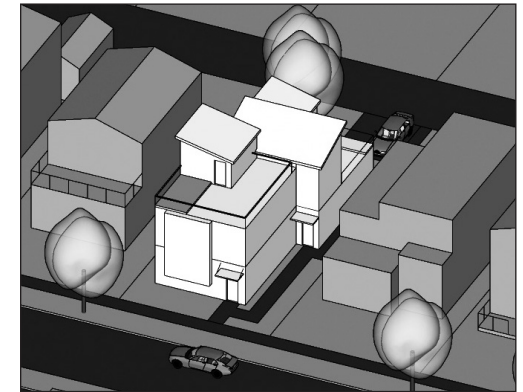
Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA)

MHA requires new construction to include affordable housing or contribute to a City fund for affordable housing. New construction on lots in an RSL zone with an MHA suffix of M, M1 or M2 may be required to participate. The MHA suffix determines the payment or performance amount.

RSL Design Scenarios

Attached Housing

Two attached homes are arranged back-to-back on a 4,000 sf lot. New homes are 1,400 and 1,600 sf. Parking for two vehicles.



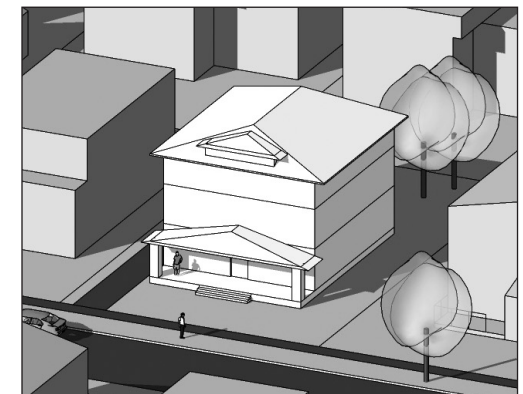
Cottage Style Housing

Five stand-alone cottage style homes with shared open space on a 10,000 sf lot. New homes range in size from 1,050 to 1,800 sf. Parking for three vehicles with frequent transit reduction.



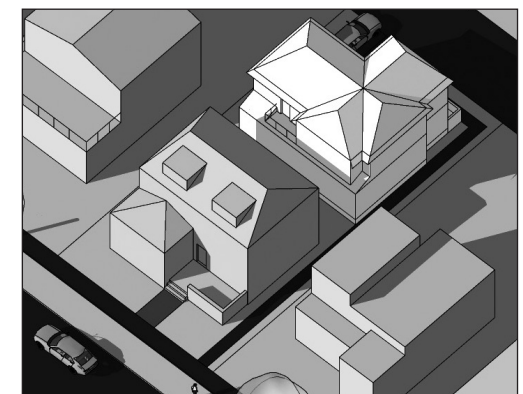
Stacked Flats

One single structure with three stacked dwelling units on a 6,000 sf lot. Each unit is 1,400 sf, one unit on each level. Development type works with new construction or conversion of an existing single-family structure. Parking for three vehicles.



Preservation Incentive

Existing single-family home is preserved with a new single-family home constructed at the rear of the 5,000 sf lot. The existing home is 1,900 sf and the new home is 2,200 sf. Parking for two vehicles. Development type takes advantage of the FAR preservation incentive.



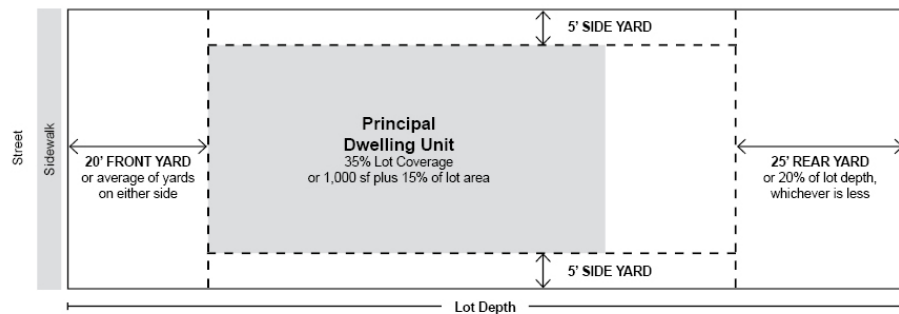
What is lot coverage?

Lot coverage is the percentage of lot area which may be covered by a principle dwelling unit and its accessory structures.

What is a yard?

Yard is an area from the ground upward extending from the front, side or rear lot line to a parallel, offset line on the lot. The horizontal depth is specified for each zone. Specific standards determine what can and cannot be developed within a required yard. The term "yard" is used in SF zones, the term "setback" is used in all other zones.

For more information on lot coverage, height, yard, and garage standards in single-family zones, see Tip 220.

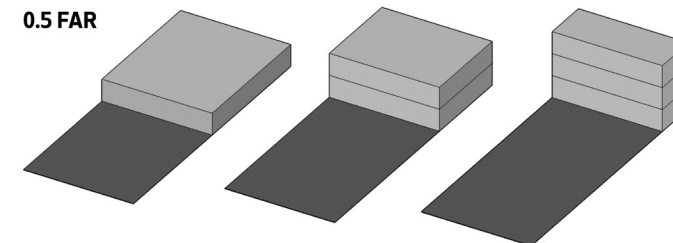


SF Yard and Lot Coverage Diagram

What is Floor Area Ratio?

Floor area ratio (FAR) is the relationship between a structure's total floor area and the size of the lot on which it was built. The FAR limit ensures new structures are similar in bulk and scale to existing structures in the neighborhood.

0.5 FAR



1 story
(50% lot coverage)

2 stories
(25% lot coverage)

3 stories
(17% lot coverage)