

Summary of Updated Rules in Neighborhood Residential Zones

January 2026

The following document outlines the updated rules for development in Neighborhood Residential Zones as of the effective date of [Council Bill 120993](#). This bill implemented a comprehensive update of Neighborhood Residential Zones and implemented other changes to comply with Washington State House Bill 1110. It will be effective in mid-January 2026.

Development Standards

Below is a summary of the key standards. Some regulations treat stacked dwelling units differently. Stacked dwelling units refer to buildings where units are stacked above or below other units such as apartments or condominium.

Allowed Uses (23.44.020)

A detailed chart of allowed uses is contained in Section 23.44.020. These uses generally include a mix of residential and institutional uses. Ground-floor commercial uses are also allowed provided they are not more than 2,500 square feet in size and meet certain requirements listed in subsection 23.44.020.E.

Maximum Density (23.44.060)

The number of dwelling units, including accessory and principal units, allowed on a lot is the greater of:

- 1 unit per 1,250 square feet for attached or detached units or 1 unit per 600 square feet for stacked flats (stacked flats may be even more dense if they meet certain requirements);
- 4 units; or
- 6 units if the lot is located within one quarter-mile of a major transit stop or if at least two units are affordable. A map of the areas within one quarter-mile of a major transit stop is available on the [SDCI Property Information Map](#).

Allowed density on lots with Environmentally Critical Areas (ECAs), such as areas around shorelines, creeks, wetlands, and steep slopes, is reduced in proportion to percentage of lot that contains ECAs.

Maximum Floor Area (23.44.050)

The maximum building floor area allowed on a lot is equal to the floor area ratio (FAR) times the lot size. The FAR would vary based on density of the lot, including accessory and principal units, as follows:

- 0.6 FAR for density below 1 unit/4,000 square feet
- 0.8 FAR for density between 1 unit/4,000 sq ft and 1 unit/2,201 sq ft
- 1.0 FAR for density between 1 unit/2,200 sq ft and 1 unit/1,601 sq ft
- 1.6 FAR for density of 1 unit/1,600 sq ft or greater

Exceptions to the above floor area limits include:

- The FAR for stacked flats with a density of 1 unit/1,600 sq ft or greater is 1.8 except that it is 2.0 where a Tier 1 tree is retained, two Tier 2 trees are retained, or the site meets a Green Factor score of 0.6.
- Stacked units in buildings with less than 10 units meeting the standards for Type A accessible units in the Building Code do not count toward FAR.
- Lots less than 5,000 square feet in area can include up to 2,500 square feet of total chargeable floor area regardless of the FAR.
- Additional FAR can be gained for certain buildings located within one quarter mile of an elementary or secondary school.

Maximum height (23.44.070)

32 feet plus allowances for pitched roofs except that it is 42 feet plus allowances for pitched roofs if any of the following are met:

- The site includes planting or preservation of medium/large or large species trees that would result in a 10 percent canopy coverage for the site at tree maturity;
- A Tier 2 tree is retained;
- The site would contain three or more principal dwelling units and have a front setback of at least 20 feet; or
- The site contains stacked dwelling units and a Green Factor score of 0.6 achieved.

Front setback (23.44.090)

On lots with one or two dwelling units: 15 feet

On lots with three or more dwelling units: 10 feet

Larger setbacks are required on Queen Anne Boulevard.

Rear setback (23.44.090)

On lots not abutting an alley with one or two dwelling units: 15 feet

On lots not abutting an alley with three or more dwelling units: 10 feet except that it is 5 feet for other structures within frequent transit service areas on lots under 5,000 square feet

On lots where the rear setback abuts an alley: 0 feet

Setbacks for accessory dwelling units are 5 feet or 0 feet if abutting an alley

Side setback (23.44.090)

5 feet average, 3 feet minimum, except that it is 3 feet within frequent transit service areas on lots under 5,000 square feet. A map of the frequent transit services areas is available on the [interactive SDCI Property Information Map](#).

Minimum separation between buildings

5 feet

Maximum lot coverage (23.44.080)

50 percent

Lot coverage on lots with Environmentally Critical Areas (ECAs), such as areas around shorelines, creeks, wetlands, and steep slopes, would be reduced in proportion to percentage of lot that contains ECAs.

Other Requirements

Subdivision

The city allows for subdivision of land to create new parent lots (which are completely independent from other lots) as well as new unit lots (which can be sold separately like parent lots but are tied to adjacent lots in terms of their redevelopment potential). New parent lots smaller than 5,000 square feet cannot be created. There is no minimum lot size for new unit lots. An accessory dwelling unit may not be separated from the principal unit through subdivision.

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)

ADUs meeting the standards of [Section 23.42.022](#) are allowed in the NR zone. ADUs count toward allowed density, FAR, and lot coverage, but are exempt from certain other requirements such as parking requirements and street improvements.

Parking

One parking spaces is required for every two dwelling units except that:

- No parking is required within a half-mile walking distance of a major transit stop such as light rail, commuter rail, or bus rapid transit stops. The [interactive SDCI Property Information Map](#) shows these locations.
- No parking is required for dwelling units that are 1,200 square feet or smaller or for accessory dwelling units.

In calculating required parking spaces, a half space is rounded down.

When parking is provided, it must generally be located at least 20 feet from property line with some exceptions. A certain number of electric vehicle ready parking spaces must also be provided.

Amenity Area

Projects with new dwelling units must include a certain amount of amenity area outside driveways and parking areas.

Tree Regulations

NR zones are subject to multiple tree regulations standards.

- The Tree Protection Code limits the number, size, and type of trees that can be removed on private property and establishes requirements for replacing trees cut down.
- Tree planting requirements require planting of trees as part of development.
- Street tree requirements limit removal of street trees and require planting of new street trees as part of development.
- Environmentally critical areas (ECA) and Shoreline regulations protect trees and vegetation around shorelines, creeks, wetlands, and steep slopes.

Design Standards

These standards regulate access pathways, entryways, windows, and doors to improve design outcomes.

Light and Glare

Exterior lighting must be shielded and directed away from adjacent properties. Screening is required for parking in certain cases.