



# Planning & Economic Development

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## SINGLE FAMILY SETBACKS

In the Poulsbo Municipal Code (PMC), a setback is defined as the minimum allowable horizontal distance from a given point or line of reference, such as a property line or street right-of-way, to the nearest vertical wall, such as the structure's foundation. Structures cannot be located in setbacks.

### WHAT IS THE FRONT LOT LINE?

The front lot line is the property line abutting a street, or the edge of a private street, or primary access. For a flag lot, the front lot line is the shortest lot line adjoining the pole portion of the lot, excluding the unbuildable portion of the pole. On a corner lot, the planning director shall determine which of the lot lines shall be considered the front lot line and street side lot line, based upon the proposed orientation of the house at the time of building permit application. (See Figure 1)

### WHAT IS ALLOWED IN A SETBACK?

Per PMC [18.310.030 A](#), certain architectural features and structures may project into required setbacks. Compliance with requirements in the International Building Code still applies.

1. Cornices, canopies, eaves, belt courses, sills, or other similar architectural features, landscaping features or fireplaces.
2. Fire escapes, open/uncovered porches, decks, balconies, landing places, or outside stairways may extend one and one-half feet into any required side or rear yard; and may extend up to six feet into any required front yard. Open/uncovered porches, decks, walkways or stoops less than eighteen inches in height may extend to within one and one-half feet to any lot line.
3. Open/uncovered pedestrian access to commercial or business/employment zoned structures, such as walkways, decks, or stairways of any height, may extend into any side or rear setback up to ten feet of the setback width, as long as all other applicable development standards are met.
4. Greenhouses, storage sheds or other similar detached structures may extend into any side or rear

setback up to three feet from the lot line. To extend into a side or rear setback, the structure must be limited to one hundred twenty square feet in size and no taller than fourteen feet in height.

### WHAT ARE MY SETBACKS?

In general, setbacks in the Residential Low (RL) zone are as follows (See Figures 2 and 3):

- Front Setback: 20' from main building facade; 25' from attached garage facade if front loaded and protrudes streetward from main building facade
- Rear Setback: 10'
- Side Setback: 5' with combined total of 15'
- Street Corner Setback: 10' (or greater if necessary for sight distance as determined by city engineer)

*NOTE:* Alternative setbacks may have been established for subdivisions approved as a master plan or planned residential development. Contact the PED Department to determine if your subdivision has alternative setbacks.

Front Setback Averaging: Per [PMC 18.310.030 B](#), if there are dwellings on both abutting lots with front setbacks less than the required depth, the front setback for the lot need not exceed the average front setback of the abutting dwellings (See Figure 4).

If there is a dwelling on only one abutting lot with a front setback less than the required depth for the zone, the front setback need not exceed a depth of halfway between the depth of the front yard on the abutting lot and the required front yard depth. (See Figure 5).

### WHAT IF MY EXISTING HOUSE DOES NOT MEET CURRENT SETBACKS?

There are many older existing structures that were built before current setback standards and are located closer to the property line than presently allowed. Structures that were legally constructed prior to the current regulations are considered "nonconforming" and special provisions exist in [PMC Chapter 18.160](#).

If you have a nonconforming house or other building and are considering remodeling, expanding or replacing the structure you will want to talk with staff about the specifics of the code and any additional permit requirements that may apply to your situation. Please be aware that any new additions will need to meet current setbacks.

Figure 1: Lot Types

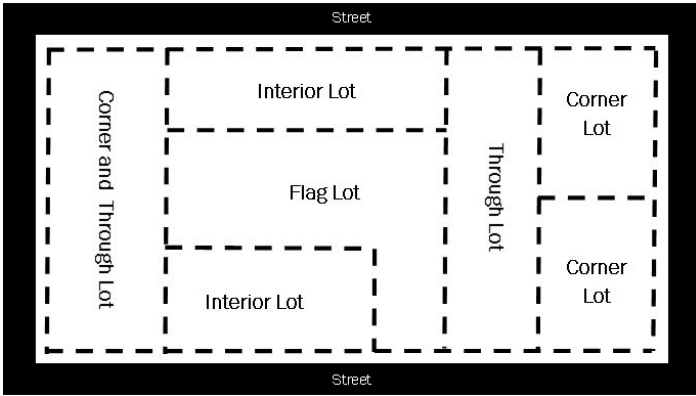
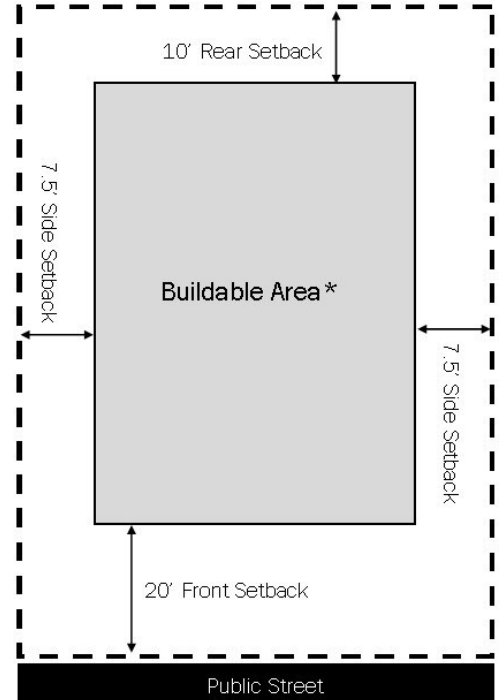


Figure 2: Required Setbacks



\* *Buildable Area*: This term is used to describe the area of the lot on which you may locate a structure. In this simple example the setbacks are the only limitation affecting the location of a future home. Be aware that lot coverage, critical areas, their buffers, and easements may also affect the buildable area of your lot.

Figure 4: Front Setback Averaging

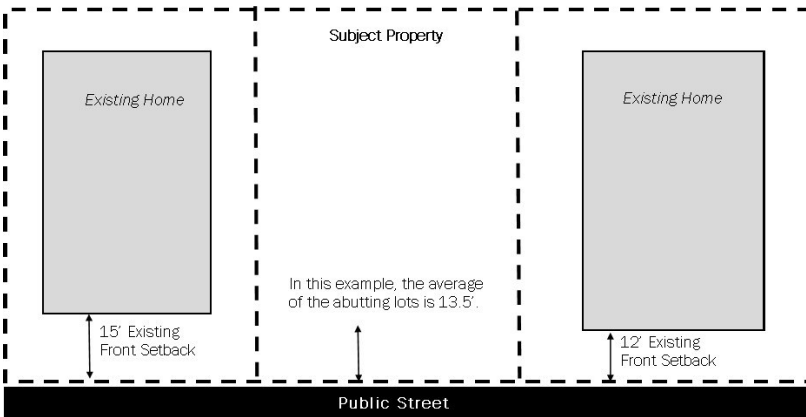


Figure 5: Front Setback Averaging

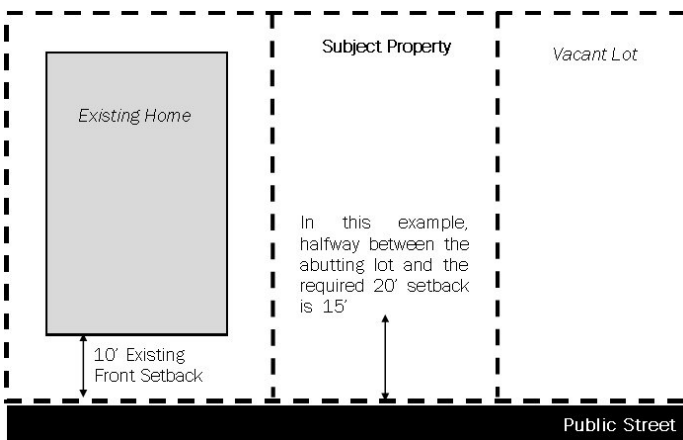
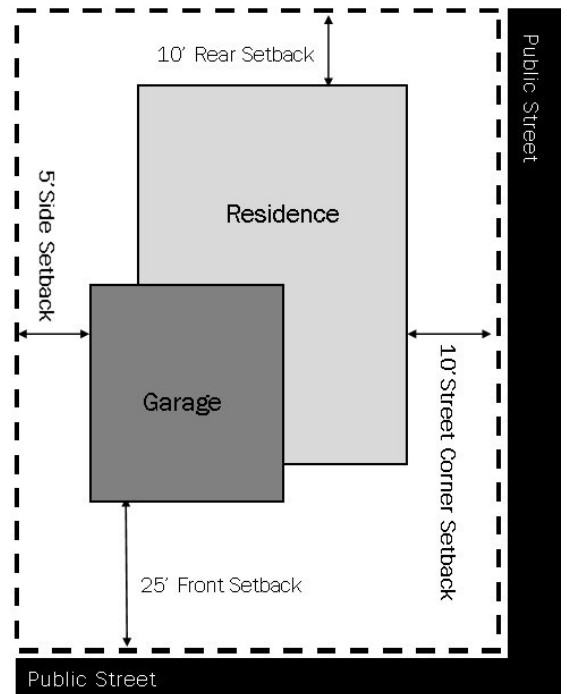


Figure 3: Required Setbacks



**Disclaimer:** This handout should not be used as a substitute for codes and regulations. The applicant/property owner is responsible for compliance with all code and rule requirements, whether or not described here. Please see the City of Pouslbo Municipal Code for complete text and requirements.

