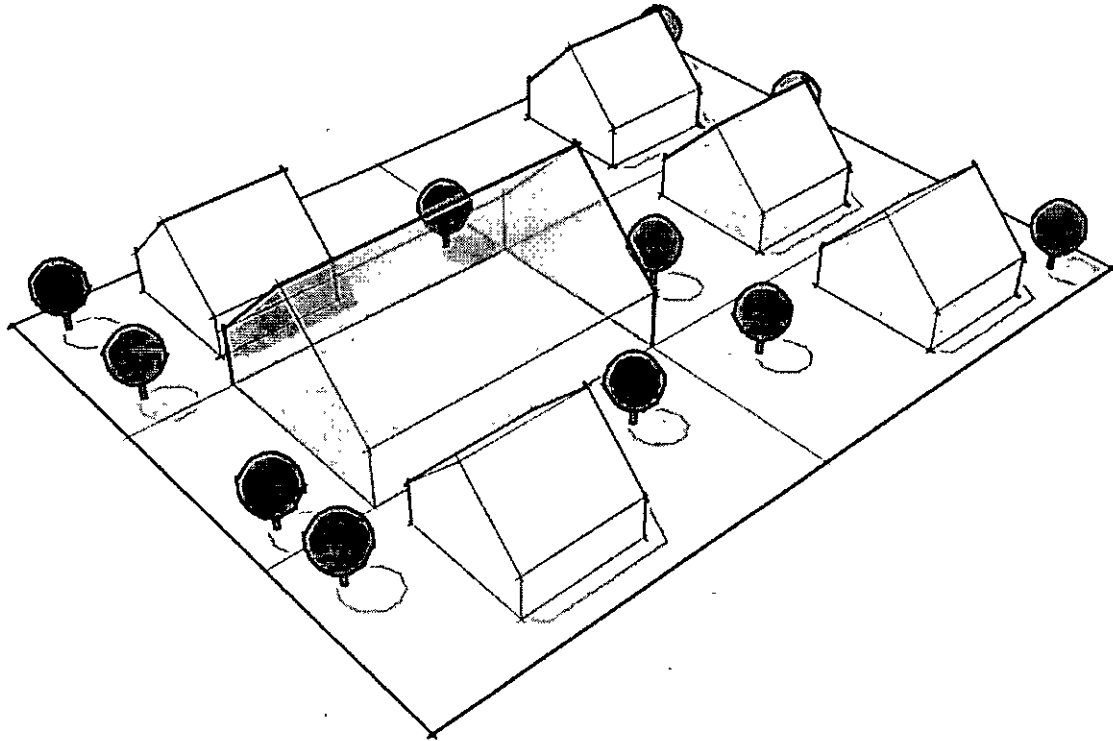


SUBCHAPTER F: RESIDENTIAL DESIGN AND COMPATIBILITY STANDARDS

Austin, Texas



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CITY COUNCIL ORDINANCE AND
SUBSEQUENT AMENDMENTS**

SUBCHAPTER F: RESIDENTIAL DESIGN AND COMPATIBILITY STANDARDS

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ARTICLE 1: GENERAL PROVISIONS

1.1. INTENT¹

This Subchapter is intended to minimize the impact of new construction, remodeling, and additions to existing buildings on surrounding properties in residential neighborhoods by defining an acceptable buildable area for each lot within which new development may occur. The standards are designed to achieve the following goals:

- 1.1.1. Protect the character of Austin's older neighborhoods by ensuring that new construction and additions are compatible in scale and bulk with existing structures, and do not exacerbate existing levels of rainwater runoff, and/or overtax the outdated stormwater system in these areas; and
- 1.1.2. Balance the needs and reasonable expectations of residents, property owners and investors, as well as the general public welfare and interest.

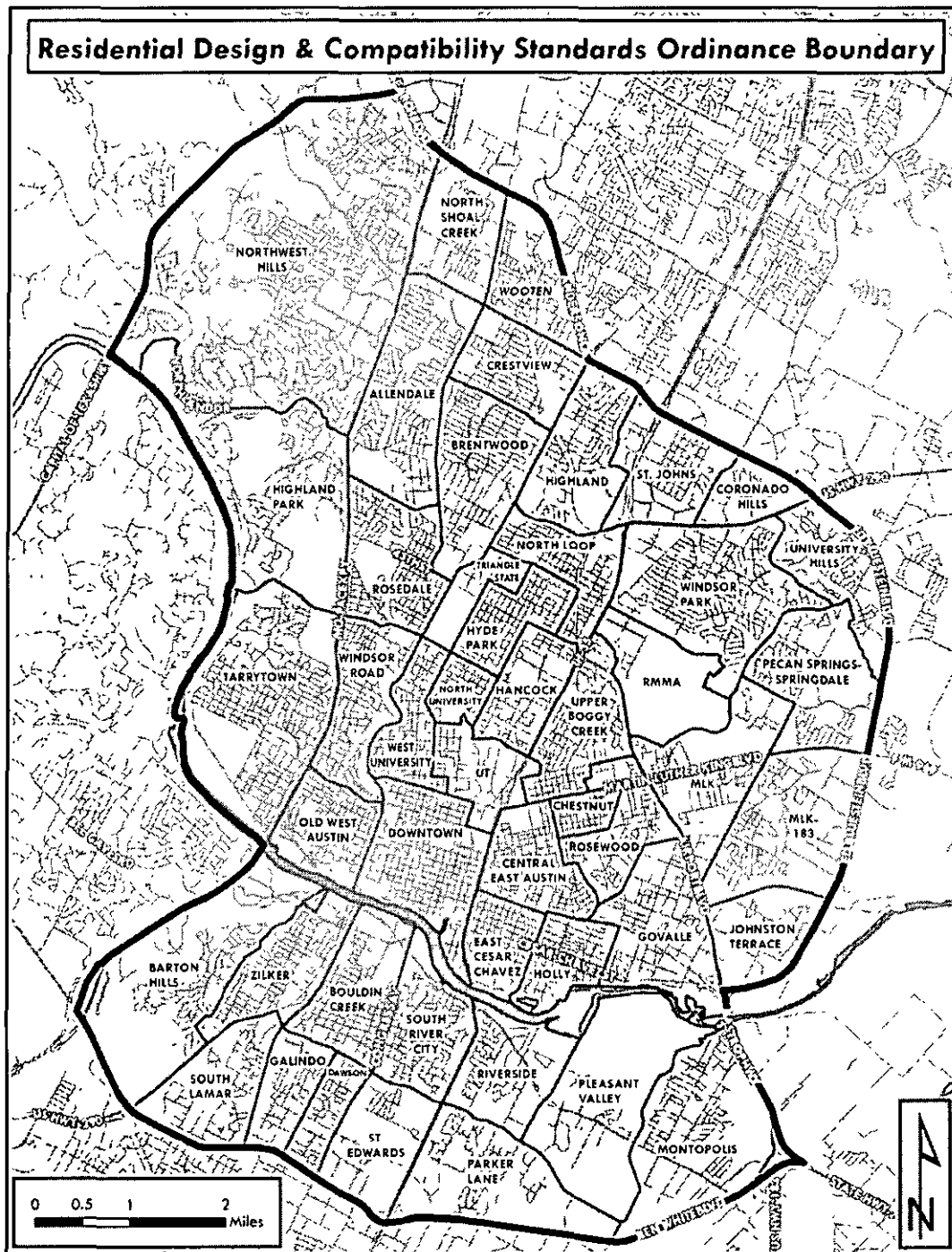
1.2. APPLICABILITY²

Except as provided in Section 1.3, this Subchapter applies to property that is:

- 1.2.1. Within the area bounded by:
 - A. Highway 183 from Loop 360 to Ben White Boulevard;
 - B. Ben White Boulevard from Highway 183 to Loop 360;
 - C. Loop 360 from Ben White Boulevard to Loop 1;
 - D. Loop 1 from Loop 360 to the Colorado River;
 - E. The Colorado River from Loop 1 to Loop 360; and
 - F. Loop 360 from the Colorado River to Highway 183; and

¹ NOTE: This suggested new intent language is based on Task Force language provided by staff.

² NOTE: This is the current Section 25-2-566(A).



1.2.2. Used for a:

- A.** Bed and breakfast (group 1) residential use;
- B.** Bed and breakfast (group 2) residential use;
- C.** Cottage special use;
- D.** Duplex residential use;
- E.** Secondary apartment special use;
- F.** Single-family attached residential use;
- G.** Single-family residential use;
- H.** Small lot single-family residential use;
- I.** Two-family residential use; or
- J.** Urban home special use.

1.3. EXCEPTIONS³

This Subchapter does not apply to:

- 1.3.1.** A lot designated as a single-family residence small lot (SF-4A) district unless the lot is adjacent to property designated as a single-family residence standard lot (SF-2) district or family residence (SF-3) district; or
- 1.3.2.** The approximately 698.7 acres of land known as the Mueller Planned Unit Development, which was zoned as a planned unit development (PUD) district by Ordinance Number 040826-61.

1.4. CONFLICTING PROVISIONS⁴

1.4.1. To the extent of conflict, this Subchapter supersedes:

- A.** Section 25-2-492 (Site Development Regulations);
- B.** Section 25-2-555 (Family Residence (SF-3) District Regulations);
- C.** Section 25-2-773 (Duplex Residential Use);
- D.** Section 25-2-774 (Two-Family Residential Use);

³ NOTE: This is the current Section 25-2-566(B).

⁴ NOTE: This is the current Section 25-2-566(C) and (D).

- E.** Section 25-2-778 (Front Yard Setback for Certain Residential Uses);
- F.** Section 25-2-779 (Small Lot Single-Family Residential Uses); and
- G.** Section 25-4-232 (Small Lot Subdivisions).

1.4.2. To the extent of conflict, the following provisions supersede this Subchapter:

- A.** Section 25-2-1424 (Urban Home Regulations);
- B.** Section 25-2-1444 (*Cottage Regulations*);
- C.** Section 25-2-1463 (Secondary Apartment Regulations); or
- D.** The provisions of an ordinance designating property as a:
 - 1. Neighborhood plan (NP) combining district;
 - 2. Neighborhood conservation (NC) combining district; or
 - 3. Historic area (HD) combining district.

ARTICLE 2: DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

2.1. MAXIMUM DEVELOPMENT PERMITTED⁵

The maximum amount of development permitted on a property subject to this Subchapter is limited to the greater of 0.4 to 1.0 floor-to-area ratio or 2,300 square feet of gross floor area.

2.2. BUILDING HEIGHT⁶

The maximum building height for development subject to this Subchapter is 32 feet. Section 25-2-531 (*Height Limit Exceptions*) does not apply to development subject to this Subchapter, except for a chimney vent, antenna, or energy conservation or production equipment or feature not designed for occupancy.

2.3. FRONT YARD SETBACK⁷

A. Minimum Setback Required

The minimum front yard setback required for development subject to this Subchapter is the lesser of:

1. The minimum front yard setback prescribed by the other provisions of this Code; or
2. The average front yard setback, as described in subsection B. below.

B. Average Front Yard Setback

1. An average front yard setback is determined based on the setbacks of each principal residential structure that is built within 50 feet of its front lot line.
2. Except as provided in paragraph 3., the four structures that are closest to the subject property on the same side of the block shall be used in the calculation of average front yard setback. If there are less than four structures on the same side of the block, the lesser number of structures is used in the calculation.
3. If there are no structures on the same side of the block, the four structures that are closest to the subject property and across the street are used in the calculation. If there are less than four structures across the street, the lesser number is used in the calculation. See Figure 1.

⁵ NOTE: Current 25-2-566(K).

⁶ NOTE: Current 25-2-566(G).

⁷ NOTE: Current 25-2-566(I) reorganized to first establish the requirement and then define the method for determining average front yard setback.

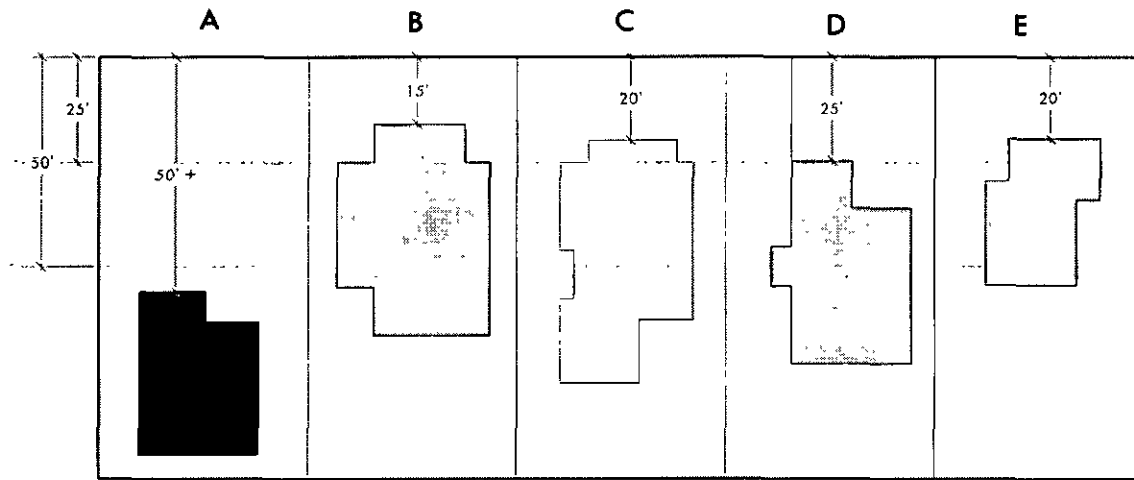


Figure 1: Average Front Yard Setback

In this example, the minimum required front setback in the underlying zoning district is 25 feet. However, because of the variety in existing setbacks of buildings on the same block face, new development on lot C may be located with a setback of only 20 feet, which is the average of the setbacks of lots B, D, and E. The building on lot A is not included in the average because it is located more than 50 feet from the property line.

2.4. REAR YARD SETBACK⁸

The principal structure shall comply with the rear yard setback prescribed by other provisions of this Code. For other structures, the minimum rear yard setback may be reduced to five feet if the rear lot line is adjacent to an alley. See Figure 2.

2.5. SIDE YARD SETBACKS⁹

All structures shall comply with the side yard setbacks prescribed by other provisions of this Code.

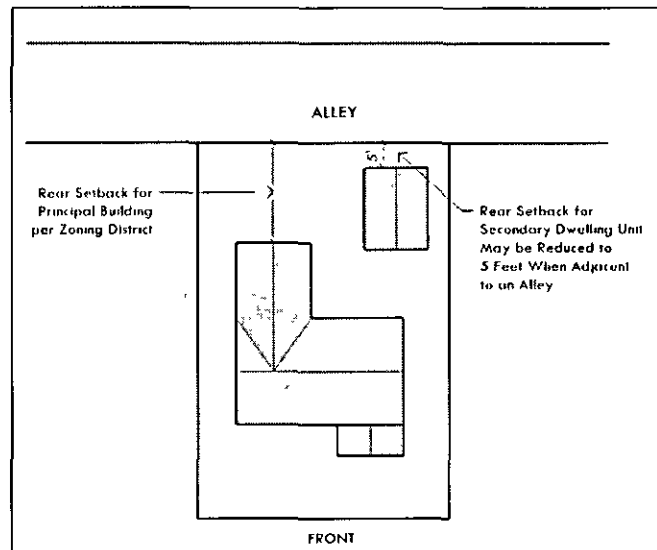


Figure 2: Rear Yard Setback

⁸ NOTE: Current 25-2-566(G), rewritten for clarification.

⁹ NOTE: Suggested new provision to clarify that side setbacks still apply in this Subchapter.

2.6. SETBACK PLANES¹⁰

This subsection prescribes side and rear setback planes in order to minimize the impact of new development and rear development on adjacent properties. A structure may not extend beyond a setback plane except as authorized by subsection D below.

A. Side Setback Plane

Except as provided in subsection B. below, an inwardly sloping 45-degree angle side setback plane begins at a horizontal line 15 feet directly above the side property line. The 15-foot height of the horizontal line is established for 40-foot deep portions of the lot, except that the last portion at the rear of the lot may be less than 40 feet deep. See Figures 3 and 4.

1. For the first portion, the 15-foot height of the horizontal line is measured at the highest of the elevations of the four intersections of the side lot lines, the building line, and a line 40 feet from and parallel to the building line.
2. For successive portions other than the last portion, the 15-foot height of the horizontal line is measured at the highest of the elevations of the four intersections of the side lot lines and the appropriate two lines that are 40 feet apart and parallel to the building line.
3. For the last portion, the 15-foot height of the horizontal line is measured at the highest of the elevations of the four intersections of the side lot lines, the appropriate line parallel to the building line, and the rear lot line.

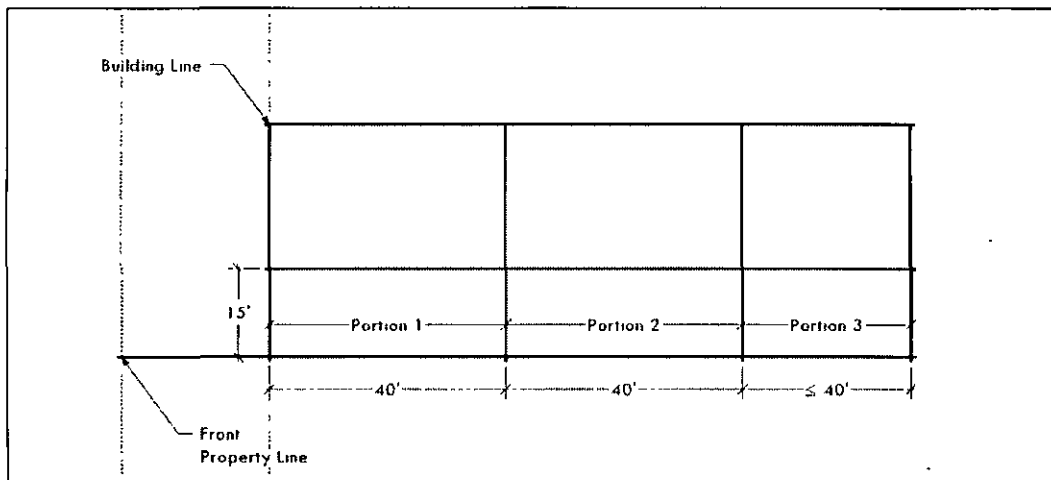


Figure 3: (Elevation View) Dividing Lot into 40-foot Portions to Create Side Setback Planes (Rear Setback Plane Not Shown)

¹⁰ NOTE: Current 25-2-566(L). Section has been reorganized with subheadings for clarity.

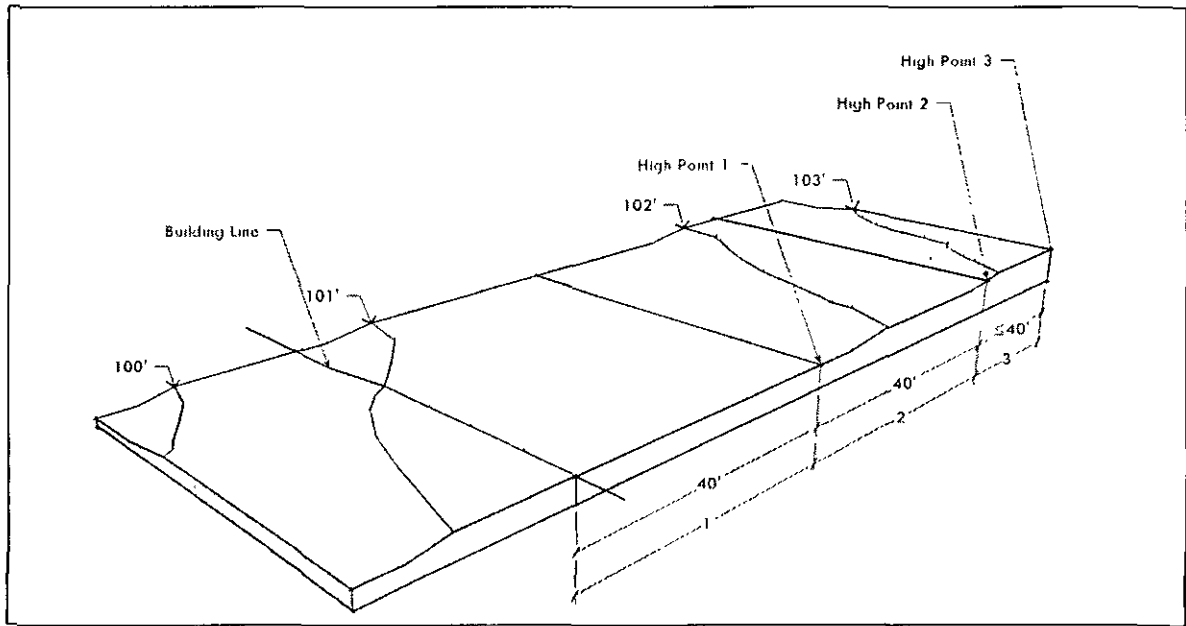


Figure 4: Determining High Points on a Sloping Lot

For each portion of the side setback plane, the 15-foot height of the horizontal line is determined based on the high point at any of the four intersections defining the portion. In this example, topography lines indicate that the lot is sloping downward from the rear to the front of the lot, and from the right to the left. The high points for Portions 1, 2, and 3 are indicated, along with the Building Line.

B. Rear Setback Plane

An inwardly sloping 45-degree angle rear setback plane begins at a horizontal line directly above the rear property line at the same elevation as the horizontal line for the last portion of the side setback plane established in paragraph A.3. See Figures 5 through 8.

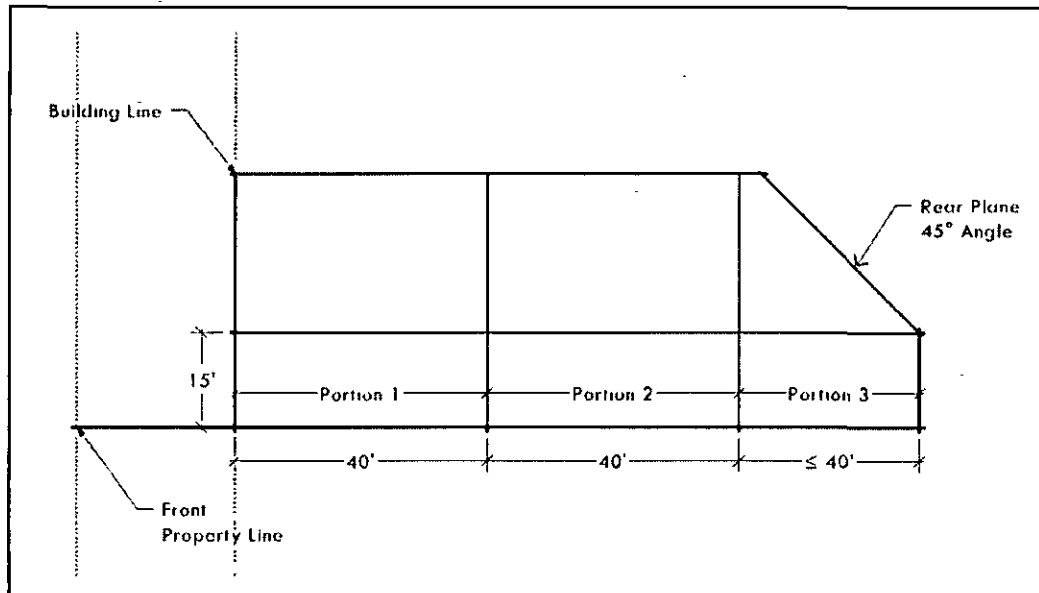


Figure 5: Rear Setback Plane (Level Ground)

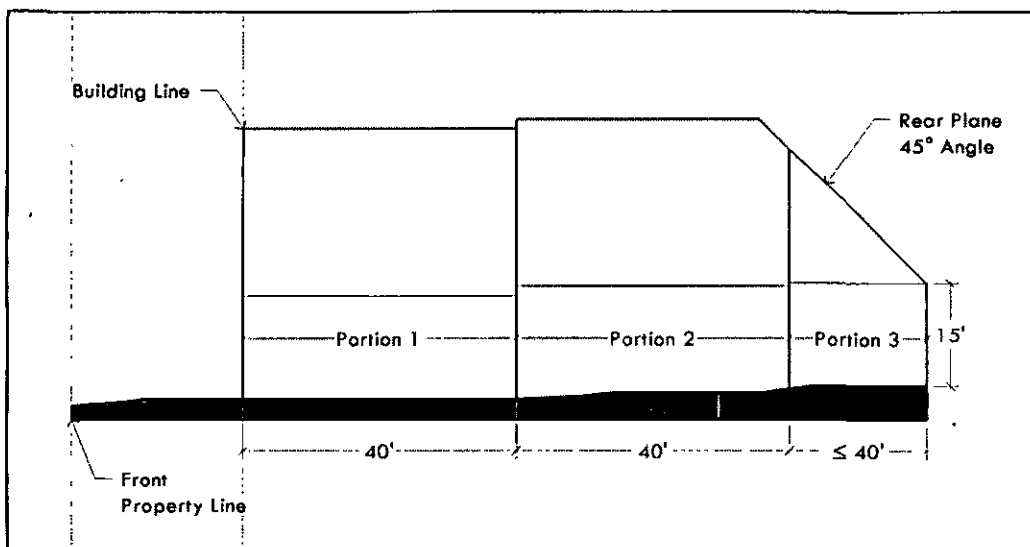


Figure 6: Rear Setback Plane (Sloping Ground)

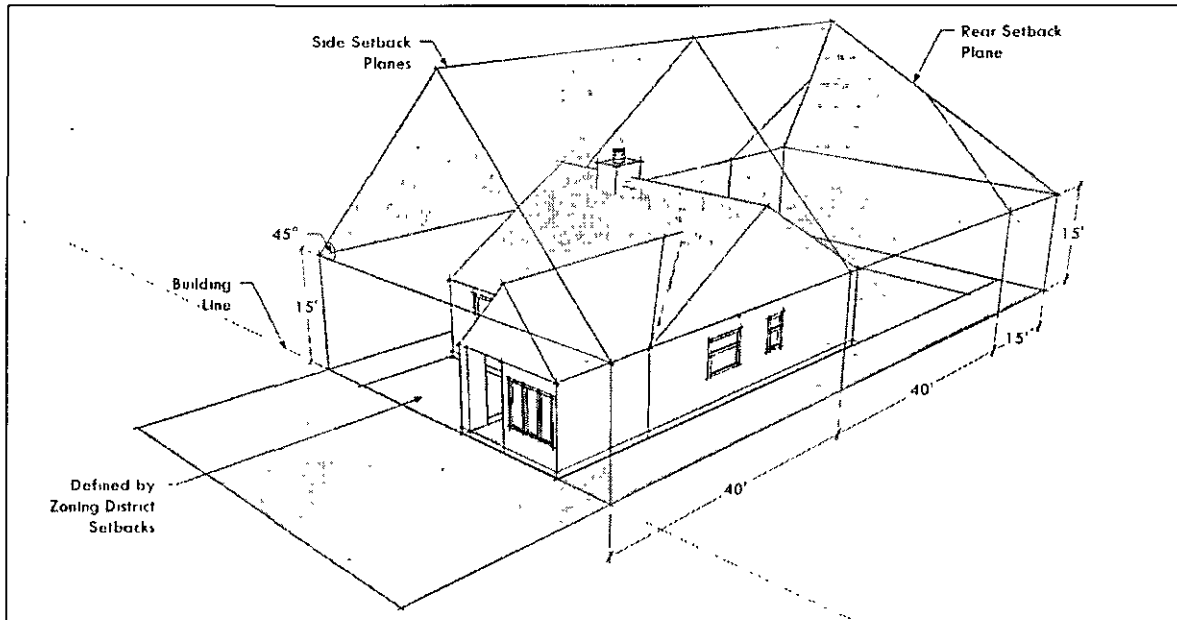


Figure 7: Side and Rear Setback Planes on Level Ground

The side and rear setback planes form a "tent" over the lot, rising from the property lines for 15 feet and then angling in at 45-degree angles from the side and rear. The required setbacks are indicated by the darker shading on the ground.

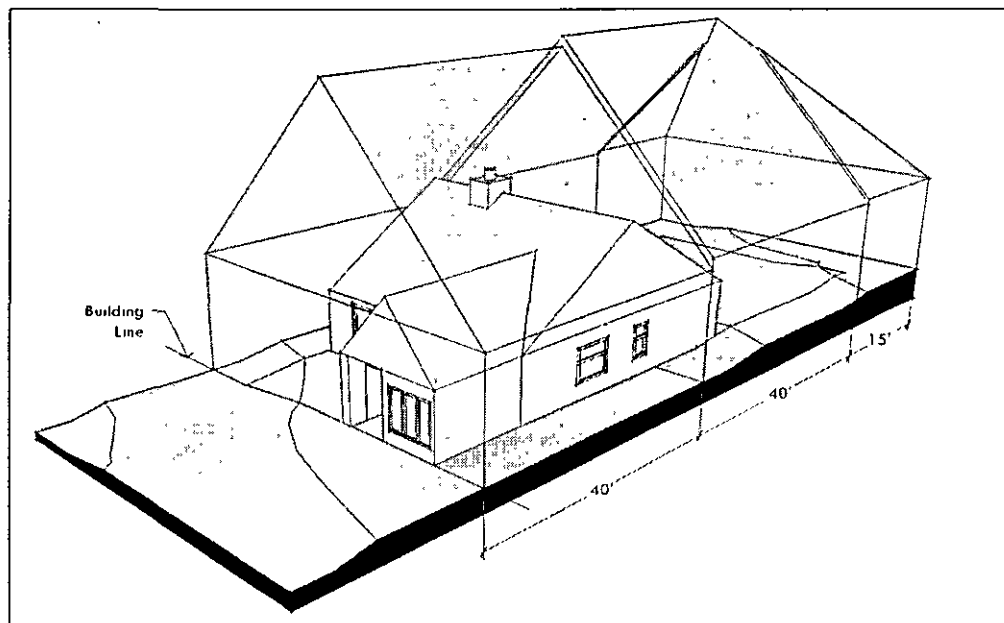


Figure 8: Side and Rear Setback Planes on Sloping Ground

C. Buildable Area

The buildable area consists of the smallest area within the setbacks, maximum height limit, and the combined side and rear setback planes. See Figures 9 through 13.

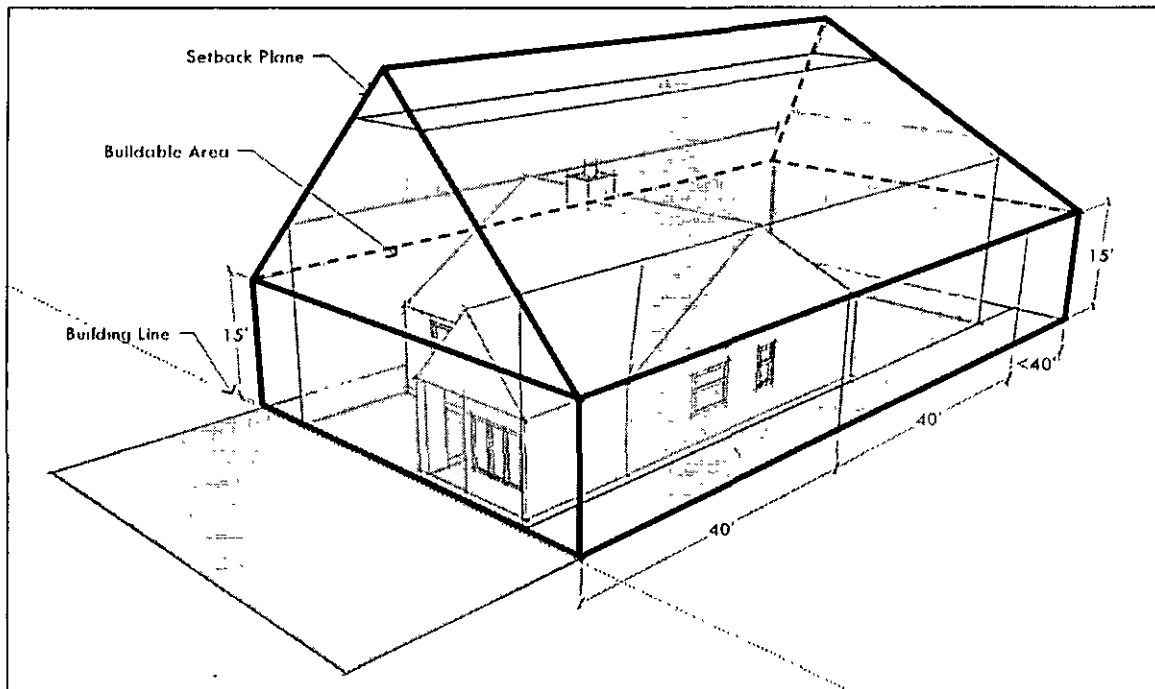


Figure 9: Buildable Area (Combination of Setbacks, Maximum Height Limit, and Setback Planes)

The heavy blue line indicates the "tent" formed by the side and rear setback planes. The buildable area is the smallest area included within the setbacks, maximum height limit, and the combined side and rear setback planes (shown here as the green area).

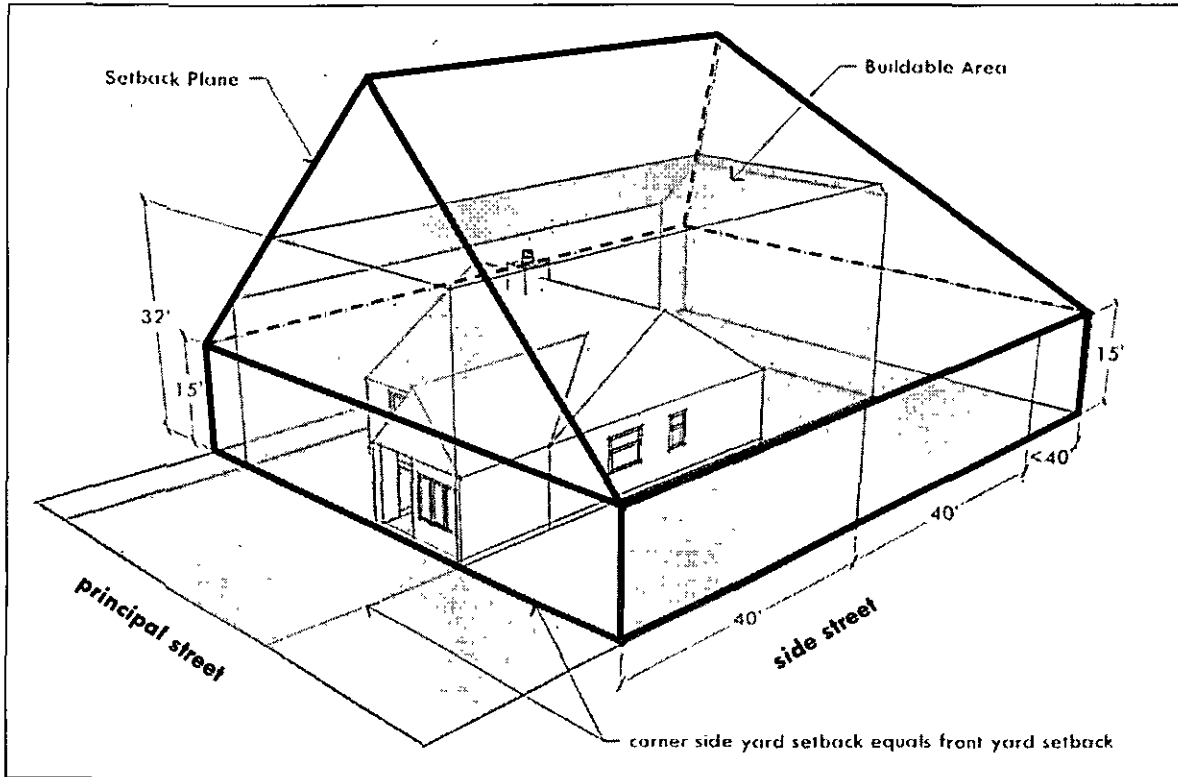


Figure 10: Buildable Area on Corner Lot

Larger side setbacks are required on corner lots, impacting the size and shape of the buildable area.

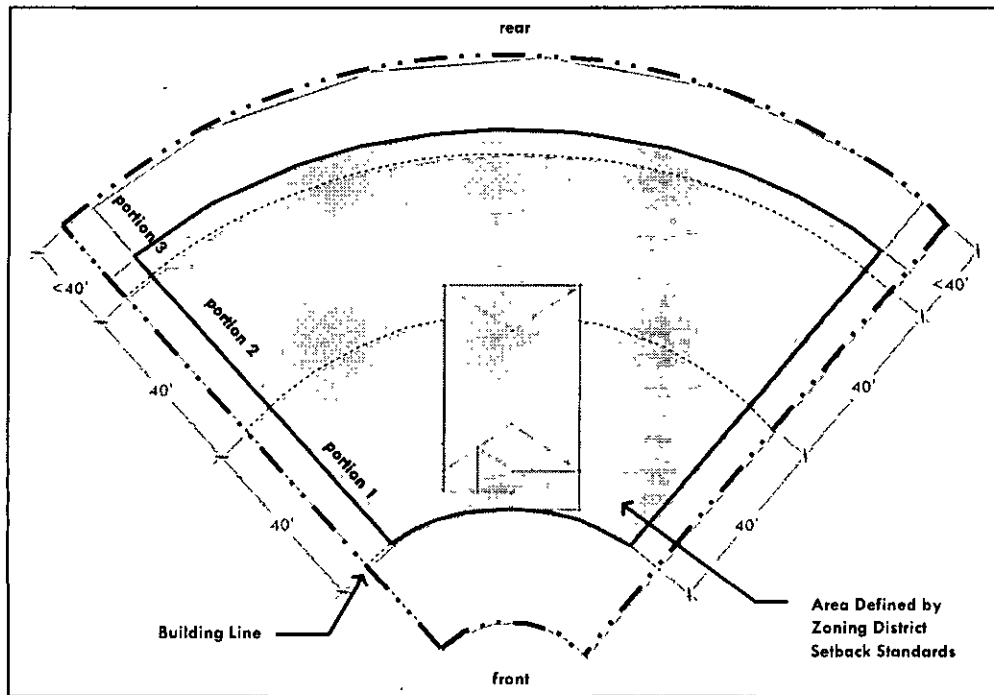


Figure 11: Buildable Area on an Irregularly Shaped Lot (Plan View)

In this pie-shaped lot example, the buildable area is almost entirely controlled by the height and setback limits, rather than the setback planes.

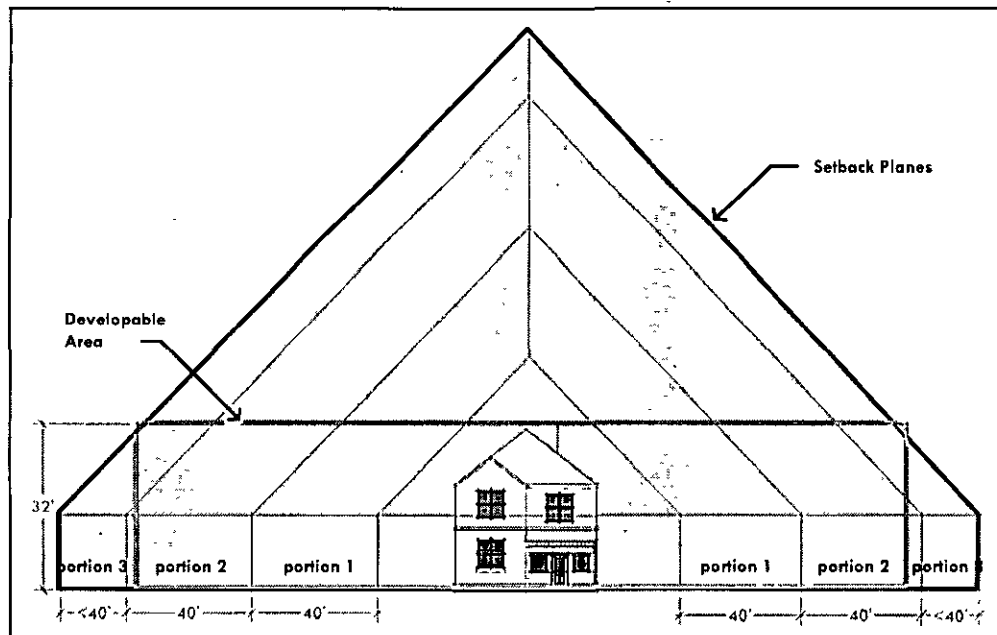


Figure 12: Buildable Area on an Irregularly Shaped Lot (Front View)

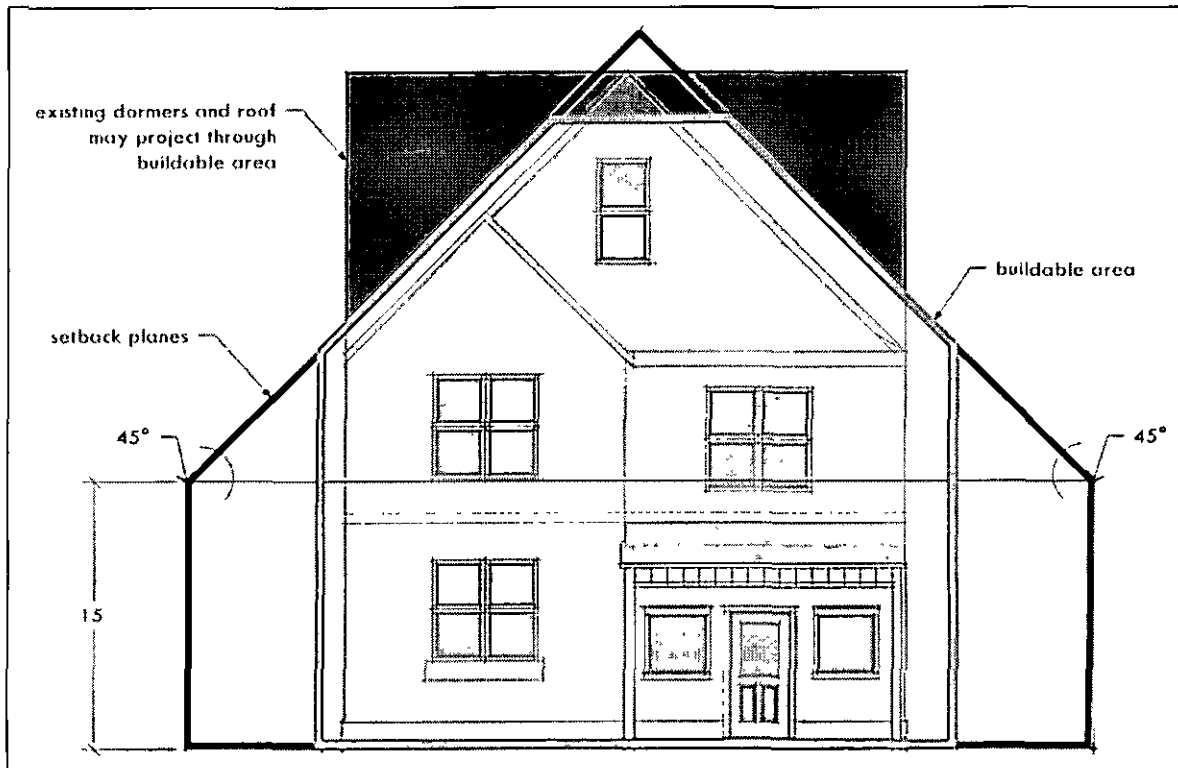


Figure 13: Existing Buildings May Exceed Buildable Area Limits

Existing buildings may project beyond the permitted buildable area. In this example, portions of the existing roof and gabled dormers (shown in red) extend beyond the building envelope. New construction and additions must meet the new standards.

D. Side Setback Plane Exception for Existing One-Story Buildings¹¹

This subsection applies to a one-story building that was originally constructed or received a building permit for the original construction before October 1, 2006, and that is remodeled to add a second story.

1. For the portion of the construction that is within the footprint of the building that was originally constructed or received a building permit before October 1, 2006, the inwardly sloping 45-degree angle side setback plane begins at a horizontal line directly above the outermost side wall at a height that is equal to the height of the first floor wall plate that was originally constructed or received a building permit before October 1, 2006, plus ten feet. See Figure 14.
2. For the portion of the construction that is outside the footprint of the building that was originally constructed or received a building permit before October 1, 2006, the side setback plane prescribed by subsection A. above applies.

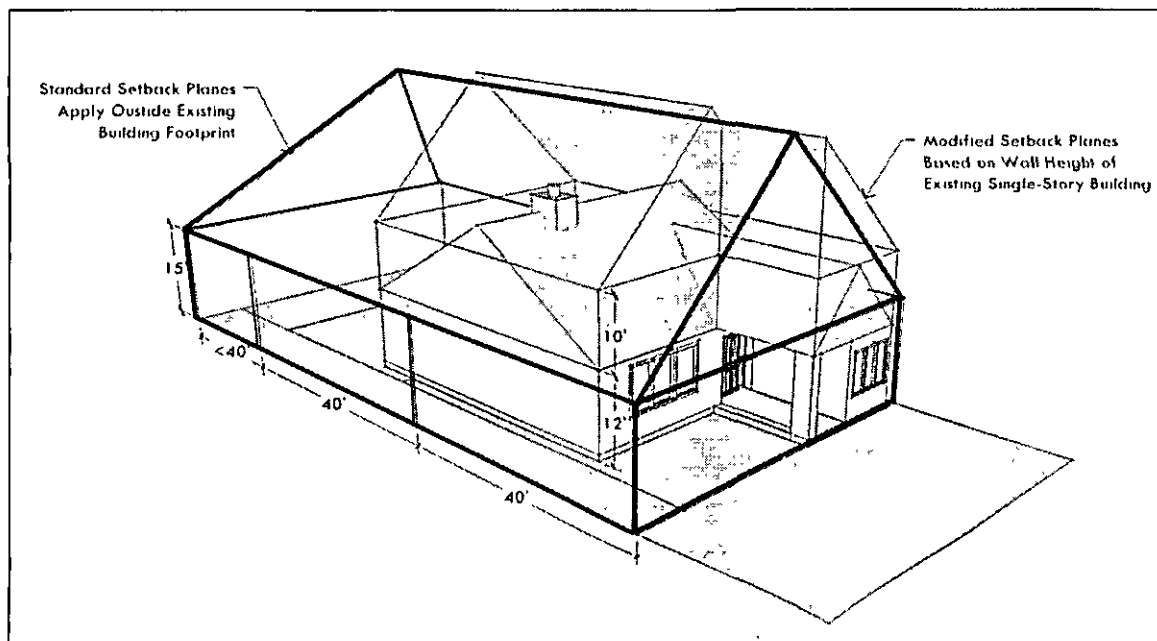


Figure 14: Side Setback Plane Exception for Existing Single-Story Buildings

The side setback planes for an existing single-story building are determined based on the height of the sidewall. In this example, the horizontal line is placed ten feet above the sidewall height (12 feet). The revised plane rises above the standard setback plane within the area of the building footprint. The standard setback plane applies outside of the existing footprint.

¹¹ NOTE: Current 25-2-566(J). Language slightly revised to clarify intent, following discussion with task force.

E. Exceptions

A structure may not extend beyond a setback plane, except for:

1. A structure authorized by the Residential Design and Compatibility Commission in accordance with Section 2.8. below;
2. A roof overhang or eave, up to two feet beyond the envelope;
3. A chimney, vent, antenna, or energy conservation or production equipment or feature not designed for occupancy; and
4. Either:

a. 30-Foot Side-Gabled Roof Exception

A side-gabled roof structure, with a total horizontal length of not more than 30 feet, measured along the base of the gable (See Figure 15.); or

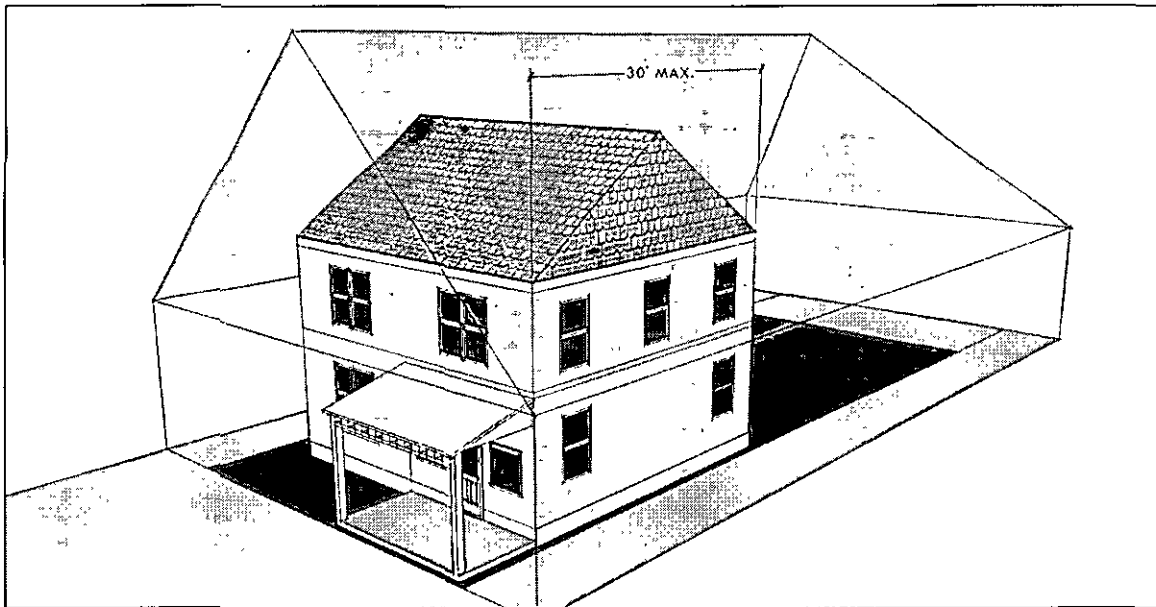


Figure 15: 30-foot Side-Gabled Roof Exception

b. Gables Plus Dormers Exception

- (i) Gables or a shed roof, with a total horizontal length of not more than 18 feet on each side of the building, measured along the intersection with the setback plane (See Figures 16 and 19.); and

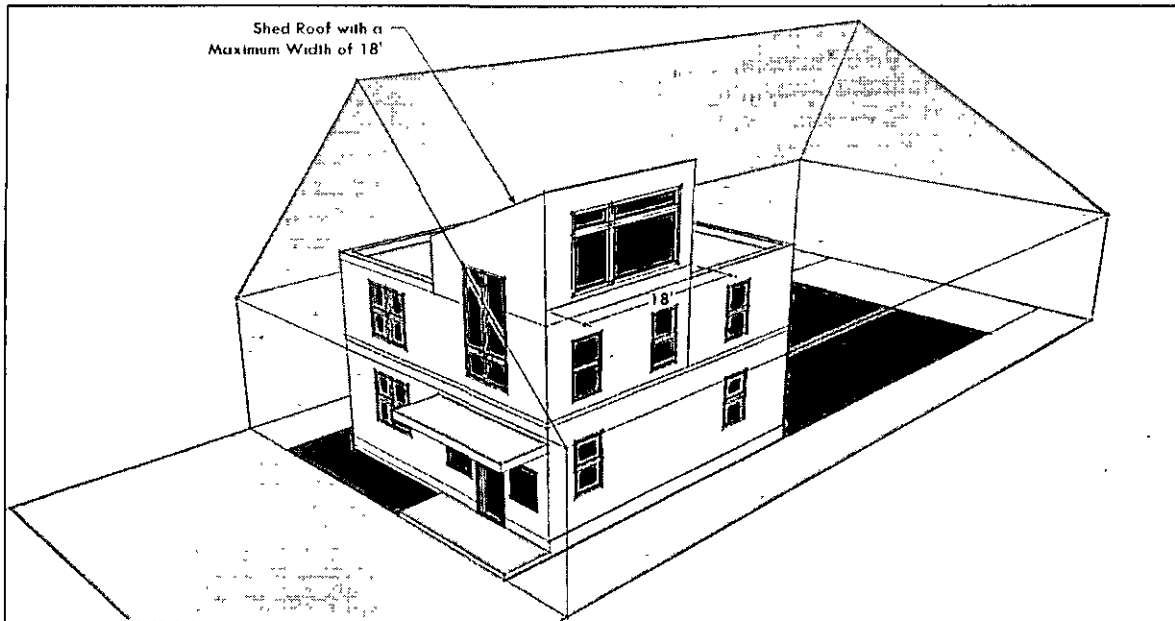
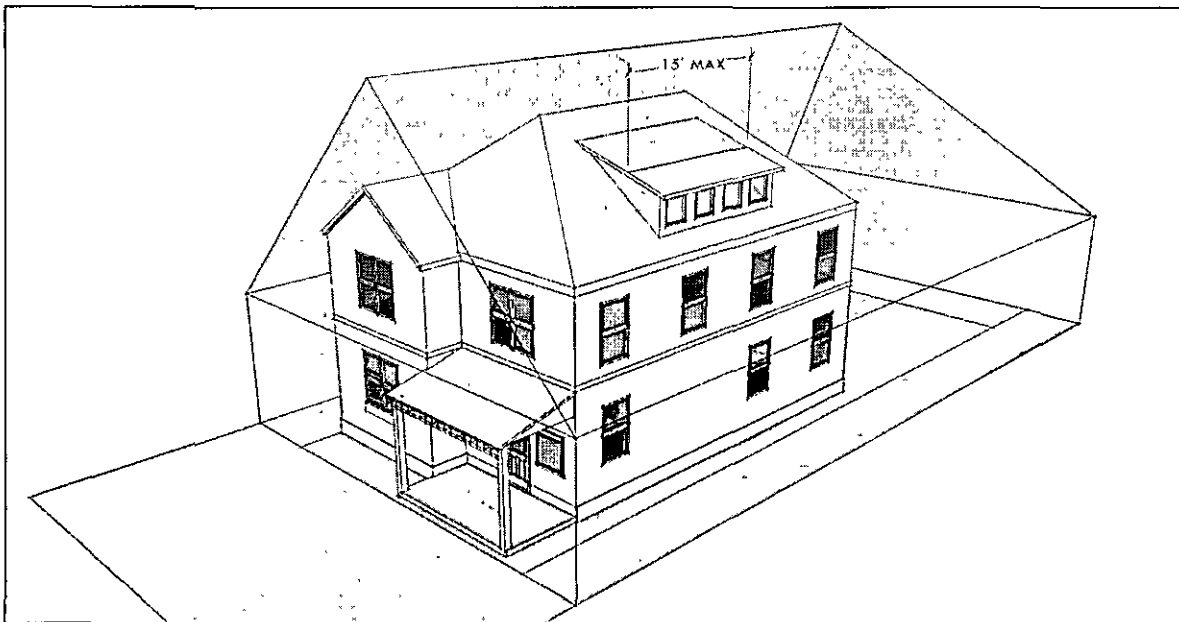
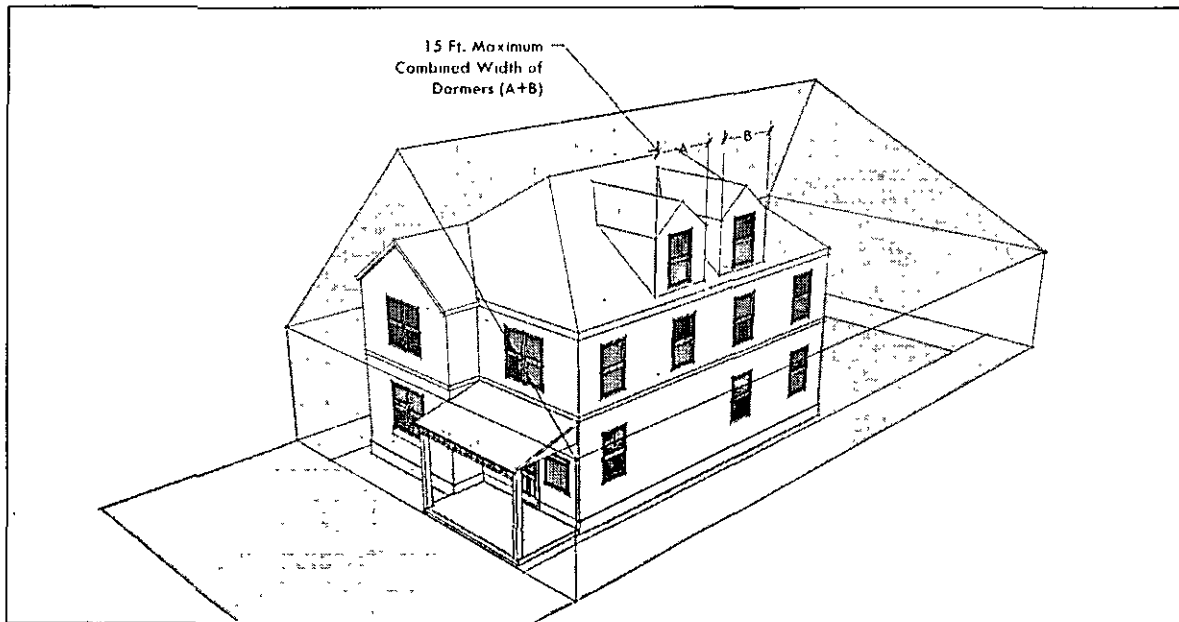


Figure 16: 18-foot Exception for Shed Roof

- (ii) Dormers, with a total horizontal length of not more than 15 feet on each side of the building, measured along the intersection with the setback plane. (See Figures 17 and 18.)



Figures 17 & 18: Dormer Exception (Gable or Shed)

One or more dormers with a combined width of 15 feet or less on each side of the roof may extend beyond the setback plane. The width of the dormer is measured at the point that it intersects the setback plane.

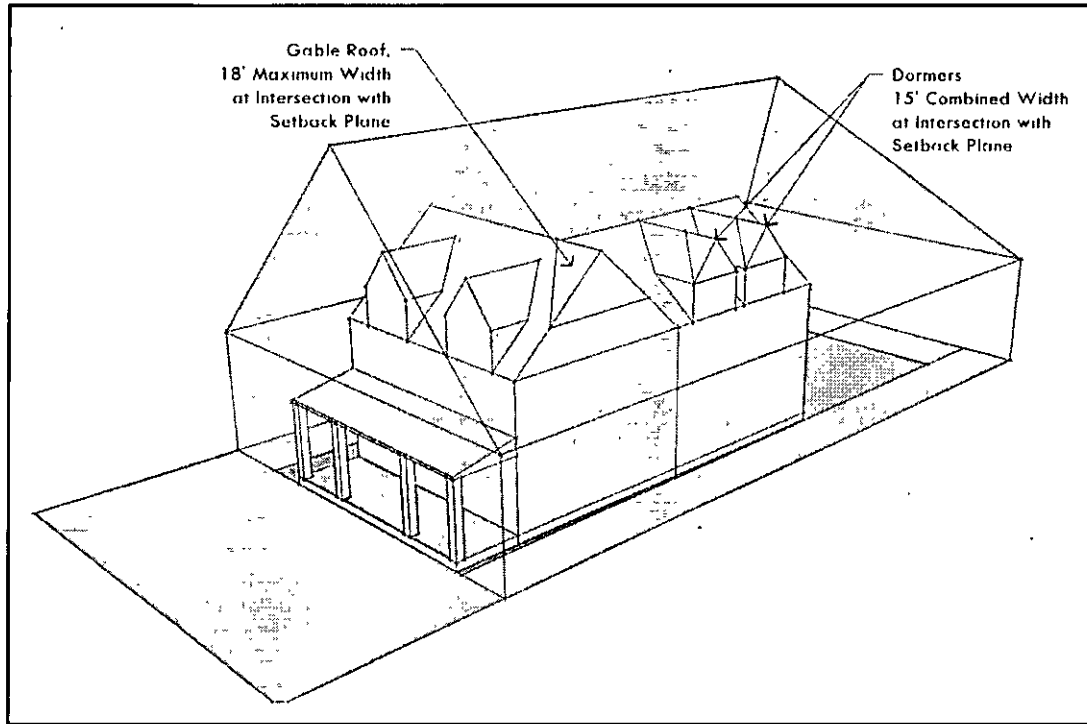


Figure 19: Combination of Roof and Dormer Exceptions

2.7. SIDE WALL ARTICULATION¹²

A side wall of a building that is more than 15 feet high and is an average distance of 15 feet or less from an interior lot line may not extend in an unbroken plane for more than 32 feet beyond the original footprint. To break the plane, a perpendicular wall articulation of not less than four feet, for a distance along the side property line of not less than 10 feet, is required. See Figure 20.

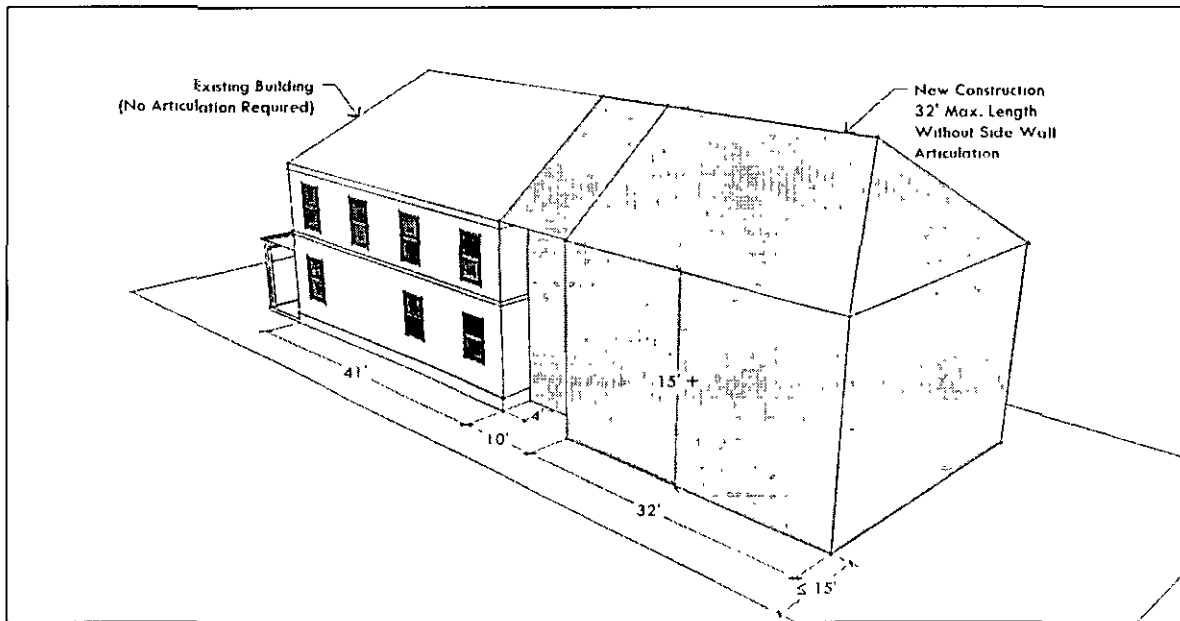


Figure 20: Side Wall Articulation

Articulation is required for side walls on additions or new construction that are 15 feet or taller and located within 15 feet of the side lot line. No wall may extend for more than 32 feet without a projection or recession of at least 4 feet in depth and 10 feet in length.

¹² NOTE: Current 25-2-566(J). Language has been modified to clarify applicability.

2.8. MODIFICATIONS BY THE RESIDENTIAL DESIGN AND COMPATIBILITY COMMISSION¹³

This section provides for modification by the Residential Design and Compatibility Commission of certain requirements of this Subchapter for a proposed development.

2.8.1. Modifications that May be Approved

The Residential Design and Compatibility Commission may approve:

- A.** An increase of up to 25 percent in the:
 - 1. Maximum floor-to-area ratio or maximum square footage of gross floor area;
 - 2. Maximum linear feet of gables or dormers protruding from the setback plane;
 - 3. Maximum side wall length before articulation is required; or
 - 4. Maximum height of the side or rear setback plane; or
- B.** A decrease of up to 25 percent in the minimum depth or length of a required wall articulation.

2.8.2. Modification Procedures

A. Application and Notice

- 1. A person may request a modification listed in subsection 2.7.1. above by filing an application with the Director on a form provided by the Director.
- 2. Not later than the 14th day after an application is filed, the Director shall:
 - a.** Mail notice of the application to:
 - (i) Each notice owner of property immediately adjacent to the subject property;
 - (ii) The appropriate neighborhood association, if any; and,
 - (iii) The neighborhood plan team, if any; and
 - b.** Post notice of the application in accordance with Section 25-1-135 (*Posting of Signs*).

B. Approval Criteria

The Residential Design and Compatibility Commission may approve a modification if it determines that the proposed development is compatible in scale and bulk with the structures in the vicinity of the development. In making this determination, the commission shall consider:

¹³ NOTE: Current Section 5-2-566(M) divided into new subsections and with new subtitles added for clarity.

1. The recommendation of the neighborhood plan team, if any;
2. The development's:
 - a. Compliance with neighborhood design guidelines, if any;
 - b. Consistency with the streetscape of the properties in the vicinity;
 - c. Consistency with the massing, scale, and proximity of structures located on either side of or behind the development;
 - d. Impact on privacy of adjacent rear yards; and
 - e. Topography and lot shape; and
3. For a development of an entire block, whether the development will have a negative impact on adjacent property.

C. Additional Criteria for Historic Properties

The Residential Design and Compatibility Commission may not approve a modification for:

1. A local, state, or national historic landmark, if the modification would adversely impact the landmark's historic status;
2. A "contributing structure," as defined in Section 25-2-351 (*Contributing Structure Defined*), or a contributing structure in a National Register historic district, if the modification would adversely impact its status as a contributing structure; or
3. A property listed as Priority 1 or Priority 2 on the City's most current survey of historic assets, if the modification would adversely impact the property's architectural integrity or change its priority rating.

D. Appeals

An interested party may appeal the Residential Design and Compatibility Commission's decision to the City Council.

E. Board of Adjustment May Grant Variances

This subsection does not prohibit the Board of Adjustment from granting a variance from a requirement of this Subchapter under 25-2-473 (*Variance Requirements*).

ARTICLE 3: DEFINITIONS AND MEASUREMENT

3.1. BUILDABLE AREA

In this Subchapter, BUILDABLE AREA means the area in which development subject to this Subchapter may occur, and which is defined by the side and rear setback planes required by this Subchapter, together with the area defined by the front, side, and rear setbacks and the maximum height limit.

3.2. BUILDING LINE¹⁴

In this Subchapter, BUILDING LINE means a line that is parallel to the front lot line and that intersects the principal residential structure at the point where the structure is closest to the front lot line. See Figure 21.

3.3. MEASUREMENT OF GROSS FLOOR AREA¹⁵

In this Subchapter, GROSS FLOOR AREA has the meaning assigned by Section 25-1-21(Definitions), with the following modifications:

- 3.3.1. The following shall be included in the calculation of gross floor area:
- A. The portion of a second or third story of a building that is covered by a roof, including a porch, portico, breezeway, passageway, or corridor;
 - B. A mezzanine or loft; and
 - C. The covered portion of a parking area, except for:
 - 1. Up to 450 square feet of:
 - a. A detached rear parking area that is separated from the principal structure by not less than 10 feet; or
 - b. A parking area that is open on two or more sides, if it does not have habitable space above it; and

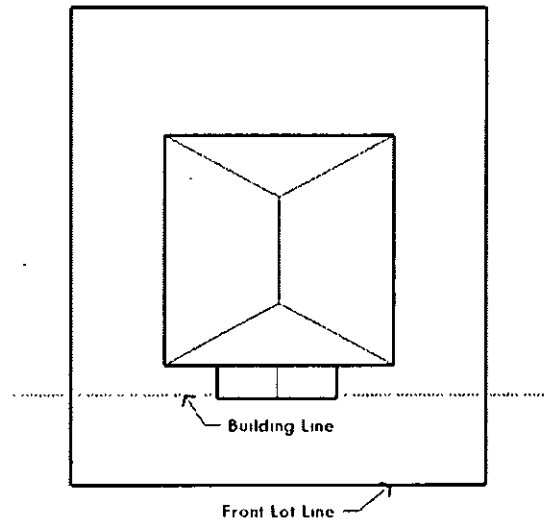


Figure 21: Building Line

¹⁴ NOTE: Current 25-2-566(L)(1).

¹⁵ NOTE: Current 25-2-566(E).

2. Up to 200 square feet of an attached parking area if it used to meet the minimum parking requirement.

3.3.2. The following shall be excluded from the calculation of gross floor area:

- A. A ground floor porch, including a screened porch;
- B. A habitable portion of a building that is below grade if:
 1. It does not extend beyond the first-story footprint; and
 2. The finished floor of the first story is not more than three feet above the average elevation at the intersections of the minimum front yard setback line and the side property lines; and
- C. A habitable portion of an attic, if:
 1. The roof above it is not a flat or mansard roof and has a slope of 3 to 12 or greater;
 2. It is fully contained within the roof structure;
 3. It has only one floor;
 4. It does not extend beyond the footprint of the floors below;
 5. It is the highest habitable portion of the building; and
 6. Fifty percent or more of the area has a ceiling height of seven feet or less

3.3.3. An area with a ceiling height greater than 15 feet is counted twice.