



SETBACKS

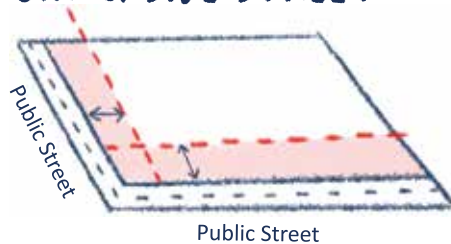
WHAT ARE MINIMUM SETBACKS?

★ Minimum setbacks are **minimum distances**. They tell you **how far from the edges of a lot** principal structures need to be. Principal structures are things like dwellings and their covered porches + garages, office buildings, retail stores, and other non-residential buildings.

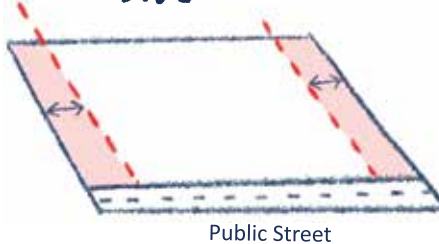
★ Minimum setback requirements change based on the zoning district you're in.

There are **4 types** of minimum setbacks: front, side street, side, and rear.

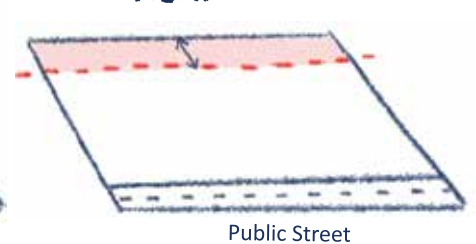
FRONT & SIDE STREET



SIDE



REAR

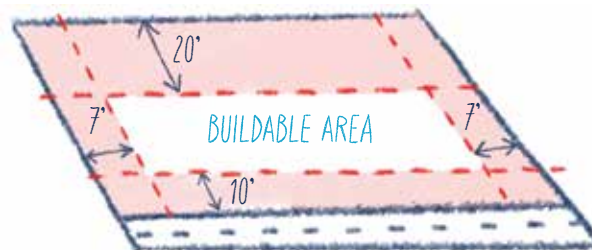


★ **Example:** This lot is in a zoning district with the following setbacks:

Min. front setback: **10** feet

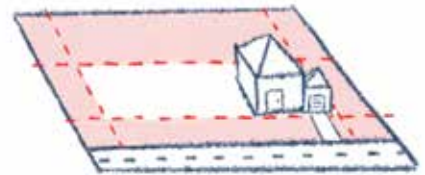
Min. side setback: **7** feet

Min. rear setback: **20** feet



Given these setbacks, structures (like dwellings, covered porches, and garages) can usually be built anywhere in the middle. We call this the **buildable area**.

Here are a few ways the lot above could be developed, given the setbacks:



WHAT ARE SOME PROPOSED CHANGES?

★ The Zoning Ordinance Update proposes to **reduce** minimum setback requirements for principal structures. This means that structures could be built **closer to the property lines**, and in some instances, more dwellings could fit in an area. In other cases, covered front porches or additions to structures could be added where they are not allowed today.

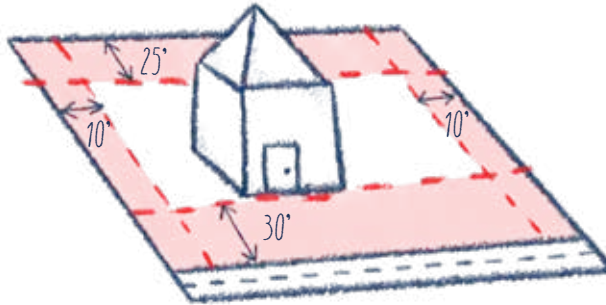
- ★ **Example:** Here is one example of current minimum setbacks versus proposed (reduced) minimum setbacks.

CURRENT MIN. SETBACKS (R-1)

Min. front setback: **30** feet

Min. side setbacks: **10** feet

Min. rear setback: **25** feet

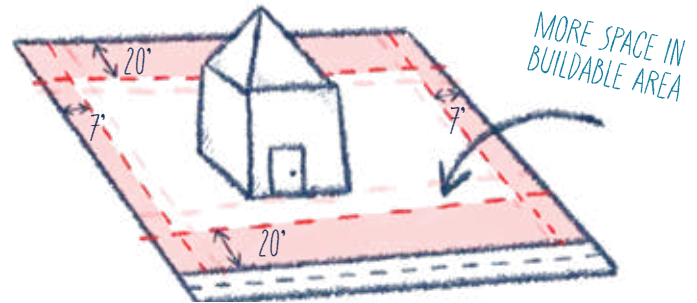


PROPOSED MIN. SETBACKS (R-5N)

Min. front setback: **20** feet

Min. side setbacks: **7** feet

Min. rear setback: **20** feet



WHY DO WE HAVE SETBACKS?

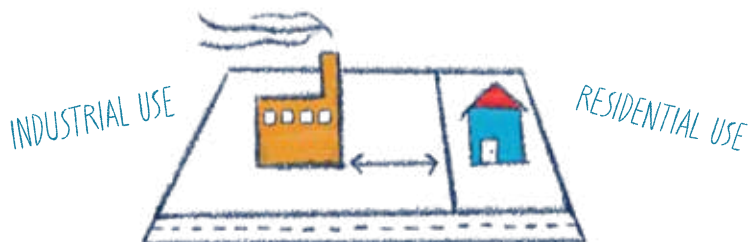
- ★ They work toward visually consistent neighborhood appearances.



- ★ They create space between structures so that fires cannot easily jump from one building to the next.



- ★ They provide space between uses that may not be compatible.



A QUICK RECAP

- ★ Reducing minimum setback requirements could give landowners **more space** and **flexibility** to make improvements on their lots (since the buildable area would be larger).



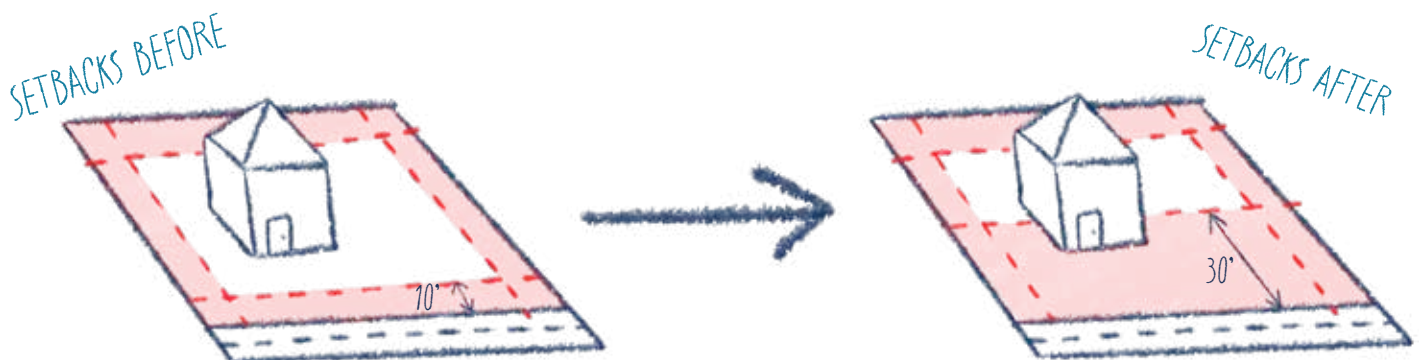
- ★ It could also give developers **increased flexibility to build more dwellings** in an area.

DO ALL STRUCTURES IN HARRISONBURG MEET MINIMUM SETBACK REQUIREMENTS?

No, not all structures in Harrisonburg meet minimum setback requirements.

- ★ Some minimum setback requirements have increased over time, causing existing structures to violate minimum setbacks and become “**nonconforming**”.
- ★ A **nonconforming setback** means that the structure *did comply* with the zoning ordinance when it was constructed, but *no longer complies* with the current zoning ordinance.
- ★ These nonconforming structures are **not** required to move.
- ★ **Example:** If someone built a dwelling when the minimum front setback requirement was 10 feet, but the minimum front setback requirements have since increased to 30 feet, they would not need to move their dwelling.

The structure is **nonconforming** to setback requirements.



WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT SETBACKS?

- ★ This guide is only meant to give a **simple introduction** to the topic of setbacks for principal structures and what's being proposed in the Zoning Ordinance Update.
- ★ Check out the Draft Zoning Ordinance (Articles B and C) for information on proposed setbacks and use requirements.

WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT ZONING?

- ★ Visit our website or get in touch:
 - 🖱️ HarrisonburgVA.gov/Zoning
 - 📞 (540) 432-7700
 - ✉️ ZoningDivision@HarrisonburgVA.gov
...for questions about zoning requirements or to report a zoning violation
 - ✉️ CDPlanning@HarrisonburgVA.gov
...for questions about rezonings and special use permits
 - 📍 Community Development
City Hall, 2nd floor
409 S. Main Street

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