



AGENDA REPORT

Planning and Zoning Commission Meeting

TODAY'S DATE: September 24, 2025

MEETING DATE: October 21, 2025

TO: Chairman Dunkel and members of the Sandpoint Planning and Zoning Commission

FROM: Planning and Community Development Director Jason Welker

SUBJECT: PUBLIC HEARING: Amendments to Sandpoint City Code Title 9-1-3 "Definitions," 9-4-1-3 "Residential Single Family Development Standards" and 9-4-2-3 "Residential Multifamily Development Standards," 9-4-4 "Rural Residential 1," and 9-4-5 "Rural Residential 2" pertaining to building footprints and impervious surface standards

INTRODUCTION:

A basic function of lot coverage standards is to manage the built environment by limiting the percentage of a lot that can be covered by building and impervious surfaces. Sandpoint's current zoning regulations contain two zone districts (Rural Residential 1 "RR1" and Rural Residential 2 "RR2") with a single lot coverage standard and two zone districts (Residential Single-Family "RS" and Residential Multi-family "RM") with two requirements to achieve this objective, often leading to confusion over what portion of a proposed development is regulated/limited by each standard.

This report presents a proposed amendment to Sandpoint City Code Title 9 to replace the two current maximum building footprint standards with a single impervious surface coverage standard applicable to all residential zones. A new single standard will be more easily understood by code users and applied at the time of development (e.g. building permit) review. Additionally, this proposed amendment modifies the regulations to allow a greater portion of the lot to be covered in all four of the residential zones.

The proposed increase in lot coverage stems from evaluating the existing purpose statement related to lot coverage and the effects these standards have on the provision of housing and accessory structures and covered patios (in RS and RM zones). When taken together with other city zoning requirements related to building setbacks, the placement of attached garages and requirements for front porches, the current lot coverage standard may be too limiting, stifling the ability to densify multi-family zones and allow for more living space in single family home scenarios. A revised purpose statement for lot coverage is provided.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED AMENDMENT:

Sandpoint City Code sections 9-4-1-3 (C) and 9-4-2-3 (C) establish specific lot coverage standards which currently require two limitations in the RS and RM zones, and a single requirement in RR1 and

RR2. One limitation called “building footprint” refers to all structures, and separately a second limitation called “maximum impervious surface” refers to hardscapes outside of the building footprints, such as driveways and uncovered patios and decks. Both of these have the effect (together with other zoning standards) of limiting how much development can occur on a residential lot. Table 1 below shows Sandpoint City Code lot coverage standards and resulting home size.

Table 1: Lot Coverage Standards in Residential Zones

Zone	Minimum Lot Size Requirement	Current Maximum Building Footprint	Current Maximum Impervious (beyond the footprint of buildings and structures)	Total Effective Maximum of current regs on lot coverage	Proposed Amendment to Lot Coverage in a new single standard	Maximum Building size under current regs on a 5,000 sf lot	Maximum Building size under proposed regs on a 5,000 sf lot
RS	5,000 sf	35%	30%	65%	70%	1,750 sf	Approx 2,600 sf*
RM	5,000 sf	40%	40%	80%	70%	2,000 sf	Approx 2,800 sf*

*On small lots setback requirements limit maximum building size to less than the maximum impervious surface, leaving additional impervious surface area for driveways, patios, etc.

The stated purpose of the lot coverage regulations (sections 9-4-1-3 C and 9-4-2-3 C) is as follows:

Purpose: The building coverage standards, together with the height and setback standards control the overall bulk of structures. They are intended to assure that taller buildings will not have such a large footprint that their total bulk will overwhelm adjacent houses. Additionally, the standards help define the character of the different zones by limiting the amount of buildings allowed on a site.

The current purpose statement refers to bulk of the primary structure together with the bulk of accessory structures to help address and define neighborhood character. Because building height and setbacks are addressed elsewhere in the code, a revised purpose statement could focus solely on the outcomes lot coverage requirements are intended to address.

Following is a proposed purpose statement focused solely on lot coverage:

“The impervious surface standards are intended to balance development flexibility with neighborhood livability and character. By limiting the total area of buildings, driveways, patios, and other hard surfaces on a lot, the ability to ensure open, outdoor character of residential areas to include lawns, landscaping, shade trees, natural spaces and gardens is enhanced. A single impervious surface limit provides a clear and predictable standard while allowing homeowners and builders flexibility in the arrangement of structures and improvements.”

This replaces the existing purpose language that emphasizes controlling bulk and scale of buildings and preventing tall structure from overwhelming adjacent houses. Notably, building footprint maximums have no impact on building heights, which are addressed in another section of the code, and setbacks are the principal tool in the zoning ordinance to address buildings’ bulk on adjacent properties. The City’s Comprehensive Plan typifies the character of Sandpoint neighborhoods as beset with an “urban forest” and includes vision statements related to its importance for aesthetic beauty, healthy natural and

built environments, affects that landscaping has on pollution reduction, shade for reducing heating and cooling costs, noise attenuation, and benefits related to capturing stormwater.

ILLUSTRATION OF IMPACT:

Replacing the maximum building footprint standard with a maximum impervious standard does not do away with the City's regulation of air, light, and open space or with the limits on the overall bulk of structures in residential zones. In no circumstance, in fact, will building footprints end up consuming the entirety of the maximum allowable impervious surface. On a 5000-sf lot, setbacks account for 48% of the lot in the RS zone and 44% of the lot in the RM zone; structures cannot be developed within the setbacks with limited exceptions. For example, if we consider the impact on developments on the smallest lots allowed to be created in the RM and RS zones (5,000 sf) we can see the effect of the lot coverage standards on home size.

- **RM Zone (5,000 sf lot):**

- A 5,000 sf lot *less* 2200 sf occupied by setbacks *equals* 2800 sf available for all structures if no other limitations were in place.
- Current maximum building footprint on a 5,000 sf lot is 40%, or **2,000 sf**. An additional 30%, or 1,500 sf of impervious area is available for driveways, and other hard ground surfaces (not required to adhere to setbacks). The total coverage between the two standards is 3,500 sf (70%).
- Proposed: Allow up to 3,500 sf for all impervious surfaces. Accounting for a 450-sf, paved driveway, a 3,050 sf footprint home (or smaller home plus additional buildings) would be possible. Setbacks on a 5,000 sf RM lot further limit max building size to 2,800 sf. Nonetheless, the proposed amendment allows a shift of the available impervious surface to **allow more structures (2,800 sf = 56%)**, as opposed to the current maximum of 40%.

- **RS Zone (5,000 sf lot):**

- A 5,000 sf lot *less* 2400 sf occupied by setbacks *equals* 2600 sf available for all structures if no other limitations were in place.
- Current maximum building footprint on a 5,000 sf lot is 35%, or **1,750 sf**. An additional 30%, or 1,500 sf of impervious area is available for driveways, and other hard ground surfaces (not required to adhere to setbacks). The total coverage between the two standards is 3,250 sf (65%).
- Proposed: Allow up to 3,500 sf for all impervious surfaces. Accounting for a 450-sf paved driveway, a 3,050 sf footprint home (or smaller home plus additional buildings) would be possible. Setbacks on a 5,000 sf RS lot further limit max building size to 2,600 sf. Nonetheless, the proposed amendment allows a shift of the available impervious surface to **allow more structures (2,600 sf = 52%)** as opposed to the current 35%.

There are other standards that also apply to developing homes, namely garage location, which increases driveway (impervious) surface length, and front porches, which decreases the livable portion of the home. These standards are very important to the fabric and aesthetic appeal of the residential neighborhoods. Trying to accommodate additional flexibility in home design thus results in looking at coverage requirements to allow additional building to the rear of the home and/or lot. Adjusting lot coverage, however, still maintains the separation between homes on neighboring lots.

Figure 1 below illustrates how a property owner hoping to maximize the use of their property will be limited by the building setbacks before the limits of the impervious surface standard impacts building size.

EXAMPLE SCENARIO 1:

Under current standards, a single-story home on a 5,000 sf lot in the RS zone with 1,600 sf of living space, a 450 sf two-car garage, and a 150 sf covered porch would have a total building footprint of 2,200 sf, or 44% of the lot area, exceeding the maximum of 35% allowed in the zone. **Such a modest house would not be permitted under current code. Only 1,150 of living space would be possible for a single-story house with a garage and porch.**

Under the proposed impervious surface standard, a single-family home on a 5,000 sf lot could have a total building footprint of **2,600 sf**. Subtracting the 600 sf for the garage and covered porch up to **2,000 sf of living space could be accommodated, increasing the amount of living space possible by 850 sf.**

EXAMPLE SCENARIO 2:

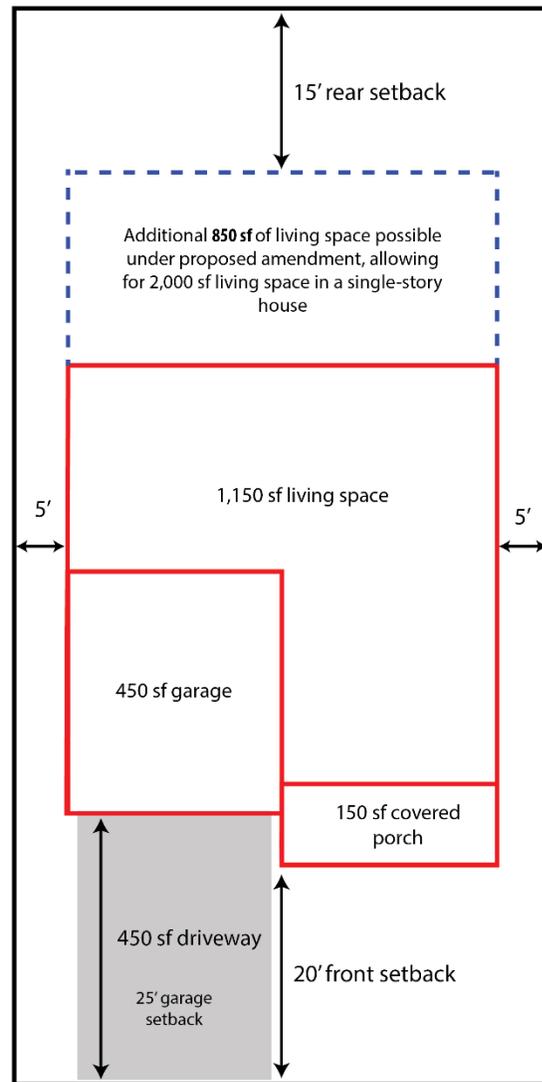
Under current code, a 1/3 acre (14,400 sf) lot in the RM zone is allowed to be developed with **up to 6 housing units** with a total building footprint of 40%, allowing a **maximum per unit size of 960 sf** (5,760 sf total building footprint across 6 unit).

The elimination of the building footprint maximum and adoption of a 70% impervious surface standard will allow a maximum building footprint of 10,080 sf (70% of 14,400), allowing **maximum unit sizes of 1,680 sf** (not accounting for impervious driveways or patios). Developers and home buyers will have a wider variety of home sizes to choose from under the proposed amendment than what is possible under the more restrictive max building footprint ordinance in place today.

Elimination of building footprint maximums and adoption of impervious surface maximums in their place will **allow structures to consume a relatively larger share of total lot sizes**, while maintaining the amount of pervious surface already required in code.

WHY IS THIS AMENDMENT NEEDED?

RS Zone: 5,000 sf lot (50' x 100')



EXAMPLE ON TYPICAL 5,000 SF LOT

Red = Current max building footprint, 35% (RS)
Red + Blue + Gray = Proposed max impervious surface (70%)
allows slightly larger houses on the smallest allowable lots

Figure 1: Example scenario showing impact of proposed amendment on max building size on a 5,000 sf lot in the RS zone

The elimination of separate building footprint maximums will allow larger and more functional homes on residential lots while preserving setbacks as the primary tool for maintaining light, air, and open space between structures. This change responds to evolving housing needs in Sandpoint, where many residents are seeking single-level homes with attached garages that support aging in place. It also enables the inclusion of outdoor living features such as patios, decks, and porches that contribute to neighborhood vitality and quality of life. By regulating only the total impervious surface, the amendment gives designers and builders greater flexibility to work within lot constraints and create attractive, livable homes, often avoiding the need for variances or other administrative relief.

Another benefit of going to a single impervious surface standards is the streamlining of permit processing; in building plan reviews planning staff must calculate only one area (impervious surface total) not two (building footprint + additional impervious surface), reducing opportunities for error and increasing administrative efficiency.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN CONSISTENCY

This amendment supports multiple goals of the 2024 Comprehensive Plan, including Housing & Neighborhoods Goal 1, which calls for a diversity of housing types, and Goal 3, which seeks to protect the charm and functionality of existing neighborhoods. By allowing more flexible home footprints within established setback envelopes, the amendment helps meet growing demand for single-level housing, garages, and outdoor living areas while maintaining neighborhood character.

The change is also consistent with Community Character & Design Goal 1, which encourages thoughtful density and site planning, and with the Land Use & Growth chapter’s call for providing housing choices and integrating development with existing infrastructure.

Comprehensive Plan Chapter	Relevant Goal / Objective	Connection to Amendment
Housing & Neighborhoods (Ch. 5)	Goal 1: Housing Variety – Provide a variety of quality housing types for a broad spectrum of households.	Allows larger, single-level homes and more flexible site layouts, accommodating aging-in-place designs and varied housing needs.
	Goal 3: Existing Neighborhoods – Protect and enhance the charm and comfort of existing neighborhoods.	Maintains neighborhood character by preserving setbacks while allowing more usable living space and amenities on each lot.
Community Character & Design (Ch. 3)	Goal 1: Character and Identity – Ensure development respects Sandpoint’s unique character through architecture, thoughtful density, and site planning.	Shifts focus from arbitrary footprint limits to thoughtful site design, promoting a balanced relationship between built and open space.
Land Use & Growth (Ch. 4)	Support housing choice and efficient, sustainable land use patterns that enhance community identity.	Encourages housing diversity and integrates new development with existing infrastructure, consistent with Sandpoint’s vision for growth.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommend that the Planning & Zoning Commission recommend approval of the proposed amendment to Title 9 of City Code updating the purpose statement for lot coverage, replacing maximum building footprint standards with a single 70% impervious surface coverage standard in RS and RM zones, 35% in the RR1 zone, and 25% in the RR2 zone. This amendment modernizes the City's development regulations, simplifies administration, and better aligns with the goals of the 2024 Comprehensive Plan by supporting housing variety, protecting neighborhood character through setbacks, and providing predictable yet flexible standards for homeowners and builders.

ACTION:

The Planning & Zoning Commission is asked to:

1. **Recommend Approval:** Recommend that City Council approve the proposed amendment to Title 9 as presented in this staff report.
2. **Recommend Modifications:** Provide feedback or request revisions to the proposed language prior to forwarding to City Council.
3. **Deny Recommendation:** Recommend that City Council retain the existing building coverage standards.

WILL THERE BE ANY FINANCIAL IMPACT? N HAS THIS ITEM BEEN BUDGETED? N/A

ATTACHMENTS:

Draft amendments to 9-1-3, 9-4-2-3, 9-5-2-3, 9-4-4, and 9-5-5.