

Chapter 18.10 SFL SINGLE-FAMILY LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL ZONE DISTRICT

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18.10.010 Intent.

The intent of the single-family low density residential (SFL) zone district is to:

- A. Preserve and establish peaceful low density neighborhoods in which owner-occupied single-family structures are the dominant form of dwelling unit;
- B. Provide designated areas in which a minimum net density of four units per acre and a maximum net density of seven units per acre apply to promote the efficient use of land;
- C. Guide residential development in such a manner as to encourage and plan for the availability of public services and community facilities such as utilities, police and fire protection, streets, schools, parks and recreation;
- D. Encourage development of attractive residential areas that provide a sense of community, establish a pedestrian-friendly atmosphere and contain a variety of housing types;
- E. Ensure that development without municipal utilities is at a density and in a configuration that enables cost effective urban density in-fill development when municipal utilities become available.

(Ord. 095-035, Added, 12/19/1995)

18.10.020 Permitted uses.

Permitted uses in the SFL district are as follows:

- A. Single-family detached dwellings;
- B. Cottage housing;
- C. Designated manufactured homes on single lots of record, in accordance with the provisions of TMC Chapter [18.48](#);
- D. Parks, trails, open space areas, and recreational facilities;
- E. Support facilities;
- F. Planned unit developments;
- G. Family child care home; child mini-day care center, subject to TMC Chapter [18.52](#);
- H. Adult family homes, residential care facilities;
- I. Duplexes are allowed on individual lots legally established before or on April 15, 2021. Duplexes shall not occupy more than twenty percent of the total lots in a new short plat or subdivision, which was legally established after April 15, 2021. In such cases, the community development director

shall have the discretion to alter the percentage in order to allow the new short plat or subdivision to meet minimum required densities due to topography or other special conditions related to the site, such as critical areas;

- J. Attached wireless communication facilities, except that it is prohibited to attach a nonaccessory wireless communication antenna on a single-family or two-family dwelling;*
- K. Agriculture up to thirty acres in size, subject to TMC [18.42.070](#);
- L. Community gardens;
- M. The housing, care and keeping of animals consistent with the requirements of TMC Chapter [6.08](#);
- N. Wildlife refuges and forest preserves;
- O. Permanent supportive housing, subject to TMC [18.42.150](#);
- P. Transitional housing, subject to TMC [18.42.150](#).

*Wireless communication facilities are subject to Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) standards and approval, and furthermore are subject to provisions for wireless communication facilities in TMC Chapter [11.20](#), Wireless Communication Facilities.

(Ord. O2022-013, Amended, 10/04/2022; Ord. O2021-019, Amended, 01/18/2022; Ord. O2020-005, Amended, 03/16/2021; Ord. O2018-025, Amended, 12/18/2018; Ord. O2017-006, Amended, 07/18/2017; Ord. O2010-029, Amended, 06/07/2011; Ord. O2011-002, Amended, 03/01/2011; Ord. O2010-005, Amended, 09/07/2010; Ord. O2005-011, Amended, 07/05/2005; Ord. O2000-004, Amended, 07/18/2000; Ord. O97-019, Amended, 06/17/1997; Ord. O95-035, Added, 12/19/1995)

18.10.030 Accessory uses.

Accessory uses in the SFL district are as follows:

- A. Storage sheds, toolsheds, greenhouses, subject to TMC [18.42.015](#);
- B. Detached garages or carports, subject to TMC [18.42.015](#);
- C. Home occupations, subject to TMC [18.42.030](#);
- D. Noncommercial recreational structures, which could include but are not limited to swimming pools and recreational ball courts;
- E. Energy systems;
- F. Accessory dwelling unit, in accordance with the provisions of TMC [18.42.010](#);
- G. Accessory wireless communication antenna;*
- H. Electric vehicle infrastructure;
- I. Supportive housing facilities such as emergency housing, emergency shelters, permanent supportive housing, and transitional housing are permitted as an accessory use only as part of a permitted church use. Such supportive housing facilities shall not to exceed twenty percent of the total building square footage of a church use and are subject to the requirements of TMC [18.42.150](#).

*Emergency communication towers and antennas and wireless communication facilities are subject to Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) standards and approval, and furthermore both uses are subject to provisions for wireless communication facilities in TMC Chapter [11.20](#), Wireless Communication Facilities.

(Ord. O2021-019, Amended, 01/18/2022; Ord. O2018-025, Amended, 12/18/2018; Ord. O2018-007, Amended, 10/16/2018; Ord. O2010-029, Amended, 06/07/2011; Ord. O2011-002, Amended, 03/01/2011; Ord. O2010-015, Amended, 09/07/2010; Ord. O97-019, Amended, 06/17/1997; Ord. O95-035, Added, 12/19/1995)

18.10.040 Conditional uses.

Conditional uses in the SFL zone district are as follows:

- A. Churches;
- B. Wireless communication towers;*
- C. Cemeteries;

- D. Child day care center;
- E. Schools;
- F. Neighborhood community center;
- G. Neighborhood-oriented commercial center;
- H. The following essential public facilities:
 - 1. Emergency communications towers and antennas;*
- I. Group foster homes;
- J. Bed and breakfasts;**
- K. Temporary expansions of schools, such as portable classrooms.

*Emergency communication towers and antennas and wireless communication facilities are subject to Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) standards and approval, and furthermore both uses are subject to provisions for wireless communication facilities in TMC Chapter [11.20](#), Wireless Communication Facilities.

**Bed and breakfasts with only one guest room are permitted uses but a public notice that an application has been submitted shall be sent to immediate neighbors. Administrative decisions may be appealed pursuant to TMC Chapter [14.12](#).

(Ord. O2024-005, Amended, 12/03/2024; Ord. O2019-007, Amended, 09/03/2019; Ord. O2018-025, Amended, 12/18/2018; Ord. O2017-006, Amended, 07/18/2017; Ord. O2010-029, Amended, 06/07/2011; Ord. O2001-012, Amended, 03/19/2002; Ord. O97-019, Amended, 06/17/1997; Ord. O95-035, Added, 12/19/1995)

18.10.050 Development standards.

Development in the SFL zone district must meet the following requirements:

A. Site Area. All land divisions are subject to the lot size provisions of this section; provided, that all land divisions must meet the following density requirements:

1. Minimum: four dwelling units per acre.
 - a. In situations where density requirements and lot size, shape, topography, or location result in a subdivision that cannot possibly meet the density requirements, a reduction in minimum density (i.e., an increase in maximum lot size) may be granted by the community development director if all of the following criteria can be met:
 - i. The lot to be subdivided must be less than or equal to three-fourths acre in total area.
 - ii. The reduction in minimum density may not result in more than one additional single-family dwelling. The reduction in density will not result in a density that is less than eighty-five percent of the minimum density required in the applicable zoning district.
 - iii. The conditions unique to the site (size, shape, topography, etc.) are not the result of actions by the applicant.
 - iv. In no event may a reduction in density be granted if it would result in a use that would not be allowed as a permitted use, accessory use, or conditional use in the district in which the property is located.
2. Maximum: seven dwelling units per acre, except that any density greater than six dwelling units per acre shall be obtained only by purchase of transfer of development rights in accordance with TMC Chapter [18.57](#). Provided, if a land division is subject to the clustering provisions of subsection E of this section and not subject to the wetland protection standards of TMC Chapter [16.28](#), the maximum density shall be no greater than one hundred twenty-five percent of the maximum density that would otherwise be allowed.

B. Density Calculation. The calculation of the density requirements in subsection A of this section is based on the portion of the site that contains lots devoted to residential and associated uses (e.g., dwelling units; private community clubs; stormwater detention, treatment and infiltration). The following land is excluded from density calculations:

1. Land that is required to be set aside for public use as open space, right-of-way, or land on which development is prohibited by TMC Title [16](#), Environment, and land that is to be used for private roads. Provided, that portion of park and open space areas that consists of stormwater

facilities and that is designed for active and/or passive recreational purposes in accordance with the drainage design and erosion control manual for Tumwater shall not be excluded from density calculations.

2. Land that is intended for future phases of development created in accordance with TMC [18.10.060](#).
3. Land that consists of lots devoted to uses other than residential and associated uses, including but not limited to churches, schools, and support facilities (except for stormwater detention, treatment, and infiltration facilities).

C. Division of Land Not on Public Sanitary Sewer. Division of land in areas without sewer must occur in a manner that maintains long-term potential to achieve minimum required densities and efficient provision of sewer once sewer becomes available. For a proposed division of land not required to be served by the extension of public sewer at the time of approval, a conversion plan shall be submitted in accordance with TMC [18.10.060](#) for the entire property, and the proposed land division shall be subject to the following:

1. For land division of an existing lot of record created prior to September 15, 1998:
 - a. Any division creating two lots shall not be subject to the minimum density requirements of subsection A of this section, provided one of the lots created is at least five acres in size. A note must be included on the recorded land division that future land divisions shall meet minimum density requirements of subsection A of this section in each phase of development.
 - b. Any division creating more than two lots shall meet the minimum density requirements of subsection A of this section in each phase of development.

D. Lot Size Requirements.

1. Maximum: none;
2. Minimum: three thousand two hundred square feet;
3. Lot width: fifty feet, minimum, except if there is an alley located adjacent to a side property line the minimum lot width shall be forty feet.

E. Clustered Subdivision. Any site in this zone district may be subdivided as a clustered subdivision; provided, that a clustered subdivision must meet all other provisions of this chapter and the following criteria:

1. Cluster subdivision shall not be allowed in subdivisions containing less than five acres.
2. Cluster subdivision shall meet the overall density requirements as set forth in this chapter.
3. For the purposes of this chapter, the minimum lot size for the SFL zone district shall be divided into the gross area of land being subdivided to ascertain the total number of lots that will be allowed by this procedure.
4. Individual lot sizes may be reduced by no more than twenty-five percent of the minimum lot size of the SFL zone district.
5. All such lot reductions shall be compensated for by an equivalent amount of land area in open space to be preserved and maintained for recreation or conservation purposes.
6. Individual lot depth and width requirements in the SFL zone district may be reduced by not more than twenty percent.
7. All other development regulations and use limitations remain in full force and effect.

F. Lots Located Adjacent to a Wetland. Lots located adjacent to a wetland and/or wetland buffer shall be encouraged to be as large as practicable within the allowances of this section and the physical conditions of the site.

G. Lot coverage, maximum impervious surface: sixty percent of total area of the lot.

H. Structure height: thirty-five feet, maximum; provided, however, that no structure shall penetrate imaginary airspace surfaces as defined by [14 C.F.R. Part 77](#). A map that provides detailed information on ground and imaginary airspace surface elevations is available for inspection in the community development department.

I. Yards.*

1. Front: ten feet minimum from frontage property line.
 - a. Driveways in front yards of single-family dwellings and duplexes must be a minimum of eighteen feet in length as measured along the shortest edge of the driveway starting from the front property line;
2. Side: five feet from property line, minimum;
3. Rear: twenty feet from property line, minimum. Exceptions: Structures on existing lots of record with rear structural setbacks or rear yards between five and twenty feet shall be considered conforming. Accessory dwelling units may be located a minimum of five feet from property line. Storage, garden, or tool sheds two hundred square feet or less in area, and residential mechanical equipment, may be located a minimum of five feet from property line.

J. Yards Exception. Any side or rear yard, not abutting on a public or private street, may be reduced to zero, provided:

1. That the yard area reduced by this procedure is added to the required setback on the opposite side of the site;
2. The opposite side yard setback is no less than ten feet after the yard area has been added as described in subsection (J)(1) of this section;
3. Where zero yard setback is used, the abutting site must be held under the same ownership at the time of initial construction or the owners of the abutting property(ies) record agreements or deed restrictions providing maintenance access and consent in writing to such zero yard setback;
4. The adjacent setback for such abutting property(ies) is not less than ten feet.

K. Park and Open Space Area. A new subdivision in this zone district shall set aside land for park and open space area as specified in TMC [17.12.210](#) and the citywide design guidelines.

*See Diagram [18.04.670](#), Yard Determination Diagram, in TMC [18.04.230](#), Y definitions.

(Ord. O2022-013, Amended, 10/04/2022; Ord. O2020-005, Amended, 03/16/2021; Ord. O2020-015, Amended, 02/16/2021; Ord. O2020-003, Amended, 09/15/2020; Ord. O2018-007, Amended, 10/16/2018; Ord. O2017-022, Amended, 12/05/2017; Ord. O2016-037, Amended, 01/03/2017; Ord. O2011-002, Amended, 03/01/2011; Ord. O2008-017, Amended, 10/21/2008; Ord. O2004-009, Amended, 12/07/2004; Ord. O2000-004, Amended, 07/18/2000; Ord. O98-009, Amended, 10/20/1998; Ord. O98-001, Amended, 09/15/1998; Ord. O96-022, Amended, 12/17/1996; Ord. O95-035, Added, 12/19/1995)

18.10.060 Conversion plans.

A. For any land division that is submitted in phases of development, and for any development where sewer is not available or that does not meet the density requirements of TMC [18.10.050\(A\)](#), the approval shall be contingent upon the following:

1. The lots created by the land division for residential and associated uses (e.g., dwelling units; private community clubs and recreation areas; stormwater detention, treatment and infiltration) shall meet the applicable requirements of TMC [18.10.050](#).
2. A conversion plan must be submitted for the entire property which demonstrates that the property can be subsequently subdivided to create sufficient lots to achieve the minimum densities necessary to comply with TMC [18.10.050](#). Such conversion plan shall depict a schematic lot layout, approximate location of utility easements, and potential street access and an internal circulation system consistent with city transportation policies. Conversion plans shall not be required to be stamped by an engineer or surveyor, and may be included as part of a drawing or plan submitted for the land division application. Simultaneous with the filing of the conversion plan, the applicant will be required to record with the county auditor, in a form acceptable to the city attorney, a document to be placed in the chain of title of the property giving constructive notice of the special density requirements relating to the property. This conversion plan will not bind future phases of development of the site to anything except the obligation to meet the overall density requirements of the entire property. Acceptance of a conversion plan by the city or county does not, by itself, constitute approval of, nor the granting of vested rights to, a future phase of development.

(Note: The purpose of the conversion plan is to ensure that the entire property can be ultimately developed at the residential densities required for this zone district, not to limit future development to a specified development scheme. Recognizing that some property subject to this requirement may not be redeveloped in the near future, the time and cost involved in preparing and obtaining approval of a conversion plan should be kept to a minimum.)

B. A permit to construct any single-family dwelling on a lot of record that is greater than one acre in size shall be contingent on the submission of a conversion plan which demonstrates that the remainder of the lot may be subsequently subdivided to create sufficient lots to achieve the minimum densities necessary to comply with TMC [18.10.050](#). Such conversion plan shall meet all of the provisions of subsection (A)(2) of this section.

(Ord. O98-001, Amended, 09/15/1998; Ord. O95-035, Added, 12/19/1995)

18.10.070 Screening and buffering requirements.

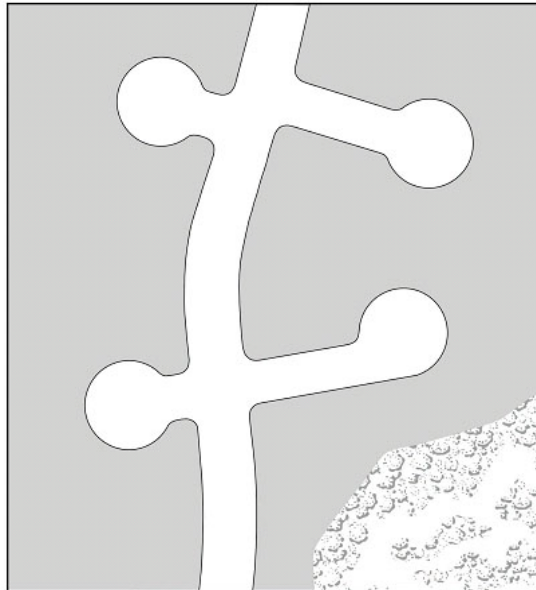
Buffering should be provided between this zoning district and areas in the light industrial zoning district. Buffering should be equally shared between the abutting industrial and residential developments, unless one of the uses is already developed as of January 1, 1996. If the residential use already exists, no further buffering should be required of the residential property owner. If the industrial use already exists, the residential use will be required to install buffering measures.




(Ord. O97-024, Amended, 03/03/1998; Ord. O95-035, Added, 12/19/1995)

TMC 18.10.050(A) and (B)

EXAMPLE DENSITY TRANSFER CALCULATION #1

Single-Family Low Density Residential Zone (4 – 7 DU/ACRE)



10 acres	Total Area of Land	
- 1 acre	Critical Area (e.g., wetland or dedicated open space) (@ 6 DU/acre = 6 DU)	
- 2 acres	Road Rights-of-Way	
= 7 acres	Net Developable Land (including stormwater facilities) (max. density @ 6 DU/acre = 42 DU)	

Density Transfer Calculation

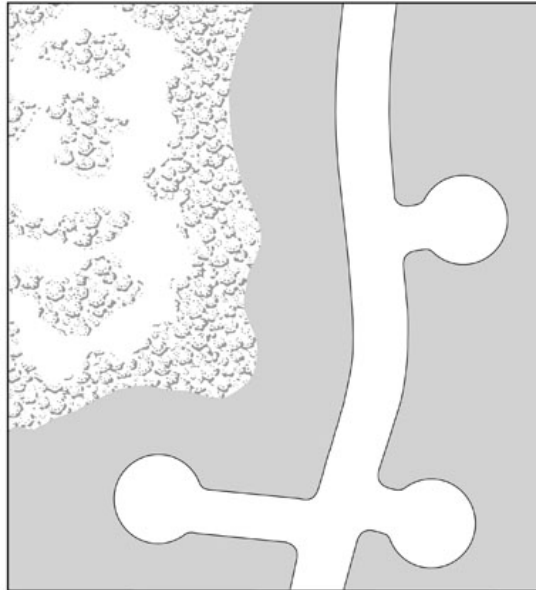
Max. allowable density with transfer: 42 DU x 1.25 = 52 DU} Lesser number =




Density transfer from critical area (excluding wetlands): 42 DU + 6 DU = 48 DU} total DUs permitted (48)

TMC 18.10.050(A) and (B)

EXAMPLE DENSITY TRANSFER CALCULATION #2

Single-Family Low Density Residential Zone (4 – 7 DU/ACRE)



10 acres	Total Area of Land	
- 3.5 acres	Critical Area (e.g., wetland or dedicated open space) (@ 6 DU/acre = 21 DU)	
- 1.5 acres	Road Rights-of-Way	
= 5 acres	Net Developable Land (including stormwater facilities) (max. density @ 6 DU/acre = 30 DU)	

Density Transfer Calculation

Max. allowable density with transfer: 30 DU x 1.25 = 37 DU} Lesser number =

Density transfer from critical area (excluding wetlands): 30 DU + 21 DU = 51 DU} total DUs permitted (37)

The Tumwater Municipal Code is current through Ordinance O2024-010, passed November 19, 2024.

Disclaimer: The city clerk’s office has the official version of the Tumwater Municipal Code. Users should contact the city clerk’s office for ordinances passed subsequent to the ordinance cited above.

[City of Tumwater Website](#)

City Telephone: [\(360\) 754-5855](tel:3607545855)

Codification services provided by [General Code](#)