

# NARROW LOTS

## Understanding The Issues

### INTRODUCTION

Narrow lots are those less than 65 feet wide. A vast majority of residential lots in Golden Valley were created under regulations that require at least 80 feet of width and at least 10,000 square feet of area per lot. However, pockets of the city were planned (platted) before those rules were in place, resulting in blocks of properties that are only 60, 50, or even 40 feet wide and that may be as small as 5,000 square feet.

There are approximately 1,350 narrow lots in Golden Valley. Roughly 600 have already been developed with single-family homes. Almost all of the City's remaining narrow lots have been combined with an adjacent narrow lot and contain a single-family home (one structure on two lots).

Recent development pressures on these narrower lots concerned some neighbors and prompted the City to study potential issues. The Council will consider whether to make zoning code changes by spring 2020.

### 2019-2020 NARROW LOT STUDY

The City Council asked City staff and the Planning Commission to look at the zoning regulations for narrow lots in order to evaluate if they are sufficient to protect the interests of nearby property owners during and after the construction of new or remodeled homes.

### NEXT STEPS

**January–February:** Planning Commission to discuss all of the background information on narrow lots; draft any amendments to zoning regulations; hold public hearing and vote on recommendations for City Council

**March–April:** City Council to hold public hearing and vote on potential changes to zoning regulations



# CURRENT REGULATIONS FOR NARROW LOTS IN THE SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL (R-1) ZONING DISTRICT

## FRONT, REAR, AND SIDE YARDS

The front yard includes all area between the front plane of the home and the lot line(s) adjacent to a street. The rear yard includes all area between the rear plane of the home and the rear lot line. Side yards include all areas between the front plane of the home and the rear plane of the home, from the structure to the side lot lines.

## SETBACKS

Setbacks are the required amount of open space in which no principle structures can be constructed or expanded, measured inwards from a lot line as follows:

- front setback is 35 feet
- rear setback is 25 feet
- internal side setbacks are 10 percent of lot width the north or west and 20 percent of lot width the south or east
- corner lot side setback (streetside) is 35 feet

## BUILDING ENVELOPE

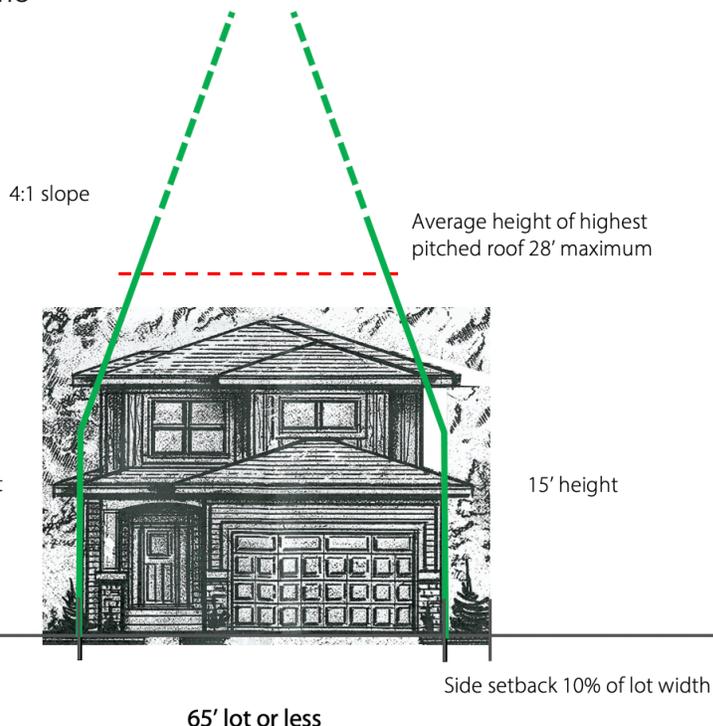
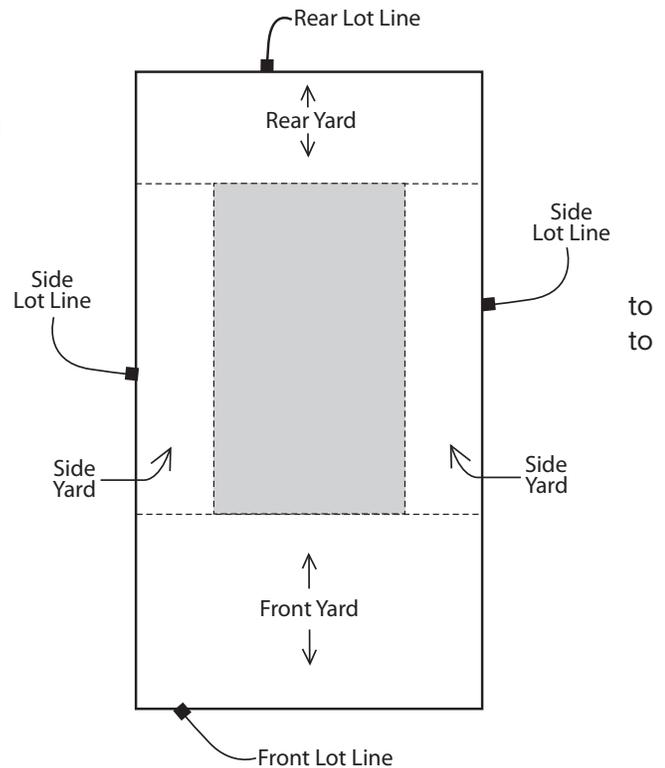
The envelope is the area within which a building can be constructed, below established height and width allowances and within the required front, rear, and side setbacks. The City's "tent-shaped" height restriction requires taller homes be stepped in towards the middle of the lot.

## BUILDING HEIGHT

The height of a home is measured from the average grade of the street side(s) of the structure to the mid-point of the highest pitched roof or to the highest point of a flat-roof. Maximum height is 28 feet to the mid-point of the highest pitched roof.

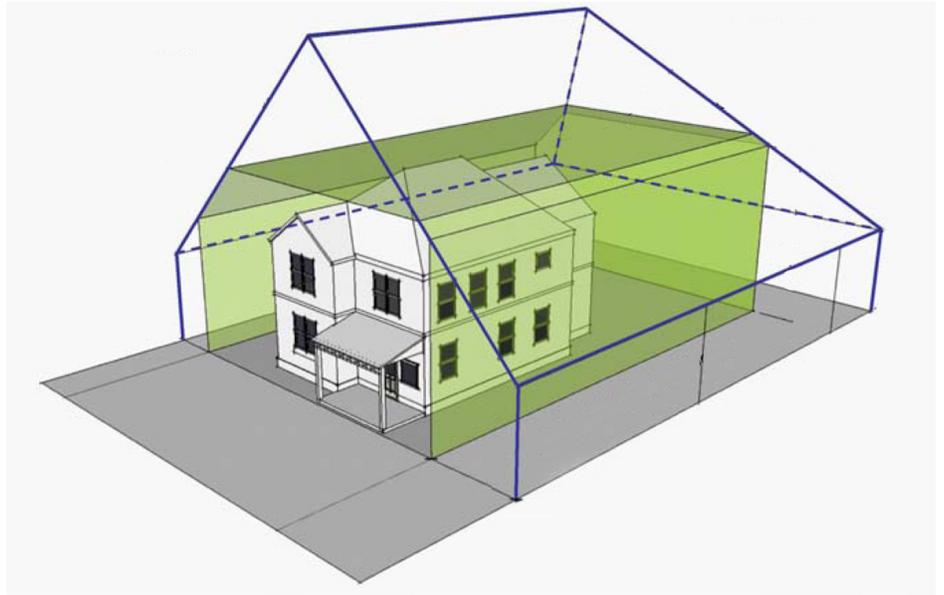
## STRUCTURE WIDTH

The width of a structure is measured as the greatest distance between two exterior side walls. The minimum allowed structure width is 22 feet.



## IMPERVIOUS SURFACE

Impervious surfaces are those that cannot be effectively penetrated by water, resulting in runoff. This includes buildings, driveways, patios, sidewalks, swimming pools, and other paved areas. Maximum allowed impervious surface is no more than 50 percent of the whole lot and no more than 40 percent of the front yard.

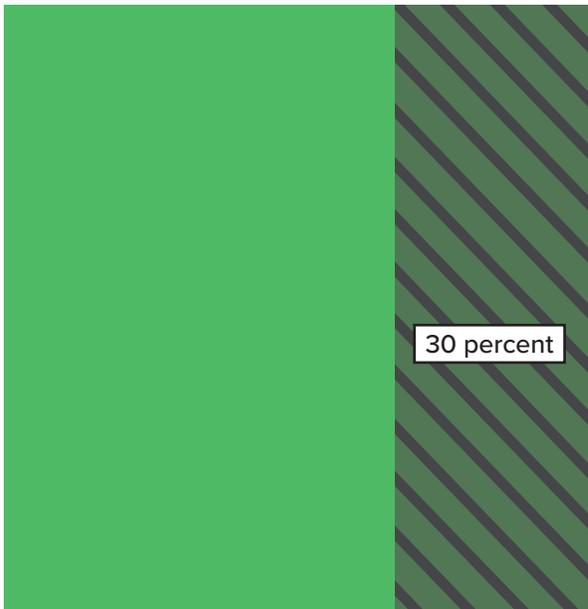


*Image by City of Austin, TX zoning code. This image is meant for illustrative purposes only and is not a strict to scale image of a lot in Golden Valley.*

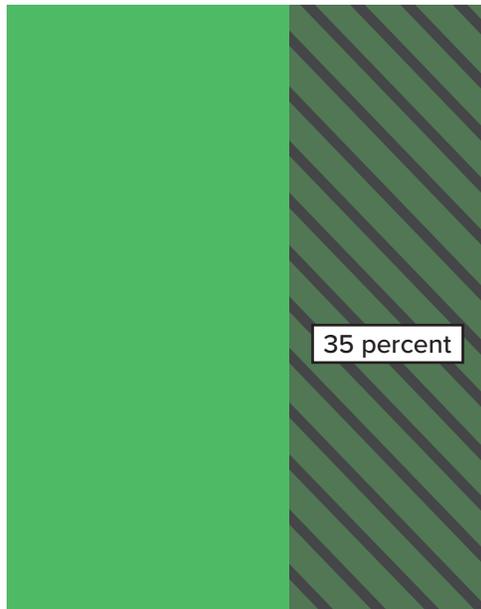
## LOT COVERAGE

Lot coverage is the portion of a lot occupied by a structure or building. It does not include driveways or other paved areas.

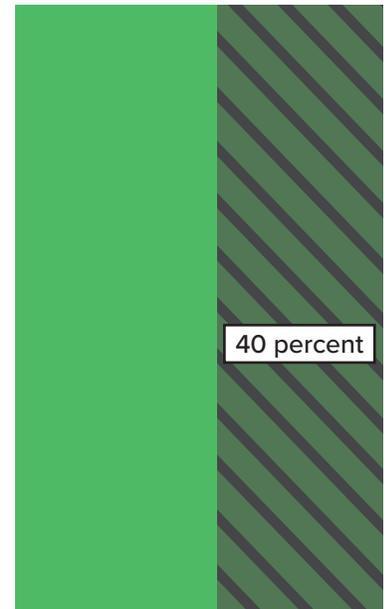
## MAXIMUM ALLOWED LOT COVERAGE



30 percent for lots larger than 10,000 square feet



35 percent for lots between 5,000 and 9,999 square feet



40 percent for lots smaller than 5,000 square feet

## SUBDIVISION AND TAX PARCEL DIVISION

One point of confusion in the discussion of narrow lots to date has been the difference between a subdivision and a tax parcel division. Both are means of dividing and using land in Golden Valley, but the first is a formal process that creates new lots and the second is an administrative process that recognizes lots that already exist.

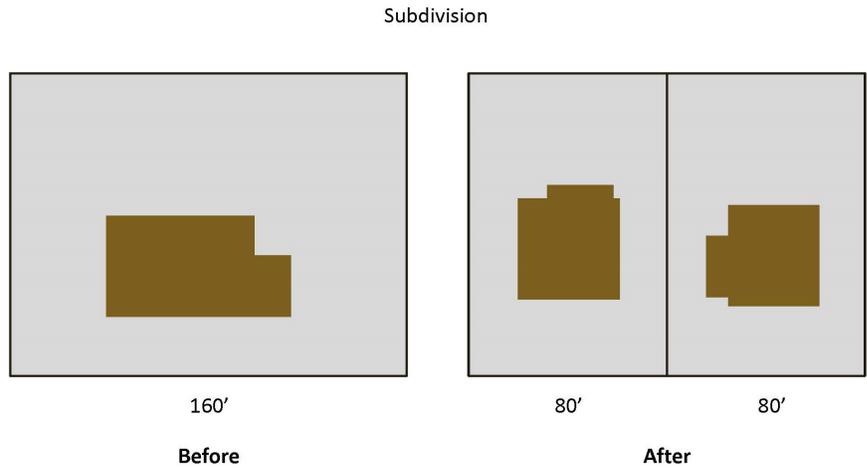
In Golden Valley, the minimum lot area for most NEW lots of record is 10,000 square feet, although in some cases it may be set at 15,000 square feet. Most existing narrow lots are around 4,000 to 6,000 square feet.

### SUBDIVISION

A subdivision is when a parcel of land is divided into two or more lots or parcels for the purpose of transferring ownership and/or constructing a building.

Subdivision applications require a significant review process. This is to ensure the proposal is consistent with the City's standards, provides any required public improvements, and meets any outside criteria (such as those from the Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission).

The Planning Commission reviews all subdivisions, and the City Council must approve them before they can take effect.



Typical subdivision process, in which a lot is subdivided and replatted into two lots.

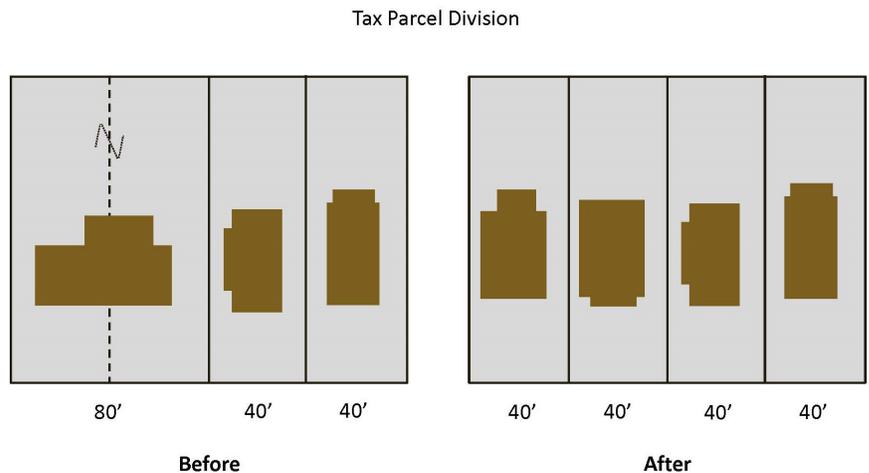
### TAX PARCEL DIVISION

Tax parcel divisions are used to separate existing lots of record that have been combined in the eyes of Hennepin County for taxation purposes, but that still maintain their original platted dimensions.

Over the period of time when these lots were first being platted and developed, some homeowners chose to purchase multiple lots and build across them to allow for a larger home. However, the underlying properties were never replatted and therefore retain their legal descriptions as 40- or 50-foot wide lots.

Given that these lots were created prior to the City's current standards, they have a "grandfathered" status and can be separated and developed even if they are narrower than the minimum width for new lots required today through subdivision.

Since this is an administrative action, the City of Golden Valley staff verifies and approves all tax parcel divisions.



One house, built across two lots of record, sharing one Property ID. Can be sold as two separate lots once house is demolished.