

Town of Lake Santeetlah – Setbacks & Height (January 2026)

(Disclaimer: This document is for educational purposes/guidance only: please refer to the actual ordinance as you complete your application.)

ORDINANCE LANGUAGE

Section 702. Minimum Development Standards.

Unless a variance is granted, the minimum standards for setbacks and height of buildings and structures in each zoning district or for PUDs are shown in the table below.

District	Measured from Street Right of Way or Center of Adjacent Street, whichever is more restrictive	Side Yard	Rear Yard	Max Height in feet
R-1 Single-Family Residential	15'	10'	10'	35'
CS Commercial Services, (except for PUDs unless waived by the Town Council)	30' (25')	10' (10')	10' (10')	35' (35')
GS Governmental Services	30'	10'	10'	35'

Note: Minimum lot area shall be subject to approval from Graham County and its Health Department or applicable state agency as required. In all cases, lot areas shall meet setback requirements contained in this Ordinance.

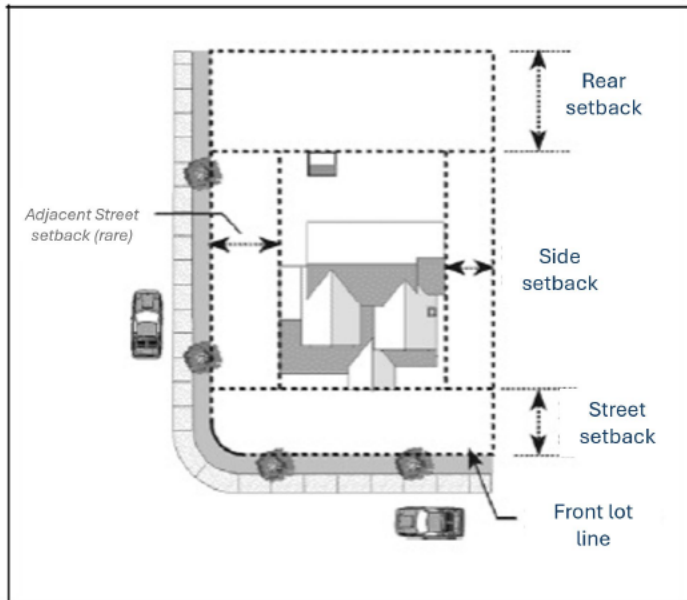
Note: See setbacks for accessory buildings or structures in Section 807.

ORDINANCE LANGUAGE

From 701: All single dwellings must meet dimensional requirements except when located in a PUD or cluster development as described in the Ordinance.

Side and Rear Yard Setback - 10'

Street Setback (Front) – 15'



WHAT IT MEANS

For residential buildings, no structures can be built within the setback areas. Note: Existing structures (non-conforming) are “grandfathered” in and can be renovated if there is no change to the footprint or height of the existing structure.

The residential side and rear setbacks are:

- The distance from your property line to 10 feet inside the property line.
- These sides are the sides of your property that do not face the main street running in front of the entrance to your property.

The street setback is taken from the more restrictive of these two measurements:

- The distance from your property line to 15 feet into your property where your house (or outbuilding) fronts the street OR
- The distance from the middle of the street right-of-way to 15 feet into your property where your house (or outbuilding) fronts the street is or
- If there is an adjacent street and questions about which side of the house is the front side, the zoning administrator will make a determination.

EXAMPLE

For new construction, the home must be built to the specifications of the setbacks in the ordinance.

For existing homes, if your house sits 10 feet away from the front property line on the street, it is non-conforming; you can’t expand it further into the 15 feet setup. However, you could significantly remodel the home, inside and out, if the footprint or height is not expanded.

ARTICLE VIII

GENERAL PROVISIONS

Sections 800-806 are general sections about meeting the requirements of the ordinance and not focused specifically on setbacks and heights.

ORDINANCE LANGUAGE	WHAT IT MEANS
<p><u>Section 807. Accessory buildings or structures.</u></p> <p><i>No separate accessory building or structure, not including fences, ornamental or retaining walls or detached steps, shall be erected within ten (10) feet of any side or rear property line, except to the extent that a greater or lesser setback or buffer is imposed as provided in Section 1103 of this Ordinance.</i></p> <p><i>A fence authorized in Section 1104 or an ornamental or retaining wall may be erected with a zero-lot line. A parking pad or detached accessory steps shall have a five (5) foot setback from the side or rear property line (unless the steps are a water dependent structure).</i></p>	<p><u>SCENARIO</u></p> <p>You want to build a shed that would encroach into the 10-foot side setback. The Zoning Administrator would review the extent that the shed would encroach into the setback. If the encroachment is within 10% of the setback (i.e. it is 9 feet from the side property line), the Zoning Administrator can decide as to whether a zoning certificate may be approved with a minor variance .</p> <p>If the encroachment is more than 10%, the zoning application would be denied. The homeowner then could request a variance to the Zoning Board of Adjustment and a hearing would take place. However, hardship and other criteria must be demonstrated. A variance is an exception not the general rule.</p>
<p><u>Section 1103. Buffers for Lake Santeetlah.</u></p> <p><i>An undisturbed riparian buffer of no less than ten (10) feet in width shall be maintained along and from the historical waterline of Lake Santeetlah. Only water dependent structures shall be allowed in this buffer.</i></p>	<p><u>SCENARIO</u></p> <p>Your house was built in 1986 and is five feet from the shoreline of Lake Santeetlah. However, the historic waterline of the lake extends six feet beyond the shoreline. The house conforms to the current requirements.</p> <p>A house built before the adoption of this zoning is four feet from the shoreline, which is also the historic waterline of the lake. The house is nonconforming, but is in compliance with current zoning.</p>

ORDINANCE LANGUAGE	WHAT IT MEANS
<p><u>Section 1104. Fences and Walls.</u></p> <p><i>Except as provided below for the GS District, only wood or wrought iron fences or materials simulating wood or wrought iron shall be allowed in any District. Fences made with any other material, including, but not limited to, wire, barbed wire, wooden pallets and electrically charged fences, are not permitted in any District. Fence posts and supports must be installed on the side of the fence that faces the owners' house or yard (that is the owner who is installing the fence). Except as provided in Section 1106 [junkyards], wood fences and rock walls may not exceed six (6) feet in height. Chain link fencing is permitted for Governmental Services located within the GS District in connection with the protection of water system facilities.</i></p>	<p><u>SCENARIO</u></p> <p>You have an old split rail fence and would like to replace it with a 6-foot wooden privacy fence. This would be allowed, but you must face the posts supports for the fence towards your property.</p>

ORDINANCE LANGUAGE	WHAT IT MEANS
<p><u>Section 500. Guidance for interpretation.</u></p> <p><i><u>Height, building or structure</u> means the vertical distance measured from the lowest grade point existing prior to construction adjacent to the building wall on the side of the building providing the primary fire department access for the structure to the highest point of the roof surface or parapet for flat and shed roofs, to the highest break line of mansard or gambrel roofs, and to the median height between edge of eave and the highest ridge of pitched or gable roofs and hip roofs. Chimneys, bell towers, steeples, copulas and other similar decorative elements may extend an additional ten feet above the highest point of the roof or parapet. Mechanical equipment on a roof shall be screened from view.</i></p> <p><i><u>Highest adjacent grade</u> means the highest natural elevation of the ground surface, prior to construction, next to the proposed walls of the structure.</i></p>	<p>The zoning administrator measures the vertical height of a building or structure by referencing the <i>primary fire department access</i> point. The primary access point is the entrance of the structure where emergency services would go to enter the structure or house, for example, a front door.</p> <p>Houses in Santeetlah greatly vary as to where the front entrance is. Some houses are downslope from the street, others are level with street. The <i>highest adjacent grade point</i> is where the dirt meets the building wall relative to the access point.</p> <p><u>EXAMPLE</u></p> <p>If the dirt on the foundation meets the house level with the front door (primary access point, the zoning administrator would approve a structure rising 35 vertical feet from that point to the top of the house.</p> <p>If the dirt on the foundation meets the ground 8 feet below the front door (primary access point), that is where the measurement of 35 vertical feet would begin.</p> <p>In the case of a front door that is on a wall with sloping dirt (going from level to the door to the bottom of the floor below), the measurement of the 35 vertical feet, according to the zoning, would begin at the lowest point.</p> <p><i>The Planning Board spent a lot of time contacting other municipalities along with meeting with contractors and appraisers. The outcome of the research provided the previous insights.</i></p>