



# Shoreland Zoning Summary

Land Use Planning and Zoning Department  
Green Lake County, WI

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- Does your property have water frontage?
- Is your property within 1000ft of a lake or naturally occurring pond?
- Is your property within 300ft of a river or stream?

If you answered YES to **ANY** of these questions, your property falls under the jurisdiction of the Green Lake County Shoreland Zoning Ordinance.

Read below for rules that impact how development on shoreland property is regulated.

The current shoreland zoning ordinance regulates setbacks from lot lines, amount of impervious surfaces allowed on the lot, and placement of structures like patios, walkways from the home to the water, and boathouses, among other things. Contact the Land Use Planning and Zoning Department with location-specific questions related to these topics, and ask for the Shoreland Zoning Specialist.

### Common questions and concerns of waterfront property owners:

**What is the Viewing & Access Corridor?** A part of your water frontage, a maximum of 35ft wide for every 100ft of frontage owned, also interpreted as 35% of the total frontage owned. This is the area that may be utilized for the viewing of and access to the water. All new structures must be located entirely in this area, including boathouses, fire pits, patios, walkways, water access, piers, and docks. This preserves the shoreland buffer zone which protects the lake. Trees and vegetation outside this corridor are protected and must not be removed unless dead, dying, or diseased.

**What are the building setbacks?** Properties with shoreland zoning jurisdiction must adhere to setbacks. Shoreland setback from the Ordinary High Water Mark (OHWM): All structures must be at least 75ft from the OHWM. Decks, patios, and fire pits are structures and must meet all applicable setbacks, unless otherwise exempt.

Some setbacks vary based on lot dimensions. For lots less than 85ft in averaged width, side lot line setbacks are 10ft. For lots at least 85ft in average width, side lot line setbacks are 12ft.

### Exemptions to Setbacks:

**Can I build a boathouse?** Newly constructed boathouses may be installed within the 75ft setback, if land use permit issued. Must adhere to current common-sense criteria to preserve the water resource. Must be within Viewing & Access Corridor (see above), meet side yard setbacks, be a dry storage unit (be placed above the OHWM), have maximum dimensions of 16ft wide by 24ft deep, have a sloped roof of maximum pitch 4/12, be earth-toned in color, and be used exclusively as storage for boats and related equipment.

**What about gazebos, patios, and fire pits?** Collectively known as open-sided or screened structures, the current ordinance allows for up to 200sqft of structure in the 75ft shoreland setback area. To qualify for this exemption, the structure must be at least 35ft from the OHWM and must follow an administrative procedure to preserve or establish and maintain a vegetative buffer zone. This vegetated area must cover at least 70% of the 37.5ft closest to the water (half the shoreland setback of 75ft). Contact us with specific questions and additional details.

**What is an Impervious Surface?** Any area that releases as runoff all or a majority of the precipitation that falls on it is an impervious surface. Written to limit new runoff to the water, surfaces that shed water rather than infiltrating it are limited to 15% of the lot. Property owners may exceed 15% by mitigating the impacts of new impervious surfaces, i.e. through installing infiltration systems (e.g. swales, rain gardens).

Existing lots with greater than 15% are allowed to maintain and repair those surfaces, or replace with similar surfaces. Relocation on the lot is also allowed, provided there is not a net increase in impervious surfaces. This is the "grandfathering clause," as many existing lots exceed the current standards.

$$\text{Percent Impervious Calculation} = 100 \left( \frac{\text{Area of all impervious surfaces within 300ft of OHWM}}{\text{Total Area of Lot}} \right)$$