



City of Phoenix
PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Glossary of Planning Terms

Below is a list of frequently used planning terms. For additional information on these and other zoning terms, please call the Planning Department at 602-262-7131, option #6.

Accessory Structure – a detached building placed on the same lot as the primary building, where the primary main use is not conducted. For example, a storage shed would be an accessory building (structure) to your home.

Building Setback – a required amount of footage from a property line where no buildings can be built upon.

Front Yard Main Building Setback – the required minimum distance (in feet) between the main building and front property line. The required front yard setback is dependent on the zoning on the property.

Interpretation

1. **Formal** – a public hearing before the Zoning Administrator determining whether a use is permitted in a specified zoning classification. The determination varies dependent on the person requesting the interpretation. The hearing process is similar to a zoning adjustment case.
2. **Informal** – a written request for the Zoning Administrator to determine whether a use is permitted in a specified zoning classification. Similar to a formal interpretation, but this request is a written letter, not a public hearing.

Lot Coverage – a percentage of the property that can be covered with buildings. Only building footprint (portion of the building on the ground) is included in the lot coverage, therefore, second stories are not included for lot coverage.

Main Building – the main structure on a property where the primary use is conducted. For example, a house.

Rear Yard Main Building Setback – the required minimum distance (in feet) between the main building and rear property line. The required rear yard setback is dependent on the zoning on the property.

Rezoning – a public hearing process to change the zoning of a property in order to change the use of the property. For example, if you wanted to build an office in a residentially zoned property, you would have to rezone the property to commercial.

Side Yard Main Building Setback – the required minimum distance (in feet) between the main building and side property line; creates an area on the side of the property where the main building may not be built or extended (projected) upon. The required side yard setback is dependent on the zoning on the property.

Use Permit – a public hearing process to allow a use, listed in the ordinance, subject to obtaining a use permit.

Variance – a public hearing process where you wish to vary development standards, such as building setbacks. The variance is considered a Zoning Adjustment, and does not change the use of the property.

Verification Letter – a written request to the Zoning Administrator to verify zoning on a property. This letter will have prior zoning history, prior cases (rezoning/special permit and zoning adjustment cases).