

COUNTY OF SANTA CLARA
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
PLANNING OFFICE
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Floor Area Ratio Regulations and Procedures

Floor Area regulations controlling the maximum size of dwellings and certain accessory buildings (cumulative) pertain in –n Neighborhood Preservation Combining Zoning Districts. They also pertain in –d1 Design Review Zoning Districts, defining the permitting and review requirements for new buildings based on size categories (Tier 1, 2, or 3). This handout provides instructions for complying with the substantive and procedural requirements of the Zoning Ordinance’s Floor Area Ratio (FAR) regulations for –n zones and provides general guidance for use in complying with –d1 regulations. For definitions and terms see the glossary items and explanations in the attached handout.

Step 1: Determine precise net lot area and clearly delineate the property lines, ROWs, ingress/egress easements on the site plan. Use an engineering scale.

Net lot area is derived from the gross area of the lot in square feet by excluding rights-of-way (ROW) and any ingress-egress easements. Other types of easements (storm drainage, slope, etc.) do not affect net lot area. To determine net lot area, consult and utilize any recorded Parcel Map, Tract Map, Record of Survey, or Certificate of Compliance that reliably furnishes that information. Alternatively, consult the grant deed or other recorded documents for property boundaries, dimensions, and easement or ROW information. Assessor’s Office information is not a reliable source of this information.

Step 2: Determine maximum allowable FAR.

Using the regulations of the appropriate –n1 (Los Altos) or –n2 (Burbank, San Jose) zoning district, determine the maximum allowed gross Floor Area.

- 2a. –n1 Zoning District: FAR = 0.35 multiplied by net lot area for lots of 10,000 sq. ft. net or less. For lots greater than 10,000 sq. ft. net, FAR = 3,500 sq. ft. of floor area plus one additional square foot of floor area per 10 square feet of net lot area over 10,000 sq. ft., to an absolute maximum of 5,700 sq. ft.
- 2b. –n1 Zoning District, Underlying Lots: FAR = 0.25 multiplied by net lot area. Lots of 16,660 sq. ft. or more, apply the standard FAR (2a above).
- 2c. –n2 Zoning District, FAR = 0.5 multiplied by net lot area.

Step 3: Determine Proposed Floor Area.

Using the following methodology, calculate and summarize the proposed gross floor area of all buildings and structures to which FAR regulations pertain (for –n1, see Section 3.40.030 and attached definitions; for –n2, see Section 3.40.040).

- 3a. Create floor plan diagrams to scale of each separate level of the primary residence, secondary dwelling, and/or accessory buildings to which FAR regulations pertain. Place these diagrams on either the same sheet as proposed floor plans, or the next sheet in the set, and utilize easily verifiable polygons (rectangles, squares, triangles) to scale, with each polygon area calculation noted in a tabular form as shown in the following example:

Polygon/Area Designation	Dimensions	Area
A	18 x 28	504
B	30 x 40	1200
C	8 x 12	96
TOTAL		1800

- 3b. Compile the net lot area and floor area calculations in the tabular form prescribed below and place the table on the SITE PLAN. All summary information required to comply with FAR regulations must be placed on the site plan, and it shall be calculated, verified, stamped, and signed by a licensed surveyor, registered engineer, or licensed architect. Wet stamp and signature of the professional who is responsible for this information is required on the site plan and any other plan sheet supplying information used to verify FAR, including the floor plan diagrams, cross sections for determining whether basement or attic space counts or does not count, etc.

-n1 Zoning District FAR Summary Information (example)

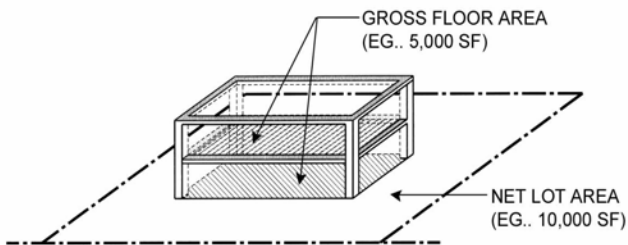
Gross Lot Area	15,250
Net Lot Area	15,000
Maximum Allowed FAR (-n1)	3500 + 500 = 4,000
Floor Area Calculations	
Primary Single Family Residence (SFR)	
Main or 1 st floor	2,500
Upper or 2 nd floor	1,000
Attic space, countable	NA
Basement space, countable	NA
Porches, decks, attached garage/carport	300
Subtotal	3,800
Secondary dwelling	NA
Detached accessory building(s)	NA
Subtotal	0
Grand Total	3,800

- 3c. Provide notes on SITE PLAN immediately below the table above indicating any other sheets within the set containing the information, tables, diagrams, etc. from which the information on the SITE PLAN was derived. Ideally, these sheets will be included in a logical order following site plan, floor plans, and elevations.

DEFINITIONS & INFORMATION APPLICABLE TO FAR REGULATIONS OF THE “-n1” and “-n2” COMBINING ZONING DISTRICTS

(-n1, Los Altos and Los Altos Hills; -n2 Burbank,
Zoning Ordinance Sections 3.40.030 & 3.40.040)

Part 1: General Information



$$\text{FAR} = \frac{\text{GROSS FLOOR AREA}}{\text{NET LOT AREA}}$$

$$\text{(EG: } \frac{5,000}{10,000} = \text{FAR } 0.5\text{)}$$

Floor Area Ratio (FAR) is determined by dividing the gross floor area of a specified building(s) on a lot by the net lot area. Net lot area is the gross lot area exclusive of land within public or private rights-of-way, including ingress/egress easements.

On flag lots, all portions of fee access corridors which are less than 25 feet in width shall be excluded from floor area calculations.

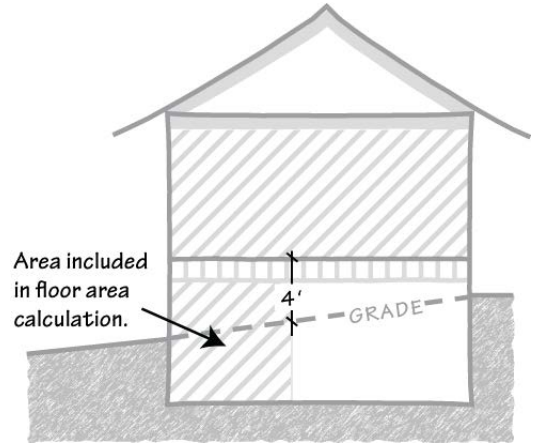
Floor area, gross: The sum of the gross horizontal areas of the several floors of a building, as **measured from the rough exterior faces of the exterior walls**, or (if applicable) from the centerline of a common wall between two attached buildings.

Part 2: -n1 District Information (Los Altos Area)

In -n1 combining districts, “floor area, gross” also includes:

- Secondary dwellings.
- All accessory buildings on any lot where the cumulative area of accessory buildings exceeds 500 square feet. On underlying lots, accessory buildings exempt under this provision must be designed and used as garage or storage buildings exclusively. Such exempt buildings shall not contain integral heating, ventilation or air conditioning systems, and shall not include bathrooms.
- Carport, porch or similar attached element that is both: (a) covered, and (b) greater than 50% enclosed by perimeter walls.

- Attached garages.
- Horizontal area of an interior stairway at each of the two or more stories to which the stairway provides access.
- Exposed portions of basements where finish floor level immediately above is more than four (4) feet above grade (see illustration).
- Attic space that has a minimum clearance of seven (7) feet in each of three (3) dimensions (l/w/ht) for at least 70 contiguous square feet.
- Where the vertical distance between any floor and the ceiling above exceeds 15 feet, floor area shall be counted twice.



FAR computations must be calculated, verified, signed and stamped by either a registered civil engineer, a licensed land surveyor, or a licensed architect.

“-n1” Floor Area Ratio (FAR) (for lots that are not underlying lots):

- **Lots of 10,000 square feet (net) or less:** a floor ratio not to exceed 0.35
- **Lots larger than 10,000 square feet (net):** 3,500 square feet of floor area, plus one additional square foot of floor area per 10 square feet of lot area over 10,000 square feet, to a maximum of 5,700 square feet.

“-n1” MAX SQ. FT. FORMULAS

Lots ≤ 10,000 sq ft:
 Max floor area = Lot size x 0.35

Lots > 10,000 sq ft:
 Max floor area = $\frac{\text{Lot size} - 10,000}{10} + 3,500$

Max floor area = 5,700 sq. ft.

Height of Dwellings: maximum 27 ft, 2 stories
 On **flag lot** of less than 20,000 sq. ft. net: maximum height is 21 ft., 1 story (Sec. 2.30.030(B))

“-n1” Special Development Standards for Underlying Lots:

- **Underlying lot** is defined per § 3.40.030(C) as any lot that meets all of the following criteria: (a) was contiguous to a lot under common ownership as of May 5, 1998; (b) was neither separately developed nor approved as a single building site as of May 5, 1998; and (c) does not meet the minimum lot size of the applicable zoning district.
- **Floor area ratio:** not to exceed 0.25. 5,700 sq. ft. maximum floor area applies. For underlying lot larger than 16,660 sq. ft., the standard “-n1” FAR formula applies.
- **Design review** is required for any proposed two-story house.

Part 3: -n2 District Information (Burbank Area)

In -n2 combining districts, “floor area, gross” also includes:

- any attached garage or secondary dwelling (attached or detached);
- carport, porch or similar attached structure or feature that is both (a) covered, and (b) greater than 50% enclosed by perimeter walls;
- horizontal area of an interior stairway at each of the two or more stories to which the stairway provides access;
- attic space that has a minimum clearance of seven (7) feet in each of three (3) dimensions for at least 70 contiguous square feet;
- areas where the vertical distance between any floor and the ceiling above exceeds 15 feet, floor area shall be counted twice;

Note: Does not include or regulate detached accessory buildings or structures. Any basement/underfloor space that does not constitute a story (Section 1.30.030, Definition of Terms) is excluded also.

FAR computations must be calculated, verified, signed and stamped by either a registered civil engineer, a licensed land surveyor, or a licensed architect.
