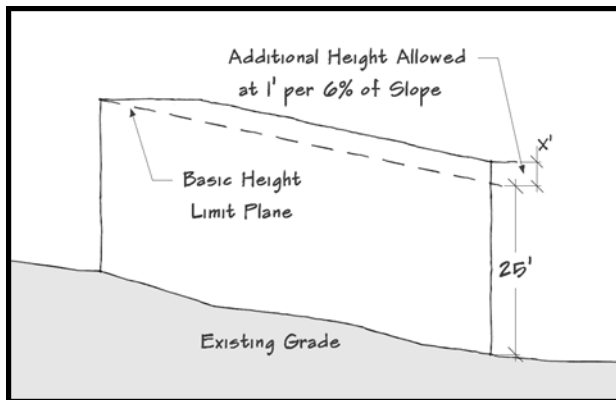


# Height of Residential Structures

In Residential Zoning Districts, building height is determined by drawing a plane created above four base elevation points. The plane is located at the height limit allowed by the zoning district above the four base elevation points. The applicant provides grade elevations on a site plan and on elevation views. Height limits for residential structures in residential districts are listed in Tip Sheet L-100, Development Standards in the R-1 and R-2 Districts.

## ADDITIONAL HEIGHT ON SLOPING LOTS

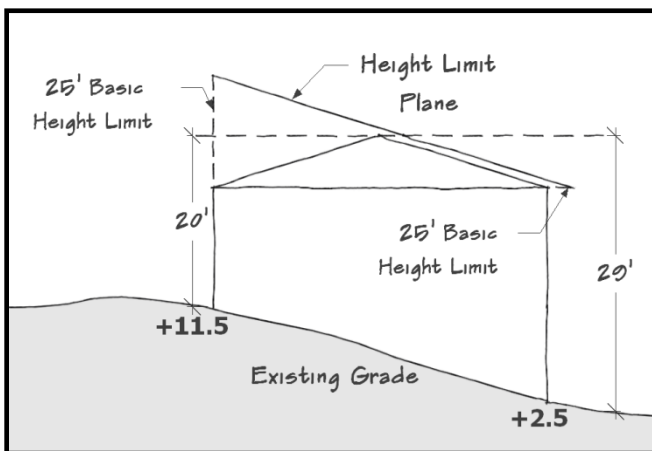
One foot of additional height is allowed on the lower corners of a building for every six percent of slope.



## ELEVATIONS

Elevation drawings should include:

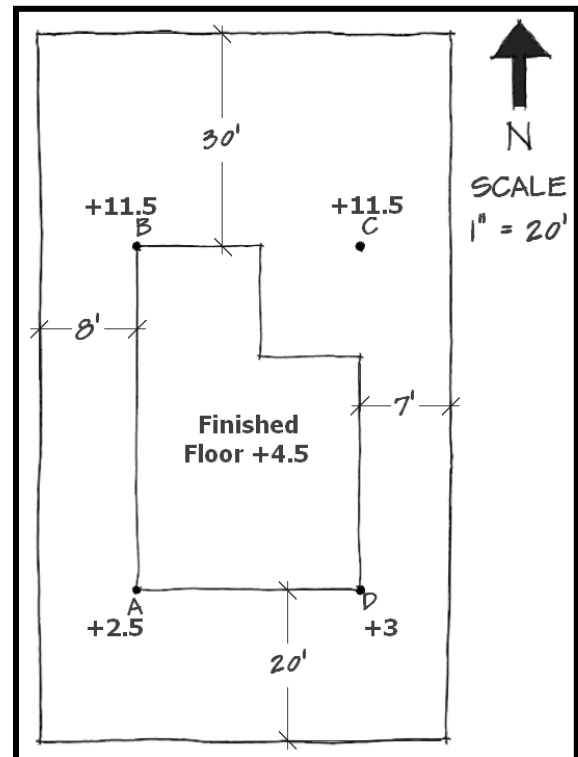
- Base Elevation Points
- Existing Grade
- Actual Height of Existing/ Proposed Structure



## SITE PLAN

Necessary elevation points on the site plan:

- A fixed benchmark needs to be established on or near the site unless elevation above sea level is used
- Four base elevation points (A-D)
  - Located at the four corners of the foundation, or if the foundation does not form a rectangle, at the smallest rectangle that surrounds the foundation. Decks and/or porches that extend beyond the foundation are not included in the height calculation for additional slope. No portion of the structure, however, may extend above the height plane that is established by the base elevation points.
- Finished floor elevation of the structure



## HEIGHT SURVEY

During the plan review process, the City may require the applicant to provide a survey of the property corner elevations and foundation base points. A ridge line survey of the structure may also be required by the City during the construction. Tip sheet G-206 includes information about the City's survey policy.



**Note: This Tip Sheet does not substitute for codes and regulations.**

**The applicant is responsible for compliance with all codes and regulations, whether or not described in this document.**

**More information: City of Tacoma, Planning and Development Services | [www.tacomapermits.org](http://www.tacomapermits.org) (253) 591-5030**

To request this information in an alternative format or a reasonable accommodation, please call 253-591-5030 (voice).

TTY or STS users please dial 711 to connect to Washington Relay Services.

# Height of Residential Structures

## SUBMITTAL CHECKLIST FOR RESIDENTIAL HEIGHT VARIANCES

All application materials must be submitted in electronic PDF format on compact disc (CD) or online at [TacomaPermits.org](http://TacomaPermits.org). See [Tip Sheet G-230](#).

- Application for Land Use Permit, completed and signed
- Site plan to scale
- Floor plan(s) to scale
- Building elevations to scale (exterior view of all sides)
- Written narrative addressing height variance criteria
- Height Survey and View Analysis if requested
- Application fee

Height variances can provide some relief from the zoning height limits, but are only approved in special circumstances.

## VIEW SENSITIVE DISTRICT OVERLAY (VSD) – HEIGHT VARIANCE CRITERIA

Requests for a height variance in the VS Districts are generally based on the following:

1. the extent of the view and the character of the area;
2. the impact of the proposed construction on the view from adjacent properties;
3. the effect of any possible restrictions on the proposed construction, the character of the area;
4. the topography of the site and surrounding properties;
5. the variance is in the interest of the general public; and
6. the variance is in the general interest of the particular neighborhood.

**Mitigation** – The following factors may make approval of a height variance more appropriate:

1. orientation of the ridgeline to minimize view impairment;
2. style of roof;
3. increased setback from the street or the side lot line; and
4. the placement of the structure(s) on the site.

## ACCESSORY BUILDINGS

A height variance for an accessory building (not to exceed 25 feet) is only allowed in the following instances:

1. Additional height is needed for building door clearance for the storage of a recreational vehicle or boat.
2. Steep topography affects the site, which makes building a detached garage for personal vehicles difficult.

3. When the rear yard of a site abuts an alley and the slope in the rear yard next to the alley is too steep to build an accessory building on, the height of the accessory building is measured from the grade of the alley to the highest point of the roofline of the accessory building with the approval of a height variance, which may include specific conditions.
4. The additional height is needed to provide architectural compatibility between the accessory building and the main building, for features such as roof pitch and style.

## ACCESSORY BUILDINGS – HEIGHT VARIANCE CRITERIA

All of the following facts and circumstances must exist for approval of a height variance for an accessory building:

1. Additional height shall be the minimum necessary to afford relief.
2. The variance is in the interest of the general public.
3. The variance is in the general interest of the particular neighborhood.
4. For purposes of this variance, the interest of the general public and the general interest of the particular neighborhood are indicated, in part, by the Comprehensive Plan.

## STRUCTURES ALLOWED ABOVE THE HEIGHT LIMITS

The following are allowed above the height limit without approval of a height variance, per TMC 13.06.602.A.3:

- Chimneys, steeples, flagpoles, elevators, fire or parapet walls, open railings, and other similar building appurtenances, provided that no useable floor space is added and all structural or other requirements are met.
- Solar panels/collectors that do not extend more than 12-inches above the surface of the roof
- Structures that are allowed to exceed the height limit through a Conditional Use Permit (CUP), per Tacoma Municipal Code 13.06.640. Tip Sheet L-640 explains the CUP process.
- Schools, libraries, structures for religious assembly, and colleges in zoning districts with a height limit of 35 feet. These structures are allowed to extend up to 45 feet.
- Shipping cranes and other freight moving equipment

## APPLICABLE REGULATIONS

- Tacoma Municipal Code Section: [13.06.100 - Residential Districts](#), [13.06.645 - Variances](#), [13.06.602 - General Restrictions](#)
- Tacoma Municipal Code Section: [2.02 - Building Code](#)



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