



Planning & Economic Development

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MEASURING HEIGHT

WHAT IS THE DEFINITION OF HEIGHT?

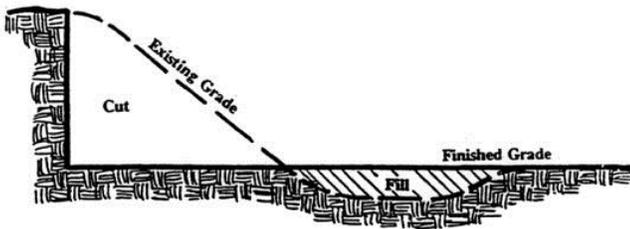
Building Height is the vertical distance measured from the elevation of the finished grade at an exterior building wall or *building segment* to the highest point of the building wall or building segment. The overall building height shall be calculated as the **average** of all building sides.

WHAT IS FINISHED GRADE?

Finished Grade means grade following development. The term “finished grade” may also mean existing grade when no terrain alteration is proposed (Figure 1).

Fill which is not necessary to achieve positive drainage or slope stabilization, or which is otherwise proposed clearly to raise the finished floor elevation(s) for any other purpose, shall not be considered finished grade.

Figure 1. Existing and Finished Grade.



WHAT IS A BUILDING SEGMENT?

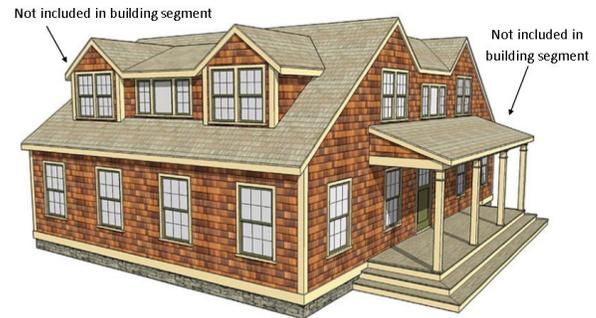
A “building segment” is when a break in the roof line, change in number of stories, or break in finished grade occurs of at least four feet. “Roof line” means the uppermost line of the roof of a building or, in the case of an extended or mansard facade, the uppermost height of said facade.

Only the primary building walls at its highest point is of relevance for the height calculation. The **primary building wall** means the wall on the side of the building which served as the essential or principal wall, in which all other walls or architectural features may be appended to or extended from.

- An appendage to a primary building wall, such as a shed or dormer, with a different roofline are not considered a building segment.

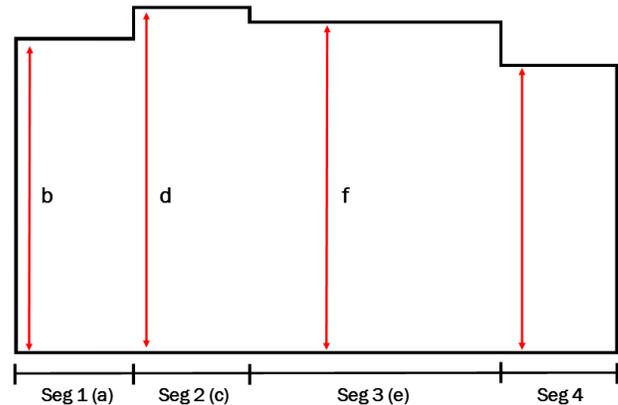
- A canopy, building overhang, building articulation, or drive-through structures, are not considered as a building segment (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Appended to or Extended Features.



For calculation of average building wall height, no more than 3 segments per building wall shall be used, even if there are more than 3 breaks in stories, rooflines, or finished grade. **The three highest segment height per building wall shall be used.** See Figure 3.

Figure 3. Walls with Multiple Segments.



Segment 4 is not included in the calculation of average height of this building wall.

For buildings consisting of **multiple wings**, the average building height shall be calculated for each wing separately. An overall average building height of each wing is calculated based on the average of each wing. Each wing is considered stand alone and must meet the maximum building height requirement (Figure 4).

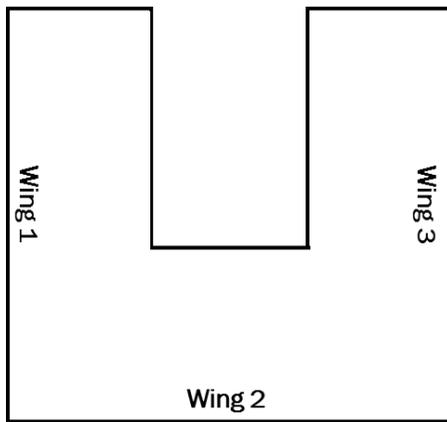


Figure 4. Building with Multiple Wings.

For example, if the height calculations for your proposed house measures 34'-6" (between 34 feet and 35 feet); a survey will be required. The attached two forms: Base Elevation Survey and Height Survey will need to be completed by a surveyor. Submit the Average Building Height form with your Building Permit application prior to land disturbance. The Height Survey form, used to verify the building's height, will need to be submitted to the City inspector at the time the framing inspection occurs.

Disclaimer: this handout should not be used as a substitute for codes and regulations. The applicant/property owner is responsible for compliance with all code and rule requirements, whether or not described here. Please see the City of Poulsbo Municipal Code for complete text and requirements.

WHAT IS MY HEIGHT LIMIT?

If you are in a residential low (RL) zoning district (single-family), no building or structure may exceed 35 feet in height. In all other zones, the height limit is also 35 feet. However, see PMC 18.310.010 for building height exceptions.

ARE ANY BUILDING FEATURES EXCLUDED FROM THE HEIGHT CALCULATIONS?

Per PMC [18.310.010 A](#), height limitations do not apply to the following: barns, silos, or other farm buildings and structures, provided they are not less than 50' from every lot line; chimneys, church spires, belfries, cupolas, smokestacks, flagpoles, cooling towers, monuments, firehouse towers, masts, aerials, elevator shafts, and other similar projections, wireless communication facilities, HVAC or other roof-mounted equipment and necessary screening, and outdoor theater screens; provided, said screens contain no advertising matter other than the name of the theater.

WHEN ARE HEIGHT CALCULATIONS NEEDED?

All permit applications for new buildings or additions that alter the height must have complete height calculations. The height calculations should be embedded in the plan set.

WHEN ARE SURVEYS REQUIRED?

If the height of the building is within one (1) foot of the maximum building height, surveys are required from a professional land surveyor.

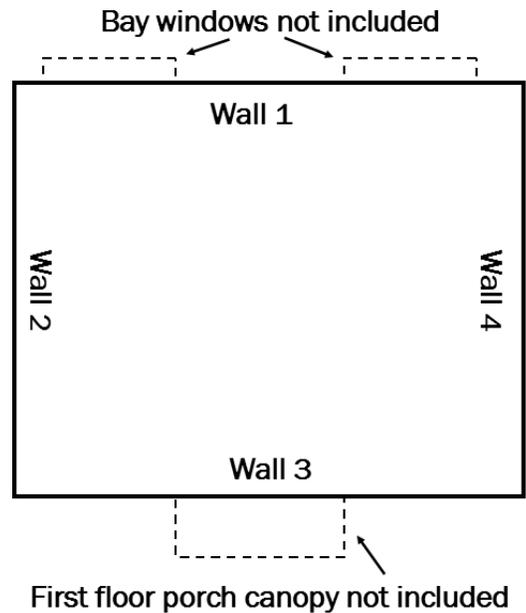
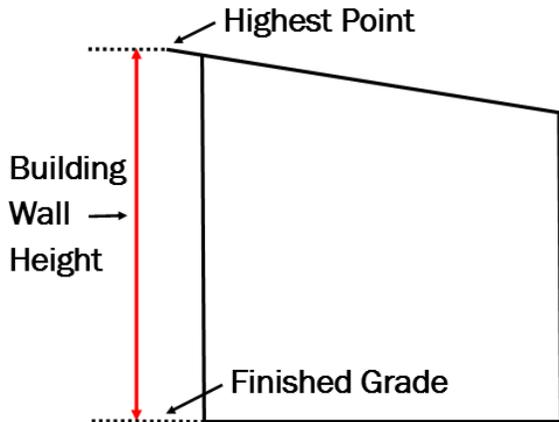


HOW DO I DETERMINE HEIGHT?

STEP 1: Determine the number of outside building walls (see right).

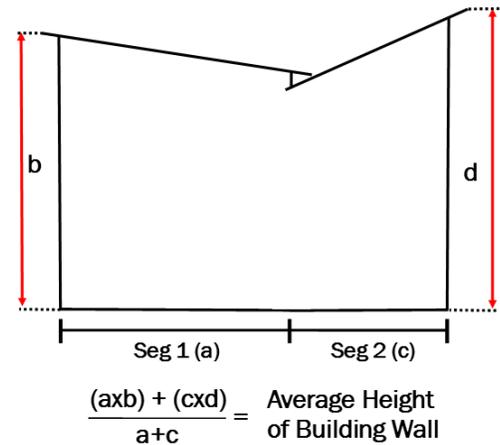
STEP 2: Calculate the height of each primary building wall.

Measure the finished grade directly beneath the outside face to the highest point of the primary wall (see below).



If a primary wall contains segments:

- A. Determine appropriate segments for the primary wall.
- B. Determine the highest point of each segment, by measuring finished grade directly beneath the outside face of the primary wall to the highest point of the segment.
- C. Calculate the buildings walls average height by determining the average of the segments height (see right).



STEP 3: Calculate average height of building.

Once each primary building wall's height has been calculated, the overall building height is determined as an average of all building walls.

For example:

- Wall 1 = 44 feet
- Wall 2 = 28 feet (average after calculating segments)
- Wall 3 = 35 feet
- Wall 4 = 32 feet
- $44' + 28' + 35' + 32' = 139/4 = 34.75$ feet
- $34.75 < 35'$ maximum allowed height - OK!

