

DIRECTOR'S INTERPRETATION: EXISTING GRADE FOR BUILDING HEIGHT MEASUREMENT

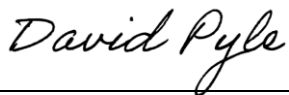
REQUEST SUMMARY

Does **existing grade** for purposes of building height measurement under [SMC 21.04.030.J](#) mean the grade of the property at the time of building permit application, following completion of approved subdivision and site development improvements, rather than the pre-development or original natural grade prior to subdivision?

INTERPRETATION

For purposes of building height measurement, existing grade shall be interpreted as the grade of the property at the time a complete building permit application is submitted.

Building height is measured from the grade as modified under [SMC 16.15.090](#), and the modified grade established through that section serves as the controlling reference point for height calculations. This interpretation confirms that once grade alteration is authorized under [SMC 16.15.090](#), the resulting adjusted grade supersedes the previously established grade for purposes of determining maximum building height. This interpretation ensures a uniform, consistent, and measurement baseline for height calculation.



David Pyle, Director of Community Development

CONTEXT, FACTS, AND FINDINGS

[SMC 21.04.030.J](#) establishes the method for measuring building height using existing grade. The code does not expressly address how existing grade should be determined when a property has undergone approved subdivision construction, grading, and associated site development before a building permit application is submitted.

The Sammamish Municipal Code ([SMC 21.04.040.B](#)) specifically defines existing grade as:

The existing elevation of land prior to any cuts and fills or other disturbances, which may, at the discretion of the Director, be determined by a topographic survey or soil sampling.

[SMC 16.15.090](#) establishes limits on site grading by providing that, unless otherwise approved by the Director, excavation shall not exceed 10 feet and fill shall not exceed five feet. These standards regulate the extent of

Related Code References

[SMC 21.04.030.J Building Height Measurement](#)

[SMC 16.15.090 Operating conditions and standards of performance](#)

[SMC 21.04.040.B Definitions](#)

Resources

[King County iMap](#)

[Sammamish Property Tool](#)

Questions?

[Submit Project Guidance](#)

City of Sammamish
801 228th Ave SE
Sammamish, WA 98075
www.sammamish.us

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grading that may occur during development and demonstrate that grading is a controlled and approved component of the land development process, rather than an unregulated means of altering site conditions.

Nothing in [SMC 21.04.030.J](#) expressly requires building height to be measured from pre-development or original unmodified grade after approved grading has established the final subdivision configuration. Where the code is silent, interpreting existing grade to mean the legally established grade existing at the time of building permit application, after subdivision construction associated site development provides a uniform method of administration consistent with the purpose of the Development Code.

Accordingly, for lots created through subdivision, staff findings are that building height shall be measured from grade set through approved subdivision construction associated site development.