



HEIGHT INSTRUCTIONS - RESIDENTIAL MAXIMUM HEIGHT

Last Updated January 2020

PURPOSE

In Berkeley, Residential Districts within the Hillside (H) Overlay and the Residential – Southside (R-S) District include a Maximum Height limit. This document provides Instructions to help applicants understand how to calculate and visually depict the Maximum Height of a residential structure, in order to comply with the development standards of the Berkeley Municipal Code (BMC).

BERKELEY MUNICIPAL CODE DEFINITION

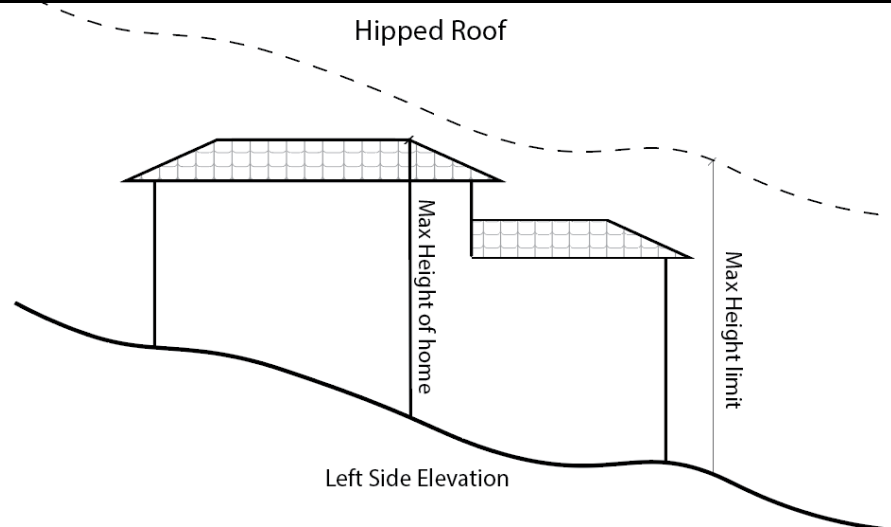
As depicted in Figure 1 below, Maximum Building Height is defined as:

The vertical distance of a building at any point, within a given plane, from finished grade to the top of the roof or parapet walls. (BMC Chapter 23F.04)

RESIDENTIAL MAXIMUM BUILDING HEIGHT DRAWING

In practice, this maximum height definition is intended to allow main buildings on hillside properties to “step” with the grade of the site, not the maximum height from the lowest possible point to the highest possible point of the building. In order to visualize Maximum Height on a hillside property, please refer to Figure 1, below. The solid line represents the existing grade, and the dashed line represents maximum height. To remain compliant with the district maximum height limit, no portion of the main building (including architectural projections such as eaves, decks, or balconies) or a proposed addition may exceed the height limit (See Figure 1). Further, you must look at maximum height on each elevation drawing of the proposed main building or addition, as grade differences on each side of the house will reveal different maximum heights on each side. The greatest height shown on all elevations is the maximum height.

Figure 1. Sloped-Lot Building Elevation Showing Maximum Height



Exemptions from Maximum Building Height in Residential Districts

Certain architectural projections are allowed above the maximum building height for residential buildings. Some are allowed by-right, and some require an Administrative Use Permit (AUP). Please see code sections below for details. ([BMC Section 23D.04.020](#))

1. Allowed "By Right"

The following architectural projections may be built and used to a greater height than the limit established for the District in which the building is located:

- Towers, antennas and poles used for the transmission of electricity, telephone, telegraph, cable television or other messages; and flag poles, skylights, solar energy equipment, and similar structures; except that an AUP is required for wireless telecommunication antennas, other than those located within the public right-of-way;
- Chimneys; water tanks, heating and air conditioning equipment, vents, pipes and necessary mechanical roof accessory objects; these objects may not individually exceed three feet in width by four feet in length or the minimum height required by the Building Code, where applicable. These dimensions may be exceeded upon issuance of an AUP.

Per BMC Section 23D.04.020.B

2. Allowed "By Right" if the resulting height is less than the residential addition height limit of the Residential District

The following features may be built above a roof but less than the residential addition height limit of the Residential District (these dimensions may be exceeded upon issuance of an AUP):

- Decks;
- Railings;
- Trellises;
- Pergolas; and
- Other similar structures.

Per BMC Section 23D.04.020.D

3. Allowed through Administrative Use Permit

The following architectural projections are prohibited except upon issuance of an AUP:

- Mechanical penthouses;
- Elevator equipment rooms;
- Cupolas, domes, and turrets; and
- Other architectural elements which exceed a District's height limit.
- This list is not exhaustive; other projections may require an AUP. The projections listed above shall not exceed fifteen percent (15%) of the average floor area of all of the building's floors; and no tower or similar structure shall be used as habitable space or for any commercial purpose, other than the mechanical needs of the building.

Per BMC Section 23D.04.020.C