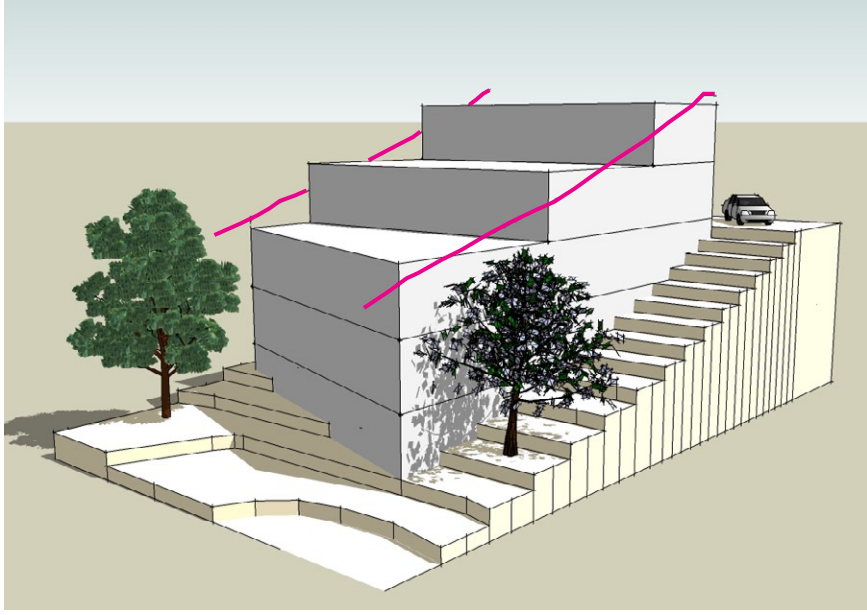


Height Measurement



Land Use Code Method

- Height is measured from all points where the building meets the ground.
- Height is measured from *existing* or *finished* grade, whichever is lower.
- Most zones provide an exception that allows 1 additional foot of height for every 6% of slope. This allows a developer to recapture some of the floor area lost due to the building “stepping down” the slope.

Pros:

- Leads to stepped or terraced building form.
- Wall height is lower when seen from the bottom of a slope.
- May help preserve views across a slope.

Cons:

- Higher walls at the top of a slope are more likely to block views from above.
- Fundamentally different method from Building Code results in the requirement for two separate sets of measurements.
- Method is most complicated of the height measurement techniques used in Seattle.
- Requiring buildings to “step down” a slope may add to construction costs.
- Requires a more costly site survey than other techniques, with measurements at two-foot intervals, especially affecting smaller projects.
- On sites that have been previously excavated, a complex technique must be followed to allow the “re-establishment” of what is considered “existing grade” so that the building is not penalized.

Building Code Method

- Average elevation of the “principal corners” of the building establishes an “Average Grade Plane”.
- The Average Grade Plane is measured from *finished* grade.
- Building height is measured from the Average Grade Plane.

Pros:

- Internationally recognized method familiar to architects and designers.
- Shorter walls at the top of a slope help preserve views from uphill.
- Similar to shoreline height measurement method.
- Less costly site survey is required than the current Land Use Code method, especially for smaller projects.
- Resulting building form is less costly to construct than under Land Use Code method.

Cons:

- Does not encourage terraced building form.
- May cause more blockage of views across a slope.
- Wall height is higher when seen from the bottom of a slope.

Shorelines Method

- Average elevation at the center of all exterior walls establishes an average grade from which the height is measured.
- Height is measured from average *existing* grade.
- Required by State law in shoreline areas to help protect views.

Pros:

- Shorter walls at the top of a slope help preserve views from uphill.
- Can require less costly site survey than the current Land Use Code method, especially for smaller projects.
- Similar to Building Code height measurement method.
- Resulting building form is less costly to construct than under Land Use Code method.
- Easier to understand and apply than the current non-shoreline method.

Cons:

- Does not encourage terraced building form.
- May cause more blockage of views across a slope.
- Wall height is higher when seen from the bottom of a slope.

Flat Site

- On a flat site the three measurement techniques result in the same height limit.

