



Residential (R-1)

Base Floor Area & Site Coverage

What is the Floor Area?

Floor Area is defined as: *the total gross square footage included within the surrounding exterior walls of all floors contained within all enclosed buildings on a building site whether finished or unfinished. In basement spaces, floor area is measured at the interior of the enclosing walls. Floor area shall include, but shall not be limited to, all floors of all enclosed spaces within all buildings, basements, mezzanines, guesthouses, studios, garages, and carports. All attic, basement, and storage shed spaces with five or more feet of clearance between the floor or walking surface and the ceiling or roof surface shall be counted as floor area. (CMC 17.10.030.D.1, Floor Area).*

In simpler terms, floor area is the total area taken up by a building on each floor level.

How much Base Floor Area is allowed?

Base floor area is the calculated floor area allowed on a site prior to consideration of [bonus floor area](#) or adjustments to floor area based on site constraints. The maximum base floor area depends on the size of the site (**see table on next page**). For sites less than 4,000 square feet in size, the maximum base floor area is 45% of the building site. For sites between 4,000 square feet and 10,000 square feet in size, the base floor area shall be calculated as follows:

$$\text{Building Site Area} \times (0.45 - (\text{Building Site Sq. Ft. Over } 4,000 \times 0.02)/1,000) = \text{Base Floor Area}$$

For sites larger than 10,000 square feet, please contact a Planner to determine the base floor area. A list of common lot sizes and their allowed base floor area is shown on the 2nd page of this handout. For sites with an average slope greater than 30 percent, the maximum allowed base floor area shall be reduced by two percent for each one percent increase in average slope above 30 percent up to a maximum reduction of 50 percent. (CMC 17.10.030.D, Floor Area Ratio and Exterior Volume)

Does my garage count towards my Base Floor Area?

Yes, all required parking shall be counted as floor area, whether supplied by garage, carport or other means (CMC 17.10.030.D.1). On each site, a minimum of 200 square feet of base floor area with a minimum dimension of 10'x20' and 2,200 cubic feet of exterior volume shall be reserved for each required parking space whether provided by means of a garage, carport or parking pad. Inability to provide on-site parking shall not authorize more floor area or exterior volume for other purposes in lieu of parking (CMC 17.10.030.D.2.d.i).

What is site coverage?

Site Coverage is the *total ground area of a site occupied by materials or improvements that cover the natural soil but which are outside the perimeter of structures that count as floor area*. Site Coverage includes fully permeable, semi-permeable, and impermeable materials. (CMC 17.70)

Site Coverage Materials

Examples of site coverage materials include but are not limited to:

- **Fully permeable:** gravel, spaced decking and spaced exterior stairs.
- **Semi-permeable:** sand-set bricks or pavers, garden walkways of small paving stones, arbors.
- **Impermeable:** asphalt, concrete, mortared brick and stone, decomposed granite, unspaced decking and balconies at any level, garden walls, solariums, bridges, sheds not counted as floor area, ponds, hot tubs and swimming pools. (CMC 17.70, Coverage, Site)

Site Coverage Exemptions

The following building projections are exempt from site coverage: oriel windows, eaves, balconies, overhangs and similar structural elements if limited to a projection of 18 inches or less (*CMC 17.10.030.C.1.a, Building Projections*). If the structural projections exceed 18 inches, the full area of the projection will be counted -not just the area beyond 18 inches. Mulch and woodchips are also exempt from site coverage.

How much site coverage is allowed?

The allowable site coverage depends on the Base Floor Area of the site. Site coverage is limited to a maximum of 22 percent of the Base Floor Area if primarily impermeable. However, if at least 50 percent of all site coverage on the property is made of permeable or semi-permeable materials, an additional amount of site coverage of up to 4 percent of the site area may be allowed for use in a single driveway of up to nine feet in width. (*CMC 17.10.030.C.1.b, Additional Site Coverage for Driveways*). The following table shows the allowable site coverage for several common lot sizes. Contact a Planner for lot sizes not listed.

Lot Size (square feet)	Base Floor Area (square feet)	Allowable Site Coverage (square feet)	Allowable Site Coverage <u>with Driveway Bonus</u> (square feet)
4,000	1,800	396	556
5,000	2,150	473	673
6,000	2,460	541	781
7,000	2,730	601	881
8,000	2,960	651	971
9,000	3,150	693	1,053
10,000	3,300	726	1,126

Non-Conforming Site Coverage

Sites not in compliance with site coverage limits shall not be authorized to increase site coverage (*CMC 17.10.030.C.2*). Site coverage that was lawfully established but not in compliance with current zoning regulations may be maintained in its current state, however, shall be considered non-conforming. If a non-conforming element is removed, or substantially altered, it shall not be permitted to be rebuilt or re-established in the same location or elsewhere on the site (*CMC 17.36.040.E*).

For example: if a property has non-conforming site coverage and a patio is removed, new site coverage (such as a new deck, for example) could not be added to the property unless the remaining coverage for the site were brought into compliance with the site coverage limits.

Additionally, sites with excess coverage may only add floor area if the site complies with the R-1 district tree density provisions and all existing and new trees have sufficient space to protect the root zones and provide for new growth; and the nonconforming site coverage will be reduced at a rate equal to two times the amount of floor area added to the site, or to an amount that complies with the site coverage limits, whichever is less. (*CMC 17.10.030.C.2, Nonconforming Site Coverage*)

A Design Study Application (Planning Department Approval) *is required* for changes in site coverage and/or landscaping, as well as any addition or demolition of floor area. (*CMC 17.58.040*). A building permit may or may not be required depending on the scope of work -please consult with Community Planning and Building Department Staff with any questions regarding the specific requirements of your project.

Refer to the Residential Design Guidelines, [Final Details Review](#) for guidelines on landscaping and paving materials and design.

Changes in site coverage may require upgrades to on-site drainage. Refer to [SOG 17-07](#) for procedures for private storm water drainage systems (*CMC 15.18*).