



Town of Tiburon
1505 Tiburon Boulevard
Tiburon, California 94920
(415) 435-7373 | www.townoftiburon.org

FLOOR AREA RATIO GUIDELINES

Excerpts from Tiburon Municipal Code Title IV, Chapter 16 (Zoning) Section 16-52.020 (I), Table 2-2, and Selected Definitions

I. Floor Area Ratio (FAR) Guidelines.

- 1. Purpose.** The purpose of this Subsection is to provide a community yardstick for appropriate residential size and scale, measured in gross square footage, in relation to the overall size of property on which the improvements are proposed. It is the intent of the Town to reasonably apply residential floor area ratios with regard to specific site characteristics and the surrounding pattern of development.

The floor area ratio (FAR) guideline is intended to discourage overbuilding of property, as often occurs with “tear-downs” and extensive remodel/additions on infill sites, and with first-time residential construction. The floor area ratio guideline for a lot is not intended as a target to be achieved, but is intended to indicate a reasonable maximum. The Town may authorize less than the maximum square footage indicated by the floor area ratio guideline when necessary to achieve compatibility with surrounding development, to maintain the neighborhood character, or for other good cause.

- 2. Calculations.** Floor area is calculated using the definition contained in Article X (Definitions) under “Floor area, gross.” Floor area ratio includes accessory buildings as well as any main building.
- 3. FAR guidelines.** Residential development standards are as shown in Table 2-2 in Section 16-21.040 (Residential Zones Development Standards). FAR guidelines for single-family and two-family residential zones (R-1, R-1-B, RO, R-2, and RPD) are shown in Table 5-2 on the next page.

Table 5-2 - Floor Area Ratio Guidelines

R-1, R-1-B Zones	
Area of Property	Gross Floor Area Maximum
Less than 7,500 sq. ft.	35% of the property area, plus an additional 450 sq. ft. of garage or carport
7,500 sq. ft. through 60,000 sq. ft.	10% of the property area plus 2,000 sq. ft. plus an additional 600 sq. ft. of garage or carport
More than 60,000 sq. ft.	8,000 sq. ft. plus an additional 750 sq. ft. of garage or carport.
RO, R-2, and RPD¹ Zones	
Area of Property	Gross Floor Area Maximum
Less than 7,500 sq. ft.	35% of the property area, plus an additional 600 sq. ft. of garage or carport
7,500 sq. ft. through 60,000 sq. ft.	10% of the property area plus 2,000 sq. ft. plus an additional 600 sq. ft. of garage or carport
More than 60,000 sq. ft.	8,000 sq. ft. plus an additional 750 sq. ft. of garage or carport.
R-3 and RMP Zones	
Area of Property	Gross Floor Area Maximum
R-3	.60, unless otherwise specified in a Precise Development Plan or equivalent permit
RMP	.30, unless otherwise specified in a Precise Development Plan or equivalent permit
Notes:	
1. Unless otherwise specified by Precise Development Plan or equivalent permit.	

a. Examples. The following are some examples to illustrate the floor area ratio guideline concept:

1) **Example No. 1.** A 7,400 square foot lot generally could achieve a

reasonable size and scale of residential construction with a maximum of 2,590 square feet (.35 x 7,400) of gross floor area, not including up to 450 sq. ft. of garage or carport.

- 2) **Example No. 2.** A 10,000 square foot lot generally could achieve a reasonable size and scale of residential construction with a maximum of 3,000 square feet $((.10 \times 10,000) + 2,000)$ of gross floor area, not including up to 600 sq. ft. of garage or carport.
- 3) **Example No. 3.** A 20,000 square foot lot (approximately half-acre) generally could achieve a reasonable size and scale of residential construction with a maximum of 4,000 square feet $((.10 \times 20,000) + 2,000)$ of gross floor area, not including up to 600 sq. ft. of garage or carport.
- 4) **Example No. 4.** A 40,000 square foot lot (approximately one acre), generally could achieve a reasonable size and scale of residential construction with a maximum of 6,000 square feet $((.10 \times 40,000) + 2,000)$ of gross floor area, not including up to 600 sq. ft. of garage or carport.
- 5) **Example No. 5.** A 60,000 sq. ft. lot (and any lot larger in size) generally could achieve a reasonable size and scale of residential construction with a maximum of 8,000 square feet of gross floor area, not including up to 750 sq. ft. of enclosed garage space, provided that the lot is at least 60,000 sq. ft. in area.

4. **Floor Area Exception.** Residential construction in excess of the floor area guidelines may be granted through a floor area exception if the following findings are made:
 - a. The applicant has demonstrated that the visual size and scale of the proposed structure is compatible with the predominant pattern established by existing structures in the surrounding neighborhood; and
 - b. The applicant has demonstrated that the proposed structure is compatible with the physical characteristics of the site. The characteristics include, but are not limited to, shape and steepness of the lot, ease of access, and the presence of natural features worthy of retention, such as trees, rock outcroppings, stream courses and landforms.

**TABLE 2-2
RESIDENTIAL ZONES DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS**

Zone	Minimum Lot Area	Maximum Lot Coverage	Required Lot Width	Minimum Setback Requirements ¹			Height Limit		Maximum FAR
				Front	Sides	Rear	Primary	Accessory	
R-1	10,000 square feet (s.f.)	One-story development: Same as Maximum FAR; Two-story or multi-story development: 30%	40 ft.	15 ft.	8 ft.	20% depth of lot or 25 ft. (whichever is less)	30 ft.	15 ft.	See Section 16-52.020.1
R-1-B-A				20 ft.	6 ft.				
R-1-B-2				25 ft.	10 ft.				
RO-1	40,000 s.f.	15%	70 ft.	30 ft.	20 ft.				
RO-2	20,000 s.f.	15%	50 ft.	30 ft.	15 ft.	8 ft.	30 ft. ³	15 ft. ³	.60
R-2	7,500 s.f. ²	35%	40 ft.	15 ft.	8 ft.				
	3,750 s.f. per dwelling ²								
R-3	10,000 s.f.	30%	--	15 ft.	8 ft.	8 ft.	30 ft. ³	15 ft. ³	.60
	3,500 s.f. per dwelling								
RPD	Established by adopted master/precise plan or precise development plan for development						30 ft. ³	15 ft. ³	See Section 16-52.020.1
RMP	Established by adopted master/precise plan or precise development plan, or condominium plan for development								

Notes:

- Some older planned development approvals do not specify setback requirements, in which case appropriate setbacks are determined by Site Plan and Architectural Review.
- In the R-2 zone, where a lot is contiguous with a submerged or tide lot that lies entirely or partially in the M zone, and all of such property is under the same ownership, the total area of such contiguous lots may be used in determining whether the minimum lot area requirements have been met. Notwithstanding any other provision of this Section to the contrary, no building or accessory building or part thereof shall extend seaward of the zone boundary line between the R-2 zone and the M zone other than as may be permitted in compliance with the regulations of the M zone (Section 16-25).]
- Unless otherwise specified in a Precise Development Plan.
- Unless otherwise specified in a Precise Development Plan.

DEFINITIONS USED IN CALCULATING GROSS FLOOR AREA

Floor Area, Gross. “Gross floor area” means the sum of all enclosed or covered areas of each floor of the building, measured to the exterior faces of the enclosing walls, columns, or posts.

NOTE: The term “capable of being used or finished for habitable space” is used below. A space shall be considered “capable of being used or finished for habitable space” if it meets California Building Code occupiable ceiling height requirements and is all of the following:

1. Covered by a solid, weatherproof roof or floor and
2. At least fifty percent of the vertical area around the space is closed.

Gross floor area shall not include the following six areas:

1. For residential uses, the first four hundred fifty square feet of garage or carport space on properties less than seven thousand five hundred square feet in area; or the first six hundred square feet of garage or carport space on properties equal to and between seven thousand five hundred square feet to sixty thousand square feet in area; or the first seven hundred fifty square feet of garage or carport space on properties greater than sixty thousand square feet in area; or the first two hundred fifty square feet of garage or carport space for each parking space required in compliance with parking requirements from section 16-32.040 (number of parking spaces required);
2. Areas permanently open to the sky;
3. Exterior areas under roof eaves or other cantilevered overhangs;
4. Attic spaces and underfloor spaces that are not capable of being used or finished for habitable space;
5. Basements, as defined in this Zoning Ordinance; and
6. Floor areas of roofed or covered open spaces (such as breezeways, balconies, porches and similar spaces), which are not capable of being used or finished for habitable space, if at least fifty percent of the vertical area around the space is fully open.

Gross floor area shall include the following:

1. Unfinished loft spaces and other areas capable of being used or finished for habitable space;
2. Other roofed or covered spaces (such as breezeways, balconies, porches, or similar spaces) that are capable of being used or finished for habitable space, if less than fifty percent of the vertical area around the space is fully open;
3. Roof penthouses; mezzanine floor areas; and accessory buildings;
4. All crawl space area with a minimum height of seven feet when measured from finished or natural grade (whichever is lower) to the bottom of the floor above. This

- definition shall only apply to crawl space created after March 31, 2006; and
5. All space with a minimum height of seven feet beneath a cantilevered portion of other floor area of a dwelling unit. This definition shall only apply to such space created after March 31, 2006.

Unless otherwise stipulated, the term “floor area” shall mean gross floor area.

Floor Area Ratio (FAR). For residential uses, the floor area ratio is specified in Table 5- 2 as described in Section 16.52.010(I). For non-residential uses, the floor area ratio is the gross floor area of the building or buildings on a lot, divided by the area of the lot.

Basement or Below-Grade Story. Any floor area, all on one level with at least one foot elevation difference from other floor area, where the top surface of the floor or roof above, as measured at the outer edge, does not exceed three feet above grade for more than fifty percent of the perimeter of the basement or below-grade story, nor exceed four feet above grade for more than twenty-five percent of the perimeter, nor exceed seven feet above grade at any point.

Cantilevered. An overhang where a floor, deck, balcony or other horizontal projection extends beyond a foundation wall or other floor level and is unsupported at the extended end.

Crawl Space. An open area between the floor of a building and the ground.