

Subject: Confirmation - Amendment Request Form
From: Smartsheet Forms <forms@smartsheet.com>
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Amendment Request Form

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| Date of Request | 04/03/2020 |
| Submitter Name | Diane Kane, President, La Jolla Community Planning Association |
| Affiliation | Other |
| Email Address | dkane002@san.rr.com |
| Phone Number | 858-459-9490 |
| Name of Item | Calculating Basement Gross Floor Area |
| Type of Amendment | Regulatory Reform |
| Is this implementing a state law? | N/A |
| Bill Number (if applicable) | |
| Is compliance with the state bill mandatory or optional? | N/A |
| Background | The Uniform Building Code Definition of Basement intended underground spaces to be used exclusively for storage and mechanical activity. Consequently, basements are exempted from counting toward GFA if they are a certain number of feet below natural ground. |
| Issue | <p>Currently, basements are considered "free space" that do not contribute to GFA/FAR since they cannot be seen. But, underground spaces are increasingly used for daily living. This trend was not originally envisioned nor intended by the Building Code Definition of "Basement." For example, current uses feature home theaters, recreation areas (ping pong & pool tables) and craft spaces. They also include home offices, exercise and meditation rooms, saunas, pools and spas, additional bedrooms, baths and guest/maid quarters.</p> <p>This provision has been used to increase actual development density above allowable FAR by as much as 25 to 30%. In the Coastal Area, such excess is often inconsistent with allowable density, as well as with the scale and character of the surrounding neighborhood, making it inconsistent with the Land Use Plan and the CA Coastal Plan.</p> |

This trend is occurring mostly in the luxury property market, specifically on beachfront and hillside lots in the Coastal Zone. Unfortunately, many of these lots also have questionable soil, drainage and geological stability. Although project review may assess geotechnical suitability of proposed construction within the subject property lines, cumulative impact analysis of excessive soil exportation and shoring close to property lines on a neighborhood scale isn't addressed.

In fact, it is unknown what effects are being generated by the increasing number of full basements currently being installed in sensitive geological areas. Where these effects might occur are also unknown, as underground water movement and soil fractures are being disrupted over a wide area. A more conservative development approach is advised

to comply with community density requirements and to protect the community from environmental hazard.

Objective

Redefining the amount of allowable GFA to reduce basement size. This would align new construction with neighborhood densities and mitigate growing, but as yet unidentified, impacts to area-wide geological stability.

Solution

The GFA of all basements (as defined by the current height above grade limitations) should count towards FAR at 50% discount. This provides some benefit to applicants, who can increase overall project size by going underground; but, it also provides benefit to the community by reducing the size of development both above and below ground. Furthermore, due to the high seismic sensitivity throughout San Diego, all projects with basements should provide a geotechnical study prior to processing a permit.

List of code sections affected by your proposal

Section 113.0103 Definitions: Gross floor Area
Section 113.0234 Calculating Basement Gross Floor Area

Is it controversial?

Unsure

File Attachments



Basement Strike Out.docx (14k)

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